“With Traces: The Iterability of Memory and Narration in Kanai Mieko’s *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde*”

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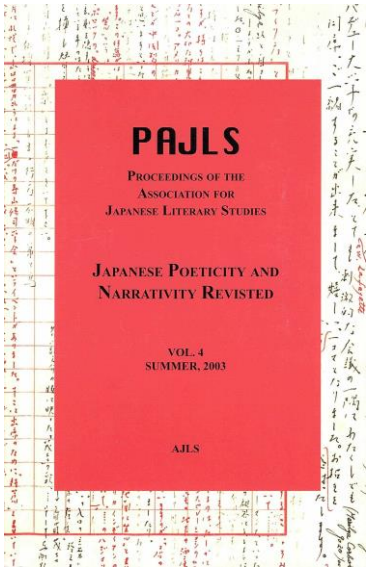

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WITH TRACES: THE ITERABILITY OF MEMORY AND NARRATION IN KANAI MIEKO'S *YAWARAKAI TSUCHI O FUNDE*, (STEPPING ON THE SOFT SOIL,)

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If the narrative is, as typically defined, for the narrator to relate things that happened in the past retrospectively, the narrator, in the present, stands at a vantage point from which to command and make sense of what happened in the past. The temporal position is conventionally thought to provide the narrator with objectivity, with no question asked of the stability of the ground on which s/he stands. This model suggests the narrative conspiracy between the past and the present, predicated upon the faith in the linear and irreversible temporality. Given the simple fact that there can be versions of recollection simultaneously seeming viable to the perceiving subject him/herself, however, we might reconsider the validity of this model. Not only does the present mold the past so as to fit the prerogative of the present,[1] as the past has always to be "preposterously" recalled,[2] but also the present is perpetually being constituted as the present in the recurrent act of remembering the past.

Attempts at remembering the past, speculating on it, and convincing oneself of the accuracy of a given account of the past may not confirm a single answer to any of the questions such as what transpired, how or why, and thus can be futile; one might keep hypothesizing without authenticating the ultimate version of history. While not yielding any fruit of a conclusion, this process of inquiry itself may become productive. The narrative present, in which the process takes place, grows saturated with possibilities of events in the past, possibilities that are, chronologically speaking, retroactively produced. To the extent that

[1] This is something that I was not unaware of when I wrote *Recontextualizing Texts: Narrative Performance in Modern Japanese Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999), a work that, as I stated in the oral presentation of an earlier version of this paper, I wish to critique and qualify, if not overcome. The present piece, if I may reiterate my point made on site here, is meant to be a commentary to my previous work and also a beginning of a new work to come where I wish to explore corporeality in the narrative as formative of textuality.

[2] See Mieke Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1999). This text also inspired me with the possible use of Judith Butler who elaborates upon Jacques Derrida's theory of citability in this essay.

any process takes place in the present, however, wouldn't the possible interpretations of the past also be a property of the present? Indeed the act of remembering the past is itself an engagement of the present and thus is constitutive and definitive of the present.

Among the writers who envision and encapsulate unavailing and yet self-proliferating attempts at remembering and registering the past, to the effect of complicating temporality in memory and narration is Kanai Mieko (1947–), arguably the most competent and strategically aware contemporary Japanese writer of fiction, poetry and criticism, including significant contributions to film criticism, an area that critically informs her fiction as we shall see. Instead of sentimentally lamenting human susceptibility to oblivion and/or senility, Kanai fleshes out the process of remembering with physical and material detail of the circumstance of remembrance (that under which remembering takes place as well as that which is being remembered), presenting such attempts as formative of the present if not of the past.

Kanai is outstanding in her effective and extensive employment of sensual effects other than those which appeal to vision, and in the synthetic interweaving of such effects. While taking full recourse to vision, her characters activate other senses to the same degree, and are conscious of trans-sensical stimulations; recognition of a color may evoke a certain kind of texture, which in turn invokes a scent, and then reminds the subject of a sound. More theoretically put, such coexistence of senses challenges ocular-centricism in phenomenology along the lines with Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Martin Jay.[3] In our current context, however, the net effect of this multi-sensical elaboration of the circumstance of remembrance is to suggest that the present is no more neutral than the past: one does not remember in a vacuum, and remembering is an act just as physical and material as any other act. The perceiving subject's body is always present in the midst of the act of remembering. It is through his/her body equipped with multiple senses that time manifests its structure, replete with partial extensions, leaps, detours, returns, and other movements that warp the linear model with which it has long been associated.

This paper is the first known attempt at foregrounding theoretical implications of the latter nature in Kanai's fiction. Specifically, I will look at the entanglement of the past and the present, both on the planes of

[3] See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1962) and Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century Thought* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993).

intertextuality (quotations from earlier texts placed within a later text/context) and of diegesis (fictional characters' remembering of things past), suggesting en route the porosity of the boundaries of the text and subjectivity, a subject that I wish to explore further on another occasion.

Sensual effects abound in the novel that I have selected for discussion here, *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde*, (1997; *Stepping on the Soft Soil*, ; the comma at the end of the title is included within the title, an implication of which we shall discuss shortly), not in order to substantiate descriptions of reality, but to the effect of suggesting the incidentality of formation of space and time. Sensual effects can warp the regulated models of temporality and spatiality by which we commonly identify our locations in time and space, as their arrival in senses is unpredictable and their presence permeable and yet elusive.[4] Kanai's thick description of sounds, scents, texture, and other things bodily felt, does not contribute to classic realism, but instead problematizes linear chronology and faithful correspondence of narration to history. In an interview on *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde*, conducted at the time the novel, previously published in "fragments (danpen)"[5] in various journals, was published as a book, Kanai theorizes on the function of description:

> I am not describing things or recollections. By composing a text, by expanding things and time, I completely transform a given recollection–or something that appears as though it were described, simultaneously as I write it in reality. That's what I am doing. Extreme or excessive description–that's what my text is about–digresses from the role of explaining something. (Watanabe and Kanai 1997: 359–360)

The compulsion of "explaining something" is predicated upon the belief in correspondence between "reality" and narration, and in effect authenticates the even-paced and linear chronology. Kanai's narration does not "explain" a given thing that affects a character, as it extends the narrated duration of his/her preoccupation with it beyond what might

[4] Kanai speaks of the first chapter of the novel, shortly after it was published in the May 1991 issue of the Gunzō that in it she "experimented with how to write of time and space" (Watanabe and Kanai 1992: 213).

[5] Kanai calls them "danpen" (fragments) rather than "tanpen" (short stories) in the interview (Watanabe and Kanai 1997: 356), suggesting that she sees each chapter of the novel under discussion as lacking closure.

appear realistic, and often leaps out of the present flow of time into another time span in the past.[6]

The ambiguous and yet productive relationship between the present and the past also prevails on the level of intertextuality. Kanai hints on many occasions in the text that it is not autonomous of other texts that she has read, written, or will write. The comma with which the title ends, for example, encapsulates the tentativeness of a narrative—not just this particular narrative under discussion, but any narrative, a narrative in general–or the lack of closure in a narrative, challenging here the Aristotlean hypothesis of the narrative possessing a distinct beginning and end—a hypothesis that serves as a backdrop of Structuralist narratology. A narrative as perceived by Kanai instead is a process and as such it never closes. The open-endedness is made obvious in the way the text ends: the last few words repeat the title: "Yawarakai tsuchi o funde," with the comma, once again. The repetition, as well as the fact that the text proper ends with a comma rather than with a period, confirms the said lack of finality.

In the postscript, Kanai refers to the fact that the ending of the narrative is a repetition of the title and the beginning of the text,[7] musing that it was a "predictable ending for any reader," and that the reader might recall the term, "the cyclical structure" ("enkan no kōzō") by witnessing the recurrence of the same phrase at important junctures. This pat association, however, is not an effect that the author had intended, but

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[6] Of course Structuralist narratologist Seymour Chatman (who, incidentally, is known to have used Jean Renoir's *Une partie de campagne* (*A Day in the Country*; 1936), a film that Kanai passionately praises in her essay "Film Renoir," as a showcase of his theory on fiction and film as narratives) theorizes discrepancies between the story time and discourse time, including "duration" of events in both. See *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell UP, 1978). A difference between Chatman and Kanai seems that while Chatman believes in the primacy of the story time in which events occur over the discourse time in which narration of events occurs, it may not be the case with Kanai. An even more important and abiding difference is that Kanai, unlike Chatman, does not seem to need a linear chronology by which to rearrange the order of events. For Kanai, the order of events that matters is nothing other than the order in which events come to a given subject's mind. In other words, the discourse time is the only time that she is concerned with. This is not to say that Kanai confuses and challenges the reader with the task of reordering events being narrated. Rather, she invites the reader to live in the coexistence of many different moments in time (and many different perceiving subjects that also coexist).

[7] To add, the text proper, after the title, also begins with the same clause.

that she had feared might be created. Kanai continues in order to dismiss this possible inadvertent effect:

> Should that be the case, I as the author would then definitely want to add that it *should* be the case that the correspondence to and memory of another novel written by the same author, which are borne by this novel yet in another expression, are offered toward yet another novel that is to be written. (Kanai 1997: 200)

In so stating, Kanai calls our attention to the fact that the connection between the title, the first and the last phrases of the text of *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde,* does not function so as to complete the autonomy of the text. Rather, she suggests, there are other connections that release the text from its own confinement and unite it with an existing text and one that will be produced. Indeed, Kanai identifies a connection in the postscript to *Kishibe no nai umi* (*The Ocean without a Shore;* 1974), added when the novel was reprinted in a revised form in 1995, admitting that she had to write "a number of short pieces, starting from 'Yawarakai tsuchi o funde,' to 'Gaitō to tanken,' and still more being written, as a continuation of" the novel (Kanai 1995: 310).[8] Evidently, Kanai is conscious that a given novel is not a finished product, but an unending process, and that the boundaries of any novel are contingent.

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[8] By way of clarification, the short piece entitled 'Yawarakai tsuchi o funde,' that Kanai is referring to here first appeared in the May 1991 issue of the *Gunzō*, and since has become the first chapter of the novel of the same title when it was published as a novel. By the time of writing of the postscript to *Kishibe no nai umi* quoted here, in 1995, Kanai had published eight of the present thirteen chapters of *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde,*, the latest one being "Gaitō to tanken" ("Cloak and Dagger"; in the Summer 1995 issue of the *Bungei*) that she refers to here. She continued publishing pieces that have culminated in the novel until, in the May 1997 issue of the *Shinchō*, the last one appeared, with the title of, none other than, "Yawarakai tsuchi o funde," again. On the precursory novel's own self-referential nature and gesture made at the intended incompleteness of the novel, see "Monogatari ron to shite no monogatari: Kanai Mieko no baai o jiku to shite," the last chapter of Atsuko Sakaki, *Kōi to shite no shōsetsu: Naratolojii o koete* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1996), 223–238. In an interview with Watanabe Naomi, however, Kanai resists Watanabe's consistent (persistent?) association of *Kishibe no nai umi* as the primary, if not exclusive, precursor of *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde, ,* rightly pointing out that other novels written between the two pieces–*Tangoshū* (*Vocabulary List*; 1979) and *Kuzureru mizu* (*Water in Dissolution*; 1981), to be specific–are also often quoted in *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde,*. See Watanabe and Kanai 1997: 357 and 365.

This awareness materializes in her novel at metafictional moments in which the narrator (narrators?)[9] and characters redo their speech/writing. It seems as though they would never complete their respective acts of verbalizing/textualizing. Their attempts at registering their experience are always in progress, without forming complete pictures. Some characters are portrayed as writing letters in order to convey some final message (to end an affair—"I can't see you any more"—or to confirm a relationship—"I belong to you"), without finishing the task; they continue to erase, overwrite, rewrite, and erase the script yet again. These instances encapsulate, self-reflexively, the impossibility of narrative closure and infinite nature of narrative as a process; it is less contrived for us not to complete our narratives than to complete them, and for narratives to be left open-ended than to be closed.

Next to neverendingness discussed above, a process possesses another inherent quality: iterability. You can reiterate a process even when you try to annihilate it. The following passage elaborates this idea, which deserves a careful processing:

> You cannot take back the words you have already uttered; words cannot but proliferate. In the case of speech, to make a correction means, strangely enough, to add something. It is absolutely impossible to delete or erase a word in speech; all that I could do is to say, out loud, "erase," "delete," or "correction." (Kanai 1997: 162)

Though here the speaker limits the scope of his/her thought to speech, this hypothesis is applied to writing as well; as I referenced above, the physical rewriting of texts is a recurrent motif in this novel. Blacking out of a word ("kakitsubusu") is not to erase or delete the word; it adds something, literally. Kanai describes physical effects of the act of over-writing (e.g., one's fingers are so smeared by ink that one has to wash one's hands with a soap) in order to confirm the fact that blacking out is not a neutral measure to erase something: it is itself an action that naturally produces its own effects. If quotation is not a repetition of the quoted utterance in the original context but is already something else, blacking out of a word is not erasure of the word; it is already something else.[10]

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[9] Kanai speaks of the potential that the narrator is multiple in the above-quoted interview, "'I' does not live, belonging to a single identity." (Watanabe and Kanai 1997: 359).

[10] We might recall Derrida's own practice of crossing-out of words in *Of*

Quotation as an act more than restoration of the original (or oblivion as an act more than erasure of the original) is effectively elaborated in the experience of viewing movies. The novel is replete with references to film, especially *La Chienne* (*The Bitch*; 1931) directed by Jean Renoir, and *Scarlet Street* (1945) by Fritz Lang, a remake of that film by Renoir. Kanai critiques Jean Renoir's film in an essay entitled "Jan Runowāru no eiga ni tsuite no oboegaki" (Notes on Jean Renoir's Film) that was once serialized in the *Kikan Eiga ryumieeru/Lumiére*,[11] a quarterly journal of film criticism edited by Hasumi Shigehiko, a film and literary critic with whom Kanai has had a number of productive dialogues on their respective works and on the works of others.[12] The essay is left incomplete, due to the discontinuation of the journal. Kanai considers this novel a continuation of her thesis on Renoir in the form of fiction, admitting to the sudden realization that: "the review had begun to live in the novel, deeply rooted in it, as though having infinitely intimate sexual intercourse,..." (Kanai 1997: 202).

The metaphor of sexual intercourse is valid in defining the ambiguous relationship between the review of Renoir's film and the novel that references his work constantly (mostly without citing); both involve two parties which are having a contact of one kind or another that is tangential, incidental, and yet intimate and potentially haunting beyond the instantaneous, obvious, direct contact that happened in a specific place at a specific moment—"here and now." Indeed, memory is by definition transcendental of time and space, but the metaphor of intercourse, being multi-sensical (five senses are at work almost simultaneously), multiplies the impact of the interface involving the instantaneity and iterability.

But let us leave the metaphysical musing on the interface between the works of criticism and fiction behind, and quickly turn to concrete examples of film-viewing in this novel and their relative significance. Film might perhaps be as close to sexual intercourse as one can get, in that it stimulates senses other than vision. In the above-cited review, Kanai elaborates on Jean Renoir's use of scenes of dining and sleeping,

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Grammatology, termed "sous rature" or "under erasure."

[11] The serialization occurred in the period extending from the winter of 1987 till the winter of 1988.

[12] In fact, Hasumi's novel, *Opera Operashioneru* (*Operational Opera;* Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1994), is occasionally quoted in a chapter of the novel under discussion ("Gaitō to tanken"), a chapter that Kanai defines as a review of Hasumi's novel in the postscript to *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde,*. See Kanai 1997: 202–203. She confirms the definition in Watanabe and Kanai 1997: 365–366.

suggesting that the director even provides movies with missing sensual effects (taste and touch).[13] Elsewhere she states, on a more general note, that viewing "film is undoubtedly a physical act."[14]

While a relative lack of quotation marks or a tag clause with which to signal the act of quotation to the reader makes it difficult to differentiate scenes of films from Kanai's own text,[15] it is still evident that a considerable part of the novel consists of characters' remembering of movies that they have seen in the past. It is important to note that it is not their *first* viewings of movies that are presented; their experience of viewing movies has to be *recalled* in the text. This is made obvious by the fact that in synopses of scenes from film words such as "hazu" (X should do....) and "darō" (X shall do....) are frequently used, both being markers of the viewing subject's anticipation of a certain action that a given film character will take.

Recalling a movie that one has seen before involves an *anticipation* of what one thinks one remembers from the past viewing, hence the future tense ("...darō"). However, the content of the clause—what is expected to happen—is not simply an event of the future; it has already been seen, registered, and retrieved from the archive of memory, to the extent of which one may deem it constitutive of the past. It is, in short, "iterated," as Jacques Derrida would phrase. Indeed it is not a simple repetition, in that the act of remembrance or anticipation has already become a part of the event, unlike the first occasion of viewing a movie, where there is no remembrance or anticipation involved. It is here that I feel Judith Butler's theory on quotation, inspired by Jacques Lacan's notion that "every act is to be construed as a repetition, the repetition of what cannot be recollected, of the irrecoverable, and is thus the haunting spectre of the subject's deconstitution" (Butler: 244) and Derrida's notion of iterability which is to say that "every act is itself a recitation, the citing of a prior chain of acts which are implied in a present act and which perpetually drain any 'present' act of its presentness" (Butler: 244) is particularly relevant:

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[13] Kanai Mieko, "Taberu koto," *Kikan eiga ryumieeru/Lumière* 14 (Winter 1988): 199.

[14] Kanai Mieko, "Nureta firumu: *Midoriiro no heya, Pikunikku*," in idem., *Eiga, Yawarakai hada* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1983): 11.

[15] Contributing to this confusion is constant slippage of the sensing and/or registering subject into another persona, a result of the suture between the viewing subject and the viewed which I shall discuss later.

> It is not simply a matter of construing performativity as a repetition of acts, as if 'acts' remain intact and self-identical as they are repeated in time, and where 'time' is understood as external to the 'acts' themselves. On the contrary, an act is itself a repetition, a sedimentation, and congealment of the past which is precisely foreclosed in its act-like status. In this sense an 'act' is always a provisional failure of memory. (Butler: 244)[16]

The viewing subject's anticipation, however, is often tainted with a distinct sense of anxiety as to whether or not s/he is able to remember a given scene accurately and to every detail. The awareness that memory can be fallible occasions phrases such as "darōka soretomo" (would that be the case, or else...), suggesting a search for alternative possibilities.

There are a number of segments (e.g., scenes, parts of scripts, music and other sensual effects) that are repeatedly recalled by characters in Kanai's novel, with subtle and yet distinct differences each time. One of the best examples of such saturated and nuanced remembrance is the recurrence of a particular scene, in which a man is trying to undress a woman with whom he is having a tryst, which is recalled over and again throughout the novel. The fact that the act is repeated is confirmed within the text: "nugase yō to suru *tabini*" (*everytime* I try to undress her; Kanai 1997: 4, 19, and 190, my emphasis). It is important to note that the act of remembering the physical conditions of the clothes always frames the act of undressing the woman: it is the recollection of the scene that is repeated, not the action in the scene itself. Thus, the perceiving subject elaborates on the pattern, the color, the sartorial details such as the seam, and the material (including the way the clothes wrinkle, and the way they stick to the woman's body). As the minute description of the physical detail of the summer dress the woman in question wear recurs, variations become more than notable and the focus of attention shifts. The agent of remembering can be drawn to the aspects that s/he was particularly taken to, or has become attached to at a later time (when s/he remembers), and repeats particular segments of the scene over and again in her/his mind.

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[16] In light of the intentionality of the author, it would probably be more appropriate to quote Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* to be specific, than to quote Judith Butler as an identifiable theoretical ally of Kanai. In order in part to keep the original form of the paper orally presented as much as possible, and to anticipate a more extensive paralleling of Butler and Kanai in the future, an enterprise that I believe promises to be productive owing to their common interest in theorizing corporeality, I will limit the theoretical framework to Butler's here.

Sometimes s/he may not pay attention to a given feature, while other times s/he is obsessed with it.

The enumeration of yellow flowers on the clothes is either detailed or absent; on some occasions, the perceiving subject simply states that the pattern was of "tiny yellow flowers" ("kiiro no kobana"), without dispensing a word on the species of flowers. Obviously on such occasions, the identity of the flower does not concern the remembering subject. If the perceiving subject lists up a variety of yellow flowers, there are two options as to the nature of the list; it can be either a list of constituents, or a list of options from which to choose one. In the former instances, there is nothing added to the names of flowers enumerated, while in the latter cases, the insertion of an interior monologue, "dore datta darō ka," or "which one was it?" (Kanai 1997: 4) and the insertion of another, "dono hana dattano darō," or "which flower was it?" (Kanai 1997: 190) suggests that there was only one flower that graces the clothes, and that the narrator is trying to identify one of the many options as the case. In short, the listed flowers can be united with one another with "and" or "or." Even the selection of the flowers, whether components or alternatives, varies, with a smaller or larger number of flowers included on the list. Also the order of the flowers listed changes, which attests to the fact that remembrance is iterable. As though replaying, fast-forwarding, pausing, rewinding, zooming-in, and slow-motioning videos, our memory works, pacing, breaking and "brecciating"[17] time. Sequences we recall are never identical.

Furthermore, futile attempts at confirming details have the ramification of invalidating the question of how they exactly were at all, and validating instead of the act of multiply hypothesizing details at hand. Accelerating this act even further is the identification with characters in the movies, a common experience of the film audience. The suture between the viewing subject and the viewed invites the viewers to re-enact the roles and improvise some parts of the course of events in the movies. The viewers participate in editing the course of action almost interactively. This is a prime example of the past and present informing and defining each other.

Dissolution of the perceiving subject takes place in yet another way. The act of hypothesizing, in the face of the attempt at remembering, can itself become memorable if repeated so many times; you end up registering your attempts at remembering as accurately as possible, as the

[17] Victor Burgin, "Brecciating Time," in idem., *In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1996): 179–275.

next instance of enumeration of yellow flowers reveals: "... to kanojo wa utau yō ni kuchizusamu" (so she recites, as though to sing a song; Kanai 1997: 61). One might wonder who she is that recites the list of yellow flowers, and for what she is doing it, as, earlier in the text, it seemed to be a man who had viewed the movie that recalls the yellow flowery pattern of the summer dress.[18] Is she the woman who wears the summer dress, suddenly responding to the gaze of the viewer of the movie that she is in?—a surrealistic thought, though neither impossible nor unknown (think *The Purple Rose of Cairo* for one).[19] Or is she someone else who has shared the obsessive re-viewing of the movie with the speaking subject, and who, in order to show off her familiarity with or saturation of his obsession, starts to recite the list as though to tease him? Whichever may be the case, this intrusion of the other, expressly female subject who reiterates what formerly appeared to be the perceiving subject's solitary preoccupation materializes the splitting or duplication of agency, and subsequently suggests the presence of alterity in iterability, as maintained by Jacques Derrida in "Signature, Event, Context": there is always already something of the other within iteration and the arrival of another subject who reiterates is an effective demonstration of the otherness within the sameness, or alterity within iterability.[20]

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[18] Watanabe Naomi asks the same question as to this woman's identity:

> ... in the repeated description of the summer dress, first, from the man's viewpoint. . . , and then, with more flower names added, the enumeration is done by the woman, as suggested by 'so she recited as though she were singing.' Though the same act was repeated, proliferation and change in perspective occur. The narration takes a breath and then begins to swim into another direction. It often happens that a same predicate is shared by more than one subjects. (Watanabe and Kanai 1997: 363)

[19] Apparently this is the case intended by the author. According to her, the alternating perspective between the man and the woman has an effect of filling in the gap in the story: "By writing of the [physical detail of] summer dress from both the man's and woman's viewpoints, by changes of perspective and so forth, their conversations about the dress that intervenes the two bodies and what not should naturally be evoked for the reader" (Watanabe and Kanai 1997: 364). Given that Kanai is well aware of the elusive identity of the woman in the summer dress, she would likely be open to the alternative interpretation that I suggest here. "The one woman becomes an infinite number of women" (Watanabe and Kanai 1997: 359).

[20] He provides an etymological hypothesis that "iter" of iterability "probably comes from *itara, other* in Sanskrit, and everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity" (Derrida: 7). In his context, alterity is recognized in the absence of the receiver of one's communication in writing, a circumstance under which the writing is still

As though to highlight the effectiveness of the metaphor of singing and recitation ("anshō suru yōni," or "as though to recite from memory")—by definition a model of reiteration—Kanai throws in one after another musical reference, where characters play records or a music box. Indeed music is meant to be repeated and yet is expected to sound differently each and every time, and thus takes iterability for granted. As Iain Chambers notes, music epitomizes iterability of memory:

> So music, although initially the expression of a historical and cultural instance, once released into the world travels interminably; (...) It is everywhere and nowhere. (Chambers: 235)

Music performance confuses the axis of temporality and spatiality, and questions the sustained identity of the listening subject. If a given individual's identity rests upon his/her memory of the past, its being iterable allows one to be many different personae. Far from being a solid, coherent and homogeneous existence, an imagined quality of the narrator in the structuralist framework, the narrator's integrity and autonomy are constantly challenged by the influx of recollections. It is not only that the perceiving subject transforms his/her vision of the past and the present; it is the visions of the past and the present that redefines the contour and consistency of his/her identity.

Chambers continues to theorize the collapse of the conventional structures of temporality and spatiality, inspired by the apt example of music, which appears as though written for the novel I have discussed in this paper:

> Music, as a language of repetition, continually proposes this play between recalling and resisting the past. (...) In the instance

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readable (and thus iterable). While Derrida is conceiving the notion of alterity in the disappearance of the receiver which should not affect readability of the writing, I am extending his theory into a suggestion that a given writing remains readable in the emergence of an unexpected receiver. I must admit first-hand that this association of Derrida is tentative and remains to be verified in the future, especially in relation to the contrast between the oral and the written, a preoccupation on his part. For the time being, however, I am inclined to suggest that regardless of the movements of the addressee, writing as iterable remains readable beyond the original context that involves a specific receiver, to the extent of which alterity is inherent in iterability. The unexpected and seemingly irrelevant emergence of the female subject in Kanai illustrates this theory, whether or not it concerns Derrida in the final analysis.

> of repetition perhaps it is not so much the case of remembering what has been forgotten as of exposing the act of forgetting itself? Oblivion is forgotten, but the language of repetition simultaneously takes it in hand and transforms it. The continual song, 'not as an event of the past, but as a present-day force', provides consistent custody for the presence-absence of the memory of being.(...)
> ...music sustains an ethical resonance that permits us not so much to understand and interpret the past as to recover fragments of its dispersed body. Beyond the rigid monologue of reading, cataloguing and interpreting antecedents, music establishes a potential site of simultaneous interpellation and response that directs us elsewhere. (Chambers: 233–4)[21]

While not a piece of music, Kanai's novel employs repetition as a strategy to demonstrate that the act of remembering, whether successful or otherwise, does not restore "an event of the past" in its entirety, but forms "a present-day force." Failing to remember accurately does not mean a defeat of the perceiving subject, but inspires him/her with many a possibility of the past which is made possible only in the present. Whereas "interpretation" is monologic and nostalgic by nature, "interpellation and response" or, as I have been calling in this paper, hypothesization, will "direct us elsewhere," where the present is perpetually constituted.[22] This fluidity, here recognized at the level of diegesis, if transferred to the plane of discourse, is simultaneously a cause and effect of the intertextual connection that this novel invites us to make with other texts by Kanai and others that we discussed in the beginning of this paper. Repetition continues beyond the boundaries of this novel, invalidating the hierarchy between the origin and the destination both in spatial and temporal terms.

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[21] I shall still need to reflect on any theoretical implication of *writing* of music, or its iterability in particular, in light of the Derridean notion of phonocentricism. What happens when music, itself iterable, is repeatedly cited in a writing?

[22] Chambers' position with regard to interpretation seems to come close to that of Jean Baudrillard's as elaborated in *Seduction*: Baudrillard posits "seduction" as opposite to "interpretation," since the former is concerned with the "appearance" while the latter is a search for "meanings." See Baudrillard: 54. With proper time and space spent, his theory might help articulate Kanai's discursive enterprise.

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