

**Adopting the Fetish:
War Memory and Uncanny Kinship in Modern Japan**

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In this paper I explore how the human figurines known in Japan as “*ningyô*” 人形, a term rather imperfectly rendered in English as “dolls”, are implicated in ritual and aesthetic processes of mourning and memorialization. Through these doll-enabled practices, the pain of tragic loss may gradually be transmuted into the promise of life and lineal continuity. Moreover, doll figurines are often situated at the intersection of the relationship of marriage and the relationship of siblingship.

In particular, I seek to understand how one particular Japanese social institution, the adoption of husbands into the family line of a bride, known as *mukoyôshi* 婿養子, has been appropriated and transformed in memorial ritual practices that involve dolls. In a wide range of microcosmic aesthetic assemblages, husband-wife and brother-sister bonds are curiously condensed and conflated, in ways that aid in transitions from melancholia to mourning, moving the potentially unquiet Dead into their proper place and allowing the living to continue with the vital business of life and social reproduction.

Levi-Strauss once noted that at the core of all Polynesian mythology are endless efforts to understand and resolve a key cultural conundrum: how is the relationship between

husband and wife like and unlike the relationship between brother and sister? A similar enigma is to be found at the heart of Japanese culture, in which the intertwined dynamics of the marriage bond and of siblingship are of endless, generative fascination.

Such a puzzle is posed in the foundational Japanese mythological text, the *Kojiki* (or *Records of Ancient Matters*), in which the first divine couple, the male *Izanagi no mikoto* and the female *Izanami no mikoto*, are brother and sister to one another, as well as husband and wife. Suggestively, the archaic term “imo” used in the *Kojiki*’s description of the goddess Izanami can refer both to a wife and to a younger sister. From Izanagi and Izanami are descended all the gods and ultimately all human life.

This foundational brother-sister mythic relationship is reduplicated in Japanese ritual schemas. Traditionally, a Japanese female shamaness is paired with a male priest, who functions as her classificatory brother as well as her symbolic lover. In my initial fieldwork on spirit mediumship and sacred landscapes in northeastern Japan, I noticed that this cosmological symbolism was often integrated with a peculiar feature of Japanese social organization, the practice of “husband adoption”. The practice of marrying an adopted groom (*mukoyôshi*) is followed when there is no suitable male heir to the house (*ie*). From the standpoint of the bride’s family, the practice often has considerable advantages, allowing land and other forms of wealth to be retained within the household line. For the in-marrying husband, the practice is often experienced as somewhat shameful or stigmatized, since it requires that he re-orient himself away from the ancestral line into which he was born, abandoning the family name of his father, and

assuming the family name of his father-in-law. According to a traditional proverb, a young man is told, “Even if you have one grain of rice...” to avoid the shame of becoming an adopted bridegroom. However, for a young man born into a low income or modest household, the arrangement may offer considerable material and social advantages.

In significant respects, bridegroom adoption marriage rests on an illusion: the in-marrying groom is given the simulacrum of descendants, though everyone knows, ultimately, that he is a substitute figure, standing as a partial stranger in between the generations of the core household line. As the genitor of the next generation, he is part of the family kin group but never fully of the core descent matrix, a “counterfeit bride” of sorts.

In a sense, the generative illusion of husband adoption inverts the classic Levi-Straussian model in which social reproduction depends on the outward exchange of women between male-dominated groups. In husband or bridegroom adoption, the patriarch in effect gets to have his cake and eat it, too: he is allowed to continue his descent line without sacrificing his beloved daughter to exogamous marriage.

This arrangement, significantly, is often followed in northern Japanese family lines of female spirit mediums. Rather than allowing a spirit medium daughter to marry outside, away from her natal household, her family will bring **in** an adopted bridegroom/husband to function as her priest and conjugal partner. As an adopted groom he functions, in some respects, as the spirit medium’s brother, sharing her family name and venerating

her parents as his own; the married couple thus re-duplicates the mythic marriage of brother and sister in Japanese sacred texts.

This ritual and social structural background will help to account for some striking features of doll symbolism in Japan. The power of dolls in Japan can be comprehended, at least in part, in terms of attachment theory and Takeo Doi's understanding of *amae*, or "intensive mutual dependence" realized through the idiom of the mother/child dyad, and most particularly in the bond between mother and son. Within the domestic sphere, as persons move through the life cycle, dolls help to establish enduring bonds between persons as well as detach persons from one another. Classically, simple cloth dolls (*amagatsu*) were made upon the birth of a child and always placed beside the child in sleep, functioning as protective objects for the child, in effect soaking up all misfortune and sickness that would otherwise be directed at the growing child.

In turn, each March 3rd, the festival known as "Doll's Day" or *hina matsuri* is celebrated in millions of Japanese households. Young girls receive from their mothers and grandmothers doll figurines which are displayed in the home in an exquisite stepped tableau modeled on the ancient Japanese Imperial Court. As young girls play in front of these *mise en scene*, they imaginatively project themselves into later family scenes (most significantly, their own marriages) structured in terms of the fantasized imperial court. (FIGURE 1) Later in the life cycle these same dolls aid in separation from the natal family; a bride will be given some of these very "Doll's Day" figurines from

her mother and from her mother-in-law so that she in turn can pass them down to her own daughters. In this sense, the Doll's Day figurines bind each girl to her bilateral female kin, to previous wives and mothers, as she contemplates her own future as a wife and mother.

Yet, more is at stake in these beloved Dolls Day displays. The multi-tiered assemblages centering on the elaborate figures of the Emperor and Empress in traditional attire are usually read as a celebration of imperial conjugal unity, anticipating the happy state of future matrimony for the little girl who plays at its base. However, for our purposes, of equal significance is the symbolism of ancestral memorialization and of siblingship that hovers around the tableau. The Doll's Day complex bears more than a passing similarity to the family domestic ancestral Buddhist altar, or *butsudan*, which also has multiple levels, and which often features wooden staves (*ofuda*) with the names of the recently deceased, while images of honored antecedents are often hung above the *butsudan* itself, suspended from a railing at the top of the wall. Many of the dolls in the Doll's Day display have been passed down from ancestral figures, transmitted bilaterally from mother to daughter and mother-in-law to daughter-in-law. In this sense, the idealized little girl looking up at the Dolls' Day display is directly facing her bilateral ancestors.

The Emperor and Empress at the apex of this mini-universe hover between affinal and sibling status: as imperial beings, they embody the founding cosmological couple of Japanese mythology. The sexual union of the brother-sister pair of Izanagi and Izanami

results in, among many other divine “births”, the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, who in turns begets the imperial line itself in a sexual union with her brother, Susuno-o. At its most basic level, the narrative structure of the *Kojiki* presents us with doubling of the originary brother/sister conjugal union set in terms of a powerful divine procreation—a procreation that gives birth to the universe itself, and to the imperial line in particular.

That said, the inherent sibling relationship of the divine Imperial couple cannot be fully acknowledged at a collective level; rather, it hovers in the background as it were, energizing the ritual power of the entire assemblage (and especially the ritual and divine fecundity of the brother/sister dyad) by virtue of its partial disavowal. In this respect, the Doll’s Day figurines may be understood as “fetishes” in the classic psychoanalytic sense, simultaneously hinting at and concealing or disavowing the underlying psychic dynamics that they present.

It is perhaps for this reason that Japanese girls are warned that the Doll’s Day displays must be disassembled and stored away before they go to bed on the night of March 3rd, the traditional day for *hina matsuri*. If the Doll’s Day display were to stay up all night, the girl is told, she will never get properly married. The Doll’s Day tableau opens up an uncanny, generative portal to the Other World for a vital day of blessings. Yet excessive exposure to the sacred Dead, to the hybrid married-sibling dyad in the form of the Imperial couple, would dangerously derail the proper development trajectory of eventual exogamous marriage and child-bearing.

In sum, it would appear that the potentially unruly powers of the Dead and the Other World are best accessed and channeled into the world of the living family through a subtle compromise between the logic of affinity (marriage) and the logic of siblingship. By placing the Dead within a marriage frame, and in turn recasting this spectral married couple as brother and sister, this honored pair becomes a vital, life-giving source of cosmological generativity. Thus death and mourning are transmuted through the operations of ritual aesthetics into the regeneration of life and the continuity of the family line.

I will note briefly that this deep cultural pattern was appropriated and transformed in the final months of the Second World War. (FIGURE 2) As thousands of kamikaze pilots prepared for the final flights of no return in 1945, they were assigned young teenage girl companions, who were, appropriately, told to act as the pilots' "honorary sisters" during their final days of life. In addition to serving food and conversing with the doomed pilots, the girls made thousands upon thousands of small "mascot dolls" or "*imon ningyô*" (or care package dolls) for the pilots; these were little female figurines of about 4-5 inches tall, created out of scraps of cloth, dressed sometimes in Western-style dresses, or in kimono or *monpe* (traditional loose trousers worn by women working in the fields), and intended to be worn hanging from flight suits or hung around the neck. (FIGURE 3)

Made during the initial years of the war, these dolls were intended to protect the soldier. Later in the war their meaning and function shifted slightly, and instead of protecting the bearer from death, the dolls were thought to enable the successful completion of a

mission, accompanying the kamikaze pilots on their final missions. Kamikaze often adorned themselves with many of these dolls as they prepared for their final missions, sometimes hanging mascot dolls on their plane's instrument panel as well. As they crashed into American naval vessels, pilots were told to look into the face of the female doll: there, they were told, the face of their mother, sister, and/or the bride whom they would never know would appear, comforting them in their final moments.

Many of the dolls were made by adolescent "honorary sisters" conscripted from the town of Chiran, near the principle army air base from which Kamikaze pilots departed on their final mission. By imbuing the mascot doll with aspects of herself, the "younger sister" doll-maker allowed herself, in effect, to accompany the pilot on his fatal flight; in so doing she served, through the substitute agency of the doll, as his mother, bride and sister. For six decades, the women who served as adolescent "honorary sisters" during wartime have continued to play important ritual functions in Japan as guardians of the venerated souls of the kamikaze, who for neo-nationalists have been recast as divinities that continue to safeguard the nation.

This complex conflation of marital and sibling doll symbolism was revived in postwar popular memorialization practices, often oriented towards Japanese military personnel who had died in combat before marriage. In several ritual sites in northeastern Japan where I have worked, the soul of a dead soldier (or of any young person who died before marriage) is bound in a kind of marriage rite to a compassionate Buddhist

bodhisattava, such as Jizô or Kannon, embodied in the form of an elaborate store-bought “bride doll” or *hannayome ningyô* 花嫁人形. (FIGURE 4)

Inside the glass box containing the doll the family includes objects, or more properly “offerings,” that signify the normal life the deceased would have lived, including money, cigarettes, toy cars (often signifying a “real” car), clothing, sake and beer. Finally, a photograph of the deceased is placed in front of the doll, effectively completing the “spirit couple” in the glass box. (It’s interesting to note that this photograph is not the usual somber “funerary” photograph, usually in black and white, but is rather a very “life-like” scene, relaxing at the beach or hiking in the mountains.) The symbolic message is that the deceased is very much “alive”, at least in this “memorial marriage” context.

(FIGURE 5)

The dead soul in “bride doll marriage” is given a degree of intimate conjugal companionship denied to him (or occasionally “her”) in life, and is thus allowed to experience a kind of virtual life span in the symbolic “house” of the bride doll marriage box installed in a temple (or sometimes a Shinto shrine). The doll is usually preserved anywhere from ten to thirty or forty years, until it is burned in a special rite of spirit release. For our purposes, it is striking that although the dead youth and the Bodhisattva-infused doll are said to be “married,” the dominant emotional associations of this couple are not so much erotic or conjugal as sibling-like. They are spoken of as good friends, who look after one another. In time, informants insist, the face of the doll and face of the deceased in the accompanying photograph come to resemble one

another. My sense from informants is that the doll, and not always the photograph, remains the focus of their attention--the doll is, after all, understood as a Bodihissattva--so people will say things like, 「にってるね！」 ”She really looks like him, doesn’t she?!” Once the process of resemblance between the doll and the deceased (in the form of the photograph) is thought to be complete the symbolic memorial marriage “work” of the bride doll box is thought to be complete.

Let us note that bride doll spirit marriage has significant structural parallels with bridegroom adoption. Both practices in a sense rest on an illusion. In spirit marriage, the dead soul, who had died before marriage, is presented with the ritual simulacrum of a companionate marriage. In some cases, the married spirit couple is even presented with “doll children” which are installed in the box, along with the spirit couple. Yet this marriage produces no real descent line for the deceased person. Rather, he or she is safely removed from the core line of the household, given just enough security and companionship to guarantee that he or she will no longer plague the living family as a wandering ghost.

In bridegroom/husband adoption, the groom leaves his own natal family to partake of the material joys of adoption; similarly, in spirit marriage, the dead child is effectively transferred out of his or her natal family to enter into the realm of the dead, where he or she is cared for by a compassionate Bodhisattva, embodied in the image of the bride doll. And as in bridegroom/husband adoption, the couple bound together in bride doll spirit marriage stand in the structural relationship of brother and sister, an elemental unit

that allows divine blessings to flow into the world, solidifying and protecting the patriline, without generating its own progeny.

The analysis will now move to consider how this rich cultural repertoire has been creatively adapted and transmuted in three specific ethnographic cases,¹ as bereaved men and women in Japan have sought to negotiate the traumas of wartime loss. In each case, as we shall see, the structural logics of husband adoption and of hybrid marital/sibling relations have been applied in highly innovative ways.

CASE ONE - The Russo-Japanese War

My first case emerges out of a minor incident in the Russo-Japanese war, the early twentieth century conflict that propelled Japan into the status of a major power on the world stage. Corporal Hamamoto Shinji, a twenty-year-old infantryman from a farming family, was badly wounded in a night attack on March 2-3, 1905, during the battle of Mukden in Manchuria. He was evacuated to the military garrison hospital in Osaka and in subsequent amputations lost portions of both legs, as well as one arm and several fingers on his remaining hand. During his several years of hospitalization and rehabilitation, a young woman, Miss Ishikawa Yoko, the daughter of a wealthy Osaka merchant, often visited him. Yoko often played the violin and sang for the wounded veteran. Her devotion to him was enormous, and she appears at times to have slept beneath his bed in the hospital, to keep him company, in effect serving as his “arms and

¹ The names used below are pseudonyms.

legs.” In time, she fell in love with the soldier and it appears that her love was reciprocated.

Oral and written narratives diverge at this point, but all agree that the couple was not able to marry. One version holds that Yoko’s father forbade the marriage of his daughter to a poor young, disabled farmer. Another version has it that Yoko herself proposed marriage to Shinji on multiple occasions with her parents’ consent, but that Shinji refused, primarily out of concern that she would “ruin her life” caring for him. According to this latter version, she reluctantly submitted to an arranged marriage to an adopted husband who met her parents’ approval.

In some distress, as she sewed her wedding kimono, Yoko conceived the idea of commissioning a doll in her likeness, which could in effect be given and “married” to her beloved Shinji. The doll was ordered from a local Osaka doll artist. Named “Sakurako” (cherry blossom child), seventy centimeters tall, this doll was an exquisite figurine sculpted with the facial features of Yoko as well as her hairstyle and depicted her playing a violin (as did Yoko). The doll’s trousseau included over thirty kimono, as well as an elaborate set of miniature furniture and utensils, of the sort that might be included in the Dolls’ Day festival of a wealthy Osaka family and which a young bride in Yoko’s position would be expected to bring with her as part of her trousseau on her wedding day. (FIGURE 6)

The doll “Sakurako” and trousseau were sent to Shinji in his village, so that a “wedding ceremony” could be conducted by Shinji’s former commanding officer on precisely the same day as Yoko’s arranged marriage. According to this version of the story, before she sent off the doll Yoko secretly held the doll to her cheek and asked it to go live with her beloved. She specifically referred to the doll as “*migawari*,” using the term normally applied to ritual images or figurines that can substitute for a living or dead person.

An alternate version of the narrative holds that Yoko and her family traveled with the doll to Shinji’s village and were present during the wedding ceremony between the doll and Shinji. Most accounts agree that the doll was “married” to Shinji in early 1908. A year later Shinji in reality married a cousin who lived in his village and this couple eventually had four children. Yoko, in turn, had several children with her husband, who as a *mukoyoshi* (adopted husband/son-in-law) took on the family name and social position of Yoko’s father, relinquishing his natal family name.

Although married to other persons, Yoko and Shinji corresponded with one another during the subsequent years and appear to have remained close. Their correspondence may have intensified following the death of Shinji’s wife, Noriko, which evidently took place in the early 1930s. Shinji wrote to Yoko in early 1935, that he was planning on traveling to Osaka to attend the upcoming Army Memorial Day, the thirtieth anniversary of the great Japanese victory over the Czarist army at the Battle of Mukden. However, Shinji died before he could attend the celebrations in late February 1935, at age 51. According to one report, on his deathbed Shinji asked his daughter to fetch the

precious doll he had received from Yoko. As he lay dying he held the doll's face close to his cheek, murmuring that now he would be with her forever.

Following Shinji's death, his military pension ceased, and his children fell on hard times. But Yoko and her adopted husband seem to have provided for Shinji's second and third children, hiring them in their company. Shinji's first son, an infantryman like his father, was wounded in action in China in the late 1930s and contracted encephalitis. As fate would have it, he was hospitalized in precisely the same Osaka hospital ward that his father had been in three decades earlier. There, Yoko and her young adult daughter tended to him. In the years that followed Yoko and her husband arranged marriages for Shinji's son and his sister; taking on, in other words, the structural responsibilities of their late parents. In spring and summer 1945, Yoko and her family escaped Osaka, which was subject to massive Allied firebombing, and lived with Shinji's children in their village until the war's end.

In June 2005 I visited with some of Shinji's descendants in their family compound. We met in the family living room, below portraits of Shinji and his wife Noriko, in front of the family Buddhist ancestral altar (butsudan) at which we prayed to Shinji's spirit before any conversation could begin. We were also in front of the *tokonoma* alcove, in which the doll commissioned by Yoko ("Sakurako") had once been prominently displayed. The meeting was friendly, but sometimes strained when it came to discussing the doll Sakurako; not surprisingly, the intimate friendship between Shinji and Yoko has been the cause of disquiet for some in the family.

Alas, the fate of the doll Sakurako (aka Yoko's "double") itself is unclear. Shinji's daughter-in-law recalls seeing it when she married into the Hamamoto household in 1945. Shinji's granddaughter recalls that when she was a girl in the early 1950s the doll was brought out from the stone storehouse every Doll's Day, on March 3rd to join the other festival dolls. Yet the family has told me they do not know what subsequently became of the doll and its accoutrements.

The parallels with bridegroom adoption in this case are suggestive. In sending the bride doll (in her exact likeness) to her paraplegic lover, Yoko may be understood as reducing Shinji to the same feminized position he would have occupied as an adopted husband, even as she simultaneously turns him into a kind of brother (a husband from afar with whom she will not have sex). With this "gift" of an aspect of herself in marriage, Yoko has, in effect, pre-empted any future "real life" marriage Shinji might make; he was "already married." His primary allegiance thus remained with his "first wife", the bride doll "Sakurako", that is to say Yoko "herself".

What is more, the presence of her doll avatar/double in his household allows Yoko later to claim symbolic motherhood over Shinji's children. Shinji's cousin Noriko as his "second wife" may have biologically birthed his children, but it is Yoko who later assumes the position of their structural mother, enabled by the "gift" of her own doll double in a "virtual marriage."

According to the 1951 account, just before sending off the doll in 1908, Yoko secretly held it close to her face and asked it to go live with Shinji. This gesture was mirrored in Shinji's supposed action nearly three decades later, while on his deathbed. Across the span of three decades, across divides of geography, legal status, and even of death, the two lovers' faces are conjoined by the mediating presence of Yoko's double in the doll's sculpted face. In her initial act of holding the doll's face to her own face, Yoko effectively split herself, allowing herself to be married twice. In turn, by holding the doll's face to his face, Shinji accomplished a comparable act of splitting, leaving behind a part of himself to remain as the patriarchal ancestor of his household while binding himself eternally in death to Yoko. After this death, Yoko dutifully honored this bond of virtual kinship to Shinji through kinship-like labor on behalf of his children, a bond they reciprocated by housing her and her offspring during the war's final, dark chapter.

The symbolic memorial relationship between Yoko and Shinji after his death was not a "conjugal" one. Rather, over the course of thirty years, the doll evidently helped to move Yoko from the position of Shinji's "would-be bride" to his "virtual sister", so that she functioned, in all effect, as a father's sister to Shinji's children. (In Japan, after the death of parents, the children's father's sister usually takes on the status of their "second mother.") The complex splitting operations enabled through the doll, in other words, gradually produced virtual siblingship between the two former "lovers". Driven by the painful lack of the Other, the doll emerged as the perfect substitute for the Other and for their conjugal unity. The mythic doll spouse is eternal and beyond reproach, more perfect than any human spouse ever possibly could be.

CASE TWO - Hasegawa Family (Nagasaki)

My second case concerns an unusual memorial undertaking by a Japanese couple spanning half a century. A husband and wife, whom I shall call Mr. and Mrs.

Hasegawa, survived the 1945 atomic bombing of Nagasaki. Over the course of five decades the couple collected about seventy *ichimatsu* dolls (large child-like dolls) in memory of their four children, who had been incinerated in the bombing. In recent years, the dolls have been transferred away from the family, and exhibited in the Nagasaki A-bomb Peace Museum, where their meanings have shifted considerably.

The story begins during summer 1945 in the port city of Nagasaki in Kyushu, Japan's southernmost major island. At some point during the summer (memories vary as to when) Mrs. Hasegawa and her (ten year old daughter) daughter Keiko decided to give Keiko's beloved *ichimatsu* doll to Keiko's best friend Sumie, on the occasion of Sumie's tenth birthday. (An *ichimatsu* is a life-like doll modeled on a six year old girl; it is often used to teach girls about mothering and has very strong associations with the mother-daughter relationship.) Mrs. Hasegawa and Keiko made a kimono for the doll out of scraps from one of Keiko's old kimono, and then presented this precious gift (especially so given the privations of mid-1945) to Sumie.

On the morning of August 9, 1945, Mr. Hasegawa was away from home performing his duties as a policeman, while Mrs. Hasegawa had gone to the city office seeking

permission to move the family out of Nagasaki to a rural community to ensure their safety. They were thus both out of the area when at 11:00 a.m. the twenty one kiloton Fat Man atomic weapon carried by the American B-29 “Bockscar” exploded. Later that day Mr. and Mrs. Hasegawa managed to reach the site where their house once stood. They recalled finding only a few small bones, which crumbled to dust in their hands. Mrs. Hasegawa was struck mute and remained entirely silent for many days (in one account, she stayed silent for three months). At some point after the bombing the Hasegawas made their way to the home of Sumie’s family (their daughter’s friend) in a village outside of Nagasaki.

There Mrs. Hasegawa saw the *ichimatsu* doll that her daughter had given to her friend Keiko on the occasion of her birthday some months earlier. Mrs. Hasegawa immediately took hold of the doll, cradled it, and began to sing to it, the first sounds she had uttered since the atomic bombing. Sumie, her deceased daughter’s friend, was reluctantly prevailed upon to give the doll to Mrs. Hasegawa, who declared its name was “Keiko”, the same name as her recently deceased daughter. (FIGURE 7)

The Hasegawas in time had four other children and moved to Saitama, an outer suburb of Tokyo, where Mr. Hasegawa continued his career as a policeman. Gradually, the couple acquired more dolls memorializing their dead children; evidently, they never purchased a doll, but rather always received them as gifts. The couple displayed the dolls within their house in front of the family domestic altar. Yet the existence of the dolls was a secret to the public, until at some point in the 1970s when a neighborhood

boy hit a baseball through a *shoji* paper screen in the Hasegawa's house. Entering the house surreptitiously to retrieve the ball, the boy was astounded to find himself face to face with scores of dolls arranged around the familial ancestral altar. He ran outside and told friends and neighbors what he had seen and the existence of the dolls became public knowledge. (It appears, however, that the couple never fully explained the meaning of the dolls to their living children, and never directly told them they were atomic bomb survivors, a stigmatized category for many Japanese.)

Gradually, the primary stewardship of the dolls shifted from wife to husband. In later years, Mr. Hasegawa, many recall, increasingly slept in the *butsudan* ancestral altar room, surrounded by the approximately seventy dolls. Around the year 2000, after Mr. Hasegawa was moved into a nursing home, his wife was taken in by their adult daughter (who had also been named Keiko, the same name of their deceased daughter and the first doll). The living Keiko, everyone agrees, never much cared for the dolls.

Soon after this, Sumie (the deceased daughter's friend) viewed a documentary on television about the Hasegawa's and their dolls, and learned that her beloved doll was still in the possession of Mrs. Hasegawa. She traveled up to Tokyo and located the Hasegawas and insisted that they show her the dolls, and especially her doll, known as "Keiko". She recalls how astounded she was to find the dolls all piled up in a closet in the elder daughter's house. She insisted that her doll, "Keiko", be immediately returned to her, and Mrs. Hasegawa complied, with a mixture of regret and relief. (Recall this was over fifty years after the doll had been originally taken from Sumie by Mrs.

Hasegawa.) This incident prompted the members of the Hidankyô antinuclear organization to campaign for proper conservation of the dolls, which the adult daughter, Keiko, consented to. The dolls were eventually exhibited in the Nagasaki A Bomb Museum for several months and visited by many A-bomb survivors and anti-nuclear activists.

In making sense of this case, my point of departure is Freud's classic characterization of fetishism as emerging out of childhood fantasies of castration and fundamental loss, associated with ruptured intimate relations with the mother and the fear that she too has been "castrated". The agentic capacity to work creatively and autonomously upon the world, signified for Lacan by the phallus, seems to play out somewhat differently for Mr. and Mrs. Hasegawa.

In Mrs. Hasegawa's case a degree of re-empowerment after the death of her first four children came with the "re-acquisition" (from her daughter's friend, Sumie) of the first doll "Keiko", named for her dead daughter, a few weeks after the A-bombing. But in Mr. Hasegawa's case, his sense of mastery only gradually returned as the couple acquired not one or two dolls, but scores of dolls. He began, in effect, to figure himself as a symbolic patriarch, siring something on the order of seventy offspring in this fantastical domain. In the later years of his life, Mr. Hasegawa increasingly reoriented himself towards this social imaginary, choosing to sleep each night in the presence of these multitudinous offspring, in front of the family domestic altar. Here too, Mr. Hasegawa is engaged in another "illusion" fostered by a symbolic transmutation of husband adoption

in which he can eternally “keep” his doll-daughter “Keiko” in the patriline, while also reaping the benefits of her sibling/offspring. This is of course the promise of the fetish-object: that it will simultaneously conceal that which we cannot accept, while tangentially eluding to it at the same time. So his “doll daughter” is both not-his-“real”-daughter and his “real” daughter at the same time.

This indeterminate space also recalls the space of “illusion” that D.W. Winnicott argues is absolutely necessary for the creation of the transitional object: parents must never ask, “Where did this object come from?” but rather must conform to the infant’s needs for a symbolic substitution for the mother in the form of a material object that remains exclusively under the infant’s control. In Winnicott’s words, the transitional object is the “first possession” and is also the means by which the infant comes to understand the symbolic, and real, structures of the “I” and “not I” world. Its ownership is never questioned, by agreement, but the threat always remains that the “illusion” of complete ownership will be broken.

Yet the dolls also must be understood as “fetishes” in Freud’s sense. In psychoanalytic theory, the fetish essentially occupies a double position—it is a partial acknowledgment of the fact of castration, and a resistance against that realization. In Freud’s words, “[The child] has retained that belief [that the mother possesses a phallus], but he has also given it up.” (“Fetishism.” Standard Edition, V. XXI, pg. 154) Significantly, the true meaning of the fetish is not known to other people—its very secrecy produces pleasure, and that pleasure does not have to be defended against, it can be purely experienced.

This would seem to be the case with Mr. Hasegawa—he “hides” the dolls from public view, and increasingly sequesters himself in their presence, seeking solace for his children’s deaths and pleasure from their “substitute” presence. For Freud, “the horror of castration has set up a memorial to itself in the creation of this substitute.”

(“Fetishism.” Standard Edition, V. XXI, pg. 154) In this sense, we can understand Mr. Hasegawa’s extreme valuation of the dolls as a memorial in part to his lost “manhood”—he was not able to protect his “real” children, and ever since their deaths sought to “protect” them from all harm in their substitute doll-form, and thus through this to recuperate his own lost masculinity. This would seem consistent with Freud’s observation that both the disavowal and the affirmation of the original trauma inform the construction and maintenance of the fetish itself.

The net result for both members of the couple was a form of “doubling,” in which the dolls uncannily hover between different domains of existence, including life and death. Trauma in its initial unmediated form has nowhere to go, trapping the traumatized person in continuous static repetition. Through projective identification, Mrs. Hasegawa constituted the doll, like her, in a state of dependent need; she was thus able to shift herself from a state of shock back towards the role of caregiver. Later, Mr. Hasegawa takes on the role of primary caregiver to the dolls, withdrawing from his living family to an alternate spatial and temporal zone hovering on the edge of the “other world” or the world of the dead.

In this respect, this unusual memorial complex bears some striking parallels with the symbolic paradigm of bridegroom adoption, even though no ritual marriage is conducted. As mentioned above, the dream world of perfect endogamy, in which social reproduction is achieved without the out-marrying of daughters, is brought about through the continuous adoption of child-dolls (it's important to note that the Hasegawas never "bought" a doll, rather receiving them as gifts every year on the death anniversary of their first four children). Neither the "Keiko" doll nor her "sisters" ever have to leave the presence of the patriarch and his ancestors, as he increasingly surrounds himself with the dolls around the family domestic Buddhist altar.

It should be noted that Sumie's (the daughter's childhood friend) reaction to the television documentary about the Hasegawa's, sixty years after the doll was taken from her, is no less fascinating. She too in some respects seems trapped in the traumatic events of August 1945. But she hoped to move matters to a different plane; Sumie told me, "The relationship between dolls and human beings is really deep. It is not a simple thing. There are many things to complete. In this case too, returning to Nagasaki is really important." (Significantly, the phrasing in Japanese leaves ambiguous the agency of the doll, implying that the doll, possessing a kind of agency, may be moving itself back to Nagasaki of its own accord, to complete a long extended cycle.)

Sumie speaks of the power of dolls in terms that are strikingly reminiscent of the theory of projective identification. She told me, "If you ask why, if you ask what kind of power dolls possess, I will tell you. With the feelings of human beings, there can be really bad

things that the doll receives. But then gradually, together with the doll, these bad things are slowly, slowly healed.” Through “reality testing,” Melanie Klein (following Freud) notes that the bereaved in most instances gradually detach themselves from the primary object of loss. But this is not always the case; at times, detachment is an unruly and inconsistent process, a kind of compromise formation that does not easily lend itself to familial continuity and the regeneration of life at the level of the kinship unit. My impression is that Sumie, in reclaiming “her” doll from the Hasegawas and allowing it to be exhibited, was partially able to detach herself from ambivalent engagements with the long-dead figure of Keiko. (The detachment, however, was not complete; she insisted that after the exhibition was complete, the doll “Keiko” be returned to her, and not remain in the museum’s permanent collection.) It is even less clear that successful detachment happened in the case of Mrs. Hasegawa, who did not part with the dolls entirely under conditions of her own choosing. This detachment has certainly not been passed on to the Hasegawa’s children, who remain confused and upset by the entire business.

For the senior Hasegawa couple, and for their living adult children, the scores of dolls thus partake of many characteristics of the fetish as it is classically understood. For this deeply traumatized family, time stands still in the bodies of the dolls. For half a century, as the married couple acquired a new doll each year, they were not moved towards relinquishing the hold of the unquiet dead upon them. In a formal sense, the dolls manifestly seemed to function as memorial elements of transition, assembled as they were next to the family domestic Buddhist altar, normally associated with the gradual

release of the souls of the deceased and their move towards Buddhahood. Yet in significant underlying ways, the annual acquisition of each new doll caused the bereaved to re-experience the primal scenario of loss, in a painfully additive and melancholic fashion. Detachment, the normal telos of Buddhist memorialization, was ultimately rendered impossible.

CASE THREE: Sumida Emiko and her brother (Yasukuni Shrine, Tokyo)

In my third and final case, we turn to a rather different set of kinship dynamics, poignantly evoked by a doll assemblage exhibited at Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine (founded in the late 1860s by then Emperor Meiji, to memorialize Japan's war dead), the center of the nation's neo-nationalist cult of State Shinto.

Mrs. Sumida Emiko, the younger sister of Lieutenant Sumida Tetsuo who died on a kamikaze mission in April 1945, made a pair of dolls (one adult female in kimono accompanied by a young girl at her side and displayed in a single tableau) and offered them to Yasukuni Shrine in memory of her brother, many decades after his death.

These dolls, known as "cherry blossom" dolls, depict a woman (presumably a mother), her face slightly averted, and a small girl seeking comfort by grasping her shoulder.

(FIGURE 8) When I spoke to Emiko, she explained that the dolls took a year of intense effort to make. Significantly, she referred to them as "*kuyô*" for her dead brother, using the Buddhist term for memorialization (a term which would of course never be used by

the Shinto priests at Yasukuni, who insist that the dolls are merely a generalized offering to the apotheosized military dead as a whole).

Emiko herself does not appear to have any interest in these theological distinctions. Noting that her brother, a student at Tokyo's elite Rikkyo University, had been an accomplished amateur photographer and draftsman, Emiko explained that she in turn had a special obligation to create a work of beauty in his memory. Tetsuo and Emiko were their parents' only children, and Tetsuo's death left Emiko responsible for caring for her parents (and for the family's domestic Buddhist altar, which still remains in her home). When she finally married, at the relatively late age of 39, she married an "adopted husband", who took on her family's name, so that her natal line would endure.

When I first viewed her dolls, I assumed they straightforwardly represented Emiko's mother and Emiko herself, embracing after learning of Tetsuo's death. But in our conversation, Emiko adamantly resisted such a specific reading, saying only that she felt that making the dolls was an important act of *kuyô* (Buddhist memorialization) for her late brother. She did tell me that the seated doll of the adult woman was emphatically "not a bride doll," since as Tetsuo's sister she could not properly offer him a wife.

The ambiguities here are, I think, significant. Emiko and Tetsuo were extraordinarily close, and his death was devastating for her. She did not marry until age thirty-nine, seventeen years after his death. When she did marry, she married an adopted

husband, who took on the name and ancestors of the Sumida house and family line. The dolls thus carry multiple associations for her; they evoke Emiko and her mother, but also Emiko as an adult as well as her memories of herself as a young child. Although Emiko insists the adult female doll is not a “bride doll,” [as she said to me, “I’m his sister—it wouldn’t be appropriate for me to give him a bridedoll!”] she did offer the dolls to Yasukuni Shrine, where it joined scores of clearly marked “bride dolls.” The net effect is that the two dolls would appear to evoke a range of identities and relationships, confounding mother-daughter, brother-sister, and husband-wife relations. Recalling the earlier discussion of brother-sister unions, it would seem that Emiko seeks to remain forever within her natal patriline--a goal she accomplishes through husband-adoption, and through the gift of the dolls that eternally encode her symbolic connection to her brother within the larger rubric of bride doll marriage.

Discussion

Why in these diverse cases should responses to traumatic injury summon up the specter of incestuous union? Why, if normal sociality, as Levi Strauss tells us, is constituted through exogamic marriage, should the imagery of radical endogamy, of the confounding of conjugality and siblingship, be so appealing? The answer partly lies in the potent return to the primal moment of mythic origin, in which the divine brother-sister pair created the universe. In royal systems the world over, the power to recreate society often rests, paradoxically, on the fundamental violation of conventional sociality, and brother-sister conjugal union is one of the most striking possible ruptures of normal

social relations.

Beyond this, the ritual symbolism of intense endogamy is appealing precisely because it resists the normal forward movement of time itself. The deeply traumatized bereaved person seek refuge in the past, or at least in a fantasized scenario of idealized pastness, outside of normal temporal progression. Hence the appeal of turning inward, of endogamous involution back into the natal family--in distinct contrast to the outward exchange-oriented progression of normal exogamy.

Consider our first case, in 1908, when Yoko and Shinji were about to lose one another through their respective legal unions. Yoko effectively rolled back the clock by sending her beloved a perfect simulacrum of herself, returning the two of them to the moment of perfect union in the hospital when she had him entirely to herself, thus rendering him her eternal brother-husband.

Similarly, in choosing the dolls to commemorate their four children killed in the Nagasaki atomic attack, the Hasegawas “returned” to dolls, to elements evoking earlier comforting experiences of early childhood. As Freud long ago suggested, the chosen object or symptom always seems to have a temporal “lag” or slippage, as it were, retaining its associative and symbolic links to an earlier emotional period or periods. For the elderly Hasegawas the dolls “carry with them” happy associative links not only to their own childhoods, but to the period when their initial children were alive. Thus, as a “symptom” which points to earlier trauma, the *ichimatsu* dolls work on one level to

overtly commemorate the death of their first four children, while at the same time they also shield the ego from the full force of this loss. Thanks to the dolls, the Hasegawas do not have to go through the process of “losing” these symbolic daughters in the normal exogamic marriage process, for they can continually co-exist in the dreamtime of the pre-exchange and the pre-Oedipal moment. Hence, the elderly Mr. Hasegawa sleeps each night with each of the seventy dolls gathered around the ancestral butsudan, a perfected dream image of radical exogamy, in which no one ever leaves the natal core ancestral line.

The solution, to be sure, is not a perfect one. In freezing time, this scenario freezes out the living, post-war children of the Hasegawas, who are denied full knowledge of their parents’ loss and who are forever exiled from the dream-world of perfect internal union. Even in adulthood, these offspring remain deeply uneasy over the dolls, which pose a haunting question that cannot fully be articulated: Are these dolls the parents’ “real children”? Are the postwar biological offspring merely shadow referents, never capable of being the “true” children of their parents?

Dolls in these cases hover uneasily between fetishistic fixation and transitional phenomena. In her insightful discussion of the fetish and the transitional object, the psychoanalyst Phyllis Greenacre notes,

“The fetish...is the product of the need for reparation because of the persistence of an illusion of defect in the body, which has become fixed through its association with certain concomitant disturbances invading self-perception. The adoption of the fetish makes it possible for development to proceed though under a burden.” (pg. 352)

The trauma of catastrophic loss presents the individual with a perceived “defect” in the body, inasmuch as the “wholeness” of the social and emotional body has been severely threatened by the loss of a loved one. In short, the mourner’s psychical body has been fragmented, and may potentially be set whole again in the “play of mourning” with a “good enough” bodily substitute that evokes the playful creativity of childhood. Thus, dolls may function as potent and poignant instruments of repair, even if they do not set their users back upon an entirely conventional life path.

Such is the case for the mother-daughter doll pair produced by Emiko: this tragic vignette of the two grief torn figures constitutes a kind of alternate body, substituting for the vanished body of the dead brother. Only once she gave this gift to her dead brother did she feel able to enter into her own marriage with, it should be noted, an adopted husband. Her doll-gift was comparable, in this respect, to Yoko’s gift in 1908 of the doll image of herself to her distant beloved, which enabled Yoko herself to pursue her own marriage to an adopted husband.

Consider as well the efficacy of the doll image for Sumie, when she rediscovered “Keiko” sixty years after the atomic bombing. In reclaiming this doll, so imbued with the persona of her long lost friend, she could finally detach herself from the enduring horrors of nuclear catastrophe. In redeeming a part of her missing childhood self she felt more at peace and better able to engage with the external world, even if she had to

violate the deep wishes of her dead friend's mother, who was so deeply fixated upon her doll-daughter.

These figures in other words are not entirely inward-directed; they do not entirely imprison their human users in a static past of endless repetition. To be sure, in all these cases the symbolic power of the brother-sister bond continues to exert its influence: the "illusion" of endogamy, the ineffable appeal of "marrying in" remains a potent expression of the fetishistic desire to render the world entirely under one's own control.

And yet, as Levi Strauss emphasizes, human existence is also characterized by an impulse to move beyond the familiar, towards exogamy, echoing the critical transition from infantile narcissism towards relational selfhood. In our early love of our security blanket or of a treasured doll, we embrace the transitional object, whose protean qualities are suspended between the "I" and the "not I." In this embrace, and in the inevitable release from this embrace, we create for ourselves the possibility of social existence.

The Problem of the Uncanny: Reading through Freud

In order to probe more deeply into this historical and ethnographic material, I find it useful to step outside, momentarily, of the specifically Japanese context, and to "read" these cases from Freud's classic essay on "The Uncanny." Although grounded in European cultural and artistic materials, Freud's discussion is particularly illuminating for

the Japanese cases under consideration. I am especially intrigued by his treatment of aesthetics and the “doubleness” of human emotional life.

Freud begins the essay with a sleight of hand. He argues that the study of aesthetic systems is epiphenomenal for a psychoanalyst, who is more concerned with “other strata of mental life” (pg. 219). Yet, he circles back, acknowledging that the uncanny may “be a province of this kind”, encompassing a powerful simultaneity of opposing “qualities of feeling” that otherwise would remain impenetrable (pg. 219). In opposition to Jentsch’s 1906 article, “On the Psychology of the Uncanny,” Freud argues that the concepts of *heimlich* (familiar) and *unheimlich* (unfamiliar) are inexorably linked, but not in the way we anticipate. In Freud's formulation the "unfamiliar" is not (unexpectedly) the source of the uncanny. Rather, it is the "familiar", that which we expect to be fully known and thus safe, that is instead the source of profound disquiet, anger, and terror.

Freud identifies with *heimlich* things that belong to the house or family, and are intimate and comfortable; and yet, there is a second set of associations with *heimlich* that express the sense that there is something to be concealed, something to be hidden from public view, a shared domestic secret which is experienced suddenly as strange, as *unheimlich*. Thus, concludes Freud, “What is heimlich thus becomes unheimlich.” (pg. 224) Freud thus lays out a sequential trajectory in which “qualities of feeling” once rooted in the familiar gradually, and with a deep measure of ambivalence, develop into their opposite, *unheimlich*. “Thus heimlich is a word the meaning of which develops in

the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*.” (pg. 226)

Following Jentsch, Freud then offers us his most powerful image of the linked concepts of *heimlich/unheimlich* namely, the automaton Olympia from Hoffman’s “The Sand-Man” (contained in the *Nachstrucken*), as well as from Offenbach’s opera, “Tales of Hoffman.” While Freud argues that the powerful sense of the uncanny in “The Sandman” is not exclusively produced by the automaton Olympia, it/she certainly haunts the essay. Freud quotes Jentsch, who argued that the most powerful impression of the uncanny is generally produced by the sense of uncertainty—“ [the] doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate” (pg. 226; Jentsch pg. 11).

What better figure to evoke uncertainty than an automaton (a machine-like human figure, who, in movement and action, can become a convincing human double), or indeed any human figurine? In “The Sand-Man” we seem to have proof of the capacity of an automaton to fool or deceive a human interlocutor: the protagonist, Nathaniel (as a young man), falls in love with the beautiful Olympia, first spying on her from across the street, using a spy glass he bought from the optician Coppola (who is a stand-in for the Sand-Man himself). The question of her humanity does not even seem to enter his consciousness, even though she seems unusually silent. Nathaniel comes upon the Sand-Man (in the form of the itinerant optician Coppola) and the clock-work maker, Spalanzani (who made the mechanism for Olympia), arguing over the dismembered

body of Olympia (now missing her eyes as the two men work on their invention/automaton). Only at that point does he realize Olympia is not human. Leaving Olympia's eyes on the table, Coppola (the Sand-Man) carries off her eyeless body, while Spalanzani makes off with her "bloody" eyes (which were installed by the Sand-Man/Coppola). Each man (one of whom is the Sand-Man), in effect, steals away with the part of Olympia that he did not make—presumably drawing closer to his rival in the process, learning what he did.

Freud observes that Olympia is surely not the only uncanny element in the story, and asserts that the Sand-Man himself is the generative source of an uncanny disquiet. The Sandman takes on a number of personas during the course of the story, becoming in effect a simulacrum of himself, inhabiting other "roles" as he makes his way insidiously into Nathaniel's potent phantasies. He is first introduced by Nathaniel's nurse, who describes the Sandman as a wicked being who plucks out children's eyes to feed to his children in the moon. But it would seem that the Sandman can never be directly "seen" by his sleeping victims, hence his theft of eyes, and sight, increases the sense of his uncanny presence, as always being there, but never visibly present. Thus, it is not a complete surprise when we learn that Nathaniel "sees" the Sand-Man materialized in the form of the lawyer Coppelius who comes to visit his father (and who becomes associated in Nathaniel's mind with the death of his father in the study where they met), or as the itinerant optician Coppola from whom, later in life, he buys a spy glass that figures in his final suicidal demise. In sum, the Sand-Man is a chimera, a figure without form, who has to seek his form in others.

Freud's discussion of the Sandman helps to illuminate the Japanese case considered above. First, the Sand-Man functions as an alternate, evil father figure in Nathaniel's fantasies, split from the duplicate, but evil, father figure, and emphatically split from the "good father" who "saves" him from the Sand-Man's early attempts to steal his eyes. Freud reads the fear of losing one's eyes as fear of castration, and in this context Nathaniel's fears of his "bad" and castrating father *imago* confront him "as a person."

Second, the figure of Olympia presents several conundrums: she is clearly an object of desire for Nathaniel but she is incomplete, not fully human, and perhaps it's that very quality, paradoxically, that makes her so attractive. By virtue of not being fully human the figure of Olympia offers less resistance to Nathaniel's projections; she can more completely mirror his desires, and she is, in effect, more "like" him. But following Freud, this suggests that the father/s of Olympia (the Sand-Man and his "incarnations" in the lawyer Coppelius and the optician Coppola) are in fact also Nathaniel's father/s. The father *imago* for Nathaniel represents "the two opposites into which the father imago is split by his indifference; whereas the one threatens to blind him--that is, to castrate him--the other, the 'good' father intercedes for his sight. The part of the complex which is most strongly repressed, the death wish against the 'bad' father, finds expression in the death of the 'good' father, and Coppelius is made answerable for it." (pg. 232) What is clear from Freud's analysis is that without the split figures of the lawyer (Coppelius) and the optician (Coppola) and the "mechanician" (Spalanzani, who makes Olympia's

mechanical works), Nathaniel would not be able to give material form to his *imago* of his father as two distinct figures.

Moreover, as Freud continues his analysis he concludes that, “This automatic doll can be nothing else than a materialization of Nathaniel’s feminine attitude towards his father in his infancy.” He follows this with the insight that, “Olympia is, as it were, a dissociated complex of Nathaniel’s which confronts him as a person, and Nathaniel’s enslavement to this complex is expressed in his senseless obsessive love for Olympia. (pg. 232) All this suggests that human “duplicates”, as specific characters (Coppelius, Coppola, Spalanzani), and as figurines/automaton/dolls (Olympia) enable a kind of fruitful (and also dangerous) objectification of internal processes, and indeed, these figures enable a particular kind of fantastic exploration of otherwise unacceptable themes like incest and fratricide. In Freud’s words, Nathaniel’s dissociated complexes “confront him as a person”, through the Sand-Man’s many forms, and especially in the form of the automaton Olympia. Further, the “person” of Olympia may be understood as his “sister”, “born” (as was Nathaniel) through the efforts of the optician and the mechanic, who were, in effect, doubled aspects of his own father. Thus, his love object turns out to be an incestuous one, and his father is split into protective and aggressive characters who eventually, in their materialized form, lead Nathaniel to take his own life.

Finally, what we learn from the materializations of Nathaniel’s complexes as they “confront him as a person” is that each of these materializations (and indeed projections) expresses tremendous aggression where one would not ordinarily look for

it. Namely, Olympia as the beautiful young “woman” turned incestuous automaton sibling has her eyes torn out; Nathaniel seems to triumph over the threats made by the multiple forms of the Sand-Man/father figure, only in the end to take his own life. The point here is that the apparent passivity of the figurine (as multiple characters or figurine) actually engenders tremendous aggression and violence.

Paradoxically though, Freud (following Rank, 1914) argues that the “double was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, and ‘energetic denial of the power of death’, as Rank says; and probably the ‘immortal’ soul was the first ‘double’ of the body.” (pg. 235) However, the “immortal” human double soon disappears, according to Freud, when the “primary narcissism, which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man” inverts to its opposite, and the “double” becomes the “uncanny harbinger of death.” (pg. 235) Modifying Freud’s sense of sequence, in which human figurines move from signifying the “immortal” to being a “harbinger of death”, human figurines may indeed be mobilized to signify both qualities throughout the life of an individual, particularly in contexts of violent conflict and warfare. In fact, the capacity of human figurines to signify simultaneously both immortality and death contributes to their uncanny qualities; in essence, *heimlich* and *unheimlich* are mapped on to life/immortality and death. Indeed, Freud argues that “the idea of the ‘double’ does not necessarily disappear with the passing of primary narcissism, for it can receive fresh meaning from the later stages of the ego’s development.” (pg. 235) Freud takes this process of “objectification” one step further, considering the role of the “conscience” in relation to the ego, “The fact that an agency of this kind exists, which is able to treat the

rest of the ego like an object—the fact, that is, that man is capable of self-observation—renders it possible to invest the old idea of the ‘double’ with a new meaning and to ascribe a number of things to it—above all, those things which seem to self-criticism to belong to the old surmounted narcissism of earliest times.” (pg. 235) Freud’s insight about the capacity of the conscience to treat the rest of the ego like an object would seem to suggest the diminishment of the need for external objects in emotional development, but that is not the case. Namely, “nothing in this more superficial material could account for the urge towards defence which has caused the ego to project that material outward as something foreign to itself.” (pg. 236)

This suggests, though, that there are at least several levels of disavowal at work: 1) that by rendering a portion of the ego this “internal double” becomes a foreign “object” on which primary fears, and desires, can be projected without accountability, because this construction is not of the self. Moving from this insight, then, we can begin to account for the “doubleness” of the human figurines themselves, especially in the Japanese context in which dolls appear to be unambiguous expressions of ancestral veneration, and yet there is clearly a degree of uncanny dis-ease surrounding practices of bride doll memorialization, and talismanic gifts of mascot dolls to soldiers and pilots. Namely, these practices on the surface seem to encode Freud’s formulation of a primary narcissistic object that expresses a relationship with the immortal. Yet, these figurines also seem to hover in darker emotional territories as they are mobilized by the living to express aggression towards the dead. Mapped back onto Freud’s sequential patterning of the “double,” these figurines become a simultaneous and polyvalent expression of

conflicting desires (immortality vs. death; veneration vs. disrespect) projected onto a conveniently external (and yet uncannily animate) object.

In this light, we can better appreciate the capacity in Japanese contexts for dolls to enter into the subterranean terrain of kinship, helping mourners to navigate the ambiguous territory between the living and the dead. Faced with the unspeakable violence of mass warfare, those who have suffered traumatic loss may find solace in moving backwards and forward in time, by creatively appropriating and merging the normally opposed symbolism of marriage and siblingship. Precisely at moments of deeply personal crisis, when conventional mourning seems ineffective and bereavement seems stymied by the fascist logic of the frozen fetish, bereaved persons may draw upon the repertoire of transitional phenomena, and even of fetishism itself, to forge provisional, experimental processes of detachment and release.

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