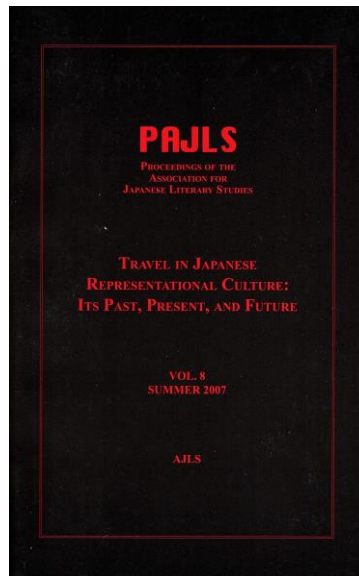


“*Yume no shima* / Island of Dreams: Hypertextuality
in Literature”

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**YUME NO SHIMA/ISLAND OF DREAMS:
HYPERTEXTUALITY IN LITERATURE**

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This paper inquires how Hino Keizō's concept of "materiality" has been performed through the various forms of spectacle, alienation, visual media, and advertisement, which culminates in the vision of the postwar devastation imagined as a picturesque negative of the hypertext, *Island of Dreams*.

Yume no shima (Island of Dreams, 1985)¹ is Hino's representative story of the Tokyo cityscape and is often regarded as "postmodern." In the 1980s, Japan was in the midst of the bubble economy, and the people welcomed a positive attempt to describe consumer society as a new literary expression. Murakami Ryū shocked society with his depiction of violent sexuality in *Kagirinaku toumei-ni chikai burū* in 1976. Murakami Haruki's 1973 *nen no pinbōru* and Tanaka Yasuo's *Nantonaku kurisutaru*, which dealt with issues of commodity fetishism, stimulated a discussion about the seriousness of literature in 1980. In 1983, Asada Akira published *Kōzō to chikara*, in which he comprehensively introduced Japanese readers to post-structuralist thought from Lacan to Deleuze and Guattari. *Posuto-modan* (postmodern) became a popular slogan, which spread ideas like "the end of big (symbolic) narrative," "from singular subjectivity to multiple subjectivities," or "from the depth to the surface."

Hino's achievement in *Yume no shima* (Island of Dreams) is his re-discovery of the ashes of a devastating war in the reclaimed land called "the island of dreams" in the Tokyo bay. The protagonist's sense of displacement creates a postwar history and the spectacular sight of Tokyo that appears so beautiful against the imagined background of the burnt out ashes of the war. It is the dichotomous image of the city that creates a spectacle. Yumenoshima (island of dreams) is the land reclaimed from the sea with the waste of Tokyo. The reclamation work at the island of dreams started in 1957 in order to dispose of increasing amounts of waste produced in Tokyo. The original "island of dreams" (*Yume no shima*) project was completed in 1967 and opened as a public recreation park in 1978. The reclamation work has expanded further into Tokyo Bay ever

¹ Hino Keizō, *Yume no shima*, Kōdansha, Tokyo, 1985.

since.² In Hino's story, the protagonist, Sakai Shōzō, has been working for a big construction company in the central district of Tokyo for more than 30 years as an architectural planner. Sakai lost his wife a while ago and his son is already independent. He is alone, but he does not feel much loneliness. He is obsessed with the modern architecture that his generation has been building in Tokyo. He feels that the sharp lines and hard texture of the skyscrapers' surface are incredibly beautiful.

The story begins with Sakai hallucinating as he walks through the business district. He remembers when Tokyo was completely destroyed by the air bombing, leaving a pile of ashes and a few miraculously surviving buildings. The shining modern buildings that surround him now give him a sense of satisfaction. At that moment, Sakai sees "another scene which is like a picture that was taken by double exposure..."³ He visualizes "Mitsubishi building no. 21" which is one of the buildings that had survived the war. The hallucination makes him feel that "an alien substance entered his body."⁴ Interestingly, his hallucination leads him to become aware of some negative aspects of the economic development. He is surprised to find that the tall buildings are the source of turbulent air on the ground. Small businesses in shabby buildings stand right in the gusty wind under the skyscraper. Sakai is very disturbed by his alien vision from the past and what he observes on the street. Then he decides to take a short trip to the reclaimed land—today's Odaiba—to see the city from there.

At the reclaimed land, he encounters Yōko, a woman who has developed a schizophrenic personality, riding on a motorcycle. Yōko and her younger brother later take Sakai to a true island of dreams – (6th Odaiba) where he dies by accident. Sakai is drawn to this area where he can see the skyscrapers of Tokyo most beautifully. He is impressed by the rapid growth of the tall buildings in the surrounding areas. His "view" is a spectacle of the city, which is both illuminated and alienated by the distance between the viewer and the object. Sakai thinks that he has rebuilt the spectacular city out of the ashes. In his eyes, the buildings appear as if they grew along with his life.

The spectacle is caused by a false encounter with an image, a substitution of a real human. It is an inversion of the relationship between human and image, and, in this inverted cycle, the image mediates the

² Tajiri, Muneaki, ed. *Tōkyō Wan no hozen to saisei*, Tokyo, Nihon shoron-sha, 1988. Between 1984 and 1985, the reclamation site was adjacent to today's Odaiba Rinkai Fukutoshin (seaside subcenter).

³ Hino. p.9.

⁴ Ibid., p.11.

human. This is a simple picture of commodified human relationships. Moreover, the spectacle produces the phenomenon of pseudo-cyclical time that accompanies consumption.⁵ In *Yume no shima*, Sakai consumes the illuminated spectacle view; at the same time, however, he begins to engage with the consumer spectacle as he finds materiality in the landfill. He has seen and known the disturbing environment but has never recognized it as an alien substance until he hallucinates. The multiplication of his vision signals Sakai's epistemological change in the story. It can be argued that Hino's discourse is a modern critique of the postmodern discursive space from within. Hino's protagonist supports the postwar development of Japan, and the commodity-spectacle does not carry a negative connotation. The question is how a modern man, Sakai, can live with a postmodern awareness. The critique presented in theories of alienation will view Sakai as a victim of the commodity culture. However, Hino sees the future more positively despite his protagonist's death in the story. What needs to be considered is how such a mixture of alienated spectacle and positive commodity image is possible.

The reclaimed land reminds Sakai of the ruins of the fires during the late 1940s. The ruin wrought by the fire-bombings is the original landscape that he experienced in Tokyo. The bare waste materials seen from the ground appear very realistic to him. Sakai thinks that the materials under the ground are stripped of any value, which is why they are so real. He is sensing the materiality of the waste. The materiality is the singularity of an object that can be revealed as a form of intervention to the exchange of meanings and values.⁶ Sakai sees the waste in an inverted image: the negation of a commercial product. His inverted sense corresponds to the postmodern resistance to modernization (Baudrillard).

The island of dreams manifests the embodiment of the gap between the name, "dream," and the reality, "waste land," which produces a perverse image that transforms a stereotypical event into the fantastic. It can be said that *Yume no shima* is a direct offspring of the gap; the image created between the name and the place. This gap is a product of social contradiction—the waste is material without value. The purity of Tokyo is maintained by disposing of the waste. The image of purity such as "nation" also maintains its hygiene by excluding minority (alien),

⁵ Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994. pp. 112, 217.

⁶ For example, to see a word as calligraphy would prevent us from reading only its meaning. The materiality reveals its singularity of the object in its opaqueness (resistance to the clarity which belongs to the dominant mode of perception) in between the modes of seeing and reading.

criminal, or disease.⁷ The image of waste also recalls the notion of abjection. Abject space is an in-between space that is excluded from the subject formation. The abject image constantly appears in fiction as grotesque, and it is the source of fictional imagination.⁸

By the 1980s, the excluded waste has become the visible and conscious part of the subject—the city of Tokyo to be controlled. This is a dual inversion of the time and space. The invisible borderline-periphery that was brought to rejuvenate the modern subjectivity in fiction is now visualized as a reclaimed land in the image of the “dream island.” What used to be the colonial project on the “outside” now appears at the heart of the metropolis. Moreover, the problem of garbage does not allow us to feel “purity” anymore. We are all entangled with this problem of modern consumption of material and image.

Hino initially presents “Yume no shima” as a site of purification and rejuvenation. The island is covered with trees and inhabited by animals. To Sakai, it looks like a natural energy source for Tokyo’s growth. On this secluded island, Sakai feels that he is deep inside Tokyo. Even to the depth of the city’s consciousness, however, human products are advancing. On the island, Sakai, Yōko, and her younger brother discover many dead white egrets hanged from trees with fishing lines that have entangled their legs. Furthermore, the island was originally an artificially constructed island-fortress used to defend Edo from foreign powers. In this situation, the cycle that started from nature to machine has completed its rotation, and in the next stage, the mixture of the artificial and animal/natural becomes the new image of nature.

The deep unconscious part of Tokyo is one of the oldest human constructions remaining. At the end of the story, as Sakai tries to bury all the hanged birds, his foot accidentally slips, and he dies hanging upside down just like the birds he was trying to bury. This conclusion shows that *Island of Dreams* is not really a celebration of the postmodern multiplicities, at least for Sakai. Sakai’s death is a natural end of a modern mind’s journey deep into the consciousness of the spectacular city (retrospection).

Sakai travels between illusion and reality. At the same time, Sakai’s double visionary gaze is constantly seen (and objectified) by the other gazes that have different historical and spatial senses.

⁷ Michael Bourdaghs. *The Dawn That Never Comes*. Columbia UP, New York, 2003.

⁸ Seiji Lippit. *Topographies of Japanese Modernism*. Columbia UP, 2002. pp. 105–106.

POSTMODERN GAZE⁹

In the story, Sakai tries to share his fascination with the skyscraper with the younger generation. His young co-worker is rather indifferent, and he takes Sakai to a small restaurant in a low-rise building on an alley. Sakai feels that he has come to “a different world.”¹⁰ Sakai is exposed to the gazes of the next generation and his hallucination could be his unconscious reaction to it. On the island, Yōko’s brother also gives Sakai a very different impression of the skyscraper. For this young boy, the skyscraper is just like “... gray concrete mountains,” and Sakai thinks that “this child is seeing it through his temporality ... I saw it in my eyes that belong to the past.”¹¹ In fact, no one shares Sakai’s spectacular image of Tokyo in this story. Sakai knows that his image is possible only when one can overlap the view of buildings with the image of the ruins of a fire in the past. For a man who has worked from the 1950s to the 1980s in central Tokyo, the image of his life-time is reflected in and symbolized by the growth of capital represented by the skyscraper. When he realizes that the spectacle of Tokyo is just a personal as well as a temporal image, his hallucination loses its fantastic aura. The postmodern gaze nullifies the interior-depth of the modern narrative by dissociating it from a shared historical image.

Near the end of the story he finally shares a vision with the boy. They see the forest and animals disappear from the island.¹² This shared hallucination signals that the modern temporal-spatial boundary is melting down in Sakai. However, he is never able to move beyond his own time. He still thinks that the skyscraper looks impressive. Then the boy tells him, “How did those dead birds see the skyscraper?”¹³ Soon after this remark, Sakai dies just as the birds did on the trees. What he sees then is the upside down view of Tokyo, in which the figures of grey mushrooms grow out of buildings. He sees the bombed field in the background. As he dies, however, he realizes that they do not constitute a double vision but reveal the same power of grey mass that ruined Tokyo once and rebuilt the skyscraper later. This explosive power of the grey

⁹ When Shōzō meets the woman for the second time on the reclaimed land, she gets into an accident on her motorcycle. Shōzō finds her unconscious from the shock of the accident. Later he realizes, however, that the woman was conscious but “pretended” to be unconscious to see how Shōzō would react. He is constantly seen by the younger generation.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.164.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp.145–6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.164.

mass is both destructive and constructive. This is the power of modernization, and his memory is a part of or even the effect of this grey power. In that sense, the dead birds are like the victims of the fire bomb, and Sakai joins them as the mass finally consumes him.

Even though Hino presents many postmodern concepts in his story, it is still the legacy of postwar modern expansion that defines the destiny of his protagonist. The image of gray mass clearly represents such a continuous vision. The image is a fusion of the complex relationship that blinds us from seeing its materiality, the body of critique. Hino shows us that hallucination can be a vehicle for crossing the boundary of spectacle when image has already consumed the interior of the human mind and the repressed invisible part has surfaced in the visible space.

MEDIA IN *YUME NO SHIMA*

In *Yume no shima*, visions of the past are often described through images of pictures, film, and VCR tapes in the story. In other words, the media technologies are an inseparable part of past memories. A contemporary media theory often states that our mental structure deeply internalizes the technological structure of time. Hino's active use of the other media image as literary representation, in this sense, signals his shift from the dominant literary mode to that of the visual media; at the same time, however, hypermediacy (the unnatural mode of multiple representations) is a necessary element (like garbage) to create a sense of transparency. By visualizing that structure, Hino tries to question and reinvent a new set of literary values.

In the story, Sakai expresses his first vision of the past as a photographic image. He also remembers that he used to dream about rebuilding Tokyo just like New York City, which he has seen in films. Both his future and past visions are expressed through media technologies. The power of the visual media helps him believe in the reality of the future and the past. It should also be noted that Yōko, in *Yume no shima*, recovers from her schizophrenia by viewing a VCR recording of her own schizophrenic personality. Furthermore, her memory of the island of dreams is recalled as "deranged memory, like the screen of a VCR."¹⁴ Her "recovery" from mental illness is actually the re-fixation of her mental construction into the contemporary media configuration.

If media is a kind of discourse that molds our minds through a perceptive configuration, the universality of media technology certifies

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 175.

the status of its product as evidence of truth in an event.¹⁵ Sakai's memory is antithetical to the spectacle image of Tokyo, which was inspired by media images. In that sense, his journey to the depth of Tokyo is retroactive to the media which visualize and dichotomize his consciousness.

I need to examine Hino's use of media more closely. In fact, *Yume no shima* is a reading/reflection of a travel-ad. In my opinion, the most significant media presented in this work is the display-advertisement made by Yōko in the showcase window. Sakai encounters Yōko's display twice in the story. The first is the mannequin display of a family in an old western house typical in Tokyo, which looks like something fondly remembered by many. Upon closer observation, however, Sakai finds that the happy-faced husband and wife at a table are not seeing each other's eyes. Daughter is looking into a mirror, but her face in the mirror is different from her real face. Son is about to fly into the sky from the window. The discrepancy between the homey atmosphere of the display and the detached familial relationships within creates a livelier than real sense of urban family. This advertisement for clothes, furniture, and cosmetics at a department store showcase presents a contemporary mode of communication in a spectacle image. For the purpose of selling goods, these mannequins are not subjects of the display. They are rather performing eye-catching effects to produce differences from our conventional perception. The protagonist in the story reads a deeper message in an advertising display created by Yōko. His "deeper" analysis in this case, however, can be interpreted as a mode of communication that establishes more personal ties with the commodity image. It is interesting to note that a similar discourse has been constituted at the heart of the consumer images.

In an analysis of brand, it has been argued that brand is constituted by proposition and personality.¹⁶ It is wrong to think that brands carry an irrational magical attraction that controls the consumer's mind. By transforming functional assets into relationships, brands can establish an emotional basis in their relationship with the consumer. As a result, the brand is able to "decommoditise almost any form of cooperate assets."¹⁷ Since the establishment of brand requires the corporation to adopt the perspective of the consumer and transform the boundary between the

¹⁵ In my interpretation, Kittler is trying to break the aura of universality in the media technology and restore the specific materiality in each media.

¹⁶ John Goodchild and Clive Callow Ed., *Brands Vision and Values* (2001, John Willy and Sons, ltd, Chichester.) p. 37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

producer and the consumer, the brand appears to be similar to the notion of the virtual—a way out of a sense of alienation. In other words, brand is a way to establish a tangible identity between product and consumer outside of the values of function and cost.

In the story, Sakai clearly suppresses the reading of circulated meaning that the city produces. As Sakai rejects the investment of meaning in commodity goods, he discovers real meaning in the material-mannequin. In Sakai's scheme, commodity expression is not real so that true reality must be devoid of the commodity value. The irony is that Sakai's sense of reality always requires the commodity to be inverted or rejected. His identification of Yōko with the mannequin shows his unsuccessful escape from the commodity value formation. Sakai's inversion of material and human subjectivity is still bound by the mode of alienation which appears old compared with a positive and ambivalent reading of subjectivity in the relationships with commodity images. A major theme of this story is this temporal gap in the understanding of commodity culture that provokes an image of postwar history. Hino seems to know the limit of his conventional scheme of thought and he tries to suggest other possibilities in *Island of Dreams*.

Sakai sees another display by Yōko in the story. This time, the display is a travel-ad to "Island of Dreams." The display consists of a woman, a man, and a boy. The copy message says, "If you are dying in the concrete jungle, there is an island of dreams right there." This display obviously foreshadows what Sakai will experience in the island of dreams in the Tokyo bay. In other words, instead of taking this advertisement in a conventional way and evoking a desire to visit the island in the tropical area ("right there" means money can buy the distance), he chooses to see a dream of this tourist advertisement itself. The reality of this advertisement is actualized as a story in the island of dreams literally right there across the Tokyo Bay. The literal presence of "Yume no shima" presents problems behind the travel-ad which arouses a desire to escape from the concrete jungle. The literalness in this case is synonymous with the notion of materiality, which constantly sends the formation of meaning-value into a void for recreation. The notion of materiality which Hino has loved so much not only appears in wastegarbage but also as literature—a travel story that reproduces a sense of journey.

If Hino simply relied on the imaginative leap with the literal mode of expression, this work may not have sustained a sense of reality. Hino intertwines his illusionary story with many contemporary social phenomena in urban Tokyo such as Otaku-nerd or corporate culture,

which keeps a real social context in the minds of the readers. One of the elements that sustains the reality is a problem of communication in the city. In *Suna no machi* (City of Sand), Hino describes how the city dwellers establish communication around a rumor of a strange vortex that appears in a public garbage dump. He knows that for those who live in a tall apartment building in Tokyo, people really say “hi” to each other only when they go to throw out garbage. This story was written just before *Island of Dreams* and it can be said that Hino had a vision of the Island of dreams in Tokyo bay as a public garbage dump where urban people might be able to communicate again.

By overlapping the urban problem in Tokyo with that from which they try to escape to the tropical island called “island of dreams” in the travel-ad, Hino’s sense of materiality discerns the core of the problem in our culture. Sakai’s journey to the island of dreams is an illusory travel seduced by and challenging the desire that the advertisement arouses. His exclusion of commodity image-meaning tries to recover a sense of “tabi – journey.” The question is whether Hino’s challenge to such forces of consumption might have to end up being the other side of the consumer image such as brand. The purchase of commodity has been sustained by the consumer’s dream as well. Sakai’s escape from the commodity value in travel/kankō could produce a sense of exultation as literature precisely because it takes the form of a new commodity. Hino leaves this problem to Sakai’s younger generation whose different temporality will create a different sense of reality than Sakai’s. Their reality, however, will have to embody the death of Sakai. Yōko and his brother keep wondering what Sakai was seeing with his upside-down eyes. His dead body hanged upside-down will remain as a friction in a transition between image and material, or sanity and insanity. His dead body appears as materiality in a temporal gap, preventing the smooth production of meaning and image. *Island of Dreams* thus presents multiple temporal windows to the view of Tokyo. This conscious presence of multiple perspectives to a text makes this work a kind of hypertext, opening our sense of reality and investment in literature to the future.