CHAPTER SIX

RIEKO MATSUURA’S THE REVERSE VERSION: THE THEME OF GIRL-ADDRESSING-GIRL AND MALE HOMOSEXUAL FANTASIES

Difficult as it may seem to you, dear reader, there are probably still people out there in the East End of London quite unaware that, when worn down by the problems of the world, a quick and simple solution is often to lie on a couch and talk about one’s mother to a highly qualified stranger.

Nigel Williams, Star Turn

One of the Japanese female writers who have produced narratives of male homosexuality is Rieko Matsuura (1958–). Beginning with her first published story, Sōgi no hi (The Day of the Funeral, 1978), most of her works, including Natural Woman (1987), Sebastian (1981), and Oyayubi P no shugyō jidai (Big Toe P’s Years of Apprenticeship, 1993) raise questions concerning lesbian identity, especially with regard to lesbian sadomasochism. While Matsuura views lesbianism primarily as a vehicle for the expression of a sense of ‘gender trouble,’ the background narrative of her gender discourse often occurs within a male homosexual context.1

Her 2000 Uravājon (The Reverse Version), in particular, represents a powerful, female, imaginative discourse in relation to fantasies of male homosexuality.2 This work foregrounds the particular way in which the sense of girl/woman-addressing-girl/woman can be elaborated with reference to a male homosexual context; the pleasure and desire involved in girls/women telling stories to other girls/women (or reading or listening to such stories, specifically addressed to them) is linked to an imagined male homosexual eroticism. This chapter explores how the impact of such

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1 Matsuura’s analysis of anal sexuality in relation to the patriarchal system is summarized in the following way: “I take Taruho Inagaki’s belief that men’s corruption starts when they discard anal sexuality and become attached to penis sexuality as a criticism of the penis’s exalted status, and I very much agree with his idea” (35). Matsuura’s idea of anal sexuality is thus highly individualistic. See Matsuura’s Poketto fetisshu (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 2000).

2 Uravājon consists of 18 chapters. The story was originally serialized chapter by chapter in the journal Chikuma, from February 1999 to July 2000.
male homosexual contexts condition the establishment of these female-oriented (or gender-limited) narratives. First, it demonstrates how the female fantasies of male homosexuality in *The Reverse Version* are recast in terms of a stage-set designed for female spectators. The second half of the chapter features a discussion of the framework of girl-addressing-girl, examining representational issues surrounding *shōjo* (girls), *shōnen* (boys) and *hi-shōjo* (anti-girls). The primary focus of this section foregrounds the ways in which girls'/women’s shared imagination of male homosexuality is elaborated in terms of the idealization of (homosexual) *shōnen* and a comparable longing to escape complicity with the somewhat negative connotations of female sex and gender as these exist within a patriarchal context.

How are Female Fantasies of Male Homosexuality Constructed?

The structure of *The Reverse Version* is complicated to such an extent that it evokes diegetic disorder throughout the entire course of its narrative development. The book consists of 18 chapters, each of which presents an independent story with its own background narrative, narrative space, characters, and themes. In contrast to this wide range of metafictional fantasies, the narrative structure as a whole is unified by the presence of two female characters who are present in the primary narrative of all 18 chapters. As the narrative develops, the reader gradually realizes that the creator of these metafictional worlds is a female writer. Reduced to dire poverty, she lives rent-free in the house of an old friend; as a form of compensation, she writes stories (metafictional fantasies) that are addressed specifically to her friend and reflect her friend’s particular tastes.3

*The Reverse Version* narrative generates a meta-fantasy that actualizes the respective ideologies and claims of the two women, and which reflects both the shifting elements that comprise female fantasies as well as the kinds of psychological interchange that occur among women. Chapter Ten, entitled “Chiyoko,” provides a suitable narrative space from which the reader can gain theoretical insights into the psychological development of female consciousness and the subconscious desires that activate

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3 The female writer’s name may possibly be Masako, and her friend’s name may be Suzuko. However, their names are never stated unambiguously.