
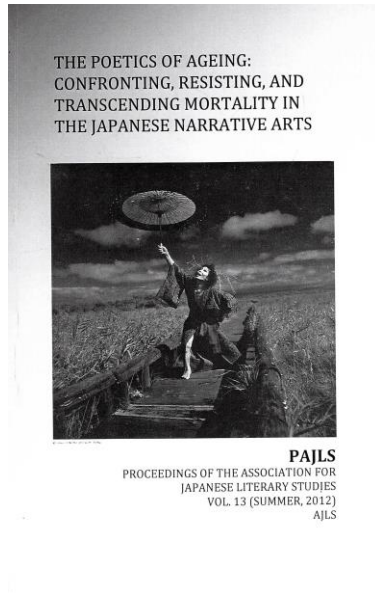


“Under Surveillance: The Blighted Body of the Aging Woman”

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Under Surveillance: The Blighted Body of the Aging Woman

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Old age—as identified in Michel Foucault’s 1967 essay, “Of Other Spaces” (*Des Espace Autres*), as a “heterotopia,” a “counter-site” in which “all other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted,”¹—is a repeated trope in the work of post-war woman novelist, Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986). The following is an analysis of the impact of aging on the protagonists of three of Enchi’s narratives written during the 1950s, a period of prodigious textual production for the writer. The texts, in chronological order of publication, are “Himojii tsukihi” (*Days of Hunger*, 1953), “Yō” (*Enchantress*, 1956) and “Mimi yōraku” (*The Earring*, 1957). In each of these narratives the body of the woman protagonist is somehow blighted by the process of aging, often in association with or accelerated by a medical condition or medical intervention. None of the women discussed is in advanced old age. Nevertheless, all violate the physical ideal of the feminine body. In the case of one, this violation renders her literally untouchable—in the eyes of her husband at least—consigned to the caste-like status of women lacking reproductive use-value in the libidinal economy of post-war Japan.² The impoverished circumstance of another of the women featured in these Enchi texts impels her frail and work-worn body to a state of “silent” premature aging. This woman chooses silence in order to preserve the finite stocks of physical

¹ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias,” translated by Jay Miskowiec. Originally published in *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité*, October, 1984. Accessed on 16 September, 2011,

<http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>.

² The notorious 2001 comments by then governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō (b. 1932-), regarding the social superfluity of women beyond reproductive age suggest that this ‘untouchability’ remains in some quarters a feature of the contemporary era.

energy required to fuel her drudgery-ridden life. When we recall, however, that Foucault's introduction to *The History of Sexuality* (1976, *Histoire de la sexualité*) cites "taboo, non-existence and silence" as elements of the sexual repression that characterises the modern era,³ we cannot but associate this woman's choice with the social restrictions placed on her sexual identity. We shall see that these restrictions operate in the case of each protagonist discussed.

Given the foregrounding in each narrative of ill health or physical imperfection, I will draw on Foucault's *Birth of the Clinic* (1963, *Naissance de Clinique*) to order my discussion of Enchi's texts. In his account of the construction of the "clinical" as this applies to "the institutional spatialization of disease,"⁴ Foucault repeatedly returns to the surveillance of the body through the medical gaze and the classification of corporeal inadequacy. In this sense, and the sense that his work provides insights into the manner in which the protagonists in Enchi's narratives are socially constructed as flawed and deserving of contempt, the French thinker's 1963 critique of the "archaeology of medical perception"⁵ provides a useful framework with which to scaffold the discussion below.

One of the two great modern myths profiled by Foucault in *The Birth of the Clinic* is that of the "total disappearance of disease in an untroubled, dispassionate society restored to its original state of health."⁶ While not articulated by Foucault as much, the Biblical reference is obvious. This myth therefore has particular significance for women, given their implication in the Fall. While the Christian narrative of woman as the source of human corruption may not have originated in Japan, organized religion in that site, too, regards the woman's body as *kegare* or pollution, both defiled and defiling, a threat to the perfection of the masculine physique. The emergence of a "modernized" medical profession in Meiji Japan that replicated a western medical system

³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: The Will to Knowledge* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 5.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception*, translated by A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

⁵ This is the subtitle of Foucault's *Clinic* text.

⁶ Foucault, *Clinic*, 31-32.

which, under the influence of Judeo-Christian values, saw women consigned to the margins, ensured that modern medical practices in Japan, also, would devalue and constrain the feminine. Hidemi Kanazu, for example, details how the importation of “modern” midwifery practices and the criminalization of abortion in Meiji Japan effectively delivered control of the bodies of the women of the empire into the hands of the men of the Meiji state.⁷ Furthermore, the “leaky” nature—to borrow from Margaret Shildrik⁸—of women’s bodies and their failure, through an “unhygienic” cyclical expulsion of reproductive blood, to conform to the systematic demand for the body to be disease-free ensured a need for the strict management of female corporeality. This was accompanied by a refusal on the part of significant males to concede women the right to a sexual identity. I refer here to hegemonic discourse rather than lived experience, particularly in sites that are distant from the centre.⁹

Before considering Enchi’s texts further, it is important to note that the women whom she creates do not always accept their blighted status without resistance. That is to say that, in spite of the fact that one woman protagonist is locked into an inescapable existence of drudgery and despair through a combination of social expectation and plain bad luck, none of the three are “victims” in the sense of passively enduring their lot. In this respect, we might consider observations made by Jad Adams regarding the manner in which, although exploited, the hysterics of Salpêtrière Hospital—made famous by one of the great western medical men of the nineteenth century, Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893)—

⁷ Kanazu, Hidemi, “The Criminalization of Abortion in Japan,” *U.S. Japan Women’s Journal* no. 24 (September, 2003): 35-58.

⁸ The term comes from the title of Shildrik’s 1997 book, *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Posmodernism and (Bio)ethics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

⁹ See, for example, Mark Driscoll’s discussion of the strong hysteric woman in the colonies: “Seeds and (Nest) Eggs of Empire,” in *Gendering Modern Japanese History*, edited by Barbara Molony and Kathleen Uno (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), 191-224.

were nevertheless adept at exploiting the system themselves.¹⁰ There is always a danger that acknowledging resistance can lead to a denial of oppression. Nevertheless, at least two of Enchi's protagonists, while restrained by the social demands on their bodies, actively extract retribution for the burden imposed upon them by deflecting this to some extent onto men in their lives.

The option of retribution is not, however, available to the unfortunate Saku, protagonist of Enchi's 1953 narrative, "Himojii tsukihi." This woman is blighted from birth by an *aza*, or birthmark. I referred above to Foucault's repeated discussion of "the medical gaze" in the *Birth of the Clinic*. In this text, we see the pitiful example of a woman who internalises this gaze to judge herself as corrupt by the presence of such a mark, located just above her left buttock. As a result, although it was hidden by clothing, she "always felt, even when walking down the street, that the mark was staining the outside of her kimono." The sense is so overpowering that, although "not unpleasant to look at," her face had become "naturally aged" through the "constant stress"¹¹ caused by her physical state.

An initial reading might interpret this fear as self-inflicted. However, I would argue that there can be no self-inflicted loathing without a corresponding state of social disapproval. Saku's consciousness of her body as abnormal was instigated when as a child she accompanied her mother to the public bathhouse. Here, another child called out, "Look, that girl has blood on her back. It's a wound."¹² Of course, this cry to some extent expresses the natural curiosity of childhood. However, I would argue that Enchi, in fact, uses this voice of innocence as a narrative strategy to contradictorily convey the strongly condemnatory hegemonic "word."¹³ As demonstrated by Tsukamoto Shinya's film *Gemini*

¹⁰ Adams, Jad, Review of *Medical Muses* by Asti Hustvedt, in *The Guardian* (on-line). Friday 15 July, 2011. Accessed September, 16, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/jul/15/medical-muses-asti-hustvedt-review>.

¹¹ Enchi Fumiko, "Himojii tsukihi," in *Enchi Fumiko shū*. Chikuma shobō, 1959, 297-306: 298.

¹² Enchi Fumiko, "Himojii," 298.

¹³ I am using this term in the Kristevan semiotic sense of the word as phallogocentric law.

(1999, Sōseji), which tells of a child surreptitiously abandoned at birth when tainted by a birthmark, the *aza* is associated with pollution and social disgrace.¹⁴ Furthermore, Enchi has the child mistake the birthmark for “blood,” a metonym for the menstrual blood that until recently damned all women, in spite of the fact that the menstrual cycle was envied by some men.¹⁵ It is this mark of blood that immediately draws the line of the gaze of the observing child. Although the mother of the accuser restrains her son, the child speaks the law of a society seeking a disease-free, physically blight-free body.

Saku’s lack of self-worth leads her into a disastrous marriage. Naokichi, the girls school teacher who is Saku’s prospective husband, has a heavy provincial accent and an air of self-importance that he buttresses by vilifying others. When Saku twice tries to refuse the match, the go-between cites the birthmark, implying that this is Saku’s only chance for marriage. In the same way that the cry of the child referred to above expresses social condemnation, the go-between here articulates not merely Saku’s personal fear, but the social censure of a woman so marked. Destabilised by the matchmaker’s overt reference to the physical flaw that haunts her, Saku accepts the match and thus finds herself as if having “forgotten something, yet is nevertheless unable to alight from a racing train.”¹⁶ This train ride continues for the next thirty years of her life.

During this period, Saku’s existence is harsh. In the pre-war era, the miserly Naokichi withholds money from Saku even for necessities such as food. With the family penniless at the end

¹⁴ See also Edward Fowler’s reference to the birthmark that marks the doctor as *hisabetsu buraku* in Tokuda Shūsei’s 1896 text, “Yabu kōji.” “Buraku in Modern Literature: Texts and Contexts,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 26:1 (Winter, 2000): 1-39: 11.

¹⁵ See Donald Roden, “Taisho Culture and the Problem of Gender Ambivalence” in *Culture and Identity*, ed. Thomas Rimer (Princeton University Press, 1990), 51. Here Roden discusses a Kyoto University professor’s obsession with a young woman in his neighbourhood that extended to his keeping a meticulous record of her menstrual cycle almost as if he himself had experienced her various bodily processes.

¹⁶ Enchi Fumiko, “Himōji,” 299.

of the war, it is Saku who collects material from the surrounding area to construct and begin operating a small shop that, while initially successful, is eventually unable to compete with the better resourced businesses that emerge with the post-war economic recovery. These difficulties, however, pale beside those associated with Saku's treatment at the hands of her children.

The relationship between Saku and her offspring is reminiscent of the *haha-mono* movie genre that depicts the tensions that exist between the hard-working war-time or immediate post-war mother and her ungrateful offspring.¹⁷ Saku has a termagant-like elder daughter, Katsu, while the second daughter, Tomie, is sullen and withdrawn. Disillusioned as she is with her daughters, Saku's great hope lies in her son. This hope is shattered, however, when the boy makes a suggestion so shocking that Saku can only retreat into silence for the remainder of her abject life. The suggestion that astounds and terrifies Saku is that the family, in effect, murder the father. Revealed as a sexual harasser following his marriage to Saku, in the post-war era Naokichi can only find night-school work, the wages of which barely cover his living expenses. Just as Saku resolves to evict her financially and emotionally incompetent partner from the family's "barrack"-style home, however, Naokichi collapses and becomes partially paralysed. When a gas tap is installed into the bedroom to facilitate Saku's boiling water to bathe her incontinent husband, the couple's son, Kōichi, suggests that they kill the father by leaving this tap on. Desperate—through her innate sense of right and wrong rather than because of any affection for her spouse—to ensure that nothing untoward befalls Naokichi, Saku becomes the butt of the cruel humour of her bad-natured children, who, in a play on the expression, "filial piety," joke meanly about her "stupid husband piety."¹⁸ The mother's humiliation in this respect is evident from the outset of the text when, in the opening scenes, she bathes her disabled husband in the outside bathhouse constructed in the tiny available space behind the family dwelling. Here, as, naked herself, she proceeds to wash excreta from

¹⁷ See Ian Buruma, *The Japanese Mirror* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 24-9.

¹⁸ Enchi Fumiko, "Himojii," 305.

Naokichi's "legs and hips, slackened like wrinkled cloth,"¹⁹ the door of the cubicle-like bathhouse bursts opens and the eldest daughter, Katsu, peering through the steam, throws some contemptuous comment at her parents. As the girl leaves, Saku realises that, rather than the father, the target of the young woman's loathing is the sight of her mother "as if captured exactly in a photograph, crouched down, washing the lower half of Naokichi's body."²⁰

In this image, we see in Katsu's gaze, as in the gaze of the child at the public bath, the social condemnation visited on the blighted woman. However, where the child merely identified Saku's physical flaw, the contempt of the daughter, Katsu, is related to Saku's association with the father, an association which, as readers know, is the result of the mark on Saku's body. Thus Enchi constructs the complex image of the woman who, while blighted herself, has this blight magnified by assuming the shame of the blighted male, the physical inadequacies of whom become not merely his own, but those of the woman caring for him.

If Saku's blighted body is backgrounded by ingrate children and a miserly partner's harrying of other women, "Yō" sees the woman's blighted body presented in the context of the male interest in erotica. This narrative is very much about the gaze and manner in which surveillance impacts women. The protagonist, Chigako, is married to a minor bureaucrat, Keisaku, a collector of curios and erotica, consumption of the latter being the ultimate expression of the hegemonic male gaze. In spite of what one would imagine is an educative element in material of this nature, Keisaku is one of the many Enchi males who lacks finesse in his relations with his wife. As a result, she has never once known "the moments of happiness that a woman could supposedly find with a man."²¹ In the immediate post-war period—at which time Chigako is, readers are told, "beautiful" and "familiar with life abroad"²²—the couple need funds for medical care for their

¹⁹ Enchi Fumiko, "Himójii," 297.

²⁰ Enchi Fumiko, "Himójii," 297.

²¹ Enchi Fumiko, "Enchantress," trans. John Bestor, *Japan Quarterly* 5:3 (1958): 339-358: 345.

²² Enchi Fumiko, "Enchantress," 342.

daughter. Rather than have her husband sell a favourite Ming vase, Chigako reluctantly agrees to earn money by translating for the titillation of foreigners a booklet on honeymoon practices in Japan. Although repulsed by both the attitude of her husband and the foreign agent who arranges the transaction, as she immerses herself in the text Chigako experiences what we might, at the risk of being clichéd, refer to as a sexual awakening. Thus, we are told that, “her whole being now thrilled at the suggestion that [a man and a woman could find moments of happiness] through an intercourse of the flesh.”²³ With this new sense of sexual identity comes an assertiveness in her relations with Keisaku which, paradoxically, leads to her avoiding physical relations with her sexually inept husband. When, following the departure from home of both daughters, Keisaku awkwardly displays signs of a “growing familiarity,”²⁴ Chigako is fearful of the intimacy that might transpire and insulates herself in domestic territory designated as off-limits to her hapless spouse.

We might consider the considerably more complex depiction of this blighted woman in comparison with the abject Saku of “Himogiji tsukihi.” Saku is given no respite. When after spending thirty years in a grossly unsatisfactory marriage she finally decides to assert herself, fate intervenes and she is left with a disabled husband whom she must both care for and protect from attack by her own children. We are not surprised when she literally dies of overwork, slumped across the laundry tub where she has been toiling over her incontinent husband’s excreta-caked clothing and bedding. Chigako, however, has more options through financial security and moves swiftly to function, if not as a fully “modern” post-war woman, then at least as one who has the capacity to make decisions about her own life. In this text, furthermore, Enchi again profiles the decaying body of the male.

One of the most grimly humorous episodes of the narrative has Chigako reflecting on the mealtime circumstances of herself and her husband. Noticing that her Japanese classics tutor, a former Imperial Army soldier who experienced the trials of post-war Soviet internment, has lost all his teeth, Chigako questions the

²³ *Ibid.*, 345.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

man about his wife's response to the fact that "his mouth [is] stuffed with plastic." Enchi's narrator then comments:

In fact, Chigako was thinking not so much of [her tutor's] teeth as of an ironical discovery she had made concerning her own and Keisaku's teeth recently. Keisaku was ten years her senior, and for long had been having his teeth treated in all kinds of ways in an effort to keep them. As if to catch up with him, Chigako had had all her own out also [...] Here they were then, she thought [...] pecking away at the same kinds of foods and pursing their old mouths, ill-fitted with the same kind of false teeth. And the hatefulness of growing old together would prey on her until she all but moaned out loud."²⁵

The passage is significant in that it confirms that, while Chigako is blighted, the man to whom she is married is equally marked.

Adroit though she may be in eluding Keisaku's embrace, Chigako cannot, however, escape the regulatory surveillance of the male gaze. While each must deal with ill-fitting false teeth, it is Chigako who endures the scrutiny of her husband regarding the physical impact of aging. One evening, Keisaku observes that Chigako's hair has become "awfully thin at the front." When Chigako questions the comment, Keisaku announces that her hair loss is particularly evident in natural light. "There's a bit in one of Sōseki's novels about a husband who complains because his wife's getting bald," he continues. "Well, I got a bit of a shock myself today. Have to get some hair tonic or something I thought."²⁶ The power of this gaze and its capacity to incite panic is evident in Chigako's response. Although "never before [...]" aware of growing old," once Keisaku comments as he does, Chigako obsessively—and grotesquely—sets about attempting to restore her youth through artificial means. Seated before an array

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 354-5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 346.

of creams and cosmetics, as well as the hair tonic purchased by Keisaku, Chigako applies “herself assiduously to the task of restoring her youth” with a vague sense “that unless she made herself up as she was doing now she would reproach herself in vain later.”²⁷ In the “opaque, frosted glass-like light of the rainy season,” Enchi tells us, “[Chigako’s] made-up face seemed to blur into a strange, ageless youthfulness.” This is in spite of the fact that the “click” of her teeth “beneath the pitiful camouflage and the colorlessness of the short hair where the dye had worn off constantly appalled her with [its] reminder of reality.”²⁸

Of course, we have seen literary representations of males who have grotesquely striven to achieve a physical ideal, including the unfortunate Gustave Aschenbach in Thomas Mann’s great classic, *Death in Venice* (1912, *Der Tod in Venedig*).²⁹ Although he roundly condemns an aging, made-up dandy whom he observes carousing with young men in the opening section of the text, in the second half of the novel Aschenbach himself engages in a series of vain and pathos-laden strategies to recapture his youth. Rather than being a response to criticism or surveillance, however, Aschenbach is motivated by longing for the beautiful boy who has captured his heart. “Yō” concludes with Keisaku berating a couple who are making love at the back entrance of his and Chigako’s house. His anger upon discovering a real-life display of the activities featured in his prized erotic texts is an ironic comment on his own sexual inadequacy. Enchi’s narratives well demonstrate, however, that this in no way disqualifies Keisaku from passing condemnatory comment on the woman’s aging body.

“Mimi yōraku” is the most complex of the three texts being discussed. In this work, both the clinical and the gaze are skilfully amalgamated by Enchi in her representation of the beautiful and successful businesswomen, Takiko. Following the rigors of the war, Takako becomes ill—perhaps like the real-life Enchi herself, with uterine cancer—and undergoes a radical hysterectomy that “at the young age of not even thirty, completely

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 349.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 355-6.

²⁹ Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice* (London: Penguin, 1974).

removed to the very core her physical attributes as a woman.”³⁰ If in “Yō” Chigako endures her sexually incompetent, aging husband’s judgement of her physical appearance, in “Mimi yōraku” it is the woman’s internal feminine organs, presumably her uterus and ovaries, that are displayed for the male gaze.

Following her operation, Takiko, understandably worried about her capacity to survive, declines physical relations with her husband, Yasuharu. When she receives a clean bill of health two years after the operation, however, she and her husband take a holiday at an onsen. While Yasuharu feels a rush of desire towards his wife “whose body appears to be younger than even before she became ill,”³¹ he is nevertheless unable to initiate intimacy, fearing that her body would be “like that of a mermaid with cold scales.”³² Gazing at his wife, he contemplates:

I wonder what’s become of your body. When you had the operation, they showed me what they had taken out and I could see all of the parts twined together. Having seen that, I just can’t imagine what your body might be like now.³³

Although Takiko suggests that he try to find out, Yasuharu refuses, saying that he is afraid. Replying that she, too, is frightened by her “deformed” body, Takiko recalls that the middle-aged woman consulting gynaecologist told her that this “cavern” (*kūdō*) that “had no purpose” (*wake no wakaranai*) once the operation had taken place was known as a “death hole” (*shiguchi*).³⁴ As if reflecting to herself, Takiko then explains to her husband:

The human body has various organs, doesn’t it? Among these, there are some from which you can take one of a pair [...] For example, tuberculosis

³⁰ Enchi Fumiko, “Mimi yōraku,” in *Enchi Fumiko shū* (Chikuma shobō, 1959), 362-370: 363.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 364.

³² *Ibid.*, 363.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 364.

sufferers can have one kidney or one lung removed, can't they? When that happens it's not regarded as so unusual or creepy. But if a woman has her reproductive organs removed, the empty space is somehow repulsive [...] When the part of a woman's body that should nurture a child becomes an empty space [...] it's given the sad name, death-hole.³⁵

Yasharu's only response is to inquire, with a look of distaste, whether or not the space of her uterus has filled up and to speculate on how this might have happened. Takiko concludes the exchange by noting that perhaps Yasuharu is right and that he should avoid having relations with her. "I'm no longer a woman," she declares. "I'm neither a woman nor a man. I'm a strange *bakemono*."³⁶ Rather than the usual translation of ghost or something similar for the term *bakemono*, I would render the expression here as "deformed being." Although Yasuharu speaks to reassure his wife, he is unable to meet her eye.

Takiko's comments on the abject state of a woman's reproductive organs confirms both the male body as the model of health and the social processes that project the modern terror of ill health onto the woman's body.³⁷ However, as mentioned above, this is a complex and nuanced text and, although marked in this way, Takiko is not without sexual power. In fact, she herself rather cruelly plays with a lonely jewellery designer who clearly has feelings for her. The text opens with Takiko pondering New Year greetings cards, one of which comes from a former admirer, an artist named Takanashi who both desired Takiko and held Yasuharu's fear of Takiko's body in contempt. Takanashi's admiration for Takiko, however, is perversely related to his insistence that she became more desirable precisely because of her altered physical state. When Takiko declares that, "I no longer

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ By "pre-Kristevan," I refer to the remarkable fact that Enchi is writing two and a half decades prior to Kristeva theorising these matters in *The Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection* (Pouvoirs de l'horreur. Essai sur l'abjection, 1980).

have a woman's body," the artist observes that it is the very fact that she can no longer have a child that makes her "all the more seductive."³⁸ As he moves to embrace her, Takanashi grasps Takiko's breast.

You must know that you have fantastic breasts.
And your skin feels smooth enough to slide right
off. You might say you're not a woman but let me
tell you that you're actually too much of a
woman.³⁹

Although Takiko declines to develop this relationship, Takanashi's praise of her physical attributes makes her feel like a "rice field after a drought" that has been "blessed with a beautiful rain." Filled with desire and "writhing" alone in her bed, she saw herself as "a battered canna flower that, although torn and broken, nevertheless continued to bloom crimson after a violent storm." Longing to "confirm that she was a woman" she was thereupon "visited by a season of seductiveness" during which time she "killed a man," or at least "she believed that he had died [been killed] because of her."⁴⁰

While this man, the jewellery maker, never once attempts to have physical contact with Takiko, he is clearly besotted by the beautiful woman for whose business he produces accessories. He eventually dies after leaving on the gas of a hot-plate, although it remains unclear whether this is accidental or deliberate. Regarding Takiko's role in his death, Enchi's narrator comments.

It slowly dawned on Takiko then that the empty woman within her, who was awakened by Takanashi's reckless words, had been flailing about in the wild dance of some demonic spirit with Jirō as the target. After seeing with her own eyes the efficacy of the poisonous discharge that

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 365.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 366.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

exuded from the death-hole [that replaced her uterus], Takiko changed to a woman without any physical longing and threw herself totally into her business activities.⁴¹

Takiko is perhaps the most blighted woman in the Enchi corpus. Elegant and beautiful, she is nonetheless irrevocably damned to a state of corrupt imperfection by the loss of her reproductive organs. As a metonym for the blighted state of all women and for the manner in which the diseases that so terrify modern sensibilities are hegemonically transferred to and aggressively distilled in the woman's body, Takiko responds like many women in an obsessively hetero-normative society, to deny her own sexual identity and to devote herself to the collective social good.

I will conclude with reference to Karatani Kōjin's discussion of illness, entitled "Sickness as Meaning," a chapter in the canonic work, *The Origins of Modern Japanese Literature* (1980, (*Nihon kindai bungaku no kigen*, 1980). Here, Karatani perceptively valorises *Byōshō rokushaku* (*A Six-foot Bed*, 1902) by Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) as an example of literature that, refusing to engage in sentimentality, avoids the "perversion" of evoking illness as an aesthetic trope in the way of Tokutomi Roka (1868-1927) in *The Cuckoo* (*Hototogisu*, 1898-1900).⁴² Enchi, too, refuses to draw on illness as metaphor, insisting instead on confronting her readers with the full force of the physiological, emotional, psychological and social impact of the "diseased" state of the feminine body as defined by 1950s Japanese hegemonic discourse. In this sense, her works can be read as textual "heterotopias," narratorial "other spaces," which simultaneously represent, contest and invert other cultural sites, particularly, in the works examined here, as these define and pass judgment on the blighted body of the aging woman.

⁴¹ Ibid., 369.

⁴² Karatani Kōjin, *The Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, trans. and ed. by Brett de Bary (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1993), 103.