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The Departing Body: Creation of the Neutral in-between Sensual Bodies

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Abstract

This paper investigates the Japanese concept of *ma/aida*, the space in-between, discussed by French author Roland Barthes as the Neutral, not signifying the medium of the opposite poles but the bare existence. It first analyzes how the discourse of contiguous relationships and the space between others has functioned in modern and postwar Japan, and further employs the works of the Japanese female writer Matsuura Rieko as counterexamples, with particular emphasis on the space between the sensual and the sexual. It provides a fresh view on the conceptions of space and indirectness between and within the body.

Keywords: space in-between, selfhood, sensual and sexual, passivity, *skinship*

Izveček

Članek raziskuje japonski koncept *ma/aida*, med-prostor, ki ga francoski avtor Roland Barthes obravnava kot »nevtralni«, in ki ne označuje medij nasprotnih si polov, temveč golo eksistenco. Članek najprej analizira, kako je diskurz sosednjih razmerij in časa med drugimi deloval v moderni in povojni Japonski ter proučuje japonsko žensko pisateljico Matsuura Rieko kot protiprimer s posebnim poudarkom na čas med čutnostjo in seksualnostjo. Članek ponudi svež pogled na koncepte prostora in indirektnosti med telesi in znotraj telesa.

Ključne besede: vmesni prostor, individualnost, čuten in seksualen, pasivnost, »intimna komunikacija preko dotika«

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1 Introduction

“The body is this departure of self to self.”
—Jean-Luc Nancy 2008

Because your sensation is transmitted very strongly, I think that I can feel you naked when you are clothed, and when you are naked, I think that I can touch your nerves directly.

When I am together with you, my threshold of consciousness is low. Small things become a joy, a pleasure.

The I that you know becomes like a shellfish stripped of its shell. Soft, pliant, sensitive—a shellfish that has lost its shell. (Matsuura 2006, 203)

The contemporary Japanese female writer Matsuura Rieko 松浦理英子 seeks the exposed, bare body which has sensual communication with others, but also the subject and body that is not dichotomized such as the active and the passive. The body which Matsuura indicates is a bare flesh that transmits sensations, stands as it is, and resists by its own existence without confrontationally being against other bodies, in the space created between and within bodies.

This paper investigates the concept of *ma/aida*, the space in-between, which is discussed by French author Roland Barthes as the Neutral. Since the mid-19th century and particularly in the postwar Japan, the relationality of Japanese self with the other—whether it is a nation or an individual—has been problematized, in the midst of the Western individualized subject and the shadowy Japanese subject. In particular, postwar discourse on the self has focused on the lack of a solid identity in the Japanese self, such as explained by the Japanese political scientist Maruyama Masao 丸山真男; although it was almost left out after the rise of the post-modern thought in the 70' and 80's, which prioritized the indeterminable, schizophrenic self rather than the modern, self-contained self. However, the fact that Japan did not have severe struggle with the imported ideas of the modern subject and individualism does not necessarily mean the lack of solid identity. In other words, the struggle of the indigenous principle against new foreign thought is not the only way to encounter others. There is another mode of encounter, and even resistance, through the bare self, as suggested by Barthes and Deleuze and Guattari, which can be further expanded using the literary creations of Matsuura. This paper aims to demonstrate a mode of encounter with the other, as well as with

the bare self, in the space created between sensual bodies, the Neutral in Barthes and *aida* in Japanese.

This paper starts with an examination of mainly French literary theory and criticism which examines issues of space, the body, and the self, along with the literature on selfhood and space provided by Japanese psychiatrist Kimura Bin 木村敏 who uniquely combines his clinical theorizations of Japanese cases with continental philosophy. Then, it examines how the discourse of contiguous relationships with others has functioned in modern and postwar Japan, examining a counterexample by Matsuura Rieko, particularly looking at the space between the sensual and the sexual; and the paper reflects upon (in)direct relationship in which the body departs to the self as well as to the other's body, in the space Neutral between sensing bodies. In doing so, this paper provides a fresh view on the conceptions of space and indirectness between and within the body in the Japanese cultural context, rethinking the convention to have particularized indirectness, transformation, and mediation as features of Japanese culture discussed through modernist authors and intellectuals, and which was criticized, for example, by Japanese critic Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人 as discussed later. This paper aims to reconfigure the issue of in-between-ness, the space which is not dichotomized into periphery and centre, but can be modulated, and which manifests not only an adjacency to externality but also to the self.

2 Creation of the Space within the Self

Roland Barthes, in *The Neutral*, based on his lectures given at the Collège de France from 1977 to 1978, raises spacing (to create a space) as the Neutral, referring to the Japanese concept *ma* 間 (between-ness)—“spacing of time, of space: rules both temporality and spatiality: neither crowding nor ‘desertification’” (Barthes 2005, 147)—to look at the relation between moments, space and objects. This *ma* is a space, an interruption, creating indirect, mediatory to some extent, relations between them. Moreover, Barthes ties this spacing to the concept of the Neutral, quoting Maurice Blanchot:

What is now in play, and demands relation, is everything that separates me from the other, that is to say the other insofar as I am infinitely separated from him... I found my relation with him upon this very interruption that is an *interruption of being*. This alterity, it must be repeated, makes him neither

another self for me, nor another existence, neither a modality or a moment of universal existence, nor a superexistence, a god or a non-god, but rather the unknown in its infinite distance. [...] An alterity that holds in the name of the neutral. (Blanchot in Barthes 2005, 147)

While Blanchot's interruption here seems to mean infinite separation, the Japanese *ma* (or pronounced as *aida* with the same character 間) to which Barthes refers does not necessarily mean infinite distance, but rather a spatial and temporal distance which can be modulated. Yet, the Neutral does not signify the middle point, the "neutral," between the two opposite poles, but rather resists being passive and submissive by its very existence. The point discussed in this article is the indirect but intimate, adjoining but weight-free, mode of communication in Japanese culture reflected upon literary creations, demonstrated, for example, by Matsuura Rieko.

Although Japanese traditional arts such as calligraphy and tea ceremony and their aesthetics embrace various examples of space and rupture, paying special attention to empty space mainly drawn from Zen thought,¹ the theorization of *aida=ma*² by Japanese psychopathologist Kimura Bin is suggestive. Kimura (1931–) has extensively worked on schizophrenia in the Japanese socio-cultural context, in relation to European philosophy such as by Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida and Deleuze. Kimura absorbs Heidegger's proposition of time into his own theorizations about the self, by reconsidering the self as "an internal difference with the self." Therefore the concept of *aida*, which meant "the space between one and the other," became internalized as "the space between the self and self." (Kimura 2007, 14) Since he analyzes schizophrenia as the pathology of temporality, Kimura writes, "The birth of the self in '*aida*' and the birth of time is strictly simultaneous," because "if there is no action for self-realization in *aida*, we cannot have concepts of 'next' and 'previous,' 'from now on' and 'until now,' and cannot understand external and internal changes as temporal phenomena." "Time is nothing other than an alternative name of the self." (Kimura 2007, 47) I should

¹ Japanese Zen scholar Fukushima Shun'ō 福嶋俊翁 writes that Zen calligraphy embraces *Kū* 空 (emptiness), associated in Japanese with simplicity or a vacuum. He explains that the vacuum does not mean nothingness or workless-ness, since it "*makes us feel the work of hand without revealing a hand.*" The blank is in effect a tense or strained part, fulfilled, with no space left. (Fukushima 1974, 105–106) Quotation translated by myself.

² *Aida* and *ma*, both represented as 間 in a Chinese character, basically convey the same meaning: space and time between plural objects. However, as opposed to *ma*, which signifies actual temporal or spatial rupture, *aida* can indicate the human relationship between the two, for which *ma* is not generally used.

note that the self in Kimura signifies an autonomous subject, as we can see from these passages. The work by Kimura is useful to employ not just because it extensively examines the Japanese selfhood in comparison with the European one, but precisely because it takes the Japanese selfhood apart and breaks down to the mapping of the self, time, and space, which allows us to see the relationality among them. As Mark Seem writes about schizoanalysis by Deleuze and Guattari that “schizoanalysis [against psychoanalysis which measures everything against neurosis and castration] begins with the schizo, his breakdowns and his breakthroughs” (Seem 1983, xvii).

These concepts of “time as the self,” “the self as temporality,” and “*aida* between the self and self” are not necessarily limited to those with schizophrenia. Kimura divides the temporality for the schizoid and the manic as “ante-festum” (the ones who always address the future in the present), as opposed to the melancholic as “post-festum” (those who address the past in the present, based on the Japanese expression *ato no matsuri* 後の祭り, which literally means “the day next of the festival” but metaphorically means the feeling of “there’s nothing to do against what’s already happened”) (Kimura 2007, 47–51).³ Moreover, “schizophrenogenic *aida* has a structure which imposes the young the temporality of the ante-festum. Therefore, those who have the basic existential structure of schizophrenia, regardless of whether they actually succumb to it, usually bear the ways of living the temporality of the ante-festum.” (Kimura 2007, 47–48) This means that, although those who have schizophrenogenic tendencies bear a specific sense of temporality that is forced by the structure, the fact that we are divided and interrupted by time, the temporal *aida*, as well as the spatial *aida*, seems to apply to our beings, including those who do not bear schizophrenic pathology. Also, considering the fact that humans are already involved in activities of foreseeing the future or reverting back to the past, which bring feelings such as of fear, concern, and regret, the difference seems not so much in the act itself but in the intensity of doing so, or the fixation to do so.

Kimura’s idea on *aida*, is not only between one and the other but also between the self and self, taking the issue of selfhood apart and breaking down the mysticism of the selfhood, as discussed earlier. And this brings me to the thoughts on space in French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (1940–). In Nancy, as well, the

³ The concepts of temporality in schizo were originally investigated in his previous book *Jiko, aida, jikan: Genshōgakuteki seishinbyōrigaku* 自己・あいだ・時間 現象学的精神病理学 (*The Self, Between-ness, and Time: Phenomenological Psychopathology*) (Kimura 1981, 122–174).

space is between one and the other, but also between the self and the self. Since a body to Nancy is not a static entity but a space to move, Nancy writes, “Bodies are always about to leave, on the verge of a movement, a fall, a gap, a dislocation” (Nancy 2008, 33). He continues:

The body is *self* in departure, insofar as it parts—displaces itself right here from the *here*. The intimacy of the body *exposes* pure a-seity as the swerve and departure that it *is*. A-seity—the *a-se(lf)*, the to-itself, the by-itself of the Subject—*exists* only as the swerve and departure of this *a*—(of this *a-part-self*), which is the place, the moment proper of its presence, its authenticity, its sense. The *a-part-self*, *as departure*, is what’s exposed.... The *a-part-self* is not translated or incarnated into exposition, it is what it is there: this vertiginous withdrawal *of* the self *from* the self that is needed to open the infinity of that withdrawal *all the way up to* self. The body is this departure of self to self. (Nancy 2008, 32)

The exposition here does not necessarily mean to display internal emotions or something hidden, since, for Nancy, the body itself is an exposition of the “self.” The exposition itself is the being, so that the body is “the being-exposed of the being” (Nancy 2008, 35). Yet, the body here is not only applied to *this* particular body since the world for Nancy is considered as the density of “(the) body(’s) places” (Nancy 2008, 39). Moreover, this space is not limited to aerial space but bears temporal dimension:

We won’t be able to stop thinking or experiencing the fact that *we destined ourselves to the place*. But neither can we ignore the fact that history yet to come—because it is *coming*—also unravels, and challenges, destinies along with endings. Because it *is coming*, it also *spaces*. We will have to ponder the spacing of time—of *time*, that is, *as a body*.... (Nancy 2008, 41–43)

The body displaced, the space created, is not only aerial but also temporal.

Kimura has been deeply influenced by continental philosophy in his work, but it is unclear if he was directly influenced by Nancy. His works on schizophrenia date back to 1965. Then he started to combine them with the concept of time in 1976, continuing to look at *aida* from temporal, spatial, and intra-personal aspects until the 1980s. During this time, he developed the theories on *aida* and the self as “an internal difference with the self,” influenced by theorists such as Deleuze and Derrida. However, since Nancy’s related works are mainly from the 80s, there is no direct reference to Nancy in the works by Kimura, at least on this topic. Conversely, there seems no distinctive influence of Japanese culture or theories in

Nancy's works, compared to theorists such as Barthes. Therefore, there may be no direct influence between Kimura and Nancy, but the conceptions of space and time *as* the body or the self (thus the time, space, and the body all depart) exist in both, probably connected through influential intellectuals such as Derrida.

3 The Passive Notion of the Self in Postwar Japan

Reading literature on the conception of the self in Japan and continental philosophy side by side ostensibly raises the argument as to whether they are applicable to each other, or whether there is any friction in applying theories. In this section, I would like to analyze the discourse on the self in postwar Japan mainly through the work of the Japanese literary critic Karatani Kōjin. Following, I will apply a gender perspective to Karatani's analysis on the subject to analyze how "passivity," if any, of the subject may or may not predicate gender roles in the rhetoric about the self in the Japanese cultural context.

After Japan's defeat and surrender in 1945, various aspects of culture from socio-political systems, education, to literature were critically examined; postwar discourse such as those by political scientist Maruyama Masao 丸山真男 criticized the absence of a solid subject in Japan and aimed for the independent individual.⁴ When postmodern thought, which criticizes such a modern, self-contained, determinable subjects in Europe and moves toward indeterminate, formless, schizophrenic subjects, was brought to Japan in the 1970s and 80s, the presence of the postwar discourse was rapidly degraded. Japanese intellectuals may have experienced a certain sense of *déjà vu*, since major characteristics of postmodern thought such as absence, nothingness, emptiness, trace, *l'écriture*, and rupture have traditionally existed in Japanese culture. Even when I read postmodern theories in the twenty-first century, I find some sort of nostalgia in a sense that "I have encountered something similar before somewhere in my own

⁴ Maruyama especially examined the particular situation in Japan in which premodern and supermodern coexisted, considering the history since Japan's opening the country in the mid-19th century. He differentiates "to be" in the feudal system (where the self used to be determined more by social class than in modernity) from "to do" in modernity (where the self is determined more by one's acts), the confusion of which had been present since the mid-19th century in Japan. He argues that in the postwar period when the wave of social confusion and shifts, westernization, cultural popularization hit Japan, the confusion that preexisted in modernity exploded. Since his critique on Japanese modern subject essentially stems from the comparison with European subject and system where European people had to strive with Christian tradition, it is worthwhile to draw on Maruyama's examination on the concept of postwar Japanese subject here.

culture,” even being aware of their structural differences. Karatani writes about this phenomenon, “[Japanese] people thought that we already had those things in Japan,” and bringing back some earlier thoughts such as by philosopher Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎, it became as if Japan was on the edge of postmodernism (Karatani 2002, 61). However, was that a healthy attitude towards new thoughts coming in?

In his chapter analyzing the short story “*Kamigami no bishō*” 神神の微笑 (“The Smile of Gods”) by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892–1927), written in 1922, Karatani focuses on the force to remodel (*tsukurikaeru chikara* 造り変える力) in Japan. Akutagawa describes a Jesuit missionary Organtino in 16th century Japan who struggles with his missions for Japanese people due to their cultural tendency to worship *Ōhirumenomuchi* 大日靈貴⁵ as their God in Japan. One day, the elder explains a short history of religion and how foreign religions had not prevailed in Japan, and says to Organtino:

Possibly, your God will change to an indigenous person in this country. China and India also changed. The West must change. We exist in trees, in a shallow stream, also in the wind that crosses over roses. We exist in the afterglow remaining on the wall of a temple. We exist anywhere, anytime. Be careful. Be careful.... (Akutagawa 2002, appendix 11)

Karatani examines this “force to remodel” from various aspects, referring to the point above that people in Japan historically transformed foreign things, such as characters and religions, in a way that they fit into their own cultural context. Karatani’s point is that the reason why Christianity in the sixteenth century Japan did not flourish was due to the violence and the suppressive power by the Japanese government (shogunate), rather than the “force to remodel” (Karatani 2002, 85–86). Therefore, although he appreciates Akutagawa’s sharpness, Karatani emphasizes that analyses of Japanese culture, including that of Akutagawa, conventionally have emphasized the uniqueness of its historical roots and regarded mere accidental past events as necessary experiences, adjoining them to its cultural particularity (Karatani 2002, 104). In other words, Karatani’s critique lies in the history of Japanese thought which enclosed their own culture by emphasizing its

⁵ = *Amaterasu Ōmikami* 天照大神, who is considered as a daughter of *Izanagino mikoto* 伊弉諾神, one of the creators of Japan, and who is appreciated as the Goddess of Sun in *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀 (*The Chronicles of Japan*). *Nihon Shoki* is one of the oldest books of Japanese classical history, finished in 720 as 30 volumes, under the editorial advice of Prince Toneri, and others.

uniqueness and “Japanizing” that particularity. This critique reversely verifies the fact that people or intellectuals in Japan used imported things in a functional way in their own culture which means that people modified them. Japanese people received other cultures *as if* they have accepted them, which was not necessarily the case.

As is often stated even by Kimura, the Japanese self is not necessarily facing an absolute existence, as the traditional European subject has faced an absolute God in Christianity; as demonstrated in the *Nihon Shoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*) and described in Akutagawa’s short story (even the title of his work demonstrates this), there have existed plural gods that are related to nature in Japan, prior to the reception of Buddhism. The self here stands towards or with nature rather than facing one absolute god, even as the Japanese representation of the “self” (*jiko* 自己) signifies.⁶ Considering the fact that European people originally believed in plural gods in the natural world, as demonstrated in Greek Myth, what did not occur in Japan was potentially the integration into or replacement with an absolute god, and the encounter with god. Therefore the issue possibly lies more on the encounter rather than only on the self. Although Japanese postwar criticism, and even some of recent academic discourse by international scholars on Japanese culture, has heavily focused on the issue of Japanese selfhood and subjectivity as opposed to the Western one, it is how one relates to the other, while being conscious about the self. The dominant critique appearing in Katarani’s essay also mentions that Japanese people did not “encounter” others, as they were never invaded, forced to speak another language or to believe in foreign religions. They blended those foreign things with their own culture and preserved them in a miscellaneous place in Japan—Karatani borrows Nishida’s term “*mu no basho* 無の場所 (the place of nothingness)” to describe this place—without severe struggle against their own solid cultural principle due to its absence. Karatani names this phenomenon a foreclosure of castration (Karatani 2002, 76–77).⁷ Therefore a solid

⁶ The Chinese character 自 signifies “naturally,” “from its own,” “from the self,” and 己 signifies “the self”. 自, “self” and “nature,” stem from the same character; Kimura explains that feelings and perceptions sensed on the body and skin in daily life are described as “self” by pulling them toward ourselves, and as “nature” by putting them towards the world. Therefore, he suggests the absence of clear-cut selfhood as well as of the otherness of nature. (Kimura 1981, 311–312)

⁷ Karatani also states that, as opposed to other parts of East Asia near China where new foreign systems such as Chinese characters replaced the indigenous systems, Japan did and did not accept such characters, since they used the characters but read and pronounced in their own way. Japanese people participated in that linguistic world, the Symbolic, (which means castration in Lacanian

identity is still shadowy, which was the postwar discourse discussed above. However, does this analysis itself not rely on the existence of the other, waiting certain pressure from external others? If this is an issue of the self and encounter, why are the people assuming to be passively contacted by others from the outside? Why are they not *touching* others to reach out the other?

As is well-known, Japanese author Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916) criticized Japanese individualism as well as the rapid industrialization and Westernization in the early modern period because Japanese individualism was caused externally under the influence of Europe, rather than caused internally, so that people were always anxious, wearing mere “borrowed clothes” (Natsume 1978, 134). But Japanese postwar criticism—which emphasizes the influence of the lack of struggling communication with external forces on the conception of the self—seems to fall fundamentally into the same rhetoric Sōseki criticized: development due to an external force rather than an internal force. This is the “feminine” to be touched as opposed to the masculine to touch, in the sense of Emmanuel Levinas and others.⁸ The femininity of Japan is not only, as Japanese sociologist Ueno Chizuko 上野千鶴子 (1948–) states via the founder of *kokugaku* 国学 (National Studies) Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), feminine in relation to China, but it is also femininized toward itself, in the wait of being touched; although we have to note that Motoori’s distinction as “feminine” is a modern construction.

Ueno Chizuko, a leading scholar in Japanese Women’s Studies, problematizes the “feminized” Japanese mind; the Orient created through European power-fantasy as the other to the Occident, as argued by Edward Said, is applied not only to the West-Japan relation, putting Japan in a passive, feminized position, but also to the China-Japan relation, “Japaneseness” constructed in the shadow of China (Ueno 2005, 225–229). Ueno writes, “Motōri adopted the strategic approach of cultural irony by postulating that ‘the Japanese mind’ is different from ‘Chinese mind’” (Ueno 2005, 227). Differentiating it from the “universal” Chinese mind, by which the Japanese mind has been affected and became a “component of the popular mind” (Ueno 2005, 227), and which is Motoori’s creation, yet still

sense), but did not participate at the same time, therefore foreclosed castration (Karatani 2002, 76–77).

⁸ The Beloved in Levinas, indicating the female, is explained as “...l’Aimé qui est Aimée” (Levinas 1969, 256 footnote). Since it grammatically determines the beloved as female, feminist scholars such as Luce Irigaray problematized the misleading grammatical usage about gender in Levinas.

admitting cultural relativism, Motoori “made the Japanese mind into a residual category of universalism” (Ueno 2005, 228). In this construction of a residual category as opposed to the Occident and China, Ueno argues that the Japanese mind is feminized, and even more so for the female figure—doubly bound as the other.

The construction of the Japanese self in the shadow of West and China necessarily renders the Japanese subject feminized. Therefore it could be said that, as Ueno suggests, the Japanese female is doubly feminized and bound. In this tendency, many pre- and postwar Japanese male writers have depicted female bodies as objects to look at, touch, and to possess, which Ueno resists. At the same time, there are exceptional cases since the prewar period in which female writers use their bodies not to be submissive but to confront males, created, for example, by Hirabayashi Taiko 平林たい子, where the body is radically exposed to others, rather than hidden in the name of preserving virginity. In the postwar period in which the academic endeavor driven by French feminist scholars as well as by an awareness of gender issues has been rapidly heightened, it is actually arguable whether the female body *can* be feminized or bound in a way that Ueno suggests. Furthermore, as continental philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari show, the body came to be considered more fluid rather than static, mobile rather than permanently sedentary. Now, I would like to examine how postwar, especially post 80s, literature deals with issues of passivity—for the female subject to be touched rather than touching, and the space created between sexual and sensual, by examining fiction by Matsuura Rieko.

4 The Non-passive Female Subject and Sensual Space demonstrated by Matsuura

“I felt a new sense of longing. It wasn’t sexual desire, it was the desire to kiss Shunji, to ca-ress him, to be ‘friendly’ with him from head to toe.”
—Matsuura Rieko 2009

In a small number of her works, Matsuura Rieko (1958–) focuses on trying to dissolve binary thoughts such as male and female, hetero- and homosexual, and to seek love not limited through the union of sexual organs or “genital eros” (*seikiteki eros* 性器的エロス) in her fiction (Matsuura 1994, 75). She resists conventional portraits of the female body by Japanese male writers in which sensualness and actual physical interactions are not necessarily depicted but rather hidden; and in

which physical interactions such as touch tend to connote highly sexual and gendered meanings, dividing gender roles between men and women. Therefore, she writes in detail of physical relationships, of a female body which is not necessarily passive, and of a female subject which does not necessarily challenge and confront the male body, precisely because her main characters are free from sexual boundaries, fixations and weight and emphasis placed on the sexual organs. “Erotic” for her does not merely have a sexual meaning; physiological changes brought with psychological elevation are all erotic and sensual, such as sensations that are not directly connected to sexual organs, sensations where skin itches or blood vessels become tense, or sensations as if hearts are pressed against by wet hands or as if the backs of eyeballs are licked (Matsuura 1994, 74). Communications with others in her works are sensual or fleshly, rather than merely sexual. Furthermore, since her early works, sensations through touch, such as texture and warmth, and affects stimulated and illuminated by touch play an important role, regardless of whether or not the touch is between male and female, female and female, or human and animal or object. And boundaries between these relationships are not necessarily identifiable in her works. Matsuura creates a particular space of sensualness, which centers around the multiple memories of contact with others, and which demonstrates the highly sensual but sexually unbound, non-passive self, not by resisting but by having a dialogue with others. Therefore in this part, I examine the creation of the space between the sensual and the sexual in Matsuura where the subject (non-passive female subject) encounters others as well as the self, not in a confrontational manner but in a dialogue, along with theorizations by Deleuze and Guattari, of *haptic* and a bare body. And I would like to connect this sensual space with the temporal space through *skinship* where tactile memories traverse.

In her work *Oyayubi P no shugyō jidai* 親指 P の修行時代 (*The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P*) in 1993, which became a bestseller in Japan, the heterosexual female protagonist Kazumi has her big toe transformed into a penis. It becomes erect and feels sexual pleasure, but is passive and does not have a reproductive function, and therefore bears the function of a clitoris. By having a big toe and meeting with other members (who possess complicated sexualities) of the show for which she is asked to exhibit a performance of her big toe P, she encounters different kinds of sexuality where erotic acts are led not only by sexual organs but also by natural desires according to physical/physiological conditions and by senses through the skin, without considering sexual organs privileged.

Even in the latest work *Kenshin* 犬身 (*The Dogbody*) in 2007 where female protagonist Fusae realizes her longstanding wish to become a dog, its physical encounter with its female owner Azusa does not imply sexual desire. Nevertheless, the communication between Azusa and the dog Fusa is dominantly and purely tactile through touching and licking. This way, protagonists in Matsuura do not necessarily aim to unite with others with sexual organs in accordance with their sex, or communicate with others in accordance with their gender. The categorical relation does not exist, since the unity can be inter-sex, gender, object, and animal; unity meant here is not limited to “sexual” unification but is a haptic interaction.

The term “haptic” was highlighted through the philosophical endeavour by Deleuze and Guattari. They questioned the divide over sense modality, for example, between touch and vision, particularly introducing the concepts “smooth” and “striated” space. Whereas smooth space is both “the object of a close vision par excellence and the element of a haptic space,” the striated is “a more distant vision, and a more optical space.” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 544) “The smooth always possesses a greater power of deterritorialization than the striated” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 530). The smooth, never being sedentary, keeps dislocating itself. Deterritorialization means not to invade others, not to possess others, as they write about the Body without Organ (BwO), “the BwO is never yours or mine. It is always *a* body.” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 182) But it may also mean to constantly dislocate itself, “deterritorialization” of the self, in a sense of departure from the self to the self, mentioned earlier through Nancy. In this aspect, the term “haptic” becomes meaningful to read Matsuura. “Haptic” for Deleuze and Guattari never dichotomizes sensual experiences; the touching as opposed to the touched, the seer as opposed to the seen. Sense-related terms such as “touch,” “see,” “look” already and necessarily connote the dichotomized relations. But “haptic” only implies tactile, or things related to touch, and it indeterminates who has an access to whom, precisely as Nancy problematizes Heidegger’s presupposition of the access to and appropriation of others in touching (Nancy 1997, 59–60). In sensual relationships in Matsuura, the active-passive role is not necessarily static, betraying the readers’ expectation.

In the early stage in *The Apprenticeship*, the protagonist Kazumi and his lover Masao possess a normative sexuality. When Kazumi’s lips and fingers move around Masao’s body, he says, “I feel like a woman,” “Because I’m lying here passively while you do what you want.” “I mean, I bet what I’m feeling right now is how girls feel in bed.” (Matsuura 2009, 51) However, since the fact that Kazumi

had a big toe P changed her idea toward sexuality, sex, and body, Kazumi cannot ignore these comments and says, “All right, you want my penis? You want me to do you?” (Matsuura 2009, 51) Having a big toe P and bearing a part of a male body makes Kazumi re-examine normative sexuality and body. On the other hand, Masao starts to have a strong sense of competition with the big toe P and asks Kazumi if she can insert her big toe P in her body, which she dismisses due to limitations of her bodily structure. Then Masao says, “Sure is a waste, though, considering the size of what you’ve got. It might be better for you than I am.” (Matsuura 2009, 54) Big toe P heightens Masao’s fixation toward sexual organ, from which Kazumi flees and is liberated. Their different stance toward the third existence big toe P creates a distance between the two. At the end of their relationship when both of them become irritated with each other, Masao says, “You’ve been getting weird on me ever since you acquired that freaky thing of yours” (Matsuura 2009, 61), and tries to cut it off with a cutter blade, which becomes the final and definitive event that determines their separation.

Deterritorialization and the renowned notion BwO by Deleuze and Guattari—explained “The BwO: it is already under way the moment the body has had enough of organs and wants to slough them off, or loses them” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 166)—does not necessarily mean to chop the body parts off. What they resist is rather organization of the body and its power which may bring value judgements (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 530). Dismantling it makes the body a bare existence, opening up a new circuit for the body. What they aim at is a bare body which will be left after dismantling fantasy and meaning of the body as organism. As opposed to the psychoanalytic body which is based on interpretation of the fantasy and on regression, the BwO intends to take away “the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 168). BwO and deterritorialization temporally and spatially displace a body from the past, and let it work on the now. However, although it makes sense to read Matsuura next to Deleuze and Guattari through the concepts of haptic, deterritorialization, and BwO since they share the intension toward bareness of the body, the difference seems to lie in the fact that while Deleuze and Guattari aim toward new horizons, resisting the regression in psychoanalysis and departing from the past, Matsuura rather cherishes the reminiscence from the past, which will be explained later.

In Matsuura’s essay *Yasashii kyosei no tameni* 優しい虚勢のために (*For a Gentle Castration*), there is the concept of “taking off the genital” or “undressing

the sexual organ” (*seiki wo nugu* 性器を脱ぐ) in her words. Although *kyosei* 虚勢 literally means castration, her castration does not signify cutting off the sexual organs since it is a *yasashii* (gentle) castration. She writes:

Even if we strip off everything, there’s still something to take off. The reason why we always suffer from dissatisfactions such as the want to ride over more or want to embrace more may be that we wear extra clothes, something other than clothes. In wondering so, our face turned red.

Then we started to take off. What? Everything extra and unclean. Maybe, innocent expectations, fixations, biased curiosities, possibly something that is naturally considered as included in love somewhere in the world. It was pleasant that we became weightless and our sensations became clearer.

And, we were undressed (genitals) when we noticed.

You undressed the (genital) which pulls over my genital from the head.

I undressed my (genital) which arranges its form with your genital...

In the end the (genitals) to take off are almost imaginary genitals which are always aware of the genitals of the opposite sex, and which wear imaginary genitals of the opposite sex, even if it is not during the sex act.

It should not hurt to dispose of the (imaginary genital).

This castration is a gentle one.

In your and my body after castration, the genital remains as a simple organ. The quiet genital is not an eyesore. It does not have a special value; it does not speak for anyone, or symbolize or suggest anything. Maybe it does not even indicate sexual difference. You and I have quitted (expression) through genitals. (Matsuura 1994, 235–238)

Her character is freed from what it should or must be, and can enjoy what it can be, by removing the genital rather than by castrating it. Thus, her protagonist, freed from the extra weight of genitals, is always free, “almost to be about to fly in the air” (Matsuura 1991, 205).

However, in the freedom which her protagonists (or in the case of *The Apprenticeship*, Kazumi’s lover Shunji as well) often possess, there is a certain reminiscence of childhood. In the beauty that Matsuura describes about someone, there is the purity, cleanliness, and sweetness of a child, possessing “the sensualness of a child to which one instinctively feels like giving a hand”

(Matsuura 1994, 80). Even in *Kenshin*, Fusae says, “Maybe I haven’t developed as a human being” (Matsuura 2007, 82–83), when she ponders upon “dog sexuality” where one “feels like being in heaven as long as one is fondled by one’s favourite human as a human fondles a dog” (Matsuura 2007, 82), which is a very basic type of pleasure.

BwO by Deleuze and Guattari works upon the now, so that it is always about experiment rather than regression, departing from the past. Meanwhile, although Matsuura’s “taking off the genital” also disposes fantasy, fixation, and meaning of the imaginary genital as BwO dismantles significances, it does not take the past memory out. In *The Apprenticeship*, Shunji, the lover, tells Kazumi about his memory of being hugged by his uncle:

“My uncle was sitting in the same room, not moving, maybe reading, and then suddenly he got up and came over to where I was. I was rolling around and bumped into his leg, which sort of surprised me, so I stayed still. Then he bent down, put his arm around me sort of hesitantly, and hugged me. I remember feeling how big his bones were.” Shunji wrapped his own arms around his body. “It made me real happy. No one ever hugged me that way again.” (Matsuura 2009, 115)

Since, especially for Shunji, touch is a way to communicate love, not limited to the sexual sense, and to show natural affection toward others, there is not much difference for him between touch for adults and that which takes place in childhood. Since the BwO is a becoming, it is “the opposite of a childhood memory” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 182). Yet, the point is that this opposition does not mean to disavow the childhood memory but rather to disavow the temporal one-way linearity toward the past as in psychoanalysis. “It is not the child ‘before’ the adults, or the mother ‘before’ the child: it is the strict contemporaneousness of the adult, of the adult and the child, their map of comparative densities and intensities, and all of the variations on that map.” (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 182) Therefore, in Deleuze and Guattari as well, although they resist set significations, they don’t necessarily disavow the past in a strict sense; Deleuze and Guattari bring the past into the contemporaneity so that one quits reflecting the past in a deterministic manner. And yet, because it is “taking off the genital” in the case of Matsuura, it is not impossible to wear it again, attaching or detaching it. Thus, it is not a definitive castration but rather a “gentle” castration.

Encounter and touch in Matsuura are highly sexual, but not always and not exclusively. Touch here is more that of a soothing *skinship*⁹ that brings dislocated memory of touch even from childhood, rather than a merely erotic relationship; skinship starts with a person's birth and lasts until death, accumulating layered memories of touch: those with parents, friends, lovers, loved objects, among others. Matsuura's loved characters often bear some sort of childishness and make us remember the memory of touch in our childhood, something that is maybe underdeveloped, that is simple, but something that is remembered within our bodies throughout life. And soothing physical sensations and affection that have been experienced through the skin have wished repeatedly to renew or re-experience the memorably soothing moments. Therefore, contrary to the tendency in Japanese literature regarding touch as an erotic touch amongst adults, touch exists throughout life. And yet, as Deleuze and Guattari do not necessarily set a clear distinction between the adult and the child, fleshly experience in Matsuura is always sensual, entailing the possibility to develop toward sexual pleasure in adults.

Now, we notice that touch for Matsuura is not passive. Since *The Apprenticeship* is, simply speaking, the story of Kazumi's development, she waits to have her clothes taken off and to be touched by her earlier lover Masao in the beginning. But it changes by having her big toe P and encountering others with unique sexualities. Especially through the communication with Shunji, Kazumi starts to wish to embrace, touch, and soothe Shunji herself. Kazumi dissolves her fixation with her sexual organ by having a big toe P and becomes freed from the female gender role which implies being touched rather than touching. The childishness mentioned above is not to be a child or to regress, but to grow while maintaining a state of childishness, knowing sexual excitation, fixation with genitals, and its dissolution.

5 Conclusion

Reconsidering the space between the self and self, between the sexual and sensual, the rhetoric mentioned earlier that the sharp structure of the self as opposed to the objective other was not created in Japan due to the lack of serious friction between

⁹ The term *skinship* is a Japanese English word created in Japan, meaning the intimate communication through touch such as between the mother and child.

the two, refers to the relation between the self as the subject and the other as the object, if we borrow Kimura's framework. The point is that the gap created in the postwar rhetoric on the self is a gap between one and the other, not between one as the subject and the other as the subject but the other as the object, so that the space cannot play a role of *aida* where they both meet. "Only the relation between the subject [of the self] and the subject [of the other] can open an *aida* that is mutually subjective, and only by its participation in *aida* can the subject totally be the subject" (Kimura 2007, 128). Although critique such as by Maruyama is prominent, postwar rhetoric, in a way, created a distance with the other on the far side of the shore, which may be applied also to the Western context. However, this space is not static but should be mobile as Nancy suggests, and has a temporal dimension. *Aida* is a space where we can modulate the relation to others and to the self, to be a bare body. It is a space where one touches the other as well as oneself, and where those memories of touch traverse.

The body becomes further weightless and further mobile, untied from genitals by "taking off" the genital and freed from dichotomized relation by becoming a bare body. The Neutral which Barthes explored is not to situate oneself in between black and white, radical and conservative, or progressive and regressive. But rather the body is freed from such a dichotomy by being a bare body. And it resists through its very existence, even without saying a word. As referred to earlier, Nancy's body, or rather body-place, is "acephalic and aphallic" and a variously folded "skin" (Nancy 2008, 15). The "direct" physical relationship probably used to mean the unification of sexual organs, or at least the intended genital unification as the peak of physical and emotional exchange; "indirect," as opposed to "direct," would mean unification through something other than genitals. However, Matsuura, from the collection of her works, shows that direct physical relationship is not necessarily the genital relationship but also *skinship*. Even *skinship*, as non-genital-focused relationship, creates a sensual space, a space for different trials of touch. This space, *aida*, is the space between one and the other, but also one to one as referred to both in Nancy and Kimura earlier. In Kimura's theorizations about interpersonal communication, the simple structure of the encounter between the self as the subject and the other as the object is not formed; rather, the self as the subject encounters the other as the subject. The space *aida* in this sense does not mediate relations; or in other words, it does not prevent direct communication. The sensual experience is not to possess and swallow the other, but to excite, soothe,

touch the other as well as the self, by touching together. And in this sense, the body is always leaving toward the sensual Neutral space.

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