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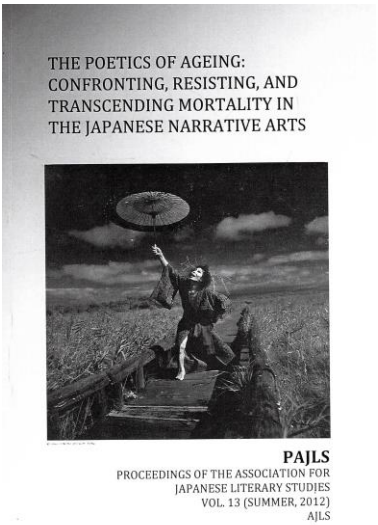

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The Nuclear Post-Exotic and Mutations of Gendered Aging in Ōhara Mariko's *Haiburiddo Chairudo*

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In an effort to explain the impetus behind her opening of a Twitter account by the handle name "*bunbukubu*" on July 3, 2011, contemporary science fiction writer and Japanese cyberpunk icon Ōhara Mariko 大原まり子 (b. 1959–) offered her sympathies for victims of the March 11 earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disasters, and expressed regret at having published two articles (one in 2008[1], the other in 2010[2]) for the Tōshiba Corporation's online public relations magazine『ゑれきてる』（*Elekitel*). In these pieces she had touted the wonders of nuclear power as sustainable, less taxing on the environment in terms of carbon dioxide emissions, "natural" in the sense that nuclear fusion drives the energy emitted by stars such as our sun, and so forth. Her Twitter activity, she explained, would be devoted on the other hand to exploring the "nuclear power problem" (原発問題), thus suggesting the use of social media as both a site for performing the 21st-century equivalent of a "tenkō" or "ideological reversal," and as a means of atonement. With Ōhara's announcement, instant electronic communication through the "cloud" no longer seemed suited solely for early or breaking news—rather, such social-networking sites could be mobilized as a medium of working through a sense of belatedness or remorse, of coming to a realization just a little too late. The temporality of the internet (among other things) has suddenly been forced to grow up in the aftermath of "3/11," and the artist Yokoo Tadanori explicitly compared this historic temporal re-alignment with a sense of aging

[1] Mariko Ōhara, "Kokunai hatsuden-ryō no yaku 3 wari o shimeru genshiryoku hatsuden: jōchōsei, tayōsei ga sasaeru shisutemu gijutsu," *Elekitel Technology Review*, no. 21 (2008), accessed February 2, 2012, http://elekitel.jp/elekitel/tec_review/2008/21/tec_21_a.htm.

[2] Mariko Ōhara, "Mizu o tsukuru, suiso o tsukuru: genshiryoku gijutsu no mirai," *Elekitel Technology Review*, no. 29 (2010), accessed February 2, 2012, http://elekitel.jp/elekitel/tec_review/2010/29/tec_29_a.htm.

and awareness of the proximity of death[3]. How did Ōhara Mariko, who for years has been seen as being on the vanguard of quite radical ideas concerning gender identities and science fiction, come to this point of apologizing for having been an apologist for the nuclear industry? Rather than constituting irreconcilable opposite positions, scientific and technological positivism (including optimism regarding the future promise of the nuclear industry) and Ōhara's brand of radically shifting cyborgian subjectivity expressed in her novels in fact share the same utopian strain. This is the case despite the latter's conscious postmodern attempts to subvert the linear temporal thrust of teleological worldviews that themselves had come to seem "aged" or outdated.

Born in 1959, educated in psychology at University of the Sacred Heart (Seishin joshi daigaku, 聖心女子大学) in Tokyo and coming of age during the feminist movements of the 1970s and the high-tech capitalist era of the 1980s, Ōhara Mariko is a feminist author devoted to interrogating Japanese femininity through "simulationism" (a term described by critic Kotani Mari as "the sampling, simulating, and remixing" that is a hallmark of postmodern culture).[4] In her essay entitled "Combini de sekkusu chenji" ("Sex Change at a Convenience Store"), Ōhara identifies femininity not in the ability to bear children (a more traditional, biologically essentialist assumption with an aura of ontological categorical stability), but in the ability to expunge painful experiences (to live in the present, switching playfully from one new thing to the next) and in a demonic (*akumateki*, 悪魔的) propensity to deviate or break away from systems and institutional structures (thus often perceived by the establishment as almost witch-like, shifty and suspect).[5] Perhaps in an ironic appropriation of Hasegawa Michiko's 1984 article "Karagokoro" ("The Chinese

[3] Tadanori Yokoo, "Ima o ikiru koto no tetsugaku," in *Shūkan New York Seikatsu* (January 1, 2012): 34.

[4] Kotani Mari, "Alien Spaces and Alien Bodies in Japanese Women's Science Fiction," in *Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams: Japanese Science Fiction from Origins to Anime*, eds. Christopher Bolton et al. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 60.

[5] Ōhara Mariko, "Kombini de sekkusu chenji," *Baiofeminizumu*, special issue of *Gendai shisō* 19:3 (1991): 150.

Mind"),[6] where she argues that Japan is culturally "feminine" enough not to need "foreign" feminist ideas such the promulgation of the Equal Employment Law, Ōhara pantomimes this "Japan as womanly" discourse. She does so to call attention to the fact that such characterizations are already implicated in the exoticized and relatively disempowered status of "Japan" within the orientalizing Euro-American gaze (そしてこの国は、とくに欧米型の文化に属する人々から見て悪魔的にうつる。。。宗教ナシ、企業がなければ根なし草。魔女のように業火に焼かれぬよう願うばかりなのだが).[7][8] Thus, she calls attention to the way Japan-as-feminine has and can continue to be potentially "targeted" in the manner Rey Chow has recently articulated in *The Age of the World Target*.[9] Japan has, in other words, already been "marked" as a target, already been burned at the stake as a "heretical witch" on the world stage. Ōhara's feminism has affinities with cyborg theory in many respects, including the latter's relatively techno-positivist slant. For instance, in the aforementioned essay, Ōhara fantasizes of being able to purchase a sex change easily at a convenience store.[10] Furthermore, Ōhara's remixing of gender is always intimately aware of and tied to contemporary geopolitics, and such geopolitical dynamics are often re-worked into her science fiction stories in the form of inter-galactic power struggles.

Not only is Ōhara Mariko known, together with Yumemakura Baku (b. 1951–), Kanbayashi Chōhei (b. 1953–), and Arai Motoko (b. 1960–), as representative of the "Third Generation" of SF writers in Japan, her work has garnered the attention of critics and of readers in publishing and in on-line subcultures for its cyborgian melding of complex psychoanalytic

[6] Hasegawa Michiko, *Karagokoro: Nihon seishin no gyakusetsu* (Chūō kōron, 1986).
[7] Ōhara, "Kombini," 151.
[8] Hasegawa's rhetoric and Ueno Chizuko's critique of it as reverse Orientalism dramatize why, in the Japanese context, an effective resistance against Orientalism leans towards a deconstruction of gender binaries (that is to say, post-gender).
[9] Rey Chow, *The Age of the World Target: Self-Referentiality in War, Theory and Comparative Work* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke UP, 2006), 25-44.
[10] Ōhara, "Kombini," 150.

re-workings of parent-child dynamics with gendered geo-political ironies, coupled with postmodern pastiche. The frequency and deliberateness with which protagonists shift genders in her stories certainly evince what one may call a "post-gender" sensibility. Moreover, I have argued elsewhere that Ōhara's texts re-work mechanisms of exoticism and eroticism by restlessly and dialectically shifting the lines between subjectivity and objectivity, the self and its Other(s).[11] This essay explores how these two aspects of her work are inflected by yet two more vectors: 1) the specter of the nuclear and 2) inverted or perverted temporalities of aging. This is particularly timely now, as the aforementioned triptych disasters of the earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima nuclear meltdowns exposed how a uniquely atomic Japan is rendered discursively as simultaneously child-like (e.g. like Murakami Takashi's "Little Boy," the Japanese nuclear industry's marketing of its "safe" nuclear energy technology to the public by using the text of "Alice in Wonderland," as reported in June 2011 in the *New York Times*)[12] and as senescent (discussions in the popular media of the denizens and victims of the Tohoku region as predominantly aged, descriptions of the design of the Fukushima No. 1 reactor model as being "ripe for retirement"). The orientalist and exoticist picture of Japan as always somehow a "latecomer" to modernity has mutated into the techno-orientalist vision of a society from which full "adult" subjectivity (akin to Kant's notion of "maturity" in his influential essay "Was ist Aufklärung?") has been bypassed into an accelerated and inauspicious sense of aging

[11] Sayumi Takahashi Harb, "Dark Constellations and Polymorphously-Perverse Utopias: Post-gender and the Post-exotic in Ohara Mariko's *Haiburiddo chairudo* (Hybrid Child)" (paper presented at the Conference on Exoticism / The Exotic, Beni Mellal, Morocco, April 21-22, 2010).

[12] See Takashi Murakami, *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture* (New York: Yale UP, 2005). Also, Norimitsu Onishi, '"Safety Myth' Left Japan Ripe for Nuclear Crisis," *New York Times*, June 24, 2011. Accessed June 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/25/world/asia/25myth.html?pagewanted+all.

toward apocalyptic death.[13] The mechanisms behind these kinds of discursive vectors in contemporary culture deserve further investigation and interrogation.

This paper seeks to re-frame and extend the existing readings of Ōhara's self-proclaimed signature text, *Hybrid Child* (1990), and in doing so, examines the relationship between post-gender and the post-exotic[14] as interdependent variables brought together by the (ever-decaying) memories and lived realities of nuclear and bio-technologies from the Asia-Pacific War to the Heisei era. In short, there is a "nuclear post-exotic" imaginary posited in Ōhara's text that provides a fruitful conceptual space for thinking through historically contextualized gendered generational conflicts, the collusion of childhood with old age at the expense of "normative" adulthood, the politics of regional and genetic "targeting" and the mechanisms of abjection. In its re-working of previously exotic spatial imaginaries into futuristic or extra-terrestrial realms and its self-reflexive perversion of Japanese orthography and the territorialized space of the printed page,[15]

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[13] Immanuel Kant, "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? (*Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?*)" *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, December 1784.

[14] Perhaps the most direct, concise formulation of the post-Exotic to date is to be found in Atef Laouyene's essay entitled "'I am no Othello. I am a lie'; Shakespeare's Moor and the Post-Exotic in Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North." While outlining post-Exoticism's affinities to post-Colonialism, Laouyene suggests that the post-exotic arises in self-conscious re-writings of Exoticist texts that ironically defamiliarize the reader from the very defamiliarization (what Peter Mason calls "decontextualization and recontextualization") that is the *sine qua non* of the Exotic. While one may argue about the details of Laouyene's formulation, nonetheless his theorization provides a useful starting point for thinking through the post-exotic. Atef Laouyene, "'I am no Othello. I am a lie'; Shakespeare's Moor and the Post-Exotic in Tayeb Salih's Season of Migration to the North," in *Native Shakespeares: Indigenous Appropriations on a Global Stage*, eds. Craig Dionne and Parmita Kapadia (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate, 2008), 217-18.

[15] One hallmark of Japanese science fiction is the liberal use of katakana loan-words from foreign (mainly Western) languages, and Ōhara's work is no exception. However, what sets Ōhara's work a bit apart is the frequent use of katakana script for native Japanese words (particularly

Ōhara's work simultaneously attempts to critique colonial, imperialist, essentialist and exoticist narratives of the gendered interaction of self and other, and proffers a new model of post-gendered, conflicted inter-generational subjectivity. However, this individualized semi-utopian post-gendered space is created at the cost of re-inscribing a kind of neo-Colonialism in the guise of an ontologically promiscuous techno-positivism, as Masao Miyoshi warned against so eloquently in 1993 in his eerily prescient essay, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State."[16] Thus, reading Ōhara's work can provide us with insights into not only the exhilarating possibilities of re-imagining (inter)subjectivities, but the limits and pitfalls of that endeavor for a feminist, post-exoticist project as well. Re-reading this text now in the early 2000s reveals to us how much the text has "aged" in this regard. It is precisely the newly-turned spotlight on the nuclear industry in Japan that allows us to re-visit this work in this way, from a different critical perspective.

Haiburiddo Chairudo (*Hybrid Child*) is a novel consisting of three sequential interconnected segments (the eponymous first section, "Haiburiddo Chairudo," the short middle segment entitled "Kokubetsu no aisatsu" or "Bidding Farewell," and the extensive final installment, "Aquaplanet"). The volume as a whole earned the fan-voted Seiun SF Award in 1991, and the "Aquaplanet" section had won the Seiun Award for short stories the year prior. Ōhara has stated in several different venues that this is the book that comes closest to representing her as a writer and as a person: in the afterword to the *bunkobon* edition for example, she writes, "this book remains, at the present moment, undoubtedly my most representative work…this is because *Haiburiddo Chairudo* is none

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adjectives and verbs). The net effect of this is that the reader is at times momentarily uncertain whether a word in katakana is completely invented, an esoteric word from a non-Japanese language, or a Japanese word in the guise of alien novelty. Even on the level of the written script, Ōhara's texts play with the reader's expectations of the boundary between domestic and foreign, the endotic and exotic.

[16] Masao Miyoshi, "A Borderless World? From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State," *Critical Inquiry* 19:4 (1993): 726-51.

other than myself (この本は、現在のところ、まちがいなく私の代表作である。。。ハイブリッドチャイルドは私自身だからだ)."[17] Critics such as Kotani have often read her works as 1) domestic dramas that "capture the intensity of love and conflict between mother and daughter living in the claustrophobic space of the house," and/or 2) exposés on the political problems surrounding the conflicts between Japanese and Western culture.[18] Kotani succinctly glosses the complex plot of *Haiburiddo-chairudo* and provides her interpretation of the text as follows.

> "Haiburiddo-chairudo" is a story about an immortal cyborg weapon, "Sample B," which can sample and simulate any object it chooses. The story begins when the weapon escapes from the military and goes into hiding in an occupied house… At the same time, this cyborg nature is also closely linked to the issue of femininity. Sample B, after all, not only intrudes into a house where a mother and a daughter are fighting fiercely, it also eats the corpse of the daughter after she is killed by the mother and buried in the basement, and takes on the daughter's form.
>
> With the simulation of the daughter by Sample B, the fighting between the mother and the daughter recommences and the murder is eventually brought to light. The truth behind the murder cannot be revealed until the daughter turns into a monster-cum-weapon, finally exposing the mother's monstrous nature…This mother-daughter battle calls to mind the conflict between two actual modes of living among women: one is the postmodern daughter, who survives by adapting to different situations and by transforming herself; the other is the phallic mother, who replaces the absent patriarchal

[17] Ōhara Mariko, "Bunkobon no tame no atogaki," *Haiburiddo chairudo* (Hayakawa, 1993), 501.
[18] Kotani, "Alien Spaces," 60.

> authority figure by becoming one with the home and by becoming the ruler of the feminized family space. The race for survival between the two female modes—one who follows the flow of things and one who merges herself with the home—appears in Ōhara's other works as well . . . . The monstrous female identity called "hybrid child" embodies the way of life led by postmodern women, who try to transform themselves by placing themselves in different situations of shifting allegiances. The "hybrid-child," through her confrontations, exposes the "traditional female image" of the Japanese mother, whose survival tactic is to embrace and perform the same role over and over.[19]

According to this interpretation, traditional femininity is not only one of dominion and control over the domestic realm, it performs like the agent of some driven, insistent superego manifesting a post-traumatic (or perhaps specifically postwar) repetition compulsion. In fact, one could read the mother here as analogous to a certain post-1945 type that is the counterpart to the absent *sarariiman* father of the Shōwa era: the education mama (*kyōiku mama*, 教育ママ). In one of the first pages of the book, the first person narrator is none other than this mother, the mother of the mysterious daughter figure "Yona," or Jonah (the biblical reference is intentional, as the opening page of the novel includes a quote from the Book of Jonah 2:10: "And the LORD spoke unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land"). After murdering Jonah, the mother had distilled her daughter's spirit into the mainframe of an electronic housekeeping system. The following exchange between the mother and the computerized (and contained) version of her daughter reads eerily, like the dream-fantasy of a bourgeois "education mama."

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[19] Kotani, "Alien Spaces," 60-61.

> I chose for the soundtrack the "Three Gymnopédies" by Erik Satie.
>
> "Keep on playing endlessly until I say it's enough. It's ok if you put in some variations."
>
> ["Ok, I'll do that. Mama…perhaps I do have some musical talent ? <laugh>"][20]

Furthermore, the circumstance that the mother has set up here is one that seeks to evade aging, for just as the daughter-as-housekeeping-software remains permanently arrested at the age of youthful innocence, so too the mother gains a kind of immortality and permanent youth. This is because Jonah is not only her daughter, but a likeness of her own self as a young girl.[21] Certainly Ōhara herself has encouraged readings of the text along the same lines as Kotani's, as a story about the power struggles between mother and daughter. In an interview with Tony Sanchez for the French sci-fi website ACTUSF, for example, she described the book as a truthful tale of a young girl gaining independence from her mother (若い女性の母親からの自立の物語で、ウソ偽りのない作品).[22] While Kotani's above reading is provocative in so far as it identifies the condition of the post-war mother-daughter relation as a major element in Ōhara's work, it does not integrate or explicate some of the other major elements in the novel, such as the presence of a military figure with a spiritual "god" at the helm (perhaps a reference to Japanese military under state-sponsored Shintoist emperor worship as well as a nod to the Crusades), or Sample B's choice not to be part of the military, but to instead opt for a fugitive life of a perpetual renegade draft-dodger in exile. Nor does it account for the other encounters between Sample B no. 3 and other characters, such as the dying cyborg Shiba, or Sample B's successor, Sample B no. 13, both of whom are gendered male, however ambiguously. Furthermore, in the third section entitled "Aquaplanet," Sample B no. 3 as daughter transfers the mother's

[20] Ōhara, *Haiburiddo chairudo*, 13.
[21] Ōhara, *Haiburiddo chairudo*, 14.
[22] Ōhara Mariko, interview by Tony Sanchez, http://www.actusf.com/spip/article-7688.html (October 10, 2011).

soul into a man-eating parasitic giant flower which Sample B no. 3 then nurtures in the palm of her hand (in essence, the daughter now gives birth to her own mother)—this "mother" then becomes too large due to voracious over-eating (recalling Jonah's mother's bulimic binge-eating episodes in the first section of the novel), prompting Sample B no. 3 (the daughter) to kill it. After this seemingly revengeful matricide, Sample B no. 3 then starts to balloon in size herself, therefore further blurring the boundary between the identities of mother and daughter.[23] In fact, the narrative voice and point of view shift with almost every section of the book, mirroring the kaleidoscopic shifting of identities taken on by Sample B. Such an intertwining of identity and subjectivity complicates Kotani's reading that presupposes a relatively stable generational separation between the traditional Japanese phallic mother and the postmodern daughter.

I'd like to identify here four major, intertwined aspects of the novel that deserve further consideration:

1) the blurring of subjectivity and identity, specifically of the usual relations between subject and object;
2) the theme of maternity, pregnancy and birth;
3) the ubiquitous leitmotifs of nuclear energy, radiation mutation, and shapeshifting;
4) subversions of linear temporalities of aging.

Aspect 2) relates to 1) in so far as the pregnant body often confounds the clear division between subject and object, for the pregnant woman is both herself and other at the same time. A pregnant person even confounds the logic of mathematics, as Kristeva, Irigaray and others have shown, by being both 1 person and 2 persons at the same time.[24] Lacanian psychoanalyst, theorist and artist Bracha Ettinger has extended the ethical possibilities of

[23] One could read this cannibalistic matricidal sequence as articulating the paradoxical trap of women's identities in a so-called "post-feminist," global capitalist world of conspicuous consumption.

[24] See, for example, Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 237-70.

this blurring of subject and object within the maternal womb in her articulation of the "matrixial borderspace." In taking the prenatal uterine condition ("The Matrix") as a non-biologically-essentialist symbol for a state of co-emerging inter-linked subjectivities, Ettinger allows space for cultural and artistic creation that is Beyond-the-Phallus without being reduced to either the Phallic Symbolic Order or the Real. She makes room for the possibility that the maternal can be cultural—i.e., deeply involved in the artistic process. Mary Klages has succinctly articulated how Lacanian psychoanalysts have understood this aforementioned relationship between the Phallic order and the Real.

> Paradoxically—as if all this wasn't bad enough!—the Phallus and the Real are pretty similar. Both are places where things are whole, complete, full, unified, where there's no lack, or Lack. Both are places that are inaccessible to the human subject-in-language. But they are also opposite: the Real is the maternal, the ground from which we spring, the nature we have to separate from in order to have culture; the Phallus is the idea of the Father, the patriarchal order of culture, the ultimate idea of culture, the position which rules everything in the world.[25]

In contrast to the traditional view of this difference, Ettinger seeks to complicate such dualistic notions as the antagonism between the Phallus and the Real which set the maternal in definitional opposition to the patriarchal/Phallic – such bifurcated border-drawings, she would argue, are themselves immersed in Phallic logic. The matrixial borderspace, by contrast, enables a "sharing across a border" between co-emerging partial subjects, without the unbalanced power differential of subject-object relations that too often translate into colonial intrusion and trauma. This notion of a matrixial borderspace obviously has striking implications for opening up new possibilities of imagining

[25] Mary Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 86.

the encounter with the Other not so much as a binary separation (between self and other), but as a dynamic relation between two partial selves that come into being together in an intersubjective sharing (just as a mother and her fetus share nutrients and blood across the placenta and umbilical cord). In other words, the matrixial borderspace can become one avenue towards the post-exotic. In terms of Ōhara's *Hybrid Child*, it is true that the mother-daughter relationship begins in a combative interdependent mode, but the end of the story can clearly be read as a redemptive resolution to this power struggle in favor of a matrixial melding-without-subsuming of multiple subjectivities. In this sense, one could interpret the aforementioned quote from the Book of Jonah which opens Ōhara's novel as a reference to the prophet's matrixial rebirth from the belly of a whale. That is a key moment in the biblical story wherein the heretofore seemingly relentless God is revealed to be a merciful one, grooming Jonah to overcome his immediate, unpolished reactions to life and death and to save the people of Nineveh. What seems abject at first (e.g. vomit, giving birth) is shown to be none other than a gateway to salvation. The transposition of Jonah's gender from a masculine one in the Old Testament to a feminine one in Ōhara's novel (as well as *Hybrid Child*'s dramatization of mother-daughter cannibalism and consumption) leads one to read the latter text as a power-play oscillating between the possibility and impossibility of the matrixial borderspace as a post-exotic overcoming of both the colonial exotic and binary definitions of gender.

By re-thinking bodily abjection in terms of the matrixial borderspace, we can come to at least a working interpretation of the ubiquity of the motifs of nuclear weapons, post-apocalyptic genetic monstrosities and mutations, and shapeshifting in Ōhara's text (aspect 3 above). In the background of the story looms a prior nuclear apocalypse, as mentioned in the description of the ラマダ ("*lamada*"), a carnivorous animal domesticated for its tasty, nutritious flesh. The text explains that *lamada* endured and evolved due to their hearty survival rates and ability to withstand radioactivity after a destructive nuclear explosion[26] The *lamada* is one of the organisms that Sample B no. 3 samples and morphs

[26] Ōhara, *Haiburiddo chairudo*, 23.

into. Sample B no. 3's shape-shifting abilities (which naturally again confound any clear line delineating subject vs. object and derails our expectations of any stable, fixed identity) are enabled precisely by the cyborg weapon's nuclear-fueled heart. This atomic energy allows it to sample genetic data (e.g. DNA sequences) and re-write its own phenotypic shape and characteristics in keeping with the newly adopted code. Furthermore, Sample B no. 3 is able to find beauty and joy for mutants whose DNA has been damaged by the interminable war between humans and the Adeopteron machines, when all others only see utter abjection, suffering and despair.[27] As the only country to have fallen victim to the use of nuclear weapons in the context of war and as the site of the ongoing Fukushima nuclear reactor meltdowns, Japan arguably has quite a special relationship with the notion of the nuclear bodily abject. Ōhara seems to suggest here a parallel between Sample B no. 3 (having been groomed as a weapon and yet rejecting that interpellation) and postwar (Cold War) Japan itself,[29] with its increasing reliance on fission energy. Or perhaps to put it another way, the novel is possibly suggesting a way for Japan to re-fashion its identity, blur its boundaries and to survive in the postmodern age, circumventing the otherizing, exoticizing gaze that has heretofore been directed towards it. Like the metaphor of Japan as a "demon witch" in the "Kombini de sekkusu chenji" article noted above, Sample B no. 3 is similarly hunted down as a dangerous anomaly, bestowed with cutting edge nuclear capabilities and powers and yet not "falling in line" with the rest of the universe.

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[27] Early on in the "Aquaplanet" section of the novel, Jonah lands on the planet Caritas accompanied by Shiba. There, she sympathizes with the abjected denizens of the decrepit central city, those mutant organisms victimized by nuclear molecular re-structuring. Ōhara, *Haiburiddo chairudo*, 143, 155-156.

[28] I employ this term in the famous Althusserian sense to describe the process by which ideology "names, " hails," or "recruits" subjects for its purposes into an ideological state apparatus. Louis Althusser "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses, " *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly, 1971), 174.

[29] It is interesting to note that *Haiburiddo chairudo* appeared shortly after the fall of the "Iron Curtain" in 1989.

Radioactivity and nuclear technology are the very things that enable Sample B no. 3's shapeshifting and gender-bending, and it is this post-gender complexity that complicates facile characterizations of "Japan as shōjo" 少女 or as a young girl. Fantasy/Sci-fi critic Ishidō Ran does not dispute that the protagonists of many of Ōhara's works (particularly those published in the first decade or so of her career) can be interpreted as embodying a species of culturally-coded "shōjo"-ness characterized by diverse stereotypical traits such as purity and fastidiousness, powerlessness and evanescence, capriciousness and slight devilishness that condense stereotypical notions of "feminine" cruelty and beauty.[30] Nonetheless, he notes that some of Ōhara's most well-known fiction after 1990 feature idiosyncratic shōjo figures (citing the character of Jonah from *Haiburiddo Chairudo* as one example) who contain within them the contradictory duality of simultaneously being and not-being a shōjo. In this way, he argues, Ōhara establishes a kind of dialectic of shōjo-ness-as-humanity: その（二重存在）がとりもなおさず、少女として描かれる存在の喚起するイメージが少女性なるものを規定するわけではないこと、少女性と見えるものが普遍的な人間性でもあり得ることを示している (this is precisely what this "duality" points us to: that the image evoked by those entities depicted as shōjo do not define shōjo-ness *per se,* and that that which appears at first as shōjo-ness may actually be universal aspects of human nature).[31] In fact the very tripartite structure of *Haiburiddo chairudo* as a whole, as well as the narrative vectors within each of the three sections, suggest a kind of Hegelian dialectic. It is no coincidence that the Sample B model endowed with a consciousness is the third machine in the series. In an ironic reversal of Hegel's own Eurocentrism, this dialectic is mobilized in the text against the very kinds of exoticizing logics that 19th-century European philosophies of history played into.

Ōhara's notion of the post-gender post-exotic is thus built upon a kind of techno-positivism about the nuclear age. In some scenes, nuclear radiation and resulting mutation actually cause a

[30] Ran Ishidō, "Shōjo = Ōhara Mariko," *Kokubungaku: kaishyaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 41:10 (1996): 62.
[31] Ran Ishidō, "Shōjo = Ōhara Mariko," 63.

sort of immaculate conception: new life forms emerge from the damaged irradiated body in a heretofore unseen model of pregnancy that is no longer limited to the female anatomy. One might thus see how this feminist author might have ended up writing propagandistic articles for the nuclear industry, and interestingly, she is still using technology (in the form of new modes of electronic social communication) to correct her "mistake." In yet another ironic twist, it could precisely be the image of "Japan as nuclear" (for better or for worse) that may short-circuit the world's ability to continue to exoticize it after 3/11/11. One may well wonder whether Ōhara's science fictional universe has fallen into the trap of reverse techno-Orientalism in an effort to combat the bifurcating gendered logic of exoticism.

Finally, let us look at the fourth aspect, that of aging, and how it fits in discursively with the nuclear post-exotic and with post-gender concerns. One of the things that makes *Haiburiddo chairudo* a challenge to read is its subversion of linear temporality, of the usual order of cause and effect. For example, there is a major character and creator-figure in the novel who is an 800-year-old oracle worshipped as the supreme commander of the military. This chronically lonely oracle is born as an old man, and spends the next 800 years growing younger and younger, much like Benjamin Button. But even this life trajectory is not easy to follow, as the military oracle prophesies his own birth to a woman (Major Dana Hess) who would become his mother. In what Douglas Hofstadter might call a "strange loop," the oracle both causes and witnesses his own birth, and the cycle begins anew. Thus, he is in effect immortal, and always somehow an aged immortal at that.[32] The vanishing point of his life in which he would be an infant 800 years into the future, he prophesies to be a

[32] Douglas Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic, 1979). Strange loops and self-reflexivity in writing have often been deployed as a way of playing with or circumventing the seeming inexorability of linear time in literature. The most famous practitioner of this technique perhaps was Jorge Luis Borges. In his story "The Garden of the Forking Paths," Borges notes the possibility of a story which has no end, the story of Scheherazade and the 1,001 Nights in which the princess tells the story of her own self telling stories (Scheherazade within Scheherazade ad infinitum).

total nuclear apocalypse in which all humanity is burned away by the enemy Adeopteron machines in a neo-nuclear apocalypse.[33] But somehow this future is short-circuited by the aforementioned matrixial strange loop, and the oracle remains perpetually aged. In other words, he seems at first glance to be the opposite of the image of the shōjo, the young girl, as characterized by Jonah and Sample B no. 3. But given that even Sample B no. 3-as-shōjo is always already a mother and daughter at the same time due to "her" genetic sampling and mutation (creating another strange loop), shōjo-ness in *Haiburiddo chairudo* is somehow an aged (or at least not completely youthful) shōjo-ness. Furthermore both Sample B no. 3 and "her" creator, the 800-year old oracle, share a matrixial relationship to their own mothers and themselves insofar as they have a hand in their own births. In this kind of universe in which time is as malleable as a molten metal Möebius strip, youth and age, childhood and parenthood become radically relativized. Though Ōhara's science fictional universe is filled with intense cruelties such that one cannot exactly call it "utopian," one might, nonetheless, see how attractive it might seem in comparison to a world in which one cannot turn back time, cannot return to a point before March 11, 2011, and re-write things such that hope for the future no longer has to hinge upon the beating of a nuclear heart.

[33] Ōhara, *Haiburiddo chairudo*, 218.

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