Exit Salaryman: Revisions of Masculinity in the Literature of Mishima Yukio and Murakami Haruki

Adrian Lore

Richmond, Virginia

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1. Introduction

In modern-day, contemporary Japan, masculinity is most readily identified in the form of the *salaryman* (サラリーマン): a salaried, white-collar employee of a corporate business most often donning a suit, frequently seen stumbling alongside coworkers out of *karaoke* bars as a form of social bonding, and reserved and distant with his wife and children. At its conception, the salaryman represented economic stability and social status, an image of comfort for the growing middle class as early as the 1960s, as reported by Ezra Vogel in his ethnographic study *Japan's New Middle Class: The Salary Man and His Family in a Tokyo Suburb* (1963). Though decades have passed, this image of masculinity remains the most pervasive and hegemonic form of masculinity in the country, despite also being an increasingly poor representation of newer generation's ideals of masculinity and gender expression. Over time, the figure of the salaryman has come to be something of a stereotype, a figure that is even mocked and parodied by comedians and TV hosts. As described by Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda in *Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan: Dislocating the Salaryman Doxa* (2002), edited by anthropologists James Roberson and Suzuki Nobue, the salaryman is an almost unappealing figure, toiling overtime and neglecting his family's emotional needs.

To state that the salaryman is the *only* widespread image of masculinity in Japan would be a massive generalization, and yet there is a strong sense of anxiety around conforming to this image and to the broader performance of masculinity, at least in public contexts. Even from the moment a young man is preparing to graduate university he is expected to prepare for job

hunting (就職活動, *shuushoku katsudou*), activities ranging from job counseling, interviews and mock interviews, and, most importantly, wearing a suit every day of his job search, even during the hottest months. Recent trends compiled by the Gender Equality Bureau Cabinet Office (男女共同参画局, *danjo kyoudou sankakukyoku*) in the "White Paper on Gender Equality in 2021" indicate that over 56% of men attend university and would likely complete those activities to eventually become salarymen, while other statistics indicate that over 80% of people in Japan are considered salaried employees (a designation that does not *necessarily* make them proper salarymen, in terms of the image presented.) That said, what it means to be a salaryman has changed over the years, which will be explored more in the following sections.

Considering the pervasiveness of salarymen, it's notable that in works by Mishima Yukio (三島由紀夫, 1925-1970) or Murakami Haruki (村上春樹, 1949-present), two of the most well known authors in and outside of Japan, masculinity tends to take a much wider variety of forms. As I will discuss, both authors subvert expectations of masculinity in a manner which raises questions about identity and the anxieties and pressures that form when faced with expectations of masculinity and manhood. Though not frequently compared side by side, the two authors produce an interesting dialogue of social pressures and masculinity from World War II to the economic plateau of the 1990s. Together they explore the different ways individuals have reacted to hegemonic masculinity, revealed both in the desire to possess masculinity when obtaining those ideals in the self is impossible or impractical and in the form of resistant to universalizing and hegemonic narratives, each in their own way a response to anxiety.

I will begin the discussion of masculinity in Mishima and Murakami's novels first by tracing the larger context for the historic narratives of gender and masculinity in Japan, beginning with the pre-Meiji restoration periods most idealized by Mishima and other

nationalists, leading up to the development of the salaryman image. I will then introduce a brief literary review of current scholarship pertaining to these authors before going into a close reading of Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask* and Murakami's *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle,* major early works by these authors. The themes within these novels will be analyzed and then compared in the conclusion, drawing a perspective on the relationship between masculinity and anxiety as well as broader representations of "manliness" in Japan.

The section on *Confessions of a Mask* will focus on the physical expectations of manhood and the ways in which the narrator, who is born sickly and struggles to meet these standards, responds to them, as well as the nationalist narratives and sadomasochism that form his homoerotic ideals of masculinity. Each of these factors culminates in his desire for his boyhood love, who we will find is representative (both in body and in characteristics the narrator projects onto him) of these masculine ideals. Ultimately, it will become clear that the narrator is following a known tradition of Japanese homosociality, in which he first models himself on young beauties who are "impaled" and later fantasizes himself as the impaler of young, beautiful men. In contrast, the main character of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* will be analyzed as an aesthete potentially embodying more modern images of the herbivore man, juxtaposed with the universalizing and globalizing image of the identity-less technocrat in the form of his brother in law. In both novels, class differences and individual identity will play a large role in the exploration of masculinity and anxiety. Each of these ideals, the homosociality of Mishima and masculinity in the 1950s, and the individuality and aspirations for identity building of Murakami and the 1990s, will be contrasted to unravel a more nuanced idea of Japanese masculinity, beyond that of the salaryman.

Before the salaryman: masculine ideas from Tokugawa to Taisho Japan

The salaryman ideal is an image with implications of globalization and economic modernization that may have taken root as early as the Tokugawa period, but would not take a wider hegemonic foothold until just before the second world war. Also called the *Edo* period in reference to the shogunate capital, located in what is now called Tokyo, this period was a feudal era with a distinct class system rife with a cultural memory of samurai with ideals such as honor and loyalty that have influenced masculinity and perceptions of masculinity up to the current era. These are the images of men and masculinity that are still held and admired by conservative individuals who people up ideals of samurai and a *bushidō* code as representative for a time when Japan was supposedly at its best - to be compared with a feminized present where contemporary masculinity looks very different from that esteemed in the past. This fantasy of a prescribed *bushidō* set of ethics influenced Mishima's image of masculinity strongly, as is especially apparent in some of his more political titles. Noted by the late G. Cameron Hurst, Director of the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, in his exploration of the imagined and real history of *bushidō* in his paper, "Death, Honor, and Loyalty: The *Bushidō* Ideal," these ideals of samurai ethics is presumed by many to be the link which ultimately evolved into Japanese imperialism and later war practices such as *kamikaze* (Hurst, 511.) Even more spectacularly, according to Hurst, the very idea of a *bushidō* code, now so recognized and even accepted by respectable scholars, may have never entered into the modern world's vocabulary had it not been introduced by Nitobe Inazo, who lived from 1862-1933 and was actually a scholar of Western studies (Hurst, 512).

Though not an expert in Japanese history or literature[1], Nitobe published a reference guide on samurai culture and its code of ethics titled *Budishō: The Soul of Japan.* The ideas he presented were quickly absorbed into both the mainstream consciousness of Western and global understandings of what makes a Japanese person distinctly "Japanese" and the ultranationalists and conservative movements within Japan that admired traditional images of militarized masculinity (Hurst, 513). This fundamental misunderstanding of what it meant to be a samurai, as Hurst describes in his objections to Nitobe's writing, is that it assumes "there was a normative system for ethical thought, a 'code' of behavior that was first universal among the samurai and then in fact became the 'soul' of all Japanese citizens," as if it "could be recited as readily as the Ten Commandments," (Hurst, 513). This racial essentialism becomes the later assumption that Japanese nationalists and imperialists of World War II were only following in the same spirit inherent to the code of ethics of *bushidō*.

For many contemporary nationalists and Tokugawa period romanticizers, there is a certain romantic appeal to *bushidō* ethics: courage, strength, loyalty, chivalry; the easy connection between body and masculinity (a favored theme in Mishima's novels), and even the connection to military power and global influence. However, the term exists only sparsely in Tokugawa era writing and is more a constructed representation of historical fiction than a firm reality. What was a much more widespread and recognized practice among samurai was not a centralizing code of ethics but actually a homosocial mentorship in which young men received education and training while having sexual relationships with older men, most often referred to as *nanshoku* (男色, composed of the characters for "male" and "colors", sometimes referred to as *wakashudou* or "way of youths"). While the practice of *nanshoku* existed in various forms before

[1] In fact, Hurst asserts that Nitobe expressed surprise at not having coined the term himself, apparently unaware of its usage in the Tokugawa period. (Hurts, 512)

the Tokugawa period, it is heavily associated with samurai culture of this period and is notable in how accepted it was as a cultural experience. It is only later, after influence from Western psychologists, that these same-sex experiences became pathologized and criminalized. Yet, in many ways these relationships and homosocial bonds still existed within later Japanese periods[2]. I will illustrate the connections between *nanshoku* and *Confessions of a Mask* later in this paper, where I will further explore how the pattern of *nanshoku* relationships played out.

Whether or not *nanshoku* is a "homosexual" practice, in the modern sense, is debatable. Gender wasn't structured in the same system in the Edo period than now: young men (determined less so by actual age and more by dress and haircut) were not considered the same as adult men, and therefore sexual relationships between them don't inherently indicate a same-sex relationship. That said, there is plenty of evidence of relationships occurring between people who would have been considered, by age, the "same sex" as well and a man could reasonably delay his "adulthood" as long as either he or his family deemed appropriate. Male prostitutes often delayed changing their hairstyle to the "adult" style for this reason[3]. Similarly, many Western scholars of modern Japanese queer research (Mark McLelland, author of titles such as *Queer Japan from the Pacific War to the Internet Age* and *Male Homosexuality in Modern Japan* is a common example) have noted that typical Japanese understandings of gender and sexuality tend to conflate the two. A queer man is presumed to at the same time be a crossdresser embodying the role of a woman, leading to murky overlap between gender and sexual identities that would have firmer definitional lines in the West. In fact, before globalization and the Meiji Restoration, an individual's sexuality was not understood as an

[2] See Natsume Soseki's *Kokoro,* a story depicting a bond between a younger man and his older mentor with a strong homosocial narrative and implications of same-sex desire.
[3] See: Leupp, Gary P. *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan.* University of California Press 1995.

identity at all. There was no words to express “I am a gay person”; those words and concepts were introduced later[4]. Meiji restoration era interaction with Western sciences introduced first the idea that to possess same-sex desire was a psychological flaw in need of treatment and soon after the criminalization of acts of sodomy. Age, too, became less associated with gender: a young man was still of the male sex, as was an old man. Both the criminalization of same-sex desire and the introduction of sexuality as an identity resulted in a distinct queer culture heavily associated with the commodified world of entertainment and kabuki theaters, places which Mishima would later frequent in the 1940s to 1960s.

Japan was still in the process of modernizing, beyond adoption of psychologized understandings of identity and sexuality, during the years leading up to Mishima’s birth. Officials and students often traveled to the West to study systems of government, economics, and other technologies with the ultimate goal of introducing them into Japan. This modernization is often overlapped with ideas of Westernization, however, the goal was less to assimilate perfectly into the Western model and more so to choose which technologies which lend best to the national (and imperial) goals of the government. This urgency toward modernization stemmed largely from the colonization of China and the opening of Japanese trade to the West. Government officials, wishing to prevent the same Western imperialist invasion being acted upon themselves, sought to attain “an equal position to these [Western] powers in the international domain,” (Ishikawa, 281-282) by encouraging technological advances and rapid modernization. Much of early Japanese imperialism thought followed the same thought pattern: that Japan might lead (East) Asia against Western powers, a justification that was later made for colonization - an effort to “improve” the nations they conquered and lead them all to greater prosperity, as the claim went.

[4] The words ゲイ (*gei*) and レズ (*rezu*) taken from “gay” and “lesbian” are loan words.

While Japanese modernization is most often studied in terms of the Meiji restoration and subsequent periods, Toyomasa Fuse argues, in *Modernization and Stress in Japan,* published in 1975, that modernization actually began during the Tokugawa period. Fuse writes that the Tokugawa period "introduc[ed] enormous changes in urbanization, population growth, a rise in literacy and mass education, emergence of an efficient, centralized bureaucracy, agricultural innovations," and emphasizes that these "change took place when Japan had practically no contact with the West." (Fuse, 2-3) That said, modernization and Westernization remain strongly linked in scholarship of the Meiji Restoration period. In the early years, the government leaders and elites who traveled to Europe and the Americas brought back facets of Western culture and lifestyle, including taking the image of the European dandy as an ideal of new, sophisticated, and modern masculinity (Karlin, 41). The fastidious attention to fashion and appearance these officials adopted was "condemned" as "Western decadence" by those outside of the government, linking it to the effeminacy of fashion, consumption, and materialism" (Karlin, 41-42). As Karlin notes, these criticisms imply an "anxiety about the threat of feminization," (Karlin, 42) which remains a consistent theme throughout the various forms and dichotomies of masculinity that evolve in modern Japanese history.

However, adopting the "decadence" of the West was a tactical political move to identify the Japanese government with Western powers. (Karlin, 44; Ishikawa, 281-282) As Tomasz Kamusella, a scholar of history, notes in researching the colonization of Hokkaido:

> The purpose [of the presence Western goods] was more subtle. The adoption in Japan of arbitrary elements of Western civilization, such as new religious beliefs and dietary practices, was so much removed from anything previously known in the Japanese home, that it functioned as an outward sign of modernity, signifying widespread acceptance of the government's unshakable decision to modernize Japan by westernizing it. With modernization being equated with westernization, the adoption of superficial trappings of some western cultural practices formed the visible index of the more profound

> transformation of Japanese through modernizations that was underway, though perhaps out of sight. (Kamusella, 34)

Thus, the government officials may have been considered overly extravagant and superficial, but in many ways were responding to modernity and attempting to bring it into Japanese culture, though scholars[5] argue whether or not this was Westernization (as stated before, change began in the Tokugawa period, pre-Western influence.)

Compared to the dandy aesthetic of the government elites, the young political activists known as *sōshi* were rougher, participated in martial arts, and believed that "violent action was often a necessary means of social change." (Karlin, 58-59) Though it is before Mishima's time, it is easy to make a connection between these nationalist activists and his own later political aspirations. The dichotomy between these two forms of masculinity; an elitist, "feminized" masculinity concerned with "superficial" appearance versus a rougher, military-minded, "manlier" masculinity unconcerned with hygiene and fashion follow into later periods, taking the forms of high collar gentleman and the *bankara* man (Karlin, 67-68; materialist men of refined taste in the first case and vulgar, stoic, rugged men in the latter), the former eventually

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[5] Ishikawa describes the nuances of the Westernization of Japan as follows: "This instrumental concept of Westernization was inseparably connected with a spirit of nationalism. Combining 'Western technology' and 'Japanese spirit' was the goal. This type of nationalism developed an ideal of 'Japanism' in the last decade of the 19th century, which emphasized the superiority of traditional Japanese values." (Ishikawa, 282)

Ravina too describes these nuances: ""The language of the Meiji Restoration embodies a profound contradiction. The new government described its actions and policies as a "revival of ancient kingly rule" (ōsei fukko), but also as a revolution (isshin). These phrases are in direct opposition: fukko refers explicitly to the ancient past, while isshin declares, on the contrary, that all is being made new" and "Not only did the government fuse the glorification of the past with an embrace of radical change, it also reconciled a celebration of Japanese uniqueness with the adoption of new Western ideas and technologies. Thus, government discourse encompassed the dual tensions of "both new and ancient" and "both foreign and uniquely Japanese." (Ravina, 212)

Lastly, Fuse notes, "Even Japan's massive industrialization after the Meiji era (1868-1912) does not support the case for an overwhelming 'Westernization' impact, because in this very process of modernization (of which industrialization is merely a part), Japan has not become 'less Japanese'" (Fuse, 3) in *Modernization and Stress in Japan.*

developing into the earliest images of the *salaryman*, which would eventually become the hegemonic image of Japanese masculinity.

2. Mishima Yukio: Confessions of Masculinity

Scholarship on Mishima focuses on two focal points: nationalism[6] and sexuality. In the former case, his ritual suicide is the primary point of concern, with some, like Edward Seidensticker, a preimminent translator of Japanese literature, and Hisaaki Yamanouchi, Professor Emeritus of English at Tokyo University, and Dan P. McAdams, a Professor for the Deparment of Psychology at Northwestern University tackling the topic from the question of personal intentions, analyzing his writing and public statements to consider whether or not he achieved what he was hoping to and what evidence he left behind that may have led to the incident surrounding his death. Andrew Rankin tackles Mishima from a different angle: in "A Wildean Theory of Yukio Mishima," published in 2013, he considers understanding Mishima's character as an aesthete with a strong appreciation for beauty, something he does not see as conflicting with his nationalist and militarist interests. Meanwhile, Dick Wagenaar and Iwamoto Yoshio, in their paper "Yukio Mishima: Dialectics of Mind and Body," published in 1975, understand Mishima instead as a man who struggled with the identity of his mind versus that of his body: "What emerges most clearly from this psychology is a conflict between two antithetical modes of being. To establish one's existence either within the confines of mentality or to do so within the confines of physicality–that was the dilemma at the center of his thinking about himself," (Wagenaar and Iwamoto, 1). Most influential to this paper, Saeki Junko, a Professor of

[6] See also: Susan J. Napier, "Death and the Emperor: Mimishma, Ōe, and the Politics of Betrayal" (1989); Atrid Lac, "Community and Death: Mishima, Bataille, and Metaphysics of the Flesh" (2017); Roger H. Brown, "Yasuoka Masahiro's 'New Discourse on Bushidō Philosophy': Cultivating Samurai Spirit and Men of Character for Imperial Japan" (2013).

Social Sciences at Doshisha University, considers the connection between *nanshoku* and Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask* in "From *Nanshoku* to Homosexuality: A Comparative Study of Mishima Yukio's *Confessions of a Mask,*" published in 1997.

Confessions of a Mask, Mishima's second novel that propelled him into the greater literary scene, was published in 1949 and translated into English less than ten years later. The Japanese title, *kamen no kokuhaku* (仮面の告白), can have several interpretations, the primary interpretation being that the narrating character, known mostly as "I" but also by the childhood nickname Kochan, feels as though he is playing a role in his life; "wearing a mask" so to speak. The resulting novel is therefore the confession of his inner truth. Similarly, the mask can suggest that it's the author's truth, rather than the character's, which is the perspective taken by those who choose to view the novel as more autobiographical (largely due to strong parallels between the narrator's life and childhood and Mishima's own) than fictional. However, if interpreted rather as "a mask's confessions," it can be read as the confession not of his identity but of the mask itself. That is, the confessions that the mask projects, and not necessarily the truth of the narrator. This is the argument that Graham Parkes, lecturer of philosophy at the University of Vienna, takes with the position that "the title…suggests not a confession about using a mask, but rather that the mask itself is doing the confessing – and not necessarily about its being a mask. That homosexuality is the thing being masked[7] is not what is important: the real issue is the presentation of desire in general and the conforming of its expressions to socially acceptable modes." (Parkes, 72) This is also the position of this close reading, with the additional lens of expectations of masculinity and class as driving factors for the narrator's thought processes and desires.

[7] Marjorie Rhine explores the ways in which the narrator justifies, rather than masks, his sexual orientation in "Glossing Scripts and Scripting Pleasure in Mishima's 'Confessions of a Mask'" (1999)

The narrator is the primary focus of this analysis. Like Mishima himself, the narrator grows up with his parents and grandparents in a home without many luxurious items despite his father being a government official, largely due to debts. Also like Mishima, the narrator's grandmother is the primary figure of his early life, entirely taking over the responsibilities and duties of raising him – this would not be the case for his siblings, who he notes have a more "normal" childhood. Much of the novel centers around his early life, including his school years into the second world war, where he is mistakenly believed to have tuberculosis and so he fails his physical examination to be drafted into the military. However, whether or not the parallels indicate that the novel is autobiographical isn't necessary for exploring the depictions of masculinity employed by Mishima. *Confessions of a Mask* is almost a meditation on the experiences and images that lead to particular masculine ideals or the assumptions of socially acceptable actions in society. The way the narrator navigates both his internal desires and the socially acceptable forms and image of masculinities that are idealized in the novel. Because it is from his perspective and centers on his own personal thoughts and experiences, only one other character besides the narrator, Omi, will be closely detailed, and even then it is more the narrator's impressions of Omi that make up the analysis than the character himself.

Like much of Mishima's writing, *Confessions of a Mask* contains major themes of masculinity and nationality which he closely intertwines. First, on the topic of masculinity and broader identities related to class, the narrator invokes images of "rough" working-class men as ideal or desirable representations of masculinity. Perhaps from his own position of relative privilege, he attaches a sense of tragedy to them that he finds highly desirable, even as early as boyhood. These images include strength in the muscles, health in the body, and hair and sweat as physical markers of manliness that he will later reject in women. From there, he includes

Western imagery of knights and more local soldiers as objects of desire or emulation during his youth. Beyond tragedy, death becomes a particular fascination of his. In this section, symbols of Japanese nationality will be included from the text. Finally, the overall impression of masculinity and desire as imagined in *Confessions of a Mask* will be summarized in the figure of Omi, an older student at his school who the narrator describes as his first love. Overall, the image of a laboring, tragic, and physically fit young man will be the ultimate form of the narrator's desires and anxieties surrounding masculinity.

Body, class, and tragedy: the night soil man

Confessions of a Mask is broken up into four chapters, beginning with the narrator's early life described in the form of loosely related, strung together memories that make up the bulk of the first two. He uses these memories to paint a picture of the development of his sexuality and fetishes, drawing comparison from as early as when he was a toddler. In addition to exploring the history of his homosexual tendencies, the narrator makes implications about masculinity and, more specifically, manliness. The images he associates with masculinity – muscles, work clothes, and a "feeling of tragedy" among others – bring to mind the "rough," working-class masculinity that developed in subversion to the "effeminate" and elitist government minister and later to the hegemonic ideal of the middle-class, well-dressed salaryman. Notably, his father is a minister and embodies all the traits he finds undesirable. However, the narrator suggests that the *root* of the family's problems were actually due to his grandparents. He explains, "祖父の事業慾と祖母の病気と浪費癖とが一家の悩みの種だった。" "My grandfather's business interests and my grandmother's illness and spending habits were the source of my family's woes"; (My

translation[8]; Mishima, 8) From the start, we are led to understand that foreign and business interest is a negative influence which causes the emasculation of his father and grandfather, reducing both their power and their worthiness of respect in the narrator's eyes.

Meanwhile, we are also made to associate femininity with sickness through his grandmother. In being raised by her and in her quarters, and only permitted to play with girls, he is being raised "sickly," which we can naturally observe in the way he describes the development of his body. As a result, the working class masculinity that he will desire is the ideal that he feels least adept at representing himself, both because his frail body fails to meet the physical standards he associates with being manly and because wealth aside, his family's social class is already markedly above the men he idealizes. The life he envisions as a laborer is out of reach for him, both by birth and by physically being incapable of performing the same kind of work, ruling out this model of masculinity for him except as an object of desire and fascination.

His initial conception of masculinity is first realized in the form of a young man (in the text, simply, 若者, *wakamono* meaning young person) in his earliest unquestionable memory, unquestionable here to differentiate between earlier memories that may have been pure imagination. This young man he crosses paths with represents his first "manly" ideal, with the following description: "肥桶を前後に荷い、汚れた手拭で鉢巻をし、仮血色のよい美しい頬と輝やく目をもち、足で重みを踏みわけながら坂を下りて来た。それは汚穢屋糞尿汲取人であった。彼は地下足袋を穿き、紺の股引を穿いていた。" "He was carrying [on his shoulder] a night soil bucket back and forth, wearing a dirty cloth as a headband, with beautiful ruddy cheeks and

[8] For the purposes of this paper, I will be using my own translations of the Japanese text. However, *Confessions of a Mask* was translated into English in 1958 by Meredith Weatherby. (Mishima, Yukio. *Confessions of a Mask.* New Directions, 1958.)

Similarly, I will be using my own translations of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle,* originally translated into English by Jay Rubin in 1998. (Murakami, Haruki. *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle*. Vintage International, 1998.) Note that in the English translation some chapters had to be condensed or removed to account for page number restrictions.

shining eyes. He stepped with the full weight of his feet as he came down the slope. He was a night soil collector. He was wearing work tabi [split toed shoes] and navy work trousers."; (My translation, Mishima, 11) The first immediate item to note is that this man performs labor that causes physical exertion and has the reputation of being a "dirty" job. A night soil man's (汚穢屋, *owaiya*, made up the characters meaning "pollution," "dirty," and "shop") purpose was to collect human waste to keep the city clean. The other things that stand out to the narrator are his attire, clothes typical for the sort of work he does, the headband he wears, and ruddy cheeks. These are all markers of a working-class masculinity that would have been unfamiliar compared to that modeled in his household.

It's important to the narrator that this man is a laborer. The narrator details the physical strain of his work: the heavy buckets of human waste are carried on his shoulder and he takes "heavy steps" with his "full weight" as he approaches them. This is the sort of physicality that the narrator becomes attracted to, something he will later refer to as "vitality", something like strength of spirit in Omi. His work is "dirty", perhaps unenviable, but the harder and more tragic the work the more the narrator is attracted to him - with "him" broadly being any hard working laborer who is young and physically fit. Later, this attraction will be placed on sailors (also laborers but of a different nature), men at war, and rough youths. The attire of laborers, here outdoor sandals called tabi and work trousers, also comes to represent to the narrator an image of masculinity and sensuality. This "vitality" and strength is something he perceives himself as lacking, especially as a young boy. He is later diagnosed as anemic, which leads him to suggest that his "lack" of blood could explain his future "bloodlust." Even more broadly, his perception that he lacks masculinity and strength could, from his understanding, rationalize his attraction to

strong, “manly” men, in the sense that he is seeking to connect with or fill himself with something he doesn’t inherently possess.

After describing the incident, the narrator explains his internal revelations about his attraction to the night soil man, which further emphasizes that this man symbolized exactly what he wished to become: “ようりかく見上げながら、「私が彼になりたい」という欲求、「私が彼でありたい」という欲求が私をしめつけた。” “As I finally looked up [at him], the desire ‘I want to become him’ and ‘I want to be him’ choked me”; (My translation, Mishima, 12) Here, the narrator explains that he was “choked” with the desire to not only become him, *kare ni naritai* (彼になりたい) , but also to be him, *kare de aritai* (彼でありたい). He walks the reader through his thought process, revealing that there were two important fixations to his desire: “一つの重点は彼の紺の股引であり、一つの重点は彼の職業であった” (“One emphasis was his dark blue plants, and the other emphasis was his profession”; (My translation, Mishima, 12) Again, his fascination with his trousers ends up centering on the crotch, despite it being years before he develops a sense of sexuality. He further describes it as a “devotion” (傾倒, *keitou*), which develops for reasons he couldn’t yet understand at the time.

Some time after this incident, his desire for the night soil man’s profession took another turn. It began to symbolize for him a kind of “deep sorrow” (悲哀, *hiai*), which he describes as a “piercing sorrow” (鋭い悲哀, *surudoi hiai,* literally “sharp” sorrow) which gave him a yearning (憧れ, *akogare*) feeling (Mishima, 12). Though the narrator was at the time a little boy younger than ten, he reflects that he, “きわめて感覚的な意味での「悲劇的なもの」を、私は彼の職業から感じた,” “In the most sensuous way, I felt something ‘tragic’ about his profession”; (My translation; Mishima, 12). That he feels this is something sensual is again likely a reflection of his class background. The “tragedy” of the job is sensualized as something “other” and

romanticized and desired because it is something unattainable except in the form of desire. Like the strength and muscles of the night soil man and other men he meets in the future, the narrator begins to seek out this sense of tragedy and applies it to his vision of masculinity. Along this sense of tragedy, he begins to be attracted to feelings of carelessness or recklessness (投げやり, *nagayari na kanji*), an affinity toward danger (危険に対する親近の感じ, *kiken ni taisuru shinkin no kanji*), and a remarkable mix of nothingness and vitality (虚無と活力とのめざましい混合と謂った感じ, *kyomu to katsuryoku to no mezamashii kongou to yutta kanji;* (My translations; Mishima 12); all feelings which he begins to associate with masculinity through this initial encounter.

As mentioned, this form of masculinity is not something he feels capable of fully embodying, and he acknowledges this with the statement, "私の知らない・又そこから私が永遠に排除されているように思える「悲劇的な生活」を彼らから強烈に**感受させられたからた゛った。**"; "It was a treasure to be able to sensitively feel strongly from them the 'tragic life' that I don't know and from which I feel I am forever excluded"; (My translation; Mishima, 13) This almost poetic sense of tragedy, connected to the unforms of labor jobs, and a general sense of this lifestyle and masculinity itself being in a sense unreachable, implies that over time he associates masculinity itself as something equally unattainable. Instead, he enjoys that he is able to feel this tragedy and by extension this sense of masculinity *through* the men he encounters, as sources of desire and interest.

Images of soldiers and nation as symbols of masculine same-sex desire

Mishima was roughly three years old when Emperor Shōwa was enthroned in 1928. The world he was born into was vastly more modern than Japan had ever been before: literacy

advanced through the population, communication infrastructure was improved, and the reach of state institutions was far greater than in previous years (Wilson, 322). The advances of mass media allowed the enthronement to not only receive some of the highest public participation, but it was also the first to be televised, distributing nation-building imagery across the country: the image of the emperor, of course, but also the flag and the national anthem (Wilson, 316-321). This was a time when not only was Japan seeking further equivalence with the West, especially as an imperial power, but also seeking a central countrywide nationalism that was more much achievable through mass media; which is not, of course, to assume that every Japanese person in the 1920s and later 1930s was committed to this symbolism.

By the 1930s, this nationalism was developing a particularly militaristic turn within politics and the government. Signs of imperialistic ideas and expansionism were prominent: militaristic advances on China and the Manchurian Incident in 1931, withdrawal from the league of legends in 1933, and eventually the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) which was "followed by the National Spiritual Mobilization Campaign (*Kokumin seishin sōdōin undō*), which forced all Japanese subjects to devote themselves to the war effort" (Suzuka, 327). Within the borders of the nation, the people of Japan could enjoy increasingly violent reports cheerfully depicted in newspapers like the Nishi Nishi Shimbun Tokyo Newspaper, which included photographs of soldiers posed beside boastful claims of their record number of kills. Under this backdrop, the first references to the idea of a salaryman begin to surface. Like the high collar gentleman of the later Meiji period, the salaryman dressed in a Western-style suit, but diverged from these original "dandy" figures in reception.

The salaryman grew to prominence at the same time as the middle class expanded; a result of military and economic growth in the 1930s (Dasgupta, 39). As Romit Dasgupta notes, at

this time salarymen are prominent characters in novels and film narratives, appearing as the rising ideal when it came to Japanese masculinity (Dasgupta, 39). The adoption of the salaryman as the hegemonic standard truly flourishes in the postwar period only to then begin to take a less positive image as time continues. This shift in imagery, though occurring later, parallels well the narrator's adoration of working-class masculinity in comparison to the growing middle and upper middle classes and salaryman idealism. In response to a shift in expectations of labor and employment, the narrator clings to the more traditional standards of masculinity, which contrasts him to much of the popular representation of the time period. As an additional point of anxiety one of the major transitions marking the end of the second world war is the American occupation of Japan, during which a new constitution is drafted and the emperor proclaims over the radio that he is not a god - an event that to this day is controversial in State Shinto and nationalist political parties. This event also had a strong impact on Mishima and influenced much of his political thought and ideals.

The nationalism depicted in *Confessions of a Mask* is much more subtle than Mishima's later work[9], yet it is still fundamentally linked to his vision of manliness and masculinity. The image of the sun is perhaps one of the most recognizable images of Japan and Japanese imperialism both depicted in the now controversial rising sun flag[10], and associated with the Imperial line. The sun appears numerous times in the novel, which holds significance because of Mishima's far-right associations. In many ways, the way the narrator connects the sun and his earliest memories positions himself and his experiences as representative of the nation. In that sense, though he is confessing to sexual desires that he supposedly rejects in himself, during a

[9] The short story "Patriotism" (憂国, *yuukoku*, 1961) and *The Sea of Fertility* tetralogy (豊饒の海, *houjou no umi*, 1969-1971) are strong examples of works which are tonally much more nationalist.
[10] Controversial because it is the flag that was used by the Japanese navy during (and prior to) World War II and is perceived as a symbol of imperialism and military aggression.

time period when queerness was often criminalized, these desires can be read as asserting a connection to historic traditions of *nanshoku* that were culturally acceptable practices during the Edo period, again an idealized time in history for models of masculinity in the form of samurai and laborers.

In nearly every memory that the narrator cites the sun appears in some form or another, either noted for how bright it is or in the reflections of water. This is especially true in the opening chapters of the novel: he even goes as far as to claim that he recalls his birth, or at least once *believed* he recalled his birth, clearly remembering the reflection of light from the sun in the water basin:

> が、私には一箇所だけありありと自分の目で見たとしか思われないところがあった。産湯を使わされた盥のふちの所である。下したての爽やかな木肌の盥で、内がわから見ていると、ふちのところにほんのりと光りがさしていた。（中略）しかしそのふちの下の所の水は、反射のためか、それともそこへも光りさし入っていたのか、なごやかに照り映えて、小さな光る波同士がたえず鉢合わせをしているようにみえた。
>
> However, there was one place [in memory] where I could only think I had seen it [his birth] with my own eyes. It is the image [place] of the edge of the basin where the water was used for the first bath. It was a fresh, wooden bowl and when I looked inside I could see faint light shining on the rim…But the water at the bottom of the rim, either because of the reflection or because light was shining through it, glowed peacefully with what seemed to be small, gentle, shining waves constantly running into each other. (My translation; Mishima, 6-7)

This first memory, despite being one he later explains must have been imagined – because the sunlight would suggest he was born in the afternoon, when in reality he was born in the evening – is descriptive enough to be believable and lends to the connection between himself and images of imperialism. He remembers his first bath, (産湯, *ubuyu*), the freshness and material of the bowl, and most importantly, he describes the light (光り, *hikari*) reflecting on the water, giving the impression that there are small waves (波, *nami*) in the basin. Notably, waves are also a recognizable image of Japan, especially in the wood-block prints of the Edo period. These

images stand out. Regardless of the real conditions of his birth, it's clear that he wants to connect himself and his birth with the mythos of the nation.

Interestingly, this first memory that the narrator shares in his "confession" directly parallels the last incident in the novel: when the narrator takes Sonoko, the woman he dated but never married and later is discovered to have married another man upon their reunion, to an apparently low-end dance hall. There, he catches sight of the reflection of a spilled beverage left behind by a young man whose death he fantasized about. These are the last lines of the novel: "時刻だった。私は立ち上るとき、もう一度日向の椅子のほうをぬすみ見た。一団は踊りに行ったとみえ、空っぽの椅子が照りつく日差のなかに置かれ、卓の上にこぼれている何かの飲物が、ぎらぎらと凄まじい反射をあげた。" "It was time [to go]. When I stood up, I stole a glance [over] at the sunny chair [where the rough youths were behaving boisterously earlier]. The gang seemed to have gone to dance, leaving behind vacant chairs in the burning sunshine and some sort of beverage spilled out on the table, giving a glaring, terrible reflection." (My translation; Mishima, 238). In both this memory and his first, the word for reflection (反射, *hansha*) is used, but in this case, the imagery suggests a much more menacing sun. These are not the reflections of gentle waves as in his birth. This is something "glaring, terrible," maybe even accusing. The change can be interpreted multiple ways. It can be read that the soft reflections, perhaps even the hand of fate or the sun goddess Amaterasu, set in motion the events of the narrator's life. Or it could be seen as the moment that the narrator reflects on and considers all of the moments of his life that led him here - perhaps following the exact narration of the novel. Even more likely, however, is that despite "wearing a mask," the narrator can't escape who he is or his desires for masculinity, however sexual or sadistic.

The narrator's more violent desires are first revealed in a fascination with knights and soldiers: young men doomed to die in a tragic manner, which is again one of his earliest fascinations. The first memory that he outlines revolves around a picture book containing a painting of a knight, which he enjoys before the time he can read:

> よろいその絵というのは白馬にまたがって剣をかざしているジャンヌ・ダルクであった。馬は鼻孔を怒らし、逞しい前肢で砂塵を蹴立てていた。ジャンヌ・ダルクが身に着けた白銀の鎧には、何か美しい紋章があった。彼は美しい顔を顔当から覗かせ、凛々しく抜身を青空にふりかざして、「死」へか、ともかく何かしら不吉な力をもった翔びゆく対象へ立ち向かっていた。私は彼が次の瞬間に殺されるだろうと信じた。いそいで頁をめくったら、彼の殺されている絵が見られるかもしれぬ。
>
> The picture of the person in the armor was Joan of Arc, riding a white horse and holding a sword. The horse had its nostrils flared and its burly forelegs kicking up a cloud of dust. Joan of Arc's silver armor had some sort of beautiful crest on it. With a beautiful face peeking out from his (at this point, the author has understood Joan of Arc to be a man) hood, he gallantry drew his sword up against the blue sky, confronting death or at any rate a flying object of some ominous power. I believed he would be killed in the next moment. If I turned the page quickly, I might see a picture of him being killed. (My translation; Mishima, 14)

In this early image of masculinity, this time in the form of a European-style knight, rather than an image of Japanese nationality or depiction of working-class fantasy. Still, this representation has much in common with the original night soil man: the knight wears attire that marks his role and suggests strength, strength is again suggested in the legs of the horse, and he is confronting (hopelessly, from the narrator's perception) some kind of deep-rooted tragedy. Notably, picture books are among the few books that the narrator explicitly references - more often, he writes only that he was reading "a book" or "the kind of book a young man could recommend to a young woman" - and even then, he doesn't provide a specific title, rendering this one of the more specific texts he alludes to.

What he enjoys is the beauty of the knight coupled with his strength and fearlessness in facing tragedy, though he is perhaps destined to fail. Early death is one of the narrator's early fixtures and fascination. The narrator spends paragraphs pouring over the details of how this

knight and other young men might die or the gruesome ways he himself might be involved in their deaths, a fantasy which he never makes into reality. However, Joan of Arc quickly becomes an image of disgust when one of his nurses tells him about the story behind the picture. She says to him, "「この人男みたいでしょう。でも女なんですよ、本当は。女が男のなりをして戦争へ行ってお国をためにつくしたお話ですのよ」" "This person look like a man. But really, she is a woman. The story is that she pretended to be a man to go off to war and serve her country"; (My translation; Mishima, 15). Even though moments ago he greatly admired Joan of Arc, the moment her sex is revealed to him he describes, "打ちひしがれた気持" "a crushed or knocked back feeling"; (My translation; Mishima, 5), not at all appreciating the same aspects of masculinity and bravery when applied instead to a woman. This is in part because the objects of his desire are men, specifically. The masculinity he attributed to the knight he perceived as a man was ruined for him if the knight was instead a woman. He admits: "現在も私には女の男装へ根強い・説明しがたい嫌悪がある" "Even now, I have a deep rooted and unexplainable disgust toward women dressing themselves as men"; (My translation; Mishima, 15). However, this revulsion is perhaps a little ironic given that the narrator dresses up as a woman more than once in his childhood.

It's important to note that this crossdressing play was not so much an exploration of gender as it was an exploration of sex roles. As mentioned, the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* can be read as someone seeking a place in the *nanshoku* continuum of same-sex desire. Saeki notes that the narrator both conforms with the *nanshoku* tradition in the sense that his same-sex desire is very age based (he first models himself on representations of young men dying or being "impaled" and later desires those same younger men but instead positions himself as "impaler"), yet at the same time he feels it necessary to pathologize his desire and at least *project* some level

of shame. If we view Joan of Arc as one of the narrator's early models of masculinity, the sort of youthful figure he meant to emulate, then that is where his disgust with the reveal of her actual sex likely stems from. He did not intend to model "womanhood disguised as man," but rather the "impaled" young man desirable to, most likely, men older than himself such as the night-soil man and the soldiers he interacted with as a child. St. Sebastian was also clearly a model for this role during his youth, especially considering the way he imagined himself as the figure impaled by arrows.

Related to both his attraction for death but also his fascination with men possessing "manly" features, his childhood is also marked by an interest in soldiers, who made up for their lack of armor with uniforms and a realness of body that knights in books could not possess. For the narrator, the "tragic" lives of the soldiers came to represent all of the masculine sorrow he yearned for in his early years. He writes, specifically of the smell of their sweat:

> しかし私を魅し、かれらから薬莢をもらうというたのしみのかくれた動機をなしていたのは、ただかれらの汗の匂いであった。
> 兵士たちの汗の匂い、あの潮風のような黄金に炒られた海岸の空気のような匂い、あの匂いが私の鼻孔を持ち、私を酔わせた。私の最初の匂いの記憶はこれかもしれない。その匂いは、もちろん直ちに性的な快感に結びつくことはなしに、兵士らの運命彼らの職業の悲劇性・彼らの死・彼らの見るべき遠い国々、そういうものへの官能的な欲求をそれが私のうちに徐々に、そして根強く目ざめさせた。
> But it was only the smell of their sweat that enchanted me, giving me the hidden motive for the pleasure of receiving the cartridges from them.
> The smell of the sweat of the soldiers, that scent like the sea breeze, like the air above the coast burned to gold, when it hit my nostrils, intoxicated me. This may be my first memory of smell. The smell, of course, at the time did not immediately connect to sexual pleasure, but rather the fate of the soldiers, the tragicness of their occupation, their death, the distant lands they had to see; it all slowly and persistently awakened a sensual appetite for such things in me. (My translation, Mishima, 17)

Masculinity again takes the form of men who are, by basis of their tragic occupations, destined to die. That the smell of sweat being associated with them further removes them from the middle-class, salaryman ideal that is somewhat in opposition to the working-class masculinity

that the narrator romanticized. However, the greatest point of significance resides in their masculinity compared to his own. As a frail boy, primarily only allowed to quietly play inside with girls, he can only desire rather than emulate the image of sweaty, muscular soldiers, compared to the beauty and youthful features of a painting of a knight. One of the concepts that later he finds very attractive in rough, hairy, and muscular men is a sense of "vitality" or "life" that he feels deprived of (perhaps due to his upbringing) and becomes sexually attracted to in others.

By associating his upbringing so closely with sickness and frailty, he makes it clear that he believes himself to be lacking masculinity, at least in physical form. Though a minor detail, perhaps the first sign that he is born in some way deficient is that his hair is first "golden" - "髪がいつまでたっても金色だった。オリーブ油をしじゅうつけているうちに黒くなった" "My hair was first golden. It turned black after being soaked in olive oil"; (My translation; Mishima, 9). Even more significant, at least once in his childhood it seems likely that he will die. Even his diet, once he is more grown, is limited to what his grandmother deems safe for him. It is only when he visits his cousins for an extended amount of time that he is expected to act more "like a boy." This expectation results in his first "mask." To perform his role of manly young boy well, he says to his cousins, girls around his age, "「戦争ごっこをしようよ」" "Let's play soldiers"; (My translation; Mishima, 29). Despite being fascinated by soldiers and death, the play is purely performance, as the narrator expresses that he found the game boring and clumsy, more of an obligation than anything else, since he prefers to read than to rough-house. And of course, he plays out his own battle field death. Returning to the final scene of the novel, it's abundantly clear that this role has shifted. He imagines in detail a sadistic death for the rough young man he openly fantasizes about while he "should" be paying attention to Sonoko. Here, he is the impaler,

with the younger man being the impaled; a role shift which would have been natural under the *nanshoku* tradition once he reached an acceptable age.

Much of his memory, as he's laid out it, explores his inner struggle with gender roles, sexuality, and sadistic urges that carry a subtle overarching nationality that hints at anxiety about his own place within nation and masculinity. Aside from a few family members, few characters are named up to this point. However, once he reaches roughly the age of middle school, he grows fond of another boy, Omi, who possesses the physical aspects of the masculine form that he admires and who the narrator projects upon the senses of tragedy and effort that represent his most desired masculinity. Notably, Omi is older than him, and at some point he notes the shift that occurs when he remains attracted to young, rough men who lack intellect while he is now in the position of the "older" man. This shift places him in the *nanshoku* tradition, despite the inner shame and wider cultural shifts that criminalized same-sex desire and resulted in the narrator's interest in Omi never coming to fruition.

Omi: same-sex desire and masculine identification

The physical markers of manliness, tragedy and sadism, and the figure symbolic of nation and betrayal are each embodied by Omi, the narrator's first love and both a model of masculinity and an object of desire. Of the reasons given by the narrator as to why he is attracted to Omi, the two that stand out the most are that he considered a delinquent student, which allows for the narrator to attach all sorts of imagined ideas of what his life might be like to him, and that he is older, meaning that he has a more developed "masculine" body. In the first scene Omi is mentioned, by one of the narrator's school friends, both of these elements are introduced:

> 二年の最終学期から、その僅かな一団に新入りが一 人加わった。近江だった。彼は何か乱暴な振舞で寮を追い出されて来たのであった。それまでさして彼に注意を払わ

> なかった私が、いわゆる「不良性」のれっきとした格 印がこの追放で彼に押されるにいたって、俄かに彼の姿から目を離しにくくなるのだ った。
> （中略）
> 私は何故だかしらないが、教練の小銃の手入れに近江が器用な腕をみせることをとつさに聯想した。
>
> During the final semester of the second year, a newcomer joined our small group. This was Omi. He had been expelled from the dormitory for some rough behavior. I, who had not paid much attention to him until then, suddenly found it difficult to take my eyes off him when this expulsion gave him the proper label of so-called "delinquency."
> …
> I'm not sure why, but I was immediately reminded of Omi's dexterous hands taking care of the rifle during military drills. (My translation; Mishima, 46-48)

Omi later spurs his later interest in "rough youths," and later lack of sexual interest in intellectual men, a specific requirement in the objects of his attraction that wasn't explicitly apparent in his interest in working-class laborers like the night soil man or in figures like Joan of Arc and St. Sebastian. This disdain for intellectualism is reflective of trends of rival masculinities that developed before the Meiji restoration era but really intensified during that period and later, as masculinity polarized between "intellectual, groomed elite" and "crass, rough laborer." His interest in Omi is both the ultimate expression of his attraction to masculinity and the basis for establishing his future attraction:

> それをものに、淘汰が行われ、一つの嗜好の体系が出来上った。私が智的な人間を愛そうと思わないのは彼ゆえだった。私が眼鏡をかけた同性に惹かれないのは彼ゆえだった。私が力と、充溢した血の印象と、無智と、荒々しい手つきと、粗放な言葉と、すべて理智によって些かもむしばまれない肉にそなわる野蛮な憂を、愛しはしめたのは彼ゆえだった。
> Based on that [the traits he is drawn to in Omi] my system of [sexual] taste was established based on these selections. It was because of him that I did not want to love an intelligent man. It was because of him that I wasn't attracted to same-sex people [men] who wore glasses. Because of him I loved the power, the impression of blood, the rough hand, the crass words, all the savage melancholy of flesh uncorrupted by reason. (My translation; Mishima, 61)

The narrator frequently draws attention to Omi's strength, his physical development, and his persona of a rough youth with little regard for intellectualism. A part of his attraction is comparison to himself and his own body: whatever his aspirations may be (he does admit to

wanting to be *exactly* like Omi; Mishima, 79), he is not as developed as Omi is, and he is clever, educated, and in many ways intellectual. Wagenaar and Iwamoto's earlier breakdown of Mishima's psyche again comes to mind, this time applied to the narrator.

Over time, the narrator begins to associate Omi with the figure of St. Sebastian, a symbol of beauty and masculinity he was earlier attracted to. He notes, "そう思ってみれば、彼が懸垂をするために鉄棒につかまった姿形は、他の何もよりも聖セバスチャンを思い出させるのにふわしかったのである" "Come to think of it, the image of him holding onto the bar to do pull-ups was more fitting than anything else to remind me of St. Sebastian." (My translation; Mishima, 85) That the narrator should find a parallel between Omi and St. Sebastian appears to be a case of projection. There is nothing inherently similar between the two, except that St. Sebastian is the object of the narrator's first sexual encounter and Omi is the narrator's proclaimed first love, whose role is to embody all that which the narrator finds appealing and masculine. He first encounters St. Sebastian in a Western art book ironically forbidden due to his father's anxiety that he might attempt to see nude depictions of women. Immediately fascinated, he describes first the immediate details that stand out to him:

> チシアン風の憂鬱な森と夕空との仄暗い遠景を背に、やや傾いた黒い樹木の幹が彼の刑架だった。非常に美しい青年が裸かでその幹に縛られていた。手は高く交叉させて、両の手道を縛めた縄が樹につづいていた。その他に縄目は見えず、青年の裸体を覆うものとては、腰のまわりにゆるやかに巻きつけられた白い粗布があるばかりだった。
>
> He was slightly leaning back into a black garden tree against the gloomy background of the Titian-style forest and evening sky. The very beautiful young man was naked and tied to the tree trunk. His hands were crossed high and the rope binding his hands was tied to the tree. No other bindings were visible, and the only thing that covered the young man's nude body was a white cloth wrapped loosely around his waist. (My translation; Mishima, 38-39)

The scene contains exactly the sort of tragedy the narrator expresses being drawn to over and over again: young men dying early deaths. He fantasizes at times being those men (though again

later fantasizes about the killing of younger men) and perceives them as his primary model of masculinity.

This "blood-lust" as he calls it makes up the bulk of his experience with sexuality. After again describing the painting of St. Sebastian, heavily associating the perceived pain the saint should be in from the arrows piercing him with pleasure and sensuality, he describes his response to this picture:

> その絵を見た殺那、私の全存在は、或る異教的な歓喜に押しゆるがされた。私の皿液は奔騰し、私の器官は憤怒の色をたたえた。この巨大な・張り裂けるばかりになった私の一部は、今までになく激しく私の行使を待って、私の無知をなじり、憤ろしく息づいていた。私の手はしらずしらず、誰にも教えられぬ動きをはじめた。私の内部から暗い輝やかしいものの足早に攻め昇って来る気配が感じられた。と思う間に、それはめくるめく酩酊を伴って迸った。…
>
> ーやや時すぎて、私は自分がむかっていた机の周囲を、傷ましい思いで見まわした。窓の楓は、明るい反映を、私のインキ壺や、教科書や、字引や、画集の写真版や、いた かえで つぼ た なっきんノート・ブックの上にひろげていた。白濁した飛沫が、その教科書の捺金の題字、ひまつ したた ンキ壺の肩、字引の一角などにあった。
>
> The moment I saw the painting, my whole being was overwhelmed with a certain heathen rapture. My fluids surged and my organs blazed with fury. This huge, bursting part of me waited more intensely than ever before for my use of it, cursing my ignorance and breathing indignantly. Without realizing it, my hand began to move in a way no one had ever taught me. I could feel something dark and bright rising from within me. While I was thinking about it, it burst from within me with a dizzying drunkenness….
>
> A little too late, I looked around at the desk I was facing with a painful feeling. The maple trees in the window cast bright reflections over my inkwell, textbooks, encyclopedias, photographic prints of art books, and notebooks. Cloudy droplets were on the title of the textbook, on the shoulder of the jar, and in the corner of the encyclopedia. (My translation; Mishima, 40)

After this incident he associates shame with his desires and begins to seek out (largely Western) psychologists and theorists, Magnus Hirschfeld for example, to understand his same-sex inclinations. His anxiety centered around his anxiety and "lack" of masculinity affect all of his later experiences, including attempting to date Sonoko and later indirectly breaking up with her with the question of marriage is raised, up to the point of the final scene, when again the "bright reflections" of a liquid appear. What arouses him then and in this situation is the sexualized pain

of young men possessing the physical aspects of manliness (muscles and body hair, notably) that he wishes to possess.

What does the narrator's desire to *possess* or even sensually destroy the masculinity he is attracted to reveal? Masculinity itself is a source of anxiety, at least in the narrator's case. As a frail boy, he doesn't feel that he measures up against other boys, peers like Omi. Even when he's grown he feels he is performing a role more than acting authentically. Through his sexuality, he seeks connection both with the historic traditions of same-sex desire of youth and beauty and with the muscular, working-class masculinity as a rejection of the soon to rise middle class and government officials, that in itself a class-based anxiety. To the extent that he pictures himself in the situation of St. Sebastian or in battlefields dying young, it may be interpreted that he fears he cannot achieve the later form of masculinity, so he would rather be fated to die a young, beautiful, and tragic young man. Notably, in addition to finding sexual gratification in sadistic fantasy, the narrator shares a piece of prose he wrote in middle school on the subject of St. Sebastian in which he describes St. Sebastian's fate not as pitiable, but rather as "proud" and "shining," even enviable; traits he would likely extend to Omi as well. Omi becomes *the* object of desire and the symbol of everything he idealizes in masculinity.

3. Murakami Haruki: Chronicles of the Herbivore Man

The men idealized in *Confessions of a Mask* possess a sense of roughness with an emphasis on the physical characteristics of the narrator's perception of manliness: muscles, hair, and even the smell of sweat. These men are, to the narrator, the most beautiful when they are on

the peak of death, with an underlying feeling of nationalism. Though the narrator himself lacks this, his assumption is that the men who most embody his vision of masculinity are assertive toward both life and women, one of the key characteristics of what would later be coined carnivore men (肉食系男子, *nikushokukei danshi*). In many ways, they are nothing like the men who populate Murakami Haruki's novels, who instead are largely passive and bodiless, sometimes even nameless, known only to the audience as "boku" (Strecher, 263-298).

Self-exploration is a major theme for both Mishima and Murakami. But while Mishima writes in the style of a personal confessional[11], Murakami instead focuses on the exploration of internal and personal identity through fictional characters in more fantastical settings. A significant portion of literary criticism of Murakami's works focuses on his style, naming it surrealism[12] and thus disassociating it from social issues, which makes *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* a compelling choice for analysis as it is one of the more politically driven texts he's written. The other range of topics include translation[13] and postmodernism[14], linked to the breakdown of master narratives and in this case the breakdown of hegemonic masculinity *and* the breakdown of self and identity[15], as will be discussed.

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[11] There is some comparison to the I-Novel format here. However, the I-Novel is meant to be a genuine confession of the author, which can only be theorized in the case of Mishima and isn't the intention at all in the case of Murakami's work.

[12] See: Matthew Strecher, "Magical Realism and the Search for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki" (1999) and Myles Chilton "Realist Magic and the Invented Tokyos of Murakami Haruki and Yoshimoto Banana" (2009)

[13] One of his greatest criticisms is that his work is not "Japanese" enough and that it seems intended to be translated into foreign contexts. Interestingly, the "Western-ness" of his writing is what appeals to many readers in Japan while the "Japanese-ness" is what appears to many international readers. See: Mette Holm "Translating Murakami as a Multilingual Experience" (2015); Matthew Richard Chozick "De-Exoticizing Haruki Murakami's Reception" (2008); and Ursula Gräfe "Murakami Haruki's Sound of Music: Personal Impressions of a Translator" (2015).

[14] See: Kawakami Chiyoko, "The Unfinished Cartography: Murakami Haruki and the Postmodern Cognitive Map" (2002); Amy Ty Lai, "Memory, Hybridity, and Creative Alliance in Haruki Murakami's Fiction" (2003) - not specifically about postmodernism, but explores breakdowns of identity and animal representations of self that are not the focus of this paper but add an interesting lens considering the number of cats that appear in Murakami's fiction; and Matthew Strecher "Beyond 'Pure' Literature: Mimesis, Formula, and the Postmodern in the Fiction of Haruki Murakami" (1998)

[15] Matthew Strecher's *Dances with Sheep: The Quest for Identity in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki* (2002) discusses Murakami's style, formulas, magical realism, and more in regard to identity formation in his writing.

Published from 1994-1995, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (ねじまき鳥クロニクル, *negimaki dori kuronikuru*, 1994-1995 and in English, 1997) was something of a turning point in Murakami's career as an author. Compiled into a single text in the English translation, *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* is originally composed of three books: *Book of The Thieving Magpie* (泥棒かささぎ編, *dorobou kasasagi hen*), *Book of the Prophesying Bird* (予言する鳥編, *yogen suru tori hen*), and *Book of The Bird-Catcher Man* (鳥刺し男編, *tori sashi otoko hen*) and won the The Yomiuri Literary Award (読売文学賞, *yomiuri bungaku shou*) in 1995. While much of his previous work contains themes still present in his more recent publications - namely, lonely and aimless male protagonists seeking meaning or identity in the world; women in their lives disappearing; trauma; and magical realism - this series also introduced an interest in social and political topics that would begin to appear more and more regularly in his writing.

The chronicle begins with a mundane scene: Okada Toru, our leading man, in the process of boiling a pot of spaghetti to the tune of Rossini's "Thieving Magpie" when he suddenly receives a phone call, the contents of which break this scene of normalcy and begin the spiraling stories and plot threads he must unravel before ultimately finding his wife, who isn't physically gone until the opening of the second book, and overcoming the series' ultimate villain, his brother-in-law, Wataya Noboru. The first book primarily focuses on Okada's attempts to locate their missing cat, also called Wataya Noboru, on the behest of his wife. From there, he meets an array of characters including psychics, a teenage girl, and a retired lieutenant who once knew a psychic he and his wife used to see (also in the army at once point), who each aid him in his quest while providing hints to the developments of the plot that will later come. In the second book, his wife fails to return home after work one evening and Okada begins exploring a dark, shadowy world parallel to his own, which he is able to reach by sitting at the bottom of a well on

a property connected to his via a closed alley behind the house he rents from his uncle. In this book he is arguably his most isolated (another theme common in Murakami's writing) as he comes to terms with his wife's disappearance.

The third book is arguably the most surreal and complex of the chronicles, tying together the previous plot threads introduced as Okada spends time working with a woman he meets, known to him as Nutmeg, and her son, Cinnamon, to provide psychic healing to women and attempting to rescue his wife, who he believes to be contained somewhere. In this book Wataya Noboru moves from being positioned simply as a brother-in-law that Okada doesn't particularly like to being solidly a force for some kind of evil connected to the shadowy world appearing like a hotel that Okada attempts to reach every time he meditates at the bottom of the well. Often in Murakami novels it is unclear whether the characters have succeeded in their journeys, however, in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* Okada at least has the potential for a happy resolution, with Wataya vanquished and his wife rescued. The conclusion of the novel will be explored further in following sections.

If Okada can't be described as possessing anything resembling Mishima's conceptions of rough and working-class masculinity, then the new model for models of ideal masculinity he may represent is the herbivore man (草食系男子, *soushokukei danshi*), a term first introduced in the early 2000s to describe men who were less assertive in relationships. This lack of an assertive drive complements well with themes of aimlessness and passivity that Murakami characters often possess, however Okada may not be a perfect or successful representation of this archetype. Additionally, Okada is solidly and comfortably a middle class man, which further positions him outside of the scope of masculinity that the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* idolized. While he is not a salaryman (he is unemployed up until the point that Nutmeg hires him

as a psychic healer), the image of the salaryman and the gender roles expected of a salaryman are pervasive in the background. Meanwhile, Wataya, in many ways a foil of Okada, provides a window into the political views of identity, or lack thereof, and its impact on broader society. Through these topics of gender expectations, class identity, and political disillusionment, a view of contemporary masculinity can be formed and compared with Mishima's earlier view of popular masculinity.

The herbivore man: gender roles and images contemporary masculinity

While the phrase herbivore man was coined in the 2000s, it named a phenomena that was slowly developing after the postwar eras. This isn't to say that forms of masculinity similar to that of the herbivore man did not exist prior to the 2000s, but following the economic bubble period and subsequent burst, this image of masculinity became a much discussed topic as demonstrations of manliness became less and less associated with the military. What is an herbivore man, then? Morioka Masahiro, professor of philosophy and ethics at Waseda University and author of *Lessons in Love for Herbivore-type Men* (2008), explains "The word 'herbivore' was taking from the phrase 'herbivore animals,' and can be seen as having the connotation of a man who does not hunt women like a 'carnivore' and is thus 'safe' from a woman's perspective." (Morioka, 2)

By that very basic definition, the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* might be taken for a herbivore man, ignoring for a moment the question of his sexuality (presumably, lack of attraction to women would of course result in the narrator not actively pursuing relationships with women.) When he enters a relationship with a woman, he does so without aggressively pursuing her or acting in a particularly assertive manner. In fact, the question of marriage is

brought up not by him, but by her brother, concerned for how far his interest in the relationship extended. When their friendship rekindles, though he possesses some sort of interest for her, he takes no real opportunity to do more than spend some time with her. However, even without a broader definition, it is clearly not herbivore-type masculinity that the narrator favors, at least as objects of desire. The narrator himself is perhaps complicated to define, but in a sense he could be read as a man who desires to project the image of being a carnivore man, whether or not he could accurately be described as one at the core.

Okada too can be described as herbivore-type based on the preliminary definition. Though he has several sexual or sexual-seeming experiences over the course of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, in virtually every encounter it is a woman who pursues him first. Take, for example, during the second time the mysterious woman on the phone (implied later to be his wife[16], already lost) calls him, he resists her sexual advances with the following interaction:

> 「じゃあ今度はあなたが私のことを想像してみて」、女は誘いかけるように言った。「声から想像するのよ。私がどんな女かってね。いくつくらいで、どこでどんな格好をしているか、そんなこと」
> 「わからない」と僕は言った。
> 「試してごらんなさいよ」
> 僕は時計に目をやった。まだ一分と五秒しか経っていない。「わからない」と僕は繰り返した。
> 「じゃあ教えてあげるわ」と女は言った。「私は今ベッドの中にいるのよ。さっきシャワーを浴びたばかりで何もつけてないの」
> 僕は黙って首を振った。これじゃまるでポルノ・テープじゃないか。
> 「何か下着をつけた方がいいかしら？それともストッキングの方がいい？その方が感じる？」
> 「なんだってかまわないよ。君の好きにすればいい。何か着たければ着ればいい。裸の方がいいのならそれでいい。でも悪いけど僕には、電話でそういう話をする趣味はないんだ。僕にはやらなくちゃならないこともあるしー」

[16] While it is not explicitly stated, Kano Creta and Okada Kumiko appear to suffer the same affliction, by Wataya Noboru's hand. This parallel between them seem to be the "us" she is referring to, though when Okada asks for clarification she does not answer: "「私たち？」と僕は言った。でも答えは返ってこなかった。" (Murakami, 41) It is also easy to draw the conclusion that the woman on the phone and later in the hotel room is implied to be his wife, and Kano morphs into the voice of this woman during this sequence.

> “Now try imagining me,” the woman said invitingly. “Imagine from my voice. What kind of woman am I? How old am I, where am I, how am I dressed, that sort of thing.”
>
> “I don’t know,” I said.
>
> “I’m asking you to try.”
>
> I glanced at my watch. Only one minute and five seconds had passed. “I don’t know,” I repeated.
>
> “Then I’ll tell you,” the woman said. “I’m in bed right now. I just took a shower and didn’t put anything on.”
>
> I shook my head in silence. This sounded like a porn tape, didn’t it?
>
> “Should I wear some underwear? Or do you prefer stockings? What would feel better?”
>
> “I don’t care. Do as you please. If you want to wear something, wear it. If you prefer being naked, that’s fine. But I’m sorry, I don’t have a hobby of talking like that on the phone. I have things I need to do –” (My translation; Murakami, Book 1, 22)

To be fair to Okada, anyone would likely attempt to disengage from a phone call from a perfect stranger who appears to be attempting telephone sex. However, the herbivore man is not entirely avoidant of sexual encounters so much as he lacks the drive to pursue them himself. This deviates from the logic of a carnivore man, who, by traditional assumptions of manliness, would take any opening a woman gave as a signal to pursue her (Morioka, 3).

What is interesting about Okada here is that he is entirely indifferent to what the woman on the phone wears. He is perfectly fine talking to her no matter what she’s wearing or doing, so long as he doesn’t have to talk about it - and even then, he lets the conversation drag on further than one might expect.

> 「陰毛がまだ濡れてるのよ」、女は言った。「よくタオルで拭かなかったの。だからまだ濡れてるの。あたたかくてしっとりと湿ってるの。すごくやわらかい陰毛よ。真っ黒で、やわらかいの。撫でてみて」
>
> 「ねえ、悪いけどー」
>
> 「その下の方もすっとあたたかいのよ。まるであたためたバター・クリームみたいにね。すごくあたたかいの。本当よ。私いまどんな格好をしていると思う？右膝をたてて、左脚を横に開いてるの。」
>
> （中略）
>
> 僕は何度も言わずに電話を切った。” (Murakami, Book 1, 22-23)
>
> “My pubic hair is still wet,” the woman said. “I didn’t wipe it with a towel very much, so it’s still wet. It’s warm and moist. And it’s soft pubic hair. It’s black and soft. Try stroking it.”

> “Hey, I’m sorry, but-”
> “It’s very warm underneath. Like hot butter cream. Very warm. Really. What do you think I’m wearing now? Right knee up, left knee out and open.”
> …
> I hung up without saying a word. (My translation; Murakami, Book 1, 22-23)

Although the woman on the phone asks for only ten minutes of his time, and claims to know him, there is nothing concrete stopping him from ending this conversation before it reached an overtly sexual conclusion. However, since he did not take the opportunity to “pounce” on her, and thus does “not belong in the category of ‘men’” by the logic of “older people” (Morioka, 3) and did not seek this encounter out, it doesn’t remove him from the herbivore man ideal. If anything, his indifference to the encounter might elevate him into the category of men “safe” for women to engage with.

Each of his other sexual encounters are again not initiated by any pursuit on his part, though none are prevented by him either. A category of these can be described as “psychic encounters,” in which he is either dreaming in a space that is not reality but is also not fictional, or otherwise performing healing for clients of Nutmeg, which has sexual overtones. In the earlier case, Okada dreams of an encounter with Kano Creta, the sister of the psychic his wife hired to help find their cat, who also has a dubious relationship with his brother-in-law which will be expanded on later. This dream begins with Kano wearing one of his wife’s dresses and becomes sexual from there. During this encounter, when Okada questions her, Kano says, “「岡田様は何も考えなくていいんです。そういうことはぜんぶ私たちがやります。私たちに任せてください」” “‘Mr. Okada, you don’t need to think about anything. We’ll do all of that (thinking). Please leave it to us’”; (My translation; Murakami, Book 2, 40-41). He has no control of the encounter. Kano, and by implication his wife, will handle this situation for him and he has no qualms with this. He says, “加納クレタの言ったとおり、何も考えないことにした。目を閉じ、体の力を抜いて、流れに

身をまかせた。” “I decided to do as Creta Kano said and not think about anything. I closed my eyes, relaxed my body, and let myself go with the flow”; (My translation; Murakami, Book 2, 41-42).

There is an assumption that herbivore men lack something inherent to being a man. They are presumed to be effeminate, slender, and likely fashionable. Over time, the definition of herbivore man was expanded to be men who were “too sissy to be considered a real man” (Morioka, 6) as the country was swept with an anxiety familiar to masculinity in all nations: that the men of Japan were “lesser” and “more feminine” than they once were. Morioka reflects that “older male commentators appearing on television began to express concern of Japan’s economy, worrying that the progressive ‘herbivorization’ of young men might eventually result in a complete lack of assertiveness not just in romance but in every other aspect of life as well.” (Morioka, 6) Under this broader definition, which is not necessarily a definition made in good faith, we would have to consider whether or not Okada has other attributes that make him less assertive in life or otherwise “feminine.” This will be explored more in the section covering his middle class background, but Okada is an unemployed man who lives on his wife’s salary, a situation which can be read as emasculating to traditional expectations of gender roles. Similarly, Nutmeg pays him considerably for his services as a psychic healer and purchases his entire wardrobe, dictating what he wears and exerting a lot of control over a small period of his life. This lack of control is a running theme in his life.

However, Morioka offers a final definition of herbivore men that does not deny them masculinity:

> “Herbivore men are kind and gentle men who, without being bound by manliness, do not pursue romantic relationships voraciously and have no aptitude for being hurt or hurting others.” As a result, even a heavyset, broad-shouldered, muscle-bound man is a “herbivore man” if he possesses these internal traits. And no matter how slender,

> effeminate, and fashionable a man is, without these internal characteristics he cannot be said to be “herbivore.” (Morioka, 7)

From the outside, Okada can be said to be a herbivore man and characters such as Kasahara May, who is vulnerable to him as a teenage girl, seem to recognize some sort of safety in him. By the third book she moves away to work in a factory, but in the meantime sends him letters (it’s unclear if he receives them.) In the first letter she sends, she describes fantasizing about Okada forcing himself on her, during the time period in the first book when he was simply exploring the back alley and looking for his cast. She then says, “でも、ねじまき鳥さんは私をムリに押したおしてレイプしようとしたりはしないと思う。” “But, I don’t think Mr. Wind-up Bird [the nickname she uses for him] would try to force me down and rape me”; (My translation; Murakami, Book 3, 97), despite the images she confesses to imagining. In a later letter, she admits she fantasizes about having turned into his missing wife, and that her name, Kasahara, is just an alias she’s using while he waits for her at home. For some reason, he gives off the impression that he’s a safe man to fantasize about, which is the basis of an herbivore man, at least externally.

However, the second point of Morioka’s definition of an herbivore man complicates this impression. An herbivore man should, in theory, not be someone who would or even could engage in violence. While Okada does not act in violence toward any of the women in the novel, he does have an interesting altercation with a musician from his past in the second book. He follows him into a less trafficked part of the city to what appears to be an abandoned building, where the man hides until Okada enters. The man then defends himself with a baseball bat. When Okada first reacts, it is in self defense, but a change occurs once he has the man on the ground.

> 最初のうち僕は、むしろ恐怖と興奮から男を蹴ったり殴ったりしていた。自分が殴られないために、相手を蹴り、殴っていたのだ。でも男が床に倒れてからは、それははっきりとし終わりに変わっていた。しばらく前、クミコのことを考えながら歩いているときに僕のか

> らだの中にわき起こってきた静かな怒りは、まだそこに残っていた。そしてそれは今では解き大きく膨らみ、炎のように燃え上がっていた。それは激しい憎しみに近い怒りだった。僕はもう一度バットで男の太を打ちつけた。（中略）僕はこれまでに殴り合いの喧嘩なんて一度もやったことがなかった。思い切り人を殴ったこともなかった。でもどういうわけか、もうやめることができなくなってしまっていた。もうやめなくちゃいいけないんだ、と僕は頭の中で考えていこれでもう十分だ。これ以上はやりすぎになる。こいつはもう立ち上げることもできないんだぞと。でもやめられなかった。自分がふたつに分裂してしまっていることがわかった。
>
> At first I kicked and punched him rather out of fear and excitement. I was kicking and hitting my opponent so that I wouldn't be hit. But after the man collapsed to the floor it clearly changed. The quiet anger that welled up in my body a while ago while I was walking thinking about Kumiko was still there. And now it had unraveled, swelled, and burned like fire. It was a rage close to intense hatred. I hit the man with the bat again…. (text omitted) I have never had a fistfight before. I never hit someone on purpose. But for some reason, I just couldn't stop. "I have to stop now," "that's enough," I think in my head. Any more than that would be too much. This guy can't even stand anymore. But I couldn't stop. I found myself split in two. (My translation; Murakami, Book 2, 328)

While Okada expresses that this isn't something he would normally do, some sort of thirst for violence is awoken in him once he begins fighting with this man. He feels guilt (the grammar form, *~teshimau*, used several times in this passage, implies that the actions are regretful) and yet he can't stop. In this case, he doesn't appear to be anything close to a person who couldn't inflict harm on another, rendering him unlike the typical representation of an herbivore man.

His guilt surrounding the incident, including a nightmare he is plagued by afterward, indicate that this violent action is something that separates him from the image he has of himself. It becomes a loss of self-identity, which is in itself an anxiety. Can an herbivore man remain an herbivore man after a physical fight such as this? He believes he must find and save his wife from whatever world she's fallen into, because if he fails then the man he thinks himself as will cease to exist. However, this isn't the only time Okada has experienced violence, even if it was not violence he's committed himself. In fact, this violence appears in his nightmare, as the man he beat uses a knife to begin peeling away his own flesh. This is a reference to Lieutenant Mamiya's story in the first book, from which many of the motifs of the rest of the novel derive

from. In brief, the story he shares is about his survival when captured by a Russian soldier while stationed in Manchuria. Humorously (in a morbid sense) titled "Lt. Mamiya's Long Story 1" and "Lt. Mamiya's Long Story 2," Lt. Mamiya explains to Okada how he and several others were selected to cross the border with a secret message, only to be discovered and later ambushed. The result of this is that the man they were escorting is skinned alive and Lt. Mamiya is left at the bottom of a well and subsequently rescued by Mr. Honda, who predicted that they would not die outside of Japan. What's more important in the case of Okada is not the details of the story, but rather his reaction to violence. He intellectualizes the story, he questions how Lt. Mamiya survived, but the gruesome details of the skinning nor any of the other elements of the story presented don't seem to affect him in particular. It is only much later, in his nightmare, that revulsion to this skinning would appear. His initial take from Lt. Mamiya's story is that he might need to find a well to sit in and think.

Beyond Morioka's definition of the herbivore man, some scholars consider this form of masculinity (or lack of masculinity, depending on the commentator) a result of the destabilization of heteronormative relationships that occurred during the post bubble period (Nast, 1). These traditional heteronormative relationships would posit that Okada, as "the husband," should work and provide for his wife, while his wife should manage the house. If masculinity is assumed to have a strong connection to both employment then Okada is clearly lacking in this area, which may or may not suggest that he is a herbivore man depending on which definition is being used[17], and definitely suggests some sort of emasculation based solely on the hegemonic and heteronormative ideals of Japanese masculinity that would assume the opposite division of labor than the role he's currently taking as the homemaker (Hidaka, 2). However, while the term now

[17] In contrast, his wife might by definition be called an early "carnivore woman" – see *Lessons in Love for Carnivore Women: How they Devour the Herbivore Man* by Sakuragi Piroko, 2009.

sometimes carries as negative connotation in the media, and in other cases an unintended connection to asexuality (Fotache, 175), the earliest scholars of the herbivore man phenomenon, Fukasawa Maki and Morioka, perceived it as a social change that may be ultimately positive.

The question that arises from all of this is one of identity. Is Okada a successful representation of an herbivore man? Further, does he demonstrate an anxiety about masculinity that is prominent in the 2000s and later, or does he more broadly represent anxieties about identity at large? If Okada is the aimless, unambitious sort of protagonist Murakami usually employs, then would his representation as an herbivore man or something akin to it be a positive depiction in the first place? And is the act of violence that may separate him from the image of herbivore man something he needs in order to propel himself closer to finding his wife and later overcoming Wataya? In this case, Okada's identity and sense of self in relation to assertiveness is only a piece of the puzzle, but his anxiety surrounding violence and losing sight of who he is as a person provides implications useful to thinking out contemporary Japanese images of masculinity.

Middle class identity and globalism after postwar japan

Against popular expectations, Japan saw incredible economic recovery and development during and after the postwar years that is often described as a miracle. In this period, "the salaryman–centered nuclear family became the hegemonic blueprint," (Dasgupta, 39), an image of masculine excellence and economic optimism. The result of this was that the generation born after World War II did not experience the hardships of the recovery period and additionally enjoyed the benefits of being raised in comparative affluence, when

contrasted to previous generations. Matthew Strecher, a professor at Sophia University in Tokyo, who published a reader's guide to *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* in 2002 and several other books analyzing Murakami's writing, notes that, "Unlike the previous generation, which understood hunger and deprivation and could define itself in terms of affluence via its own participation in the efforts of the rapid growth era, Murakami's generation…did not understand affluence as a goal in itself, and thus could not identify itself in those terms." (Strecher, 264-65) Given this generational context, Murakami's protagonists are not seeking the same sort of stable employment that the salaryman represents, but rather internal identities that can't be demonstrated by job status, especially as affluence or at least relative comfort became "the norm" instead of a worthwhile future goal.

Though the image of the salaryman rose to prominence even before the time Mishima was writing *Confessions of a Mask*, it has remained the dominant image of masculinity and ideal masculine gender roles long into Murakami's time as an author, in part due to this rising middle class after the postwar years. Despite the hegemony of this image - the presumed ideal man being a provider to his family and a dedicated employee - very few Murakami characters, and none within *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, barring perhaps Kumiko by virtue of being a salaried employee, can be understood as salaryman. Okada may have been considered a salaryman *before* the events of the novel, when he still worked at the law firm, but at the start he is unemployed and never possesses a standard job throughout. This coincides with the economic stagnation of the 1990s and early 2000s, a time when many men delayed or were unable to get full-time employment (Dasgupta, 39), which in part contributed to the slowly growing image of the (somewhat polarizing) herbivore man.

Okada's lifestyle is entirely supported by his wife's income and by the opportunity of renting his house through his uncle, as he notes that they typically would not be able to afford a rental property of that size otherwise. Again, while the image of the herbivore man largely is associated with the manner in which men pursue women in relationships, there is also a connotation of "passivity" that is depicted in this scenario. Additionally, rather than being disappointed that Okada isn't living up to the expectations of a husband, Kumiko suggests that Okada doesn't need to worry about finding a job: "「あのね」とあらたまった口調で妻は言った。「ちょっと思ったんだけれど、あなたべつに急いで仕事を探すこともないんじゃないかしら」"

"'Well,' my wife said in a more ceremonious tone, 'I was just wondering, but isn't it okay for you to not be in a hurry to find a job?'"; (My translation; Murakami, Book 1, 16). She continues to explain:

> でも私のお給料もあがったし、副業の方も順調だし、貯金だったあるし、贅沢さえしなき十分食べていけるでしょう。今みたいにあなたが家にいて家事をやるっていうのは？そういう生活はあなたとしては面白くない？」
> 「わからないな」と僕は正直に言った。わからない。
> "But my salary has risen, my side job is going well, and we have savings, so as long as we aren't extravagant we will probably have enough to eat. Why don't you stay home and do chores like now? Isn't that kind of life interesting for you?"
> "I don't know," I said honestly. I don't know. (My translation; Murakami, Book 1, 16)

While this surprises him, their conversation gives the impression that he never needed to work in the first place. As previously noted, that his wife is the "breadwinner" and he is the "homemaker" he could be read as "lacking" traditional expectations of masculinity, but he appears to apathetic or at least indecisive about his life to be "emasculated" or bothered by the roles they play. He's surprised that his wife is okay with it, but he's not upset that she's salaried and he isn't. Whether or not this is a positive rejection of the salaryman or the heteronormative

breadwinner role[18], it is representative of the social conditions of the 1990s (Dasgupta, 39) that persist into the current decade. Interestingly, this also appears to be a moment for Kumiko to assert her own masculinity within their relationship. Note that Okada's surprise has nothing to do with her own advantageous employment, but rather that he personally seems to feel as if it would be expected that he quickly look for a job, if for nothing else than to cushion their financial situation.

Moving away from the salaryman dogma doesn't necessarily mean that he, or men in general, has a concrete idea of what masculinity or his life at large should look like. About quitting his previous job, he says, "辞めて何をするというはっきりした希望や展望があったわけではない。" "Not that I had a clear hope or vision of what I would do after quitting"; (My translation; Murakami, Book 1, 19), which reinforces that though he was unsatisfied with the idea of remaining at his job any longer, he had no plan for what would come after. He only knows that his life working at the firm isn't the way he envisions his future: "それ以上長くいたら、僕の人生はたぶんそこでずるずると終わってしまうことになる。なにしろもう三十になったのだ。" "If I stayed longer than that, my life would probably end there [I would be working there for the rest of my life]. I was already thirty after all"; (My translation; Murakami, 19). While the salaryman may remain the hegemonic image of masculinity, it's clear that the same milestones of "being a man" that previous generations found connection with are no longer appealing to the post-postwar generations. There may not be a dominant model of masculinity rivaling the salaryman yet, but that makes room for many different explorations of masculinity and subversions of gender roles as these generations think through the same pursuits of identity seeking and formation that are present in Murakami's novels.

[18] Okada's characterization, while presumably intended to be sympathetic, is not always convincingly positive. Consider again the violence he demonstrates toward the musician, the odd relationship he develops with a teenager, and his overall relationships.

As mentioned, the other way that Okada subverts the expectations of the salaryman is by being a homemaker. While his wife works, he is at home planning their meals and focusing on laundry, a lifestyle more and more common these days as men don't feel as pinned down by traditional expectations of masculinity as they may have in the past. Again, he admits to being uncertain about the sort of life he would like to live, but he has the freedom to explore this option given his wife's financial means. At least during the first book, he's able to spend the majority of his time tending to the house, planning meals, and doing the shopping and drycleaning pick ups. These are not necessarily novel things, but when compared to more traditional depictions of male-female relationships, it is a clear gender role reversal. One question that surfaces here is whether this is evidence of a resistance to such gender roles in relationships, or a rejection of the salaryman image specifically, or both. Does the image of the salaryman emasculate Okada in an observable way? Arguably, it seems like the salaryman itself is not an image that shadows over Okada in the novel, but rather the image of identity crushing politicians and government agencies that plagues not only his masculinity and personal identity but his entire life.

The Universalizing Technocrat as Identity Rapist

While the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* sublimated masculine ideals with sexual desire in the form of Omi, Okada finds the opposite in Wataya, his brother-in-law who he hates from nearly the moment they meet. The Wataya family is already significantly wealthier and of a higher social standing than Okada, playing on the class and power imbalances already in the novel, but while he describes Kumiko's father as closed-minded and traditional, Wataya's characterization is much more sinister from the onset. An intellectual elite, Okada repeatedly expresses disbelief that anyone actually understands his writing or believes him on TV (he

describes him cleverly switching positions to win arguments, having no true convictions of his own.) Despite apparently being immediately adored by all who hear him speak, Okada's initial assessment of him is that he is a stuffy academic:

> 父親は彼が大学を卒業したあと役人になるか、あるいはどこかの大きな企業に入ることを期待していたのだが、彼は大学に残って学者になる道を選んだ。現実の世の中に出て集団の中で行動するよりは、知識をシステマチックに扱う訓練を必要とし、個人的な智的技能がより重視される世界に残った方が自分には向いているということがわかっていたのだ。
>
> His father expected him to become a government official after graduating from university, or to join some big company, but he chose to stay at university and become a scholar. Rather than stepping to the real world and working in a group, he thought it would be better for him to remain in a world that requires training in systematic knowledge and where personal intellectual skills are important. (My translation; Murakami, Book 1, 138)

This presentation of intellectualism, while not presented with the same sort of disdain as Mishima's assessment, does possess a similar air of distaste – perhaps because Okada doesn't *believe* his intellectualism. It's not clear whether Okada disapproves of intellectual elites and government officialdom as a whole or simply dislikes Wataya, but the universalizing and identity crushing political elite is a common trope in Murakami's writing. Interestingly, he compares Wataya as almost seeming as if he's wearing a mask: "僕が嫌だったのは綿谷ノボルという人間の顔そのものだった。僕がそのときに直感的に感じたのは、この男の顔は何か別のものに覆われているということだった。そこには何か間違ったものがある。これは本当の彼の顔ではない。僕はそう感じたのだ。" "What I didn't like was Wataya Noboru's human face itself. At the time the feeling of my intuition was that the man's face was covered by something else. There was something wrong about it. This is not his real face. That's how I felt"; (My translation; Murakami, Book 1, 145). However, while the narrator of *Confessions of a Mask* used a persona to conceal a sense of self, Okada doesn't believe there is truly anything for Wataya to conceal.

There's a sense that he is simply a void, or, perhaps, something of a black hole for personal identities.

One of the first things that Kano Malta tells Okada is, "「そして妹は綿谷ノボル様に汚されました。暴力的に犯されたのです」" "'And my sister was defiled by Wataya Noboru. She was violently violated,'"; (Mishima, Book 1, 80; 犯す *okasu* can mean to violate or to rape, depending on context.) Later, Creta tells him the complete story, including how she met Wataya as a prostitute and that he did not *technically* have sex with her, but he did do something to her. She describes this "soul-rape" to him as follows:

> そのような痛みと快感の中で、私の肉はどんどん大きく裂けていきました。私にはもうそれを止めることはできませんでした。それから奇妙なことが起こりました。そのばっくりとふたつに裂けた自分の肉の中から、私がこれまでに見たことも触れたこともなかった何かが、かきわけるようにして抜け出してくるのを私は感じたのです。その大きさはよくわかりません。でもそれはまるで生まれたての赤ん坊のようにぬるぬるしたものでした。それが何であるのか、私にはまったく見当もつきませんでした。それはもともと私の中にあるものでありながら、私の知らないものなのです。でもこの男が、私の中からとにかくそれを引き出したのです。
> In the midst of all that pain and pleasure, my flesh ripped larger and larger. I couldn't stop it from happening. Then a strange thing happened. Just then, I felt something I had never seen or touched before crawling out from within myself and the halves of my flesh. I'm not sure how big it was. But it was slimy, like a newborn baby. I had no idea what it was. It's something that was already inside me, but I don't know it. But this man pulled it out of me anyways. (My translation; Murakami, Book 2, 238)

This "thing" inside her that is removed, her personal essence, causes a sense of loss that seems to plague her until she later has dream sex with Okada, as outlined earlier. Wataya appears to have the ability to draw out the inner essence of women he encounters and take it from them. Metaphorically, this may make him a carnivore man, relentlessly taking from women and causing harm along the way, compared to Okada's sense of being an herbivore man. This stealing of identity, while not directly happening to Okada, also underscores a sense of anxiety when it comes to modern identities and senses of self against a universalized technocratic elite like Wataya.

This is not the first time Wataya has “soul-raped” a woman. Kumiko tells Okada about a weird incident during her childhood, two years after her sister died. She finds him masturbating and smelling her sister’s underwear, a scene which she couldn’t really understand at the time because she was young. She says, “「でもお姉さんに性的な関心を持っていたかどうかまでは知らないけれど、そこにはきっと何かがあったし、たぶん彼はその何か離れることができないんじゃないかという気がするの。結婚なんてするべきじゃなかったと私が言うのは、そう言うことよ」” “I don’t know if he was sexually attracted to my sister, but there must have been something there, and I have a feeling he could never leave that something. When I say he shouldn’t have gotten married, that’s what I mean”; (My translation; Murakami, Book 1, 231). The suggestion becomes that whatever Wataya did to Creta, he also did to his sister, years before, and perhaps did the same to Kumiko. If this “core” that is taken from them is their identity, then Wataya is “soul-raping” these women, removing their identities in the process. Okada appears to be the opposite of Wataya. Where Wataya destroys identity, Okada restores it. This is the reason why Nutmeg hires him in the first place: she recognizes the mark on his face as being a sign of some sort and uses his connection to something *other* in order to restore the lost identities of their female patrons. In this sense, Okada is presented as a healer, a very positive depiction of masculinity, and Wataya something more akin to the herbivore man’s carnivorous opposite.

There is arguably not a strong masculine ideal present in *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle.* This is less that there isn’t a line of masculinity present throughout the novel, but more that whether or not these depictions are intended to be models to emulate remains unanswered. Is the herbivore man the idealized goal of masculinity, over that of the carnivore man? Is it better to identify with the cosmopolitan hipster than the universalizing technocratic elite, and are these depictions limited to masculine experiences in the first place? It’s worth considering that many of

Murakami's novels do not have concrete endings, leaving more questions unanswered than not. However, in the case of Okada, he succeeds against Wataya and has the potential to recover his wife and therefore himself, giving him more potential for a happy ending than other protagonists written by Murakami.

4. Conclusion: masculinity beyond the salaryman stereotype

Despite the salaryman's extensive presence in Japanese society, both Mishima and later Murakami subvert the expectations of hegemonic masculinity in favor of their own distinct presentations of identity. In both cases, these models of masculinity veer away from the salaryman image, though in contrary ways. For Mishima, this means looking back to an older, more traditional time, in which "men" physically embodied their masculinity through labor and demonstrations of strength. This representation carries a heavy nationalist tone, likely a response coming from the occupation of Japan and fears of feminization that stem from a position of defeat. In contrast, Murakami's male leads search less for images that may denote physical masculinity – muscles, hair, a certain roughness of character – and more for internal modes of identity and individualism in a globalized society.

There are parallels between the sadomasochistic dichotomy of the "older" and "younger" men in the *nanshoku* tradition and the herbivore and carnivore men present in Murakami's writing. While the objects of desire differ, in both cases there is an "aggressor" and a more passive role to some extent. The major difference is of course the homosocial narrative of the former, which is both a product of its time and a strong tradition in *bushidō* type cultures. As Japan modernizes, and homosocial relations lessen in intensity, images more like the herbivore and carnivore man surface. Additionally, we begin to see a postmodern breakdown of

relationships that shifts how gender roles and expectations begin to deviate from what would have been anticipated in Mishima's time.

When the narrator in *Confessions of a Mask* discusses identity, he focuses strongly on bodied experiences and the ways in which he wears a mask to present a certain image to the world. But while his ideals differ from the primary narrator of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle,* there is a similar thread of anxiety around the ways in which one is perceived that can be extrapolated from the way Okada presents himself as distinctly cosmopolitan, with global and notably "non-Japanese" tastes in music, specifically jazz and opera, and the almost self-conscious way he describes Wataya, who he immediately dislikes even before Wataya becomes the central villain of the story. Comparing the two side by side, the images of masculinity they present both demonstrate a desire to possess identity and present a certain sense of self that does not fall within the wider umbrella of the salaryman. However, even as the authors like Mishima and Murakami attempt to explore alternate avenues of masculinity, there has yet to be a cohesive counter image to hegemonic masculinity - only the herbivore man comes close, and the image of the herbivore man is not nearly as pervasive as the salaryman continues to be. Still, as these ranges of identity grow and remove power from the hegemonic dogma, the salaryman becomes an increasingly outdated figure. If Mishima grew up during the rise of the salaryman, Murakami perhaps is writing during the salaryman's exit.

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