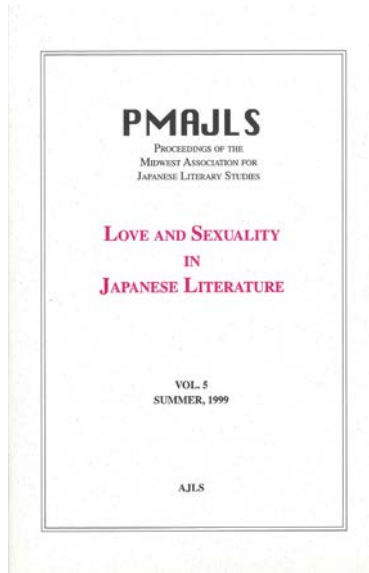


# “Imperial Textuality, Imperial Sexuality”

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# IMPERIAL TEXTUALITY, IMPERIAL SEXUALITY

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Modern society is perverse, not in spite of its puritanism or as if from a backlash provoked by its hypocrisy; it is in actual fact, and directly, perverse.

—Michel Foucault

The taking up of any one position, within a specific discursive form, in a particular historical conjuncture, is thus always problematic—the site of both fixity and fantasy. It provides a colonial “identity” that is played out—like all fantasies of originality and origination—in the face and space of the disruption and threat from the heterogeneity of other positions.

—Homi K. Bhabha

The “event” of Japanese imperialism was frequently inscribed in Edogawa Rampo’s popular early Shōwa fictions. In *Spider Man* (1929) Rampo’s fictional detective Akechi Kogorō (uncannily doubled with Rampo as Sherlock Holmes is with Arthur Conan Doyle) has just returned to Japan from a three-year visit to the Asian continent where he spent time in the Japanese colonial cities of northern China as well as living in New Delhi, Shanghai and Hong Kong. Back home, Akechi strutted his new colonial fashion accessories, including a pith helmet bought in India and “modern Asian” suits from Hong Kong (having quickly grown tired of the more traditional Chinese hat and clothes he flaunted in Rampo’s earlier detective novel *Midget* (1926), when Akechi returned to Japan from his first long trip to the continent). As Rampo was a reader of the main colonial journals and newspapers it is no surprise that some of the specificity of imperial expansion into both Asia and the South Pacific would find its way into his non-Akechi fiction as well. This essay will treat Rampo’s 1929 text *Kotō no Oni* (The Demon of the Lonely Island) which was a partial rewriting of the H.G. Wells novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, a text dealing explicitly with imperialism in the South Pacific. By reading Rampo’s transcoding of British imperialism onto Japanese imperialism I hope to contribute to correcting the elision of colonial empire from scholarly work done on Japanese modern literature and culture.

Rather more than being merely elided, colonial-imperialism has often been strongly foreclosed by modern Japanese literary and cultural studies

in and outside of Japan.<sup>1</sup> In my reading this is the result of two processes coming together. The first vector is the obvious one of Orientalism. Among its variegated effects is that either explicitly or implicitly Japan (as synecdochy for the “East”) is always “late” and/or temporarily “behind” the assumed superiority of the “West,”<sup>2</sup> and thus Japanese modern culture is similarly judged to be tardy. In other words, the assessments of modernism in Japan have tended to use the (barely disavowed) superiority of Euro-American genres and styles to pass judgement on “peripheral modernisms.” The second process follows somewhat from the first in that the “location of culture” as exclusively high culture—always binarized against mass culture—has, until quite recently, disinclined scholars of Japanese modernism from treating mass and sub-cultural aesthetic forms as legitimate objects of study.

I argue that by displacing the high culture biases and focusing instead on the modernist mass culture form of the erotic-grotesque-nonsense/*ero-guro-nansensu* (arguably the hegemonic aesthetic phenomenon in Japan from around 1925 until 1936) we can re-open the inscriptions of Japan’s empire *within* Japanese modernism. This will fracture the Orientalist schema which locates the origin of all modern culture and civilization in the “West,” and demonstrate the ways in which metropolitan, mass culture modernism in Tokyo received major determinants from Japan’s imperial periphery. As I argue at more length elsewhere, some of the most important and popular Japanese modernist discourses of the 1920’s and 1930’s can be shown to have been influenced by *colonial* forms and genres. Especially in the Japanese colonial cities of Seoul and Dalian (China), modernist cultural expressions originated in the colonial encounter and impacted new metropolitan forms appearing *later* inside Japan. The fact that these cultural force-fields moved from the lesser developed periphery to the imperial center runs directly counter to the supposed unidirectional cultural and civilizational movement of Eurocentric historicism,<sup>3</sup> which locates modernist origins in Euro-America, stopwatches their arrival late to Japan, and then assumes they would arrive even later

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<sup>1</sup> See Fujii, James (1997): “Writing Out Asia: Modernity, Canon, and Natsume Soseki’s *Kokoro*” for a similar critique.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, Stuart (1992): “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power.”

<sup>3</sup> Mary Pratt calls this one-way flow a “diffusionism,” and opposed to that simplistic notion she argues that “I aim to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination.” See *her Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992, pg. 6.

still to Japan's imperial periphery. However, I argue that the "mature" Tokyo representatives in the case of the erotic, grotesque, nonsense genre can only be fully historicized through colonial phenomena and subjective technologies spawned in Japan's imperial periphery.

The *ero-guro* was clearly inscribed within and contemporaneous with the colonial-imperial context and thus can be used as a source of codes from which to historically configure the Empire. This historical configuration may contribute to a partial displacement of the important, *au courant* "critique of nationalism" that hegemonizes critical scholarly work on Japan. The critical gains from this mode have been significant and my own work has been strongly influenced by these critiques. Nevertheless, its tendency to fixate on nationalism and its support system of culturalism has in some cases paradoxically re-inscribed the very nationalism it was meant to displace. This can be explained in part by the correct methodological insistence in critical Japanese Studies to deconstruct homogeneity and the repression of difference. Still, the critical exposure of homogeneity has at times had the paradoxical effect of making it difficult to see some of the ways in which the proliferation of difference and hybridity was—at some times and in some places—central to the construction of Japan's empire, and even *constitutive of that very empire*. In other words, although the critique of culturalism and homogeneity has made a fantastic contribution towards deconstructing nationalism, it has had its hands somewhat bound when it comes to imperialism, which was—in the case of Japan until 1936—in part grounded on very different terms than homogeneity, culturalism, and "Japanism"

I want to suggest here that these "different terms" can be condensed into the signifier "*hentai*," usually rendered into English as strange, perverse, and transformative. For the most part read *hentai* has been configured as only positing an inside-outside schema in the form of a clearly differentiated Otherness. In this way, *hentai* is often configured as delimiting all the great dualisms of the period: Japanese vs. Korean, East vs. West, male vs. female, hetero vs., homo, normal vs. pathological, etc.<sup>4</sup> While it is impossible to refuse the force of those binaries, they are incapable of treating the structure of overdetermination of *hentai* and the ways in which it constructed grids differently in different time-spaces. If we can think about multi-imperialism instead of imperialism as in the monolithically positivized entity like "Japanese imperialism," we can begin to

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<sup>4</sup> See Yonezawa Yoshirō, ed., (1994) *Rampo no jidai, Bessatsu Taiyō*, no. 88 (Winter).

think about the ways in which *hentai* as “difference-in-transformation” held a multiplicity of functions.

In this essay I will zoom in on some of the ways in which *hentai* functioned in its preferred site: the erotic-grotesque-nonsense. I locate the origin of the *ero-guro* phenomenon with the first 1919 issue of *Hentai Shinri* (Strange Psychology), the official publication of the Japanese Psychiatric Association. The Association was founded in 1918 by a young psychologist named Nakamura Kokyō and its journal and annual conference quickly enlisted the most influential psychiatrists, psychologists, sexologists, criminologists, historians of sexuality, and cultural anthropologists in Japan. They developed and introduced central themes of strange psychology like hypnosis, schizophrenia, hysteria, telepathy, sadomasochism, sleepwalking murderers, vampires, the third sex, and channeling of the dead. These themes in turn were translated to a popular reading audience through erotic-grotesque-nonsense novels and tabloid stories that often fictionalized cases that appeared first in *Strange Psychology*, or in its sister publication, Tanaka Kōgai’s *Hentai Seiyoku* (Strange Sexuality), which began publication in 1921. Building on the surprising popularity of his journal, Nakamura procured his own psychiatric clinic at Chiba University in 1924 and there went on to conduct Charcot-like experiments in hypnosis, thought control, sleep-walking, automatic writing, and suggestion. From 1930 until 1936, Nakamura ran a second clinic that treated female hysterics where he recorded cases of patients who could suddenly speak Korean, Chinese, and Russian without having had prior exposure to those languages, and monolingual Japanese patients who, while sleepwalking, could write classical Chinese poetry and recite fairy tales in German.

Nakamura consistently mobilized the signifier *hentai* as a general diagnosis of the psycho-social condition of the modern subject. Although the histories of Japanese sexology of the 1910’s and 20s<sup>5</sup> consistently emphasize the passive Japanese “importation” of *hentai*’s signifieds like “homosexual” and “hysteric” from European psychiatrists and sexologists like Krafft-Ebing, these histories tend to overlook the ways in which *hentai*—in the historical process of its renegotiation and typographization in Japanese sexology—was often understigmatized. The decoding and recoding of *hentai* by sexologists like Tanaka and Habuto Eiji, psychoanalysts like Kubo Yoshihide and Ihai Setsuzō, as well as the famous

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<sup>5</sup> See my forthcoming essay “Seeds and (Nest) Eggs of Empire: Sexology Manuals/Manual Sexology,” forthcoming in Cathleen Uno and Barbara Maloney, eds., *Gendering Japanese History*, (Harvard University Press, 1999).

natural historian and anthropologist Minakata Kumagusu (who published some of his most famous essays in *Hentai Shinri*), had the effect of de-pathologizing and universalizing *hentai* as a general description of modern subjectivity. Nakamura himself defined every modern subject as split to varying degrees between the three modes of *hentai* he called 1. individual (*kojinteki*), 2. group (*shūdanteki*), and 3. Universal (*ippanteki*).<sup>6</sup>

As the traces of empire materialized on the bodies of Nakamura's "hysterical" patients in Tokyo—who miraculously spoke Korean, Chinese, and Russian; all areas then being de-territorialized and re-territorialized by Japanese imperial capital—Tanaka Kōgai (the editor of *Hentai Seiyoku*, the other social science predecessor of the fictional genre of *the ero-guro-nansensu*) had a more sustained and direct connection to the imperial periphery. Along with Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō, Tanaka (1875-1944) is considered one of the three most important popular sexologists of Taishō Japan.<sup>7</sup> His journal and annual books featured accelebratory tone regarding the multiple modes of *hentai* and he quickly became one of the main sources of popular information on hysteria, s/m, necrophilia, and mixed ethno-racial relations in Japan.<sup>8</sup> Like Nakamura, Tanaka published journalistic essays in the women's monthlies and he became well-known outside of sexology magazines for his journalism and collections of metapsychological essays<sup>9</sup> written when he retired from his medical practice as a neurologist and from writing popular sexology in the late 1920's. The two main collections of these are *New History, New Mythology* (1934) and *Strange, Weird, Outrageous* (1939), in my opinion the culmination of the social scientific erotic-grotesque-nonsense. They feature essays on the history of sexuality, popular culture and fashion, and positively treat themes like the hybrid origin of the Japanese race, intermarriage between Japanese and other East-Asian ethnicities, the East Asian tradition of powerful women he called "*josei yūetsuShūgi* (female

<sup>6</sup> Nakamura Kokyō, *Hentai Shinri to Hanzai* (Perverse Psychology and Crime). Bukyōsha, 1930, pg. 5.

<sup>7</sup> For a useful introductory essay on the topic that locates these three as the main popularizers of sexual discourse, see Furukawa Makoto, "Ren'ai to Seiyoku no Daisan Teikoku," *Gendai Shisō* 1993, vol. 21-07, p.110-127.

<sup>8</sup> There has been nothing at all published on Tanaka in Japanese except for one sentence in Furukawa (see above). I've read all of his available works in the Diet Library in Tokyo, but only in a post-war reprint of his best-selling 1939 sexology/*ero-guro-nansensu* text *Ki, Chin, Kai* (Strange, Weird, Outrageous). Hōmeidō Shoten, 1953, is there much biographical information on him, and even there only a short paragraph.

<sup>9</sup> see his *Shinshidan shinwa* (New History, New Myth) (Tōgakusha, 1934), as well as his *Strange, Weird, Outrageous*.

supremacism)" and histories of Japanese vampirism, s/m, and transvestitism. He genealogized his own intellectual investment in these issues through his long tenure in colonial Taipei as the Japanese doctor in charge of instructing Taiwanese medical trainees in hygiene and pathology, a role he played from 1896 until his transfer to Osaka University as Professor of Medicine in 1906.<sup>10</sup>

In this essay I want to elaborate on *hentai* to suggest some of the ways we might begin to see how it functioned historically, using as presentative erotic-grotesque-nonsense novel, Edogawa Rampo's 1929 *Kotō no Oni* (The Demon of the Lonely Island), as an example. Rather than relying on the normal/pathological, straight/queer, and West/East binary coding of *hentai* I want to divide it into 4 different modes. The first mode I will call *hentai1* and for the most part this will be correlative with the psychoanalytic notion of fantasy. Following psychoanalytic and queer theory protocols, I want to argue that fantasy is an eroticized response to *hentai4* or the traumatic antagonism (similar to the "Real" in Lacan, and *zettai mu* in the important Japanese philosophers of the period Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime) that threatens the subject with dissolution. The function of fantasy is to cover over, transform, and substitute this loss (always troping away from capture by representation, hence *hentai4*) with eroticized replacements. What's more, *hentai1* eroticizes, grotesques (as in "transforms"), and makes nonsense of the historical-material loss and trauma represented by *hentai4*.

Let's homologize *hentai1* with the phantasmatic site of the *mise-en-scene* of the multiplication and proliferation of identifications in fantasy. The contemporary versions of fantasy derive from Freud's 1919 essay "A Child is Being Beaten" where he describes several of his patient's fantasies of "a child is being beaten," which under the pressure of analysis, reveal three different phantasmatic identifications for each patient: 1. my father is beating the child whom I hate; 2. I am being beaten by my father; 3. A child is being beaten. In their influential reading of this essay, Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis insist that fantasy doesn't entail an identification with a single position within the fantasy, rather identification is distributed among the three positions of active, passive, and verbal action of the scene. They write:

fantasy is not the object of desire, but its setting. In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its sign; one appears one-

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<sup>10</sup> Tanaka also went to Germany for one year to study pathology and hygiene sometime around 1900, and then went to Manchuria for the Russo-Japanese war in 1904.

self caught up in the sequence of images. . . . As a result, the subject, although always present in the fantasy, may be so in a desubjectivized form, that is to say, in the very syntax of the sequence in question.<sup>11</sup>

Fantasy, then, is not something “possessed” by a subject, but is a place where the subject *becomes predicate* in the staging of the multiplication and proliferation of identifications. I will read the Rampo novel as functioning in a similar way to stage strange and contradictory identifications normally outlawed by the operations of Symbolic Law. Nevertheless, *hentai1* will not in any way be opposed to Symbolic Law. Instead this Symbolic coding of objects will complement *hentai1* as what I will call *hentai2*. *Hentai2* functions to code the strange—transforming and “mattering” it<sup>12</sup> in historically specific ways and thereby works like “discursive production”<sup>13</sup> in Foucaultian influenced critical theory. Discursive production—*hentai2*, when we think of production as material “transformation”—tends to reverse the temporality of a positivized object supposedly existing contentedly before its description by an observing subject. Rather than assuming the fullness of an object before its “capturing” by discourse, Judith Butler argues that through repetition and citation, regulative discourse works to produce objects by transforming them and providing them with new symbolic coherence.<sup>14</sup>

Relying for these levels of *hentai* on psychoanalytically informed theory and modern Japanese philosophy of the 1920’s and 1930’s alike, in my longer work on imperial modernism<sup>15</sup> I argue that both these mappings claim that in the repressed origins of any social symbolic structure there is a trauma (psychoanalysis) or originary violence (philosophy) which opens a space where this violence is eroticized, grotesqued, and made nonsense of by social signification (*hentai2*) and fantasy (*hentai1*).

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<sup>11</sup> Laplanche, Jean, and Pontalis, J.B. (1986): “Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality,” pg. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Butler, Judith (1993): *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex.”*

<sup>13</sup> see Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1978). For Butler see the introduction to *Bodies that Matter* and the excellent recasting of Foucault with psychoanalysis in (1997) *The Psychic Life of Power*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

<sup>14</sup> See her (1997) *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, New York, London: Routledge.

<sup>15</sup> Driscoll, Mark (1999): *Erotic Empire, Grotesque Empire*.



Therefore queer psychoanalytic theory<sup>16</sup> and the texts of the central political philosophers of Japanese imperialism (Tanabe Hajime and Miki Kiyoshi) alike claim that the process of repetition in discursive production takes place *because of* and over the traumatic wound of the Real and nothingness, identified in my schema here as *hentai*<sup>4</sup>.

The third mode of *hentai* (*hentai*<sup>3</sup>) is the economic and although I won't have much time to discuss it in relation to the Rampo text below, I introduce it here to finish my schema. I deploy *hentai* at this level because it is more than historical accident that in what Marx calls the "General Formula for Capital"<sup>17</sup> the operation of the "transformation of money into capital" is translated as "*hentai*" in the Japanese renderings of Marx. That is to say that *hentai* signifies the operation in modern capitalism whereby surplus from the various exchanges of commodities (including human labor) and money is "transformed (*hentai*)" into capital. Here, although scholars of Japanese imperialism have been warned by Mark Peattie and Peter Duus against reading Japanese colonialism and imperialism as "an arrangement of socio-economic relationships . . . used by Marxist scholarship,"<sup>18</sup> I argue that not to analyze socio-economic relationships canonically lead to a mystification of the awesome power of the modernizing, capitalist State. Directly opposed to modernization theory, it seems obvious that only from *within* recent Marxist and post-Marxist scholarship can any historical accounting be undertaken to explain the complexities of Japanese imperial capitalism in this period and explain the ways in which it was imbricated with the other levels of psycho-social reality.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> See Diana Fuss (1995) *Identification Papers*. New York: Routledge and Lee Edelman (1994) *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory*. New York: Routledge

<sup>17</sup> see Capital 1, part 2 Chapter 4, "The Transformation (*Hentai*) of Money into Capital." See also Grundrisse "The Chapter on Capital".

<sup>18</sup> (1984) *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pg. 11.

<sup>19</sup> To put all my methodological cards on the table, see Deleuze's (1990) *Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester, New York: Columbia University Press, where he theorizes the different levels of "being" as reciprocally presupposed, but autonomously "parallel." In Deleuze and Guattari's *Mille Plateaux* the notion of "parallelism" has morphed into one of "stratifications," but the sense of molecular/singular flows in transforming movement across different planes of social reality is fundamentally the same in both texts. As I explain elsewhere, I find this consistent with so-called regulationist Marxism's insistence on the "overdetermined" nature of social reality by the autonomous and irreducible moments of the regime of accumulation, modes of regulation, and the conjunctively operating social norms of consumption. See Michel Aglietta (1979) *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, London: Verso, and Alain Lipietz

In offering this analytic of the four modes of *hentai* which configured the psycho-social space of Japanese imperial modernity, I want to suggest that the effect of the reciprocal crossings of these modes should be construed as the modern itself; what I would call *hentai* to the nth power. Although there has been much discussion over the appropriate way to designate the modern, modernity, and modernization in East Asia, following the citation from Foucault above, I suggest that *hentai* most accurately captures the sense of “modernity” in Japanese. In a deconstructive retrieval of the signifier “modernity,” Hayden White has demonstrated its origin in the way that “trope”—the ancient Greek *tropos*—comes into European languages through the Latin for mood or measure/verse.<sup>20</sup> *Modus* in classical Latin carried a signified similar to what mood carries today: the sense of extreme transformability, evanescence, and an obstinacy to being configured clearly in representation. That is to say that “modernity” in Latin preserved much of the sense of “trope” in Greek; i.e. the quality of swerving away *from* (*per-verse*, for or to the turn) with the predicates of unpredictable curving and turning. I ask, what signifier in Japanese can better convey the tropological sense that “modernity” carries as a classical European etymonym than *hentai*? The process of uncontrollable swerving (trope) and changing can best be rendered in Japanese by the Chinese character for *hentai*, composed of the compound whose first character is rendered as *hen* (strange, perverse, or transformative) and whose second character *tai* means mode or condition. Although its standard rendering (the one I have been using) is “perversion/ transformation/metamorphosis,” we can more complexly render *hentai* as “that which is in the mode of infinite transformation or troping,” and we will have captured the sense of modernity developed by the Japanese philosophers and social theorists I rely on here.

The Rampo novel begins with a scene where the trauma (*hentai*4) of an imperial encounter produces a radical cut which the narrative logics of *hentai*1 and *hentai*2 work to fill in.

Although I'm not yet 30 years old, there's not a hair on my head that hasn't turned white. How could there possibly be another human this uncanny (*fushigi*)? So I try to cover my head with a cotton hat. When people meet me they either look suspi-

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(1985) *Mirages and Miracles: The Crises of Global Fordism*, trans. David Macey, London: Verso, and his (1985) *The Enchanted World*, London: Verso.

<sup>20</sup> White, Hayden (1978) *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, pg. 2.

ciously at my head, or, if they have no sense of propriety, they simply blurt out some sort of query about it. . . . I really hate this, but what I hate even more is when people come into contact with my wife and they ask me about the huge scar on her left thigh. Not that it's a big secret or anything, but most people won't sit through the whole story. Even if they do manage to sit through it, they refuse to believe it. . . . But weird things like this aren't that unusual; I've read about them in books and stories. From the little I can figure out, it seems that instances where somebody's hair turns white overnight are caused by experiences of intense pain and terror. Maybe you could figure that my white hair would be proof enough that I've been through a pretty traumatic experience. The same goes for the scar on my wife's thigh. If a doctor saw that thing, they wouldn't have known what to make of it. It kind of seems like she had a third leg removed.<sup>21</sup>

Here traumatic events that happened outside Japan in a "foreign land" in the "South Sea (*Nankai*)" (176) are depicted as uncanny and strange, although the narrator Minōra assures us that they have been accurately and logically represented in other fictional texts. Unfortunately, even though Minōra assumed that it would be fairly straightforward to do the same in this text, to accurately describe what happened in the "other world (*jingai kyō*)" (124) of imperial contact would "not be easy at all." Minōra soon realized that

I wasn't controlling the sentences, they were controlling me. I found out that I could easily write about trivia, but I just wasn't able to capture the essential parts. I didn't realize how hard it would be to describe the truth of the matter in such a way that it actually sounded truthful. (4-5)

The sense here that Minōra as a fully bounded subject will not be writing the event, but rather "he" will be written by the event is consistent with the logistics of *hentai* sketched out above. To repeat, a constellation of symbolic language, semi-conscious reverie, and the dream will eroticize, grotesque, and make nonsense of the trauma of an imperial

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<sup>21</sup> Edogawa, Rampo. *Kotō no Oni* Tokyo: Shun' yōdō, 1987, pg. 2-3. Further citations in text. The novel was published serially in Tokyo's second largest daily newspaper the *Asahi Shimbun* running from January 1929 to February 1930.

encounter. Therefore, determined by the movement of *hentai1*, Minōra's identity will be strongly de-subjectivized and contradictory identifications discussed below will mark his structure of desire. Simultaneous with and parallel to those tropings of *hentai1* is the movement of *hentai2* that will subjectivize marginal subjects and bring them into discourse. The most important of these is the openly homoerotic Moroto (this is the first hint that Rampo's novel is a partial re-write of H. G. Wells' 1896 *The Island Of Dr. Moreau*; as an alternate reading of the Chinese characters of his family name is Moro /Moreau, to/Island) Michio with whom Minōra has an erotic relation. The next most important is the 18year-old woman who works as a typist in Minōra's export firm, Kizaki Hatsuyo. She is the kind of young, unmarried working woman who was one of the privileged objects of the disciplinary gaze of the popular social sciences of sexology and urban criminology in Japan in the 1920's.

The presence of *hentai1* allows for contradictory cathexes to function for Minōra that would usually be outlawed by the normative laws of *hentai2*. As in fantasy, in *hentai1* both the demands of compulsory heterosexuality and the normative requirements that desire flow only between homogeneous ethno-racial subjects are relaxed. This means that Minōra's fling with the gay Moroto can occur unproblematically with his courtship of Kizaki and later, after Kizaki is mysteriously murdered, he will remarry a separated Siamese twin who appears to be an ethnic South Pacific Islander. Although in some sense the genre of the fictional erotic, grotesque, nonsense allows these contradictions to co-exist, it also provides realistic portraits of imperial subjects and mappings of urban topologies consistent with the operations of *hentai2*. Therefore, we get plausible depictions of the lives of Kizaki and Moroto as we get strange spaces in Tokyo and Kamakura mapped and brought into knowledge. Again, these depictions of *hentai2* run parallel with the co-existence of Minōra's contradictory homo, hetero, and cross-ethnic erotic relations functioning in *hentai1*.

The parallel and simultaneous presence of *hentai1* and *hentai2* is evident from the first scene of the novel where Minōra describes his meeting with Kizaki.

I had been working in Maru no uchi at S&K as a clerk for four years. I hated work because it turned you into a machine; I was a dreamer interested in art and creativity. Because of this I felt left out at work and didn't go to the parties and films that my co-workers went to. I had absolutely no friends, but one day a typist came to work at the company and changed all that. She had

translucent white skin, was in good health and had a high forehead; she was the girl of my fantasies. She was the kind of girl who was so enticing that my hunger (*ue*) would never be satisfied. . . . Still, because I was shy, I didn't try to talk to her for six months. (6-7)

This is a classic scene of fetishism, foregrounding the dream and fantasy. Completely silent (they didn't speak for six months), Minōra's cruising of Kizaki is characterized by a scopophilia which in this scene and in later scenes cuts up Kizaki's body by fixating on her skin, nape of the neck and hands. Nevertheless, he is equally fascinated with the gay Moroto Michio described as a dashing medical doctor 3 years older than Minōra. In these recollections, Minōra, who was the subject of erotic agency in the heterosexual scene above, reverses his position vis-a-vis Moroto where he willingly becomes the passive object of Moroto's queer cathexis and is erotically topped. I don't have the room to go into the scenes in detail, but they are described as fraught and intense. What's most interesting, is that although Minōra keeps saying he doesn't really want to talk about his homoerotic relation with Moroto (5), he keeps returning to it, as *hentai*1 seems to overwhelm his conscious attempts—ruled by *hentai*2—to repress and downplay his homoeroticism.

Although one could argue that what we have here is a situation of a bisexual narrator, I think that the logic (and illogic) of *hentai*1 provides the phantasmatic potential for multiple transferences and multiple positions to be occupied in relation to desire. Although these contradictions are disavowed in the descriptive statement (“although I don't want to talk about my homoerotic experiences, because they are central to the plot I feel like I must”), the enunciation of the movements of *hentai*1 is salient enough. For example, before Minōra and Kizaki's engagement is announced, Kizaki's stepmother attempts to force an arranged marriage between her and Moroto (seemingly an eligible bachelor because of his good looks and medical degree) and they actually go out a few times.

During Minōra and Kizaki's courtship we learn of another improbable situation. When they decide to have sex for the first time at a hotel (12-13), they both get nervous and decide to just talk for a while. Kizaki decides to reveal her past and she tells Minōra that she was found abandoned at a dock in Osaka as an infant. Although we later find out that she was brought to Japan from the island in the South Pacific (where bodies are being Shuttled back and forth and transformed as commodities in a movement of *hentai*3), here Kizaki explains that all she remembers is that she was only left with a bundle of clothes and her family genealogy.

Although her stepfather attempted to ascertain her family background, all he could come up with was that she didn't seem to have come from Japan, but nonetheless was from a noble family. No reasons are given for either her abandonment or her strange origins.

When Moroto (as an MD he is of course, Dr. Moro-to) realizes that Minōra had found out about Kizaki's genealogy, it appears that he somehow gets involved in her subsequent murder. Solving her murder and the two other murders which occur after it occupy the rest of the novel. Along the way towards the eventual arrival in the colonial scene of the South Pacific Island, we get heretofore mysterious places mapped and produced, following the movement of *hentai*<sup>2</sup>. These include the resort and artistic environs of Kamakura (43-46) and Ikebukuro, then an upscale suburb of Tokyo (60-62,76-79) where Rampo himself lived at that time. The descriptive mode of these places, although somewhat recognizable to contemporary readers of the novel, is itself permeated by the movement of *hentai*<sup>1</sup>. Here's Minōra's description of Moroto's house in Ikebukuro:

Although the first time I was invited to Moroto's place he wasn't at home, I went back the second night and I had an unexpected bounty (*shūkaku*). It was already the middle of July on a strange sticky evening in Ikebukuro, nothing like the lively Ikebukuro we all know today. Coming out behind the teachers college, there were hardly any houses in the area. . . . I started to walk along the streets in pitched-black darkness. Although I might have come upon a human being, the uncanny (*bukimi na*) feeling was that there was some kind of ghost nearby. (76-77)

The logic of the dream is announced here where the narrator appears to disappear and get lost in the supernatural. Adding to the nightmarish ambiance, in the short scene that immediately follows, Minōra sees a dwarfish hunchback run by him. The man appears to be around 80 years of age, but Minōra is completely flabbergasted by him, only remembering that a similar person was noticed at the crime scene just before Kizaki's murder and that Kizaki herself reported having seen someone like this hanging around her neighborhood in the days just preceding her death. What I want to emphasize here though, is that immediately following this scene determined by *hentai*<sup>1</sup> there is a *hentai*<sup>2</sup> scene that offers a narrative and thereby produces Moroto Michio as a subject. Minōra describes him as surrounded by young men, gynophobic, dashing and handsome and intelligent. Yet, he is also depicted as a slave to his desires, and therefore inclined towards cruelty. This is evidenced in his medical field of

vivisection, and related to this, Minōra describes a scene where he is scoping out Moroto across the street from his Ikebukuro house: Moroto has blood on his hands and Minōra claims that he can hear the screams of animals somewhere in the house. In other words, although Moroto is depicted positively (intelligent, sensitive, and frequently ethical) here and elsewhere his coding follows the standard homophobia of Japanese and European sexology which read (and occasionally still reads) homosexuality as essentially inclined towards the sadistic, hysterical, and “perverse.”

When Minōra finally gets to visit with Moroto he makes the acquaintance of a middle-aged dwarf named Tomonosuke, who we later learn comes from the South Pacific island. This is the first real clue readers get about the identity of the culprit who has committed (by now) several mysterious murders—as Minōra will realize later that only a little person could have gained access to the places where the murders happened. So with all the tropes of what Homi Bhabha calls the “colonial stereotype,”<sup>22</sup> which in the cited caption operates at the site of “both fixity and fantasy” (or *hentai1* and *hentai2*) Tomonosuke is coded ambivalently as “at once pure and sly,” “simpleminded yet devious,” and although his movements and speech have a “mysterious seductiveness” he is said to have “no common sense because he is an innate (*sententeki*) criminal type” (106). At the level of language as well, Tomonosuke is produced and troped by *hentai2* as a colonized subject. His Japanese speaking patterns are described as scattered, illogical, and lacking in common linguistic sense. His accent is similarly depicted as “strange (*hen na*).” In other words he is othered as non-Japanese, and said to be adept at “Chinese acrobatics.”

Nevertheless, the production of Tomonosuke’s subjectivity others him in such a way as to make his physical deformities politically understandable. His hunchback is said to have been caused by forced enclosure in wooden boxes on the colonial island as well as in slave-ship like conditions during trips back and forth to Japan. The inhuman living and working conditions of Tomonosuke and his other “brothers and sisters” turn out to be the evil doing of Moroto Takegorō, the hideous primal father of Moroto Michio. I won’t have time here to discuss the end of the novel where the “death of the father” closure reveals that Moroto Takegorō himself was partly deformed as a hunchback. As vengeance for the treatment he received growing up in Japan in late Meiji (1868-1912),

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<sup>22</sup> See “The other question: Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism” in Bhabha (1994) *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 66-84.

he gains control of the lonely South Pacific Island and turns it into his very own “laboratory of modernity” where he exploits and turns both Japanese and South Pacific Island subjects into docile bodies through the operation of *hentai*3.

The last thing I wanted to say about Tomonosuke will reroute the discussion back to *hentai*1. Recalling for a moment that the operations of *hentai*1 involve a blurring of subject and object as well as the improbable mixing between types and identities. What’s interesting about Minōra’s description of Tomonosuke is that it in some sense doubles how Minōra himself is socially mirrored. In various places, Minōra is described as dimwitted, strange-looking (especially with his white hair), and lacking in common sense. Despite these deficiencies, many men and women seem to be fascinated with Minōra, and though this may be merely another instance of dimwittedness (thinking that everyone wants him), it suggests a barely disavowed identification with and desire for Tomonosuke. This is consistent with the fetishistic eroticization of South Pacific bodies during the colonial period. Mark Peattie quotes a popular radio song in Japan in 1930 called “The daughter of a chief (*Shūchō no musume*).” The song lyrics go like this:

My sweetheart is the daughter of a village chief  
 She’s pretty dark but in the South Seas, she’s a beauty  
 In the Marshall Islands, below the equator  
 She dances slowly in the shade of the palm trees.<sup>23</sup>

The mode of representation of Tomonosuke as both a phantasmatic figure and the logical type of a colonized non-Japanese subject—which, again, at the level of *hentai*1 allows for a de-centering of individual subjects and an eroticized intermixing between them and, at the level of *hentai*2, produces Tomonosuke as a clearly othered type—is brought to an extreme with the appearance of what at first glance appear to be Siamese twins. With the entrance of the twins Ki-chan and Shū-chan we are offered an uncanny figure par excellence where there is an apparent recombinant of sex and gender onto one body. Still, as the narrative of the twins advances they become produced as logically sexed and gendered subjects by the operations of *hentai*2, although the *hentai*2 production distinguishes sex and gender as I will show.

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<sup>23</sup> Peattie, Mark R. (1988) *Nan’yō: The Rise and Fall of the Japanese in Micronesia, 1885-1945*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pg. 216.



The introduction of the twins begins two scenes after Minōra's visit to Moroto in Ikebukuro. Moroto is considered the prime suspect in Kizaki's murder (because of his homosexuality generally and his jealousy over Kizaki and Minōra's marriage in particular) and because Minōra figures that he is the only person connected to both of the murder victims. Moroto, in turns out, is an avid fan of detective fiction, and describes himself as a *shirōto-tantei*, or amateur detective, using the same self-identification as Rampo's more famous amateur detective Akechi Kogoro. Minōra asks Moroto for help and also questions him on any complicity. Moroto admits that he is completely baffled by the twin murders so far, and he wants to clear himself from any suspicion. He admits that although he has a new lover and live-in boyfriend, he is still in erotic transference with Minōra but insists on his innocence and claims that he has always conducted his relations in an ethical and humane fashion. Upon listening to his story, Minōra begins to recathect onto Moroto's charm, beauty, and delicacy.

Next, after consulting texts by Poe and Conan Doyle, Moroto reports that he's gotten hold of a small notebook discovered at one of the crime sites that seems to offer the first clue. The notebook is said to have come from the "other world (*jingaikyō*)" and is also described as "uncanny"(124, 125). Minōra as narrator here interjects that he has had to change around some of the grammar and fix some of the kanjis to make the text comprehensible at all. Excerpts from the notebook take up the next 20pages of the novel and describe the life of the 3 and 1/2 foot tall twins Ki-chan (the male half) and Shū-chan (the female), who have authored the notebook. Shū-chan begins by saying that she thinks she is around 17 years old although she can't be entirely sure. The one thing she is sure about is that she is "unhappy. . . . I know about the world and Japan but I've never seen it before" (125-126).

She claims that she has no conscious memory of anything that happened before she was 5 years old or so; everything before that is black. She reports that "Otōchan" or her scary "father-like" presence has locked her and her twin in a cell-like structure her whole life. She claims that it took her a long time to figure out that there is any differentiation between humans, bugs, mice, or fish, but once she does realize that humans are different she is shocked to find out that they only come accessorized with one face (130). When she asks her maid about this the maid hints that she and Ki-chan are cripples and therefore different from "normal" humans. One day the maid's husband provides her with three illustrated books (*Children's World*, *The Sun*, and *Memories*) and the maid helps her to read them. But although she says she begins to understand what she reads,

she has “no real reference point in the outside world to compare the picture in the books to. . . . All I can do is think of these things as a dream” (131). So moving from the operations of *hentai*1’s blurring and intermixing of identity, the shock of the cruel binary logic of *hentai*2 produces her eventually as a “properly” gendered subject.

The gendered production of Shū-chan by *hentai*2 involves what Judith Butler calls the “girling of the girl,”<sup>24</sup> which necessitates both a founding interpellation and the forced reiteration of gender norms. As response to both the dread of the darkness that she remembers before she was five years old (*hentai*4) and the gender interpellation of the popular illustrated books, she begins to mimic the pictures of the young women she sees in the books, getting hold of some make-up and a brush. She manages to obtain a piece of glass and starts to compare herself to the images in the books, declaring that she can become as pretty as any of the women in the pictures (135-136). At this point she realizes that there is no escaping her other half Ki-chan. But as the sense of connectedness between them seems inevitable, the psycho-sexual separateness intensifies. With this double awareness an ugly agon is established between them and they begin to have regular physical and verbal fights (138-139).

Only at this point does she realize that she is what people call a “girl” and Ki-chan a “boy” (140). Simultaneous with this is the awareness of the exacerbation of biological distinctions between them as she has her first menstruation and his voice becomes pitched noticeably lower. At night, she writes that he is now doing strange things to her, twisting his body over to hers so he can “molest” her regularly (142-143). The nightly rapes are intensely painful both physically and emotionally and her disgust for Ki-chan becomes unbearable. She pleads with the maid and the maid’s husband (*ojisan*) to give her a saw so she can hack herself off from Ki-chan but when they refuse she gets desperate and at this point attempts to communicate with the visitors who, she has heard, occasionally come to the island. One day she notices a man outside her window and feels strongly attracted to him, but they can only exchange smiles. When he leaves she prays that he will come back so she can throw her notebook to him (148-149). Shū-chan’s notebook ends here with her plea for the mysterious man to return to the Island so that somebody in the far-off land of Japan can become aware of her plight.

Gradually, Moroto tells Minōra he has figured out the whereabouts of the South Pacific Island and they decide to make the trip there by boat in order to save the twins who are receiving more brutal punishment each

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<sup>24</sup> Butler, (1993) op. cit. ,pg. 7.

day at the hands of "Father." After the long trip they land on the island and Minōra realizes why Moroto knew the whereabouts of the island—he was brought up there. Moroto has apparently arranged an uprising of sorts for all the people who are being held captive by Father and they are all immediately ecstatic when they recognize Moroto. As some of the elderly people they come across on the island call Moroto "son/*musuko*," it dawns on Minōra that Moroto is one of the children of the hideous patriarch Moroto Takegorō and therefore a sibling of sorts of the Siamese twins Ki-chan and Shū-chan. After 30 pages a brutal battle with Father ensues and they kill him in a dark cave to the accompaniment of heinous screams and blood spurting everywhere. The death of the father frees everyone on the island and the twins are especially happy. After they are brought back to the metropolitan center of Tokyo, Moroto performs an operation surgically separating them (it turned out that they were artificially joined by technology developed by Moroto under "Father's" orders and not actual Siamese twins at all), hence the scar on Minōra's wife's leg referred to at the beginning of the novel. That's right; during his time on the island, Minōra developed a crush on Shū-chan and begged Moroto to separate them so he and Shū-chan could get married.

### CONCLUSION

I've briefly tried to suggest some of the ways in which this imperial text has inscribed and articulated modalities of imperial sexuality; sexuality read as an effect of historical traumas or *hentai*<sup>4</sup>. I have tried to present the process of eroticizing, grotesquing, and making nonsense of specifically imperial trauma here in terms of the four levels of *hentai*. At the level of *hentai*<sup>1</sup>, there is a strong de-subjectivization of the narrator whose contradictory and contagious structure of desire and identification shifts fluidly between straight and gay, Japanese and non-Japanese, and colonizer and colonized. Nevertheless, at the level of *hentai*<sup>2</sup> there is a binary coding of normal and pathological and therefore a partial resolution of the crisis caused by the chaos of *hentai*<sup>1</sup>. For example, although homoeroticism is represented as non-essential and de-naturalized for Minōra, when the novel ends with the revelation that Moroto is the biological child of the evil hunchback Moroto Takegorō and his crippled wife, the sense is that his gayness is genetic and continuous with biological "degeneracy" in the nineteenth century sexological mode. In other words, although the novel foregrounds Moroto and Minōra's homoerotic transference, in the end Moroto is read as the child of physical freaks and sadistic terrorists, thus metonymizing these with his homoeroticism. Again, this is almost directly opposed to the ways in which, through the

operations of *hentai*<sup>1</sup>, homoeroticism in particular and otherness in general can be identified with and erotically desired.

Although I've hardly opened any discussion of *hentai*<sup>3</sup>, the strange events and relations of power in the novel are configured as logical effects of and responses to the violent de-territorializing and dis-organizing imperatives of imperial capitalism. Capital in the sense that Moroto Takegorō's colonial power is sustained by an absolute surplus value extracted from the bodies of both his Japanese workers and the South Pacific Island subjects. Takegorō as monopoly capitalist impels the movement of bodies back and forth between center and periphery. Like capital he has the power to transform bodies materially as in the case of the unification of the bodies of the separated infants Ki-chan and Shū-chan into one Siamese twin. Like capital too, he works in covert and mysterious ways, behind the backs and in the shadows of everyday life. But he can only function within a structure of modern imperialism where, as Foucault argues, society is directly and in actual fact, *hentai*.

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