



Fetishized Blackness: Hip Hop and Racial Desire in Contemporary Japan

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Source: *Social Text*, No. 41 (Winter, 1994), pp. 113-139

Published by: Duke University Press

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/466835>

Accessed: 17/11/2009 20:39

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Fetishized Blackness

HIP HOP AND RACIAL DESIRE IN CONTEMPORARY JAPAN

Flipping television channels late one insomniac night in Tokyo in the winter of 1990, I happened upon a Japanese dancing duo performing with darkened faces, singing, outfitted in the trendiest costumes: baseball caps with brims turned to the back, expensive sneakers, and baggy trousers. That same year, a friend who was visiting Japan entered a dance hall which to his surprise appeared to be peopled almost exclusively by black youths. Upon closer scrutiny he realized that the “black” young men were Asian: Japanese with darkened faces, some with dreadlocks and some with fades, performing hip hop dance steps and breaking to rap music.

Nina Cornyetz

The encounter of teenage and young adult Japanese men and women with rap music, hip hop style, and signs of blackness is a multifaceted reconfiguration of these variant signs, bound to global commodity exchange, Japanese racism, and Japanese national identity. The contemporary pop-culture Japanese rendering of hip hop and rap consists of a fascination with the aural and visual styles (the sounds, movements, body language, and outfits) and an African American symbolic presence signaled by fetishizing black skin and hairstyles. This disposition of hip hop style requires *as its foundation* a separation of hip hop and rap from the specifics of American racism, and a reconstruction bounded by Japanese racism.

The phenomenon of nonblack youth dressing themselves in “black style” is not unique to Japan. In the United States, white teenagers have also adopted the clothing, mannerisms, hairdos, vernacular, and other markers of hip hop style. In Japan, special salons advertise their expertise in “dread-hair” (*doredodo hea*), a process which may cost dearly in time and money; in America, white girls may plait their hair in small braids.¹ What is strikingly different in Japan is that black skin is incorporated as an essential signifier of hip hop style. Japanese youth enamored of hip hop regularly darken their complexions with makeup, especially when they go out dancing.

Recent works by John Russell have mapped out a domain of Japanese representations of blacks which he holds to be directly imported from the West. But present-day Japanese “black face” is usually not determined by the American historical counterpart.² In the United States, the history of white entertainers in blackface has marked as racist the darkening of the skin in imitation of African Americans. The debacle of Ted Danson at the

In America the massification of rap and hip hop style to access a white market inevitably entails a partial elision of hip hop's subversive origins in the service of "sanitized" white narratives. In the Japanese reproduction, the origins of hip hop and rap are erased differently, and they are not "whitened."

New York City Friars Club roast of comic Whoopi Goldberg in October 1993 affirmed that blackface remains a taboo in contemporary America.³ The American version, a caricature, made use of certain coded images and props such as white gloves and exaggerated lips: American blackface did not seek realistic representations of African Americans.⁴ Japanese black face, on the other hand, emulates hair and clothing styles (akin to the "white Negro" phenomenon in the United States) but *also* fetishizes skin color in an attempt to mask the Japanese self with a realistic black visage. Russell has argued convincingly that the new popularity of black style in Japan reproduces old stereotypes, yet I think that for some Japanese youth, reconfigurations of themselves in black images mark a processing of blackness qualitatively different from earlier representations and reveal a subject of racial and erotic desire.

That the blackening of the bodily self has become a desired index in Japan upsets conventional twentieth-century inferential symbolic homilies on black skin. While, as Tricia Rose has argued, hip hop originates within commodity-driven urban African American youth subculture (availing itself of already circulating recorded music, audio and video technology, and fashion), it also originates as a venue for black youths' subversive voice.⁵ In America the massification of rap and hip hop style to access a broader, white market inevitably entails a partial elision of hip hop's subversive origins in the service of "sanitized" white narratives and further exploits the collusion with commodity culture.⁶ In the Japanese reproduction, while many of the origins of hip hop and rap are erased, they are erased differently; most notably, they are not "whitened."

Although rap and hip hop have been successfully utilized by corporate advertisers throughout the world, each reproduction represents a hybrid of the dominant local culture and the imported African American subculture. Hip hop is globalized yet is ceaselessly remade regionally through its interaction with variant social, political, ideological, and other contexts. This decentering and unification of desire for goods and the capacity to acquire them are situated within the globalization of capital production in the contemporary period. Goods sold to a targeted region must *resonate* with an extant aesthetic and/or appeal on an imagistic level to a perceived need or desire. Marketing campaigns must redirect existing desire toward novelty commodities.

The dispensation of goods in late capitalism frequently employs an erotic subtext. Sex bolsters sales. Wolfgang Haug has argued that when commodities are divorced from utilitarian value, they compete on the level of illusion and appearance: an image is created and sold through the suggestion of erotic sensualism (or libidinal urge). Apparel, for example, is frequently sold by means of "a language of clothes conveying sexual feelings."⁷ Haug's erotic subtext has particular relevance for Japanese hip

hop style. In Japan, the sexual message encoded in hip hop style is directly identified with phallic empowerment for both men and women, a consequence of Japanese racial attitudes toward American blacks. Other copresent subtexts, such as rebellion against adult mainstream society, provide youth with, in Umberto Eco's words, a text for "semiotic guerrilla warfare" against the world of their parents.⁸

During the American occupation in the immediate postwar period, Japan was perspectively "feminized" and metaphorically raped as a result of its subordinate positioning. The writer Sakaguchi Ango (1906–55) envisioned a future Japan bereft of Japanese men, peopled by American men, Japanese women, and their mixed-blood children.⁹ In Shinoda Masahiro's film *MacArthur's Children*, a central female character is raped upstairs at the very moment that the villagers are entertaining the occupation troops downstairs. The young boys from whose viewpoint the film is narrated speak in awe of the massive size of American (black and white) penises.¹⁰ Against the assumedly superior American penis and phallus, Japanese men were materially and symbolically demasculinized. Prewar Japanese and American collusive productions of each other had already situated Japan within a binary system as a shadowed, unknowable, and mysterious other, persistently occupying the same polarity, and alterity, as the feminine.¹¹ In Japan, discourses mirroring European and American racialism have historically regarded dark skin as a sign of nature and physicality; in the postwar period, African American soldiers paradoxically *also* occupied the dominant position vis-à-vis a surrendered Japan.

Hip hop style, which is marked in Japan with black skin, is interwoven with the phallus as a signifier of a subtext of masculine, heterosexual *body* power. Young men seek to incorporate this power by remodeling themselves in hip hop style. For young women, hip hop style includes the acquisition of male African American lovers, bound to the same subtext of phallic empowerment, but transgressive of assumed (racially exclusive) Japanese male access to their sexual bodies and belittling of Japanese masculine identity. The doubled perception of threat and desire produced through the fetishization of blackness is a product of contemporary Japanese representations of self and mechanisms of othering, nuanced by reforming gender and power distribution.

For the older generation, "whiteness" was a signifier of American economic, ideological, and political putative superiority, against which murky Japanese "yellowness" was a sign of being below the standard. As the nation-state Japan is increasingly perceived to have surpassed American capitalist initiative, a somnambulant anti-Japanese sentiment has reawakened in America. In Japan, the younger generation has begun to challenge the monolithic myth of white supremacy. In the shadow of a reviving Japanese nationalism are other perceptions straining against the

delineations of racialism bounded by the antipodal notions of black and white. Young Japanese reproducing themselves in black style signifies a potential transnational identity, supplementary to a previously introjected, Western imperialist black-white binary paradigm, revelatory of a desire and a propensity for racial identificatory slippage.

Hip Hop as Commodity

While rap and hip hop originated as expressions of young black resistance and represented attempts to “negotiate the experiences of marginalization, brutally truncated opportunity, and oppressions within the cultural imperatives of African-American and Caribbean history, identity, and community,” they were also, as Rose has argued, always already indebted to commodity consumption.¹² Their formal attributes (rap as rhyming, not singing, to synthesized music and a beat box, over which previously recorded music is sampled and variously “deconstructed”; hip hop as a broader term inclusive of dance and dress style) were thus primed for crossover first into a mainstream (white) United States youth culture and subsequently into the global market.¹³ Rap and hip hop were soon marshalled to the promotion of clothing, soft drinks, and other items appealing to young people. Corporations endeavoring to sell goods to the youthful consumer have remolded hip hop subculture into a form more palatable to a larger, lucrative market by retaining many of its formalist resistance-signifying codes but divesting it of the particularized defiance and subjective agency of urban African American youth.¹⁴ Hip hop thus makes its appearance in Japan (and other global contexts) tethered to commodity circulation and prepared for recirculation in a form already partly sun-dered from African American resistance.

While employed as interpreter to one of Japan’s top “idols” (pop stars) during a television-commercial shoot in New York City in 1990, I was surprised when she and her entourage asked to go to Brooklyn, a place, in my experience, usually met with disinterest by young visiting Japanese. I began to expound upon the history of Brooklyn’s various communities, but she interrupted me to explain that they wanted to visit the Spike Lee shop to buy clothing and other memorabilia. They had no interest in his neighborhood, or in any other part of Brooklyn. The pop star did not want her attention diverted from the purchase of goods re-creating a film version of a subculture (an invented and reflected version) to the material object of Brooklyn itself. She was apparently on the cutting edge of hip Japanese style: now Japanese bus tours make the trip to Brooklyn just to purchase T-shirts and movie paraphernalia at the Spike Lee store. Spike Lee himself promotes Japanese blue jeans in a Japanese advertisement.¹⁵

In spite of the subtexts informing Japan's embrace of hip hop style, such as phallic empowerment, erotic desire, and racial liminality, Japan's enthusiasm for African American style does not emanate from an internal, alternate discourse. Rather, it is introduced through mostly American images (MTV, movies, commercials), which are then reproduced by Japanese youth. In Japan, a contemporary focus on "surface," coinciding with a mature capitalist disengagement of style from content, facilitates extreme forms of disjunctive montage which reverberate with the formal aspects of hip hop's reconfigurations. For Japanese rap performers and audience alike, sampling (incorporating portions of previously recorded music and lyrics and then rearticulating them through the rapper's manipulations of the original) resonates with a contemporary taste for pastiche. Phrases in rhymed rap intonations may be interspersed with lines sung to Japanese pop melodies.

The pasting together of disparate surfaces is not new to Japan. Masao Miyoshi has described Edo-period (1600–1868) *gesaku* (prose fiction) as "engrossed in the thick texture of verbal surface, and thus . . . inhospitable to characterization and employment. . . . Its playful sophistication contains at least potential traits of postmodernity."¹⁶ The *gesaku* and other genres that played with dispersal of meaning are indicative of previous narratives which share the current taste for pastiche, presently conjoined with the circulation of information, novelty, and commodities and with the appropriation of foreign subculture(s). According to the critic Karatani Kōjin, in the 1980s "Japan has become a highly developed information-consumption society, in which meaning is information and desire is the desire of the Other, because the 'subject' of the nineteenth-century West has never existed in Japan."¹⁷

The nonconstitution of the subject in Japan facilitates a type of "play" which, while it resembles the postmodern, structurally replicates an antecedent literary and artistic intertextuality reliant upon authorizing, factual sources extrinsic to the work of art. Television programs, newspaper and magazine articles, and the commodities sold side by side with, or within, them (both text and advertisement) have taken on the structural function of exterior, factual repositories to which the text(s) may refer for affirmation and authority. This authority reaffirms a myth of Japanese homogeneity through its implied unification of desire and, as Harry Harootunian has said, intimates that "everybody belongs to the 'middle stratum' despite all the differences which exist in fact."¹⁸ Hip hop style, both art and item, may be utilized as a source of self-identificatory authorization.

A very popular fictional narrative (*shōsetsu*) written in 1980, *Nantonaku, kurisutaru* (Somehow, crystal), which describes a two-week period in a young couple's life, comes complete with copious notes that explicate the hundreds of Western brand names and foreign words throughout.

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The narrative incited the wrath of several academic scholars. Miyoshi's scathing criticism follows:

Nantonaku, kurisutaru . . . presents disembodied adolescent voices, or mildly erotic daydreams, whose only existential testimonies are store names, miscellaneous foreign words, and trade names that are carefully annotated in the book's 442 footnotes. Hardly gathered into sentences, nouns—especially names like "Dior" and "Jaeger"—echo in the hollows of dead narrative possibilities. Presented in a succession of slick commercials, these names are meant to guide the reader in the glossy world of buying and consuming.¹⁹

The narrator guides the reader toward certain items in an assumption of absolute, communal commodity value. Hip hop as commodity targets youth and subverts the notion of Japanese homogeneity while it *also* fosters a youth subgroup communalism. Hip hop takes its place among countless Western imports, its entry into the marketplace smoothed by the antecedent movement erasing difference between high and low art and, by extension, between text and commercial. Globally, the conjoining of art (narrative, pictorial, and performative) and consumer products has become commonplace, but it has taken an extreme form in Japan. Marilyn Ivy notes that

CMs [television commercials] are tied together only by sheer seriality, and perhaps by their presentation of commodities (something which is, however, often subverted or elided in Japanese commercials). . . . In Japanese magazines as well, the distinction between text and commercial is often blurred; in fact, with their highly developed graphics, visuals, and advertising concepts, Japanese commercials often override program or text in interest.²⁰

The Japanese pop star's desire for "authentic" hip hop goods has been stimulated by filmic and other representations of African American culture, and her capacity to purchase the goods and her very presence in the States are facilitated by the strong yen. The manner in which hip hop style is manufactured in Japan is bound to the focus of capital on consumption.

During the 1980s the power of the rising yen made New York City a popular location to film print and television commercials, soft news programs, and sitcoms. Japanese video and photographic crews, capturing the "New York scene" for the audience back home, were fixtures on Manhattan street corners. For a national hip hop dance contest aired on Japanese television, a production team and "talent" (performers) were sent to New York to obtain footage to complement and "internationalize" the program. The contest was broadcast on a Sunday-night program, "Tensai

Takeshi no genki ga deru terebi.²¹ The opening act was a Japanese rap duo, L. L. Brothers. Contestants competed in groups affiliated with various high schools but called themselves by such names as Scrap and Trash, Slum G., and Imperial. The production team dispatched to New York traveled with L. L. Brothers and videotaped them performing in Manhattan. There was additional footage of street performances by African American New Yorkers. Studio commentators discussed the contest in segments intercut with location footage. The African American male dancers were asked to show off their footwear, and the Japanese titles identified the boots as *wangan sensō bōtsu* (Desert Storm boots) and gave the price. The segment shot in the States thus functioned as both entertainment and advertisement of “authentic” (native) apparel. Further highlighting the complicity between advertisement and hip hop style, L. L. Brothers were featured in a magazine print (photo) shoot of the making of a television commercial.²²

The overlap between journalistic, narrative, or other noncommercial text and advertisement is not limited to media that materially alternate between the two, such as magazines and television, but, as evidenced by *Somehow, Crystal*, has made the leap in Japan to popular fiction. *Somehow, Crystal* is art in the service of commodity aesthetics. In her “*Somehow: The Postmodern as Atmosphere*,” Norma Field contends that 80 percent of the notes designate Western things and people and that characters identify themselves through their consumption of these foreign brand-name goods: they are what they buy. Descriptions of the characters’ erotic encounters and fantasies which intersect the listing of commodities serve to highlight the commingled “motifs of body, race, and commodity” set within an assumedly communal repository of knowledge.²³

The commingling of commodity consumption and erotic fantasy in Japanese popular fiction (and subculture) results in advertisements that appeal directly to, in Ivy’s words, “desire within the symbolic economy.”²⁴ The scene is thus set for the conflation of hip hop performances, erotic and gendered subtexts, and an enticing display of hip hop goods. On the “Genki TV” special, an impromptu interview at Kennedy International Airport with a member of the winning dance group reveals his reason for going to New York: “To see, and *steal*, the fashion of black men of my age group.”

Densely enmeshed with commodities, hip hop style is encoded with a braid of subtexts of symbolic desires and with questions of national and individual identity. Since the late 1980s the hippest Japanese youth have sought to reproduce themselves through an alternate yet communal identity, articulated through hip hop commodities: clothing, music, magazines, tanning lotions, hair preparations, and so forth. Rap self-expression

consists of inscribing an individual name and associated difference to an extant, borrowed expression of another. Sampling commingles the rapper's own statements with an existing discourse and produces the voice of the individual both within and without his or her immediate subgroup.

One popular means of inscribing self-articulation within the shared repository of music, lyric, and beat is self-naming (similar to graffiti tagging; the name is usually a nickname, sometimes acquired, sometimes chosen). From the indeterminacy of the mix of self and other, the naming proclaims subjectivity. Likewise, in Japan, L. L. Brothers announce themselves, calling out in English, “L. L. Brothers, you can check it out!” For L. L. Brothers, even the name is conflated with their adopted African American style. “L. L.” references the famous African American rapper, L. L. Cool J. The “Brothers” part of their name has two meanings: they are siblings, and the word brothers (*burāzazu*) is the hip term for “African American.” Dance and rap groups in Japan frequently adopt a name that fosters stereotypical images of black America—Zoo, Slum G., Vibe Seduction—although there are instances of transidentity such as Yellow Monkey Crazy.²⁵ The Japanese rapper thus proclaims a hybrid self through his or her affixed foreign name representing African American urban culture. As evidenced by Yellow Monkey Crazy, the transidentified self appropriates American racialist stereotyping for an ambivalent self-identification. The Japanese self is integrated with its “coloredness,” and thereby with blackness, while it simultaneously introjects the Western (white) imperialist gaze by which Japanese and blacks become “monkeys.”²⁶ Naming, sampling, hip hop dress, turning hair into dreadlocks, and darkening the skin all function to produce an ambivalence in Japanese youths’ embrace of African American style: individual and national identity (self-as-Japanese) and transidentity (self as allied with color) are proclaimed and erased.

Japanese hip hop employs an image of blackness while it sells goods to Japanese youth, and provides a context for a *difference* in self-identification. Akin to the narrative texts and television shows which become arenas for advertising brand names, hip hop style (which is also dressing black) envelops the targeted consumer in an incited desire, simultaneously promising (illusory) satiation through identification with the created icon, or purchase of the commodity being sold.

Japanese youth have responded to the media images of African Americans by attempting to incorporate signs that re-create themselves in a black image; this image functions on some level to challenge mainstream adult sensibilities. Following Eric Lott’s general analysis of blackface, while representations of African Americans in Japan reduce the other to spectacle, they also may represent the attempted incorporation of an image of the other and/or an expression of an unconscious erotic desire

for the other.²⁷ Reconceptualized in consideration of Japanese female agentive solicitation of black male lovers, erotic desire is not repressed but flaunted. Hebdige has noted that in Britain, blacks can be seen as the ultimate symbol of the other within the dominant culture, and therefore aspects of black style can be sampled by the white subculture in defiance of dominant social mores, resulting in a semiotic dialogue.²⁸ To recast Hebdige's analysis within a formulation acknowledging a fundamental power imbalance as the cornerstone of the fetishization of blackness, hip hop style in Japan is not a dialogue between Japanese and African American youth but a plundering of an empowered body image. Most of the interaction between Japanese and African American youth is indirect (because there are still so few African Americans in Japan). Accordingly, the object of desire is generally encoded within and is limited to interaction with the variant signs.

At the end of the dance contest, the father of one of the contestants is called to the stage, where he proudly basks in his son's glory. In another scene, the young man who accepts the trophy for the winning team is so moved by the public acknowledgment that he weeps while thanking his audience. Rap and hip hop as anti-establishment, abrasive, defiant self-expression and insubordination by (primarily) African American youth are absent from this scenario. Instead, a transidentified Japanese youth reveals his vulnerable desire for affirmation not just from his peers but from his parents and the school officials, who are also present. The concert winners stand in the midst of acclaim, outfitted in the latest international style, purchased with the power of the yen and proudly worn as a symbol of modern Japanese consumption.

Phallic Empowerment: The Meaning of Blackness

In spite of the apparent ease with which hip hop style has been commodified, the retention of a (represented) African American presence signals that the sign of blackness is an important subtext. The information encoded in the sign should be read in the context of how African Americans (not Japanese remodeling themselves in a black image) have been represented in modern Japan, as productive of the "meaning" of Japanese youth in hip hop style.

Racial othering in Japan, as elsewhere, is promoted, as David Goldberg has asserted regarding the general structure of racialist essentialism, as a mode of exclusion based on a perceived natural (physical, bodily) difference, which conceptually unifies both self and other in homogeneous groupings.²⁹ Japanese racism has historically marked differences between Asians by positing a variety of discourses on physical (bodily)

distinctions, which include the notion of “pure blood lineage” and the association of purity and acculturation with light skin, discourses which also mark inhabitants of the nation-state Japan as other. John Dower writes in *War without Mercy* that “the Japanese themselves looked down on all the other ‘colored’ races. . . . they had esteemed ‘whiteness’ since ancient times.”³⁰ Modern Japanese racial ideology is thus classical in what Etienne Balibar identifies as the anthropological universal of marking difference along the axis of humanity (culture) and animality (nature).³¹

As John Russell has shown, the dominant, pre-World War II images of Africans and African Americans that circulated in Japan were fettered by the binarism of black equals savage and white equals civilization. Such delineations buttressed the Japanese racial ideology that had represented darker Asians as inferior. Russell has argued convincingly that images of American blacks in Japan have frequently reproduced American racialist stereotypes, evidenced by the popularity of *The Story of Little Black Sambo*, and the modern yet still reductive portrayals of African Americans as “sexual objects, studs, fashion accessories and quintessential performers,” imagistic changes that Russell dismisses as “more old wine in new bottles.”³²

While I concur with Russell’s conclusion that the vast majority of “expanded roles” remain within set domains (musician, athlete, stud), I think that for Japanese youth, African Americans as signs are encoded with additional, new significations: the images of African Americans are not the same old thing but something *different* (even if they are still also informed by antecedent discourses). For many young Japanese, admiration replaces former fear and distaste, as evidenced by the quote “I am mesmerized [*akogareta*] by black people.”³³ *Akogareta*, “to yearn for, to be in awe of,” has been affixed to things foreign in the past to mean “desired,” but until very recently African Americans were definitely not considered part of desired America.

When working as a production coordinator for Japanese television and commercials ten years ago, I would be asked to find American extras to appear in various minor roles. *American* unequivocally meant “white.” Black extras were reserved to illustrate criminal activities. Asian faces would not do, because Asian faces don’t signify “America” within Japanese codes. Ten years ago, producers, “talent,” and crew would whisper to me their fears of black people, known to them only through American media and filmic portrayals of African Americans holding guns to the heads of putatively normative, law-abiding whites. They would ask, “Why are black people so violent?” Ten years ago, the *akogareta* United States constructed by Japanese television advertisements was exclusively white. Today, a different yet still “desired America” is *also* signified by hip hop-styled African Americans. The reimaging of America to include eth-

nicity begins within America itself but is reconfigured to suit Japan's positioning, supplemental to a black-white binarism, revealing moments of slippage and indeterminacy, mirroring the concurrent, subtle repositionings of dominance between the two nations.

Twentieth-century Japanese national racial identity was constructed in the shadow of Western black-white binarism, into which Japan could not neatly configure itself. Japanese (and other Asians), who inhabited an in-between space of being neither white nor black, experienced a certain degree of identificatory irresolution.³⁴ Japanese racial identity frequently took on a relationalism: "colored" in comparison to whites, "pale" against blacks. For the writer Natsume Sōseki, catching a reflection of his own countenance while visiting London in 1900 was a lingering moment of racial shame and self-hatred. Sōseki described in a letter how he saw a midget with a strangely colored face approaching him while he was taking a walk near his boardinghouse, only to awaken to the shocked realization that the midget was his own reflection in a mirror. In her 1994 essay "Fearful Terrain: The Underground and the Continent in the Works of Natsume Sōseki," Katsuyo Motoyoshi writes:

Frantz Fanon would have had no trouble understanding. . . . before the ironic, and perhaps uncomfortable laugh, before the shocking flash of recognition, who was that "midget" that Sōseki had seen? . . . the identity of the midget caught in Sōseki's glimpse cannot be understood if the reflective surface of the mirror is falsely equated with transparency. Here, the mirror stands for a specific intervention, that of the Western imperialist gaze which has been interiorized by Sōseki.³⁵

In 1933, the writer Tanizaki Jun'ichirō noted that, although the Japanese had long esteemed whiteness, "this whiteness of ours differs from that of the white races": Japanese whiteness, he asserted, is clouded by irrepressible shadows, and therefore

when one of us goes among a group of Westerners it is like a grimy stain on a sheet of white paper. . . . A sensitive white person could not but be upset by the shadow that even one or two colored persons cast over a social gathering. . . . [During the American Civil War] when persecution of Negroes was at its most intense, the hatred and scorn were directed not only at full-blooded Negroes. . . . [Even] those with the slightest taint of Negro blood . . . had to be ferreted out and made to suffer. . . . how profound is the relationship between shadows and the yellow race.³⁶

Frequently Japanese situated themselves medially along the familiar evaluative axis of white supremacy–black inferiority, yet Sōseki's misrecognition of himself and Tanizaki's empathy for Western racialism illus-

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trate how the Western imperialist gaze has also been introjected when beholding the self and has collapsed within extant discourses on colored others. As Japanese racialism renders blackness alongside the natural and the bestial (as do many racial systems), it accommodates a production of blackness commingled with “body-ness” and an uncontrolled, excessive sexual drive, differentiating the slightly tainted whiteness of the yellow race from the deeply polluted black race. Michael Dyson’s commentary on black masculinity and sexuality in America is also true of Japanese racialism:

Few images have caused more anxiety in the American sexual psyche than the black male embodiment of phallic prowess. A sordid range of stereotypes, jealousies and fears have been developed around black men wielding their sexuality in ways that are perceived as untoward, unruly, or uncontrolled.³⁷

The widely disseminated stereotype of black men possessing mythic phallic power has its foundation in an association of black skin with a masculinized primal.³⁸ The protagonist of the contemporary author Shimada Masahiko’s “Momotaro in a Capsule” collusively visualizes the black phallus as a symbol of supreme masculine prowess:

From the time he was twelve, Kurushima idolized the brave beautiful phalluses of primitive sculpture. Phalluses like oversized nightsticks: heavy, gleaming, black, hard, glaring provocatively heavenward, brimming with a fearless laughter, as if they had a special connection with some omnipotent god. “Wish I had a cock like that.” . . . Whenever Kurushima eyed his [own], he grew depressed. “My genitals were made for masturbation.”³⁹

To possess the black phallus is to wield the weapon that threatens white masculinity; a black phallus affixed to the Japanese body would invert the “feminization” imposed by the occupation troops. The psychoanalytic term *fetish* has been substantially broadened in academic discourses, increasingly detached from a corporeal materiality, and utilized, for example, to describe the psychic mechanisms that dominate perspectivist imaginings of (and appended anxieties over) sexual difference and colonial desire.⁴⁰ My use of *fetish* is meant to be inclusive of the establishment of a replacement object to stand in for the missing penis in protection of the index of male subjective identity, because not just the phallus as symbol but the penis itself is woven directly into the signification of blackness in the contemporary Japanese context. My usage is also inclusive of the broadened application of *fetish*: appropriate to the polysemic symbol of black skin in Japan today, inextricable from the variant historical texts of representations of African Americans in the modern period. One such text is the African American presence in occupied Okinawa.

American forces that occupied Japan in the immediate postwar period were soon centralized in Okinawa, creating a “colonized” site where black and white Americans became “others within.”⁴¹ It was a limited, specialized site, however, which did not infiltrate mainstream society. Interracial marriages and liaisons between soldiers and native women of Okinawa were common, but Okinawans themselves were (and are) excluded from the category of the (conceptualized) pure Japanese.⁴² The Americans’ sources of income were independent of the Japanese economy and offered no threat of monetary competition to dominant classes. The Japanese Home Ministry organized local associations of prostitutes (poor women) in the exclusive service of the occupation troops in an attempt to maintain the “racial purity” of the dominant classes.⁴³ In the aftermath of the war, Japan as nation was “feminized,” deprived of self-governance, forced to surrender and capitulate to the Western other, upsetting the terms of power and masculinity.

Today, anxiety expressed over the black penis in Japanese magazines, on television shows, and in narrative texts is still often accompanied by an assessment of Japanese penises as inferior. In 1992, a young black man identified as Luke was an advice columnist for a popular magazine, *Video on Stage*. One Japanese youth wrote, “Luke, please listen to my problem. I am mesmerized by brothers like you, I go to tanning salons and I’m determined to do my very best at dance and fashion. But [my penis is] small.”⁴⁴ His inadequate penis was, he complained, the reason why he had just been dumped. While Luke asserted that technique was more important than size, he concluded by assuring readers that his own penis was enormous. The prewar image of a bestial black man was reconstituted as a sex symbol, and the once threatening black phallus (and suppressed erotic curiosity) was reimaged as overtly desirable, and commodified.

When Japanese male inferiority is thus centralized in the penis, and black men are equated with phallic power, the outfits imaginatively bound to African American black youth promise to transform the wearer into a stud. The establishment of a fetishized object averts (or displaces) the threat (of emasculation, or feminization, or disempowerment). In Japan, black skin is both metonymy and metaphor, mimicry and menace, not as an appendix to the lacking other but as a reconfiguration of the lacking self in the empowered, masculinized image of the other.

Contemporaneous with the popularity of hip hop style among (mostly young) Japanese men has been a fad among young Japanese women to seek African American lovers. For these women the penis is the transcendental signifier of a now desired masculine prowess. While most of the African Americans in Japan for extended stays are affiliated with the military, jazz musicians who came to tour Japan in the postwar period have been followed in the contemporary period by other entertainers, including

hip hop and rap artists.⁴⁵ A second letter to columnist Luke is from a Japanese teenage girl who confesses her desire to have sex with black men and asks advice on how to solicit them. It is not that the young woman is enamored of a particular black man, but rather that she wants to try sex with any black man. Blackness for this young woman is desired for its symbolic meaning. In *Banana Chips Love*, a popular television miniseries videotaped on location in New York City in 1991, a Japanese woman who has apparently mastered the art of living abroad in Manhattan peripherally establishes the program's internationalism by regularly appearing flanked by African American men.⁴⁶ She, the program intimates, is the epitome of sophistication and independence from Japanese tradition, and the black men on her arm(s) represent her subjective, erotic agency.

Recent newspaper and magazine articles report the new reluctance of young Japanese women to marry and the dilemma of their male counterparts, who are eager to settle down. In general, young Japanese women enjoy their greatest economic and experiential freedom before they marry.⁴⁷ Most live with their parents and work at office jobs, so that they have plenty of money for travel and shopping. Because their education is less directed toward career goals, women are freer to study liberal (and/or traditional) arts such as literature, music, and languages. Once married, the majority quit their jobs, become the head of their household, and dedicate themselves to child rearing, housework, and domestic needs. Babysitters and day-care centers are exceptions. When help is needed, women usually turn to their mothers, in-laws, or other (female) family members. Because Japanese men are required to spend long overtime hours at work and often commute well over an hour each way, it is logically impossible for most of them to participate as fathers more than nominally.

Sexual and other relationships with non-Japanese offer these young women, and those Japanese men who have foreign partners, release from certain expectations: both partners are somewhat relieved of the burdens of cultural norms (although other racial and national expectations exist).⁴⁸ The young women usually do not expect relationships with non-Japanese men to become permanent or serious. Foreigners are curiosities, and much as Asian women have been eroticized in the male American imagination, so too have black men become symbolic of desirable erotic exoticism for Japanese women.

During my visits to Japan, from 1974 to the present, I have repeatedly been asked, in frank discussions with young Japanese women, about the mythic penis size, sexual appetite, and stamina of African American men. The object of these women's curious desire, the black penis, is symbolically present in black skin, with which Japanese male youths have conflated their selfhood. Conjoining the desire for the phallic power of black-

ness is the threat that Japanese phallic inferiority will displace the Japanese male from his position of power over Japanese women. Female rage lurks beneath the phenomenon: by choosing an African American lover, encoded with a text of phallic empowerment, and by rejecting the economic and social stability of a Japanese husband, the Japanese woman has availed herself of a passive-aggressive act of resistance.

A comic from a men's pornographic magazine illustrates the male anxiety awakened by Japanese women's choice of other lovers. Two young men at a bar are lamenting their miserable sex lives. One sobs that his girlfriend has been stolen by a "black alien"; the other commiserates that his girlfriend is having an affair with a married "entity X." Sighing over their virginity and the growing scarcity of available Japanese women, the two young men exchange glances and embrace, one saying, "Gee, the more I look at you the cuter you get," the other replying, "My, you too." The final caption reads, "The anxiety over Japan's future continues."⁴⁹

The choice of African American lovers by Japanese women emasculates Japanese men. In the cartoon, blackness functions as an icon of desired and omnipotent heterosexuality, against which Japanese men have become homosexualized—not by choice but simply by displacement from heterosexual practices. By taking on an African American sexual partner, the Japanese woman, who is socially, economically, politically, and otherwise subordinate to her male counterpart, liberates herself and threatens Japanese male heterosexual subjective agency, although she sidesteps the issue of Japanese male dominance. Removing Japanese men as lovers and husbands from their immediate, personal circumstances places women outside the Japanese norm and does not, in the short term at least, affect directly the systems of power distribution between the sexes in mainstream society.

The woman most famous in Japan for proclaiming her interest in African American men as erotic objects is the contemporary best-selling novelist Yamada Eimi. Yamada herself has an African American husband, and most of her texts are about Japanese women and their African American lovers. The power positioning between her characters inverts the prewar (im)balance of power between Japanese prostitute and black soldier; now black men service Japanese women. Yamada's first work, *Bedotaimu aizu* (Bedtime eyes [1987]), which won the Bungei prize, depicts the relationship between a black American soldier, "Spoon," and his Japanese lover, Kim. Kim describes a common economic arrangement between black American soldiers and their Japanese lovers: "The women . . . purchase and support the man as a *pet to be played with* [*kau*] however they pleased."⁵⁰ Many of Yamada's female protagonists flaunt their sexual and economic dominance over their black lovers, overturning the imme-

diate postwar paradigm by which Japanese prostitutes serviced black soldiers. The bodily myth of black American masculinity that permeates Japanese representations is the iconic ideation that paves the way for such power inversions. The basis for Kim's attraction is Spoon's "bestiality," which affirms her "purity." As translated by Russell:

From his arm pits came a strange smell. A corrupt odor, but definitely not unpleasant. As if by being assaulted by a dirty thing, I am made aware I am a pure thing. That kind of smell. His smell gives me a sense of superiority. It makes me yearn like a bitch in heat driven by the smell of musk.⁵¹

In Yamada's *Hāremu wārudo* (Harem world [1990]), protagonist Sayuri introduces her black lover, Stan, to her Japanese lover, Shinichi, who agonizes:

A black man—the so-called very incarnation of sexuality. He had heard that once a woman tasted that, she would never return to Japanese men. [Sayuri] had said that the size of his [Shinichi's] penis was not a problem, but if she knew how good that one [the black man's penis] was, then she surely would switch [to a black lover].⁵²

The supreme mark of difference that inverts the conventional superior-inferior binarism (which would situate Japanese men in the empowered position) is the "perfect black phallus." The black phallus remains a transcendental signifier of power, which denigrates by its perfection the phalluses of white and Japanese men. Simultaneously, Yamada's heroines are empowered by manipulating this transcendental (black) phallus. Boasting of a tryst with another black man, Sayuri proclaims, "His dick is the best. . . . Do you think white people have dicks?"⁵³ Yamada's female protagonists devalue the Japanese penis with equal vigor while paying homage to the black penis. In *Bedtime Eyes*, Kim describes Spoon's penis:

His dick bore no resemblance to those reddish, nasty cocks that white men have; and it was also different from Japanese men's childlike, pathetic ones which were completely incapable of self-assertion unless they were stuck inside some helpless Japanese pussy.⁵⁴

Hizamazuite ashi o oname (Kneel down and lick my feet [1988]) is the story of a dominatrix, Shinobu, who services (tortures) Japanese men, whom she refers to as jerks and slaves. Erotically detached from her work, Shinobu contemptuously claims that clients' penises "look like a bunch of wriggly vegetables out of some cartoon."⁵⁵ She delights in the (temporary) power reversal: "Show me another job where you can abuse men and have them thank you."⁵⁶ There is a startlingly vulgar and graphic descrip-

tion of needles being inserted into the penis of a pathetic (Japanese) client. Yamada's textual engagement of black male characters is thus indebted to their symbolic functions (as is the teenage girl's erotic interest), as threatening to Japanese phallocentrism and as indicative of female erotic agency. Her works also take their place within and reinforce the commodity aesthetic of African American men.

A student of mine reported that during a recent visit to Japan he noticed, and queried his Japanese companion about, the increasing numbers of young Japanese women seen arm in arm with black men. His companion responded that it was the latest fad: Japanese women sought black men because they looked good on one's arm, akin to the latest pocketbook or other fashion accessory. As accessory, African American lovers are reduced to reflections of Japanese symbolic desire. Alone in her bathroom, the female narrator of Yamada's "X-Rated Blanket" (1988) looks at herself in the mirror and sees the reflection of her own desire when she fantasizes about her lover George: "Twisted, I am wet; water floods high enough to wet my eyes. That's how I clearly recognize my own desire when I look in the mirror"—much as commodities reflect back the inner desire of the consumer, according to Haug.⁵⁷

Just as advertisements arouse a libidinal desire that the acquisition of goods only inflames, sex with George, confesses Yamada's narrator, is always accompanied by more desire: "As the sensation of satiation fills me—the satisfaction of having at last become one—I savor an intense pleasure tinged already with the mingling of a new, ongoing hunger."⁵⁸ The consumption of her lover yields only temporary satisfaction because, like goods sold by image and not by use value, the symbolic desire targets an imagination, not a reality. The writer Shimada Masahiko cites Yamada's narratives as examples of easily accessible, circulated, and consumed prose: narrative in the service of the market economy.⁵⁹

Abetting the wide range of racialist stereotypes, the borrowing of elements of style sundered from context is facilitated by the status of blacks as foreigners in Japan, rather than others within. Attitudes toward American blacks are not the direct outgrowth of tensions within mainstream society (although earlier discourses on racial purity are). Japanese refabrications of elements of black youth culture are thus primarily limited to ones that operate on the level of signs originated elsewhere and split from their referents. Accordingly, there is an increased potential for reductive mythic images of African Americans. For both the young women seeking African American lovers and the young (primarily) men who dress themselves in hip hop style, blackness is frequently affixed to an antecedent erotic subtext that fetishizes black skin as symbolic of phallic empowerment.

National or Transnational: The Meaning of Japaneseness

Racial distinctions were efficacious for distinguishing Asians from blacks and from whites, yet they would not suffice for the clear-cut differentiation *between* Asians required by the building of the nation-state. In the modern period, Japan has identified itself as Asian in oppositional relationship to non-Asian nations, and as “Japan” to differentiate itself from other Asian nations. The perception of unity is established on the creation of a social discourse postulating multiple communal positions of subjectivity that are dependent upon the erasure of difference in the categories of race, ethnicity, language, culture, geography, and sexuality.

Japan relegated “culture” to a repository of Japaneseness, an ideology informed by the necessary internalization of technology, then the science of the other. “Culture” was construed as the essence of Japaneseness, common to all Japanese and unknowable to non-Japanese; a category of Japanese superiority to offset the self-perception of inferiority in science and technology. Tetsuo Najita has described the prewar Japanese discourse on “culture” as follows:

In general, “culture” . . . contained ideal “forms” that withstood the passage of time, including the corrosive forces of modernity and development. Culture, in this sense, was “anti-modern”; it was articulated self-consciously in this manner so as to distinguish internal truthfulness from the otherness [of the West] within.⁶⁰

In the mobilization of the nation for World War II, in Najita’s words, “a national cultural certitude” was employed to legitimize the theory of the Japanese people (*Nihonjinron*), which further subsumed the individual within a community of The Nation.

In the 1980s, numerous academics and journalists, in Japan and the States, commented on the resurgence of “Japanism,” the assertion of the existence of a particular, historically transcendental Japanese racial group commonality or essence. Karatani has analyzed this resurgence as an out-growth of the extreme “play” (dispersal of meaning) characterizing contemporary Japan, suggesting two alternative future scenarios: total absence of “meaning” or the reinvestment of word with “content.” One “content” vying for dominance since the late 1980s has been ultranationalism.⁶¹ This ultranationalism is laden, as it was in the prewar period, with Japanism.

Japanism (*Nihonjinron*) is evident in a statement by a studio commentator for the “Genki TV” dance contest: “Just like transistors, [hip hop] was originated elsewhere, but we the Japanese can imitate it and do it even better.” For this commentator, *Nihonjinron* has once again begun to fill previously emptied signs with an absolute interiority.

The reinscription of Japanism into social, ideological, and other discourses was accompanied by a consumption-based “ethnic boom” in the 1980s, during which ethnic commodities (outfits, foodstuffs, handicrafts, folk arts, and so on) associated with varied regions and peoples, including Southeast Asians, Koreans, and urban African Americans, flooded Japanese markets. The ethnic boom can be read variously: as the fine-tuning of self-identificatory categories through a “discovery” of and “familiarity” with others and/or as a multiculturalism resistant to valorizations of Japanese “uniqueness.”

Undoubtedly, for many Japanese, the sense of their own Japanese identity (validating economic and political power over others within and without) is still so solid that the appearance or look or atmosphere of the other can be donned like a hat or coat and just as easily shed, leaving no mark or impact on the idea of self-as-Japanese. Japanese desire for blackness exposes an ambivalence while it reproduces nature-culture, animal-human binarisms. The experience of “playing black” does not necessarily alter this racialism. A Japanese *Video on Stage* columnist rambles through a discourse unified only by media images of blacks around the world: a brief reference to starvation in Somalia is followed by an explication of the English word *wicked*, after which Spike Lee’s *Malcolm X* is (positively) reviewed.⁶²

Such processing of the African American other lends itself to essentialist analysis. Karen Kelsky’s critique of young Japanese women’s affairs with Western men, “Intimate Ideologies: Transnational Theory and Japan’s Yellow Cabs,” blurs the distinctions between the Japanese processing of whiteness and blackness and thus is not attentive to the role of power informing the logic of a black-white antipodal paradigm and the resultant production of Japanese hybridity. Concluding that affairs between Japanese women and (all) Western men function purely as reaffirmations of the Japanese self, Kelsky asserts that

in nearly all cases the women viewed the gaijin [foreign] male as a brief fling, to be enjoyed before settling down to the serious work of marriage with a Japanese man. . . . she approaches him with clearly defined parameters marked by her sense of the gaijin as Other; he is irreconcilably alien from and antithetical to her own essence as “Japanese.”⁶³

As evidenced by the admission implicit in Kelsky’s “nearly all cases,” some Japanese women do remain with their lovers. It should be reiterated that Yamada Eimi, to whose work Kelsky refers repeatedly, has married an African American. While much of Yamada’s work affirms racial difference, some of her heroines labor to erase distinction: “I realize that this body draped over mine is a completely different type of body. I move my

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hips, raise my voice, trying to transform his type into the same type as mine.”⁶⁴ In *Harem World*, the narrative subject position is occupied by a female protagonist who is herself part African American.

Kelsky’s essay focuses on Japanese female liaisons with Western men, but when these encounters are viewed within the wider context of the *ambivalent* othering by women such as Yamada, of hip hop style embraced by mostly male youth, and of the meaning of blackness as a signifier, the closure of her conclusion is compromised. Although the “Genki TV” commentator (who represents a “disengaged” audience, not a fan of hip hop or a hip hop stylist or rap performer) employs hip hop style as a means of othering to affirm his belief in Japanese uniqueness, is this also true for the youth in black face dancing to hip hop music? In its insistence on a (constructed) difference, signaled by the intentional sign of ethnic otherness, black skin, many youth situate themselves oppositionally against the myth of Japanese racial homogeneity. At the same time, difference is affirmed through the surety that outfits and skin darkening do not erase their own Japanese-ness. As a young magazine columnist put it, “Mesmerized by black people . . . I cannot turn black. Of course not.”⁶⁵

The selling of black style has the potential to unsettle discourses on Japanese racial purity. The “desanitization” of desired (*akogareta*) America to incorporate blackness and the positioning of blackness as a signifier connoting desire destabilize the familiar constructs of racially based evaluative systems. Remodeling the Japanese self in an African American image reproduces an indeterminacy and interlocation in Japanese racial self-identification. Reconfiguring blackness as desirable also provides greater possibilities for African American (bodily) presence in Japan, which generates interactive dialogue rather than unilateral plundering of image.

The very new popularity of black lovers among young Japanese women (not Okinawans but Tokyoites) constitutes a further site of resistance to Japanese myths of homogeneity: interracial coupling challenges Japanese male ownership of Japanese women and threatens to defile “pure” blood lineage (the essence of Japanese superiority). Although, as Kelsky claims, most of these young women neither marry their African American lovers nor birth babies of mixed heritage, some do (as has Yamada), and others will. If, and when, more of the liaisons sought by Japanese women with African American men progress beyond accessory to husband, their children will produce, of necessity, a site of resistance that will further challenge Japanese homogeneity by broadening the categories of heterogeneous voices within.

Notes

I would like to thank the following individuals, whose criticisms and support at various stages of this essay have proved invaluable: Paul Anderer, Marilyn Ivy, Tricia Rose, Louisa Schein, and Janet Walker.

1. Japanese salons advertise expertise in African American hairstyles such as dreadlocks, high-tops, and fades. An advertisement in a popular magazine, *Video on Stage*, 1 November 1992, 87, claims, "We do 'club hair' including 'dread-hair' [doreddo hea]." See Andrew Jones, "Black like Me," *Spin* 9, no. 1 (1 October 1993), 74–78, for a good description of the hip hop trend in Japan. See "Reviled for Their Love of Hip-Hop Style," *People Weekly*, 31 January 1994, 60–61, for reportage on white youth dressing themselves in "black" hip hop style. All translations from Japanese source materials are mine unless indicated otherwise.

2. John Russell, "Narratives of Denial: Racial Chauvinism and the Black Other in Japan," *Japan Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (October 1991), 416–28; "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture," *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (February 1991), 3–25. These two articles are pioneering discussions of modern Japanese discourses on blackness. To distinguish Japanese from American practice, I reconfigure the word *blackface* as two words, *black face*, when referring to the Japanese.

3. Typical samples of the media response to Danson's "performance" include "Whoopi, Ted, We Are Not Amused," *Los Angeles Times*, 13 October 1993; "Racial Jokes Spur Apology from Friars," *New York Times*, 10 October 1993; "What Are You Laughing At?" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 17 October 1993.

4. I am indebted to Eric Lott, "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrels," *Representations* 39 (summer 1992), 23–49; and John G. Blair, "Blackface Minstrels: Cross-Cultural Perspective," *American Studies International* 28, no. 2 (October 1990), 52–65, for my understanding of the fetishization by American and English blackface minstrels. See Russell, "Narratives of Denial" and "Race and Reflexivity," for discussions of representations culled from American ones. Although such images still exist, most of the Japanese youth darkening their complexions in today's hip hop style do not imitate these exaggerated models.

5. Telephone conversation with Tricia Rose, 27 July 1994. See Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, N.H.: Wesleyan University Press, 1994); "Orality and Technology: Rap Music and Afro-American Cultural Resistance," *Popular Music and Society* 13, no. 4 (winter 1989), 35. There is undoubtedly another side to the topic of Japanese reproductions of African American style, namely, African American agency. What role do black entertainers and athletes who make commercials for Japanese television and magazines, or who tour Japan, or who record music there, have in the present Japanese reordering of hip hop? How have African Americans in Japan processed the "black fad" there? What is the relationship between contemporary African American productions of self and Japanese youth? Because this essay focuses on Japanese processing of blackness such questions are beyond its immediate scope, and my questions are posed hopefully pending ethnographic studies that might address the issue from the "other side."

6. Elizabeth Blair argues that rap has entered a stage characterized by the "sanitization" of hip hop subculture as it makes its appearance in mass culture.

The process of sanitization includes a negation of hip hop's association with the (specific) conditions of being black in America, partly by placing whites with blacks as producers and consumers of rap. See Elizabeth Blair, "Commercialization of the Rap Music Youth Subculture," *Journal of Popular Culture* 27, no. 3 (winter 1993), 21–33, esp. 31–32. My reading also follows Hebdige's analysis of subculture in Britain. Hip hop, which originated as a challenge to the dominant (white) culture by a disenfranchised (black) class in America, was first incorporated by white youth subculture and then appropriated by capitalist production at large, mass produced and in the process defused of much of its subversive attributes. See Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York: Methuen, 1979). Rose also cites Hebdige in her discussion of rap's commercialization (*Black Noise*, 40–41).

7. Wolfgang Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality, and Advertising in Capitalist Society*, trans. Robert Bock (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 56.

8. Quoted in Hebdige, *Subculture*, 105.

9. Sakaguchi Ango, *Sensō to hitori no onno* (The war and a woman), *Darakuron* (Essay on depravity), and *Tennō shōron* (Short essay on the emperor), in *Sakaguchi Ango zenshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Bunko, 1990), 4:171–88; 14:511–22, 523–24. Japanese names are cited following the Japanese custom of placing the last name first, with no comma between last and first names. Japanese-American names follow the Western model.

10. Shinoda Masahiro, *MacArthur's Children* (English subtitled version distributed by Pacific Arts Video, Beverly Hills, Calif., 1985). The rape of the woman Komako becomes a metaphor for the rape of Japan as a nation by the American occupation. Komako is raped by her brother-in-law Tetsuo, whose assumption of the "right" to access her body after her husband is (erroneously) proclaimed a war casualty parallels the assumption of rights and privilege by Americans to the nation-state Japan.

11. Because the Western subject is putatively male and Japan has been conceived of as the other to this subject, Japan is in effect feminized. This postulate, to which the works of Marguerite Duras are a glaringly obvious exception, is reinforced by the erotic absence of the Japanese male in Western constructions.

12. Rose, *Black Noise*, 21; see chap. 2, "'All Aboard the Night Train': Flow, Layering, and Rupture in Postindustrial New York," 21–61. "Hip hop has always been articulated via commodities and engaged in the revision of meanings attached to them" (*ibid.*, 41).

13. Rose, "Orality and Technology," 35; Elizabeth Blair, "Commercialization of the Rap Music Youth Subculture."

14. I identify African American subjective agency and community, expressed in lyric, gesture, and movement, and disdain for standard copyright and for notions of originality and ownership of both lyric and sound as resistant formalist codes of hip hop and rap which are reproduced by whites, Japanese, and others. The process of reproduction invests these codes with additional subtexts. For studies of resistance and African American hip hop and rap, see Rose, *Black Noise*; Elizabeth Blair, "Commercialization of the Rap Music Youth Subculture"; Ted Swedenburg, "Homies in the 'Hood: Rap's Commodification of Insubordination," *New Formations* 18 (winter 1992), 53–66. Swedenburg argues that American rap reorders back into a "black" context "white" music (rock and roll, for example) from which black origins have been elided and samples old rhythm and blues in positive acknowledgment of the origins of African American contempo-

rary music. In Japan, rap and hip hop are severed from the specifics of American racialism, and (inevitably) from the reordering into a “black” context, and are frequently montaged with Japanese lyrics and rhythms. Japanese rap and hip hop are thereby usually divested of specific references to the economic, political, and other material and ideological contexts germane to being African American in the United States. There are occasional instances when Japanese rappers use rap as a vehicle for conscious political oppositional statements, reframed within the context of specific Japanese insubordination. See Jones, “Black like Me,” for an interview with one such Japanese rapper.

15. See Jones, “Black like Me,” for a description of this advertisement.

16. Masao Miyoshi, “Against the Native Grain: The Japanese Novel and the ‘Postmodern’ West,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 87, no. 3 (summer 1988), 532–33. Hereafter, this issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* is referred to as *SAQ*.

17. Karatani Kōjin, “One Spirit, Two Nineteenth Centuries,” *SAQ*, 627. In the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japanese writers attempted to validate “fiction,” which in the premodern period was devalued as low art. Edward Fowler has argued that for the early-twentieth-century *shishōsetsu* (personal fiction), which became the primary modern Japanese fiction genre, the author’s life and personal corpus became the “authority” (factual repository) which posterior works referenced in place of other historical validation (*The Rhetoric of Confession: Shishōsetsu in Early Twentieth Century Japanese Fiction* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988], 16–18). Karatani has argued that, by the Taishō period (1912–26), the *shishōsetsu* had already “overcome the modern” by its rejection of a “Western subject” (an interiorized thinking subject who reflects upon the world of objects). Although the *shishōsetsu* prototype diminished as a genre in the 1980s, fictional prose narratives became more, not less, resistant to the idea of subject and structure. This sort of play, which incorporates information consumption, is made possible by the nonconstitution of the subject in Japan. Conversely, the strong constitution of the subject in the Western tradition prevents the same degree of play in Western texts. See Karatani Kōjin, “Nihon seishin bunseki,” *Hihyō kūkan* 4 (January 1992), 271–81. The critic Asada Akira concurs, in “Infantile Capitalism and Japan’s Postmodernism: A Fairy Tale,” *SAQ*, 629–34, attributing the contemporary Japanese passion for pastiche to the absence of “the subject” in Japan.

18. Harry Harootunian, “Visible Discourses/Invisible Ideologies,” *SAQ*, 449.

19. Miyoshi, “Against the Native Grain,” 539. The author of *Somehow, Crystal* is Tanaka Yasuo.

20. Marilyn Ivy, “Critical Texts, Mass Artifacts: The Consumption of Knowledge in Postmodern Japan,” *SAQ*, 432–33.

21. “Tensai Takeshi no genki ga deru terebi,” Nippon Television, Tokyo, 1990, videotape; hereafter referred to as “Genki TV.”

22. *Video on Stage*, 61.

23. Norma Field, “*Somehow: The Postmodern as Atmosphere*,” *SAQ*, 555, 557.

24. Ivy, “Critical Texts, Mass Artifacts,” 436.

25. *Video on Stage*, 1–10, 69, 72.

26. For a discussion of American World War II racial discourses on Japan and the Japanese, see John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986).

27. Lott, “Love and Theft.”

28. Hebdige, *Subculture*, 44–45.

29. David Goldberg, "The Social Formation of Racist Discourse," in *Anatomy of Racism*, ed. David Goldberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 306.
30. Dower, *War without Mercy*, 12. The valuation of white complexions existed in the tenth century, when it was employed to distinguish the economically dominant, nonlaboring Heian aristocracy from the working classes. In the modern period, members of the outcaste group known as *burakumin*, Korean Japanese, Okinawans, the Ainu and other aborigines, children of mixed racial parentage, and, more recently, Southeast Asian and Chinese immigrants, fall into the category of "other within." For essays on discrimination in modern Japan, see Hirota Masaki, *Sabetsu no shosō* [Various aspects of discrimination] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1990). On the *burakumin*, see George De Vos and H. Wagatsuma, eds., *Japan's Invisible Race* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).
31. Etienne Balibar, "Paradoxes of Universality," in Goldberg, *Anatomy of Racism*, 290.
32. See Russell, "Narratives of Denial," 5–7; "Race and Reflexivity," 19, 21. Most of the Africans and African Americans with whom prewar Japan had contact were the slaves and servants of European and American traders.
33. *Video on Stage*, 77.
34. While some Japanese clearly recirculated stereotypes, as argued by Russell in "Race and Reflexivity" and "Narratives of Denial," and thus appear identified with whites, others deplored American racism and allied themselves as people of color with African Americans, both prior to and immediately following World War II. See Dower, *War without Mercy*. For studies of Japanese and Okinawan racism, see Michael Molasky, "Burned-Out Ruins and Barbed Wire Fences: The American Occupation in Japan and Okinawan Literature" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1994); "Poetry of Protest from Okinawa: Arakawa Akira's 'The Colored Race'" (Unpublished manuscript, 1994).
35. Katsuyo Motoyoshi, "Fearful Terrain: The Underground and the Continent in the Works of Natsume Sōseki" (Paper presented at the workshop "The Politics of Exclusion in Modern Japanese Literature and Culture," Boston, 25 March 1994).
36. Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas J. Harper and Edward Seidensticker (New Haven, Conn.: Leete's Island Books, 1977), 31–32.
37. Michael E. Dyson, *Reflecting Black: African-American Cultural Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 169.
38. Frantz Fanon, "The Fact of Blackness," and Nancy Leys Stepan, "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science," in Goldberg, *Anatomy of Racism*, 108–26; 38–57.
39. Shimada Masahiko, "Momotaro in a Capsule," in *Monkey Brain Sushi*, trans. Terry Gallagher (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1991), 113.
40. The basis for fetish can be read as anxiety related to sexual performance, identity, masculinity, and, by extension, power. The fetishized object transforms the threatening sexual lack into eroticized presence and allows for the circulation of desire. In Japan, as elsewhere, the black phallus becomes an index of eroticized power, alternately perceived as a threat or as an object of desire. As Griselda Pollock has argued in "Fathers of Modern Art, Mothers of Invention," *Differences* 4, no. 3 (fall 1992), 107–8, following John Ellis, Freud's "penis" (anatomy-bound material object), as explicated in "Fetishism" (1927), in *Collected Papers* (New York: Basic Books, 1959), 5:198–204, can be recontextualized within an expanded symbolic context: "Fetishism is not just a disavowal of a lack of penis;

it is potentially also to be understood as a contorted form of masculine resistance to a whole system, the phallic structuring of sexual difference. . . . Fetishism can then be understood as a structure of substitution of signifiers determined in relation to the phallus/language/difference/power, which is not exclusively tied . . . to a sexual difference which is . . . a matter of masculine versus feminine." Homi Bhabha has further "detached" the penis from its corporeal context by reading the commingled perception of threat and the desire felt by the colonist when confronted with the native as imbued with the same psychic mechanisms that inform the construction of the fetish. For Bhabha, black skin becomes the sign of difference that engenders anxiety and the fabrication of discourses of likeness/presence and dissimilarity/lack (metaphor and metonymy). See Homi Bhabha, "The Other Question" and "Of Mimicry and Man," in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 66–84; 85–92. Fetish has also been used to explicate the psychic mechanisms of commodity exchange. Karl Marx, "The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret," in *Capital* (New York: Vintage, 1977), 1:163–77, paves the way for Haug's Marxist and psychoanalytic analysis of commodity exchange.

41. While Japan as a nation has not undergone colonization (and conversely has played the role of colonizer), the experience of the United States as occupier in the immediate postwar period is partly analogous to colonization.

42. Okinawa was invaded by the Shimizu Clan from the Japanese islands in the seventeenth century and remained a Japanese colony until the Pacific War. After the war, Okinawa was under United States sovereignty until it was "returned" to Japan in 1972. See Molasky, "Burned-Out Ruins and Barbed Wire Fences," for Okinawan and Japanese literary processing of the occupation.

43. Dower, *War without Mercy*, 308.

44. *Video on Stage*, 76. The column, "Mr. Luke no mi no shita sōdan," rewrites the common idiomatic "discussions pertaining to one's circumstances (*mi no ue*)" with "discussions pertaining to the lower half of the body (*mi no shita*)."

45. The racialist structures of European and American societies determine in large measure the limited realms in which blacks excel; African Americans celebrated in American media comprise increasing percentages of Americans touring Japan, which reinforces the association of blacks with music and athletic achievement, to the exclusion of intellectual, political, and other arenas.

46. *Banana Chips Love*, Fuji Television, Tokyo, 1992, videotape.

47. The brief explication here on sex and gender roles and the status of women in contemporary Japan cannot do justice to the topic. Nor should the reader assume a correlation between premodern or modern Western and Japanese gender politics and the class issues that inform these politics. In premodern Japan, neither upper- nor lower-class women were exclusively responsible for child care or cooking; they were primarily responsible for the management of "stem households" (*ie*). The relegation of cooking and child care to women is a twentieth-century reformation. A few English-language sources for a general introduction to political, economic, social, literary, and other contemporary and historical positionings of women in Japan, to modern and premodern gender roles, to women's status, and to sexual politics include Gail Lee Bernstein, *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Ueno Chizuko, "The Position of Japanese Women Reconsidered," *Current Anthropology* 28 (1987), 575–84; Sharon Sievers, *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University

Press, 1983). More recent studies may be found in the English supplements to the *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, nos. 1–6 (1991–94). See especially Karen Kel-sky, “Postcards from the Edge: The ‘Office Ladies’ of Tokyo,” *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal, English Supplement* 6 (March 1994), 3–26, and “Intimate Ideologies: Transnational Theory and Japan’s Yellow Cabs,” *Public Culture* 6 (1994), 465–78, for discussions of Japanese women’s relationships with non-Japanese men, particularly relevant to this essay. The reader may also consult Kathleen Uno, “The Death of ‘Good Wife, Wise Mother,’” and Sandra Buckley, “Altered States: The Body Politics of ‘Being-Woman,’” both in *Postwar Japan as History*, ed. Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 293–322; 347–72.

48. American men, for example, are expected to be more *yashashii* (indulgent, gentle).

49. *Goro* (February 1992), 173.

50. Yamada Eimi, *Beddotaimu aizu* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1987), 112; my emphasis.

51. Quoted in Russell, “Narratives of Denial,” 423. The original is in Yamada, *Beddotaimu aizu*, 13. Many of Yamada’s female protagonists also labor to dissolve this difference and form a community aligned with black men through shared marks of bodily otherness. For a thorough discussion of the production of femaleness and blackness in Yamada’s texts, see Nina Cornyetz, “Power and Gender in the Narratives of Yamada Eimi,” in *Gender and Theory in Japanese Women’s Writings*, ed. Paul Schalow and Janet Walker (forthcoming).

52. Yamada Eimi, *Hāremu wārudo* (Tokyo: Kōdansha Bunko, 1990), 100; hereafter referred to as *Harem World*. The title is a “Japanized” pronunciation of (originally) English words, written as the phonetic syllabary for transliteration of non-Chinese foreign words. Transliteration of the title back into English renders two possibilities, *Harem World* and *Harlem World*. In Japanese the dual meaning is most likely intentional. In the afterword, Yamada claims to have been inspired by Spike Lee’s film *She’s Gotta Have It*.

53. Yamada, *Harem World*, 8.

54. Yamada, *Beddotaimu aizu*, 14.

55. Yamada Eimi, “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” in Gallagher, *Monkey Brain Sushi*, 191. All quotes are from this excerpted translation. The original text is entitled *Hizamazuuite ashi o oname* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1988).

56. Yamada, “Kneel Down and Lick My Feet,” 189.

57. Yamada Eimi, “X-Rated Blanket,” in *Boku wa biito* (I am beat) (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1988), 59; Haug, *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics*, 52. See also Yamada Eimi, “X-Rated Blanket,” trans. Nina Cornyetz, in *New Japanese Voices* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 1991), 50–54. Pagination references the Japanese-language text.

58. Yamada, “X-Rated Blanket,” 14.

59. Inoue Hisashi, Takahashi Gen’ichirō, and Shimada Masahiko, “Soshite, ashita wa dō naru ka,” in “Kono issatsu de wakaru Shōwa no bungaku,” *Shinchō* special issue (February 1989), 447–50.

60. Tetsuo Najita, “On Culture and Technology in Postmodern Japan,” *SAQ*, 413. In the modernization process, “others within,” who are conceptually excluded from “homogeneous” Japan, are summarily erased in Japanese self-representation. See also Naoki Sakai, “Modernity and Its Critique: The Problem of Universalism and Particularism,” *SAQ*, 475–504.

61. Karatani, “One Spirit,” 627. See also Harootunian, “Visible Discourses/Invisible Ideologies,” and Najita, “Culture and Technology,” on Japanism.

62. *Video on Stage*, 77.

63. Kelsky, “Intimate Ideologies,” 473.

64. Yamada, “X-Rated Blanket,” 12.

65. *Video on Stage*, 77.