

The Touchable and the Untouchable:
An Investigation of Touch in Modern Japanese Literature

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Abstract of the Thesis

The Touchable and the Untouchable: An Investigation of Touch in Modern Japanese Literature (91246 words)

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This thesis examines how the experience of touch is depicted in modern/contemporary Japanese literature and culture. Employing touch-related 20th century French thought (Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Nancy) and psychoanalytic theory (Klein, Anzieu, Kimura), it discusses how the representations of touch illuminate various aspects of human existence, specifically: the mediated nature of touch, the process of the bodily encounters, the formation of subject identity, sexual differences, and the way memories of touch depicted in literature affect our sense of temporality.

Touch is a particularly interesting way of approaching Japanese literature because touching between people (apart from mother and child, called *skinship*) has been considerably repressed at least until after WW2, due to the relative absence of public practices of touch, authors' aesthetic choices and censorship. Opposing this tendency, female authors born postwar write freely about touch. In comparison to Judeo-Christian cultures, Japanese culture has historically not been open to tactile communication, nor is explicit articulation of internal experience, as in psychoanalysis, particularly prominent. Japanese literary characters are thus especially self-conscious about touch.

Following a theoretical and historical overview regarding touch and contact in the Introduction, Chapter 1 discusses different ways of mediating touch in the works of Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, and Abe Kōbō. Chapter 2 argues how high levels of mediation affect the manners of engaging in direct encounters with others in Yoshiyuki, Kawabata Yasunari, and Matsuura Rieko. Chapter 3 discusses the temporality of tactile memories in Yoshiyuki, Kawabata, and Ogawa Yoko.

Reflecting on such a complicated portrayal of touch in Japanese culture will help fill a gap in the existing scholarship regarding touch in literature. By critically examining the relationship between theories and literature in the East and West, this thesis also significantly contributes to the field of comparative literature and cultural studies as an example of cross-cultural research on touch.

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Introduction: The Point of Contact

A. Can We Touch?

I never become aware of my own existence until I have already made contact with others (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*).

Modernist Japanese writer Yoshiyuki Junnosuke (1924–1994) questions whether one's touching another is already mediated by earlier touch, which creates an imaginary 'membrane' between people. In Yoshiyuki's *The Dark Room* (*Anshitsu*) (1970), the male protagonist, Nakata, describes his lover, Natsue:

She did, in fact, have a number of physical habits she'd picked up in her relationship with other men. Those lovers were always there, like a thin membrane between her body and mine. But in a sense, it was this that allowed our affair to continue. [. . .] Physically, then, we were linked; but her body alone wasn't enough to tie me to her. From around that time, the membrane between our bodies began to fulfill all kinds of functions.¹

Stimulated by contact with the skin, repetitive intimate touch becomes a thin membrane between bodies, mediating (connecting and preventing) touch between bodies and affecting living bodies.

I begin this research into the touchable and the untouchable² in modern Japanese literature with the above quotation and thoughts about invisible membranes because

¹ Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, *The Dark Room*, trans. John Bester (New York: Kodansha International, 1975), 144. The original Japanese is in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū* (*The Complete Works of Yoshiyuki Junnosuke*), vol. 8 (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1972).

² The word 'untouchable' is associated with a certain social class in the caste system and with diseases, such as leprosy and AIDS (Constance Classen, ed., *The Book of Touch* [Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005], 292-293). In this research, however, I focus on a phenomenological and psychoanalytical reading of touch by which (un)touchability reflects a tension created, for example, through desire, sensations, memories and affects.

such a discussion presages various key elements of touch in modern Japan, including the ambiguity of physical contact, the hesitation toward and fantasy about direct touch and the tension between touchable/untouchable and immediate/mediated touch. Yoshiyuki describes touch and physical intimacy more realistically than previous Japanese authors such as Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886–1965) and Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972). These authors extensively wrote about the sensual body, but without detailed descriptions of bodily interactions—Kawabata especially hesitated to describe explicit physical relationships. Funabashi Seiichi (1904–1976), whose works were associated with the aesthetics of female bodies and love affairs, also influenced Yoshiyuki's representation of the body in the transitional period from pre- to postwar Japan.

Touch in modern Japanese society seems lacking or hidden; public practices of touch such as kissing and hugging are uncommon. In 'From Paris' ('*Pari Yori*') in 1914, poets Yosano Akiko (1878–1942) and Hiroshi (1873–1935) write about their travels to Europe. Hiroshi started his journey via ship from Yokohama and passed Shanghai, Singapore and the Mediterranean Sea on the way to Marseille. Akiko writes about her trip via the Trans-Siberian Railroad from Vladivostok. She journeyed past Harbin and Moscow to Paris to meet Hiroshi there. After spending time in Paris, they travel to London via Amiens. Akiko writes about the day they left the house where they stayed in London: 'When we were leaving, the eyes of the lady [who hosted Akiko and Hiroshi]

were filled with tears as she took my hand over the car window. This lady's face will be the first thing to come to my mind every time I think of England'.³ Akiko also notes a comment from a Japanese painter they met on their journey: "Madame, the Western parents and children kiss each other. They touch bodies in this way. Once we go back to Japan, we will get a slap from our fathers. That's when Japanese parents' and children's bodies touch".⁴ The Japanese who travelled or lived in Europe in the early twentieth century noticed this physically affectionate mode of communication in Europe because of how uncommon it was in Japan. This is displayed in Akiko's gratitude; this affectionate interaction impresses her.

Matsumoto Michihiro discusses minimal verbal exchanges out of preference for silence and *ma* (the space in-between) in Japan through the dramatic term *haragei*, actors' performances that express human psychology with a minimum of words and actions.⁵ Anthropological and literary studies have also highlighted indirect modes of communication in Japan that rely on non-expressive implications and non-verbal signs. The concept of *iki* (refined/chic) espoused by philosopher Kuki Shūzō (1888–1941) emphasises implicit attraction rather than visible appeal and a certain distance from the intimate object. The aesthetics of Kuki's *iki* lies in one never reaching the other, though

³ Yosano Akiko, 'London no Yado' ('The Inn in London', a part of 'Pari Yori'), in *Teihon Yosano Akiko Zenshū* (*The Complete Works of Yosano Akiko*) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1981), 20: 560. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

⁴ Yosano Akiko, 'Nikki no Issetsu' ('A Part of a Diary', a part of 'Pari Yori') in *Teihon Yosano Akiko Zenshū*, 20: 567.

⁵ Matsumoto Michihiro, *The Unspoken Way, Haragei: Silence in Japanese Business and Society* (New York: Kodansha International, 1988).

they are almost touching. *Iki* ‘dimly hints’ (*honokani anjisuru*) at the direction of the opposite sex, which is never really explicit or never actually *touches* the other.⁶ Anthropologist Diana Tahhan observes that physical and visible forms of touch are not always manifest in Japan, and she writes, ‘the emphasis is on more subtle and non-tactile forms of communication where the listener is expected to be able to infer feelings’ instead of explicit verbal explications.⁷ Japanologist Donald Keene analyses the indirect, unspoken implications in Japanese literature through the ideas of ambiguity or a reliance on ‘suggestion’ in which the poet frequently omits the subject of the sentence as commonly practised and does not define the intended meaning of the image.⁸ In this cultural context, where the fundamental mode of communication is indirect, non-expressive and ambiguous, the tension of conceiving the object as touchable or untouchable and the hesitancy toward and fantasy about touch become discernible in some literary texts. The result of this is desire repressed and replaced into the texts.

⁶ Kuki Shūzō, *Iki no Kōzō (The Structure of Iki)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1930), 21, 70. Kuki uses the term *bitai*, or coquetry, to refer to this never fully realisable attraction to the opposite sex. In addition, Kuki refers to two other characteristics of *iki*: *ikiji*, which can mean self-confidence, strong spirit, self-pride or sense of humor, and *akirame*, meaning resignation, acceptance and an indifferent attitude to accepting one’s destiny without persistence (22-27). *Iki* is still often used in everyday Japanese to describe a type of coolness, referring to a person or object that is refined and attractive. The dictionary definitions of *iki* in *Kōjien* are ‘being plain, clean, frank and refined in one’s feeling and behaviour, and having sexual attraction; being well informed about two sides of human emotions and amusements’. *Kōjien*, ed. Shinmura Izuru (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2008 [1955]), 133.

⁷ Diana Adis Tahhan, ‘Blurring the Boundaries between Bodies: Skinship and Bodily Intimacy in Japan’, *Japanese Studies* 30, no. 2 (2010): 215, accessed 28 February, 2013, doi: 10.1080/10371397.2010.485552.

⁸ Donald Keene, ‘Japanese Aesthetics’, *Philosophy East and West* 19, no. 3 (1969): 295, accessed 16 January, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1397585>.

Tayama Katai (1872–1930), Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Kawabata Yasunari present interesting contrasts between early postwar authors. Influenced by the French authors Zola and Maupassant, the naturalist writer Tayama aimed for a “‘realistic” depiction of life’ but without a strong orientation toward scientism as in the original French.⁹ Compared to another naturalist writer, Shimazaki Tōson, who described human nature’s dark side, Tayama goes a step further in his description of an intimate relationship. For example, Tayama’s protagonist in ‘The Quilt’ (*Futon*, 1907) does not explicitly express his love to his female student. Instead, he sniffs the ribbon that she left behind and immerses himself in the smell she leaves on her quilt.¹⁰ Instead of depicting the protagonist’s love for his student through direct physical intimacy, Tayama chooses smell, which was then regarded as sensational at the time to describe this sort of intimacy, even though the protagonist only gets to smell her after she leaves.

Literary scholar Douglas Slaymaker comments on Tanizaki: ‘if we are to speak of *nikutai bungaku* [the literature of the flesh] before the war, one thinks of Tanizaki’s work and a sexuality that follows an instinctual carnal desire, the sense in which individuals are unable to resist natural instincts, no matter the cost in terms of morality and social ostracism’.¹¹ In Tanizaki’s ‘Tattoo’ (*Shisei*, 1910), the protagonist, a tattoo

⁹ Katō Shūichi, ‘Thinking Beyond Parallel Traditions: Literature and Thought in Postwar Japan and France’, in *Confluences: Postwar Japan and France*, ed. Douglas Slaymaker (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002), 50.

¹⁰ Tayama Katai, ‘The Quilt’, in *The Quilt and Other Stories by Tayama Katai*, trans. Kenneth G. Henshall (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1981), 95-96. Originally published as *Futon* in the journal *Shinshōsetsu* (Tokyo: Shun'yōdō Shoten, 1907).

¹¹ Slaymaker, ‘Sartre’s Fiction in Postwar Japan’, in *Confluences*, ed. Slaymaker, 101. The literature of the flesh appeared soon after the war, describing the body in detail, freed from such phenomena as

artist, fantasises about tattooing or mapping his soul on a woman's beautiful skin.¹² The fantasy of this touch is elevated due to his imagining he creates a perfect match with his tattoo and her seductive skin. Slaymaker points out that the postwar literary focus, especially regarding the literature of the flesh, is the individual body (*nikutai*/flesh) as opposed to the nation-body (*kokutai*/body politic) during the wartime or an abstracted spirituality (*seishin*). However, many of Tanizaki's works exhibit a sensual desire toward an idealised female body in a playful attitude, rather than in such ideological tensions.

While describing intimacy and bodily sensuality, Tanizaki constructs a solid structure and progression of the story with *The Tale of Genji* as his model.¹³ Some postwar writers, such as Ōoka Shōhei, similarly pursued a well-structured novel, but using French writers, including Stendhal, as a model.¹⁴ To them, the Japanese novels were structurally weak—'sections were appealing, but the whole was not sound'—a critique applied to Kawabata's works.¹⁵ Kawabata's protagonist in 'Thousand Cranes' (*Senbazuru*, 1952) fails to touch the lip print of his now-dead loved one that she left as

wartime physical suffering, national control, censorship and sexual suppression.

¹² Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, 'Tattoo', in *Literature: The Evolving Canon* by Sven P. Birkerts (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996, 2nd ed.), 128-133, trans. Ivan Morris. Originally published as 'Shisei' in the journal *Shinshichō* in 1910.

¹³ *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji Monogatari*) is one of the classical Japanese masterpieces written by Murasaki Shikibu in the early eleventh century. About the debate on a 'novel without plot' in 1927, see Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, 'Jōzetsuroku' ('Talkative Collections'), in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Sakuhinshū* (*Works of Tanizaki Jun'ichirō*), (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1951), vol. 9: 92-93. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, 'Bungeiteki na, Amarini Bungeiteki na' ('Literary, All Too Literary'), in *Shuju no Kotoba, Bungeiteki na Amarini Bungeiteki na* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2003), 123-126, 144-145. Both essays were originally published in 1927. Also see Karatani Kōjin, *Nihon Seishinbunseki* (*Japan Psychoanalysis*), (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjyū, 2002), 88-92.

¹⁴ Katō, 'Thinking Beyond Parallel Traditions', 59.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

a brown stain on her tea bowl, creating the distance between life and death.¹⁶ Because the protagonist hesitates to touch the stain, symbolising intimacy, union with his loved one is unreachable. Historian Matt Matsuda quotes French Japanologist Jean-Jacques Origas's comments on Japanese tradition via Kawabata when Matsuda writes that it is “the result of efforts, ruptures, repetitions, and failures”; ‘characterized by an “imprecise localization”’, ‘Kawabata’s [narrative view] is so much the opposite of a European monumentalized past’.¹⁷ In this sense, Origas believed that Kawabata represents the Japanese nature of rupture and de-centralisation.

Rather than describe actual bodily interactions, three of the abovementioned writers expressed a ‘fantasy’ about direct, whole-body touch. They would contrast with postwar writers who were deeply influenced by French writers and may have written more about the undeniable existence of the body. The above three are not simply addressing a situation in which touch is entirely absent. Literary characters perform indirect, invisible, yet perceptible touch.

Despite the active political engagement of the first wave of postwar writers (*daiichiji sengo-ha*), including Noma Hiroshi, and their continued influence on next-generation writers like Ōe Kenzaburō,¹⁸ authors like Funabashi, Kawabata and

¹⁶ See Kawabata Yasunari, ‘Thousand Cranes’, in *Snow Country and Thousand Cranes*, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker (London: Penguin Books, 1971). Originally published as *Senbazuru* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1952).

¹⁷ Matt Matsuda, ‘EAST OF NO WEST: The *Posthistoire* of Postwar France and Japan’ in *Confluences*, ed. Slaymaker, 25. Quoted from R. Etiemble and Jean-Jacques Origas, *Deux lectures de Kyoto de Kawabata: Lecture barbare et au hasard de la lecture* (Paris, 1978).

¹⁸ See Katō, ‘Thinking Beyond Parallel Traditions’, 55.

Tanizaki continued writing about the subtlety of intimate human relations. As Yoshiyuki recalls, Funabashi resisted an overly political climate in postwar Japan and kept writing about intimate human relationships.¹⁹ Having witnessed the work of other authors—especially Tanizaki, Kawabata and Funabashi—and having gained a certain creational inheritance from them, Yoshiyuki describes intimate relationships between men and women but also extensively delves into the ambiguities of love, sex and human relationships. While demonstrating the repressed desire for direct touch and the tension between touchable and untouchable, these examples clearly show the indirect, mediated nature of touch compared to the simple touch of the skin.

According to Slaymaker, the individual body (*nikutai*/flesh) was eventually emphasised more than the national ‘body’ (*kokutai*/body politic) in the postwar period. Freed from the unitary state, a sense of individuality has significant effects on the postwar body in literary creations mainly influenced by existentialism and phenomenology:

Liberation from the restraints of the body may be one of the most representative of the postwar phrases. It is only natural, when discussing the liberation from the body, to be drawn to the concerns of existentialism and phenomenology, for the body and existence are central in these systems.²⁰

¹⁹ Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, ‘*Funabashi Seiichi Shōron*’ (‘Short Essay on Funabashi Seiichi’), in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 267-273. Funabashi writes about female bodies especially through his detailed descriptions of women’s kimonos. See Funabashi’s *Shikkaiya Kōkichi* (Dyer Kōkichi) in 1945 and *Yuki Fujin Ezu* (*Portrait of Lady Yuki*) in 1948. Regarding Ōe’s comment on Funabashi, Yoshiyuki writes that, in Funabashi’s work, one can see a woman’s skin appear, while in Kawabata’s case, one sees something like liquid moving inside the body (人間の細胞の中でだぶだぶ動いている液体みたいなもの). Yoshiyuki, ‘*Funabashi Seiichi Shōron*’, 271.

²⁰ Slaymaker, ‘Sartre’s Fiction in Postwar Japan’, 100.

The thirst for carnality in postwar Japan represents a seeking of individuality that was curtailed during wartime. Not limited to the influence by Sartre, Slaymaker writes that both Merleau-Ponty and literary critic Ara Masao 'are convinced of the need for politicization of individuals while opposing the evil of political systems'.²¹ The postwar individual body, which was liberated from the national body, was in a way, theoretically mediated by both existentialism and phenomenology.

While Slaymaker's works provide a thorough understanding of the body in postwar Japanese literature with the necessary tie to existentialism and phenomenology, he does not necessarily examine how one body actually makes contact with others. This includes touch and contact with the world in postwar Japanese literature. Slaymaker emphasises the Sartrean gaze and the 'Other'²² on which one's self-consciousness depends and through which one is aware of one's body through contact with the world. A man (being-for-itself) 'is present to the world *through* the senses, and the world spatially has meaning only with the body as center of reference'.²³ Also in Merleau-Ponty, self-consciousness is dependent on our consciousness of others, which

²¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

²² The gaze in Jean-Paul Sartre surprises the subject, reduces it to shame and disappears if the subject sees the eye that is looking at the subject. Jacques Lacan writes about this gaze, 'The gaze I encounter [. . .] is not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other'. (Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan and ed. Jacques-Alain Miller [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979], 84). Sartre's gaze remains in relation to the subject so it makes the subject feel ashamed, but it is in relation to the unreachable Other. The use of the capital 'O' in 'Other' appears often in Continental philosophy, to differentiate the radical 'Other' as an element to define or constitute the self from a more general 'other'. This use of 'Other' appears in Emmanuel Levinas, Sartre, Lacan and other thinkers.

²³ Slaymaker, *Confluences*, 104. Quoted from Hazel E. Barnes, introduction to *Being and Nothingness* by Jean-Paul Sartre, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), xxxix.

is linked to our experience of their actions and speech. Each person is already in a certain relationship with others; the ‘contact I make with myself is always mediated by a particular culture, or at least by a language that we have received from without and which guides us in our self-knowledge’.²⁴ But this aspect of mediating contact is not fully developed regarding modern Japanese literature.

In Merleau-Ponty, one body is not necessarily an isolated entity from the world; ‘my body is made of the same flesh as the world (it is a perceived), and moreover that this flesh of my body is shared by the world, the world *reflects* it, encroaches upon it and it encroaches upon the world’.²⁵ Since there is doubling, overlapping or encroachment between a body being looked at and the looking, a body being touched and the touching, ‘the things pass into us as well as we into the things’.²⁶ In addition, ‘the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things’.²⁷ The perception of the world, body and contact with the world in Merleau-Ponty is already mediated by others’ perceptions; this perception ‘is nowhere else than in my body as a thing of the world’.²⁸ Thus, not limited to individuality, how we make contact and relate with others is a necessary condition we must ponder.

²⁴ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*, trans. Oliver Davis (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2004), 66. Originally published in French as *Causeur* in 1948.

²⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 248. Originally published as *Le Visible et l’invisible* by Editions Gallimard in 1964. Merleau-Ponty’s concept of *flesh* does not mean just a biological body but the body as a living substance and a thematisable element of being that is not limited to the individual but opened up to the universal. Flesh connects the relationship between the body and the world and occurs due to encroachment of those inseparable entities.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

This discussion of touch in postwar Japanese literature also merits particular attention to language, particularly in the psychoanalytic sense. Literary scholar Jean-Philippe Mathy writes that the 1960s and '70s were a period for 'another wave of *Japonisme*'²⁹; many French writers and philosophers visited Japan and encountered 'a highly subversive countercultural utopia'.³⁰ Compared to the first wave of *Japonisme*, which mainly focused on visual arts, the second wave of *Japonisme* in the postwar period focused more on writing, language and meaning.³¹ In particular, Jacques Lacan's attention to natural bilingualism and 'perpetual translation'³² in the Japanese language (through Japanese reading of the Chinese characters *kun-yomi*, Chinese reading of the Chinese characters *on-yomi* and all three different types of characters) merits further analysis, suggesting that Japanese subjects are always already involved in the translation of the unconscious to the conscious. Mathy writes, 'What dominates in Japan is not the love of knowledge "contents" or the celebration of *speech* (as in the West) but the cult of the letter, that is, of pure form without content'.³³ Lacan noted the limits of psychoanalytic practice in Japan or, say, other possibilities of psychoanalysis.

²⁹ Jean-Philippe Mathy, 'From Sign to Thing: The French Literary Avant-Garde and the Japanese Difference', in *Confluences*, ed. Slaymaker, 34.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ The first *Japonisme* was mainly led by painters such as Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec in the late nineteenth century. It focused on exotic motifs such as the kimono, Japanese edo painting (*ukiyo-e*) and the family crest (*mon/kamon*). Intellectuals involved in the second *Japonisme* include Alexandre Kojève, who visited Japan in 1959, Roland Barthes in 1966, Jacques Lacan in 1971 and Michel Foucault in 1978, each of them leaving remarkable observations on the nature of Japanese culture such as the erasure of content, emptiness, de-centredness and meaning without content. See Roland Barthes, *The Empire of Signs* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982); Maurice Pinguet, *Voluntary Death in Japan* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); Ikegami Yoshihiko, ed., *The Empire of Signs: Semiotic Essays on Japanese Culture* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1991).

³² Mathy, 'From Sign to Thing', 44. Lacan, 'Lituraterre', *Littérature* 481 (October 1971), 9.

³³ *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

Therefore, psychoanalysis provides another axis to explore touch in modern Japanese literature, especially regarding the verbalisation of desire and bodily senses.

This research explores such a precarious and ambiguous interpersonal relationship particularly through the phenomenon of touch and contact regarding phenomenology and psychoanalysis, which has barely been discussed in Japanese literary discourse. This study examines the ways modern Japanese literature contributes to our understanding of the following: how we make contact with other bodies, how our touch is already mediated by something else (such as memories of touch, invisible and emotional membranes, and the skin), how the tension between the touchable and the untouchable is negotiated, and whether touch is necessarily a shared experience that creates a history of touch for both parties. This research fills a gap between the lack of attention to the phenomenon of touch in literary discourse and the need to re-examine the importance of bodily contact and intimate human relationships in modern and contemporary Japanese society. My hypothesis is that this research will illuminate a heightened desire for various sorts of touching due to the mediated modes of physical interactions and offer a nuanced understanding of the sense of distance from others, desire and hesitation about touch, and fantasy about direct touch in modern Japan. An analysis of distance from others in touching will also illuminate communication issues. The case of *hikikomori*, in which one stays at home without social participation but

without psychic disorder, is one of the contemporary issues in Japan that will be further discussed shortly.

This research attempts to explicate the experience of touch in modern Japanese literature mainly by examining the works of Yoshiyuki, Kawabata and contemporary female writers Matsuura Rieko (1958–) and Ogawa Yoko (1962–), who write about touch more freely than the male writers mentioned earlier. Matsuura effectively describes a form of touch called *skinship*, a Japanese-English term meaning intimacy through touch or education through touch, especially between the mother and infant,³⁴ that is not limited to touch between the sexes but includes non-sexual intimate touch. She also explicitly writes about an active, not passive, female body. Ogawa focuses on affection and memories through touch, ultimately making us think about how to touch the invisible existence that was but no longer is here. As I examine Japanese literary texts through the lenses of phenomenology and psychoanalysis, which have produced significant theories about body and touch, I will look at the moment when contact is established by the sense of touch, tactile encounters and their aftereffects.

‘Touch’, as I use it in this thesis, does not refer to how physiological touch simultaneously affects human psychology, but rather how touch lasts in our body and

³⁴ See Takie Lebra, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004) and Eyal Ben-Ari, *Body Projects in Japanese Culture: Culture, Organization and Emotions in a Preschool* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1997). See Shinmura Izuru (ed), *Kōjien*, for dictionary definitions, namely, that *skinship* is intimate communication through touch by the skin such as between a mother and children (1493). The word itself consists of *skin* plus the suffix *-ship*. Also, *skinship* plays a significant role in child development and thereafter. See Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1959), 71; Tiffany Field, *Touch* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 20.

affects us by being accumulated and mingled with other contact experiences. Psychologist Ian Parker states that touch functions as a touchstone in Japanese therapeutic work ‘both to define what may be more authentically Japanese and to mark out psychoanalysis in Japan as a conceptual framework that cannot easily fit into such cultural assumptions’.³⁵ Parker assumes continued *skinship* for adults, drawing examples from the childishness of *skinship* and dance therapy, which regards touch as a comforting experience. But psychological anthropologist Takie Lebra writes: ‘The Western mother [...] expresses her love in a specific, straightforward manner involving bodily contact, typically hugging and kissing. In Japan too, the infant is caressed and kissed. But unlike in Western culture, where such expression of affection can be a generalized behavior lasting one’s entire life, in Japanese culture bodily endearment stops by the time children enter preschool’.³⁶ Tactile experiences, especially in Japan, manifest themselves differently and have different significance between childhood and adulthood. Thus, tactile experiences present an accumulated layer of mediation as one’s life develops. Effectively played out in literature, this layer of mediation can include psychological implications like desire and hesitation, cultural meanings like generalised societal practices and verbal nuances regarding how to narrate bodily experiences. While considering that written texts are a delayed mode of narrating and communicating bodily experiences, I also examine questions of the immediacy,

³⁵ Ian Parker, *Japan in Analysis: Cultures of the Unconscious* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 99.

³⁶ Lebra, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic*, 75.

mediation and the temporal displacement of contact.

Although touch has a lasting influence on our lives, it has not been sufficiently theorised upon, except perhaps in French contemporary thought, the broader field of nonverbal communication and partially in psychoanalysis. However, a historical resonance about the lack of and hesitancy toward casual touch in Japan has consequently produced, in no small amount, literary texts that describe highly self-conscious experiences of touch and musings on the in-between-ness and the ambiguity between subject and object, *soma* and mind. By comparing these perspectives and theories in a cross-cultural way to gain insight into Japanese texts, I will delve into the question of contact represented in literature, asking how we understand what it means to touch others. Throughout this thesis, I will elaborate on the concept of ‘touch’, which is not just about subject-object tactile relations, or the touching by oneself explored by Merleau-Ponty. The tactile relationships in which we engage in everyday life are not simple. In the introduction, I discuss relevant theoretical overviews, mainly in phenomenology and psychoanalysis, and situate those theories as a lens through which I analyse literary texts in the following chapters. I also incorporate relevant cross-cultural works and theories to start a dialogue between theories and texts, which will be continued throughout this research, and to see how theories work in relation to cultural representations.

I will begin with *Point of Contact* by Marina Abramović (1946–) to examine energy, sensations and possible transformations of the body through touch. Then I will introduce relevant theoretical accounts by Jean-Luc Nancy and Merleau-Ponty, and I will address those accounts with respect to Japanese literary examples. Abramović has produced various works of performance art that address pain, violence and bodily limitations.³⁷ *Point of Contact* will be particularly useful for this research since it exhibits indefinable moments of contact, showing a beauty proximate to that of Kuki, in which one almost reaches another but never actually does. Although this is not a Japanese example, it is relevant because a similar question discussed earlier is present: whether the contact with oneself, others and the world is immediate or is already mediated.

a. Contact

About to touch in the next moment, but never actually touching. About to cross each other's path, but never intersecting. In Yugoslavian artist Marina Abramović's *Point of Contact* (which premiered in 1980), two bodies in black suits are simply standing,

³⁷ Although touch necessarily involves negative memories such as with pain and violence as Abramović shows, this research focuses on relatively positive aspects of touch for two reasons: First, research on embodied memory, such as pain, violence, mourning and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) has been conducted, mainly through the discourse on trauma and loss (Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Diana Taylor, David Eng and Roger Hallas, to name a few). Second, I conduct this research in the hope of examining the possibility of affective interpersonal communication via touch for the highly individualised contemporary Japanese society.

pointing toward the other with their index fingers, intending to touch but never actually reaching each other. This performance demonstrates a never-ending attempt at contact. Abramović says this work is a static performance in which the ‘aura’, the energy, is felt in the moment of being about to touch, of pure presence; ‘you really can reach the transformative quality of transcendence and elevate your own spirit...’.³⁸

Neither ending in touch nor ceasing to emit energy from the body, this performance reveals the body in a particular moment. Like this contact, French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy sees the body itself as a never-ending process. It is always about to move and is immeasurable, ‘An immense, unending encounter: each body, each mass taken from a body, is immense, which means immeasurable, an infinity offered to reach, touch, weigh, watch, to be left resting, dispersing, infusing, left to weigh, support, resist, sustain like a weight and a look, like the look of a weight’.³⁹ The body is untouchable in the sense that it is never static. The performance *Point of Contact* invites its viewers to think about whether the body that has already touched or been touched signifies something already transformed. If so, the body is already

³⁸ From the video clip *Point of Contact*, for the exhibition ‘Marina Abramović: The Artist is Present’, uploaded at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) website, open 14 March-31 May, 2010, <http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/190/1980> (accessed 12 May, 2010). Walter Benjamin noted the loss of this ‘aura’, the presence in time and space, in the modern age due to technological advances (Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt, London: Jonathan Cape, 1970). Also, the presence and the authenticity of the living body have been actively discussed in relation to technological advances such as by Peggy Phelan, emphasising the importance of the unrepeatable, authentic presence of the living body, which has an aura. See Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993).

³⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard A. Rand (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 31. The text *Corpus* was originally published in 2006 by Éditions Métailié.

mediated by touch.⁴⁰ In agreement with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Nancy also suggests that it is necessary to analyse bodies in contact.

A phenomenological investigation of touch (especially Merleau-Pontean, including self-touch of the left hand on the right hand) emphasises the reciprocal nature of touch, or rather, the encroachment between the touched and the touching, the looked and the looking, and the inside and outside of the body. Merleau-Ponty writes, ‘not to see in the outside, as the others see it, the contour of a body one inhabits, but especially to be seen by the outside, to exist within it, to emigrate into it, to be seduced, captivated, alienated by the phantom, so that the seer and the visible reciprocate one another and we no longer know which sees and which is seen’.⁴¹ In this encroachment and crisscrossing, there is a circle of intercorporeal reciprocal insertion:

There is a circle of the touched and the touching, the touched takes hold of the touching; there is a circle of the visible and the seeing, the seeing is not without visible existence; there is even an inscription of the touching in the visible, of the seeing in the tangible—and the converse; there is finally a propagation of these exchanges to all the bodies of the same type and of the same style which I see and touch—and this by virtue of the fundamental fission or segregation of the sentient and the sensible which, laterally, makes the organs of the body communicate and founds transitivity from one body to another.⁴²

⁴⁰ Nancy also points out that, though Heidegger suggests the exposedness and present-ness of the individual body, he had not sufficiently explored the phenomenon of bodily contact with weight. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, trans. Jeffrey S. Librett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 61. Originally published as *Le Sens du monde* by Éditions Galilée in 1993. I will discuss this issue of weight at length in Chapter 2.

⁴¹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 139.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 143.

In this *chiasm*, ‘we situate ourselves in ourselves *and* in the things, in ourselves *and* in the other’, so that ‘we become the others and we become world’.⁴³ In this Merleau-Pontean account, the tangible and the touching are considered inseparable, but the tangible and the visible are also considered proximate.⁴⁴ This could suggest that one reaches another in seeing, as the bodies in Abramović are almost already touching without actual contact. This can be extended to Japanese literary examples in which the characters sense others through smelling, seeing and touching through mediation.

Although this Merleau-Pontean understanding of touch proposes mutuality of the body, the world and one’s embodied experiences, Jacques Derrida deconstructs Merleau-Pontean touch starting from his critique of Husserlian phenomenology. Derrida’s main concerns lie in Merleau-Ponty’s ambiguous treatment of the relationship between touching one’s own body and seeing another person and the relationship between touch and vision.⁴⁵ For Derrida, such ambiguity seems to negate the difference between touching one’s own hand and touching the hand of another and the difference between self and other, ‘reducing an alterity very much less “other” than Derrida would like’.⁴⁶ Derrida explores the possibility of ‘contact’ with alterity, which instead

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁴⁴ See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, trans. R. C. McCleary (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 171. Originally published as *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960).

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 191. Originally published as *Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* in 2000 by Éditions Galilée.

⁴⁶ Christopher Watkin, *Phenomenology or Deconstruction? The Question of Ontology in Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Ricœur and Jean-Luc Nancy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 15. Watkin further investigates a mutuality of body and world, from the fact that meaning for Merleau-Ponty is *of* the world rather than *in* the world in the same way that the body is *of* the world, so that the relation

interrupts contact ('con-tact' as 'interrupted contact'), as he writes, '*I self-touches spacing itself out, losing contact with itself, precisely in touching itself*'.⁴⁷

Moreover, Nancy's concept of contact necessarily coincides with departure. Martin Crowley writes, 'Through Nancy, we might get to a thought of the artwork as the compelling offer (but no more) of a touch, the promise (but no more) of a form of contact—referential or affective—whose excessively proximate touch is nowhere other than in the departing movement of this promise'.⁴⁸ Nancy's interpretation of *Noli me tangere* (a Latin sentence meaning 'Do not touch me') between the resurrected Jesus and Mary Magdalene⁴⁹ is also based on distancing: 'a touching that, of itself, distances and impedes itself',⁵⁰ in which touch is identical to its withdrawal. In this account, contact itself is a departure, and touch is an act of moving away from the other while attempting to reach the other in the very invisible tension between these antagonistic directions. The relationship between phenomenology and deconstruction has provoked a continuous discussion—whether deconstruction is post-phenomenology or whether there is a before and after for Derridean deconstruction at all. Nonetheless,

between self and another is mutual rather than reciprocal. In this mutual relationship, encountering others irretrievably *alters* those participants' lives. Thus, Watkin writes that, rather than mutuality eliding the alterity of the other, Derrida 'risks not respecting the other at all' by 'respecting the *otherness* of the other' (*Ibid.*, 64-65).

⁴⁷ Derrida, *On Touching*, 34. Derrida uses the term 'con-tact' to mean 'interrupted contact', 'noncontact', a 'hiatus' at the core of contact (63, 70).

⁴⁸ Martin Crowley, 'Contact!', *L'Esprit Créateur* 47, no. 3 (2007): 3, accessed 14 September, 2012, doi: 10.1353/esp.2007.0053.

⁴⁹ The words the resurrected Jesus said to Mary Magdalene when she recognises him. See John 20:17. This motif has been frequently represented in fine arts and in such works as those by Fra Angelico, Jacopo da Pontormo, Alonso Cano, Titian and Hans Holbein the Younger.

⁵⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli Me Tangere: On the Raising of the Body*, trans. Sarah Clift et al. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 42. Originally published as *Noli me tangere: Essai sur la levée du corps*, published by Bayard Éditions in 2003.

phenomenology and deconstruction have produced a set of manifold theories of touch by critiquing and informing one another, as Watkin describes this relationship: ‘Instead of trying to conflate or separate phenomenology and deconstruction, we should appreciate the moves and counter-moves in their complex and intricate *pas de deux*’.⁵¹

As discussed above, the idea of ‘con-tact’, which signifies interrupted contact rather than immediate, seamless contact, questions whether we can actually touch the other’s essence precisely because there is a mediation, interruption, distance and temporal deferral in touching. As examined throughout this thesis, touch in Japanese literature exhibits indefinable tension between the touchable and the untouchable, mediation and immediacy, desire and hesitation, and repression and fantasy of touch. Although the emergence and development of the idea of ‘con-tact’ in French critical theories and of the tension between the touchable and the untouchable, mediation and immediacy, or unreachable touch in Japanese literature and thought are not the same, there is a common aesthetic that pursues the unattainable in the midst of conflicting forces such as reach and withdrawal, rise and fall, revealing and unrevealing, and the desire to possess and the unwillingness to be taken hold of. It is therefore important to situate the above French theorisations on touch and contact beside literary texts and thoughts to analyse the phenomenon of touch in Japan. It is not just that French theorisations help understand the phenomenon of touch in Japanese literature; those

⁵¹ Watkin, *Phenomenology or Deconstruction?*, 208.

theories and literary texts make contact and touch each other in temporally and geographically dislocated manners, just like touch itself bridges entities.

The process of contact—such as stimuli or energy touching the body, perceptions becoming referable in language and memories being embodied—raises questions about the immediacy of touch. The idea of ‘con-tact’ problematises whether our touch is always already mediated through objects, past experiences, the sense of time, language, culture, and other factors or whether we can touch others directly. Not limited to Japanese literary texts and phenomenological accounts, some mediation regarding touch necessarily occurs when the skin perceives external stimuli, as human geographer Mark Paterson writes: ‘touch is always already mediated through whatever means, haptic sensations arising through interaction and the cutaneous surface of the skin, the organ of touch’.⁵²

Speaking more from a physiological perspective, somato-psychologist Yamaguchi Hajime states that our bodies do not simply receive stimuli but ‘choose’ different types of receptors for various kinds of stimuli,⁵³ through a range of various tactile sensory receptors scattered all over the body. French critic Paul Valéry also pays particular attention to the surface of the skin: ‘The marrow, the brain, all these things we require in order to feel, suffer, think ... to be profound ... are inventions of the *skin*! ...

⁵² Mark Paterson, *The Sense of Touch: Haptics, Affects and Technologies* (Oxford; New York: BERG, 2007), 145. His research on touch from the perspective of interdisciplinary human geography includes historical, philosophical and technological accounts regarding touch.

⁵³ Yamaguchi Hajime, *Hifukankaku no Fushigi: Hifu to Kokoro no Shintaishinrigaku (The Mystery of Skin: Physio-psychology of the Skin and Mind)*, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006), 16.

We burrow down in vain, doctor, we are ... ectoderm'.⁵⁴ Valéry's view of the skin as something deeper than the surface did not end as a creative discourse or metaphor, but has been validated over recent decades by various biologists and physiologists, including Yamaguchi. Psychiatrist Thomas R. Verny studies the prenatal development of perception through the skin, associating the functions of the skin with those of the brain.⁵⁵ These accounts suggest that the skin is not merely a receptor of external sensations but is actually *acting* at the place of contact. The skin is significative, as Nancy writes: 'Truth is in the skin, it makes skin: an authentic extension exposed, entirely turned outside while also enveloping the inside, a sack crammed with rumblings and musty odors. Skin touches and lets itself be touched'.⁵⁶

On top of mediation through the skin and perception receptors, stimuli as a form of kinaesthetic memories become another layer of mediation. Residual stimuli remain in the body, but rather than being statically left in the body, they start to have an almost active function as suggested through Merleau-Ponty's idea of 'kinaesthetic residua'. Merleau-Ponty examines whether the excitations enact 'kinaesthetic residua' that take on the role of actual movements. He explains this by observing that, in the case of a normal person, the stimulus surges into the body function as a source of arousal toward

⁵⁴ Quoted in Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. Chris Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 60. Quoted in Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border between Self and the World*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 6-7. Discussed in *The Book of Skin* by Steven Connor in relation to the philosopher Michel Serres (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 28. Original in 'L'idée fixe', Paul Valéry, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gillimard, Pléiade, 1957), 2: 215-216.

⁵⁵ Thomas R. Verny and Pamela Weintraub, *Pre-Parenting: Nurturing your Child from Conception* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003).

⁵⁶ Nancy, *Corpus*, 159.

the ‘potential movement’. Whereas in the case of a person who cannot perform abstract movements with his eyes shut, describe his bodily position or identify the point of his body being touched,⁵⁷ it becomes a blind attempt to perform that movement. What the patient lacks is not motility or thought, but an anticipation or ‘motor intentionality’, in Merleau-Ponty’s words. Kinaesthetic residua signify something embodied in us, serving to prepare us for potential movements.⁵⁸ In this analysis, he considers residua as something *not still*. The stimuli perceived in the body are not mere residua that are statically left, but living entities that continuously affect our behaviour.

Some Japanese literary texts demonstrate mediated touch and contact as a retreat, interruption or gap between individuals.⁵⁹ Kawabata and Yoshiyuki especially attempt to capture sensations while allowing us to explore the concept of immediacy and mediation. As an example, Yoshiyuki shows how complicated it is to have a transparent and direct relationship with intimate objects in his 1970 work *The Dark Room*. Touch in Yoshiyuki is already mediated by previous touch and memory, which form a thin ‘membrane’ (*maku* was his original word) between the bodies of Nakata (the male

⁵⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (New York: Routledge, 2002), 118. Originally published as *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945).

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 124-125, 127. ‘Kinaesthesia’ itself means awareness, sensation of the bodily position and movement; ‘residua’ means things left behind. The idea of ‘kinaesthetic residua’ bears contradictory temporalities.

⁵⁹ Sometimes, the gap occurs even within the self, as exemplified by psychopathologist Kimura Bin’s idea of ‘internal difference’. By reconsidering the self as ‘an internal difference with the self’, Kimura defines his concept of *aida* (the space in-between), as the space between one and the other, but also ‘the space between the self and self’. Kimura Bin, *Bunretsubyō to Tasha (Schizophrenia and the Other)* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2007), 14. Originally published in 1982, *Rinshō Seishin Byōri (Clinical Psychopathology)*, volume 3.

protagonist) and Natsue (the main female character).⁶⁰ Nakata senses the imaginary odour of other men—memories that remain within Natsue’s body. However, even though memories within Natsue’s body are of the past, the odour of others appears in the present between their (Nakata’s and Natsue’s) bodies. A membrane of memory acts as if other men with invisible faces are present between the two entangled bodies. Even if the membrane does not completely interrupt the characters, it mediates touch between them, which implies that this touch is always already mediated by previous touches. This membrane is not a biological entity like a skin. It is a transparent membrane with an existence that only Nakata may *sense*. We cannot know whether Natsue senses it, but even if she does, a description of it is not written. Nakata is drawing this membrane from Natsue’s past—residua that do not reside only in the past. Merleau-Ponty suggests that external or internal stimuli arouse potential movement in the time to come; Natsue’s physical responses, which occur now, stem from her previous experiences and affect the subsequent communication between the two. Nakata shows that their physical relationships refer back to the embodied residua as influential elements in constructing their relationship. In a sense, our body, skin and membranes have lost the sense of chronology triggered by (attempts at) contact, as manifested in the transforming body in Abramović. The search for contact suggests a search for embodied temporality in a moment yet to come.

⁶⁰ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 144.

b. Senses in Art and Literary Movements

Abramović has explored bodily limits and potentials and the question of time (such as the body as a bearer of memories and the performance as a duration of time) through touch, self-violence, eating and standing in live performance works since the 1960s. Indeed, various artistic attempts have focused on happenings and events occurring around the '60s, even in Japan.⁶¹ The fundamental ideas behind these related movements in the '50s and the '60s echoed Dadaism and Surrealism, cultural movements from the early twentieth century that influenced Japanese writers like Kawabata regarding the immediacy of perception. Walter Benjamin describes the work of the Dadaists as 'acquiring a tactile quality', 'the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator'.⁶² Such shock effects in film are immediate, as they do not allow the viewer time to think: 'No sooner has his eye grasped a scene than it is already changed'.⁶³

This sort of immediacy, which Benjamin described as 'tactile', echoes Kawabata's attempt to seek immediacy of perception, as influenced by Dadaism around

⁶¹ Since the 1950s, Neo-Dadaism as an anti-art movement has had a concurrent influence on the *gutai* movement in Japan that has included performance and action-painting; since around the 1960s, a movement called *Fluxus* included experimental and more cross-boundary artistic involvements from such artists as John Cage and Yoko Ono.

⁶² Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 240.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

the mid-1920s. I will now consider the relevant influences of these art movements on Japanese literature, particularly respecting how senses are treated. In 1924, a Japanese literary group was formed named *Shinkankaku-ha*, which literally means ‘New Perception Group’, often translated as ‘New Sensationalist School’. Kawabata took a pivotal role in this group, attempting to conceive of the senses in a new way for their literary creations. Kawabata explains this approach in a 1925 essay, contrasting the literary styles of authors who describe the connection or lack thereof between an eye and a rose. Whereas conventional authors divide eyes from the rose blossom and say, ‘My eyes saw the red rose’, the new authors unite the eyes and the rose and say, ‘My eyes are the rose’.⁶⁴ In other words, the new authors attempt to sense stimuli with maximum immediacy. In this sense, not only *my* eyes but also *your* eyes can be the rose, implying temporally and spatially dislocated synchronicity with an object, as in a film. The New Sensationalists aimed for an immediate intake of the outside world.

Kawabata explains the method behind experiments in the New Sensationalist School and other new literary movements in Japan with reference to free association in psychoanalysis. Kawabata explains that free association liberates the human imagination and makes it more direct. He believed the Dadaists had found a new way of thinking, and he based the New Sensationalists’ literary activity and immediacy of

⁶⁴ Kawabata Yasunari, ‘*Shinshin Sakka no Shinkeikou Kaisetsu*’ (‘Interpretation of the New Tendency of New Authors’), in *Kindai Bungaku Hyoron Taikei* (Modern Literature Criticism Compendium), ed. Miyoshi Yukio and Sofue Shōji (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1973), 6: 353.

senses on the Dadaists' approach.⁶⁵ Free association and automatism, which Kawabata explains in relation to Dadaism, are generally more associated with Surrealism. While André Breton's *Manifestoes of Surrealism* was first published in 1924 in France, Dadaism in Tokyo started in 1921 with Japan's first Dadaist manifesto by Takahashi Shinkichi, and the New Sensationalist School was active from 1924. The New Sensationalists' new methods for perception stemmed from Dadaism but served a surrealist function. Influenced by psychoanalysis and free association, new writers in the 1920s tried to catch the freshness and immediacy of the senses.

Being involved in this new movement and the creation of films, Kawabata proved himself to be an experimental writer, a contrast to his general image as an authentic 'Japanese' novelist. Yoshiyuki Eisuke (1906–1940), the father of Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, was also an experimental writer influenced by Dadaism. Eisuke was drawn into the Dadaist movement and left fragmental writings about confusion, prostitution, the work environment in Tokyo, urban modernity and the cinema.⁶⁶ Eisuke's literary career did not last long due to his career shift into the stock market. His son Junnosuke did not highly value his works, saying that Dadaists destroyed social conventions and their writings.⁶⁷ Junnosuke would not be described as an experimental writer in that he almost always wrote the *I*-novel, a form of novel based on the writer's real-life

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 355-356. Dadaism occurred in Japan slightly after the European and New York Dadaism, which occurred from the mid-1910s (Dadaism started in Zurich in 1916).

⁶⁶ William J. Tyler, *Modanizumu: Modernist Fiction from Japan, 1913-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), 445.

⁶⁷ Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, 'Watashi no Bungaku Hōrō' ('My Wandering Journey of Literature'), in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8:188.

experience, often described as ‘autobiographical confession’.⁶⁸ Yet, Junnosuke’s early works certainly displayed Eisuke’s attitudes while sketching the various realities of chaotic cities like Shinjuku when Junnosuke described the sad realities prostitutes experienced in Tokyo’s red-light districts through the lens of his experiences while roaming the districts. This analysis of the mainly female bodies notably reflects his physiological sensitivity to the living body, collected in this manner almost like fieldwork.⁶⁹

Despite Kawabata’s goal of immediacy of perceptions in literature, many of his male protagonists are distant from the exchange of bodily perceptions and hardly actualise touch. If these elements are not absent, their descriptions are either lacking or hidden. While Yoshiyuki Junnosuke was not an experimental writer like Yoshiyuki Eisuke or Kawabata in terms of his style, he verbalised actual physical relationships and sensitivities. Yoshiyuki had an interest in works that detailed stream of consciousness; Laurence Sterne (1713–1768), who problematised the progression of time and consciousness; and Henry Miller (1891–1980), whose works Yoshiyuki translated into

⁶⁸ This autobiographical confession, on one hand, realises the author’s self-assertion and liberation through the narrative voice; on the other hand, it makes it difficult for the reader to judge the sincerity of narration, to have a wider conception of truth and to distinguish the author’s ethical and artistic grounds. Dennis C. Washburn, *The Dilemma of the Modern in Japanese Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 142-163. See also Tomi Suzuki’s *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

⁶⁹ Some feminist scholars criticise Yoshiyuki’s view of the female subject, specifically when his male protagonist often uses the female to eliminate his anger and stress. Ueno Chizuko, Ogura Chikako and Tomioka Taeko, ‘Yoshiyuki Junnosuke’, in *Danryū Bungakuron (Discourse of Men’s Literature)*, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1992), 29-30. Ironically, the title of this book *Danryū Bungakuron* seems largely a response to the term *Joryū Bungaku* or *Joryū Bungakuron*, meaning discourse of women’s literature.

Japanese. Yoshiyuki was therefore aware of the development of psychology and psychoanalysis, but it is questionable whether Yoshiyuki tried to replace bodily perceptions with words. He tried to describe his private experiences that he thought he could not otherwise share with others, as he comments in numerous essays and interviews. However, the fundamental idea of psychoanalysis is the replacement of bodily stimuli and symptoms into words to cure such symptoms. It seems that this aspect of psychoanalysis was not intended to be included in the description of the senses by these Japanese writers.

As examined above, Kawabata aimed for the immediate intake of external sensations and almost direct verbalisations of them, rather than the *representation* of them through language, stimulated by automatic writing. But actual tactile perceptions are not necessarily written in Kawabata. In Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, they are described but in a personalised manner. Therefore, the awareness of psychology and psychoanalysis in the above Japanese writers stimulated descriptions of affects and sensations, sometimes driving some toward experimental writing and others toward internal explorations of themselves through writing.

Considering the retention of touch within the body in non-Japanese literary examples, modern writers such as W. G. Sebald (1944–2001) have explored the theme of embodied memory. Marcel Proust (1871–1922) notably described an unlimited chain of touch, sensations and consequential contact as a form of arousal for the memory,

which is not limited to cultural boundaries. The protagonist in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* involuntarily remembers and recreates previous memories almost perfectly as a stage set conjured a cup of tea in which he dipped a piece of madeleine:

But the very instant when the mouthful of tea mixed with cake-crumbs touched my palate, I quivered, attentive to the extraordinary thing that was happening in me. A delicious pleasure had invaded me, isolated me, without my having any notion as to its cause. [...] It is clear that the truth I am seeking is not in the drink, but in me. The drink has awoken it in me, but does not know that truth, and cannot do more than repeat indefinitely, with less and less force, this same testimony which I do not know how to interpret and which I want at least to be able to ask of it again and find again, intact, available to me, soon, for a decisive clarification. [...]

Will it reach the surface of my limpid consciousness—this memory, this old moment which the attraction of an identical moment has come so far to summon, to move, to raise up from my very depths? [...]

And suddenly the memory appeared. [...] the forms—and the form, too, of the little shell made of cake, so fatly sensual within its severe and pious pleating—had been destroyed, or, still half asleep, had lost the force of expansion that would have allowed them to rejoin my consciousness. But, when nothing subsists of an old past, after the death of people, after the destruction of things, alone, frailer but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, smell and taste still remain for a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, on the ruin of all the rest, bearing without giving way, on their almost impalpable droplet, the immense edifice of memory.⁷⁰

Carnal sensations in Proust remain 'like souls' with a mental function like remembering, allowing us to wonder: 1) whether sensations are stored in our consciousness (mind) or on the bodily surface like the skin or the tongue, 2) how the memory of touch mingles with other memories in different chronological timelines, 3) how long the skin or the body retains that goodness of touch, 4) whether a mark that has been left can be erased

⁷⁰ Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Vol. 1. The Way by Swann's*, trans. Lydia Davis (London: Penguin Books, 2002), 47–50. Originally published as *Du Côté de chez Swann* in 1913.

and have another mark written on top of it, like a palimpsest, and 5) whether touch endures as a form of memory, as a corporeal mind. The memory is not just buried in the depths of the body but reappears, triggered by another contact, as Proust's above example suggests.

Touch represented in literary texts involves rereading inscribed sensations through the readers' present bodies in a delayed manner, the sensations of which are repressed and repeated in the texts. Traditional psychoanalytic theories deepen the verbalisation of repressed desire and experience in which somatic acts are recognised in relation to the unconscious via language. Some analysts, such as Didier Anzieu, pursue more interpersonal settings such as groups or psychodramas to investigate the intersection of bodily expression and verbal communication. Meanwhile, French philosophers, such as Emmanuel Levinas and Jean-Luc Nancy, ponder the ethical aspect of touch, which tends to be absent in the psychoanalytic account of touch. Levinas writes of touch in the form of a caress, which problematically seems to escape its receiver without encountering the alterity of the other.⁷¹ For Nancy, even in the prohibition of touch between the resurrected Jesus and Mary Magdalene, touch is a form of tenderness and benediction.⁷² Touch is a point of contact, capable of conveying excitement and developing calm, comfort, love, memory and possibly trust. Therefore,

⁷¹ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969). Originally published as *Totalité et infini* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1961). I argue at length about the ethics of touch again in the second section of the second chapter.

⁷² Nancy, *Noli Me Tangere*, 36-37.

the lack of touch could cause psychological and physical isolation, which is prevalent in Japanese society.

Sociologist Ide Shōhei and psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki investigate *hikikomori*, a contemporary phenomenon in which one stays at home without social participation but without psychic disorder.⁷³ Ide writes that 60% to 70% of those identified as *hikikomori* are male, existing only in Japan, amounting to over a couple hundred thousand people. This phenomenon is particularly contemporary, having appeared in the '70s.⁷⁴ Saitō examines the reason for this regarding the *amae* (dependency) theory by psychiatrist Doi Takeo, in which the child-parent relationship is based on dependency. Since one must be conscious of the distance to the other to judge the person on whom one can depend, the failure of the appropriate dependency may cause one's social unfitness, ultimately leading to *hikikomori*.⁷⁵ In particular, the lack of various trials to understand how to distance oneself from the other—the lack of otherness (*tashasei no ketsujyo* in Saitō's words)—is prominent in a closed space of *hikikomori*.⁷⁶ Even Yosano's remark that a Japanese son gets physical punishment,

⁷³ For further definition of *hikikomori*, see Ide Shōhei's *Hikikomori no Shakaigaku (Sociology of Hikikomori)* (Tokyo: Sekai Shisōsha, 2007), 35-68, and Saitō Tamaki, *Shakaiteki Hikikomori (Social Hikikomori)* (Tokyo: PHP Kenkyūjo, 1998), 25. The noun *hikikomori* stems from the verb *hikikomoru*, which means 'to withdraw'.

⁷⁴ Ide, *Hikikomori no Shakaigaku*, 49. Many of them start by staying at home due to *futōkō* (not going to school) at their elementary or junior high school. They continue to stay at home even after they become adults.

⁷⁵ Saitō Tamaki, *Hikikomori Bunkaron (Cultural Discourse on Hikikomori)* (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 2003), 101-128. Saitō explains that the bond between the mother and child is stronger than that of the father and child in Japan, so that even the image of social success earns praise for the mother figure (108). Doi's theory will be examined again in Chapter 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 151-152. It is a common feature within cyberspace in the sense that the physically distant other and the close other are equally understood, so the virtual distance from any object becomes equal.

rather than a kiss, from his parents demonstrates a lack of touch that communicates love, affection and warmth, all of which would address communication problems that beleaguer Japanese youths. In the next subsection, I will further analyse corporeal, interpersonal relationships in Japan and provide a brief overview of how touch and the body have actually been represented in pre- to postwar Japanese literature.

c. Touch and Representation of the Body in Pre- to Postwar Japan

According to Japanese anatomist Yōrō Takeshi, from the twelfth century onward, the body in Japan was historically treated as a part of nature, except during the Edo (1603–1867) and Meiji periods (1868–1912), when the state controlled and systematised the body. That concept of the unpredictable and uncontrollable ‘body as nature’ was brought back by modernist writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927) in the Taishō period (1912–1926) through his use of a motif from the *Collection of Tales of Times Now Past* (*Konjaku Monogatarishū*), compiled around the twelfth century.⁷⁷ Writers such as Akutagawa and Tanizaki do partially represent tactile communication. This is not necessarily because of the return to the ‘body as nature’, but because of the Westernisation of lifestyles, including the introduction of ballroom dancing.

The researcher of satire and comic books Shimizu Isao points out that French illustrator and cartoonist Georges Ferdinand Bigot (1860–1927) and English artist and

⁷⁷ Yōrō Takeshi, *Nihonjin no Shintaikan no Rekishi* (*The History of the Japanese View of the Body*) (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1996), 233-234.

cartoonist Charles Wirgman (1832–1891) both depicted hand-shaking (*akushu*), which spread only after Japan's opening of its borders in the mid-nineteenth century and contact with Westerners as a greeting.⁷⁸ Furthermore, ballroom dancing, such as at the Rokumeikan in Tokyo during the Meiji period, certainly merits attention since it brought opposite-sex touch into a public space, unlike the Japanese dance *nihonbuyō*.⁷⁹ Marcel Mauss considers ballroom dance in a partner's arms a 'product of modern European civilisation',⁸⁰ and it is also a relatively recent cultural development in Europe. Ballroom dancing especially in Japan appeared as a new mode of communication.

Both 'Ball' ('*Butōkai*') by Akutagawa in 1920 and *Naomi* (*Chijin no Ai*) by Tanizaki (1924) depict a ballroom dance party. But especially in Tanizaki the partially realised touch functions as a device to heighten desire for the female body. The male protagonist Jōji in *Naomi* dances with Kirako, who is a dancer from the Imperial Theatre. He narrates:

I noticed that Kirako's lips were just below my temple. This seemed to be a habit with her: Just as with Hamada a few minutes before, her sidelock touched my

⁷⁸ Shimizu Isao, *Bigō ga Mita Meiji Nippon (Meiji Japan Viewed by Bigot)* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2006), 18–19. Wirgman's illustration on hand-shaking was published in the cartoon magazine *The Japan Punch* in 1862, and Bigot's one was for *Nihonjin no Seikatsu (The Life of the Japanese)* in 1898. At a time when there was no advanced photographic technology, illustration, cartoon and satire by these artists were an important method to describe the life of the Japanese.

⁷⁹ *Nihon buyō* is a generic term to indicate dances developed in Japan, especially meaning dances after the early modern age, including *Kabuki* dance in the Edo period. See *Kōjien*, 2143. For different types of dances and the process of solidifying *nihon buyō* in the midst of Westernisation after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, see Barbara Sellers-Young, *Teaching Personality with Gracefulness: The Transmission of Japanese Cultural Values through Japanese Dance Theatre* (Lenham, University Press of America, 1993).

⁸⁰ Marcel Mauss, 'Techniques of the Body', *Economy and Society* 2, no. 1 (1973): 82, accessed 19 July 2012, doi: 10.1080/03085147300000003. Originally published as *Les Techniques du corps* in 1934.

cheek. The caress of her soft hair ... the faint whispers that escaped from her lips from time to time ... For me, having been trampled so long by that unruly colt Naomi, this was a height of feminine refinement that I'd never before imagined. I felt as though a sympathetic hand were tending the wounds where thorns had stabbed me⁸¹

Westernisation after the Meiji period, even if most of the lifestyle changes then were limited to upper-class people, certainly influenced Japanese modes of bodily communication and, in a way, made touch more accessible in everyday life.

Some proletarian female writers such as Hirabayashi Taiko (1905–1972) began depicting radical descriptions of their embodied experiences rather than merely being fantasised and objectified by male authors. For example, in 1927's 'In the Charity Ward' ('*Seryōshitsu nite*'), Hirabayashi describes a pregnant woman with beriberi who gave milk to her infant. Although the ostensible reason for this action is her lack of money to give her infant proper health care, Hirabayashi describes this situation, which led to the infant's death, almost as an intentional resistance to the capitalist society.⁸² Another example of Hirabayashi is 'The Woman's Life' ('*Onna no Isshō*'), which describes protagonist Seiko being torn between her carnal love for her lover and her spiritual love for her husband, who then discovers her affair and beats her, causing her suicide.⁸³ Hirabayashi exposed unfantasised female living bodies in hardship during wartime.

Slaymaker comments on her work, saying that she 'gives *nikutai* [flesh] another nuance'

⁸¹ Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *Naomi*, trans. Anthony H. Chambers (London: Secker & Warburg, 1986), 100. Originally published as *Chijin no Ai* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1924).

⁸² Hirabayashi Taiko, 'Seryōshitsu nite', in *Hirabayashi Taiko Zenshū* (*The Complete Works of Hirabayashi Taiko*), (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha, 1979), 1: 93-105. The descriptions of her breast and the infant's death can be also seen in 'Self Mockery' ('*Azakeru*').

⁸³ Hirabayashi Taiko, 'The Woman's Life' ('*Onna no Isshō*'), in *Hirabayashi Taiko Zenshū* (*The Complete Works of Hirabayashi Taiko*) (Tokyo: Ushio Shuppansha, 1977), 5: 351-364.

by constantly using the word *nikutai* to discuss women's embodied experiences, pregnancy and childbirth, 'which is far from the sensual body imagined by the flesh writers [writers in the literature of the flesh, *nikutai bungaku*]'.⁸⁴

Further open representations of the body and touch in modern Japan did not appear until the end of World War II for several reasons, including severe censorship based on the Peace Preservation Law (*Chian Iji Hō*) enacted in 1925 and cultural aesthetics that prefer indirectness.⁸⁵ The postwar liberation of the body came to occupy an explicit position through the literature of the flesh soon after World War II, which was represented by authors such as Tamura Taijirō (1911–1983) and Sakaguchi Ango (1906–1955). Authors' wartime experiences at the front effected a more tangible and concrete representation of the body while nurturing more disbelief in ideology and faith in bare flesh, as we can see in Tamura's 'The Gate of the Flesh' (*Nikutai no Mon*) from 1947.⁸⁶ Unlike proletarian literature, where the labouring body is depicted through the lens of the working class amongst ideological tensions, the literature of the flesh attempted to depict an individual body without ideology, even to the point where this strong faith in the body itself becomes ideological.

⁸⁴ Douglas Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction* (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2004), 9.

⁸⁵ Indirectness is part of the Japanese aesthetic, as explained in the earlier part of the introduction. Also, the master of Noh theatre Zeami's phrase *Hisureba Hana* means that *Hana* (one of the aesthetic essences of performing Noh) should be veiled and implicit to effectively show beauty and attraction. See Gotō Hajime, *Noh no Keisei to Zeami (The Formation of Noh and Zeami)* (Tokyo: Mokujisha, 1989), 199–219, and Nogami Toyochirō, *Noh no Yugen to Hana (Yugen and Hana in Noh)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1943), 37–61.

⁸⁶ Tamura Taijirō, 'Nikutai no Mon', in *Nikutai no Mon* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1988). Originally published in *Gunzō*. In his essays such as 'Nikutai ga Ningen de Aru' ('The Flesh Is the Human') collected in the same book, he writes about his disbelief in thought and ideology, stating a belief only in the flesh.

As mentioned earlier, Slaymaker writes that, in the literature of the flesh, the individual flesh (*nikutai*) is discussed in the tension between the material body (*karada*), the spiritual body (*shintai*, which incorporates both body and spirit), and most importantly, the body as a nation (*kokutai*).⁸⁷ The individual body (*nikutai*), set in opposition to the national body (*kokutai*), ‘carries specific political meanings; emphasizing the body, carnality, and sexuality functions as explicitly counterhegemonic because it defies the primacy of the national body’.⁸⁸ Yet, for example, in Tamura’s works, a woman’s body was treated as an object, ‘a means, via sex, for male characters to achieve a variety of goals: utopia of communality, connection with fellow human beings, a guide for the path to another level of existence, or liberation from current oppressions’.⁸⁹ The flesh writers achieved a revelation of the *male* body, treating interactions ‘between a virile angular man and a soft-edged sexually available woman’, sex promising ‘an end to radical loneliness’.⁹⁰ The modern Japanese body encountered complex sociocultural shifts: the rapid Westernisation starting from the Meiji period mentioned earlier,⁹¹ a flux of various ideologies, the redefinition of the state and body due to defeat, the collapse of the traditional family *ie* system and the rise of the nuclear

⁸⁷ Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 9-10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11. As Slaymaker points out, this active argument about the political significance of the body in the tension between the state and the individual was not limited to Japan, as we think immediately of the Foucauldian discourse of the body developed in the postwar era (*ibid.*).

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Westernisation created various counter-responses, as we can see in Tanizaki’s creation *In’ei Raisan/ In Praise of Shadows* in 1933, which we will discuss later, and in butoh dancer Hijikata Tatsumi’s works that tried to find the ‘Japanese’ body from the ’60s onward.

family.⁹²

Another key factor when discussing the representation of the postwar body is gender: that is, the feminisation of the nation and the male body, and the liberation of the female body by female writers. A leading scholar in Japanese women's studies, Ueno Chizuko, argues the feminised emperor was an 'empty centre' where the imperial system lacked responsibility toward the end of his reign.⁹³ She also points out the emperor was feminised in comparison to the commander-in-chief of the Allied military forces, General MacArthur, due to Japan's defeat. Ueno further problematises the feminised Japanese mind not only against the West but also against China. The 'Orient', created through a European power fantasy as an other against the 'Occident', as argued by Edward Said, is applied to the Western-Japanese relationship, putting Japan in a passive, feminised position, and to the China-Japan relationship, 'Japaneseness' being constructed in the shadow of China.⁹⁴ Ueno writes, 'Motōri [Motoori Norinaga, a founder of Japanology] adopted the strategic approach of cultural irony by postulating

⁹² In the *ie* system, one child remains in the parental house and eventually leads the family, ensuring its continuity. See Ochiai Emiko, *The Japanese Family System in Transition: A Sociological Analysis of Family Change in Postwar Japan* (Tokyo: LTCB International Library Foundation, 1997), 58-59, 62. Originally published as *Nijūisseiki Kazoku e: Kazoku no Sengo Taisei no Mikata, Koekata* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku Publishing, 1994). Margaret Hillenbrand writes about *ie* as 'the physical manifestation of a continuous bloodline that stretched backwards to the family forebears and forwards into the realm of unborn—and considerable investment of psychological and economic resources was made to ensure its preservation'. Margaret Hillenbrand, *Literature, Modernity, and the Practice of Resistance: Japanese and Taiwanese Fiction, 1960-1990* (Leiden and Boston: BRILL, 2007), 181. The collapse of the *ie* system may have played a role in the extent to which the individual body is bound or unbound to the family in the postwar period. Kawabata Yasunari's *The Dancing Girl (Maihime)* in 1951 touches upon this issue.

⁹³ Ueno Chizuko, 'In the Feminine Guise: A Trap of Reverse Orientalism', in *Contemporary Japanese Thought*, ed. Richard F. Calichman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 240.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 225-229.

that “‘the Japanese mind’ is different from ‘the Chinese mind.’”⁹⁵ Differentiating it from the ‘universal’ Chinese mind, Motoori ‘made the Japanese mind into a residual category of universalism’.⁹⁶ In this construction of a residual category as opposed to the Occident and China, Ueno argues that the Japanese mind is feminised and even more so for the female figure—that is, Japanese women are doubly bound.⁹⁷

Moreover, the Japanese occupation by GHQ (General Headquarters) affected Japanese opposite-sex bodily communication. The critic Tsurumi Shunsuke writes that the influence of American movies from the 1920s and American gestures on streets, especially in the cities where US soldiers were based, formed models for opposite-sex physical interactions. For example, before and during the war, Japanese women used to walk a few steps behind Japanese men, which was considered morally appropriate. After the war, men and women started to walk beside each other, which gave ‘the impression that a new age had arrived’.⁹⁸ A new mode of bodily communication introduced a slightly different image of gender roles in Japan. Postwar women’s social advancement was also initiated through women’s suffrage, as legislated under the new constitution of 1945, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Law (*Danjo Koyō Kikai*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁹⁷ The postwar self-critique that addresses the passivity of the Japanese subject may include the political scientist Maruyama Masao’s critique on the absence of a solid subject in Japan (Maruyama Masao, *Nihon no Shisō* [*Japanese Thought*], Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1961) and the literary critic Katarani Kōjin’s critique on the lack of severe struggle against their own solid cultural principle due to its absence (Karatani Kōjin, *Nihon Seishinbunseki*). Japan’s national development caused by an external force rather than an internal force was already criticised by Natsume Sōseki in 1911 (Natsume, Sōseki, ‘*Gendai Nihon no Kaika*’ [‘Civilisation of Modern Japan’], in *Watakushi no Kojinshugi* [*My Individualism*], 35–66, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1978 [1914]). Originally delivered as a lecture in Wakayama in 1911.

⁹⁸ Tsurumi Shunsuke, *A Cultural History of Postwar Japan: 1945–1980* (London: KIP, 1987 [1984]), 11.

Kintō Hō) in 1972, effective from 1986. Yet, the actual practising of this law was questionable due to institutional barriers to women, such as the internal labour market, job training and promotion systems.⁹⁹ The question of whether gender equality has been achieved is still prevalent in Japanese society today.¹⁰⁰

In addition, female writers' depictions of the body by female writers became prominent in postwar works, including those by Yamada Eimi (1959–), Akasaka Mari (1964–) and Kanehara Hitomi (1983–). The work of Takahashi Takako (1932–2013), particularly 'Doll's Love' (*Ningyō Ai*) in 1976, provides a good example of a women's touch, describing the female protagonist's touch on a male wax doll named Tamao. One night, in a dream, she meets Tamao and strokes his skin, forehead, ear and nipple, making her feel almost as if all her body has become a tactile sensory organ. During the day, she meets an eighteen-year-old Tamao in the tea room inside the hotel. Tamao is staying at the same hotel, and she identifies him with this wax doll. At night, she meets the wax doll Tamao in her room, which she caresses with all her soul, giving his cold skin the warmth of life. In this story, she is the active subject, touching him, rather than being the object touched.¹⁰¹ This sense of autonomy—the ability to touch Tamao, tinge the doll's lips with red and look for a plant associated with his

⁹⁹ Mary C. Brinton, *Women and the Economic Miracle: Gender and Work in Postwar Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 146–147.

¹⁰⁰ There is a discrepancy between social shifts with regard to women's rights and their actual implementation and the remaining patriarchy in the family context. See Hasegawa Kei, 'Sekushuaritī Hyōgen no Kaika' ('Flourish of Expressions about Sexuality'), in *Ribu Toiu Kakumei (The Revolution Called Women's Liberation)*, ed. Kanou Mikiyo (Tokyo: Impact Shuppankai, 2003), 104.

¹⁰¹ Takahashi Takako, 'Doll's Love' (*Ningyō Ai*), in *Takahashi Takako Jisen Shōsetsu Shū (The Selected Works of the Author Takahashi Takako)*, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1994), vol. 4: 414.

body—certainly gives her pleasure. This sort of pleasure, to be an autonomous subject, was seemingly not easily attainable for most of the women in 1970s Japan.

Frequent descriptions of sexuality in postwar Japan contradict prewar aesthetics. For example, one element from Kuki's aesthetics of *iki* is *bitai* (coquetry toward the opposite sex), which necessarily requires a certain distance between two people of the opposite sex. Touch between the sexes has been changing; the mode of communication is becoming more open and Western compared to the prewar and early postwar periods. Yet, there exist some gaps that seem distinctive enough to merit further analysis. These include the literary description of *skinship* experienced in childhood and touch for adults; the contrast of early body communication such as hugging or kissing, which continues into adulthood in European culture versus the hesitancy toward such communication in Japan;¹⁰² and the gap between recent frequent descriptions of sexuality and traditional aesthetics that might have repressed them. Desire and physical sensations have been displayed and articulated effectively in literature, even if language itself functions as a displacement of desire so that the absence within literature itself conveys repressed desire. The reading of Japanese literature on touch, which reveals characters' internality, unbound desires and hesitancy toward touch, is therefore to open up the implicit desire toward intimate relationships with others.

¹⁰² See Takie Lebra, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic*, 75.

d. Space, *Aida*, as a Necessary Element for Contact

Regarding the earlier-introduced concept of ‘con-tact’, I will now examine the concept of space and in-between-ness, which is a necessary element to make contact, and has an overarching significance in this thesis. Kawabata’s untouchable stain on the tea bowl and Yoshiyuki’s membrane that prevents transparent touch are examples of the protagonists trying to touch others but encountering unreachable gaps, either spatial, temporal or emotional.

This is also applicable to the partial body in Tanizaki. Literary scholar Thomas Rimer writes about Tanizaki, ‘His [Tanizaki’s] male characters often find themselves most comfortable when groveling at their feet’.¹⁰³ Fetishism in Tanizaki is not limited to *Tattoo*. In *Naomi*, the protagonist Jōji is attracted to Western-looking, fifteen-year-old Naomi who works at the café, her presence functioning almost like a femme fatale. Two scenes—in which men make fun of Jōji for his licking Naomi’s foot and in which Naomi asks Jōji not to touch her skin while he shaves her—convey a tension between desire and the hesitation, or even prohibition, to touch the female body.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, in *Diary of a Mad Old Man* (*Fūten Rōjin Nikki*) in 1961, the protagonist is attracted to his daughter-in-law Satsuko’s body, which is partially visible through the slit of a shower curtain. She allows him to lick her calf, heel and big toe,¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ J. Thomas Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Traditions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 23.

¹⁰⁴ Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 140, 227–228.

¹⁰⁵ Tanizaki, *Diary of a Mad Old Man*, trans. Howard Hibbett (New York: Knopf, 1965), 48, 66. Originally published as *Fūten Rōji Nikki* (Tokyo: Chūōkōronsha, 1962).

which causes him to fantasise about her body further. In these examples, heightened desire necessitates an almost reachable but never exactly reachable gap. As the following discussion suggests, this gap is between the touching and the touched, but it can also be between the temporal and spatial distance within oneself.

Contrary to the Western Cartesian dualism of the mind and body, a major theoretical shift in the twentieth century portrayed bodies as indeterminate phenomena rather than definitive entities. Nancy's concept of the body is also far from the fullness of the body:

Bodies aren't some kind of fullness or filled space (space is filled everywhere): they are *open* space, implying, in some sense, a space more properly *spacious* than spatial, what could also be called a *place*. [...] The body-place isn't full or empty, since it doesn't have an outside or an inside, any more than it has parts, a totality, functions, or finality. [...] In these and thousands of other ways, the body *makes room* for existence (no "a priori forms of intuition" here, no "table of categories": the transcendental resides in an indefinite modification and spacious modulation of skin).¹⁰⁶

For him, the body is an open space, a room, 'to create an event',¹⁰⁷ the body being 'neither substance, phenomenon, flesh, nor signification. Just being exscribed'.¹⁰⁸

Space (including the space between one and another) will be continuously renewed and modified; 'the bodies of lovers: they do not give themselves over to transubstantiation, they touch one another, they renew one another's spacing forever, they displace themselves, they address themselves (to) one another'.¹⁰⁹ The body for Nancy is leaving,

¹⁰⁶ Nancy, *Corpus*, 15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 19. The body for Nancy is the one 'out there' and moves away, so that in-scription is impossible; since the body is outside, the act of ex-istence, it should be exscribed.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

renewing one another's movement and space through which one may touch the other.

Roland Barthes, in *The Neutral*, based on his lectures at the Collège de France from 1977 to 1978, considers spacing (to create a space) Neutral, referring to the Japanese concept *ma* 間 (in-between-ness)—‘spacing of time, of space: rules both temporality and spatiality: neither crowding nor “desertification”’¹¹⁰—to look at the relationship between moments, space and objects. *Ma* is spacing, creating a space and interruption rather than distancing between the objects,¹¹¹ which perhaps creates indirect and mediatory relations between them. Barthes ties this spacing to the concept of the Neutral, quoting Maurice Blanchot:

What is now in play, and demands relation, is everything that separates me from the other, that is to say the other insofar as I am infinitely separated from him. [...] I found my relation with him upon this very interruption that is an *interruption of being*. This alterity, it must be repeated, makes him neither another self for me, nor another existence, neither a modality or a moment of universal existence, nor a superexistence, a god or a non-god, but rather the unknown in its infinite distance. <...> An alterity that holds in the name of the neutral.¹¹²

While Blanchot's interruption here seems to mean infinite distance in a form of unknowable alterity, the Japanese *ma* to which Barthes refers does not necessarily mean infinite distance, but rather a spatial and temporal distance that can be modulated. Yet, the Barthesian Neutral does not signify the middle point of two opposite poles, as he

¹¹⁰ Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977-1978)*, trans. Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier, text established, annotated and presented by Thomas Clerc, directed by Eric Marty (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 147.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, Editor's insert in notes on the suggestion of Éric Marty (a student of Barthes) on the opposition 'between the Neutral as spacing (distance in the object insofar as it is dispersed) and the more frontal distancing of the subject vis-à-vis the object' (243).

¹¹² *Ibid.* Quoted from Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 77.

writes, ‘for me, the Neutral doesn’t refer to “impressions” of grayness, of “neutrality,” of indifference’.¹¹³ Rather, it resists being passive and submissive by its very existence and outplays or ‘baffles’ the paradigm.¹¹⁴

The aesthetics of traditional Japanese arts such as calligraphy and the tea ceremony to which Barthes refer embrace various examples of space and rupture, paying special attention to the empty space mainly drawn from Zen thought.¹¹⁵ But Japanese psychopathologist Kimura Bin (1931–) comprehensively presents this theorisation of *aida*.¹¹⁶ Kimura has extensively worked on schizophrenia and subjectivity¹¹⁷ in Japan in relation to European philosophy, including theorists such as Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze. Kimura reconsiders the self as ‘an internal difference with the self’ both in temporal and spatial aspects, coming from Derridean *différance*, which indicates temporal deferral and difference. The concept of *aida*, meaning ‘the space between one and the other’, became internalised as ‘the space

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6, 7. Barthes’ desire for the Neutral is not the will to possess wisdom, but the desire for vitality, shifting from ‘will-to-possess’ to ‘will-to-live’ (12-14).

¹¹⁵ Japanese Zen scholar Fukushima Shun’ō writes that Zen calligraphy embraces *Kū* (emptiness), associated in Japanese with simplicity or a vacuum. Since this vacuum ‘*makes us feel a work of the hand without revealing a hand*’, it is in effect a tense or strained part, fulfilled with no space left. Fukushima, Shun’ō, ‘*Zen to Shoga*’ (‘Zen and Calligraphy’), in *Kōza Zen (Lecture on Zen)*, ed. Nishitani Keiji (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1974), 5: 105-106.

¹¹⁶ *Aida* and *ma*, both represented as 間 in Chinese characters, basically convey the same meaning: space and time between plural objects. However, as opposed to *ma*, which signifies actual temporal or spatial rupture, *aida* can indicate the human relationship between the two, for which *ma* is not generally used.

¹¹⁷ The discussion regarding subjectivity can range from philosophy, particularly phenomenology and philosophy of mind, to psychoanalysis and psychology, among others, an investigation of which can include cultural and social aspects that form the subject. Subjectivity can be formed through such phenomena as personal experiences, sensations and feelings, desires and beliefs, as opposed to objectivity, which is considered truth. Here, Kimura’s search for subject and subjectivity is based on his psychiatric practice in Japan and its interpretation in relation to Western philosophy.

between the self and self'.¹¹⁸ Kimura analyses schizophrenia as the pathology of temporality. He writes, 'The birth of the self in *aida* and the birth of time is strictly simultaneous'; 'Time is nothing other than an alternative name of the self',¹¹⁹ though I should note that the subject here is an autonomous one, rather than a traditional psychoanalytic subject that is considered not to control himself or herself due to the unconscious. Kimura's work is useful in this research because it examines Japanese selfhood in comparison to European selfhood and because it takes selfhood apart and breaks it down into the mapping of the self, time and space, which allows us to see their interrelationship.¹²⁰

Kimura's idea of *aida* can mean a temporal, spatial and interpersonal gap or difference; *aida* also includes a gap created inside the self. In Nancy, the space not only is between one and the other, but also between the self and the self. The body for Nancy is not a static entity but a space that moves: He writes, 'Bodies always about to leave, on the verge of a movement, a fall, a gap, a dislocation'.¹²¹ He continues by discussing 'this vertiginous withdrawal of the self from the self that is needed to open the infinity

¹¹⁸ Kimura, *Bunretsubyō to Tasha*, 14.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹²⁰ Mark Seem writes about schizoanalysis by Deleuze and Guattari, 'schizoanalysis [which opposes an exclusive focus on neurosis and castration in psychoanalysis and unequal relationship between the psychoanalyst and the analysand] begins with the schizo, his breakdowns and his breakthroughs'. Mark Seem, introduction to *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), XVII. Originally published as *L'Anti-Oedipe* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1972). Kimura's concepts of 'time as the self', 'the self as temporality' and '*aida* between the self and self' are not necessarily limited to those with schizophrenia since the fact that time, the temporal *aida* and the spatial *aida*-interrupt being is applicable also to our beings. The concepts of temporality in schizophrenia were originally investigated in his previous book *Jiko, Aida, Jikan: Genshōgakuteki Seishin Byōrigaku (The Self, In-between-ness, and Time: Phenomenological Psychopathology)* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1981), 122-174.

¹²¹ Nancy, *Corpus*, 33.

of that withdrawal *all the way up to* self. The body is this departure of self to self¹²² and an exposition of the self.¹²³ The body here is not limited to a particular body since the world for Nancy is considered as the density of the body.¹²⁴ Moreover, his space bears a temporal dimension:

We won't be able to stop thinking or experiencing the fact that *we destined ourselves to the place*. But neither can we ignore the fact that history yet to come—because it is *coming*—also unravels, and challenges, destinies along with endings. Because it *is coming*, it also *spaces*. We will have to ponder the spacing of time—of *time*, that is, *as a body*....¹²⁵

The body displaced and the space created are aerial and temporal.

The ideas of contact in Nancy, *ma* in Barthes and *aida* in Kimura suggest that we have (or are) a space or distance between one and the other and within oneself at the time of making contact. Put precisely, we make contact due to and within the place of this gap, but we leave this place due to touch. Next, I will investigate more internal aspects of the tactile experience to examine how tactile sensations work within the body.

B. Touch, Sensations and Memory in Phenomenology and Psychoanalysis

a. The Tactile Stimuli and Memory—in Merleau-Ponty and Freud

In this subsection, I introduce accounts of touch, sensations and memory in a comparative manner between phenomenology and psychoanalysis, mainly but not

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 41-43.

limited to focusing on Merleau-Ponty and Freud. As mentioned earlier, phenomenological and psychoanalytic accounts are essential in conducting this research, especially given that both accounts played certain functions in Japan¹²⁶ and their construction of consciousness involves a certain level of mediation. Merleau-Ponty is particularly one of the prominent philosophers who have analysed touch and developed the notion of mutuality or encroachment of the touchable and the untouchable, the visible and the invisible, interiority and exteriority, and touch and vision. He thus provides the overarching understanding of touch for this research. I also employ Freud here since I regard a psychoanalytic understanding of psyche, memory and replacement of somatic symptoms with language as an essential source to understand being, though some may consider psychoanalysis outdated as science. In this research, I will utilise multiple schools of psychoanalysis to read literary texts, such as Lacanian, object relations (Kleinian in particular), Didier Anzieu and Japanese psychopathology by Kimura Bin. However, Freud still provides a starting point regarding soma and psyche. The aim of using phenomenological and psychoanalytic accounts and different types of psychoanalytic schools is so each will compensate for the theoretical deficiency of the other. Especially in cross-cultural research where cultural practices and language affect the construction of the self, the comparative use of theories seems more durable in effectively facilitating the theoretical analysis of cultural representations.

¹²⁶ This includes the politicised body in the postwar era (phenomenology) and the perpetual translation within natural bilingualism in Japanese (psychoanalysis). See the beginning of this introductory section.

In explaining the ‘kinaesthetic residua’ mentioned earlier, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the stimuli touching the body do not necessarily occupy a specific position within the geometric outline of the body, but arouse ‘potential movement’.¹²⁷ They are not merely sensed within the body but act toward bodily movements; ‘every event related to movement or sense of touch causes consciousness to put up a host of intentions which run from the body as the centre of potential action either towards the body itself or towards the object’.¹²⁸ For him, stimuli can arouse potential movement through the motor intentionality situated in the body as the source of movements. He also admits the proximity between the tangible and the visible and between the sensible intuition of oneself with that of others, considering what one sees and what the other sees the same.¹²⁹ Such an understanding undergirds Derridean critiques of metaphysics of presence (such as the presence of origin and the presence of manner of being in the world) and intuitionism (of immediate access to the other) in phenomenology.¹³⁰

Derrida fundamentally extends his critique of the metaphysics of presence to Freudian psychoanalysis (the presence of the unconscious).¹³¹ Here, the Merleau-Pontean account of stimuli and bodily intentions toward potential movement

¹²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 125.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*, 171.

¹³⁰ Derrida, *On Touching*, 191. Watkin, however, finds difficulty in deconstructing Merleau-Ponty’s indirect ontology in a straightforward manner since Merleau-Ponty’s perceiving subject is not a passive recipient of sensations and since his ‘other’ traverses our thought without being exclusively a frontal evidence, the body and world both mutually participating in meaning. See Watkin, *Phenomenology of Deconstruction?*, 26-29.

¹³¹ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), 229-230. Originally published in 1967 as *L’Écriture et la différence*.

merits a comparison with the Freudian account of quantitative and qualitative psychic stimuli. Freud analyses the psychic apparatus as a system of flow and maintains that a primary function of the nervous system is to receive and emit quantities of excitation. The sensation that accompanies the ‘discharge’ of excitation is experienced as pleasure, and resistances opposing this discharge generate what Freud called ‘unpleasure’.¹³² Therefore, Freud explains psychic stimulation as free-floating energy in the body, the cathexis (charge of psychic energy) and discharge of which are experienced as affects. Whereas Merleau-Ponty’s stimuli arouse potential movement through embodied intentionality, Freudian stimuli are not based on intentions but flow or transform excitations. Likewise, while the former stimuli can possibly be hosted within the body, the latter stimuli can be altered or discharged. The crucial difference between the two is that, while for Merleau-Ponty the body is a real agent of our perceptual acts, the body for Freud is never a full agent of our acts, due to the presence of the unconscious. The relationship between them is incompatible in this sense regarding their treatments of human intention and agency. Yet both of these accounts uniquely contribute to this research on touch in modern Japanese literature since they regard both one’s consciousness and actions as, in a sense, *mediated*. This mediation is via others’ perceptions and contact with the world in the case of Merleau-Ponty¹³³ and the

¹³² Sigmund Freud, ‘Project for a Scientific Psychology’, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 1:296-298. Later, I abbreviate Freud’s complete works as *SE*.

¹³³ Although intuitionism and solipsicism in Merleau-Ponty tend to be criticised by those including Derrida and Luce Irigaray, reciprocity and mutuality in Merleau-Ponty necessitate the presence of the

unconscious and language in the case of Freud or psychoanalysis in general.

The theoretical originality of this research lies in the combined use of phenomenology and psychoanalysis. They are incompatible in the sense that, while the subject has intentionality and agency in phenomenology, it does not possess control of itself due to the unconscious in psychoanalysis, as explained above.¹³⁴ Yet, they nonetheless criticise and inform each other and thus have developed together: Derridean deconstruction develops from critiques of both phenomenology and psychoanalysis. Lacan develops his analysis of sight through a critique of Merleau-Pontean reflexivity. Nancy's can be conceived as a 'divergence from both psychoanalytical and phenomenological accounts'¹³⁵ respecting contact. Notably, Kimura Bin produced his theory on the concept of time, self and *aida* by employing both psychoanalysis and phenomenology without clear separation. Accordingly, the relationship between self and other and touch and temporality can be revealed productively through the comparative use of those theories.

As an example, Diana Tahhan ethnographically analyses touch and *skinship* in Japan, employing Merleau-Ponty's concept of *flesh* and Japanese philosopher Ichikawa Hiroshi (1931–2002)'s *mi*, both of which emphasise reciprocal relations between body

other through which the self is seen and through which the self is jointly constructed.

¹³⁴ Because they are incompatible, Jean-Paul Sartre explored the possibility of existential psychoanalysis, which recognises human freedom before anything else, rejects the presupposition of the unconscious and which looks for 'choice' rather than the state based on conscious intention. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2003), 590-594.

¹³⁵ Laura McMahon, *Cinema and Contact: The Withdrawal of Touch in Nancy, Bresson, Duras and Denis* (London: Legenda, 2012), 32.

and world by ‘blurring boundaries’¹³⁶ between the two. Tahhan’s combined use of Merleau-Ponty and Ichikawa enhances our understanding of *skinship*, especially since both of them perceive the body through a biological, cultural and historical nexus. Yet certain types of psychoanalysis that describe internal-external relational dynamics (such as the Kleinian idea of introjection and projection) are very near Ichikawa’s idea of *mi*, incorporating and making objects a part of it.¹³⁷ The possible difference would be that introjection-projection considers the world as a psychic image and that *mi* treats it as its corporeally overlapped part or inseparable *nature*. Since encroachment with or incorporation of the other’s body necessarily involves a psychological aspect, research on touch regarding the interior-exterior and self-world can further benefit from the use of psychoanalysis. I will discuss the issue of incorporation through Kawabata and Kleinian psychoanalysis at length in Chapter 2.

Therefore, my hypothesis about the theoretical aspects of this research is that in Japan, touch, the relationship between body and world, and subjectivity can be better understood through the very mixture of phenomenological and psychoanalytical accounts, not exclusively through either one. I employ these theorisations in this research by comparing them; examining theoretical influences between them, if any;

¹³⁶ Tahhan, ‘Blurring the Boundaries’, 221. Ichikawa’s concept of *mi* (body), which neutralises the division between body and mind, searching for the body to be lived, the body as mind and the body as phenomenon, is largely influenced by the phenomenological account of the body. I will further discuss Ichikawa’s understanding of the body at length in Chapter 1. Ichikawa Hiroshi, *Mi no Kōzō* (*The Structure of Mi*) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993).

¹³⁷ I should also note that the concept of intersubjectivity is one example that interests both psychoanalysis and phenomenology. The idea of introjection in phenomenology can be also seen in Husserlian phenomenology.

and each covering the other's theoretical deficiency. This methodology ensures that the object of analysis is profitably observed both from corporeal and linguistic aspects (embodied experience/replacement through language) and phenomenological and psychical aspects. Through the comparative use of these two accounts of body, touch and memory, I will investigate further the question of embodied stimuli and memory below, in relation to Yoshiyuki's novel.

Considering the relationship between perception and time, Yoshiyuki's novel sharply demonstrates accumulated perceptions in the body. Nakata seeks a part of Natsue's body that is totally free from other men because he wants to avoid sensing memories in Natsue's body created by someone else. Nakata notices some marks of other males on her body from the past, but perceived through the lens of Merleau-Ponty, Nakata must have something related to the specific nature of physical memory in himself to perceive a physical memory that concerns Nakata. Otherwise, he might not be able to notice it—he would just let it pass without particular attention. Merleau-Ponty states, 'I am able to touch effectively only if the phenomenon finds an echo within me, if it accords with a certain nature of my consciousness, and if the organ which goes out to meet it is synchronized with it'.¹³⁸

In light of this statement, paradoxically, Nakata can touch Natsue's body and see her bodily memory from other men insofar as he does know, even unconsciously, his

¹³⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 369. It might also be worth paying attention to his use of the term 'organ' here, which 'goes out to meet it', suggesting that it is an autonomous entity.

own bodily memory to react to her specific bodily behaviour. Husserlian phenomenology admits that the transcendental ego and beings are constructed through my 'ownness', saying, 'Do not wish to go out; go back into yourself. Truth dwells in the inner man'.¹³⁹ Conversely, recent theories explore the body more frequently concerning the outside. For example, literary and film scholar Kaja Silverman combines Lacanian and Freudian psychoanalysis, suggesting that sociocultural elements and one's relationship to the world affect the process of constructing the ego. The model and image of the body must be built up since they are not biologically given. This process of construction 'must be endlessly repeated, since—lacking any stable referent—it undergoes repeated disintegration and transformation'.¹⁴⁰

Philosophers like Gilles Deleuze and Jean-Luc Nancy show an understanding of the body different from a 'self-contained body'. Deleuze points out that the enclosed body emits force from within so that the body is not necessarily a place to live, but a space to act upon.¹⁴¹ Nancy states that the body is an extension, suspending the senses at the limit of the body. It is already saturated with signification and interpretation, and

¹³⁹ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorion Cairns (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), footnote on p. 157, citing *De Vera Religione*, 39, n.72. In Husserl, the world is *for* me as the world perceived and *from* me as an object mirrored, though it is controversial if his *alter ego* as a mirroring of my own through abstraction can fully explain the subjectivity of the other. Merleau-Ponty points out that one has to have an outer appearance other than the perspective for oneself. See preface XIII in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

¹⁴⁰ Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 13. Silverman combines Lacanian visual imago and Freudian bodily ego as a 'threshold', by focusing on cultural elements in the construction of the ego.

¹⁴¹ Observing the body in Francis Bacon, Deleuze writes: 'It is not I who attempts to escape from my body, it is the body that attempts to escape from itself by means of...in short, a spasm: the body as plexus, and its effort or waiting for a spasm'. *Francis Bacon: the Logic of Sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 15. Originally published as *Francis Bacon: Logique de la sensation* by Editions de la Difference, 1981.

the limit of interpretations ‘manifests the truth of the body, in the form of its implosion’.¹⁴² Nancy sharply presents the body as never being static and always about to depart from its current status. Considering this understanding of the body that is constructed in the world, rather than only in oneself, Nakata’s search for Natsue’s physicality might be read as a search for Natsue’s embodied memories together with his own memories that synchronise those of Natsue; conversely, his own consciousness can be explored through his relation to Natsue.

Merleau-Ponty further explains this translatable nature of tactile perception. The perception of linen against the back or chest can remain in the memory as a manual contact, and one may touch the object, in recollection, through body parts that have actually never touched it.¹⁴³ Due to this translatability, touch occurs in various modes as a way to open the world of perception:

That is how the constancy of a tactile object may come about through its various manifestations. It is a constancy-for-my-body, an invariant of its total behavior. The body is borne towards tactile experience by all its surfaces and all its organs simultaneously, and carries with it a certain typical structure of the tactile ‘world’.¹⁴⁴

In Merleau-Ponty, perceptions can be merged into memory or recollection as embodied experiences, becoming a part of the body or of bodily history. Without being limited to a certain bodily location, tactile memory can be dislocated to other parts, from the chest to the neck or the mouth to the foot, perceiving touch with the whole body. To

¹⁴² Nancy, *Corpus*, 23.

¹⁴³ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 369.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 369-370.

Merleau-Ponty, tactile memory can be one type of ‘kinaesthetic residua’; it resides in the body but synchronises with different touches by others or even acts toward the next possible movement.

As mentioned earlier, Freud explains psychic activity as flowing through quantitative and qualitative transformations, though he does not deny the idea of an accumulation of stimuli. Freud states that the main feature of nervous tissue is memory, ‘a capacity for being permanently altered by single occurrences—which offers such a striking contrast to the behaviour of a material that permits the passage of a wave-movement and thereafter returns to its former condition’.¹⁴⁵ The raw material of memory traces remains unknown so that memories are *formed* at the time when they are aroused.¹⁴⁶ The memory created and stored through the interactions of neuronal systems remains not as a sensation but as a remembrance. According to Freud, sensation is not yet a memory,¹⁴⁷ but its repetition creates memory: ‘the memory of an experience [...] depends on a factor which is called the magnitude of the impression and on the frequency with which the same impression is repeated’.¹⁴⁸ Once experiences become

¹⁴⁵ Freud, *SE*, 1: 299. Impermeable neuronal systems, represented as ψ , are loaded with resistance and are a vehicle of memory, transforming its state before and after the conduction of excitation; permeable neuronal systems, represented as ϕ , offer no resistance and serve perceptual purposes (299-300). For Freud, neurons are both influenced and unaltered since they are completely different after excitation, but fresh excitations nevertheless fulfil the same conditions of reception as before.

¹⁴⁶ Freud particularly explains the concept of ‘screen memory’ as ‘one which owes its value as a memory not to its own content but to the relation existing between that content and some other, that has been suppressed’. Freud, ‘Screen Memories’ (1899) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al. (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), 3: 320-322.

¹⁴⁷ However, for Henri Bergson, the perception is already a memory. Thus, when the perception becomes a memory should be further argued. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 150.

¹⁴⁸ Freud, *SE*, 3: 300.

memories, those memories can be dislocated in time by being replaced, repressed, recalled, repeated and lived through. Freudian psychoanalytic theories of memories and sensations date back over one hundred years, during which physiological knowledge has rapidly developed. But Freud suggests that the memory is not static by its constant reformation and displacement; it is performative.¹⁴⁹ Considering the performative aspects in relation to language and culture, memory does wait to be recalled; it interrupts us, joins us and affects us.

b. The Tumult of Temporality in Text and Theory

One of the features of memory is temporary dislocation, backward and forward. Memory is one of the themes that Kawabata and Ogawa examine in their *House of the Sleeping Beauties* (*Nemureru Bijo*) in 1961¹⁵⁰ and *Still Crystal* (*Hisoyakana Kesshō*)¹⁵¹ in 1999, respectively. In Kawabata, scenes that the male protagonist remembers, dreams in which memories unfold and the protagonist's anticipation of his death are all

¹⁴⁹ The term 'performative' is a key notion in understanding memory. The term 'performative' stems from J. L. Austin's investigation of a performative statement as 'doing' as opposed to a constative one as 'saying' (J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962]). Shoshana Felman re-reads performative theory through Austin and psychoanalysis, stressing the inherent possibility of misfire, self-subversion and untranslatability in itself (Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages*, trans. Catherine Porter [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003]). Richard Schechner further defines performance as a 'twice-behaved behavior' or 'restored behavior', always being subject to revision and never the same again (Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance* [London: Routledge, 1993]). Joseph Roach explores 'genealogies of performance' to contextualise culturally specific memory in his theorisations of performance (Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1996]).

¹⁵⁰ Kawabata Yasunari, 'House of the Sleeping Beauties', in *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, trans. Edward Seidensticker (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1969), 13-99. Originally published as *Nemureru Bijo* in 1961 by Shinshōsha.

¹⁵¹ Ogawa Yoko, *Hisoyakana Kesshō* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1999), originally published in 1994. I will examine both Kawabata's *House of the Sleeping Beauties* and Ogawa's *Still Crystal* in Chapter 3.

interrelated. Memories that appeared in his dream also affect his interaction with others. In Ogawa's case, people's memories of particular objects and the objects themselves are lost due to 'memory hunting' by the secret police on a small island. The female protagonist's attempt to regain memories of particular objects or senses of her body parts that now are lost is, therefore, fundamentally a trial for recapturing and reliving memories. In these cases, memories do not stay in the past but act on the present moment and complicate the timelines of our lives.

Freud admits that screen memories can be formed also from residues of memories relating to later life, in which the connection is the reverse of the case in which the childhood memory is demonstrated by later experiences. 'A screen memory may be described as "retrogressive" or as having "pushed forward" according to the one chronological relation or the other holds between the screen and the thing screened-off', 'according to whether the displacement has been in a backward or forward direction'.¹⁵² Psychoanalysis mostly concerns the relationship of the present to the past. However, in the light of this statement, the present or past might illuminate the future.¹⁵³

As we can expect from the different accounts of Freud and Merleau-Ponty discussed earlier, Merleau-Ponty involves the subject in his understanding of temporality. He states, 'the past is a former future and a recent present, the present an

¹⁵² Freud, *SE*, 3: 320.

¹⁵³ Deleuze and Guattari still criticise Freud for never examining the process of the cure (the forward direction) as such. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 66.

impending past and a recent future, the future a present and even a past to come'.¹⁵⁴

These conceptions of time are connected to the overlapped time frames of past-present-future and to the perspectives of subjects. Time for Merleau-Ponty is a gaze or someone through whom it bears meaning; 'time *is* someone, or that temporal dimensions, in so far as they perpetually overlap, bear each other out and ever confine themselves to making explicit what was implied in each. [...] We must understand time as the subject and the subject as time'.¹⁵⁵ Time is not always uniformly shifting toward the future according to external events, but can be a cross-movement from the past to the future, from the future to the past, from the future to the present, or even a tumult, each dimension of time being treated 'as something other than itself'.¹⁵⁶ Temporality here is a mixture of times that might confuse our future-oriented notion of time. Yet, Ogawa's *Still Crystal* problematises temporality centred on the subject. At the end of the memory-hunting, legs, hands and the whole body disappear, with only the voice left. This conscious, but body-less subject may challenge this way of looking at temporality. As further examined in Chapter 3, one might ask if time is where the body, consciousness and being coincide.

Further introducing some points of contact between theories and texts discussed later in this thesis, the memory of touch that complicates the sense of temporality also necessarily occurs at the site of writing. In Abe Kōbō's 'Cryptic Colouration'

¹⁵⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 490.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

(‘*Hogoshoku*’)¹⁵⁷ and ‘Starving Skin’ (‘*Ueta Hifu*’),¹⁵⁸ both written in 1951, external visual images are taken into the body and projected on the skin. Moreover, emotions sensed through the body appear as a skin colour, and strong attachment to and memory about a certain figure replaces a woman’s name with the male protagonist’s on an inscribed surface, representing the correlation between the skin, written mark and colour. Freud associates the motif of the mystic writing pad with the system of perception-consciousness that receives perceptions without retaining permanent traces, and the unconscious traced on the the slab as permanent traces.¹⁵⁹ Derrida, critiquing Freud’s assumption of the presence of the unconscious, proposes that the written is always already written, and thus, the text is a repository of meaning.¹⁶⁰ Writing is an act of contact, even if it is either an early or belated touch. But since Abe’s disappearance is a retreat into the self, the appearance and disappearance of the written mark may endanger the presence of the subject itself, as examined at length in Chapter 1.

Recalling the dislocation of tactile memory in the body parts and the complication

¹⁵⁷ Abe Kōbō, ‘*Hogoshoku*’, in *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* (Abe Kōbō: Complete Works), (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1997), 3: 15-32.

¹⁵⁸ Abe, ‘*Ueta Hifu*’, in *Abe Kōbō Zenshū*, 3: 59-72.

¹⁵⁹ On this pad, the pointed stimuli scratch the surface and leave traces on the wax slab through the medium of two layers of sheets, which will be erased once the layers are lifted from the slab from the unfixed end. Sigmund Freud, ‘A Note upon the “Mystic Writing-Pad”’, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 19: 228-231.

¹⁶⁰ Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 211. Also, Jean-François Lyotard proposes that we cannot apprehend sensation or make it into a written form because by the time we write, the sensation has already gone (Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the Jews”*, trans. A. Michel and M. Roberts [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990], 20).

of time that Merleau-Ponty suggests, contemporary Japanese author Matsuura Rieko well exemplifies this temporary and spatially dislocated tactile memory through her use of *skinship*. Shunji, one of the main male characters in *The Apprentice of Big Toe P*, talks about his memory of being held by his uncle when he was a child and his wish to warmly caress his loved one in the same manner his uncle did.¹⁶¹ The childhood memory of being touched by a loved one stays in one's body and can synchronise with another touch later in life, or can be a prototype of sort of an ideal touch (as the case for Shunji) and motivate the possible touch to come, like Merleau-Pontean motor intentionality. Tactile memory reappears in later time, affecting living bodies and being unlimited to both space and time. As discussed at length in the second chapter, Matsuura's *skinship* also complicates the reminiscence of childhood, with *skinship* entailing the possibility of developing into sexual pleasure in adults while easing the tension between sexual touch and infant-mother *skinship*.

Touch is a lived experience that is embodied and accumulated and acts toward potential movement, as Merleau-Pontean phenomenological accounts suggest. Simultaneously, its related sensations and memories undergo constant displacement, transformation and alteration, as Freudian psychoanalytic accounts suggest. As introduced above, the exploration of touch in literature certainly profits from these theorisations. In the analysis of literary texts in the following chapters, I employ these

¹⁶¹ Matsuura Rieko, *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, trans. Michael Emmerich (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2009), 115. Originally published as *Oyayubi P no Shugyō Jidai* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1993).

theories and try to contextualise them in modern and contemporary Japan. Additionally, I will examine if they work or why they do not, if such is the case, making a cross-cultural dialogue between these European theorisations and Japanese thought and between texts and theories. In the next section, I examine how experiences of touch start in our lives, how they develop and how they affect the creation of relationships. Just as Nakata inevitably returns to Natsue's embodied memories to know her in the present, one may need to return to earlier tactile memories embodied in us, exploring forgotten touch.

C. Touch and Its Effects

a. Prenatal Touch and Its Effects

In various parts of this thesis, I will examine memories of touch. The first memories of touch inevitably originate with touching the mother or touch within the mother's womb if we define even the prenatal body perception that stems from the foetal period as a type of touching. In this section, I explore touch from the perspective of life development, starting from the possibility of prenatal touch inside the mother's womb and its effects and continuing through research on touch and psychoanalysis.

During pregnancy, the foetus starts experiencing the world through the amniotic fluid of the womb. Discussing the tactile experience of the foetus, Tiffany Field states, 'Touch, affecting both tactile and pressure receptors, stimulates the central nervous

system into a state of relaxation'.¹⁶² Field researches how touch affects infants and their development—for example, touch deprivation may cause psychological disturbances, physical violence, sleep disturbances and even immune response problems.¹⁶³ As the quotation above shows, Field does not necessarily differentiate the experience of touch between the foetus and infants, touch giving them a sense of comfort and relaxation. French sociologist Muriel Jolivet also points out post-puberty nervous disorders due to the lack of *skinship* in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s. Babies' co-sleeping with the mother had been discouraged since 1950 to avoid accidents such as suffocation, resulting more recently in some Japanese clinicians warning against these less tactile methods.¹⁶⁴ These accounts suggest that touch is an experience of relaxation and enhances the infants' and foetuses' well-being, while raising the question of whether comfort is already needed in the prenatal stage.

Otto Rank sees the ultimate biological basis of psychic consequences in birth trauma.¹⁶⁵ He regards it not merely as a womb-fantasy to go back to the mother's womb to be protected for safety and comfort, but as the basis of major psychic repetitions. He states that the real transference-libido is the mother-libido as it existed in the prenatal physiological connection between mother and child.¹⁶⁶ Rank foregrounds

¹⁶² Field, *Touch*, 17.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 62-71. As a founder of the Touch Research Institute, based at the University of Miami's School of Medicine, Field researches ethnological case studies on touch, infant-mother relationships and touch therapy, among others.

¹⁶⁴ Muriel Jolivet, *Japan: The Childless Society? The Crisis of Motherhood* (London: Routledge, 1997), 84-85.

¹⁶⁵ Otto Rank, *The Trauma of Birth* (New York: Dover Publications, 1993), Preface xxiii.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 6. The 'libido' was explored starting from Freud; it generally signifies sexual desire or psychical

the tie between mother and infant and stresses its effects on later infant development in both sexes. Ichikawa Hiroshi, referring to Rank's birth trauma, writes: 'The first experience of one's life coincides with violent fear and anxiety [such as separations from the mother's warmth and the comfort to be caressed]. [...] This separation is not one's volition but to 'be born' is a literally passive experience'.¹⁶⁷ Rank believes that the primal repression of birth trauma causes memory in general and that memories are reproduced to substitute for the primary trauma that has been fundamentally repressed.¹⁶⁸ These analyses suggest that separation (or anticipation of it) from the mother's body may cause irretrievable feelings of fear and anxiety, that there is a postnatal and prenatal anxiety about the near future.

Furthermore, activities of the foetus within the womb are not limited to receiving physical and mental sensations from the mother and mobilising its body (such as kicking), but also include responding to external stimuli and vibrations within the womb. Field states, 'very young foetuses increase their activity in response to our massaging their mothers' feet'.¹⁶⁹ Before its actual birth, the foetus senses stimuli through touch

desire. Freud's first use appeared in 'Extract from the Fliess Papers', written from 1892 to 1899, mentioning that physical sexual tension above a certain level arouses psychical libido (*SE* 1:192). Freud's first published use of the term 'libido' appears in the paper on anxiety neurosis (See editor's footnote, *SE* 3:102), whose mechanism is looked for 'in a deflection of somatic sexual excitation from the psychical sphere' (108). Thus, Freud used 'libido' to distinguish between somatic sexual excitation and psychical desire.

¹⁶⁷ Ichikawa, *Mi no Kōzō*, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Rank, *The Trauma of Birth*, 8. Kawabata's short story 'Inside the Human Being' (*Ningen no Naka*) may be relevant here since it represents the female protagonist's syndrome of keeping multiple relationships with men and filling her inside with those men, due to her wish and fantasy to have remained inside the mother's body. *Kawabata Yasunari Zenshū (The Complete Works of Kawabata Yasunari)*, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1981).

¹⁶⁹ Field, *Touch*, 37.

even on the surface of its mother's body and tries to respond to the stimuli. In this sense, the relaxation through touch proposed by Field can be applicable to the foetus. This contact felt inside the womb can be considered the infant's first connection with the external world. Psychoanalysts such as Sandor Ferenczi and Michael Balint emphasise the passivity of primal love—the infant loves the mother because it is loved by her—introduced below, but the examples above show that it is not the only case.¹⁷⁰

b. Postnatal Touch and Object Relations/Creations

Even after birth, infants are physically tied to the mother and fed by their mother's breast, which becomes the first loved object. Infants primarily come to know love and separation from the first object, the mother's breast, effectively by touching. Melanie Klein uses these object relations to analyse all the mental developments that appear subsequently. Starting from a Kleinian account, in this subsection, I will analyse how we relate to objects and create interstitial objects with reference to literary examples in order to investigate the development of one's (object-based) relationships to others, the construction of the ego and the negotiation with the absence of loved object.

In Klein's account of object-relations, the ego splits the object into a good part and a bad part, absorbing the good part such as the mother's breast into itself (introjection) and disavowing the bad part and splitting off its own feeling

¹⁷⁰ Franco-Czech writer Milan Kundera, in his fiction, proposes an active foetus who loves itself and sucks itself, even before it receives passive love by the external mother as its first 'other'. Milan Kundera, *Identity*, trans. Linda Asher (London: Faber and Faber, 1998), 50.

(projection).¹⁷¹ For Klein, it is through this first experience of contact—with an outer object, namely the mother’s breast—that humans begin to seek to be loved, express love to be loved, or seek to defend themselves from external persecutors.¹⁷² I should note, however, that her interpretation is based on the act of fantasising about the mother’s body, and that despite an opposition of introjection and projection that sets up a boundary between interior and exterior in Kleinian psychoanalysis, Didier Anzieu points out the lack of attention to the body’s surface and the skin in Kleinian theory.¹⁷³ Kleinian analysis creates an internal space for things introjected and projected, where different types of ‘position’ are experienced, but it does not pay sufficient attention to the skin, the edge or the limit of the body, which Anzieu regards as the place where identity is constructed. I would add a critique of Kleinian analysis in its lack of ethical attention to the things introjected and incorporated, which will be developed in Chapter 2 through Kawabata and Klein’s work.

Didier Anzieu’s theories, unlike object relations theories, develop an understanding of the ego through the senses of the skin, called *skin ego*, which stems

¹⁷¹ Melanie Klein, *The Selected Melanie Klein*, ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 20. Specifically, when infants identify themselves through projection by putting a part of themselves into others with whom they identify, Klein names this ‘projective identification’, a notion that has been further developed by later Kleinian psychoanalysts (20, 58, 183).

¹⁷² In Klein, the mother’s breast is not just a positive attribute for infants; they (infants) introject the mother’s breast as a good object, but they also feel guilt at this and consequently develop anxiety about being persecuted by mothers. The internalised mother can take on the role of super-ego, from whom infants dread receiving punishment. See *The Selected Melanie Klein*, 71. Moreover, children come to be curious about the external world, starting from the mother’s body, and come to wish to appropriate the contents of the womb (72), so that the presence of the mother’s body is the first object and the first stimulation for the infant’s acquisition of knowledge.

¹⁷³ Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 37.

from the transparent relationship between the mother and infant. Anzieu considers the skin a primary means of communication; it is the psychic and physical boundary between individuals and an inscribable surface. The baby goes through a period of ‘common skin’ starting with the period of intra-uterine fantasy and a fantasy of reciprocal inclusion, where the baby tries to draw its mother into a narcissistic fusion.¹⁷⁴ This skin has the mother on one side and the baby on the other and provides direct communication between the two, as ‘it is a unique screen which comes to resonate with the sensations, emotions, mental images and vital rhythms of the two’.¹⁷⁵ The suppression of this common interface brings resistance, pain and ultimately what Anzieu calls a ‘skin ego’, an identity formed on the basis of its experience through the skin.¹⁷⁶ As will be examined in Chapter 1, Anzieu’s transparency complicates one-way access from Nakata to Natsue in Yoshiyuki.

Further touching upon object relations, Michael Balint analyses object relationship as primary, paying further attention to its passivity. Following Ferenczi’s proposition of ‘passive object-love’, Balint suggests that infants are unconditionally loved by their mothers. This primary love does not aim at ‘what one generally means by sensual or erotic, but rather what Freud has called tender, aim-inhibited. Non-gratification calls forth passionate reactions; gratification, on the other hand, only a

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 62–63.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 40. Also in Anzieu’s analysis, the fantasy stimulated by the senses through the skin and the boundary between the internal and the external fundamentally stem from one’s relationship to the mother.

quiet, tranquil sense of well-being'.¹⁷⁷ Only later does he shift his view to take into account more elements and admit active aspects of the primary object-love.¹⁷⁸ Even so, for Balint, later psychological developments such as feelings of hate and narcissism occur as a response to the primary object relationship to the mother. Conversely, André Green concentrates on the more negative aspect of the mother's presence, as 'the dead mother', as a psychical blank.¹⁷⁹ The mother is still present, but it is considered 'presence with an absent mother'¹⁸⁰ or 'non-existence'.¹⁸¹ Stemming from Donald Winnicott's concept of the 'not-me' object where the infant recognises any object other than the omnipotent *me*,¹⁸² Green's negation includes the 'objectualising function' through which an extra object between the self and other is created. 'We create objects from our relation with the outside world, but we supply our internal world with the infinite capacity to create objects'.¹⁸³ This discussion suggests that we create interpersonal and interstitial objects within us.

¹⁷⁷ Harold Stewart, *Michael Balint: Object Relations Pure and Applied* (London: Routledge, 1996), 19-20. Quoted from Michael Balint, 'Critical Notes on the Theory of the Pregenital Organization of the Libido', *Primary Love, Psycho-analytic Technique* (London: Hogarth Press, 1952), 61.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁷⁹ The concept of the dead father, explored by Lacan, has symbolic significance such as the ancestor as the introjected psychic apparatus. Richard Feldstein, 'The Mirror of Manufactured Cultural Relations', in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, ed. Richard Feldstein et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 139. Unlike the father, the dead mother is irreplaceable, and when the mother is depressed, she becomes lost to the infant because the infant loses the meaning of his or her relationship to the unreachable mother.

¹⁸⁰ Gregorio Kohon, 'The Greening of Psychoanalysis: André Green in Dialogue with Gregorio Kohon', in *The Dead Mother: The Work of André Green*, ed. Gregorio Kohon (London: Routledge, 1999), 54-55.

¹⁸¹ André Green, 'The Intuition of the Negative in *Playing and Reality*', in *The Dead Mother*, ed. Kohon, 218. In his article, Green articulates the reason why he avoids using 'absence', in which there is a hope of return of presence, and 'loss', which could be mourned. Considering Winnicott's notion of 'negative', he admits that the negative is the only thing that is real.

¹⁸² See D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁸³ Green, 'The Intuition of the Negative', 219.

In Kawabata's 'Thousand Cranes', the tea bowl serves as a linking object, but the stain of Mrs Ota's lip also connects her and the male protagonist Kikuji as an interstitial object created through his fantasy. After her death, her daughter Fumiko gives him the lady's Shino tea bowl, the rim of which is stained brown by tea. One deeper part of the cup was touched by the red lip, which arouses in him 'a nauseating sense of uncleanness and an overpowering fascination',¹⁸⁴ though he cannot even touch it. Never being able to touch it with his own lip, Fumiko later breaks it, throwing it on the stone in the garden. Although he tries to collect those broken pieces, only that specific part bearing her lip print cannot be found. The tea bowl connects the protagonist to the absentee as a linking object. Like an objectualising function, the protagonist's fantasy toward Mrs Ota *forms* a particular object for him (a stained lip mark on the tea bowl), creating a tension between touching and not touching the absent Mrs Ota's lip.¹⁸⁵

Thomas H. Ogden develops this concept of 'extra object' as the analytic third by proposing the 'intersubjective analytic third',¹⁸⁶ where a new subjectivity is created by the interplay of analyst and analysand, standing in dialectical tension between the two in a continuous state of flux. Even though these examples are specifically in the psychoanalytic setting, the created object, or the new subjectivity in the case of Ogden,

¹⁸⁴ Kawabata, *Snow Country and Thousand Cranes*, 179.

¹⁸⁵ It should be noted, however, that object-relations and object creation is a process of meaning making and property making. Thus, it is interesting when the object is no longer an object and does not belong to a particular person, such as the milk that flows from the mother's body into the infant's body, or the saliva that is described in Kundera's *Identity*, 50.

¹⁸⁶ Thomas H. Ogden, 'Analysing forms of aliveness and deadness of the transference-countertransference', in *The Dead Mother*, ed. Kohon, 131.

is helpful in considering interpersonal (or inter-object) relationships in literature. These theorisations of object *formation* through Winnicott, Green and Ogden suggest that a third subjectivity can be unconsciously constructed between individuals, which is suggestive for thinking about the membrane that we saw earlier in Yoshiyuki's writing. This membrane is an indeterminate, intersubjective entity between two bodies, affecting them and standing in a fluid tension between the two, as Ogden suggests. The membrane and—we might be able to say—other objects in general, connect us with what we touch. Simultaneously, since they prevent touch through their materiality, the function of object and membrane includes both conducting and preventing our touch.

As examined above, British object-relations in general tend to presuppose the mother's body and existence as presence, compared to the absence found in French psychoanalysis. Kleinian theory especially tends to focus on the early relationship to the object such as the mother's breast and its subsequent influence on later life.¹⁸⁷ However, I should note that Leo Bersani and Patrick ffrench discuss the relationship to the object not necessarily via object-relations theory but via a re-reading of Freudian analysis.

¹⁸⁷ Although there is always a question whether we can transfer psychoanalytic theory into another cultural or linguistic context, especially in Asia where psychoanalysis is not much practised, observation-based Kleinian theory creates less of a gap for cross-cultural application than those with a particular linguistic nature like that of Lacan. Moreover, the Kleinian focus on the mother works well in the Japanese psychic climate, where the matriarchy possibly has a stronger presence than in the West. About the maternal function in Japan, see Doi Takeo, *Amae no Kōzō* (*The Anatomy of Dependence*) (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1971). Jungian Psychologist Kawai Hayao also points out that, in Japanese fairy tales, female figures take an active part and 'the ego of a Japanese is properly symbolized by a female and not by a male.' Kawai Hayao, 'The "Forbidden Chamber" Motif in a Japanese Fairy Tale', in ed. Ikegami Yoshihiko, *The Empire of Signs: Semiotic Essays on Japanese Culture* (Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1991). Yoda Tomiko also examines the construction of a maternal society in the postwar Japanese society in 'The Rise and Fall of Maternal Society: Gender, Labor, and Capital in Contemporary Japan', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 99, no. 4 (2000): 865-902, accessed 17 February, 2013, doi: 10.1215/00382876-99-4-865.

Focusing on its reciprocity, Bersani explores object-love as the reverse side of narcissism. His analysis of love through reciprocal relations does not necessarily assume passivity as the first and active love as the second to be loved, as object-relations theory does. Rather, his reciprocity proposes narcissistic love as pure object-love and knowledge of otherness.¹⁸⁸ ffrench explores object-love through Freudian instincts and repetition, in which relations to others and the world are considered as the vicissitudes of self-love and as something re-found rather than through a primary perception of the object.¹⁸⁹ Psychoanalysis tends to receive the critique of being deterministic in its intensely retrospective method, but these accounts of object-relations pay more attention to the displacement of libido, memory and the repetition of experience, in which we inevitably need to re-find our relationship to the world, leaving constant changes through which we must live. The reciprocal relationship with the loved object through the lens of Bersani will be further examined by reading Kawabata's text at length in the third chapter.

D. Conclusion: Chapter Summary

This introduction has briefly introduced relevant theorisations that appear in the following chapters, especially regarding phenomenology, psychoanalysis and other

¹⁸⁸ Leo Bersani, 'The Power of Evil and the Power of Love', 57-87, in *Intimacies*, by Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

¹⁸⁹ Patrick ffrench, 'Fantasizing Contact: The Freudian Object', *L'Esprit Créateur* 47, no. 3 (2007): 43-54, accessed 20 May 2010, doi: 10.1353/esp.2007.0059.

thoughts relevant to touch. It has also examined various types of contact, including the immediacy/mediation of touch and the spatial and temporal dislocation of tactile memory and its affections. In my hypothesis, subtle descriptions of intimacy like those found in the works of Kawabata or Funabashi have been diminished by succeeding Japanese authors, partly due to Western culture and postwar authors' elevated interests in political engagement, not their interest in sensual descriptions of the (female) body.¹⁹⁰ Yoshiyuki would be one of the last male authors after the war who wrote extensively but sensually about bodies, skin and relationships to females. However, the hesitancy of touch in Kawabata and the sensitive but male-centred observation in Yoshiyuki are, in a way, inherited as a counterresponse by contemporary female authors such as Matsuura Rieko or Ogawa Yoko, who describe physical relationships more freely. On the theoretical level, this thesis examines the intersection of literary texts with psychoanalysis and phenomenology respecting touch in conjunction with Japanese thoughts, where appropriate. Then, it explores how theorisations on touch and sense, such as those by Merleau-Ponty and Nancy, could provide another reading of literature on touch and how literary analysis can provide a fresh view of theories on touch.

Chapter 1, entitled 'Mediation of Touch', consists of three sections, each discussing different ways of mediating touch, namely through A) membranes, B) light and C) the page. Including a historical aspect of how Japanese writers have represented

¹⁹⁰ See Yoshiyuki's comments on severe critiques of Funabashi's works soon after the war and his 'resistance' by continuing to write novels related to traditional aesthetics in the midst of rampant Westernization. Yoshiyuki, '*Funabashi Seiichi Shōron*', in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 267-268.

touch, the first section, dealing with the membranes, analyses Yoshiyuki Junnosuke's *The Dark Room*. In light of Anzieu's theorisations, I argue how the skin and the membrane affect our tactile relationships. Section B), on light, further analyses Yoshiyuki's writings by conceiving the gaze as a ray of light that touches the body and mediates communication between one body and another, with reference to Barthes, Lacan and Kaja Silverman. I then explore cultural aspects of the interpretation of vision, light and touch by reading Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* (1933).¹⁹¹ Section C), on 'page', focuses on the mediation of touch through the printed page. I analyse how the mediation of touch through skin, colour and the page are uniquely interconnected in Abe Kōbō's 'Cryptic Colouration' ('*Hogoshoku*') and 'Starving Skin' ('*Ueta Hifu*'), both written in 1951, with reference to Derrida's theory of trace and the iterability of the mark.

Chapter 2, entitled 'Encounters', consists of three sections: A) weight, B) incorporation and C) encounters. I argue how high levels of mediation make it difficult for Japanese literary subjects to engage in direct encounters with others. In section A), on weight, I examine how the protagonist perceives the weight of another while touching in Yoshiyuki, while critically examining Merleau-Ponty's theory on the reversibility of the touched and the touching that may lack the consideration of weight.

In section B), I argue for the ethics of incorporation, that is, to incorporate another's

¹⁹¹ Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward G. Seidensticker (London: Vintage, 2001). First published in Great Britain in 1991 by Jonathan Cape. Originally published as *In'ei Raisan* in 1933.

body within one's body, analysing Kawabata's subtle but violent touch in 'One Arm' (1964),¹⁹² comparing subtlety of touch in Kawabata, Emmanuel Levinas and Steven Connor, and critically examining psychoanalytic concepts of incorporation that lack a component of ethical examination. Section C), on 'encounter', examines counterexamples from the previously discussed literary works by Kawabata and Yoshiyuki. I analyse non-passive, genital-free touch by female figures in Matsuura Rieko's *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P* (1993) and others, with reference to Barthes' idea of Neutral, Kimura Bin's idea of *aida* (in-between-ness) and Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of *haptic* and *Body without Organs*.

Chapter 3, entitled Memory of Touch, comprises five sections: A) the father's absence from earlier touch, B) the circulation of tactile love, C) touching absence, D) touching the invisible and the untouchable, and E) the temporal reflection of touch. The first two sections look at early tactile experiences and the circulation of memory projected on different characters in Yoshiyuki and Kawabata, utilising theories of passive love (*amae*) from Doi Takeo and *reciprocal* love from Leo Bersani. Section C) discusses the idea of touching the absent existence—sleeping girls without clear consciousness in Kawabata's *House of the Sleeping Beauties*. Section D) connects Kawabata's absent bodies in *House of the Sleeping Beauties* and Ogawa's vanished

¹⁹² Kawabata Yasunari, 'One Arm', in *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, trans. Edward Seidensticker (Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1969), 103-124. Original in Japanese: 'Kataude' in *Bungō Kaidan Kessaku Sen, Kawabata Yasunari Shū (Selected Ghost Stories by Great Writers, Volume on Kawabata Yasunari)* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2006). Originally published in 1965 by Shinchōsha, Tokyo.

body in *Still Crystal* (*Hisoyakana Kesshō*) in 1999. In both cases, the touching subjects try to reach untouchable objects, which ultimately heighten their desire for touching and for the work of the imagination. Section E) analyses the relationship between touch and time. In *Still Crystal*, one of the main themes is memory hunting. Hunted by secret police, people in this novel gradually lose their memories of objects. I analyse how memories of past touch affect lives now and in the future, mainly through Merleau-Ponty's theory of temporality, which complicates the normative progression of the commonly understood timeline. In this way, Chapter 1 examines 'before touch' (mediation), Chapter 2 examines the 'actual practice of touch' (encounter), and Chapter 3 examines 'after touch' (memory).

This thesis is an attempt to read how we make contact with others in modern Japanese literary texts. The reason why we touch others seems more discernible; in addition to our wish to touch them, we have to touch them to communicate, touch being a communication of emotion and affect. But it is not necessarily so easy to discern how we touch others or whether we are touching them at all. The question asked here is: Can we touch the body of the other, or do we touch something else by touching it? Does touching the body already necessarily imply something more profound?

Chapter 1: Mediation of Touch

A. Mediation through the Skin and Membrane

[Synopsis]

***The Dark Room (Anshitsu)*, by Yoshiyuki Junnosuke**

Nakata, the male protagonist, is a middle-aged novelist. The story progresses following his memories from the past, such as his relationship to Keiko, his dead wife; his suspicion about the relationship between Keiko and Tsunoki, who is his friend and a novelist; his experiences as a college student soon after World War II; and his relationships with several females. Yumiko, his housekeeper and assistant, decides to marry another man after a year of working for him. Takako, who has stayed with Nakata for four years, leaves him to marry another man. Maki, a young lesbian girl who works at a bar and has a relationship with Nakata for a short time, decides to give birth to her baby with Nakata and moves to New York. Natsue, who rarely goes outside and lives on a small amount of money from fashion design and family support, remains with him at the end. Having no desire to monopolise any one of his women used to give him a sense of freedom. Yet, once he finds the unavoidable desire to uncover Natsue's relationships with her former partners, he becomes puzzled by his strong attachment to Natsue.

‘Cryptic Colouration’ (*Hogoshoku*), by Abe Kōbō

In the very short story ‘Cryptic Colouration’, a scientist and his assistant (the nameless protagonist) witness a girl's skin changing from white to green and then to spots, emulating characters from the book she is reading and reflecting what she sees on her skin. The doctor explains to her that it is not a sickness but rather the human tendency to mimic colouring. The doctor becomes further interested in her as an object of his research. The doctor and assistant ask her father, who experiences the same phenomenon, to bring them to her home. At the end of the story, when they arrive at the entrance to the girl's house, the father, who is shivering, stops shaking and disappears, leaving his clothes on the ground.

‘Starving Skin’ (*Ueta Hifu*), by Abe Kōbō

In another short story, ‘Starving Skin’, set in postwar China, the protagonist deceives Mrs Kim with the belief that she is ill with ‘cryptic colouration’ and that she needs an appropriate medication. He periodically gives her opium pills without telling her what they are. She is at his mercy because of her fear of this illness and gives him her body and her husband's property. Later, the

protagonist reads a newspaper article far away in the countryside that describes the woman having gone mad and Mr Kim's mysterious bankruptcy. In repeatedly reading the article, he notices her name changes to his. One day, feeling anxious, his skin changes to dark green, the colour he had explained to her represented a coolness similar to death anxiety.

Skin is a means of contact in that it conducts physical stimuli to the central nervous system and connects them. Yet, it is preventative in that, as it mediates, it does not allow us to touch the other directly, insofar as we consider the skin not to be us but a bodily frontier. Furthermore, if the skin retains memories of touch on its surface, one can infer that our touch is always already mediated by other touches. This chapter, consisting of three sections, discusses different ways of mediating touch, namely through A) membranes, B) light and C) the page. The first section, A, begins with a brief analysis of the skin, then explores how Japanese writers represent the phenomenon of touch and memory in the postwar period, focusing on the mediation of touch through the skin. After that, I further analyse Yoshiyuki's *The Dark Room* in light of Anzieu's theorisations and argue how the membrane affects our tactile relations.

a. Skin

Technological advances, including those related to anatomy and artificial operations, among others, have allowed us to modify our bodies and further developed our bodily capacities. But German cultural historian Claudia Benthien writes that the skin still

remains the principal boundary through which individuals encounter each other. She writes, ‘in the twentieth century, at the latest, skin—the place “where the ego is decided”—became the central metaphor of separateness’.¹⁹³ Although Benthien’s emphasis on the skin is a counter-response to the post-structuralist movement, where the body and the skin were read as a ‘sign’, this attention to the skin did not simply start after post-structuralism. As Benthien and literary scholar Steven Connor note, this attention to the skin and its almost brain-like functions was already present in the writing of Valéry, as mentioned earlier. The importance placed on the sign and signification, especially in the latter half of the twentieth century, gradually prepared the way for a ‘corporeal turn’ that occurred toward the end of the twentieth century in the realm of the humanities and social sciences.

As mentioned earlier, the term *skinship* is a Japanese-English coinage to signify intimate communication through touch, mainly between a mother figure and child. Intimate tactile communication in childhood has a significant meaning in Japanese child care.¹⁹⁴ The traditional belly band called the *haraobi*, the origin of which dates to ancient times, supports a pregnant woman’s belly after the fifth month, thus keeping the foetus from turning or overgrowing by maintaining a secure physical tie between the

¹⁹³ Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border between Self and the World*, 1. Originally published as *Haut: Literaturgeschichte, Körperbilder, Grenzdiskurse* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1999). Quoted from Michel Serres, *Les cinq sens: Philosophie des corps mêlés* (Paris: Grasset, 1985), 17.

¹⁹⁴ Tiffany Field also refers to the term *skinship*, denoting that the Japanese have an intimate tactile communication with their parents in childhood. Field, *Touch*, 20.

mother and foetus.¹⁹⁵ American anthropologist Edward T. Hall also observes that, while American teachers are not allowed to touch pupils, Japanese teachers even hold and guide their pupils' hands.¹⁹⁶

Furthermore, another anthropologist, Eyal Ben-Ari, analysed children's naptimes in a Japanese day-care centre; those naptimes provide a clue to the importance of *skinship* in Japanese child education:

A few minutes before one o'clock, the teachers begin to circulate and devote their attention to children who are having trouble falling asleep. Usually they lie next to these children and softly stroke or caress them. Those troublesome ones who are *kappatsu* (sprightly) find that the teachers very delicately but firmly place their heads below their breasts and their behinds under the adults' knees to calm them. At this stage many teachers actually lie next to the children underneath the latter's blankets with full body contact and the exchange of body heat between adults and youngsters.¹⁹⁷

This *soine* (co-sleeping) practice borrowed from the family utilises a *futon* (the mattress) that makes it easier for caretakers to reach out to children than individualised beds that set a clear boundary between separate identities. This co-sleeping cultivates mutual dependence rather than independence.¹⁹⁸ Thus, 'sleeping in proximity to parents or on the same *futon* allows the creation of what the Japanese positively value as a sense of secure intimacy', fostering 'dependence by reducing children's anxieties and

¹⁹⁵ Kunimoto Keikichi provides detailed a history on *haraobi* in his book *San'ikushi: Osan to Kosodate no Rekishi (The History of Childbirth and Parenting)* (Morioka: Morioka Times, 1996). Tsipy Ivry argues that Japanese obstetrics and gynecology textbooks devote more space to pregnant women's everyday physical aspects, such as warmth, the stability of their bellies and protection against bumps, compared to American books. Such material is absent in recent Hebrew textbooks (Tsipy Ivry, *Embodying Culture: Pregnancy in Japan and Israel* [New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010], 95).

¹⁹⁶ Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*, 71.

¹⁹⁷ Ben-Ari, *Body Projects*, 35.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 36-38.

anticipating their needs and desires'.¹⁹⁹ Therefore, despite the relative absence of public practices of touch such as kissing or hugging in adulthood, intimacy and *skinship* between children and caretakers have been important aspects of Japanese bodily communication.

As mentioned earlier through Anzieu, the skin acts as an interface to keep the outside out and to protect against penetration. Skin is a site and a primary means of communication. This 'inscribing surface' retains and accumulates goodness through feeding and care.²⁰⁰ The skin is a host of previous sensations and emotions, which have an effect on the formation of our subjectivity. In addition, sociologist Harvie Ferguson observes the body is an accumulated collection of body images: 'each one of which has a specific origin in the past and, as such, allows the sediment of a previous epoch to settle within us'.²⁰¹ In this account, the ego and the body image created through the skin's senses can be considered as a kind of sediment in our bodies. Moreover, Ben-Ari writes that, body practices, once internalised, 'are used by the children naturally and "automatically"'.²⁰² Our bodies *keep* the past; "'Posture and movements which are habit memories become sedimented into bodily confirmation'".²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁰⁰ Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 40.

²⁰¹ Harvie Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity: Body, Soul, Spirit* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 26–27. Ferguson's works in phenomenological sociology include the discussion of modern identity and analyse literary examples by such writers as Thomas Mann and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō.

²⁰² Ben-Ari, *Body Projects*, 75.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 75. Quoted from Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 94. Ben-Ari regards the sediment of body practices not merely as 'embodied memories' but as the intersection of culture and organisational motivation.

The image and the stimuli, however, do not portray the totality of the body. Ferguson suggests that, in modern society, we can only see ourselves as partial possibilities of completeness, not a totality,²⁰⁴ as is also evident in traditional psychoanalysis. In addition, Silverman suggests that, even though the construction of the ego bears sociocultural elements, that process never ends, lacking any stable referent and repeating transformation.²⁰⁵ Here, Anzieu's view of seeing thoughts as almost interchangeable with thoughts of the body,²⁰⁶ while having a tendency to prioritise the psyche over the body, raises these questions: To what extent can we relate the sense of touch with the ego and the act of thinking? To what extent can bodily perceptions be retained in the memory and recalled after maturity?²⁰⁷ Equating 'thoughts' and 'the thoughts of the body' raises questions about the relationship between mind and body that many different schools of thought, including traditional psychoanalysis and phenomenology, have long debated.²⁰⁸ It also reminds us of the Merleau-Pontean body, which is not necessarily self-contained; rather, it is the nexus of biological, historical and cultural bodies, suggesting that the body is a continual process. Next, I would like to examine how Yoshiyuki and relevant writers have treated and depicted the body,

²⁰⁴ Ferguson, *Modernity and Subjectivity*, 27.

²⁰⁵ Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 13

²⁰⁶ This is further discussed in the chapter 'Anzieu's Theory' in Naomi Segal's *Consensuality: Didier Anzieu, Gender and the Sense of Touch* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2009).

²⁰⁷ Takie S. Lebra affirms the retention of body warmth through co-sleeping in a child's memory and its recollection with pleasure in adulthood. *Japanese Patterns of Behavior* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1976), 141.

²⁰⁸ See Christina Howells, *Mortal Subjects: Passions of the Soul in Late Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011).

especially focusing on the issues around mainly the repression of intimacy, sensuality and touch.

b. Fantasies of Transparent Touch

The authors of Yoshiyuki's generation are known as The Third Newcomers (the *Daisan no Shinjin*), who appeared as new writers in the Japanese literary world in the mid-1950s. These writers tend to be overlooked by the more influential generation that followed, including Ishihara Shintarō (1932–) and Ōe Kenzaburō (1935–), who tackled political questions more than figures like Yoshiyuki. Yoshiyuki's works are personal, sensual and sexual. Despite the lack of extensive research on his literary works, it is clear that Yoshiyuki is an author who possessed a heightened awareness of the senses experienced through the skin from his particular attention to senses, sexuality and the body.

Having witnessed Japan's defeat and the lost Japanese prewar past, literary scholar Susan Napier avers, 'While Tanizaki in his mourning for a lost past made women into the main supports of a shrine to traditional Japan, Kawabata accepted death and memorialized it. As Kawabata himself said, after the war he could "produce only elegies for a lost Japan"'.²⁰⁹ Although Kawabata's 'One Arm' and *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, which I examine in the second and third chapter respectively, 'are of

²⁰⁹ Susan Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature: The Subversion of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 1996), 61.

the postwar period, Kawabata himself is a writer whose sensibility is still formed by the prewar period. This is obvious in his treatment of female characters, whom he still believes to offer redemption; and when they do not, or cannot, the male characters are shown to be equally at fault'.²¹⁰ It is clearly not our task here to define what the prewar and postwar literary aesthetics and tendencies are and how the transition between them occurred. But there are certain inherited aesthetics between them, such as the beauty of the female body as portrayed in Tanizaki, Kawabata, Funabashi and Yoshiyuki. Yet there is scarce research on the body, senses and touch as dealt with by writers in a transitional period, especially those who experienced war as adolescents but started writing after the war like Yoshiyuki. Yoshiyuki can be distinguished from the other three, who were already active writers. An extensive literary analysis of Yoshiyuki will give us one way of looking at how the unreachable body becomes reachable or how the touchable body entails some untouchable components in this period.

In works by Kawabata, readers often cannot see detailed descriptions of direct touch, either because of his hesitancy, censorship or the impossibility of full engagement with the actual body as portrayed in his later works. In *The Izu Dancer* (*Izu no Odoriko*), the 20-year-old male protagonist, who is a student from Tokyo, visits Izu, a hot springs area in southern Tokyo. Through spending time with his fellow travelers and communicating with one of them—the innocent female protagonist—he is touched

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 66

by human warmth and overcomes his unbearable loneliness, though no actual touch is realised.²¹¹ The female who attracts the protagonist in Kawabata's works is often young, innocent and angelic, sometimes with her virginity intact. The protagonist has a reticence toward touching such a female body. He creates distance from her, or Kawabata himself creates distance from such a description. Although both female characters in Kawabata and Tanizaki tend to be 'traditional, aesthetically pleasing objects to be desired', Napier writes that Kawabata's characters 'tend to be self-sacrificing, "good" women without even a hint of the selfish qualities that give Tanizaki's women a special edge'.²¹² Yoshiyuki also comments that Kawabata seems to trust the beauty of the 'passing female' rather than actual interaction with her, constructing his own *image* of female beauty as 'passing beauty' (*toorisugiru bi*). Kawabata's protagonist looks at her from a distance and *visually* touches her.²¹³

In works by Tanizaki, as mentioned earlier, the female body is of immense interest to the male protagonist, often involving the fetishisation of the foot or the skin,

²¹¹ Kawabata Yasunari, *The Izu Dancer*, trans. Edward Seidensticker (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1964). Originally published as *Izu no Odoriko* (Tokyo: Kinseidō, 1927). The novel has been adapted for the cinema and staged theatrically. The story was translated into English in 1952 by Edward Seidensticker. Moreover, in the beginning of *Snow Country* in 1937 (*Yukiguni*, translated in 1956), Kawabata describes how only the male protagonist Shimamura's finger, instead of his mind, has 'a vital and immediate memory' of the geisha Komako. But 'The more he tried to call up a clear picture of her, the more his memory failed him, the farther she faded away, leaving him nothing to catch and hold'. Therefore, touch is hinted at, rather than depicted in detail. 'Snow Country', in *Snow Country and Thousand Cranes*, trans. Edward G. Seidensticker (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 13. Original work *Yukiguni* published by Sōgensha.

²¹² Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 61.

²¹³ Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, 'Funabashi Seiichi Shōron', in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 271. Yoshiyuki also argues that Kawabata has a preference for not-yet-mature women in unfortunate circumstances, onto whom it is possible for him to project himself, having been orphaned at age 15. Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, 'Kawabata Yasunari ron Danpen' ('Fragments on Kawabata Yasunari'), 264-297, in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 286-287.

such as in *The Tattoo* and *Naomi*. In commenting on the female's reply to the tattooer's warning about the pain—'I can bear anything for the sake of beauty'—Thomas Rimer writes, 'His [Tanizaki's] ability to push his reader into a peculiar psychological state, as well as his highly developed dramatic sense [...] remained enormous assets for him throughout his creative life'.²¹⁴ In Tanizaki's being able to portray physical sensuality and (repressed) sexual desire, the protagonist realises a partial touch and develops an illusionary erotic world.

In contrast, for Yoshiyuki, one's own body is deeply entangled with and taken into someone else's. Yoshiyuki steps into a situation in which the body is inescapably touchable after the transition from being unrealisable as in Kawabata to being partially touchable as in Tanizaki, situating Kawabata first from the standpoint of contact. Yoshiyuki's male protagonist narrates physical contact with others and their memories by being deeply embedded in other bodies, though he describes them in a detached manner. Yoshiyuki, in his 1970 work *The Dark Room*, develops memories through actual contact with others through the skin and, as introduced at the beginning of this thesis, creates an imaginary membrane that mediates touch between two bodies, making us ponder an indivisible boundary between the touchable and the untouchable. The more intimate the relationship between Nakata and Natsue becomes, the greater the concern Nakata begins to have about Natsue's physical relationships with other men.

²¹⁴ J. Thomas Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Traditions*, 23.

Simultaneously, he always strives to avoid deep entanglements with women. Another woman, Maki, points out that Nakata ‘ought to dig back into’ the past,²¹⁵ possibly referring to problems with his dead wife. Nakata is exposed to Natsue’s physical memories that she consciously and unconsciously manifests through her body and her fragmented recollections about past relationships narrated through her voice. He cannot prevent himself from sensing the existence of other men emerging as memories from Natsue’s body.

In addition, those memories emerge as a thin membrane that mediates communication between the two:

I won’t deny that the men in Natsue’s past—who were still there, a membrane between us—served as a welcome stimulant. And the desire to find some part of Natsue’s body still free of this film that seemed to cover it so completely was another factor that kept our relationship going.²¹⁶

It seems contradictory that Nakata says that the men in Natsue’s past, who formed a membrane between them, are ‘a welcome stimulant’ but that he is trying to find some part of her body ‘still free from this film’. Even though he initially intended to be detached from Natsue to avoid a deep entanglement with a woman, the more time they spend physically entangled, the more they become psychologically involved with each other. While his ‘whole body cleaved to hers’,²¹⁷ his psychological attachment makes it difficult for him to treat her just as a sexual object. In the end, he cannot cast aside the

²¹⁵ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 74.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

shadow of the other men in Natsue's past whose 'faces and bodies remained decently obscure',²¹⁸ and he actively explores the membrane itself.

Here, two things coexist: the membrane and their continued relationship. The mechanism that allows them to coexist is the conduction and retention of stimuli. The fact that the membrane prevents direct contact as it mediates does not necessarily function like a stumbling block to touch, but rather heightens the fantasy of direct contact and the adherence to memories of touch that are retained on the membrane. This suggests that the membrane formed on the skin, which is separate from the skin, has an effect on the relationship between Nakata and Natsue. Like a linking object or object created, as discussed earlier through applied object-relations theory, the membrane has a presence with absence between Nakata and Natsue. This membrane is a fantasy created in Nakata's mind, affecting Nakata's psychological landscape but having no tangible presence. As such, psychoanalytic theory provides us an effective tool to further examine both the somatic and psychological effects of this membrane.

For Didier Anzieu, the skin stores stimulations and forms the ego, called the skin ego, through the senses of the skin after the common-skin period in which touch between the mother and infant is transparently communicated. The membrane, which is a creation of Nakata and is something beyond a living organism, also has a pivotal role in terms of Nakata's perception of Natsue's body. *The membrane* begins to take on a

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

particular identity. Explaining Yoshiyuki's *The Dark Room*, literary critic Kawamura Jirō emphasises that the theme of this novel is how the mind struggles against sexuality.²¹⁹ Capable of considering sexuality here as the body, Kawamura argues how Yoshiyuki perceives the body, senses and sexuality as a compelling force against the mind. Here, it is applicable to think about the membrane as that which has its origin in contact with others but which also has a significant effect on the mind since the membrane between the bodies fulfils 'all kinds of functions', as quoted above. In this regard, the membrane is beyond the surface; Anzieu sees the skin having functions as complex as a biological organism, yet nurtured through fantasy. There is, however, a crucial difference between the surface as it is seen by Anzieu and Yoshiyuki. Transparent 'common skin' for Anzieu seems to be equally reachable for both parties, providing a direct communication between the two as 'a unique screen which comes to resonate with the sensations, emotions, mental images and vital rhythms of the two',²²⁰ referred to earlier. But this is not necessarily the case for Yoshiyuki's membrane. Nakata creates a membrane and has access to it, whereas Natsue does not.

The relationship between Nakata and Natsue, examined through Anzieu's common-skin framework, raises the question of *who* makes and operates these surfaces. Literary scholar Naomi Segal states that Anzieu's skin, which serves as the 'leading

²¹⁹ Kawamura Jirō, *Kankaku no Kagami: Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Ron (The Mirror of the Senses: The Essay on Yoshiyuki Junnosuke)* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1979), 185.

²²⁰ Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 62–63.

organ', can avoid both gender assumptions based on the penis-phallus and castration; the sexual difference is seen as inherently hierarchical.²²¹ Anzieu's common skin seems more or less created gender equally since it is a fictitiously shared membrane to which both parties believe they are "glued by love".²²² It is about the membrane but also a common ideal ego, in which both parties can know the thoughts, impressions and affects of the other.²²³ Matsuura Rieko also tries to overcome hierarchical sexual relations by employing *skinship* and dismantling communication focused on sexual organs. It seems reasonable to state that, relatively speaking, the skin tends to be a gender-equal organ, open to those who touch, paying attention to sensations and the following affects given by both sexes such as the mother, father, family members and lovers.

However, a bodily encounter includes prompt conduction of touch and brings conventional physical, ethical and cultural power relationships into play, in which the man clearly tends to have the initiative, as in *The Dark Room*. Nakata creates an imaginary membrane and talks about this membrane from his standpoint, so that the readers do not know if Natsue has access to it. Or, more specifically, we do not encounter her commentary on the membrane. Natsue plays a role in the creation of this membrane through her body and words that perplex Nakata and heighten his desire for

²²¹ Segal, *Consensuality*, 56, 72.

²²² *Ibid.*, 192. Quoted from Anzieu, *L'Epiderme nomade et la peau psychique* (Paris: Les Editions du Collège de Psychanalyse Groupale et Familiale, 1990), 38.

²²³ *Ibid.*

her: ‘She would deliberately say this sort of thing [experiences with other men] as we made love. The words would turn to moans, and she would arch her back, and move her body about....’²²⁴ Yet, she does not have a mutually communicative and active role in the operation of this membrane since Nakata creates and operates it in his mind.²²⁵ Anzieu’s theory based on tactile experiences making direct communication possible through shared skin lets us free ourselves from normative gender assumptions based on the sexual organs, just as Segal argues. Nevertheless, the application of this theory in everyday life, for the body to practise it as it is lived, is still questionable in Yoshiyuki precisely because the common-skin fantasy does not necessarily operate in the same manner for both members of the couple, or at least not in 1970s Japan.

Ueno Chizuko, Ogura Chikako and Tomioka Taeko criticise Yoshiyuki’s view of the female subject in that his male protagonist often uses the female as a means to eliminate his anger and stress.²²⁶ We can certainly apply this critique to *The Dark Room*, since Nakata considers a woman who is ‘all sex organ without any brain’ as an ideal.²²⁷ In the novel, Nakata has a discussion for a magazine with another author (called ‘A’),

²²⁴ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 145.

²²⁵ As an earlier-mentioned I-novel (autobiographic novel where the protagonist’s experiences double with those of the author), Yoshiyuki wrote this fiction, reflecting his own life experiences onto Nakata. But since Nakata is a narrator of this novel, Natsue’s and other female characters’ perspectives are unrevealed unless he makes comments on them or unless those characters ‘speak’ of themselves. Ōtsuka Eiko, Yoshiyuki’s real-life last partner and supposedly the model for Natsue, published two books, such as *Anshitsu no Nakade (Inside the Dark Room, 1997)*, relating her relationship to Yoshiyuki to the novel *The Dark Room*.

²²⁶ Ueno Chizuko, Ogura Chikako and Tomioka Taeko, *Danryū Bungakuron*, 29-30. Ogura is a psychologist and gender studies scholar, and Tomioka is a poet, critic and novelist.

²²⁷ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 43.

who is the same age. A comments, 'If one's going to get fed up with women who've got intelligence, they might be better without any brains at all'.²²⁸ Nakata continues:

If you said publicly that the ideal woman was a sex organ with arms and legs, a majority of women would get furious, and the remainder would laugh scornfully at the so-called "male dilemma." Among the men, there'd be a lot who'd agree, yet you could safely assume that in many cases the anguish would be there just the same, under the surface.²²⁹

The women writers introduced earlier such as Hirabayashi, Takahashi and Matsuura represent not necessarily passive women's desire and intentional actions. Yet, in *The Dark Room*, it seems that Natsue's role is mainly to receive the desire developed in Nakata's fantasy through a one-way reachable membrane. Anzieu's mutually shared common skin would have Nakata on one side and Natsue on the other, both with equal access to it. But Natsue does not necessarily reach this membrane, or she is not even aware of it. Thus, any shared mutuality of this membrane is dissolved.

Yoshiyuki does not problematise the one-way nature of the membrane, but as Anzieu does, it has been discussed in a Judeo-Christian context through the concept of *Noli me tangere*. Men are encouraged to touch, but women must not, as Thomas was invited to touch Jesus, but Mary Magdalene was not.²³⁰ Taking this concept as a cross-cultural reference to reflect upon tactile prohibition or differentiated access according to gender,²³¹ Anzieu's understanding of *Noli me tangere* seems relatively

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

²³⁰ Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 143–144.

²³¹ This religious motif of the prohibition of touch has been discussed in the French context such as by Anzieu and Jean-Luc Nancy, and I employ this Judeo-Christian motif to discuss touch in Japanese literature because, as I discuss this below through Nancy, this motif indicates prohibition and could

divided according to gender. Yet, Jean-Luc Nancy provides us a more indefinable interpretation, considering Jesus' words after his resurrection. Jesus blesses Mary Magdalene while keeping her at a distance, effectively saying, ““Don't touch me, for I'm touching you, and this touch is such that it holds you at a distance.””²³² *Noli me tangere* for Nancy is a combination of distance, tenderness, benediction and caress. This is not a one-way prohibition of touch from men to women as Anzieu suggests. Rather, it can be a touch of mutual care, so that the touch renews or opens their paths to go, as the resurrected Jesus suggested Mary Magdalene go and announce his resurrection.

A Nancean interpretation may not work in the same manner for Yoshiyuki if we consider the particularly Christian context, regardless of the fact that touch in Yoshiyuki's works as a whole is not necessarily exclusively limited to the sexual but includes sensual touch as care so that the male protagonists read and listen to women's pasts through touch. Yet, the negation of one-way touch has an ironic twist in *The Dark Room*. Natsue is the only one who knows her past, with Nakata 'knowing' her past only through her narrative and bodily performance, bound up with his own fantasy and interpretation. Natsue shows Nakata the presence of other men in her past through her speech. He then wonders whether his touching of particular parts of her body has

include care and benediction, showing the undefinable tension between the touchable and the untouchable, the reachable and the unreachable, the very similar tension that existed in Kuki. Moreover, in the priority given to the letter over speech in Japan unlike in the West (as discussed earlier by Marthy), Anzieu's suggested message of this motif—do not touch, but listen and speak—may present an interesting comparison with the Japanese case in its small scale of practices both in Christianity and psychoanalysis.

²³² Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli Me Tangere*, 36.

already been done by others, even when she says, ““that’s the first time””.²³³ His contact with her body is focused on investigating whether his touch is the first one on her clean film of skin or whether it is already mediated through the membrane, created by the previous touches of others, as he says, ‘I tried hard to find something in physical relations with Natsue that would be a “first” for her’.²³⁴ Only Natsue knows the truth. This membrane consists of previous touch, as opposed to common skin that consists of the previous and subsequent touches. Despite Nakata creating, operating and discussing this membrane as mentioned earlier, Natsue alone possesses actual knowledge of her past sexual experiences, further complicating the gender imbalance problematised by scholars like Ueno.

Transparent common skin is a failure in the case of Nakata and Natsue because of the gender imbalance and inevitable previous touch. Anzieu’s common skin also has an inscriptive function through the sensations that will be immediately shared by the couple. In Yoshiyuki, only Nakata is actively searching for the inscription, despite tending to negate the transparency with others because of his hesitation regarding being ‘taken hold’ of by women. What makes this common-skin project a failure in *The Dark Room* is that, though the surface is jointly created, inscribed sensations do not extend to both sides of the subjects. Nakata’s membrane is in between Natsue’s bodily inscriptions versus her verbal narrative, his attraction to bodily knowledge of Natsue

²³³ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 149.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

versus his reluctance to be taken hold by her, and his desire for transparency versus his experience of mediation.

As seen in this section, there is a heightened fantasy about transparent skin or direct touch because of mediation, the lack of actual tactile communication, the ongoing aesthetic that heightens the value of ‘not touching’ and ‘having a certain distance’ from the loved object and an unavoidable membrane that hosts previous touch and sensations. Here, we notice that the crucial difference between Yoshiyuki’s membrane and Anzieu’s common skin is that the membrane is jointly created through words and sensations, whereas the common skin itself is not necessarily tied to language for its creation. Various factors that form the membrane—gender power relations and sensations, utterances and memory about past experiences—make it difficult to achieve gender equality precisely because it is not necessarily free from past constructions of the self. In the next section, I will analyse a narrative performance relating to the membrane and the skin to examine the intersection between the body and language regarding touch.

c. Narrative and Words as Mediated Touch

Natsue’s physical memories of others and memories conveyed through her spoken narrative emerge in the present as a membrane that mediates communication between the couple. Her discourse is not necessarily conveyed to Nakata as a purely ‘spoken

narrative', as it is entangled with a certain somatic excitement. Nakata says:

I could feel her breath coming faster even as she spoke.

Whenever I asked her about the other men she'd had, she would answer immediately. In time, she began to tell me about them of her own accord, and made herself excited in the process. In such ways, I got to know all kinds of things about Natsue and her lovers.²³⁵

Nakata comes to know 'all kinds of' events that have happened to Natsue's body, based on her discourse, to which the reader and Nakata himself have no access in reality.

Nevertheless, he cannot be indifferent about this discourse. This narrative, combined with her physical performance, helps to create the membrane between their bodies. As

Nakata narrates, 'More than once she said, "This is the first time." If she was to be believed, there would be a surprising number of places on her body left untried',²³⁶

which suggests an effort on his part to find some of her body parts that are free from this film. We have seen, in the previous section, how touch is inscribed and accumulated over the skin in both Anzieu's conceptions of the skin ego and Yoshiyuki's membrane. Yet, since Nakata grasps Natsue's memory of touch on her skin both through her bodily performance and her narrative, in this section, we should further investigate the function of narrative concerning touch.

Anzieu proposes that, at the dawn of psychoanalysis, Freud was 'more a man of sight and of touch than a man of words'²³⁷ and gradually shifted from hypnotherapy to psychical analysis. This shift occurred due to his realisation, through the phenomenon

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 145.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 149.

²³⁷ Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 138.

of transference, of the necessity of denying physical intimacy with patients and giving up on the capricious results of hypnotherapy. Traditional psychoanalysis—Anzieu confirms the fundamental principle is still the same²³⁸—involves tactile and visual prohibitions, patients lying on the couch without seeing and touching the analyst. Via this method, psychoanalysis is only possible with the prohibition of touch.²³⁹ Further, Anzieu's interpretation of *Noli me tangere*, mentioned earlier, is based on the superiority of language; Anzieu suggests that 'touch me not' can also imply 'simply listen and speak', indicating the abandonment of the language of gesture for communication through words.²⁴⁰ Moreover, he raises the question of the cultural specificity of the prohibition of touch in Christian civilisation, where spirituality is given greater importance than bodily communication.²⁴¹ This is a somewhat problematic statement if we consider various forms of touch in Christianity and casual touch such as hugging and kissing in Roman Catholic countries.²⁴²

If the practice of a 'talking cure' with a prohibition on touching is specific to Christian civilisations compared to others, as Anzieu posits, the inescapable touch and

²³⁸ This prohibition 'as the minimum requirement of psychoanalysis' that is still maintained includes the 'prohibition on undressing, on showing one's naked body, touching the psychoanalyst's body or being touched by his hand or any other part of his body'. *Ibid.*, 141.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 154. Anzieu emphasises the prohibition of touch, but Freud, at least in his earlier period, did not draw a clear-cut distinction between hypnotherapy and proper psychoanalysis, employing the 'pressure' technique. See *Studies on Hysteria*, *SE.*, 2, the cases of Lucy (106–124) and Elisabeth von R (135–181). Or also in 'Resistance and Repression' in *SE.*, 16, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Part 3).

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 142–143.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 143–144.

²⁴² Christianity embraces touch in various instances, such as Mary of Bethany's anointing Jesus's feet and hair, another woman from Bethany's bathing Jesus's feet and miracles executed via Jesus' touch. Anzieu mentions such examples as 'problematics' with regard to touch, *ibid.*, 144. Christian relics and shroud also represent one aspect of Christian touch. Tiffany Field also explains that early experiences of touch (casual touch such as hugging) affect greeting behaviour (Field, *Touch*, 21).

unspoken sensibility in Yoshiyuki's writing might indicate one aspect of Japanese tactile experience that is separate from Christian culture. Yoshiyuki's characters conduct touch in 'special spaces', such as in certain pubs or a locked room only for lovers. Kawabata depicts the implicit yet constantly latent desire to touch others—a desire that exists under the censorship and aesthetics of indirectness, albeit in the absence of a widespread religious prohibition on sexual touching. There also exists a hesitation toward excessive verbalisation about the self, for which various motives may be rendered, including a reluctance to lose a certain ambiguity in an aesthetic sense²⁴³ and a general prejudice against mental health care in an analytic or therapeutic sense.²⁴⁴ Certainly, Christian morality would criticise the absence of religious prohibitions regarding sex in Japan and inherently question the repetitive descriptions of physical relationships with multiple partners and the male's sexual imposition onto women without repentance.²⁴⁵ However, the fact that Nakata persistently touches Natsue's body—even though he 'knows' of her past relationships to some extent from her verbal discourse—may indicate that he tends to rely more on his senses than on her narrative.

²⁴³ The ambiguity, linked to beauty unexpressed through language, has been historically related to Japanese aesthetics, as seen in *Tanka* short poetry or *Noh* theatre.

²⁴⁴ See the documentary film *Seishin (Mind)*, directed by Sōda Kazuhiro (2008; Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 2010), DVD.

²⁴⁵ See Endō Shūsaku, *Shiroi Hito, Kiiroi Hito (White Person, Yellow Person)* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1960). Originally published in 1955. In comparison, Yoshiyuki does not suggest any moral constraints on sexual relationships with multiple partners. Nakata simultaneously has relationships with Takako, Maki and Natsue and picks the one who is available or calls a prostitute when he needs a female body, so that their bodies are placed 'on the same level' (Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 47). Natsue has multiple relationships with Nakata and other men (*Ibid.*, 46, 157), and she regards one of her men as 'a sexual convenience' (*Ibid.*, 126). Takako also has a relationship with other men while being with Nakata (*Ibid.*, 86).

Being more dependent on bodily ways of knowing than representation through language, Yoshiyuki's writing can be, as Kawamura describes, the struggle of sexuality as nature and mind,²⁴⁶ or in other words, how compellingly the body may affect the mind.

Anzieu seems to contradict himself in placing more importance on verbal touch than physical touch while establishing the ego through senses of the skin. By crediting senses over the skin without privileging the surface of genital organs, Anzieu succeeds in betraying certain gender assumptions and opening up new possibilities for the body. Simultaneously, he claims spiritual superiority, which lowers the value of bodily senses and which demonstrates a different position from Yoshiyuki, who pursues the struggle between body and mind or who possibly treats the body as the mind. Since it seems Anzieu prioritises touch mediated through words over bodily touch, the question remains as to what extent language can represent contact, sensations and bodily experiences and to what extent the products of mind (language) and body (sensations) can intertwine. If psychoanalysts 'touch' analysands in the form of words as representation as Anzieu suggests,²⁴⁷ symbolic contact should *touch* others over the divide of cultural, social and linguistic differences. In other words, even though symbols are culturally specific, representation and symbols are fundamentally

²⁴⁶ Kawamura Jirō, "'Anshitsu' ni Tsuite" ('About "The Dark Room"'), in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke no Kenkyū* (*Research on Yoshiyuki Junnosuke*), ed. Yamamoto Yoshiaki (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1978), 39.

²⁴⁷ Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 154.

replaceable with others, so that symbolic contact should be tangible, insofar as the structure remains similar.

Regarding the use of psychoanalysis, though modern Japanese writers starting from Tanizaki, Akutagawa, Kawabata and Yoshiyuki were aware of and interested in psychoanalysis—just as many other writers and artists around the world were at the time—psychoanalysis has not become established in Japanese culture as it has in the West. Psychoanalyst Okonogi Keigo writes that, after the first appearance of the psychoanalytic document in Japan in 1912, Freudian psychoanalysis was introduced in the 1910s and published in translation from 1929 to 1933. Psychoanalytic practice showed some expansion in the 1930s.²⁴⁸ But when World War II broke out in 1939, psychoanalysis was regarded as a ‘dangerous Jewish system of thought’ (in the Freudian sense) in Nazi Germany-allied Japan, which caused the special police to surveil Kosawa Heisaku, a leading Japanese psychoanalyst at the time.²⁴⁹ After World War II, more psychologists and psychiatrists went to Europe and the United States to receive therapeutic training. The psychotherapy of borderline cases and psychoanalytic therapy attracted more attention especially from 1960 to 1970 due to rapid Westernisation and urbanisation and consequent psychological problems.²⁵⁰ But there

²⁴⁸ Okonogi Keigo, ‘Psychoanalysis in Japan’, in *Freud and the Far East: Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the People and Culture of China, Japan, and Korea*, ed. Salman Akhtar (Lanham: Jason Aronson, 2009), 9-10.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13. Regarding the psychopathology associated with modernisation and urbanisation in Japan, see Nishizono Masahisa, ‘Culture, Psychopathology, and Psychotherapy: Changes Observed in Japan’, in *Asian Culture and Psychotherapy: Implications for East and West*, ed. Wen-Shing Tseng et al. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005).

existed prohibitive elements for the genuine expansion of psychoanalysis in Japan due to such reasons as: the tension between the German-based psychiatric tradition in Japan and emerging therapies; the worldwide antipsychiatry movement around 1970, which caused many disputes among psychiatric societies and universities;²⁵¹ and the general resistance of verbal treatments in Japan.²⁵² Despite many Japanese translations for essential psychoanalytic works and some Japanese psychoanalysts' international reputations,²⁵³ the psychoanalytic circle still remains small in Japan, due to the above reasons and because of the unsuccessful handing down of training analyses in the transitional period.²⁵⁴

Japanese Lacanian psychoanalyst Shingū Kazushige and Japanese literary critic Karatani Kōjin both refer to their linguistic system, in the form of different *on* (Japanese-derived) and *kun* (Chinese-derived) readings of Chinese characters and three different characters in Japan. Karatani problematises Lacan's foreword comment for his

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 13-14. Nishizono also writes that a campaign against the government's mental health policy that occurred several decades ago still makes community-based psychiatric surveys difficult to carry out, providing no comprehensive epidemiological data in Japan. Nishizono, 'Culture, Psychopathology, and Psychotherapy', 49.

²⁵² Kitayama Osamu, *Prohibition of Don't Look: Living through Psychoanalysis and Culture in Japan* (Tokyo: Iwasaki Gakujutsu Shuppansha, 2010), 106-109.

²⁵³ This includes Doi Takeo's theory of *amae*, Okonogi's *Ajase* complex (the mother's desire to kill her child, prenatal rancor and the child's desire to kill the mother, stemming from Buddhist texts, as opposed to the paternal relationship in the Oedipus complex), and Kitayama's 'Don't Look' prohibition (based on Japanese myths and folklore in which the hero breaks the prohibition against his looking at female characters that are non-human creatures, such as a crocodile or crain taking a woman's shape, resulting in their separation). See Okonogi, 'The Ajase Complex and Its Implications', Kitayama, 'Prohibition against Looking: Analysis of Japanese Mythology and Folktales', both in *Asian Culture and Psychotherapy*. These examples and some of the Kawai Hayao's analysis on Japanese subjectivity heavily rely on folklore and myth, which risks another myth-making of the 'Japanese' psyche.

²⁵⁴ Okonogi, 'Psychoanalysis in Japan', 24. The Japan Psychoanalytic Society (the Japanese branch of the International Psychoanalytical Association) had 33 members (including active and associate) before 1994 (*ibid*) and 35 members (Official website of Japan Psychoanalytic Society, <http://www.jpas.jp/org01.html>) in 2013.

publication *Ecrits* in the Japanese translation that Japanese people may not need to be psychoanalysed, since Japanese speakers—by constantly using Chinese within their native language and borrowing foreign characters in the communication between the unconscious and *parole* (spoken language)—always speak the truth via a lie, without being liars.²⁵⁵ While psychoanalysis is a verbalisation of repressed desires, experiences and fantasies in a spoken language through which one makes the unconscious conscious, Karatani explains that the unconscious appears as it is at the conscious level in the Japanese language. There is no repression because one is already embracing the constant translation between Chinese and Japanese and the communication between the unconscious and the conscious. Japanese speakers always expose the unconscious without being repressed.²⁵⁶ Shingū Kazushige also explains that the Japanese subject is fragmented between *on* and *kun* readings, between speech and writing, and between Japanese and Chinese characters. The relationship between writing and the truth is necessarily relativised. The Japanese subject has access to the unconscious in that way and is divided between the inscribed letters and speech; therefore, ‘psychoanalysis is neither necessary nor possible’.²⁵⁷ Clearly, then, a cultural and linguistic translation was needed to situate psychoanalysis in Japan, which may not have been done in the early introductory phase of psychoanalysis.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Karatani Kōjin, *Nihon Seishinbunseki*, 75-76.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁵⁷ Shingū Kazushige, ‘Freud, Lacan and Japan’, in *Perversion and Modern Japan: Psychoanalysis, Literature, Culture*, ed. Nina Cornyetz and J. Keith Vincent (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 264.

²⁵⁸ Analysing the development of psychoanalysis and modern subjectivity in Japan, psychologist Ian

As opposed to Anzieu, who treats language and the body separately as different ‘means’ of communication, Yoshiyuki considers those two channels intertwined in communication, just like a membrane is formed through narrative and bodily performance. Nakata, after listening to Natsue’s recollection with other men, narrates, ‘These conversations added a not unwelcome touch of spice to our relationship. As for the men, I asked for no details, and their faces and bodies remained decently obscure’.²⁵⁹ Certainly, because these faces and bodies are one of the elements that create a membrane, Natsue’s other men are entering into their relationship—or precisely speaking, into the membrane—through her narrative. When Nakata asks a question about Natsue’s relationships with other men, Natsue responds:

“Still suspicious? Just because you forced me to say I’d been fed by other men? I should have kept quiet. I really didn’t think you were the kind to go on fretting.” True enough, at one time the idea of other men sharing her body hadn’t bothered me in the slightest.

The one thing you need is Natsue’s body, I reassured myself. *And you’ve got it here, now*. I felt the tiredness ebbing from my own body at the thought.²⁶⁰

Being concerned about her relationships with other men, Nakata tries to assure himself that he has Natsue’s body with him and he attends to Natsue. Then he physically

Parker writes that, as a part of the development of psychoanalysis concerning the strength of the ego that American culture brought to Japan after World War II, the analysis of dependency and autonomy in Japan ‘adapted and transformed theories of the ego and its relation to others. Japanese psychoanalysis thus turned apparent weakness, its subordinate relationship, to a culturally-specific system of psychology introduced from outside the country, into its strength’. Ian Parker, *Japan in Analysis*, 5. Critically examining the *Japaneseness* claimed by Japanese intellectuals including Motoori Norinaga and Akutagawa, Karatani argues that the *Japanese* thing, if any, is probably foreclosure regarding a *kun* reading. The Lacanian concept of foreclosure means the elimination of primary repression, in other words, the elimination of castration and the entering into the verbal world. In this context, Karatani states that the *kun* reading of Chinese characters (meaning the acceptance of Chinese characters while not accepting them by employing the Japanese reading of them) is a foreclosure, which he says could be the only Japanese thing. *Nihon Seishinbunseki*, 77.

²⁵⁹ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 145-146.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 163.

becomes less tired. These external conversations, the internal voice and actual physical performances all affect the membrane and their relationship.

Occasionally, the body takes on a proximate role to, or even an interchangeable role with, verbal communication in a way that the body prevents foreseen conversations. Nakata narrates:

I remembered calling when she had another man at her place.

“There must have been times when you arrived home after sleeping around and found him waiting for you?”

“There were.”

“He must have sensed something and got suspicious.”

“Yes, he did. I worked things so that we made love immediately, in case he checked up on me. Once he’d finished, I felt safe, because the white stuff was all mixed up inside me and he couldn’t tell anymore.”²⁶¹

In this case, the body serves as an immediate replacement against the words she wanted to avoid. The body, compellingly enough, performs the unsaid words, or the body is employed as a form of concealment. In this way, as Kawamura describes, Yoshiyuki’s themes of the struggle between body and mind as well as language and body are not easily divisible.

This indivisible account of body and language, as described in Yoshiyuki, is a major concern also for contemporary Japanese thought. By looking at the historical account of the Japanese view on the body as mentioned in the introduction, Yōrō Takeshi tries to explain mind-body monism in Japanese contemporary thought. Yōrō refers to figures like himself and Ichikawa Hiroshi, who is influenced by

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

phenomenology and whose theory of the body *mi* is proximate to Merleau-Pontean *flesh* as discussed in the introduction. Yōrō sees the body as a part of nature. Ichikawa, neutralising the division between body and mind, regards the body not as an object, but as the body to be lived, the body as mind, the body as phenomena and ‘a compound body of the world to smell, world to touch and world to hear’.²⁶² The original wording for ‘world to smell, world to touch and world to hear’ is *niou sekai* 匂う世界, *fururu sekai* 触れる世界 and *kikoeru sekai* 聞こえる世界, which could also be translated as ‘smelling world, touching world and hearing world’. But the original Japanese makes the subject and the object of actions indivisible—whether we are the subject to touch the world, whether the world is the subject to touch us, or whether we both touch each other. This ambiguity of word choice is certainly his conscious decision, though we can say that he most likely meant the last one, both touching subjects by encroaching on one another.

The accounts through Yoshiyuki, Yōrō and Ichikawa above necessarily remind us of Watkin’s phrase about Merleau-Ponty, ‘The body is irreducibly open. The body itself, furthermore, is not a given but an inextricable mutuality of the biological and the historical, as much a human creation as a natural artefact’.²⁶³ This mutuality of body and world as well as biological and historical is not limited to the body and perception, but is open to language. ‘Linguistic expression is on a continuum with perceptual

²⁶² Ichikawa, *Mi no Kōzō*, 186-188.

²⁶³ Watkin, *Phenomenology or Deconstruction?*, 22.

experience; there is a flesh of the body and a flesh of language, and the visibility in which invisible sense is encrusted [...] has the same structure of promiscuity and pregnancy in the case of language'.²⁶⁴ In this account, we also see intertwined relationships between body and language, nature and mind, and body and world, which echoes and verifies Yoshiyuki's construction of the 'indivisible other' in the form of a membrane. Perhaps Anzieu does have attitudes differing from traditional psychoanalysis, as exemplified by Freud in my introduction, where I discuss the tension between psychoanalysis and phenomenology. Nevertheless, we can see that Anzieu's psychoanalysis fundamentally tries to replace the body's experiences through language. Thus, for him, '*noli me tangere*' implies to speak and listen.²⁶⁵ The body according to Yoshiyuki, Ichikawa and Merleau-Ponty is more open to touch the world, to create the world and to *sense* the world, without fixation and determination. Even if Anzieu and Merleau-Ponty do not have much of a historical gap, it seems there is still some incompatible distance between their thoughts stemming from psychoanalysis and phenomenology, respectively, in how they help us understand the world, especially regarding the relationship between language and the body here.

As has been observed in Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity regarding the body, the problematisation of the mind-body relationship is widespread. Anzieu draws

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 47. 'Pregnancy' in Merleau-Ponty is meaningfulness and to participate in meaning. 'Promiscuity' similarly means encroachment of the visible and the invisible, interiority and exteriority, disavowing a dualism and refusing to fix the alterity. See Watkin, 29.

²⁶⁵ Ian Parker sees the way of setting boundaries with others through *skinship* as requiring touch rather than prohibiting it, assuming the childish *skinship* works the same way for the adults (Parker, *Japan in Analysis*, 100). Thus for him, the limit of psychoanalytic theorisations in Japan is precisely touch.

spiritual superiority largely from (though not limited to) the Christian tradition, which has no deep connection to Japanese culture. In Japanese culture, unlike traditional Western dualism, the body has existed as a part of nature²⁶⁶ and also works as a sort of mind, which is precisely what happens in Yoshiyuki's membrane. The fantasy of accumulated corporeal experience appears as if it has a mind and thus has a *presence* of absence or perhaps an invisible presence. Yet, Nancy suggests the Christian body—the body of God as the absolute—is also the Absentee²⁶⁷ or invisible presence. To read this invisible presence as presence is not necessarily to replace corporeal experiences with words, or not to say reduce them to words. The words may affect the membrane as they are, as a representation or replacement of bodily touch and as an acoustic presence uttered by the body, because both the body and narrative stimuli form and develop the membrane in Yoshiyuki. Although Anzieu admits sound performs in early childhood development as a 'sound mirror',²⁶⁸ like the visual effect of Lacan's mirror image, his touch in the psychoanalytic framework divides the functions of the body and language (mind), which is more intertwined in Yoshiyuki. Or, rather, tactile or acoustic signals in Anzieu exist to produce meaning and to symbolise,²⁶⁹ which is not necessarily the case

²⁶⁶ 'The self' is written as 自己; the Chinese character 自 signifies 'naturally', 'from its own' and 'from the self'. 己 signifies 'the self'. 'Nature' is written as 自然, 自; 'self' and 'nature' stem from the same character. From this example, Kimura Bin explains the feelings and perceptions sensed on the body and skin in daily life are described as the 'self' by pulling them toward ourselves and as 'nature' by pushing them toward the world, suggesting the absence of clear-cut selfhood and of the otherness of nature.

Kimura, *Jiko, Aida, Jikan*, 311-312

²⁶⁷ Nancy, *Corpus*, 3.

²⁶⁸ Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 158.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

in Yoshiyuki. Thus, psychoanalytic touch, though it touches the person analysed through representation and symbolism, may omit the one that is indivisible, as in Yoshiyuki's work. The point of touch in Yoshiyuki may be the very inability to touch fully—even through representation and symbols—as Kuki suggests.

Yet the indefinable, invisible and ambiguous nature of the membrane is not fully represented in the translation of *The Dark Room*, due to an omission in the translation of the term 'membrane'. 'Membrane' in *The Dark Room* is originally written as *maku* 膜 in the Japanese text to mean a surface or tissue, but different kinds of *maku* are equally translated as 'membrane' in the English version, including *nenmaku* (a mucous membrane) translated as 'membrane'.²⁷⁰ In addition, two Japanese terms meaning 'skin'—*hifu* 皮膚, which is used in a biological and medical context, and *hada* 肌 which is used in daily life including to indicate the nature of human beings—are translated identically as 'skin'.²⁷¹ Yoshiyuki differentiates membrane (*maku*) from the skin (*hifu/hada*) of the human body, representing the nature of the membrane that is something alien to the skin of Nakata and Natsue. We can find this also in his other

²⁷⁰ Yoshiyuki, *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 151; *The Dark Room*, 168.

²⁷¹ As an example of the general use of *hada*, 'I can get along with him' can be expressed as '*Karetoha* (with him) *hada ga* (skin) *au* (get along)'. '*Hada* (skin) *wo yurusu* (allow)' implies allowing somebody to have a physical relationship. For both of these cases, *hada* is not replaceable with *hifu*. Yoshiyuki rarely uses the term *hada*, but it seems he intentionally differentiates between them, using *hada* to describe the body of a non-intimate partner (such as Maki's body at a moment when Nakata does not consider her as an intimate partner, *The Dark Room*, 20; *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 20); using *hifu* when Nakata sleeps with Maki, through which she becomes pregnant (*The Dark Room*, 103; *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 92); and using *hifu* for an intimate Natsue's body in which he has a particular emotional investment and attention (*The Dark Room*, 142; *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 128). The English word 'epidermis' can be another way of translating *hifu*, but it means 'outer surface' or 'layer' in Japanese. Thus, it is possible that the translator could not find an adequate word to translate different sorts of bodily membranes.

short story 'Katsushika' ('*Katsushika*') in 1980, where the membrane indicates a female skin touched by other men that feels grey and sticky for the male protagonist.²⁷² The membrane exists between bodies, stimulating one's interest in another, mediating stimuli and affecting living entities. The above discussions demonstrate Yoshiyuki's particular attention to depictions of the body, which is not fully illuminated in an English translation.

To conclude this section, the fantasy of transparent touch stemming from the primal touch with the mother seems applicable to the infant-mother relationship but also to other intimate relationships. Nevertheless, how fantasy operates in interpersonal communication is much more complex, since the body we might touch is already mediated through previous touches, sensations, memories and language. Therefore, the fantasy of transparent touch that Nakata expresses almost results in failure. He does not wish for the other to hold him, which may mean that he hesitates to take responsibility for another's weight literally or emotional burdens figuratively, though he wishes to touch the fresh skin of Natsue. Yet, the mediation through the membrane necessarily arouses a fantasy of immediate contact, precisely because there is a rupture, gap and space between them where contact takes place and the fantasy is heightened. The relationship between Nakata and Natsue involves traces of the other within the body, which reminds us of the inscribable surface of skin described by Anzieu and the

²⁷² Yoshiyuki, 'Katsushika', in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1998), 4: 263.

‘sediment’ of previous epochs within us, described by Ferguson. Nakata senses the odour of other men, memories that remain within Natsue’s body. Yoshiyuki’s mediated touch through the skin, membrane and words represents the indivisible interaction of body and language. This indeterminacy and encroachment of body and world, object and subject, and body and language echo the thoughts of Merleau-Ponty and Ichikawa. Mediation of touch does not necessarily mean the impossibility of transparent touch. Rather, it suggests that the body itself consists of various affects, gaps between words and memory.

We witnessed a corporeal turn in the late twentieth century against a tendency to place importance on sign and meaning, especially in the West. This turn included the re-examination of surfaces, as in Benthien, Connor and Segal in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Due to its cultural history and aesthetics of bodily practices, the Japanese writers mentioned earlier depicted repressed bodily communication in the midst of rapid Westernisation and traditional practices. This repression inversely heightened their unrealisable desire toward transparent touch. Yoshiyuki was influenced by writers such as Tanizaki and Kawabata, who were already successful in describing the fantasy of female bodies and intimate relationships; Yoshiyuki thematises the relationship between body and mind, sexuality and senses in a very distinctive, yet subtle style. To describe the skin and membrane that generally define one’s corporeal border is to question how we can reach the other, not necessarily in the sense of a

‘Western other’ as Tanizaki repeatedly writes, but in the sense of the unreachable yet indivisible existence of the other’s body.

B. Touch through Vision

In the previous section of this chapter, I analysed how touch to the skin is already mediated by previous touches most likely of different persons, arguing against the general assumption that one can reach others simply through the physical action of contact. Yoshiyuki shows how complicated it is to have a transparent and direct relationship with intimate objects. I examined the issue of mediated touch in the work of Yoshiyuki through the thoughts of Anzieu, who affirms that touch is direct and transparent in particular between a mother and infant, but not necessarily thereafter.²⁷³

Touching the skin is almost always mediated by previous touches, through related memories and through culture. By using the term ‘mediation’, I intend to signify the experience of connecting and interrupting one’s touch with another. One’s memory of being touched from prior experiences connects the present touch with another, but this memory may prevent or interrupt any direct, fresh tactile experience with each other. Thus, mediation regarding touch possesses a dual, oppositional nature: It is connective and preventative.

In this section, (B), I further examine the mediated nature of touch in Japanese

²⁷³ See Introduction, C-b. Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, 62-63.

literature, asking whether the gaze conducts touch, how vision and touch are interrelated and whether elements of light and darkness are relevant. I specifically focus on examples from Yoshiyuki's novel *The Dark Room* and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's work *In Praise of Shadows*. *The Dark Room*, which in Japanese is *Kurai Heya*, does not fully express the connotations of the original title, *Anshitsu*, which literally means 'a darkroom' for developing photographic images. I would like to draw more attention to the gaze and light that touch the body in literary texts, specifically looking for the idea of light rays as a carnal medium, as a kind of skin that one shares with the photographed and as a threshold between bodily sensations and vision through Barthes and Silverman. Finally, I would like to present a similarity respecting the aesthetics of shadow between Tanizaki and Barthes.

In Yoshiyuki, visual and tactile communications between Nakata and Natsue are interconnected. The encounter with the anonymous photographed woman, who resembles Natsue, reminds Nakata of Natsue. Nakata begins to lower his barriers toward Natsue in real life after this visual encounter while continuing his bodily relationship with her. His psychological and bodily states change, thus modifying his image of Natsue. The correlation between touch and vision—which Merleau-Ponty examined—has been further discussed by such figures as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Laura Marks and Mark Paterson.²⁷⁴ In particular, Martin Crowley develops

²⁷⁴ Deleuze and Guattari investigate the translation between the 'haptic' and the 'optic'—a vision that engages with the haptic sense of touch—instead of being uniquely on the side of the visual (Deleuze and

the notion of affective relationality and the mediation of contact through artwork, including the cinema and literature. The image of contact here is a metaphor for ‘a process of mediation relayed through all manner of psychosomatic apparatus’,²⁷⁵ the art producing an affective response. Crowley suggests that this occurs through the fantasy of immediacy especially in the case of media arts and through the distance between the artwork and the receiver as if touch occurs because of the artwork leaving the receiver, which reminds us of Nancy’s touch as leaving and Kuki’s concept of *iki*.²⁷⁶ In addition, from her ethnological research on *skinship* in Japan, Tahhan writes, ‘This distance or spatial segregation [especially between the father and child] can be proximity through distance in sight, or “touching at a distance”. It is in this depth that sight can be a form of skinship’.²⁷⁷

In *The Dark Room*, it remains ambiguous whether Yoshiyuki divides those who see (the seer) from those who are seen (the seen); rather, it seems to be left undecided. By seeing the photographed woman, Nakata eventually becomes attached to Natsue’s image. Nakata is looking at Natsue’s image ‘through’ the photographed woman. He is

Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi [London: Continuum, 2004]). Laura Marks develops critical investigations of ‘haptic visuality’ in film and media art and explores the ways in which vision can be tactile (Laura Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002]. See also *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* [Durham: Duke University Press, 2000]). Mark Paterson differentiates between the haptic (the sense of touch in general), cutaneous (the skin as a sense organ), and the tactile (cutaneous sense, more in relation to pressure), and develops the idea of a ‘felt’ phenomenology against a contemporary society exclusively focused on vision (Mark Paterson, *The Sense of Touch*).

²⁷⁵ Crowley, ‘Contact!’, 2.

²⁷⁶ This separation or ‘leaving’ is articulated in Nancy’s writing in a sense that touch occurs almost due to another’s movement to leave. See *Noli Me Tangere*. Moreover, Kuki’s *iki* necessarily requires some distance between one and the intended object.

²⁷⁷ Tahhan, ‘Blurring the Boundaries between Bodies’, 225.

also ‘looked at’ by Natsue (in his image) and the photographed woman. Nakata starts being affected by Natsue, while narrating that Natsue has also changed through her communication with him. This triangular relation between the seer (Nakata), the photographed (other woman) and the imagined gaze (Natsue) complicates our understanding of vision, touch and the body. This is another important aspect in examining touch since the touchable (or the tangible)²⁷⁸ and the visible may not be clearly divisible as suggested by Merleau-Ponty, as mentioned in the introduction.

a. Touch through the Gaze and Light

1. The Case of Yoshiyuki

In *The Dark Room*, Yoshiyuki inserts many short memories into narrative descriptions of the present. Between passages about Nakata’s first conversation with Natsue and an interaction between them one year after, Nakata describes a collection of black and white photographs. Because he was too tired to examine the photographs at the time, most of the collection remained untouched on his desk, yet:

This time, I had a feeling that some unseen hand must have deposited the book unnoticed on my desk. I went through it thoroughly, page by page. That done, I was to open it again only occasionally, as the fancy took me, but each time I found it as gripping as ever. For a whole year, in fact, it was as though I was shuttling to

²⁷⁸ As defined at the beginning of the introduction, (un)touchability reflects a sort of tension created through desire, sensations, memories and affects. Therefore, the (un)touchable in this research includes psychosomatic effects caused by the dual nature of touch (desire and hesitation or drive and prohibition in psychoanalytic sense), compared to the Merleau-Pontean phenomenal aspect of tangible touch.

and fro between the book of photos and Natsue's body.²⁷⁹

Looking at the face of the one white woman in the collection, Nakata narrates, 'As I looked at it, I began to fancy that the woman's face resembled Natsue's'.²⁸⁰ After his realisation that the woman resembles Natsue, he abruptly narrates his thoughts about Natsue, and the gaze in the shape of the photographed woman starts affecting his consciousness. Accordingly, 'the change in my own mind had modified the image of Natsue projected on it'.²⁸¹ In this subsection, I will examine how looking or gazing at another person serves a tactile function beyond the visual realm in Yoshiyuki.

This phenomenon of being affected by the gaze is not far from Barthes' 'emanated ray' in which the gaze is emitted from the photographed object; 'The photograph is literally an emanation of the referent. From a real body, which was there, proceed radiations which ultimately touch me, who am here'.²⁸² Barthes' idea of light and the gaze, explored in his *Camera Lucida*, is the point where touch and vision become entwined as closely as possible. He writes, 'A sort of umbilical cord links the body of the photographed thing to my gaze: light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed'.²⁸³ Nakata's association of Natsue with the photographed woman causes this ray, which is the photographed woman's gaze that Nakata feels and that grips Nakata. It is emitted by Natsue's image

²⁷⁹ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 129.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 133.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁸² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 80. Originally published as *La Chambre claire* by Editions du Seuil, 1980.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 80-81.

instead of the photographed woman, due to his association with Natsue. Because there is no further communication between the photographed woman and Nakata, Natsue replaces the woman. His particular relationship to this photo, which Barthes calls *punctum*, is created due to his image of Natsue.

Barthes' *punctum* signifies the particular intensity and meaning that a given photograph has for the seer.²⁸⁴ For the seer to be caught in a *punctum* means the seer has a personal relationship to the photograph. It can be argued that, due to this *punctum* or being caught by the ray, Nakata moves from the general interpretation of the photograph to thinking of Natsue. While recovering from his depression, Nakata's consciousness and bodily states change through his interaction with the imagined gaze or the ray of Natsue, and her actual physicality. Barthes' account of light is focused on a sharedness that bridges the gap between the seer and the seen, as if the transmission of light is considered a shared experience similar to touch. Bodies are connected by a luminous transmission sent from the photographed body to the seeing body. This is touch through light, a form of shared skin in the Barthesian account. In Yoshiyuki, both manners of construction of the self, through touch and vision, occur together without a clear separation. Light emitted by Natsue's gaze (as imagined by Nakata) reaches Nakata and touches him. Natsue is pulling Nakata toward her through a visual, cutaneous exchange. From this example, we can see a relationship in which vision is

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

intertwined with touch.

The case of Yoshiyuki does not necessarily fit well with the analysis of the alienated gaze as in Lacan,²⁸⁵ precisely because the gaze described earlier in Yoshiyuki is the gaze reduced to Natsue, which makes it unlike the unreachable gaze. Nakata can relate to the imagined Natsue, who transmits light through the gaze, with her physicality behind. For example, Nakata narrates that the collection of photographs he frequently revisits does not include many photographs of men: ‘Yet with almost all the women one felt a strong male presence in the background. In this very pervasiveness of the male lay the whole significance of the collection’.²⁸⁶ This explanation easily leads us to think of the multiple relationships that Natsue has had with other men, if we read Nakata’s narration, ‘I saw a serried rank of men’s heads lined up behind Natsue: faces unknown to me, the vaguest of outlines filled in with black’.²⁸⁷ Then the narration moves on to the description of the particular photo of the woman who resembles Natsue: ‘One photograph showed the bare torso of a black man, with a naked white woman *clinging to* him from behind. The woman was young and attractive. White fingers and black

²⁸⁵ For Lacan, the ‘gaze’ is the reverse side of consciousness that is constantly misunderstood. Lacan opposes the phenomenological understanding of visual perception ‘I see myself seeing myself’, since visual perception is not inside the subject, but is rather on the side of the object to be apprehended. In ‘*I warm myself by warming*’, the sensation is located in the body, whereas in ‘*I see myself seeing myself*’, there is no bodily sensation corresponding to the vision. Thus, the gaze comes from everywhere, and it is outside. Because of its radical difference from the subject, the gaze of the Other makes the subject feel anxious to be looked at and aware of the self. This Lacanian gaze externally constructs the self, but his investigation of light has a corporeal dimension, which is further discussed later. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 80-83.

²⁸⁶ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 133.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

fingers tangled on the man's shoulder'.²⁸⁸ Around this time in the novel, Nakata gradually notices the changes of Natsue's body: her skin colour, which turned from amber to 'white behind a colourless, semitransparent film',²⁸⁹ and her body odour, which used to have a strong, characteristic scent but now became odourless.²⁹⁰ Because of lowering his barriers and getting entangled with Natsue, 'gradually my whole body *cleaved to hers*'.²⁹¹

Nakata's interpretation of the photographs goes alongside his actual relationship to Natsue—he says, 'I was shuttling to and fro between the book of photos and Natsue's body',²⁹²—showing an inseparability between her image, gaze and actual physicality. In this sense, we see Barthes' interrelation between vision and touch exemplified between the two, effectively connecting vision and bodies. Simultaneously, *The Dark Room* further complicates existing theorisations of touch and vision as well as our understanding of their interrelation, mainly through the fact that Yoshiyuki leaves the subject-object relationship, with regard to visual touch, undetermined and ambiguous. The relationship between Nakata as the seer and Natsue as the seen is left ambiguous. This makes it hard to distinguish between the subject and the object and perhaps suggests an unsettled subjectivity.

As mentioned above, after a period of going to and fro between the photographs

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 133. Emphasis added.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 159. Emphasis added.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 129.

and Natsue's body, Nakata perceives that Natsue's body has started to change:

Nevertheless, another transformation, of a completely different nature, had taken place in Natsue physically. In reality, it must have occurred gradually over a period of time, but to me any change I noticed always seemed to have happened overnight.

Natsue's skin had originally been an amber color, but one day I suddenly realized that now it was—not exactly bluish-white, but white behind a colorless, semitransparent film.²⁹³

He starts to feel more intimate toward her, physically and psychologically. She starts to seem more transparent to him; this transparency signifies the unmediated reachability of Natsue's individuality, a fantasy of transparency created by Nakata.²⁹⁴ Nakata's different perception of Natsue does not necessarily stem from within; rather, it arises through the process of his communication with her gaze and body. Nakata does not necessarily create the change in Natsue's body, but he is under the effect of what Natsue's body does. Nakata is supposed to be the seer in this novel—the seer of the photograph and of Natsue's body in general—but he is also reflected through Natsue. Thus, the subject-object relationship—Nakata as the seer and Natsue as the seen—is not necessarily fixed. Natsue, functioning as the gaze, also has an effect on Nakata.

The quotation above also raises a question about Nakata's perceptions of Natsue versus changes in Natsue's physical body. Nakata narrates as if her body changed according to *his* perceptions of Natsue, yet the reader never knows if her physicality has in fact changed. Nakata narrates as if he owns the authenticity of Natsue's physicality.

²⁹³ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 135.

²⁹⁴ See Chapter 1-A, 'Fantasies of Transparent Touch'.

Yet, his vision of Natsue is reflected through her and in his fantasies and desires toward her, always already mediated through impressions, sensations and affects. In this way, we see the confusion of unidentifiable roles between Nakata and Natsue regarding which of them is the seer and the seen, and indeed, who is the toucher and who is the touched.

Concerning gender power and desire, Nakata is not necessarily an active creator of the threshold or the visual and physical boundary between him and Natsue. This is evident in the way that Nakata cannot resist the desire to touch and engage her body, and how his consciousness is affected through the gaze. Assuming that the ego is created via visual and physical touch and cultural imprints such as desires and values, as Silverman argues, we can say that the imagined light from Natsue to Nakata, a visual touch, and Nakata's desire for Natsue continually influence Nakata. This desire for Natsue may be reflected back to Nakata in their physical interaction. Even the physical memories imprinted on Natsue's skin from her previous partners²⁹⁵ inevitably touch Nakata's body. As discussed in Section A, Nakata tries to find some part of Natsue's skin untouched by other men. Simultaneously, memories and conversations about Natsue's other men 'added a not unwelcome touch of spice to our relationship',²⁹⁶ as Nakata says. The desire to locate a clean film of Natsue, a desire that is heightened due to the shadow of other men and continued physical interaction between them, influences

²⁹⁵ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 144.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 145–146.

Nakata and continually reshapes his subjectivity.

Nakata's consciousness progresses with the relationship to Natsue's gaze and body. Lacan insists the gaze is outside and the self is a picture to be looked at, so that the gaze is a necessary element to photosensitise and constitute the subject:

What determines me, at the most profound level, in the visible, is the gaze that is outside. It is through the gaze that I enter light and it is from the gaze that I receive its effects. Hence it comes about that the gaze is the instrument through which light is embodied and through which [. . .] I am *photo-graphed*.²⁹⁷

The gaze is the point through which light is embodied. This external light captures and 'photo-graphs' the individual. Since visual perception does not seem to occur inside our bodies but is instead projected onto external objects, self-consciousness is always already mediated and partly misunderstood. Through this, we see that light externally touches the body; light is embodied and the subject is '*photo-graphed*'. Considering this account, we can say that Nakata is externally *photo-sensitised* and his consciousness changes when his body is illuminated by Natsue's gaze. Viewed through the work of Barthes and Lacan, the relationship between touch and vision is not clearly divisible; light can *touch* entities. In this sense, Natsue is an active subject who touches Nakata.

The difference between Barthes and Yoshiyuki on the temporal orientation merits attention. As opposed to Barthes' emphasis on the approaching death of photographed figures, Natsue's body—which is created through Nakata's desire and fantasy based on their visual and bodily communication—becomes fully alive for Nakata. The Barthesian

²⁹⁷ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 106.

punctum often has an association with the temporality of ‘being dead’ or ‘going to die’ in the near future: The ‘photograph tells me death is in the future’ of the photographed, as in the case of an assassin who will be hanged or his mother who is already dead.²⁹⁸ Therefore, photographs in Barthes, *touching* the seer, often reference an orientation toward death. Compared to this, Natsue’s image begins alive. She used to be merely a physical existence to Nakata: ‘The ties between us were supposed to be purely physical. And in some ways it was true that Natsue lived solely for her body’.²⁹⁹ But later, he begins to drop his barriers toward her through visual and physical communication. Around that time, his health improves and, gradually, Natsue starts to have a different meaning to him. Nakata does not think of it as the change of her essential elements. Rather, those elements ‘showed themselves in different ways’.³⁰⁰ She becomes to have a new meaning to him through this visual touch.

Barthes’ account of the photograph focuses on photography’s certainty, even for a limited length of time, considering the photograph as a sort of denial or refusal to change. However, Natsue’s image continuously affects Nakata. Eventually, Natsue becomes a full psychological and physical body for him, implying a shift from Barthes’ reading of the photograph focused on certainty. Continuous changes between Nakata and Natsue’s visual and bodily communication stimulated by the photograph suggest that the photograph gives those who see it not only exactitude but also uncertainty.

²⁹⁸ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 96.

²⁹⁹ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 132.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

As Silverman suggests, the construction of the body will be continually repeated without any static point of reference. In Barthes' *Camera Lucida*, 'the bright room', the seen is captured in exactitude, reminding us of the optical device 'camera lucida' used to draw accurate images. But Natsue's dark room always shuts out external light, which reminds us of the pinhole camera, 'camera obscura', to produce an upside-down image via light through a pinhole in a dark space. Natsue previously was careless about the light, but when she started to have different meanings to Nakata, she started to care about light: 'she hadn't objected to the light in the room, so it wasn't as if it was dark. Come to think of it, it was only recently that I'd begun noticing her new signs of modesty, too'.³⁰¹ After that, Natsue prefers to make love in dim light coming from the slit of the curtains or in a small amount of electrical light. Without the stable referent of the body, the communication in Yoshiyuki's dark room is endless; there is no certainty. This lack of clarity in Yoshiyuki can be related to the blurriness of the photograph and shadow in Tanizaki. Without creating a clear image, the photograph in Tanizaki is also left uncertain, which conversely heightens the seer's imagination because of its ambiguity. Tanizaki's example is also useful in introducing the significance of the counterpart of light and clarity, which is shadow and ambiguity or obscurity.

2. The Case of Tanizaki

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

In Tanizaki's works, we also find elements that further complicate the concept of photographic certainty, authenticity and conceptualisations of light. Literary scholar Sakaki Atsuko analyses the function of a blurred photographic image represented in Tanizaki's 1933 work, *A Portrait of Shunkin* (*Shunkin Shō*). According to Sakaki, normally, the seer is hesitant to receive the gaze of the seen and is deprived of the freedom to interpret the image, but the closed eyes of the protagonist Shunkin in Tanizaki's story 'grant[s] the narrator the liberty of submitting his interpretive version of her story'.³⁰² This is a story about Shunkin, who is a blind *shamisen*, or Japanese three-stringed guitar player. Despite her sadistic and egoistical personality, her servant Sasuke always guides her with patience and loyalty, later becoming her student and effectively her partner. Later, someone attacks Shunkin, possibly one of her students, at night in her house. Her face is burned by a hot water pot. She refuses to let anyone look at her, forcing Sasuke to prick his eyes with a needle so he will not see her burns.

In this story, set from 1829 to 1907 and based on Shunkin's biography, the only remaining photo of Shunkin, at the age of thirty-six, is a blurred picture:

Thus we have only one dim reflection of her to help us imagine her appearance. No doubt I have given a vague, inadequate impression of how she looked. Yet the photograph itself is perhaps even vaguer than the impression which my words convey.³⁰³

The reader does not actually have access to Shunkin's photograph, except through the

³⁰² Sakaki Atsuko, 'Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, or Photography as Violence', *Japan Forum* 22, no. 3–4 (2010): 385, accessed 25 November, 2011, doi: 10.1080/09555803.2010.534839.

³⁰³ Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, 'A Portrait of Shunkin', in *Seven Japanese Tales*, trans. Howard Hibbett (New York: Knopf, 1963), 9. Quoted in Sakaki, 'Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, or Photography as Violence', 386.

narrator's explanation of it. Therefore, the text conveys the image. Sakaki writes:

That the narrator possesses more knowledge than the reader is less important in our context than the fact that the narrator invites the reader to compare the visual with the textual and tentatively concludes, counter-intuitively, that the visual is no more definitive of an image than the textual. The narrator thus disputes photography's claim to absolute truth.³⁰⁴

This photo loses its archival function. Consisting of image, narration and the narrator's memory combined with the image, the photo rather relativises the relationship between visual and optical³⁰⁵ and dispossesses authenticity, contrary to a Barthesian notion of the certainty of the photograph. Tanizaki uses Shunkin's photograph to blur her image, rather than clarifying her existence in the past or her death in the future. As conveyed through the narrative, the reader will never have access to an exact image of Shunkin. The photograph functions to blur his memory. In this case, light does not illuminate the photo; rather, the image appears due to its blurriness. The reader's relationship to the image itself is highly precarious.³⁰⁶

We may contrast this case with that of Yoshiyuki, whose example shows Nakata's shifting state of consciousness influenced by relationships with different women and by Natsue's bodily and visual contacts with him. Yoshiyuki leaves ambiguity surrounding the question of the difference between Nakata's vision of Natsue's body and her actual

³⁰⁴ Sakaki, 'Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, or Photography as Violence', 386.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 387. Neither the naked eye nor the camera is necessarily essential to the construction of the visual here.

³⁰⁶ Although I cannot expand on it here, the tactile sensitivity of blind subjects is another interesting area for further research, such as through Tanizaki's *Portrait of Shunkin*; modernist writer Uchida Hyakken's 'The Short Interval of Yanagi Kengyō' ('*Yanagi Kengyō no Shōkan*') written in 1940, another story about a blind Japanese harp (*koto*) player; Mishima Yukio's commentary on them; and Denis Diderot's 'Letters on the Blind'.

body. It is written almost as if Nakata owns her body, even if he merely owns her bodily *image*, since he is also under her influence. Conversely, Tanizaki's example depicts indeterminacy between light and darkness, never identifying the photograph with exactitude. The indeterminacy displayed in both Yoshiyuki and Tanizaki problematises the certainty that Barthes attributes to the photograph. Is it the case, as Silverman argues, that subjectivity is culturally *formed* and that indeterminacy is the preferred mode for these Japanese writers? Does culture form a layer to mediate subjectivity and its experience of touch and vision? The relationships between the subject-object and light and darkness are left undecided. Is this a cultural element or an aesthetic strategy employed by writers?

As Silverman proposes, our relationship to culture is not static. Our consciousness is always mediated by the processes through which we live. For example, in Maruyama Masao's view, the postwar concept of the self can be considered a mixture of prewar Japanese systems and other components after the war.³⁰⁷ As mentioned earlier, Kimura Bin considers nature not separately from the self, but in relationship to the self, the self inevitably mediated by the environment.³⁰⁸ Kimura's conclusion that the Japanese have

³⁰⁷ In his critique of the absence of a solid subject in Japan, Maruyama Masao differentiates 'to be' in the feudal system (where the self was determined by social class) from 'to do' in modernity (where the self is determined by one's acts), the confusion of which had been present since the mid-nineteenth century and then exploded in the postwar period when the wave of social shifts—such as Westernisation and cultural popularisation—hit Japan. His critique on the Japanese modern subject essentially stems from the comparison with European subjects, which is constructed through the encounter with the absolute God in the Christian tradition. See Maruyama Masao, *Nihon no Shisō*.

³⁰⁸ Kimura Bin, *Jiko, Aida, Jikan*, 312. Although his theories stem from Japanese cases, philosophers such as Giorgio Agamben referred to Kimura's concepts of self and temporality, finding them applicable to the delayed temporality of survivors' confessions. See Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The*

a specific common feeling toward nature different from Westerners³⁰⁹ must be carefully considered since it could lead to a sort of cultural determinism. But Kimura's theory can better explain Silverman's formation of subjectivity in the Japanese context since the self for him exists as a mixture of various elements before we define it. Again, it would be a simplistic way of interpreting culture if we were only to consider geographically and linguistically confined cultural mediation, having witnessed relationships like those between the New Sensationalists' attempts and Dadaism,³¹⁰ Kimura's concept of *aida* and Derrida's interruption and mediation.³¹¹ Cultural mediation of one's experience is based on geographic and linguistic aspects—and on historic interaction with others.

I analysed 'vision as touch': vision that can touch the subject in the form of light and gaze, subjectivity formed visually and bodily with attached values and desire, and culture as mediation. I focused on touch through light and gaze in the section above. Tanizaki claims it is shadow, not light, that occupies an important element in Japanese everyday life. With this in mind, it is worthwhile analysing light and opacity, cloudiness, shadow and places where light cannot fully illuminate the subject. Can the lack of bright light signify the unreachability and miscomprehension of the subject? Do shadow and

Witness and the Archive, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999).

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 320. On the concept of culture, Kimura refers to Yamaguchi Masao, who argues that culture exists by constantly giving a new order to nature without form, so that culture is always changing and dynamic; culture can be considered as a dilemmatic process (307-308).

³¹⁰ See Introduction, A-b.

³¹¹ See Introduction, A-d. Leonard Lawlor explains Derridean mediation as opposed to immediacy in Paul Ricoeur. *Imagination and Chance: The Difference between the Thought of Ricoeur and Derrida* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 1-3, 83-84, 91.

light have different effects on the subject? *In Praise of Shadows*, from 1933, shows Tanizaki's pursuit of traditional Japanese shadow aesthetics, different from Western ones, in the midst of rampant modernisation and Westernisation.

b. Mediation via Shadow

1. Shadow in Tanizaki

In this section, I would first like to analyse Tanizaki's notion of shadow and then examine its problematics regarding interactions with other cultures. In the previous example, *A Portrait of Shunkin*, the photo shows the blurriness of the image, in contrast to the certainty proposed in Barthes. This blurriness and ambiguity of the image is another type of mediation via shadow that is unlimited in photography. In his text *In Praise of Shadows*, Tanizaki argues that how the Japanese prefer shadows, with a dark grain and the grime of objects that have been touched repeatedly. He contrasts this to the West's preference for light, shown through examples such as architecture, theatre, cuisine and the skin. He claims that the Japanese should have achieved modernity in a culturally appropriate manner, rather than following and borrowing from the West: 'I always think how different everything would be if we in the Orient had developed our own science'.³¹² His analysis of indigenous inventions in relation to shadow considers various aspects of Japanese culture that 'have had profound influence upon the conduct

³¹² Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, 13.

of our everyday lives, and even upon government, religion, art, and business'.³¹³ Most of the points in his book are focused on how Japanese people find aesthetic perfection through darkness, shadow and gradations of light: 'The light from the garden steals in but dimly through paper-paneled doors, and it is precisely this *indirect* light that makes for us the charm of a room. We do our walls in neutral colors so that the sad, fragile, dying rays can sink into absolute repose'.³¹⁴ Instead of the bright whiteness that 'turns away the light',³¹⁵ he finds 'an inexplicable power to calm and soothe'³¹⁶ in blackened, darkened, dim, soft and warm textures. Light sinking into materials indirectly touches upon a lacquer bowl, paper, skin and other objects, due to the effects of shadow.

Tanizaki's analysis of shadow is suggestive, but his opposition between the Western yearning for bright light and the traditional Japanese preference for shadow was problematic both in 1933 and in contemporary times. Japan's socioeconomic circumstances, its relationship to the West and the everyday life of most of its people have radically changed since this essay was written in 1933. Tanizaki writes, 'the progressive Westerner is determined always to better his lot. From candle to oil lamp, oil lamp to gaslight, gaslight to electric light—his quest for a brighter light never ceases, he spares no pains to eradicate even the minutest shadow'.³¹⁷ However, Japan followed almost the same destiny as the West: Overusing electric light, Japan became one of the

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 14.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 30. Emphasis added.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

³¹⁷ Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, 48.

‘brightest’ countries. Miya Elise Mizuta discusses the irony in Tanizaki’s praise of shadows: ‘Electric lighting quickly penetrated the outlying areas of Japan at the turn of the twentieth century, much faster than perhaps any other symbol of modernity. By century’s end, Japan led the world in the use of fluorescent lighting (*keikōtō*) as a mainstay and standard of light fixtures in homes’.³¹⁸ The use of electric light was already common by 1933, which Tanizaki lamented. Furthermore, in contemporary Japan, bright light emanates from twenty-four-hour convenience stores and from vending machines on almost every block.³¹⁹ As Tanizaki was aware, playfully utilising that oppositional framework as a sort of irony, the Japanese traditional aesthetics of shadow was already changing in his time.

Tanizaki’s shadow seems to function as a trope to rethink traditional Japanese-ness in the context of rampant modernisation and Westernisation. Historian Stephen Vlastos problematises the notion of tradition, employing Eric Hobsbawm’s idea of tradition as invented; ‘tradition is not the sum of *actual* past practices that have perdured into the present; rather, tradition is as a modern trope, a prescriptive representation of socially desirable (or sometimes undesirable) institutions and ideas

³¹⁸ Miya Elise Mizuta, ‘Luminous Environment: Light Architecture and Decoration in Modern Japan’, *Japan Forum* 18, no. 3 (2006): 339, accessed 4 April, 2013, doi: 10.1080/09555800600947223.

³¹⁹ In the play *Shun-kin* (directed by Simon MacBurney and produced by Complicité, based on *A Portrait of Shunkin* and *In Praise of Shadows*, performed by Japanese actors first in 2008 in Tokyo and London), there is a scene moved from Shunkin’s Meiji period to the contemporary period where the story *A Portrait of Shunkin* is recorded by a radio narrator (performed by Tateishi Ryōko). In that scene, the only bright light that comes from upstage and appears against a darkened stage is the light from vending machines on the street. MacBurney interprets Tanizaki and interrogates the gap between Tanizaki’s traditional aesthetics of light and actual contemporary lives in Japan. Tanizaki’s work examines Japanese preference to shadow against Western preference to light, whereas MacBurney refers to the traditional preference for shadow against the modern prevalence of light in Japan.

thought to have been handed down from generation to generation'.³²⁰ This applies to Tanizaki's case. Many of his examples, such as paper doors, sand walls and tatami mats, are based on the Japanese prewar lifestyle that reflects the Japanese experience with shadow and darkness. Given Tanizaki's comment that cities like Tokyo and Osaka in the 1930s were brighter than European cities with electric light,³²¹ Tanizaki's *traditional* aesthetics of shadow can be considered a part of his ironic project to return to the classics and the East or Japan now lost in the modern era. As Vlastos may suggest, Tanizaki skillfully uses shadow to return to the Japanese tradition and to juxtapose it against the modern West by redefining Japanese traditional aesthetics of shadow.³²²

The *Japanese* preference for shadow is similarly difficult to verify. We can find various pre-modern Japanese texts that exemplify beauty in obscurity. One example is the association between the light of the moon and the poet's emotional, social and political situation, depicted through its waxing and waning, clouds and the seasons, such as the ambiguous moonlight *oboro duki*, that is, hazy moon. However, the poem by Ōe no Chisato on this motif collected in *A New Collection of Japanese Poems Past and Present* (*Shin Kokin Wakashū*), for example, complicates the authenticity of these aesthetics, being based on a Chinese poem by Bai Juyi (772–846). Ōe's work (*Shin*

³²⁰ Stephen Vlastos, 'Tradition: Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History', in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1998), 3.

³²¹ Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, 53-54. Mizuta, 'Lunimous Environment', 342.

³²² We can also find salient examples of Tanizaki's version of Japanese aesthetics and the tension between East and West in *Some Prefer Nettles* (1929), for example, the beauty of a Japanese woman with blackened teeth or the protagonist's fascination with the Western wing of his house. See *Some Prefer Nettles*, trans. Edward Seidensticker (London: Secker & Warburg, 1956).

Kokin Wakashū, 55), especially the latter part, corresponds to the poem of Bai Juyi:

Nothing is
like the translucent vernal moonlit night—
neither bright
nor yet dark.³²³

This example of blurriness³²⁴ does not necessarily prove that the preference for shadow has long been a Japanese-specific aesthetic. Japanese students had been sent to China from the seventh century onward, and it is not necessarily easy to find a purely Japanese aesthetic, as some Japanese nativists like the founder of *Kokugaku*, or native studies, Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) arguably tried to do.³²⁵

Japanologist Thomas LaMarre points out that Tanizaki refers to Japanese aesthetics as Japanese and as ‘Oriental’, including China and India, saying; ‘His turn (or “return,” if one insists) to traditional aesthetics entails an “orientalist” or “orientalizing” gesture that brings Japan in relation to East Asia’, entailing imperial ambivalence.³²⁶ In this sense, Tanizaki’s praise of shadows functions like a trick. Tanizaki occasionally emphasises Japanese-ness, Orientalising it against the West, but at times employs the coloniser’s perspectives when he sees other Asian countries. As

³²³ *The Shin Kokinshū: The 13th-century Anthology Edited by Imperial Edict*, trans. Honda Heihachirō (Tokyo: Hokuseidō Press, 1970), 21. The original in Japanese says, ‘照りもせず曇りもはてぬ春の夜のおぼろ月夜にしくものぞなき’. Bai Juyi’s original poem is ‘不明不暗朧々月’, in *Kokin Wakashū*, *Shin Kokin Wakashū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1962), 144.

³²⁴ Voyeurism also plays a role particularly in the courtly literature of the medieval period. Courtly ladies often bore witness to secret affairs through the slit of bamboo blinds called *misu* (peeping through the fence, *kaimami*). Without penetrating the seen with light, the seer gazes at the object in dimness, the seer’s identity being concealed. Edith Sarra, *Fictions of Femininity: Literary Inventions of Gender in Japanese Court Women’s Memoirs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 222.

³²⁵ See ‘Motoori Norinaga’ in Ryūsaku Tsunoda, William Theodore de Bary and Donald Keene, ed., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958).

³²⁶ Thomas LaMarre, *Shadows on the Screen: Tanizaki Jun’ichirō on Cinema and “Oriental” Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: The Center for Japanese Studies, the University of Michigan, 2005), 13.

Japanologist Nishihara Daisuke argues, he skillfully switches the object and the subject of his Orientalism—Japan as the subject of Orientalism to describe countries such as China, employing the coloniser’s viewpoint, while Orientalising Japanese culture and treating it as an exotic object from the Westerner’s viewpoint—unlike the fixed Orientalism of Said.³²⁷ Tanizaki effectively mystifies Japanese beauty.³²⁸

Tanizaki defines bright light as the incessant preference of modern Westerners and opposes it with the traditional indirect Japanese beauty found in ‘the lack of clarity’.³²⁹ However, the Western preference for light comes from the sought-after light that enlightens people’s minds, influenced by Greek and Judeo-Christian thought. We can see early links between knowledge and light and *doxa* and darkness in Parmenides,³³⁰ the Biblical theme of light that guides us³³¹ and the Christian themes of light tied to understanding and thus enlightenment.³³² Even in the history of visual representations, light has similar significance: Medieval paintings depict rays of light emanating from objects, representing God as light or light as wealth, while baroque

³²⁷ As Nishihara Daisuke and others have argued, we can witness a radical shift of Tanizaki’s works around 1930. The earlier works fall into the double discourse of Orientalism by switching the subject and object of Orientalism, and the later works are highly appreciative of Japanese indigenous beauty, praising Japanese aesthetics. See Nishihara Daisuke, ‘Said, Orientalism, and Japan’, *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, no. 25, special issue on Edward Said and Critical Decolonization (2005): 246–248, accessed 20 February, 2012, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4047459>.

³²⁸ Margherita Long argues Tanizaki’s aesthetics are a fetish, an investment to interpret the fetish being ‘a symptom of the enjoyment it masks and displaces’. ‘Tanizaki and the Enjoyment of Japanese Culturalism’, *Positions: East Asia Cultural Critique* 10, no. 2 (2002): 437.

³²⁹ Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, 32.

³³⁰ M. R. Wright ed., *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1995 [1981]), 252.

³³¹ See the Gospel of John, John 1:7–9; 8:12.

³³² Iain M. Mackenzie, *The ‘Obscurism’ of Light: A Theological Study into the Nature of Light* (Norwich: The Canterbury Press, 1996).

paintings are illuminated or ‘struck by the light’.³³³ Cultural theorist Mieke Bal even analyses that light functions to optically caress the surface to draw and substantiate the image.³³⁴ Tanizaki especially considers the yearning for bright light as a modern Western preference, but one must bear in mind that the Western preference for light is not a modern construction and requires longer historical reflection.

Tanizaki’s problematic discourse on shadow creates a cultural dynamic when looking at the Japanese context compared to others, such as China and the West. Tanizaki’s shadow means the lack of light; it also affects the subject’s emotion, producing a soothing effect. Shadow is not merely the lack of clarity but is a necessary element in Tanizaki’s aesthetic and imaginative life. Sakaki claims that the lack of ability to look back at the seer ‘grants the viewer complacency with which to interpret the image freely’;³³⁵ blurriness enables us to use the imagination and think. Such an account of shadow with various functions and cultural dynamics does not simply shade illumination but possesses a mediatory function in the opposing forces, which is discussed below.

2. Mediation

Ambiguous states of blurred pictures and dim light heighten our imagination. Under a

³³³ Umberto Eco, *On Beauty*, trans. Alastair MacEwen (London: Secker & Warburg, 2004), 100.

³³⁴ Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Arts, Preposterous History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 192. This analysis stems from her analysis on various adaptations of Caravaggio by late twentieth-century contemporary artists.

³³⁵ Sakaki, ‘Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, or Photography as Violence’, 385.

dim light, there is only a vague understanding of what we are seeing. For example, while looking at a hanging scroll in a dark temple, Tanizaki writes that one must ‘follow as best as we can the all-but-invisible brush strokes, and *tell ourselves how magnificent a painting must be*’.³³⁶ ‘The lack of clarity, far from disturbing us, seems rather to suit the painting perfectly. For the painting here is nothing more than another delicate surface upon which the faint, frail light can play; it performs precisely the same function as the sand-textured wall’.³³⁷ What is important here is not to take hold of the seen in an attempt at comprehending it, but rather to liberate the seen object by seeing. The importance is not so much in comprehension but rather the imagining of how it might be, due to the very lack of bright light to aid our comprehension. For Tanizaki, the completion is realised due to this very lack of light and dimness. By neither clearly showing nor being caught by light, the object reveals itself in blurriness. Tanizaki’s shadow accompanies and touches things; this touch is indirect since the object is not clearly revealed. This concealing character seems a particular feature of touch through shadow, which can be considered another form of mediation—mediation via shadow. This subsection focuses on the notion of mediation, one different from that of the skin and the membrane discussed earlier.

As mentioned before, Anzieu and Silverman respectively argue that touch is mediated through the skin and through socioculturally shaped values and desires;

³³⁶ Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, 31. Emphasis added.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

Yoshiyuki represents physical experiences mediated through the skin and membrane. An aesthetic of indirectness appears in Kuki's writing of *iki*³³⁸ and Keene's explanation about ambiguity and a reliance on 'suggestion' to a degree uncommon in European writing.³³⁹ As discussed in relation to psychoanalysis in Japan, there is hesitation toward excessive verbalisation about the self, reflecting a reluctance to abandon ambiguity. 'Ambiguity' generally refers to vagueness or blurriness in the sense of grayness between black and white, or shadow between light and darkness. But it also occupies opposite poles simultaneously: revealing and not revealing, touching and not touching, light and darkness. This is why indirectness, suggestion and ambiguity depend on the art of the mediated experience, rather than immediate meaning and experience.³⁴⁰

In his renowned speech for the Nobel Prize ceremony in 1994, Ōe Kenzaburō articulates the difference between vagueness (from Kawabata's talk for his own Nobel Prize ceremony in 1968) and ambiguity (in a sense of *ryōgisei*, to possess two meanings, in Japanese). For Ōe, Kawabata's extreme vague beauty effectively claims the impossibility of the expression of truth via language.³⁴¹ Ōe's conscious decision to use the term 'ambiguity' over 'vagueness' references an era when Japan was put in an

³³⁸ It can be argued that his theorisation of *iki* is because of his encounter with Western phenomenology and aesthetics and that this is his attempt to find and theorise a specifically Japanese aesthetic that can be systematised vis-à-vis the West in the modern era.

³³⁹ Keene, 'Japanese aesthetics', 295.

³⁴⁰ As mentioned earlier, one of the prominent examples would be the master of Noh theatre Zeami's phrase *hisureba hana* (*Hana*, an aesthetic essence of performing Noh, should be veiled and implicit to effectively show beauty and attraction). The acting subject never reveals beauty in a direct manner, but it reveals beauty without explicitly showing it.

³⁴¹ Ōe Kenzaburō, *Aimaina Nihon no Watashi* (*Japan, the Ambiguous, and Myself*) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 4-5. This title came after Kawabata's speech '*Utsukushii Nihon no Watashi*' ('Japan, the Beautiful and Myself').

ambiguous position. Since its forced opening in the Meiji period, Japan has been torn between rapid Westernisation and preservation of its traditional culture, between Japan in Asia and Japan as a Westernised and modernised leader within Asia. In Ōe's view, rapid economic growth in the postwar period accelerated this ambiguity,³⁴² which echoes Maruyama's view and to some extent Tanizaki's. Ōe defines this internal conflict between those opposing positions and the bearing of those different natures and meanings at the same time as ambiguity. In this regard, ambiguity does not simply signify in-between-ness; rather, it is a conflicting state of being in the midst of opposing forces.

This notion of ambiguity bears a certain similarity with Barthes' idea of the Neutral. As mentioned earlier, the Barthesian Neutral does not signify the midpoint between the two opposite poles, but is a form of resistance to choosing either of the two opposites. It is a rupture or a space in-between.³⁴³ Barthes also describes spacing (creating a space) as Neutral, referring to the Japanese concept of *ma* (in-between-ness), which is a space, an interruption, creating indirect, mediatory relations between objects.³⁴⁴ As his analysis on Japanese aesthetics embraces various examples of space and rupture, mediation as a gap is an important concept in analysing one's relationship to others in the Japanese context. The idea of ambiguity in the sense of conflicting

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 8-11.

³⁴³ Raymond Williams also defines the word 'mediation' as an intercession between oppositions, a means of transmission or intermediate agency, and a division or gap. Raymond Williams, *Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1976), 204.

³⁴⁴ See Introduction, A-d.

positions and the Neutral both play a mediatory function in that they create a space between opposite forces. In the next subsection, I examine how shadow plays this mediatory function in the creations of Tanizaki and Barthes to cross-culturally compare the significance of shadow on the subject.

3. Mediatory Shadow in Tanizaki and Barthes

Tanizaki insists on a preference for shadow as part of traditional Japanese aesthetics, while Barthes also calls for shadows for the perfection of photographs. Tanizaki requires a shadow ‘tinged by a slight cloudiness’³⁴⁵ in the light. Barthes desires the ‘luminous shadow which accompanies the body’³⁴⁶ for the perfection of a photograph. Barthes introduces the concept of *air*, which is ‘something inexpressible’, ‘evident’ but ‘improbable’, intending the expression of truth.³⁴⁷ Without this *air*, ‘there remains no more than a sterile body. It is by this tenuous umbilical cord that the photographer gives life; if he cannot, either by lack of talent or bad luck, supply the transparent soul its bright shadow, the subject dies forever’.³⁴⁸ Both Barthes’ and Tanizaki’s shadows circumscribe the subject but have particular effects on it, giving life and value in Barthes and calling forth imagination in Tanizaki.

³⁴⁵ Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, 49.

³⁴⁶ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 110.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 107–109.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

But what does Barthes mean by referring to *air*? It is a luminous shadow, in other words, light in shadow. Tanizaki's shadow is rather straightforward in that he chooses the soothing effect of shadow that sinks into his body rather than bright light, which may penetrate him. But Barthes' *air*, luminous shadow, certainly bears opposing forces in itself—illuminating the seen but putting a shade on it. Analysing a collection of photographs by Japanese photographer Shinoyama Kishin, Derrida refers to Tanizaki's use of shadow, writing of photography as 'the writing of light as the writing of shade'.³⁴⁹ As Barthes and others claim, the photograph is a unique, absolute singularity. But Derrida desires more: 'But that's not all. How is this (light) clarity of the night? Why does it appear not only to come out of and proceed from the night, as if black gave birth to white, but also to belong still to shadow, to remain still *at the heart* of the dark abyss from which it emanates?'³⁵⁰ The description 'black gave birth to white' could be perceived as a variant of Barthesian *air*. But what Derrida is seeking here is precisely to possess oppositional tension in oneself: light that illuminates the object but still belongs to the darkness, shadow created in the midst of light, but still possesses the darkness like *air*—light in the dark, or 'Light of the dark', the title of the collection. Barthes' luminous shadow as *air* comes out and reaches the photographed to give one final addition to the photograph: life.

³⁴⁹ Jacques Derrida, 'Aletheia', trans. Pleshette DeArmitt and Kas Saghafi, *The Oxford Literary Review* 32, no. 2 (2010): 171, accessed 3 April, 2013, doi: 10.3366/olr.2010.0102.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Shadow expresses a mediatory function. This shadow is a blurriness and a space where the touched object is in the middle of conflicting positions between life and death, or the seer is between comprehending the object and never reaching the object. It is true that Tanizaki's investigation of shadow emphasises the aesthetisation of shadow as exclusively Japanese. But the commonality between Tanizaki (including his indecision about relations with other Asian countries and the West), Barthes and Derrida is that the shadow is never simply the lack of light, obscurity or stillness. The commonality is actually a continuous spatial move—between light and darkness, illumination and shade, and black and white, among others. This shadow mediates or creates a space for the relationship between the conflicting oppositions and thereby produces an indirect experience for those touched by shadow—such as life in Barthes and imagination in Tanizaki—inspired by shadow. Although it could hardly be said that Tanizaki and Barthes showed an overlapping theoretical development like *ma* and *aida* between Barthes and Kimura,³⁵¹ similarities do exist. Their respective treatments of shadow are closely related through their use of shadow as having a fundamental effect on the subject.

The perception, formation and signification of light are culturally mediated. But the mediatory function of shadow exists both in Barthes and Tanizaki. It shows an

³⁵¹ Kimura developed his theorisations of *aida* and schizophrenia by referring to existential phenomenology, poststructuralist theories and other Western philosophy around the 1980s. Barthes started his writing based on influences from existential philosophy, and he deeply influenced structuralist and poststructuralist theories, showing his particular interest in Japan starting from the 1970s. His interest in Japan is not only in Japanese culture in general as seen in *Empire of Signs* (1983, originally published in French in 1970), but also in Zen and Japanese thought as seen in *The Neutral*.

aesthetic similarity, light and shadow as entities that influence subjectivity, not just clarity and obscurity. The literary texts by Tanizaki, Kawabata and Yoshiyuki examined in Chapter 1 exemplify an unspoken desire, a hesitancy to touch and indirect rather than direct touch. Barthes' theories show a similar aesthetic tendency in *Camera Lucida* and *The Neutral*, which pays particular attention to elements such as unspoken sensations, *ma* and shadow. The Japanese literary works mentioned above and Barthes' work came from different theoretical and cultural backgrounds. As Tanizaki writes, the modern Westerner yearning for bright lights and traditional Japanese preferences for shadow may exist to a certain extent as an opposition. Yet Barthes' shadow accompanies and, thus, touches the body and even gives birth to it; Tanizaki's shadow touches the object and adds attraction and imagination. The opposing relationship between the subject and object of Orientalism, between light and shadow, are not necessarily fixed.

4. Returning to the Dark Room: Conclusion

Considering the play of light and shadow, it is worthwhile returning to how authors have accordingly developed their concepts. I will do this by focusing on the function of the room: the dark room where Yoshiyuki's characters develop their relationships and the light chamber where Barthes meditates the relationship between vision, affect and touch. Philosophers such as Descartes and Locke saw the human mind as an inner space in a dark room where perceptual sensations were analysable. There is a certain

specificity to the mind's spatiality as a 'room': to be enclosed, separate from the outside world. Jonathan Crary writes, 'The secure positioning of the self with this empty interior space was a precondition for knowing the outer world. Its enclosedness, its darkness, its categorical separation from an exterior incarnates Descartes' announcement in the Third Meditation, "I will now shut my eyes, I shall stop my ears, I shall disregard my senses"''.³⁵² The communication in the dark room between Nakata and Natsue is disconnected from the external world; the room is constantly dark with only faint light from the slit of the curtains. Although Nakata traverses external space, he always returns to the dark room where he meets Natsue. Once they are in the room together, the internal exploration—in the spatial and the bodily sense—exceeds external, shared communication with others. There is a sharing of Natsue's body with other men through the mediation of the membrane. It is the mediating surface created between Nakata and Natsue's body from their previous touches and bodily experiences.³⁵³ In this sense, it seems that the darkness of the room in Yoshiyuki also stems from isolation, not only from the absence of light. By being disconnected from the external world, their bodies engage only with each other, so that unless one body brings a memory from the past or a new memory from everyday life, there is nothing new. Therefore, Nakata starts exploring Natsue's body more and more thoroughly.

³⁵² Jonathan Crary, 'Modernizing Vision', in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: New Press, 1999), 32. Originally published by Bay Press, Seattle, in 1988. Crary himself focuses on the productive role played by the body compared to its role in Descartes, since Crary considers the body a visual producer.

³⁵³ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 144.

The growing incidence of an individual ‘lockable room’ is a quite recent phenomenon in Japan, appearing rapidly in the postwar period. The reason that Tanizaki’s light is liberated from spatial limitation, unlike the ‘enclosed-ness’ in the dark room in Yoshiyuki, is because his house is a traditional one. Traditional houses are flat and left open to the external world. External effects such as light, wind and birdsong enter readily, as the room is exposed to nature. In this respect, there may be fewer mediating functions in contemporary Japan, compared to the prewar period. Like Western houses, modern houses are easy to ‘lock’, and they utilise electric light more than natural light. Yet, as Ōe may suggest, the ambiguity between Japan and Asia, Japan and the West, and advancement and tradition is still relevant.

I have argued that light can be analysed not only in terms of gaze and vision, but also in terms of cultural mediation and embodiment of light.³⁵⁴ Tanizaki’s theory of shadows continues to mystify Japanese culture and to ‘Orientalise’ it. Tanizaki’s theories are also representative of the ‘(re)turn to tradition’ movement. Yoshiyuki’s characters are not liberated from darkness, ‘a shadowy room with the heavy curtains drawn, even in daytime’.³⁵⁵ In earlier subsections, I analysed the relationship between

³⁵⁴ ‘Embodiment’ is a concept often employed in recent critical theories to mean a bodily experience that shapes the mind. In the Cartesian tradition, the body and mind are considered separately, but as a response to this, recent critical theories often pay attention to the experiences of the self through the body and their effects on the mind, often referring to thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty. Elizabeth Grosz argues for an embodied subjectivity that deconstructs Cartesian dualisms of mind and body from the feminist point of view, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). Also see Simon J. Williams and Gillian Bendelow, *The Lived Body: Sociological Themes, Embodied Issues* (London: Routledge, 1998), for various aspects of embodied experiences in everyday life, including sleep.

³⁵⁵ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 170.

light, the gaze and the subject. There does not seem to be a yearning for light in Tanizaki and Yoshiyuki. Sakaki claims that, instead of bright light, shadows and blurriness have strong effects in developing the imagination. Shadows and blurriness implicitly reveal the object, like the ways Tanizaki and Yoshiyuki use shadow and darkness to explore the object.

We can say that one is ‘touched’ when one has been touched by light and shadow in the act of seeing. This portrays the limitations of the Lacanian investigation of the gaze: Light may touch us, not only to photosensitise our bodies in the gaze, but also to mediate sensations as they pass from one body to others, as in Barthes. While this section also refers to the cultural connotations of light in Japan and Europe, the variation is not fixed as a determinate set of cultural configurations. As we see evident similarities between Tanizaki’s and Barthes’ treatment of shadow, the cultural differences we see do not necessarily entail disjointed experiences of light and shadow. Rather, light mediates the gap between the seeing and the seer, and shadow mediates oppositions between darkness and light, life and death, to eventually accompany us. Oppositions are modulated by the mediatory function of light and shadow. Perhaps the oppositions are never fixed. Shadow for Tanizaki was a tool to redefine Japanese-ness and the return to traditional Japan. But according to this investigation of shadow, especially through the comparison of Tanizaki and Barthes, shadow shows an ambiguity, indefinability or even constant mobility between opposite elements. In this regard,

culture is a constant, never-ending process without any stable referent, and therefore, the search for light and shadow continues without a final determination.

C. Ruptured Surface Space: The Mediation through the Page

We have considered membrane and light and shadow as carnal media that mediate touch. Before closing this chapter, I would like to examine another form of membrane that is essential for literary analysis, the page. The page receives touch as written stimuli and translates different kinds of membrane as examined below. The page, fundamentally a sheet of paper, conducts touch as a visible mark or remnant of touch for readers. Touch through the page is necessarily mediated through language and paper fibres. It is also exposed to material and epistemological shifts, due to advances in print technology, writing and linguistic systems. In this section, employing literary examples by Abe Kōbō, I will analyse how touch through the page appears in literary representations, how it relates to modes of mediation through language and how different types of membranes relate to one another.

a. Written Words as Surface Touch in Abe

The twentieth-century Japanese author Abe Kōbō (1924–1993) often represents the materiality of objects such as sand and skin with detailed chemical and biological

descriptions. As a graduate of medical school—though he never served as a physician because he did not pass the medical board exam—his descriptions of objects are composed of scientific, detailed analyses that go beyond literary representations as, for example, his descriptions of sand in *The Woman in the Dunes* (*Suna no Onna*).³⁵⁶ Susan Napier writes, ‘Abe’s writing has sometimes strayed toward the science fiction genre, and even his more clearly fantastic works are informed by a coldly logical scientific mentality’.³⁵⁷ Abe writes about various Kafkaesque metamorphoses or physical transformations in his works in which the protagonists become objects.³⁵⁸

Among several of his works discussing the skin,³⁵⁹ two works, ‘Cryptic Colouration’ (*Hogo-shoku*) and ‘Starving Skin’ (*Ueta Hifu*), both written in 1951, provide cases in which the page and other external materials are reflected onto the skin, combined with emotions. ‘Cryptic Colouration’ and ‘Starving Skin’ both share the same lines:

[...] a chameleon has pigment cells that contain plenty of chromatophores under the skin. Once the surrounding colour is transmitted to these cells through the optic nerve, only certain chromatophores selectively diffuse or gather, causing the change of skin colour. The same phenomenon does not happen to the blind chameleon. This applies also to algae shrimp, tree frogs and flatfish.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Abe Kōbō, *Sunano Onna* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1962).

³⁵⁷ Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 199.

³⁵⁸ This includes a stick as in ‘The Man who Became a Stick’ (*Bou ni Natta Otoko*) in 1969 and a cocoon in ‘A Red Cocoon’ (*Akai Mayu*) in 1950.

³⁵⁹ Examples include *The Woman in the Dune*, where the protagonist, shut in a house at the bottom of a dune, is attracted to the naked skin of the woman in this house who lives with the damp and intrusion of the sand. In *Tanin no Kao* (*The Face of Another*) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1964), the protagonist who got his face burnt and a keloidal mark creates a plastic mask to hide his own identity and performs another identity.

³⁶⁰ Abe, *Abe Kōbō Zenshū*, 3:19, 63.

The state of skin colour and surface corresponds to the surrounding environments. Especially in 'Starving Skin', the skin reflects sensations and emotions, the fantasy created by the protagonist. Upon the female protagonist Mrs Kim's arrival in his room, he strokes all over her body with his 'fingers of eyes' (*me no yubi* in the original text), desiring to touch her skin as soon as possible.³⁶¹ To seduce her, he explains that he wants to save her from the 'disease' of cryptic colouration and gives her medication, which is actually opium. He says:

When the skin colour changes, it will necessarily be accompanied by particular sensations that correspond to that colour. Red signifies the heat of passion, yellow is proud pretension, green is the coolness similar to death anxiety, blue is boredom, purple is a romantic urge, black is irritating pain, and white is fawning smoothness.³⁶²

Waiting until the opium makes her lose control of her body, he holds her, examines her skin in detail, and says into her ear, 'white, fawning smoothness'.³⁶³

The above examples demonstrate the fantasy of skin colour transformation regarding the external world. These two novels manifest the same phenomenon by which the perception of skin colour changes depending on the environment and connects characters written on the page of a book with living skin. Abe writes in 'Cryptic Colouration':

She [the patient] put away her handkerchief and moved her eyes to the page of the book opened beside her. It was the book by [Lucien] Lévy-Bruhl I was reading to do research on the physical changes of primitive people. Soon, fine black spots started to appear on her skin. [...] Those black spots became

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 67.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 67-68.

clearer, forming certain shapes. They were finely disposed in a line. Approaching her, I noticed, amazed, that they were characters. [...] Sentences on the page appeared on her skin as spots.³⁶⁴

There is neither pain nor swelling nor fever. Spots just suddenly appear. In this example, the page touches and affects the girl who sees it. Toward the end of ‘Starving Skin’, while repetitively reading an article on Mrs Kim’s madness and Mr Kim’s mysterious bankruptcy, the protagonist notices Mrs Kim’s name on the paper changes to his:

I was reading the article about the woman every day, repeatedly, like licking. One day, I noticed a strange thing. The woman’s name changed to mine, without my noticing it. And one day, my skin felt a coolness similar to death anxiety, and it changed to dark green.³⁶⁵

The printed word and the presence of the protagonist are replaced, and correspondingly, his skin colour changes. In other words, the page is touched by his act of reading it, causing the change in characters on it. His bodily skin, then, is touched by the act of seeing it, responding to the printed characters on the page and the inescapable memory of Mrs Kim.

This example demonstrates that the page is another type of membrane that shares similar characteristics with membranes discussed in previous sections—such as mediating contact, transmitting embodied experiences and affecting living beings. Meanwhile, because the page shows a collection of characters and marks (or their absence), the particularity of this page as a membrane leads us to further discussions

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 17. French cultural anthropologist Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1857-1939) researched different modes of perception, mind and representation in tribal societies from the West. Because he proposed that ‘primitive’ people bear a different cognitive setting from ‘civilised’ people, he faced severe criticism in the postwar period.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 72.

about the presence or absence of a trace, a sign, an addressee and the iterability of a mark.

Derrida argues that writing presupposes the absence of a receiver, since we can write a letter or book, for example, without an intended receiver: ‘A written sign is proffered in the absence of the receiver’.³⁶⁶ Likewise, a sign presupposes a certain iterability where that sign can be repeatedly interpreted regardless of the spatial and chronological context. Derrida explains that the absence is not simply a distant presence of the receiver but is also a temporal distance in which the meaning itself is reconstituted afterward in its deferral (*différance*).³⁶⁷ For this reason, ‘communication must be repeatable—iterable—in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers’.³⁶⁸ If it were not so inscribed, touch would be unreadable beyond the life of the addressee. ‘In order to function, that is to be readable, a signature must have a repeatable, iterable, imitable form; it must be able to be *detached* from the present and singular intention of its production’.³⁶⁹ This detachment or displacement is common, not only the ‘touch’ of a written mark on the paper but also physical touch and its memory. In this way, touch can be displaced from one specific context and temporality to another, though it is questionable whether this

³⁶⁶ Jacques Derrida, ‘Signature Event Context’, in *Limited Inc.*, trans. Samuel Weber and Jeffrey Mehlman (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 7. Originally published in *Glyph. I: Johns Hopkins Textual Studies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).

³⁶⁷ The Derridean term *différance* indicates temporal deferral and difference. In *différance*, the presence of the primary meaning of the message or act is put into question.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 20. Emphasis added.

temporal direction is only forward.³⁷⁰ As mentioned in the discussion of contact, rupture is an almost necessary condition for touch, whether on the paper or the skin.

Accordingly, the written marks from the book that appeared on the girl's skin in Abe's 'Cryptic Colouration' are readable to scientists by virtue of being temporally and spatially displaced from when and where the book was written. On the girl's forehead is a line by Lévy-Bruhl that says, '死の色は白。新入者は白色に彩られる。' (The colour of death is white. Newcomers are coloured in white.) On the top of her nose, another phrase is inscribed, '集団表象' (Collective representation).³⁷¹ Those phrases are signs rather than sentences within the book, displaced and detached from the original context. For the girl and the scientists, signs still convey certain meanings, which are not completely irrelevant topics for them. Displaced from the original context and time, the signs may indicate something different from the original meaning for unexpected receivers, but those signs still function as marks, inscribed on the surface and affecting readers.

Rupture—mediation, dislocation and distance—is necessary for contact. But to articulate the interpretation of Abe's texts here, we may need to pay more attention to the sign, writing and language. Abe, who used a word processor for the first time in 1980s Japan, found writing with a computer much easier than previous modes due to its ability for cutting and transferring. He explains that, though he generally aims at an

³⁷⁰ As discussed through the Freudian screen-memory in the introduction, the displacement can be in a backward or forward direction. Once it is dislocated, the memory of touch is repetitively sense-able.

³⁷¹ Abe, *Abe Kōbō Zenshū*, 3: 17.

inorganic writing style, the written work ends up containing overabundant adverbs when he tries to freely catch an idea, due to the inherent tendencies of Japanese. Compared to handwriting, writing produced on a word processor is easier to cut without hesitation.³⁷² The temporal gap between writing and seeing words on the screen is even shorter compared to seeing them on paper, so that writing is more an oscillatory activity between thought and actualisation. The media theorist Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980) writes that electronic media, unlike previous literacy and visual cultures, surround us and approach us instantaneously, so that there is a shortened temporal gap in which we register the effects of our acts.³⁷³ Abe, by mediation through an electronic device, reconstituted gaps in his writing unless otherwise naturally created by Japanese. In a way, by the very use of mediation that normally creates a gap, Abe adjusted the language-derived gaps in his writing.

Referring to Condillac's discussion of Egyptian hieroglyphics and Chinese ideographic writing, Derrida states that writing developed from the simple form of painting as a representation:

Representation, of course, will become more complex, will develop supplementary ramifications and degrees; it will become the representation of a representation in various systems of writing, hieroglyphic, ideographic, or phonetic-alphabetical, but the representative structure which marks the first degree of expressive communication [such as paintings], the relation idea/sign,

³⁷² Abe, *Abe Kōbō Zenshū*, vol. 28 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2000), 67, in an interview about the novel written by word processor. He was also one of the first figures who used a synthesiser in Japan.

³⁷³ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (Corte Madera, CA: Ginko Press, 2001 [1967]), 63. Although McLuhan's theorisations emerged before the Internet age, the instantaneity of action and reaction has been further heightened through Internet devices, which rendered even more remote the involvement and hypertrophy of individualism.

will never be either annulled or transformed.³⁷⁴

Hieroglyphic, ideographic or phonetic-alphabetic characters mainly in non-Western cultures have served as a 'representative structure', with their visual, haptic or even bodily (in the case of East Asian calligraphy) functions performed. Nonetheless, McLuhan overlooks non-Western characters in his theorisation, despite having left interesting accounts of the relationship between media (including language) and the body and having considered accelerated fragmentation and individualism caused by alphabetic and print technologies.³⁷⁵ To explore contact on the page, further investigation of the characters and the linguistic system is necessary.

b. Mediation through Language

Roland Barthes, on the book jacket of his *The Empire of Signs* (*L'Empire des signes*), writes that the reason he chose Japan as an object of analysis is that Japan is a country of *l'écriture* (writing, or something written) where one encounters the work of signs of convictions and fantasies.³⁷⁶ Barthes analyses the overabundance of signs in Japan through such phenomena as cuisine, theatre and student protests. Despite his problematic gaze on Japanese culture as the 'other', his comments are still useful. The emphasis on writing occurred as part of a broad shift in structuralist and post-structuralist thought to the elements of sign and written language, aided by

³⁷⁴ Derrida, *Limited Inc*, 5.

³⁷⁵ McLuhan and Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage*, 8.

³⁷⁶ Roland Barthes, *L'Empire des signes* (Genève: Edition d'Art Albert Skira, 1970), back of front cover.

reflections like Derrida's that the study of metaphysics had focused too much on phonic or speech-oriented elements. This shift to writing further provides a point from which the Japanese experience of writing and language, including Abe's note of 'overabundant adverbs', can be analysed through comparison with French.

Barthes, in his 'Inaugural Lecture at the Collège de France' in 1977, discusses how the French language imposes certain choices, not allowing neutral or dual positions such as gender and level of closeness (one must use either *tu* or *vous*): 'by its very structure my language implies an inevitable relation of alienation. To speak, and, with even greater reason, to utter a discourse is not, as is too often repeated, to communicate; it is to subjugate: the whole language is a generalized *rection*'.³⁷⁷ The use of language requires us to establish certain relationships to others, which is applicable also to Japanese, considering the different levels of formality established through the usage of language, from honorific, humble and formal forms. Although speaking and writing is an individual action, Ferdinand de Saussure considers language to exist in a collective form and as never completed in individual usage: 'The language itself is not a function of the speaker. It is the product passively registered by the individual'.³⁷⁸ 'A language [...] is a social institution',³⁷⁹ and thus, we are necessarily involved in a certain linguistic system insofar as we participate in society.

³⁷⁷ Roland Barthes, 'Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France' (1977), in *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982), 460.

³⁷⁸ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983), 14. Originally published by Éditions Payot in Paris in 1972.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Barthes, in *Empire of Signs*, also discusses the proliferation of suffixes, complex enclitics and the subject-less enunciation in Japanese, which makes the subject a ‘great envelope empty of speech’.³⁸⁰ Barthes wonders ‘how we can *imagine* a verb which is simultaneously without subject, without attribute, and yet transitive, such as for instance an act of knowledge without knowing subject and without known object?’³⁸¹ For example, in Japanese, the subject can be simply skipped without conjugation of the verb, unlike Latin-based languages, so that the reader or listener must grasp the context in which the speaker makes a statement to understand what is meant.

Abe was also active in theatrical productions. Indeed, many of his texts can be—and actually have been—developed into dramas bearing various performative aspects. But Austinian performative utterances do not function in the same way in Japanese due to its language system; in principle, a performative utterance needs a subject of action. J. L. Austin writes, ‘There is something which is *at the moment of uttering being done by the person uttering*’.³⁸² ‘The “I” who is doing the action does thus come essentially into the picture’.³⁸³ As an example, Austin lists the words ‘I bet’, in which ‘I perform the act of betting’, instead of ‘he bets’ in which ‘I only state that he utters (or rather has uttered) the words “I bet”’ and ‘I *describe* his performances of the

³⁸⁰ Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, 7; ‘... fait précisément du sujet une grande enveloppe vide de la parole’. Barthes, *L’Empire des signes*, 15.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

³⁸² J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 60. Austin makes a distinction between performative and constative; a performative utterance actually accomplishes an action, whereas a constative utterance makes a statement.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 61.

act of betting'.³⁸⁴ But it is strange to say, 'I warn...', 'I promise...' or 'I bet...' in spoken Japanese; rather, one would omit 'I'. The subject 'I' does not need to be particularly expressed. Without making it explicit, it is naturally read from the context. As a variant of Lacan's analogy of Merleau-Ponty's reflexive phenomenology ('I see myself seeing myself'), with the help of Zeami's aesthetics, this could be said, '*I show myself not showing myself*'. If the first-person singular subject says merely 'bet', the listener understands the subject is 'I', though grammatically it does not make any difference whether either 'you' or 's/he' is the subject. Where the performative is possible, it must wait for the proliferated ending of the sentence where the verb and negative appears, which can create a form of belated drama.³⁸⁵

Many of Abe's writings can be perceived as a disappearance of the self into the self, where the 'I' itself physically disappears. The theme of retreat is prominent through metamorphosis, self-enclosure and disappearance. Thomas Rimer writes that Abe's victims in another work retreat, disappearing into themselves rather than disappearing from society.³⁸⁶ It is particularly meaningful to read in Abe that this 'retreat into the self' signifies not necessarily the one into a fully contained self but rather the one into an alienated subject in modern society. In such a case of disappearance and retreat, there is no way to authenticate the 'I'. Abe searches for

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

³⁸⁵ Although Japanese uses Chinese characters in writing, the experience of speech is different, Chinese having a structure similar to English.

³⁸⁶ Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and its Traditions*, 262.

identity in alienated modernity, but meanwhile, seemingly rejects an identity. Even in *The Woman in the Dune*, the protagonist disappears. The report of the disappearance having proved fruitless after some years, the protagonist is treated as dead though his body is never discovered. Abe's self does not assert itself; its presence is too precarious to claim itself as 'I'. As such, not only bodily stimuli or the aforementioned visual imago but also the use of language affect how the subject develops and exists.

The above demonstrates only a few examples of different demands stemming from language. Even academic discourse is subject to the specificity of its linguistic system, considering the way gender theories such as French feminism have arisen in France and the problematic potential language already embraces within itself such as in Luce Irigaray's problematisation of Levinas's expression of the beloved, *l'aimé qui est aimée*, which grammatically indicates a female.³⁸⁷ Also, as discussed earlier, Donald Keene explains the unspoken implications in Japanese literary creations, which are uncommon in European forms of writing. It is perhaps hasty or slightly reductive of Barthes to try to see emptiness in almost any aspect of Japanese cultural phenomena, from a subject-less Japanese sentence to the emperor system in *Empire of Signs*, particularly so when one considers Karatani's point that Altaic languages like Korean have a linguistic structure similar to Japanese.³⁸⁸ Nonetheless, *le sujet vide*, the empty subject, is an important point to keep in mind when considering the phenomenon of

³⁸⁷ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 256, footnote.

³⁸⁸ Karatani, *Nihon Seishinbunseki*, 98.

touch in modern Japanese literature through the cross-cultural application of the theory, since the descriptions of the felt sensations and affects necessarily come through the writer's self, using a particular language. Lacan observed that the Japanese might not need to be psychoanalysed, as discussed earlier. Shingū responds with hesitancy to Lacan's pessimism and raises the possibility of discovering ourselves through the viewpoint of the Other, particularly in alienation from one's own culture.³⁸⁹ This alienation can be applicable to Abe's writing, as self-alienation from the self.

Barthes notes, 'Japanese [...] articulates impressions, not affidavits'.³⁹⁰ The Japanese, as writing subjects, face a constant choice of multiple types of characters and sounds, shortening and prolonging sentences through particular characters. Yoshiyuki constantly uses the ideogram 軀, which is not in common use, to indicate the body.³⁹¹ The use of this ideogram resulted in him being labeled a writer of the 'body'; consequently, some writers intentionally avoided using this ideogram.³⁹² This selection and combination affect the impressions conveyed by writing. Shingū describes the Japanese subject as 'pulverized'³⁹³ in this fragmentation of different reading and characters; in other words, the experience of writing is already mediated by such

³⁸⁹ Shingū, 'Freud, Lacan and Japan', 267-270.

³⁹⁰ Barthes, *Empire of Signs*, 7. This tendency to inexplicitly communicate impressions or feelings is also a feature of particles and adjectives in Japanese. See Senko K. Maynard's *Expressive Japanese: A Reference Guide to Sharing Emotion and Empathy* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

³⁹¹ 軀, simplified as 躯, originally stems from the shape of a person bending his back. Andrew N. Nelson defines 軀 as 'body', 'corpse' and 'tree with a rotten heart' in *The Modern Reader's Japanese-English Character Dictionary*, 2nd Revised Version (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1974 [1962]), 863.

³⁹² See Yamaguchi Hitomi's essay on this ideogram used by Yoshiyuki, 'Karada' ('Body'), in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke no Kenkyū*, ed. Yamamoto, 193-195.

³⁹³ Shingū, 'Freud, Lacan and Japan', 266.

elements. This involves further rupture, creating a space of linguistic play between the sender and receiver of the message, precisely as Shingū refers to the invention of ‘multiple practices for enjoyment, such as *waka* and *haiku*’.³⁹⁴ Those types of linguistic play enable participants to present their feelings and emotions through the very use of ruptured language. Abe does not seem to ‘articulate emotions’, judging from his materialistic writing and protagonist’s passivity for his own fate; ‘after a long series of aborted movements, searches, escape attempts etc., the protagonist is usually seen motionless, a passive observer to his own fate, often quite literally’.³⁹⁵ But he certainly utilises the playful part of Japanese, considering, as we saw, how he uses Chinese ideograms as a written mark displaced from the book on the face. Abe, in both ‘Cryptic Colouration’ and ‘Starving Skin’, employs various specialised scientific vocabularies, as is often the case in Abe. Especially in the former, a small drawing of chemical equations between the texts—written in the story by the scientist on the ground to explain the phenomenon of cryptic colouration—functions as a visual mark inside the text. Employing various manners of writing, Abe’s text becomes readable, visible and touchable. As discussed above, the subject is already fragmented into different characters, readings and significations from Chinese and Japanese; thus, language mediates the subject. I will next analyse how the different types of membranes discussed so far can relate to each other, through such ruptured verbal representations.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁵ Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 203.

c. Translatability among Membranes

The discussion regarding membranes thus far in this chapter has concerned the skin, light and the page, all of which mediate touch. However, especially in Abe's second work mentioned earlier, 'Starving Skin', we witness a fictional and uncanny translatability among those membranes: physically, the page and the skin, and necessarily light (or colour) and the skin. As quoted earlier, while the protagonist repetitively reads an article that tells of Mrs Kim, who has gone mad, and Mr Kim's mysterious bankruptcy, he notices her name on the paper changes to his. The printed word and the presence of the protagonist are replaced, and correspondingly, the skin colour of the protagonist changes. The translatability of the membranes also necessarily applies to light and the skin. The skin colour changes in the mediation of light, as Deleuze and Guattari state, 'liberating light and modulating colour, restoring a kind of aerial haptic space that constitutes the unlimited site of interaction of the planes'.³⁹⁶ But this male protagonist becomes excessively attached to and reads—as if he 'licks'—Mrs Kim's presence on the printed page. Consequently, he slips over the boundary between him and her and between the page and the body and falls into the translatability of membranes.

Soon after the war, Abe suffered from serious poverty, an ideological shift

³⁹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 547.

and a sense of alienation and confusion, so his works mostly refer to alienation, the outside, dystopias, social madness and even a search for identity, as seen in the comments on Abe by Napier and Rimer. Even through his essay 'Internal Periphery' (*Uchinaru Henkyō*), which references the Jew's non-sedentary nature and being without a place to which he or she can return, he searches for internal periphery or attempts to go into exile inside the self.³⁹⁷ Yet, this slipping into Mrs Kim on the page or introjection of her as the absent presence leaves another line of interpretation, which illuminates an inevitable desire for incorporating another and being with another.

The protagonist was initially so jealous of Mrs Kim's wealth compared to his severe poverty, he tries to trick her into taking the opium pills he gives her to avoid cryptic colouration. Eventually, he achieves his aim, making love with her, making her addicted to opium and finally getting access to Mr Kim's property to cause him bankruptcy.³⁹⁸ Thus, those elements of alienation, madness and exile from the norm all appear in Abe's texts. Whereas a quick look at the article about Mr and Mrs Kim would have sufficed, he reads and 'licks' it too much, eventually causing him the same corporeal phenomenon, cryptic colouration. With this phenomenon, he cannot choose what to take in and what to introject, unlike normal introjection in which the subject can limit what to introject only to the good object. The only way to avoid taking in the

³⁹⁷ Abe Kōbō, 'Uchinaru Henkyō', in *Abe Kōbō Zenshū* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1999), 22: 205-228. Originally written in 1968.

³⁹⁸ In the story, the protagonist asks Mrs Kim (who got addicted to opium and no longer has control of herself) to give him Mr Kim's seal or stamp, called *inkan* in Japanese, which functions as an official signature for any transaction at the bank. Abe, *Abe Kōbō Zenshū*, 3: 71-72. Mrs Kim's giving this *inkan* to the protagonist means allowing him access to all of Mr Kim's property.

object is not to see it, though that is not always effective, for his skin colour represents his emotion. By actively reading the article, he allows himself to introject Mrs Kim's absent body as a typed name. This introjection causes the appearance of his name in the article instead of Mrs Kim's, and his skin becomes the dark green of death anxiety.

The translatability between the haptic and optic discussed by Deleuze and Guattari³⁹⁹ permits one to move from one sense modality to another such as between touch and vision. However, Abe's works further signal the translatability of the membranes, the skin, light or colour, and the page without being fixed to any one of the modalities of touch, vision and language. The membranes discussed above are all interrelated in Abe. Simultaneously, however, this translatability needs another medium. Although it seems like a circular argument—since the membrane mediates external stimuli, conducts stimuli and prevents them—membranes such as the skin and the page are unrelated unless they have a medium to connect each other. This medium is a body with weight, temperature and emotion. Abe's 'Starving Skin' shows that different kinds of membranes can function individually but are capable of being interrelated and translatable due to the mediating function of the human body in a fictional world. The change in the nameless protagonist, in his name appearing in the newspaper instead of Mrs Kim's, occurred through his act of repetitive reading, so the paper's surface emits it

³⁹⁹ See the beginning of Chapter 1-B. Deleuze and Guattari question the divide over sensory modality, such as between touch and vision, particularly introducing the concepts of 'smooth' space (that is both visual and haptic space) and 'striated' space (that is distant optic space). This concept of the haptic will be discussed again in Chapter 2.

to him. Meanwhile, though Abe's other work 'Cryptic Colouration' focuses on colour changes, it also contains extensive transformation of the body beyond colour. The man, S, who is surrounded by smoke from a pipe, becomes smoke. A scientist moans, 'it's cryptic colouration'.⁴⁰⁰ On another occasion, a shivering girl's father transmits anxiety to the nameless protagonist, since the protagonist gives his arm to the father for the father to avoid seeing the outside world and causing the change of skin colour. The father then disappears when the shaking stops.⁴⁰¹ In these cases, Abe certainly crosses the boundary of colour in the name of 'cryptic colouration' or 'mimic colouring', making us ponder the presence of the body in a different way, which is weight. It shows the presence of the human body's mass by disappearing. I will expand on this in the next chapter.

When we try to grasp issues of membranes in such authors as Yoshiyuki and Abe, we necessarily encounter their radically different literary styles. There seems to be another issue to examine here—the difference between the skin and the page described in the different writing styles of Yoshiyuki and Abe. The major difference between the two is whether the subject's skin can be affected by the emotion.⁴⁰² Abe's skin transforms as the very carnal reaction to the external world. As described in 'Cryptic

⁴⁰⁰ Abe, *Abe Kōbō Zenshū*, 3: 26.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴⁰² Tanizaki sees cloudiness in Japanese female skin; 'For the Japanese complexion, no matter how white, is tinged by a slight cloudiness', while 'the skin of Westerners, even those of a darker complexion, had a limpid glow. Nowhere were they tainted by this gray shadow'. Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, 49. This reading of the skin can be considered his fantasy and authentication of *Japanese* skin in his Orientalisation of Japanese culture.

Colouration’, after the girl manifests a book’s characters 集団表象 atop her nose, ‘she moved her eyes to the green mat on the desk. Then she became green. She closed her eyes, and in twenty seconds, she returned to her original colour, her girlish beautiful skin colour’.⁴⁰³ In ‘Starving Skin’, the colour change further reflects different kinds of emotion. As quoted earlier, the male protagonist feels something cold, like anxiety, and notices that he has turned green, which is explained as the colour of death anxiety earlier in the novel. Although this is a fictional transformation, the skin responds to *touch* from the world.

Also in Yoshiyuki, the skin responds to elements of the external world such as wetness due to psychological excitation as seen in *The Dark Room* or to an itch caused by humidity, from which Yoshiyuki himself often suffered. However, the skin colour itself does not change unless it is beaten and recovers. Nakata whips Natsue with his belt, and ‘A diagonal red weal started into sight on her flesh’.⁴⁰⁴ Then he narrates, ‘When I met Natsue five days later there were in fact no marks of the belt anywhere on her body. I searched carefully, but couldn’t even find any discoloration’.⁴⁰⁵ Possibly based on his fantasy, Nakata finds some physical changes as their relationship deepens. ‘The buttocks, ample out of proportion to her slender body, were noticeably smaller than before. It wasn’t that she’d lost weight, for the thin skin fitted the swelling flesh as

⁴⁰³ Abe, *Abe Kōbō Zenshū*, 17-18.

⁴⁰⁴ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 141.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

tightly as ever'.⁴⁰⁶ He finds another change. 'That same day I noticed another change in Natsue—though it, too, had probably been taking place gradually over a long period. Her voice, once low and rather husky, had become thin and clear'.⁴⁰⁷ Since Nakata thought her former voice self-defensive or artificially attractive, he interprets this voice change as a sign of intimacy; 'It was just around then that I was feeling my own barriers going down. Her remark pleased me'.⁴⁰⁸ These changes are not carnal transformations or metamorphoses as in Abe. Rather, these changes are due to Nakata's perception of Natsue's body, narrated through the lens of Nakata in the form of the 'I-novel', *shi-shōsetsu* or *watakushi shōsetsu* in Japanese, written based on the author's personal experiences, and which has been a major literary form in Japan since the early modern period.⁴⁰⁹

The I-novel reflects the author's experience in a retrospective way by borrowing the figure of the protagonist. It describes the protagonist's regret or self-examination through the perspective of the 'I', 'the confessional form or inward-looking explorations of the individual psyche'.⁴¹⁰ While acknowledging this particular form regarding Japanese formulations of identity, Hutchinson and Williams

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁹ Since this term's appearance in the early 1920s, the I-novel has characterised the nature of modern Japanese literature as the following: a factual and 'direct expression of the author's lived experience', as opposed to a Western fictional, imaginative novel; real but immature; and a reflection of the author's life and Japanese society. See Tomi Suzuki's *Narrating the Self*, 3.

⁴¹⁰ Rachael Hutchinson and Mark Williams, 'Introduction: Self and Other in Modern Japanese Literature', in *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach*, ed. Hutchinson and Williams (London: Routledge, 2007), 2.

choose to explore the process of self-identification, in terms of the inside self and in relationship to others, namely through the creation of the imaginary other. This account of the I-novel may fit well in understanding the identity in *The Dark Room*, since Nakata's identity construction in the novel is inseparably tied with the shadow of other men whom Nakata's women bring in as their past—the membrane as the imaginary other. Therefore, the I-novel does signify the novel based on the self and the self in relationship to the world.

Yoshiyuki often draws motifs for his works from his life experiences and deploys them as the protagonist's.⁴¹¹ For Yoshiyuki, this style has not been limited solely to *The Dark Room*, as most of his works have been written in the same manner. Because of this, the actual skin colour in Yoshiyuki's works *cannot* easily change. Although Abe and Yoshiyuki are roughly from the same generation, Abe resisted the confessional form and kept writing 'fiction'. Abe creates a Kafkaesque atmosphere, where he unites highly scientific descriptions with grotesque, surreal fantasy. Christopher Bolton writes, 'The contrast between these technical elements and the fantastic or surreal ones generates a tension which is a trademark of Abe's text'.⁴¹² Abe was against both the confessional form and proletarian writing because 'the "gap between reality and expression" makes it impossible to "turn life into a work of

⁴¹¹ As mentioned earlier, Ōtsuka Eiko, Yoshiyuki's real-life partner, claims that *The Dark Room* is based on his relationship to her and that she is the model for Natsue. See Ōtsuka Eiko, *'Anshitsu' no Nakade* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1997).

⁴¹² Christopher Bolton, 'The Dialogue of Styles and the Dance of Fiction in Abe Kôbô's *The Face of Another*', in *Bakhtinian Theory in Japanese Studies*, ed. Jeffrey Johnson (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 154.

fiction”’.⁴¹³ Taking ‘a careful balance between the weight of the narrator’s internal, textual world and the weight of the world outside’,⁴¹⁴ Abe’s fiction challenges the extremes of language. Due to his policy of sticking to fiction with a structure, not confessional fiction, Abe’s protagonists go beyond the limit of the sense modalities that they can feel and capture. His characters disappear not in the large vacuum of the self at the forefront of the confessional novel, but in a constant dislocation of the self as Abe’s internal exile in fiction, knitting a dialogue between language and the external world. Alienation of the self in a form of fiction in a ruptured language enables Abe to perform the transformation of the protagonist’s body and of the shape of affects.

When analysing the use of literary representations and sense modalities, it would be hasty to determine that the skin corresponds to human emotions and the page does not, prioritising biological material over inhuman material. In Abe’s ‘Starving Skin’, the word on the page changes with the protagonist’s obsessive reading of the same article, which means that the page changes due to the behaviour of the protagonist, at least in this fiction. Corresponding to the name switching, the protagonist’s skin colour changes. As we have seen in the previous section, the membrane in the form of light (as a shared skin) and gaze affects Nakata’s consciousness. The difference between the skin and another inhuman membrane becomes problematic in terms of what affects Nakata: whether it is Nakata’s skin that perceives external stimuli, bodily memory in

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

Natsue, the woman's body in the photograph or Natsue's gaze imagined by Nakata. The difference between membranes—whether the skin, light or the page—cannot simply be determined by the question of whether it is human or not. The translatability of membranes embraces different senses and communication modalities and requires a kind of agency that acts in the process of creating membranes and mediated touch.

In this chapter, I analysed the skin that sustains the memory of touch, the fantasy of transparent touch, the self-identity formed by the senses through the skin, and the membrane formed through previous tactile relationships and its effects on currently touching bodies as in Yoshiyuki. I have also examined how light touches us as a carnal medium and shared skin, the gaze that affects our consciousness, and the shadow that possesses a mediatory function between conflicting oppositions of death and life, understanding and the lack of it. Last, I argued that the page, with written marks on the surface, touches readers, combining with mediation through language, and that different kinds of membranes are interrelated. The analysis also demonstrated how the ambiguity represented in Japanese literature signifies the movement between conflicting oppositional forces rather than a simple vagueness that echoes with the notion of con-tact and the tension between the touchable and the untouchable examined through this thesis. Touch requires detachment and attachment as well as conduction and prevention; likewise, Japanese literary characters tend to touch others through mediation. Either in mediation through the skin, light, the page or its language, we have witnessed

in this chapter that mediation prevails widely and profoundly in experiences of various kinds of touch. Simultaneously, mediated communication conversely heightens the fantasy about immediate contact. The question examined next is how this mediated subject can actualise face-to-face or skin-to-skin touch with others. Membranes partly absorb the stimulation of contacts. But real encounters with others must involve the weight of other bodies, accepting the soothing possibility and risk of being with other bodies.

Chapter 2: Touching Others, Encountering Others

[Synopsis]

‘One Arm’ (‘Kataude’), by Kawabata Yasunari

In this short story, a girl lends the male protagonist her arm for one night, permitting him to replace her arm with his. The protagonist takes her arm beneath his coat to his room, in fear of people noticing her arm. Safely in his flat, the protagonist observes her arm under the play of light, subtly touches the nails and fingertips, and talks with her. Becoming interested in her, he unknowingly replaces his arm with hers. In the first moment, there is an unreachable gap between the girl’s arm and the rest of his body. But soon, the two unite peacefully without disruption, and he sleeps. When he wakes, with the repulsive touch of his arm thrown on the floor, he wrenches her arm off and replaces his arm. The girl’s arm, thrown on the floor, is left without warmth. He holds her arm as if holding a dying baby.

***The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P (Oyayubi P no Shugyō Jidai)*, by Matsuura Rieko**

The female protagonist, Mano Kazumi, is a normal girl who helps with her friend’s business of virtual matchmaking. One day, she dreams of having her big toe transformed into a small penis, big toe P. When she wakes, she notices that her big toe has actually transformed into a penis. This physical and, in a way, gender transformation causes her trouble with her lover Masao, who cannot accept the presence of big toe P. Splitting up with him, Kazumi meets a new partner, Shunji, a blind musician who is free from sexual fixation, and other members of the Flower Show. With this performance group, Kazumi happens to show her big toe P and also comes to experience *skinship* free from genital union. Eventually she becomes free from sexual fixation and seeks a relationship for love.

Touch is hardly realised unless we meet others face-to-face, except for certain cases in which touch is mediated through the skin, light and shadow, and the page as discussed in the first chapter. As discussed earlier, mediation, ambiguity and rupture play an

important role in Japanese literary representations. Like Nancy's touch, which departs while making contact, the experience of touch described in the literature above demonstrates the point of contact where desire, jealousy, intimacy, love, memory, affection, disbelief and hesitation become momentarily imbricated—the point of touching and not-touching. But under this mediated nature of contact, is there any point at which we can touch others fully? In other words, touch being highly mediated, can we ever really encounter the alterity of the other in touching and accept the other in an ethical sense?⁴¹⁵ 'Tactile encounter' with others here can mean the weight of another felt on the body, the existence of another's body taken inside the body and the bareness of the body experienced through *skinship*.

To examine the issues addressed above, this chapter will first analyse the issue of bodily weight and touch in Yoshiyuki's literary examples mainly through the lens of Nancy's thought on weight and Merleau-Ponty's concept of the reversibility of the touched-touching, body-world relations. The body weight of the touched tends to be arguably absorbed by the act of touching in Yoshiyuki, while we can find examples in which the touched body presses against the touching body almost with the same pressure or at least prohibition, such as in the works of Tanizaki or Milan Kundera, as a non-Japanese example. The reception of touch as it appears in literature—not the

⁴¹⁵ By saying 'ethical', I mean not only the question of accepting the other's body but also the question of accepting what the other brings together with the body such as the alterity of the other, as Emmanuel Levinas would say that 'a fecund being' should be capable of a fate other than its own. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 282.

conception of touch, but the physical reception of touch by another—also raises the issue of how physical sensations can be translated and demonstrated through language. Furthermore, touch itself means surface touch, as repeatedly appears in Yoshiyuki, and incorporation of another's body part. As discussed in the introduction, Kawabata's protagonists are hesitant to touch others, or at least descriptions of touch are carefully hidden for a combination of aesthetic and censorial reasons. Yet in his short story 'One Arm' ('*Kataude*'), an arm is radically incorporated or joined with another's body, which raises many ethical questions, including how to accept another's alterity inside one's body. The second part of this chapter will focus on the ethical issue of bodily encounters through the discussion of incorporation in Kawabata, regarding phenomenological theorisations of touch and psychoanalytical concepts of incorporation, considering risk and responsibility in tactile encounters. Touch in Yoshiyuki and Kawabata's fiction still centres on protagonists' male fantasy of the female body and direct touch. I will end this chapter by examining novels by Matsuura Rieko because she particularly resists literary conventions that are created mainly by Japanese male writers in which physical relationships tend to be hidden, by detailing physical intimacy, interactions and relevant sensations. She does not portray touch particularly as sexual, as authors like Kawabata and Tanizaki tend to do, but as sensual experiences that are prevalent in our lives, allowing us to think of touch as *skinship* rather than sexualised physical contact. I will analyse her novels, looking at the space

between the sexual and the sensual through theories such as those by Roland Barthes, Kimura Bin and Deleuze and Guattari, bringing the idea of *skinship* to the third chapter.

A. Weight

a. Absorbed Bodily Weight in Yoshiyuki

As discussed in the previous chapter, the concept of membrane and the materiality of the skin have great significance in Yoshiyuki's *The Dark Room*. However, it is arguable whether bodies really encounter each other in his works. The word 'encounter' here means inevitable witness, thinking, sensing and touching with the play of weight—pushing against each other, leaning on the other and entrusting one's body to the other.⁴¹⁶ In Yoshiyuki's work, bodies meet on the surface. The presence of a sensitive 'membrane' is prominent, but the issue of weight is slightly problematic because whether the female character resists or not, her body weight seems to be problematically absorbed into a male character's, while another male body retains considerable resistance. Nakata describes one of his lovers: 'Takako's body would dwindle and melt away in your arms like a snowflake in the palm of your hand'.⁴¹⁷ Of the lover who remains with him until the end of the story, he says, 'Natsue's body got more and more supple, with a kind of inner resilience, and faintly damp all over with

⁴¹⁶ Heidegger writes, 'Many men never encounter this question ["Why are there essents rather than nothing?"]', if by encounter we mean not merely to hear and read about it as an interrogative formulation but to ask the question, that is, to bring it about, to raise it, to feel its inevitability.' *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 1.

⁴¹⁷ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 47.

sweat’.⁴¹⁸ Although other women left Nakata for different reasons, the one with resilience, Natsue, eventually has a deeper relationship with Nakata, leading us to the question of the role of weight in bodily encounters.

For Jean-Luc Nancy, weight is an essential element with which to discuss touch and the body in space. He raises questions about Heidegger’s statement below:

The stone is without world. The stone is lying on the path, for example. We can say that the stone is exerting a certain pressure upon the surface of the earth. It is “touching” the earth. But what we call “touching” here is not a form of touching at all in the stronger sense of the word. It is not at all like *that* relationship which the lizard has to the stone on which it lies basking in the sun. And the touching implied in both cases is above all not the same as *that* touch which we experience when we rest our hand upon the head of another human being.... Because in its being a stone it has no possible access to anything else around it, anything that it might attain or possess as such.⁴¹⁹

Nancy writes:

Heidegger apparently fails to weigh precisely the weight of the stone that rolls or surges forth onto the earth, the weight of the *contact* of the stone with the other surface, and through it with the world as the network of all surfaces. [...] He misses the exposition of surfaces through which, inexhaustibly, delayed arrival singularly exhausts itself.⁴²⁰

For Nancy, the stone is problematically on the surface without enough consideration to its functions of pressing the other, being pressed by the other, or the weight of the stone itself. He poses, ‘The body *is* weight. Laws of gravity involve *bodies* in space. But first and foremost, the body itself weighs’.⁴²¹ Although the first chapter is focused on the mediation of touch, that is to say, events happening before touch, it is essential to think

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁹ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, 59. Quoted from Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeil and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 196-197.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴²¹ Nancy, *Corpus*, 7.

about bodily weight and response when our bodies actually make contact with others. Therefore, in this section, I focus on investigating the weight of touch, both in the physical and psychological sense, to develop our understanding of a bodily encounter. The lack of attention to body weight is visible even considering that Yoshiyuki's touch is largely focused on surface materiality and the fictitious membrane rather than body weight, and that, on the theoretical side, Merleau-Ponty's encroachment does not seem to involve weight.

Theoretical investigations of touch before Nancy seemed mainly to deal with the phenomenological oscillation between subject and object or the sexual power relations between the touching male and the touched female, both of which refer to one's embodied experience. Luce Irigaray criticises the lack of otherness in Merleau-Ponty, saying, 'Merleau-Ponty's whole analysis is marked by this laby-rinthine solipsism'⁴²² and asks how it is possible to analyse the visible and the tactile without the other, including that given by sexual difference. For Irigaray, touch reaffirms the other and its flesh:

Before orality comes to be, touch is already in existence. No nourishment can compensate for the grace or work of touching. Touch makes it possible to wait, to gather strength, so that the other will return to caress and reshape, from within and from without, a flesh that is given back to itself in the gesture of love. The

⁴²² Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian Gill (London: Continuum, 2004), 131. Originally published as *Éthique de la différence sexuelle* by Les Editions de Minuit in 1984. This solipsism means that, in Merleau-Ponty, the subject-object relationship or 'two leaves' of the body and of the world seem to make it impossible for the other to be seen. 'The subtlety of what is said of the visible and of its relation to the flesh does not rule out the solipsistic character of this touch(ing) between the world and the subject, of this touch(ing) of the visible and the seer in the subject itself' (131).

most subtly necessary guardian of my life is the other's flesh.⁴²³

But as Cathryn Vasseleu says and as we can see from this quote, a caress for Irigaray is a gesture of love, 'the most elementary gesture of fecundity'.⁴²⁴ Irigaray's tactile encounter as a gesture does not seem to involve weight, even though Irigaray considers touch a primary way to encounter the other and she is sensitive about membrane and touch by highlighting the mucous that resists being captured by the male fantasy.⁴²⁵

Even in Merleau-Ponty, the body seems to demonstrate surface-ness rather than weighty mass. Being simultaneously a perceiving subject and an object of perception, the subject-object relationship oscillates:

Already in the "touch" we have just found three distinct experiences which subtend one another, three dimensions which overlap but are distinct: a touching of the sleek and of the rough, a touching of the things—a passive sentiment of the body and of its space—and finally a veritable touching of the touch, when my right hand touches my left hand while it is palpating the things, where the "touching subject" passes over to the rank of the touched, descends into the things, such that the touch is formed in the midst of the world and as it were in the things.⁴²⁶

Touching here is, at the same time, an object touched, in the name of 'veritable touch'.

Merleau-Ponty is careful about the depth and thickness of the body, saying, 'The thickness of the body, far from rivaling that of the world, is on the contrary the sole

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴²⁴ Cathryn Vasseleu, *Textures of Light: Vision and Touch in Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty* (London: Routledge, 1998), 114.

⁴²⁵ Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 93-95. Mucous for Irigaray is, unlike a representation in the mirror, more open to touch than sight. It is half open, unlike a closed container, and enables both the male and female to have one of the lips and the female to be a desiring subject.

⁴²⁶ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 133-134. This reversibility is not limited to touch but is applicable to the tangible and the visible: 'every visible is cut out in the tangible, every tactile being in some manner promised to visibility, and that there is encroachment, infringement, not only between the touched and the touching, but also between the tangible and visible, which is encrusted in it, as, conversely, the tangible itself is not a nothingness of visibility, is not without visual existence' (134).

means I have to go unto the heart of the things, by making myself a world and by making them flesh'.⁴²⁷ The flesh here suggests the encroachment of body and world, which dissolves the clear dichotomy of subject-object relations and body-world relations.⁴²⁸ This reversibility seems to suggest no friction. The body for him, being subject and object, is 'a being of two leaves'.⁴²⁹ In saying 'making myself a world' and 'making them flesh' reversibly, the notion of weight has been omitted. Precisely for this reason, a Merleau-Pontean oscillation between subject-object is contact, on the surface. Yet, the body is a weighty mass, as Nancy reminds us; 'If, as its name suggests, the Occident is a fall, then the body is the ultimate weight, the extremity of the weight sinking from this fall'.⁴³⁰ A body necessarily has weight. Through the play of weight—pushing, being pushed against, mutual pressing—one would actually reach and touch the other.

Considering weight on the body as one of the necessary conditions for tactile encounters, we should further examine how it actually appears in literary representations. Since Yoshiyuki is sensitive to the senses on the surface rather than the mass of the whole body as examined in the previous chapter, weight does not necessarily come to the forefront in his works. But we can find other reasons for it: First, he describes the weight of and the pressure on the body metaphorically; second, the

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁴²⁸ See the Introduction B-a with regard to Merleau-Ponty's flesh and Ichikawa's *mi*, both of which blur the boundary between body and world and which are important aspects for Tahhan to think about *skinship* in Japan.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴³⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, 7.

female in Yoshiyuki tends not to press back, which necessarily raises gender-related questions such as those of female agency. Turning now to the first point, though we can find certain descriptions of pressure in Yoshiyuki, it is not always the body that brings a clear identity. Nakata, getting bored of beating her with his belt, narrates as follows:

“I’m the sucker here,” I thought to myself. I’d used the word lightly in a similar situation before, but now it carried a new weight.
But that thought too was swept aside in its turn. A bundle of extremely fine, subtly intertwined threads attached themselves to my skin and began to exert pressure on it. Sometimes, quite suddenly, they changed into a single thick thread and came forcing their way into my senses.⁴³¹

It is not clear, even in the original text, what the ‘bundle’ or ‘thread’ means in this phrase. It could be the belt with which he beats Natsue; her body, as mentioned before this phrase;⁴³² or the partial sensibility of her body as a metaphor. Reading from the context where he plunges into Natsue’s body just before the narration above, and where right after, he cannot help asking her, ““Do I see you tomorrow?””,⁴³³ it would make sense to interpret it not as the belt or the thread itself but Natsue’s physicality as a fine thread. But still, since descriptions are metaphorical, her whole body itself does not directly press him. It is the threads that ‘exert pressure’ on his skin. The pressure is present, but the clear identity of the presser is absent. This thread is, like the membrane, his imaginary creation, borrowing the image from the human figure. Even at the end of

⁴³¹ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 165. The last words in ‘my senses’ is, literally speaking, ‘my body’ (私の軀) in the original text, *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 148.

⁴³² After some observations about her lip and face, Nakata gets bored of beating her with his belt and started feeling foolish, and ‘I threw the belt aside, and plunged directly into the fray’. (ベルトを投げ捨てて、直接夏枝の軀に溺れてゆく) (*The Dark Room* 165, *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 148).

⁴³³ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 165.

the story, when Nakata arrives at the building where Natsue lives, he starts sensing her smell:

As I plunged into the entrance of the building where she lived, I caught a whiff of Natsue in the air. Nowadays, Natsue's body hadn't any real smell to speak of. Yet a faint odor hung about it, an odor that both stimulated the senses and induced a faint melancholy. I climbed the stairs and walked along the long concrete corridor. The smell grew steadily stronger: the smell that I was sure no one but I could detect. Soon it filled my nostrils, stiflingly oppressive.⁴³⁴

Natsue comes into Nakata in the form of smell, not with her physical bodily weight.

The second issue—the lack of female autonomous subjectivity, and in this case, the tendency that the female does not press the male back—is problematised by feminist scholars such as Ueno Chizuko, saying Yoshiyuki eliminates the otherness of the female.⁴³⁵ As mentioned earlier, in their dialogue on the chapter on Yoshiyuki, Ueno, Ogura and author Tomioka criticise Yoshiyuki because his male protagonist often uses the female as a means to eliminate his anger and stress.⁴³⁶ Due to the nature of his style, the I-novel, Yoshiyuki often describes his personal experiences borrowing the figure of a male protagonist. Thus, they direct this critique, the erasure of female subjectivity, toward Yoshiyuki's own relationship with women. They further criticise that Yoshiyuki's works fall into the realm of 'popular literature' by exercising a sexual double standard, despite his attitude as a sexually radical explorer.⁴³⁷ 'Popular literature'

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴³⁵ Ueno et al., *Danryū Bungakuron*, 9. The effacement of the other's alterity in Yoshiyuki is also discussed by Sekine Eiji, '*Tasha*' no *Shōkyō*: Yoshiyuki Junnosuke to Kindai Bungaku (*The Erasure of the 'Other': Yoshiyuki Junnosuke and Modern Literature*) (Tokyo: Keisō Shobō, 1993).

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 32-42.

here means literature that practises a sexual double standard in which, they explain, sexual morality is generous for the male, allowing him multiple relationships, but strict for females, requiring chastity from them.⁴³⁸ Their critique may include the fact that Yoshiyuki, one of the well-known writers at the time, made this double standard further prevail in society; couples of middle-age (often married) men and young women, which is the same situation as in the novel, were named *yūgure zoku* following the title of the novel *Until the Dark* (*Yūgure Made*) in 1978. Ueno suggests Yoshiyuki imposes a non-reproductive sexuality on the females, the protagonist seeing their passive responses toward the stimuli he gives and playing on the surface level.⁴³⁹ Because of this reason, the female, no matter how deeply he physically relates with her, is supposed to leave him.

In Yoshiyuki's short story 'The Prostitute's Room' (*Shōfu no Heya*) from 1958, which describes a male protagonist's relationship to the prostitute Akiko, the protagonist narrates, 'Possibly I was heading toward Akiko's body as if I was trying to confirm that I was living'.⁴⁴⁰ In *The Dark Room* and most of his short stories, his protagonists desire the female body to be satisfied physically and psychologically, perhaps even ontologically. In other words, they aim to be satisfied psychologically by assuring their physical presence—which also can be seen in the literature of the flesh

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 50-53.

⁴⁴⁰ Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, 'Shōfu no Heya', in *Shōfu no Heya, Fui no Dekigoto* (*The Prostitute's Room, an Unexpected Event*), (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1966), 15.

(*nikutai bungaku*). It is a search for the female body for physical and psychological comfort and assuredness, as the protagonist narrates, 'For me, the prostitute was an existence that was sad and nostalgic, and gave me comfort'.⁴⁴¹ However, Yoshiyuki's protagonists seem already to know that it is impossible to be fully comforted, because even at the end of this short story, the protagonist and Akiko depart from each other. After Akiko attempts and repeatedly fails to get out of the red-light district, the protagonist realises that he no longer needs either her or the district; nor does she need him. This sort of ending, which does not lead lovers to unite but leave each other, is common also in his other works, in which the characters are in search of human physicality, despite its uncertainty and never-fulfilled satisfaction. Contrary to what Ueno and others state, it is not just female characters who leave the male protagonist.

Yet, it is still true that Yoshiyuki deals with the male's anger or stress via the female body and accommodates the male's demands. Just after the sentence quoted earlier in 'The Prostitute's Room', we read, 'Or, possibly I was going to explode my repressed anger toward Akiko's body'.⁴⁴² Resulting from his jealousy about other unknown men, the protagonist also narrates, 'Since that day, it often occurred to me that, when I noticed I was putting violent force upon Akiko's body in her room, her room was no longer a soothing place for me'.⁴⁴³ He presses the female body, but there are no descriptions of her body pushing back with weight. Like Merleau-Ponty, Yoshiyuki is

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 21.

careful about the thickness (in the sense of memory accumulated inside) and surface of the flesh, but his bodily communications seem to remain on the surface, lacking weighty friction. This raises questions about the female character's active ego or her power to affect the male's life actively, as Tanizaki's female characters do within the framework of his desire for her, for example.

In Yoshiyuki, we hardly see 'giving' from the touched. However, problematically, we can see a giving back from the touched male figure. In the short story 'The Sleeper Ship' (*Shindai no Fune*, 1958), the protagonist, who is a schoolteacher, unexpectedly has an interaction with a man in drag called Misako. When Misako pushes her (Yoshiyuki uses the female pronoun for Misako) body against the body of the protagonist, her sexual organ bumps against his body, which surprised him. He 'instinctively reached and touched it. It rigidly and strongly came to touch my hand'.⁴⁴⁴

In his short article on the theatrical adaptation of Tanizaki's *A Portrait of Shunkin*, Stephen Dodd writes, 'While most Japanese male writers of his generation described women either as wives who hardly spoke, or as prostitutes, who also hardly spoke, Tanizaki's female characters stand out in the way they seem to possess at least a degree of autonomy, a sexual self-awareness, and an ability to *bite back*'.⁴⁴⁵ Yoshiyuki rarely writes about visible retribution from a female figure. Yoshiyuki does not necessarily

⁴⁴⁴ Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, 'Shindai no Fune', in *Shōfu no Heya, Fui no Dekigoto*, 48.

⁴⁴⁵ Stephen Dodd, 'An Outstanding Storyteller', 10-11, *Shunkin* performance catalogue (London: the Barbican, 2010), 11. Emphasis added.

represent prostitutes as ‘the underclass’.⁴⁴⁶ Instead, he treats them as humans like himself,⁴⁴⁷ and they often speak of themselves. But his female characters do not possess the ability to resist or proactively change the male protagonists’ destinies, in other words, to ‘bite back’ like Tanizaki’s female characters.

As an example, in Tanizaki’s *Naomi*, the female protagonist has a certain control over the male protagonist. Naomi asks Jōji to help to shave her face, the back of her neck and shoulders to wear an evening gown. She uncovers her shoulders just a little and immediately covers them again. Jōji then narrates: ‘Though I knew it was just a trick, I found the temptation hard to resist. She didn’t want to shave her face; she’d gone to the bath just to set me up. I understood this perfectly well, but shaving her skin would be a totally new challenge. Today I’d be able to look at her skin up close; I’d be able to touch it. The thought took away my courage to refuse’.⁴⁴⁸ When they get married toward the end of the story, Jōji promises to dispose of his property in the country for Naomi. She asks:

“Can we live in luxury and take it easy?”

“Well, we can’t just take it easy. You can, but I plan to open an office and work independently.”

“I don’t want you putting all that money into your work. You’ll have to set aside enough to keep me in luxury. All right?”

“Yes, all right.”⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁶ For a depiction of class, sex and gender, see Heather Bowen-Struyk’s critical work on the proletarian writer Hayama Yoshiki’s ‘The Prostitute’ (1925). Heather Bowen-Struyk, ‘Sexing Class: ‘The Prostitute’ in Japanese Proletarian Literature’, in *Gender and Labour in Korea and Japan: Sexing Class*, ed. Ruth Barraclough and Elyssa Faison (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2009), 10-26.

⁴⁴⁷ Shirakawa Masayoshi, ‘Yoshiyuki Junnosuke’ in *Kokubungaku (National Literature): Sakka no Sei Ishiki (Authors’ Sexual Consciousness)*, November special volume (Tokyo: Shibundō, 1974), 131.

⁴⁴⁸ Tanizaki, *Naomi*, 227.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.

She possesses agency and influence over him that is strong enough to keep him at her mercy.

As discussed in the first chapter, Nakata in *The Dark Room* is affected by Natsue in various ways, like her narrative, body performance and gaze. Becoming entangled with her, Nakata narrates, ‘But though conscious of the risks involved, I couldn’t stop meeting her. It wasn’t just the feel of her sex that attracted me; gradually, my whole body cleaved to hers’.⁴⁵⁰ Natsue’s presence certainly affects Nakata’s psychological states and his physical attachment to her. Nonetheless, this *cleaving*, originally written as *haritsuiteyuku*, literally means ‘stuck to’, ‘attached to’ or ‘going to be stuck to’, without space between the two touching objects and without any weight pushing against or between them. Yoshiyuki’s bodily encounter is ambiguous and does not always coincide with weight perceived by the male protagonist from female characters. Regardless of the fact that touching and its descriptions are unlimited, especially on the surface, attention to weight is lacking, especially that related to gender.

b. Yoshiyuki’s Subtle Escape from the Ideological Weight of the Body

It is important to draw attention to the difference between the works of Yoshiyuki and those of the literature of the flesh (*nikutai bungaku*) from the perspective of ideological

⁴⁵⁰ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 159. In the original text, it would be not ‘the feel of her sex that attracted me’ but rather precisely speaking, ‘the feel given by her genital that attracted me’. 夏枝の性器の与えてくれる感覚だけが私を引き寄せてゆくのではなく、軀全体がその軀に貼付いてゆく。Yoshiyuki *Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 143.

weight. This is because, though both devote particular attention to carnality and a distrust of ideology, they demonstrate different ideological weights placed on the body. As discussed below, Yoshiyuki's protagonist struggles with the unknowability of the other's body, so that there is neither firm belief in the body, nor ideological weight placed on the body. Rather, he subtly retreats into the lack of confidence in himself and in understanding another's body.

Although gender-related criticisms such as by Ueno discussed above make sense, I must note the one-sidedness of their interpretation, or 'judgmental' critique, to quote literary scholar Tsuboi Hideto.⁴⁵¹ This is because, as Yoshiyuki often writes in various essays, he started writing to give a place for his sensibility that was not found in the political tendencies at the time.⁴⁵² It is not so much that he was necessarily looking for abnormal, anti-social sex and sexuality (as a radical 'sexual explorer', causing further sexual double standards, as mentioned earlier), but he chose to depict humans through the lens of sex. Shirakawa Masayoshi writes, 'When Yoshiyuki writes about sex, he makes the reader understand that he is not just writing about the sex, but he is touching human existence through sex. That is why Yoshiyuki's literature is highly valued'.⁴⁵³

Feminist critiques look at how the protagonist—and they assume Yoshiyuki himself—uses the female body, but they do not pay enough attention to how, in detail,

⁴⁵¹ Tsuboi Hideto, *Sei ga Kataru: 20 Seiki Nihon Bungaku no Sei to Shintai (Sex Narrates: Sex and the Body in 20th century Japanese Literature)* (Nagoya: Nagoya Daigaku Shuppankai, 2012), 428.

⁴⁵² See Yoshiyuki, *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 252, essay 'Watashiha Naze Kakuka?' ('Why do I Write?').

⁴⁵³ Shirakawa, 'Yoshiyuki Junnosuke', 132.

Yoshiyuki ‘writes’ about and tries to see the female body. Once closely read, it is clear that he writes about the female body with significant attention, and—I would add, depending on the work and context—similar care whether the female is a prostitute or a middle-class woman. While admitting Nakata’s heterosexist tendency and the lack of equal subjectivity that may create a dialogue between Nakata and Natsue and the lack of his understanding of Natsue, Tsuboi re-evaluates this misunderstanding. Tsuboi writes: ‘Nakata and the narrator cannot see Natsue’s naked shape; moreover, this awareness of “being unable to see” should be valued. Although Nakata tries to examine her and Maki’s origin, the text demonstrates that it is a fruitless effort’.⁴⁵⁴ Not seeing and not being able to see are two different things. Feminist scholars mentioned earlier criticise Yoshiyuki’s lack of understanding in portraying the female body. My point is that, at least he is trying to demonstrate it, though his portrayal cannot depict it fully due to multiple reasons such as his own image as a writer, biases toward women, gender politics in the 1970s, and lastly but notably, Yoshiyuki’s awareness of the fundamental impossibility of understanding the embodied experiences of another. This shows some weight of the female body and its existence in Yoshiyuki’s works. But since Yoshiyuki recognises the unknowability and ambiguity of the embodied experience of another, just like Nakata’s membrane demonstrates, he escapes the firm belief in and ideological weight of the body, unlike flesh writers.

⁴⁵⁴ Tsuboi, *Sei ga Kataru*, 435.

The literature of the flesh as a movement is postwar, but the main writers in this movement span from the prewar to the first postwar generation, including Sakaguchi Ango and Noma Hiroshi. Their notion of the body, *nikutai*, as discussed mainly in the introduction, indicates the carnal, physical, individual, personal body as opposed to the spiritual and social operation of the body, *kokutai*, the body politic.⁴⁵⁵ The first postwar generation, who appeared in literary circles in the late 1940s, tried to rethink the existence of the body as a response to their severe, suppressed wartime experiences. The second postwar generation, with authors such as Abe Kōbō and Ōoka Shōhei, inherited similar topics from the first generation, but developed them into further conceptual creations. The Third Newcomers (*Daisan no Shinjin*), including Yoshiyuki, came into the circle around 1955, when the bubble economy after the Korean War brought financial recovery to Japan. Authors in this group typically experienced their adolescence in that wartime and were affected by its ideology and forced suppression. These social circumstances nursed their hatred and thorough incredulity for the politics and ideology that aimed for one unitary power, giving witness to a radical paradigm shift in postwar Japan.⁴⁵⁶

As we have seen from the previous chapter, physical descriptions of the body in Yoshiyuki tend to be on the surface without corporeal pressure by the female figure.

⁴⁵⁵ Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 8.

⁴⁵⁶ Kondō Yūko, 'Daisan no Shinjin no Isou' ('Topology of the Third Newcomers'), in *Jidaibetsu Nihonbungakushi Jiten, Gendai Hen* (*Periodical Dictionary of the History of Japanese Literature, Modern Period*), ed. *Jidaibetsu Nihonbungakushi Jiten Henshū Iinkai* (Tokyo: Tokyodō Shuppan, 1997), 307-311.

This causes the gender issue, as in Ueno's argument that Yoshiyuki depicts the female body as a means to satisfy a man's desire and that the female figure brings neither autonomy nor solid identity. But Yoshiyuki's surface contact also poses a question about the human physical relationship itself. Authors of the literature of the flesh and Yoshiyuki both explore physicality and bodily relationships. But a possible difference between them, and any difference in this time period, is that Yoshiyuki does not necessarily rely on the body as the essence of life, as some of the flesh writers like Tamura Taijirō do. The flesh writers aimed for physical liberation from the national state such as those of sex, food and living. Slaymaker explains,

Much postwar fiction reflects writers' reactions to the manipulation of bodies by the wartime state, and this motivated their postwar call for physical, carnal liberation. Through a celebration of the body they removed themselves from the arena of state control. While the individual and erotic body has long been central to intellectual and literary traditions of Japan, these writers, finding that fresh images and descriptive styles were needed, reworked the tradition.⁴⁵⁷

They relied upon the carnality of the individual body apart from the state body.

But the point is that the body in Yoshiyuki does not have a strong enough carnality to oppose the state body, and he does not necessarily wish to do so. Rather, Yoshiyuki flees from political tension: He escapes into individual carnality not to confront the state body but to avoid encountering it, a move Kondō explains is one of the features of The Third Newcomers.⁴⁵⁸ Particular postwar attention to carnality and sexuality seems

⁴⁵⁷ Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 15. Also, as Slaymaker examines, postwar flesh writers highly praised the Sartrean existential body, which postulates the body in relation to spiritual and psychological conceptualisations (24-25). But we should note that flesh writers such as Sakaguchi Ango misinterpreted Sartre's *Intimacy* as an erotic novel.

⁴⁵⁸ Kondō, 'Daisan no Shinjin no Isou', 311.

common to the flesh writers, including Sakaguchi, Noma and those from the next wave such as Abe or even following generations such as Ishihara and Ōe, and writers like Yoshiyuki. Nonetheless, the body in Yoshiyuki is sensual rather than political as well as intimate rather than socially liberated, similar to how modernist writers including Funabashi and Kawabata write about the female body. In Yoshiyuki, the male protagonist's body also is relatively weak and does not represent physical strength as, for example, the male body in Ishihara, where a protagonist penetrates a paper-paneled door, or *shōji*, with his penis.⁴⁵⁹ Yoshiyuki extensively writes about carnality, but it does not mean that he uses and believes in the body in the same way as many flesh writers.

Touch in Yoshiyuki confirms the existence of touching bodies through surface sensibility, rather than through ideological weight on the body. This would be similar to the concept of 'veritable touch' in Merleau-Ponty, already discussed. In 'veritable touch', the touching subject confirms its existence at the same time as the object to be touched. In this instance, the subject-object relation is switched around without the question of weight put onto the body. Similarly, in Yoshiyuki, the sensation of being touched by touching often appears:

Natsue was lying on her belly, her face buried in a large pillow. As I laid a hand on her shoulder blade, she shrank away.

"I'm embarrassed," she said in a small voice, her body wriggling. The smooth skin, faintly damp with sweat, moved beneath my palm.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁹ See *Taiyō no Kisetsu (Season of the Sun)* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1956).

⁴⁶⁰ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 155.

In this case, the one touching is Nakata. The one being touched is Natsue, but the mover is Natsue, affecting Nakata as the touched. This is different from Merleau-Ponty's veritable touch, since his veritable touch is the touch onto oneself felt by oneself, in a self-reflexive way such as that highlighted by Lacan in relation to phenomenological thought. Here, in Yoshiyuki, touch involves two parties—the touched and the touching—and it seems still different from 'a touching of the things' as 'a passive sentiment of the body and of its space', the second category of touch quoted earlier from Merleau-Ponty,⁴⁶¹ given the fact that the touching feels the movement of the touched and that is how the touching recognises his contact with the other. Once touch is conducted, there is no clear line between the touching and the touched, precisely because touch is exchanged between the figures, and the subject-object relation stumbles. Nakata feels Natsue's skin moves, which makes him again realise he is in touch with Natsue, in the same way Merleau-Ponty writes that, even if the subject is in contact with a certain object, the perception of touch is vague when there is no movement, as discussed in the introduction regarding kinaesthetic residua. It is Nakata who touches her body. Nonetheless, Natsue is the one who gives movement, awareness and the confirmation of touching.

In this sense, Merleau-Ponty's veritable touch becomes problematic, precisely because it signifies self-reflexivity only in relation to oneself. The reflexivity of touch is

⁴⁶¹ Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and Invisible*, 133.

not only limited to the inner self but also is open to those who share touch with others. This may accord with Irigaray's critique of Merleau-Ponty respecting the lack of the gendered other. Yoshiyuki's subtle distinction shows us that touch itself is a reciprocal phenomenon, possibly more so than Merleau-Ponty, due to the inevitability of listening to the response of another. While the criticism by feminist scholars that Yoshiyuki denies female subjectivity makes sense, the protagonist does not or cannot completely disregard the female subjectivity with which he is in contact. Yoshiyuki's male figure does impose his physicality onto hers, but his body always pays attention to and lends an ear to the response from her. This is probably because he is physically and psychologically not powerful by having a certain sickness, not confident of himself by always concerning about the existence of other men (both in the case of *The Dark Room* and 'The Prostitute's Room'), and is often unhealthy by struggling with illnesses like asthma, which Yoshiyuki himself had. Tsuboi points out that Nakata, in his mid-40s, finds something unusual in his health and is suspicious about death; possibly due to this, he is sexually motivated, as if the death instinct drives him toward sexual indulgence.⁴⁶²

When the protagonist and Akiko in 'The Prostitute's Room' calmly lie down, the protagonist narrates, 'I didn't speak a word, but had a lot of complicated conversations with her body. Her body conveyed so many words to my body, which I didn't catch when I was putting violent power on her body'.⁴⁶³ Touched and pushed by

⁴⁶² Tsuboi, *Sei ga Kataru*, 428-429.

⁴⁶³ Yoshiyuki, *Shōfu no Heya, Fui no Dekigoto*, 15-16.

a male character escaping from ideological bodily weight and retreating into his lack of confidence, the female body is not oppressed to the great extent that all of her subjectivity is effaced. We remember that Natsue's smell becomes oppressive to Nakata. His relationship to the female is, even if he *uses* her body, gentler and more respectful than some feminist scholars interpret because he listens to her response. The protagonist realises that Akiko's body does not respond as usual, reading it as a sign of tiredness. She is hesitant to sleep with him without stipulating clear reasons but only ambiguously smiling. 'But when I touched her body, I noticed that her body seemed exhausted and did not speak any words to me'.⁴⁶⁴ The protagonist discovers changes in the female body through touch, so that he is listening to her (body). This is not an erasure of the other. There still remains, though, the question of to what extent the subject can be active, and to what extent he trusts the response from the touched body.

c. Weight, Ground and Access

Yoshiyuki writes in his short essay 'Trivial Things' ('*Sasai na Koto*')

[...] it is too easy sometimes to traverse the bridge between man and woman via sex. And the fear of piling up a body over another's body becomes stronger, being in the face whose personality is clueless. Chased by such a fear, one tries to confirm to have had at least a physical connection with someone, but the energy put into this person is *absorbed* without resistance, like pouring water in a *bottomless hole*.⁴⁶⁵

This sense of absorption into the bottomless abyss, considering what we observed in the

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁶⁵ Yoshiyuki Junnosuke, '*Sasai na Koto*', in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 251. Emphasis added.

subsections above, is related to anxiety about or the lack of solid ground to receive another's weight. As discussed earlier, resistance from the touched female is rarely perceived by the male protagonist or rarely described by the narrator. Considering the reciprocal nature of touch, this could suggest that the male's body does not properly weigh either on her body, or is not firmly perceived by her. In a sense, combining Nancy's idea of leaving the body and Ueno's critique on surface-level communication in Yoshiyuki, the body in Yoshiyuki is leaving, remaining in surface contact, without entirely receiving another's weight. This feeling of being absorbed into an abyss above is likely to demonstrate man's energy absorbed into woman, but it could also mean the woman's body absorbed into man, just like Takako's body in *The Dark Room* melts like snowflake in the palm of another's hand.⁴⁶⁶ Without the weighty friction of being pushed against, energy directed toward another is absorbed. This absorption heightens the sense of impotence for the male protagonist, not being able to find the female's indubitable response, so that he steps into further physical explorations, as we have seen. However, this absorption shows the absence of a solid weighty mass to touch, push and lean on—and the uncertainty in others on which one can rely. This subsection focuses on the issue of ground or abyss to receive another's body in Yoshiyuki.

Having a rupture of ground on which one cannot rest fully both physically and psychologically, or having a presupposed ground, changes one's way of thinking.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 47.

⁴⁶⁷ In Kleist's *On the Marionette Theater*, the principal dancer who is trained to be upright against the

Having an abyss, there is an uncertainty if one can even touch the ground without the risk of falling into the ‘bottomless hole’. One also needs gravity’s pull even to rise up, as if falling down consists of two forces pulling and resisting each other, as if saying, ‘we do not *want* to fall’, which Hélèn Cixous posits as a human condition.⁴⁶⁸ This perspective of bodily conditions can show that, in Yoshiyuki, there are no rival forces that arise, collide and strive against or in-between touching bodies, one’s force and weight soaking into the other’s. Touch in Yoshiyuki is mainly light, surface contact, the communication being felt and built upon the surface membrane. Yoshiyuki’s touch rarely includes that of ‘pushing-pushing against’, but ‘touching-absorbing’ or ‘pushing-melting’. Even though the physical, biological materiality is prominent especially on the surface, the question of weight is not thought through, excluding the case with Natsue mentioned earlier, where the protagonist finds some tangible response to push and to be pushed against. ‘Her body was slender but supple and in no sense thin. There was a kind of toughness [...]’.⁴⁶⁹ But her response is *a response toward* his touch; she is not a primal giver of weight.⁴⁷⁰

pull of gravity talks about the grace (in falling) of marionettes in which puppets prepare for their next ascent, a renewal of their bodily momentum, by touching the ground lightly, as opposed to the necessity of humans resting upon the ground. Heinrich von Kleist, ‘On the Marionette Theater’ (trans. by Christian-Albrecht Gollub, 238-244), in *German Romantic Criticism*, ed. A. Leslie Willson (New York: Continuum, 1982).

⁴⁶⁸ Hélèn Cixous, *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*, ed. and trans. Verena A. Conley (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 37. The human condition here means we cannot fall freely like puppets.

⁴⁶⁹ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 141.

⁴⁷⁰ By contrast, in Milan Kundera’s *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, which similarly describes the body, love and lightness of a physical relationship, touch tends to have weight. For example, the main female figure Tereza squeezes the hand of the male protagonist Tomas by keeping a firm grip on his wrist, finger or ankle when they sleep (14). In another scene, while working as a window cleaner, he has a sort

As discussed so far, Yoshiyuki describes certain responses from the touched body, but not necessarily with the weight pushing against the touching body. Yet, there is another problematic point concerning touch in Yoshiyuki's work, specifically that relating to the issue of access. Returning to the earlier-mentioned theoretical discussion regarding weight, the reason why Nancy resists Heidegger concerning weight is also an issue of access and appropriation. Nancy, referring to the stone touching the path in Heidegger, poses two questions about access and weight. Heidegger differentiates not only (a) the stone touching the path from (b) the lizard lying on the stone, but also both from (c) humans resting their hand upon the head of another, since in cases (a) and (b), the stone does not have access to another entity around it.⁴⁷¹ Nancy asks:

Why, then, is "access" determined here *a priori* as the identification and appropriation of the "other thing"? When I touch another thing, another skin or hide, and when it is a question of this contact or touch and not of an instrumental use, is it a matter of identification and appropriation? At least, is it a matter of this first of all and only? Or again: why does one have to determine "access to" *a priori* as the only way of making-up-a-world and of being-toward-the-world? Why could the world not also *a priori* consist in being-among, being-between, and being-against? In remoteness and contact without "access"? Or on the threshold of access?⁴⁷²

I discussed the issue of 'taking hold' or 'being taken hold of' in touch through *Noli me*

of play with one of his female clients, a 'do as I do' kind of game, sitting face to face, their hands moving along each other's bodies. But when he reaches her groin, she starts resisting. Kundera's examples engage the weight between touching bodies, without assuming that the female is the one who always receives touch (204). Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (London: Faber and Faber, 1984). Originally translated from *Nesnesitelná Lehkost Bytí* in 1984. In this story, the male protagonist Thomas and his lover Tereza, finding themselves at the mercy of the impact of political confusions connected with the revolution and of multiple love relationships, strive against the question of the lightness of existence, infidelity and irreconcilable love.

⁴⁷¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, 59. Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 196-197.

⁴⁷² *Ibid.*, 59-60.

tangere in the previous chapter. If, as Anzieu interprets, Jesus is reluctant to be touched by Mary Magdalene through fear of being taken hold of, it suggests that touch implies access as a form of appropriation of the other. Similarly, St Thomas's putting his finger into the body of Jesus to confirm his resurrection⁴⁷³ can be read as a touch of identification. Moving back to the case in Yoshiyuki where Nakata touches Natsue to identify her past embedded in her physical responses, touch signifies *access to* the past. By touching her body, Nakata is trying to reach her past left within the body. Most of the female figures in Yoshiyuki do not necessarily have active access to the protagonist, but Misako, the male in drag, does have access to or a way to resist the protagonist with her (his) sexual organ—problematically postulating the significance of genitals, which will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Even if it is difficult to take hold of another's existence by touch, one tries to reach, touch and hold the other. The ambiguity between subject and object in touch matters insofar as touch reaches and appropriates the other. That is why Nancy proposes touch without appropriation:

The stone, no doubt, does not “handle” things (*betasten*), as Heidegger writes [...] But it does not *touch*—or it *touches on*—with a passive transitivity. It is touched, same difference. The brute entelechy of sense: it is in contact, an absolute difference and an absolute *différance*. There is difference of places—that is to say, place—dis-location, without appropriation of one place by another. There is not “subject” or “object,” but, rather, there are sites and places, distances: a possible *world* that is already a world.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ John 20: 24-29.

⁴⁷⁴ Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, 61.

This touch, not of appropriation but of *différance*, of dislocation, concerns more an issue of sites, weight and moment. In this regard, it is not a matter of who touches the other and who is touched by the other because we cannot necessarily suppose that we have access to the other from the first instance. Those in contact move, dislocate and leave, so that they touch each other.

To find a ‘clue’ in a bodily encounter, which Yoshiyuki strives for but never quite attains, one must have a tangible response, as Milan Kundera’s figures do, as a confirmation that touch has been received by the other. This clue, given by perceptible response, inevitably entails an ethical weight; a mutual pressing that heaps up trust can further receive another touch. Simultaneously, when the body part is dislocated and incorporated, the ethical configuration regarding appropriation becomes obscure, because it completely cancels out an appropriation of the touched by having one’s own body part taken hold of inside the body of another. In the next section, I will explore this issue through the short story ‘One Arm’ by Kawabata Yasunari, thoughts on otherness in Levinas and Irigaray and the psychoanalytic concept of incorporation. Although Kawabata’s characters often hesitate to touch, the protagonist in ‘One Arm’ boldly incorporates one arm of the girl, causing a spasm between two bodies. Through this story, we inevitably encounter questions such as whether one has access to others, to what extent and based on what kind of responsibility or consent.

B. Incorporation

a. Incorporation, Spasm and the Sense of Otherness in Kawabata

“I can let you have one of my arms for the night”, says the girl to the protagonist. She removes her right arm at the shoulder and uses her left hand to lay it on the protagonist’s knee. The girl’s right arm is still warm.⁴⁷⁵ This is the beginning of the short story ‘One Arm’, written by Kawabata Yasunari in 1964. In the story, Kawabata weaves a dialogue between the protagonist and the girl’s arm; the protagonist ‘talks’ with her through her arm, tries a subtle touch on her fingertips and embraces the arm. When he replaces his right arm with hers, however, there is a spasm between the two bodies, which makes him aware of the otherness of the arm and poses him or us readers the question of how one can receive another’s body within one’s body. Through his concerns about proper blood flow, his disturbing her purity and the sudden realisation of alterity within his body, we see that he encounters ‘her’ with both repulsion and affection. In this section, I will explore the sense of otherness, displacement and incorporation of the other’s body and its ethics in ‘One Arm’.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, it is not necessarily easy to determine if the skin mediates or prevents one’s touching of objects, retaining the previous touch and memory of touching on its surface. Touch is almost always already mediated by other touches, memories nursed and triggered by touch, and thus by culture, because of

⁴⁷⁵ Kawabata Yasunari, ‘One Arm’, in *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 103.

the verbalisation of physical sensations and memories. Moreover, in articulating the various workings of the skin, Steven Connor quotes Jean-Paul Sartre: '[T]he caress is not a simple stroking: it is a *shaping*. In caressing the Other, I cause her flesh to be born beneath my caress, under my fingers ... If I extend my hand, remove it, or clasp it, then it becomes again body in action'.⁴⁷⁶ Touching the other, therefore, can also mean shaping the other or creating the other at the moment of contact. It is not only the skin indicating the presence of others from the past inscribed on it, but also touch itself indicating the presence of the other, by the very act of touching. Meanwhile, in Nancy's account, touch is more about weight, sites and moment: dislocation. There is a difference between whether one *dislocates oneself* into another site and moment, and whether one *is dislocated* by the other(s), in an active-passive dimension. But in Kawabata's case, the girl gives the protagonist permission to replace her arm with his; "I don't suppose you'll try to change it for your own arm," she said. "But it will be all right. Go ahead, do."⁴⁷⁷ Based on this consent, the girl gives part of her body to the protagonist and later is incorporated into his body. Therefore, it is not merely a matter of an active-passive sexual power relationship, placing the female in the passive position; consent is involved. It further highlights the alterity, rupture in the moment of incorporation, and the encounter with the other, accompanied by the benefit and risk of touch. If the condition of what Levinas would call 'a fecund being' is to be capable of a

⁴⁷⁶ Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin*, 277. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (1984), 390, 396.

⁴⁷⁷ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 104.

fate other than its own,⁴⁷⁸ what is the spasm between the arms of the man and the girl, incurred by incorporation?

Kawabata's protagonist is generally hesitant to touch others, as explained earlier. This story, despite its motif of bold bodily incorporation, also illuminates an uncertainty about touch, whether the protagonist really does touch the girl. It seems as if, in touching, he eternally escapes the whole presence of her body. This recoil from actual contact while writing about touch is not limited to Kawabata, but also is applicable to Levinas. Through his exploration of light touch via Levinas and Irigaray, Steven Connor writes, 'His [Levinas's] voluptuous exposure is constructed as a kind of recoil from contact. It is as though a hand were to reach out in a dark place and touch, where it had expected an object, another hand, or the twitching fur of an animal. One recoils from such a touch' due to 'the danger of betraying the flesh into the carapace of an outline'.⁴⁷⁹ As is often the case, the lonely male protagonist in Kawabata's work is hesitant to disturb the romanticised female figure and her virginity. Therefore, the subtlety of touch has a significant effect on the protagonist; 'The long, narrow, delicate nail scratched gently at the palm of my hand, and the slight touch made my sleep deeper. I disappeared'.⁴⁸⁰

In Levinas, touch in the form of a caress similarly seems to escape rather than

⁴⁷⁸ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 282. Fecundity in Levinas signifies infinite recommencement in which one keeps searching and desiring the possibility of mine and of the other and the relationship to such a future (267-269).

⁴⁷⁹ Connor, *Skin*, 278.

⁴⁸⁰ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 123.

take hold:

The caress consists in seizing upon nothing, in soliciting what ceaselessly escapes its form toward a future never future enough, in soliciting what slips away as though it *were not yet*. It *searches*, it forges. It is not an intentionality of disclosure but of search: a movement unto the invisible. In a certain sense it *expresses* love, but suffers from an inability to tell it.⁴⁸¹

The tender correlative of the carnal caress is not about the material body per se, the living body or even bodily expression, but rather about the body that is beyond existence.⁴⁸² Therefore, the beloved remains in a state of virginity, the feminine being ‘an incessant recommencement of virginity, the *untouchable* in the very contact of voluptuosity, future in the present’.⁴⁸³ The girl in Kawabata is kept ‘untouched’ out of fear of disturbing her purity. Due to this inability to touch, the act of touching itself becomes further idealised and fantasised. Moreover, her appearance as one arm rather than the whole body seems to give him easier access to her since he could keep escaping from the visibility of her body—both his own in the sense that she does not possess the eyes to directly look at him, and hers in which she does not appear as the entirety of her body. But her arm, though a partial body, essentially functions as if it were the totality of her body; it ‘talks’ to him, moves and watches him while he is changing his clothes and makes him feel shy.⁴⁸⁴ He communicates with her arm that brings her wholeness behind, but without pressure on him since it is an arm rather than

⁴⁸¹ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 257-258.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 258.

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.* Emphasis added. The Beloved in Levinas, indicating the female, is explained as ‘...l’Aimé qui est Aimée’, footnote on page 256.

⁴⁸⁴ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 116. Napier also discusses the maternal function of this arm instead of the breast. Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 65.

the whole female body. The sense of untouchability, the subtlety of actual touch and the partiality of the touchable body make his touching the girl further special.

Conversely, the drama of this story lies in the fact that such delicacy could become an acute rupture with the other in a diabolic moment by throwing her arm from his body and 'insisting on the essential isolation between individuals, the fundamental inability to connect'.⁴⁸⁵ In 'One Arm', since the girl gave the protagonist permission to replace her right arm with his, he carries it out. Soon after he substitutes his arm with hers, there is a spasm, break and disjunction between the arm and shoulder. The protagonist narrates:

I noticed something. I could feel the girl's fingers in my mouth, but the fingers of her right hand, now those of my own right hand, could not feel my lips or teeth. In panic, I shook my right arm and could not feel the shaking. There was a break, a stop, between arm and shoulder.⁴⁸⁶

In the next moment, he is immediately concerned by the blood, worried about whether the blood is coming and going between his shoulder and her arm, which is connected to his body, and if the blood is circulating in his arm, which has fallen beside him. When her arm covers his ear, he continues by saying, 'It was now my own right arm, but the motion seemed to have come not of my volition but of its [the girl's arm] own, from its heart. Yet the separation was by no means so complete'.⁴⁸⁷ Then they listen to the sound of the pulse. The blood starts going and flows through the arms. He no longer feels any shuddering or spasm:

⁴⁸⁵ Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 65.

⁴⁸⁶ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 118.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 120.

There was no dramatic awareness that between the arm and my shoulder the blood came and went. My left hand, enfolding my right shoulder, and the shoulder itself, now mine, had a natural understanding of the fact. They had come to know it. The knowledge pulled them down into slumber.⁴⁸⁸

He sleeps. When he wakes suddenly with a scream, ‘to the touch of something repulsive’,⁴⁸⁹ his right arm, he tears the arm from his shoulder and puts his own back, trembling. ‘The act was like murder upon a sudden, diabolic impulse’.⁴⁹⁰ When he regains his composure, the girl’s arm is lying on the bed, still and whitening. He embraces it like a dying baby.

b. Ethics of Incorporation

In this story, there coexist two very different types of touch: subtle touch, close to the touch suggested by Connor, Levinas and Kawabata, and violent touch, including the displacement and incorporation of the body part and the wrenching off of it. A reason for these very different bodily touches would be an acute ethical rupture that momentarily went beyond the protagonist’s control. Yoshiyuki recollects Ōe’s comments on Kawabata that, while Funabashi excels in understanding the sexual consciousness of normal people and describing current and traditional sexuality in Japan, Kawabata demonstrates abnormal sexual consciousness in a remarkable way. Yoshiyuki adds that, though both authors write about the beauty of women, it seems that Kawabata

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

prefers the beauty of a ‘passing female’, as mentioned earlier.⁴⁹¹ Napier also writes, quoting literary scholar Van C. Gessel about Kawabata’s love story, ‘it is one played out with the principles at considerable distance from one another, seeking something intensely private rather than any sort of interpersonal involvement’.⁴⁹² Rather than focusing on literary history and further examining the individual case of abnormal sexuality in Kawabata, I would like to analyse in this section the ethical aspect of incorporation and compromise, if any, with the otherness inside one’s body. With this purpose in mind, it would be worthwhile paying attention to the concept of ‘incorporation’ in psychoanalysis, employing theories by Freud and Klein, as psychoanalytic incorporation precisely examines the internal-external dynamic (internalising a loved object or expelling a bad object) in the realm of fantasy.

According to Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, the first use of the term ‘incorporation’ appears in Freud’s ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’ in 1905, with instincts involved in the procedure of incorporation in the oral stage. Melanie Klein further develops the coincidence of sexual mastery over the object and the destruction of it in the discussion of the oral-sadistic impulse.⁴⁹³ Klein’s argument cannot fully cover the phenomenon of incorporation in Kawabata, since her particular argument is about children’s psychic development. Babies internalise a ‘good object’

⁴⁹¹ Yoshiyuki, ‘*Funabashi Seiichi Shōron*’, in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 271.

⁴⁹² Susan Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 65. Van C. Gessel, *Three Modern Novelists: Sōseki, Tanizaki, Kawabata* (Tokyo: Kōdansha International, 1993), 162.

⁴⁹³ Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Kanarc Books, 1988), 211-212.

based on the prototype of the encounter with and loss of the mother's breast, an encounter that gives rise to the paranoid-schizophrenic and depressive positions.⁴⁹⁴ For Klein, incorporation also involves 'cannibalistic' fantasies; 'the child's gratification of being fed is not only felt to be a cannibalistic incorporation of external objects [...] but also sets going cannibalistic phantasies relating to the internalized loved objects and connects with the control over these objects'.⁴⁹⁵ Klein's incorporation is almost like the devouring of a loved object. Nonetheless, due to its particular attention to psychic object relations, her theory is still helpful in thinking about the relationship between love and objects in Kawabata.

The reasons why Klein's theory is useful in analysing Kawabata's 'One Arm' are not limited to the fact that theoretical and literal creations by these two heavily rely on fantasy and that observation-based theories can be more cross-culturally adaptable than psychoanalytic theories based on social and linguistic systems such as the Lacanian. It is also that, in both cases, the subject knows the impermanence of a particular object's possession. The protagonist knows that there will be an end, sometime soon, of having his loved object. Knowing that he needs to return the girl's arm the next day, the protagonist narrates, 'The clean blood of the girl was now, this very moment, flowing through me; but would there not be unpleasantness when the arm was returned to the

⁴⁹⁴ Klein's depressive position is also characterised by the children's recognition that the split of good and bad objects are different aspects of the same object.

⁴⁹⁵ Melanie Klein, 'A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States' (1935), in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, 143.

girl, this dirty male blood flowing through it? What if it would not attach itself to her shoulder?’⁴⁹⁶ For Klein, internalised ‘good objects’ are in danger of menace by ‘bad objects’ based on the subject’s own hatred and unconscious aggression. It is ‘not only the vehemence of the subject’s uncontrollable hatred but that of his love too which imperils the object’,⁴⁹⁷ since loving an object and devouring it is almost another side of the same coin in Klein. She writes:

It now becomes plain why, at this phase of development, the ego feels itself constantly menaced in its possession of internalized good objects. It is full of anxiety lest such objects should die. Both in children and adults suffering from depression, I have discovered the dread of harbouring dying or dead objects (especially the parents) inside one and an identification of the ego with objects in this condition.⁴⁹⁸

One suffers from the fear of the impending loss of the loved object because of love and the wish to possess it eternally, though this is unrealisable.

This struggle of possessing or dispossessing that reverberates with the tension between the touching and non-touching goes with the feeling of love that progresses from the partial to the whole object, though the incorporation itself can happen with a partial object. Klein writes:

[...] the ego comes to a realization of its love for a good object, a whole object and in addition a real object, together with an overwhelming feeling of guilt towards it. Full identification with the object based on the libidinal attachment, first to the breast, then to the whole person, goes hand in hand with anxiety for it (of its disintegration), with guilt and remorse, with a sense of responsibility for preserving it intact against persecutors and the id, and with sadness relating to expectation of the impending loss of it. These emotions, whether conscious

⁴⁹⁶ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 122.

⁴⁹⁷ Klein, *The Selected Melanie Klein*, 120-121.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

or unconscious, are in my view among the essential and fundamental elements of the feelings we call love.⁴⁹⁹

In 'One Arm', when the girl gives the protagonist permission, he supposedly already has the intention to incorporate her arm sometime soon. In the actual process of knowing her arm—through his talking with her, observing the light reflected on her arm and spending time together—he becomes attracted to it. Her body part, becoming more than the arm, becomes the whole, as Klein suggests, especially through identifying the pulse of the girl's arm with his heartbeat:

There was a delicate pulse at the girl's wrist. It lay over my heart, so that the two pulses sounded against each other. Hers was at first somewhat slower than mine, then they were together. And then I could feel only mine. I did not know which was faster, which slower.

Perhaps this identity of pulse and heartbeat was for a brief period when I might try to exchange the arm for my own. Or had it gone to sleep? I had once heard a woman say that women were less happy in the throes of ecstasy than sleeping peacefully beside their men; but never before had a woman slept beside me as peacefully as this arm.⁵⁰⁰

The presence of her arm beside him almost signifies the whole female body. He is soothed by the presence of her arm, and the scene unfolds thus:

I turned on the light. I put my hands to the fingers and shoulder and pulled the arm straight. I turned it quietly in my hands, gazing at the play of light and shadow, from the roundness at the shoulder over the narrowing and swelling of the forearm, the narrowing again at the gentle roundness of the elbow, the faint depression inside the elbow, the narrowing roundness to the wrist, the palm and back of the hand, and on to the fingers.

'I'll have it.' I was not conscious of muttering the words. In a trance, I removed my right arm and substituted the girl's.

There was a slight gasp—whether from the arm or from me I could not tell—and a spasm at my shoulder. So I knew of the change.⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁵⁰⁰ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 118.

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 118-119.

The protagonist falls in love with her (arm) and incorporates it even without noticing.

This impossible incorporation of one arm is a fantasy Kawabata created. Being ‘overtly “postmodern” in style and setting’, as Napier says of this story, ‘anything can happen’.⁵⁰² It is the fantasy of his protagonist or Kawabata himself that he falls in love with the girl’s arm and wants to incorporate it as a part of himself. But, as we witness, physical incorporation causes an inescapable spasm with the arm, the repulsive touch of his arm and a wrenching of the girl’s arm off at the end. So, after all, this fantasy of incorporation and being with the loved object do not exceed the realm of fantasy, just as Nakata’s fantasy about direct touch with the clean sheet of film (of Natsue’s skin) fails in *The Dark Room*. Napier writes, ‘Although the “I” has initially tried to bridge the difference between self and Other, in the long run he is unable to maintain such unity for long’, as a paranoid reaction to women and withdrawal.⁵⁰³ Furthermore, it is not entirely oral, anal or genital incorporation. The exceptions are the scene soon after the incorporation in which he has her fingers in his mouth due to a shudder.⁵⁰⁴ Also, Napier recognises a sexual component in the girl’s arm, saying ‘the scene where he attaches the arm in the first place is reminiscent of first intercourse, as the arm trembles in shock

⁵⁰² Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 64.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 66. Napier uses this ‘I’ constantly to mean the male protagonist in her essay, but when the girl says “‘I’ve gotten very warm’” after the incorporation, the protagonist receives an impression that the girl used the first person pronoun (*atashi*) for the first time, though its use is not the first appearance. Neither Napier’s essay nor the English translation mention this newly appeared ‘I’. The English translation emphasises the womanly aspect of this female first-person pronoun *atashi* as ‘There was something especially womanly in the cadence’. While the original Japanese is ‘娘の片腕が「あたし」という一人称を使った’, the original sentences surrounding it do not seem particularly to mention the ‘womanly aspect’ of this girl. Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 119; ‘Kataude’, in *Bungō Kaidan Kessaku Sen, Kawabata Yasunari Shū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2006), 33.

⁵⁰⁴ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 119.

when the man attaches it to himself'.⁵⁰⁵ But it is not exclusively a sexual component; 'the arm, although clearly erotic, also has obvious elements of the maternal to it as well',⁵⁰⁶ as when for example it embraces the protagonist's neck or when the maternal role is reversed in the final scene in which the protagonist embraces the girl's dying arm. Without being necessarily limited to either the erotic or maternal, this story clearly shows what Klein calls the 'sense of responsibility for preserving it intact' and the 'sadness relating to expectation of the impending loss of it' quoted earlier, precisely because of the presence of love.

Klein, starting from the actual observation of a child, especially on its psychological dynamics, thinks that children will always face disappointments in their development—for example, the fact that they cannot take in every good object. Especially in Klein's account, the girl tends to be disappointed about her impossible Oedipal wishes toward her mother.⁵⁰⁷ As Klein repeatedly writes, children come to know loss through their experience of the mother's breast. Moreover, loss in Klein pays particular attention to the sense of temporality because the subject is always anticipating the loss of the object. Klein, in an article about the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states, writes that the depressive state is derived from the paranoid state. Klein continues, 'I consider the depressive state as being the result of a mixture of paranoid anxiety and of those anxiety contents, distressed feelings and defences which are connected with the

⁵⁰⁵ Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 66.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁵⁰⁷ See Klein, 'Early Stages of the Oedipus Conflict' written in 1928, in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, 70.

impending loss of the whole loved object'.⁵⁰⁸ Children realise they must lose the object even if they can hold it momentarily, which leads to sadness. In addition, incorporation, being terminologically differentiated from introjection, signifies a greater sense of bodily frontier. Laplanche and Pontalis explain, 'In psychoanalysis the bounds of the body provide the model of all separations between an inside and an outside. Incorporation involves this bodily frontier literally. Introjection has a broader meaning in that it is no longer a matter only of the interior of the body but also that of the psychical apparatus, of a psychical agency, etc.'⁵⁰⁹ Because of this, the sense of loss can be even more significant in the case of incorporation, in which one loses the presence of the body (part) as psychic fantasy and corporeal reality. Children must suffer from psychic and bodily sadness.

However, psychoanalytic theory may suffer when it comes to an ethical question, 'a sense of responsibility' for preserving the loved object intact. The psychoanalytic subject struggles to keep good objects out of anxiety about losing them or through the dread of internalised persecutors. The subject also defends against the bad objects. But there is no question of the object's standpoint. In Klein, children face the sadness of loss or impending loss after acquiring the object. However, there is no account of the object. It does not matter what the object feels regarding incorporation, because it is considered an ego-less object in Klein. The mother's breast, the prototype

⁵⁰⁸ Klein, 'A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States' (1935), in *The Selected Melanie Klein*, 130-131.

⁵⁰⁹ Laplanche and Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, 230.

of a good object, cannot say 'no' to being sucked and incorporated by her babies, since it potentially means the death of the loved babies. The mechanism of introjection and incorporation should be basically the same either for object, animal or human. But when the incorporated object has an active ego that can deny, neglect or betray, the responsibility to preserve the loved object intact, which Klein mentions, does not fully make sense, apart from within the fantasies of the psychoanalytic subject.

In 'One Arm', where disruption and affection regarding contact is prominent, this raises various ethical questions. Particularly, the alterity sensed through incorporation and the absence of negotiation impart the subtle sadness of bodily communication. It is a sadness from Klein's 'impending loss' of a loved object, but perhaps also the sadness that stems from the inability to accept another's life within oneself. As quoted earlier, Levinas writes, 'A being capable of another fate than its own is a fecund being'.⁵¹⁰ But this fecundity is, Cathryn Vasseleu suggests, 'an escape from the universal or time of history that is not achieved with, but away from the feminine'.⁵¹¹ The bodily incorporation and following sensations caused by the alterity of the other's body further complicate ethical (especially gender) aspects of touch, bridging Klein's lack of attention to the ethics of incorporation and Levinas' withdrawal from touch with the otherness in the present (and Irigaray's critique on it) via the incorporation of the girl's arm in Kawabata.

⁵¹⁰ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 282.

⁵¹¹ Cathryn Vasseleu, *Textures of Light*, 107.

Unless it is the case of ‘One Arm’, most of the male protagonists in Kawabata in general tend to defer the actual encounter with the female body since they choose passing the beauty rather than holding it, as mentioned earlier. This deferral of touch is as yet applicable to Levinas. Although Levinas acknowledges the sexual difference, the beloved who ‘does not speak true words’⁵¹² is untouchable for him and is thus ‘future in the present’.⁵¹³ It seems it is conversely enclosed in the specific temporality beyond the present, as opposed to the expectation of the other as ‘infinity’. Vasseleu quotes Levinas:

The caress is a mode of the subject’s being, where the subject who is in contact with another goes beyond this contact. Contact as sensation is part of the world of light. But what is caressed is not touched, properly speaking. It is not the softness or warmth of the hand given in contact that the caress seeks. The seeking of the caress constitutes its essence by the fact that the caress does not know what it seeks. This ‘not knowing’, this fundamental disorder, is the essential ... always other, always inaccessible, always still to come. The caress is the anticipation of this pure future [*avenir*], without content.⁵¹⁴

Rather than suffering from the impending loss of the loved object, Levinas’ male subject enjoys anticipating an encounter with the loved object in the future. Yet, it should be pointed out that this unrealisation of touch is not always the product of male fantasy, as Vasseleu problematises Irigaray’s caress:

The caress is not so much a touch as it is the gesture of touch, an alternation between movement and posture, simultaneously dissolving and constituting itself without memory or distinction. This gesture is a never-to-be grasped beginning, an attraction without consummation, always on the threshold of

⁵¹² Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 263.

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, 258.

⁵¹⁴ Vasseleu, *Textures of Light*, 106. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), 89.

appetite, not yet anticipating or yearning another. The caress affirms and protects its infinite otherness in the prolongation of a birth which will never come to pass.⁵¹⁵

Although Irigaray resists Levinas—that he encloses the beloved in an unknown future while acknowledging the sexual difference and that he presupposes ethics before the sexual difference—the localisation of touch is obscure in Irigaray, given that the caress for her is not a contact but a ‘gesture’.

Irigaray resists the dream of male transcendence and recoils at its revulsion from contact, ‘forgetting of a vital threshold—the tactile’.⁵¹⁶ The issue for Irigaray is the exclusion of women from representation and the impossibility of representing otherness within the gaze of the same:

Porosity, and its fullest responsiveness, can occur only within difference. A porosity that moves from the inside to the outside of the body. The most profound intimacy becomes a protective veil. Turns itself into an aura that preserves the nocturnal quality of the encounter, without masks. Distance of the impenetrable in the clarity of daylight, of that which perceives but never beholds itself. Sometimes it crosses itself like a threshold, while touching and being touched by the other, but is forgotten and then recollected.⁵¹⁷

What Irigaray insists on seems to be the mark inscribed, the memory left, in the course of the touch. To lead the beloved into animality and infancy in his transcendence would indicate suppression of the voice about the memory of touch. Opposing Levinas, where real encounters are substituted by the nocturnal dream or recoiled from actualisation, Irigaray states, ‘The other cannot be transformed into discourse, fantasies, or dreams. It is impossible for me to substitute any other, thing or god, for the other—because of this

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁵¹⁶ Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, 177.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 159.

touching of and by him, which my body remembers'.⁵¹⁸ Irigaray tries to reserve the embodied tactile memory in the female body. Yet, though contact in Irigaray entails particular concepts of surface such as membrane, mucosa and threshold, they are embraced in gesture and not necessarily *touched*, mystifying the exact point of contact.

The theoretical problematics above question whether the body really encounters another body. Levinas's encounter occurs not in the present but in the infinite future, preserving alterity discontinuously and rendering the encounter with the other as a rupture.⁵¹⁹ Irigaray, however, admits the encounter in the present unlike Levinas, but in doing so, she may miss the pardon given the other in the future as in 'One Arm'. There are two pardons in 'One Arm'. One is given to the protagonist by the girl who lends her arm; the other is given to the protagonist by a different woman who decides to give herself to him. The protagonist retrospectively narrates the woman's pardon:

"Please," she had said, gazing at me. I had put my fingers to her eyelids and closed them. Her voice was trembling. "Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved her!"

"Her" was a mistake for "him." It was the story of the dead Lazarus. Perhaps, herself a woman, she had remembered it wrong, perhaps she had made the substitution intentionally.

The words, so inappropriate to the scene, had shaken me. I gazed at her, wondering if tears would start from the closed eyes.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁵¹⁹ Levinas writes, 'The work of time goes beyond the suspension of the definitive which the continuity of duration makes possible. There must be a rupture of continuity, and continuation across this rupture. [...] It is not the finitude of being that constitutes the essence of time, as Heidegger thinks, but its infinity. [...] In continuation the instant meets its death, and resuscitates; death and resurrection constitute time. But such a formal structure presupposes the relation of the I with the Other and, at its basis, fecundity across the discontinuous which constitutes time'. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 283-284.

⁵²⁰ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 114. The Bible says, 'Jesus began to

Although the substitution of gender here is another intriguing point since it creates another ‘beloved’ female, this pardon is given to be actualised, not in an unknown time but in an impending future. It seems that this sense of permission is not discussed in Irigaray’s encounter; the feminine in Irigaray insists upon the unforgettability of the inhabited memory, but does not discuss a consent that may be exchanged between those who touch and perhaps through which they can find compromise or agreement. In ‘One Arm’, both the physical exchange with the other woman above and the replacement with the girl’s arm occur through the consent between the male protagonist and the female figures. In addition, when the protagonist is considering whether the one arm can be safely returned and attached to the girl’s body and whether it would be unpleasant to have ‘dirty male blood’ flowing in the girl’s body,⁵²¹ the protagonist mutters, “No such betrayal,” and the arm whispers, “It will be all right”.⁵²² Physical incorporations in ‘One Arm’ are driven not exclusively by the male protagonist’s fantasy but through consent between those who touch.

There are consecutive ruptures both in a bodily and ethical sense: the sudden realisation of having incorporated another’s body part, having thrown off his body part and then wrenching off the arm. Levinas is right in saying that the discontinuity of time renews and resuscitates the time to come: ‘The work of time goes beyond the

weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”” John 11: 35-37.

⁵²¹ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 122.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, 123.

suspension of the definitive which the continuity of duration makes possible. There must be a rupture of continuity, and continuation across this rupture'.⁵²³ To continue, one needs disruptions, just as one needs interruptions, gaps and distance to make contact. But it should be in the present or the dislocated temporality that is not the unknown, infinite future. Otherwise, the rupture cannot perform the encounter. Touch in Kawabata, Levinas and Connor concerns subtlety, lightness and delicacy of touch. Simultaneously, the girl isn't necessarily the person who resists incorporation in 'One Arm'; the protagonist himself resists the incorporation of another's body, which creates a physical rupture from his side. As this sudden separation of being unable to accept the alterity of the other shows, bodies contact not just through touch. They also meet when they intersect, reject and separate; arise, collide and strive. Touch *gives* in dislocations of the body, space and time. What makes incorporation or even touch possible is, as I suggested before, the very rupture of contact. The tension between touching and not touching or the touchable and the untouchable is blurred due to encroachment in the Merleau-Pontean sense. Moreover, it is almost a necessary condition that those two oppositions coincide and co-occur to make contact happen. In the next subsection, I will further examine the space created for touch, the space between sexual and nonsexual touch, as *skinship*. As discussed below, Matsuura Rieko attempts to dissolve the fantasy of genitals and to bring touch back into a non-sexualised body without making a sexual

⁵²³ Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 283-284.

dichotomy.

C. Encounter

In the examples discussed so far, the female body has been mainly depicted from the male viewpoint rather than through her own active literary engagement. Works by the flesh writers focused on carnal liberation, but Slaymaker writes, ‘The men seem to focus on their own situation, in search of liberating possibility; the women find no liberation in such description as they look outward and describe the reality they inhabit’.⁵²⁴ He problematises the tension between the public and private, Japanese men escaping from public society: ‘escape from the public towards the private and the woman, or escape from the home, which can be a little “society,” towards the woman of the pleasure quarters, the sensual woman’.⁵²⁵ This retreat or wandering into private space has, as Mizuta Noriko suggests, gendered difference often involving ‘the rejection of a conventional marriage and an escape with men of their own choosing’. A ‘woman’s wandering thus signified her separation from the culture’s definition of “woman.”’⁵²⁶ Even if the male figure resides in the outer territories, he ‘never leaves the institutions of Japan’, especially in Hayashi Fumiko’s *Drifting Clouds* (1949–1950).⁵²⁷ In the examples discussed so far, the male figure generally possesses access to and reaches the

⁵²⁴ Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 137.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁶ Noriko Mizuta, ‘In Search of a Lost Paradise: The Wandering Woman in Hayashi Fumiko’s *Drifting Clouds*’, in *The Woman’s Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women’s Writing*, ed. Paul Gordon Schalow and Janet A. Walkter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 332.

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*, 338.

female body when he likes; in Yoshiyuki, the protagonist goes to the room of prostitute Akiko or of Natsue while maintaining a connection to society, whereas those female characters are somehow excluded from the marriage system and public society. In Hirabayashi or Hayashi, the female figure through her wanderings comes to the realisations that ‘she must use men for her own purposes—seduce them, press them to take responsibility and somehow survive’.⁵²⁸

Contrary to the tendency for the male to have access to the female, including his physical accessibility to her and his role as a narrator to describe her, many postwar Japanese female writers along with the rapid socioeconomic and cultural shift of the postwar period started addressing the issue of sexuality more clearly and freely than before.⁵²⁹ Among them, Matsuura Rieko is an extraordinary writer in the sense that she describes issues surrounding sexuality in detail as others do and seriously seeks tactile communication as *skinship*, which need not be limited to the erotic and which does not necessarily create binary oppositions such as male and female or heterosexual and homosexual. Touch is often associated with its sexual connotation as in Yoshiyuki and Tanizaki, but it is not always so. Kawabata’s touch, seemingly highly erotic due to its repressed desire and unlimited fantasy, occasionally bears an erotic and maternal function, as discussed through Napier’s account in the previous section. In this section, I

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁵²⁹ The first public demonstration against sexual discrimination by Japanese Women’s Liberation was in 1970. Since then, Japanese feminists have fought for women’s freedom regarding childbirth, sexual autonomy, equal opportunity for employment and justification for extramarital birth. See Kanou Mikiyo ed., *Ribu toiu Kakumei*.

would like to analyse touch (*skinship*) that is not limited to gender roles and divisions between the sexual and nonsexual by looking at literary examples from Matsuura, through the conceptualising of the body by Deleuze and Guattari and by examining the notions of *ma* or *aida* by Kimura and Barthes. I will first critically examine the issues of female passivity, normally rendering the female to be touched rather than touching, and how that is deconstructed by Matsuura. I will then consider the space created between the sexual and sensual, and explore the quality of tactile encounter to be found there.

a. *Skinship* and Dissolution of the Dichotomised Touch in Matsuura

In her works, Matsuura Rieko (1958–) describes various kinds of intimacy and sexuality, dissolving binary thoughts⁵³⁰ such as male and female, hetero- and homosexual, and suggesting love not only through the union of sexual organs—what she calls ‘*seikiteki eros*’ (genital eros)⁵³¹—but also through non-sexual *skinship*. Her *skinship* means hugging, holding a lover’s hand, kissing and other sorts of *skinship* that are not necessarily connected to sex, genital-based sexual desire and pleasure.⁵³² Any physiological change triggered by a psychological elevation can be erotic and sensual for her, such as sensations where the skin itches or blood vessels become tense, or

⁵³⁰ Elizabeth Grosz’s introduction deals with dualism and Cartesianism as the separation of soul from nature rather than the separation of mind from body and reduced corporeality to a ‘knowable transparency’ that devalues the body and goes along with the oppression of women. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 6–10.

⁵³¹ Matsuura Rieko, *Yasashii Kyosei no Tameni (For Gentle Castration)*, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1994), 75.

⁵³² Matsuura Rieko, ‘*Oyayubi Penisu toha Nanika?*’ (‘What Is the Big Toe P?’), in *Oyayubi P no Shugyō Jidai*, 2: 329.

sensations described as if wet hands are pressing hearts or the backs of eyeballs are being licked.⁵³³ ‘Erotic’ for her is not necessarily ‘sexual’, and communications with others in her works are sensual or fleshly, rather than merely sexual.

Matsuura consciously resists conventional portraits of the female body by Japanese male writers in which actual physical intimacy and interactions have not been fully represented. Against conventional female passive characters, she sets her female character—one who is not necessarily passive, but equally one who does not necessarily challenge the male body, precisely because her main character is often free from sexual norms and the conventional weight placed on sexual organs. Matsuura gives an explanation about her main character, Kazumi, in *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P* (*Oyayubi P no Shugyōjidai*) in 1993 as a woman who is too pure to have grown up noticing and being influenced by societally enforced norms, while possessing normative sexuality.⁵³⁴ Furthermore, in her works, touch happens between male and female, female and female or even between human and object. Boundaries between these relationships become blurred, not in the conceptual sense as in Merleau-Ponty’s or Ichikawa’s blurriness but in an actual corporeal sense to be realised. Matsuura creates a particular space of sensuality, which centres on the multiple memories of contact with others and which demonstrates a highly sensual but non-passive communication. In this subsection, I focus on non-passive female sexuality and the ‘unfixation’ of relationships

⁵³³ Matsuura, *Yasashii Kyōsei no Tameni*, 74.

⁵³⁴ Matsuura, ‘*Oyayubi Penisu toha Nanika?*’, in *Oyayubi P no Shugyō Jidai*, 2: 325-326.

to examine the creation of the space that makes effective *skinship* possible.

In her work *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, which was published in 1993 and became a bestseller in Japan, the heterosexual female protagonist Kazumi has her big toe transformed into a penis. It becomes erect and feels sexual pleasure, but is passive and does not have a reproductive function. Therefore, it bears the function of a clitoris. She encounters different types of sexuality by having such a big toe and through meeting other group members at the show for which she is asked to exhibit a performance of her big toe P. Erotic acts are led not only by sexual organs but also natural desires according to physical/physiological conditions and by senses through the skin, without privileging sexual organs. Even in the work *The Dogbody (Kenshin)* in 2007,⁵³⁵ in which the female protagonist Fusae finally realises her longstanding wish to become a dog, the physical encounter of the dog with its female owner, Azusa, does not imply sexual desire. Nevertheless, the communication between Azusa and the dog Fusa (former Fusae) is dominantly and purely tactile through touching and licking. Protagonists in Matsuura do not necessarily aim to unite with others' sexual organs according to their sex or to communicate with others according to their gender. The categorical relationship does not exist, since the unity sought can be inter-sex, gender, object and animal; the unity meant here is not limited to 'sexual' unification but is a haptic interaction.

⁵³⁵ Matsuura Rieko, *Kenshin* (The Dogbody) (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 2007).

The term 'haptic' was highlighted by Deleuze and Guattari. They questioned the divide over sensory modality, such as between touch and vision, particularly introducing the concepts of 'smooth' and 'striated' space. Whereas smooth space is both 'the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of a haptic space', the striated is 'a more distant vision, and a more optical space'.⁵³⁶ 'The smooth always possesses a greater power of deterritorialization than the striated'.⁵³⁷ The smooth, never being sedentary, keeps dislocating itself. Deterritorialisation means not to invade others, not to possess others. It is to be a body, as they write about the Body without Organs (BwO), 'the BwO is never yours or mine. It is always *a* body'.⁵³⁸ But it can also mean to constantly dislocate itself, 'deterritorialization' of the self, in a sense of departure from the self to the self mentioned earlier through Nancy. In this aspect, the term 'haptic' becomes helpful in reading Matsuura. 'Haptic' for Deleuze and Guattari never dichotomises sensual experiences: the touching as opposed to the touched, the seer as opposed to the seen. Sensory-related terms such as 'touch', 'see' and 'look' already and necessarily connote dichotomised relations. But 'haptic' only implies the tactile or things related to touch, and it determines who has access to whom, just as Nancy problematises Heidegger's presupposition of the access to and appropriation of others in

⁵³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 544.

⁵³⁷ *Ibid.*, 530.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 184. Body without Organs here, rather, means a body without organisation that brings judgment and values together, rather than losing organs. By getting rid of this system, Deleuze and Guattari aim for a bare body that is free from the fantasy and meaning attached to the body organism.

touching.⁵³⁹

In sensual relationships in Matsuura, the active-passive role is not necessarily static, betraying the readers' expectation. In the early stages of *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, the protagonist Kazumi and his lover Masao possess a normative sexuality. When Kazumi's lips and fingers move around Masao's body, he says, "I feel like a woman", "Because I'm lying here passively while you do what you want." "I mean, I bet what I'm feeling right now is how girls feel in bed."⁵⁴⁰ However, because Kazumi now has a big toe P, her ideas about sexuality, sex and the body have changed, so Kazumi cannot ignore these comments and says, "All right, you want my penis? You want me to do you?"⁵⁴¹ Having a big toe P and bearing a part of the male body makes Kazumi re-examine normative sexuality and the body. But Masao starts to have a strong sense of competition with the big toe P and asks Kazumi if she can insert her big toe P in her body, which she dismisses due to the limitations of her bodily structure. Then Masao says, "Sure is a waste, though, considering the size of what you've got. It might be better for you than I am."⁵⁴² Big toe P heightens Masao's fixation toward the sexual organ from which Kazumi flees and is liberated. Their different stance toward the third, the existence of big toe P, creates distance between the two. At the end of their relationship, when both of them become irritated with each other, Masao says, "You've

⁵³⁹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World*, 59-60. Despite this undichotomised term 'haptic', I use the term 'tactile' or 'touchable' rather than 'haptic' in this research, considering the emotional impacts of touch, such as being 'touched' by touch.

⁵⁴⁰ Matsuura, *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, 51.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, 54.

been getting weird on me ever since you acquired that freaky thing of yours”’.⁵⁴³

Masao tries to sever it with a razor blade, which becomes the final and definitive event that determines their separation.

Deleuze and Guattari’s explanation of the notions of deterritorialisation and BwO—‘The BwO: it is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them’⁵⁴⁴—does not necessarily entail severing body parts. What they are trying to resist, rather, is the organisation of the body and its power to summon value judgements.⁵⁴⁵ Dismantling the body gives it a bare existence, opening up a new circuit for it. What they aim for is the bare body, which will be left after dismantling fantasy and the meaning that arises from understanding the body as an organism. As opposed to the psychoanalytic body, which is based on an interpretation of fantasy and regression, the BwO intends to take away ‘the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole’.⁵⁴⁶ BwO and deterritorialisation temporally and spatially displace a body from the past and let it work in the now. Considering the fact that Matsuura attempts to shake the sexual norm by posing a toe penis as a pure organ without sexual conventions and values, it is useful to read Matsuura beside Deleuze and Guattari through the concepts of the haptic, deterritorialisation and BwO since they share their intentions toward the bareness of the

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁴⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 150.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 530.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 168.

body, un-fixation and a sort of flow between them.

In Matsuura's essay *Yasashii Kyosei no Tameni (For Gentle Castration)*, there is the concept of 'taking off the genital' or 'undressing the sexual organ'—*seiki wo nugu*, in her words. Although *kyosei* literally means 'castration', her castration does not signify cutting off the sexual organs, since it is a *yasashii* (gentle) castration. She writes:

Even when I am naked, I haven't undressed enough. It is because we wear something more than clothes—is that why we are suffering from dissatisfaction, as if we are not getting enough embraces? When we think about this, our faces turn red.

We begin to take off ... what? All sorts of superfluous things, dirty things?

Perhaps celebratory expectations, a spirit of tenacity or biased curiosity.

Perhaps somewhere in this world, there exists something that contains the essence of love. Taking off your clothes and throwing them away as you go—this clear mounting sensation of lightness is a pleasurable thing.

"Genitals," you will notice, also happen to be naked.

You undress your genitals, which cover me from head to toe.

I undress my genitals, which are shaped by your genitals.

You undress your genitals, which put down roots in my genitals.

I undress my genitals, which use your genitals to point to my genitals.

I undress my genitals, which assume the direction of your genitals.

We undress our genitals, which are willing to take a conventional role without getting bored.

We undress our genitals, which await a partner's genitals.

We undress our genitals: annoying genitals, which entice us to put on too many clothes, and our rough genitals, which resolve our genitals into a combination of male and female forms.

In short, the "genitals" that must be stripped and discarded, are always aware of the genitals of the opposite sex, even if they are not in the middle of the sex act. The body gathers the imaginary genitals of the opposite sex, genitals that can be said to be a fiction.

Even if we deal with the "imaginary" genitals, there is no reason for them to feel pain.

This castration is a gentle one.

Even in our castrated bodies, the genitals remain, but as mere organs. When they are at peace, they are not an obstruction. They have no particular value,

they don't speak for anything, they aren't a symbol, and they suggest nothing. Perhaps they don't even show sexual difference. You and I stop using genitals as an "expression."

You and I enjoy a pleasure that doesn't depend on genitals.

We call it "sex-gang-child": sex that belongs to us.⁵⁴⁷

Her character is freed from what it should or must be and can enjoy what it can be, by removing the genital rather than by castrating it. By removing genitals as they are imagined by the opposite sex, one may get rid of the social norms that make heterosexual relationships predominate and substitute instead a bare body as it exists. Both Deleuze and Guattari and Matsuura fundamentally aim to remove fantasy, meanings and any system that enforces those meanings by posing the body without the genital or the body without an organ. Matsuura's protagonists in other stories are freed from the extra weight of genitals so as 'almost to be about to fly in the air'.⁵⁴⁸

However, the difference seems to lie in the fact that, while Deleuze and Guattari aim toward new horizons, resisting regression in psychoanalysis and departing from the past, Matsuura cherishes reminiscences of the past. The freedom that her protagonists (or in the case of *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, Kazumi's lover Shunji as well) enjoy embraces a certain reminiscence of childhood. In the beauty that Matsuura describes about someone, there is the purity, cleanliness and sweetness of a child possessing 'the sensualness of a child to which one instinctively feels like giving a

⁵⁴⁷ Matsuura, 'The Song of Sex-Gang-Child', in *Woman Critiqued: Translated Essays on Japanese Women's Writing*, ed. Rebecca Copeland (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 204-205, trans. Amanda Seaman. Matsuura, *Yasashii Kyosei no Tameni*, 235-238.

⁵⁴⁸ Matsuura, *Nachuraru Ūman (Natural Woman)*, (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1991), 205.

hand'.⁵⁴⁹ Even in *The Dogbody*, Fusae says, 'Maybe I haven't developed as a human being',⁵⁵⁰ when she ponders 'dog sexuality' in which one 'feels like being in heaven as long as one is fondled by one's favourite human as a human fondles a dog',⁵⁵¹ which is a very basic type of pleasure. This is why her pleasure is based around the experience of *skinship*. Yet, this removing of the genital through alternative touch can be problematic since, first, the border between sexual and sensual is indefinable and second, a body without genitals can be understood as signifying a regression to the infantile stage.

Japanologist Yoshiko Yokochi Samuel comments, 'It [*The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*] challenges the notion that heterosexual union is the only socially acceptable form of sexual activity and suggests as its alternative "skinship," sexual intimacy by means of body contact of all sorts'.⁵⁵² Even if Matsuura's pleasure through *skinship* (*hifu kankaku tekina kairaku*) does not only imply sexual pleasure,⁵⁵³ as Samuel writes, the reader may take a sexual connotation over a sensual one from her stories. 'The writing, therefore, borders on pornography. Here, the author appears to suggest that pornography can be helpful for women's sexual liberation'.⁵⁵⁴ An example like *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P* certainly involves various sexual scenes that create the

⁵⁴⁹ Matsuura, *Yasashii Kyosei no Tameni*, 80.

⁵⁵⁰ Matsuura, *Kenshin*, 82-83.

⁵⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵⁵² Yoshiko Yokochi Samuel, 'The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P', *World Literature Today* 84, no. 4 (2010): 64, accessed 25 June, 2013, http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2124/searchFulltext.do?id=R04320293&divLevel=0&trailId=13EC2DB95CD&area=abell&forward=critref_ft.

⁵⁵³ Matsuura, *Oyayubi P no Shugyō Jidai*, 2: 329.

⁵⁵⁴ Yoshiko Yokochi Samuel, 'The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P', 64.

possibility of it being read as pornography. If we were to extend this analysis to other works, *skinship* in *The Dogbody*, for example, does not involve either the sexual act or desire. But an erotic atmosphere is present, as Napier writes concerning Kawabata's 'One Arm'. In this sense, it is still arguable whether her writing itself invokes erotic imaginings for the reader or if the reader expects an erotic atmosphere from the outset from descriptions of touch. Matsuura writes, 'I would like to seduce readers not through the genital, but through the skin'.⁵⁵⁵

Especially in the Japanese context, the tension between the sexual and the infantile merits some analysis. As opposed to the nature of anti-regression of the BwO, Matsuura's body without genitals, by placing an importance on sensual *skinship*, risks rendering touch as psychoanalytic regression to the level of actual infantile fantasy. Introducing Japanese psychiatrist Saitō Tamaki's book on fighting female characters in Japanese popular culture, Keith Vincent writes that fighting girls are '[S]ometimes overtly sexualized, always intensely cute, and often a mixture of both,'⁵⁵⁶ who 'can exist only in the space of fiction and of infantile polymorphous perversion'.⁵⁵⁷

Referring to the 'Lolita Complex', Saitō writes:

First off, we are told that Japanese women are infantile. They love toys intended for children, and they speak in unnaturally high voices like little girls.

⁵⁵⁵ Matsuura, *Oyayubi P no Shugyō Jidai*, 2: 329.

⁵⁵⁶ J. Keith Vincent, 'Translator's Introduction: Making it Real: Fiction, Desire, and the Queerness of the Beautiful Fighting Girl', in *Beautiful Fighting Girls* by Saitō Tamaki, trans. Keith Vincent and Dawn Lawson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), ix, accessed 25 June, 2013, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/bodleian/docDetail.action?docID=10461001>. Book originally published as *Sentō Bishōjo Seishin Bunseki* (Tokyo: Ōta Shuppan, 2000).

⁵⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, xviii.

Surrounded by these infantile women, men become infantilized as well. Japanese people in general are young in psychological terms, and their objects of sexual desire contain immature and polymorphously perverse elements.⁵⁵⁸

Putting aside Saitō's slightly deterministic nature of analysis, it is true to say that this infantile image prevails in Japanese popular culture, from pop music and animations to comic books. Matsuura elevates readers' and possibly characters' sexual fantasies by avoiding normative heterosexual relationships and by inviting genital-free, intimate and sensual communication through the skin between homosexual and hetero-species (human and dog, for example) relationships. Extending our thinking from Saitō's account, Matsuura's various sensual relationships can also be understood as a variant of 'infantile polymorphous perversion' in which any combination of sexuality, sexual imagination and fantasy are tolerated within the closed space that allows us to regress to the infantile wish.

The BwO of Deleuze and Guattari works upon the now, so that it is always about experiment instead of regression or a departure from the past. Matsuura's 'taking off the genital' also aims to get rid of genital-related fantasy, fixation and meaning, as BwO dismantles significances. It is possible that, in aiming to remove fantasies of the opposite-sex genital, it may create a fantasy of perversion as according to the above interpretation, but BwO removes the past memory. In *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*,

⁵⁵⁸ Saitō Tamaki, *Beautiful Fighting Girls*, 6. For the Otaku culture that involves these elements of popular culture, see Azuma Hiroki, *Otaku: Japan's Database Animals*, trans. Jonathan E. Abel and Shion Kono (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). The Lolita Complex generally refers to sexual intimacy and preference for female infants or young girls. This includes, unlike pedophilia, preferences for those who are already physically mature.

Shunji, the lover, tells Kazumi about his memory of being hugged by his uncle:

‘My uncle was sitting in the same room, not moving, maybe reading, and then suddenly he got up and came over to where I was. I was rolling around and bumped into his leg, which sort of surprised me, so I stayed still. Then he bent down, put his arm around me sort of hesitantly, and hugged me. I remember feeling how big his bones were.’ Shunji wrapped his own arms around his body. ‘It made me real happy. No one ever hugged me that way again.’⁵⁵⁹

For blind Shunji, touch stems from childhood and is now a basic means to communicate love and to show natural affection toward others, so that he exhibits no radical gap between the intimate touch of childhood and the erotic touch of adulthood. After meeting Shunji for the first time, Kazumi narrates, ‘I recalled Shunji’s hand. He was enjoying the physical contact with another human being, like a child holding hands with a classmate. Could the boy even feel sexual desire? And, say the right person came along and he did feel desire, how would he express it?’⁵⁶⁰ Shunji, already being a nineteen-year-old man, conducts *skinship* without dividing the sexual and the intimate. Kazumi is first perplexed by this type of *skinship* but soon comes to enjoy this manner of communication with Shunji. We could read Matsuura’s case as infantile *skinship*, which does not necessarily mean sexual contact and which can be of the same sex, including between female and female. But since intimate touch is too ambiguous to put into a binary opposition such as either the sexual or the sensual, even infantile *skinship* must be understood as containing the seed for sexual touch.

⁵⁵⁹ Matsuura, *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, 115.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

The BwO is a becoming, so that it is ‘the opposite of a childhood memory’.⁵⁶¹

Yet this opposition does not mean the disavowal of the childhood memory but rather to disavow the temporal one-way linearity toward the past as often understood as being present in psychoanalysis. ‘It is not the child “before” the adults, or the mother “before” the child: it is the strict contemporaneousness of the adult, of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, and all of the variations on that map’.⁵⁶² Although Deleuze and Guattari resist set significations, they don’t necessarily disavow the past in a strict sense. Deleuze and Guattari bring the past into the contemporaneity in which one may cease reflecting the past in a deterministic manner. In this regard, re-examining the theory through the reading of Matsuura, the anti-regression in Deleuze and Guattari also suggests the possession of the child in the contemporaneous now, neutralising the tension between now and the past, the child and the adult. In fact, in Matsuura, it is not impossible to wear the genital again, attaching or detaching it because it is ‘taking off the genital’. It is not a definitive castration, but a ‘gentle’ castration. In both cases of Deleuze and Guattari and Matsuura, what we can see is, in a way, the ease of definitive tension: the active and the passive, the child and the adult, the sexual and the sensual, the past and now. That is the translation of the oppositions, which echoes with Merleau-Pontean encroachment, Ichikawa’s *mi*, Barthesian Neutral and Yoshiyuki’s membrane attained through different

⁵⁶¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 182.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

methodologies.

Encounter and touch in Matsuura are highly sexual, but not always and not exclusively. Touch here is a soothing *skinship*, accumulating layered, dislocated memories of touch: those with parents, friends, lovers and loved objects, among others. Matsuura's characters often possess some sort of childishness and make us remember the memory of touch in our childhood, something that is perhaps underdeveloped, that is simple, but something that nevertheless is remembered within our bodies throughout our lives. Soothing physical sensations and affection experienced through the skin renew memorable moments, as in the example quoted earlier of Shunji's hug. Touch occurs throughout life, contrary to the tendency in modern Japanese literature to regard touch among adults as erotic. Deleuze and Guattari do not necessarily set a clear distinction between the adult and the child, and the fleshly experience in Matsuura is always sensual, entailing the possibility of developing into sexual pleasure in adults.

Considering what is examined above, we notice Matsuura's *skinship* does not necessarily create a dichotomised tension, such as putting the female into a passive position, but rather dissolves it. *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P* is a bildungsroman, the story of Kazumi's development; in the beginning, she waits to have her clothes taken off and to be touched by her earlier lover Masao. But things change for her through having her big toe P and encountering others with different sexualities. The communication with Shunji particularly makes a significant change. In an earlier phase,

Shunji often surprises Kazumi by his sudden shift from a platonic, casual atmosphere to a sexual ambiance. Being asked why Kazumi does not take the initiative, she replies to Shunji, ““Masao always started things””.⁵⁶³ Likewise, partners did take the lead with Shunji. But later on, Kazumi starts to wish to embrace, touch and soothe Shunji herself. The assumption and discourse that place the female body in passivity as in Levinas, or a certain feminist viewpoint that binds and feminises the female subjectivity as in Ueno (the ‘doubly bound Japanese subjectivity’ discussed earlier) do not necessarily exist in Matsuura. Matsuura’s female subject does not wait until she is touched. She is not merely a ‘receiver’ of pleasure but a ‘giver’ of touch and sensations, without making a dichotomous resistance against the male. This is mainly due to the nature of *skinship* that invites mutual touch from both parties. It is not that Kazumi comes actively to seduce Shunji, or Shunji to Kazumi. Describing her toe penis, which becomes erect only when it is touched, Kazumi narrates, ‘Like mine, Shunji’s penis tended to be passive; it didn’t get hard unless you touched it, and while it could function as a sexual tool, it was really only a part of the satisfaction Shunji desired in physical contact [*skinship* in original], since sex was just one among many other ways of being close to his partner’.⁵⁶⁴ *Skinship* through big toe P, being a basic manner of human communication that leads to an increased intimate relationship, does not require the male to be active

⁵⁶³ Matsuura, *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, 90.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 339-340. ‘Physical contact’ here is ‘skinship’ in the original, 彼の性行為はスキンシップの延長だから、やはりスキンシップへの欲望を満たす部位と言う方がふさわしい。(Since sex is an extension of *skinship*, his penis is a tool to meet a satisfaction regarding *skinship*), Matsuura, *Oyayubi P no Shugyō Jidai*, 155.

and the female to be passive.

Kazumi dissolves her fixation with her sexual organ by having a big toe P and becomes freed from female gender expectations. Because of this transformation, she becomes able to maximise pleasure through the skin. Yet, this change occurs due to the very possession of the penis. This can raise further problematic questions, implying that Matsuura's liberation from the genital occurs paradoxically through the possession of the other's genitalia: how Kazumi can be freed from gender fixation by the very possession of a penis and whether it would have happened unless she possessed the genital of the opposite sex. The childishness mentioned above is not to be a child or to regress, since adults already know genital sexual pleasure. It rather means to grow while maintaining a state of childishness, knowing both sexual excitation and fixation with genitals, and also their release. This space in between, such as touch in the adults and touch in childhood, the sexual and the sensual, will be further discussed below, particularly focusing on space.

b. Creation of the Space In-Between

As discussed above, Matsuura's creation lets us reconsider the space or the neutralised tension between the active and the passive, the sexual and sensual. Especially the latter gives a distinctive characteristic to her novel due to its indivisible nature. In this subsection, I would like to conceptualise space further, through functions of the space

in-between in Matsuura. The various notions discussed in the introduction and thus far become useful here: the active-passive relationship regarding gender and nation, the struggling concept of the self in the postwar period, the concept of the in-between space *aida* as an internal difference within oneself in Kimura, and *ma* as a sort of resistance to choosing any one of the opposite forces in Barthes.⁵⁶⁵ The rhetoric mentioned earlier suggests that the sharp structure of the self as opposed to the objective other was not created in Japan due to the lack of serious friction between the two. This includes the other as in the Christian God explained by Maruyama and the other as in national geography and language by Karatani. But according to Kimura's framework, the relationship between those kinds of others refers to the relationship between the self as the subject and the other as the object, not between the self and the internal other, the other as the subject. Since Kimura's *aida* is created in the very space between the self and the internal other, it makes even a part of the subject the other. This concept of *aida* derives not from the Merleau-Pontean encroachment between the body and world, subject and object, but mainly Derridean *différance* where both time and meaning matter. 'Only the relation between the subject [of the self] and the subject [of the other] can open an *aida* that is mutually subjective, and only by its participation in *aida* can the subject totally be the subject'.⁵⁶⁶ Through constant differentiation from the other, internal and external, the self can be opened up into itself, a bare body.

⁵⁶⁵ See Introduction, A-c. and d.

⁵⁶⁶ Kimura, *Bunretsubyō to Tasha*, 128.

Matsuura's body becomes more weightless and mobile, untied from genitals by 'taking off' the genital and freed from a dichotomised relationship through *skinship*. As mentioned earlier, the Barthesian Neutral is not to situate oneself between black and white, radical and conservative or progressive and regressive; rather, the body resists such a system. The 'direct' physical relationship in a sexual sense, where one unifies with the other while encountering the intense alterity of the other, probably used to mean the unification through sexual organs or at least intended genital unification as the peak of physical and emotional exchange. Hence, 'indirect' as opposed to 'direct' must mean unification through something other than genitals. However, Matsuura, from her collected works, shows that a direct physical relationship is not necessarily a genital relationship but *skinship*. Even *skinship*, as a non-genital-focused relationship, creates a sensual space for different trials of touch. This is the space that can be potentially thought of as *aida*, between one and the other, and one and oneself as referred to both in Nancy and Kimura earlier.

The sensual experience does not mean to possess and swallow the other, but to excite, soothe and touch the other and the self, by touching together. In this sense, the body is departing toward the sensual neutral (Neutral in Barthes) space, as Kazumi left her fixation toward her female identity for a Neutral gender space. This Neutral space does not mean the middle point of the male and female or the hermaphrodite. Although Kazumi receives both male and female genitals, her big toe P does not have the function

of a male penis and can receive only sensual and sexual pleasure, assimilating it to a clitoral function. So it is not the middle point of the sexual and the sensual either, since she enjoys both kinds of pleasure. Rather, she is freed from a way of seeing pleasure as ‘either one of the sexual or sensual’. Due to the possession of big toe P and communication with Shunji, she becomes able to enjoy both without necessarily separating the two. Looking at Shunji, who uses the phrase ‘be friends’ for being friends and having sex, Kazumi narrates, ‘He hadn’t been hungry just for sex, after all. Maybe for him being friends and having sex *were* the same thing, but the urge to be friends came first. That’s why his physicality didn’t feel sexual, and why it was so soothing; that was what made him so kind and gentle. It was such a simple thing, why hadn’t I seen it earlier?’⁵⁶⁷

This space in Matsuura, both being sexual and sensual contemporaneously rather than exclusively sensual or sexual, can happen through *skinship*. This *skinship*, as discussed via Tahhan and Ben-Ari earlier in this thesis, is tactile, intimate communication in which children and adults feel the existence of others and are comforted. It is also an *encounter* with the other, taking this otherness into the self or possibly making some sort of compromise with the other. But as Samuel implies, we may need to pay further attention to how *skinship* has functioned in Japan in a wider scope: ‘as Japanese critics point out, this is a static work, filled almost exclusively with

⁵⁶⁷ Matsuura, *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, 80.

the images of sexual experiments and lengthy discussions about them taking place in the confinement of small, private spaces. This story, which basically deals with the age-old theme of self versus society, regrettably overlooks the side of society'.⁵⁶⁸ It is true that the communication in Matsuura works only within a closed circle, though much wider than Yoshiyuki's dark room. I will next examine how touch, or *skinship*, leaves us a memory of touch in a temporal space and how the memory of touch affects us as embodied temporality. Matsuura's text demonstrates how touch affects those who touch through multiple types of relationships, but it lacks, except for Shunji's memory of a hug from his uncle, the vertical axis of *skinship*, that is to say, how the memory of touch comes through parents, how it affects the construction of the self and how it affects his or her mode of interpersonal communication. The memory of touch almost necessarily demonstrates the social aspect of touch, because it illuminates one's relationship to mother and father figures—for example, the absence of touch with the father, pointed out also in Yosano's travel writing, suggesting the absence of the father in child-rearing in Japan. In the embodied temporality created through touch, chronological or diachronic temporality is also problematised. The embodied memory of touch allows us to move both forward and backward along a timeline, to the point where the memory of touch brings us, unlike Derrida's deferral toward the future to come or unlike psychoanalytic referral to the past.

⁵⁶⁸ Samuel, 'The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P', 65.

Chapter 3: Temporality of Tactile Memory

[Synopsis]

***House of the Sleeping Beauties (Nemureru Bijo)*, by Kawabata Yasunari**

Old Eguchi, entering a secret house, is told by the woman of the house not to wake any of the sleeping girls. In this house, customers sleep overnight with the girls who are put to sleep with sleeping pills. He sleeps with a young girl about 20 years old or younger. He touches her in her sleeping, observes her response and sometimes tries to wake her, and while he is drowsing and dreaming, recalls various memories about childbirth, his daughters, his younger days and his wife. Each time he goes back to this house, the woman assigns him a different sleeping girl, which gives him the impression they are promiscuous. But the house lady explains that it does not matter since the girls will not remember him anyway. One night, when Eguchi awakes, he notices that the sleeping girl next to him is cold and without a pulse. He is told to go to sleep again as if nothing had happened, and the girl is taken from the house as if the loss of her life meant nothing.

***Still Crystal (Hisoyakana Kesshō)*, by Ogawa Yoko**

In this story, set on an island, things gradually disappear so that both the object itself and relevant memories are taken from the residents in a process called ‘memory-hunting’. Those who do not lose memories when things vanish are taken away by the secret police if they are spotted. The female protagonist, a novelist, tries to recollect the first object that disappeared. She attempts to remember the objects that have disappeared, how they felt and memories associated with them. The disappearance of memory begins to affect the bodies of those involved. The residents lose legs, hands and eventually their entire bodies, except for their voices. R, the protagonist’s editor who retains his memory, has been kept hidden in the protagonist’s house and tries to help her regain her memory. He tries to touch the protagonist’s body, now absent, and her voice. Finally, with nothing left of her to be taken away, the protagonist suggests that R go to the outside world, while she makes herself disappear in her room.

Touch is embodied, leaving with us the urge to re-experience that memorable touch in the future. Shunji, in *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, remembers a hug from his uncle

and desires to re-perform it for somebody else as his uncle did for him. As is argued in the first chapter concerning Anzieu, the skin retains sensations and physical stimuli, which suggests that the skin can possess a sort of memory of touch. But it is questionable as to how and to what extent we can be aware of and retain the sensation of touch. If we are fully aware of touch on our bodies, we may indeed remember it, though its intensity may vary. But should touch be conducted without our clear consciousness, as in the subconscious? Would it still, then, be remembered? This is also a question about the locus of memory: whether the touch is remembered either on the skin or in our mind, whether and where various memories of touch are layered, and how that layered memory acts upon us. Discussions of the senses as in Anzieu and Merleau-Ponty suggest that there is a ‘memory’ that is retained through the sensations and stimuli the body has received, but that it is ‘remembered’ because we were fully aware of the touch. But if we are not physically ‘feeling’ it, is it possible to ‘remember’ it?

Kawabata Yasunari, in his *House of the Sleeping Beauties* (*Nemureru Bijo*) in 1961, clearly makes the readers ponder this issue. Kawabata is reticent about direct descriptions of bodily communication between opposite sexes. Mishima Yukio (1925–1970), an influential author and political activist, points out in his comment on Kawabata’s works that it is possible for the protagonist in ‘One Arm’ to have a dialogue and interactive communication with the girl’s one arm because it is one arm, not the

whole body of the girl.⁵⁶⁹ Mishima continues that, in the case of *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, while the protagonist Eguchi desires the loved objects, he tries to avoid the desired objects' effects on him, so that it is an ideal situation for the protagonist to communicate with the sleeping girls' whole bodies, which are uncommunicative. The sexual desire in this case can remain as pure sexual drive because his existence is not transmitted to the other, which prevents an interaction-based love.⁵⁷⁰ This commentary suggests that, though old Eguchi is touching the girls' bodies, they are actually not communicating with each other due to sleep, and their subjectivities are not engaging each other. Old Eguchi is touching them without their consent and without their clear consciousness, which raises the multiple ethical questions discussed below.

This story further complicates the issue of memory and whether touch that is conducted in the absence of clear consciousness (on the part of the person touched) can be remembered. This can be applicable to a subconscious state such as sleeping and states such as brain death in which the body is still alive but consciousness is vague if not completely dead. In this section, I would like to explore touch memory regarding temporality through touch during sleep in *House of the Sleeping Beauties*. This investigation also illuminates ethical aspects of current medical debates such as the brain death mentioned above, considering a further application of the theory of touch into everyday life. This exploration of touch memory also requires us to go upstream of

⁵⁶⁹ Mishima Yukio, 'Kaisetsu' ('Commentary') on *Nemureru Bijo*, by Kawabata Yasunari (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1967), 246.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 243.

the memory in a psychoanalytic sense; the search for touch memory and love implies the search for our earlier touch memories in a mainly but not entirely retrospective manner. In this last chapter, I would like to start from the analysis of the absence of father's touch in Yoshiyuki and Kawabata through psychoanalytic accounts, moving to the circulation of tactile love through a reading of Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips' *Intimacies* and the sleep and absence of Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Fall of Sleep*.⁵⁷¹ In the following sections of this chapter, I analyse the works of Ogawa Yoko (*Still Crystal/Hisoyakana Kesshō*, 1999) and Kawabata, examining the touch of the untouchable and the tumult of touch memory, referring to the concept of temporality in Merleau-Ponty. Overall, this chapter, through the examination of works by Kawabata and Ogawa and relevant theories, will consider how touch memory remains in our body and how it does or does not develop progressively.

A. Father's Absence in Earlier Touch in Yoshiyuki and Kawabata

As we have seen mainly in the introduction and Chapter 1 through Ben-Ari, Tahhan and Field, touch in childhood is largely conducted in Japan in the form of *skinship*. It is naturally incorporated even in the early institutional or school educational process, as mentioned by Ben-Ari and Hall.⁵⁷² However, the earliest memory of touch or the first touch would always be the one with the mother, not with the father, due to biological

⁵⁷¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Fall of Sleep*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009). Originally published as *Tombe de sommeil* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2007).

⁵⁷² See the beginning of the introduction and Chapter 1–A, a.

reasons; the foetus grows in and is expelled from the mother's womb and receives nutrition via milk from the mother's breast while she holds the baby. Motherhood is deeply related to having a physical and psychological tie with the baby, as the term *skinship* signifies, by recalling the early tactile relationship between the baby and the mother.⁵⁷³ But this is not with the father; literary works such as those of Yoshiyuki and Kawabata reveal the radical absence of the father in primary tactile scenes. This subsection problematises the father's absence in early tactile communication, examining political shifts and the rapid economic development of the postwar period as well as the father-child relationship.

As explained in the introduction regarding psychoanalytic accounts of the infant-mother relationship, while British object relations theorists like Klein and Winnicott rely heavily on the infant-mother relationship, French psychoanalysis, especially that of André Green, examines the dead mother and highlights the father's delayed role in Kleinian analysis. The mother's breast has an extensive role in Kleinian child analysis; the relationship with it affects the infant's development, process of identification, projection and introjection. Kleinian psychoanalyst W. R. Bion further suggests that the fantasies of the mother's body are conceivably present even in group

⁵⁷³ Contemporary Japanese female writers include more detached infant-mother relationships than before: fantasies of violence against children and hatred toward a blood relation and family tie as in Takahashi Takako's 'A Boundless Void' ('*Byōbō*'), *The Massachusetts Review* 51, no. 3 (2010): 456-481; total detachment of the pregnant mother from her foetus as in Ogawa Yoko's *Ninshin Carendā* (Pregnancy Calendar), (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1994); or the abuse of a baby by other adults in Kanehara Hitomi's *Asshu Beibī* (Ash Baby), (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2004).

dynamics,⁵⁷⁴ the mother's body having an influence even after a child's physical separation from it. Green concentrates, however, on the more negative aspect of the mother's presence as discussed in the introduction through the concept of the dead mother and points out the 'father's delay' in the Kleinian view:

The important thing is that the father in their [Kleinians'] view comes *afterwards*! And I say: in their case, the father comes after the curtain has already fallen. The play has been played; the father comes as the second poor chap who is nearly a replica of the mother, with some distinctive traits, oh yes, but of minor importance.⁵⁷⁵

It is true, then, that the father does not appear in a Kleinian analysis of the infant's primary interaction with the world. In a sense, because the mother's figure is more empirically verifiable and Kleinian analysis is observation-based, the infant-mother relationship is extensively examined compared to the father's more symbolic role. But the father figure in literary texts further illuminates the specific social context at that time.

The examples of Yoshiyuki and Kawabata discussed earlier do not include touch by the father figure. The absence of the father and of the father's participation in child-rearing is not rare in modern Japanese literature. An extreme case includes that of Yoshiyuki's childhood, in which the father, Eisuke, rarely comes back home; once he comes back, he is already making his *tabi* (something like socks) ready for the next

⁵⁷⁴ He writes, 'The more disturbed the group, the more easily discernible are these primitive phantasies [about the contents of the mother's body] and mechanisms'. W. R. Bion, *Experiences in Groups* (London: Routledge, 1989), 165. Also see 162-164.

⁵⁷⁵ Gregorio Kohon, 'The Greening of Psychoanalysis', 35.

going out.⁵⁷⁶ Kawashima Itaru writes, ‘It stems from his father having received a false reputation as a prodigal that the father Eisuke becomes a significant existence for Yoshiyuki. “Most of my father’s memories involve being shouted or hit, and I hardly remember having smelled his body odour.”’⁵⁷⁷ This comment corroborates exactly Yosano’s phrase quoted at the beginning of this thesis, that the Japanese son expects to get a blow from his father, showing the lack of *skinship* between grown-up children (especially male) and the father.

In the postwar Japanese family, the father was present less and less due to political and economic shifts. Slaymaker argues for the emasculation of the postwar Japanese male, through Japan’s defeat and consequent occupation, in which “the masculine” military experience carries overtones of the “feminine.”⁵⁷⁸ Men ‘were encoded as effeminate by the occupiers’, by being marginalised and having heightened ‘anxieties concerning masculine identity in postwar sexual economies’.⁵⁷⁹ The notion of the traditional family, *ie*, also collapsed in the postwar period, which may play a ‘symbolic’ role in Green’s sense, since this *ie* system is one’s relationship to family ancestors rather than the immediate family.⁵⁸⁰ Even after the dissolution of the *ie*

⁵⁷⁶ Kawashima Itaru, ‘*Sei no Genfūkei*’ (‘The Original Scenery of Sexuality’), in *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke no Kenkyū*, 105.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Quotation from Yoshiyuki’s essay, ‘*Bungō no Musume ni Tsuite*’ (‘About the Great Writer’s Daughter’), *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Jisen Sakuhin V* (*Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Author’s Selection V*), (Tokyo: Ushio Publishing, 1975).

⁵⁷⁸ Slaymaker, *The Body in Postwar Japanese Fiction*, 19.

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁰ See Margaret Hillenbrand, *Literature, Modernity, and the Practice of Resistance*. Also see Ochiai Emiko’s explanation of the *ie* system in the introduction.

system and expansion of the nuclear family, the remnants of the *ie* system still persisted, such as in familial and marital systems,⁵⁸¹ the authority of the father became unstable in the Japanese family. Even in cinematic family representations, the father ‘became increasingly a figure of fun or simply absent’ in the postwar cinema.⁵⁸² Napier writes, ‘In a world where fathers are increasingly absented one would expect that woman, in her role of caretaker, would become increasingly privileged’.⁵⁸³

Such postwar collapse of the Japanese family structure is due to the collapse of the traditional *ie* system itself and to the rapid economic expansion since the 1960s. Japan achieved its remarkable economic growth due to its employees’ hard work, in other words, at the expense of the father’s presence in the home. Literary scholar Margaret Hillenbrand, analysing the disruption of the kinship system in 1960-1990s Japan due to rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and migration to the city, ascribes the absence of the father to the following reason. ‘The well-attested phenomenon of the absentee father and its role in the rise of Japan Inc, is a further factor, as overtime and mandatory office socializing (*tsukiai*) among Japan’s worker tribes have kept the *sararîman* away from home’.⁵⁸⁴ Especially since the 1960s, the father started to spend

⁵⁸¹ See Tomiko Yoda, ‘The Rise and Fall of Maternal Society’.

⁵⁸² Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 56. Tadao Sato, *Currents in Japanese Cinema* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982), 117.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid.* In a different manner, the motif of the absent man can be also found in the *Torasan* film series by Yamada Yôji. The protagonist travels much and rarely returns home, though he does not have a family and is free from family responsibility. Broadcast from 1968 to 1969, the film series continued from 1969 until the death of the lead actor Atsumi Kiyoshi in 1995.

⁵⁸⁴ Hillenbrand, *Literature, Modernity, and the Practice of Resistance*, 183. As Hillenbrand notes, this is further observed in Muriel Jolivet’s *Japan: The Childless Society*, cited earlier.

more time on business matters, the tendency for which is still observable in current society.⁵⁸⁵ Due to such reasons, the father's figure became less and less visible in the postwar Japanese family. Yet, the descriptions of the family and the absence of the father's touch in Yoshiyuki and Kawabata seem to concern more basic communication issues, such as how to receive the other's alterity and assume its responsibility.

In the earlier analysis of Yoshiyuki, we left unexamined the protagonist's deep hesitance toward reproduction amid his heightened desire for sex. Yoshiyuki's male protagonist desires sex insofar as it is not connected to reproduction and childbirth. In *The Dark Room*, regarding the editor's question, "“They say you don't like babies [...] You've made up your mind never to have kids, haven't you?”",⁵⁸⁶ Nakata asks the editor who plans to have children after marriage:

“For your own sake?”

The question seemed to take him by surprise. I'd intended it as a continuation of our conversation, but the time I'd spent on my own reflections seemed to have broken the thread, so I rephrased it.

“I mean, do you want to have kids for your own sake?”

“Well...”

He thought for a while, with an expression as though he hadn't expected that particular question, then said finally,

“I suppose you might say so.”

“I wonder how the kids feel, though, being born into a world like ... Though

⁵⁸⁵ Yoda describes this destabilisation of Japanese masculine identity not only in the postwar era but also in the postbubble era since the 1990s, where fathers who have lost jobs or who are in danger of losing jobs ‘are desperate to find their way back “home”’. Tomiko Yoda, ‘The Rise and Fall of Maternal Society’, 866. This manner of a family's falling apart can be seen also, for example, in Murakami Ryū's recent *Saigo no Kazoku (The Last Family)* (Tokyo: Gentōsha, 2001). Written in 1961, Ōe's *Seventeen and J (Sebuntin)* depicts—apart from the economic aspect—psychological distrust toward fathers and social and political impotence soon after *anpo tōsō* (a national campaign against the Security Treaty between the US, which failed) in 1959–1960 and in 1970. But only recently do we witness the rise of the father's participation in parenting, creating the word *ikumen* (meaning ‘parenting men’, or ‘men who participate in parenting’) in contemporary Japan.

⁵⁸⁶ Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 58.

being alive doesn't seem to bother *you* very much, does it?"

"How about yourself, Mr. Nakata—do you wish you hadn't been born?"

"That's a difficult question. Maybe it's partly due to not being very strong physically, but..."

"Mr. Tsunoki told me to find the answer. I mean, about why you don't want children."⁵⁸⁷

Then Nakata remembers that Nakata's lover Maki, who got pregnant, made a similar comment. His attitudes toward his own life and childbirth as evidenced above and various descriptions of abortion that Hillenbrand also refers to⁵⁸⁸ would be enough to show Nakata's unwillingness or even hatred toward childbirth.⁵⁸⁹ Although *The Dark Room* is a typical example that shows Yoshiyuki's hesitancy about birth, this tendency applies to his other works. There is almost never a father figure who supports his family and takes care of children in his work. Eisuke, Yoshiyuki's father, rarely stayed at home and occasionally came back to receive money from his wife, so that Yoshiyuki grew up without an image of the family-oriented father. There are almost no incidences of a

⁵⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁸⁸ Hillenbrand, *Literature, Modernity, and the Practice of Resistance*, footnote in 215. Various techniques practised in Japan for infanticide and abortion are described in *The Dark Room*, such as *tsubushi* or *mabiki*, in which a woman intentionally closes her thighs while giving birth (Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 63). There is no moral constraint on having an abortion in *The Dark Room*. For example, Nakata makes his wife Keiko get rid of her child, probably the child of Keiko and Tsunoki (*Ibid.*, 14), and tries to make Maki get rid of her child by himself (*Ibid.*, 106-107). Natsue does not have any sense of guilt about having an abortion, saying, 'I love starting a kid and getting him to drag it out again' (*Ibid.*, 67). Abortion in Japan has different connotations than in the West and Christianity. Buddhism teaches its adherents not to take others' lives, and some temples have statues of Buddha and dolls dedicated to dead children and aborted fetuses, showing compassion for both mothers and infants. Yet legal prohibition was only introduced after the Meiji period, with the crackdown on *mabiki* in 1831, but laws outlawing both abortion and infanticide were enforced in 1868, aiming to increase births for centrally defined goals such as industrialisation. See William R. LaFleur, *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), accessed 19 August, 2013, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/heb.04090.0001.001>.

⁵⁸⁹ In addition, the narrator does not convey a strong family bond after the dissolution of the *ie* system in the postwar period, even if pregnancy and marriage appear often in the text. Nakata tries not to have a child (Yoshiyuki, *The Dark Room*, 58, 133) and escapes from the family system.

father touching babies or children in Yoshiyuki's works.⁵⁹⁰ The father is delayed in joining the play as in *Green*; indeed, he does not come to the play.

Touch that can be metaphorically read as a maternal caress appears in Kawabata (the caress by the girl's arm seeming like a maternal one) as quoted earlier through Napier's reading of 'One Arm',⁵⁹¹ but the absence of or hesitancy toward a father's touch also exists in Kawabata's work. In *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, we read a protagonist's reflection in which he was criticised by his lover for bringing with him the smell of milk and euphemistically for embracing his child:

"Milk. It smells of milk. It smells like a baby." Starting to fold the coat he had taken off, the woman glared at him, her face tense. "Your baby. You took it in your arms when you left home, didn't you? Didn't you? I hate it! I hate it!" Her hands trembling violently, the woman stood up and threw his coat to the floor. "I hate it. Coming here just after you've had a baby in your arms." Her voice was harsh, but the look in her eyes was worse. She was a geisha with whom he had for some time been familiar. She had known all along that he had a wife and children, but the smell of the nursing child brought violent revulsion and jealousy. Eguchi and the geisha were not again on good terms.⁵⁹²

Here, the smell of milk on his arms is something to be hated, not by the protagonist but by his lover, who is not in the family circle. Although there is no description of how his

⁵⁹⁰ Psychoanalyst Hatashita Kazuo notes Yoshiyuki's yearning for *skinship* with his mother Aguri, who was a busy hairdresser, suggesting that such a lack of *skinship* led him to search out in prostitutes to identify with his unattainable 'mother' and may have driven him to a search for bodies. This line merits quoting from the original text: 母親は、肌の温もりを十分感じさせてくれなかったが、どれほどそのスキンシップを憧れて甘えたかったかしれない [...] 吉行淳之介は、「娼婦」において、母親に背き、道楽息子になりつつ、スキンシップを復権させることによって、求め得られなかった憧れの母親と同一化し、知らず知らず素直な息子になってしまっていたのではなかろうか。 'Yoshiyuki Junnosuke', in *Kokubungaku: Sakka no Sei Ishiki*, November special volume, 135. In this sense, Yoshiyuki may not have had a close family relationship with both parents and had a positive image of family life, though we should be aware of the distance between his real-life experience as a writer and his character's experiences, even if written in the I-novel style.

⁵⁹¹ Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 65.

⁵⁹² Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 24.

touching his youngest daughter is received in his family context, it is an unwelcome touch for his lover, the geisha, since this touch excludes her from the family circle. Furthermore, in another part, another detachment from children appears in the form of a dream. He takes a sleeping pill and falls asleep while playing with the girl's long hair as if he is combing it, she turning away from him and her back toward him. In the dream, one of his daughters appears as a substantially deformed child in a hospital. Although the baby was soon taken from the mother behind the curtain, the mother followed and started mincing the baby to throw it away as he and a doctor just stood beside her.⁵⁹³ Waking up from the dream, he asks himself, 'Was it that, having come in search of misshapen pleasure, he had had a misshapen dream?'⁵⁹⁴ Although all three of his daughters had normal babies in reality, children appear his dream with deformations.

After this dream, he wants to leave this house if possible, but instead, he takes another pill and falls asleep again. Looking at the sleeping girl having her back to him, he narrates:

Thinking that she might—it was not impossible—bear the ugliest and most doltish of children, he put his hand to the roundness at her shoulder.

"Look this way."

As if in answer she turned over. One of her hands fell on his chest. One leg came toward him, as if trembling in the cold. So warm a girl could not be cold. From her mouth or her nose, he could not be sure which, came a small voice.

"Are you having a nightmare too?" he asked.

But old Eguchi was quick to sink into the depths of sleep.⁵⁹⁵

The dream above shows detachment from or anxiety toward childbirth, moving between

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

his dream of childbirth and co-sleeping with the girl's living body. In Yoshiyuki, the father's figure—or even the father's image—is absent from the beginning, and even the image of family is not necessarily observable throughout his works. In Kawabata, the father's touch is unwelcome to his lover, who is outside the family circle, while the reception of his touch by the family member is not depicted. Furthermore, the father literally stands by without stopping his wife from mincing their baby. Only by virtue of his touch and his saying 'Look this way' did the sleeping girl turn over '[a]s if in answer'.⁵⁹⁶ The father's touch is absent from primary tactile scenes in these examples, and the father's figure itself and its role is shadowy. The father's absence in the postwar period due to the political and economic reasons mentioned earlier perhaps accelerated the situation, but the absence of the father poses a fundamental detachment and anxiety from childbirth in these authors. The father is not just delayed; he is absent from the beginning, or he is only standing by, even if he is there.

B. Circulation of (Transitive) Tactile Love in Kawabata

The father's figure is shadowy in the Japanese postwar family, and his touch is absent, which may even further develop a male's fantasy of touching a female body. The remarkable point about Kawabata's *House of the Sleeping Beauties* that distinguishes it from Yoshiyuki's works is that the circulation of tactile memory (memory of touch)

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 33.

centres on the mother figure, the male protagonist and other females. In Yoshiyuki's case, as we have seen in the first chapter, the tactile memory forms the membrane, which plays a role in the communication between Nakata and Natsue. But the communication mediated via this membrane is limited to that of Nakata, Natsue and her past partners, while in Kawabata, the tactile memory is not necessarily limited to love or sexual relationships. Kawabata's touch—though direct touch is rare—has a significance, not limited to sexual love, but reminding us of the maternal relationship as in Napier's observation about the protagonist's touch to the girl's arm and opening up a wider circuit of tactile memory. This subsection examines how touch involves different figures in tactile memory, which circulates among those figures, asking about the concept of love, otherness and response in tactile encounters.

While Eguchi gazes at the sleeping girl, the narrator in *House of the Sleeping Beauties* says:

He had forgotten the nightmare, and as affection for the girl poured through him, there came over him too a childlike feeling that he was loved by the girl. He felt for a breast, and held it softly in his hand. There was in the touch a strange flicker of something, as if this were the breast of Eguchi's own mother before she had him inside her. He withdrew his hand, but the sensation went from his chest to his shoulders.⁵⁹⁷

In this case, the current touch is connected to Eguchi's own childhood memory or imaginary memory, a memory of *skinship*, not that of an objectified child but of a personalised child, as himself. This personalised or embodied childhood memory is not

⁵⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

one of anxiety but is a spring of memory as the above shows. In the former quotation of his dream in which Eguchi shows reluctance or anxiety toward childbirth, he is, as a father, supposed to touch children, while in the quotation just above, he is a receiver of touch and warm love, not necessarily a giver. The question arising here is whether these different positions—as a father who is supposed to be a giver of love and a supporter of the family and as a child and an adult who is predominantly a receiver of love—have any effect on his attitude toward tactile communication. It seems that the protagonist here is gratified to receive love or the memory of love by touching the other but is anxious about or unwelcome to give love by touching the other. Does this anxiety about touching and receiving another's existence stem from his sense of responsibility as a parent? What does it mean to welcome touch insofar as he receives love and comfort?

‘EVERY THEORY OF LOVE IS, necessarily, a theory of object relations’, writes Leo Bersani: ‘Love is transitive; to conceptualize it is to address not only the question of how we choose objects to love, but also, more fundamentally, the very possibility of a subject loving an object’.⁵⁹⁸ Bersani asks, while discussing object relations and narcissism, how ‘we should or even can love others “for themselves”’.⁵⁹⁹ In his analysis of love, which ranges through Greek philosophy to psychoanalysis, Bersani explores the reconciliation of narcissism and love connected to the world in the name of ‘impersonal narcissism’, where ‘Narcissistic love in both the lover and the

⁵⁹⁸ Leo Bersani, ‘The Power of Evil and the Power of Love’, 72.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

beloved (can they even still be distinguished?) is exactly identical to a perfect knowledge of otherness'.⁶⁰⁰ As referenced earlier, Kawabata's love can be often read as a matter of narcissism; the protagonist in Kawabata needs the girl insofar as it heightens his own narcissism as discussed by Yoshiyuki, and insofar as the other's ego does not merge into his as raised by Mishima.⁶⁰¹ The protagonist also loves others insofar as the object appears safe for him because it does not menace his own life. That is why, even in *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, the sleeping girl appears as a 'life to be touched' with comfort. 'She was not a living doll, for there could be no living doll; but, so as not to shame an old man no longer a man, she had been made into a living toy. No, not a toy: for the old men, she could be life itself. Such life was, perhaps, life to be touched with confidence'.⁶⁰² She is a life that could be touched without any fear and anxiety. By touching it, he knows that he can be kept secure because the girl is sleeping without knowing what he has done to her body. This is the security obtained due to the absence of the other: specifically, the absence of other's awakened consciousness. Kawabata's love in this case is possible due to the lack of otherness.

Reading Kawabata's *House of the Sleeping Beauties* through two axes, the symbolic and the literal, literary scholar Hosea Hirata gives another interpretation of the same line 'life to be touched with confidence'. Although for him, '[a] potentially

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁰¹ See Chapter 1, A-b, and the introductory section of Chapter 3.

⁶⁰² Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, 20. In the original text, it says '*anshinshite furerareru inochi*' 安心して触れられるいのち (*Nemureru Bijo*, 19) for 'life to be touched with confidence', so that it may be more appropriate to translate as 'life to be touched with comfort', 'calmness' or 'security'.

dangerous, threatening life is locked in a secure place', the 'literal begins to dissect this "life," this symbol, into separate morsels of flesh and returns us to the original oxymoronic condition: a living doll'.⁶⁰³ In Hirata's reading, the 'symbolic and the literal struggle for dominance. They repeatedly appear and disappear, reversing the face, changing the mask, from one to the other', due to these two axes.⁶⁰⁴ The literal eye tries to open the girls' eyes and comes closer to the surface, longing to 'touch it', as opposed to the 'symbolic eye' in the sleeping girls; 'it [the thing] must be hidden; and there must exist a desire to uncover it, to bring it to light (eye)'.⁶⁰⁵ In this tension, created by the two axes of language, the literal and symbolic, Eguchi's touching hand sees her skin and finally, quietly, puts his fingers on her skin with indecision, hesitation and desire. Then he withdraws. Certainly, it is Kawabata's language that also embraces the body, as Hirata puts it; 'Kawabata's words caress the entire body, slowly, in detail, as if casting a tight-fitting net of language over the body'.⁶⁰⁶ Yet it is still questionable whether Eguchi or Kawabata as a writer is touching the surface and caressing the body toward him, that is, toward the love of himself or toward the other—put differently, whether there is the possibility of loving the other in touching and a willingness to receive another's existence, even in the absence of another's consciousness.

A typical model with which to understand the notion of passive love in

⁶⁰³ Hosea Hirata, *Discourses of Seduction: History, Evil, Desire, and Modern Japanese Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 34. For Hirata, the literal here functions as the mechanism of the desire and dissects the symbol.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

Japanese psyche is without doubt the *amae* (dependence) theory provided by Japanese psychiatrist Doi Takeo, in which love is understood as being essentially dependent on the object. It is as if the baby passively waits to be loved by its mother and in which one longs to merge into or unite with the other; thus, Doi finds certain proximity between his concept of *amae* and Michael Balint's primary passivity of love.⁶⁰⁷ Doi's *amae* theory has been widely and crossculturally used, from anthropology to cultural history, to describe a particularity of the Japanese psyche, treating dependence as a constructive element of human relationships in Japan.⁶⁰⁸ Although Doi finds a certain similarity to other psychoanalytic accounts like Balint, as mentioned above, he explains the structure of *amae* as a particularity of the Japanese psyche that is inexplicable outside its own language, to the extent to cause some critique. Hillenbrand says his theory 'goes so far as to posit infantilism and maternal dependence as the psychological underpinnings of Japanese society'.⁶⁰⁹ Saitō Tamaki also finds here an adherent relationship with the mother (*boshi micchaku*, meaning 'a too-close relationship between the mother and child') caused by the contemporary family structure in which the father spends most of

⁶⁰⁷ Doi Takeo, *Amae no Kōzō*, 30.

⁶⁰⁸ *Amae* may appear not only between the mother and children but also between adults' vertical relationships, such as the boss and a lower-level employee, and a horizontal relationship. Doi explains that the feeling of *giri*, a sort of socially formed morality that has informed Japanese morality since the pre-Meiji period, stems from the structure of *amae*. This feeling of *giri* is also tied up with the emperor system, which postulates a spiritual centre that presides over the various divisions of class. Doi reads this *amae* not only as partial or temporary dependency but rather a tendency that prevailed generally in Japanese culture and language. *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁰⁹ Hillenbrand, *Literature, Modernity and the Practice of Resistance*, 214. Ben-Ari examines both lines of dependency between children and caretakers, and of the strong group orientation of Japanese people through his fieldwork on the naptime in Japanese preschools (Ben-Ari, *Body Projects in Japanese Childcare*).

his time working and the mother overly interferes and protects her child, causing a difficulty for children in constructing an appropriate distance from the other.⁶¹⁰ But Doi's analysis of *amae* through the concept of identification, in which one takes in the characteristics of the others,⁶¹¹ can be related to Bersani's exploration of love that aims toward union as its goal. Bersani writes; 'Love is an exemplary concept [...] about the possibility of connectedness between the subject and the world'.⁶¹² Therefore, Doi's theory may function as a bridge here to read the phenomenon of love and subject-object in *House of the Sleeping Beauties* in relation to the exploration of love by Bersani.

As referred earlier, Yoshiyuki points out an extremely strong narcissistic tendency in Kawabata's works in that the object of love does not necessarily need to possess 'feminine' sexuality because, should the loved object function to heighten Kawabata's narcissism, the feminine sex is unnecessary.⁶¹³ Yoshiyuki further refers to the comments by Mishima on Kawabata's eroticism:

Kawabata's eroticism is almost a constant touch or attempt to touch toward voluptuous substance—life itself—that never follows logical consequences, rather than the manifestation of his own voluptuousity. The reason why it is truly erotic lies in the mechanism that the object or life, in another word, cannot be eternally touched. And the reason why he prefers to write about the virgin is maybe his interest in the mechanism particularly of a virgin, that she is forever untouchable insofar as she remains a virgin but that she is no longer a virgin when she is raped.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹⁰ Saitō Tamaki, *Hikikomori Bunkaron*, 124-125. Saitō argues that the case of *hikikomori* can be understood as a shift from projective identification to imaginary paranoia-schizo in the Kleinian sense through the process of the self-closed space (149).

⁶¹¹ Doi, *Amae no Kōzō*, 68-73.

⁶¹² Bersani, 'The Power of Evil and the Power of Love', 75.

⁶¹³ Yoshiyuki, *Yoshiyuki Junnosuke Zenshū*, 8: 286-287.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 286. Mishima, Yukio, 'Eien no Tabibito' ('Eternal Traveller') in 1958.

Both Yoshiyuki and Mishima see Kawabata's eroticism of the virgin—which Mishima posits, can be even life itself—as the object to be touched, and in the division between the 'life' to be touched and Kawabata's own life. But Bersani's narcissistic love, which is also purely object love, further complicates the reading of love and touch in Kawabata.

Examining love, starting with Ancient Greek culture, Bersani writes:

The lover's desire is not that which he fails to recognize as his; rather, it is the reality of the other that he remembers and embraces as his own. Backlove is self-love, but the self the boy sees and loves in the lover is also the lover's self, just as the lover, in remembering and worshipping his own godlike nature in the boy, is also worshipping the boy's real (ideal) soul. Narcissistic love in both the lover and the beloved (can they even still be distinguished?) is exactly identical to a perfect knowledge of otherness.⁶¹⁵

The 'backlove' or 'counterlove', a translation of a Greek word *anteros*, is a type of love in which the loved longs for the lover inasmuch as the lover longs for the loved (or the lover pours love onto the loved in return for receiving divine love, so that the loved falls in love with the lover), because of 'the mirror image of love' in the loved.⁶¹⁶ He falls in love with the lover because of the image of love in himself, which is narcissistic. Yet this love is caused by the very existence of another, which means that it is reciprocal and necessarily requires the narcissistic self and the other to make it possible. As Bersani observes, the narcissistic love in the lover and the loved is not necessarily easily distinguishable. The self whom the loved desires in the other and the self that is the

⁶¹⁵ Bersani, 'The Power of Evil and the Power of Love', 84-85.

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

lover itself are almost inseparable. Bersani names this reversal of the relational mode as ‘impersonal narcissism’.⁶¹⁷ This mode undoes the dichotomy between the active and passive in a different manner from, for example, Deleuze and Guattari’s haptic function that has more to do with the mobility between the smooth and striated. Bersani’s approach does not necessarily try to ‘unfix’ the opposition through mobility but rather attests to a reciprocal relationship, seeing the very presence of the other. Bersani writes, ‘If we were able to relate to others according to this model of impersonal narcissism, what is different about others (their psychological individuality) could be thought of as merely the envelope of the more profound (if less fully realized, or completed) part of themselves which is our sameness’.⁶¹⁸

Kawabata’s narcissism can be read, then, almost as if it were a safety net; his protagonist is touching the girl insofar as it is a safe touch and it guarantees a silent love for himself, as he puts it, the ‘life to be touched with confidence’, mentioned above. In the case of ‘One Arm’ as well, he continues to cleave to the girl’s one arm insofar as it gives him a sense of comfort and calmness, but suddenly wrenches it off at the point where he finds something repulsive. If we, therefore, consider the reciprocal nature of such a love, it is impossible to see it as only being about receiving comfort and calm, but we must also accept the insecurity, anxiety and menace that comes with the body of the other, in this case, whether it arises from the active or passive resistance of the

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

sleeping girls.

Scrutinising the text of *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, the girls in the house are in a deep sleep caused by sleeping pills, and it is a rule of this house that customers do not try to wake them while they are together. The woman in this house notes, ““please don’t try to wake her. Not that you could, whatever you did. She’s sound asleep and knows nothing.” [...] “She’ll sleep on and on and know nothing at all, from start to finish. Not even who’s been with her. You needn’t worry.””⁶¹⁹ Being amazed at the first girl’s beauty and youth ‘as if another heart beat its wings in old Eguchi’s chest’,⁶²⁰ old Eguchi looks at her body in detail, almost as if *touching* her body through his gaze, or embracing her body by (Kawabata’s) descriptive words as Hirata mentioned about Kawabata’s language. Old Eguchi narrates:

Her right hand and wrist were at the edge of the quilt. Her left arm seemed to stretch diagonally under the quilt. Her right thumb was half hidden under her cheek. The fingers on the pillow beside her face were slightly curved in the softness of sleep, though not enough to erase the delicate hollows where they joined the hand. The warm redness was gradually richer from the palm to the fingertips. It was a smooth, glowing white hand.⁶²¹

Then he asks her, ““Are you asleep? Are you going to wake up?””⁶²² The text continues, ‘It was as if he were asking so that he might touch her hand. He took it in his and shook it. He knew that she would not open her eyes. Her hand still in his, he looked into her face’.⁶²³

⁶¹⁹ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties and Other Stories*, 14.

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

⁶²² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶²³ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

Touching the female body in her deep sleep, in the absence of her clear consciousness, it sounds like the male's egoistic, deformed or 'misshapen', *kikei* in Kawabata's word, love. In response to his hesitancy, and feeling a sense of promiscuity, against changing the girl each time he goes to this house, the woman who runs it says:

"And then you may think of it as promiscuous, but the girl herself is asleep, and doesn't even know who she has slept with. The girl the other time and the girl tonight will never know a thing about you, and to speak of promiscuousness is a little..."

"I see. It's not a human relationship."⁶²⁴

Feeling an attachment to the sleeping girl with whom he has slept, he asks the woman if he can stay until she wakes up. The woman repeats, "That's exactly the sort of thing we can't allow" [...] "It's best just to keep them company and not let foolish emotions get in the way. She doesn't even know she's slept with you. She won't cause you any trouble." Eguchi responds, "But I remember her. What if we were to pass in the street?"⁶²⁵ Napier writes, 'They [the girls] are objects in the most fundamental sense, gazed at by men who cannot engage with them in any active way'.⁶²⁶ This absence of consciousness certainly raises the question of whether her subjectivity is considered in this relationship. Eguchi repetitively feels resistance or hesitance toward this rule precisely because he desires a human relationship in which he can feel her presence, in other words, her response.

In this hesitancy toward an inhuman relationship in which Eguchi can carry

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁶²⁶ Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 63.

out various surreal touches on the sleeping girl, all the while treating her almost like a doll or toy, Kawabata in a subtle manner succeeds in creating a fantasy and desire about reciprocal tactile love. On the first night, when he had a nightmare, as referred to earlier, he puts his hand to her shoulder, ““Look this way.” As if in answer she turned over. One of her hands fell on his chest. One leg came toward him, as if trembling in the cold’.⁶²⁷

On another night, attracted to the scent of the third girl, he slid his body toward her:

As though in reply, she turned gently toward him, her arms extended under the blanket as if to embrace him.

“Are you awake?” he asked, pulling away and shaking her jaw. “Are you awake?” He put more strength into his hand. She turned face down as if to avoid it, and as she did so a corner of her mouth opened slightly, and the nail of his index finger brushed against one or two of her teeth. He left it there. Her lips remained parted. She was of course in a deep sleep, and not merely pretending.⁶²⁸

Old Eguchi, not yet accustomed to sharing time with a girl who does not say a word, opens her eyes. She does not recognise him. ‘Empty longing had not left him. He wanted to see the eyes of this witchlike girl. He wanted to hear her voice, to talk to her’.⁶²⁹ After some attempts to breach the house’s rule that one should not try to wake sleeping girls, he decides to stick to the rule, feeling emptiness in himself for not being able to ‘communicate’ properly with the girl.

Yet in looking at the girl who is more alive than the earlier girl, Eguchi narrates, ‘Life was there, most definitely, in her scent, in her touch, in the way she

⁶²⁷ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, 33.

⁶²⁸ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, 44-45.

moved'.⁶³⁰ This girl, turning away from him and her back toward him, seeks for him with her arm. This is what follows:

"Don't," the girl seems to say, in a voice that was not a voice.

"Are you awake?" He pulled more strongly at the knee, to see whether she would awaken. Weakly, it bent toward him. He put his arm under her neck and gently shook her head.

"Ah," said the girl. "Where am I going?"

"Are you awake? Wake up."

"Don't, don't." Her face brushed against his shoulder, as if to avoid the shaking. [...]

"What do you think you're doing?" said the girl. "Stop it."

"I am not doing a thing."

But she was talking in her sleep.⁶³¹

Various thoughts arise in Eguchi's mind. Can he wake and keep her awake until the next morning? Might his touch rather than his words make her talk in her sleep? He is excited about the idea that he could have something like a conversation with her.

"Mother." It was like a low groan. "Wait, wait. Do you have to go? I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

"What are you dreaming of? It's a dream, a dream." Old Eguchi took her more tightly in his arms, thinking to end the dream. The sadness in her voice stabbed at him. Her breasts were pressed flat against him. Her arms moved. Was she trying to embrace him, thinking him her mother?⁶³²

Against his initial thought that she is a 'witch' who seduces old men, even though she is a virgin, he comes to think that she, rather, is the one who is bewitched; 'she was alive while asleep. Her mind had been put into a deep sleep, and her body had awakened as a woman. She had become a woman's body, without mind'.⁶³³ Because he himself is undecided as to how to read her vocal and physical performances, his thoughts roam,

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶³¹ *Ibid.*

⁶³² *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

and he wonders if ‘the heavy touch of old men had trained her to talk in her sleep, to resist’.⁶³⁴ Then he starts to touch her, wondering what he should say and where he should touch to get her answer, just as Nakata in *The Dark Room* touches Natsue in the search of the clean film of Natsue’s skin that is untouched.

The touching of Natsue’s body in Yoshiyuki is a trial to find a clean film, somewhere untouched by anybody else on her skin. In Kawabata, however, it is a trial to get the sleeping girl’s response, though she is not even a lover. The question raised in the earlier chapter in this thesis was whether a reciprocal relationship is possible, maintaining a certain extent of female agency, in Kawabata’s works. Even in ‘One Arm’, the protagonist interacts with her arm only as long as he feels he is safe, which does not necessarily suggest a reciprocal relationship—though at least they have a proper verbal conversation, compared to the case with the sleeping girls. In *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, because the sleeping girl’s consciousness is absent, the wish to have an interaction with the girl is heightened. As we can see in the phrases above, the girls’ responses are probably those in Eguchi’s imagination. Yet, should we employ here Bersani’s theory of the reciprocal love that flows from impersonal narcissism, we may be able to say that there is an interaction between old Eguchi and the sleeping beauties. Eguchi’s touching of the sleeping girls, hesitant yet occasionally firm, is to reassure him of his existence rather than touching girls simply for the purpose of ‘touching’ them.

⁶³⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

This is why he waits to see and feel the girls' responses to check if his touch has been received. To check this further, he tries to find some part of the body where she particularly reacts. He seeks and confirms his own life with another's body and life by touching. He finds himself excited by receiving response from the girls, even in their sleep and the absence of clear consciousness. This shows not only how self-love is the love of another as suggested by Bersani, but also how self-recognition or self-awareness stems from the awareness or confirmation of the other for the first instance. Kawabata shows that, even in the state of sleep or in the near death of consciousness, this (wish for) a reciprocal relationship to others can still survive.

There are some similarities between Doi and Bersani, such as the recognition of the self through the other in a mode of identification and the unification with the other as the ultimate goal of human relationships. But Doi primarily sees in his *amae* theory the passivity of human communication widely applicable to Japanese life, in much the same way as Balint does early through his idea of the passivity of love, as discussed in the introduction. In this 'passive object-love', infants can just be loved without any active engagement of their own: '*I shall be loved and satisfied, without being under any obligation to give anything in return*'.⁶³⁵ Although Balint admits the active part of object-love later, the passive object-love remains for him primary. In this sense, narcissism comes after passive object-love, as a *détour*, saying, 'if I am not loved

⁶³⁵ Michael Balint, *Primary Love, Psycho-analytic Technique*, 82.

sufficiently by the world, not given enough gratification, I must love and gratify myself'.⁶³⁶ Another *détour* is active object-love: 'We love and gratify our partner, i.e., we conform to his wishes, in order to be loved and gratified by him in return'.⁶³⁷ Presupposing that we will be loved by our mother and the world, the mother in Balint's theory leaves us with a primary memory of warmth, tranquillity and of being loved. In Bersani, even though love is already there because of reciprocal relationships, it is not necessarily that the passive comes first and then the active love becomes necessary to be loved. Rather, reciprocity as Bersani conceived it suggests that presence of the other already exists in the beginning of love: 'each partner demands of the other [...] that he reflect the lover's type of being, his universal singularity [...], by recognizing and cultivating that singularity as his own most pervasive, most pressing potentiality'.⁶³⁸ First and foremost, 'Love is an exemplary concept in all philosophical speculation about the possibility of connectedness between the subject and the world'.⁶³⁹

In Kawabata, this reciprocity is not necessarily limited to the two-person relationship, as previously mentioned in the scene in which Eguchi touches the sleeping

⁶³⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.* It should be noted that, even though Balint situates the infant's relationship to the mother as the source of primary love, he does not necessarily limit the possibility of love being given by the mother, observing that, 'I wish to mention the innumerable magic, mystic, or symbolic acts, such as hand-shaking, laying on of hands, touching, clinging, etc., all of which have this tendency (the child is not suckled, but sucks actively) as their basis, and show the conscious aim of identifying oneself with the object or asking help from it'. *Ibid.*, 83. In addition, he mentions the importance of primitive clinging as having an influence on a large number of object-relations, *Ibid.*

⁶³⁸ Bersani, 'The Power of Evil and the Power of Love', 86.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*, 75.

girl's breast as if it is his earlier touch on his mother's breast. In another scene as well, the touching of the girl's body synchronises with that of his mother's body. Toward the end of the story, he dreams of his mother's death, of the smell of the foods she prepared for him and his new wife, and about the red flower she prepared for their arrival.

Between the dreams, he touches the sleeping girl's breast with strength:

There was no response, for the breasts too were deep in sleep. When, in her last hour, he had stroked his mother's bosom, he had of course felt her withered breasts. They had not been like breasts. He did not remember them now. What he remembered was groping for them and going to sleep, one day when he was still an infant.⁶⁴⁰

Touch here develops along the lines described by Yoshiyuki's Nakata-Natsue two-person (or Nakata-lovers) relationship, but also as among Eguchi, his mother and the sleeping beauty.

The tactile love and memory of the mother is clearly primary as Balint suggests, and it becomes the prototype for later experiences. The mother leaves us with a primary memory of warmth, tranquillity and being loved, the primary memory of touch with the mother possibly giving us warm comfort throughout life. Yet, tactile memory is not limited to the mother figure. It is repeatedly projected onto different figures throughout life. 'The scent and looks of each new girl he sleeps with evoke different feelings and recollections, some enjoyable but many disturbing'.⁶⁴¹ As earlier mentioned, the nightmare of a deformed child cut into pieces comes between Eguchi's touch of the

⁶⁴⁰ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, 96.

⁶⁴¹ Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 63.

girl's hair and sleeping. Touch, the provoked memory of oneself and other individuals are interconnected in this case. This way, touch circulates over the division between individuals and time. Tactile affection and love expressed through touch, not necessarily limited to fixed figures, are developed through the presence of the other and circulate among the one and those others with whom it comes into contact. The ultimate goal of this reciprocal relation is the connectedness of the one and the other, as Bersani and Doi suggest. But this connectedness can be that which connects oneself and the other, and the other and another other being connected via memory. 'Love, which we like to think of as a discovery, is inseparable from memory'.⁶⁴² When Eguchi gazes at a red drop oozing from the petals of the red flower that his now-dead mother prepared for his wife, he awakes from his dream to find that the girl sleeping beside him is cold and without a pulse. Love that is inseparable from tactile memory circulates, arising from birth and proximating to death.

C. Touching Absence

Touch and intimate interactions with others in the moment evoke memories of the past and different individual(s) to synchronise and mingle with one's present. Discussions about skin, membrane and *skinship* so far suggest that touch memory can be remembered by the skin or sense organs and stored in our bodies. But current medical

⁶⁴² Bersani, 'The Power of Evil and the Power of Love', 72.

discussions about the brain, which give priority to the brain over the body, may highlight that our sense-related memories are remembered by the mind rather than the body. John Allan Hobson, from the perspective of neurophysiology and psychiatry, whose theory of sleep is based on work with the brain, sees the ultimate solution of hard issues such as the mind-body problem as being located in the world as it is represented in the brain.⁶⁴³ Conversely, in a certain type of recent psychoanalytic/therapeutic thinking revising traditional Freud and British object relations theorists, Ivri Kumin in his work on pre-object relations stresses the ongoing importance of the body.⁶⁴⁴ There, therefore, still seems to be a relatively large space to discuss this body-mind issue, especially as it arises in a case like *House of the Sleeping Beauties*. Tactile memory also has to do with sleeping and dreaming, raising further issues such as that of the unreachable unconscious as absence, and questioning us again what is touchable and untouchable, to be discussed in this subsection.

Within the framework of this thesis, the temporal gap of touch, traversing the past and present, seems more complex in Kawabata than in earlier literary examples of touch due to the effect of sleeping and dreaming. Jean-Luc Nancy, when investigating the phenomenon of sleep, writes that the ‘fall is not a loss of consciousness but the

⁶⁴³ John Allan Hobson, *Dreaming: An Introduction to the Science of Sleep* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 138.

⁶⁴⁴ Pre-object relations is the stage before the infant achieves an ability to objectify the mother as an object, attachment to which is embodied in the ‘unperceived’ ego (7–8). Kumin states that, since pre-object communication primarily relies on the sensorimotor, it is physically sensed by the body (82–83), in *Pre-Object Relatedness: Early Attachment and the Psychoanalytic Situation* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1996).

conscious plunge of consciousness into unconsciousness',⁶⁴⁵ continuing to the state that sleeping itself is 'detachment from everything' so that the 'presence of the sleeper is the presence of an absence'.⁶⁴⁶ Old Eguchi's touching of the sleeping beauties also seems the touching of absence, without being able to receive a response specifically directed to him. He can feel the physical materiality of the girls by touching, but we can never tell if this touch is 'perceived' from the girls' side because they are sleeping. Regarding different stages of sleeping, in the transitional period of drowsiness in which Eguchi's thought flows, one may feel as if one is not sleeping. Then one goes into the light sleep stage, where the system to maintain wakefulness switches to promote sleep. In the deep-sleep stage, the mind becomes unfocused and drifts, and then rapid-eye movement (REM) is the time when the brain most actively works and dreaming occurs.⁶⁴⁷ During each sleep stage, the sleeper probably experiences different perceptions of and reactions toward external stimuli, as Eguchi's state of drowsiness and dozing girls' responses (without knowing what they are responding to) manifest. In the sense that the protagonist is touching not-fully-reachable girls in sleep, he is touching the presence of the absent mind.

For Nancy, to fall asleep means to lose one's mark as oneself (as Nancy puts it,

⁶⁴⁵ Nancy, *The Fall of Sleep*, 8.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁴⁷ Drowsiness usually lasts about ten minutes. REM sleep appears about one and a half hours after falling asleep and initially lasts about ten minutes in cycles but can occupy up to two hours in total in young adults. Chris Idzikowski, *Sleep* (London: Collins, 2007), 18–20.

to experience the ‘effacement of my own distinction’⁶⁴⁸), and to sleep is ‘the return to the immemorial world’.⁶⁴⁹ Hobson, however, admits the dreamer’s ongoing agency, saying:

The one orientational anchor that is never lost in dreams is the self, the “I” who dreams, the I who thus swims, flies, flees, makes love, fears, and fights. True, some dreamers see themselves as dream actors (rather than being the centre of the action), but the self is always there. It is the construct of constructs, the organizational unit of consciousness. I dream, therefore I am.⁶⁵⁰

In Hobson’s view, sleeping is neither the effacement of the self nor the loss of agency.

We should acknowledge this distance between theories derived from humanities and neurophysiology. We could possibly take into consideration Kumin’s account regarding the sleeping subject’s relationship to the other in which the other reappears in the dream; ‘She [the mother] is lost through sleep and found through the dream’.⁶⁵¹ There is a certain difference in terms of development states, whether it is in the foetus and infant as the original stage of pre-object relations or the adult in sleeping as the state of absence of consciousness. But this idea of touching an absence or of return to the immemorial can be connected with Kumin’s pre-object relations and presumably immemorialised touch for the sleeping girls, precisely because stimuli in pre-object relations are physically communicated through the body, yet are non-repetitive and thus immemorial.

Kumin states, ‘Pre-object communication cannot be repeated since it exists

⁶⁴⁸ Nancy, *The Fall of Sleep*, 7.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁶⁵⁰ Hobson, *Dreaming*, 143.

⁶⁵¹ Kumin, *Pre-Object Relatedness*, 120.

concretely in real time between individuals who are communicating in this way'.⁶⁵² The pre-object stimulations, which Kumin examines, are closely related to the Freudian idea of the bodily ego that derives from bodily sensation based on the surface of the body and which admits the concept of double surface—of the self and the object.⁶⁵³ In other words, the surface that touches something else and is touched is associated by Kumin with Freud's mystic writing-pad as the first example of 'the double-layered surface of the ego'.⁶⁵⁴ This association with Freud means that certain stimulations are rejected through the work of an external protective shield and some are written in the inner layer, the written mark of which is inscribed on the pad behind it. This investigation of touch on the body without clear consciousness through Kawabata and immemorial sensations through Kumin asks what the memorial touch is, what can be remembered and in which direction or whether touch vanishes without chronological dislocation due to the function of 'immemorial' stimulations.

As was examined in the previous chapter, where Shunji in *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P* remembers his uncle's touch and how he wishes to touch Kazumi in the same manner, the issue is about how touch is to be conducted now, based on touch memory from the past. However, in the current case of *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, there is no premise that touch on the girls has even been perceived or that touch can be remembered. As a presence of absence, the girl's body functions as if it is the

⁶⁵² *Ibid.*, 87.

⁶⁵³ *Ibid.*, 120. Kumin calls this function of a double surface a 'semipermeable membrane'.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.* See the introduction about Freud's mystic writing pad.

untouchable, while physically being the touchable. Analysing the dehumanisation of sex in Kawabata's 'One Arm' and *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, Roy Starrs writes: 'the girl lying asleep beside him, being an "absent presence" herself, and so incapable of engaging him in a present relationship, has the effect of "reawakening" his past relationships with other women'.⁶⁵⁵ It is not just about tactile memory and the temporal gap between now and the past, that current touch reminds us of previous touch stored on the skin or the body, or previous touch stimulates touch to come. Rather, it entails a two-pronged question: whether touch can be remembered, including touch on the unconscious, and where it can be remembered, going back to the body-mind question.

Freud's bodily ego and the associated notion of the mystic writing pad that Kumin considers suggest that there are two types of sensations: those that are not remembered and those that are. In the case of the former, there exists those stimulations that are repelled by the protective shield, and in the latter case, there are those that permeate to the lower layer and thus have the possibility of being remembered. Applying these mechanisms of ego formation and memory formation to the story, Eguchi's touching of the sleeping girls is conceived for Eguchi as a touch, the sensation of which can 'soak into' the unconscious level; however, for the touched girls, it is

⁶⁵⁵ Roy Starrs, *Soundings in Time: The Fictive Art of Kawabata Yasunari* (Richmond: Japan Library, 1998), 196. Starrs problematises the objectification of human beings particularly in 'One Arm' and *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, in which Kawabata treats a woman's body as a toy without the possibility of an individual identity (189). Yet, while accepting such an objectification of the female, I rather problematise, as has been discussed in this thesis, the effacement of subtle remarks uttered by (female) bodies due to the straightforward critique of such an objectification. There are remarks extensively signaled by female bodies both in Yoshiyuki and Kawabata that these authors allow the existence of female bodies and listen to their voices, even if protagonists may actually fail in effective communication with those bodies.

perhaps not conceived as memorable touch but merely as ‘sensations’. This sort of sensation cannot even be remembered but rather sensed as passing, as Kumin suggests. The mechanism of the double membrane is, then, the membrane that functions both to touch and to be touched by oneself, as in the self-touch in Merleau-Ponty, and the membrane that works between subjects potentially as an inter-connective membrane that conducts sensations for one person and not the same for another. But the membrane can block certain stimuli like a barrier or perhaps like a mirror, creating different realities on the two sides. In *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, it can act as a barrier at the point that, while touch is making one sensual reality for Eguchi, it is making another dreamy world for the sleeping girl stimulated by touch, but those two realities do not meet. The absent or the unattainable becomes reachable when sleeping or dreaming.

When Eguchi touches the sleeping girl, thinking that she may be the last woman in his life, he goes into a daze, wondering who the first one was. Then the thought flashes into his mind that the first one would have been his mother. Nevertheless, due to the drug, he cannot pursue this idea:

Now at sixty-seven, as he lay between two naked girls, a new truth came from deep inside him. Was it blasphemy, was it yearning? He opened his eyes and blinked, as if to drive away a nightmare. But the drug was working. He had a dull headache. Drowsily, he pursued the image of his mother; and then he sighed, and took two breasts, one of each of the girls, in the palms of his hands. A smooth one and an oily one. He closed his eyes.⁶⁵⁶

Again, he reminisces about his mother. Eguchi found his mother while drowsy,

⁶⁵⁶ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, 94.

remembering his imaginary first ‘woman’, triggered by the touch with the sleeping girls. This phenomenon—reaching the absent through a drowsiness or dream—is applied to Eguchi. The other girl, stimulated by Eguchi’s touch, seems also, at least from Eguchi’s perspective, to dream of her mother. When Eguchi reaches the girl’s knee and tries to pull it toward him, the girl says, ““Don’t””⁶⁵⁷ in a soft voice, with further refracted responses continuing toward his touch:

“Ah,” said the girl. “Where am I going?”

“Are you awake? Wake up.”

“Don’t, don’t.” Her face brushed against his shoulder, as if to avoid the shaking. Her forehead touched his neck, her hair was against his nose. It was stiff, even painful. Eguchi turned away from the too-strong odor.

“What do you think you’re doing?” said the girl. “Stop it.”

“I’m not doing a thing.”

But she was talking in her sleep. Had she in her sleep misunderstood his motions, or was she dreaming of having been mistreated by some other old man on some other night? His heart beat faster at the thought that, even though what she said was in bits and fragments, he could have something like a conversation with her. Perhaps in the morning he could awaken her. But had she really heard him? Was it not less his words than his touch that made her talk in her sleep? He thought of striking her a smart blow, of pinching her; but instead, he brought her slowly into his arms. She did not resist, nor did she speak. She seemed to find it hard to breathe. Her breath came sweetly against the old man’s face. His own breathing was irregular. He was aroused again by this girl who was his to do with as he wished. What sort of sadness would assail her in the morning if he made a woman of her? How would the direction of her life be changed? She would in any case know nothing until morning.

“Mother.” It was like a low groan. “Wait, wait. Do you have to go? I’m sorry, I’m sorry.”

“What are you dreaming of? It’s a dream, a dream.” Old Eguchi took her more tightly in his arms, thinking to end the dream. The sadness in her voice stabbed at him. Her breasts were pressed flat against him. Her arms moved.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.

Was she trying to embrace him, thinking him her mother? [...] ⁶⁵⁸

As Kumin writes, 'She [the mother] is lost through sleep and found through the dream', ⁶⁵⁹ the absentee—the mother figure in this case both for Eguchi and the girl—reappears in their drowsiness or in the actual sleep and dream.

The touching of the girl perhaps may not even leave her with a memory of touch, but rather be perceived as a sensory stimulus, which connects her mother in the dream and Eguchi's body, as if it is her mother's body. At this point, it is not only Eguchi that cannot communicate with the subjectivity of the sleeping girls in his touch, but this unreachability also applies to the girls, who unconsciously respond to his touch and who give or hold him back. As Eguchi cannot necessarily see each girl's (psychological) individuality, Eguchi's identity does not affect the girls. Their response to his touch is a physical response—connected to their psychological response mainly in their dreams—and is triggered by his touch. Their bodies are unconsciously moving and reacting to his touch. As stated earlier in relation to Mishima, Eguchi's emotional investment does not affect the sleeping girls. Failing to reach the girls with the wholeness of his body and presence, Eguchi's touch reaches them only as sensorial stimuli. The girls return them to him without consideration of his individuality.

Yet such physical behaviours, which are prompted through the mother figures and arise in dreams, are not necessarily irrelevant to human psychological activity.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 45–46.

⁶⁵⁹ Kumin, *Pre-Object Relatedness*, 120.

REM sleep is the time when the brain is most actively working and dreaming occurs, so that the physical responses brought through dreams are not merely 'physical' phenomena. At this point, it seems difficult to see the ultimate responsibility for human behaviour as being located only in the brain because physical responses are, even in the stage of the unconscious, connected to mental activity. Should the brain stop its activity, the body can still sometimes keep living. Accordingly, corporeal life may not be cancelled out immediately after the mind's death. The sleeping girls are sleeping almost as if they are dead, and it occasionally happens at this house that the sleeping girl never wakes, indicating the proximity of deep sleep and death. However, these sleeping girls, who live in the state closest to death without clear consciousness, still move, respond to stimuli and embrace the other assimilated to the person of whom they are dreaming.

Sleep in *House of the Sleeping Beauties* is a temporary effacement of the self from the world or a form of temporary death in which Eguchi mutters to himself, 'As if it were alive',⁶⁶⁰ looking at the sleeping girl. Within this muttering, there is undoubtedly transmitted the sense that deep sleep is something close to death. The narration continues: 'Though this girl lost in sleep had not put an end to the hours of her life, had she not lost them, had them sink into bottomless depths?'⁶⁶¹ Sleep and death are treated as very close states especially in *House of the Sleeping Beauties* because the old customer Eguchi knew died in this house while he was sleeping, Eguchi is old

⁶⁶⁰ Kawabata, *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, 20.

⁶⁶¹ *Ibid.*

enough to think about death, and more importantly, the last girl sleeping beside Eguchi dies while she is asleep and while he dreams of his mother's death. In this story, death is depicted not as a disjunction from life but rather as a possible continuation of deep sleep. One could even say, as the girl in *Mina's March* (*Mina no Kōshin*) by Ogawa Yoko does, that Eguchi may be practising his own death: 'This old man is practising death. To spend one night next to those girls forced to sleep through the drug and who are almost dead is the same thing as sleeping with death in the bed. In doing so, the old man is trying to get accustomed to dying, so as not to be scared and flee at the real time of death'.⁶⁶² Death and life sit beside each other, but deep sleep also exists beside death. It is even treated almost as being the same state, as in the Biblical chapter about Lazarus that Kawabata cites in his 'One Arm'. Jesus says, "'Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him'".⁶⁶³ Because of his call, the dead Lazarus is resurrected. Being asleep here signifies being dead.

However, there is something in Nancy that never sleeps and never temporally dies, which is the soul. He writes:

Never, however, never does the soul sleep. That absencing of self in self is unknown to it. Absence belongs to the body and to the mind; it is foreign to the soul. In sleep, the mind abandons itself to the body and disperses its location

⁶⁶² Ogawa Yoko, *Mina no Kōshin* (Mina's March). Tokyo: Chūō Kōron Shinsha, 2009), 133. Originally published in 2006. In this story, Tomoko, due to her family situation, starts to live with her aunt's family. She gets accustomed to the new life and especially comes to have a good friendship with Mina, who is Tomoko's cousin and who likes reading books. Tomoko makes this comment about Kawabata's *House of the Sleeping Beauties* to a librarian, though in reality it is Mina's comment, as it is she who actually reads the story.

⁶⁶³ John 11:11. Starrs writes about Kawabata's use of Christian allusions instead of Buddhist ones to suggest the 'parable-like' level of the work in 'One Arm' and *House of the Sleeping Beauties*. See Starrs, *Soundings in Time*, 211-214.

through it, dissolves its concentration into that soft, almost disjointed expanse. The body, for its part, abandons itself paradoxically to the very location of the mind [...] The person who sleeps is a mental body or a bodily mind, one lost in the other [...] But the soul animates sleep as well as waking. The soul is both sleeping and vigilant, and for that very reason it does not sleep. Nor is it awakened: in waking it is that which ceaselessly dozes, in sleeping it is which wakes and watches—from all quarters, every time, it is that which, giving form and tonality to a presence, adheres to the edges, to the outlines. Not, indeed, like a skipper in his ship, but spread throughout the entire expanse of the body and mingled with it so that simultaneously at every point it is like a signal, like a lantern, like a lookout on top of a tall mast or like a sated seagull on the taffrail.⁶⁶⁴

Nancy situates the soul almost like a mediator between the sleeper and waker and between the self and the world, because the soul ‘receives and emits for both of them the signals from the rest of the world and signals from the other, from the sleeper huddled inside the waker, from the waker circling inside the sleeper’.⁶⁶⁵ I do not necessarily intend to connect this presence of the soul (which lets us sleep and remain awake) in Nancy to the presence of a mystic soul or the spirit as seen in various works by Kawabata. However, the fact that Nancy names the unnamable and invisible as the ‘soul’ does present a potential point of contact with which to read Kawabata’s works in relation to those of the former.

D. To Touch the Invisible and the Untouchable: From Kawabata to Ogawa

Japanese anthologist and literary critic Higashi Masao writes in his anthology on Kawabata’s ghost stories that Kawabata was the rare author who pursued the motifs of

⁶⁶⁴ Nancy, *The Fall of Sleep*, 35–36.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

spirit and sexual love throughout his life, almost like a man possessed.⁶⁶⁶ I mentioned earlier how his protagonist is obsessed with the desire to touch the untouchable, or rather, the desired object is necessarily *untouchable* like sleeping girls. This yearning to touch the untouchable is not only sexual or romantic but also has a further connotation as touching the invisible. As Higashi explains in detail, Kawabata was strongly influenced by the spiritualism movement and psychics from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries.⁶⁶⁷ Examples of this can be seen in various forms, such as the misty and mystic atmosphere in ‘One Arm’, the ghost of a young lady in a house of roses who talks to the current occupant in ‘The Ghost of Roses’ (*Bara no Yūrei*), or the dead protagonist who occasionally has a brief conversation with his living friend in ‘The Inferno’ (*Jigoku*), among many others.⁶⁶⁸ Although Higashi admits the existence of other authors influenced by psychics and spiritualism, including Akutagawa, Higashi emphasises Kawabata’s unique relationship to spiritualism: as the first Japanese author to discuss phenomena related to psychics, such as telepathy, ectoplasm and poltergeists; his incorporation of psychic elements arising from Christian mysticism; and as a pioneer to have opened up his own horizons by uniting spiritual motifs and sexual love

⁶⁶⁶ Higashi Masao, ‘*Kaisetsu*’ (‘Interpretation’), in *Bungō Kaidan Kessaku Sen, Kawabata Yasunari Shū* (Selected Ghost Stories by Great Writers, Volume on Kawabata Yasunari), edited by Higashi (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2006), 371.

⁶⁶⁷ Higashi notes that there are some scholars who relate the rise of spiritualism, psychics and theosophy to the *shinkankaku-ha* movement around the 1920s because the association for the psychic sciences was formed in 1923 (*Ibid.*, 371–372).

⁶⁶⁸ ‘*Bara no Yūrei*’, originally published in 1927 in the literary journal *Shojo sekai*, vol. 19, and ‘*Jigoku*’, published in 1950 in the journal *Bessatsu Bungei Shunjū*, vol. 16. Both are collected in *Bungō Kaidan Kessaku Sen, Kawabata Yasunari Shū*, 325–339, 264–277.

through his obsession with the female body.⁶⁶⁹ Taking this aspect into consideration, this section examines Kawabata's search for (effectively uncommunicable) touch on the untouchable and touch on the invisible, which may connect Kawabata to contemporary writers such as Ogawa Yoko.

Some of Kawabata's short stories reveal his protagonist's hesitancy toward touch in the midst of a strong desire for it. As examined thus far, this is generally due to the protagonist's hesitancy toward touching the female body 'without destroying that very quality in her which he finds desirable'⁶⁷⁰ and because he is trying to touch the invisible. In a sense, Kawabata, as a writer, may not necessarily presuppose the tangible presence of the body. Yoshiyuki's portrayal of touch is certainly a touching of the physical carnality, unless it is something like a membrane that arises in relation to the memory of touch, which nonetheless comes up through bodily interaction. Touch in Kawabata is searching for the invisible and the untouchable from the moment his protagonist stumbles touching in front of the female body, but perhaps from the beginning. His protagonist almost never achieves direct touch, because what he seeks tends to be fundamentally unattainable.

Yet this unattainability and untouchability may stem from the fact that Kawabata or his protagonist tries to communicate with the 'invisible', understood perhaps as the soul, spirit, ghost or the sleeping girls' absent consciousness, all of which

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 377.

⁶⁷⁰ Starrs, *Soundings in Time*, 192.

are supposedly located inside (or on) the body. Instead, in Nancy's account, the soul is not an 'inner' soul that resides deep inside the human body. Rather, it is an extension, an exposition to the world, and the body is the extension of the soul.⁶⁷¹ The body for Nancy is never finite but is an opening, the touching of the body being meant to open:

[...] the body is the open. And in order for there to be an opening, something has to be closed, we have to touch upon closure. To touch on what's closed is already to open it. Perhaps there's only ever an opening by way of a touching or a touch. And to open—to touch—is not to tear, dismember, destroy.⁶⁷²

If this is the case, the body becomes untouchable, as Derrida in his analysis of Nancy's touch writes: 'The extension of a body, a body inasmuch as it is extended, can thus remain untouchable'.⁶⁷³ Should the body and the soul continue its extension, we cannot really touch its surface, but rather, it may remain an attempt to touch and thus to open. Employing this aspect, we may say that the touching of the invisible and untouchable in Kawabata results not merely from a hesitation or even from the untouchability of the human psyche or soul, which have been assumed as residing inside the human body. Rather, it is an attempt to touch and open the invisible and untouchable existence that is in continuous extension.

As mentioned earlier, Kawabata, as a part of the New Sensationalist School (*Shinkankaku-ha*) formed in the mid-1920s, intended to catch immediate sensations, rather than the two-stage process of first receiving perception and then writing it down

⁶⁷¹ Nancy, *Corpus*, 144. See particularly the essays 'On the Soul', 122–135, and 'The Extension of the Soul', 136–144.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶⁷³ Derrida, *On Touching*, 72.

through language. Perception, vision and consciousness change more quickly than the words and characters so that these writers placed an importance on immediacy and simultaneity.⁶⁷⁴ The double irony is that first, despite Kawabata's progressive trial to express sensations in a new manner, he has been treated as an icon of 'traditional' Japanese writers.⁶⁷⁵ Second, despite his intention to gain immediacy and simultaneity, most of his protagonists seem hesitant in the face of such immediacy and instead create a space between themselves and the objects with which they wish to interact. Nevertheless, his attempt to interact with the existence of the invisible and to touch the untouchable (such as the absent consciousness, ghost or spirit) still seems novel, considering the fact that subjects such as ghosts are an often-discussed topic in recent academic research in the humanities.⁶⁷⁶ Kawabata keeps a subtle sensibility and aesthetics in that one never over-touches the other's existence and keeps her intact so as to protect her from any harm. He also keeps an ambiguity unable to draw a clear line between what is touchable and untouchable, as can be observed in *House of the Sleeping Beauties*. Although descriptions of carnal interactions became much more

⁶⁷⁴ Kawabata, 'Shinshin Sakka no Shinkeikou Kaisetsu', 353–355.

⁶⁷⁵ It seems, though, that toward the end of his career, Kawabata went back to experimental writing, as Starrs writes, in 'One Arm' and *House of the Sleeping Beauties*, Kawabata is 'returning with a vengeance to the modernist experiments of his youth' (Starrs, *Soundings in Time*, 192).

⁶⁷⁶ We should also note that the topic of ghosts has been present in Japanese literature since the eleventh century, such as in *The Tale of Genji*. Lady Rokujō (the tormented lover of Genji, the protagonist) in this story is so jealous that her spirit appears to murder or attack Genji's other lovers or make them suffer. But Richard Okada notes that Lady Rokujō does not attack those who have similar circumstances such as an Akashi family member. See H. Richard Okada, *Figures of Resistance: Language, Poetry and Narrating in The Tale of Genji and Other Mid-Heian Texts* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 269–286. Napier also explains this spirit as an 'internal alien' that can be seen in modern Japanese literature (Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 112).

observable in postwar Japan, especially through women writers, as discussed before, if this attempt to touch the invisible and a sort of belief in the untouchable still exists in contemporary Japanese literature, it can be perhaps found in the works of Ogawa Yoko. She maintains the communicable and sensible and the untouchable existence, such a care probably stemming from her background of being brought up in a family adhering to *Konkō kyō*, a new religious group formed around the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁷⁷

Many stories by Ogawa have to do with loss, the memory and the senses, such as the mathematician whose memory lasts only eighty minutes in *The Numerical Formula the Doctor Loved* (*Hakushi no Aishita Sūshiki*) in 2003⁶⁷⁸ or the specimen of the object to shut out its relevant memories in as in *Specimen of a Ring Finger* (*Kusuriyubi no Hyōhon*) in 1994.⁶⁷⁹ In *Still Crystal* (*Hisoyakana Kesshō*) in 1994, we can especially see the touching of the invisible and untouchable, though in a different manner from Kawabata. In this story, set on an island, things such as a bird, perfume or a calendar occasionally vanish. Whenever residents of the island encounter a new vanishing, they must throw away and burn everything that relates to it, so that

⁶⁷⁷ *Konkō kyō* was started in Okayama prefecture by Akazawa Bunji, who heard a divine voice to mediate God's voice and the people (*toritsugi*) and started a mission. Ogawa grew up in a family the members of which belonged to *Konkō kyō*, including her grandfather, who was a teacher at this church. Literary scholar Ayame Hiroharu sees this religious influence on her writing in her seamless treatment of this world and another world, as *Konkō kyō* does not set up a clear separation between life and death. Ayame Hiroharu, *Ogawa Yoko: Mienai Sekai wo Mitsumete (Gazing at the Invisible World)* (Tokyo: Bensei Shuppansha, 2009), 178-179. Ayame also sees that this *toritsugi* is an utterance of the internal, unconscious voice of oneself instead of the divine voice, as if the voice 'comes out' of oneself without trying to utter it and interprets the writer's job as similar to this mediatory function of *toritsugi* by making fragmentary thoughts into words (180-185).

⁶⁷⁸ Ogawa Yoko, *Hakushi no Aishita Sūshiki* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha 2003).

⁶⁷⁹ Ogawa Yoko, *Kusuriyubi no Hyōhon*, (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1994).

eventually, they lose all related memories. Unless they follow this rule, they will be monitored by the secret police.⁶⁸⁰ Only a limited number of residents can retain memories even after objects vanish, though they have to hide this fact; otherwise, the secret police will take them away and kill or imprison them.

In the story, the residents lose photographs (one way of retaining memory), fruit and the novels through which the female protagonist earns her living. They even lose their calendar in winter, which means they can no longer have a spring. After a while, these vanishings are no longer limited to objects and are extended to the human body. The first such vanishing comes after the death of an old man who had helped the protagonist and R, her former editor who is able to retain his memory and whom the protagonist has sheltered in the basement of her house. The protagonist talks about one vanishing:

I tried to know what had vanished this time by stretching my every nerve inside the bed. The outside was quiet, without anyone's murmuring. Does that mean what vanished this time is something unrelated to us or something insignificant? [...]

I turned the duvet and found something incomprehensible. It was stuck to my waist. I tried to pull, push and pinch it, but I couldn't take it off. It was as if it were welded by a soldering iron.

'What is this?'

Feeling weird, I held on to the pillow. I felt almost as if I would fall from the bed, unless I held onto something. Even with a subtle movement, I couldn't keep my balance properly, disturbed by the object clinging to my waist. [...]

Just to see, I tried to grab the object with my arms and take hold of it in the

⁶⁸⁰ Ayame assimilates this burning of hunted objects and the surveillance by the secret police with Nazi book burning and the Gestapo, considering Ogawa's favourite work *The Diary of Anne Frank*, her affinity to Anne and her essay on Anne soon after the completion of *Still Crystal*. Ayame, *Mienai Sekai wo Mitsumete*, 96-99, 103-106.

hole of my trouser leg. Although it was heavy and it took time to do so, it was hidden in my trousers as I imagined, almost as if I had taken a measure of it beforehand.

Then I finally noticed that what vanished this time was my left leg.⁶⁸¹

When the residents lose an object, they can sense that they have lost something. By looking at other people's behaviours and looking around at one's own life, they come to notice what they have actually lost. But this is the first case of the vanishing of their own body parts.

This example of losing one leg and its sense of disability can be closely related to that in Kawabata's 'One Arm', though the lost arm is that of the girl in 'One Arm', not that of the male protagonist. R has repeatedly tried to help the protagonist keep her memory by encouraging her to write a novel even after the novel itself (both its material and concept) vanished from the island and remember her body by R touching her. The protagonist in *Still Crystal* who lost her right arm asks, "But how can you hold the body that vanished?" and he responds, "I can always touch anywhere on your body." "No, you can't touch something vanished." "Why? Look. Like here, and here..." He grabbed the two stick-like plasters that are hanging from my waist and shoulder. The hem of my skirt waved and the hair touched the cheek'.⁶⁸² The shape of the body part is still present but without transmitting sensations. It is still visible at this point and touchable by the toucher, but untouchable from the perspective of that body's owner. 'One Arm' is depicted from the perspective of the toucher (the male protagonist),

⁶⁸¹ Ogawa, *Hisoyakana Kesshō*, 357–359.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*, 373–374.

not the owner of the arm (the girl), while *Still Crystal* is depicted from the point of the owner of the body, the female protagonist, not the toucher, R. Due to this standpoint of narrating the loss of her own body, it demonstrates more concretely the perception of absence and loss in the touched body as an embodied experience. Moreover, as Ayame writes, vanishing is not limited to the loss of corporeal memory; it is the loss of memory regarding language.⁶⁸³ It is not even a symbolic loss; it is an invisible but perceptible loss.⁶⁸⁴

Gradually losing visible objects, the residents lose everything that is visible in the end: ‘things vanished one by one, such as the left hand which made the novel into written form, the eye from which tears shed, and the cheek which tears followed. The last thing that remained was the voice. People have lost everything with a contour. Only the voice was left drifting around’.⁶⁸⁵ The protagonist loses the visible presence, shape and weight of her body:

I became able to go down to the secret room, without jumping into his [R’s] arms. I became able to pass through a slight slit, without lifting up a heavy floorboard. In this sense, the fact that everything of the body had vanished brought me a sense of liberation. But suddenly in my carelessness, the invisible, unreliable voice seems to be carried far away with the wind.⁶⁸⁶

⁶⁸³ Ayame, *Mienai Sekai wo Mitsumete*, 95-96.

⁶⁸⁴ In this work, most of the residents on the island (except those who can retain memory) lose the same object at the same time, so that they do not suffer from a sense of disability stemming from the difference or segregation from others. I should briefly note that, in the age of modernity and industrialisation, as Bill Hughes writes, people with disabilities were excluded from the labour market, and bodily abnormality was considered an impairment and personal tragedy (62). Yet due to the rise of a refusal of such a political discourse by people with disabilities, contemporary society has had a ‘somatic turn’, in which disability is embodied. Bill Hughes, ‘Disability and the Body’, in *Disability Studies Today*, ed. Barnes, Oliver and Barton (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 59-76.

⁶⁸⁵ Ogawa, *Hisoyakana Kesshō*, 394.

⁶⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

His arm, which pursued her body, now stays still without a point to reach. Since the secret police no longer continues memory hunting (*kiokugari*) and people with memory can go around safely, she recommends that R goes out. Yet R responds, “‘It doesn’t make sense unless you are together.’” He was trying by any means to touch my voice’.⁶⁸⁷ He embraces the air around where the voice is drifting, and she can still feel his warmth.⁶⁸⁸ In the end, he returns to the outer world while she remains in the secret room and vanishes.

While Kawabata describes the touching of an absent body, the absence of consciousness, Ogawa describes the extinction or vanishing of the presence. What this difference, between absence and vanishing, could imply is the memory of previous presence. In the case of Kawabata, unless the touched girl is connected through her recollection to other experiences of touch and interaction with others, she is almost absent—like the absent possessor of the girl’s arm, absent consciousness of sleeping girls and absent body as in a ghost or simply the unreachable as a premise. However, in the case of Ogawa, something that used to be present vanishes or is gradually lost so that there is a memory of presence that is now lost or of the presence that is no longer. This mode of being, which was present but now is lost, is reminiscent of André Green’s dead mother, discussed earlier. In such a case, where the development of ego is based on the recognition of the lack thereof—‘the negative’ according to

⁶⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Green—psychoanalyst Michael Persons writes, ‘We become who we are by how we deal with the fact that we cannot have what we want nor be who we wish to be’.⁶⁸⁹ In this sense, how we overcome the experience of loss or lacking opens us to new experiences and new relationships to others, or to ‘new object-relationships’.⁶⁹⁰ Yet to think about the memory of a vanished presence that is no longer reachable, we may need to consider the temporal aspect of vanishing and loss and its physical aspect since the concept of ‘no longer’ connotes temporal reflection in itself.

E. Temporal Reflection of Touch in Ogawa and Merleau-Ponty

In *Still Crystal*, R repeatedly tries to make the female protagonist remember what has been lost, such as photographs and a novel. The scene in which the protagonist tries to write a novel, taking a whole day even to write a single sentence, seems as if it is like a child’s learning how to write a sentence for the first time. Now she cannot even read a novel; even if she can read each word at a time, she cannot understand it as a continuous story. Each character is just a character and does not give any sensation to her.⁶⁹¹ When she tries to describe something that is on another woman’s head, she says, ‘she puts something strange on her head’ that is about to fall every time when she moves her body.⁶⁹² After some time observing this woman, she realises, “‘Ah, that’s a hat.” I

⁶⁸⁹ Michael Persons, *The Dove that Returns, the Dove that Vanishes: Paradox and Creativity in Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 2000), 183.

⁶⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 183–184.

⁶⁹¹ Ogawa, *Hisoyakana Kesshō*, 276.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*, 262.

suddenly remembered, “It’s a hat of a sort my neighbour used to make. It vanished a few years ago. One puts it on top of the head as the woman was doing, isn’t it?”⁶⁹³ In both cases, it seems almost as if she has acquired a new concept and piece of vocabulary. The difference between this situation of island residents and that of the real child who learns vocabularies and concepts for the first time is that the residents used to have such memories and vocabularies that are now lost. As with the lost mother’s figure found in the dream and drowsiness in Kawabata, a lost memory is about to be refound, but the temporality here cannot be explained merely through general divisions such as the past-present-future or their continuity. Memory, which is often considered an attribute of the past, disappears and reappears, like a sinking piece of wood repeatedly surfacing. In this case, it seems we need to employ a different mode of perceiving time beyond chronological, future-oriented time. Thus, this final section investigates how we can relate to, find and refind the memory of touch in its temporal dimension.

In the modern to postmodern age, phenomenologists in particular conceived time considering *our* relation to time, such as our willful relation to time considered by both Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. Merleau-Ponty’s thought is particularly useful to contemplate embodied memory because, for him, what makes time is our willful engagement with time and its psychic traces. He emphasises that our particular relationship to time makes sense of time for us and writes, ‘Time is, therefore, not a real

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, 262-264.

process, not an actual succession that I am content to record. It arises from my relation to things'.⁶⁹⁴ Merleau-Pontean temporality, in a way, surpasses the temporal divisions such as past, present and future, or perhaps forms a *mélange* because of the particular significance that the experience and sensations hold for oneself. He writes of how 'these [physiological or psychic] traces in themselves do not refer to the past: they are present; and, in so far as I find in them signs of some "previous" event, it is because I derive my sense of the past from everywhere, because I carry this particular significance within me'.⁶⁹⁵ Some edifice of perception within the body, which is supposedly a sort of memory from the past, makes contact with the present—thus, it *is* the present. Although Merleau-Ponty thinks it is not possible to form a future from consciousness, he admits that one can see the future in the same way that one sees the actual present as past: 'Looking ahead would seem in reality to be retrospection, and the future a projection of the past'.⁶⁹⁶ Here, even when looking at the future, there is no sense of total estrangement in a different temporality, unknown to the present, because the future is one that involves projection. This aspect of a 'familiar' future makes sense in Ogawa in the sense that the future, which is supposed to be estranged from us and new to us, possesses already familiar elements, as in the examples mentioned above. The projection then can happen both toward the past and toward the future to come. The residents and the protagonist are about to remember what they have lost, that with

⁶⁹⁴ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 478.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 480.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 480.

which they used to be familiar. They are trying to remember the past they know but they have forgotten.

Time is generally considered something that is externally imposed on the human body and flows on regardless of us. The symbol of time, the clock, measures the temporal aspect of our life. In the story in wintertime, the vanishing of the calendar—which is another means to homogenise temporality—deprives people of the arrival of spring. At this point, we clearly notice that vanishing in Ogawa is a concept that comes from outside as an external constraint, imposed by the secret police, a constraint that normal people have no choice but to obey. Yet to let oneself vanish altogether at the end of the story means the flight from such a constraint. Through self-vanishing, one is released from such a control of memory, which is the same as to be released from the control of time. A Merleau-Pontean account suggests, however, that the embodied memory that relates to time, even future time, does not completely vanish, which can further mean that we are never really free from embodied perception, temporality and memory. What determines the present, past and the future is the direction of projection, meaning that the past cannot be simply understood as the nostalgic retrospective or the future as the fresh imaginary. Through the vanishing of the self, Ogawa's protagonist intends to become free from her presence in the world. But if embodied temporality vanishes with the vanishing of the body, the question arises of whether this vanishing of the body can also mean the vanishing of the memory of

consciousness.⁶⁹⁷

What is remarkable about Merleau-Pontean temporality is that, as discussed above, there are not different temporalities from the past, present and future. Nor does time pass us as the river passes us. Instead, time remains the same, but our relation to temporality changes; therefore, it looks different for us. He writes: ‘There is a temporal style of the world, and time remains the same because the past is a former future and a recent present, the present an impending past and a recent future, the future a present and even a past to come’.⁶⁹⁸ In this regard, our conception of time is undetermined, because the past is no longer a retrospective, nostalgic temporality that we might miss and the future is not a new, unknown temporality that we might expect to come. It can be so because for Merleau-Ponty ‘each dimension of time is treated or aimed at *as* something other than itself and because, finally, there is at the core of time a gaze, or, [...] *someone* through whom the word *as* can have a meaning’.⁶⁹⁹ If we should take this stance, our relationship with time determines its meaning to us. The past once used to be the future for us in the past, the present is becoming the impending past, and the future

⁶⁹⁷ Ayame comments that Ogawa touches upon neither the philosophical issue of how we should live now and the future in relation to memories, nor the meaning of collective memory under the totalitarian force. Instead, this novel emphasises the importance of memory since the loss of memory means the loss of human nature (Ayame, *Mienai Sekai wo Mitsumete*, 104-105). Ayame comments on another work, ‘*Dareka ga Kimi no Doa wo Tataiteiru Kubini Kaketa Yubiwa*’ (*Somebody Is Knocking on Your Door, the Ring Hang on the Neck*) which describes the communication between the female protagonist who gradually loses her body memory and a greenhouse keeper. Ayame writes, ‘even if bodies touch each other, one does not understand that his body is in touch without the body with memory’ (*Ibid.*, 95). But as suggested above, it is problematic whether the vanishing of the body equates the vanishing of the memory (of consciousness), paying attention to the Merleau-Pontean account.

⁶⁹⁸ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 490.

⁶⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

is already a passing present or is becoming the past for us when we notice. In Ogawa, the body—in which or on which temporality is embodied—that gradually had already lost its physicality and corresponding notions is about to vanish as an existence. “‘If it is the voice, I feel easy. [...] If it is the voice, I think I can reach the last, ultimate moment quietly and calmly, without leaving pain, suffering or misery.’”⁷⁰⁰ But this departing voice, that no longer possesses shape, weight or warmth (though she can feel the warmth of R), still possesses the memory of her life. Because she already lost her body except for her voice, there is, in terms of its physical aspect, no difference between her existing in the world or not. She exists without having any form of incarnation but her voice—the invisible presence.

Similarly, time, especially the present, is in a sense invisible: ‘Time exists for me only because I am situated in it, that is, because I become aware of myself as already committed to it, because the whole of being is not given to me incarnate, and finally because one sector of being is so close to me that it does not even make up a picture before me—I cannot *see* it, just as I cannot see my face. Time exists for me because I have a present’.⁷⁰¹ This present is so special because the present is the only zone in which ‘being and consciousness coincide’.⁷⁰² Building on this, it follows that, in either the past or the future, being does not necessarily coincide with consciousness, and so we

⁷⁰⁰ Ogawa, *Hisoyakana Kesshō*, 394.

⁷⁰¹ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 492.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.* In his conception, being and being conscious is the same thing as far as it is in the present and in perception: ‘In the present and in perception, my being and my consciousness are at one, not that my being is reducible to the knowledge I have of it or that it is clearly set out before me’ (493).

can interpret Ogawa's leaving of the body as an invisible presence with consciousness. Considering this, leaving in Ogawa may therefore not necessarily be limited to the leaving of the world, but possibly a shifting toward a different temporality where, we might presume, being remains. The presence of being here is not necessarily divided by the temporality of past-present-future but rather is an imbrication of consciousness or invisible presence, body and shifting temporality. The leaving or vanishing need not necessarily be the vanishing of self from the world. It may be a temporalisation of being together with consciousness in the world. If the now is when being and consciousness coincide, consciousness and embodied memory may be left within the body in the present, which suggests that consciousness may vanish in accordance with the vanishing of the physical body and the being still remains in the world. In Ogawa, the ultimate presence in the world was not a body, but the invisible presence of the voice.

Merleau-Ponty states: '[The] ultimate consciousness is not an eternal subject perceiving itself in absolute transparency, for any such subject would be utterly incapable of making its descent into time, and would, therefore, have nothing in common with our experience: it is the consciousness of the present'.⁷⁰³ The descent into time, or becoming rooted in time, is one of the conditions in which consciousness becomes being in the present. Yet once she tries to make her voice vanish, she ceases to be rooted in time and have consciousness. In other words, with her vanishing, the

⁷⁰³ *Ibid.*, 493.

protagonist's embodied tactile memory vanishes even if it is left on R's side.

As discussed through Yoshiyuki, Matsuura and Kawabata, touch memory does not exist only in the past, but rather provokes a memory, which is triggered by the present touch. Often, this tactile memory refers to past tactile memory, associated with parents and family members, lovers or other intimates. However, Merleau-Ponty suggests that this memory does not possess only a regressive orientation as Freud may have maintained in most of his theorizations. Rather, it can also work on the future, in such a way that the memory refracts toward the future. The reason why R in Ogawa's story is trying to keep the protagonist's memory alive is so as not to forget the sensibility that can be had through a particular object. What she must try to remember is the vanishing objects, and she must also recall what those objects bring to her mind. Hence, the presence of the people who maintain their memories amid vanishing objects would also affect other people's minds to help them regain their memory. This reworking of memory is not a regressive or retrospective orientation, but rather works on the future. It is effective on the time to come. The workings of memory may seem to possess a retrospective function, but in Ogawa, the workings of memory can influence people's minds in the future. If this is the case, it may make sense to think that the present is the only area where consciousness and being coincide. Although the protagonist is going to let her consciousness vanish from this world, this does not mean her existence itself as a being vanishes. Along with her consciousness, her memory

probably also vanishes, though a different experience of tactile memory—for example, the touch from the side of R—remains in R’s mind. She makes her consciousness and her memory vanish. But her being may be still present, not as a ghost, as Kawabata might write, but as an existence that simply does not match with the now and, thus, consciousness. Yet, a part of her consciousness remains in another’s mind, such as that of R in the form of his memory, having an effect on his future. Tactile memory, having access to both the past and future, confuses our sense of chronological time, almost causing a tumult. But because of this feature, all the while appearing and disappearing, it can stay with us.

As is examined in this chapter, the memory of touch has a complex function, not just that current touch echoes with past touch or synchronises with touch with one person. The memory of touch circulates among different individuals and among different temporalities. Most of the texts examined before this chapter illuminate the ‘embodied’ memory of touch that moves with the specific bodies, such as of Natsue, Nakata, Shunji and Kazumi. But when the body itself vanishes as in Ogawa, or when touch cannot be remembered on the touched body as in Kawabata, the embodiment of touch no longer fully makes sense. That is why, as is posed throughout this thesis, touch is not a simple conduction of touch on the skin. Not only does touch create human intimate relationships, one’s ego, sense of otherness and responsibility to take that otherness in, but it also affects our mode of being, including how we relate ourselves to

others, objects and time. Therefore, to ask what is touchable and untouchable, or to seek negotiation or encroachment between the two is to ask how we live a life in an affectionate manner with others.

Conclusion: How does Modern Japanese Literature Touch Us?

An investigation of touch in modern Japanese literature has demonstrated layers of sensations, desire, hesitancy, intimacy, jealousy, recoil, affects and memories. I began my thesis with this question: Can we touch? Despite the widely accepted practice of *skinship* in childhood, touch in Japanese adult society is relatively lacking or hidden, as the absence of public practices of touch such as kissing and hugging demonstrates. Investigations from the perspectives of literature, anthropology and philosophy have highlighted various indirect modes of communication that are prevalent in Japanese culture. In particular, they have identified nonverbal signs and implications as well as subtle and non-tactile forms of communication.⁷⁰⁴ But this tendency does not simply signify the lack of touch. Indeed, literary characters do touch, not necessarily in a straightforward manner but through a certain level of mediation; touch is already mediated through the skin, an imaginary membrane, the gaze, light, a page, memories, language or even culture, adding to more affective elements such as sensations, emotions and desire. As both (Merleau-Pontean) phenomenology and psychoanalysis suggest, even consciousness of the self is mediated: by the consciousness of the others and culture in the former, and by the translation between the conscious and the unconscious and between language and stimuli in the latter. Viewed through these theoretical lenses, fictional depictions of touch in Japanese literary texts examined in

⁷⁰⁴ See the beginning of the Introduction.

this thesis develop our understanding of touch: psychosomatic responses occurring at the moment of contact, layers of mediation regarding touch and the tension between the touched and the touching and the touchable and the untouchable.

Mediated touch in Kawabata's texts demonstrates his protagonists' invisible, mainly psychological, efforts made before the actual touch, and their desire for 'human' communication through touch while withdrawing from it, akin to the case in Levinas. Yoshiyuki's fiction presents the physiological and psychological effects of touch on the characters beyond the simple conduction of touch, and an imaginary membrane created through those effects to mediate touch between the characters. Yoshiyuki's descriptions of the skin, the body and intimate relationships enrich our understanding of tactile experiences, particularly when analysed through Anzieu's theorisations of the skin. Anzieu's common skin framework, based on the transparent mother-infant relationship, allows an effective analysis on mediated touch in Yoshiyuki. While Matsuura boldly and freely depicts various tactile encounters with acute physicality, including heterosexual, homosexual and interspecies touching, she has a clear objective to write against male-centred/phallocentric descriptions of intimate relationships. Such descriptions of touch necessarily neutralise the gender dichotomy and create a space between the sexual and the sensual tactile experience. Ogawa does not have such an agenda clearly focused on touch, but she pays close attention to touching the invisible, such as disappeared objects and body and relevant memories. It is therefore not that the

Japanese literary characters examined in the thesis do not touch others. They indeed demonstrate a wide range of tactile experiences from the implicit, hesitated, mediated, sexual and neutralised nature of touch.

Moreover, the investigation of touch in this thesis has problematised the different signification of touch between childhood and adults, the gap clearly witnessed in Japanese culture as discussed by Lebra.⁷⁰⁵ *Skinship* in childhood is encouraged in Japan, but not necessarily in adolescence and adulthood. Despite the close physical tie between parents and children, they do not maintain the same sort of *skinship*; after childhood, touch takes on a sexual connotation, as in the one between lovers in a private space in Yoshiyuki's fiction. There is a transitional gap from the *familial skinship* to the *intimate* or *sexual skinship* that causes sexual imagery of touch. The tactile desire depicted by other Japanese writers such as Tayama and Tanizaki discussed in the introduction also connotes sexual touch. Meanwhile, touch is undefinable. The portrayals of touch in Kawabata's fiction tend to depict a highly hesitant nature due to the protagonist's self-consciousness and his excessive anxiety about destroying the loved object's purity and virginity. But Kawabata also describes the maternal nature of touch as Napier discusses.⁷⁰⁶ Portrayals in Yoshiyuki are often highly sexual, but he also writes about the care through touch shown to the female body. Moreover, his descriptions of touch and the search for the body may reflect a compensation for the

⁷⁰⁵ See Introduction. Lebra, *The Japanese Self in Cultural Logic*, 75.

⁷⁰⁶ See Chapter 2-B. Napier, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, 65.

lack of his own *skinship* as Hatashita suggests.⁷⁰⁷ Matsuura tries to disavow a unification through the genitals and depicts various examples of *skinship* that provide an intimate experience of touch, one that does not necessarily make a dichotomy of sexual and non-sexual touching. The examples provided by these writers have demonstrated undefinable tension between the sexual and non-sexual touch or touch that possesses both functions even if it looks sexual.

In Judeo-Christian culture, there exists an idea of touch that is connected with a form of love and care, such as Jesus' touch that cures people, makes them believe in his existence and confirms his resurrection. Nancy's ideas about touch are relevant to Christian conceptions of touch as care and benediction. Despite the absence of many Christian practices in Japan, both Kawabata and Ogawa give unique attention to the existence of the invisible and the untouchable through their particular religious standpoints (rather mystical in the case of Kawabata and the new religion *Konkōkyō* for Ogawa). These writers describe touching invisible *things* beyond the physical body. This spiritual type of 'touch beyond the body' is not necessarily observable in Yoshiyuki, Matsuura or Abe.

One of the agendas for this thesis as a project has been to discuss Japanese literary texts that have not been given enough attention in English-speaking academic circles. The lack of critical works on Matsuura and Ogawa might be explained by the

⁷⁰⁷ See Chapter 3-A. Hatashita, 'Yoshiyuki Junnosuke', 135.

fact that they are contemporary writers who are still living. Despite the fact that he is a well-known and established writer in Japan, Yoshiyuki has been rarely researched in Western academia, and even Japanese scholars have paid him limited attention. But he distinctively verbalises subtle physical sensitivities. My research draws attention to this sensitivity in a Western academic context through the use of both Japanese and European theories, an adequate framework with which to examine them. I suspect the lack of an adequate framework is one of the reasons why writers like Yoshiyuki and Funabashi are underresearched in the English-speaking literary scene, especially given that Yoshiyuki's works are based on the I-novel style in which seemingly nothing dramatic happens.⁷⁰⁸ However, through a combined use of European and Japanese theories, I have attempted to find a way to discuss the significance of Yoshiyuki's work in the wider context.

Throughout this doctoral research, I have often been asked, 'Why touch?', 'Why Japanese and French?', 'Why psychoanalysis AND phenomenology?' Questions such as these have further inspired and deepened my research. As set out in the beginning of the thesis, I needed both psychoanalytic and phenomenological

⁷⁰⁸ Michael Bourdaghs discusses possible causes for the 'less-than-overwhelming presence of Tōson in Western versions of modern Japanese literature', including the failure to provide exotic elements in comparison to Mishima, Kawabata and Tanizaki and the discouragement for Western scholars who work within the framework of New Criticism in the mid-twentieth century, which emphasises the autonomy of literary texts. Shimazaki Tōson's naturalism is based on authorial biography and socio-historical context, elements of which were not highly valued at that time. Michael K. Bourdaghs, *The Dawn that Never Comes: Shimazaki Tōson and Japanese Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 20-21. This aspect is also applicable to Yoshiyuki in the sense that he does not provide *Japanese* elements that the audience outside Japan might have appreciated and that his texts are closely related to his own life experiences.

theorisations to conduct this research. We recently witnessed an extensive re-reading of Merleau-Ponty in the humanities toward the end of twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, especially relating to the notion of embodiment. His theories have been useful in this research as touch is a type of embodied experience. But if the tactile experience in literature is examined only through phenomenology, the issues of ego formation, psychic-corporeal dynamics and desire and fantasy (especially the displacement of desire via language) would have remained largely unaddressed. Similarly, if I were to employ only a psychoanalytic approach, this would exclude certain aspects of lived, embodied experiences and intentionality created through past experiences. Phenomenology and psychoanalysis, though in one view incompatible, inform and compensate each other at least in this research project to develop our understanding of touch, especially given the mediated construction of the self in both accounts.

The possibility of psychoanalytic practice in Japan is still to be discussed. If there are differences of psychoanalytic culture between Japan and France or other European countries, it is not always only about subjectivity—as much postwar Japanese discourse such as those by Maruyama and Japanese subjectivity explained by Japanese psychoanalysts/psychologists including Doi, Kitayama, Okonogi and Kawai suggest. It is also about Japanese preferences for writing over speech or the resistance to verbal

treatment as Mathy and Kitayama write.⁷⁰⁹ To quote Mathy again: ‘What dominates in Japan is not the love of knowledge “contents” or the celebration of speech (as in the West) but the cult of the letter, that is, of pure form without content’.⁷¹⁰ Writing allows us to express desire, emotions and psychical conditions while keeping our anonymity, unlike how the speaking subject in a psychoanalytic setting necessarily reveals his own identity. Should this be developed, it could open further understanding of the ties between literature and psychoanalysis in Japan.

In conclusion, contrary to the expectation that indirect modes of communication in Japan involve little actual touch, Japanese literature exhibits an unbounded desire for touch. The direct physical contact of *skinship* is largely conducted in childhood, but stops in the adolescent and adult, when touch becomes more sexual and is thus repressed in the public sphere. Yet, as seen in this thesis, this does not mean that the Japanese literary characters do not touch others; rather, as examined especially through Kawabata and Tanizaki, literary characters represent the elevated desire to touch. Therefore, when they touch others in literature, they do touch in variously mediated manners, while negotiating the tension between the touchable and the untouchable. Under these circumstances, touch may not necessarily engage with the other’s full body; even in a skin-to-skin encounter, it is through one arm or sleeping girls in Kawabata’s fiction. The repressed desire of touch results in detailed

⁷⁰⁹ Kitayama, *Prohibition of Don’t Look*, 106.

⁷¹⁰ Mathy, ‘From Sign to Thing’, 44.

observations of the loved object as if narrators' language and characters' gaze touch and caress the other. In this sense, overt descriptions of touch and sexuality in the postwar period do not necessarily possess a greater impact compared to those that are intimate and subtle, the kind of touch that profoundly reaches the loved object due to the tension between touching and not touching, and the touchable and the untouchable. Repressed desire may exhibit a greater richness of tactile sensibility due to its hesitation, gap and untouchability. As Kuki suggests, a desired object is seductive due to its unreachability, almost touchable but never fully reachable. Characters' desire for touching the loved object is represented and expanded on via repression in the texts. Thus, the readers want to touch it, open it and unfold it, as Derrida may say via Nancy.

Even if the lack of *skinship* in adolescence and the ensuing sexual connotation are still problematic, this research shows that writers like Kawabata and Yoshiyuki do not simply suppose that one can touch and reach others. Even if there has been a critique from feminist standpoints such as by Ueno that these writers possess male-centred viewpoints, their extensive and detailed attentions to the moments before touch and during touch are, we may say, ethical in that they do not necessarily assume that their characters are entitled to touch others in the first instance. In this sense, they respect the otherness of others, as opposed to the erasure of the other suggested by Sekine and Ueno as a critique on Yoshiyuki.⁷¹¹ Yoshiyuki represents male characters'

⁷¹¹ See Chapter 2-A.

never-ending attempts to be with someone, to be satisfied with someone and to fully touch someone—never-ending attempts to grasp the ungraspable. One can, of course, touch another's body, but the simple conduction of touch is not the only way to reach the other and accept otherness; touch and contact with the other can be conducted in uncountable various manners, as all the writers I examined have demonstrated.

Can we touch the body, or do we touch something else by touching it? Yes, it seems we can touch others, but the process of touch is much more complex than it appears, having multiple layers of mediation and affects. It often happens, especially in Yoshiyuki's fiction, that the protagonist touches another thing by touching the other's body. It is not so much that the protagonist physically cannot reach the other. It is rather because the protagonist is too sensitive about affects and memories related to touch to simply suppose that the protagonist can automatically touch and reach the other, so the protagonist creates layers of imaginary membranes before one can reach the other. The modern Japanese literature examined above exhibits various modes of touch: from highly repressed touch, partially realisable touch, realisable one but with other's physical and mental absence, touch with mediation of other figures, freely communicable touch due to genital castration, and touch without a perceptible body. Various modes of touch written in the texts extend their forces and affections to contact us, the readers, and eventually touch us. As Abe's protagonist is 'touched' and affected through his act of reading the article, we are touched, through the act of reading the

sensibility of variously convoluted touch in modern Japanese literature. Now, literature also touches us.

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