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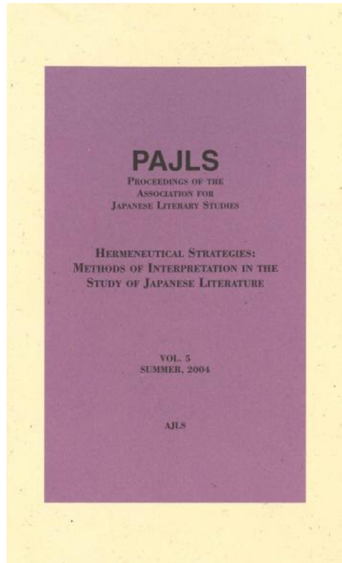

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MATERIALIZING NARRATOLOGY: KANAI MIEKO'S CORPOREAL NARRATIVE

Atsuko Sakaki

Kanai Mieko (b.1947), whose literary career has extended to date for 35 years, is among the most versatile writers of modern Japan. She has been prolific and critically acclaimed in the genres of poetry, fiction (both short and full-length), and criticism (most notably on film and photography). To further diversify her work, she has delivered two seemingly distinct styles in the novel: dense and opaque writings, constituted by exceptionally long and syntax-defying complex sentences with extended description and self-reflexive contemplation of the unidentified narrator, and light and lucid writings carried forward with conversations between characters and their interior monologues focusing on details of their lives in consumer culture. Novels such as *Kishibe no nai umi* (The Sea Without a Shore 1974; expanded ed. 1995), and *Yawarakai tsuchi o funde,* (Stepping on the Soft Soil,; 1997) are examples of the first kind, while "The Mejiro Quartet" (*Bunshō kyōshitsu* (Writing Workshop; 1985), *Tama ya* (Tama, My Little Cat; 1987), *Indian Samā* (Indian Summer; 1988), *Dōkeshi no koi* (A Clown's Love; 1990)–and *Ren'ai taiheiki* (Chronicle of Great Peace: Romantic Version; 1995) are of the latter.[1]

The response of literary critics to both types of her fictional writings has been mixed; while the former, philosophical type has been met with respectful if irrelevant reviews, the latter is at best praised for the author's mastery of prose and at worst is labeled as non-committal, apolitical and frivolous. In an oft-cited essay, Akatsuka Naoki criticizes Kanai's digression into "fūzoku shōsetsu" (novels of manners and customs), lamenting that the author, whose talent is comparable to that of Salman Rushdie, would take up such a light, meaningless subject as an ordinary housewife's uneventful life when she could, and should, be concerned with ideological and political issues of import (Akatsuka 92). Kanai defends herself, declaring that she "rank[s] Jane Austen higher than Fyodr Dostoevsky" without any hesitation (Watanabe and Kanai 368).[2]

[1] The choice of either of the styles for each novel is not incidental but deliberate, as Kanai reveals in an interview with Kidono Tomoyuki (Kanai and Kidono, p. 154).

[2] One may criticize Kanai's orientation as inviting the possibility that women's fiction is again pigeonholed into the domestic arena, by the everyday-life setting

It is evident from the way she reacts to critics' dismissals of her "low-brow" work that Kanai does not validate the divide between intellectual and material subjects as formative of or restrictive on her fiction. Neither does she seem to accept a division or hierarchy between ideas and things; as I have written elsewhere, materiality is conspicuous in her meta-fictional writings as well (Sakaki 2004). She does not simply describe things for the sake of mimetic representation, but in order to "accentuate the amorphous nature" of the object of description (Kanai and Kidono 156). The way she presents material goods—or, to put it more precisely, the relations between human beings and objects of their attention—does not confirm or expand our knowledge of the things, but complicates our understanding of space and time in much the same way as in a semiology of space (Jean Baudrillard), theories of memory (Henri Bergson) and phenomenology (Maurice Merleau-Ponty). A proliferation of materiality in her fiction does not define, let alone derogate, her work as materialist, but suggests that our intellectual faculty is inevitably formed in its relation to the material and physical environment.

In this paper, I will identify and foreground some of the moments at which materiality inspires philosophical reflections on temporality–an important dimension of the narrative that narratologists have inquired into in many ways–in the novel entitled *Karui memai* (Vague Vertigo; 1997).[3] The story evolves around the household of Natsumi, a full-time mother and housewife of a family of four, living in an apartment complex in a residential area in a suburb of Tokyo. As is typical with Kanai's other novels of manners and customs, this novel is deceptively accessible—an impression generated by the vocabulary with little hint of pedantry,

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subject matters, rather than something beyond, physically or metaphysically. In an interview by Makioka Yukiko on *Ren'ai taiheiki*, another novel of manners and customs, Kanai relates that "there are many surprises in the details of everyday lives ordinary women live" which may be a "topic that has nothing dramatic about it" and thus "is a topic that does not easily yield a 'novel'" (Kanai and Makioka, p. 45). The fact that Kanai brackets "novel" suggests her choice to stand apart from a certain kind of the novel. She articulates the kind of the novel that she does "not want to read" (or "write," as she also confesses that she writes what she wants to read herself) as "the novel in which [characters] talk about something meaningful" (ibid., p. 45). If, as Peter Brooks among others argues, "the desire for meaning" is a driving force for the act of reading the narrative, then Kanai's propensity for lack of meaning poses a challenge to the conventional narrative.

[3] I have changed the translation of the title from *Light Dizziness* as given in the paper I presented at the 2003 ATJ Seminar, so as to make a tribute to the film *Vertigo* that Kanai references elsewhere and to Barthes who uses the term as we shall see later on Page 11.

ordinary people's everyday life being the main focus of the story. The text is made up of eight chapters which relate seemingly inconsequential episodes, such as the implicit competition between residents in terms of which floor plans and how many square feet of units they respectively occupy; neighborly disputes about the proliferation of stray cats and their intervention with the domestic cats that residents of the apartment keep despite the no-pet policy; how often the households should do laundry and whether or not to separate the husband's load from the wife's; what to buy on anniversaries and other occasions, and so on. None of the episodes changes the direction of the main storyline (if there is any), and each fades out as imperceptibly as it fades in.

Despite the appearance of a loose structure, however, Kanai herself calls this piece as "chōhen shōsetsu" (the novel), and states in the postscript that all the segments that had been previously published—two-page monthly installments in *Katei gahō*, a glossy magazine on bourgeois home-making, and two reviews of photography exhibitions—were written in order to be put together for this novel at a later stage.[4] It is true that threads of stories that are left loose in the serialization are often picked up in different chapters of the book, to the effect of forming the whole design of the narrative with delays and displacements. The narrative is structured not linearly or steadily but in multiple directions across the text, and irregularly.

Further argument could be made to verify the author's claim that this is a novel. Kanai articulates her desire to write of the "moments" in which those housewives who have never experienced any dramatic turn of events in their lives, "abruptly feel their existence and their memory as unmanageable and undefinable" (Kanai 1997a 207, also Kanai 1997b 4). The author's keen sensibility on the irregularity, ambiguity and precariousness of the everyday life that otherwise appears to be stale, simple and stable is revealed in the way that the past, ostensibly deposited in the oblivion, is found protruding into the present. An unexpected foregrounding of a thing that references a past incident brings the messiness of the "here and now" to the front of one's consciousness. Many textual moments in this novel trigger a movement of thought that disturbs the characters' sense of time.

The unplanned realization of incongruity and incoherence of existence which Kanai paints a picture of can be easily translated into

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[4] See "Atogaki" (Postscript), Kanai 1997a, p. 208. The serialized story shares the title, major characters and some of the passages with the novel, but each installment focuses sharply on one topic and varies in content from its equivalent in the novel. The magazine is not a literary journal, possibly another instance of the transgression of the boundary between material and intellectual.

theoretical language. Merleau-Ponty would call it "leakage," Roland Barthes terms it "punctum" as opposed to "studium," while it is termed "fossil" in the terminology of Gilles Deleuze. Variably defined, these terms share in common the concept of sudden disclosure of a perceivable element that until that point went unnoticed or less recognized within the whole present-ness, which consequently forms a blow to the perceiving subject–so much so he or she is urged to re-claim his/her temporal location.[5] When this shock materializes in Kanai's novel, the focalizing character (usually Natsumi) experiences "fushigina kimochi" (strange feeling), "hakike" (nausea), or "memai" (vertigo) as in the title. Reproduction of an inconsequential detail leads Natsumi to a review and reassessment of her life in the past and present, complicating the concept of the transparent, even-paced and geometrical model of time that we are accustomed to in the structuralist paradigm. It is often at such moments where the author employs a long and complex sentence, in which the flow of the story-time (the temporal order in which the narrated events occur) is disturbed by changes in its pace, density, and its distance from the discourse-time (the temporal order in which the act of narration takes place). An effective tool often put to use is a liberal use of "free direct speech," or unannounced slippage from the third person, past-tense narration into dialogues between characters without quotation marks or tag clause (e.g., "she said that") that would ordinarily demarcate the characters' speech/thought from the narration.[6] The premise of the narrative—the presence of story, dictated by chronology and causality, and formed by the narrator who exercises authority over the narrative structure—is considerably qualified if not renounced on such occasions. Seen this way, *Vague Vertigo* is not a mediocre specimen of the conventional narrative that tends to digress into meaningless details, but a meta-critical novel which rewrites narratology; rather than telling a coherent story consistently and clearly, the novel demonstrates complexity of narration which materializes at the moments of encountering matters that were not expected to matter.

In the balance of this paper, I would like to take a close look at passages that concern photography as they most eloquently illustrate my

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[5] One can argue the same regarding space, as I did (See Sakaki 2003). Spatiality and temporality are not distinct templates, but irrevocably help form (or erode) each other.

[6] Yoshikawa Yasuhisa also notes free direct speech that is used in *Ren'ai taiheiki* as "interesting," though without elaborating the impression. See Kanai, Takahashi and Yoshikawa, p. 359.

view of this novel stated above.[7] The leitmotif of photography manifests itself in two instances of old family photos unexpectedly being unburied, and in references to exhibitions by Kuwabara Kineo (b.1913) and Araki Nobuyoshi (b.1940; commonly known as "Ararchy"), both active and vocal photographers of contemporary Japan. The two cases are drawn together by reflections on the effect of the photographed on the viewers of the photographs.

In the case of the discoveries of family photos, characters are similarly surprised as they do not remember having ever seen them before. Given their size and mobility, photographs are prone to slip away or be forgotten, and then show up unpredictably from nowhere to threaten one's status quo in the present. While photos may be collected to form the family album that Pierre Bourdieu argues is an essential foundation of the social memory of private life,[8] they are also "leaves" as they are referred to in Japanese (e.g., ichi-*yō* no shashin), that may scatter; they are not necessarily collected and arranged in chronological order or framed for display so as to recurrently remind family members of what they are about. In Japan where the practice of framing a number of family photos for display in conspicuous places in the homes is not established, photos may even more easily fall in and out of possession. By the time they are found, it may become difficult for the viewers to restore the exact location of the photographs in a family chronicle.

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[7] I must forego another leitmotif, grocery shopping, that I spoke of at the AJLS conference due to the limited space. I have since found that two critics single out the motifs of photography and grocery shopping as the most interesting in this novel (Kanai and Watanabe, p. 367; Akatsuka, p. 90).

[8] Bourdieu states in "The Cult of Unity and Cultivated Differences:"

> The family album expresses the essence of social memory. There is nothing more unlike the introspective 'search for lost time' than those displays of family photographs with their commentaries, the ritual of integration that the family makes its new members undergo. The images of the past arranged in chronological order, the logical order of social memory, evoke and communicate the memory of events which deserve to be preserved because the group sees a factor of unification in the monument of its past unity or—which amounts to the same thing—because it draws confirmation of its present unity from its past: this is why there is nothing more decent, reassuring and edifying than a family album; all the unique experiences that give the individual memory the particularity of a secret are banished from it, and the common past, or, perhaps, the highest common denominator of the past, has all the clarity of a faithfully visited gravestone. (31)

While sorting out the deceased grandmother's belongings, Natsumi and her parents are drawn to different things that trigger reflections on the past in distinct ways. Natsumi's mother becomes nostalgic over the painting her brother drew as a boy, whereas Natsumi's father is engrossed in reading the old newspaper that wrapped the painting, and is surprised to find many historical facts that he did not know or cannot remember, repeatedly saying to himself "was that really the case?" The contrastive responses to the historical past anticipate the ambiguity with which photography projects the image of the past into the present: while nostalgia is a possible outcome of a reminder of the time that passed, surprise may also result from things of the past that one had forgotten or had never known existed. The latter effect is predominant in Natsumi's reaction to newly found photographs:

> ... Natsumi was less taken by the Fauvist watercolor that Uncle of Yukigaya had drawn than by the quarter-plate photograph, aged and discolored all over it, found stored together with the painting. It was a leaf obviously taken by an amateur, distinctly different from those formal family portraits in her parents' albums, with each member properly stationed, evidently works of a professional photographer whether taken in his studio or in their own home. Her mother cried in tears that she didn't remember who had taken the photo–that she hadn't even known such a picture had existed. The quarter-plate photograph, longer horizontally, showed the wooden terrace of the ground-floor of the family's house in Ueno, now gone, a boy of about ten years old, with his head shaven, light-colored short trousers and a short-sleeved shirt on, leaning against the glass pane on his side, with only his face straight toward the camera; the little bob-cut girl with a frilled apron squatting with both hands on her lap and looking down at the ground–ants, that's what I was looking at...there was a huge ant's nest there, and I had placed some sugar there, though Mother gave me a hard time about it–their father, only half visible behind the reed sliding doors between the terrace and parlor, in the midst of reading the newspaper on the tatami mat, with his legs crossed on it, head lowered, his body slightly leaning forward, and the children's mother with a white blouse and semi-flaired gray skirt on, her face slightly downcast as though she were about to make some movement, on the other side of the terrace from where the boy was. The only person who looked at the camera was Uncle of Yukigaya, still an

> elementary school pupil, and everyone else—the little girl engrossed in ants, Grandpa whose face Natsumi didn't remember well, or Grandma who may be younger than Natsumi now was—was not paying attention to the camera, each facing a different direction, minding their own business in the shady house or in the garden under the strong afternoon sun, on an ordinary day during a summer vacation. As Natsumi thought of the fact that all but her mother who may be younger than her younger son were deceased and no longer with her, she felt very strange. "Who took this picture? Uncle of Yukigaya's looking at the person"—as Natsumi addressed the question, her mother said in a vacant tone of voice, "I have no idea." (Kanai 1997a 63-65; underlining is mine)[9]

The above quotation forms only one sentence in the original, which I have broken up into many for the sake of readability. I found it impossible to do justice to the complexity of the original sentence, within which tense, personal pronouns (and thus, perspectives from which individuals are identified), and modes of speech (direct or indirect) change frequently and without notice, complicating the flow of time, in terms of its pace, direction, and density. Thus, both Natsumi's mother and her own mother (Natsumi's grandmother) are referred to as "hahaoya" (mother), which suggests that though the viewpoint consistently rests upon Natsumi, she observes both as a distanced spectator of the photograph (in which case the narrator, speaking from Natsumi's viewpoint, refers to Natsumi's grandmother as "the mother" as she is the only maternal figure in the picture of a family,) and as a family member who, standing by her mother, tries to restore the family history (in which case the narrator refers to Natsumi's mother as "the mother" as Natsumi would, in her present life outside the photograph). Accordingly, Natsumi's mother is referred to as "onna no ko" ("a little girl") in the former case as she appears as such in the picture, while Natsumi's grandmother is referred to as "obāchan" ("Grandma") in the latter case where the personal relationship prevails to determine a given person's identity. The passage quoted above thus presents the narrative as not linear, but amorphous, by constantly shifting the location of the observer in time and space. The discursive complexity corresponds to a destabilizing effect of the sudden appearance of the photograph, which makes Natsumi "fe[e]l very strange."

In another lengthy sentence, of which the passage below is only a part, another family photo is mentioned and presented. As Natsumi stays

[9] All the translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

overnight with her father during her mother's hospitalization, he remembers something out of nothing ("sō ieba").[10]

> "I almost forgot. We found a photograph out of Grandma's belongings at Yukigaya. Your mother was saying we should let you have it." So saying Natsumi's father produced from a drawer of the cupboard in the living room a photograph enclosed in a document envelope. "What? I haven't heard anything," said Natsumi and took a look at the quarter-plate black-and-white photo. She had no recollection whatsoever of it, but it didn't take her long to figure out that it must have been taken when she was in the second year of kindergarten; she was shown wearing that sleeveless white dress with red polka-dots, one sewn for her that year. The year after, as she was admitted to elementary school, she grew in height and size so quickly that she couldn't wear the dress Grandma had made for her a year earlier; even with the hem down, the waistband was over two inches higher than where it was supposed to be, which didn't look sharp, not to mention the sleeves became too tight to wear. Natsumi remembers her mother say in astonishment she had grown like summer grass just as they say.
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> The picture presented Natsumi and her younger brother, still very much a baby, asleep on the straw mat under the jujube tree in the garden of the family's residence in Yukigaya, with Uncle of Yukigaya, seated with his straw hat on and his legs crossed in a wicker chair nearby, gently smiling toward the camera. Peacefully sleeping with her brother, stuffed bear (Uncle had kept it since his childhood), and Mimi the white cat with eyes in different colors, Natsumi had obviously forgotten all about the scene. "How could your grandma forget

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[10] References to forgetting recur in Kanai's novel, reminding us that we begin to think about or talk about something not entirely intentionally but often incidentally. When Natsumi's friend produces from her purse a copy of two articles on photography (to be discussed shortly) at the classmates' reunion, she says "wasurenai uchi ni" ("lest I should forget") (Kanai 1997a, p. 145). Then we are told that after the party, Natsumi "had forgotten about [the articles] and had not read them until much later" (Kanai, ibid., p. 148). While the fear of forgetting dictates the order of acts in the former case, the occurrence of forgetting affects the order of acts in the latter. In both cases, individuals' acts are susceptible to the effect of forgetting, either imagined or materialized – just as memory interferes with the order of acts, which complicates our notion of temporality.

> to give us such a rare photograph?" wondered her father, and then muttered, "she was a strong-willed woman; she wouldn't accept our invitation to come to live with us in Mejiro, or our offer to move in with her in Yukigaya, and continued to live alone." Natsumi heard him say that it had been twenty years since her death, which left her with a very strange sentiment. (Kanai 1997a 191-192; underlining is mine)

In this sequence time is again felt to be heterogeneous. The sentence beginning with "Peacefully" first describes Natsumi asleep within the photograph in the present tense and, with a continuative particle of "te" (as in "nemutte i te"), switches to Natsumi's present state of mind in which she does not remember anything ("nani mo oboete inai"). The visit to and return from the image of the past only fragments of which Natsumi can identify on her own terms, as well as the realization that the photograph resurfaced twenty years after the death of her grandmother who had kept it, makes Natsumi lose her sense of time and, again, she experiences "a very strange sentiment."

It needs to be stressed that these forgotten photographs do not evoke nostalgic, sweet sentiment in the characters; rather, the characters experience difficulties in establishing stable relationships between themselves and the people represented in the portraits even though they are supposed to be family members only in their earlier days (or while they were still alive in the case of those deceased). Natsumi's mother and Natsumi in these two respective instances have trouble determining the exact circumstances under which the photos were taken. Even though a careful collation of known facts about clothes and other commodities represented in the pictures enables them to locate the approximate time when the photos are respectively taken, they still remain unable to identify the respective photographers of the two pictures in question.[11] The lack of

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[11] Unlike in this case accessories could work to the disadvantage of the "detective," presenting a challenge to the attempt at restoring the circumstances:

> With regard to many of these photographs, it was History which separated me from them. Is History not simply that time when we were not born? I could read my non-existence in the clothes my mother had worn before I can remember her. There is a kind of stupefaction in seeing a familiar being dressed *differently*. (Barthes 64; italics original)

knowledge surrounding the portraits—their existence, the "stories" around them–does not help Kanai's characters restore a part of the family history as something dear and intimate to them, but instead makes them realize the foreignness of one's "own" past that one in fact does not "own."

The whole process in which family photos are discovered, viewed and reflected upon reveals distinct resemblance to the trajectory of Roland Barthes' meditations on photography that represents his mother in a way that he had never known her, as presented in his *Camera Lucida*[12]. The photographs of family members and others who you thought you knew

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Kanai writes a paralleling passage in a short story "Mado" (The Window; 1976), in which an amateur photographer reminisces how his fascination with the art started:

> According to my father, the girl [photographed] was my mother before she married him. The photo, he believed, must have been taken by a male cousin of hers, then in junior high school, who was younger than my mother. It was the first time I saw my mother's portrait—or, to put it precisely, I had never seen her face until I saw this only picture of hers—and in itself it was also the first time for me to experience a very strange, sad if you will, juvenile loneliness. But what unsettled me more was the light that surrounded the already non-existent mother—the girl in the photo, who had not yet married and had never thought of me who had been yet to become her son. (Kanai 1979 35-36)

In a novel *Koharu biyori* (Indian Summer, 1988), Kanai indeed refers to the conspicuous similarity between Barthes' and her character's observations of their respective mothers' old photographs, which could not have been a product of influence, given that her text predates Barthes' and that Barthes would not have known her text. See Kanai 1999, pp. 157-158.

[12] *La chambre claire: note sur la photographie* was originally published in 1980. Its first Japanese translation by Hanawa Hikaru was published in 1985, as *Akarui heya: Shashin ni tsuite no oboegaki*. The Japanese main title is a literal, verbatim translation of the original, while the main title of the English translation by Richard Howard (1981), *Camera Lucida*, correctly renders what the title phrase stands for. The Japanese title may nonetheless have inspired the title of a novella by Kanai "Akarui heya no naka de" (In the bright room), published a year after. In a postscript to a collection of short stories including it, Kanai relates how intimately she reads Roland Barthes—*Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes* (in Japanese translation), to be specific. Though the story or any other collected work in the volume centers on photography, and does not exhibit any specific connection to *Camera Lucida*, it is possible that Kanai had that text by Barthes in mind. Kanai often borrows titles of other works without any bearing on their content.

well can threaten you with the realization of how porous and intangible your own history could be. Barthes writes of the effect of an unfamiliar photograph of himself or someone close to him as follows:

> The Photograph does not call up the past (nothing Proustian in a photograph). The effect it produces upon me is not to restore what has been abolished (by time, by distance) but to attest that what I see has indeed existed. Now, this is a strictly scandalous effect. Always the Photograph *astonishes* me, with an astonishment which endures and renews itself, inexhaustibly. (Barthes 82; italics in the original)

The above general statement echoes the surprise Natsumi and her mother experience as they see they themselves figure in photographs that they do not remember being taken. The correspondence between Kanai and Barthes intensifies as Barthes recounts an encounter with a photograph of himself which corroborates well with Natsumi's sentiment that we saw above:

> In front of a photograph, our consciousness does not necessarily take the nostalgic path of memory (how many photographs are outside of individual time), but for every photograph existing in the world, the path of certainty... One day I received from a photographer a picture of myself which I could not remember being taken, for all my efforts; I inspected the tie, the sweater, to discover in what circumstances I had worn them; to no avail. And yet, *because it was a photograph* I could not deny that I had been there (even if I did not know *where*). This distortion between certainty and oblivion gave me a kind of vertigo, something of a "detective" anguish (the theme of *Blow-Up* was not far off); I went to the photographer's show as to a police investigation, to learn at last what I no longer knew about myself. (Barthes 85; italics in original, underlining mine)

The photographs evoke not nostalgia that would authenticate the heuristic continuity and coherence of one's life story (narrative, in other words, backed up with solid chronology and causality), but the overwhelming present-ness of the past: there is the "here and now" of the people who we know are deceased in the present, for example, that nonetheless are very much present in the past in a way that is new to us. Since the photographed people are in the present, regardless of the frame

of the photograph and of the photographer's authorial/authoritative intent, they succeed in resisting the master narrative that attempts to encapsulate them in nostalgia.

It is noteworthy that in the two photographs there is only one person—Natsumi's uncle in his childhood who, we are told elsewhere in the novel, was mentally challenged and died prematurely–that gazes straight back at the camera. The others are seen minding their own business without paying any attention to the agent of photographing: they are disconnected from the photographer and do not necessarily collaborate or contend with him/her. We might recall here Gilles Deleuze's words: "It is in the present that we make a memory, in order to make use of it in the future when the present will be past" (Deleuze 52). Should it be the photographer's intent to "make a memory, in order to make use of it in the future when the present will be past," then Natsumi's uncle is the only person who acknowledged if not consented to it: the others are engrossed in what matters to them in the (then) present, with no intention of archiving it for the future. The uncle then succumbed to the destiny of premature death long before the time that these photos are seen. He would have remembered who took the photo and on what occasions, as a Barthesian "detective," and would have narrativized the photographs. Without him, they remain opaque and continue to cause strange sensation ("punctum") within Natsumi as she is mesmerized by the slipperiness of one's location in time, seeing familiar people framed by an unidentifiable photographer, people senior to herself as younger than she now is, and people who are deceased as alive in the photos. She is no longer securely anchored in the unidirectional, even-paced chronological time, but is released in a chaotic temporality deprived of a measure with which to articulate time.

The incidentality of the act of photographing that Kanai embraces if not praises is shared with the work of Kuwabara Kineo, whose exhibitions (not fictional but historical; 1993 and 1995) Natsumi has seen and commented upon. Two reviews of the exhibitions by Kanai are quoted almost in their entirety as read by her. As has been theorized, the documentary photograph is neither exclusively controlled by the photographer nor consented to by the photographed: it includes things that were not focused upon, or people who did not realize that they were photographed.[13] According to Kanai, Kuwabara's photography is "ethical"

[13] Barthes writes: "Certain details may 'prick' me. If they do not, it is doubtless because the photographer has put them there <u>intentionally</u>. (...) the detail which interests me is <u>not</u>, or at least is not strictly, <u>intentional</u>, and probably must not be so; it occurs in the field of the photographed thing like a supplement that is at once <u>inevitable</u> and delightful; it does not necessarily attest to <u>the photographer's</u>

as it does not project "the photographer's authorial consciousness" and remains a "corporeal" collaboration between "the eye and the finger" (Kanai 1997a 167). In other words, his photos (as well as some of the family portraits mentioned above) do not purport to tell a coherent story dictated by the photographer. Kuwabara "does not photograph the narrative," as Kanai's character declares, and instead "gently exfoliates the surface of the present of light" (ibid. 167). He does not take photos in order to verify a master narrative.[14] Thus, his photography does not "flatten" the photographed, as Araki's does. Kuwabara is "a cameraman," while Araki is "a journalist" who catalogues and exhibits images of historical society–images of platitudes that death possesses (ibid. 158). Through a physical maneuver of the eye and finger, Kuwabara materializes a dialogue between "the viewer's time that is alive" (miru mono no ikita jikan) and the photographed people "who live in the moment and place that are nothing but here/now" (koko de shika nai shunkan to kūkan ni ikiteiru mono)–from which they declare they shall not be "flattened" (ibid. 159). Thus, the effects of Kuwabara's photography are not limited to "nostalgia:" in fact, one can feel as though they were made to be nostalgic by seeing his photographs only if one limits one's attention to the *references* to the past materiality that one remembers. Otherwise, it is "a strange silence and astonishment" (ibid. 165) that these photographs evoke within the spectators: "the rustle of strangers, who must have lived personal histories from which they are disoriented, whose lives are not unimaginable, stirs within the spectator a sensation that resembles vertigo" (ibid. 165; underline added). We can sense an ambiguous relationship between photography and narrative here: the former disrupts the narrative of the photographed people, and yet, in Kuwabara's case, hints at its (albeit absent) existence, without imposing another, preordained, authoritarian narrative on it. The narrativity of the photographed moment thus warps the template with which to measure the duration of time. Meanwhile the present-ness of the past that comes across the spectator who lives his/her own life in the present disturbs the distinction between the past and the present, as well as representation (the

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art; it says only that the photographer was there, or else, still more simply, that he could not *not* photograph the partial object at the same time as the total object (...) The Photographer's 'second sight' does not consist in 'seeing' but in being there" (Barthes 47; italics in the original; underlining is mine).

[14] Kuwabara Kineo's expressed preference for the Benjaminian "flaneur" who has "not formed a self-consciousness as a photographer," and for Garry Winogrand's words "Photography is about finding out what can happen in the frame," suggests a lack of preordained scheme in his photographs. See Kuwabara, "Hashigaki" (Preface), in a collection of his works cited in Kanai's novel.

image) and reality (experience). The whole complication of temporality materializes a "vertigo."

"Vertigo" revisits Natsumi whenever something anomalous about time materializes in a form of an ordinary thing in her everyday life. The novel ends with one of such occurrences, and in the present tense. Without any terminal incident, the ending alerts the reader to the fact that an irregularity of time would present itself at any moment in the days to come, and causes Natsumi vertigo—a symptom of the state of mind and body that is opposite to clarity, an essential asset for conventional story-telling. One may complacently engage in it when the past is safely anchored in the horizontal and even-paced chain of events that we might call history. Her physical response to the realization of the potentially hazardous nature of memory undoes the boundaries between the body and its environment, the past and the present, and the cognitive and the physical. Susceptibility of the dialectics to a model of disruption, distortion and displacement is thus effectively showcased in Kanai Mieko's material narrative.

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