Dis-Oriented Desires and Angela Carter's Intersectionality: Nationalism, Masochism, and the Search for "the Other's Otherness"

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Abstract

This article examines Carter's portrayal of the intersections of race, gender, and nationalism through imagery drawn from the nationalist tales Momotaro [Peach Boy] *and "the lion and the unicorn" in her writing during and after staying in Japan. Analysing* Miss Z *and* Fireworks*, we argue that Carter's depictions of fantastical creatures reveal a proto-intersectional awareness of complex power interconnections between race and gender, specifically in relation to ideas of whiteness and masochism. Like her contemporary Taeko Kono, Carter critiques men's masochism and theorizes a type of feminine masochism. Carter grows in awareness of both racial politics (whiteness) and masochism in Japanese culture and attempts to grasp the "essence of the other's otherness" therein. In doing so, she conceptualizes intersectional power relations of gender and race.*

Introduction

This article focuses on Angela Carter's reflections on masochism, national identity, and intersectional power dynamics in her writing about Japan and, more specifically, investigates

how her time in Japan influenced her use of two mythological figures: the unicorn and Momotaro. Using salient queer and critical race theories, we will first trace the presentation of the recurring figure in her early works of the unicorn and then examine her use of the traditional Japanese hero, Momotaro, in her short story collection *Fireworks*. Carter plays with their gendered identities and, in doing so, suggests an understanding of the complexity of the intersections of gender and race in power relations. Our main focus will be on "A Souvenir of Japan" and "Flesh and the Mirror" in *Fireworks*, the poetry collection *Unicorn*, and her children's story, *Miss Z.* We will draw original connections between these works and both Lewis Carroll's seminal story *Through the Looking-Glass* and Taeko Kono, a Japanese woman writer who was contemporary to Carter and who engaged with similar concepts and issues in 1970s Japan. Through these international comparisons, we generate a new paradigm for analyzing masochism in Carter's work as well as others', including texts in the field of Japanese literary studies. We propose new interpretations of these texts to argue that Carter's rewriting of these fantastical creatures shows her increasing awareness of her own whiteness and privilege, which she reflects on in conjunction with her sense of increased subjugation under the patriarchal system in Japan. Carter paints a picture of power relations informed by a distinctive proto-intersectional perspective, ultimately providing a new and complex understanding of masochism, which she engages with throughout her career, to distinguish between a nationalistic aesthetic concept of men's masochism and a more nuanced expression of the pleasures and pains of women's masochism.

The concept of "masochism" has been developed in relation to various cultures, historically, and has been theorized, most famously, in psychoanalysis (see Freud and Deleuze). More recently, queer counter-cultures have redefined masochism as a concept which challenges heterosexuality and heteronormativity. This essay takes as its theoretical point of departure, not Freudian psychoanalytic theory, especially of "female masochism,"

which also essentializes the gender dichotomy, but rather queer theorists' conceptualization of subjectivity and sexuality as constructed and performative. In the stories "Bone Meat" and "A Souvenir of Japan," Taeko Kono and Carter, respectively, also challenge sexism, but they do so by depicting internalized suffering in these relationships, self-negation, and prioritization of others' desires and needs, showing how these can lead paradoxically, to temporarily satisfying their desires. As Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner argue, "[m]aking a queer world has required the development of kinds of intimacy that bear no necessary relation to domestic space, to kinship, to the couple form, to property, or to the nation. These intimacies *do* bear a necessary relation to a counterpublic – an indefinitely accessible world conscious of its subordinate relation" (558, italics in original). While queer theorists and communities focus on the practice of physical masochism as a space in which to challenge heteronormativity, Kono and Carter focus on the complex operations of masochism within heterosexual couplings.

Intersectionality is a crucial framework through which to understand Carter's figurations of the unicorn and Momotaro. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) proposed the paradigm of "intersectionality" to challenge the white liberal middle-class groundings of feminism, selecting Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) as an example of how generalizations about gender inequalities are implicitly grounded in whiteness and middle-class experiences as a given norm, failing to engage with or represent the inequalities systemically experienced by Black women (154-55). Her focus is specifically on Black women, as is much significant intersectional work that follows from Crenshaw's seminal beginnings, but as Devon Carbado *et al.* note, the study of intersectionality is a seemingly endless process of engaging with new contexts and new power relations: "there is potentially always another set of concerns to which the theory can be directed, other places to which the theory might be moved, and other structures of power it can be deployed to examine" (304).

Departing from Crenshaw's model, Carter's characters do not necessarily experience marginalization through both gender and racial identities in the works we are focusing on, but rather present tensions between positions of subordination and authority that are combined in the encounters between white women and patriarchal society in Japan. In the frame of Patricia Hill Collins' theory of interlocking oppressions, we might see Carter as "simultaneously oppressor and oppressed" (225). In other words, Carter's writing appears prescient of a specific element of intersectionality that she comes to recognize, in learning about her own whiteness and Japanese men's masochism at the same time during this period in Japan.

With this article, we are amplifying prior research efforts by providing new arguments about Carter's use of folktales and fairytales (see, most notably, edited collections by Sage and by Roemer and Bacchilega): we examine how Carter's encounter with racial otherness in Japan resulted in the radical revision of her prior use of magical and mythical beings. There is considerably less critical attention to Carter and ideas of race, with key publications by Charlotte Crofts and Natsumi Ikoma on Carter's self-reflections when in Japan (see also Dimovitz and Ikoma in this special issue). Crofts analyzes Carter's representation of white men's orientalism in the radio play *Come Unto These Yellow Sands* (1979), arguing that it sets out an "explicit engagement with postcolonial discourse" (91). In regard to Japan, Crofts presents evidence of the "reverse Orientalism" (93) from what Carter experienced there, with whiteness seen as exotic, and she compares Carter's reflections to those of the French critical theorists Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes on their own explorations of East Asia (Crofts 93-97, 102). Crofts demonstrates the potential in Carter's texts to raise white people's consciousness of their positionality and critically engage with its implications, an idea we expand on in this article by examining its links to Carter's own exoticization of the other and the tangled power relations of her attraction to a Japanese man. This article actively takes up

Crofts' call for scholarship that "pursues the avenues opened up here to further address the racial politics of Carter's work" (104), particularly through our analysis of the unicorn as a symbol of white, British nationalism and of its shifts in meaning during and due to Carter's experiences of Japan.

Ikoma proposes further that Carter's time in Japan enables us to recognize "gender performativity," in Carter's writing, "even before the term was coined by Judith Butler in the late 1980s" (80), as she experienced the male gaze in a new way and discussed gender relations with her Japanese boyfriend, Sozo Araki. Ikoma contextualizes both Carter's experience of Japan in the 1970s and Japanese attitudes towards white people at the time: "Depending on the situation, Caucasians were feared, idolized or sexualized, but in all cases they were objectified. Women in general were 'others' in Japanese society, but Caucasian women were doubly so" (81). This heightened sense of her own otherness and of the operations of patriarchy spurred Carter to gain a deeper understanding of the constructedness of gender. However, it is essential to see that the otherness of a white woman is not commensurate to that of an East Asian woman, as Carter herself reflects in her writing from this period. Thus, we further argue that Carter's experience of Japan engendered in her a complex sense of intersectionality, a recognition of the power of her whiteness, of which she was formerly unaware, and of its entanglement with racial and gendered otherness. This is evident, we argue, in Carter's regendering of the patriarchal image of the unicorn and in the ways that Carter conceptualized masochism in heterosexual relationships across racial differences.

Unicorns: Britishness, Patriarchy, and White Skin

Reflecting on feeling like an outsider during her stay in Japan, Carter writes in her journal, "I am a bit like a phoenix or a unicorn" (qtd. in Gordon 157), and on another occasion: "In Japan, to say that I came from England was like saying I came from Atlantis, or that I was a unicorn" (qtd. in Gordon 143). This repeated reference to the unicorn as herself and thus as female is unusual in Carter's *oeuvre*, as she regularly used the unicorn as a masculine figure of patriarchy and its associated violence both before and after this period. Moreover, Carter's other works represent the male unicorn's relation to the maiden as an intricate, sexualized power relation with sadistic and masochistic elements, which, when intertwined with the racial element of whiteness as it is in this context, becomes a symbol of intersectional power dynamics. To explicate this atypical use of the unicorn, this section will trace the unicorn through Carter's earlier writing, its relation to Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books, then bring it back to Carter's comment about herself as a unicorn and see how it might be implicitly reflected in her other writing about Japan.

As Carter arrived in Japan in 1969, she was close to completing the publication of two stories for children, which were released in 1970: *The Donkey Prince* and *Miss Z, or The Dark Lady*. They were mainly written before she went to Japan but are fascinating to think about in conjunction with her stay there, in particular for the ways she thinks about the exotic and the postcolonial and revisits a legendary duo in her writing, the lion and the unicorn. They both appear in *Miss Z*, as the heroine Miss Z travels from home to explore the nearby forests where she encounters vain unicorns and green lions. There is little written about Carter's children's books, despite the fact that she wrote several, including, later, *Sea-Cat and Dragon King*, *Comic and Curious Cats*, and *Moonshadow*. In a brief mention of her children's writing, the fairytale critic Jack Zipes writes:

> *Miss Z* and *The Donkey Prince* stand at the beginning of Carter's fairy-tale production. They do not have the density and complexity of her later tales.

> They do not have the stunning metaphors and lust for sexual imagery. But these tales are zestful because they initiate "crossing over" into new realms for her female protagonists, exploring dangerous territory, and returning home fully confident in their abilities. (153-54)

While there is none of the explicit sexuality that is evident in Carter's later fairytale writing, we would argue that *Miss Z* is a tale of some complexity and shows the world coming to grips with the decolonization that Crofts has highlighted in other works by Carter. Miss Z lives with her father in "a Parrot Jungle" (5), on land they have taken from parrots, but the father finds himself "exasperated" (5) by the constant comic singing of the parrots and shoots their king. The parrots all leave and curse the land to be infertile in their absence, spurring Miss Z to set out on a journey to make peace with the parrots and break the curse. On her travels, she crosses paths with a creature called Odd, an old snake named Dragon; and she traverses a country of unicorns and one of green lions, to find the parrots, apologize, and offer compensation for living on their land. Colonial motives are clear in the father, as it is specifically the land's natural resources that motivate her father and Miss Z to live there: "'Your father is a silly man; if he didn't like parrots, why did he come to live in the Parrot Jungle?' / 'The earth is so rich,' said Miss Z. 'And the air is so sweet'" (9; see also 28). The choice of parrots as the original keepers of the land invites a postcolonial reading, for teaching language to parrots has a literary history of paralleling the education and subjugation of racially othered slaves, most famously in Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. The conventional happy ending of the story imagines the colonizer and colonized co-existing peacefully, with the colonizers acknowledging their past wrongdoings, offering reparations, and showing that they value the culture of those indigenous to the land. In "remorse" after the parrots leave, the father tells Miss Z: "If only the parrots came back, I would learn to laugh at their antics and put out bread and marmalade for them every morning" (8). Paraphrasing her

father, Miss Z completes the story by seeking forgiveness from the parrots and making the same offer, to all "live together happily in the Parrot Jungle" (29). As the parrots fly home, their many colors make a "flying rainbow" (3), symbolizing the covenant of peace forged between them.

This clear colonial allegory of the story is complicated, however, by the fact that Miss Z is herself figuratively "other" and implicitly described by Carter as "exotic" (qtd. in Gordon 169), with much emphasis laid on her "dark" skin. The creature Odd, for example, tells her, "A dark lady like yourself can flit through like a shadow" (17), and when she travels with the unicorn, the difference in their skin colors is highlighted: "She put her dark arm around his white neck" (21). What might traditionally be the moral of the story, namely that violent colonizers must reflect on their wrongdoings, apologize, and make reparations, is distanced here from its primarily Western readership, through othering and exoticization. Although set in a fictional place, the reality is that a woman of Miss Z's skin color in our world would almost certainly have lived through a history of Western colonization, as most of the world did.

Further complicating this allegory, the other creatures in the narrative are ambiguous symbols, with connections to other parts of the world. The greenness of the lions might imply that they are "cowardly" (28), possibly in a nod to *The Wizard of Oz*. Their greenness is also linked to the color of jade, which they are rich in, and their prince gives Miss Z "as many rings and necklaces of jade as she could carry" (30), thus suggesting a connection to Chinese culture. Closer to home for Carter, the symbol of the lion and unicorn fighting is inscribed in the British royal coat of arms. The unicorn is also said to be living on land that "had the texture of tapestry" (18), raising associations with the famed unicorn tapestries at the Musée de Cluny and linking the unicorns to French culture. These two allusions lend the unicorn a particularly Western, white, colonial authority. Yet at the same time the unicorn's allusion to

the British coat of arms is arguably complicated by both England's historic enmity toward and feminization of the French and by the unicorn's status as the national animal of Scotland – a fact Carter probably knew since her father was Scottish – thus giving the creature associations as well with oppressed subjecthood and subjugation by (yet also agential resistance to) the English.

Miss Z is filled with violence, despite its generally light and comic touch, but of all the creatures Miss Z encounters, only the unicorn incites fear in the heroine. Miss Z decides not to disagree with a unicorn while he praises himself, for fear that he would "gore her with his horn out of hurt vanity" (20). Unicorns are not generally imagined as violent beasts, but their horns distinguish them from horses, which means that their difference is in weaponry. The unicorn in Carter's early works symbolizes patriarchal and sexual authority as well as aggression, as this story exemplifies. The unicorn that approaches Miss Z puts himself in her power, but rather than acting submissively or passively toward her, reveals that he is in control of this seeming submission through his use of imperatives: "'Allow me to place my head in your lap. . . . Now I am in your power,' he said. 'Consider yourself lucky, for I am the most beautiful of all the unicorns'" (20). Together with the danger he represents and his bellicose attitude (he notably also tells her, "I have destroyed more green lions than you've had hot dinners" 20), this imperious tone collectively figures the unicorn in this story as a patriarchal and imperial creature.

We contend that Carter is drawing here on the influence of Carroll's *Alice* books, as she explicitly does elsewhere in her writing. Her poetry collection *Unicorn* (1966) includes a short poem about the ending of the second *Alice* book, "Through the Looking-Glass," demonstrating that Alice was on Carter's mind at this time. The following passage from *Through the Looking-Glass* has direct connections to several parts of Carter's use of unicorns:

"What — is — this?" [the Unicorn] said at last.

"This is a child!" Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice to introduce her, and spreading out both his hands towards her in an Anglo-Saxon attitude. "We only found it to-day. It's as large as life, and twice as natural!"

"I always thought they were fabulous monsters!" said the Unicorn. "Is it alive?"

. . .

Alice could not help her lips curling up into a smile as she began: "Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too? I never saw one alive before!"

"Well, now that we *have* seen each other," said the Unicorn, "if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?"

"Yes, if you like," said Alice.

"Come, fetch out the plum-cake, old man!"

. . .

"It's a fabulous monster!" the Unicorn cried out. . . .

"Then hand round the plum-cake, Monster," the Lion said. (228-29, 230)

In Carroll's work, the defamiliarization in this passage is typical of Alice's encounters. In the world through the looking glass, moreover, she becomes the "fabulous monster," not the unicorn. It is also worth noting here the "Anglo-Saxon attitude" of the messenger Haigha. Just before the Unicorn meets Alice, he fights with the Lion for the crown, recalling the lion and unicorn on the royal coat of arms. While he is friendly to Alice here, the text makes his dangerousness clear; the king himself is concerned about the violence of his fight with the lion: "At this moment the Unicorn sauntered by them, with his hands in his pockets. 'I had

the best of it this time!' . . . 'A little – a little,' the King replied, rather nervously. 'You shouldn't have run him through with your horn, you know'" (228).

In *Unicorn*, the long title poem picks up on the language of Carroll's writing, characterizing both unicorns and virgins as "fabulous beasts" (4). The plum cake that Alice shares with the lion, unicorn, and Haigha in the above passage becomes "rich fruit-cake" in Carter's poem and takes on sexual overtones: the unicorn "ravens / to gorge on her rich fruit-cake dark" (6). That image recurs in a sexual sense later in the collection when Carter writes of the "rich fruit-cake of her dark recesses" (29) in a passage about her cat in heat. Carroll's phrase "fabulous monster" shifts slightly to "fabulous beast" in "A Souvenir of Japan," where Carter writes: "I had never been so absolutely the mysterious other. I had become a kind of phoenix, a fabulous beast" (8). Carter suggests further ambiguities through this allusion since the "fabulous beast" in her poems can refer either to the unicorn or the virgin, the mysterious masculine aggressor or the idealized feminine victim. The reference to herself in Japan combines the two into one, in a manner we will discuss further below.

Scott Dimovitz notes that the unicorn is "a crucial image for Carter throughout her career" (30). For example, Carter depicts the unicorn and lion in *Miss Z* in the manner in which they are represented in the tapestries of the Musée de Cluny where a virgin holds authority over a unicorn, and she explicitly refers to "the tapestry at the Musee de Cluny," where "the unicorn . . . edges toward the virgin," in her later work, *The Passion of New Eve* (146).[1] There are six tapestries at the museum, representing the five senses, and a sixth ambiguously titled "A mon seul desir," which could be translated as "To my only desire," or "according to my desire alone." In each case, the lady is at the center, the focus of the image, and the lion and unicorn are subservient. This is especially clear in "Touch," in which the lady holds a smaller unicorn by its horn, indicating her authority and power over it. It is historically plausible as well as relevant to Carter's other work to read the woman figure as

having spiritual authority over a unicorn, while it serves as her protector. However, Dimovitz argues for the complexity of power relations in these scenarios and draws a fascinating connection between the recurring image of the woman taming the unicorn in Carter's writing – the "manipulatively passive maiden in the unicorn story" – and Carter's reflections on sadism and masochism in heterosexual relationships (45). A further layer of power relations is overlaid on the maiden-unicorn dynamic in Carter's long poem, "Unicorn": this poem expresses women's agency in the maiden's active approach to luring and entrapping the unicorn, but frames the entire encounter within a pornographic, cinematic setting, which subjugates the maiden to the male gaze and patriarchal authority. Both the maiden and the unicorn become victims in this structure, which pits them against each other and parallels the masochistic interracial relationships.

As we have seen, unicorns are often potential patriarchal aggressors in her work, as in "Unicorn," and in *Miss Z*, in which the unicorn encounters a virgin. The unicorn's approach is sexualized, and his power takes the shape of patriarchal authority over women's bodies. When Carter refers to herself in her journal as a unicorn, then – to return now to her comment that "In Japan, to say that I came from England was like saying I came from Atlantis, or that I was a unicorn" (qtd. in Gordon 143) – positioning herself as unicorn-like in Japan, she may be signaling her awareness of her own (Western, white) agency, even within this context of being the "other." She sees the power her whiteness brings her, even as a woman, in Japan, when she writes: "I've become very conscious here of being a European, being white" (qtd. in Gordon 143). The unicorn is not just any mythical creature, but literally white and often British, as in the royal coat of arms. In some stories about Japan, she presents a Caucasian protagonist who stands out physically precisely because of her whiteness. In "A Souvenir of Japan," the narrator says that her "pink cheeks, blue eyes and blatant yellow hair" all make her "an instrument which played upon an alien scale" (8). In "The Smile of Winter," another

story from the *Fireworks* collection, the narrator says, “They giggle when they see me because I am white and pink while they themselves are such a serviceable, unanimous beige” (42).

Such awareness of one’s own whiteness can be a powerful first step in developing a conception of intersectionality and in acknowledging the privileged position endowed on her by her race. As Gary Younge argues: “In general, the more power an identity has, the less likely its carrier is to be aware of it as an identity at all. . . . Because their identity is never interrogated, they are easily seduced by the idea that they do not have one” (45). Henry Giroux further contends that the assumed neutrality of an identity that confers power (such as whiteness) is central to its process of maintaining power, and he asks his readers to “question the norm of whiteness as an ethnic category that secures its dominance by appearing to be invisible” (15). Thomas Nakayama and Robert Krizek note that naming it as an identity category is itself a powerful move: “by naming whiteness, we displace its centrality and reveal its invisible position” so that it “may be placed under critical analysis” like other racial positions (292).

Carter takes precisely that step when she develops the sense of whiteness as an identity category while in Japan. She reflects on her time in Japan: “It was a painful and enlightening experience to be regarded as a coloured person, for example; to be defined as a Caucasian before I was defined as a woman, and learning the hard way that most people on the planet are *not* Caucasian and have no reason either to love or respect Caucasians” (“Notes from the Front Line” 72, Carter’s emphasis; also qtd. in Crofts 94). She describes it as painful here, but the unicorn suggests it was also empowering. In her fictional writing about Japan, she writes through the perspective of narrators who are not just the object of patriarchal society, but in a position to objectify others, as in “A Souvenir of Japan”: “I knew him only in relation to myself” (9). The construction of her lover as other consequently means the

construction of herself as Self, as authority, as the norm. The same concept recurs in "Flesh and the Mirror": "I created him solely in relation to myself, like a work of romantic art, an object corresponding to the ghost inside me" (74-75). Another comment, which Ikoma points out, reframes this concept more specifically in terms of women's status in Japan: that they are caught in the non-choice of a "choice of becoming either slaves or toys" (Ikoma 82). But in "Flesh and the Mirror," it is her lover, a man, who is described as a clockwork toy, which she wants to take apart. He is the object to her subject: "When I'd first loved him, I wanted to take him apart, as a child dismembers a clockwork toy, to comprehend the inscrutable mechanics of its interior" (75).

In a review of *Naomi,* a novel by Japanese modernist author Junichiro Tanizaki, Carter indicates that she also understands how whiteness intersects with gender in power relations. The hero of the story has idealized a Japanese girl in whom he sees Western features, and Carter reads this as a simulated submission to Western-ness, allowing him to take control over it precisely through his submission. Carter writes: "His own sense of self is never at risk with her, as it would be with a real foreigner" ("Junichiro Tanizaki: *Naomi*" 327-28). In saying this, she implicitly acknowledges that she has some power or, at least in the perception of Japanese men, might have a power that threatens theirs. Similarly, the shift in her use of the unicorn, from masculine aggressor to herself as a white, Western figure in Japan, registers her own experience of a shift in power relations and her understanding of the intricacies of race and gender intersecting to create multiple, complex types of otherness, which are not necessarily commensurate with each other. The mythical figure of the unicorn encapsulates the various, ensuing tensions in its intricate allusions to the power dynamics of race and gender that Carter experienced and wrote about in Japan.

Momotaro: Masochism in an East Asian Lover

Carter's use of mystical creatures and association of them with masochism shifts in her construction of the Japanese national mythical figure Momotaro ["Peach Boy"] in "A Souvenir of Japan," in a manner that highlights Carter's developing understanding of intersectionality. In "A Souvenir of Japan," Carter shows the same tensions around her position as those generated with the unicorn – simultaneously, as a subjugated woman and an authoritative white Westerner – through the fictionalization and mythologization of her affair with a younger Japanese man.[2] In the story, the heroine recognizes that she is reconstructing her lover from her own perspective. She does this, in part, by choosing his name, commenting explicitly on this moment in the story: "His name was not Taro. I only called him Taro so that I could use the conceit of the peach boy, because it seemed appropriate" (10). The passage where she describes the peach boy, or Momotaro, is a particularly dense and fascinating part of this story. Carter blurs gender and racial roles in this construction and reveals complex configurations of gendered masochism.

To summarize the traditional story of Momotaro briefly, he is a boy born from a giant peach, who journeys to fight a group of demons [*oni*]. He saves a bird, a monkey, and a dog, who travel with him to fight the demons. They defeat the demons, take their treasure, and live comfortable lives. This is a well-known folk tale in Japan and, during the Second World War, was used in government propaganda to bring the nation together for military action. The first Japanese feature-length animation, *Divine Sea Warriors* (1945), is about Momotaro working with the Japanese navy. In Japanese folktales and in Japanese culture, Momotaro is an archetypal hero, a fighter, and a leader. However, for Carter, he is not an aggressive figure. She sees in him "a passive, cruel sweetness I did not immediately understand, for it was that of the repressed masochism which, in my country, is usually confined to women"

("Souvenir" 6). Carter's observation of this masochism plays a significant role when we connect and compare it to contemporary Japanese literature. It can be aligned, in particular, with the work of the contemporaneous, award-winning Japanese woman author, Taeko Kono. Both Carter and Kono attempt, at about the same time, to conceptualize female masochism in Japan, especially within the confines of an intimate heterosexual relationship.

In literary criticism of Tanizaki and in their own creative work, Carter and Kono disclose a shared interest in writing and theorizing sado-masochism. More specifically, they respond to prior conventional representations of men's masochism and imagine women's masochism. They both aim in their works, moreover, to conceptualize women's masochism in mundane, daily lives during the late 1960s and early 1970s, focusing on masochism in heterosexual/hetero-normative intimacy. In this section, we will compare their ideas about women's masochism, in Kono's short story "Bone Meat" (1969), in her collection of short stories *Toddler Hunting*, and in Carter's "A Souvenir of Japan" in *Fireworks*, written almost a year apart.

Kono's understanding of masochism and her literary texts resonate with Carter's writing on women's masochism. In the interview with the prominent Japanese literary scholar Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit, Kono confirms that sado-masochism is not a dichotomous system of desire and, in fact, that a masochist always possesses an element of the sadist since she believes masochists develop masochistic desire through sadism (45-46). In her critique of Tanizaki's *oeuvre*, Kono further elaborates that the kind of masochism he represents is mainly physical ("carnal and sensual"), as enacted by Tanizaki's men protagonists, and his masochist literature gradually develops into the psychological, then conceptual (*Tanizaki's Literature and Desire of Affirmation* 34-35). Kono stresses, "of course, all kinds of human sexuality (*seiai*) consist of mutual participation from the physical and the psychological (from the sensory and from consciousness), and in particular, in regard to masochism, physical

masochism cannot exist without intimate connection to psychological masochism" (*Tanizaki's Literature and Desire of Affirmation* 34, Uematsu's trans.). The Japanese literary critic Keiko Yonaha builds on Kono's theorizing of masochism by clearly defining three distinct types (physical, psychological, and conceptual masochism) and clarifying the significance of conceptual masochism (19-22). She defines it as "an idea which stresses the sadistic imagination above all, in the process of fermenting eroticism" (21, Uematsu's trans.). Mary A. Knighton has also analysed Kono's fiction through the lens of masochism, elaborating on this framework of types of masochism (498). In Knighton's terms, conceptual masochism "reigns" over both physical and psychological masochism (498). As Yonaha argues, conceptual masochism does not necessarily require the presence of the sadist as the absolute other since it is not physical (22), and a masochist's desire does not need to be performed in bed as a sexual activity, but rather could be achieved anywhere in daily life by using the imagination.

Such conceptual masochism can be observed in Kono's short story "Bone Meat" [*Hone no niku*] (1969), in which a character's mind is set upon finding pleasure in self-destructive behavior or governed by an ethical system that values self-sacrifice. Julia Bullock argues that "Bone Meat" demonstrates "a self-destructive internalization of the very discourses that render" the protagonist inferior and that "her submission to their vaguely sadomasochistic role-play is crucial in the success of this process of self-abjection" (83). While concurring with Bullock's argument about the process of internalization, we see masochism in this story working also as a strategy for women to survive mundane lives in heterosexual relationships. This short story starts with a woman's retrospective narrative after she has broken up with her ex-boyfriend: in her reflections, a man and a woman, both unnamed, enjoy playing power games over food. In one of the key scenes, we see the woman taking pleasure in denying herself pleasure as the man eats a plate of oysters:

"Go ahead and have some," the man said, taking one from the center of the large plate. . . .

"Mm," she replied, but did not reach for one.

"No, really," the man continued. . . .

"Mm," she again replied, but took pleasure in not reaching for one.

She watched the man's hand, clenched so tightly around the fruit fork that it appeared even more delicate. . . . As he lifted the oyster to his mouth, seaweed still clinging to its shell, he worked it slightly with his fork and the sound carried the smell, taste, and freshness of the seashore. . . .

"Have some of these," said the man, indicating the large plate.

At this, she took even greater pleasure in not doing so. (257-58)

The fundamental pattern, repeated here, is of the woman's "pleasure" and then "greater pleasure" in denying herself the pleasure of eating the oyster, demonstrating the effect of crescendo into ecstasy. This pattern demonstrates the conceptual masochism of finding pleasure through self-denial.[3] That pleasure combines with the implicit sensory pleasures of "smell" and "sound" and with her enjoying the spectacle of the man's movements with the oyster – all evoking the taste that she imagines but does not directly experience. At a glance, this scene does not appear sexual, but in this ordinary scene in daily life, the woman finds sensual "pleasure" in denying a man's request for her to eat, instead only eating small remnants of meat on the shell. Mitsuhiko Tsuge finds a confluence of psychological and conceptual masochism in this scene (qtd. in Yonaha 21). In the aforementioned interview with Hijiya-Kirschnereit, Kono explains masochism itself as a form for women's sexuality, which works as a "life strategy" [*seikatsu no chie*] and a kind of "self-deceit," to make daily living bearable. This "strategy" seeks to convert the daily suffering and oppression women experience into pleasure and enjoyment (Hijiya-Kirschnereit 47, 43-48).

Kono's understanding of masochism arguably derives from Japan's national identity since the Occupation period. Kono started her writing career after the war when she sought to recover what she had lost during the prime of her youth. As Hijiya-Kirschnereit explains, she deeply regretted suppressing her hopes and dreams during the war (48-50). During the post-war period, modern Japanese literature and journalism by men used representations of rape to describe the humiliation of the nation's defeat to the west, as Michael Molasky explains, and associated this humiliation with being "feminized" by the west and especially the US (11-12; see also Bullock 35). Molasky notes also Kono's response to this tendency: "This propensity of male writers to appropriate rape's symbolic dimensions while ignoring its violent reality may be what prompted Kono Taeko, an acclaimed female writer, to sardonically state that 'it might have been best had the victors raped every woman in Japan'" (11-12). Knighton too situates Kono's work and her views of masochism in the historical context of the Occupation and post-war period: "Because women had never been considered equally human to men, they could not even fall to the level of rape [victim] or prisoner. Instead, women gained freedoms that kept them in their ideological place more firmly" (513).

We would extend Knighton's argument to encompass a longer stretch of time during which the nation experienced humiliation since this climaxed during the years 1969 and 1970 with the suicidal death of modernist author Yukio Mishima. Both Kono and Carter experienced this historical period, and their observations of masochism reflect the exigencies of the time.[4] In other words, it is probably not coincidental that Kono and Carter theorized masochism for women in the years 1969 to 1970, considering the polarized Japanese politics of those years, in particular during the campaigns against the US-Japan Security Treaty (see Ikoma in this issue). In 1969 to 1970, students were radicalized through numerous student campaigns to fight against the renewal of this treaty (a struggle which included such violent clashes as the one between students and riot police at the National Diet [Schieder 31] and

hijacking an aircraft into exile in North Korea [Igarashi 233]). As Ikoma explains in this issue, these events proved crucial to Carter's understanding of Japan, and she wrote about them in her essay "Mishima's Toy Sword": in 1970, Carter observed the two political extremes of Japan, the far-left "radical students" who "hi-jacked a plane and held all who flew on it to ransom" and the far-right in "the attempted *coup d'état* by the Society of Shields." Mishima was a central member of this society ("Mishima's Toy Sword" 295). After leading his private army *Tate no kai* [The Shield Society] to hijack the Eastern Regional Headquarters of the Japanese self-defense Force, Mishima committed suicide through *harakiri* on 25 November 1970. Mishima had explained that *Tate no kai*'s ethos "lies simply in the determination to sacrifice our lives in order to make of the Self-Defense Forces, when it awakens, a national army, an honorable national army" (Mishima 74). Mishima aimed to reinvigorate what he believed to be a traditional Japan and to recover the authority and power of the Emperor, literally by "sacrificing" his life.

Of these events, Carter writes, critically:

> Mishima's act was an orchestration of certain elements: sado-masochism; the homo-eroticism inevitable in a culture which has, for the past 800 or 900 years, systematically degraded women; a peculiarly nutty brand of fidelity; narcissism; and authoritarianism. As these elements unhappily do not fall into those areas of the human psyche that the Japanese repress, they tend to seem, sometimes, characteristics that are especially Japanese. (295)

While claiming that Mishima's act is essentially an issue of the Japanese psyche, what does she mean by also terming it one of "sado-masochism"? This passage is not only about Mishima as an individual who embraces pain and suffering through *harakiri* for the honor of the nation, but a reflection of a collective sense of sado-masochism that Carter observes in Japanese culture. Carter rightly notes that Mishima's act is embedded as well in a

homoeroticism that requires misogyny (preceding Eve Sedgwick's argument about homoeroticism and homosociality in *Between Men*). The Japanese psyche she thus observes in relation to sado-masochism and homoeroticism inevitably leads to the issue of gender and, in particular, to the further question of how women, who have been historically barred from this discussion of the Japanese psyche, relate to men. What she finds is that women are both negated and excluded from the discussion of subjugated relations on the national level and the national level is imagined by men as occurring exclusively between Japanese men and the West. Carter's insight resonates with Kono's frustration in regard not only to modernist literature by men, but also Japanese nationalism and men's masochism, which all apparently dismiss the condition of women in these post-war years. In "Bone Meat," Kono, and in *Fireworks*, Carter, both reject this exclusivity in relation, in particular, to men's masochism and redirect focus to the issue of women's suffering and masochism.

Carter's women narrators in *Fireworks* speak of women's suffering in markedly similar ways to Kono in response to these two writers' frustration with men's masochism, as we see in "Flesh and the Mirror": "I positively salivated at the suggestion of unpleasure, I was sure that *that* was real life" (67). In the story of Taro in "A Souvenir of Japan," the unnamed woman narrator struggles and suffers in communicating with Taro, especially in relation to his absence overnight or to his boredom. In her response to Taro's excuse for staying out without telling her, the narrator explains what Taro was willing to die for as all about himself:

> his dedication was primarily to the idea of himself in love. This idea seemed to him magnificent, even sublime. He was prepared to die for it, as one of Baudelaire's dandies might have been prepared to kill himself in order to preserve himself in the condition of a work of art, for he wanted to make this

> experience a masterpiece of experience which absolutely transcended the everyday. (11)

Resonating with Carter's observation on Mishima's suicide in her journalism, this narrator sees Taro's desperate excuses also as a product of his self-aggrandizement; phrases like "magnificent, even sublime" and "masterpiece of experience" ultimately portray him as narcissistic. Taro is "prepared to die" with a grand gesture for the sake of creating a beautiful image, much as Mishima sought to do with his suicide.

In a prominent scene in "A Souvenir of Japan," during the highlight of a fair's fireworks, a psychological battle between Taro and the narrator transpires. The last thing the narrator wants to do is to return to central Tokyo before the end of the fireworks, but as Taro's boredom reaches its limit, their negotiation over whether to stay or leave leads into a competition over "selflessness" and "self-abnegation": "We fought a silent battle of *self-abnegation* and I won it, for I had the stronger character. . . . I do not know if it was worth *my small victory of selflessness* to bear his remorse at cutting short my pleasure, even if to engineer this remorse had, at some subterranean level, been the whole object of the outing" (3; emphasis added). The narrator's relation to Taro becomes complicated when Taro, who has been aligned with the concept of men's masochism, competes with the narrator, who is "suffering from love" (9). The narrator's suffering in choosing to deny her own desire to stay at the fireworks, is entangled with her pleasure in being with Taro. In this sense, the relationship brings her a mixture of pleasure and pain, as she enacts the role of the female masochist. This scene parallels the key scene in Kono's "Bone Meat"; just as Kono's scene represented a pinnacle of conceptual masochism, in which a woman finds pleasure in refusing the man's offer of pleasure, Carter's "A Souvenir of Japan" emphasizes the woman narrator's denial of her own desire and claims that, in some way, suspending her pleasure and suffering

silently offer another form of pleasure. In both cases, these two authors are exploring women's masochism in mundane moments of their unnamed women protagonists' lives.

However, Carter's account of masochism differs from Kono's in some crucial ways because Carter makes it clear that gender is not the only issue at stake in the Japanese relationships. From the beginning of the story, when Carter sets out the subtle entanglements of pleasure and self-sacrifice, the whiteness of Carter's narrator troubles the gendered power relation with Taro, empowering her as a Western authority over him, to which he responds by expressing masochistic desire towards her. When Taro asks if she is happy during the fireworks, and she reflects that "I knew he was bored and, if he was himself enjoying anything, it was only the idea of my pleasure – or, rather, the idea that he enjoyed my pleasure, since this would be a proof of love" (3), that concept of Taro enjoying her pleasure rather than his own exposes an underlying issue that Carter found in Japanese culture. That issue is not only one of masochistically sacrificing one's own pleasure for another and finding pleasure in that, but of racial power play. In turning the story of Momotaro – a story of national authority – into a story about male passivity, and masochism, Carter recognizes potential links between variously marginalized groups in society and her own role in Japan, both as a woman and as a Caucasian subject. Through exposing the narcissistic masochism of her lover and resisting it, fighting it in order to enable and express masochism for herself, we see Carter complicating and challenging the category of conceptual masochism itself.

Through their experiences of post-war Japan, with its long literary and cultural history of expressing men's masochism, both Carter and Kono question the impact such a figuration has on women themselves and undermine the aesthetic image of a nationalist male masochism to express women's potential desire, sexuality, and pleasure in women's masochism. But while, as Dimovitz has argued, Carter moves also from seeking her identity in masochism to expressing sadistic tendencies through her relationships (49), we can add a

further stage to this shift: as Carter breaks down masochism as a concept and recognizes both gendered and racial differences within it.

Conclusion

The regendering of the masochistic images encapsulated in the virgin and unicorn dyad and in the figure of Momotaro invites a new intersectional understanding of racial and gender positions and Carter's own awareness of her white subjecthood in her work in and about Japan. Both Kono and Carter write women's masochism and suffering through dysfunctional heterosexual relationships from late 1969 to 1971, when Japan was going through significant political change in relation to the US. The discourse of Japan as a nation subjugated to the US leads to a sense of the feminization of the nation at the macro level, and both Kono and Carter respond to this by writing stories about women's further entrapment in the name of love, at the micro level. An intersectional analysis shows that Carter's writing complicates the issue of the power dynamics of masochism since her writing and her affair with a Japanese man involve not only gender, but also a racially charged hierarchical relationship. Carter, as a white woman, and Taro (or Sozo), as an East Asian man, exoticize the other: while expressing physical attraction to each other, yet they both fail to capture what might be "real" in their relationship. The narrator of "A Souvenir of Japan" tries to identify Taro as herself and must inevitably fail: "I was suffering from love and I knew him as intimately as I knew my own image in a mirror. In other words, I knew him only in relation to myself. Yet, on those terms, I knew him perfectly. At times, I thought I was inventing him as I went along" (9). She (or Carter herself) shows her awareness of desiring an idealized image of her partner,

an existence in relation to herself, but not one that she can directly grasp, any more than we can grasp our own image, seemingly, on the other side of a mirror.

Through their relative positions, both Carter and Araki could be considered marginalized and othered in this relationship, for Carter exposes the patriarchal underpinning of Japanese society, yet also repeatedly expresses her own position in terms of nationalist, white, even patriarchal terms, through her redeployment of unicorn imagery and through the understanding she indicates in Miss Z of what it means to live in a postcolonial world. She exposes the feminized element to her lover's identity in relation to her, as Taro is reduced from a military-nationalist icon (a Momotaro) to "a passive, cruel sweetness" ("Souvenir" 6). In these ways, Carter plays with the intricacies of racialized and gendered identities, and the positioning of otherness.

Carter concludes "A Souvenir of Japan" by reflecting, "try as we might to possess the essence of each other's otherness, we would inevitably fail" (13). This line suggests that otherness is not monolithic but varied and not necessarily clearly comprehensible ~~from one to another~~ from one marginalized identity position to another, in ways that anticipate the theorization of intersectionality by Crenshaw and others in the late 1980s and 1990s. What is fascinating in these stories is how aware Carter is of her power to construct, objectify, and position herself as an agent at the same time that she serves as the object of the gaze and authority of others. In doing so, she proposes not only an understanding of gender performativity, as Ikoma has argued, but hints further at complex, intersectional power relationships. With illuminating insight, she redirects images closely associated with national authority, regendering the unicorn, from its British, white masculine authority, and Momotaro from its military, imperialist culture, in her writing about Japan.

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1. See also Dimovitz's discussion of the unicorn in Carter's published and unpublished works (30-33).

2. For further discussion of the relationship between Carter and Araki, see Ikoma.

3. The imagery of the peach haunts Carter's writing after *Fireworks* as a complex indication of desire, as in "The Quilt Maker" (1981).

4. For Kono and masochism, including brief comparison to Carter, also see Jones.

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