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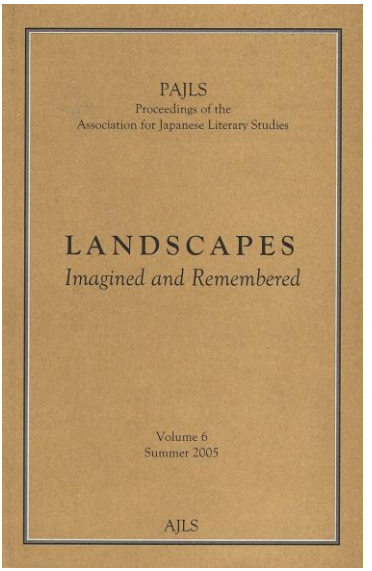

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Historicizing the Marginal Case: Late-Taishō Literary Production and the Provincializing Landscape of Iihatov

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In December 1924, after nearly a year of setbacks, family emergencies, and last-minute loans, a tiny Morioka publisher finally released one thousand copies of a collection of *dōwa* (children's stories) by local author Miyazawa Kenji.[1] With the title *Iihatov dōwa: Chūmon no ōi ryōriten* イーハトヴ童話：注文の多い料理店 (Tales from Iihatov: The Restaurant of Many Orders), the book was a rather handsome volume, bound in a cover of deep indigo and inlaid with a colored illustration of a snowy rural landscape. One Morioka native remembered seeing it at the local bookseller and thinking how attractive it looked in comparison to the haggard works typically put out by Iwate authors. He also recalled, with a tinge of regret, how twenty to thirty copies of the work were crammed into the case for low-turnover items and how, on each subsequent visit to the store, he failed to see their numbers decrease. Yet even he was unwilling to lay down the money for a copy.[2] Indeed, the book sold so poorly that, in addition to the one hundred books Miyazawa took as a royalty payment, he had to purchase two hundred more with funds borrowed from his father in order to help repay the publisher's debts. What was meant to be the first in a series of twelve volumes turned out to be the only collection of stories that Miyazawa published during his lifetime.

That this book met with such a dismal fate is difficult to imagine today, as Miyazawa is arguably one of Japan's most recognized literary figures. He has also become one of the defining influences on the landscape of his native Iwate, where one can find, among other things, a Miyazawa Kenji Museum that has seen over five million visitors since its opening in 1982, and a water

[1] The publisher in this case was a tiny outfit by the name of Toryō Shuppanbu 杜稜出版部. Their main business was publishing agricultural-related textbooks. Upon *Chūmon no ōi ryōriten*'s release, the company changed its name to Kōgensha 光原社.

[2] The recollection is that of Mori Sōichi 森荘已池, an early fan of Miyazawa who later became one of the founding figures in the field of Miyazawa Kenji studies. See his essay "*Chūmon no ōi ryōriten*" 注文の多い料理店, in *'Chūmon no ōi ryōriten' kenkyū*「注文の多い料理店」研究, vol. 1, ed. Tsuzukihashi Tatsuo 続橋達雄 (Tokyo: Bungei Shorin, 1989), 9-10. The essay was originally published in 1954.

theme park built in his name.[3] Such a vast disparity has turned the seeming "failure" of *Chūmon no ōi ryōriten* into something of an enigma, one that is often explained away by declaring Miyazawa's fiction so distinctive that it was simply misunderstood by his contemporaries. Rather than treat the "failure" of the book as a means of hagiographical adulation, however, this essay uses it as a departure point for considering the material history of the work itself. Specifically, I am interested in its status as a provincial publication within the highly centralized and uneven field of Taishō-period literary production. "Failure" is thus not meant as an indicator of aesthetic worth, but as a means to highlight how the actual spaces of production – and their organization in space – contributed to the work's "failure" to enter contemporary networks of literary valuation. As we proceed, it will become clear that *Chūmon no ōi ryōriten* did not stay put on the shelves of the Morioka bookstore merely because of what was printed inside it.

This is not to imply that a historical materialist approach renders attention to aesthetic content irrelevant. On the contrary, it is precisely the relationship between aesthetic form and the field of production that will be explored here. And for Miyazawa's *dōwa* collection, one of the most fruitful places to begin this exploration is with paratextual elements such as those we find on the book's front cover, where the curious toponym of Iihatov first appears. "Tales from where?" potential readers may have wondered as they took the book from the shelf. But had they searched for the word's meaning in the text itself, their search would have been in vain. In fact, the only text in Miyazawa's entire opus to offer any kind of formal explanation is an advertisement pamphlet created just prior to the volume's release. The text of this pamphlet and the imagined region of Iihatov that it describes will be the focus of the second half of this essay. I will argue that this piece of paratextual media lay at a curious intersection where the landscapes of representation negotiated with the real spaces of an uneven field of literary production. In doing so, my aim is to provoke further thought on how ideas about landscape – produced and circulated within materially grounded circuits of exchange – intertwine with the spatial organization of those same circuits.

Returning for a moment to the bookstore in Morioka, we will note that the local resident's observations hint subtly at certain spatial inequalities in the contemporary print culture industry. The contrast made with the typically haggard works of local authors points to inequality in the types of materials

[3] In the late 1990s, the Miyazawa Kenji Kinenkan 宮沢賢治記念館 had an average attendance of nearly 320,000 visitors, far outpacing all other literary museums in Japan. Only the Lafcadio Hearn Museum came close, with about 280,000 visitors per year. For attendance figures, see *Bungakukan wandārando* 文学館ワンダーランド, ed. Riterēru Henshūbu リテレール編集部 (Tokyo: Metarōgu, 1998). The numbers can partly be explained by the "Kenji boom" that surrounded the one-hundred-year anniversary of his birth in 1996. Even today, however, attendance rates remain comparatively high.

and technology that were available; the quantity of books left for the store to sell points to difficulties in distribution; and the fact that all copies went directly to the shelf for low-turnover items belies certain expectations about consumption patterns. There is not room here to discuss the complicated story of *Chūmon no ōi ryōriten*'s publication and the infrastructural realities that worked against its chances for broader reception, but suffice it to say that its circumstances were not unique.[4] Indeed, by the late Taishō period, provincial literary publications faced an increasingly uneven playing field that had come to define national production as a whole. Not only were most elements of the modern literary infrastructure (e.g., manufacturing, marketing, distribution, and publication) centralized in Tokyo by this time, so too were the producers of texts. The process by which Tokyo's status as center of print and literary culture was solidified after the Meiji Restoration naturally depended on social and historical factors external to purely literary matters. The high concentration of educational institutions that came to be situated in the capital, for instance, drew in those youths who would eventually form the largest base of producers and consumers. Nonetheless, once the process accelerated in the late 1880s, it set into motion a self-perpetuating cycle of ever more intensified centralization.[5] And while the entire structure was thrown into brief shock by the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, prompting some writers to call urgently for the system's "provincialization" (*chihōka*), Edward Mack has shown how the centrifugal pull of the industry grew only stronger in the years that followed.[6] Indeed, it was the system's increasing rationalization that ultimately paved the way for the *enpon* (one-yen book) boom of the late 1920s.

To be sure, the centralization process was neither unilinear in its course of development nor homogenous in its cultural effects. It impacted certain genres and forms of media differently than others.[7] But while some genres

[4] It should be noted that while publishing and distribution were handled from Morioka, the book was actually printed through a small upstart publisher in Tokyo. While this offered an advantage in terms of the quality of material used, it offered no help in gaining exposure to the Tokyo market. Because the printer/publisher was not yet a member of the Tokyo Book-Trade Union, others in the union (including distributors) would likely have been dissuaded from doing business with the company.

[5] Literary historian Nagamine Shigetoshi 永嶺重敏 has done some of the most interesting work on the process of literary centralization in the modern period. See especially his *Zasshi to dokusha no kindai* 雑誌と読者の近代 (Tokyo: Nihon Editaa Sukūru, 1997) and *'Dokusho kokumin' no tanjō* 「読書国民」の誕生 (Tokyo: Nihon Editaa Sukūru, 2004).

[6] See chapter two of Edward Mack, "The Value of Literature: Cultural Authority in Interwar Japan" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2002).

[7] Consider that while the percentage of books published outside of Tokyo dropped to nearly 30 percent of the total by 1922, the percentage of magazines and newspapers based outside the capital increased in nearly inverse proportion over the same period. We must remember, of course, that provincial media could never hope to match Tokyo publications in terms of circulation size. For an example of how certain kinds of regional literary activity flourished even despite centralization, see Richard Torrance, "Literacy and Modern Literature in the Izumo Region, 1880-1930," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 22, no. 2 (1996), 327-362.

carried on in a decentralized fashion, others (e.g., narrative fiction, modernist poetry, and *dōwa*) were so entwined with the centralized structure of the field that the field effectively delimited the paths by which an aspiring provincial writer or poet could successfully pursue his or her chosen art. Earning recognition in any of these genres meant a necessary engagement with Tokyo in one form or another: by making personal connections to members of the city's literary scene, by responding to the evolving trends it gave rise to, or by putting one's work into the networks of distribution and valuation centered there. Even as the readership for literary material grew more nationalized and diffuse, then, the infrastructure that controlled the production and distribution of this material was doing exactly the opposite, resulting in a kind of spatial disparity between literary consumer and producer. Just consider the shape of the *dōwa* marketplace between 1921 and 1925, at the very height of the *dōwa* boom. Of the 601 publications with the word *dōwa* in the title, all but fifty-one originated in Tokyo. Out of these, thirty-eight were published in Osaka, six in Kyoto, four in Nagoya, and one each in Morioka, Tottori, and Kumamoto.[8] This was the uneven playing field onto which *Chūmon no ōi ryōriten* made its fateful appearance.

These are also the conditions under which the advertisement pamphlet for the book was designed, a subject to which I will return shortly. First, I want to introduce an analytical framework through which we can better conceptualize the ideological potential of provincial publication at this time. Consider that the centralized structure of the field of production inevitably fostered a degree of spatial polarization between Tokyo and non-Tokyo writers, the delimiting effects of which were surely felt more acutely by writers living outside the capital. To be in such a position was to inhabit a marginal node in a larger array of inter-connected locales – an array dominated by a center where capital, in both its literal sense and in Pierre Bourdieu's sense of recognition, reached its highest concentrations.[9] When conceptualized in this way, the marginalized node inhabited by the provincial writer appears as a site of extreme disadvantage, but also simultaneously as a site to be consciously and strategically occupied. That is, the margins are sites of difference potentially available as a source of literary identity – a way to inform one's choices about how to write and who to write for. The position was in this sense a negotiable one, capable of being manipulated at the level of aesthetic expression in a way that confronted, appropriated, or reoriented

[8] The numbers presented here are based on a search of the most complete catalogue of children's literature in Japan, which is managed by the International Library of Children's Literature in Osaka.

[9] I mean to indicate here both the notions of symbolic and social capital. The former refers to one's general recognition in the field and the latter to one's degree of connectedness with others in that field.

discourses from the center.[10] This is not to say that it had to be occupied in such a way, or that many chose to do so, only that the position harbored certain strategic possibilities inherent to the structure of the field itself. And if we allow for the existence of such possibilities, then we avoid an approach that privileges the center at the expense of reducing "provincial" to a label connoting only imitation and unoriginality. We can imagine provincial writers as engaged in a kind of dialogue with literary production in Tokyo, rather than condemn them to a fate of forever having to catch up to a center too often made the singular locus of modernity and innovation. As we will see, the potential to carry out such a dialogue was especially crucial to those, like Miyazawa, concerned with the representation of landscape.

Miyazawa's dialogue with the center unfolded along several different paths after 1921, the year he began writing *dōwa* seriously. And for the most part, especially in the early years, it remained a rather one-sided conversation. Things started poorly with the stories that eventually made it into the *Chūmon no ōi ryōriten* collection, all of which were drafted between the fall of 1921 and the spring of 1922 after an eight-month sojourn in Tokyo. When he took his manuscripts to Tokyo in early 1923 to see if the publisher Tōkyōsha might accept any of them, the stories were flatly rejected as ill-suited to the company's line of magazines (e.g., *Fujin gahō* and *Kodomo no kuni*).[11] Later that same year, he tried an alternative route and published three *dōwa* in the local *Iwate mainichi shinbun*, the prefecture's second largest newspaper in terms of circulation size. Notably, especially given their appearance in a regional newspaper, two of the stories displayed obvious signs of a spatially engaged narrative stance. "Shigunaru to Shigunaresu" シグナルとシグナレス (Signal and Signalless), for example, presented the parable of a regional economy and its relation to the national infrastructure in the form of a love story between two railway signal poles. "Hyōga nezumi no kegawa" 氷河鼠の毛皮 (Fur of the Glacial Mouse) was less explicit in its regional identification, but it did mark the first use of "Iihatov" in Miyazawa's fiction – in this case as an imagined toponym vaguely correlated to the city of Morioka.[12] He would experiment further with the term in several unpublished

[10] This is not to imply that occupying such a position inevitably led to a subversive engagement with the center. Just as likely was an engagement deeply essentialist and conservative in tone, one that found authenticity in the particular (e.g., the local or regional) as opposed to the universal (e.g., the nation).

[11] A brief account of Miyazawa's visit can be found in *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 新校本宮沢賢治全集, vol. 16, no. 2 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 2001), 251-252. Tōkyōsha was established in 1907. Its premier children's magazine, *Kodomo no kuni*, began publication in January 1922. Directed at a fairly young audience, it was best known for the highly artistic children's paintings (*dōga*) that graced its cover. Ogawa Mimei and Hamada Hirosuke were occasional contributors.

[12] The former story was serialized between 11 May and 23 May. The latter appeared on 15 April.

works from 1923 and 1924, but only with the printing of the advertisement pamphlet does one find a clear articulation of the strategic possibility Iihatov came to embody for Miyazawa. In late 1924, this strangely irreducible signifier served both to encapsulate the aim of his literary project and to promote that project in the form of a consciously provincial publication.

The text of the pamphlet, of which approximately one thousand were printed, consists of several paragraphs of prose followed by a descriptive table of contents.[13] In the prose section, which most scholars attribute to Miyazawa, there are several passages worth examining closely. Together they can be interpreted as forming a kind of representational strategy that adopts a spatially marginalized position in the field of production and deploys it as part of an effort to reinvest the local landscape with new meaning. One key passage supporting this strategy comes toward the end, in a list of special traits the stories are said to embody. According to the fourth item in the list, "These stories are the fresh produce [*sanbutsu* 産物] of the countryside [*den'en* 田園]. They are mental sketches offered to society [*seken* 世間] together with the glistening fruits and green vegetables grown from the wind and sunlight of the country [*den'en*]."[14] This statement seems to be performing three functions. First, by drawing on that inimitable keyword of the age, *den'en*, it invokes the positive representation of the non-urban – the countryside as a pleasant pastoral and source of cleansing purity. Second, it situates the stories as products metaphorically harvested from that pastoral environment and makes explicit their origins outside the unacknowledged, but still implied, urban core of literary production. Finally, in its declaration of society in general, and not the city in particular, as the intended recipient, the passage actually disrupts any conventional reading of *den'en* as a static source of tradition offering respite only to disaffected urbanites. *Den'en*, while still idealized in its own way, is made the productive origin of texts ostensibly aimed at all levels of society, both rural and urban alike.

Granted, the boundaries of *den'en* remain rather abstract and diffuse in this passage, but if we turn back to the opening paragraph of the pamphlet, we find that *den'en* has already been curiously localized:

> Iihatov is the name of a place. If you must seek this place, think of it as part of the same world as the fields tilled by Big Claus and Little Claus, or the Wonderland that little Alice traveled through; think of it as a place to the distant northeast of the Tepantar desert, or to the far east of King

[13] The pamphlet was printed in Tokyo by the same company that published the *dōwa* collection. Marks left by the printer on the only extant copy indicate that one thousand of them were produced at a cost of just over thirty yen. It is not known how they were distributed, but one was found in a copy of another Toryō Shuppanbu publication.

[14] *Kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* 校本宮沢賢治全集, vol. 11 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1974), 389.

> Ivan's realm. In truth, this place is Japan's Iwate prefecture existing as a dreamland [*dorīmurando* ドリームランド], brought into being by scenes from the author's own mental images [*shinshō* 心象].[15]

This may seem an odd form of localization, blurring as it does the line between physical and mental space. On one level, it strives to locate Iihatov in a spatially and temporally boundless realm where the fictional worlds of Hans Christian Andersen, Lewis Carroll, Rabindranath Tagore, and Leo Tolstoy, respectively, are joined.[16] This desire to merge Iihatov with such a fantastic literary space is further confirmed in the passage that follows:

> There, everything is possible. At one moment a person can leap over icy clouds, traveling northward to follow the winds raised by the global circulation of air; at another moment one can talk to an ant crawling at the bottom of a crimson flower-cup. Even sins and sadness shine with beautiful purity. Thick forests of beech, wind and shadows, evening primrose, mysterious cities, a line of electric poles that stretches to Bering City; it is truly a strange and exciting land [*kokudo* 国土].[17]

Yet while both of these passages associate Iihatov with a dimension that is clearly distinct from the reality of the everyday, they do not show signs of relinquishing all ties to the material world. The landscape of Iihatov, for instance, includes elements that are very real and specific (e.g., global winds, beech trees, and electric poles), easily found within the actual space of Iwate. And consider the directional markers in the opening passage that geographically situate Iihatov to the *east* of King Ivan's realm and to the *northeast* of Tepantar Desert. Deployed in what would seem to be an amorphous fictional space, how are we to make sense of such markers? Indeed, they appear meaningful only when we use the original language of expression to ground the two fictional worlds in question. By forcing such an equivalence, it then makes sense to say that Iihatov – or rather the geographical referent of Iwate prefecture to which it is linked – lies to the east of King Ivan's realm (i.e., Russia) and to the northeast of Tepantar Desert (i.e., Bengal). That a

[15] Ibid., 388.

[16] Aside from the reference to Lewis Carroll's famous story, today's reader might be at a loss to locate the other fictional worlds referred to. The world of Big Claus and Little Claus alludes to an 1835 fairy tale by Andersen (1805-1875) about two farmers – a simple story of revenge meted out by a crafty underdog on his wealthier and seemingly stronger opponent. Tepantar Desert is a mythical place name used by Bengali poet Tagore (1861-1941) in a collection of poems from 1913 called *The Crescent Moon*. The realm of King Ivan refers to the utopian socialist kingdom founded by Ivan the Fool in an 1886 story of the same name by Tolstoy (1828-1910). All of these worlds would have been available to Miyazawa in translation by at least 1915, and their creators enjoyed considerable popularity throughout the Taishō period.

[17] *Kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, vol. 11, 388.

direct link to a socially and politically recognized region like Iwate is made at all is itself a matter of great significance. It serves to indicate that the position from, and about, which the author spoke was a critical part of his message, bound up as it was with the very site of production (a site, mind you, plainly indicated on the back of the pamphlet). And thus while Miyazawa's "dreamland" appears at first glance to transcend the physical world, existing only as a mental representation, a closer reading finds it oddly caught up in a web of signifiers linked to actual spaces and familiar geographical relations.[18]

Thus, at least within the discursive space of the advertisement, Iihatov is structured as the partly imagined, partly real location from which Miyazawa's *dōwa* collection is said to originate. But if we agree that the pamphlet functions to implicitly site the productive origins of the text in a rural area loosely tied to Japan's northern Iwate prefecture, then we might be tempted to ask the following: if indeed a dialogue with society at large was sought, what advantage was there to selecting Iwate over other possible links to geographical reality? At a time when the six prefectures of northeastern Honshū were typically reduced in social and political discourse to the label of Tōhoku, this regional signifier would have had far more cultural resonance outside the boundaries of Iwate. In fact, the larger project from which this essay is culled argues that the discursive structure of the advertisement actually parallels contemporary attempts by local media to re-imagine the Tōhoku region in the face of grossly uneven economic development. By no means, then, is the absent trace of Tōhoku irrelevant. Yet the refusal to invoke it here signals what can be read as a desire for a more meaningful specificity, one impossible to capture with a signifier like Tōhoku, which is so homogenizing in its rhetorical effect and which was already burdened at this time with derogatory and exotifying connotations. To invoke Tōhoku under such circumstances would have run counter to the strategic possibilities that a focus on the immediate environment offered.

A second question raised is this: what was to be gained by replacing Iwate with a toponym lacking any previous referent and, even more striking, no identifiable linguistic home?[19] Or rather, since it is impossible to capture authorial intention, what was the discursive effect of such a strategy? Consider how the inexplicable foreignness of Iihatov effectively dissociated it from any

[18] This inherent duality in the explication of Iihatov has also been pointed out by Sugiura Shizuka 杉浦静. See his *Miyazawa Kenji: meimetsu suru haru to shura* 宮沢賢治：明滅する春と修羅 (Tokyo: Sōkyū Shorin, 1993), 146-56.

[19] As to the etymology of the word, various theories have been put forth, but no one really knows where it comes from. Making the task even more complicated is the fact that Miyazawa altered slightly the notation of the word throughout his writing career. One of the more popular theories argues that Iihatov is a combination of the older *kana* spelling of Iwate (the *iha* of *Ihate*), an Esperanto-inspired variation of *te* (rendered as *to*), and the German suffix indicating place (vo). Thus, Iha-to-vo. For the purposes of clarity, I have chosen to stick with "Iihatov" in this essay as it most closely approximates the notation on the title of the *dōwa* collection.

of the socially entrenched representations of Iwate or Tōhoku (the region under which Iwate was so often subsumed) that would have been familiar to contemporary readers. As discussed earlier, the word was not used to signal a break from social reality entirely, but it certainly rendered enough of a split to open up a space of linguistic and mental difference. I would argue that such a space was critical to a strategy attempting to rethink (and represent) the particularity of the local landscape in ways that circumvented biased views bound to the center of literary and cultural production. Iihatov as it appears in the advertisement thus represents a two-pronged ideological stance, one that asserted the link between author and site of production (i.e., the rural provinces) as it simultaneously tried to sidestep conventional representations that might be attached to that site. And by conventional, I mean descriptions common to elite literary circles that reduced the periphery to a pure locus of tradition and nostalgia, or else subjected it to other less romantic forms of temporal displacement. Iihatov potentially served as a kind of representational filter for the landscape – a filter that provincialized, or de-privileged, those filters that had been made dominant and seemingly universal merely by their association with the center. And it did so not for the purpose of fantasy alone, but with a desire to enact real social change. As the text of the pamphlet made clear, "These stories have been presented so that they might become materials for forming a new, better world. Not an ashen-colored utopia [*yūtopia* ユートピア] kneaded together in a deformed way, but a miraculous development [*hatten* 発展] of the world itself that is yet unknown to this author."[20]

In the end, the strategy embodied in Iihatov and in the text of the advertisement pamphlet fell on deaf ears. *Chūmon no ōi ryōriten*'s position in the field of literary production did not allow for any kind of sustained dialogue to take place. Hidden in this "failure," however, at the intersection of literary production, paratextual media, and spatial location, we find the potential for adopting a provincializing strategy – in this case, one that sought to re-imagine the landscapes of Japan's modern periphery. How this strategy played out in both social practice and textual, as opposed to paratextual, form is something I treat at greater length in my dissertation. As a way of conclusion, it is telling to consider what happened in the one instance where Miyazawa's text was marketed through the center – specifically, in the January 1925 issue of the preeminent *dōwa* magazine *Akai tori* (Red Bird).[21] A passage in bold that dominates the single-page ad reads, "[This book] is a fabulous yacht that races across Tōhoku's vast fields of snow." In a separate passage, the ad

[20] *Kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, vol. 11, 389.

[21] For a description of the process by which this ad came to be, see Horio Seishi 堀尾青史, "*Chūmon no ōi ryōriten* kankō goro makki"『注文の多い料理店』刊行頃未記, in Tsuzukihashi, *'Chūmon no ōi ryōriten' kenkyū*, 68-73. Negotiations with *Akai tori*, if one could even call them that, apparently were handled entirely by the illustrator for Miyazawa's volume, Kikuchi Takeo.

describes the book as desirable for those who "truly want to savor Tōhoku." Where was Iihatov in all this? It had gone missing, replaced by a toponym from which the pamphlet had tried to distance itself. The dialogic and provincializing strategy it represented had been diffused, rendered invisible, and turned from an outward artistic movement from the periphery to a blatantly commodifying look back from the center.