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War and Atomic Memory in *Kachikujin Yapoo* (1956) by Shōzō Numa Masochism as the Re-enactment of Trauma

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Abstract • Shortly after the Second World War and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, author Numa Shōzō serialised the novel *Kachikujin Yapoo* (Yapoo the Human Cattle, 1956) in the magazine «Kitan Club» (Club of Bizarre Tales). Through a sci-fi setting and radical masochistic imagery, Numa stages an ultra-racist dystopia dominated by Aryan women in which Japanese survivors of a Third World War are degraded to subhuman creatures and genetically manipulated. The novel articulates with a Swiftian plot a dialogue with the oldest sources of Japanese myths to deconstruct the sacredness on which the Japanese imperialist dream was founded. This paper aims to analyse these themes to identify the relationship between the re-enactment of trauma and Numa's masochistic and sci-fi literary imagery.

Keywords • War; Atomic bomb; Trauma; Japanese Science Fiction; Masochism.

Ledizioni 

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I. Introduction

Was it necessary to bring back so many memories? Soon the truth came to light. There was a place where they made drawers (the term “panties” was not in common use at the time) for women. It was said that one flag could make exactly one pair of drawers, and that they were tailored in such a way that the red rising-sun circle would just hit the crotch and get badly stained. Of course, the *hinomaru* flags provided to every Taiwanese household were collected as much as possible,¹ but this was still not enough. So, they had to pay a lot of money to collect even soldiers’ flags. They produced and secretly sold the drawers at a low price. The rumour was that the ones made from soldiers’ flags had a better reputation because on the white banner there was the name of the Japanese soldier.²

This anecdote reported by the anonymous writer Numa Shōzō, when he was posted to Taiwan at the end of the war as a corporal in his unit, sums up the humiliation of Japanese defeat. Flags with the rising sun, symbol of the sacredness of the Japanese Empire, became stained underwear for Taiwanese women.

In the aftermath of the Pacific War, which ended with the defeat of imperialist ambitions and the atomic bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan was confronted with a process of identity reconstruction that was even more radical and sudden than in the years of modernisation at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. The war ended with military defeat, the declaration broadcast on the radio in which Hirohito renounced the divine prerogatives of the imperial lineage, and occupation by the allied forces until 1951. For those who had founded their certainties on the sacredness of the Japanese mission in Asia, these changes were traumatic on an individual and collective level. The aftermath of Japan’s war corresponds to the term coined by Kaja Silverman «Historical Trauma»³ due to the unassimilable nature of these events and, as regards male subjectivity, to the disempowerment of Japanese masculinity.⁴

¹ *Hinomaru* means «circle of the sun», the Japanese flag with a white banner bearing a crimson-red circle at the centre.

² Numa Shōzō, *Aru Musōka no techō kara*, vol. 3, Tokyo, Toshi Shuppansha, 1971, p. 12. Unless otherwise stated, translations from Japanese are mine.

³ Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, London and New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 55.

⁴ Japanese masculinity here refers not so much to a specific type of male, but rather to the most desired form of relationship with social, cultural and institutional aspects. It includes a set of prerogatives that express a gendered and racialised hegemony of Japanese male subjectivity. For example, the myth of the martial heroism of the samurai from which the suicide attack corps of the *Tokkotai* (better known as kamikaze) drew inspiration, the patriarchal system and the enjoyment of laws that allowed concubinage and adultery, the racial superiority over the subjects of the colonies on whom the Japanese cultural model and educational system was imposed.

In her studies, Shoshana Feldman points to the notion of traumatic experience as something to be addressed and literature as a specific mode of testimony.⁵ This statement allows us to simultaneously deem trauma to be an individual and collective experience, entailing significant social and political issues. Cathy Caruth points out the historical dimension of trauma experience, which involves a notion of collective engagement exceeding the grasp and the referential repetition of the individual.⁶

The defeat in the war and the atomic bombings are undoubtedly the most traumatic events in Japan's modern history. The memory of these experiences resurfaces in many Japanese works from the post-war period to the present day. The first work that re-enacted the war memory in popular culture was the film *Godzilla* (1954) by Ishirō Honda (1911-1923). In the following decades, manga and anime, in which the apocalyptic scenarios of sidereal battles represent a cathartic reworking of the war and atomic experience, reached the general public including non-Japanese audiences.

In Japan, the critical attention to the relationship between trauma and literature is relatively recent and the very word «trauma» has only entered the Japanese discursive space since the late 1990s, after the 1995 Kobe earthquake.⁷ Studies on atomic trauma and fiction in Japan have so far been directed mainly at the literary genre *genbaku bungaku* (atomic literature), defined theoretically by its value as autobiographical or transgenerational testimony.⁸ There is also a critical literature that identifies elements of the war memory and atomic trauma in the production of manga and anime since the 1980s.⁹ Other analyses on the relationship between trauma and literature have been devoted to a heterogeneous corpus of modern Japanese novels and film¹⁰ Both wide range researches, without a specific focus on war and atomic trauma.

Kachikujin Yapoo (Yapoo, the Human Cattle 1956) by Numa Shōzō is a science-fiction novel that ranks among the works that have not yet been sufficiently investigated in the field of studies on the connections between war trauma and literary expression. It features extreme sadomasochism, which was also possible because the «Kitan Club» (Bizarre Tales Club) magazine was only distributed by mail order and therefore Numa's novel also had a limited circulation. This was until 1970, when the single-volume edition came out and was a great success with the public.

Numa Shōzō's identity is still shrouded in mystery. Several hypotheses have been circulated about him. Part of the criticism assumes that he was the writer Amano Tetsuo (1926-

⁵ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony. Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, New York and London, Routledge, 1992; Felman, *The Juridical Unconscious. Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge and London, Harvard University Press, 2002.

⁶ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience. Trauma, Narrative and History*, Baltimore and London, John Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. 66, 116.

⁷ Akiko Naono, *Torauma kara miru genbaku taiken* [Trauma seen from Atomic Bomb Experience], «Hiroshima Heiwa Kinenkan Shiryō chōsa kenkyūkai [Research report of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum]», 14, 2019, p. 53.

⁸ See J.W. Treat, *Writing Ground Zero. Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb*, Chicago University Press, 1995, pp. 11-13.

⁹ For example, Susan Joliffe Napier, *World War II as Trauma, Memory and Fantasy in Japanese Animation*, «Asia-Pacific Journal. Japan Focus», 3, 5, 2005, web, last access: 25 November 2022, <<https://apjff.org/-Susan-J.-Napier/1972/article.html>>, and Thomas Lamarre, *Born of Trauma: Akira and the Capitalist Mode of Destruction*, «Positions», 16, 1, 2008, pp. 131-156.

¹⁰ For example, David C. Stahl, *Trauma, Dissociation and Re-enactment in Japanese Literature and Film*, Routledge, New York-London 2018, and *Social Trauma, Narrative Memory, and Recovery in Japanese Literature and Film*, Routledge, New York-London 2020. Both extensive range research, without a specific focus on war and atomic trauma.

2008)¹¹ to whom the posthumous collection of essays *Zangeroku. Ware ha ikani shite masohisuto ni narishi ka* (*Confessions. How I became a masochist* 2009) is also attributed. More recently Kawahara Azumi argues that Numa Shōzō's literary and non-fiction production in the 1950s should be attributed to the writer and former magistrate Kurata Takuji (1922-2011).¹² In the June 1953 issue of the «Kitan Club», Numa published serially until 1957 *Aru masohisuto no techō kara* (*From the notebook of a masochist*, renamed in the 1970-71 edition *Aru Musōka no techō kara, From the notebook of a daydreamer*), a collection of short essays which ranges from excerpts of unpublished translations from French, German and Anglo-American literature, Chinese poetry from the Tang era to contemporary American science fiction. It is a work in which Numa's broad cultural background emerges. He soon became the most representative author of the «Kitan Club» where he published his most famous work *Kachikujin Yapoo* from February 1956. The novel describes the brainwashing, breeding and domestication of Japanese men by white women and inaugurates a literary strand, the “literature of domestication”, as a variant of the broader genre of sadomasochist literature.

2. Effacing subjectivity

Among the main studies on Numa Shōzō's novel, Tatsumi Takayuki frames the work within the paradigm of «creative masochism». The masochistic urge that snakes through Japanese culture would not simply be a reaction to wartime defeat, but the expression of an aesthetic sensibility produced by conflicting tensions around national identity: the presumption of racial superiority (based on the idea that the Japanese, descendants of the Kami, were a chosen people) and the sense of inferiority due to technological backwardness, together with the sense of humiliation resulting from wartime defeat. These tensions would be for Tatsumi the way in which Numa stages the dualism between East and West starting when the post-war reconstruction generation encounters the consumerist lifestyle and the Western cultural industry.¹³ Numa's yapooos represent Japanese identity in the 1950s through the masochistic pleasure of humiliation as a form of compensation for biological downgrading. Christine Marran's study, focusing mainly on the manga version published between 1983 and 1993 (created by Ishinomori Shōtarō and Sugar Satō), highlights in the figure of Rin'ichirō the traits of a psychology of abjection in the Kristevian sense. The abduction into the future world dominated by Aryan women for the male protagonist

¹¹ Shingo Suzuki, *Numa Shōzō to Amano Tetsuo: aru fukumen sakka no sugao o megutte*, [Numa Shōzō and Amano Tetsuo: In search of the True Face of an Anonymous Author], «Wakō Bungaku Gendai Ningen Gakubu Kiyō», 3, 2010, p. 152.

¹² Azumi Kawahara, *Masohizumu to sengo no nashonarizumu. Numa Shōzō Kachikujin yapoo o megutte*, in *Sengo Nihon bunka saikō*, ed. by Hideto Tsuboi, Kyoto, Sanninsha, 2019, pp. 427-428. Despite Kurata's denial of any relationship with the anonymous Numa Shōzō, Kawahara's thesis takes on substance when considering certain similarities between the two writers' backgrounds. Both of them were mobilised in Taiwan at the end of the war and spent a year in a prison camp. Moreover, among the authors of the «Kitan Club» magazine, Kurata was the one who knew several languages and translated German jurist Leo Rosenberg's (1879-1963) work *The Burden of Proof in Civil Law* (1908) into Japanese. Not to be confused, however, with Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946), the Nazi ideologist whose writings also circulated in Japan before WWII and who may have inspired the eponymous character who first theorised the subhuman condition of the yapoo.

¹³ Takayuki Tatsumi, *Full Metal Apache. Transactions between Cyberpunk Japan and Avant-Pop America*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2006, pp. 28, 56-57.

Rin'ichirō represents the collapse of the symbolic order.¹⁴ The fluidity of the boundaries of subjectivity and Japanese bodies, which through genetic manipulation eliminate the distinction between human and non-human, represents the encroachment of the semiotic into the symbolic order and the process of transformation of Rin'ichirō into a yapoo.

Tatsumi and Marran's readings point out the profound crisis of Japanese subjectivity. This paper will try to reveal in the novel *Kachikujin Yapoo* a connection between the subjectivity crisis and the collective trauma following the war, including the atomic devastation that affected Japan.

There are many different theories about trauma. Among these, several studies have pointed out a link between traumatic experiences and masochism.¹⁵ For the purposes of this paper, trauma is defined as a state in which the ego is overwhelmed and reduced to relative loss of function.¹⁶ Psychic trauma occurs when a sudden, unexpected, overwhelming blow or a series of blows assault a person from outside. Traumatic events are external but become incorporated into the self, and they have the effect of destroying the process of constructing meaning. Violence, war and slavery are among the experiences that can be traumatic. As we shall see, these elements can be found in *Kachikujin Yapoo*.

The novel consists of 28 chapters beginning on an unspecified day in 1960s West Germany. A brilliant university student, Clara Von Kottwitz¹⁷ and her fiancé Sebe Rin'ichirō, a promising law student at the University of Berlin, relax after a day of horse riding. Rin'ichirō is swimming naked in a mountain stream while Clara is still wearing her riding suit and holding the horse whip. Suddenly, a time travel spaceship crashes into their house. The pilot knocked unconscious by the impact is the Princess Pauline from the Empire of a Hundred Suns (henceforth EHS) of 4000 AD. EHS is a society dominated by white women, where black people are treated as semi-human and enslaved. The Asian peoples are almost all extinct due to an atomic conflict in the 80's of the 20th century, except for the Japanese who are regarded as subhuman creatures, generically called yapoo. The Japanese (yapoo) are genetically manipulated to be used as furniture, living musical instruments, livestock and pets. Biotechnology also makes it possible to transform some of them into pleasure tools for the dominant Aryan women. In chapter seven, Numa lists the various functions of yapoos, meticulously inventing a multilingual lexicon in which he combines the writing of terms in sinograms with phonetic transcription in Katakana that reproduces their pronunciation in Latinising or English words, particularly for the more degrading functions. For instance, coprophagous yapoos that serve as vacuum sewers are called *nikubenki*, written 肉便器 (flesh toilet) with the phonetic guide in Katakana indicating its pronunciation as

¹⁴ Christine Marran, *Empire through the Eyes of a Yapoo: Male Abjection in the Cult Classic Beast Yapoo*, «Mechademia», 4, 2009, pp. 259-273.

¹⁵ Bassel Van der Kolk, *The Compulsion to repeat the Trauma. Re-enactment, Revictimization and Masochism*, «Psychiatric Clinics of North America», 12, 2, 1989, pp. 389-411; Bea Gavin, *No Pain, No Gain. Masochism as a Response to Early Trauma and Implications for Therapy*, «Psychodynamic Practice», 16, 2, 2010, pp. 183-200; Harold P. Blum, *Masochism and Trauma*, in *The Clinical Problem of Masochism*, ed. by Deanna Holtzman, Nancy Kulish, New York and London, Jason Aronson, 2012, pp. 145-159.

¹⁶ Blum, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁷ The name is a clear allusion to Anna von Kottwitz, Leopold Von Sacher Masoch's mistress between 1861 and 1865. The writer took inspiration from her for the character of Wanda Von Dunajew in the first edition of *Venus in Fur* in 1866. Readers of the «Kitan Club» magazine were undoubtedly able to pick up on these details.

secchin (セッチン).¹⁸ Then there are the yapoo *niku hedo bon* (肉反吐盆, vomit pickers with the pronunciation *vomitōra*), those who specialise in cunnilingus are *zetsujingata* (舌人形, but the author indicates the pronunciation as *kunnilinga*). Thanks to EHS's advanced biotechnology, yapoos can be shrunk and act as contraceptives *chitsunai kodoji* (腔内小童子 to be pronounced as *tunnel boy*). Some yapoos are shrunk to function as disposable footbeds, the virtue of which is to offer Aryan mistresses the soft sensation of stepping on flesh. For yapoos bred to be eaten as canned meat, indoctrinating them with nationalist ideology makes their meat more delicious. The skin of yapoos is also genetically modified to make it more resistant and yapoos are never clothed. Therefore, when Princess Pauline, regaining consciousness, sees Rin'ichirō naked and Clara with a whip, she imagines the former to be a yapoo of the latter. She learns with disgust that the two are engaged and that an equal relationship exists between them. It all stems from a misunderstanding, but Pauline, although informed that she is not actually in her Empire but in 1960s Germany, decides to persevere in correcting this anomalous relationship and takes the two fiancés to the EHS where Rin'ichirō is transformed into a yapoo by biogenetic intervention. The relationship between Clara and Rin'ichirō changes within a day from betrothed to mistress and slave.

In the remaining chapters, the story is set in the EHS where Clara and Rin'ichirō have been abducted. Clara's transition from fiancée to mistress occurs through the pleasurable discovery of a privileged position. For Rin'ichirō, the transition from fiancé to subhuman yapoo unfolds through the increasing discovery of his Otherness in a constant state of psychic and traumatic disorientation that traces a pattern similar to that of *Gulliver's Travels*.

As can be seen from the plot, *Kachikujin Yapoo* combines motifs of sadomasochistic literature with ethnic issues that were still a painful wound for the Japanese in the 1950s. The EHS is an ultra-racist dystopia, where white hegemony has as its corollary the degradation of the Japanese to subhuman creatures on whom sadistic tortures are inflicted. Rin'ichirō himself in the process of domestication is fed insects, forced to drink the menstrual blood of Aryan ladies, and beaten with shoes and a whip made from the skin of his own penis (Numa a, 371).¹⁹

This portrayal of the Japanese degraded to subhuman creatures and subjected to torture is characterised by a blatant masochistic sexualisation of ethnic identity. But although the power is held by Aryan women, the entire narrative is wrapped in an androcentric perspective. Despite the fact that the story offers copious and detailed descriptions of the sexual and coprophagic functions of the male yapoos, all we know of female yapoos is that having undergone surgery, they lose the sensitivity of their uterus and cannot experience pleasure from sexual activities. Their function is only to procure other yapoo or make their wombs available for surrogacy by white women. On the other hand, the few scenes focusing on Princess Pauline and the young Clara describe the girl's transition, diametrically opposed to Rin'ichirō's, from girlfriend to mistress. Also in these cases, the description of the women's bodies and clothing reflects a sexualised objectification of the female characters that is compatible with the "male gaze" theorised by Laura Mulvey (1989, 19-21).²⁰

¹⁸ Numa explains the origin of the expression «set in yapoo», hence the name 'settee' for the yapoos on which it is comfortable to sit. Numa Shōzō, *Kachikujin Yapoo*, Tokyo, Kadokawa Bunko, 1970, p. 99.

¹⁹ Ivi, p. 371.

²⁰ Mulvey's study deals mainly with the visual arts, but in the specific case of Numa's novel, the meticulous descriptions encode female corporeity in the context of an erotic objectification for the benefit of the male gaze (the reader), as in the following example: "She (Princess Pauline) turned

The masochistic sexualisation of yapoos is strongly connected to the aesthetic sensibility of Numa Shōzō. The humiliations to which the Japanese yapoos are subjected, however, also have an ethnic connotation that links the work to Japanese nationalism. First, it is necessary to define the meaning of the subjugation to Aryan women and what the subhuman condition of the Japanese is based on.

Behind the transformation of the Japanese lie two powerful ideologies reminiscent of World War II, like Nazism and anti-Japanese propaganda in the United States' public discourse. Regarding Nazism, we must remember Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946), an anti-Semitic ideologue whose writings circulated widely in Japan during the 1930s.²¹ It is not a coincidence that the first white theorist of the inferiority of the yapoo is called Rosenberg, like the Nazi ideologist. Another reference to the recent wartime past is the name of General Mac (a clear allusion to MacArthur) who led the evacuation of Earth by the white people following an atomic conflict that had rendered the planet uninhabitable. The white survivors decided to escape to the space colony called Terra Nova. They returned to Earth in 1987 to try to make it habitable again and to procure slaves among the black survivors. To their surprise they discovered that the Japanese archipelago was inhabited by creatures living in primitive conditions. It was decided to take some members of that species. However, although their way of life and cognitive abilities appeared to be quite like those of humans, in order not to incur civil liability during transport in the case of the death of those yapoos, Rosenberg theorised that they were a sort of ape, therefore lacking the rights of humans.²² In the 23rd century, a descendant of Rosenberg published the work *The Origins of Domestic Man* (*Kachikujin kigenron*), which scientifically established that Asians, whose only survivors were the Japanese, were not human beings but a form of *simia sapiens*. The yapoos themselves are indoctrinated into their Otherness. In school, yapoo children learn the cult of the white gods they will one day serve. They are taught that they are not human and that the sole purpose of their existence is to serve and worship white people.²³

The placing of the Japanese in the subhuman category of primates is also a distinctive feature of American war propaganda during the Pacific War. The discursive strategy of dehumanising the enemy (probably recurring in any war) in those years was mainly articulated in the use of crude racial stereotypes reinforced by zoomorphic representations of the Japanese as snakes, rats and very often monkeys.²⁴ Even the name yapoo echoes the derogatory term Jap used to refer to the Japanese until the end of the Second World War. Yapoo is the combination of the names Jap and Yahoo, the brutal, filthy, greedy and

her gaze towards Clara. Her forehead was beaded with sweat. Her riding outfit was too hot for that environment. Moreover, it was poorly made. Pauline thought it was her duty to ensure that the guest did not appear excessively miserable in the eyes of her own sister who was about to arrive. 'Clara', she called her by name, 'come here, come on, get changed'. She spoke in the tone of voice of someone used to giving orders [...] Pauline pulled a suit, underwear, and stockings out of the wardrobe. She hurriedly undressed Clara who was demurely embarrassed. She explained to her how the underwear should be worn. The stockings, brassiere and all other garments were seamless and made of a fabric that fit the body perfectly. The stockings were made of a fiber much more translucent and thinner than silk. She didn't even feel like she was wearing them. [...] She perceived a beauty in herself that she had never seen before. Her interest in those garments was so strong that, if only for a moment, she completely forgot about Rin'ichirō" (ivi, pp. 96-97).

²¹ Meron Medzini, *Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun. Japan and the Jews during the Holocaust era*, Brighton, Academic Studies Press, 2016, pp. 33-38.

²² Numa, *Kachikujin Yapoo*, cit., p. 500.

²³ Ivi, pp. 129-131.

²⁴ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy. Race and Power in the Pacific War*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1986, pp. 81-82, 85-88.

degenerate humanoid race subjugated to the intelligent and rational Houyhnhnm horses in the fourth part of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) by Jonathan Swift.

It is important to emphasise that Numa actually represents the subhuman condition of the Japanese not as a biological fact but as an ideological construction and its resulting biogenetic manipulation. From this point of view, the work takes the ethnocentrism of the European Orientalist tradition to its most radical manifestation. As E. Said had pointed out, the otherness represented by what is not Western ends up being characterised with the categories of passivity, femininity, implying traits of the subhuman in diversity.²⁵ In short, the ethnocentric perspective of Orientalism has consistently implied that the basic categories of the human are «white» and «male».

How can this be reconciled with the desire for submission to Aryan women? In *Aru mosoka no techō kara*, Numa recounts an episode that occurred during his stay in the prison camp. His unit was captured by the British Army. One day, he was called by his unit commander and ordered to work as a messenger at the British commander's house. In other words, the mission was to be the caretaker of the commander's home. The commander's wife had come from her home country and required soldiers who understood English. The only soldiers in the unit with university education were Numa Shōzō and a soldier named K. The latter had been sent first but had been shot dead for disobeying orders. So, there was only Numa Shōzō left. When he went to the commander's house, he found that the wife was much younger than the old commander. The young lady ordered Numa to sit upright on the floor and gave him a whip on the cheek. She demanded that Numa become a dog and trained him to do so. She made him put his hands out in front of her and tied his aligned thumbs together with a wire and chained one of his legs with a chain tied to the wall. She then forced him to drink her «holy water» and eat her «gold» as a sign of loyalty to her. There were also times when he was whipped for no reason. This continued until Numa was demobilised. Numa himself wrote that this experience was the foundation for the birth of *Yapoo the Cattleman*. He also writes that Princess Pauline was modelled on this commandant's wife.²⁶ It is not possible to know whether this is a real episode or an invention. In both cases the focus is on the relationship between white mistress and subjugated Japanese defeated man. Numa, however, in his novel frequently uses the more generic term *Hakujin* (白人 white) without gender connotation, as the hegemonic race even when referring to white mistresses.

In the collection *Aru mosoka no techō*, which is a valuable source for understanding *Kachikujin Yapoo*, Numa offers some insight into what he means by *hakujin sūhai* (worship of white people) in connection with the Japanese sense of inferiority.

Masochism idealises and deifies the counterpart woman as a domina. In this case, it is a psychological operation of extreme self-deprecation. If this is combined with a sense of inferiority that the Japanese in general have towards whites, needless to say, the psychological inclination that arises here is of a very high magnitude. In particular, the sense of tribal dissimilarity operates, making their deification easier. It is easier to worship women as goddesses. This generalises to white race worship. The sense of inferiority to whites of the Japanese evolves into a sense of worship. In the case of masochists this is mediated by the conception of the white woman's body.²⁷

²⁵ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1978, pp. 140, 183, 204, 218.

²⁶ Numa, *Aru Musōka no techō kara*, vol. 4, Tokyo, Ushio Shuppan, 1976, pp. 109-113.

²⁷ Id., *Aru Musōka no techō kara*, vol. 1, Tokyo, Toshi Shuppan, 1970, pp. 118-119.

The desire to be subject to the Aryan erotic regime of the Empire would thus be a disguise for the sense of inferiority towards the white race. It is necessary to wonder to what extent Numa Shōzō's writing can be taken literally, or as a fantastic construction. However, the dialectic between white hegemony and Japanese identity is the central element of his masochistic imagery. This dialectic cannot be separated from the historical and ideological background in which it takes shape. Although his real identity is unknown, we can understand that Numa was a member of the Japanese social elite and that until the end of the war he had no doubts about the reasons for the Japanese war and the project of a new Asian Order under the Japanese leadership. The military victories in the first phase of the conflict encouraged the vision of a hegemonic Japan. They posed the problem of reconfiguring the particularistic and peripheral role it had carved out for itself up to that point. The war against the West was the war against the poisonous materialism of that civilisation founded on capitalist power. The traditional holistic Orient united under the divine Japanese Emperor would restore spiritual health to the community in Asia.²⁸ The transition from hegemonic to defeated and subjugated race was a political and collective trauma added to the many traumatic episodes of those who had experienced the atrocities (committed and suffered) of the conflict.

When Numa wrote this story, the problem of genetic malformations because of nuclear contamination was already known but still something unspeakable. The occupying authorities and the Japanese government tried to oust the issue of the *hibakusha* (person exposed to nuclear radiation) from public discourse.²⁹ Nevertheless, Ota Yoko's autobiographical novel *Shikabane no machi* (*City of corpses* 1948-1950) already testifies to the suffering and social stigma toward the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In a different modality of expression, *Kachikujin Yapoo* re-enacts the atomic trauma in its collective dimension as an event from which the subhuman degradation of the Japanese originates.

Alongside the atomic trauma, Numa evokes in his novel the humiliation and suffering of a war that ended in subjugation to white hegemony. This re-enactment is meticulously made by describing the various forms of degradation of the yapoos, from the *secchin* who feed on the droppings of the whites, the yapoos who serve as sexual tools or disposable foot bedding, to those destined for slaughter to become food for the hegemonic race. In the novel there is an obsessive description of the degrading functions of the yapoos to the extent that the attachment to masochistic fantasies is tinged with a Lacanian *jouissance*.³⁰

Numa addresses the sense of confusion and post-war inadequacy through the masochistic re-enactment of the humiliation and powerlessness of the Japanese male under Western Occupation. Numa's yapoos are a re-enactment of the psychic and collective trauma of defeat through the compulsive repetition of masochistic behaviour. His masochism, deeply rooted in an aesthetic rather than pathological dimension, succeeds in organising a chaotic reality and shaping trauma. In this sense, Numa's masochism still retains a sphere of agency insofar as it represents a quest for identity reconfiguration, even if this results in the erasure of Japanese subjectivity, or more precisely, in the dislocation of anthropocentric subject-

²⁸ Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit, *Occidentalism. The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*, New York, The Penguin Press, 2004, p. 3.

²⁹ For a detailed study on this issue, see Monica Brau, *The Atomic Bomb Suppressed. American Censorship in Occupied Japan*, London and New York, Routledge, 1991.

³⁰ For the definition of *jouissance*, reference was made to Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London and New York, Routledge, 2nd ed., 2002 (1996), pp. 93-94, and here it is understood in its sexual connotation as the subject's quest to transcend the limits imposed by the symbolic order beyond which a mixture of pleasure and suffering is experienced.

ivity as a way to escape the unsustainability of the hierarchical binarism between East and West.

3. Trauma and time machine for history deconstruction

In her writing about *L'Amant* (1984) by Marguerite Duras, Meera Atkinson describes the concept of time in contemporary literature as after-wounding and points out that the time circulates among a never solid past, present and future and subjectivity slips in and out of the ages and gazes backward and forward.³¹ In *Kachikujin Yapoo* the idea of temporality related to trauma re-enactment is an important aspect of the narrative strategy. Trauma, in the way it announces itself, does not follow a linear time, but it is fragmented, layered or even circular like a Möbius loop.

Between the first serial publication in 1956 and the last manga versions, Numa dedicated almost forty years to writing and later reworking *Kachikujin yapoo* into manga. Yet the timeline of the narrative is only a few days and ends with Clara allowing Rin'ichirō to return to his own time on Earth. But the young Japanese man refuses. He already knows that Japan will be obliterated by a third world war and chooses to embrace the fate of yapoo in Clara's service. There is thus a big discrepancy between the elapsing of time in the author's real life and the one imagined in his literary creation. This datum, not uncommon in literary expression, takes on a particular significance if we note how the temporality is a fundamental element in the discursive operation that Numa Shōzō carries out in *Kachikujin Yapoo*. The non-linearity of time, in fact, allows Numa a radical deconstruction of Japanese cultural identity.

The story begins with Pauline's spaceship crashing on Clara and Rin'ichirō's house during a space-time journey. We then learn that in the EHS, technology has evolved to such an extent that the white people of the future can travel to the various eras of the Earth. The possibility of time travel makes the relationship between the past, present and future fluid, as we shall see, with paradoxical consequences.

Rin'ichirō, accompanying Clara as her yapoo, learns a truth that is devastating to him. Pauline introduces Clara to a young noblewoman, one of the Ohirman sisters.³² Her hairstyle and clothing complete with bow and quiver remind Rin'ichirō of archaic Japanese. Then, the following verses from *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matter*, circa 712 A.D.) come to his mind.

She forthwith, unbinding her august hair, twisted it into august bunches; and both into the left and into the right august bunch, as likewise into her august head-dress and likewise on to her left and her right august arm, she twisted an augustly complete string of curved jewels eight feet long, of five hundred jewels, and slinging on her back a quiver holding a thousand arrows, and adding thereto a quiver holding five hundred arrows, she likewise took and slung at her side a mighty and high-sounding elbow-pad, and brandished and stuck her bow upright so that the top shook, and she stamped her feet into the hard ground up to her opposing thighs, kicking away the earth like rotten snow, and stood valiantly like unto a mighty man.³³

³¹ Meera Atkinson, *The Poetics of Transgenerational Trauma*, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, p. 45.

³² «Ohirman» to Rin'ichirō's ears sounds like *Ohirume*, epithet of the goddess Amaterasu in one of the Japanese sacred texts, the *Nihonshoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*, circa 720 A.D.).

³³ The English translation is taken from Basil Hall Chamberlain, *'Ko-ji-ki' (古事記) or Record of Ancient Matters*, Kobe, J.L. Thompson & Company, 2nd ed., 1932 (1919), pp. 53-54.

These are the verses in which the sacred text of Japanese mythology describes Amaterasu, the Shintō pantheon's primary Goddess and ancestor of emperors' divine lineage, ready to face the august brother Susanoo as he approaches the celestial plain. The woman who looks like the goddess Amaterasu is named Anne Terus. Rin'ichirō learns from her story that on a space-time journey, she happened to visit protohistoric Japan, where she was welcomed and worshipped as a deity by the local population. From here, the cult of the goddess Amaterasu was born.³⁴ Her younger sister Susan, who was more impetuous than Anne and particularly adept at capturing beasts and yapoos with a whip, was later worshipped for having defeated the hostile Orochon tribe invading the yapoo lands.³⁵ Susan remained on the Earth. She used to wear slacks and carry a sword on her belt. For this reason, the archaic yapoo people believed she was a male deity. So, Susan herself changed her name to Susano.³⁶

Rin'ichirō is even more confused when he hears from Anne Terus the truth about the ancestral deities Izanagi and Izanami, from whom Japan and the Japanese were supposedly born. According to the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*, the two deities were ordered by the deities of the celestial plain headed by Amenominakanushi (a mysterious God who only appears in this episode of Japanese mythology) to «make, consolidate, and give birth to this drifting land»,³⁷ granting them a heavenly jewelled spear. The couple used it to stir the muddy waters below from the Floating Bridge of Heaven (Amanoukihashi, which connected the sky with the earth) and coagulate the island of Onogoro. This story relates to how the Japanese archipelago originated. The following is, instead, the version that emerges from the words of Anne Terus.

With the purpose of an anthropological study, the Royal Cylindrical Spaceship 'Roseau Pensant',³⁸ led by Commander Mynekaa, organised an expedition into the past. On Her Majesty's orders, two non-genetically manipulated yapoos were brought along. Sanami was the female, and Sanagi was the male. They were left in the wild on the island of Yapun, called 'Honoured Goal' (as a port of call of imperial designation, the island of Yapun was called Honoured Goal, a name later generations distorted to Onogoro) for an archaeological experiment. It was 12,000 BC, during the Neolithic period. Over the next few years, the Yapoos reproduced and inhabited the Yapun Islands.³⁹

Rin'ichirō understands that Mynekaa is the actual name of the deity Amenonominakanushi. He also understands the reason for his absence in all the other Japanese myths: he was the spaceship's commander and had departed immediately after leaving Sanagi and Sanami on Earth, whose names were handed down as Izanagi and Izanami.

Numa Shōzō's discursive operation consists in deconstructing the sacred structure of Japanese mythology through a partially exogenous and white-race origin of the deities (the most important ones), together with a yapoo origin of the Shinto pantheon. The *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki* describe a cosmology divided into three levels. The Takamagahara (High

³⁴ Numa, *Kachikujin Yapoo*, cit., p. 324.

³⁵ An allusion to the *Kojiki* myth in which Susanoo, expelled from the High Plain of Heaven for his outrageous behaviour, redeems himself by defeating the eight-headed dragon Yamata Orochi.

³⁶ Ivi, pp. 572-573.

³⁷ Chamberlain, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

³⁸ In Japanese characters 考える葦 *kangaeru ashi*, «thinking reed». The name of the starship derives from French philosopher Blaise Pascal's (1623-1662) definition «l'homme est un rouseau pensant».

³⁹ Numa, *Kachikujin Yapoo*, cit., p. 324.

Plain of Heaven) is inhabited by celestial deities called Amatsukami (Heavenly Gods). Anne Terus (Amaterasu) is the presiding deity of the Takamagahara. Then there is an intermediate level, the world also inhabited by humans, called Ashiharanonakatsukuni (the middle country of reed beds). In this case, the ancestral deities Izanami and Izanagi would be the two yapooos, Sanami and Sanagi. From them, the Japanese lineage would have originated. The third level is the underworld, the Yomi no Kuni, the equivalent of the world of the dead. Numa therefore reconfigures the founding myths into a kind of cosmological geopolitics in which Caucasian deities preside over the celestial plain, while Japanese deities preside over the middle country. This subdivision reflects the differences between Anglo-Americans and Japanese, between hegemonic and subjugated races.

The temporal paradox of such genesis of the Japanese confuses Rin'ichirō. If the Japanese descend from the yapoo transported from the future, are the Japanese the ancestors of the yapoo, or vice versa? Was the egg or the chicken born first, he wonders.⁴⁰

On 25 August 1945, a law enacted by the occupying forces imposed a radical revision of school texts. Every statement that presented the *Kojiki* myths about the emperor's divine descent as historical truth and parts characterised by nationalist content and incitements to war were deleted. In some cases, the pupils blackened these parts of the text under the teacher's guidance.⁴¹ Devotion to the Emperor and the duty to sacrifice one's life for him were values already introduced in two imperial edicts of the Meiji era and were instrumental in mobilising the population for the war engagements in 1894 against the Chinese Qing Empire and 1904 for the Russo-Japanese War. Hirohito's reign fully realised the theocratic authoritarianism. In 1937, the Ministry of Education drafted an official text, the *Kokutai no hongī* (Cardinal Principle of the National Policy), the reading of which was mandatory for all subjects. One passage in this text is particularly interesting for its association of imperial sanctity with the cosmic and temporal horizons.

In the great august Will and great august undertakings of the Emperor, who is deity incarnate, is seen the great august Will of the Imperial Ancestors, and in this Will lives the endless future of our nation. That our Imperial Throne is coeval with heaven and earth means indeed that the past and the future are united in one in the "now," that our nation possesses everlasting life, and that it flourishes endlessly. Our history is an evolution of the eternal "now," and at the root of our history there always runs a stream of eternal "now".⁴²

From the 1930s, subjects of the Emperor were told that Japan was a great nation. The Japanese, a hegemonic race endowed with an indomitable Yamato spirit, were fighting for the noblest of missions: to create a great area of prosperity in Asia and overthrow Western imperialism. The *Kokutai no Hongī* legitimised this ideology by affirming the historical truth of the founding myths of the august emperor through the convergence of past and future to the present.

Numa's sarcastic time paradox reconfigures the sacred roots of Japanese identity. All myths are nothing but the result of the time-travelling whites' intervention. The author's

⁴⁰ Ivi, p. 574.

⁴¹ John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat. Japan in the Wake of World War II*, New York, W.W. Norton and Company, 1999, p. 247. For concrete examples of this practice, called *kuronuri kyōkasho* (blackened school texts), we would like to mention also the *Sensō taiken bunkō shiryō* (war experience in library material) exhibition held from 1st of May to 16 September 2019 at the Nara Prefectural Library. The library has also made the following document with eloquent images available online. <https://www.library.pref.nara.jp/sites/default/files/52zuroku_0.pdf> (last access: 31 August 2022).

⁴² John O. Gauntlett and Robert K. Hall, *Kokutai no hongī. Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1949, p. 65.

discursive operation is not simply the erasure of events that militarist propaganda represented as history. Anne Terus's reconstruction initially traumatises Rin'ichirō. However, gradually he takes possession of a new certainty. The myths of Japan are not fantasy; they are facts that happened due to the intervention of the hegemonic race of the EHS. This truth about Japan's origins triggers a mental process that makes the subhuman condition attributed to him acceptable. If white people are gods, it is righteous that the yapoo should be subservient to them. In other words, in Rin'ichirō's masochism there is an active choice to place himself in a position of inferiority.

The author plunders national history by adapting it to new circumstances. In a time of traumatic changes, he invents something familiar to hold onto. Numa deals with the psychological disorientation by bringing together two irreconcilable elements: Japanese nationalism and subjugation to the Allied powers. The mythology founded on the cult of Anne Terus (Amaterasu) is the only way to preserve the sacredness of Japan. The yapoo, then, are not simply a satire of the nationalist past. On the contrary, they represent the ideal subjects of a totalitarian capitalism, able to bear the burden of the EHS's prosperity.

4. Conclusion

Through the novel *Kachikujin yapoo*, it is possible to read Numa Shōzō's reaction to the humiliation of defeat and the trauma of the suffering and devastation of war. Trauma processing, both individual and collective, unfolds through two intertwining levels. One consists of the combination of masochism and nationalism. The other is the temporal paradox that, together with the science fiction setting, allows him to establish an ontological distance from the events he recalls and reworks in the text.

This paper began with the quotation of an anecdote Numa published in the "*Kitan Club*" magazine two years before he started writing the novel. In the same essay, the author comments on the episode of Japanese flags becoming women's pants.

I find this story masochistically exciting, and I am sure that some readers do too. I wonder why that is. [...]. The source of the excitement is ultimately the union of the Japanese flag and the woman's crotch.

For the generation that since childhood sang "Red on a white banner...",⁴³ that had to die saying "long live the Emperor!", that was forced to be at one with the Japanese nation, whether they wanted to or not, the rising sun flag, symbol of the Japanese mythology, represented, in short, the most sacred thing they possessed. To have it defiled in the loins of women of a different ethnic group was tantamount to having oneself defiled there. The masochistic effect arises where this identification psychology operates.⁴⁴

Those flags of Japan, a metonymy of individual and collective identity, represent the sudden and traumatic collapse of the symbolic order on which Japanese subjectivity was founded. From this collapse emerges the urge to transcend the limits of the symbolic order. This fuels Numa's fervid masochistic imagination, which, consistent with the quoted

⁴³ *Hinomaru no hata* (The Flag of the Rising Sun), a patriotic song that was taught in school. The lyrics are as follows: *Red on a white banner/ the rising sun is dyed /Ah, how beautiful the Japanese flag is! /Showing the vigour of the morning sun/ how brave the Japanese flag is! /High in the blue sky the rising sun / Ah, how beautiful the Japanese flag is!* (Shiroji ni akaku/Hinomaru somete/Ah, utsukushikiya Nihon no hata wa!/ Asahi no Noboru ikioi misete/Ah, isamashiya Nihon no hata wa!/ Aozora takaku/ Hinomaru agete/ Ah, utsukushiya/ Nihon no hata!).

⁴⁴ Numa, *Aru Musōka no techō kara*, vol. 3, cit., pp. 12-13.

anecdote, initially appears to be oriented mainly towards coprophagy. In the quotations from *Aru Musōka no techō kara* (but the collection of essays contains a much larger number of examples) and in the variety of yapoos within the novel, the link between masochism and coprophagy recurs with considerable frequency, along with other relatively less extreme forms of masochism. The obsessive repetition of such scenarios represents an attachment to trauma symptoms and belongs to the referential dimension of Numa as an individual. However, Numa Shōzō's masochistic writing, closely connected to the author's aesthetic quest, can be interpreted as an artistic rather than pathological fact. As reported elsewhere, this literary device where masochists do not just pretend to be but become human cattle is strikingly reminiscent of what Deleuze and Guattari wrote about masochism as a process of transformation.⁴⁵ The yapoos are bodies in perpetual transformation, not pretending but becoming animals or living objects.

In addition to the referential dimension of the individual, *Kachikujin Yapoo* also expresses a discourse of collective interest. Numa implements a process of deconstruction and re-appropriation of mythology and folklore.⁴⁶ Thus, he creates a metafiction that invests the entire Japanese cultural tradition.

The manipulation of the Japanese past by the white EHS poses a fundamental question. Are the yapoo biologically manipulated Japanese, or are the Japanese descendants of the Yapoo?

The only possible answer is that the yapoo are both ancestors and descendants of the Japanese. However, behind this question lies a broader question: what is the authentic Japanese identity?

The one that waged war against the West in the name of a sacred mission, or the one defined by the Western ethnocentric construct? With his sci-fi and masochistic imagery, Numa tries to reconcile these two realities in the only possible way, through paradox.

⁴⁵ Luca Capponcelli, *Biomachines, Metal Bodies and Masochistic Masculinity in Postwar Japan*, «Kervan. International Journal of African and Asiatic Studies», 25, 2, 2021, p. 367.

⁴⁶ For instance, in Japanese folklore, the Kappa is a mischievous river sprite whose iconography varies slightly according to epochs and locations. In *Kachikujin yapoo*, it is a yapoo biologically manipulated to become an underwater bicycle and accidentally ended up in a bygone era in Japan. Even the name would be nothing more than the prototype brand designated with the Greek letter K. (Numa, *Kachikujin Yapoo*, cit., p. 286).