

Edgar Allan Poe's Ideal Reader : Edogawa Rampo

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要 約

エドガー・アラン・ポーの理想的読者：江戸川乱歩

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英語訳の不足から欧米では江戸川乱歩はその作品においてエドガー・アラン・ポーの模倣をした作家とみなされてきた。しかし、フロイトを学んだ乱歩は自身のもつ不明瞭なセクシュアリティへの手がかりを探ってポーの作品に着目したと考えられ、そのため彼の作品はポーの影響を受けているというよりはむしろ、彼の表現しきれなかったセクシュアリティ、空間、凝視、体、腐朽というテーマを自身の作品において解明しており、この点においてポーを超越する作家であったといえる。1949年のマリー・ボナパルト以来、フロイト学説の視点からポーを解釈する数々の研究がなされてきたが、その中でも、彼の作品に見られるスペースの縮小化と主人公の破滅の關係に注目し、その最終点にセクシュアリティを見出したロバート・L・キャリンジャーの作品の解釈が乱歩のそれに最も近いものであると考えられるため、彼の研究を基に本論を進めていく。異性を恐れるポーは女性の体を閉じ込め腐朽させて彼女と主人公の間における凝視を不可能にしてきたが、乱歩はそこに多孔性を見出し、彼自身が女体の中に入り込んでその運動性を表現し、異性との合体を求めている。このような性の転換を可能にする彼の想像力は、ポーが先に提示していた凝視、体の腐朽、性というそれぞれのテーマを結びつけるという発想にまで及ぶ。そして、彼自身が一貫して問いつづけてきた虫のイメージと性行為とを結びつけることによって、虫の発生が暗示する体の腐朽とその反対である生物の誕生との關係を提示し、ポーが恐れから破壊して完結していたものに運動性を認め、新たな誕生を可能にしている。ポーが分裂的に暗示していた各心理を透過的に解明した点において、乱歩はポーの理想的な読者であったといえる。

In 1914 Japanese writer Hirai Taro adopted the pen name of “Edogawa Rampo,” a phonetic play on Edgar Allan Poe, whom he helped to popularize in Asia. Ever since, owing to the paucity of English translations of Rampo’s work, the West has presumed that he imitated Poe in writing his own detective and horror stories. No doubt he was “influenced,” but his work is an expansion of Poe’s. A self-trained Freudian, he read Poe astutely for clues to his own ambiguous sexuality: his stories develop, in particular, aspects of Poe’s attitudes toward vision, the human body, space, and decay, in ways that scholars have only recently begun to appreciate in Poe. To use Jerome J. McGann’s term, we may say that Rampo read Poe radially, that is “putting himself in position to respond actively to the text’s own (often secret) discursive acts¹.”

Rampo is today a central literary presence in Asian life. Many international manga and several anime are based on his work. His life is a subject of popular interest; two recent films depict it, if somewhat sensationally: *Rampo*, Dir. Mayuzumi/ Okuyama, 1994; and *Rampo: Okuyama Version*, Dir. Okuyama, 1995. Many other films depict his stories². All of Rampo’s work is still in print in Japan, and he is widely translated in Asia, where popular literature reinforced by the energy of *manga* is widely respected. But what makes Hirai Taro particularly interesting to us is his work re-reads Edgar Allan Poe in a manner that is, like Hirai’s penname both apparent and overlooked.

I.

Rampo was born as Hirai, Taro, in the town of Nabari, in the Mie Prefecture of Japan, on 21 October 1894³. He spent his childhood in Nagoya, which he left at 17 to enter the prestigious, private Waseda University in Tokyo in 1912. There he majored in economics, graduating four years later. The next six years he worked as a clerk, accountant, salesman, and editor, in between times pulling the cart as an itinerant soba vendor. His years as a dock clerk at the Shinko Electric Company have become a source of corporate pride and are detailed at the company’s website⁴. According to Noriko Lippit, in 1914 Rampo read Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue⁵.” But not until 1923, when he was unemployed in Osaka, did he write what is considered to be the first modern Japanese detective story, “Nisen Doka” (The Two—Sen Copper Coin). This was published beside the works of Poe, Doyle, Chesterton and others in *Shin Seinen* magazine, then the only mystery magazine in Japan. The editors asked for more, and Rampo followed with “Ichimai no Kippu” (One Ticket). Both works, writes Lippit, “reflect obvious influences from ‘The Gold Bug’ and ‘The Purloined Letter’” (140). In 1925 Rampo founded the Association of Lovers of Detectives, which after W.W. II became the Japan Mystery Writers Club—a group that ignited enthusiasm for the genre. Rampo began to translate Poe into Japanese as well as to write his own stories, completing six translations by 1931. Among these,

Lippit identifies “Panorama to Kitan” (A Strange Story of Panorama Island, 1927) as “obviously based on an idea taken from ‘The Domain of Arnheim’ and ‘Landor’s Cottage’” (141).

Rampo was so prolific that his collected works, thirteen volumes, were also published in 1931, when he was 37 years old. Titled *Waga Yume to Shinjitsu* (My Dream and Truth), this book contains his thoughts on Poe and Freud as well as “Douseiai Bungakushi,” (The Literary History of Homosexuality), and “Ren—ai Funousha” (Mentally Impotent for Heterosexual Love), none of which are translated into English. As we argue below, these are of great value in understanding the use Rampo made of Poe. By 1956, Rampo had written 20 full—length books, 53 short stories and novellas, and six books of essays on his various genres. When he died in 1965, Rampo was not only Asia’s most famous writer in the genre, but also a world literary figure, with more than 250 volumes to his credit.

The relation of Rampo to Poe was noted early on, yet it has customarily been taken as one of homage by those writers whose assessments are available in English (Harris, 1975, Lippit, 1999). Japanese scholarship has been much more perceptive about parallels and similarities in theme and plot (Horie, 1991 ; Shibusawa, 1992), but less inclined to explore the way Rampo used Poe to probe questions of sexuality. Any investigation of the two writers must begin with the fact that Rampo read Poe through a Freudian lens. Freud was introduced to Japan in 1926 with a single volume. In 1928—29 more volumes were translated, until seven were in print by 1931. Rampo wrote that he read these as soon as they came out. When a group was formed to research Freud, Rampo joined for six months⁶. His interest was piqued, he wrote, by the number of people present who were interested in homosexuality. Rampo himself had male lovers when he was young, but married later on. Rampo called his first experience, at 14, “a common make—believe homosexual love, which was really platonic and passionate” (*Waga Yume* 41). It happened that love letters were popular in his school ; he received many, but wrote back only one time, to a boy who was handsome, smart, good at painting and at swordsmanship. The boy asked an older friend to make the match with Rampo. All of this follows a tradition that dates to the Samurai era. However the boy did not continue to follow the code. During a school trip it was arranged so he slept side—by—side with Rampo in a large tatami room. But nothing happened, except that he drew a short sword he had brought and brandished it in front of Rampo. This strange play was reported to the teachers, who scolded him, and Rampo was guarded by some classmates until he got home. After that Rampo felt he was looked upon as strange by his teachers and classmates—his first experience of the gaze. Rampo felt a great shame. His second experience Rampo called his “first love.” This was a platonic experience when he and a friend were 15. Both were so shy that they could not talk. Instead Rampo wrote many letters to him. He even wrote, “I want to eat you,” which he writes that he meant “platonically.” When they met at the friend’s house, Rampo put his finger through a hole in the

table, and the boy took hold of it under the table. Rampo wrote that he never had such powerful feelings with any women, but they did not even kiss (*Waga Yume* 43–46). Scholar Furukawa Makoto has argued that the first incident was a traditional Japanese homosexual love affair: a loving older man and a younger beloved boy. Rampo was put in the younger *Chigo* part, because the older friend helped the other boy, and while he was ready to accept this, the boy could not act his role of the Older *Nenja*. By contrast, the second was a “new style” homosexual love relationship. They were equals. This experience of two kinds of homosexual love, writes Furukawa, parallels Rampo’s double view of homosexuality: on the one hand there is Japanese traditional homosexual culture, on the other, ancient Grecian or western “equal” homosexuality (62)⁷. But scholar Sugimori Hisahide takes a different approach to Rampo’s homosexuality:

It is natural that Rampo, who favors abnormal mystery, goes too far into homosexual love. It is an ordinary thing that a man acts as a man, but when he acts as a woman against his original gender he gives out a strangely perverted beauty. This can be a kind of disguise. When an actor who plays female roles in Kabuki wears powder, red underwear, and a wig to play a harlot or a girl in the village, he looks more strangely and vividly attractive than real harlots or girls. Since it smells like a sin against nature, the pleasure taken from it is deep. For those who enjoy this secret pleasure, ordinary women are just boring dolls. (64)

Sugimori thus suggests that his culture puts additional resources at Rampo’s disposal, which Rampo used in the belief that homosexuality was a purer, more idealistic form of love, a view identical with that of Japan’s samurai tradition.

We can see why Rampo might lean in this direction in his essay “Mentally Impotent for Heterosexual Love.” Here he wrote that he felt fated to love only one particular woman, but could not believe that he would find her, especially in his circle of acquaintance. Anyone who did attract him, therefore, he could only love partially: this “love” was “just something happening,” not divine. Though this was the root of what he called his “nihilism,” the Japanese conception of the sexual act as “ugly or evil” reinforced his feeling. He had wanted to think highly of “love,” he wrote, but could not once he learned that it came from “ugly organs.” In the second, rather speculative part of this essay, Rampo postulated a kind of prelapsarian androgyny, from which “men” and “women” evolved as a result of a binary division. So he would never “search” for “love,” Rampo wrote, comparing himself to a painter who does not paint or a poet who does not write (*Waga Yume* 70–71). But Rampo did marry (to an elementary school teacher, whom he met in 1971), and had a son. His real life seems to have been unlike the sensational *Rampos* of 1994.

II.

The impulse to analyze Poe in Freudian terms dates at least to Marie Bonaparte's work in 1949. Joel Porte (1969) Daniel Hoffman (1985) and Leland Person (1988) advanced and deepened this analysis. As Person noted, the classic rhetoric that Poe inherited and exploited left him straitened in his use of woman as topos. This tendency to see Poe as a classicist within a tradition characterizes most of the essayists gathered in Harold Bloom's critical collection (1987). Other Poe scholarship, in the Freudian vein, takes Puckish delight in unmasking *doppel-gangers* and plot repetitions, having perhaps learned the lesson of Lacan too well. Within this critical tradition Leo Lemay has unzipped stories such as "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" to reveal a compressed homosexuality at work, with which he contends that Poe intended to tweak Victorian readers. Whatever the origins of Poe's convoluted references and invocations, Lemay is surely correct when he remarks that "homosexuality has psychological and symbolic meanings in Poe's fictive world that complement the story's major themes" (172). But there is more to Poe's sexuality, as feminists have pointed out. Poe exceeds his models in Petrarch, Dante and Shakespeare in his tendency to dismember and entomb female characters. There is a fascination with their physical decay ("The Fall of the House of Usher," "Berenice"). And even dead, as Jacqueline Doyle writes, "the feminine corpse is prone to eerie reanimation" (13).

Among Western scholars, Robert L. Carringer has come closest to reading Poe as Rampo read him, so let us build unabashedly on his scholarship. Carringer finds a central dynamic in six of the thirteen stories he designates as Poe's high period. He takes his first hint from Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition": "a close circumscription of space is absolutely necessary to the effect of an isolated incident." He takes his second hint from Richard Wilbur's reading of Poe's "William Wilson": "Wilson never seems to set foot out of doors," and this "isolation of the poetic soul" indicates that the character "is in the process of dreaming his way out of the world" (Carringer 22). This "urge to delimit space" to a room, a tomb, a recess or a pit begins a process in which the "libertine alter-ego is presented as a kind of archetype of 'criminality.'" (22). In the center of the space toward which the protagonists are driven is an image of the "eye" or "I," homologous with the "evil I." The story "The Black Cat" can serve as a paradigm. The spatial dynamic begins constricted, becomes more so, and collapses on an image of the narrator himself that must be destroyed. Poe's fear of the center has a decidedly sexual cast, which scholars have typically explained in Freudian or Lacanian terms.

Poe's use of the gaze is more complex, so let us turn to his stories to refresh our memory. Here is the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" explaining his motive for murder:

Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale

blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold ; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye for ever. (303)

An insupportable gaze emanates from this eye. It accuses the narrator and represents something like his loss of humanity. This effectively doubles him. Destroying this gaze, and freeing oneself from the double and disciplinary panopticon produces an illusory sense of freedom, as Poe's narrator notes when he buries his victim : "I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected any thing wrong"(305). Poe found that reversing the dramatic situation and narrating from the position of the gazer also produced a dramatic effect. In "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," a story that influenced Rambo's "Mushi" (The Bug), the narrator hypnotizes a dying man, postponing the moment of death for seven months. When he finally releases his victim, the man "absolutely *rotted* away beneath my hands. Upon the bed, before that whole company, there lay a nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putrescence"(103). As in "The Black Cat," the eye/I creates an in-human other. The narrator hypnotizes his subject by "directing my gaze entirely into the right eye of the sufferer." He notes that

The glassy roll of the eye was changed for that expression of uneasy *inward* examination which is never seen except in case of sleep—walking, and which it is quite possible to mistake. With a few rapid lateral passes I made the lids quiver, as in incipient sleep, and with a few more I closed them altogether. (99)

The hypnosis and its effects, described in pseudo—medical diction, are thinly veiled torture ; the narrator prolongs his victim's life despite pleas to allow him to die. The relation Poe finds between the gaze and power is clearer in this story : vision is connected to bodily decay in the flood of clinical detail that engulfs the reader at the conclusion :

The first indication of revival was afforded by a partial descent of the iris. It was observed, as especially remarkable, that this lowering of the pupil was accompanied by the profuse out—flowing of a yellowish ichor (from beneath the lids) of a pungent and highly offensive odor. (102)

The double in Poe is wholly body, always decaying or mutilated—the body as mere matter, but as potentially erotic if transformed. The eye is the chief organ of othering, but the mouth can also be fetishized. In Poe's "Berenice," the fiancée of the narrator dies of a wasting disease, after which he disinters her body and extracts her teeth in a trance. At the end of the second section, the narrator transfers his fetishistic interest from his fiancée's eyes to her mouth :

My burning glances at length fell upon the face. The forehead was high, and very pale, and singularly placid ; and the once pretty hair fell partially over it, and

overshadowed the hollow temples with innumerable ringlets, now of a vivid yellow, and jarring discordantly, in their fantastic character, with the reigning melancholy of the countenance. The eyes were lifeless, and lusterless, and seemingly pupilless, and I shrank involuntarily from their glassy stare to the contemplation of the thin and shrunken lips. They parted ; and in a smile of peculiar meaning, *the teeth* of the changed Berenice disclosed themselves slowly to my view. Would to God that I had never beheld them, or that, having done so, I had died ! (646)

At the story's end, as Jacqueline Doyle has argued, Berenice has been "dismembered" and forbidden acts committed upon her body. From this Doyle construes something broader, that Berenice is dispersed in order to diminish her threat, to bury as it were, "her text" in this story that is buried in family texts figuratively and literally (the setting is a family library). Robert L. Carringer explains the story more narrowly : "Poe's most productive period begins with a narrative involving a disguised bloody act of desexualization, the pulling of Berenice's *vaginae dentes*, and in the various sequels, earthly women are safely shut away in tombs while a lover yearns for cold, sexless 'ideal' women" (22).

We believe that both readings miss the mark slightly. Berenice, like M. Valdemar, is a double and a pure body. If we reinstate two overlooked aspects of the story, this is clearer. Early in the story Poe links the healthy Berenice to another of his stories, "The Garden of Arnheim" ("Oh, sylph amid the shrubberies of Arnheim," 643). Second, the key passage above is a moment of reciprocal gazes ; Berenice gazes at the narrator as he gazes at her. The teeth, and the mouth are details singled out at the expense of the dynamics of gazing. As the literature on this subject teaches us (Kristeva, 1982 ; Scarry, 1985 ; Williams, 1989), the gaze mediates our identification with the tortured, or the torturer, or as Carol Clover has recently argued, keeps us in a state of oscillation between the two (229–30). The reciprocal gaze is a reciprocal acknowledgement of humanity. Writing about the contemporary horror film, Wheeler Winston Dixon notes that many urge "the viewer to avoid the returned gaze of the victim," thus retailing a dehumanization of the subject (63). "The spectacle of the victim in pain," he writes, "becomes a Medusic construct to be viewed at the risk of one's becoming a potential victim of torture one's self" (63–64). The transformation wrought upon the body of the other may not be viewed. But it is always emblematic of the difference eliminated between the narrator and the double. In "Berenice," it is femininity—the narrator keeps her *vaginae dentes* hidden in a box.

That this is something more than misogyny becomes clear if we read Poe with Rampo. The place to begin is with Poe's paired stories "The Domain of Arnheim, or The Landscape Garden" and "Landor's Cottage." The narrator of the first follows a character named Ellison as he attempts to create a perfect landscape "composition" (608). Poe's allusion to his own "Philosophy of Composition" could not have been lost on Rampo. At length Ellison finds the perfect

venue and creates a park that the narrator can only approach by “a light canoe of ivory”. The canoe descends a stream of “exquisite cleanness” that is free of “the usual river debris” (614), arriving in a glen of flowers. Here a golden door magically opens, revealing a gushing river and an amphitheater of flowers. “The whole Paradise of Arnheim bursts upon the view,” writes Poe, but his conclusion is little more than a list of flowers and architectural ornaments. In the sequel, “Landor’s Cottage,” Poe’s narrator is ostensibly in upstate New York, where he describes himself vagabonding through a Washington Irving-ish country-side. Following a trace of trail, he comes upon a similar amphitheater, at the center of which is another clear body of water and an indescribable house—“poetry,” Poe calls it: “its marvelous *effect* lay altogether in its artistic arrangement as a *picture*” (621). Inside the house the narrator encounters “Annie,” whose vivid gray eyes he interprets as “*enthusiasm*” and “*romance*.” This effect he locates in her eye, “wreathing itself occasionally into the lips.” Then he is invited by the owner into a vestibule, into a bedroom, and he sees a series of rounded objects. Finally, “the fireplace was nearly filled with a vase of brilliant geraniums” (625). The stories are clearly Poe’s attempt to map female anatomy on landscape, to realize an idealized and purely material version of a woman. However, in his self-estimate—“I have found the perfection of natural, in contradistinction from artificial *grace*”—Poe’s narrator misinterprets his own narrative, which manifests everywhere a fear of dirt, disorder, and decay. In fact, he fears the body. Taken together, the stories can obviously be read as a desire to return to the womb and a fear of woman as unclean. But if we read “Berenice” with the understanding that the story extends the two stories above, we read a different story, as Rampo did.

III.

Rampo understood Poe’s *material* woman as the doorway into an arena where the body doubled was entirely fungible. Heterosexuality is not a given, as for Poe, but an addition to Rampo’s toolkit. His central characters are usually men, but sometimes women, as in “The Caterpillar.” His first-person narrators are always men, but he uses female point of view characters of diegetic omniscience. Many of his stories are set in small rooms, not unusual in Japan, a land of small rooms. Others are set in gardens (“The Twins”), and even amusement parks (“The Traveler with the Pasted Rag Picture”) or out of doors (“The Cliff,” “The Caterpillar”). The more open the space, however, the stronger the sense of verticality Rampo introduces. “The Traveler” features a high tower, “The Cliff” a precipice, and “The Caterpillar” a deep well. Death by falling into a well or from a high place, motifs from Japanese folklore, are common and substitute for Poe’s entombment. In one story (“The Human Chair”), a man entombs himself for sexual pleasure, becoming all body as he lives inside a chair to feel its reclining owner. Open spaces in Rampo’s stories invoke the performance of the body.

Rampo’s “Kasei no Unga” (The Martian Canal) clearly owes to his interest in Poe’s “The

Garden of Arnheim” and “Landor’s Cottage.” In this story a man, whose senses have seemingly been reduced to vision, wanders in a limitless forest, scared by the onset of darkness and the sense of infinite extension. Rampo’s landscape is idealized but not particularized, as Poe’s was. The man comes to a vaguely lit spot, where he finds a marsh, at the center of which is a rock. All nature seems to “yearn” for something to happen. When the man looks down at himself, he finds he has become a beautiful woman :

そして、そこに、男ではなくて、豊満なる乙女の肉体を見出したとき、私が男であつたことをうち忘れて、さも当然のようにほほえんだ。ああこの肉体だ！私は余りの嬉しさに、心臓が喉の辺まで飛び上がるのを感じた。

私の肉体は不思議にも、私の恋人のそれと、そっくり生きうつしなのだが、なんというすばらしい美しさだったろう。(Edogawa Rampo 205)

(…when I looked on a young girl’s voluptuous body instead of a man’s, I smiled as if there was nothing to wonder at, forgetting the fact that I was a man. Oh, this is my body! I was so happy that I felt my heart jump to my throat.

Oddly my body was the same as my girlfriend’s. How beautiful it was!)

This exchange of physical natures occurs via a self-gaze. It is followed by a strange performance, as he swims to a rock in center of the marsh and begins to dance for the personified nature :

それから、極端な筋肉の運動がはじめられた。それがまあ、どんなにすばらしいものであったか。青大将がまっ二つにちぎれて、のたうち廻るのだ。尺取虫と、芋虫と、ミミズの断末魔だ。無限の快樂に、あるいは無限の痛苦にもがくけだものだ。

踊り疲れると、私は喉をうるおすために、黒い水中に飛び込んだ。そして、胃の腑の受け容れるだけ、水銀のように重い水を飲んだ。

そうして踊り狂いながらも、私はなにか物足りなかった。私ばかりでなく、周囲の背景たちも不思議に緊張をゆるめなかった。彼らはこの上に、まだ何事を待ち望んでいるのであろう。

「そうだ、^{くれない}紅の一と色だ」

私は、ハッとそこに気がついた。このすばらしい画面には、たった一つ、紅の色が欠けている。もしそれをうることでできたならば、蛇の目が生きるのだ。奥底知れぬ灰色と、光り輝く雪の肌と、そして紅の一点、そこで、何物にもまして美しい蛇の目が生きるのだ。(Edogawa Rampo 206-07)

(Then an extreme muscular movement began. How wonderful it was, like a blue-green snake had tore itself into two and wriggled. It was the last moment of a measuring worm, a caterpillar, or an earthworm. I was a beast that had struggled against the endless pleasure or the endless pain. But then, tired from dancing, I jumped into the black water and drank the heavy, mercury-like liquid, until my stomach could

hold no more.

Even dancing wildly, I lacked something. Strangely not only I myself but even the surrounding background sensed this. It did not relax. What more did it watch for?

The idea suddenly struck me: "it is the color red." This wonderful mural lacked only the color red. The eyes of the snake would glitter if it could have that color.

Imagine a bottomless gray or a brilliant snow white skin, and a speck of red color. Against it, the snake's eyes look attractive, more beautiful than anything else.)

Having conflated the landscape and the female body, the narrator scratches his flesh to add red to the scene, from his blood. Unlike Poe, Rampo inhabits the female body. He finds it porous, permeable; he can imagine himself into it, and he seeks an analogue by which he can *perform* the female body:

のたうち廻れば、今度は断末魔の長虫だ。あるときは胸と足をうしろに引いて、極度に腰を張り、ムクムクと上がってくる太腿の筋肉のかたまりを、できる限り上へ引きつけてみたり、あるときは岩の上に仰臥して、肩と足とで弓のようにそり返り、尺取虫が這うように、その辺を歩きまわったり、あるときは、股をひろげ、そのあいだに首をはさんで、芋虫のようにゴロゴロと転がってみたり、または切られたミミズをまねて、岩の上をピンピンとはねまわって、腕といわず肩といわず、腹といわず腰といわず、所きらわず、力を入れたり抜いたりして、私はありとあらゆる曲線表情を演じた。命の限り、このすばらしい大芝居のはれの役目を勤めたのだ。

(Edogawa Rampo 208)

(When I writhed I was a long bug in the hour of death. Sometimes I pulled back my chest and legs, stretched my waist extremely, then retracted my thigh muscles so they came up as high as possible. Other times I lay on my back on the rock, warped my body like a bow, and walked around as an inchworm crawls. I sat with my legs stretched apart, put my neck in the space between, and rolled over like a caterpillar. I imitated the cut earthworm and jumped about on the rock, flexed and relaxed my arms, shoulders, belly, waist, and every part of my body to form a curved figure.

I played such a big role in this wonderful performance, as long as my life lasted.)

He is awakened from this dream—the reader is kept in the dark until the last page—by a woman whose face, as she bends to kiss him, is likened to the red planet of Mars descending on him. From this image the story takes its name. And exactly here we wish to recall the image of Poe's Berenice. Instead a terrifying *vaginae dentes* that limits the reciprocity of the gaze, Rampo imagines himself into the physicality, the corporeality of the female, extending Poe. As the maggoty images remind us, this body is just as hemmed in by decay as that of Poe's M. Valdemar, but Rampo has discovered a *motility* at this level—everything moves—that

sanctions higher level performances.

Once he discovered this doorway, Rampo entered often and led readers in new directions. Two of the most interesting are evident in "The Love of a Non-Human" (Hitodenashi no Koi) and "The Caterpillar." The former is told from the point of view of a woman whose misanthropic, retiring husband turns his attention to a beautiful doll. She was happy with her husband at first, but after six months of marriage gradually feels if something unknown to her occupies her husband's love. All this while she has been gazing at him, and now she perceives him to be doubled:

私を眺める愛撫のまなざしの奥には、もう一つの冷たい眼が、遠くの方を凝視しているのでございます。愛の言葉をささやいてくれます、あの人の声音すら、なんとやらうつろで、機械仕掛けの声のようにも思われるのでございます。(Edogawa Rampo 433)

(Another cold eye stared at the distance from the depth of his caressing gaze. Even his voice whispering his love sounded to me somehow hollow and mechanical.)

It occurs to her that her husband's strangeness may be related to his custom of reading in the storehouse, an old habit which he had stopped when they married, but has recently begun again:

お嫁入りをしましたのが春のなかば、夫に疑いをいだきはじめましたのがその秋のちょうど名月時分でございました。今でも不思議に覚えていますのは、門野が縁側に向こうむきにうずくまって、青白い月光に洗われながら、長いあいだじっと物思いにふけていた、あのうしろ姿、それを見て、どういうわけか、妙に胸を打たれましたのが、あの疑惑のきっかけになったのでございます。(Edogawa Rampo 436)

(I married my husband in the middle of spring, and began to doubt him at the harvest moon of fall of the year. I, with wonder, remember even now that Kadono turning his back, crouched down on a veranda, was sunk in thought for a long time under the pale white moon light. I was so touched to gaze after the back view of him at that time, and this was the beginning of my doubt of him.)

One night the wife follows her husband to the storehouse and overhears his conversation with another woman. He says that he cannot help meeting her, that he has known her since childhood, and that he feels guilty about their affair. The wife is not brave enough to confront the lovers, and when she tries to see the woman's face as they leave the storehouse, darkness prevents her: "...一つにはそうして女めの顔をよく見覚えてやりましょうと、恨みに燃える眼をみはったのでございます。" (Edogawa Rampo 441) (I opened my eyes wide with resentment to memorize the woman's face.)

She repeats this experiment, but she can never see the woman come out of the storehouse.

Then she realizes that she hears a large chest close every time her husband leaves the store-room. The next day she checks and she finds a beautiful doll, which emanates an unearthly attraction. She realizes that it is that doll that her husband loves, so she destroys it. That night her husband goes to the storehouse, but does not come back. She goes to the scene :

そこには夫のと、人形のと、二つのむくろが折り重なって、板の間は血潮の海、二人のそばに家重代の名刀が、血を吸ってころがっていたのでございます。人間と土くれとの情死、それが滑稽に見えるどころか、なんともしれぬ厳肅なものが、サーッと私の胸を引きしめて、声も出ず涙も出ず、ただもう茫然と、そこに立ちつくすほかはないのでございました。

見れば、私に叩きひしがれて、なかば残った人形の唇から、さも人形自身が血を吐いたかのように、血潮の筋が一としずく、その首を抱いた夫の腕の上にタラリと垂れて、そして人形は、断末魔の無気味な笑いを笑っているのでございました。

(*Edogawa Rampo* 454-55)

(There I saw two corpses, my husband and the doll lying one on top of the other. The wooden floor looked like a pool of blood. The celebrated sword, which had been passed down in the family, had taken blood and now lay inert. A double suicide of the man and the clod of earth, which did not sound funny. It rather seemed to me that a strange, solemn thing tightened in my bosom. I could not shed tears or speak. I could not do anything but stand there.

When I gazed at them, I saw a drop of blood drip from the doll's lips, only half of which remained after my blows, on to my husband's arm as he held her neck. It looked as if she herself had vomited blood, and she had such an uncanny smile in her last moment.)

Rampo has created a triangle of gazes. The wife gazes at her husband, who gazes at the doll, whose fascination can only be apprehended when it is seen by and gazes back at the wife. Rampo retains from "The Martian Canal" the color red, his emblem of the body's materiality, but he displaces it to the mouth. The wife destroys the triangle of gazes by crushing the doll, a fixed and immutable image of the female. This does not recover her husband for her, but it frees her from the binary position of the mortal, non-ideal and transient flesh into which her husband had placed her by his infatuation with the doll. Only at the end of the story are the emotions of the wife articulated ; her gaze is speechless and unrecognized by any other character except the doll. Her husband's emotions, like his gaze, are shared by his wife and the doll. This performance of heterosexuality is structured by the contrast between Rampo's two experiences of homosexuality. Though the woman has repudiated her double ("the clod of earth"), she remains in the speechless lock of the gaze. Unfortunately, Rampo's performance of the female here is usually overlooked, especially in popular interpretations, which prize the fet-

ishistic aspect of the male gaze.

Rampo's re-reading of Poe is most striking example in his later work "The Caterpillar." The story concerns the war invalid Lt. Sunaga and his wife Tokiko. It is told from her point of view but not in the first person. Lt. Sunaga was horribly maimed in Manchuria, losing his legs and arms, and every bodily sense except sight, appetite, and sexuality. He can only express himself through his gaze or by laboriously writing with a pencil clenched between his teeth. His emotions he puts entirely into his gaze, which is so vivid as to recall the doll in "The Love of a Non-Human." :

Lieutenant Sunaga, or rather "the bundle," still seemed far from satisfied, but perhaps he became tired of the performance of writing with his mouth, for his head lay limp on the floor and moved no more. After a brief spell, he looked hard at her, putting every meaning into his large eyes. (*Japanese Tales* 73)

Lt. Sunaga is "essentially" male, but Rampo identifies him with the bugs and undulant motions that characterized the gender-shifting protagonist in "The Martian Canals." That is to say that Sunaga is *motile*; he has assumed the position of fleshy decay and incipient death that characterized Berenice and Waldemar in Poe's stories. But his body wholly body is still essentialized male—it is the site of intense sexual desire, emotional longing, and physical appetite for food. Rampo has completely reserved the sexual polarity of the Poe's paradigm, locating sexual power and control in Mrs. Sunaga :

Suddenly bending over her husband, she smothered his twisted mouth with kisses. Soon, a look of deep contentment and pleasure crept into his eyes, followed by an ugly smile. She continued to kiss him—closing her eyes in order to forget his ugliness—and, gradually, she felt a strong urge to tease this poor cripple, who was so utterly helpless. (*Japanese Tales* 73)

By closing her eyes, the wife eliminates the reciprocity of the gaze. Lt. Sunaga is thereafter increasingly identified as a doll, and his condition with the undulant, rhythmic insect-like state Rampo earlier identified with mortality. The reversal is not complete however.

There seemed to be but one consolation for her miserable "career" as nurse-maid to a cripple : the very fact that this poor, strange thing which not only could neither speak nor hear, but could not even move freely by itself, was by no means made of wood or clay, but was alive and real, possessing every human emotion and instinct—this was a source of boundless fascination for her. Still further, those round eyes of his, which comprised his only expressive organ, speaking so sadly sometimes, and sometimes so angrily—these too had a strange charm. The pitiful thing was that he was incapable of wiping away the tears which those eyes could still shed. And of course, when he was angry, he had no power to threaten her other

than that of working himself into an abnormal beat of frenzy. These fits of wrath usually came on whenever he was reminded that he would never again be able to succumb, of his own free will, to the one overwhelming temptation which was always lurking within him.

Meanwhile, Tokiko also managed to find a secondary source of pleasure in tormenting this helpless creature whenever she felt like it. Cruel? Yes! But it was fun—great fun! . . . (*Japanese Tales* 80)

The residual sexual desire that Rampo allows Lt. Sunaga, and permits Tokiko to exploit dramatically, differentiates Rampo's consciousness from that of Poe. The dance of *motility*, which is nothing less than basic, biologic sexual desire, is always seeking to rejoin its opposite in Rampo's work. Poe worked in fear of that reunion. For Rampo, all torture, all trans—gendered performances, work to heighten consciousness of the primordial oneness of all flesh.

No story makes that clearer than "The Caterpillar," for when Tokiko tires of tormenting her husband, she "accidentally" blinds him :

She had cruelly deprived her husband of his only window to the outside world. What was left to him now? Nothing, absolutely nothing—just his mass of ghastly flesh, in total darkness.

However, she knew it was not her mistake. She felt her husband's expressive eyes had been an obstacle to their being beasts together. The sense of judgement that came to them sometimes was hateful to her. Moreover, in those eyes she recognized something eerie, something inhuman. (*Japanese Tales* 82) ⁸

This passage suddenly clarifies an earlier section of the story. That passage described a dream that Tokiko experienced after arousing her husband to a sexual "frenzy" :

Now that she was wide awake she tried to erase all thoughts of the horrors of the nightmare that had assailed her mind, but the more she tried to forget, the more persistent became the images. First, a mist seemed to rise before her eyes, and when this cleared, she could distinctly see a large lump of flesh, floating in mid—air, spinning and spinning like a top. Suddenly a stout, ugly woman's body seemed to appear from nowhere, and the two figures became interlocked in a mad embrace. The weirdly erotic scene reminded Tokiko of a picture postcard portraying a section of Dante's *Inferno* ; and yet, as her mind drifted, the very disgust and ugliness of the embracing pair seemed to excite all her pent—up passions and to paralyze her nerves. With a shudder she asked herself if she very sexually perverted.

Holding her breasts, she suddenly uttered a piercing cry. Then she looked at her husband intently, like a child gazing at a broken doll. (*Japanese Tales* 75)

The reader who has followed the development of Rampo's use of the gaze and the body is

in position to understand this earlier section as a key to his “radial” reading of Poe. From the initial dream state—mist, and flesh in motion (“The Martian Canal”)—to the doll image (“The Love of a Non—Human”), we can see Rampo’s gaze acquire its biological reductiveness. Tokiko tortures her husband sexually and then extinguishes him by putting out his eyes. She does not kill him. He commits suicide by crawling caterpillar like through the garden behind the house until he finds and plunges into an abandoned well. She has sent him back up the birth canal as surely as Poe’s narrator eliminated that possibility by removing Berenice’s teeth.

Rampo conflates the sexual act and the decay after death of the body. The march of the maggots (detailed in “The Bug”) mimics the moment of creation. This fundamental and uniting motion was first suggested by Poe, in the stories discussed, but he could not understand his own psychic imagery as a later reader might. Rampo’s great insight into Poe was to connect the gaze, the mortality of the body, and sexuality. As recent scholarship has shown, these were present but buried in Poe. Rampo’s genius was to make all three areas performative, thereby showing the porousness, the permeability of sexuality, the body, and decay. In his male imagination of the female body, in his triangulation of the female—male—inanimate gaze, and in his creation of a male Berenice, he was Poe’s ideal reader.

Notes

- 1 Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition*. Princeton : Princeton U. P. 1991, 217.
- 2 Among the films based on Rampo’s work are *Edogawa Rampo Theater: The Pasted Rag Picture*, Dir. Toru Kawashima, 1994 ; *Rampo : Mysterious Women*, Dir : Yoshika, Akio, 1994 ; *Yaneura no Sanposya* (A Stroller in the Attic), Dir : Jissouji, Akio, 1994 ; *Hitodenashi no Koi* (The Love of a Non—Human), Dir. Matsuura, Masako, 1995 ; *Ningen Isu* (The Human Chair), Dir. Mizutani, Toshiyuki, 1997 ; *D Saka no Satsujin Jiken* (A Murder on D Hill), Dir : Jissouji, Akio, 1998 ; *Souseiji* (The Twins), Dir : Tsukamoto, Shinya, 1999.
- 3 Biographical facts from James B. Harris’ introduction to *Japanese Tales* and Lippit’s “Poe in Japan.”
- 4 [http : //www.shinko—elec.co.jp/eng/square/square.htm](http://www.shinko-elec.co.jp/eng/square/square.htm)
- 5 Lippit, 140, gives dates for Rampo’s life that conflict with those of Harris. She dates his earliest stories to 1914, which does not seem consistent. We have used Harris’s dates for these stories.
- 6 Rampo writes about his interest in Freud in *Waga Yume to Shinjitsu* (My Dream and Truth), 172—73.
- 7 Furukawa refers to Rampo’s essay “Futari no Shishou(The Two Teachers)” in the essay. It is about two people who arouse his interest in homosexual love. Iwata Junichi, who was a scholar of Japanese traditional homosexual relationship, and Hamao Shiro, who was a detective writer, introduced Rampo to the western argument about homosexual love of Edward Carpenter, who was one of the defenders of homosexual love as an extension of friendship between two men.
- 8 The last sentence of our translation of this passage varies considerably from that of Harris, who seems to bowdlerize the original. His translation skips over Tokiko’s emotions and proceeds to her action : “Stumbling downstairs, she staggered out into the dark night barefooted. Passing through the back gate of the garden, she rushed out onto the village road, running as though in a nightmare, pursued by specters fast and yet seeming not to move” (82)

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