Imperial subject formation between colonial Seoul and metropolitan Tky

Autor(en): **Driscoll, Mark**

Objekttyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie**

Band (Jahr): **53 (1999)**

Heft 2: **Rethinking urban and mass culture in 1920' and 1930' Japan : representations, politics, identities, and subject formations**

PDF erstellt am: **13.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-147453

Nutzungsbedingungen
Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.
Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.
Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss
Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

Ein Dienst der *ETH-Bibliothek*
ETH Zürich, Rämistrasse 101, 8092 Zürich, Schweiz, www.library.ethz.ch

http://www.e-periodica.ch

IMPERIAL SUBJECT FORMATION BETWEEN COLONIAL SEOUL AND METROPOLITAN TŌKYŌ

Mark DRISCOLL, University of Michigan

The massive disavowal of colonialism in modern Japanese literary and cultural studies (Fujii 1997) has resulted in the foreclosure of comparative analyses *within* Japan's modern empire. The sole comparative works we have treating Japanese modernism are policed by Orientalist power/knowledge regimes which either explicitly or implicitly situate Japan's synecdochic status to the "East" as always "late" and/or temporarily "behind" the assumed superiority of the "West" (Hall 1992). That is to say that the assessments of modernism in Japan have always used the (barely disavowed) superiority of Euro-American genres and styles to pass judgement on Japan's modernity and modernism.

In this paper I will attempt to fracture the Orientalist schema which locates the origin of all modern culture and civilization in the "West" (and, again, its necessarily tardy arrival into Japan and China) by analyzing the power flows between imperial Tōkyō and colonial Seoul (Keijō). As I argue in my forthcoming manuscript on culture and colonialism, some of the most important and popular Japanese modernist discourses of the 1920s and 1930s 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 which originated in the colonial encounter there can be shown to have impacted new metropolitan forms appearing *later* than their colonial predecessors inside Japan. This cultural flow moving from lesser developed periphery to the imperial center runs directly counter to the supposed uni-directional cultural and civilizational movement of Eurocentrist historicism, which locates modernist origins in Euro-America, stopwatches their arrival late to Japan, and then assumes they would arrive even later still to Japan's colonial empire. However, in the case of the erotic-grotesque-nonsense genre (*ero-guro-nansensu*), I argue that it's "mature" Tōkyō representatives can only be fully historicized through colonial phenomena and subjective technologies spawned in Japan's imperial periphery.

Therefore, following these post-colonial reading protocols, I will begin my analysis in the 1910s in the urban site of colonial Seoul by looking at

some texts by one of the most popular colonial journalists of the 1910s, Ishimori Seiichi. He wrote his column "Strange, Uncanny Illusions that Appear and Disappear" under the name of "drag journalist" (*hensō kisha*) and using various disguises (Japanese woman, old Korean man, Russian spy, Chinese taxi-driver), he introduced readers to the most interesting scenes in the colonial cities of Seoul, and Dalian, China. I will then briefly show how the so-called "erotic, grotesque, nonsense" is deeply connected to colonial-imperialism and read Edogawa Ranpo's famous novel of 1928 *Injū* (*The Monstrous Feminine*) showing its formal and thematic closeness to the colonial work of Ishimori. Lastly, I will suggest that the splitting and reversals of identification (between gender, ethnicity, colonizer and colonized) in these two urban texts point to what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls an "imperial subject production"[1] and can therefore help us locate the specificity of this imperial subject formation in the case of Japan's imperial modernism and imperial urbanism.

The "work" of empire: Field work and dream work

The most popular monthly magazine in Japan's colonial periphery in the 1910s was the *Korea Digest* (*Chōsen kōron*) and it ran a regular series from September 1913 for about six years called "Strange, Uncanny Illusions that Appear and Disappear."[2] Although the piece was alternately signed with three different names, in each case the names were followed with the imprimateur "*hensō kisha*"—journalist in drag. The drag author turned out to be the popular Japanese essayist Ishimori, who promised to introduce readers to the "dark, underbelly" (*ankokumen*)[3] of the new colonial world, a world where he claimed the "overworked bodies are weak, but the appetite for desire is strong."[4] Like "sleazy characters in Russian novels,"[5] and "immoral representations à la Flaubert," Ishimori boasted that the "real people" of Seoul, Pusan, and Dalian will be shown in all their "decadent (*daraku*) glo-

1 See SPIVAK 1988, p. 296.

2 See *Chōsen kōron*, "Kiki kaikai hengen shutsubotsusen," from September 1913.

3 *Chōsen kōron*, August 1915, p. 151.

4 *Chōsen kōron*, January 1914, p. 122.

5 Ibid. 123.

ry," amidst their "living, breathing contradictions."[6] These "real people" of Japan's colonialism included the lesbians who fled Japan for the relative freedom of the colonies, the liberals in the colonial bureaucracy who turn into "sex maniacs" (*shikima*) and prey on women at night,[7] destitute Chinese and Korean sex workers who are so bold that they will "have sex with you right in front of their parents for money,"[8] the modern colonizer working women who insist on doing everything in a rejection of tradition,[9] crossdressing Japanese and Russian woman sex workers,[10] Japanese pretty-boy gigolos (*danshō*) whom colonial women pay for sex,[11] notorious Japanese poisoned women who gather dead "horny little devils" (*irogaki*) of Korean, Chinese, and Japanese ethnicity in their mosquito nets,[12] and thrill-seeking kids (*tsūkaiji*) who become tragic, wretched (*santan-taru*) sacrifices to the dangerous, epistemological opacity of the colonial cities.[13]

The series features the detective/writer in various kinds of drag, drag which allows him/her the freedom to do "field work" on the subjects existing at the edges of colonial society and bring them into discourse. Each issue has the drag journalist putting on a different disguise including that of Chinese *shafu* driver in Dalian, elderly Korean male drifter in Seoul, Japanese woman sex worker in Seoul and Pusan, French detective tracking Russian criminals in Manchuria and Russia,[14] elderly Russian man in Dairen, and Japanese migrant worker in Seoul where the journalist puts on black face (*kao ni kuroide sumi*) to convince the locals that he is really a lower-

6 October 1913, p. 77.

7 September 1915, p. 111.

8 August 1915, p. 114.

9 April 1914, p. 90.

10 October 1915, p. 97.

11 June 1914, p. 117. There are many examples of Japanese women paying men for sex in these features and gossip columns as well. See for ex. *Korea Digest*, October 1913, p. 71.

12 July 1914, p. 109.

13 October 1913, p. 81.

14 See installments of September and October 1915.

class Japanese.[15] Many of the installments emphasize the phantasmatic and hallucinogenic elements of colonial reality,[16] and the introduction to the October 1914 installment insists that because the ethnographic work of the drag journalist operates through the logic of the dream, readers should be encouraged in a similar way to let their "imaginations run wild" (*takumashū suru*).[17]

In what the *Korea Digest* advertised as the most popular series in the colonies, the double imperative of ethnographic *field work*, and the *dream work* of phantasmatic identification is inscribed (Butler 1993). The field work discursively produces for an imperial power/knowledge regime both marginal and central social positions in colonial society: the hypocritical bureaucrat, the proto-feminist "new woman," displaced Korean migrant workers, Korean and Japanese female sex workers, Japanese petty-capitalists obsessed with the commercial sex districts, etc. The journalistic field work also provides the reader with remarkably detailed mappings of the colonial cities featuring lavish descriptions of bars, back-alleys, train stations, Chinese restaurants, and underground Korean resistance meeting houses. Although the writer sensationalizes and *grotesques* the "unknowability" (*etai no shirenu*) and "uncanny" (*bukimi*) sense of the colonial scene (similar to what Michael Taussig (1987) has described as the "epistemic murk" of colonialism), this is partially overcome through a mapping of space and a discursive "working of the field." Moreover, as the Japanese colonial reader[18] is asked to identify through the drag journalist with a truly universal conglomeration of gendered and ethnic speaking subjects—French, Russian, Korean, Japanese, Chinese—the series can be homologized with the mise en scène of the multiplication and proliferation of identifications in psychoanalytic theories of fantasy (Laplanche and Pontalis 1986).

The contemporary versions of fantasy derive from Freud's 1919 essay *A Child is Being Beaten* where he describes several of his patients' fantasies of "a child is being beaten," which under the pressure of analysis, reveal

15 See installment for August 1915, p. 150.

16 See April 1914, p. 87, and installment for October 1914, and December 1913.

17 October 1914, p. 123.

18 There were definitely some Korean readers (and many more Chinese) who could read Japanese at this time.

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 oneself 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. (Laplanche and Pontalis 1986:26)

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. At the same time, Laplanche and Pontalis identify fantasy as the privileged locus for the most primitive defensive reactions, such as turning against oneself, or turning into an opposite through projection and negation. Here, I want to emphasize the ways in which the Japanese male imperial subject enjoys a radical slippage between seemingly contradictory identifications.

Nevertheless, the identities that Ishimori drags aren't infinite, and crucial positions are absent and disavowed. As Judith Butler argues, "certain exclusions and foreclosures institute the subject and persist as the permanent or constitutive spectre of its own idealization" (Butler 1993:116). Following psychoanalytic and queer theory protocols, I want to argue that fantasy is an eroticized response to a traumatic antagonism (similar to the "real" in Lacan, and *zettai mu* in Nishida Kitarō and Tanabe Hajime) that threatens the subject with dissolution. The function of fantasy is to cover over, transform, and substitute this loss with eroticized replacements. Or rather, I suggest that fantasy *eroticizes, grotesques* (as in "transforms"), and makes *nonsense* of this historical-material loss and trauma. Nevertheless, despite this miraculous technology of subjectivity capable of eroticizing and grotesqueing this painful loss, the source of the antagonism and pain is often present in its *absence* from phantasmatic staging. Consequently, the identifications dragged by Ishimori don't contain the obvious ones of Korean men below the age of 60 (theoretically the easiest position for the 20-something Ishimori to drag), young working class males (the Chinese *jinrikisha* driver

in Dalian is elderly), and queer men.[19] As I will elaborate on later, the positions most threatening to the exuberant colonizer heterosexuality of Ishimori—queer and colonized working class male—can't be performatively acknowledged. These are the abjected positions which necessarily ground all the other eroticized and grotesqued inversions staged by Ishimori. Through the absenting of homoerotic identifications, as well as the erasure of the partly homoerotic love-hate cathexis for his Korean male double, the structure of colonial compulsory heterosexuality is installed. In my forthcoming dissertation I will discuss at length how this structure of homoerotic disavowal was crucial for the heterosexualization (through the commodification of sex and women's bodies) of Japan's imperial periphery from 1895.

Edogawa Ranpo's sensational horror-detective novel of 1928, *The Monstrous Feminine* (*Injū*) (Edogawa 1996),[20] articulates a proliferation of phantasmatic identifications strikingly similar to the ones identified above in Ishimori's colonial texts. It does so by foregrounding the psychic "work" of the dream and fantasy. For example, on page one of the novel, the first person narrator *watashi* (a "famous detective writer") claims that

> although the incidents you will read about actually happened to me, the actual incident is like a dream that keeps changing.... This isn't simply a case of the uncanny, but a situation where ungraspable hallucinations appear and disappear. (Ibid.:2–3)

Two pages later we discover that these go beyond even hallucinations to "erotic dreams I feel like I've entered ... but I never actually appear in" (5). The fantasy-like scenario is compounded by the first scene which takes place in the Imperial Museum of Natural History located in Ueno Park, Tōkyō, where the narrator finds himself the lone visitor; here as well, "everything points in the direction of the dream" (6). His isolation is interrupted by the sound of a cough and then the sudden appearance of a solitary woman (30-

19 The presence of lesbians in Seoul and Dalian is amply documented in the colonial archive. There is no doubt that the Japanese colonial cities were "safer" places for nonheterosexual women than inside Japan, where the structure of compulsory heterosexuality would arguably have been more intense. The presence of male sex workers—serving mainly male customers—has also been documented. See my dissertation (DRISCOLL 1999).

20 The novel was originally published in *Shinseinen* in three parts from August 1928 to October 1928.

something and attractive, with an "uncanny Mona Lisa face and smile") who enters the huge exposition room. In the cruising scene that follows, the narrator fetishistically focuses on the nape of the woman's neck, and is shocked to discover unnatural, black and blue welts (*mimizubare*) on her exposed upper back. Fascinated, the narrator imagines what kind of "strange eroticism would have included pleasure in such cruelty (*zankoku*)." The first scene pauses with the narrator "trembling with excitement (*zokuzoku suru*)" (7).

After they exchange greetings, it turns out that the woman is a big fan of the narrator's detective novels, and they agree to meet and exchange letters. The woman is an unhappily married bourgeois named Oyamada Shizuko. A few weeks later, Shizuko confesses to the narrator that she had been in love and sexually involved with a beautiful boy named Hirata Ichirō, but they ran into financial difficulties and she was compelled to marry her present husband, a finance capitalist (13–15). But she finally confides to the narrator that Hirata has never forgotten her, and has lately been stalking her and sending her threatening letters. She shows him one of the letters and it reveals that Hirata has actually been writing popular detective novels under the pen name of Ōe Shundei and because of his success is now wealthy. The first-person narrator is stunned, as his own popularity has waned somewhat because of the sudden rise of this Ōe Shundei, a figure who incidentally looks uncannily like the bald, "Chinese-faced" (28) narrator. Moreover, the similarities extend beyond the physiognomic to the psycho-sexual; Ōe is described as obsessed with strange sexuality (*hentai seiyoku*) and is the "kind of guy who likes to put his fantasies into practice" (25). This is only the first in a series of doubles and triples in the novel. The reference to the bald head and "Chinese demeanor" of Ōe doubling the narrator's appearance would have tipped off Tōkyō readers to the ubiquitous appearance of Edogawa himself, who was famous for his round "Chinese face" and prematurely (aged 32 when *Injū* was published) bald pate. So we have a multiplication of doubles leading from Shizuko's ex-boyfriend Hirata to his new identity under the *nom de plume* Ōe Shundei, whose appearance is uncannily similar to, and the compositional style of his popular detective novels homologous in style to, the narrator—himself explicitly presented as Edogawa's double.

As the threats from Hirata intensify, Shizuko sets up a (wo)man hunt with detectives and police to find the homicidal Hirata/Ōe. We learn that Yoshiko and her husband (bald as well) have been having consensual sadomasochistic sex for 4 years. Strangely, this doesn't tip anyone off when the

husband is found at the bottom of Sumidagawa River wearing only underwear, an ugly toupée, and with small knife cuts and light burns all over his body (49). Even after Shizuko shows the narrator the s/m room, riding crops, and harness where she and her husband would have "erotic play" (58), he doesn't suspect a thing. Only after the narrator himself is drawn into a s/m relation with Shizuko—where their lovemaking is described as sounding like "shrieking dogs" (85)—does he begin to figure out the truth. But the narrator's gradual awakening comes from his best friend Honda, who is naturally a detective writer himself in the mode of Ōe (and therefore the narrator as well) and who has memorized all of Ōe's novels. Following the plot of two of Ōe's novels, they hypothesize that Shizuko herself murdered her lover Hirata, and has been composing the popular novels sold under the name "Ōe Shundei" herself. She had apparently bought a house in the country where Ōe was sending his manuscripts from, and twice a week would go out there and masquerade as his wife. It turned out that Shizuko reversed the top/bottom power dynamic with her husband and sadistically tortured him to death, deliberately stirring up suspicion that one of her husband's masochistic European lovers was actually the murderer. The next to last chapter of the novel features a riot of gender blurrings as a new Tōkyō literati scandal featuring yet another popular detective novelist thought to be a woman, comes out as a man. The narrator wonders to himself that if he went out cruising men in drag "could I find out what it's like to have sex as a woman?" (108)

The novel closes with a brutal s/m scene as the narrator reveals the truth of Shizuko's disguises to her. He psychoanalyzes that her subjectivity has been at least "triply split" (*hitori, san'yaku*) (113) among the shifting identities of Hirata's ex-lover mourning over his murder, the man Ōe, and Mrs. Oyamada (she is also doubled or quadrupled with the masochistic European women blamed for Mr. Oyamada's death). After Shizuko suicides, the narrator realizes that he has killed her, and that in fact, she and he share the same fractured subjectivity; i. e., they both share the simultaneous identifications of "detective, victim, and criminal."

Although critics in Japan have occasionally underlined Edogawa's theme of the doubly split subject/*hitori, niyaku* as representative of his classic works of the 1920s and 1930s, the subject made up of at once "detective, victim, and criminal" has not been examined. Such neglect is surprising given that this more radically split subject was privileged not only in Edogawa's

major fictions of this period, including *Zakurō, Oni,* and *Nanisha,* and in his Akechi Kogoro detective novels of the early Shōwa period, but also in the popular *ero-guro-nonsense* novels of Kyūsaku as well.

I argue that this subjective technology that identifies at once as "detective, victim, and criminal" is the Japanese imperial subject *par excellence* and should be read together with the slippages in phantasmatic identification located above in the colonial text. Shizuko's dragging of the Japanese detective writer Ōe, who is metaphorized (Chinese face and demeanor) and metonymized (seen at Chinese restaurants), is doubled again by the narrator who looks and acts Chinese as well. The drag detective in the colonial feature "Strange, Uncanny Illusions that Appear and Disappear" showcases similar identifications. Like Ishimori's drag detective piece, the *field work* in Edogawa's novel (marginal erotic subjects identified and subjectivized, strange places in Tōkyō cognized and mapped, etc.) is accompanied by an explicit *dream work* where we can register the mechanisms of fantasy and its power to reverse and multiply identifications and desire. And lastly, the *network* of putting these imperial texts on line with other texts—Poe, Dostoevsky, Freud for Edogawa; Flaubert, Gorky, de Quincy for Ishimori; German film, Freud, Chinese tales for Yumeno Kyūsaku—urges a reading of these texts as what Franco Moretti has called "world texts." Moretti identifies the hybrid, impure quality of world texts as texts that are "not about any national culture, but invoke the world by the supranational dimension of their represented space" (Moretti 1996:2).

Although the supranational dimension of these and other erotic-grotesque nonsense texts has guaranteed their foreclosure from the canon of Japanese literary and cultural modernism, their work of phantasmatic identification, their excess, and their foregrounding of imperialism invite critical-historical attention.

Bibliography

BUTLER, Judith (1993). *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge.

DRISCOLL, Mark (1999). *Erotic Empire, Grotesque Empire*, Ph.D. thesis Cornell University.

EDOGAWA Ranpo (1996). *Injū*. Tōkyō: Shun'yōdō.

FREUD, Sigmund (1963). "A Child is Being Beaten. A Contribution to the Origin of Sexual Perversion," in Philip RIEFF (ed.) *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love.* Macmillan: New York, (1919).

FUJII, James (1997). "Writing out Asia. Modernity, Canon, and Natsume Sōseki's *Kokoro*," in Tanie BARLOW (ed.) *Formations of Colonial Modernity in East Asia.* Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 171–197.

HALL, Stuart (1992). "The West and the Rest. Discourse and Power," in Stuart HALL and Gram GIEBEN (eds.) *Formations of Modernity.* Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 3–20.

KOMAGOME Takeshi (1996). *Shokuminchi teikoku Nihon no bunka tōgō.* Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten.

LAPLANCHE, Jean, and PONTALIS, J.-B. (1986). "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," in Victor BURGIN, James DONALD and Cora KAPLAN (eds.) *Formations of Fantasy.* London: Methuen, pp. 1–28 (1964).

MORETTI, Franco (1996). *Modern Epic.* London: Verso.

SPIVAK, Gayatri Chakravorty (1988). "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in Cary NELSON and Lawrence GROSSBERG (eds.) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, pp. 271–313.

TAUSSIG, Michael (1987). *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man. A Study in Terror and Healing.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.