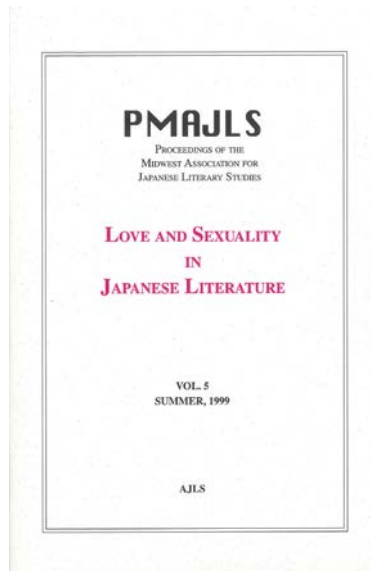


“Penisism and the Eternal Hole: Takahashi Mutsuo’s *Homeuta*”

Jeffrey Angles 

Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary Studies 5 (1999): 207–220.



PMAJLS 5:
Love and Sexuality in Japanese Literature.
Ed. Eiji Sekine.

PENISISM AND THE ETERNAL HOLE: TAKAHASHI MUTSUO'S *HOMEUTA*

Jeffrey Angles
Ohio State University

From 1966 to 1970, the poet, novelist, and literary critic Takahashi Mutsuo worked on his longest poem to date, a gigantic work entitled *Homeuta (Ode)* which examines the phenomenological and psychological gestations of an individual experiencing sexual desire. *Ode* follows a protagonist who engages in anonymous fellatio in a bathhouse, a pornographic movie theater, and public restrooms while searching for a connection with a certain being that he treats as semi-divine. One might regard this piece as the culmination of Takahashi's earlier work since it draws on a major paradigm in his earlier, shorter poems, namely the paradigm of an incomplete individual standing prostrate before a greater force and attempting to make up for his lack through accessing the external force in order to transcend mundane existence. Though the poem delves into details that are extraordinarily erotic, it is clear from the presence of these important themes that Takahashi is not simply writing for the sole purpose of sexual titillation. Instead, he explores the phenomenological limits of the body and the circuits of desire as they operate in the sexual act and imaginings of the protagonist. As George Bataille notes, echoing Sartrean existentialism, "Sexual activity is a critical moment in the isolation of the individual... it weakens and calls into question the feeling of self."¹ In *Ode*, Takahashi is presenting his readers with a case study in which he explores the relationship between this self and other in the sexual act. Likewise, he explores the perception (or *misperception*) that sexuality serves as a means of connecting to the outside world.

TM = Takahashi Mutsuo (Used in citing Japanese sources)
MT = Mutsuo Takahashi (Used in citing English sources)

¹ Georges Bataille, *Death and Sensuality: A Study of Eroticism and the Taboo* (NY: Walker and Company, 1962): 100.

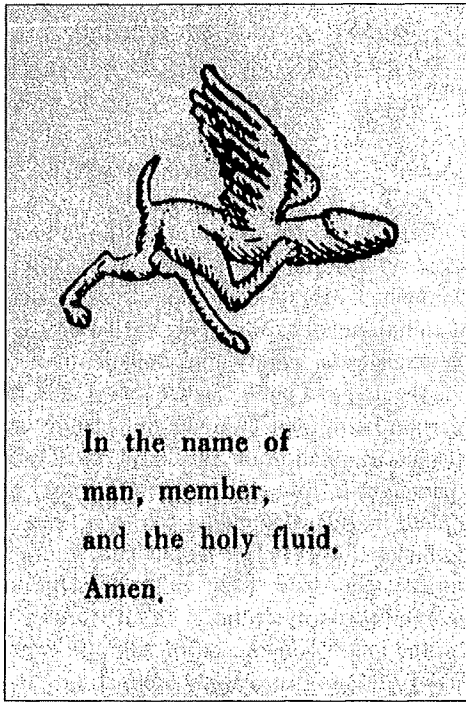


FIGURE 1

Winged Greco-Roman phallus with epigraph from *Homeuta*.

Source: Takahashi Mutsuo, *Homeuta* (Tokyo: Shinchō Sha, 1971): N. pag.

Ode begins with an English-language epigraph which reads, “In the name of man, member, and the hold fluid, Amen”² (Figure 1). From the

² TM, *Homeuta* (Tokyo: Shinchō Sha, 1971): 1; MT, *Poems of a Penisist*, Trans. Hiroaki Sato (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1975): 47. Because of its literal rendering of the original, Sato’s translation is the source of the quotes included here. In 1980, Takahashi published a revised version of *Homeuta*. The revised version may be found in TM, *Shinsen TM shishū*, Shin-sen gendaishi bunko 120 (Tokyo: Shichō Sha, 1980): 24–71 and TM, *Zoku TM shishū*, Gendaishi bunko 135 (Tokyo: Shichō Sha, 1995): 22–54. In addition to a number of textual changes towards the end of the poem, these versions do not include the epigraph, subtitles within the poem, or the final afterward. An English translation of the revised version, also by Hiroaki Sato, is available in MT, *A Bunch of Keys*, Trans. Hiroaki Sato (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1984): 28–76 and MT, *Partings at Dawn: An Anthology of Gay Japanese Literature*, ed. Stephen D. Miller (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1996): 225–256.

very beginning then, it is clear that the man who gives his penis and semen is the object of the protagonist's devotion. This man, identified in bold-faced type with only the vague terms of address *Anata* ("You") or *Otoko* ("The Man"), is described as more than a human being. He is treated as a god, and the act of giving him oral sex is for the fellator a means of communion with him. When the protagonist finally brings *Anata* to orgasm and then masturbates himself to climax toward the end of the poem, the protagonist experiences an ecstatic connection to light, angels, and goodness, but just as an orgasm passes in a blinding moment, this connection cannot be maintained.

One must first recognize the significance of the image of the glory-hole prevalent throughout *Ode* to grasp Takahashi's concept of penisism. In the afterward to *Ode*, Takahashi states, "The glory-hole is a *hole*, a void, which to paraphrase Lao Tzu represents 'that which is useful for *what is there* (= substance) by not being there.'"³ By nature, the glory-hole is emptiness. This emptiness in turn mirrors the lack of substance, divinity, and fulfillment that the person waiting by the glory-hole feels. By accepting a penis into his mouth, the fellator serves as an invisible hole to the person on the other side. Thus, the person sitting before the glory-hole himself becomes a hole in both a literal and figurative sense.

Takahashi takes this idea one step further by explaining that "the *most* void part of the void human being is perhaps neither the vagina nor the rectum, but the oral cavity."⁴ Though Takahashi never explicitly explains this assertion, he may be writing this because the mouth does not experience the orgasmic pleasure of the genital orifices, and the act of oral sex results in only an indirect erotic stimulation for the fellator. The mouth, as opposed to the vagina or rectum, is an instrumental cavity which is not used for receiving direct, ecstatic pleasure. On a more symbolic level, Takahashi explains,

I take the emptiness of the oral cavity as the symbol of the imperfection of human existence. And I take the phallus, which is the object that the oral cavity hopes to hold to complement its emptiness with, as the symbol of the absolute other, which is perfect. So the essence of homosexuality, and of humanity,

³ TM, *Homeuta*: 94. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 103.

⁴ TM, *Homeuta*: 94. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 104.

must for all its worth be on the side of non-pleasure, of the oral cavity.⁵

Oral sex becomes a form of communion with that which is outside, with that which is perfect. Likewise, the act of consciously accepting something perfect into oneself through the mouth which is, by nature, an empty hole, mimics mankind's wish to accept the outer world into one's own life. Takahashi also reminds us that in the Christian church, another forum in which one searches for sacred truths, the "sacred body of Christ, enters from the mouth, and the food for flesh, i.e., bread, water, and fish, also enters from the mouth."⁶ Like Christian communion, Takahashi's concept of penisism takes the "penis as the substance that fills the void innate to man—as the substitute of God."⁷ Penisism, or the passive worship of the phallus, thus represents the desire to achieve a state of wholeness and connection absent in quotidian existence. Takahashi builds upon the existentialist idea that sexual activity serves as a forum in which one can explore one's own subjectivity, since the relationship between the being, its incarnation in the body, and the Other are most immediately visible. Takahashi's protagonist approaches the object of his worship in an attempt to overcome his subjectivity by creating a link, both physical and spiritual, to the external object, which by its very completion represents perfection. In short, the act of engaging in fellatio is a symbolic act that represents an attempt at union between the profane, limited individual and the unlimited, external world.

The human being, as symbolized in *Ode* by the figure waiting beside the glory-hole, is incomplete, living in a prison of the body, separated from all that surrounds him by the limits of the flesh. He experiences the outside world as lack; everything beyond the prison of his body is something alien to him, something that he himself does not contain within. Because humans can only exist within finite, ephemeral bodies, they are inevitably separated from one another, from the outside world, and from the supernatural. The flesh that contains the soul functions as a barrier preventing complete and total communication with all other beings. In *Death and Sensuality*, Georges Bataille states, "Each being is distinct from all others. His birth, his death, the events of his life may have an interest for others, but he alone is directly concerned in them. He is born

⁵ Keizo Aizawa and MT, "Keizo Aizawa Interviews Mutsuo Takahashi," *Gay Sunshine Interviews*, Vol. 2, Winston Leyland (ed.) (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press): 246.

⁶ TM, *Homeuta*: 94. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 104.

⁷ Keizo Aizawa and MT: 256.

alone. He dies alone. Between one thing and another, there is a gulf, a discontinuity."⁸ All individuals are incomplete and therefore in some sense "empty." Since humans are cut off from the outside infinite world by the confines of the body, they are unable to know the infinite, and they remain eternally divorced from the outside universe.

Like the eager, waiting figure by the glory-hole, individuals suffer from an overwhelming drive to reconnect themselves with the "perfect" world that exists outside the prison of the body. The emptiness and subsequent desire within Takahashi's protagonist echoes Bataille's remarks about the natural tendency to yearn for a sense of unity and continuity with the infinite: "We find the state of affairs that binds us to our random and ephemeral individuality hard to bear. Along with our tormenting desire that this evanescent thing [known as life] should last, there stands our obsession with a primal continuity linking us with everything that is."⁹ This obsession suggests that humanity will engage in activities, such as sexuality, that attempt to overcome their limited worlds by achieving some unity with the primal continuity. Within the sexual act, mankind attempts to access the external by submitting some certain object that promises reconnection. Here, Takahashi echoes Aristophanes' famous statement in Plato's *Symposium* that erotic "love is always trying to reintegrate our former nature, to make two into one, and to bridge the gulf between one human and another."¹⁰

Takahashi, however, differs from Aristophanes in his suggestion that the two partners are always on unequal standing. Since the individual who is limited in nature cannot know the infinite external directly, he must rely on some concrete manifestation of the external in a limited form. In order to express this idea, Takahashi employs in *Ode* the Christian idea of an infinite God manifesting himself in a single body, that of Jesus Christ, to present himself to the world. Christianity holds that mankind is by nature limited and cannot engage in communion with the infinite, and for this reason, one cannot know firsthand God-the-Father, an infinite, external being. Instead, mankind worships and communes with God-the-Son, a physical manifestation of God-the-Father that acts as a limited incarnation of the limitless. In *Ode*, it is the penis that serves as the manifestation of the external, the "God-the-Son" comes to lead man to a higher state of spiritual being.

⁸ Bataille: 12.

⁹ Ibid: 15.

¹⁰ Plato, "Symposium," Trans. Michael Joyce, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961): 544.

The fact that in *Ode* the penis/God-the-Son and profane, incomplete individual come together in filthy, rat-infested rooms is significant. In one place, the poem reads:

A cheap movie house with a low ceiling that touches one's head
 Its lavatory—the back of a building is all that's visible from its
 small window
 From there, can't one go to heaven's lavatory along the road of an
 invisible rope?
 At this very moment, in heaven's lavatory, among young angels,
 Are YOU dreamily jerking off?
 Here, to climb is to descend
 To descend, to climb
 No, to climb and to descend are one¹¹

Takahashi has adopted the idea of salvation from Christianity and re-applied it to the deified object of devotion, the anonymous penis. In order to worship the phallus, the fellator descends into the ugly, dirty world of the restroom in a movie theater, but through this act of debasement, the fellator creates a situation in which he can achieve connection with the sacred and rise spiritually. The phallus acts as a Christ-like figure, dispensing the right to rise and enter heaven, and the fellator invites the divine phallus of *Anata* into his mouth in order to rise and counteract the squalor of his surroundings. In the afterward to the poem, Takahashi reminds us that “the ritual in which the basest become the most exalted is manifested the profundity of the supernatural blessings.”¹² By placing sexual activity in such base surroundings, the final salvation is made all the more significant, underlining the divine power of the sexual act.

The equation fall = rise implies that in the sexual act, there will always be an inequality between partners. Because one gives the penis in a communal offering, thus granting salvation to the partner that accepts the gift, the two cannot be on equal standing during the sexual act. The fellator is inevitably lower than the other partner. Yet in *Ode*, Takahashi takes the inequity to extremes, concluding in his afterward that the protagonist turns “himself into zero.”¹³ In doing so, his protagonist comes to stand for the eternally desiring emptiness that Takahashi sees as present within

¹¹ TM, *Homeuta*: 35–36. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 68–69.

¹² TM, *Homeuta*: 98. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 106.

¹³ TM, *Homeuta*: 96. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 105.

all people. Man can never fully overcome the void that occupies his soul, nor can he ever become infinite and complete.

Takahashi's penisism, and especially the concept of the individual as a nothingness or hole, might be compared to the Lacanian notion of the subject formulated as lack. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the concept "T" always contains loss and absence within itself. Symbolization—marked by the subject's entrance into the realm of language—coincides with the age at which the individual begins to apply an image of an external, complete being to himself in order to organize his disconnected, visceral drives and experiences behind the façade of a subject. It is at the age at which the individual recognizes himself as an individual, that one finds him employing language to access the world as a subject. However, language is always predicated on lack, some knowledge that what one is speaking of is not present, and so when the subject employs the word "I," the totality that he is attempting to describe is always dispossessed, alienated, and inauthentic.¹⁴ Because one superimposes the external image of an entire complete being onto a series of disconnected, inchoate drives, feelings, and experiences, there is a dissonance between the signifier "T" and the signified experience of the individual. The subject, is in effect, a product of the signifiers that represent it, signifiers which despite their cleanliness, do not point to a clear, clean, or even unified signified. Therefore, the internal thing that one is trying to represent as an "T" is never entirely at home with the symbolic "T" that one employs to represent it. The image of the self is reversed and outside, ever different and alienating.

Takahashi's "I" too is characterized by as much what he is not than what he is. He is not complete, not attached to the outside world, and as such not able to fill the fullness that the pronoun "I" would seem to require. The delusion that he can come into a full being through the compliment of some external object is a phantasy belonging to the register of the Imaginary, that field of phantasies and images associated with what precedes the Mirror Phase, the movement out of the dyadic world of the mother and child. The very entry into the symbolic order in which the subject is separated from the embrace of the maternal Other (M/Other) appears for the protagonist to become the traumatic event from which his

¹⁴ Monique Wittig describes this situation with the symbol *J/e*, the French word for "I" with a bar or *coupure* through it. In this, she expresses the idea that the *je* or subject is never entirely together and never fully at home with itself. The signified self is always slipping away from the signifier that is its representation.

desire arises, since in his case, desire manifests itself in a drive to overcome this schism. Desire persists as a residue of primordial absence.

In the introduction of the poem, Takahashi sets the tone for much of what follows:

A sunset
 The world's most tragic
 Therefore the most beautiful sunset
 Skin hypersensitive to 'time' that moves second by second¹⁵

The disappearance of the sun, by its poetic associations, introduces a feeling of transience to the poem, a feeling that foreshadows the disappearance of sexual partner and the absence or non-existence of *Anata*. As the reader soon notices, *Anata* is described as a being of light like the sun, and this line at the head of the work already suggests the decline of his brilliant figure.

When *Anata* appears at the beginning of *Ode*, he is a man of gigantic stature that is out of all proportion to ordinary humanity. The author gives us a detailed description of his body by stringing a series of terse, specific images. The opening, like most of the poem, consists of intensely imagistic diction that frequently turns symbolist or surreal. Light is a major motif, one frequently linked in *Ode* with the divine phallus. For instance, consider in the scene when the fellated penis finally has an orgasm.

Light, Holy Spirit, the tongue of a flame going down noisily
 A jolly spring, joyful flow
 Touched by light, Persephone's water cries out with delight
 At midnight, a water-surprise
 On a festival night, fireworks
 A sudden visit
 Brightly between the thighs, angels
 The Word, what is eternally sonlike, overflows
 Cheerfulness, innocence, directness comes forth¹⁶

In this passage, Takahashi has connected the orgasm with images of brightness which, in turn, reflect the sacred nature of the phallus. As discussed earlier, the sexual climax results in an outpouring of pleasure,

¹⁵ TM, *Homeuta*: 1. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 48.

¹⁶ TM, *Homeuta*: 71-72. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 90-91.

innocence, and open-heartedness with the god accepting unto himself the fellator. The semen is a concrete manifestation of the Word, the means of communication used by Yahweh to bring together mankind and the Kingdom of Heaven. The "eternally sonlike" Word, like Christ, serves to bring humanity into a stronger connection with God himself. Through this orgasm of light, the fellator rises from his bathroom to receive the embodiment of joy, "innocence," and the negation of "sin."

As the protagonist fellates *Anata* during their first encounter towards the beginning of the work, *Anata*'s face becomes hard and tense, blood vessels rise from his forehead, and "Only, the waves of pain that slither up from his dim underbelly / Move like the breathing earth".¹⁷ As he comes to climax, the man, suddenly takes on gigantic proportions, becoming an entire landscape. At the moment of his orgasm, the man becomes the manifestation of everything, of God, and the whole of creation. Immediately after *Anata* takes on these grandiose proportions, ants begin swarming over his penis. Just as ants come in swarms to infest an abandoned corpse, these ants swarm over the now dead shell of the divine rod. Within a moment of the appearance of these vermin-like creatures, they transform into "abominable female weepers, hair coated with ash" whose "obscene griefs pierce heaven"¹⁸ as they mourn the falling deity. The fellator is left alone in his world "like vomit, like an afterbirth" without any sign of the divine Other. The protagonist is left alone in the ruined landscape to cry, "Where on earth are you going? / Please do not go / Please stay".¹⁹ He is left alone with the emptiness of his glory-hole to exist in a world without God, without any connection to the world outside the body. As the setting sun and approach of night in the first lines of the poem reveal, the orgasm of light takes place in the midst of darkness, and thus the light of orgasm is surrounded by a larger, more fundamental darkness. By the end of the introduction of *Ode*, the light has faded and returned the protagonist once again to unending blackness. The cycle of rise and fall is complete.

Most of the remainder of the poem consists of the protagonist's vivid recollections and phantasies of *Anata*, of the dirt on his toes, of the scent of his groin, of the appearance of his glans, his penis, his pubic hair, his scrotum and testicles, his foreskin, his smegma, and his semen. The poem bombards the reader with image after image. For instance, the following is part of a long passage describing the head of *Anata*'s penis.

¹⁷ TM, *Homeuta*: 2-3. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 48-49.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ TM, *Homeuta*: 4. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 50.

A mango, papaya, durian with a pungent odor
 A banana gives off fragrance as one peels it
 The coconut one holds with both hands in cool shade and pleas-
 antly lets drink one's sweat
 The tight, bumpy head of a native drinking from a coconut
 Novel fruits brought over salt-fragrant oceans [...]
 In the morning field, a dew-drenched, muddy melon
 A watermelon, its red inside peering out of the crack made when
 it dropped on the road
 A butchered infant's head, its wet brains peering out²⁰

In *Anata's* absence, the protagonist traces his memory through what Lacan has called the Symbolic Order in an attempt to somehow come in contact with or grasp the Real behind the image of the penis. *Anata* does not appear until nearly the end of the work, and until then, the protagonist is left with his slippery chain of signifiers that point some reality, some disordering moment of *jouissance* that he cannot grasp except in the final throes of orgasm.

In the end, the protagonist and *Anata* do meet again and the protagonist masturbates himself to climax. As the protagonist approaches orgasm, the lines grow increasingly terse and direct. The orgasm comes with the following words.

A galaxy spilling out of a jewelry box
 Celestial bodies
 Airships
 Planes in large formation, falling in flames
 Paratroopers
 Naked men
 Fly
 Go on flying
 And in the end turning into balls like fetuses
 Fall, leaden, ponderous!²¹

Takahashi has juxtaposed images of flying and the heavens with the blatantly sexual image of nude men. The pull of gravity, however, begins to function when Takahashi introduces images of falling, slowly with a parachute then faster like lead. Despite the protagonist's calls to the air-

²⁰ TM, *Homeuta*: 28–29. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 65.

²¹ TM, *Homeuta*: 75. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 92.

borne nude men, he falls, showing that the connection with the divine that he feels is not permanent. As he recovers from his ejaculation, he plunges back to his earthly existence as an incomplete being.

After this orgasm, at the very end of the work, Takahashi's protagonist comes to a startling conclusion about the nature of the Other, his *Anata*, as he languishes in his loneliness. He imagines *Anata* sitting on the toilet before him.

You . . . form the median point of the cross-shaped mysteri-
ous toilet floor
And the cross shape cut off with you, thinking
Goes under, creaking heavily
Into the dark earth, into the invisible red inside
You, who go under, who are power and are wisdom
You, who are gentleness, heaviness, and pureness
You, who are at the blazing center of all—who are you?
You, who are god of my gods, are NOWHERE
You on the cross-like toilet floor
Whom I have made up in my painful faith, are NO ONE
Ah!²²

The poem ends this way, leaving the reader with the sigh of anguished recognition that his god does not exist. Like the Christian messiah on the cross who also fell, *Anata* disappears under the earth into the imagined fires of hell, but unlike Christ who, according to Christian legend was resurrected, *Anata*, the great Other at the center of everything, is not. Instead, he turns out to be a mere man who, like the protagonist, also falls after the sexual rise. The protagonist's "god of gods" does not exist anywhere, except within the world of his own imagination. There is no one to grant him eternal salvation, and he is apparently doomed to a continued existence of emptiness.

In *Death and Sensuality*, Georges Bataille points to the bitter irony that eroticism should rely upon a physical bounded entity, such as the phallus, to achieve unity between the individual and the surrounding world. Bataille writes, "eroticism which is a fusion, which shifts interest away from and beyond the person and his limit, is nevertheless expressed by an object. We are faced with the paradox of an object which implies the abolition of the limits of all objects, of an *erotic object*."²³ This para-

²²TM, *Homeuta*: 86–87. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 97.

²³ Bataille: 130. Emphasis is in the original.

doxical reliance upon a physical object outside of the self to achieve unity with the outside world is the reason that the erotic experience described in *Ode* is doomed to fail.

To restate this phenomenological finding in terms of Lacan, the drive (which is fueled by desire) cannot come to rest on the *objet petit a* which opens and becomes the object of desire. Instead, the drive moves in a circular course from the erogenous zone of the subject through the rim of his body (here the mouth into which the penis comes) around the *objet petit a* before returning back through the rim into the self.²⁴ His desire merely circulates around the *objet petit a* without penetrating it, without achieving some sort of union with the *le grand Autre* (Other) that appears to stand behind it. Despite the drive trying to propel the subject into the realm of the Other, the circular route of the drive always brings the subject back to himself. The internal structure of that *objet petit a* remains inaccessible to the subject, and despite the subject's attempts to engage in communion with it, he is not able to do so. His desire to complete himself through union must remain unfulfilled since the object that unleashes desire by hinting at its fulfillment is fundamentally unable to achieve this goal.

Takahashi appears to be suggesting that mankind's desire for connection and for lodging within the external world can never be permanently fulfilled as long as the individual involved remains bounded by the flesh. There is no one, no spirit, no object that can eternally fill the hole—the sexual void of the glory-hole or the larger spiritual emptiness within mankind. Given this inescapable state, attempts to create a greater ideological construct to fill the internal void will only remain at the level of an abstract construct and can never be transformed into flesh. It was merely the workings of desire attempting to reconnect the individual to the outer world that led the protagonist to view *Anata* as a greater being representative of the outside world. *Anata's* penis, though proposing communion with the outside world, though promising to serve as the “substitute for God,” and though suggesting fulfillment for the individual protagonist, was able to fulfill none of these promises. The protagonist realizes that *Anata* and his phallus are nothing but empty signifiers pointing to an interiority that must remain ever hidden from the protagonist's view. The protagonist finds himself alone with his existential hole, separated from the external world.

²⁴ See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Trans. by Alan Sheridan (NY: W.W. Norton & Co, 1978): 178 for a diagram of this phenomenon.

Though *Ode* depicts homosexual activity without camouflage or hesitation, Takahashi never uses the Japanese vocabulary associated homosexuality or homosexuals, such as *nanshoku* (“male eros”), *okama* (“fag” or literally “rice pot”), or *kagema* (“fly,” a man who acts effeminate) to refer to his protagonist or his actions. Likewise, he avoids terms derived from Western terminology, such as *gei* (“gay”) or *dōseiaisha* (“homosexual”) to refer to the protagonist. The overwhelming sexual explicitness of the work, however, suggests that Takahashi is not avoiding these terms out of shyness or self-censorship. Instead, by avoiding these terms, he has attempted to prevent his protagonist from being viewed as a marginalized sexual minority.²⁵ In the afterward, Takahashi rejects the notion that the protagonist should be understood as a “homosexual” on the grounds that this label leads the reader to the false conclusion that homosexuality involves different dynamics than other sexualities.

In the correct sense of the word, *homosexual* points to a self-preservation of purity through the copulation of two homogeneous entities. And yet, basically, copulation is not homogeneous, and therefore, self-preservation of purity through it is impossible. Copulation requires a relation akin to that of the ‘bolt and nut,’ and when both participants in copulation are bolt-like beings, one of them would have to become nut-like.²⁶

²⁵ The lack of labels may also be seen in many of Takahashi’s other longer works which also depict homosexuality, works such as *Jū-ni no enkei* (1970), *Sei sankakkei* (1972), and *Zen no henreki* (1974). Sociologist Furukawa Makoto has discussed the terms listed above and shown how they refer to a particular “code” or construction of homosexuality within twentieth-century Japan. The fact that Takahashi avoids such words implies that he has tried to portray his protagonist apart from these societal constructions and their varying levels of acceptance. Given the widely fluctuating attitudes towards homosexual behavior in modern Japan and Takahashi’s self-admitted desire to write literature that is universal, it may well be the case that he wished to avoid words that might date his work by locking it within the language of a particular period. See Furukawa Makoto, “The Changing Nature of Sexuality: The Three Codes Framing Homosexuality in Modern Japan,” Trans. by Angus Lockyer, *U.S.-Japan Women’s Journal: English Supplement* 7 (1994): 98–127; Furukawa Makoto, “Dōseiai no hikaku shakaigaku: Rezubian / Gei Sutadiizu no tenkai to nanshoku gainen,” *Sekushuariti no shakaigaku*, Iwanami gendai shakaigaku 10 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996): 113–130.

²⁶ TM, *Homeuta*: 97. MT, *Poems of a Penisist*: 106.

In other words, all sexuality involves penetration and receptivity. Even *homosexuality* must become *heterogenous* sexuality, or otherwise intercourse could not occur. In this sense, the experience that Takahashi describes is not confined to gay men. If Takahashi were to identify his protagonist with the word “homosexual” or some other qualifying term, he may have obscured this point. Takahashi’s afterward makes it clear that he wishes to portray themes of the human condition that are not just confined to just a small slice of humanity but that are universal.