“Performative Citation and Allusion in Matsuura Rieko’s *Oyayubi P no shugyō jidai*: Interrogating Matsuura’s Inheritances”

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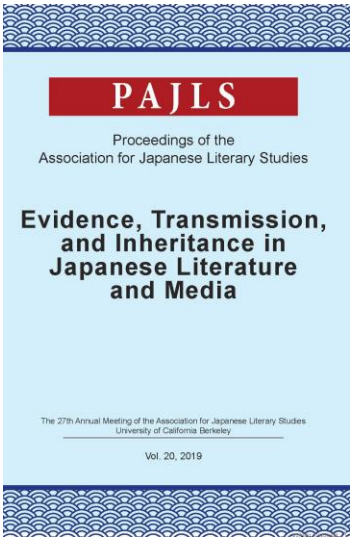

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PERFORMATIVE CITATION AND ALLUSION IN MATSUURA RIEKO'S *OYAYUBI P NO SHUGYŌ JIDAI*: INTERROGATING MATSUURA'S INHERITANCES

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Nearly 30 years after its acclaimed entrance onto Japan's literary stage in 1991, Matsuura Rieko's *Oyayubi P no shugyō jidai*, or *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*, remains quite well known—if only for its seemingly comical plot device of the "big toe penis." Featuring a female protagonist whose big toe has turned into a penis and her experiences touring with a travelling sex show, it is far more than comic relief that makes this complex novel compelling even today. Through the sexual education of the twenty-two-year-old protagonist, Kazumi, and her interactions with the other "sexual misfits" in the traveling sex-show Flower Show, the novel underscores the limitations of conventional approaches to sexuality and challenges the privileged status of the phallus—indeed, of genital sexuality altogether. The novel thematizes both performance and sexuality as it works to deconstruct and destabilize hetero-normative sexuality itself and the pervasive binaristic structures that inform and support it.

A close reading of *Oyayubi P* yields myriad possibilities for theoretical approaches to the novel, revealing Matsuura's deliberate and theoretically informed efforts to critically interrogate socially or theoretically constructed views of sex and sexuality. Traces of any number of theoretical approaches can be found embedded in the events and characters of the novel, perhaps most obviously a critique of phallocentrism and Freud's construction of female sexuality as a lack, but also a pastiche of psychoanalytic, post-structuralist, feminist, and semiotic theory from Freud and Lacan through Deleuze, Kristeva, and Butler. Castration anxiety, penis envy, abjection, the body without organs, penis vs. Phallus—not to mention the prominent role of performance and performativity—all make an appearance in this text. It is well beyond the scope of the present essay to undertake an analysis of the novel in terms of these theoretical approaches, but I offer here the potential of such theoretical interpretations as a kind of evidence of Matsuura's wide-ranging inheritances and their transmission in ways that make this novel a

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truly performative intertext that can be brought into dialogue with a number of critics, scholars, and theorists.

In this essay, I will excavate some of the literary citations and theoretical allusions that I find in a close reading of the novel and which, in turn, contribute to Matsuura's authorial persona and the performativity of the novel. Additionally, I will highlight some of the ways in which Matsuura makes use of allusion and performative citation in interviews and essays from around the time the novel was published. While a thorough exploration of questions of performance and performativity in the novel is again beyond the scope of this essay, it is my argument that the significant literary and theoretical citations I'll discuss here form part of the novel's large repertoire and thematization of performance. Positioning *Oyayubi P* as an intertext, the connections that I find between *Oyayubi P* and the Western literary canon, as well as between Matsuura's authorial persona and French post-structuralist and second-wave American academic feminism, demonstrate the complexity of Matsuura's overall project and reveal the literary and theoretical inheritances that Matsuura brings to bear on the seemingly whimsical story of a girl with a toe-penis.

First serialized in the literary magazine *Bungei* from 1991–1993, from its very title *Oyayubi P no shugyō jidai* invokes the Western canon and questions of the literary patriarchy in its titular reference to Goethe's prototypical bildungsroman of 1795, *The Apprenticeship of Wilhelm Meister*. Published in Japanese translation as *Viruherumu Maisutā no shugyō jidai*, in Goethe's novel the young Wilhelm Meister learns about life and love as he leaves home and travels with an itinerant theatre troupe. Matsuura's use of a travelling sex show as a plot device that drives the protagonist's sexual education aligns her novel with Goethe's in more than just name. While *Oyayubi P* contains elements of a variety of both Japanese and Western literary forms and tropes, such as the transformation tale, for example, Matsuura herself has said that the novel most clearly falls into the bildungsroman genre.[2] Locating *Oyayubi P* in the Western bildungsroman genre makes it even more of a landmark novel, one that claims a place in Western literary history while simultaneously challenging the literary patriarchy; for here we have a 20th century Japanese bildungsroman that names its own lineage in its very title—but this one is written by a woman, features a female protagonist, and explores

[2] See Matsuura Rieko, "Bungaku to sekushuaritī" [Literature and sexuality], *Waseda Bungaku* 214 (March 1994): 38–57. All translations from this essay are my own.

female sexuality. While the performance motif in *Oyayubi P* thus functions as a citation of Goethe, significantly engaging with the Western literary patriarchy, it simultaneously activates links to contemporary performance theory, particularly as it relates to gender and sexuality. It is in this doubling, or perhaps even tripling, of performance and performativity that I find Matsuura's use of citation to be particularly compelling and complex.

Matsuura's citation of Goethe is but one of a handful of such connections that contribute to the rich repertoire of the text. It might seem like a trite detail that Kazumi, the twenty-two-year-old female protagonist, wakes up to find that the big toe on her right foot has turned into a penis, but this literal awakening prefigures Kazumi's psychological and sexual one, calling to mind two very different literary awakenings: those of Franz Kafka's Gregor Samsa in *The Metamorphosis* (1915), of course, but also Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* (1899). The connections to Kafka that can be found throughout *Oyayubi P* (and in Matsuura's 2007 novel, *Kenshin*) go beyond the "exemplary narrative beginning," as Peter Brooks would have it, of "waking up to find oneself transformed into a monstrous vermin."[3] I'll say a bit more about these resonances with Kafka's work below. Perhaps less well known is Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, in which the female protagonist, in 1899, begins to challenge the constraints of her respectable, upper-class life, and awakens to the joys of a woman's life outside of motherhood and sexual pleasure outside of marriage. So while Kazumi awakens, like Gregor, to an unwelcome physical metamorphosis of sorts, she also eventually awakens, like Edna, to a full range of sexual desire and pleasure.

Another significant invocation of the Western canon can be seen at the level of narrative structure in Matsuura's use of a frame narrative to introduce, contextualize, and conclude the tale of the girl whose toe turned into a penis. The frame narrative, narrated by "the novelist M," suggests Matsuura's attention to the performative functions of narrating and writing and makes at least two additional literary citations, thus redoubling the performative impact.

If waking up to find that one's toe has turned into a penis isn't sufficiently overt in its reference to Kafka, Matsuura's use of "M" as a frame narrator echoes perhaps more loudly of Kafka's K. In fact, the novel itself can be read as a citation of Kafka's work, from the similarity to *The Metamorphosis* in its narrative beginning to the darker themes of

[3] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 339 n. 13.

alienation (the band of sexual misfits who make up Flower Show) and man's efforts to stand against societal systems (hetero-normative love and sex) in such works as *The Castle* (featuring K) and *The Trial* (featuring Josef K.). Significantly, Matsuura's later novel *Kenshin* (犬身, 2007; lit. "body of a dog" or "in a dog's body") also activates links to Goethe and Kakfa; "metamorphosis" in Japanese is "henshin" 変身, which is also the title of Kafka's novel in Japanese translation. Matsuura's *Kenshin* incorporates the Faustian theme of selling one's soul to the devil, which has been famously taken up by Goethe, of course. So with *Oyayubi P* and *Kenshin* we have titular references to Goethe and Kafka, respectively, twinned with thematic references to the other. The thread of performative citation and literary transmission doesn't stop there: Matsuura's inheritances from Kakfa include Kafka's inheritances from Leopold von Sacher-Masoch[4]; sado-masochism and power relations in general are themes that Matsuura explores in *Oyayubi P* and *Kenshin* as well as in her earlier novel *Natural Woman* (ナチュラル・ウーマン, 1987) and her 1997 *Ura vājon* (裏ヴァージョン, The Reverse Version).

In addition to foregrounding the role of the narrator, the novelist M, Matsuura's use of a narrative frame in *Oyayubi P* invokes the narrative structure of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), in which the monster's own narration of his story lies at the center of nested narrative frames. This similarity in narrative structure first suggested to me the possibility of reading *Oyayubi P* as an interpretation of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, informed by both Sharalyn Orbaugh's "Sex and the Single Cyborg" (2002) and Peter Brooks's "What is a Monster? (According to Frankenstein)."[5] The similarities between the two novels are not limited to the use of the narrative frame. Both novels foreground the reality of the physical body and deal with a mind/body duality—in both cases this is played out as an exploration of the psychic pain caused by non-normative embodiment. Both also deal with the protagonist's coming-to-knowledge—in particular sexual knowledge. Additionally, both novels explore "monstrous sexuality" (this theme of monstrosity is also connected to Kafka, in that

[4] A number of scholars have written on Sacher-Masoch's influence on Kafka's writing. See, for example, Mark Anderson, "Kafka and Sacher-Masoch," *Journal of the Kafka Society of America* 7 (1983): 4–19, and Peter Bruce Waldeck, "Kafka's 'Die Verwandlung' and 'Ein Hungerkünstler' as Influenced by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch," *Monatshefte* 64 (1972): 147–52.

[5] Sharalyn Orbaugh, "Sex and the Single Cyborg," *Science Fiction Studies* 29:3 (2002): 436–452; Peter Brooks, "What is a Monster (According to Frankenstein)," in Brooks, *Body Work, Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 199–220.

Gregor was transformed into, literally, a "monstrous vermin"). In addition to the toe-penis itself, which may or may not be considered to be "monstrous," the characters who make up the travelling sex show in *Oyayubi P* suggest the monstrous sexuality of Frankenstein's monster, particularly the character of Tamotsu, who bears the body of a parasitic twin, Shin, almost entirely embedded within his own. Tamotsu's quest for sexual knowledge and the violent rage evoked by his inability to engage in "normal" sexual intimacy correspond almost too neatly to Brooks' reading of Frankenstein's monster. It is also significant that Kazumi only performs in the show once, at the very end of the novel. It is by watching the performances from the wings that Kazumi's sexual education unfolds. Again, with reference to Peter Brooks, I can't help but think of Frankenstein's monster peeping and listening through a chink in the wall of the de Lacey cottage, thus discovering human language.[6] Brooks also points out that the only person who does not completely shun the monster is the blind de Lacey. Significantly, it is with a blind man that Kazumi first shares sexual intimacy with her toe-penis, after he has rescued her from her then-fiancé's attempted castration of the toe-penis.

The connections I find between *Oyayubi P* and *Frankenstein* bring us back to the challenge to the Western literary patriarchy I noted vis-à-vis Matsuura's citation of Goethe. Writing in 1818 or in the early 1990s, I would argue that the central issues for Shelley and Matsuura remain the same. Imaginatively configured as a man-made monster or as a toe-penis on a woman's foot, both women authors foreground non-normative embodiment and sexuality as a challenge to systems that work to define and contain female bodies and female sexuality. At the same time that Matsuura's inheritances from Shelley would seem to indicate a feminist concern with the repression of female sexuality by a patriarchal society, however, another set of inheritances I have traced throughout Matsuura's public persona as an essayist and critic would seem to indicate an intentional distancing from academic feminism. Just as the major literary citations invoked by Matsuura's use of the narrative frame, together with the narrative device itself, form part of the novel's large repertoire and thematizations of performance, these seemingly conflicting stances toward feminist concerns contribute to what I read as Matsuura's performance of authorial persona via literary citation and allusion.

A close look at Matsuura's interviews and essays from around the time *Oyayubi P* was published gives us a further glimpse into Matsuura's intellectual repertoire and her creation of a public persona as an author.

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[6] Brooks, "What is a Monster?," 203–204.

Specifically, her engagement—or disengagement—with academic feminist approaches demonstrates a different set of inheritances at work in the novel. I read her references to major Western theorists as yet another element of performance that situates the novel as an intertext both within and outside of the Japanese literary tradition. For the remainder of this essay I will trace Matsuura's citation of Western feminist theorists and theories in order to illustrate not only the multi-layered ways in which "performance" can be read in *Oyayubi P* and in Matsuura's authorial persona but also the significant role of "inheritances and transmission" that are such salient features of the Japanese literary tradition.

One of Matsuura's self-stated motives in writing *Oyayubi P*—to challenge the construction of sex as "an activity defined by the union of male and female genitals"[7]—echoes Andrea Dworkin's complaint that in Western art and culture heterosexual intercourse has been privileged as the only form of "real" sex.[8] In fact, Dworkin's 1987 *Intercourse* was published in Japanese translation in 1989, just two years before Matsuura began serializing *Oyayubi P*. Matsuura even cites Dworkin in her 1993 lecture "Literature and Sexuality," in which she uses the oft-mistaken citation from Dworkin that "all penetration is rape" to criticize feminist ideology for being "too philosophical" and "too removed from reality."[9] In the same breath that she dismisses Dworkin and academic feminism, however, Matsuura's very citation of the radical American feminist signals to me her intent to engage with feminist theory, whether via her persona or her fiction.

In interviews and essays, Matsuura has repeatedly declared that she is not a feminist, going so far as to explicitly state that she is anti-feminist and anti-academic.[10] Even so, the questions raised and ideas explored in *Oyayubi P* have much in common with a range of contemporary feminist theoretical approaches. When asked in a 1995 interview if the toe-penis, as an alternative to the vagina, could be thought of in terms of Luce Irigaray's suggestion that female sexuality is multiplicitous, Matsuura doesn't even nod at Irigaray but offers Gilles Deleuze instead as a model for the existence of sex organs all over the body. While Irigaray has also famously said that "Woman has sex organs more or less everywhere," Matsuura instead refers to Deleuze's "idea that there are sex organs all

[7] Matsuura, "Literature and Sexuality," 41.
[8] Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (New York: Free Press, 1987).
[9] Matsuura, "Literature and Sexuality," 47.
[10] See, for example, Matsuura, "Literature and Sexuality"; and "Matsuura Rieko: Interview," *Matsuura Rieko to P-sensu na ai no bigaku* [Matsuura Rieko and the aesthetics of 'P' love] (Tokyo: Tōkingu hezzu henshūshitsu, 1995), 12–35.

over the body."[11] By aligning herself with Delueze, Matsuura distances herself from Irigaray and the so-called "French Feminists." The novel itself, however, demonstrates a number of affinities between Matsuura's approach to gender and sexuality and that of feminist theorists such as Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, not to mention Dworkin and Judith Butler. Matsuura's explicit citation of Deleuze and Dworkin reveals the intellectual repertoire she brought to bear on the theoretical complexity of *Oyayubi P*. Critical of both feminism and academia on the one hand, Matsuura's fictional works and active persona as an essayist and cultural critic bring her into dialogue with theoretical approaches she claims to deplore, on the other. While it is not at all unusual for a "woman writer" to take issue with such an essentializing categorical designation, in the case of a novel like *Oyayubi P*, which questions binary, genital sexuality and pursues what might fairly be called a radical revision of sexual norms, it is especially significant that Matsuura makes clear her anti-feminist stance.

One of the most central points of departure for Cixous, Irigaray, and their contemporaries is that "woman does not know her own desire"—that mainstream culture has privileged male sexuality and has kept women from owning their own sexuality. This argument is also foregrounded in *Oyayubi P* in the characterization of Kazumi. In "Literature and Sexuality" Matsuura describes Kazumi as "the type of person who grew up not questioning what society presented to her, the type of person who never even noticed that societal systems inform everyday thought."[12] The novel, too, explores this characterization of Kazumi, and explicitly links it to sexuality and desire:

> Before my first sexual experience, I'd had an intellectual understanding of what went on in the minds of men and women that led them to make love, of the caresses they exchanged, and of that most ecstatic of moments, when their sexual organs came together. I had pieced together this understanding from tidbits from television, movies, and magazines, as well as from what friends told me. While the picture in my mind was sketchy in places, the impression was powerful enough, and deep enough, that the first time I made love, it reassured me that I was doing the right things.

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[11] Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977); *This Sex which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.28; Matsuura, "Matsuura Rieko: Interview," 15.
[12] Matsuura, "Literature and Sexuality," 42–43.

> When I began having sex regularly, I made little adjustments to my image of the sex act in order to bring it in line with my experience, but everything I did was in accordance with the model of normality in my mind. As long as I could tell myself that what I was doing was correct and normal, desire didn't have to be involved. I was so utterly dependent on this understanding of sex that I never felt the need to discover what I desired.[13]

One of the functions of the toe-penis, then, is to force Kazumi to confront her own desire and to reflect on how various configurations of physical intimacy satisfy her own desire and cause her to redefine her understanding of what "sex" is. So while Matsuura explicitly disavows academic feminism, her deployment of the toe-penis does answer one of the most important calls of French post-structuralist feminism and second-wave feminism in the United States: that female sexuality be made visible, re-written as a positivity, and that women take ownership of their own desire.

Another example of Matsuura's antagonistic confrontation with academic feminism can be seen in her assertion that she "absolutely did not want to write about a phallus-like penis."[14] Calling the penis an "innocent organ" and criticizing the feminist conflation of the penis with the phallus, Matsuura invokes wide-ranging feminist and psychoanalytic discourses on "the Phallus," from the distinction, or correspondence, between the penis and the phallus to Lacanian theories of "being" vs. "having" the phallus—and numerous feminist analyses and critiques of both (I'm thinking here of Irigaray, Kaja Silverman, Jane Gallop, Maryanne Doane, Elisabeth Grosz, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, and others). Without delving into the theoretical approaches to penis vs. Phallus here, what is important to note in this regard is Matsuura's familiarity with the theoretical debates and issues in contemporary psychoanalytic and feminist thought, and that she seems to side with Lacan, rather than with any of his feminist interlocutors. While noted feminist theorists such as Jane Gallop and Elizabeth Grosz[15] have written at length about the relationship between the penis and the phallus, Matsuura's insistence on

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[13] Michael Emmerich, trans., *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2009), 317.
[14] Matsuura, "Literature and Sexuality," 46.
[15] See, for example, Jane Gallop, "Beyond the Phallus," in her *Thinking Though the Body* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 119–133; and Elizabeth Grosz, *Jacques Lacan, A Feminist Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

the distinction between the penis and the phallus falls squarely within a Lacanian approach to the phallus, which emphasizes that no "special relationship" exists between the penis and the phallus.[16]

Similarly, explaining her intention to "deny the primacy of genitals in order to suggest a 'truth' capable of replacing the 'truth' of female genitals,"[17] Matsuura calls upon Nietzsche: "men are philosophers and the truth they seek is the vagina." Again, with a single reference to Nietzsche in this context, rather than to Irigaray, for example, she alludes to feminist discourse without naming it (here I am referring to feminist critiques of Nietzsche's metaphor of "truth as hymen" by Irigaray and Alice Jardine, among others). It is the theoretical richness and possibility of the text that I would like to underscore again here, not the question of whether Matsuura is or is not a feminist. But it cannot be overlooked that Matsuura's citations are strategically performative—for what it's worth, she almost exclusively cites men, not women.

As I have shown here, specific references in essays and interviews tell us that Matsuura was familiar with a range of Western feminist and philosophical theorists when she wrote *Oyayubi P*—specifically Dworkin, Irigaray, Deleuze, Lacan, and Nietzsche. I have also shown a different set of inheritances in terms of literary lineage, as it were, that connect *Oyayubi P* with some major works in the Western canon—including those by Goethe, Kafka, and Mary Shelley. By highlighting and interrogating these various sets of inheritances in Matsuura's work, this essay demonstrates at least one of the ways in which Matsuura's work, while in conversation with the Western canon and Western theoretical approaches as outlined above, simultaneously engages in the traditional Japanese literary practices of allusion and intertextuality. This positioning both within and against the Western literary patriarchy, together with the ways in which Western feminist approaches are reinscribed as they are refuted, makes *Oyayubi P* an intertext *extraordinaire*—for all of the fantastic novelty offered by the toe-penis, the novel significantly engages with and transmits literary heritage both Japanese and Western.

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[16] Jacques Lacan, "The Signification of the Phallus," in *Ecrits, A Selection*, 281–291 (New York: Norton, 1977), 285.
[17] Matsuura, "Literature and Sexuality," 45.