Unuseless Cyborgs: Spiral Posthumanism and Popular Culture in Japan’s Ushinawareta Nijūnen (1990-2010)

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Unuseless Cyborgs: 
Spiral Posthumanism and Popular Culture in Japan’s *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* (1990-2010)

by

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This thesis entitled:

Unuseless Cyborgs: Spiral Posthumanism and Popular Culture in Japan’s

_Ushinawareta Nijūnen_ (1990-2010)

written by Andrew Gilbert

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Abstract:

*Unuseless Cyborgs: Spiral Posthumanism and Popular Culture in Japan’s Ushinawareta Nijūnen (1990-2010)* examines contemporary American posthuman theories (theories that challenge humanist accounts of embodiment, agency, subjectivity and humans’ relation to the environment) through the lens of an emerging critical subjectivity in Japanese popular culture during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* (The “Forgotten Decades”). This dissertation creates a conversation between contemporary Japanese popular culture from 1990-2010 and American posthuman theories in order to identify a strand of Japanese subjectivity that straddles the line between liberal humanism and a transhuman post-subjectivity (that emphasizes human entanglements with the non-human). In the absence of a developed Japanese critical discourse of posthumanism, this project adapts American posthuman theory for a Japanese cultural context, exploring the nascent forms of subjectivity revealed in Japanese cultural texts during these decades. These forms, I argue, are critical of Japan’s conventionally sanctioned subjectivity in this period, which emphasizes individuality, efficiency, and autonomous thinking. In addition to analyses of Haruki Murakami’s short fiction and Junji Itō’s horror manga, *Uzumaki*, this dissertation introduces the Japanese product *Chindōgu* (quirky inventions created to be specifically “unuseless”) to American theoretical discourse and is the first to analyze the ways they contribute to a specifically Japanese posthuman discourse during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* (“Forgotten Decades”) period that I argue is best exemplified in the spiral form.
I would like to take a moment and acknowledge those who made this undertaking possible. Thank you all.

This project is the result of the direction and encouragement of Dr. Karen Jacobs without whom I would not have reached this far or delved this deep. My committee, Dr. Annje Wiese, Dr. Eric White, Dr. Faye Kleeman, and Dr. Jeremy Green, has brought each of their own specialties to this project and allowed me to expand its scope in exciting ways. My family has been a gigantic support and all of them have contributed to this by listening to my theories and asking thoughtful questions. My wife, Darcy Winteregg Gilbert has been my biggest cheerleader, intellectual catalyst, and inspiration for the theories introduced within this project. My greatest accomplishment has been seeing the pride in her eyes. My mother, Dr. Amy Gilbert, more than anyone, understood the trials of obtaining my doctorate and became a lighthouse for when the work seemed to fog my surroundings. My sister, Ashley Guntle, has never let me settle with “good enough.” Her own accomplishments have challenged me to constantly strive to be better and take risks. My father, Ron Gilbert, helped instill in me the work ethic I needed to accomplish my professional goals while balancing my personal life. My grandparents, Linda and Harold Towsley, have been integral in supporting us as I finished my degree. We could not have survived without their constant care. My mother-in-law, Kathy Winteregg, has shown me nothing but love and demonstrated for me the meaning of strength. And my late father-in-law, Terry Winteregg, showed me that it was okay to be quiet and contemplative. Without these guiding qualities, I would not have come out of this research unscathed.

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Introduction: Posthumanism-Proper

Japanese Subjectivity through the Lens of Anglo-American Posthumanism Discourse

We are something other than ‘autonomous’ … but that does not mean we are merged or without boundaries.

Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (27)

Me: Cleverbot, I’m using you in my dissertation. What do you think about that?

Cleverbot: I dream of funerals.

Conversation with the AI Cleverbot on October 29th, 2016 (cleverbot.com)

The comparative and interpretive act performed in this dissertation unearths a critical Japanese subjectivity which at once straddles the borders between liberal humanism (defined as the human self autonomously delineated from the non-human and non-self through modes of cognition such as mastery, hierarchy, and progression)\(^1\) and a transhuman post-subjectivity\(^2\) (a view of subject as inextricably interconnected with and subsumed under the non-human or non-self). An inconsistency exists within Anglo-American\(^3\) transhumanism which utilizes liberal humanist thought processes (mastery, hierarchy, or erasure) in order to attempt to surpass humanism and the Japanese posthuman subjectivity extracted in this project supplements these current theories by uncovering a posthuman subjectivity in Japan that resists such an

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\(^1\) The culmination of enlightenment thinking.

\(^2\) Post-subjectivity, according to Christoph Schmidt’s “Subjectivities After the Death of the Subject” - an introduction to a collection of essays entitled *Post-Subjectivity* (2014), expresses the questions of subjectivity as a theory set apart from the post of post-humanism which tends to retain something of humanism. Here, post-subjectivity engages with the “always already present element of community, [Jean Luc Nancy’s] being-with, and intersubjectivity, as well as the role the Other might play in the constitution of self without subjectivity” (5-6). Here, the alterity that Emmanuel Levinas seems to transcend couples with the new work on love from Michel Foucault, Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Marion, and William Desmond in order to discover a way to philosophize a phenomenology without the subject. In America, this post-subjective influence is expressed in notions of Object Oriented Ontology and New Materialism which work to transcend the individual subject to find its necessary connection to objects and the environment that shares existence with the self – no longer an actual subject. For this project, post-subjectivity will be used to define a subject inextricably diffused into community, others, objects, and the world as opposed to a Cartesian *cogito*, both in their zenithal senses. Post-subjectivity will soon be fully subsumed under the umbrella of transhumanism as it opposes humanism.

\(^3\) Rather than a self-identified group, the collection of posthuman theorists used in this dissertation happen to share ethnic and national boundaries, boundaries that I hope are broadened with the inclusion of Japanese texts.
inconsistency. This subjectivity recognizes the borders of the other already present within itself, a complicated and contradictory subjectivity which separates and conjoins the self and the non-self, and is exhibited within contemporary Japanese popular culture from 1990-2010. This particular Japanese subjectivity remains undertheorized. With a goal toward reexamining inconsistencies and Western-centric biases in Anglo-American posthumanism, this dissertation also reveals a critique of Japan’s own modern subjectivity expressed within Japanese cultural texts from 1990-2010, the period known as the “Ushinawareta Nijūnen” [the forgotten/lost decades].

In order to argue that Japan’s own posthuman subjectivity, showcased in popular culture, exposes an undertheorized tendency in Anglo-American posthumanism, we must briefly explore Japanese historical subjectivity leading up to a particularly turbulent time in recent post-war society, the period called “Ushinawareta Nijūnen.” We will then examine several products of Japanese culture during this period that critique the Japanese liberal humanist subjectivity (known as shutaisei), products such as: the internationally popular works of Murakami Haruki (particularly his short-fiction thematically surrounding the 1995 Kobe Earthquake entitled in English, after the quake); chindōgu (odd and interesting Japanese inventions), which act as prosthetics in order to highlight a type of broken cybernetics requiring the user to acknowledge the otherness within his/her cyborg self; and the depictions of spirals in Itō Junji’s horror manga, Uzumaki: Spiral into Horror, as a figuration of this type of subjectivity. But first, before we

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4 The 1990’s and the 2000’s in Japan, often referred to as Ushinawareta Nijūnen [the Lost Twenty Years], was a period of economic collapse after the Japanese asset price bubble of the 1980’s had burst and a period in which modernity itself was being scrutinized anew.
5 Shutaisei (主体性), often read as subjectivity/individuality/identity, represents the modern autonomous nature of subjectivity within contemporary Japan. This term and its cultural emergence will be studied at length later chapter one. Because it will become a common and normalized term within this work, I will not offer translations each time it is used but rather let the term stand for itself.
engage in a comparative analysis of a posthumanism that transgresses borders we must define the borders between Anglo-American posthumanism, humanism, and transhumanism because these delineations were not made in the earlier works of posthumanism and have since been complicated and blurred by further studies. Beyond the terminology, major theorists in this field tend to ignore their use of liberal humanist cognitive modes in their dismissal of humanism. In this way, we establish the need for a transnational approach to a posthuman theory which accounts for nuances in subjectivity from extra-national sources since posthumanism desires to take all of humanity as its theoretical target (and since Japanese popular culture has become highly influential within American culture).

**Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Humanism**

Posthumanism is the critical reaction to modern humanism which stems from the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* (an autonomous subjectivity constructed through liberal humanist modes of thinking such as: individuality, anthropocentrism, hierarchy, mastery, overcoming,

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6 While humanism refers to the modes of thinking associated with creating an autonomous and individualized self, posthumanism and transhumanism are slightly more difficult to define. Posthumanism may refer to a large range of critical theory that complicates the Cartesian autonomous subject and so this may include transhumanism. Transhumanism is often used as a specific branch of posthumanism centered on the technological transcendence of humanity. However, transhumanism utilizes humanist modes of thinking (hierarchy, foundations of binaries, and mastery) to accomplish this which thus places transhumanism closer in practice to humanism. Other forms of “posthumanism” that do not deal specifically with technology but rather with the innate interconnectivity of the subject to its surroundings is also referred to as transhumanism (specifically by Cary Wolfe) because it too relies upon the usurpation of the autonomous individual in order to be theoretically delineated from humanism. Posthumanism, as it is used in this project, may at times refer to the larger project of complicating humanist subjectivity; however, it will most often attempt to delineate itself from both humanism and transhumanism by incorporating both poles into its constitution. This will be referred to as posthumanism-proper, a posthuman theory which does not fall into the liberal humanist modes of thinking. The nuances of these definitions will be explored throughout the project.
unity, and efficiency). Current theorists in Anglo-American posthumanism tend to diverge along two distinct fronts: transhumanist theorists such as Katherine Hayles, Nick Bostrom, Donna Haraway, Hans Moravec, and Ray Kurzweil tend to examine the destabilization of what it means to be human as it technologically surpasses the bounds of the biological; and posthuman theorists such as Niel Badmington, Stacy Alaimo, Arthur Kroker, Cary Wolfe, Bruce Clarke, Levi Bryant, and Ian Bogost who reexamine subjectivity by contrasting it with liberal humanism’s autonomous human subject. The former front looks to the future in order to question the limits of what may still be called “human” corporeality; the latter looks to the past in order to differentiate itself from forms of modernity which require modes of thought such as: anthropocentrism, delineated binaries, hierarchy, and mastery of selfhood. Both forms of the theory progress parallel to the rapid development of technological/biological advances that complicate the humanist boundaries dividing the human from the other-than-human, the subject from the object, and the self from the other. This dissertation is far more interested in

7 The autonomous subject as Descartes lays out in Discourse on Method is contrasted here with a type of transhumanism laid out in posthumanist works of Alaimo, Bryant, or Bogost in which the humanist’s distinctiveness is nearly abolished.

8 It should be noted that Hayles’ work, How We Became Poshuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics (1999), does not refer specifically to “transhumanism” only to a posthumanism that may later be categorized as “trans.”

9 However, Alaimo, Kroker, Bogost, and Clarke will be shown to contain transhumanist tendencies in their denial of humanism.

10 These advances in technology range from the precision of adaptive equipment (wheelchairs, walkers, glasses, pacemakers, compression socks – devices to help with “activities of daily living”) to the incorporation of cybernetics and computer science into the realm of what has traditionally belonged to the human (the body, the complex mind, subjectivity, creativity, knowledge acquisition). Specific instances that have arisen recently have already stepped beyond the introduction of robotics and AI into human reality and include: AIs that attempt to mimic human conversation (cleverbot.com, Microsoft’s TAY AI, or IBM’s Watson), the ability of AI to learn to encrypt on its own (from researchers at Google Brain), the Italian study of robotic embodiment that proposes to create robots out of decomposing materials (https://www.facebook.com/HuffPostWeirdNews/videos/936956633056891/), neurologic implants that allow the brain to control computer systems (http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/a19344/implantable-device-measures-brain-signals-control-electronics/), and implantable technology (http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/03/10/468556420/body-hacking-movement-rises-ahead-of-moral-answers?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=npr&utm_term=)
posthumanism-proper which attempts to find the critical space that may critique humanism while not erasing the individual through liberal humanist thinking (hierarchy or mastery). I do find transhumanism’s influence to be prevalent in the theoretical works and cultural products to be discussed, especially in its ties to technology amidst subjectivity. However, as we will see, not only are the boundaries of human subjectivity questioned, the boundaries between posthumanism, transhumanism, and humanism are also complicated and intersecting if they exist at all. I will show how several of the “posthuman” theorists listed above engage in more transhumanist undertakings by revoking subject autonomy in favor of networked, interconnected, and borderless subjects. Thus, the double theoretical work of establishing a Japanese posthuman subjectivity (which at once maintains borders as it transgresses them in a type of dialectic) and highlighting the dialectic of posthumanism (which at once reinstates humanism just as it attempts to surpass it) is reexamined through a form of posthuman subjectivity found in Japanese popular culture. This subjectivity ultimately promotes a posthumanism that requires a new way of considering the self in relation to what the self is not.

Posthumanism-proper must separate the terms “posthuman” from “transhuman” so that the former may include a critique of humanism while not attempting to surpass it as the latter tends to do. However, the colloquial terminology of the posthuman also tends to incorporate ideas of technological advances such as cyborgs, avatars, or artificial intelligence into the ideas of subjectivity. And while these are indeed fascinating occurrences of a complex subjectivity...

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nprnews&utm_content=20160310). These advances portray a world already in the midst of what Roger Parloff of Fortune Magazine calls the “AI Revolution” or the fourth industrial revolution.  
11 The connection between technology and questioning the bounds of the human becomes more frequent in recent years that have seen exponential growth in cybernetics, neural circuitry, artificial intelligence, and what Ray Kurzweil calls the “singularity.” But the origins of posthuman thought precede such booming technological progress, and yet, coinciding with major technological shifts, theorists have promptly sought to question subjectivity in the new light, for example: Walter Benjamin with the advent of film and Alan Turing with breakthroughs within theoretical computer science.
comprised of a connection to objects, once a theory takes the transcendence of humanity as its telos (read transhumanism), it reifies the thinking of humanism in its mastery, concern for binaries, and hierarchy. Transhumanism (post-subjectivity) alone will not critique humanism; it merely extends it into futuristic technological progressions.

Thinking of posthumanism is inextricably tied to thinking as a posthuman since what we discover in posthumanism is the complex and contradictory nature of our selves. Put another way, we cannot think as anything but posthumans. So what is it about our own make-up which shapes this thinking? What transcends the boundaries of both the ontic and the epistemic? It begins with the other in the self. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler relates how her “very formation implicates the other within [her],” and that her own “foreignness toward [her]self” (46) is the origin of her connection to others. Individuals, however, struggle to remain autonomous in certain spheres which demand definite aspects of an interconnected transnational world. This struggle does away with neither humanism nor transhumanism, but rather, asserts separately an in-common experience, “a condition that cannot be thought without difference” (27).\(^{12}\) Butler’s addition to the posthuman process of cognition requires a subject to be both connected and separate. In this way the autonomous remains, but never alone. “We are something other than ‘autonomous’ in such a condition, but that does not mean we are merged or without boundaries” (27). We are in fact the negotiation of a

\(^{12}\) Kathy Dow Magnus in “The Unaccountable Subject: Judith Butler and the Social Conditions of Intersubjective Agency,” Claims that this thinking, “marks an important development in Butler’s thought, for while previous texts tended to associate dependence with subordination, Butler now acknowledges that the interdependency of subject can ground a conception of ethics that is not fundamentally oppressive” (94). And while there is much to praise in Magnus’ works (a comparison of Butler and Adorno for example), we emphasize different pieces of the same quote from *Precarious Life*. Where Magnus takes the “other” within as “the condition of her ethical relation to others,” I wish to emphasize the necessity of the other as other within Butler’s “process of formation.” Rather than emphasizing interconnectedness alone, I read Butler’s “foreignness” toward herself as the prerequisite to interconnection, the other which allows the formation of interconnectedness. It is a connection (to another) which also requires separation (within one’s self).
simultaneous autonomy and borderlessness, a negotiation brought to light in and through this project’s examination of a Japanese pop-culture within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* which critiques the established, modern, Japanese subject while simultaneously preventing its usurpation into post-subjectivity. This mode of thinking requires an ability to hold contradictory constitutions of subject within a single ontology (e.g. the other within the self). Thinking in this manner, different from a modern humanist logic, enlightens postmodern theory to a subjectivity which simultaneously holds autonomy and borderlessness as necessary conditions of its constitution. The examination of American theorists that follows thusly will not dispute their legitimacy to analyses of subjectivity, but rather identify the empty spaces which may be occupied by a theory that allows for a subjectivity whose ontology cannot be regimented to only humanist thought processes. These humanist instances of thought should be separated from a posthumanism-proper which avoids negating humanism or surpassing humanism by embracing both it and its antithesis: a post-subjective transhumanism. The type of logic required to hold these contradictory elements together within the same concept is the herald of a truly postmodern way of thinking the posthuman. This project attempts not to change what the human is, or how

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13 The scope of Butler’s concept of the other within self as explicated in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004) stems from her examinations of subject identity (especially as it relates to Gender and Feminism) within her earlier works, particularly “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution” (1988) and *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). In the later, Butler identifies the problem with the “universal woman” as the subject of feminism. Such a constitution utilizes the same power systems from which Feminism attempts to be freed. This innately questions the subject in terms of identity and attempts to free identity through ontology. Of course, such a denial of identity politics (as well as identity thinking) might then prevent juridical subjects from expressing themselves as actual disenfranchised/underprivileged/oppressed groups. Such a formation loses political power just as it frees its delineations from modern power structures. Butler concerns herself in such a battle by stating, “Within Feminist political practice, a radical rethinking of the ontological constructions of identity appears to be necessary in order to formulate a representational politics that might revive feminism on other grounds” (5). This earlier appeal (1990) constructs the issue that, in my opinion begins to situate the theories of Butler in the realm of posthumanism by confronting ontological distinctions of the human from others, from objects, and from environments. This is why this project utilizes Butler’s deconstructive concepts of subject while attempting to avoid the greater formations of identity, gender, and politics (though these are certainly products of a “rethinking of ontological constructions.”)
we may be aware of our subjectivity, but rather to expand how a subject may be defined in how the posthuman subject thinks through the inclusion of a previously unrecognized subjectivity expressed in Japanese culture.\(^\text{14}\)

Posthumanism may rid itself of these modern pitfalls when it allows for a theory of subjectivity which paradoxically diminishes and reclaims the delineated humanist self and its separation from the other. That is to say, the scope of posthuman subjectivity needs to incorporate both Cartesian autonomy and post-subjective transhumanism into its construction to avoid mastery, binaries, progression, or hierarchy. Subjectivities depicted within contemporary Japanese culture that critique local humanism retain this posthuman undercurrent by not seeking only the transcendence of embodiment or autonomy (as transhumanism does) but by reexamining that which separates and conjoins self and other. The primary texts which this project examines will uncover the posthuman-proper within transhumanism rather than attempting to subsume the transhuman under the generalized umbrella of the “posthuman” category. In this way, Japanese culture may furtively utilize transhumanist themes (cyborg/avatar, for example) to encounter a critique of modern humanism.

The post in posthumanism may inadvertently utilize modern modes of thinking if we understand it to surpass and usurp humanism, ultimately undercutting its own critical distance by assuming a chronology of theories. Because of this, posthumanism must recover the same nuance that Gianni Vattimo championed in postmodernity in his introduction to *End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture*, by complicating the idea that

\(^{14}\) Concern for the posthuman process of thinking is not my concern alone. Stemming from the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am), it is common for posthuman theorists reacting against this primary insinuation of the connection between thinking and being to offer their own take on thinking, whether it be Stacy Alaimo’s “thinking as the stuff of the world,” Hayles’ idea of “thinking about what being human means” or Cary Wolfe’s “new way of thinking.” Each of these theorists will be discussed later in this chapter.
postmodernity must come “after” modernity by bringing about a new condition or order. Vattimo states, “The idea of ‘overcoming,’ which is so important in all modern philosophy [in which humanism firmly rests], understands the course of thought as being a progressive development in which the new is identified with value through the mediation of the recovery and appropriation of the foundation-origin” (2). I continue Vattimo’s argument into posthumanism which also cannot utilize the idea of overcoming humanism, thus perpetuating the modern philosophy that “the history of thought is a progressive ‘enlightenment’ which develops through an ever more complete appropriation and reappropriation of its own ‘foundations’” (2). This allows us to separate posthumanism-proper from a historical progression necessarily coming after humanism and to prevent it from erasing humanism completely through an “overcoming.” Posthumanism, like Vattimo’s postmodernism, must simultaneously incorporate that which it is supposed to surpass. The brand of posthumanism which ignores Vattimo’s argument of postmodernism is called “transhumanism” for its teleological transcendence of the human.15

In order to uncover a critical posthuman subjectivity in Japanese culture that may enlighten Anglo-American theories of subjectivity to its existence, we must first briefly examine the state of Anglo-American posthuman thought. What follows are examples of posthuman theory from contemporary and relevant critics (Katherine Hayles, Neil Badmington, Stacy Alaimo, Aurther Kroker, and Cary Wolfe) who have helped shape the current representative theoretical landscape in America.16 From here, we will discover transhumanist trends in posthumanism that may benefit from the complicated and complex subjectivity found in

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15 Cary Wolfe in What is Posthumanism? refers to this transcendence of embodiment through technological means and of humanism through the use of flat ontologies and trans-corporeality as “transhumanist.” In this way, Wolfe’s “sense of posthumanism is the opposite of [a] transhumanism” which seeks to surpass and supplant humanism and in so doing, requires modern humanist tendencies of binary separation and hierarchy (xv).

16 I examine these theorists in chronological order of the examined works they produced in order to show not only a brief foundation of Anglo-American posthumanism, but also a hint at its evolution.
Japanese culture during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. Also, any new theoretical work of American posthumanism stands on the shoulders of such theorists and must not only differentiate itself from them, but also highlight the specific moments in certain theorists against which it reacts whether in agreement or differentiation. And in addition, to figuratively explain how each theorist considers the posthuman in relation to itself and its environment, I will figuratively ask of them, *What am I to the oak tree?*17

**Hayles’ Embodied Human Subject**

Posthumanism in the late 90s, beginning with Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* (1996) and Katherine Hayles’ foundational work, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999), gained scholarly traction by accentuating (and complicating) corporeality and embodiment. Since then, rarely are these texts overlooked in posthuman discourses, especially Hayles, whose prolific work acknowledges the rapidity of technology’s fusion with biology while resisting its teleological inevitability. Hayles opens *How We Became Posthuman* with Alan Turing’s famous “Turing Test.”18 The test acts not only as a thought experiment concerning Artificial Intelligence, but also serves as a premonition of the

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17 The question concerning the oak tree sits at the base of posthuman subjectivity. It questions the relation between the subject and its surroundings. What is the cognizing subject to something that is traditionally (through views of liberal humanist subjectivity) delineated as separate? American post-humanism will complicate the subject and thus its relationship to its environment. Why the “oak tree” specifically? I chose this as a way to subtly harken to Levi Bryant’s use of the oak tree potential telos latent within the acorn (*Democracy of Objects* 115-119). The use of the oak tree merely creates a distinct other against which the subject may reflect.

18 As introduced in his own influential 1950 paper, “Computer Machinery and Intelligence,” the test (which has taken many forms over the years as technology has progressed) is used to evaluate a machine’s ability to seem human. On September 3rd, 2011, at the Techniche Festival in Guwahati, India, a “high-powered” version of Cleverbot (the AI mentioned in the heading of my introduction) took place in a formal Turing Test. This version of the program was judged by 59.3% of 1334 voters to be a human intelligence. Actual humans, in the same test, were judged by only 63.3% of participants to be a human intelligence. (www.cleverbot.com/human)
human subject’s ever-increasing dependence on computers and machinery. This increasing amalgamation of life and circuitry culminates in her description of Hans Moravec’s *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* in which computer machinery ultimately becomes a repository for the human consciousness. Hayles ends these first few paragraphs of her prologue with, “You are the Cyborg, and the cyborg is you” (xii), asserting that becoming the cyborg is already a foregone conclusion as her use of tense (How We Became Posthuman) has laid out - not how we will become, how we are becoming, how we were becoming, but rather, the past perfect of “how we became.” For Hayles, the process is complete in the sense that the human is now inseparable from his/her technology.19 Through the way we operate our lives online within cyberspace, give meaning to digital signifiers (as in the Turing test’s artificial communication), and establish relationships mediated through digital communication, media, and the spectacle of technology, humankind became cyborgs. Evoking Bruno Latour, Hayles argues that networks, at once material, social, and discursive, suggest that we have never been human but always posthuman (291). However, surpassing humanism just as the human is technologically surpassed, for Hayles, elicits both terror and pleasure in her scholarship. The distinctions between post- and trans-humanism within my project are delineated with the same brushstrokes as Hayles uses to color the terms “terror” and “pleasure.”

19 Of course this is not solely Hayles’ opinion. Haraway too, in her “Cyborg Manifesto” exclaims that, “we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics” (150). Haraway, while certainly imperative to feminist and bodily politics whether in cyborgs or, more recently, in “companion animals,” uses the image of the cyborg in order to “build an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism” (149). She is only briefly mentioned in my examination of American posthumanism because I do not wish to pull a fantastic theory into something it was only intended for ironically. Posthuman theory absolutely augments and informs feminist, socialist, and/or materialist theories, but not all feminist, socialist, or materialist theories carry a necessity for posthuman scrutiny. Also, Amber Case, a “Cyborg Anthropologist,” opens her TED talk with the statement, “I would like to tell you all that you are all actually cyborgs, but not the cyborgs that you think.” She purposefully attempts to resist the “cyber punk” version of amalgamated flesh and machinery by highlighting a subtler cyborg, a cyborg whose brain is partly in his/her pocket in the form of a cell phone (http://www.npr.org/2015/09/11/438944317/are-our-devices-turning-us-into-a-new-kind-of-human).
The “terror” stems from the fear that the human (defined by Hayles as the culmination of an embodied history in the flesh) may be surpassed not only in agency but in embodiment as we forego flesh and blood for circuits and wiring. Surpassing human embodiment through such technological means is explicitly transhumanist. Hayles, however, concludes her book by arguing that those elements which surpass embodiment are not inevitable. “As I have repeatedly argued,” she claims, “human being is first of all embodied being, and the complexities of this embodiment mean that human awareness unfolds in ways very different from those of intelligence embodied in cybernetic machines” (283-284). A “major blindspot” in philosophical and literary examinations of technology’s disembodied humanity lies in the significance of embodiment. Hayles resists the “evolution” described by Moravec, and this comes to her through evolutionary biological history. In this way she stymies transhumanism’s totalizing power to surpass. The human cannot transcend embodiment and remain “human.”

On the other hand, the “pleasures” associated with posthumanism include possibilities of new cultural configurations and new ways of “thinking about what being human means” (285). For Hayles, the openness of a posthuman future allows for the construction of an account that differs from mastery which counters “an objectivist account of science, and the imperialist project of subduing nature” (285). And while she concludes acknowledging that posthumanism need not be apocalyptic, nor wholly anti-humanist, the acknowledgment of transhumanism’s innately humanist tendency toward mastery is absent. The “openness” toward which she hopes posthumanism may aspire is also a type of closure as it denies the possibility of a humanist definition. What Hayles separates into the pleasures and fears of posthumanism, I separate via their ability to inhibit humanist mastery (as in posthumanism) or to repurpose mastery over – and thus transcend – nature, embodiment, and subjectivity (as in transhumanism). Posthumanism
attempts to critique humanism’s anthropocentric autonomy while transhumanism seeks to supplant human embodiment or autonomous subjectivity with something beyond each. The human subject, for Hayles, may not be humanist and transhumanist at once. She would argue that the human cannot be without the specific, historical embodiment of flesh and blood. In this way, Hayles would respond to the question of the oak tree by claiming, “I cannot retain human embodiment if I am intertwined with the body of the oak tree.”

**Badmington’s “Alien Love”**

Rather than conflating posthumanism with transhumanism, Badmington’s 2004 *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within* explores the “love affair” our culture has with extra-terrestrials in order to blur the lines between posthumanism and humanism. This affair takes as its critical target, a pure sense of “other” embodied in “alien,” and yet through the direct connection of desire, brings the other into the self ultimately by deconstructing the “versus” binaries of self and other. In fact, the “versus of the past,” he claims, “might have given way to what Jacques Derrida calls a ‘Crisis of versus’” that enables one to possibly read in “alien love” a “proof of the end of humanism” (3). When the culture pulses with a crisis of subjectivity, when the subject begins to doubt the differences between humans, animals, and machines, “we turn to the alien for its instant difference,” Badmington claims. “‘I may be a cyborg, but at least I’m not one of those’” (90). In this way, Badmington reacts against the totalizing nature of transhumanism’s claim and builds a foundation for this dissertation by coupling two seemingly paradoxical theories into a contradictory truth.
Badmington continues to add a layer of nuance that simultaneously breaks down the binaries of “us and them” while maintaining that the “present secretes the past,” and – like Tom Wolfe’s “radical chic” – alien chic “quietly reaffirms a traditional border between ‘them’ and ‘us’” (6). The love of such a pure other at once surpasses otherness as it attempts to consume it and maintains the other through its recognition of alterity. This reaffirmation of boundaries lies somewhere between a transhumanism which ushers out the human completely and a Cartesian subject which believes that the figure of the human is “at the center of things, is entirely present to itself, is absolutely distinct from the inhuman, and shares with all other human beings a unique essence” according to Badmington (9). Here he explains that humanism “always becoming posthumanism” (12) brings about this crisis in humanism rather than the uniqueness found in alien-love culture, or the transhumanist threat of deciphering the essence of the human into code-like information, or even a current technological shift in understanding our world.20

However, Badmington is puzzled by “alien love” (seemingly the project of his book) as he confesses in his chapter, “I want to be leaving.”21 “Why Love?” he asks, “Why not hate?” Why do we bring in to ourselves that which is other? How do we define ourselves through this action? His answer is unsatisfying. In the final paragraphs of the chapter he claims that love and hate (at least when applied to aliens) are one in the same. We love them as other.22 Ultimately,

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20 This is reminiscent of Lyotard’s 1979 work, The Postmodern Condition in which he claims that Postmodernity precedes modernity.
21 A play off of the popular television show, The X-Files, in which Mulder had a poster in his office which read, “I want to believe.”
22 This is quite oppositional to Alaimo’s trans-corporeality, in which the borders between the self and other have already nearly evaporated. Yet, it should be noted that the discourse on feelings of love or compassion often arises when discussing the borders of self and other. Here we see it in Badmington, Alaimo, and also Jean Luc Nancy in Being Singular Plural as what he speaks to in the introduction to his book “is compassion, but not compassion as a pity that feels sorry for itself and feeds on itself. Com-passion is the contagion, the contact of being-with one another in this turmoil. Compassion is not altruism, nor is it identification; it is the disturbance of violent relatedness” (xiii). In this way, the sudden recognition of self’s inseparability of other dominates Nancy’s discourse on love and compassion, continued also in his article, “Shattered Love.”
Badmington’s project attempts to resurrect the project of humanism amidst posthuman landscapes by reconstituting the other outside of self as a way to retain a humanist self. While Badmington requires the “other within” to be “brought” into the self, my project uncovers evidence for a Japanese subjectivity in which the “other” is always already present. Badmington also lacks a representation of such a subject rather than a representation of what the subject distinctly is not. I believe the posthuman subject discovered in Japanese culture during the 90s and 00s is this representation. Ultimately, rather than “I am the oak tree,” Badmington may claim, “I may only love the oak tree when/because it is other than me.”

Badmington’s Alien Chic precedes Cary Wolfe’s What is Posthumanism? and engages with posthumanism more broadly by attempting to deconstruct the boundaries between posthumanism and humanism. This dialectic, which is advanced in Cary Wolfe’s second order systems theory, deconstructs subjectivity along parallel lines as the boundaries of subject/object mimic the boundaries of humanism/posthumanism; thus, a deconstruction of one is a deconstruction of the other. Badmington, however, ultimately promotes the reconstitution of the other as necessary for subjectivity. This dissertation attempts to introduce a subjectivity which occupies the space between autonomous humanist subjectivity and a post-subject transhumanism. I differentiate the subjectivity that this project will discover within Japanese popular culture from either Hayles or Badmington in that it is a process of thinking about the subject who withers the borders between subject/object, self/other, and human/other-than-human while constituting such borders so that both may remain in dialogue. That is to say, whether such borders exist or are always already eliminated depends not on ontology, but rather on meaning which may affix arbitrary borders of the subject depending upon the practicality of distinction.

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23 We will discuss this work at more length later in the introduction.
(one ontology encompasses the identity expressions of a subjectivity both in terms of individualism and community, the “I” and the “we”). Claiming a subjectivity which at once both conflates and separates the binaries of self/other, subject/object, and human/other-than-human creates a space in which seemingly opposed philosophies (Descartes and Stacy Alaimo for example) may remain in discussion. Such an act may theorize an American posthumanism which seeks to neither reinstate the humanist other nor surpass it entirely (both acts of humanism).

The poststructuralism used in Badmington’s *Alien Chic* allows the binaries of posthumanism’s self/other, subject/object, and human/other-than-human, to succumb to Derrida’s “Crisis of Versus” (Badmington 3). The self may be deconstructed just as the boundaries of humanism and posthumanism are blurred. And while Badmington gives posthumanism the theoretical capabilities to bring poststructuralism into the discussion, he lacks the direct ontological and political ramifications present within ecological studies of the subject-in-world found in New Materialism, Materialist Feminism, and Object Oriented Ontology. These branches of posthumanism take the blurring of subject/object binaries seriously, that is to say, poststructurally. The study of the subject in relation to the stuff of the world has (in and through liberal humanist thinking) been one that reconstructs the human’s dominance of nature through mastery in knowledge. In this way, nature is subordinate to mankind within humanist enlightenment thinking.

**Alaimo and Kroker’s Complex and Hybrid Natures**

Theorists such as Stacy Alaimo (who examine ontological and epistemological means to critique autonomous subjectivity) rightly criticize these hierarchical distinctions that mimic the
disruptive heart found in other offshoots of Western Modernity.\textsuperscript{24} Her most significant text, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), introduces her concept “trans-corporeality” in which, she claims, the human, “is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, [and] underlines the extent to which the substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from ‘the environment’” (2). Trans-corporeality highlights the porous boundaries of the subject, that is, a subject whose distinctions between subject and object are always already being erased. Within the liminal space or the “contact zone” of these human/more-than-human binaries,\textsuperscript{25} Alaimo discovers ethical and political functions; feminism, in response to Western modernity and steeped in material agencies, is thusly foregrounded. The project emphasizes, … the material interconnection of human corporeality with the more-than-human world – and, at the same time, acknowledging that material agency necessitates more capacious epistemologies – [which] allows us to forge ethical and political positions that can contend with numerous late twentieth – and early twenty-first-century realities in which “human” and “environment” can by no means be considered as separate.\textsuperscript{26} (*Bodily Natures*, 2)

\textsuperscript{24} In Walter Mignolo’s work, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, “coloniality” is an inextricable linking of Modernity with the underlying logics of Colonialism as seen in conceptions like enlightenment thinking, patriarchy, or anthropocentrism. The two are inseparable and therefore, a critique of one is a critique of both, while also a privileging of one is a privileging of both. Just as these are linked to patriarchy through what Mignolo calls the “Colonial Matrix of Power,” feminism too is taken into account as a possible avenue for “decolonial options” which must arise to combat a singular possible continuing future of Western Civilization that has dwelled in the rhetoric of “progress.” These rhetorics of Western domination, as Mignolo understands it, are seen through the *Patrón Colonial de Poder*, or – as Mignolo translates it – the Colonial Matrix of Power. The Matrix of power is figured as a two-legged, four-headed beast. “4 Heads” - Interrelated Spheres of Management and Control: Knowledge and Subjectivity, Race Gender and Sexuality, Economy, and Authority. What acts as an adhesive to “hold together the different spheres of the Matrix” is the underlying logic of Coloniality (13). The pervasive and disruptive power of modernity – here tied to colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism – performs two functions for this dissertation. First, It links together the children of Western Modernity so that posthumanism (that which critiques the humanist constructs of mastery, hierarchy, autonomy, and anthropocentrism) is shown to be a critical theory that not only questions the subject but the social systems into which the subject finds itself taking the “*Patrón Colonial de Poder*” as its target; and second highlights the danger in pursuing such critiques merely through Western means and theories that are, inextricably, bound up in the “*Patrón Colonial de Poder*”.

\textsuperscript{25} Also termed as corporeality/nature (Alaimo 3).

\textsuperscript{26} Alaimo seems to attach the quotations to terms like “human” and “environment” in order to distance herself from terms linguistically distinct from each other. The project of “trans-corporeality” desires to erase such distinctions.
Alaimo deviates from an emphasis on corporeality in posthumanism (as was established in Hayles) and supplants it with a trans-corporeality in which subjects are always creating themselves through interconnected being (interconnected between other humans and other-than-humans). While this becomes quickly reminiscent of New Materialisms like Object-Oriented-Ontology or flat ontologies, Alaimo, in her article, “Thinking as the Stuff of the World,” criticizes such stances that place “DVD players and plumbers on an equal plane” (14). She deviates from OOO (specifically Bogost’s) which creates a “posthumanist” ontology by foregrounding objects. Bogost’s act, Alaimo claims, “reinstalls a humanist and masculinist sense of a disembodied subject” (15) by leveling the ontology of the living and non-living, ignoring a corporeality that recognizes itself as intertwined with the living and the non-living. In this way, Alaimo seems to champion Hayles’ human embodiment while intertwining this embodiment with environmental systems outside the body, an act that seems too radical for Hayles.

What differentiates Alaimo’s and Bogost’s views has more to do with positionality it seems than ontology. While both attempt to bridge the “abyss” between subject and object, Alaimo privileges the living subject over pontificating about purely material “experiences” for two reasons: first, she would argue that such experiences may never be “purely material,” and second, such experiences ignore a nature entangled with “material agencies … human bodies, animal bodies, ecosystems, technologies, and the wider world” (17) that give a pragmatism.

27 A process also somewhat similar to Jean Luc Nancy’s Being Singular Plural, in which Nancy’s concept of being-with is foregrounded. Here, unlike Object Oriented Ontology’s desire to claim meaning within the object in, of, and for itself, Nancy claims, “The least just as much as the most elevated has no meaning in itself and, as a result, is what it is and does what it does only insofar as it is communicated, even where this communication only takes place between ‘me’ and ‘myself.’” Here, Nancy espouses a type of borderlessness between subject and object in that no subject or object may exist without communicating its existence (the being and doing) to another (even if the “other” is within one’s self).

28 Referred to as OOO from now on.

29 Here she references (and takes as a target for the subject of her paper) Ian Bogost’s Alien Phenomenology, or What is it Like to Be a Thing. Bogost uses OOO to blur the boundaries between subjects and objects in a way, different from Alaimo.
centered more on environmental apocalypse and mass extinction than on Bogost’s fascination with consumer objects. Rather than imagine what it is like to be a thing, Alaimo would prefer to imagine what it’s like to be a person imagining what it’s like to be a thing. “Thinking as the stuff of the world” is Alaimo’s new mode of thinking that positions the posthuman as an entity which cannot be but that which is entwined with the “very stuff of the world” (16).\footnote{This new way of thinking is an attempt to rise to the challenge of Cary Wolfe’s \textit{What is Posthumanism} when he claims, “the nature of thought itself must change if it is to be posthumanist” (xvi). Also, it is reminiscent of Hayles’ idea of “thinking about what being human means” (\textit{How We Became Posthuman} ... , 285).} It is a process of “thinking from within” as a being inextricably tied to the material “becoming of the world” (20).\footnote{Cited by Alaimo from Karen Barad’s \textit{Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning}, which states, “there is not ‘I’ separate from the intra-active becoming of the world” (394).} In this way, I am always already complexly connected with the oak tree, in concert with a spectrum of other material variables.

Another theorist, Arthur Kroker in his work \textit{Body Drift: Butler, Hayles, Haraway}, examines each of these posthuman/postmodern thinkers to highlight the complex, hybrid, and contingent aspects of subjectivity. Kroker’s view of subjectivity stems from “hauntology,” a diversion of ontology in which existence remains in a liminal space contingent on and between its externals.\footnote{For further reading on “Hauntology,” I suggest, Colin Davis’ \textit{État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres, and Phantoms}, as well as, Helen Sword’s “Modernist Hauntology: James Joyce, Hester Dowden, and Shakespeare’s Ghost.”} This line of thinking purports a theory of subjectivity (as well as corporeality) which theorizes “the body in its complicated inflections with the languages of gender, sexuality, science, ideology, power, and politics … never reducible to description but … actually part of the discourse of the body” (5). In Kroker’s estimation, the body does not disappear, but is rather reified, “drifting through many different specular performances of the body” (1). He argues that we do not inhabit one body “in any meaningful sense of the term,” but instead “occupy a multiplicity of bodies – imaginary, sexualized, disciplined, gendered, laboring, technologically
augmented bodies” (2). Not only is our body in drift, switching between codes, but the codes themselves are in drift creating a double instability which can only be thought of in hauntological terms. This lack of coherence that is essential to “body drift” creates a separation from liberal humanism and yet falls prey to its thinking in that through “body drift” one cannot think autonomously about the body. The drifting embodiment cannot drift into autonomy (into a body not in drift). This ultimately retains the political within these theorists, in that

the postmodernism of Judith Butler, the posthumanism of Katherine Hayles, and
the companionism of Donna Haraway represent possible pathways to the posthuman future – pathways that both follow a logic of descent into the complexities of contemporary history and yet draw into presence a posthuman future still in the process of revealing itself. (19)

The complexities of a posthuman path, for Kroker, remain in a state between states, always becoming hybrid, complex, and contingent.

The chapter, “Hybridities: Donna Haraway and Bodies of Paradox” offers a contradictory nature of subjectivity when he examines hybridity as well as Nietzsche and Heidegger. And yet, the paradoxical in this focus on Haraway maintains a type of assumed fluidity within posthuman subjects. That is to say, stable, coherent, whole bodies disappear if they had existed at all, cleaving any instance of autonomy from bodily form. However, a paradoxical body which at once maintains these drifting bodies and hauntologies along with a concept of individuality and autonomy is truly what needs to occur in order to prevent the liberal thinking of hierarchy, mastery, and overcoming from luring posthumanism into tautology. Body drift examines the performative aspects of the body in comparison to the oak tree, existing only between instances while only ever seeing the material bodies of the oak or the human as imaginary. And just like Alaimo’s inability to see the separated corporeality, Kroker too falls
into transhumanist workings of a subjectivity which requires humanist understandings of
mastery, hierarchy, and delineation from humanism to function.

**Wolfe and Bryant’s Posthuman Thinking**

Opposed to a strictly interconnected post-subjectivity that surpasses humanist autonomy,
Cary Wolfe, in the introduction to his work *What is Posthumanism?* differentiates
transhumanism from posthumanism by evoking Étienne Balibar’s humanity/animality dichotomy
as a similar context which situates both humanism and transhumanism together.³³ “The human,”
Wolfe says to explicate Balibar, “is achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins
in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of
materiality and embodiment altogether. In this respect, my sense of posthumanism is the opposite
of transhumanism” (xv).³⁴ Here, Wolfe sees the transhuman in understandings of “the human”
even when applied to something as philanthropic as animal rights, as he states in an interview
with Bruce and Elizabeth Dunlevie.³⁵ How then does Wolfe define posthumanism, and how may
it differ from Hayles, Badmington, or Alaimo?

For Wolfe, Posthumanism does not transcend the human nor emerge within culture
temporally after humanism (or situated, as it is for Hayles, historically), but it denies the
humanist fantasies of autonomy and disembodiment. Wolfe furthermore uses R. L. Rutsky and
Bruce Clarke to critique Hayles’ original argument that requires a historical progression in order

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³³ From “Rascism and Nationalism” translated by Chris Turner.
³⁴ Balibar finds the dichotomy of the human/animal paradoxical. Humanity is a process which requires its telos to
be that which is beyond human. It looks back not into its animal origins, but instead differentiates humans tied to
the evolutionary process of “survival of the fittest” as also animal. The new human evolutionary process, it seems,
is not one directed by nature, but by humanity.
³⁵ “Cary Wolfe on Post-Humanism and Animal Studies.”
to place posthumanism within the culture. Because such a progression remains inextricably bound to the patterns of historical cause and effect, Rutsky argues that it is a humanist move. Second, Wolfe questions the randomness with which Hayles believes the mutation of posthumanism enters the culture and psyche of postmodern peoples, arguing that it represents a process which names that which is already inherent within these systems. This retains notions of the posthuman as merely an extension of the human that cannot escape (quoting Rutsky)

“‘processes which can never be entirely reduced to patterns or standards, codes or information’” (xix), upholding an oppositional binary of matter and information, a binary now seen (by second-order systems theory) as dialectical. Wolfe critiques non-dialectical agents within posthumanism because such a fixed binary system cannot but elicit strong ties to humanism’s mastery, hierarchy, and isolated subjectivities. The Japanese posthuman subjectivity to be explored also works to rebuff such modern fixities by allowing a dialogue of humanism/transhumanism to replace hierarchical binaries.

Posthumanism, for Wolfe, assumes a poststructuralism that requires (as it is in second-order systems theory) an openness from closure rather than a closure from openness (a modern move). He ultimately combines pragmatism, systems theory, and Derridian deconstruction with that which directly critiques issues of anthropocentrism thus “changing practices of thinking and reading” (xix), as well as his declaration (and challenge) that “the nature of thought itself must change if it is to be posthumanist” (xvi). The new way of thinking, required by Wolfe’s posthumanism, cognizes a deconstruction of systems which work to maintain current, modern,

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36 Cary Wolfe’s second-order system’s theory in What is Posthumanism? that states a “principle of ‘openness from closure,’ which may itself be seen as the successor to the ‘order from noise’ principle associated with first-order systems theory and inherited by successors such as complexity theory.” Here this “openness from closure” is the culmination of the intertwined theory of Derrida and Luhmann’s “paradoxical fact;” or as Wolfe puts it, “the very thing that separates us from the world connects us to the world” (xxi). This “paradoxical” act mimics the one used in this dissertation to conflate and separate the self/other dichotomy in posthumanism.
self-making practices. This call to a new way of thinking is taken seriously by Anglo-American posthuman theorists and now this project (summarized best by the “inverted logic way of thinking” that Kawakami Kenji proposes through his construction of *chindōgu* as explained in Chapter Three).

Wolfe’s systemic deconstruction of form\(^{37}\) develops the posthuman not as something beyond the human, but rather as a new way of thinking that deconstructs the “distinctions” that create meaning, and enables second-order systems theory to be “the reconstruction of deconstruction” \(^{38}\) by being the “deconstruction of [second-order systems theory’s] central term” \(^{39}\). That is to say, Wolfe’s project claims that distinctions of difference (the difference in posthumanism’s cornerstone terms – human, self, subject, and their respective antitheses – other-than-human, other, object) are systemically meaningful (viewed only in second order observations), and may thusly be deconstructed through an examination of the systems of meaning. Subject binary deconstruction thus reexamines the meaning of such distinctions within culture, ultimately based in systems rather than ontology (or at least posits an ontology which allows for dual perceptions regarding subjectivity’s separation and connection to the other).\(^{40}\) Wolfe’s position allows my project to utilize a post-structural approach to subjectivity by deconstructing the delineations of meaning that mark the subject. Such an act also joins Badmington’s use of Derrida’s concept of *Différance* in its use of deconstruction.

\(^{37}\) As explained in his use of George Spencer-Brown’s *Laws of Form*.

\(^{38}\) Wolfe quoted from, Niklas Luhman, “Deconstruction as Second-Order Observing,” in *Theories of Distinction* (101).

\(^{39}\) Here Wolfe cites Dirk Baeker’s piece called “Why Systems?” (61).

\(^{40}\) Such an ontology may borrow the figure of Schrödinger’s cat (as a box containing poison may posit whether the cat is alive or dead). The cat may be simultaneously thought of as alive and dead. Upon opening the box, the paradox is resolved. It is at that moment the paradox of believing the cat to be both alive and dead is dismissed. Here, the paradox of a subjectivity which may be thought of as humanist or transhumanist remains perpetually unattainable.
Such a deconstruction of primary binaries is paramount to new materialist Levi Bryant’s *The Democracy of Objects*. For Bryant objects and subjects are not poles but indicated spaces under the marked rubric of “objects” containing marked and unmarked space within the distinction of indicated meaning. Bryant argues that “within any distinction there can also be sub-distinctions that render their own indications possible” (21), a position which Bryant uses to expand marked space to include and precede the subject with objects, creating an object out of the subject. That is to say, Bryant utilizes George Spencer-Brown in order to imagine a distinction under which he subsumes both objects and subjects. Thus the self and the other may both fall under a single category.

My project, however, asks; what if the subject (before it is objectified) contains sub-distinctions rendering this indication “possible?” Would this not follow the destruction of such binaries to its fullest extent, that of questioning their theses? While Bryant expands outward from the subject in order to include objects, one might also spiral inward to discover the sub-distinctions, the other within the self. If every distinction always already contains within it sub-distinctions, the distinction of self may also contain sub-distinctions or an anarchic other within the self that makes the constitution of the self possible. What we distinguish as self inwardly contains the pieces of self and other just as Bryant sees the self and other outwardly. The melding of the self with the other is a dialectical constitution of self – a self/other self, a dialectic which takes self as synthesis, rather than thesis.41

41 A reference to Hegel’s Dialectic self, which begin with self as thesis and spirals outward to include a recognizing other. Hegel’s self—certainty, born of a mutual recognition, according to Robert R. Williams in Hegel’s *Ethics of Recognition* is a project that resists choosing “between ... unsatisfactory alternatives [either/or] but rather to mediate them and work out a third alternative. This alternative requires that subjectivity be expanded to intersubjectivity and that freedom itself be intersubjectively mediated” (18) resulting in Hegel’s world spirit (*Geist*). Robert R. Williams claims of Hegel that the dialectic of intersubjectivity contains the whole relation in each of its consisting parts, the “sharp distinction” between self and other and the union of self and other (51).
Examining these pivotal texts, it becomes clear that a dialectical posthuman project that allows for a subjectivity expressed as both humanist and transhumanist within Japanese culture also allows Anglo-American posthumanism an opportunity to avoid humanist pitfalls and culminates in what Wolfe calls a “new way of thinking.” This project blurs the binaries of self/other, subject/object, and human/other-than-human, while simultaneously upholding the distinctions in a dialectic. This theory denies the liberal humanist move of mastery by prohibiting the hierarchy inherent within much of posthumanism by including that which posthumanism attempts to surpass, humanist tendencies of individualism, hierarchy, mastery, and separation.

This project works to uncover a subjectivity in Japanese popular culture that adheres to posthumanism despite its seeming alliance with accounts such as Moravec’s transhumanism which technologically transgress human embodiment. The Japanese posthuman subjectivity to be discussed will critique Badmington’s questioning of “Alien Love” requiring not only the transgression of boundaries outward from the self, but the recognition of the other as already present in the self. By remaining connected to and autonomously separated from others, this subjectivity may critique Alaimo’s transcorporeality which denies any separation at all from the more-than-human. This dissertation amends Alaimo’s statement that, “‘human’ and ‘environment’ can by no means be considered as separate,” into “‘human’ and ‘environment’ must at once be considered inextricably linked and separate.” This project thus examines a posthuman Japanese subject which must think as one connected to the oak tree and separate from the oak tree.
Japanese Cultural Products in Analysis

Now that I have expressed the theoretical context within which I place this examination, but before I name the products which will showcase a Japanese posthumanism within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*, I would like to briefly explain why I connect American theory to particular cultural products of Japan. A historically-grounded, localized, Japanese posthuman subjectivity should not be viewed merely as the condition of a single medium within Japanese culture, or the result of an auteur’s specific aesthetic, but rather as a subjectivity that has permeated popular products and emerged from sudden cultural misgivings about modern humanism. This project highlights Japanese cultural products (film, literature, *anime*, *manga*, and *chindōgu*) within a twenty year span beginning in 1990 (referred to as *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* [the lost decades]) that engage with this emergent Japanese subjectivity. I refer to these as “products” because they incorporate visual media and literature, as well as quirky material inventions, as evidence of a Japanese posthuman subject. The use of such “low” cultural products not only engages with the products’ mass appeal, but more importantly engages with Japanese culture on the terms of Japan’s emblematic constitution: images. That is, Japan and the Japanese people constitute themselves through visual means according to Mark W. MacWilliams in the introduction to *Japanese Visual Culture*. Here he calls upon Susan Sontag’s work *On Photography* to explicate that “Japan is … an ‘image world’” (3). He argues that Japan’s mass media is involved in the production and consumption of visual images that have, quoting Sontag again, “extraordinary powers to determine [people’s] demands on reality and are themselves coveted substitutes for firsthand experience…” (3). MacWilliams goes on to discuss how visual images have become emblematic of Japanese society, and how *anime* and *manga* specifically
share a “mixed or hybrid” nature in four distinct and culturally relevant ways. First, the media blend the visual and the verbal into a unified whole. Second, they display the “cultural hybrids” stemming from Japan’s contact with the modern west. Third, acting as “forms of contemporary art” Japanese visual culture blurs the distinctions between high and low art. And fourth, anime and manga serve an important function within what MacWilliams refers to as, “Mixed Media,” that which exists as part of a globalized marketing strategy where a single corporate conglomerate may put out a wide variety of media (6). The hybridity existing within the form, function, and production of Japanese visual culture mirrors that of the hybridity innate to posthuman complexity. This project utilizes this similarity within the constitution of the products to mirror the constitution of subjectivity as expressed through the cultural products themselves. Just as these products have historically influenced a self-identification in Japan, they will now be used to help reexamine the Japanese self.

However, it would be naïve to claim that such cultural products of Japan only influence Japan. Japanese visual culture is not only its national constitution, it is also Japan’s primary export, especially to America. Roland Keats, in his book, Japanamerica: How Japanese Popular Culture Has Invaded the U.S., speculates on this cultural import from an American perspective. He ties a recent explosion in Japanese popularity to the aesthetic differences of Studio Ghibli films, sudden fears of world-ending events, 9/11, political turmoil among youth, Otaku fandom, and the “draw of DIY.” Japanese anime, manga, and film have become a part of American cultural understandings; however, unlike cultural imports from other Western nations, Japanese culture retains its exoticness to a certain extent. For example: the appropriations of Japanese television like Takeshi’s Castle (1986-1990), retitled Most Extreme Elimination Challenge in English and Crayon Shin-Chan (1992-1996), also Shin-Chan in English, were
“retranslated” to include more adult humor, innuendo, and even American political satire. All of the works I examine within this project have found a fan base within the U.S. as well. Major U.S. film productions have even been influenced by (if not copied from) originally Japanese visual texts. Such transnational cultural pieces thus cannot be completely separated and “Orientalized” from American culture. This is why Anglo-American Posthumanism may also be concerned with Japanese cultural products; they are not so distinct from the influences that shape our own culture.

In order to explicate this Japanese subjectivity, I first examine the historical and contemporary views of self construction (Chapter One). I then discuss Murakami Haruki’s depiction of subjectivity in his collection entitled after the quake in order to highlight an author’s response to the traumas and disasters within the Ushinawareta Nijūnen, a response which first deconstructs the foundations of modern humanism while hinting at the complex construction of subjectivity (Chapter Two). Then I begin to look toward visual media, examining first Chindōgu [珍道具] as a way to discuss an alternative to the transhumanist views of cyborgs by showcasing Graham Harmon’s Object-Oriented Ontology (specifically the concept of the “well-wrought broken hammer”) in order to discover the subjectivity realized from the well-wrought broken cyborg (Chapter Three). And finally, I read Itō Junji’s horror manga, Uzumaki, as a figuration of a subject which requires the permeation of self and other outwardly as well as inwardly (Chapter Four). This sequence allows us to critique certain contemporary views of

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42 I quote, “retranslated,” because there is very little if any of the original intent or meaning remaining.
43 Including, Godzilla: King of Monsters (Morse and Honda 1956), The Magnificent Seven (Sturges 1960), A Fistful of Dollars (Leone 1964), Star Wars (Lucas 1977), Blade Runner (Scott 1982), Karate Kid (Avildson 1984), The Matrix (Wachowski’s 1999), The Ring (Verbinski 2002), Lost in Translation (Coppola 2003), The Last Samurai (Zwick 2003), The Grudge (Shimizu 2004), Speed Racer (Wachowski’s 2008), Ramen Girl (Ackerman 2008), and Astro Boy (Bowers 2009).
44 The term can be translated as “gadget,” but literally means “strange tool.” The term “gadget” feels like it carries a certain amount of usefulness and purpose to something somewhat devoid of each.
Japanese subjectivity by showcasing one which is neither fully humanist nor transhumanist and establishing a theoretical figuration of such a subjectivity that may be translated into Anglo-American posthuman theories that would have excluded such a subjectivity.

The first chapter briefly explores pre-modern, modern, and postmodern constructions of self within Japan in order to lay the historical frameworks for a subjectivity expressed in the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. This borrows from national traditions while resisting previous constructions of self that may have influenced ultranationalist tendencies leading to World War II. I begin this chapter, however, by examining Stephen Brown’s *Tokyo Cyberpunk: Posthumanism in Japanese Visual Culture* in order to establish what a typical posthuman examination of Japanese culture is like from a Western perspective (as well as what such an examination lacks). I show how Brown’s work ignores a local distinctiveness – expressed clearly when he states, “there is no Japanese posthumanism per se” (159) – which I then attempt to refute by claiming that the Japanese posthuman discourse lacking within academia, appears within its cultural products.

I first examine this discourse of Japanese self-making as it draws upon pre-modern influences of Japan’s cosmology and mythos through Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s article, “Selves and Others in Japanese Culture in Historical Perspective.” Here, Ohnuki-Tierney describes a type of reflexive self within pre-modern Japanese culture(s) that defines itself against the otherness of geographical others (China, Korea, or the West) and mythological others (within “stranger deities”). However, this reflexive definition also incorporates the other into the self as is manifested through Japan’s consumption of foreign technologies, religions, or resources (and metaphorized within Ohnuki-Tierney’s piece as “rice as other”).
From here, I will advance to the early 20th century philosopher, Nishida Kitarō, whose philosophy of the contradiction of self has a resurgence within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. Reacting against Western philosophies of being from Sartre and Descartes, Nishida proposes a *Mu no Basho* (place of nothingness) from which the self is enacted (as opposed to the presence of a stable and unified self in the West, Nishida offers a lack within the self). Nishida ultimately performs the Japanese version of Hegel’s dialectic self; the ontology of the subject is theorized in a hauntology, forever negotiating presence and absence, life and death.

I then examine the emergence of a modern Japanese humanist subjectivity called *Shutaisei* (主体性 – meaning subject or individual) which followed the war and critiqued the interconnection preceding it. Japan’s pre-modern, animistically influenced subjectivity, with its porous boundaries between individuals and nation and Nishida’s empty subjects (with their non-fixed foundations of self) became the target of post-war, leftist critical theorists charged with uncovering the causes of ultranational/fascist tendencies in Japan’s society within the modern (post-Meiji) era leading up to Japan’s involvement in WWII. This critical reaction led to the purposeful construction of *shutaisei* to promote the liberal humanist ideals of free-thinking, creativity, autonomy, and individualism in an attempt to curb future movements toward ultranationalism. This reaction explains the reluctance of Japanese discourse to undermine *shutaisei* with a potential subjectivity that may revert Japanese subjectivity back to its highly nationalist tendencies. Such potential certainly exists in the blurred borders and networked (or rhizomatic) nature of transhumanism. Therefore, any discussion of posthumanism in Japan is haunted by fears of normative rationalizations of totalitarianism.

Within this chapter, I argue that the influences of past self-making constructions (specifically within pre-modern cosmology and myth as well as Nishida’s *mu no basho* – place
of nothingness), coupled with a resistance toward intersubjectivity (evidenced in the critical reaction to ultranationalism), culminating within a period of time described as “fragmented” and traumatized by national disasters (Kobe Earthquake and the Tokyo Subway Gas Attacks), develop a localized Japanese sense of posthumanism. This posthuman subjectivity, expressed within culture, necessarily critiques humanism while resisting transhumanist tendencies of interconnection and therefore also denies the use of liberal humanist tendencies of mastery and hierarchy in its critique. This is the theoretical subjectivity I will give evidence for in the following chapters.

The second chapter builds upon the critical posthumanism of Badmington and Wolfe in order to showcase a theory of subjectivity found in Murakami Haruki’s collection of short stories called *after the quake*, specifically those pieces entitled “UFO in Kushiro,” “Landscape with Flatiron,” and “Super Frog Saves Tokyo.” This examination of subjectivity critiques the “stable,” modern foundations of subjectivity. While the encroaching technology often associated with the reexamination of the human subject is absent from Murakami’s collection, the bordered/borderless dialectic of self remains intact and often surrounds disaster and trauma. This particular collection revolves around the 1995 Kobe earthquake in which Murakami explores protagonists which at once differentiate themselves from and conjoin themselves with others/environment and protagonists who lack agency in the face of disaster. In stories of disastrous destabilization, one discovers the disruption of agency, of subjectivity, and of representation as well. Reading Murakami in such a way allows us to join the already established Japanese critical discourse which on one hand attempts to dismiss Murakami’s depiction of

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45 Published originally in Japan in 2000 under the title 神の子どもたちはみな踊る (kami no kodomo-tachi wa mina odoru – All God’s Children Dance). It is also not capitalized in English.
subjectivity as an annihilation of self rather than a discovery of a new self, and on the other, recognizes instances of “the war within” his protagonists. Within this chapter, we create a link between a problematized posthuman (as we have already established) and its orientation in the world. Disaster/trauma will be shown to be that which unveils the rotted foundations of self and individualism, allowing the theoretically foundationless to emerge from that which literally de-constructs, an earthquake.

Murakami’s characters wrestle with the potential nothingness inside them, but beyond this destruction of foundation, Murakami also offers us a potential construction of self. This representation of self-construction draws from Nishida’s mu no basho (place of nothingness) as a self which may critique humanist mastery and yet resist a solely transhumanist interconnection. This figuration of self is expressed in the opening chapter of Kafka on the Shore saying.

Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions. You change direction but the sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous dance with death just before dawn. Why? Because this storm isn’t something that blew in from far away, something that has nothing to do with you. This storm is you. Something inside you. So all you can do is give in to it, step right inside the storm, closing your eyes and plugging up your ears so the sand doesn’t get in, and walk through it, step by step. There’s no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time. Just fine white sand swirling up into the sky like pulverized bones. (Murakami 5)

Here Murakami proposes that the something inside the individual is not a stable, unified foundation of self, but rather a storm. Its amorphous structure spatially perplexes due to a lack of common directional points of reference, “There’s no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time.” The something inside purposefully disorients. You may only ever find yourself in relation to it as if in a “dance with death.” And it finally takes shape in the description of its

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action, “swirling up into the sky,” a twister outwardly formed of the physical insides, “bone.” This *something* presents itself as a type of spiral that penetrates form, at once the interior and exterior, simultaneously environment and osseous embodiment. This is my first evidence for a theorized posthuman subjectivity within Japanese contemporary culture (1990-2010).

Chapter Three highlights the invention craze of Japanese *Chindōgu*. These are odd inventions that do not function normally. Often they are designed for functions so specific, the energy used in creating them or carrying them around far outweighs their potential use value. An example of one such invention is the “solar powered flashlight” which only “works” when the sun is shining. Another example would be the “Shoe Umbrellas” that keep the rain off your shoes (but make it much more difficult to walk). Kawakami Kenji, thought to be the “father of *Chindōgu*,” establishes the tenets of what he deems *chindōgu* in a collection called, *The Big Bento Box of Unuseless Japanese Inventions*. Here, creating a guide to maintain the “unuselessness” of such inventions, Kawakami builds on the inability of such devices to claim mastery through usefulness or handiness allowing for a type of “well-wrought, broken” cyborg.  

Kawakami’s Ten Tenets of *Chindōgu* are as follows: 1) *Chindōgu* cannot be for real use, 2) *Chindōgu* must exist, 3) Inherent in every *Chindōgu* is the spirit of anarchy, 4) *Chindōgu* are tools for everyday life, 5) *Chindōgu* are not for sale, 6) Humor must not be the sole reason for creating *Chindōgu*, 7) *Chindōgu* are not propaganda, 8) *Chindōgu* are never taboo, 9) *Chindōgu* cannot be patented, and 10) *Chindōgu* are without prejudice. These pillars of *chindōgu* reflect the critical nature within the production of such objects. And by examining individual *Chindōgu*, we may come to understand how these Japanese cultural products resist becoming perfectly...

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48 A play on words to invoke Graham Harman’s *The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer: Object-Oriented Literary Criticism* which calls in to question the relationship of function to the invisibility of objects, claiming that it is in the broken tool that the taken-for-grantedness of the object vanishes allowing it to be seen for the first time. Here a new autonomy of the object springs forth that retains its otherness.
functional tools that conceal their autonomy, their otherness, just as they are placed upon the bodies of individuals like prosthetics upon a cyborg. While the typical cyborg’s functional prosthetics allow a sense unity of the self and its parts, Chindōgu prosthetics (in their dysfunction) require a recognition of this otherness, the other within. This contradictory embodiment creates the “Unuseless Cyborg.” This chapter will examine further understandings of prosthetics in posthumanism as in *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future* edited by Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra, as well as a revisitation to Derrida’s “Originary Technicity,” as discussed in *Originary Technicity: The Theory of Technology from Marx to Derrida* by Arthur Bradley. In this way, Chindōgu force us to face the other that has always already been a part of the human.49

Chindōgu act as a prosthetic “thing” that remains separate from the self which would require its utility in order to seamlessly incorporate it into embodiment. The “thingness” of this “broken” prosthetic integrates theories of Heidegger’s hammer50 and the subsequent interpretations presented by theories of objects within Graham Harman’s Object-Oriented Ontology. Such a subject retains the otherness of an object from OOO while it reaffirms the complex borderlessness of contemporary cyborg theory. In this way, the *chindōgu* tool, acting as a prosthetic, fails to perform its allotted task without being “broken,” or rather, *chindōgu* are never not broken.51 When one creates Chindōgu, they create not a tool which accidentally breaks or is guaranteed to break, but one whose primary function is dysfunction. The Chindōgu cyborg thus acts as evidence of a Japanese posthuman subjectivity within the culture of the

49 And be reminded of the tense within Katherine Hayles prominent posthuman text, *How We Became Posthuman.*
50 Now understood (according to Freud) as a prosthetic augmentation of the subject ignored in Heidegger for what it produces – the functioning human body.
51 “Broken” only in comparison to the ever-increasing productive mandates of capitalism. Within the terms of the *chindōgu* itself, it rather must be somewhat useful for its designated task.
Usshinawareta Nijūnen that requires purposefully reconstituting a self/other dichotomy (since Chindōgu demand to be seen as other) within the unity of a cyborg subjectivity.

Finally, Chapter four examines Itō Junji’s horror manga, *Uzumaki: Spiral into Horror*, and proposes the adoption of the spiral as a figure emblematic of posthuman Japanese subjectivity which resists the totalities of both humanist autonomy and transhumanist post-subjectivity. The spiral may thusly act as a point of translation because it already contains a rich theoretical history in the West.

In Itō ‘s *Manga* series, several characters recognize that spirals invade or “pollute” their small town, “Kurouzu-cho.” This seemingly innocuous shape does not only cause the mysterious deaths in the community, but also exists as the uncanny shape into which most of these humans contort themselves. The people of this town are becoming spirals. They are entwined around themselves and with each other acting as the height of posthumanism’s intertwined alterity. The spiral acts as a transgressive movement between the borders that mark the outside from the inside by penetrating the idea of form itself. The spiral denies stasis and always already transgresses form and formlessness. It exists in the in-between, but only as a dialectic movement between binaries. This *manga* utilizes the spiral in order to figuratively hold in tandem the contradictory notions of individualism and post-subjective interconnection without surpassing either because the very form of the spiral inherently includes contradictions (it is both infinite and finite, ever-expanding and diminishing, it is limitless and yet must be limited to be perceived).

Within the narrative, nothing evades the spiral as it breaches the boundaries of environment, built structures, and even the bodies of human beings. Neither human nor his/her environment escapes the basic arrangement of the spiral shape, the *Uzumaki*. The first
acknowledgment of this crisis comes from Kirie’s boyfriend, Shuichi, who claims “…The winding streets … it all gets on my nerves. Yes, winding … I’m getting wound up … Spirals … This town is contaminated with spirals …” (17). He is one of the only characters who sees clearly the immediacy of the problem. Beyond the interconnection between individuals through networked and rhizomatic occurrences (spiraling outward from the body), there are numerous cases of the body twisting in on itself (spiraling inward in the entropic sense of individualism). *Uzumaki*, however, displays both within its pages, and the most grotesque images stem from the spirals which pierce the bodily form. In this way, the spiral penetrates form both outwardly and inwardly, creating a figure for the Japanese posthuman subject which accomplishes similar feats.

This spiral not only represents the subjectivity within Japan, it transgresses borders in an attempt to translate, through the simplicity of its visual form, a complex and contradictory subjectivity. Anchor points of theory surrounding the spiral’s uniquely intricate form help translate this concept to the West as Western theory has already found its complication and complexity useful for critical purposes. For example, Hegel’s dialectic understanding of consciousness comes to mind whenever one considers the figuration of subjectivity as a spiral. Beyond Hegel’s phenomenology, Roland Barthes uses the spiral to come to terms with distinctions within religious textual constructions and philosophical dialectics. And Nico Israel’s *Spirals: The Whirled Image in Twentieth-Century Literature and Art* (2015) chronicles the use of

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52 そうだ … ひっかき回すんだ … 涡 … 涡だ … うずまきだ … この町はうずまきに汚染され始めている (sōda … hikkaki mawasunda … uzu … uzu da … uzumaki da … kono machi wa uzumaki ni osensare hajimete iru). I was wary of the word “contaminated” at first because it felt off. However, “osensare” is clearly “contaminated” or “polluted,” in the passive voice. What feels odd about it is the passive voice, as if some unseen force was polluting the town with spirals rather than the spirals themselves having agency. And the fact that these spirals, which will shortly be seen as that which may blur lines between humans and environment, are the products of “pollution” is worth noting. The act of disturbing the natural through pollution unveils the roots of the Japanese state. And these roots or foundations, as we saw when discussing Murakami, are now exposed for questioning. Here Itō ties in the natural and the critical within Shuichi’s exclamation.
spirals within modern art and literature that complicates and critiques standard practices of modernity.53

Through these chapters, I will have uncovered a posthuman Japanese subjectivity expressed through cultural critiques of modern Japanese humanism (shutaisei) and will have speculated about the local terms of its emergence that ultimately separate this self-construction from those already examined in Anglo-American posthuman discourse. To this end, I will have laid out the culturally specific historicities evident in this particular construction, given evidence of cultural products which ascribe to and influence this subjectivity, and offer a translatable figuration of such a subjectivity with theoretical ties to the West (including Hegel, Barthes, and Descartes) in the shape of the logarithmic spiral form. Such a subjectivity contains elements which have yet to be thoroughly examined by Anglo-American posthumanism and which may provide a critical theorization of modern, humanist subjectivity which does not fall prey to the liberal humanist modes of thinking that have plagued many transhumanist theories. This dissertation uncovers the potential for reexamining posthumanist thought through the human subject which act as individuals and assemblages and components.

53 Namely Yeats, Rilke, Duchamp, Joyce Carol Oates, and Samuel Beckett.
Chapter 1: Post-Humanism & Post-Shutaisei
A Japanese Critique of Subjectivity

… dialectical formation does not negate the given from the outside but transcends the self from inside itself while that which is given contradicts itself. Nishida Kitarō, *Nishida Kitarō Zenshu Vol. 9* (189).

This chapter aims to correlate a localized Japanese subjectivity with Anglo-American posthuman theory in order to explore the premodern, modern, and postmodern conditions of Japanese self-making leading up to the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. While considering the possible historical influences upon and reactions to that emergent Japanese subjectivity, I begin by acknowledging that Japan experienced the progression of humanist thought quite differently from American discourses. In the Anglo-American context the humanist autonomous self that co-developed along with modernity has now been critiqued by intersubjective posthumanist/transhumanist theories. Japan instead adopted an understanding of subjectivity that historically progressed from already blurred borders between intersubjective selves into humanist autonomy (referred to as *shutaisei* – individual/subject), in part due to the ultranationalist tendencies leading up to the loss of World War II and the national trauma of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japanese views of autonomy, however, did not emerge in parallel with modernity, but instead were adopted by Japanese critical theorists after World War II to critique the interconnected subjectivity that emerged in pre-modern reflexivity that linked the individual

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54 The 1990's and the 2000's in Japan, often referred to as *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* [the Lost Twenty Years], was a period of economic collapse after the Japanese asset price bubble of the 1980’s had burst and a period in which modernism itself was being scrutinized anew. Later, in the article “The New Individualism and Contemporary Japan: Theoretical Avenues and the Japanese New Individualist Path,” printed in the *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, written by Anthony Elliot, Masataka Katagiri, and Atsushi Sawai, I will discuss how this period will also be listed as the “age of fragmentation.” As the term *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* will be used frequently throughout this project, I will no longer provide subsequent translations of it; instead, I will allow the term to stand alone.

55 *Shutaisei* (主体性), often read as subjectivity/individuality/identity, represents the modern autonomous nature of subjectivity within contemporary Japan. This term and its cultural emergence will be studied at length later chapter one. Because it will become a common and normalized term within this work, I will not offer translations each time it is used but rather let the term stand for itself.
self with the nation. In the views of Maruyama Masao, that interconnected subjectivity contributed to ultranationalist tendencies prior to and during the war in so far as it resisted a free-thinking, autonomous populace. The resulting Japanese posthumanism differs from Anglo-African American theories then not only because it is articulated chiefly through art and cultural artifacts, but also because it resists recapitulating the interconnectedness of pre-war subjectivity within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. Japan’s alternative posthumanist path is formed from three distinct aspects of Japanese history. The first is the pre-modern religious and philosophical qualities which influenced Japanese subjectivity leading up to the war (and whose attributes may be seen in posthuman instances within culture). Second, the sudden critical reaction to this interconnected subjectivity after the loss in WWII and the trauma of the atomic bombings produced a modern humanist subjectivity (*shutaisei*) that was eventually adopted by the government even though its autonomy was attributed to a critique of governmental control. And thirdly, a postmodern fragmentation during a period of national trauma (natural and man-made) enticed a new posthuman critique of humanist subjectivity while resisting a return to the pre-modern interconnection many feel led to ultranationalist tendencies. This distinctive path to the posthuman critique, I believe, necessarily produces a localized posthuman subjectivity that is foreign to Anglo-American posthuman theory.

The emerging cultural critique of *shutaisei* examined in this project differs from other Western perspectives on posthuman Japanese visual culture (specifically those from American critic Steven Brown) by acknowledging the social critique that *shutaisei* itself presents, a critique that diagnoses the remnants of a pre-modern subjectivity that lead to ultranationalism and prescribes a new autonomy within subjectivity. Thus, any critical posthumanist movement in Japan that involves a return to pre-modern subjective interconnections becomes haunted by the
possibilities of fascism. This is why Japanese critiques of shutaisei necessarily straddle the lines between the critiqued autonomous humanism and post-subjective interconnection (associated in this project with “transhumanism” in order to display the liberal humanist tendencies still present). This dissertation recognizes the absence of a local, scholarly posthuman theory in contemporary Japanese academia, but asserts the presence of posthuman cultural practice that accomplishes comparable ends. In the subsequent chapters I will thus engage with a selection of Japanese literature, anime, manga, and popular inventions called Chindōgu [珍道具 strange tools] which display the culmination of a critical posthumanism rooted in this historical progression of subject.

The historio-cultural process of self-making that was a dominant narrative in Japan undergoes upheaval during the highly fragmented period often referred to as Ushinawareta Nijūnen. Due to the presence of national trauma not felt since the war, during this period (more so than the cultural explorations into robotics, cyborgs, and technology that pioneered a vibrant popular culture beginning in the 50’s) the dominant view of human subjectivity (as a unified/autonomous self) is thrown into question. In this chapter, I argue that a Japanese posthuman subjectivity is developed through premodern reflexivity, modern shutaisei, and a postmodern “age of fragmentation” by dialectically embracing a subject which neither fully returns to interconnection nor succumbs to modern individualism.

56 Chindōgu are a specific type of invention that seemingly make one’s daily life easier by technologically acting as a prosthetic which fills a highly specific gap in one’s life. These inventions are not mass produced and are not meant to be humorous in their entirety (though many of them certainly are). They act as prostheses which operate only in specific situations, making their ownership and use often troublesome. However, their esoteric nature and their nearly useless applications create a fascinating examination at prosthetics which resist unification with one’s body.

57 Japan’s reliance on the amalgamation of technology and the body within anime and manga finds its origin in the works of Osamu Tezuka. In 1952, Atom Boy, displayed a visual depiction of this cyborg body, and since then anime and manga have proliferated through the explorations into technological embodiment. However, most of these instances led to what American theorists would call transhumanism.
Examining posthumanism across Anglo-American and Japanese national and cultural borders inescapably highlights their differences while providing a mutually defamiliarizing angle of interpretation. For example, America’s crisis of subjectivity (registered in the posthuman scholarship of Hayles and Haraway) has centered on the rapid progression of technology rather than on the socio-economic upheaval and natural disaster that preoccupied Japan. Because of this, American transhumanism finds its telos in the technological transformation/transcendence of the human within culture while Japanese technological advances that challenge humanist subjective models contain posthuman tendencies that may appear to Western onlookers as merely transhumanist.58

Because current posthuman studies of Japanese texts mainly derive from Anglo-American theory rather than native Japanese scholarship - the latter of which concerns itself primarily with A.I. or clinical studies of prosthetics and machine/body relations – they tend to overlook the impact of Japan’s distinctive historical path of modernity and subjectivity. For example, in Tokyo Cyberpunk: Posthumanism in Japanese Visual Culture American critic Steven Brown (representative of the few voices concerned with posthumanism in Japanese visual culture) argues for his implementation of Western theory on Japanese cultural products claiming that because Western posthumanism has economic ties to modernity, Japanese subjectivity must also. Brown thus ignores the underlying historical criticism in which post-war modernity itself already reacts to a pre-war, pre-modern subjectivity. In his book, Brown adopts the postmodern work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guatarri59 in order to demonstrate the “posthuman” (rather transhuman) flux of amalgamation and borderlessness within popular Japanese anime and

58 A thorough examination of the terms posthumanism, transhumanism, and humanism has been discussed in the introduction.
manga, wherein current iterations of Japan’s history of self-making are linked to visual culture. He utilizes a “rhizomatic” reading of the porous nature of bodies in Japanese posthuman depictions such as AKIRA (Otomo 1982) and Serial Experiments: Lain (Nakamura 1998). This not only exemplifies a reading of Japanese culture through its cultural products, but also interprets through a Western theoretical framework. “By situating works of Japanese visual culture dealing with posthumanism in relation to rhizomatic connections,” Brown claims, “the lines of flight that they set into motion in response to the mechanisms of advanced capitalism, globalization, and emerging imaging and telecommunication technologies thereby come into clearer view” (9). Such works seek to “defamiliarize” Japanese societal issues, serving as points of intersection between “competing discourses, philosophical crises, and socioeconomic fault lines” (9), but perhaps simultaneously enact their estrangement from their own cultural roots. From Tetsuo’s techno-organic (even “rhizomatic” [4]) body to Lain’s diffusion of self and corporeality engaging with the concept of avatars, Brown takes on a Japanese posthumanism that, “… has learned to accept the posthuman self as an ongoing work of fiction that is in a constant state of revision – contingent, fluid, and in between human, animal, and machine – a ‘nomadic subject’ that emerges in relation to a wide range of nonhuman others” (185).

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60 Japanese scholars, according to Yulia Mikhailova in “Intellectuals, Cartoons, and Nationalism, During the Russo-Japanese War,” have recently pointed to the construction of a Japanese cultural cannon as that which created its national identity in Japan in a time of international upheaval (Russo-Japanese War – 1904-05). During the modernization of the Meiji/Taishō periods (1868-1926), Japan relied on its high culture (Noh, Tea Ceremony, Zen Gardens, Buddhist Sculptures, Kabuki) to establish a sense of uniqueness in its culture not only as a sense of communal pride, but also that which constructs an “inherently distinctive cultural identity” (155). However, Mikhailova, continues, while the high culture of Japan seemed to distinguish Japanese national identity from other foreign cultures, much of “low” culture’s (Namazu-e [catfish pictures], the political cartoons circa 1904, or Manga and Anime beginning in the mid-late ’40s) power in Japanese self-making has been overlooked.

61 Used by Brown to evoke Frederick Jameson.

62 Quoting Susan Napier, Brown explicates that, “Tetsuo’s awesome transformative powers as well as those of the other mutants in AKIRA suggest a subverting of all boundaries, especially the hierarchical ones that still characterize contemporary Japanese society.” (5).

63 Throughout Brown’s piece, his language references spatial and national connections to the ideas of posthumanism, specifically transnationalism. The “Nomadic subject” that occurs here is one that transgresses
Such a subjectivity resembles the Anglo-American tranhumanist interconnected subjectivity as exemplified in Stacy Alaimo’s “trans-corporeality” and Arthur Kroker’s “Body Drift,” each of which posits a fluidity of interconnectedness that critiques an autonomous subjectivity while adhering to a “hauntology” of unceasing code-switching. Any position that seeks to overcome humanist autonomy/individuality would appear to be tranhumanist (that which sees its telos in the transcendence of the individual human, both technological and post-subjective), thus reestablishing modern tendencies toward hierarchy, separation, and mastery. And yet Brown differentiates his argument from a purely transcendental interpretation which views the human being as a device, a communicative medium, or an entity of data exchange (185). In this way, Brown sees a posthumanism which does not fully supplant Japanese humanism as it appears in visual culture. However, the possibility of a reconstitution of modern subjectivity, a self separated from the other, is absent in Brown’s study of the Japanese construction of the posthuman self; his own readings of Japanese texts propose only rhizomatic

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borders (but which would seem to require borders across which to transgress). This type of dialectic transnationalism that reinforces borders as it transgresses them, for Laura Doyle in Toward a Philosophy of Transnationalism, “puts nations back into the dialectical history out of which they have developed” (63). This constant reimagining of borders that created the need for borders themselves now shifts to a relation among nations in the space between nations. Doyle focuses less “on the movements of people and capital across national borders and more on the implicitly other-oriented interactions between and among nations making them mutually shaping and mutually contingent phenomena,” essentially a Hegelian dialectic centered on subjectivities (63). The constant “mutually shaping” of the idea of nationhood and “placedness” begins its destabilization within the nation itself in an increasingly globalized world. Doyle examines the “tilted” nations and “tilted” individuals as being “disoriented” in that the pull and gravity of each’s situation create a constant unevenness that must be renegotiated. In this, the individual is pulled “outward” by the economy and “downward” by the gravity of one’s placedness which requires a re-orientation of our human lives (65).

64 “Hauntology,” becoming popularized in critical theory in the late 2010’s, is characterized against ontology as its alternative which may not exist without also being haunted by another state. Hauntology is the existence between states (between past and present, present and future, or thematically metaphoric, between life and death).

65 In fact, while Brown cites Niel Badmington’s critique of a posthumanism which allows a clean break with humanism, and highlights Sarah Whatmore’s and Catherine Walby’s use of “critical posthumanism” (159). In this use, critical posthumanism refers to a posthumanism that destabilizes the first term in such binaries as mind/body, human/animal, human/machine, or nature/culture, and in so doing, is able to critique a humanism which is absolutist and anthropocentric.
interconnectedness and disorientation (which becomes a type of orientation in itself). Here Brown takes the destabilization of subject foundations via rhizomatic interconnection as posthumanist when such a position still only overcomes humanist autonomy and individuality. Doing so, as I have suggested in the introduction, establishes a new binary and hierarchy thinking which only serves to reinstate humanist modes of thought.

While the discourse of borders plays a large part in the formation of Brown’s posthuman method of reading Japanese visual culture, he overlooks the local borders involved in creating a specifically Japanese posthumanism. Brown tends to claim a one-world, global (or more accurately, Anglo-America-centric) posthumanism by claiming, “there is no Japanese posthumanism per se” (159). Against this view, I contend that a Japan-specific theory resides in its cultural products despite the absence of a unified academic discourse. Brown’s conclusion stems from the assumption that though Japan, “followed an alternative historical path to modernity, emerging from an early modern tradition that privileged neo-Confusion rationalism, [it was] no less susceptible to the influence of the Cartesian cogito in the form of instrumental reason with its emphasis on efficiency, productivity, and usefulness …” (159). However, while Japan’s socio-economic path perhaps relied upon an efficient and rational humanism, these qualities originate and function differently in a Japanese context, and lead to a distinctive posthumanism. We should be wary of globalizing [post]humanism in favor of acknowledging a complicated, nuanced, and local history of subjectivity and corporeality. Brown’s readings of these cultural products overlook the modern (liberal humanist) view of hierarchy, tradition, individualism, or separation, dialectically entwined with the rhizomatic “trans-corporeality” of

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66 A brief example is understood when he claims that “… AKIRA consistently eludes (and even seems to actively resist) the hermeneutic impulse to settle on a definitive interpretation or grand metanarrative.” (5). And yet, there appears to be an impulse to settle on a single, definitive interpretation of that which cannot settle on a definitive interpretation, transhumanism.
postmodernity (transhumanism) that this project will highlight within interpretations of Japanese texts and artifacts. By claiming a rhizomatic, interconnected subjectivity in Japan, Brown ignores the types of pre-war self-making projects which were critiqued by post-war, modern modes of subjectivity. Japanese culture in the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* does not promote a subjectivity which merely returns national self-making thought processes to their pre-war states. Japanese subjectivity inherits the critical nature of modernity just as it attempts to move beyond it by creating a contradictory and complex subjectivity. Whereas American posthumanism posits a subjectivity that either complicates a humanity through a technological telos or surpasses humanism through a post-subjective interconnectivity, Japanese subjectivity in the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* critiques modern autonomous subjectivity without surpassing it in favor of the solely interconnected subjectivity. In what follows, I elaborate upon the historio-cultural influences of this emerging subjectivity.

**Pre-Modern Japanese Subjectivity**

The influences of Japan’s cosmology and mythos on subjectivity ultimately fostered a pre-modern Japanese self-making practice infused with dialectic borders between selves and others. This in turn establishes the origin of interconnectedness within Japanese subjectivities, origins whose roots still exist in aspects of present-day communal Japanese conceptions of self. However, even though such origins remain intelligible, they are no longer necessarily dominant forms of subjectivity, a title (prior to and during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*) that belongs to *shutaisei*. Such foundations are expertly addressed in Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s article, “Selves and Others in Japanese Culture in Historical Perspective,” in which she lays the groundwork for
a possible Japanese critical subjectivity with roots in pre-modern self-making practices that coalesced against the otherness of China, Korea, India, and the West.

According to Ohnuki-Tierney, the Japanese concept of self (as opposed to Western ideals of the autonomous personhood) requires a “social self” and a “social other” which are in dialogical relation with one another. The autonomous self, or the “lone individual,” nearly becomes the “non-self” in such a system (157). These self/other constructions, she argues, stem from Japan’s historical dependency upon the other, against which the self reflects. As Ohnuki-Tierney puts it “historical conjunctures,” as modeled from the “stranger-deities” (deities who exist more as autonomous others than as imagined reflections of self), help shape the interpretations of outside forces and peoples, the confrontations with Tang China or with the influx of the West during the modernization of Japan for example (161).

Flux seems to dominate the ideal of self-construction within pre-modern Japan producing a subjectivity whose borders are consistently fluid. The ever-changing and evolving identity of self stems from these disoriented, uncentered, and foundationless origins. The self’s only commonality with alterity evolves from the universal “need to demarcate the self … in relation to the other.” This “demarcation,” however, produces not clear boundaries of self and other, but delineates the self by incorporating the other into it.

Requiring an other against which the self may be constructed requires both local and foreign influences of self construction creating a self made from Japan’s specific others. Realizing this, Ohnuki-Tierney uses the Japanese mythic constructions of self and reflexive self to valorize locality in the light of a “globalization process [that] acts as a strong counterforce”

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67 Such a subjectivity is much closer to what Steven Brown argues emerges from Japanese Visual Culture.
This local conception of self/other is inextricably bound up in religion and cosmology for Japan. Ohnuki-Tierney’s figuration of “rice as self” begins with a historical categorization of Japanese otherness found in the dual nature of Deities. The Deities, she posits, act against the reflexive self and are thus often symbolized as mirrors. These reflexive selves become the “projection of the dual qualities [of self and other] that the Japanese see in themselves” (155).

Ohnuki-Tierney’s concept of “rice as self” utilizes societal (and inescapably national) formations of self (that is, the selfhood of Japan) to explicate the individual’s formation of self. This reflexivity that requires an other against which the self is constructed defines a self which is “construed contextually.” That is to say, the contextual self is culturally constructed. This subjectivity briefly categorizes the pre-modern paths of Japanese subjectivity informed by religious contexts and adorned in ebb and flux. Versions of this subjectivity continued throughout Japanese history and subsisted through modernization (late 19th century) creating a populace whose communal ties and blurred borders of agency ultimately led to nationalist modes of thinking that in turn inform Japanese subjectivities.

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68 In this way, Ohnuki-Tierney critiques a globalized posthumanism as it applies to Japanese culture. Globalized posthumanism (or Anglo-American centric posthumanism) is what Steven Brown applies to Japanese culture, a notion we discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

69 It becomes apparent to me (looking in from my fixed point as a Western, cis-male academic) that while American conceptions of the human self arise from logic and theory, the Japanese constructions of self—throughout their history—have been intertwined with religious influences, particularly Buddhism. I am well aware that within Western thought it is tricky to combine religious belief and academic theory; however, in the moment of reading a Japanese cultural text, one cannot separate culture from religion. I mention this not to proselytize, but rather to validate an examination of a culture inextricably infused with religion.

70 The “rice as self” construction of subjectivity metaphorically uses Japan’s adoption of rice farming techniques from foreign nations and the physical act of consuming rice as way to highlight the consumption of the other into the self. This construction at once separates the self from others by recognizing the foreign influence of rice production while creating the self from its incorporation. Ohnuki-Tierney thusly uncovers a historical construction of self whose constitution requires the other within.

71 Dissanayake (editor of Narratives of Agency: Self-making in China, India, and Japan) sees in Western writings a tendency to overlook the individualism, personal agency, and selfhood inherent in Asian cultures by overemphasizing “the analytical categories of caste, clan, community, family, group, and so on” (Dissanyake, xii).

72 Maruyama Masao (a Japanese critical theorist examining subjectivity after WWIII) will highlight this susceptibility to identify with community and nation as a link to the influences of government and the rise of ultranationalist tendencies prior to the war.
Nishida Kitarō and Early 20th Century Subjectivity

Beginning in 1911, the works of Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), a founder of the Kyōto school of philosophy, compounded the pre-modern views of interconnection by establishing a type of negated subjectivity (termed specifically, Mu no Basho – place of nothingness)\textsuperscript{73} as performative subjectivity. For Nishida, the presence of the subject may only be thought in negative terms; the subject’s presence is a lack of central core.\textsuperscript{74} In volume nine of the collection *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū*, Nishida states that the “dialectical formation does not negate the given from the outside [as in Sartre’s *being-in-itself* and *being-for-itself*] but transcends the self from inside itself while that which is given contradicts itself” (189). That is to say, that which is present as the self, is only ever contradictory-self. Michael Seats attempts to explain *mu no basho* in reaction to the literary critiques of Murakami Haruki’s subjects (such critiques which will be explained more in chapter two), within his work, *Murakami Haruki: The Simulacrum in Contemporary Japanese Culture*.

Here, the lack of a core or centre (read subjectivity) explains a perceived inability to move beyond modernity. However, rather than envisage this as a kind of lack couched largely in negative terms, one possible solution can be found in imagining its obverse. That is to say, in the topos or ‘place of nothingness’ (*mu no basho*) proposed by Nishida Kitarō, Japanese Being coheres on its own terms as an ostensibly empty subject position only when viewed from the Western stance of identity and presence as the hallmarks of subjectivity. Viewed, however, from the perfectly ‘full’ emptiness of a Japanese subjectivity based on a Buddhist ontology, the question of subjectivity never actually

\textsuperscript{73} The *mu* [無] within the Japanese phrase, “*mu no basho*,” is often translated as “nothingness,” and yet this may even be too specific. *Mu* is a fascinating term used in constructions like *mujin* to mean “unmanned” or in *mugen* to mean “without ceasing.” It is a word for lack or negation itself. Thus, *mu* may not only be “nothing,” but also, “nowhere,” “no-when,” or “no how.”

\textsuperscript{74} Here, the philosophical presence of absence begins to link for us views of subjectivity in Japan that relate to continental philosophy, particularly Lacanian theory and de Manian deconstruction which came after Nishida’s texts. According to the translator David Dilworth’s notes, Nishida’s “final religious and metaphysical position, [exists] as a synthesis of some variables of Christian, Pure Land and Zen tradition. Existentialist philosophy is also clearly incorporated into Nishida’s view” (*Nishida Kitaro Zenshū*, 203).
arises, because it is outside the ontological and epistemological parameters of Japanese experience. This radical dismissal of the stipulation of subjectivity (or at least subjectivity as a form of agency) as a condition of modernity is, to say the least, highly provocative … (50).

Seats argues that the “perceived” lack of self within Murakami’s subjects does not represent an inability to engage with modernity, but in fact critiques modernity by highlighting the haunted subject, the specter of Nishida’s mid-century philosophy of the *mu no basho*. Murakami’s subjects are not mired in *inability* to contend with modernity, but rather represent a potent *ability* to present the lack of stability and substance within modern subjects. This subject is thusly based on a “‘full’ emptiness.” Nishida goes on to suggest that the subject must not consist of inner instinct, but rather “the self’s existence must be regarded as a predicate.” The predicate includes the subject within itself. More concretely, the temporal aspect includes the object within itself; and that which infinitely determines itself in the form of the self-identity of contradiction is the activity of consciousness” (208-209). Nishida’s critique of the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* (indeed an early posthuman moment of critique) proposes that the consciousness of self is only conscious of that which is available to consciousness. The self itself is not nominal being, in other words, but rather a predicate of the self self-ing, becom-ing, and be-ing. This conception resists formations which claim to be conscious of the self because the self in this instance becomes an object of observation and reveals only that which may be observed and does not account for the hidden substance of subjectivity. Nishida performs the Japanese version of Hegel’s dialectic self;

75 This mimics again a deconstructive act of destabilization and the presence of a lack as in Paul de Man’s concept of “blindness as insight.”
76 In his work, “Religious Consciousness and the Logic of the Prajnaparamita Sutra from the Logic of Place and a Religious World View.”
77 Nishida’s contradiction is based on the idea of a self whose “foundation” is nothingness, a non-present foundation.
the ontology of the subject is theorized in a hauntology, forever negotiating presence and absence, life and death.\textsuperscript{78}

According to Rikki Kersten in \textit{Democracy in Post-war Japan: Maruyama Masao and the Search for Autonomy}, Nishida also “… sought to go beyond the ideas of Kant and the neo-Kantians by devising a theory which could transcend the perceived opposition between subject and object. He achieved this through his ‘system of absolute nothingness,’\textsuperscript{79} which identifies the transcendental ‘place’ where subject and object were yet to be distinguished” (95). Here, Kersten explains, that Nishida’s contradictory subjectivity is mired in posthuman questions concerning a subjects’ relation to objects. Kersten goes on to explicate Nishida’s

… heavy emphasis [on] subjectivity and the role of consciousness and the will. His formation of ‘\textit{mu}’ (nothingness) was meant to be free of the taint of subjectivity, but in proceeding to locate ‘place’ in the actual world (which he called ‘the historical world’), Nishida returned to a de facto stress on the self as a creative determinant of a the world as well as of the self. (95)

This “creative determinant” is Nishida’s agency; however, agency whose origin is nothingness looks much different than an autonomous agency free of governmental influence on thinking. It is an agential self which centers on nothingness, a self without the foundation of an inner substance. For Nishida, the Japanese self remains paradoxical. And this paradox/contradiction returns to posthuman conceptions of the subject within the \textit{Ushinawareta Nijūnen}.

\textsuperscript{78} We spoke of “huantology” within the introduction, specifically in reference to Arthur Kroker’s \textit{Body Drift}.

\textsuperscript{79} Kersten’s translation of “\textit{mu no basho}” is perhaps a slight mistranslation she utilizes in order to take an inherently contradictory phrase and utilize it for explanatory purposes. The “place” of \textit{basho} occurs in her explanation more than the phrase itself.
Modern/Post-War Japanese Subjectivity, *Shutaisei*

In post-war Japan, subjectivity became a highly examined concept of national introspection. This is due in part (just as it is during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*) because of several distinct national upheavals and traumas. The first is the immediate national trauma of the mass destruction from the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 which decimated the two city centers, killing nearly 129,000 people, and the strategic bombings of Tokyo beginning in 1942 killing an estimated 80-90,000 people. Beyond this, losing the “Pacific war” effort was the first major military loss in Japan’s modern history. Previous victories over China (1894-95), Russia (1905), and the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires during the First World War (1914-18), established Japan as a world power both internationally and domestically. And as a result of Japan’s loss, newly occupying American forces (specifically the offices of Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of Allied Powers) requested from Emperor Shōwa (Hirohito) a declaration of humanity (*Ningen-Sengan*) which he delivered on January 1st, 1946. In this address, the Emperor confirmed his humanity over the myth-history of his divinity, and denied the notions that the Japanese are superior to other races and therefore fated to rule the world. This declaration saved the Emperor and his family from being tried as war criminals, and yet, as Herbert Bix claims in discussion of the Emperor, “MacArthur's truly extraordinary measures to save the Emperor from trial as a war criminal had a lasting and profoundly distorting impact on Japanese understanding of the lost war” (545).80

Such dramatic upheavals in society mark a distinct shift in the perception of subjectivity as it

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80 From Bix’s work *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*. 
relates to subjects within Japan and those outside it. Such trauma and forced introspection isn’t seen again until the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*.

Japan’s pre-modern, animistically influenced subjectivity, with its porous boundaries between individuals and nation, along with Nishida’s empty subjects (with their non-fixed foundations of self), became the target of leftist critical theorists charged with uncovering the causes of ultranational/fascist tendencies in Japan’s citizens within the modern (post-Meiji) era leading up to Japan’s involvement in WWII. From these notions of subjectivity, a new individualism emerges in post-war Japanese society, a humanist identity marked by autonomy and agency (specifically focused on creative freethinking as a means to remain autonomous from the government). This modern humanist subjectivity did not organically grow from the process of modernization but was rather adopted as a critical deterrent to the ultranationalist trends that led (according to leftist Japanese theorists) to the totalitarian tendencies of Japan prior to and during WWII. Japanese nationalism inculcated the concept of an overarching military might; all social structures (schools, home life, family relations, worker production) became subsidiaries of the military. The phrase, “良妻賢母” (*Ryōsaikenbo* – good wife, wise mother), became the mantra of dutiful Japanese women who, in service to Japan, viewed child rearing as a patriotic duty. But, more closely linked to the interconnected subjectivity of the period, the phrase, “八紘一宇” (*Hakkō Ichiu* – meaning, eight corners of the world/one roof) proposed a universal “brotherhood” with Japan at the top. Not only was a “universal brotherhood” a moniker of interconnected subjectivity, there is an undeniable hierarchy in play that belies liberal humanist thinking even in pre-modern and pre-war Japan.

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81 The phrase “Good wife, wise mother,” was coined by Nakamura Masanao in 1875. Nakamura was a Confucian scholar turned educator and politician during the modernization of the Meiji period.
The Japanese humanist subjectivity which followed the war, and critiqued the interconnection preceding it, is called Shutaisei, and served as the dominant subjectivity of Japan during the Ushinawareta Nijūnen. We may use shutaisei against which to measure the emergence of a critical posthuman subjectivity. The term shutaisei (主体性) typically references identity, subjectivity, or selfhood and yet there remains in the construction of the term’s kanji an undeniable sense of modern humanism. Connotatively, shutaisei equates identity with individualism and creative “free-thinking” with subjectivity. The first kanji, 主, read as shu, may denote a type of key or “main thing,” but is also read as lord, chief, or master in the construction of主体 which refers to a philosophical subject (or a core/nucleus). Shutaisei, then, may be read as already conflating subject identity with humanist tendencies of mastery, hierarchy, and autonomy. The subjectivity presented in the culture of the Ushinawareta Nijūnen is one which critically abolishes such mastery of self. Japanese shutaisei had not grown temporally parallel with modernity as Steven Brown might suggest, but rather assumed its current form after WWII, over fifty years following the rapid modernization of the Meiji period (late 1800’s).

Through post-war debates of subjectivity, Japan adopted a new definition in order to critique the foundations of a pre-war model that stressed national and communal identity. Victor Koschmann explains in his article, “The Debate on Subjectivity in Post-War Japan: Foundations of Modernism as a Political Critique,” that the term’s connotations (and thus the political and social construction of subjectivity itself) were under debate during 1946-48.

In brief, as a form of subjectivity, authenticity or “selfhood,” shutaisei meant more than just an inner, personal way of viewing the world. It also connoted an active force, or energy, that originated internally but was inevitably expressed in practice. By extension, it suggested firm commitment and a stance of independence in relation to potentially deterministic, external forces. The focal point of the debate on shutaisei, therefore, was the

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83 Perhaps the same could be said of the English, “subject-ivity.” Does this term already connote a clear, delineated subject?
relationship between history and social structure on the one hand and voluntary, creative thought and action on the other. (610)

Koschmann argues that the “potentially deterministic external forces” are the very ones that drive nativism and communal hierarchy to both positive and negative ends. Critical theorists felt a type of inter-subjective cohesion had taken place and fought against that within the debates between 1946 and 1948 that Koschmann studies. Those debates seem to suggest that a stance of independence in subjectivity would indeed stifle the group-think of ultra-nationalism by emphasizing freedom of choice and thought in the Japanese psyche.

Rikki Kersten’s *Democracy in Postwar Japan* examines Maruyama Masao’s roles in developing this critical humanism. Kersten writes, “In the early postwar years, Maruyama was more concerned with the power structure of the fascist state, and the pervasive psychology which supported this structure, than with joining the communists in their search for specific, individual war responsibility” (36). This “power structure” includes the national subjectivity expressed in pre-war Japan. Kersten explains that the discourse of protest in the 60s centered not only on US foreign policy with regard to Japan, but also on the “internal struggle between increasingly divergent ideas expressed as strategy during the course of the protests, a battle for the right to define the nexus between value and action.”

In postwar parlance, different entities were fighting over the redefinition of the core idea of the post-World War II (WWII) era, that of autonomy (*shutaisei*) (229). Kersten goes on to discuss the critical nature of *shutaisei* as it is led by one of the most influential thinkers in postwar society, Maruyama Masao, and what he believed was the key to preventing the fascist tendencies of the past.

At the heart of *shutaisei* was insistence on agency, an autonomous value definition that in turn fed into action based on those values. The war had been rationalized in postwar Japan as an expression of normative as well as political

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84 The article titled, “The Intellectual Culture of Postwar Japan and the 1968-1969 University of Tokyo Struggles: Repositioning the Self in Postwar Thought.”
totalitarianism on the part of the state. In postwar, leftist thinkers such as Murayama argued that society had to retrieve the power of value definition from the state and guard it from any intrusion from above. Maruyama established critical distance between state and society in postwar Japan as the founding premise of his version of postwar democracy; shutaisei (autonomy) was the active, future-focused formula for inverting power from the state to society. (229)

Not only does this highlight Murayama’s theory in expressing a new individualism, a new autonomy in shutaisei, but it explains the reluctance of Japanese discourse to undermine shutaisei with a potential subjectivity that may revert Japanese society back to its highly nationalist tendencies. Such potential certainly exists in the blurred borders and networked (or rhizomatic) nature of transhumanism. Therefore, any discussion of posthumanism in Japan is haunted by fears of normative rationalizations of totalitarianism.

Produced from these debates, ironically, was an autonomous subjectivity adopted by the government itself and propagated through moral education. The official Japanese subject no longer joins a linked populace that makes up the nation-state, but merely the newly individualized products of the nation-state. That is to say, the result of post-war debates on subjectivity discovered within humanism a resistance to the communal subject devoid of free thought and the critical creativity necessary to struggle against fascist tendencies. The state eventually accepts Murayama’s expression of an anti-state criticism and begins to examine those elements of humanism helpful to the state (ideals of hierarchy, efficiency through reason, etc).

We can identify the critical insight’s pervasiveness into Japanese society in works such as Sakai Naoki’s Translation and Subjectivity: On Japan and Cultural Nationalism and Brian McVeigh’s “Linking State and Self: How the Japanese State Bureaucratizes Subjectivity through Moral

86 However, such encouragement of freethinking and creative models of thought in the populace inevitably may contain the seeds of a posthuman critical thinking.
Education.” The latter piece goes so far as to claim that “state bureaucratic structures try to build a psychology that hierarchizes, categorizes, and formalizes the sociopolitical environment, thereby supporting a belief in … rationality and efficiency …” (125). This is congruent with Koschmann’s argument that a socially concerted effort is being made to normalize shutaisei in post-war Japan as a modern, efficient humanism even when its roots were socially critical. These roots however, McVeigh argues, “emanate from Japan’s Ministry of Education,” and are applied throughout the society at “local sites (schools)” by “producing ideology via socialization” (125). This ideology is disseminated through social studies curriculum and the enforced social structure of schools and classrooms by rewarding efficiency, hierarchy, and competition (126-128). This, McVeigh argues, calls upon a pre-war understanding of a Japanese education that acts as subsidiary of state and especially the “Monbusho’s Secretariat and advisory councils” whose policies are “shaped by economic nationalism” (128). Beyond, the classroom, the school also provides (somewhat mandatory) clubs which reiterate the “junior/senior” relation. In this way, the government has adopted and propagated shutaisei, the very same concept of subjectivity meant to free individuals from Government influence. This helps inform why a new posthumanist critique of subjectivity might resist official forms of discourse (from the academic and political elite), and prefer to be cultivated within culture itself. And yet, such a stance on critical thinking and creativity in turn allows for the diversion from shutaisei presented in critical posthuman movements of the cultural products in the Ushinawareta Nijûnen.
The Influences of Postmodernity and Late-Capitalism on Shutaisei

From the establishment of shutaisei in post-war Japanese society until the posthumanism of Ushinawareta Nijūnen, subjectivity in Japan took on more common postmodern characteristics related to capitalism, production, and fragmentation associated with new denials of “Grand Narratives.” In their article, “The New Individualism and Contemporary Japan: Theoretical Avenues and the Japanese New Individualist Path,” Anthony Elliot, Katagiri Masataka, and Sawai Atsushi examine the sudden shift toward individuality in postwar Japan and propose possible postmodern catalysts which lead to a description of the Ushinawareta Nijūnen as “the age of fragmentation.” This work establishes an incredibly accurate and useful summary dealing with subjectivity and the changing nature of Japanese society. Their theory critiques the foundations of modernity through the fragmentation of subjectivity (due in no small part to the growing industry of commodity and capital in Japan). My project builds on this consensus by exploring how Japanese products, as a result of the progression of subjectivity throughout Japanese history, concretize the deconstructing of these foundations by depicting posthuman subjectivity as dialectical instances of both humanism and transhumanism.

Elliot, et al. lay out a brief examination of contemporary Japanese self-making by examining post-war Japanese society’s progression toward the era in which this dissertation’s primary materials are found, the Ushinawareta Nijūnen. The article chronicles sociological factors in Post-war Japan’s increasing individualism. Calling upon “intensive globalization” as

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87 By “postmodern,” I refer to Fredric Jameson’s, Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (1991), in which he highlights a few symptoms of the postmodern shift. 1) The Weakening of Historicity. 2) The lack of distinction between, “high” and “low” culture. 3) A “New Depthlessness.” 4) A “new type of emotional ground tone” or “intensities” (6). These join together to form the image of a culture which is lost. The subject is lost in both “space” and “time” and has little to no ability to orient him/herself.
a condition of individualism in social theory, Elliot et al. explore “New Individualism” through the rapid shift in post-war Japan’s social structure and sociology of self. “New Individualism,” they write, is the product of “today’s ‘plastic’ culture of reinvention, reorganization and flexibility [which] carries profound consequences … for the private and public lives of individuals” (426). This theory stresses the fear and anxiety which a reinvention through “instant transformation” may alleviate, contrasting it with Anthony Giddens’ “reflexive individualization” which posits a self that is created, not inherited. To demonstrate this, Elliot et al. highlight four tenets of the theory that progressively shape the modern flux of subjectivity in Japanese society: 1) Self-reinvention: the desire (and ability) to reconstruct identities that theoretically will transform or improve every aspect of our lives. This ultimately arose with the globalization of makeover industries and cosmetic surgery. 2) Instant Change: the idea that self-reinvention may be accomplished quickly (or more importantly, impulsively). This idea gives rise to an “Instant Generation” according to the authors. 3) Speed: instant change of one’s surroundings develops a fascination with speed which becomes paramount to (and is a result of) consumerism in the desire of the newest and best products available. 4) Short-termism or Episodicity: the concept of self-reinvention, coupled with a desire for an increasingly precise acceleration of one’s ever-changing situation, uncovers a subject to whom the prospect of lifelong employment or careers seems foreign. This then informs a “new economy,” one that is “flexible, mobile, networked” (429). Once having applied such consequences of late-capitalism to the individual, Elliot et al. see shifts in individualism that coincide with large economic upheavals. Such an upheaval of economy and society exaggerates the turmoil of post-war Japan in that an emergent and critical subjectivity may also take modern capitalism as its target.
Elliot et al. furthermore classify four particular ages that mark distinct discourses of the self in post-war Japanese society. 1) The Age of the Ideal: Running from World War II into the 60s, a type of “privatized person” emerges.\textsuperscript{89} Contrasted against the “isolated privatism” or narcissism of North America, the “privatized person” is at once selfish, but reflexive,\textsuperscript{90} not taking for granted – and thus minimally connected with – others. 2) Age of the Dream: Spanning the 60’s and 70’s, this era gave rise to the “new-middle-masses” due to a high rate of economic growth. These new individuals, having diluted the nationalism of their parents, became the first to build “their own lifestyles … free from a national framework” (431). Egoistic desire and thus the ability to transform one’s identity became much more socially acceptable during this time frame. 3) Age of Fiction: Within the 80’s, this era saw Japan become an “advanced consumer society” (430) where consumption itself became an individual goal. And more so than the ever-expanding use of products, the public consumed the fiction of a consumer lifestyle. Such a consumption gives rise to what Elliot et al. claim to be “the-new-human-beings.” These individuals begin to “use the consumption of goods as a tool of communication with others” (431). 4) The Age of Fragmentation:\textsuperscript{91} From the 1990’s and beyond, this era saw the birth of the psychologized self, the self that ultimately desires to solve social problems through ever-increasing psychological means. The Age of Fragmentation marks the outset of the socially volatile period, the \textit{Ushinawareta Nijūnen}. Within these twenty years, such primary materials as the fiction of Murakami, Haruki, Kawakami Kenji’s exploration into \textit{Chindōgu}, and Itō Junji’s \textit{manga} – \textit{Uzumaki} that this dissertation explores cumulatively question the boundaries of

\textsuperscript{89} Emerges from Y. Tanaka’s 1976 Critique of “Me-ism.”
\textsuperscript{90} “Reflexivity” is defined as that which creates itself by reflecting against the other.
\textsuperscript{91} While it is not mentioned directly in the article, it seems that Elliot et al. are referring to Jameson’s “fragmentation” that occurs in the individual within Late-Capitalism due to an inability to cognitively map one’s surroundings.
subjectivity, of private and public identities, and of humanism and modernity itself.\textsuperscript{92} Within this period, the first iteration of self as defined by Elliot et al. remains absent of reflexivity, a movement, they see, from modernity to postmodernity.\textsuperscript{93} The reflexivity with which Japan created its self becomes inverted. Rather than reflexively determining self against other, the inner movement of reflexivity constitutes self through the other already within, the \textit{self/other self}. This subjectivity acts as a posthuman self which critiques typical Anglo-American instances of postsubjective transhumanism by showcasing a dialectical relation of self and other that stems from the other already within and yet moves beyond individualism into fragmentation and instability.

\textbf{The Subjectivity of the \textit{Ushinawareta Nijūnen}}

The Japanese posthuman subject thus is not tied to the eradication of self into unity with the non-self (object/other/environment/group) or the adoption of complete autonomous solipsism, but rather, evolves as the occasion for the dialectical constitution of self and its binaries in a way that critiques the dominate form of Japanese subjectivity, \textit{shutaisei}.

\textsuperscript{92} The connection and disparity between “public” and “private” in Japan, is complex and should not necessarily be read as opposing binaries; however, as Elliot et al. describe through the ideas of the theorist Aruga, there appears to be a hierarchy among the two. Where “public” is traditionally viewed as unselfish and fair, “private” may be seen as “selfish and unfair” (433). A privatization of the individual may begin to deconstruct such binaries in the \textit{Age of Fragmentation}. The traditionally reflexive individualism (the public) has given way to a psychological “gentleness” which attempts through introspection to connect with the other, a way to “narrate the self” (434). I believe it is a subjectivity that may be discovered in that which the Japanese use to narrate one’s self, literature, films, \textit{manga}, and \textit{anime} of popular culture.

\textsuperscript{93} While it is not specifically mentioned, one may easily see the burgeoning conditions that create compulsive shut-ins - \textit{hikikomori} (引きこもり) - or at the very least, the \textit{Journey of self-discovery} - \textit{Jibun sagashi} (自分探し) - that is prevalent within later generations. Such destabilizations of subjectivity in this era create the need for radical understandings of self (the isolationism of \textit{hikikomori} as well as the search for one’s context in society of \textit{jiubn sagashi}).
Nishida and Ohnuki-Tierney’s explorations of Japanese self-constructions create a possibility of future critiques of subjectivity which may draw from their pasts and in which already lie latent. However, post-war Japanese society was highly reticent to accept such unstable formations of self and systematically adopted, finally, a type of modern humanism as the official public discourse of subjectivity. This subjectivity may be read in Japanese as shutaisei or by Anthony Elliot, Masataka Katagiri, and Atsushi Sawai as a “New Individualism.”

My argument regarding the cultural conditions in which Japanese popular culture brings forth a new subjectivity echoes current influential interpretations of American posthumanism offered by Hayles, Neil Badmington, Stacy Alaimo, and Cary Wolfe who problematize Cartesian conceptions of an autonomous self and seek to establish a new way of thinking about the human subject (or in the case of Wolfe, a new way in which the human subject thinks). And yet, as my project will display, Japanese depictions of subjectivity in literature, anime, manga, and chindōgu critique the modern influences of mastery and hierarchy that pervade certain approaches of transhumanism and Japanese shutaisei. Using critical works which explore historical moments of Japanese self-making practices demonstrates that the absence of posthuman theory and the presence of posthuman practice in the cultural sphere mandate a unique Japanese posthuman theory, one that further complicates the binaries of humanism and transhumanism.

So then, what separates Japanese economic issues, its increased privatization, and heightened anxiety regarding modern life from other nations which also seem entwined in these seemingly typical features of postmodernity? The answer lies first within the speed with which

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94 ... as well as theories of subjectivity from Levinas, Judith Butler, and Jean Luc Nancy that take up the case of subjectivity and alterity.

95 Post-war Japanese sub-culture has called for the study of various individuals and their relation to views of reality, the Otaku (オタク) and the Hikikomori (引きこもり) to name a few. Otaku are ardent fans of pop-culture.
these changes occurred, and second, with the degree of penetration with which socio-cultural
affected the “texture of lived experience … a transition from traditional forms of individualism
to a new individualistic society” (Elliot et al. 436). The abrupt and deep changes in Japan
throughout its post-war history chronicle the rapid acceptance of self-reinvention attributed to the
“New Individualism” and adoption (or definition) of shutaisei. Also, the interconnected
subjectivities that had dominated pre-modern Japanese society operated as the status quo which
individualistic modern humanism later critiqued. This progression from interconnection to
individualism inversely mirrors an American progression away from a historically individual
subject. This means that the pervasive changes occurring within society (rather than only within
the individual) sets Japan apart from other modern nations dealing with similar issues. The
society itself echoes the progression of the subject. Or rather, as Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney
believed, the Japanese self contextually mimics the culture in the way that the self constructs
itself against the other.

Mythic/religious histories and formations of a pre-modern self support an instability and
mu (nothingness) which becomes its defining traits (especially against Western constructions of
self). This led to the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō’s concept of mu no basho (place of
nothingness) which defines a self that transcends form with a movement simultaneously inward
and outward, a contradictory (and dialectic) self. This mu no basho coincides with my readings

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(mostly science fiction, futurism, superheroes, and many other facets of anime, manga, toy, and video game
content). Some interesting native-Japanese work is being done on the subjects and subjectivities of these groups
of people. I am particularly interested in Azuma Hiroki’s Otaku: Japan’s Database Animals in which he adopts a
reading of Otaku as subjects based on “narrative consumption” rather than subjects which act as the products
of Grand Narrative. He plays with orientations of self-making akin to Deleuze and Guattari’s “rhizomatic structure”
(as opposed to the “tree-structure”) in which he compares the rhizome to the database. Such formations of self
speak directly of a sub-culture within Japan and not necessarily of humanity as a whole. It is closer to a
postmodern working of culture, rather than a posthuman understanding of subjectivity. I mention this to further
include the discussion I’ve found regarding the state of discourses orbiting subjectivity even though this is an
argument toward reading Japan as postmodern more so than posthuman.
of contemporary Japanese culture forms and their dialectic of self and other. They employ a construction of self which recognizes the other already within it, and a fragmentation of self inextricably bound to society that may pragmatically retain autonomous, humanist roots, even in its emergent posthumanism. This emerging subjectivity reacts against the popularized (and even state sponsored) modern shutaisei which itself established a critique of previous views of subjectivity. It appeared imperative to the Japanese artists and writers considered here that a new Japanese concept of subjectivity must at once reject the autonomous nature of humanism while simultaneously avoiding a complete erasure of self into community (or with the non-self as transhumanism). Because either of these options would repeat the humanist trap of totalizing a subjectivity, Nishida’s view of a contradictory self, a self which avoids a teleological nature of self, a self self-ing would allow Japan’s historical contributions to the theoretical environment of subjectivity to create a space ripe for a postmodern critique of subject foundations. This dissertation contends that which Anglo-American posthumanism has as much to learn from its example as Japanese practitioners learned from their intermittent forays into these extra-national theoretical materials. The critical texts uncovered by this dissertation appear throughout the Ushinawareta Nijunen and react against this government sanctioned modern self-making while not supplanting shutaisei with the type of subjectivity against which shutaisei was critically reacting. The next evolution of Japanese subjectivity must incorporate both the critique and that which it critiques within the safe spaces of popular cultural products.
Chapter 2: Murakami Haruki’s Subjectivity:  
A critique of Shutaisei in the Ushinawareta Nijūnen

Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions. You change direction but the sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous dance with death just before dawn. Why? Because this storm isn’t something that blew in from far away, something that has nothing to do with you. This storm is you. Something inside you. So all you can do is give in to it, step right inside the storm, closing your eyes and plugging up your ears so the sand doesn’t get in, and walk through it, step by step. There’s no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time. Just fine white sand swirling up into the sky like pulverized bones.

-Kafka on the Shore by Murakami Haruki (5)

During the Ushinawareta Nijūnen (Japan’s Lost Decades, 1990-2010) Murakami Haruki composed protagonists that questioned and complicated the efficient, modern subjectivity (shutaisei-主体性) that had been popularized in Japanese post-war society. His characters at once sought to complete themselves through a connection to others while disrupting the foundations of a perceived and unified subjectivity, a disruption stemming from the something already within, a type of anarchic other. The nuanced and complicated (even contradictory) subjectivity that Murakami demonstrates during this period and specifically in after the quake functions in lieu of an established Japanese academic discourse of posthumanism by harkening back to alternative, pre-war, notions of Japanese subjectivity, especially that of Nishida Kitarō and the much more historically distant influence of Buddhism on Japanese thought. However,

96 Shutaisei is translated as subjectivity, identity, individuality and refers to the modern autonomous subject, promoted by the state to encourage a free thinking and individualized populace. Because this term becomes common throughout this project, and because we have already discussed it at length within the previous chapter, I will not be providing a translation each time. After this point, the term will stand alone in this text.

97 In this case, the “other,” as expressed in the introduction to this project and according to Judith Butler in Precarious Life, remains something separate from the self and yet within the self and acts as the source of an in-common experience with another. This anarchic other, in its inability to be fully subsumed into the self, obstructs the foundation of a monolithic self.

98 This is the English translation (purposeful lack of capitalization). The Japanese publication was called All God’s Children Dance (Kami no kodomotachi wa mina odoru - 神の子どもたちはみな踊る).

99 While we have already discussed Nishida’s connection to religion, Murakami’s should be mentioned as well. His father, Murakami Chiaki was the son of a Buddhist priest and was also devout. In his 2009 speech upon receiving the Jerusalem Prize, Murakami spoke about how his father would “As a child born after the war, I used to see [my father] every morning before breakfast offering up long, deeply felt prayers at the Buddhist altar in our house. One
Murakami’s literary explorations of subjectivity drew criticism from prominent Japanese literary figures, Ōe Kenzaburō and Karatani Kōjin, for lacking any critical/political stance (especially with regard to his depictions of subjectivity in the younger generations). I reexamine the subjectivities in Murakami’s *after the quake* (a collection in Murakami’s oeuvre that is currently understudied in American literary theory, especially concerning subjectivity) and find them indeed critical of *shutaisei*. By revealing the cracks within its perceived foundations, Murakami thereby reframes the critical discourse in favor of his own posthuman critique. The posthuman tendencies of Murakami’s subjects in the novels and short story collections composed during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* display an emerging, Japanese posthuman discourse whose theoretical work is accomplished within popular, rather than academic, culture.100 Murakami’s labor constitutes characters reacting to this period’s traumatic influences on subjectivity, a trauma whose presence complicates autonomous selfhood and which Murakami himself acknowledges publicly (in the non-fiction texts *Underground* and “Boston, From One Citizen of the World Who Calls Himself a Runner”). The text that most closely (thematically) relates to this trauma and disaster with the highest density of these critical subjects is the collection *after the quake*.

To understand Murakami’s intervention into *shutaisei* and the academic/literary critique in Japan that seeks to dismiss his views, I will first need to examine Murakami’s connection to trauma and disaster within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* as a potential catalyst for his critical reexamination of *shutaisei*. That trauma, I argue strongly motivates Murakami Haruki’s

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100 Though Murakami Haruki was also acquainted with Anglo-American postmodern theory at the time of its composition.
innovations and depictions. I will then read Murakami’s stories in *after the quake* in order to complicate the foundations of representation/language and human subjectivity.¹⁰¹ I stress Murakami’s development of a subjectivity in *after the quake* which complicates the notion of Japanese *shutaisei* subjectivity. I identify a critical posthuman subjectivity in the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* which can be productively explicated using many of the fundamental concepts of American posthuman theories despite the limits of their Western worldview. Unlike Japan, current American posthuman theory overlooks a subjectivity that at once straddles the line between liberal humanism (defined as the human self autonomously delineated from the non-human and non-self) and transhumanism (the surpassing of the individual, a view of subject as inextricably interconnected with and subsumed under the non-human or non-self).¹⁰² My account of Japanese posthuman theory, in order to incorporate the nuanced and complicated Japanese subjectivity to be unearthed in this project, seizes its rejection of the autonomous individuality of

¹⁰¹ The use of “deconstruction” in this project refers to Paul de Man’s work in which the foundations of representation (language itself included) are dismantled as stable forms upon which truth may be built. This is specifically interesting when he replaces foundation of knowledge with “blindness” in a text entitled “The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida’s Reading of Rousseau” from de Man’s greater compilation, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*. It is this critical text of another critical text in which de Man voices this confrontation with a deconstructive lack of foundation as “blindness,” a theoretically weighted term in de Man’s oeuvre. Here he espouses the destructive nature of perhaps the core of his deconstruction by claiming Derrida’s examination of Rousseau already, “…shows blindness to be the necessary correlative of the rhetorical nature of literary language” (141). This critique’s critique names a “specificity of all literature” as “blindness,” and the foundation of sight (or knowledge) of a text is the lack thereof. A deconstructive reading of a text, as de Man puts it in his article “Shelley Disfigured,” acts then as that which “exposes the wound of a fracture that lies hidden in all texts” (120). This blindness and the epistemological deconstruction of meaning will inevitably tie to a close reading of Murakami’s subjects which also tend to base a foundation of selfhood on a lack or a deconstructed foundation. The metaphor of blindness will be further examined as it connects to subjectivity within Murakami later in this chapter. This project takes not only Murakami’s subjects as its target, but uses these subjects to uncover the fracture that lies hidden in all of subjectivity. This is the posthuman move borrowed from deconstruction.

¹⁰² It should be noted that it is not the intention of this project to engage in any form of colonialism via theory. The use of “Western theory” (mostly “American theory”) is either used to discuss theoretical practices which are underdeveloped in Japanese academic discourse, or to present an incomplete Western theory which may be helped by the close-reading of Japanese materials. While the influence of Western theoretical discourses is evident in Murakami’s work (according to Lyubov Kuryleva and Svetlana Boeva in their article, “Literary Texts by H. Murakami in Terms of Intercultural Communication.”), this comparative project will not purposefully ignore an established and localized Japanese theory by simply replacing it with a Western one.
the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* while limiting its polar opposite subjectivity viewed only as interconnected with the non-self (as transhumanism does). A dialectical Japanese posthuman theory emerges which contains both the self’s connection to and separation from the non-self while not erasing either. Only these terms allow us to expand beyond autonomous humanism while not attempting to surpass it by using the liberal humanist thinking devices of mastery and hierarchy.

What follows is an examination of this dialectical posthuman subject within several of Murakami’s short stories from *after the quake*. First, I will discuss Murakami’s connection to the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* in order to highlight this period’s disruptive effect on culture which helps create the environment in which a critical subjectivity may emerge. I will then place my readings of Murakami within a contemporary critical academic context by highlighting several examinations by both Japanese and American critics of the subjectivities presented in his characters. Next, I examine four short stories within the collection, *after the quake*, in order to showcase the tendencies of his characters to disrupt the foundations of modern subjectivity - *shutaisei*. I will finally return to the epigraph from *Kafka on the Shore* in order to show how Murakami not only fractures the foundations of subjectivity but also hints at the complicated and critical subjective model he embraces that will be displayed elsewhere in culture during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*.

**Murakami and the Lost Decades**

For Murakami Haruki, the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*, and the collection *after the quake* specifically, marks not a fundamental shift in tone, content, or portrayal of subjectivity in his
own writing, but rather becomes the occasion for the galvanization of each. 1990-2010 of course was not the start of Murakami’s authorship, nor was it the beginning of his fame, though it was in the late 1990s that translations of his work began to grow immensely popular overseas. During the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*, Murakami’s Japanese publications included: *South of the Border, West of the Sun* (1992), *The Wind-up Bird Chronicle* (1994-1995), *Sputnik Sweetheart* (1999), *after the quake* (2000), *Kafka on the Shore* (2002), *After Dark* (2004), *The Elephant Vanishes* (2005), *The Strange Library* (2005), *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman* (2009), and *1Q84* (2009-2010).103 Murakami published six novels, three short story collections, stories in magazines, several other non-fiction works like *Underground* (2000), many translations (including Raymond Carver, J.D. Salinger, and F. Scott Fitzgerald) and an illustrated children’s story. This was thus a prolific period for Murakami in which his characters became increasingly unsure of their foundations both physical and psychic (physical as they experience natural disasters and psychic as they wrestle with the something – or nothing – inside each of them). My project focuses on *after the quake* as the most direct example of the connection between the difficulties of Japan’s “Lost Decades” and the portrayal of characters’ own loss of a self-foundation.104

In *after the quake*, Murakami wrestles with the stability of subjectivity in a time of literal and figurative destabilization. It took the socio-cultural upheaval of this period, marked by destruction both natural and man-made, to shape and articulate this posthuman subject. An exploration of this time period’s effect on Murakami allows us to speculate about its influence on his critique of modern subjectivity during the same period. Murakami’s critique of modern

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103 Though these are the years of his Japanese publications, I have listed them by their English titles for the sake of clarity.
104 Not only does the destruction of foundations theoretically run parallel to Western theories of Deconstruction, Murakami eludes to his own familiarization with deconstruction with a direct reference in one of the short stories to be discussed later in this chapter, *super frog saves tokyo.*
subjectivity, *grounded* in the upheaval of disasters, becomes apparent in his reactions to the two most abruptly devastating events – a natural disaster, the Kobe earthquake, and a man-made disaster, the Tokyo Subway Gas Attacks. While Japan engaged with several difficult issues during this time socially and economically, it was these two which Murakami chose to address at length in both fiction and non-fiction forms.

On January 17, 1995, Japan saw the most devastating natural disaster since the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 when a 7.3 magnitude earthquake rocked the Kobe region of Japan killing up to 6,343 individuals according to a 2006 report from the Kobe City Fire Bureau. Nearly five years after the earthquake, Murakami Haruki published a collection of short stories in Japan which all contain this earthquake as a backdrop by way of theme, conflict, or character. This work was given the English title *after the quake*, and the narratives within, represent complex and contradictory subjectivities that question the foundations of *shutaisei* with its commitment to ideas of origin, foundation, or autonomy. This collection reacts to (and spearheads) the culture’s reexamination of liberal humanist thought amidst an “act of God” because it explicitly tests the limits of human agency. Murakami’s quake survivors reveal a selfhood which begins to define itself as neither wholly humanist nor transhumanist, but a synthesis of both. Contrary to the path America took toward posthumanism (a path incessantly paved with the emergence of new technologies), Japan’s experiments with subjectivity seem cultivated more so by disaster and trauma than by the cultural explorations into robotics,

105 I feel it is right to highlight the origins of such disasters. I am aware that in doing so, this creates a difference between the natural and man-made. However, it should be pointed out that it is not the place of this dissertation to speak to the ontological differences of such tragedies, but rather to engage with the reactions of the culture to such tragedies. While it is possible there is no difference between the two based on origins alone (what could be more natural than man-made), there appears to be a difference in how a society steeped in modernity reacts. For is not enlightenment’s promise that knowledge may yet overcome such natural occurrences? Here I accentuate the reexamination of subjectivity which occurs in the midst of these disasters. How trauma may create such reactions is a topic for another book.
cyborgs, and technology that have influenced popular culture in Japan since the 70’s. For this reason, during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* we discover in the transhuman depictions of bodies within Japanese culture a posthuman critical subjectivity.

On March 20, 1995, merely three months later, Japan was terrorized by the “Subway Sarin Incident” (*Chikatetsu Sarin Jiken* - 地下鉄サリン事件) in which members of a religious movement called Aum Shinrikyo planned a coordinated attack on several major Tokyo subway lines killing twelve people and harming over a thousand others. Patricia Welch in “Murakami’s Storytelling World” also connects the disasters of the Kobe Earthquake and the Aum Shinrikyō attack to Murakami’s fiction. She adds, however, that what so unnerved many Japanese was that this attack was carried out not by outsiders or shut-ins, but by Japan’s “best and brightest, young middle-class men and women educated at top universities who felt completely alienated by Japanese society … the numbing mindlessness to modern life” (57). Here, Welch seems to suggest that the attack was not only a catalyst for questioning postwar modernity, but also a direct protest against it. Both events caused Murakami to return to Japan after living abroad nine years.

In 1998, Murakami attempted to make sense of this incident by publishing a series of interviews entitled *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche* (*Andāguraundo* - アンダーグラウンド) in which he interviews not only victims, but other members of Aum Shinrikyō as well. Here Murakami envisions a conversation with a member of the cult, Dr. Hayashi Ikou, who desires a sort of Utopian society. To him, Murakami would like to say, “Reality is created out of confusion and contradiction, and if you exclude those elements, you’re no longer talking about reality. You might think that – by following language and a logic that appears consistent – you’re able to exclude that aspect of reality, but it will always be lying
in wait for you, ready to take its revenge” (363). Such a critique of modernity and its logics
displays in what social system Murakami believes the fault to lie. Here he attacks the foundations
of logic and certainty while adhering directly to reality; the two are inseparable for Murakami.
“Reality is created out of confusion and contradiction.” This grounds a critique of modern
subjectivity within an ontology of contradiction and an alternative way of thinking to traditional
logic, this is Murakami the postmodernist becoming a posthumanist.

In this collection, Murakami addresses specifically the disasters which have disrupted
such modern notions by claiming that,

… arriving as they did at a time when Japan’s ‘bubble economy’ burst, marking
the end of those times of rampant excess, ushered in a period of critical inquiry into the
very roots of the Japanese state. It was as if these events had been lying in wait for us …
Both were nightmarish eruptions beneath our feet – from underground – that threw all the
latent contradictions and weak points of our society into frighteningly high relief. (237)

Murakami Haruki’s term, “latent,” suggests that the earthquake did not cause weak points or
contradictions, but rather, unveiled them as latent moments of disruption only now actualized. In
this way, the disasters reveal destabilized meaning. These foundational “roots” literally and
figuratively relate to the concept of the ground or grounding, and so when Murakami emphasizes
the disasters as “eruptions beneath our feet,” the cultural critiques bridge theory and practice,
linking homogenous concepts both concrete and abstract by uprooting the foundations of
modernity with the foundations of buildings.

In an essay Murakami later wrote to the survivors of the Boston Marathon bombing, he
compares these two terrorist attacks and offers his empathetic advice. In it, he reveals how
trauma remains with the individual in an anarchic sense. This disruption within the self mirrors a
theory of trauma in which language and representation fail in the presence of pain, and because
of this, the presence of trauma remains as a barrier to a unified self, a self perfectly healed of
trauma. Here the emphasis on pain and trauma is merely to speculate on the possible catalyst for depictions of subject instability within the cultural environment in which Murakami writes (and in which later chapters’ products will mature). Both Dominick LaCapra in *Writing Histories, Writing Trauma* and Cathy Caruth in *Violence and Time: Traumatic Survivals* borrow from Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* to develop a psychoanalytic response to pain and trauma. That is, each claim that the repetition of the post-traumatic, stems from an initial break (or “death drive”) in which the psyche attempts to return to the moment of self-separation caused by trauma. The issue of communicating (or miscommunicating, rather) trauma or pain (to another or to one’s self) through language and representation is something that Elaine Scarry discusses at length in the introduction to *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Scarry directly speaks to the separation of another in pain through this inexpressibility when she says, “Vaguely alarming yet unreal, laden with consequence yet evaporating before the mind because not available to sensory confirmation, the pains occurring in other people’s bodies flicker before the mind, then disappear” (4). Pain and trauma at once seek to conjoin and separate the self with the other mirroring the posthuman subject which at once autonomously separates and intersubjectively conjoins.

The *New Yorker* piece entitled, “Boston, From One Citizen of the World Who Calls Himself a Runner” suggests the complexity of building a singular/whole life after such tragedy precisely because of the presence of trauma. While *after the quake* and *Underground* act as literary avenues for Murakami himself to explore these ideas, this letter to Boston succinctly explains his belief in a complex subjectivity which continues after trauma. Here he writes,

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106 The myth of a singularly whole subject remains a humanist ideal. Posthumanism will accept this anarchic presence as a type of other within and root (as explained earlier through Judith Butler’s *Precarious Life*) a connection to others through the in-common experience. This demonstrates again a subjectivity which simultaneously connects and yet still remains separate.
“Some of the pain goes away over time, but the passage of time also gives rise to new types of pain. You have to sort it all out, organize it, understand it, and accept it. You have to build a new life on top of the pain.” Murakami goes on to say, “Hiding the wounds, or searching for a dramatic cure, won’t lead to any real solution. Seeking revenge won’t bring relief, either. We need to remember the wounds, never turn our gaze away from the pain, and—honestly, conscientiously, quietly—accumulate our own histories” (www.newyorker.com). Here, in the shadow of trauma, Murakami embraces the role of pain in one’s life. It becomes the foundation on which a “new life” is built. Yet, is there any shakier foundation than that of pain and trauma? Such a foundation is revealed through Murakami’s representations of trauma and subjectivity to be built on shifting sands. The subjectivity which emerges under such conditions is one which cannot unify the anarchic but rather embraces it as such. One does not overcome the pain by extinguishing it. One, rather, lives through the pain, realizing its continuous presence in our lives. In the aftermath of national trauma, a subject emerges in Murakami’s work that embodies such a destabilization.

For Murakami, the disasters of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* are key to exposing the weak “roots” for critical inquiry within modern Japanese *shutaisei*. He contributes to this Japanese period of critique by claiming that subjectivity always already contains a traumatic presence, a foundation of pain which complicates and constitutes individual psychology. This not only disrupts and exposes the self’s present foundation, but prevents a stable future foundation somehow devoid of pain or trauma. Murakami’s contribution to posthumanism will be revealed through trauma and disaster that analyzes the inadequacy of the modern, autonomous self by directly showcasing subjects’ inability to form a humanist foundation of self. Such a depiction is mischaracterized by certain Japanese literary theorists as an empty and vapid self. However, the
final summation of what Murakami’s subjectivity reveals (after the foundations of humanist subjectivity have been thoroughly compromised) via a reading of the quote from *Kafka on the Shore*, is a complex and contradictory subject who wrestles with such an instability rather than one devoid of any substance.

**The Critique of Murakami’s Subjects**

The fact that many Japanese theorists tend to see Murakami’s characters as vapid and weak (even critically “empty”) indicates their propensity to dismiss him as a serious author. However, several Western theorists (such as Mathew Stretcher, Stephen Snyder, Jay Rubin and myself) discover Murakami’s critical stance within said vapidity and weakness. I will argue against the typical Japanese response to Murakami’s subjects by emphasizing the complexity and contradiction within the subjects critical (in that they destabilize the foundations of modern humanism) to Japanese *shutaisei*.

In 1985, Murakami Haruki was awarded the Tanizaki Prize for his novel, *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*. Among the awarding panel was Ōe Kenzaburō who, according to Jay Rubin\(^\text{107}\) said “how wonderfully invigorated he felt that Murakami had won the prize for having so painstakingly fabricated his adventurous fictional experiment” (499). However, this praise was not to last. Ōe soon became one of Murakami Haruki’s harshest critics, eventually claiming that Murakami’s works would not “go beyond their influence on the lifestyles of youth to appeal to intellectuals in the broad sense with models for Japan’s present and future” (Ibid). For Ōe, Murakami had traded “pure literature” for “mass literature,” and in

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\(^{107}\) In the article, “The Other World of Murakami Haruki.”
so doing, lost any serious critical status. Critic Masao Miyoshi made a different critique when he said, “Murakami is also exhibiting an exotic Japan, its international version,” for ‘foreign buyers,’” as well as deterring literary critics from “deep reading” the material (Ibid). This is problematic on a couple levels: first, that Ōe and Miyoshi seem to explicitly believe that what is popular is necessarily not pure and secondly that what is Japanese cannot also be relatable to foreign buyers. So much of what is Japanese is already first borrowed from other cultures and then made Japanese.\textsuperscript{108} To say that what is purely Japanese must be devoid of outside influence is naïve in such a transnational world.

Murakami’s use of simple language, lack of clear political stances, and depictions of seemingly empty subjects have catalyzed criticism regarding his legitimacy as a serious literary figure. This is a common critique of postmodern works, that they engage in popular cultures of nihilism and relativism in order to commodify their works. It is the “new depthlessness” defined by Frederick Jameson in *Postmodernism: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (5). Mathew Stretcher, in his piece, “Beyond ‘Pure’ Literature: Mimesis, Formula, and the Postmodern in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki,” believes that the critique that Murakami lacks seriousness is attributed to his “reliance on simple language, [and] hiding little or nothing from the reader” (356). However, simple or accessible language does not directly suppose simple ideas, and in fact, the perceived simplicity in Japanese takes on a new critical patina as it is translated. I argue

\textsuperscript{108} Examples include: the Chinese character system for language, Wet rice farming techniques, Western medicines and psychological practices, Western writing techniques (left to right composition on paper without brushes), notions of modern subjectivity and posthumanism. The same argument has been made when discussing two of the greatest film directors of all time, Ozu Yasujirō and Kurosawa Akira. One attempts to make a distinctly Japanese style (Ozu), and the other borrows from foreign techniques, themes, and plots (Kurosawa). Because of this, many critics tend to discount the works of Kurosawa when discussing purely Japanese film. There is a deep desire in the critical community to carve out a purely Japanese culture. And yet, when establishing notions of subjectivity, it is the culture itself that seems to be representing subjects which critique the adopted forms of modern subjectivity (shutaisei) from foreign sources.
that perhaps there in nothing more important than in deconstructing the foundations of what is assumed “simple” and taken-for-granted.\textsuperscript{109}

Murakami’s American critics such as Stretcher, Snyder, and Rubin have ignored the accusations that his works do not constitute “serious” literature and engage with the text by challenging the main critiques of Murakami’s most vocal critics,\textsuperscript{110} Ōe Kenzaburō and Karatani Kōjin - namely that Murakami and his contemporaries do not engage with and critique the past (Snyder 80). The Japanese critics listed above level their critiques on a perceived superficiality that assumes his simplistic style is merely for international appeal and monetary gain. Such a stance on Murakami’s literature also contains shades of nationalism because he is perceived as not “Japanese enough” to be counted among serious Japanese writers like Sōseki, Kawabata, Tanizaki, or Ōe.

Murakami’s fiercest critic is Karatani Kōjin, perhaps the most prolific contemporary Japanese literary theorist. In a work entitled, \textit{Hanbun ga Kuron} (Against Literature), Karatani wrote in reference to Murakami and his contemporaries that “in all honesty, I am fed up with the writing of the ‘brats’” (95). And in \textit{Shūen wo Megute} (On the 'End') Karatani goes on to suggest that “While it may seem as though Murakami Haruki undoes ‘interiority’ and ‘background’ in his stories … He has actually only added a new dimension to it, a solipsistic world view that most young writers nowadays take to be the normative style” (98). The subjectivity created here

\textsuperscript{109} In Paul de Man’s essay, “The Epistemology of Metaphor” he discusses how theorists like John Locke and Étienne Bonnot de Condillac seem to believe that non-rhetorical language is truly representative of nature, whereas the rhetorical only serves to create falsities, and this presuppositional foundation acts as the substructure upon which the higher tenets of truth arise. De Man, however, sees this foundation as one built on shifting sand, and it is precisely in philosophy’s denial of the rhetorical by denying the catachresis – an argument that “now takes all language for its target” (21-22) by claiming truth in “simple ideas” that may be beyond the requirement of definition (17-18). I, like de Man, take the idea of “simple language” as a deconstructionist’s challenge because the idea that language can be simple may actually be arrogance.

\textsuperscript{110} Snyder specifically in his article, “Two Murakamis and Marcel Proust: Memory as Form in Contemporary Japanese Fiction.”
is one Karatani fears becomes not a “new self” but the erasure of self into the environment entirely. For Karatani, self (subject) and non-self (object) must be products of this environment or, as he proposes in his seminal work *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, “rather than existing prior to landscape [translated from *fūkei* 風景 – scenery/scene/view, a word which conflates environment with perception], subject and object emerge from within it.”

Karatani’s view, that which distinguishes object from subject and “came into existence within landscape” (34) demonstrates a clear delineation of subject and object. Though Karatani is critical of the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* and modernity at large, his subjects remain distinct and distinguishable from objects while retaining the epistemological complication that amounts to a shared source or origin. The absence of that complication seems to be the basis for his critique of Murakami. However, I argue that such critiques miss Murakami’s critical subjectivities by assuming the simple (read empty) subject evoked from simple language.

Jay Rubin comes to the defense of Murakami’s subjects in his article, “Murakami Haruki and the War Inside” and preserves the idea that Murakami’s characters display a complex and critical inner-self. He points out that the protagonist’s within Murakami’s *The Wind-up Bird*

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111 This then becomes a boon for this project’s claim to the connection between poststructuralism and posthumanism because the critiques of either share highly similar content, specifically the assumption of “anything goes.” While Karatani finds a relativism in the refutation of subjectivity, Nicholas Shackel in the article “The Vacuity of Postmodernist Methodology” (2005), subsumes many categories under the umbrella of postmodernism. Though he mentions directly “deconstructivists,” he has omitted posthumanism; after reading this project he may want to reconsider that omission. In this article, which I view as a culmination of the common critiques I hear regarding postmodernism, he defines postmodernists as those, “united by a special doctrine about rationality (which they mistake for a profound discovery): namely, that rationality cannot be an objective constraint on us, but is just whatever we make it, and what we make it depends on what we value.” While I tend to agree with the first and last parts of the critique, his subsequent evidence to the contrary stems from “whatever we make it,” relativism of rationality. I will not take the time to refute this here as a refutation of Karatani’s critique of posthumanism accomplishes the exact same goal: namely, a complication of the foundations of self (or rationality) do not constitute the erasure of it toward an “anything goes” mentality.

112 Another critique of Murakami’s ability to critique comes from Kuroko Kazuo in “Murakami Haruki hihan” [A Critique of Murakami Haruki]. In this, Kuroko believes Murakami’s international speeches were done solely for the purposes of garnering attention for the Nobel Prize, a prize Murakami has yet to win; he also critiques Murakami’s ignorance of anti-nuclear movements in Japan while Murakami openly critiques Japan’s dependence on atomic energy. However, since neither of these are directly tied to subjectivity, I will postpone a discussion of Kuroko.
Chronicle (1994-95) toil and wrestle with the incompleteness of self. Here, Rubin showcases the complicated self, a non-autonomous self which requires another in order to function. “It is as much for the sake of the integrity of his own personality,” Rubin claims, “as for the continuity of his marriage that the husband, Toru, decides to pursue his wife, Kumiko” (53). He cites a passage from The Wind-up Bird Chronicle in order to display the need of the protagonist to retain a connection with the other. That passage reads, “I had to get Kumiko back. With my own hands, I had to pull her back into this world. Because if I didn’t, that would be the end of me. This person, this self that I think of as ‘me’ would be lost” (Murakami 340). Rubin then begins to conflate the roles of subjectivity and of epistemology as he quotes a scene in which Tōru’s connection to this other (in order to complete himself) is grounded in knowledge. For Tōru, knowledge (understanding) of another is what connects the other to the self.

Is it possible, finally, for one human being to achieve perfect understanding of another? …
That night, in our darkened bedroom, I lay beside Kumiko, staring at the ceiling and asking myself just how much I really knew about this woman … I might be standing in the entrance of something big, and inside lay a world that belonged to Kumiko alone, a vast world that I had never known. I saw it as a big dark room. I was standing there holding a cigarette lighter, its tiny flame showing me only the smallest part of the room. Would I ever see the rest? Or would I grow old and die without ever really knowing her? If that was all that lay in store for me, then what was the point of my life at all if I was spending it in bed with an unknown companion? (Murakami 30-1)

Rubin argues that Murakami’s conflation of knowledge with inter-subjectivity, here a “perfect knowledge,” bridges the gap between subjects. For Murakami, knowing another is connection to the other, and embraces all the epistemological complications that follow. The protagonist is right to question such a feat.

Rubin and other American critics, through their critical engagement with Murakami deny the Japanese critics who claim that Murakami lacks the seriousness and critical nature of pure
literature. I argue that Murakami develops characters who display posthuman subjectivities ultimately critical of the Japanese shutaisei by emerging a subject within the Ushinawareta Nijūnen which destabilizes the foundations of modern subjectivity and hints at the presence of a complex and contradictory construction of self within characters who continuously attempt to connect with others.

**Murakami’s Emerging Subject**

Murakami’s assemblage of short stories entitled *after the quake* presents several subjects which destabilize the foundations of modern autonomous subjectivity by complicating the substance within the human. The works are titled (in order of discussion), *ufo in kushiro, landscape with flatiron, all god’s children can dance, and super-frog saves tokyo.* We will first give ambiguity to the subject in *ufo in kushiro* by highlighting the vague “something within” and introducing a box (not unlike Schrödinger's cat) in which the unknown contents mirror a contradictory knowledge of subjectivity. Then we will expose the emptiness within two characters in *landscape with flatiron* as those who not only destabilize subjectivity, but who also try to connect through their emptiness. In *all god’s children can dance,* we will discuss the uprooting of foundation as origin when we follow a young man in search of his real father, an act necessarily without resolution and yet becomes the occasion for bodily communication with

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113 The term “substance” refers to Murakami’s use of nakami (中身) meaning literally “contents,” “filling,” “substance.” Its use in translation, as you will see when discussed within the first story, *ufo in kushiro,* becomes much more vague, perpetually deferring the meaning of the question, what is inside? The translation of nakami by Jay Rubin becomes, “the something inside.”

114 Notice how each of the chapter titles also lacks capitalization, even when mentioning proper names, including God (the most traditionally proper of proper names). This follows the style of the English title. It should be noted, however, that the disruption of capitalization norms is an invention for the foreign translations rather than a formal aspect translated from the original. The Japanese language does not contain capitalization. Such a typographic move, I believe, is enacted on behalf of the instability Murakami presents within the piece.
nature. And finally, we discuss *super-frog saves tokyo* in order to showcase the most overtly theoretical complications to subjectivity as we bear witness to a man attempting to define both himself and another through the foundation of knowledge, an act doomed to fail.

Before we explore Murakami’s fiction, however, I must quickly address my use of English translations in my project. Even when discussing the language of the translations, Murakami cannot be set aside. This author not only knows and understands English (enough to translated F. Scott Fitzgerald, Raymond Carver, Truman Capote, Tim O’Brien, and John Irving into Japanese), he uses it in translation so that he may see his work through a different lens. Focusing more on the translations as I do may seem to remove Murakami from the discussion and instead focus merely on the translator of *after the quake*, Jay Rubin; however, Murakami does not remain the invisible original in his English translations. Rubin argues in “The Other World of Murakami Haruki” that Murakami had not yet found his “voice until he tried writing in English and then translated himself into Japanese” (491). And in a public reading at MIT in 2005, Murakami specifically mentions how translation was involved in the creative process in *after the quake* when he says, “I wrote [Super Frog Saves Tokyo] … [and] the first place, I write first a few pages in Japanese and after that, I read in English the same part.” This points to an author not only keenly aware of the English of his Japanese, but one who creates a Japanese of

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115 Murakami’s translation is not restricted to *after the quake* alone. According to Roland Kelts in his New Yorker piece entitled “Lost in Translation?” “Murakami is a writer not only found in translation (in forty-plus languages, at the moment) but one who found himself in translation. He wrote the opening pages of his first novel, ‘Hear the Wind Sing,’ in English, then translated those pages into Japanese, he said, ‘just to hear how they sounded.’” Kelts goes on to argue that Murakami is involved in the translation of his works and states that Jay Rubin claimed “the first time he translated a Murakami novel, ‘The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle,’ he phoned the author several times one day to nail word choices and correct inconsistencies.” And one of Murakami’s latest novels, 1Q84 (いちきゅうはちよん) requires both the Japanese and English for the title (one of the main plot devices in the book) to make sense. The book’s title, 1Q84 is in reference to an alternative reality from 1984. The Japanese word for 9 spelled phonetically, *kyuu* (which sounds like the English letter Q) references both the “9” of 1984 and the “Q” of 1Q84.
English, nearly a dialectic of the two, not wholly Japanese nor English, and yet not separated completely from the other.

Rubin’s translations not only communicate the plots and characters, but endeavor to capture the essence of the same critical disruption we have already seen from Murakami regarding disaster and trauma: a de-centered and destabilized foundation of the subject. This is evidenced in titles as well as the prose. The Japanese title, Kami no kodomotachi wa mina odoru [神の子どもたちはみな踊る - all god’s children can dance], is a title of one of the short stories, after the quake is not. This title, however, misleads in its simplicity. It is true that this collection was published after the 1995 earthquake, and most of the stories directly reference this event, and yet the purposeful lack of capitalization undercuts such unifying clarity. Capitalization in this space would demand to be read as a title, an acting foundation on which the collection is built, the thread tying together the various stories into a cohesive and totalizing unity. This collection cannot do this; it cannot participate in the illusion of foundation just as it deconstructs such pillars of form. Instead, the lack of capitalization requires us to ask how this collection may center on a decentered title. The title’s incongruous form begs us to examine each word within it. Why “quake” rather than “earthquake?” If we look for a grounding in this title, is the destabilization within the collection so destabilizing that it must remove the mention of “earth” (as the embodiment of figural foundation) entirely? The earthquake so devastates the landscape and the subjects who experience it that it exists without even the foundation of the “earth.” And finally, we may complicate “after.” If we remember Murkami’s letter to Boston after the marathon bombing, we recall that he dissuaded victims from the idea of simply “moving on.” There is no “after” for pain and trauma. That is to say there is no resolution of trauma which ends

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116 A convention followed in his later collections The Elephant Vanishes (2005), Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman (2009), each named after stories. I also placed the title in lowercase letters to better match the English translation.
in subjective unity. The anarchic remains. It becomes a part of you yet disconnects us from ourselves as it presents us with an anarchic other that refuses to be fully assimilated into the self. To claim that there is an “after” is a modern move of progression toward telos.\textsuperscript{117} The author could not capitalize the words of his title and legitimize their totalizing unity. That would be absurd.

The contents of this collection mimic the destabilization expressed in the title, but do so mostly within the subjects themselves. The quake acts as catalyst to reveal that which the characters fear is latent, dormant inside each of them, the absence of a foundation-origin of self and the presence of that potentiality which disrupts foundations. The first story in the collection, \textit{ufo in kushiro}, begins in this exact vein: the protagonist’s wife cannot pull herself away from the television coverage of the earthquake’s aftermath and soon leaves her husband, Komura. In her parting letter she explains, “The problem is that you never give me anything, she wrote. Or to put it more precisely, you have nothing inside you that you can give me. You are good and kind and handsome, but living with you is like living with a chunk of air” (5-6). Komura reacts very little (comparatively) and decides soon after he signed the divorce papers to go on a trip to help deliver a mysterious box to some people in Hokkaido.\textsuperscript{118} Now, due to the lack of described

\textsuperscript{117} To even claim that something is historically “after” is difficult in postmodernity because it establishes a pattern of endings and overcomings. The event of the earthquake is not over while its effects still ripple through subjects. In his introduction to \textit{End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture}, Gianni Vattimo complicates the idea of an “after” as bringing about a new condition or order when he states, “The idea of ‘overcoming,’ which is so important in all modern philosophy, understands the course of thought as being a progressive development in which the new is identified with value through the mediation of the recovery and appropriation of the foundation-origin” (2). And yet, in another sense, the title holds a contradictory note as well. In fact, there can only ever be an after to an event epistemologically speaking. The innate structure of perception and conception due to an event may only ever occur after the event has taken place. One cannot know the event, give meaning to the event, or understand the event, as the event occurs. It is only “after” an event that it may be known, understood, and/or categorized. To even recognize an event as an event requires the event to have been. Only then may the event conclude, enabling it to be called “event.”

\textsuperscript{118} The box is small, it surely contains something, but Komura has no idea what this might be. He never looks in the box before delivering it.
emotion from the protagonist, it would be quite easy to assume the type of emptiness in Komura that his ex-wife mentions in the letter (and that critics like Karatani mention in their criticisms), a character who is little more than a “chunk of air.” However, the letter clearly separates “good and kind” from what she perceives as lacking. This seems to separate and suppress a discussion of affect. It is not the lack of feelings or morality, but something else entirely that worries the figures of Komura and his wife. He continues to concern himself with the validity of his wife’s accusation concluding that she must have meant “that there’s nothing inside me,” and later continues with, “I may have nothing inside me, but what would something be?” (21). In this, Murakami admits to a difference of self and what is inside the self while questioning the substance that would constitute it. Komura is not merely himself but supposedly a combination of himself and what is in him, his substance. The question, “what would something be?” remains unanswered. It hangs in the air and then is repeated by the girl he is with, Shimao, who says, “Yeah, really, come to think of it, what would something be?” She continues to wonder at the value of having something over nothing saying, “There may be some cases when it’s better to have nothing inside” (21). Neither however, name the something inside. It is forever

119 “Something inside.” Nakami (中身) means literally “contents,” “filling,” “substance.” Japanese combines the “something” with the “inside.” The Japanese is less vague and perhaps less nuanced in these instances. Obviously English has these terms, and in fact the sentence may feel much less awkward referring to a person’s “substance.” This is quite colloquial. Why then break up the word into a less specific phrase (a vague noun and a placement preposition)? There is a moment of insight when reading the kanji, however, that Rubin may have been trying to capture. While the colloquial Japanese中身 refers to everyday substance (the contents of your purse or pockets), the second kanji, 身, is mi, meaning “body,” “someone,” “one’s station in life.” In this way, the term fits better a discussion of a person’s substance than the contents of one’s pockets. Rubin’s separation of terms here enunciates each “something” and “inside” individually. “Something” rather than “substance” has an innate interpretive feel, a demand for an inquisition that is lacking in the more teleological term, “contents.” He also takes the assumed pieces, the taken-for-granted mundanity of “contents” or “substance” and forces us into a dialogue with each “something” and that which is “inside.” It defamiliarizes the term. It forces a foreignness into them, a foreignness Komura himself feels regarding his own 中身.

120 A dual questioning. An open-ended philosophical question within literature as well as a pointed one, directed at those who criticize a lack of this something. It is at once a rhetorical question and one posed to critics like Karatani who don’t quite provide a definition of what it is that is lacking in Murakami’s works. They do not define what the something is, or worse yet, they already assume a complete and stable presence of self, an assumption which takes any complication of self as a denial of its existence.
unattainable, incessantly deferred. The place where the *something* resides, or the thing in which it resides, is as close as we get to illusion of a cohesive self. Besides Komura, Shimao also wonders if the something might have been in the mysterious box he had delivered. She wonders if, “The box contains the something that was inside you.” And Komura realized in response to this “that he was on the verge of committing an act of overwhelming violence” (23). This is perhaps the first truly emotional response from Komura, and the severity of it is alarming. For a subject presumably lacking substance, lacking the *something* inside, Komura is found to be surprisingly emotional. It is emotion, however, directed solely at the insinuation that Komura had just given away the *something* inside of him. Or rather, that he gave it away without knowing that it was. The unknowable box provides a metaphoric relation of mystery to its container, a perceivable outer form with an endlessly unreachable inner form. Here, we may as well have been introduced to the box in which Schrödinger put his proverbial cat.\(^{121}\) The metaphor for the *something* inside remains unknowable, distant. To this end, the box (read subjectivity) may only be understood in paradoxical terms. It remains in this state until it is opened and knowledge of its contents are gained, but precisely akin to the subjects Murakami cultivates, the telos of meaning is perpetually delayed into the future. Murakami’s character, Komura, is hyper aware of the conditions of his own subjectivity. He just encountered a violent relatedness of self and what’s inside the self, a disturbing confrontation of the inner and outer manifestations of self. This confrontation lacks resolution and remains constantly in the state of confronting.

Separating a self from the self depicts an otherness within the self (a vague *something* that is and isn’t the original given) or at the very least creates another self. This is seemingly

\(^{121}\) The answer to the thought experiment for Schrödinger (whether the cat is alive or dead) lies in the opening of the box. It is at that moment the paradox of believing the cat to be both alive and dead is dismissed. Here, the paradox remains perpetually unattainable.
contradictory and, on a certain level, merely theoretical. Yet Murakami, in an attempt to bring the theoretical into the realm of space, connects self with place and physical indexes in another metaphor of this complex and contradictory self that emerges within these stories. However, in connecting with the physical, Murakami does not ground this depiction of self, but rather uproots it further in the metaphor of travel, of transgressing borders. At one point Shimao claims, “Those planes are too damn fast. Your mind can’t keep up with your body,” and then, “No matter how far you travel, you can never get away from yourself.” Komura then repeats in agreement, “No matter how far you travel, you can never get away from yourself. It’s like your shadow. It follows you everywhere” (12). Here, Murakami gives further examples of this contradictory self-separation. That is, the seeming separation of self from self. He begins with the mind/body duality, then complicates it again with the same tautological language, but finally Komura grounds the metaphor in the concept of shadows. Shadows could easily be considered as separate from us, and yet, they are shaped like us, share our space, cannot exist on their own, and move as we do. They are a visible trace, a residue of ourselves, at once separate from us and contingent upon us. Komura uses the metaphor to showcase the inseparable nature of the experiential self from the observing self. Here, Murakami’s metaphor displays a concept of subjectivity which is at once separate from and connected to the self. His complex and

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122 The “observing self” as separate from the self mimics Nishida’s critique of the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* in which he criticizes Descartes’ description of an observing self which observes itself observing. “I believe that philosophy hitherto has lacked a deep reflection concerning consciousness. It seems to me therefore that the root of the irresolvable problems of both metaphysics and epistemology lies therein. When we ordinarily speak of consciousness, we are thinking of a consciousness that we are conscious of, an activity that bears meanings. But that act has already been objectified, it is not the consciousness that is being conscious, not the true consciousness itself. On the other hand one might say that the consciousness that is conscious is something inconceivable. But even such a person must be aware of the fact that the consciousness that one is conscious of and the consciousness that is conscious are distinct” (54). Kitarō, Nishida, and Krummel John W. M. "The Unsolved Issue of Consciousness." *Philosophy East and West*. However, if the observing self is only one aspect of self (or an entirely different self), this would not prove the existence of this non-observing self (or an unobservable self).
contradictory vision of self continues to perplex the lives of his fictional subjects just as it perplexes the reader.

Murakami then injects the complication of trauma back into the issue of subject by questioning one’s connection to the something inside and disrupts the agency one has in ever connecting with it. When Komura arrives in Hokkaido and meets his contacts, he is set up in a hotel room, takes a bath, and begins to watch television with Shimao, a special on the Kobe Earthquake. He is confronted with the “usual images” of “buckled streets … confusion, aimless anger” (17). Komura and Shimao then attempt to have sex, but he cannot perform to completion. Something still weighs heavily on his mind. Shimao guesses, “You must have been thinking about your wife.” Komura responds with, “Yup.” The narrator then continues, “but in fact what he had been thinking about was the earthquake. Images of it had come to him one after another, as if in a slide show, flashing on the screen and fading away. Highways, flames, smoke, piles of rubble, cracks in streets. He couldn’t break the chain of silent images” (20). This is highly reminiscent of the description that opens the story, a description of the images presented to his ex-wife. “Five days straight she spent in front of the television, staring at crumbled banks and hospitals, whole block of stores in flames” and her reaction to the images was silence, an impotent silence. “She never said a word. Sunk deep in the cushions of the sofa, her mouth clamped shut, she wouldn’t answer when Komura spoke to her. She wouldn’t shake her head or nod” (3). For her, the trauma is inexpressible. And in the same way that the images of the disaster seemed to steal all agency from his wife, they create another type of impotence in Komura, not a deconstructive inability to represent in words the presented trauma thereby exposing the metonymical gap between event and representation, but rather an inability to show Shimao the something that is quite literally inside of him. Surrounding the television images of
the Kobe Earthquake, we have a dual impotence on display. The first is a deconstructive moment of silence that highlights the inability of language to close the gap between event and representation. The second is a posthuman moment linking the lack of agency during a sexual act (the bringing together of subjectivities) to the inability to close the gap between Komura and what Komura is made of (the something inside). Both foundations of modernity, the non-figurative language and the autonomous agential Human, have been deconstructed by an event which literally deconstructs, an earthquake.\(^{123}\)

In a story which geographically displaces the subject who at once acts as subject and place (at least in name - Komura (小村) literally translates to “little village) and in so doing, questions the autonomy and construction of that subject, Murakami forces us to come to terms with the self as an unstable, unknown, something or someplace. The subject, Komura, then becomes a type of liminal space in which Murakami links the mysterious unknown something with the unknown someplace. We are left with a final complex image, that of Komura twice encountering the wind, once in reality and the other seemingly within his mind as metaphor. As he lays next to Shimao “he closed his eyes and took a deep breath … The huge bed stretched out around him like a nocturnal sea. He heard the freezing wind. The fierce pounding of his heart shook his bones” (23). This wind, however, appears once before, just before Shimao had hinted that what was inside of Komura might have been what was in the mysterious box. Together, “they listened to the moaning of the wind. The wind: it came from someplace unknown to Komura, and it blew past to someplace unknown to him” (22). The unknown “someplace”

\(^{123}\) Here, Murakami links for the first time within two different stories what I hope to do in theory; he shepherds the connection of deconstruction and posthumanism toward a depiction of the human self whose modern foundations reveal themselves to be cracked if they existed at all. Beginning his collection with a short story that immediately complicates and contradicts the subject through deconstructive means obstructs any unifying reading we may have been hoping to find throughout.
mimics the unknown “something” as it too lacks a foundational origin or telos. Here, the action of the wind lacks any definable origin or endpoint. As it “blew past” Komura, he finds himself in between two unknowns, unknown spaces. The progression from the unknown space to Komura and on to the unknown space does little but situate Komura himself as an unknown space, doubly unknown, the unknown between unknowns. The opening story to this collection complicates the subject far beyond merely erasing it. Instead, it erases the illusion of a stable foundation. This does not mean the self spirals off into nothingness, but rather that it perpetually struggles somewhere between two unknown spaces, with a dual movement inward and outward in contradictory trajectories. This is not nihilism or relativism, but a call to discover the disruptive power of the perceived foundation of the human self.

Two other short stories in this collection briefly complicate specific instances of this complex emerging subjectivity, landscape with flatiron, and all god’s children can dance. In the former, the main character, Junko (順子), gets a call from a friend late at night to burn some driftwood on the beach. During this private time, as the fire is beginning to die, she confesses “‘I’m completely empty … There’s really nothing at all in here … I’m cleaned out. Empty’” (43). Immediately we remember Murakami’s opponents who have returned to claim nihilism within these subjects, and yet the emptiness presented here, discussed among two friends, allows complication to penetrate it. Her friend, Miyake, for example, feels something very similar and describes it best by recounting a dream he has of being stuck in a refrigerator.

I’m in this tight space, in total darkness, and I die little by little. It might not be so bad if I could just suffocate. But it doesn’t work that way. A tiny bit of air manages to get through some crack, so it takes a really long time. I scream, but nobody can hear me. And nobody notices I’m missing. It’s so cramped in there, I can’t move. I squirm and squirm but the door won’t open. (40).
Rather than a self consisting of a missing inside, Miyake demonstrates a self which is only inside, trapped, dying. The dual selves described in each of the two lonely characters huddled together in the light of burning driftwood exist entirely without an outside in one and without an inside in another. The subjectivity in Japan during this time that I wish to highlight is exemplified within their connection, elements of this contradiction tied up within a single being. Here Murakami gives us a depiction of current possible subjectivities, the trapped movement inward (humanist individualism) and lack of an identifiable inward (transhumanist intersubjectivity) marked by her fleeting attachment to others outwardly. Junko’s lack of an inside is represented in her lack of locality, and soon Murakami complicates subjectivity by linking it to the already liminal subject of spaces. She is a run-away. Her constant movement lacks foundation.

This story, *landscape with flatiron*, accentuates the necessity of contradiction and complexity in subjectivity without providing a teleological reading. What follows in the story are several suggestions to fix the problem of this emptiness inside. At first, her friend recommends a good night’s sleep, but when Junko does not think it will work, it escalates quickly to double suicide. This appears to be the answer as both agree to the extreme terms. However, the final solution resolves nothing in particular as Junko decides to take a nap and asks her friend to wake her. He responds, “Don’t worry. When the fire goes out, you’ll start feeling the cold. You’ll wake up whether you want to or not” (45). The words repeat in her mind as she drifts off to sleep in front of the fire. The fire itself, the burning of driftwood, acts as a moment of destruction, a moment ritualized prior to this meeting tonight. Two *drifting* subjects participate in the destruction of *drifting* objects, the destruction of their metaphorical selves. It is an act doubly without foundation and without end. Before the fire completely consumes the driftwood, she will
fall into the sleep that acts as a solution to her emptiness, and yet it is a contradictory sleep, or as Murakami describes it, “fleeting, but deep.” She will awake when it is over whether she wants to or not (45). The culmination of sleep in this case is a possible future awakening. This meaning for a contradictory sleep, however, is perpetually deferred and inevitable. Here the form of the short story itself (the sliver of plot without resolution) mirrors the complexity these subjects wrestle with, a finite inevitability with an infinite deferment of meaning.

The story *all god’s children can dance* specifically attacks foundation through a destabilization of origin. This tale presents us with a subject without origin, or rather without a confirmed origin. The protagonist, Yoshiya (善也), is told by his mother that his father is the Lord. This is even confirmed by a family friend, Mr. Tabata, when he says, “It’s true, you do not have a father in this world … Our Lord, your father, is the world itself” (51). This immediately contradicts itself as God is often confronted in metaphysical, immaterial terms, and yet is immediately conflated with all that is material, the world. This father-origin from whom Yoshiya’s complex subjectivity is produced is itself already contradictory. Such a myth propels Yoshiya to continue to look for an earthly father, a foundational origin to his own subjectivity, not one that is inherently contradictory. This search leads him to a man with a missing earlobe (an incomplete body). He happens across this figure on the subway a short time after the quake and is reminded of a story his mother told him about his possible father’s missing earlobe.124

He follows him into unknown territory, and when he loses him, Yoshiya takes time to reflect. He remembers thinking as he had stood next to Mr. Tabata’s deathbed, “Our hearts are not stones. A stone may disintegrate in time and lose its outward form. But hearts never disintegrate. They have no outward form, and whether good or evil, we can always communicate

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124 The temporal proximity to the quake suggests an unearthing of sorts, an exposing of roots. In this case, the foundation of origin for this young man is only teased and is never resolved.
them to one another. All God’s children can dance” (68). Reviving and meditating on these thoughts, Yoshiya, having just lost the man he thought was his father, experiences a dance of the environment around him, the dance of the grass in the wind. He then said aloud, “Oh God.”

Yoshiya never discovers certainty in his origin and may only experience a final dance via the communication of something inside of him (his heart) which has no outward form. That which constitutes Yoshiya is the inside without an outside, a contradiction of subject. His father, his origin, is at once absent from his senses but present in his interpretation of the grass dance. And it is within his ability to discern the dance within the grass, a discernment of the heart that connects him to others – all God’s children, that Yoshiya remains the contradictory product of contradictory forces which do not conclude the narrative, and yet the dance becomes the occurrence of his connection to the world around him. Yoshiya, having once again deferred the answers to his origin, grounds himself instead in the impermanent dance, the outward manifestation of the communication of a formless heart. He connects, not outwardly with anyone, but inwardly with everything.

The final story I discuss is the one most closely tied to themes of disaster and trauma, but is also the one which acts as the literary movement of postmodernism’s critique of modernist foundations. Here, we discover specifically (along with a de Manian deconstructionist’s destabilization of representation itself) the posthuman critique of modern humanism. It is indeed the story with the most destructive text in after the quake which comes wrapped in the silliest content - super frog saves tokyo (Kaeru-kun, Tokyo wo Sukū [かえるくん、東京を救う]). In this, a young man named Katagiri (片桐)\textsuperscript{125} is confronted by a well-mannered, yet somewhat stern,

\textsuperscript{125} Katagiri is written with two Kanji. The first, kata, means “one of a pair, incomplete, fragmented, lacking” and the second, kiri, is the name of the Paulownia tree (typical type name ending). What is interesting is that this name could be read as “half of the Paulownia tree,” with an emphasis on its inability to complete itself. It is broken,
giant frog who wishes to be called, “Frog.” Frog tells Katagiri of an impending earthquake, a giant one that will be caused by a rampaging worm and asks Katagiri to help him battle this worm underground so to prevent an earthquake. As you can imagine, Katagiri is shocked to discover Frog in his apartment to begin with. However, in order to help Frog and save Tokyo, Katagiri must somehow come to terms with the reality before or at least suspend his disbelief. In this passage, we see the beginnings of this action,

“Katagiri still had his briefcase jammed under his arm. Somebody’s playing a joke on me, he thought. Somebody’s rigged himself up in this frog costume just to have fun with me. But he knows, as he watched Frog pour boiling water into a teapot, humming all the while, that these had to be the limbs and movements of a real frog. Frog set a cup of green tea in front of Katagiri and poured another one for himself.

Sipping his tea, Frog asked, ‘Calming down?’” (112).

Immediately Katagiri searches for the rational. His mind levels on what makes sense, a joke. But as he “watched Frog,” he then comes to the understanding that “these had to be the … movements of a real frog.” It is in “seeing” that his mind rests on what he considers fact. What he sees, notably, is not the rationalization of his mind but the denial of such a rationalization in sight. Rather than the movements of a man in a frog suit, his eyes watched the movements of a real frog. While what he is left with is reality, it is not any easier to accept. What follows is key. “But Katagiri could not speak” (112). Presented now through his eyes with reality, he could not speak. Words had failed Katagiri. Katagiri’s inner self reveals in the previous passage a mind fragmented, as are many of Murakami’s protagonists, but perhaps more interestingly, this is not unlike the inability of representation (and language specifically for de Man) to complete itself.

126 This should remind us of de Man’s foundation of blindness in sight/knowledge.
127 The failure of words in disaster or trauma is not unique to Japan. While the traumas of tragedies are still fresh, we desire words to make sense of them, to know them and in turn have some power over them. However, this is rarely a reality. As I write this, the Orlando night club shooting is unfolding. Many times throughout the last few hours I have heard authority figures utter, “words cannot describe it.” The desire to capture the trauma in words is ever present and yet seems impossible. In this spirit of encapsulating trauma in language, the Japanese Kanji Association of Japan creates a word to encapsulate the year. In 2011, months after the March 11 earthquake, they chose the kanji, 舗 (kizuna – meaning “bond”). Is what resides in the human, the something inside, also beyond words? Beyond representation?
that comes to understanding, an understanding that is different from an initial assumption (joke) and is verified by seeing, by knowing. However, what the mind understands is not at all represented through language. We have then a gap between the brain’s ability to “see” and its ability to place what is seen in language.

The initial conversation eventually carries on with the assumption that Frog is indeed real. But this hardly makes it easier to understand. Frog then presents an answer to Katagiri’s first question, “Does this ‘matter’ have something to do with me?’ The narrator then continues, ‘Yes and no,’ said Frog with a tilt of his head. ‘No and yes’” (113). Frog answers, if you may call it that, with, “Yes and no.” He then offers more information, as if it were possible to somehow clarify an answer of two opposites with their opposite, “No and yes.” He offers the opposite of two opposites or an inversion of two opposites. However you look at it, what he offers as further information clarifies nothing. Neither response answers Katagiri’s question. The narrator presents the utterance and its opposite which exist simultaneously and yet not at all for neither utterance carries an answer, and yet both function as Frog’s answer. It is an answer which answers nothing. Murakami, through Frog, sets up a denial of binaries. The only way to read Frog’s answer to Katagiri’s question regarding himself, is if we first accept the binary yes/no not as yes or no, but only as yes and no. Dialectic synthesis is required in order to read these two diametric poles. Murakami’s language thusly teaches us how to structure our justifications of complex and contradictory foundations by embracing a dialectic, a theoretical move which will come to fruition in later examinations of subjectivity.

When Frog finally reveals his goal, to “save Tokyo from destruction” (114), Katagiri “scanned the room for a hidden TV camera.” He again, when faced with disaster in the breakdown of reality, searches to see – hopes to see – that this is a joke. When confronted with
absurdity, Katagiri falls back again on previously understood concepts, but more specifically, he looks for a television camera. The absurdity that presents itself to Katagiri would be mediated through the television screen.\textsuperscript{128} He looks for a representation of what is presented to him. The understanding emerges slowly if it comes at all, and will need to be ratified through Katagiri’s eyes, those eyes that search for a hoped-for-truth and yet come up short.

As Katagiri is able to put language to the task of discovering meaning, he asks Frog if he minds being asked a few questions. Frog’s response to an attempt at linguistic understanding is stated,

‘Not at all, not at all,’ Frog said. ‘Mutual understanding is of critical importance. There are those who say that understanding is merely the sum total of our misunderstandings, and while I do find this view interesting in its own way, I am afraid that we have no time to spare on pleasant digressions. The best thing would be for us to achieve mutual understanding via the shortest possible route. Therefore, by all means, ask as many questions as you wish.’ (115)

Frog’s response becomes problematic. Upon an initial reading of this passage you may be tempted to assume that what will follow is Katagiri’s grasp of the situation. However, Frog seems to place a greater weight on the process of misunderstanding as a way to bring about understanding, that is, understanding built on the foundations of misunderstandings, understanding as the product of misunderstanding. Frog, though he feels that \textit{to know} is built on the \textit{unknowable}, the “misunderstandings,” he is willing, for the sake of \textit{time} to set this aside, to forget that foundational knowledge is founded on illusions.\textsuperscript{129} However, if it is indeed for the sake of time that Frog wishes to divert from “pleasant digressions” why then is he willing to be

\textsuperscript{128} This precise mediation, the television screen, is reminiscent of the story \textit{ufo in Kushiro} as a type of impotent mediation, one that tends to remove agency.

\textsuperscript{129} The reference to illusory knowledge roots this discussion not just in the deconstructed foundations of language and metaphor as is discovered in Derrida and Paul de Man, but also in the arrogance Nietzsche purports within “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” particularly in his poetic examination of truth in which he claims truth is “as if hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger” (54).
asked “as many questions” as Katagiri wishes? Does not this take up time? How many questions will it take to reach a teleological meaning in this? Is such a thing possible? Perhaps no limit of time may be stated, but the alternative, the understanding that understanding is itself not understanding but misunderstanding or that knowing is unknowing, would progress *mise en abyme*. However, it is still “understanding” that we must come to, even if that mutual understanding is illusory. In this respect, Frog sets aside the epistemological for what is pragmatic, the saving of Tokyo knowing full well the truth of this is based on cracked foundations of knowledge.

However, even when wrestling with epistemology, in the face of disaster the ontological inevitably creeps in. This speaks to the instability of subjectivity when the subject is questioned alongside knowledge itself. Katagiri’s interrogation turns from Frog’s problematic “misunderstandings” to questions of the “real.”

“No, you are a real frog, am I right?”

“Yes, of course, as you can see. A real frog is exactly what I am. A product neither of metaphor nor allusion nor deconstruction nor sampling nor any other such complex process. I am a genuine frog. Shall I croak for you?”

‘Fine. I see, I see!’ Katagiri said, worried about the thin walls of the cheap apartment house in which he lived. ‘That’s great. You are, without question, a real frog.’

‘One might also say that I am the sum total of all frogs’” (116).

His desire to prove his realness leads Frog to denounce the very theories we have been using to read the text, deconstructionism. And while Frog denies that he is figuration, he is of course saying this within a fictional text that can be nothing but figuration. What is more interesting than these metanarrative moments is that Frog advocates his reality as a frog as something that is seen, “… as you can see.” However, this “seeing” has already been undercut because what is

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130 本物 (*honmono*) meaning “genuine article,” literally a “true thing.” Here it is not necessarily ontology, but truth, that concerns Katagiri.

131 Similar to the sum total of misunderstandings.
seen is not what is experienced as in Katagiri’s assumption that this was a joke or the content on a television screen.\textsuperscript{132} We are left with figuration that denies that it is figuration and that calls upon sight to verify its denial. Frog has become figuration and un-figuration at the same time, two contradictory binaries that seem to be in a state of flux, of becoming. This binary degradation has already occurred in his “yes and no” answer, but in this case, the figure which denies its own ability to become a figure is at once both figure and non-figure. That is to say, this is the culmination of a deconstructionist’s critique\textsuperscript{133} of an epistemology that attempts to deny the rhetorical, the frog is figuration, but as figuration, he is no less “real.” Frog himself is resistant to the label of metaphor, a label that is so easily categorized as tropological language and could be said to have no place within truth.\textsuperscript{134} It is in this denial that abstraction and reality come together into a reality as abstraction. Katagiri comes back with “Fine. I see, I see!” When in truth he sees nothing, knows nothing. He is worried more about his neighbors hearing the croak through the “thin walls” than seeing the “real” thing (本物, honmono - the true thing). In the Japanese text, the term used for “I see” is wakarimashita (It is understood, past tense of “I understand”), which of course is not understanding at all, but misunderstanding for the sake of his neighbors. The question of Frog’s being as that of a real frog is accepted by Katagiri, but then Frog adds, “One might also say that I am the sum total of all frogs.” This serves to question again his reality and representation in a posthuman sense in that he exists only as the sum of his parts (which remain as parts even when subsumed into the whole), and the parts that make the sum are others like him. His self-construction exists as the sum of others. To this extent, Frog is the representation of all frogs; he speaks on their behalf as representative and representation.

\textsuperscript{132} Furthermore, sight as knowledge (or proof) has earlier been questioned by de Man’s foundation of “blindness.”
\textsuperscript{133} Specifically Paul de Man’s \textit{Epistemology of Metaphor}.
\textsuperscript{134} According to Locke and Condillac’s assertions against which de Man argues in \textit{Epistemology of Metaphor}. 
Again, a contradictory dual-nature exists within Frog, that of a representation that denies he is a figure, allusion, or metaphor (but what is representation but figure, allusion, or metaphor?). As a type of synthesis or platonic ideal, Frog desperately makes the case for his realness.

What, though, does Frog save? What are the rhetorical implications of the central action of the story? The representation of the city, specifically Tokyo (the “intensive collectivity”), is saved through acknowledging the disruptive power of foundational epistemology. Frog explains that we, through the trauma and disaster that will occur, “will be made to realize what a fragile condition the intensive collectivity known as a ‘city’ really is” (117). Through earthquake (disaster and trauma) people will learn the true instability of the structures (both of concrete and of ideals) that they have come to depend. Frog has arrived to save the people from the penultimate destabilization. And while the city is called a city, it is at its core an “intensive collectivity.” A city is a mere representation of that collectivity. One might then say that Frog (a representation) is sent to save the city (a representation of the collectivity) from Worm (a representation of that which, from the foundations underground, destabilizes). Figuration is the truth of the figural, saved through the figural. The idea that through representation, we are saved (in representation we trust) is an idea that is flawed because we have forgotten that representation itself needs to be saved. It is within figuration that we must lay the groundwork for the “intensive collective.” But is figuration the truth, is it the stable foundation that will save us, save the collective, save Tokyo? Of course any creation of stability through the act of destabilizing foundations is completely illusory whether the act is of destabilizing is done through de Manian deconstruction or a posthuman deconstruction of modern humanist foundations.

135 Highly reminiscent of Murakami’s own words regarding the disasters of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* which “ushered in a period of critical inquiry” into the very roots of the Japanese state.
Let us next look at Worm – the occasion of potential devastation. Here we will find the representation of that which disrupts. Worm, as a latent moment of critique built into the foundations of the “intensive collectivity,” becomes the anarchic presence which shows the foundations to always already contain the potential for their own instability.

“Worm lives underground. He is a gigantic worm. When he gets angry, he causes earthquakes.” Frog said. “And right now he is very, very angry … Nobody knows what Worm is thinking inside that murky head of his. Few have ever seen him. He is usually asleep. That’s what he really likes to do: take long, long naps. He goes on sleeping for years – decades – in the warmth and darkness underground. His eyes, as you might imagine, have atrophied, his brain has turned to jelly as he sleeps. If you ask me, I’d guess he probably isn’t thinking anything at all, just lying there and feeling every little rumble and reverberation that comes his way, absorbing them into his body, and storing them up” (119).

Worm lives underground\(^\text{136}\) in the “warmth and darkness.” The eyes have withered away, and all that remains is blindness. That which is blind then holds sway over the foundations of Tokyo, or rather that which remains blind. There is no ebb and flux for Worm. There is only reverberation and absorption; there is a dual relationship of power with the world around him, a relationship of both the city’s dominance over Worm and Worm’s dominating potential for destruction. Worm is not wrestled by and for the academic elite alone. No. As Frog explains to Katagiri, “Tokyo can only be saved by a person like you. And it’s for people like you that I am trying to save Tokyo” (Murakami 128).\(^\text{137}\) This struggle in the imagination exists (much like that of Japan’s critical subjectivity) outside the realm of academic discourse.

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\(^{136}\) The space underground has already been complicated through Murakami’s association with trauma. In *Underground* he describes both the Kobe Earthquake and the Tokyo Sarin Gas Attacks as “... nightmarish eruptions beneath our feet – from underground – that threw all the latent contradictions and weak points of our society into frighteningly high relief.” In the descriptions of Worm, Murakami reminds us of that which, “ushered in a period of critical inquiry into the very roots of the Japanese state” (237).

\(^{137}\) Patricia Welch in “Haruki Murakami’s Storytelling World” that Katagiri is, “an unassuming man ... no typical hero, [and yet] Katagiri has always acted responsibly and with respect for others” (59). It then is the non-hero, the ordinary person, that may help and for whom the Tokyo may be saved. The agency within the non-hero is potential only as Katagiri ends up in the hospital prior to the battle and feels like he hadn’t helped at all. Of course, Frog assures him that he did. While agency is complicated, it is neither literarily all-powerful nor erased.
Worm acts as the anarchic other that remains inside, hidden, “asleep” inside (underneath) the intensive collectivity. As Katagiri and Frog hatch their plan to defeat Worm, however, on the night of the attack Katagiri is unexpectedly shot. He awakes in the hospital at 9AM the following day, having missed his rendezvous with Frog and asks the nurse if an Earthquake occurred in Tokyo. She assures him it did not, and she also lets on that he was never shot in the first place, that he had just collapsed the night before. Later, Frog appeared in his room and told Katagiri that he had indeed been there, in his dream. “The whole terrible fight occurred in the area of imagination. That is the precise location of our battlefield. It is there that we experience our victories and our defeats” (135). The mind is the battlefield in which we wrestle with Worm, with becoming Worm, with the “disruptive power” of representation and figuration. The ebb and flux of binaries, the complication of subject and object, is a process which occurs in the mind.

You might say the mind is not only the “ground of the flux” but, the battleground of the flux. This acts as a foundation of subjectivity (as the sense of self constructed in the mind) always already in flux. For our posthuman purposes one might say that the mind - that which constitutes the limits of the subject thereby distinguishing it from the object - is itself constituted by that which it constitutes. The mind/imagination creates the façade of self-foundation, but is stable in appearance only. In the end, Frog and Katagiri who battled Worm in the imagination, did not kill worm as would be a totalizing overcoming, they only prevented the earthquake, or rather deferred the earthquake.138

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138 According to Alex Bates in “Catfish, Super Frog, and the End of the World: Earthquakes (and natural disasters) in the Japanese Cultural Imagination,” following the great Edo Earthquake of 1855, artworks depicting the battling of gigantic creatures that may cause earthquakes were titled “namazu-e” (catfish pictures) and were a sub-genre of ukiyo-e paintings. These depicted Gods smiting a giant catfish so that it would no longer cause earthquakes. This type of overpowering is linked to Frog’s attempt to fight worm. Here, Murakami seems to borrow on this tradition of representations of Gods subduing representations of earthquakes. However, the link of these to subjectivity specifically prevents me from going into this too deeply.
Finally, in Frog’s dying moments, succumbing to the injuries of the fight, he discloses one last definition of himself, “I am, indeed, pure Frog, but at the same time I am a thing that stands for a world of un-frog” (Murakami 136). Here Murakami highlights the perpetual motion required to engage with the meaning of language and the acceptance of the linguistic as the metaphoric just as the posthuman subjectivity known as Frog reifies the deconstruction of linguistic and metaphoric foundations. That is to say, Posthumanism recapitulates deconstructionism. Frog is at the same time the accumulation of all frogs, the “sum total,” and the un-frog. This critical subjectivity, derived for us as metaphor, recognizes itself as contradiction. Murakami establishes a subject in Frog which retains the dual movement inward (seeing oneself as a conglomeration or “sum total” of pieces) and outward (as a delineation of marked distinctions, a presence through difference). The figuration which we employ to combat the epistemological is not in itself a telos because this would be to stabilize instability, to master freedom. If one were to ground instability in representation alone, one would forget that the position from which this claim is made (the human subject) is similarly unstable. Once we feel that we have reached understanding of ourselves in order to make such claims, we have encounter “misunderstanding.”

The story now turns from mainly a deconstructionist perspective on knowledge and representation to a posthuman exploration of the complex and contradictory subjectivity as the subjectivity of that which claims to be representation is questioned. After Frog’s self-definition of the pure frog and the un-frog, there is a final banter between the two in which Katagiri says,

“‘Hmm, I don’t get that at all.’
‘Neither do I.’ Frog said, his eyes still closed. ‘It’s just a feeling I have. What you see with your eyes is not necessarily real. My enemy is, among other things, the me inside me. Inside me is the un-me’” (137).
These are some of Frog’s last words before he disintegrates back into mud, and the primary level of destabilization in which the mind (subject) itself is misunderstood by itself forms another level of self or another self. Something “inside” of the self that is seen as foreign, even enemy.139 If Frog is the “sum total,” he is the sum of the anarchic within. In this way we no longer only have a destabilization of the object and its representation but of the subject itself, the un-self, a self which cannot be known, only felt. This is an ultimate bafflement with no critical distance from which it may be understood. Destabilization thusly occurs not only in the relationship of the object and subject, but within the subject to the point that the subject is at the same time subject and un-subject before it may be thought in opposition to or conflated with the object (and perhaps un-object).

Of course we may not easily (or solely) other Worm within a project which complicates the borders of self and other. We must also, simultaneously, self Worm. That is to say, a reading of Worm as an autonomous other ignores his ingrained contingency and interdependence with the “intensive collectivity.” Worm exists as the anarchic other already present (though perhaps dormant, “usually asleep,” and rarely seen). He acts simultaneously as foundation (being that which lies underground) and threat to the foundations (as that which may uproot). If Frog is the product of complicated foundations in reality then Worm is the complicated foundation which must be subdued in order for it to go back to sleep. The anarchic other is battled within the imagination and once it is lulled back to sleep (not destroyed, mind you) then its counterpart (Frog) disappears as well, grotesquely, unnervingly.

139 This should remind us of Judith Butler’s statement from the introduction of this Dissertation. In Precarious Life, she relates how her “very formation implicates the other within [her],” and that her own “foreignness to [her]self” (46) is the origin of her connection to others. The idea of the “something” inside which at once does and does not constitute the self will be a common theme through Murakami’s works.
In addition to a cognitive discourse surrounding the other within, Murakami ends the story with an abject interpenetration of bodies. The maggots and worms and centipedes that Frog had dissolved into, begin to infiltrate the body of Katagiri. This is how Frog leaves us, as the sum total of penetrating insects which leave behind, once they’ve dug into Katagiri, only a “horrible slimy sensation.” As Katagiri’s body is pierced with foreign objects (doubled as the man-made “bullet” which put him in the hospital and the natural insects into which Frog had disbanded his unity, penetrations of form from both natural and social sources) we may speak of a type of transcorporeality that takes place within Katagiri; and yet, upon waking from each, he is unified once again. Katagiri’s body, moreso than any other subject within these short stories, mirrors the transgressions of compromised boundaries; however, this does not mean that Katagiri is borderless, merely that his borders are complicated, erased into dream and memory just as they reform upon waking. The battle to save the intensive collectivity occurs between an uprooting foundation and the product of complex and contradictory origins in order to lull back to sleep the anarchic, mindless, blind other. And once this was accomplished, Frog (the product of him and the un-him) is absorbed into Katagiri who lies now in the hospital, awaking from his perceived trauma. This story depicts the struggle of perpetually wrestling with the pieces of a complex and contradictory self, at once real and un-real, foundation and destroyer, traumatized and asleep, friend and foe.

Murakami’s super frog saves tokyo mirrors a movement from the destabilization of knowledge to the destabilization of the subject, a move from deconstruction into posthumanism through the destruction of foundations and binaries. This text may thus be understood as fiction

140 “Transcorporeality” is Stacy Alaimo’s term from her work, Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self, in which she emphasizes “… the material interconnection of human corporeality with the more-than-human world” (2). What is missing in Murakami’s story from Alaimo’s perspective would be Katagiri’s ability to penetrate into his environment. Here, a type of unity forms from the incorporation of the environment.
meant to destabilize; and in that destabilization the story’s content mimics the practice to which it calls us, the destabilization of the fixed, modern foundations. It attempts a representation that ultimately calls into question the ability of itself to represent that which destabilizes (disaster) while destabilizing the very idea of representation (subjectivity). It is at once sight with the foundation of blindness, understanding and misunderstanding. It is, as we remember, not an arrested momentum, but a perpetual momentum of discovery. We participate in the disaster only in so far as we try to know the scope of the disaster, the disruptive power of subjectivity.

**Concluding without Unifying**

An internationally known figure like Murakami allows us to acquaint ourselves with Japanese culture from a Western perspective while identifying the prevalent Japanese thought on literary subjectivity through critics like Karatani. Japanese culture, in the wake of the social and natural upheaval of the Lost Decades, pushes back against modern humanist thinking (which attempts to master and subdue such upheavals). However, Murakami does not simply provide a “new” subject in place of the old modern humanism (as this would master and subdue humanism). His goal (mirroring those of American postmodernists like Judith Butler), rather, achieves fruition in complicating the previously assumed foundations of modern humanism. What replaces this is not the denial of humanism outright, but the assertion of the contradictory presence of autonomy in human subjects with that which undercuts it. Murakami’s subjects may be easily mistaken for empty subjects, erased of self entirely, yet I argue that the truth is much more complex. Complication and contradiction absolutely critique the mastery of stable human foundations of self; however, complication is not erasure (which would be falling back into the
modern trap of hierarchy, mastery, and overcoming) but rather a call to reexamine the problematic nature of such foundations. *after the quake* focuses on the destruction of foundations as it deconstructs traditional formal elements of titles or origins, as well as thematic elements of foundation within subjects. While this examination of Murakami concerns itself first with critically transgressing modern notions of subject, does Murakami offer us anything like a presence of self? Does he ever encounter or characterize the *something* within?

The *something* within Murakami’s subjects undercuts the ideas of foundation by being a something made of nothing. The complexity and contradiction involved in this anarchic core within subjects react to the modern Japanese *shutaisei* by evoking another Japanese philosophical figure in the discourse of subjectivity, Nishida Kitarō. In his work, "Religious Consciousness and the Logic of the Prajnaparamita Sutra from the Logic of Place and a Religious World-View" Nishida examines the *mu no basho* (place of nothingness) as that which resides within and acts as the core. Nishida explains that

… we know the self in self-negation … When the self thus knows its own eternal death, when it knows its own eternal nothingness, the self is truly self-conscious. To say that the self exists in such self-consciousness is an absolute contradiction. But to know the nothingness of the self is not merely to make the judgement that the self is nothingness … This is indeed a contradiction. (205)

Subjects which act out the desire for self-consciousness (as we have seen in Murakami’s short fiction, especially *landscape with flatiron*) engage in a quest for the self inside. This quest, however, concludes not when the pure essence of self is discovered, but rather when such a notion is discarded for complication and contradiction. The core of Murakami’s characters contains not nothing, but an eternal nothing from which they must constitute themselves. This is Nishida’s contradiction of self. And Murakami, like Nishida, continues to examine the presence of the self through its absence when the self is obscured, perpetually deferring “true self-
consciousness.” And this something – a something as nothing – becomes the foundation for Murakami’s subjects. The characters in after the quake exist as the super-structure manifestations of the infinite nothing, its sub-structure. This is the deconstructed self whose rotten roots are revealed (as opposed to “created”) through trauma just as he explained in his writings surrounding the Boston Marathon Bombings and the Tokyo Subway Sarin Incident.

Finally, once he has critiqued the foundations of shutaisei through an engagement with trauma and disaster’s effects on the subject, Murakami displays a figure for “self-existence” in his later work Kafka on the Shore in which he recalls several moments of figuration from after the quake such as: the something inside (ufo in kushiro), the inability to locate oneself spatially (Junko in landscape with flatiron and Komura in ufo in kushiro), the bodily movement of dance as a communication of the innermost (all god’s children can dance), both the penetration and transgression of bodily form (Frog and Katagiri), blindness (the shutting of or atrophied eyes). Remembering the opening quote of this chapter from Kafka on the Shore we see how Murakami offers not merely the absence of a self-foundation, but the presence of its negated complication through these moments of subject-disruption.

Sometimes fate is like a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions. You change direction but the sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous dance with death just before dawn. Why? Because this storm isn’t something that blew in from far away, something that has nothing to do with you. This storm is you. Something inside you. So all you can do is give in to it, step right inside the storm, closing your eyes and plugging up your ears so the sand doesn’t get in, and walk through it, step by step. There’s no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time. Just fine white sand swirling up into the sky like pulverized bones. (5)

Here, Murakami presents us again with “something inside you;” this time it takes the form of a sandstorm, another natural disaster. He wrestles with the idea that fate is somehow conflated into this something as that would give it telos, an endpoint. The something inside is inescapable. And
he describes a contradictory orientation when he designates the position of the storm as not only something inside you, but something that you may “step right inside” of. The storm equates in representation you and both what is inside and outside of you, penetrating form and placing a *mise en abyme* of self at the heart of this figuration. However, while this names the *something* that was omitted in his earlier collection, *after the quake*, is it anything substantial? Is it merely a new foundation, a grounding of subjective self? It is not. Its amorphous structure spatially perplexes due to a lack of common directional points of reference, “There’s no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time.” The *something* inside purposefully disorients. You may only ever find yourself in relation to it as if in a “dance with death.” And it finally takes shape in the description of its action, “swirling up into the sky,” a twister outwardly formed of the physical insides, “bone.” This *something* presents itself as a type of spiral that penetrates form, at once the inner and outer, simultaneously environment and osseous embodiment. The innate stability of foundations is uprooted by the foundation of self when figured as a storm – another disaster (along with the earthquake whose themes penetrated *after the quake*) which uproots. Murakami gives us this metaphoric description of self a few years after *after the quake* in the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* offering us the figuration of selfhood as a swirling disaster which resists orientation and form.

I began my examination of Japanese cultural products with Murakami’s *after the quake* because it presents a reading of subjects that flows into posthumanism’s critique of the foundations of self while not erasing the idea of humanism completely. Literarily (culturally) connecting for us what this dissertation does theoretically, Murkami presents to us the subjects Katagiri, Junko, Yoshiya, and Komura in whom we discover metaphoric representations of the self that disrupt the modern foundations of representation (in de Manian deconstruction’s
understanding of “blindness”) and of subjectivity (in posthumanism). Such subjects continue to complicate foundations with a lack of telos that is without defining the something inside. However, we end this chapter with what was initially provided as a cognitive undertone for reading subjectivity in Murakami’s fiction, the passage from Kafka on the Shore. In this, Murakami goes beyond disrupting the borders of the self and presents us with a depiction of the something that was only hinted at within after the quake, a foundation understood as misunderstanding. The image of the swirling sandstorm equated to self acts as this project’s first figuration of a type of posthuman self which does not overcome humanism but which dialecticizes both the modern humanist subject and the transhumanist inter-subjectivity. This dialectical movement between contemporary views of subject (while maintaining each as either thesis or anti-thesis) becomes for us a figure of the posthuman subject in itself, a figure which will be further unpacked in cyborgs, avatars, and chindōgu (chapter three), culminating in its depiction within the horror manga by Itō Junji, Uzumaki (chapter four). Murakami Haruki’s emerging subject accompanies other representations of subjectivity which critique the shutaisei within Japan’s Ushinawareta Nijūnen and which may be presented as that which previous forms of American posthuman theory have overlooked.
Chapter 3: *Useless Cyborgs: Chindōgu and Subjectivity*

… in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology.
– Donna Haraway (“A Cyborg Manifesto,” 149)

Cyborgs, avatars, artificial intelligence, prosthetic sensory systems, brain-machine interfaces, artificial cells, genetic engineering, neurocybernetics, robotic exo-skeletons - such encroaching manifestations of the technological future play a large part in the Japanese popular culture produced since the 1950s (*anime, manga*, film, and literature spanning many different genres)\(^{141}\) as well as in our own soon-to-be reality. While most of these manifestations fall under “transhumanism” (the technological transcendence of humanity), I wish to expose their posthuman core. Posthumanism-proper views subjectivity not in terms of humanism’s mastery of self and nature, hierarchical positions over other beings, or historical progression, as transhumanism does, but rather as their cumulative displacement. This chapter discovers posthumanism (the *chindōgu* cyborg) in what initially appears to be transhumanism as it complicates that subjectivity with the union of technology and biology. That union crucially also entails the reconstitution of the technological other within the self. By “technological other,” I mean the other-than-human objects of technology which both surround embodiment and penetrate it (compared here to the prosthetics and cybernetics of the cyborg that remain anarchic to being). My project thus joins an already established Anglo-American posthuman discourse.

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\(^{141}\) Outside of fictional representations, the realities of technology (specifically robots) influence much of contemporary life. According to “From *Metropolis* to *Metropolis*: The Changing Role of the Robot in Japanese and Western Culture” by Lee Makela, “Robots are becoming ever more integrated into our everyday world. The international Federation of Robots estimated that at the end of 2006 approximately 875,000 multipurpose and dedicated industrial robots were operational around the world, while another 638,000 service robots were also added to the world’s stock of mechanized helpmates” (91). While these numbers also include the industrialized nations of the West as well, Japan specifically has been called *robotto ōkoku* (Robot Kingdom). Beyond only robotics, science is continuing to introduce us to other technologies listed above and discussed in more specifics within the introduction.
centered on the cyborg, and also deviates from it via a uniquely Japanese subjectivity to be found in the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen.*

Constellations of the organic body with non-organic tech and prosthetics within the cyborg demonstrate the separation of the other within the self – constellations necessary to a posthuman-proper reading of embodiment. This differs from a transhumanist reading of the cyborg which incorporates the other into the unification of self by effectively erasing the other as long as it remains functional. The complication of a subjectivity which reinstates the other within is the cybernetic manifestation of what Judith Butler in *Precarious Life* claims “implicates the other within.” Cybernetics allows us to rhetorically (and technologically) inhabit Butler’s “foreignness to [her]self” (Butler 46), a belief that the origin of her connection to others is the other within. In this way, Butler resists a borderlessness of interconnection and yet displays connection as the progeny of an in-common experience, “a condition that cannot be thought without difference” (27). Butler requires a subject to be both connected and separate from others externally, including the other within. In this way the autonomous subject remains, but never alone. As Butler puts it, “We are something other than ‘autonomous’ in such a condition, but that does not mean we are merged or without boundaries” (27). The very existence of human connection (be it through empathy, sympathy, compassion, understanding, etc.) stems from bordering the other within, an other which remains anarchic to the unity of self.

However, traditional models of cyborg theory (of which Donna Haraway is the most influential) emphasize the singularity into which the dual natures of cybernetics and biology fold,

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142 The term, “consumes,” used here rather than “integrates,” recognizes a concept not unlike the metaphor “rice as self” introduced in Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s article, “Selves and Others in Japanese Culture in Historical Perspective.” This concept was discussed in chapter one. The “rice as self” construction of subjectivity metaphorically uses Japan’s adoption of rice farming techniques from foreign nations and the physical act of consuming rice as way to highlight the *consumption* of the other into the self. This construction at once separates...
with otherness erased into the functionality of a borderless sameness. The “successful” cyborg does not recognize the use of technology as an other within its own constitution, but rather consumes its otherness, bringing it into the unity of a fully functional cyborg-self.\textsuperscript{143} In order to discover a posthuman tendency in this transhumanist logic, we must uncover a broken cyborg or broken prosthesis, one which (like Heidegger’s sudden awareness of the broken hammer)\textsuperscript{144} allows us to recognize the object/technology as separate from being. Only then will we be confronted with a cyborg ontology which recapitulates the separation of self and other within: in other words, the unique type of subjectivity found within the \textit{Ushinawareta Nijünen}.

Beyond prosthetics that have the potential to break, I ask what an always already “broken prosthesis” may accomplish for us theoretically.\textsuperscript{145} In Japan, beginning in the early 1990s, the artist and theorist Kawakami Kenji gathered together odd inventions that shared common themes, the product’s inability to function properly as a technology united with the body chiefly among them. Kawakami named these objects \textit{Chindōgu [珍道具]}.\textsuperscript{146} \textit{Chindōgu} act as cultural evidence for a cyborg subjectivity which straddles the lines between humanist individuality and the self from others by recognizing the foreign influence of rice production while creating the self from its incorporation. Ohnuki-Tierney thusly uncovers a historical construction of self whose constitution requires the other within.

\textsuperscript{144} In \textit{Being and Time} Heidegger discusses usefulness, handiness, and the knowledge of the hammer expressed through its function (its in-order-to). Its being, Heidegger claims, is more accessible only if one goes beyond the things-at-hand, the functionality. This being-at-hand only comes to us in use, when the tool is used to produce something else. In this state, its being is hidden from us as we concentrate on the product being produced and not the tool producing. "Handiness is the ontological categorical definition of beings as they are ‘in themselves’" (67 emphasis removed). However, when the object (the hammer in this case) becomes useless or “gets in the way” of producing, it becomes obtrusive, obstinate, and conspicuous (69). When this occurs, the object at hand loses its handiness and thus its “what-for” and “in-order-to” are disturbed (70). In this way the invisible, handy object reveals something beyond its utility, practicality, or perceptual qualities (70-71).

\textsuperscript{145} For this examination of subjectivity through these objects, the term “broken” and any reference to their “inability to function properly” is only ever in relation to normative and capitalistic assertions of use and function (that which requires less energy to produce, maintain, and use than not – use value vs. production value). While \textit{chindōgu} certainly do function in their own specific way, this function is overshadowed by the exertion required to produce and maintain. In this way they are “broken” when compared to normative utility of the current consumer/product relations of capitalism which requires an ever increasing ease of use and function.

\textsuperscript{146} The term can be translated as “gadget,” but literally means “strange tool.” The term “gadget” feels like it carries a certain amount of usefulness and purpose to something somewhat devoid of each.
transhumanist unity. To accomplish this, I examine Kawakami Kenji’s construction of the *chindōgu* concept by exemplifying and working through his ten tenets of *chindōgu*. I also briefly provide a theoretical framework of *chindōgu* by discussing their use as a “prosthetic thing” and discussing their visual content and aesthetics. Few critics (outside of some connections to Dadaism in France and Japan) have examined these manifestations of low culture, especially from perceptive of subjectivity.\(^{147}\) Finally, I will examine this emerging subjectivity which maintains the separation between self and other just as the *chindōgu* cyborg brings the other into the self. I develop this theory with the help of Graham Harman’s Object-Oriented Ontology (specifically his emphasis on otherness & objects through his reading of Heidegger’s “broken hammer”). Harman helps us situate the Japanese posthuman subjectivity of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* within a discussion of a well-wrought broken cyborg, but I differentiate my argument from OOO’s by including in its construction also the cyborg unity of objects and subjects. As a result, we glimpse the Japanese cultural conception of posthumanism within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* as that which resists such a cyborg amalgamation via the forced recognition of its unuseless tools - *chindōgu*. This resistance, I argue, has wider cultural relevance and utility because it exposes the cracked foundations of modern Japanese subjectivity (*shutaisei*) and enables its posthuman critique without succumbing to the liberal humanist modes of thought like unity, hierarchy, mastery, and anthropocentrism.

\(^{147}\) While popular in concept, *chindōgu* pieces are not readily available to own or buy. They are admired in image form in magazines, books, and even in art exhibits, but should not be considered a common material form affixed to the everyday Japanese individual.
What are Chindōgu?

Chindōgu are quirky inventions popularized in Japan and categorized by Kawakami Kenji beginning in the early 1990’s. Kawakami, born in the Nara Prefecture in 1946, attended Tokai University where he studied engineering but dropped out due to the student movements of the 1960s and 70s. He first experimented with theorizing chindōgu in his “Tenets of Chindōgu.” even before constructing them.

First appearing in Kawakami’s magazine, Mail Order Life, these quirky inventions soon became popular enough to require dedicated publications in Japan. Such products grew in international appeal and are now propagated by the International Chindōgu Society (of which I am a member, though the organization doesn’t appear to be operating recently). Kawakami was not the first to create an odd invention or a somewhat useless tool and yet he was the pioneer who refined the concept into a critical movement of product anarchism. These inventions, Kawakami argues, also promulgated concepts through their creation, production, and use. In his largest English collection of chindōgu entitled, The Big Bento Box of Unuseless Japanese Inventions, he notes such examples as the “Solar-Powered Flashlight” or the “Up/Down Toothbrush” with bristles on the top and bottom to “cut brushing time in half” (73). While such products provide a specific function, their usefulness – when taking into account the energy of

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149 The Japanese name of the magazine, Tsuhan Seikatsu 通販生活
150 The late 1920s saw the first Rube Goldberg (1883-1970) machines (fantastically complicated machines for the completion of simple tasks) and Finnish artist, Anssi Orrenmaa in the 1980s championed Niksi Pirkka [tricking] household items into operating differently from their intended production.
their production, the likely clumsy nature of their “use,” and the unlikely willingness of everyday individuals to use them in public – appears questionable. For example, there are very few instances where sunlight, bright enough to charge an electronic device through its solar panels is yet dim enough to require a flashlight. And the toothbrush with bristles on the top and bottom would only brush parts of one’s teeth effectively before you would need to change the brush to reach other areas. These devices exist in the liminal space between function and dysfunction, and that is their simple beauty: their inability to be completely useful, their “unuseless” nature. As most of these objects act as tools or prosthetics, their unuselessness complicates human embodiment (and thus the human subject’s delineation from objects) when in use.

Kawakami Kenji begins his 2005 work entitled “逆理の発想: 珍道具の世界 (An “Inverted Logic” Way of Thinking: The World of Chindōgu),” with “珍案, 奇案, 妙案と:” (Strange idea, odd idea, and ingenious idea …). For Kawakami, the concept of chindōgu clearly locates the anarchic thing amidst the quirky nature of a commodified object. This theoretical tendency, as the title suggests, inverts the logical paradigms of liberal, capitalist production and efficiency (paradigms which led Japan to the brink of economic collapse prior to 1990). That is, chindōgu enter the realm of commodity production and yet remain only partially intelligible to their normative practices. These “normative practices” adhere to late capitalist tendencies epitomized in globalized conglomerates that prize an ever-increasing efficiency

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151 Translation mine. While 珍道具の世界 [Chindōgu no sekai] is fairly straightforward, there is no good English term for 逆理 [gyakuri]. I have translated this as “inverted Logic” in order to keep the playfulness of the term, and have steered clear of a bad connotation that may come from a slightly more literal translation in, “Illogical Way of Thinking.” In English, as Western thought has often sees anything outside the realm of logic to be bad, we lose the sense of stability the term seems to possess. This is the third part of a three part series from Kawakami Kenji.

152 Translation mine. Not much seems to separate the first two terms, but the third, 妙案 [myōan], while retaining a bit of the odd/queer nature of something, also may mean exquisite/excellent.
fueled by commodity fetishism and exchange value. In a 2008 interview with Wired Magazine’s Bruce Sterling, Kawakami explains that he had been thinking about the key critical concepts of *chindōgu* since his days in the student movements of the 1960’s, even before inventing/discovering the actual products. “I think of *chindōgu* as an intellectual game to stimulate anarchic minds or a physical manifestation of my way of thinking,” he says. Similar to Katherine Hayles, Stacy Alaimo, and Cary Wolfe, Kawakami too is interested in discovering through posthuman practices a “new way of thinking” about the post-human. In the introduction, I discussed conceiving of posthumanism as the way the posthuman thinks about its borders while also acknowledging the Anglo-American posthuman theorists who attempt to establish the post-humanities. Here is the first explicit use of “thinking” as a critical move within posthumanism in Japan during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. *Chindōgu* cognition rests on rethinking tools and products of everyday use via defamiliarization and paraody. Kawakami’s reexamination of the taken-for-grantedness of our household products compliments the impetus to create instabilities in subjectivity in other Japanese contexts during this time period (such instabilities in Murakami and Ito’s works are examined at length within other chapters). Here Kawakami highlights the way in which *chindōgu*, implicitly critical of capitalist trends, forces us to reexamine objects and practices which we had always assumed had a stable foundation – the relationship between

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153 My particular view of “Late Capitalism” from which these tendencies of production emerge is informed by works such as Guy DeBord’s *Society of Spectacle* and Frederick Jameson’s *Postmodernity: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, both of which borrow heavily from Carl Marx.

154 Murakami Haruki too was influenced by the student protests of the 1960’s (anti-Japan-US security treaty protests) and had set one of his most popular novels (*Norwegian Wood*, 1987) in the midst of this volatile period.


156 Although a type of “inverted logic” is used by Murakami Haruki in order to state in his work on the Tokyo Subway Gas Attacks called “Underground” that, “Reality is created out of confusion and contradiction, and if you exclude those elements, you’re no longer talking about reality. You might think that – by following language and a logic that appears consistent – you’re able to exclude that aspect of reality, but it will always be lying in wait for you, ready to take its revenge” (363).
ourselves and our technological augmentations. But in the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*, such foundations tend to be revealed as cracked and fading, leading to expose what in Chapter Two Murakami Haruki called “the roots of the Japanese state” which necessarily threw “all the latent contradictions and weak points of our society into frighteningly high relief” (*Underground* 237).

The international reception of *chindōgu* varies. While some in Europe and Japan see Kawakami’s inventions as surreal and neo-dada, the West has generally ignored them outside of their capacity for pure diversion or brief statements that appropriate the concept for their own use. Kawakami himself explains that, “*Chindōgu* is considered radical in other parts of the world … but in America they just laugh at the weird Japanese Inventor” (1). Of course, laughter itself is not foreign to the concepts of *chindōgu*. In fact, Kawakami contends that “we need more [laughter]. I believe in rejecting society by laughing at it” (McNiell 1). In this way, however, *chindōgu* teeter on the precipice of the modern humanist canyon into which many Anglo-American posthumanist accounts have fallen. That is, the laughter brought about by *chindōgu* must not establish a hierarchy and separation from modern society since these are indeed modern modes of thought. When *chindōgu* elicit only laughter as their primary function

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157 This project takes for granted a cyborg ontology (as referenced at the beginning of this chapter from Haraway). Humans are cyborgs and (as Arthur Bradley explains Derrida in *Originary Technicity: The Theory of technology from Marx to Derrida*) humans have always been technical beings. Whether we like it or not, human embodiment and cognition is now inextricably tied to technology that – if working properly – remains invisible to us (the glasses we wear to augment our vision, the memory card in our phone to augment our memory, the hearing aids, the pacemakers, the IUDs).

158 A good example of this appropriation is its use by Charles Handy in his work, *The Hungry Spirit: Beyond Capitalism: A Quest for Purpose in the Modern World* (1998), when he claims, “Technology thrives on Chindogu” (37). Here, Handy, highlights the “gadget” nature of *chindōgu* in his chapter entitled, “Chindogu world.” He broadens the term to include any product that has a quirky, humorous, or whimsical appeal with very little practical use value. To this end, in “Work Ethic and Ethical Work: Distortions in the American Dream,” Gayle Porter says regarding Handy’s understanding of *chindōgu*, “technology seems to create its own demand” (539). Both Porter and Handy expand on ideas of desire, demand, and need within commodity relations in their inclusion of the term “*chindōgu*.” Though they mistakenly expand the term to include all technological gadgets which retain enjoyment value but have no real function, their point toward *chindōgu*’s ability to create its own demand outside of the need to fulfill a function places a new, and possibly critical light on Kawakami’s cognitive construction.

159 “The Art of Chindogu in a World Gone Mad” by David McNiell.
something critical is lost. And *chindōgu* must retain the very nature of society which it critiques. This is done by joining the discourse of capitalism while forcing a new relationship between products and consumers. In this way, *chindōgu* may be funny, but they cannot only be funny; this violates the dual/hybrid critical nature of such inventions, and is in fact one of the ten tenets of *chindōgu* that Kawakami has laid out.

**The Ten Tenets of Chindōgu**

In order to define *chindōgu* products which may retain a critical undercurrent, Kawakami outlines “Ten Tenets of Chindōgu,” which form the parameters of his conceptual scheme.

1) *Chindōgu* should not be for practical use/utility.\(^{160}\) The primary condition of *chindōgu* is its lack of functionality. These inventions should not function perfectly, they should be more useless than useful. Several more of these tenets provide their conditions based on this; they resist functioning perfectly within certain spheres (capitalism, entertainment, etc.). In this way, they exist as neither products to be bought, sold, and profited from, nor as products which fulfill a certain function conceptually (the fulfillment of diversion, of entertainment, or even of critical discourse). If a *chindōgu* becomes useful through the invention of new technology or through the adoption of new consumer desires, it may no longer be called *chindōgu* since it adheres to a new functionality.

2) However, *chindōgu* should be functional (機能 - *kinō*). They must fulfill some actual use, a real use. And to that end, they must exist in the physical world. They cannot merely be concepts, designs, or drawings. They must be physical objects to be held or worn, new

\(^{160}\) Practical use/utility is translated from 実用 (*jitsuyō*).
appendages that perform some action the human currently cannot. The dialogue between these first two tenets gives *chindōgu* its “unuseless” quality. Kawakami requires of *chindōgu* that they always must remain in the state between function and dysfunction. This is often accomplished by the imbalance of production energy with use energy. *Chindōgu* must do something, but are they worth the effort to create and maintain? No.

3) *Chindōgu* should be a tool for everyday-living (暮らしの道具 – *kurashi no dōgu*). They should not exist in hyper-specificity. That is, *chindōgu* must not be only tied to a specific profession or task. They must be understood by all to serve a mundane and ordinary function. The average person must be able to differentiate a barely functioning tool from a perfectly functioning tool. For example, a cinematographer’s light meter would be outside the boundaries of commonplace knowledge; thus an “unuseless” version of this device could not be recognized as *chindōgu*. In this way, Kawakami requires that the common populace retain accessibility to *chindōgu* and that it resists a monopoly of thought from academic or entertainment elites.

4) *Chindōgu* should be anarchic. They are meant to resist modern society and be removed from the shackles of usefulness within the realm of tools. They are meant to be different, meant to resist the conservative tradition of utility. *Chindōgu* are innately critical of the relationship that the subject has to its tools, or the clear delineation of object from subject. In this way, when *chindōgu* act as prosthetics, they are not subsumed under the self in the borderless cyborg. They retain their anarchic presence.

5) The goal (目的 - *mokuteki*) of *chindōgu* should not be sale or profit. Beyond the anarchic sense of utility, *chindōgu* should also resist becoming useful for the purposes of capitalism. Not only should you not sell *chindōgu*, you should not mass produce them. *Chindōgu* are meant to be created and used by individuals, not to be sold, even as a joke. To participate in the utility of
commodity is to forfeit the purity of chindōgu. And yet, one must also recognize that the proliferation of Kawakami’s books which feature chindōgu, certainly have ties to profit and mass production. It is perhaps naïve to assume that anything within such a society may retain critical distance from monetary influences. Although, while one may profit from the concepts of chindōgu, there may yet be a critical distance from commodity within the objects themselves if the objects can be separated from their conceptions.

6) The goal of chindōgu should not exclusively be humor. While chindōgu may certainly be funny or amusing, utility (or lack thereof) must still be its primary concern. To be completely useful for the purposes of entertainment diminishes the critical nature of their unuselessness.

7) The goal of chindōgu should not be “black humor” (ブラックユーモア – burakku yuumoa). While in English black humor/dark comedy may contain connotations of morbidity, in Japanese the term refers to several different kinds of taboo humor (concerning life or death, but also political satire, negative, and grotesque jokes that “debase the sanctity of living things”). These uses would alienate people from certain types of chindōgu and such an alienation prevents the dissemination of their critical stance to the masses. Nothing about chindōgu should conceal a hidden political significance. This tenet appears to be Kawakami’s defense against using chindōgu for propagandist purposes. In this way, removing potential ties to politics (even through humor) reduces their potential to be diverted from their critical stances. And yet, such a critical stance appears to be stem from a specific political position (though, perhaps for Kawakami, the anarchy innate within chindōgu require an apolitical anarchic position, something I feel would be very difficult to achieve).

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161 The quote comes from the 2005 version published in the United States, The Big Bento Box of Unuseless Japanese Inventions (TBBBoUJI) translated by Dan Papia. In it, Papia also translates Black Humor as, “Propoganda” (9).
8) Sexuality or bawdiness is strictly prohibited in chindōgu. These inventions are “innocent.” Crude and lascivious themes in chindōgu lessen the impact of a critique of the modern ideals of production, commodity, and utility by the potential to alienate members of the populace. Several of these tenets stem from the established properness of modern Japanese society and may not have the same impact (the alienation of the masses) within other cultures.

9) Chindōgu should not be patented. In the spirit of sharing chindōgu with the world outside of capitalistic production, they are therefore not owned by any one individual. They are free to be made, remade, or improved upon by any like-minded individual.

10) Chindōgu should be international. Unlike globalization, cosmopolitanism, or transnationalism, however, the Japanese view indicates simply a non-prejudice among people groups. Favoring one race, religion, or nationality over others limits the possibilities of chindōgu, and this curtails the everyman/everyday-life quality of these inventions. Thus, chindōgu posit an equal validity of use. However, this view will be complicated as the images all demonstrate Japanese practitioners. While chindōgu are indeed open to all cultures, peoples, and diversities theoretically, they are surprisingly homogenous in their actual display.

Kawakami’s philosophy of chindōgu, attempts not only to define the products, but to eschew capitalistic goals associated with the act of production, sale, and entertainment. Furthermore, to remain unuseless, because chindōgu must not become commercialized, fetishized, or institutionalized, the utilitarian conceptualization of “oddity” or “whimsy” that

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162 It is important to note that not only do chindōgu resist capitalistic tendencies within their own production, but also remain anarchic to the new economy of our cybernetic future. In a future that allows for the augmentation of brains and bodies through technological means, it appears that this distinction will first be made those who have the finances to do so. This creates an entirely new class of humans, the augmented rich. In this instance, a chindōgu cyborg (just like the chindōgu product) remains anarchic to a system driven by capitalistic tendencies of efficiency, usefulness, and commodity. The chindōgu cyborg helps to retain the critical otherness in such a future, and is thus potentially invaluable to society.
fulfills a use must also be avoided or limited. Of course this is not to say that chindōgu serve no function at all; on the contrary, many such devices, at first glance, seem useful for highly specific situations. Yet, it is in the ownership of such devices and in the effort to create them that they lose functionality. Since, chindōgu may not be mass produced, the labor of its production by the individual is applied to the equation of efficiency where efficiency requires that use value should exceed the effort to produce and maintain. Even when a product appears somewhat useful during its specified task (for example the “Ten-in-One Gardening Tool), the ease at which the object is available must also be taken into account.\(^{163}\)

This means that the production of the object and the effort expended to haul the object around must be taken into account when defining usefulness. The Ten-in-One Gardening Tool’s usefulness in any given situation does not surpass the energy used to construct and haul the device. Imagine the space a “solar-powered flashlight” would consume; think of its weight. Lugging around such a device for the incredibly rare occasion it would be useful is ridiculous, and yet, its functionality cannot be erased completely.\(^{164}\)

Another good example of chindōgu (one which often acts as the symbol of all chindōgu by appearing on many of Kawakami’s covers) is “The Noodle Eater’s Hair Guard” (TBBBoUJI 18-19). This device is not only interesting to look at, but is the purest form of chindōgu encapsulating the spirit of an “inverted logic.” The Hair Guard claims to maintain “follicular hygiene at mealtimes” (18), and its construction is simple. It consists of two pieces of molded plastic, fastened nearly in the middle of each but overlapping enough to give the piece its face-fitting curve. This fastening of two pieces, however, eludes to the fact that this device was not

\(^{163}\) This Chindōgu is also found in The Big Bento Box of Unuseless Japanese Inventions (142-143).
\(^{164}\) In fact, several of the products introduced in Kawakami’s collections have made their way into the market as mass-produced goods, certainly not the least of which is the “Selfie Stick,” a reimagining of the “Self-Portrait Camera Stick” (TBBBoUJI 251) which aided in the taking of non-digital photos from a camera rather than a phone.
molded this way originally but instead repurposed into the Noodle Eater’s Hair Guard. The original product, a shampoo guard for a child’s face, is repurposed into a broth guard for an adult’s hair. This calls attention to a peculiar function that is only useful in the original and serves no utility in the rebranded *chindōgu*, that is the grooves along the plastic. Such grooves are made in a child’s shampoo guard for the water to disseminate in trenches, however, as the device holds back the young woman’s hair, such grooves serve no function beyond, perhaps, an aesthetic appeal. Thusly, *chindōgu* repurpose an item and turn the functionality of an individual attribute into dysfunction. The design of the *chindōgu* in its entirety fails its original function, and yet, this device still somehow holds back the hair from the ramen fulfilling its repurposed function. Use, while withered in its new *chindōgu* form, is not erased entirely. Beyond design functionality, notice that the repurposing of the child’s shampoo guard quite literally inverts the logic of its original, intended function. Where the original sought to confine liquids only to the hair and away from the face, the Noodle Eater’s Hair Guard prevents liquids from touching the hair and keeps them near the face for consumption. And finally, this particular *chindōgu* presents a utility while resisting the mass-consumption of the commodity via individual (mis)use. In this way, The Noodle Eater’s Hair Guard is the ideal *chindōgu* as it favors an anarchic philosophy over handiness by resisting its former life’s functionality and place as a commodity.

However, *chindōgu* does little to overtly critique other traditional social binaries and foundations such as race, sexuality, or gender. These topics themselves are immensely complicated and hold their own historical motivations and understandings in Japan, and yet, the *chindōgu* concerning appearance modification (make-up applicators, maintaining fashion, or specifically the device to help one smile more, figured right), and household cleaning or cooking utensils (for example, the “Handy Chopper” with its painted nails figured depict women using
such traditionally gendered items concerning beauty and housekeeping.\textsuperscript{165} Men, however, are depicted more with items concerning work attire, relaxation, exercise, and sports (like the “Driver Drier” figured bottom right). Certainly \textit{chindōgu} didn’t create gender norms in Japan and as part of their philosophy, must remain culturally intelligible in order to showcase their own \textit{unuselessness} to the common individual. However, the anarchic moment of critique imbedded within \textit{chindōgu} that begins to complicate the perceived unity of subjectivity apparently does little to explicitly complicate identities derived from this subjectivity. Such a critique is mostly absent from Kawakami’s collections as they are depicted within his publications. It is unclear, however, whether the addition of products or images which complicate identity (gender, race, class, religion) wouldn’t also muddy the simple message of utility. And yet to be fair, while the male is the one using the golf-styled \textit{chindōgu}, he is drying clothes, a traditionally feminine role in Japan. However, these moments of “drift” within gender roles are few and far between. And yet, Kawakami’s own tenets seem in conflict with issues of gender, sex, and sexuality, specifically the contradiction between #8 – \textit{Chindōgu should not be bawdy or sexual} – and #10 – \textit{Chindōgu must be international} (non-discriminatory). It is curious that Kawakami includes modernized, \textit{cultural} feminine products (socially constructed products such as make-up and finger nail paint applicators) while expressly omitting any type of sexualized or \textit{bodily} “feminine” products that may be more biologically attuned to women specifically according to Western-normative views of sexuality and sex. Here is the elevation of socially constructed gender norms over biological distinctions which alienate or alter a specific bodily experience. This conflict seems counterproductive for the anarchic goals of \textit{chindōgu} because Kawakami

\textsuperscript{165} Feminism in Japan followed other industrialized nations in women’s suffrage movements and again in the 70s with new expressions of sexuality and freedom. However, according to Iwasawa Yuji in \textit{International Law, Human Rights, and Japanese Law: The Impact of International Law on Japanese Law}, in 1986 Humana’s \textit{World Human Rights Guide} Japan’s equality received a failing grade (234).
forbids a key component of identity, sexuality, to be expressed in and through *chindōgu*. And yet, while the overt traditional gender reinforcement of the products complicates its ability to critique social foundations, its veiled nature as a cyborg subjectivity may imbue these products with the bodily complications that their outward appearance and visual depictions lack. A *chindōgu* cyborg subjectivity at once consumes the tool into bodily unity while being aware of the otherness of the tool itself. This complex ontology allows (even begs) for the complication of identity based on hybrid cyborg experiences.

*Chindōgu Aesthetics*

Throughout Kawakami’s publications on *chindōgu* a prevailing visual aesthetic has accompanied these “strange tools:” an aesthetic of apparent uselessness wherein the color, composition, and content work toward visualizing the function of each *chindōgu*, a callback to the visual language of American mail-order catalogues of the 1960s-70s. For example, let us consider the “Funnel Eyeglasses,” “Rain Evacuator,” and “Umbrella Necktie.” These images of *chindōgu* are representative of the vast number of pictures in these books and hold several things in common with which we may excise a certain aesthetic that reaffirms (or critiques) Kawakami’s theory of *chindōgu*.

To this end, one may notice immediately that the composition of each photograph centers on the functionality of the *chindōgu*, subordinating the human models, within the frame. This is best expressed with the Umbrella Tie which boasts an attached human figure whose head and face are cut off by the frame; the Umbrella Shoes also display decentered legs (nearly cut off on the left); and the Rain Evacuator whose plastic sheet covers entirely the woman inside also blurs
the face of the model. More so than the humans pictured, these *chindōgu* images display function (or dysfunction) through composition. Here, one gets the sense of a product catalog or department store advertisement when viewing this images. *Chindōgu* are also rarely viewed alone, without a human component to contextualize the visual functionality of each device. The human pictured with the *chindōgu* will always be in the process of using or wearing the tool. In this way, *chindōgu* cannot visually exist without the human counterpart. The reader may not gaze upon *chindōgu* without also encountering the human body (even in portions as is depicted with the umbrella shoes). They are not pieces of art to be observed, but tools to be (mis)used, and the aesthetic captures this – tools in use. These are action photographs. The lighting is always “high key” creating soft features and few shadows that display proudly all the intricacies of the function to the viewer’s eye. The backgrounds, unless specifically linked to the function of the *chindōgu* (as is the case with the Umbrella Shoes’ wet pavement), are drab, monochromatic, flat surfaces which draw the eye to the differently colored/textured devices (the dark backdrop of the Funnel Glasses highlight the light colors of the funnels themselves; the grey background of the Umbrella Tie differentiates the device in color and pattern; and the Nail Dryer pictured below will contrast the hard horizontal grain in the wood with the diagonal white lines of the straws). The Noodle Eater’s Hair Guard, mentioned previously, beautifully fulfills each of these aesthetic components to highlight the *chindōgu* in use. The soft fill lighting hides nothing in shadow and displays the pink of the object in contrast to the greys of the models clothes and the whites in the background. The foreground, though also chromatically differentiated, casts sharp lines at precise angles with the positioning of the chopsticks, the bowl, the woman’s hair, the off-hand spoon, and the falling noodles, a pronounced dissimilarity from the curves and circular ridges of the round hair guard. In this way, color, texture, composition, linear arrangements, and
movement potential work to showcase the aesthetic of function of each chindōgu similar to shopping displays within mail order catalogs not unlike Mail Order Life where Kawakami began experimenting with chindōgu images. What highlights the function however, also removes the chindōgu from its visual surroundings. The aesthetic then also mirrors chindōgu’s anarchic nature at once engaged with and separate from the conditions in which the device finds itself.

Apart from the human placement within a chindōgu aesthetic, the design of such tools depicts a clarity of use. That is, the (dys)function of each chindōgu is readily apparent in its visual form. No circuits, screens, undisclosed wires, or hidden mechanics veil the obviousness of both its usefulness and unuselessness. For example, the images of both the Nail Dryer and the Solar Powered Cigarette Lighter hide nothing in their design. Such clarity of use and misuse is reminiscent of a previous historical period of human/commodity evolution in which a tool’s function was immediately available to consciousness. The hammer hammers. The sword cuts. Harkening back to simplicity, to connection with one’s tools, produces a type of nostalgic aesthetic with such devices in which the human is suddenly aware of utility itself. Chindōgu amalgamate useful and handy tools to create something new which critiques use and handiness. Here, Kawakami gives us a type of dialectic of past and present, of use displayed and use hidden. The reappropriation of different found-objects in order to piece together a single chindōgu creates an aesthetic that is itself a chimera of objects. Chindōgu are collages of useful pieces that, when combined, lose most (if not all) of their original use in service to the new device. And yet, the original pieces within the chindōgu are not visually erased to be subsumed under the finished product. We recognize the different pieces still within the whole as anarchic to the whole. In this way, chindōgu visually adhere to what the Japanese posthuman subjectivity may critique through
the *chindōgu* cyborg as the assertion of a subjectivity whose being is already a combination of self and other.

Contextually, with the portrayal of these tools themselves, these images display humans in the act of enacting unuselessness. They are static images of both function and dysfunction. We only ever see the models *doing* the specific function of their *chindōgu*. On display, more so than the actual products, is the very act of insubordination - individuals participating in an “inverted logic” of commodity and consumption. A *chindōgu* aesthetic is one which focuses on the human in an anarchic act of resisting use. Never in all of Kawakami’s work are individuals pictured looking, staring, gawking, or acknowledging the *chindōgu* by itself without this connection to unuseless human agency.

However, this body on display alongside *chindōgu*, whether male or female, is always Japanese. Logistically, due to the racial homogeneity of Japan, very few non-Japanese models are available for such work in small publications. Presumably, the ease of acquiring participants mis Kawakami’s main motivation for such a commonality among his images, and yet, as *chindōgu* Tenet #10 claims, “*Chindōgu should be international.*” Internality, displayed without diversity, leans toward a Japanese-specific normativity in which the Japanese body is seen as normal and representative of all bodies. Here then is conflict between the intended critical purposes of *chindōgu* and the aesthetic being displayed among Kawakami’s images.

A philosophy of *chindōgu*, informed by a particular aesthetic, engages questions of production, of product consumption, of the re-appropriation of materials, of waste, and of the interplay between subject and object. These strange tools reshape subjectivity (specifically their innate inverted logic) by alluding to theories of the cyborg, the bionic amalgamation of human
and technology. The subjectivity uncovered through such an act does not take the integrated technology into our embodiment as an invisible (perfectly functioning) tool, but rather reminds us of the other within the self precisely because of their useless nature. That is to say, viewing chindōgu as prosthetic tools allows us to adopt Heidegger’s hammer-thing and Graham Harman’s Object Oriented Ontology to reconstitute the object within the subject recognized as such, an embodied representation of a subjectivity which contains the other already within.\(^{166}\)

**Chindōgu as an Unuseless Cyborg**

This project, in order to uncover a critical posthumanist model of Japanese subjectivity through the manifestation of an unuseless cyborg, must see chindōgu as poorly integrated prosthetics, as technological tools devised to be worn or carried as absurd extensions or augmentations to the human body. However, the implications of affixing objects to human bodies complicate the discourse surrounding such devices and therefore establish a rich undercurrent of cyborg anthropology that now runs beneath chindōgu.\(^ {167}\) The theoretical work of David Willis allows us to expand the medical definition of prosthetic to engage with a complex and contradictory subjectivity.\(^ {168}\) With Willis’ aid, I argue that chindōgu prostheses/prosthetics bridge the gap between the “object” and the “prosthetic,” understanding the prosthetic as a

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\(^{166}\) In relation to Heidegger’s hammer as described in *Being and Time*, we will discuss Harman mostly through his work “The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer: Object-Oriented Literary Criticism,” which also takes an interpretive stance on Heidegger. Also, because of the culturally interpretive mode of criticism in this project, we will stick close to Harman’s rendition of literary criticism and not venture too far down the path of OOO.

\(^{167}\) Cyborg Anthropology is the study of human machine relations from an anthropological perspective.

\(^{168}\) Willis’ *Prosthesis* and on *The Prosthetic Impulse: From a Posthuman Present to a Biocultural Future* edited by Marquard Smith and Joanne Morra.
bodily attachment that augments, replaces, extends, fortifies, or (in the case of chindōgu) complicates the human’s capabilities.

The origins of the term “prosthesis” inform its additive nature and broaden the scope of the concept into the constitutions of all humans, rather than merely the most technologically advanced and obvious cyborgs of the modern era.¹⁶⁹ Smith and Morra, in their introduction to The Prosthetic Impulse, begin by acknowledging Willis’ contribution to the etymology of the word, its first use in English appearing around 1553 as the added syllable to the beginning of a word. Beyond these linguistic origins, the word took on its modern use around 1704 coming to mean (quoting Willis) the “replacement of a missing part of the body with an artificial one” (1-2). This medical definition perpetuates two concepts in relation to subjectivity. The first is the innate artificiality inherent in any prosthetic; it is not something the human grows or dons naturally, nor is it borrowed from another natural host (via transplant). The prosthetic is a thing created. Secondly, the “artificial part” replaces a “missing” one.¹⁷⁰ This seemingly requires a piece of the body to first become missing or for a body, born without a specific piece, to look upon fellow humans and find a lack within one’s own body, a missing element. The definition, Smith and Morra note, evolves from these humble (and somewhat vague) beginnings and through art, studies in humanities, and the growth of what is technologically possible, into more than a “replacement.” This is the movement from seeing prosthetics as merely an agent of disability, to seeing them fulfill an as-of-yet unfulfilled ability. The creation of this unfulfilled ability lies more with the product’s promise to fulfill than the sense of loss within the individual:

¹⁶⁹ The Japanese terms for these have a slight nuance in their use. 補綴 – hotei – connotes a type of addition or supplement (including use in “prosthetic make-up”) while 義肢 - gishi – is more often used as a medical term, “artificial limb” and borrows gi from the construction of “non-sanguineous relationship” ie. in-laws.
¹⁷⁰ In this way we tie prosthetics to chindōgu via not only physical manifestations of need and lack in human function, but also via capitalist modes of need and lack. Both of which are critiqued through these purposefully difficult products.
another biological/mental function replaced by material components. The prosthetic becomes an extension, an enhancement, an augmentation and theoretically the perfect symbol for examinations between the relations of humans and technology. These examinations move beyond modern modes of mastery, binary, and hierarchy culminating in the postmodern/poststructuralist works of Donna Haraway, Katherine Hayles, Jean Baudrillard, Avital Ronnell, and Paul Virilio in the sense that they exhibit the cyborgs as hybrid and networked corporealities (3). The augmented impulse cultivated in Smith and Morra’s collection draws on the dialectical nature of subject and object expressed through the human’s complications with his/her own bodily replacements, extensions, augmentations, and enhancements. This dialectic exposes the intersections between materialism, immaterialism, identity, memory, perception, embodiment, and consciousness within the prosthetic cyborg, the amalgamated being which (according to Hayles and Haraway) each of us has already become (2).

However, these terms (augmentation, extension, enhancement) require the notion of progression, replacement, or improvement, and this certainly does not fit *chindōgu*. The notion of prosthetic must widen further to incorporate not just the “improvements” upon the human body, but merely the tools with which the human naturally/traditionally uses to become cyborg. Bernard Steigler from *Technics and Time* claims that “The prosthesis is not a mere extension of the human body; it is the constitution of this body *qua* “human” (1), where the use of prosthetics to enhance, augment, or extend is (according to Steigler) innate within the constitution of the human.171 Freud, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, reminds us that “With every tool man is perfecting his own organs, whether motor or sensory, or is removing the limits to their

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171 Quoted from Smith and Morra’s text.
functioning … Man has as it were, become a kind of prosthetic God” (Smith and Morra 1). Here Freud connects the use of tools to the progression of the body, and this understanding mirrors Arthur Bradley’s discussion of Derrida in *Originary Technicity*, by claiming that the link between technicity (tools) and humans is perhaps ingrained in humanity from our origin. Tools are Prosthetics. Unuseless tools are unuseless prosthetics forming the unuseless cyborg. In this way, any tool may be seen as a prosthetic in that it augments the human body. These tools exist throughout human history in varying degrees of technology. In other words, the non-technological human hasn’t existed since the moment of tool-use in our evolution. We have not only “become” cyborgs, we have never been anything but.\(^{172}\)

Distinctions of the metaphoric vs. material prosthesis may force a dialogue between the theories of subjectivity/self/autonomy and the trauma associated with material disabilities. “Thinking about prosthetics pushes us to acknowledge,” as Diane M. Nelson claims, such “experiences of disability” (305).\(^{173}\) In this way, the theory that prosthetic study resonates with blurred borders and identity politics must remain in dialogue with the circumstances which produced the “lack” of or need for such augmentation (weaponry, assembly lines, corporate pollutants, illness, congenital differences, or even the “riskiness of everyday life”). For Nelson, such instances of cyborg anthropology cannot separate themselves from gestures toward Late

\(^{172}\) It should also be noted that while this project genuinely pontificates about cyborg theory, a very imminent cyborg reality is upon us. To take Hayles’ and Haraway’s assertions of our current cyborg nature/ontology as fascinating thought experiments alone risks ignoring our cybernetic future. Such a future includes evolutionary modifications in three branches biological engineering (an “intelligently designed” evolution of human biology), cybernetic prosthetics (the amalgamation of biology and technology), and technological creation (the creation of transcendence to a fully technological being). Such manifestations are no longer merely science fiction to many, including Yuval Noah Harari, author of *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. Harari explores the current paths of *homo sapiens* and derives a possible future, one engaged with the Anthropocene (71), a new form of capitalism which creates a biological poverty line (2), and a “Great Decoupling” from liberal modes of thought, revalued now away from military or economic usefulness, and individualism – though an augmented class of humans will retain unique abilities (307). While I should note, I don’t quite agree with all of his takes on humanism or religion, the logical evolution of his argument is persuasive.

\(^{173}\) In “Phantom Limbs and Invisible Hands: Bodies, Prosthetics, and Late Capitalist Identifications.”
Capitalist dangers. While we again witness the inclusion of trauma within the construction of Japanese posthuman subjectivities within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*, it is perhaps not tied to “disability” as much as a “lack of ability.” The difference between the two is brought to the fore in any discussion of *chindōgu* that surely doesn’t act as a prosthetic in the traditional sense of disability, and yet joins Nelson’s warnings of Late Capitalism in that *chindōgu* still fill a gap or lack. *Chindōgu* do not replace a previously existing function in the human body, but rather fulfill a newly desired functionality (or dysfunctionality). In this way, *chindōgu*, produce the highly specific lack that they in turn fill. They create, not a disability per se, but the capitalistic function of producing a lack, a capitalistic trauma in itself. The absurdity of this lack, however, becomes parody in its extremity: that is, the previously invisible lack created via capitalism is made extreme and therefore visible within *chindōgu* which act as prosthetics for the non-disabled.

Aside from *chindōgu*’s critique of lack, capitalism, and abilities, discussions of blurred borders and the resulting identity configurations of the hybrid cyborg have also helped feminism to complicate the foundational binaries of fixed identities. And while many Western theorists enter a discussion of cyborg subjectivity through identity, this chapter instead works to generalize such trends in the Japanese subjectivity of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* and discuss the more basic ontological questions surrounding its formation of self. For now, momentarily, this discourse of cybernetics and technology target the foundations of a humanist subjectivity alone and have not yet critiqued the transhumanism that reiterates humanist modes of thought in its contemplations of the human. I thus examine the theoretical foundations of the useful tool as a prosthetic made complex through *chindōgu* in order uncover a cyborg theory which both serves the hybridity of transhumanism while maintaining the technological other within.174

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174 Most of the Anglo-American cyborg discourse follows Haraway’s blazoned trail into cyborg anthropology via feminist critiques, especially those who take the Japanese visual culture of “cyberpunk” as their target. Cyberpunk
The discussion of usefulness, uselessness, and unuselessness that permeates the philosophy of chindōgu evokes an already established discussion of materialism and new materialism with their respective ontologies of objects in/of the world. Chindōgu are thus available to academic discourse through the discussion of objects, tools, and things. Because chindōgu’s prosthetics invite a discussion of cyborg subjectivity, understanding thingness through its technological terms becomes imperative. To this end, let us discuss Heidegger’s Hammer from two perspectives relating to our purposes for chindōgu: Peter-Paul Verbeek and Petran Kockelkoren in their article, “The Things that Matter,” and Graham Harman’s Object Oriented Ontology.

Verbeek and Kockelkoren take seriously the status of “things” when discussing technology and objects. Verbeek and Kockelkoren interpret Heidegger similarly to Derrida in Of Grammatology: that objects and things can only ever present themselves to the subject, thus requiring a subject to interpret objects—a phenomenological stance. That is, Verbeek and Kockelkoren also see technology only as “technology-to …” (36). For them, “technology-to …” is a dystopic genre of literature and art defined by the extensive emersion of bodies in technology. Examples of Japanese cyberpunk may include, Death Powder (1986), Tetsuo the Ironman (1989), Tokyo Gore Police (2008). In this, the science fiction tropes of humanity’s hubris as it relate to technology comes center-stage. The genre engages with questions of cybernetic-human relations and has also spawned major blockbusters in the United States such as: Bladrunner (1982) and The Matrix (1999). These examinations in such texts as Carl Silvio’s “Refiguring the Radical Cyborg in Mamoru Oshii’s ‘Ghost in the Shell’” (1999), Sharalyn Orbaugh’s “Sex and the Single Cyborg: Japanese Popular Culture Experiments in Subjectivity” (2002), or Sato Kumiko’s “How Information Technology Has (Not) Changed Feminism and Japanism: Cyberpunk in the Japanese Context” (2004), help form a contentious discourse that reiterates the complex identities of cyborgs introduced by Donna Haraway. Orbaugh’s text seeks to claim for the present what futuristic formations of cyborg ontology complicate, a complex bordering of bodies and sexuality. Silvio however, points out that while cyborgs have the potential for blurred borders, in the case of Oshii Mamoru’s Ghost in the Shell (1995), such a construction of the body may play directly in to the binary norms of gender (in often a hyper–sexualized way). Sato then examines the cultural context from which these cyborg visuals occur, asking questions such as: “Why did Japan become the only non-Western country that vigorously produces stories and images about cyborgs, androids, and cybernetic identities?” (335). In her work, Sato attacks the Western modes of assumption within postmodernism and studies of cyberpunk in that they assume a Western progression from modernism to a historically postmodern age. Japan, however, has not followed this occident-centric worldview. She claims (as does this dissertation) that a country who differs from the ideas of “Western progression” might also create differing cultural products weighted with their own history.
gives the artifact its identity, an identity through purpose/functionality which requires the consciousness of the user to judge it so. This mimics Heidegger’s in-order-to, or for-what, which focuses mostly on the outcome of the tool’s use rather than the object being used. And in the case of traditional cyborgs, the technological prosthetic’s “in-order-to” is the wholly functional human. The usefulness of cybernetics reinforces the agential, autonomous human being by eschewing the otherness of its own being (just as the tool in the instance of the cyborg is bound up in its corporeality). This touches on the second tenet of chindōgu which requires the invention to function (though barely). With the technology of cyborgs (and chindōgu specifically), this is crucial. Chindōgu require the subject to interpret the invention as an ill-performing prosthesis (rather than as only prosthesis – this requires judgment). Not only must chindōgu be viewed as chindōgu rather than as a useful tool, a specific embodiment must exist in which chindōgu may find a place to “function,” creating the cyborg. This describes chindōgu and technology as a contingent reality which cannot only exist independently of human access – the central question that Harman takes up in his Object-Oriented Philosophy. However, chindōgu, like the well-wrought broken hammer, resist handiness (and therefore invisibility for the sake of the “for-what” or the “in-order-to”) at the same time. In this way, the consciousness is still master of object, and incorporates the object into the unity of self. Such an object’s only ontology is as an invisible other.

The other side of prosthetic technology’s dual nature is expressed in Graham Harman’s opposition to how Verbeek and Kockelkoren interpret Heidegger’s hammer. Harman, in “The Well-Wrought Broken Hammer,” takes the sudden recognition of the object once it is broken as

175 For Verbeek and Kockelkoren, technology may also be an object (its essence constantly in retreat), but for the object to become technology, it must adhere its being to the context in which it finds itself (a context only created through subjects, subjects constituted by the very technology they might imbue with context).
the crux of an independent ontology of objects. He does not offer a human accessibility beyond that of Heidegger, but rather re-forms the relation of human to object as object to object, to which he expands the “haunting” inaccessibility of the thing-in-itself (187). Likewise, the inability of chindōgu to function efficiently declares its independence from the mind that would only perceive its qualities as a means to something else, the product or outcome for which a tool is used. In the case of cyborgs, the product is the functioning of the human body, thus the cybernetic technology which constitutes the cyborg remains veiled in bodily performance. However, because chindōgu are broken tools existing outside the relation of their use value, they may interrupt the process in which the tool becomes overlooked disrupting the very constitution of one’s cyborg self. This forces the cyborg to recognize its own amalgamation and makes visible once again the invisible other.

The reclamation of otherness that the tool (prosthetic) demands once its use is questioned mimics the heart of OOO for Harman which exists in the “non-relational.” Retaining an inaccessible otherness to objects, OOO becomes a reactionary philosophy to what this dissertation has referred to as transhumanism, or what Harman calls “advances in humanities [which have] abandoned the notion of stale autonomous substances or individual human subjects in favor of networks, negotiations, relations, interactions, and dynamic fluctuations” (Harman 187). OOO (like chindōgu) adheres to a critical politics in its denial of the wholly relational. “The political problem here,” he states, “is that a consistently relational ontology would only lead to a perpetual ratification of the status quo.” How could change, spurned by oppression, occur if the terms of the oppression exist only in “intersecting institutions and disciplinary practices” (194)? If subjects are mutable and constantly shifting (think Kroker’s “Body Drift”), it does not follow that they are necessarily without autonomy (think Judith Butler’s Gender
Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity). Harman understands this upheaval about one’s gender identity as equally valid and relative. They may still be a human in upheaval about their gender identity; however, this does not mean they are simultaneously “a trireme, a wall, a butterfly, a nonbutterfly, and a human devoid of any upheaval in gender identity … contextuality is not universal” (194-95). To this end, Harman desires to maintain the stable within the fluctuating, a “definite character” that may then change or be in upheaval. This is his critique of Derridian deconstructionism as well, assuming that because something is in flux it may fluctuate into all things, ultimately settling on the porposition “everything will be everything” (198). This is his critique against a relativist, equa-validity that he sees within deconstruction and transhumanism. However, maintaining stability as the last bastion against “anything goes” assumes that instability necessarily leads to “anything and everything.” This is a common misconception regarding deconstruction and postmodernism (which we have already discussed in the introduction).

Harman’s critical theory here attributes to posthumanism the very traps I have try to avoid and have critiqued within transhumanism: that is, taking modern modes of thinking (mastery and hierarchy in this case) as a critical target while utilizing such modern modes such as delineation, separation, and autonomy.176 As a posthuman theory, OOO cannot stand alone, nor can transhumanism.177 And yet, the particular brand of unuselness within chindōgu (influenced by a unique Japanese history of self-making practices that recognize the dangers in

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176 Harman’s OOO attempts to retake realism from New Criticism, New Historicism, and Deconstructionism by evoking a “weird realism” which instills objects with a resistance to “all forms of causal and cognitive mastery” (188).
177 While Harman never actually equates OOO with posthumanism, the targets of each theory’s critical discourse (subject and object relations and influences in eco-criticism) appear in line with one another. Rather than attempting to validate OOO, this project emphasizes its value while ultimately critiquing its use for the purposes of posthumanism.
outright refuting the critical humanist subjectivity - *shutaisei*) may allow an ontology to emerge which at once holds the autonomy of humanism and OOO in dialogic relation to tranhumanism and a cyborg subjectivity of blurred borders. Only through such a dialectic of philosophies may posthuman-proper emerge. This dual (and contradictory) nature in *chindōgu* subjectivity utilizes its *unuselessness* to interpret Heidegger’s hammer as a tool which remains othered just as it is consumed into the self, an object within the subject.

The posthuman influences of cyborg theory on *chindōgu* (namely hybridity, networking selves, and unity of its constituents) intersect at the point of intentionality. Both *chindōgu* and tranhumanism in general represent the agency of humanity within its own (technological) evolution. That is to say, they jointly pursue a conscious effort to shape humanity’s progression/digression in purposeful ways as opposed to a natural evolution of chance and survival. For example, Heidegger’s hammer (even when broken) still retains a tiny bit of usefulness (hammering the nail with only the wooden handle for example), what then separates this nearly useless tool from an *unuseless* tool? The answer lies in the tool’s creation. *Chindōgu* are intentionally made to be *unuseless*. They fail at performing their allotted task with the efficiency required of industrial products. They break from resourceful productivity, or rather, they are never not broken. The production rendered to create the *chindōgu*, creates not a tool which accidentally breaks or is guaranteed to break, but one whose primary function is dysfunction. This illuminates a tool that is not suddenly recognized as a tool upon breaking (as in Heidegger’s metaphor), but rather is the product of human cognition which purposefully (agentially) shapes a relationship between subject and tool that will always render an acknowledgment of the tool, thereby retraining human cognition in relation to one’s self and one’s objects. In this way, within the pause created through *chindōgu’s* (dys)function, the pause
before the blind movement of usefulness, a moment of contemplation exists which is absent through the useful. *Chindōgu*, thus do not only present the means that evoke the occasion for posthuman contemplation, but exist as posthuman contemplation – or as Kawakami put it, an “inverted logic.”

The *chindōgu* cyborg acts as evidence of the emergence of a Japanese posthuman subjectivity within the culture of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* in this bifurcated and contemplative sense. The amalgamation of technological tool and biology inherently blends the boundaries of self and object within a cyborg ontology, and yet the *chindōgu* cyborg simultaneously resists such an amalgamation by rejecting the usefulness of typical cybernetic prosthetics. This cultural product becomes the figure of an ontology that may utilize borders just as its construction purports borderlessness. *Chindōgu* evidence the contradictory and complex embodiment within physical existence by mimicking what Murakami Haruki accomplishes within fictive subjectivity.¹⁷⁸ This contradictory subjectivity again requires a critique of modern subjectivity (Japanese *shutaisei*) to be one which does not revert fully to the pre-modern borderlessness that Maruyama Masao argued against.¹⁷⁹ It is a posthumanism that must remain both humanist (autonomous) and transhumanist (postsubjectivist). *Chindōgu* uncover the anarchic conceptions of Japanese posthumanism which rebel against not only the adopted liberal humanism of *shutaisei*, but also modernity itself. This rebellion uncovers the roots of Japanese modern society

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¹⁷⁸ To further this point, this project outlined a close reading of Murakami Haruki’s short story collection *after the quake* and the opening to the novel, *Kafka on the Shore*, in which we examined Murakami’s deconstruction of the foundations of subjectivity and his connection to the traumas of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. This provided a concept of subjectivity which is not affixed to a stable foundation, but allows for both autonomous borders and post-subjective borderlessness.

¹⁷⁹ Not only does this highlight Murayama’s theory in expressing a new individualism, a new autonomy in *shutaisei*, but it explains the reluctance of Japanese discourse to undermine *shutaisei* with a potential subjectivity that may revert Japanese society back to its highly nationalist tendencies. Any discussion of posthumanism in Japan is haunted by such fears of normative rationalizations of totalitarianism.
and resists therein not only the liberal humanist thought processes of unity, progression, efficiency, or mastery, but the entirety of a logocentric modernity. This does not deny the ability of liberal humanist thought and logic to express reality, but diminishes its mastery over the potentially illogical, separate, useless, paradoxical, and incongruous human thinking. This is posthuman thinking, and it requires a non-western perspective in order to express itself. It requires that Japan have followed a different path of humanist thought than their economic partners in the West and for the theoretical innovations within subjectivity to have come from “low” cultural products rather than the established academic elites so that its growth may detour state influences. This Japanese posthumanism may ultimately unleash Anglo-American Posthumanism from the shackles of liberal humanist thought by showcasing a transhumanism (in the chindōgu cyborg) which paradoxically shares both humanist and transhumanist attributes.
Chapter 4: The Posthuman Spiral: Junji Ito’s *Uzumaki* and the Figure of Japanese Subjectivity during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*

“…The winding streets … it all gets on my nerves. Yes, winding … I’m getting wound up … Spirals … This town is contaminated with spirals …” Itō Junji, *Uzumaki* (17).


Thus far, this dissertation has exposed a subjectivity in culture which (for the political and historical reasons identified in Chapter One) resists the totalities of both humanist autonomy and transhumanist post-subjectivity. The resulting posthuman subjectivity, as expressed within the cultural products of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*, differs from Anglo-American accounts of posthumanism in that it necessarily retains both humanist autonomy and transhumanist heteronomy/interconnection. The ease with which depictions of subjectivity in Japanese culture drift between these two poles without ever overcoming or erasing the other suggests a conception of human ontology that (although perpetually deferred) allows for the contradiction of maintaining both humanism and transhumanism in the arbitrary performance of subjectivity. While such a conception initially appears paradoxical, Japanese culture has long been preoccupied with an image exists that incorporates these elements: the spiral. This chapter considers another cultural work during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* entitled, *Uzumaki: Spiral into*

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180 The spiral form, specifically the logarithmic spiral, contains such contradictory elements as: a movement inwardly and outwardly, a simultaneous infinity with a finite perception, a measured sameness as the spiral expands or diminishes.
Horror by Itō Junji. While there are many instances of spirals within the Japanese visual culture of the Ushinawareta Nijūnen, this particular work beautifully encapsulates the spiral’s connection to the emerging posthuman subjectivity within Japan at this time. Through Itō’s horror manga (graphic narrative), I argue that the titular symbol is the perfect figuration of this difficult conception of subjectivity because its ontic foundations resist the totalizing structures of both humanism and transhumanism.

The spiral shape (Rasen - 螺旋, Kajou - 漩渦, Uzumaki -渦巻き) is not foreign to Japanese aesthetic culture and its history helps illuminate the importance of its resurgence and reworking during the Ushinawareta Nijūnen. Within the Jōmon period (14,500 BC – 300 BC), early inhabitants of Japan used spiral designs in their pottery. Fermat’s Spiral separates the Yin from Yang in Onmyodo (based on the ancient Chinese philosophical figuration of dual forces in balance within Taosim). Japan has included the swirling design in its modern aesthetics as well. In more recent art history we find numerous employments of the spiral, including Hokusai’s Ukio-e woodblock painting, The Great Wave off Kanagawa (神奈川沖浪裏) (1830-1833) and Miyazaki Takashi’s The Castle of Tin Tin (2003), to the architecture of Maki Fumihiko’s Spiral (1985), Nikken Sekkei Ltd.’s Mode Gakuen Spiral Towers (2008), and Hiroshi Nakamura’s Ribbon Chapel (2013). Significantly, the use of this geometric shape within narrative culture becomes more frequent during the Ushinawareta Nijūnen. Manga such as: Itō Junji’s Uzumaki: Spiral into Horror -うずまき (1998-1999), Shirodaira Kyō’s Spiral: The Bonds of Reasoning -スパイラル〜推理の絆 (2000-2005), or Kishimoto Masashi’s Naruto -ナルト and continuation in

181 The first publication of this manga series was within a magazine called, Big Comic Spirits, and was titled simply, うずまき -uzumaki – meaning spiral. Retaining the Japanese uzumaki in the English translation is not something common within manga. In this instance, the title promotes a defamiliarization with the spiral in order, perhaps, to villainize it within this particular horror. The series ran from 1998-1999. Also, two games were released under the publisher, Bandai Wonderswan, called Uzumaki: Denshi Kaiki Hen (テレビ怪奇篇 – Television Odd Edition – [2000]) and Uzumaki: Noroi Simulation (呪いシュミュレーション–Curse Simulation – [2000]).
Naruto: Shippuden (1997-2015) who’s titular character dons the surname, Uzumaki; films such as: Iida Jōji’s Rasen (1998), Higuchinsky’s Uzumaki (2000), Sono Shion’s Suicide Circle (2001), and Kurosawa Kiyoshi’s Pulse (2001), depict both plot and thematic elements of spirals and curves.

Among these narratives, only Itō Junji’s Uzumaki confronts the spiral as an antagonist, a force beyond its form which shapes both humans and their environment in a way that models the emerging posthumanism within Japanese culture. In this way, Ito’s manga diverts from typical portrayals of the spiral form, as it uniquely connects the spiral to subjectivity via an exploration of agency. Thus, I turn to Uzumaki and the figure of the spiral to visually metaphorize the contradictory Japanese subjectivity that we have already uncovered within the short fiction of Murakami Haruki and the unuseless cyborgs of Kawakami Kenji’s chidōgu.

The spiral (as depicted within Itō’s manga) represents the ontology of a Japanese subject that draws from Buddhist thought and the Kyoto School of philosophy (specifically, Nishida Kitaro) to critique Japan’s modern humanism. At the same time, this spiral resists the post-subjective interconnection between Japanese subjectivities which preceded it (pre-World War II) by not only spiraling outward into connection with others, but spiraling inward as well into a simultaneous individualism. The spiral becomes a way of thinking the posthuman subject in Japan that differs from current Anglo-American theories of posthumanism; and yet, it can also be linked to other Western theorists’ work on the spiral shape (Hegel, Benjamin, and Barthes). Itō’s Uzumaki uses this spiral form to present an inverted logic of subjectivity and to question the (liberal humanist) reason-centered processes of unity, progression, mastery, and hierarchy. We have seen this inversion in several contexts: in the epistemological subject complicated by

\[182\] This will be discussed at more length later in this chapter of the dissertation.
Murakami Haurki’s deconstruction of foundations (along with Paul de Man’s conception of “blindness as insight”); in the physical subject of the Chindogu Cyborg whose unity and functionality were questioned; and now in the ontological subject that transgresses the borders of an autonomous self. Such inverted thinking practices require not only a destruction of humanist totalizing structures, but also the resistance to incorporating a new totalizing structure. The spiral integrates the thesis and anti-thesis (Murakami’s sight/blindness, emptiness/wholeness, Kawakami’s dysfunction/usefulness/unusefulness, unity/fragmentation, Nishida’s presence/absence, place/nothingness; as well as Itô’s individualism/interconnection, nature/humanity). It does so, furthermore, without requiring synthesis or the erasure of the parts into a whole or totality. In this way, a spiral subject may figuratively hold the contradictory notions of individualism and post-subjective interconnection without surpassing either because the very form of the spiral inherently includes contradictions (it is both infinite and finite, ever-expanding and diminishing, limitless and yet limited by perception). Such a subjectivity is thus not equivalent to the theory of Anglo-American posthumanism, but marks a uniquely Japanese contribution.

However, it invites comparisons and dialogue with Anglo-American posthumanism for two reasons. It shares the target of its theoretical inquiry – the human subject – as it exists prior to distinctions of race, ethnicity, and nationality, and it acknowledges the influx of Japanese popular culture into America as influences and stand-alone products. Such formations that complicate foundations and binaries acquire a new sense of urgency during this period of social questioning, the Ushinawareta Nijūnen. In this way, the spiral transgresses national and cultural borders through the universality of the human as theoretical target and the international appeal of the cultural products from which a Japanese posthuman discourse emerges. This transnational
trajectory mimics the spiral shape itself: we begin with Anglo-American posthumanism, circle outside these borders to Japanese popular culture of the 1990s and 00s, and return in difference with a conception of the human self that maintains both humanism and transhumanism. This is, however, to be expected from theorizations that necessarily complicate the idea of borders.

Since very little is written on the manga, *Uzumaki*, (and that which is written concentrates on the film adaptation), this project seeks to read subjectivity in Itō Junji’s horror manga toward a Japanese/Anglo-American posthuman theory. It builds on the work of Western critic Jay McRoy who touches on the spiraling similarities among several films of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. In “Spiraling into Apocalypse: Sono Shion’s *Suicide Circle*, Higuchinsky’s *Uzumaki*, and Kurosawa Kiyoshi’s *Pulse,*” McRoy suggests that these films contain recursive moments of apocalypse and return or transcendence, “a complex history of annihilation and reconstruction” that mimics the *daikaiju eiga* (giant monster films, ie. *Gojira* - 1954) of post-war Japanese culture (135). In this way, McRoy identifies two distinct attributes of the spiral that are thematically accentuated within Itō’s *Uzumaki*. The first is the temporality of a spiral which progresses in recurrences; the second is the spatial return with difference; and both require thought processes which may hold logical contradictions. He also links the experimental nature of Higuchinsky’s *Uzumaki* to the disorienting effects of the thematized vortex.

McRoy furthermore examines these works as representative icons of a Japanese social body circulating between destruction and construction. In these terms, the post-apocalyptic is not comparable to the barren wastelands of American films [*The Omega Man* (1971), *Mad Max* (series), *The Matrix* (1999), *Children of Men* (2006), *Wall-E* (2008), or *The Book of Eli* (2010)], but rather a point of transition or revelation much more closely linked to the term’s original Greek meanings (*ἀποκάλυψις* – *apokálypsis* meaning “uncovering” or “disclosure”). To
demonstrate a post-apocalyptic mindset that embraces contradiction, McRoy quotes Joshua La
Bare when he claims that Japanese cultural products reacting to trauma (as displayed in post-war
society as well as the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*) display “not only apocalypse, but the fact of its
transcendence: the finite and, through it, the infinite” (136). It is this spiral motion of trauma
through apocalypse and transcendence that allows McRoy to link the Japanese horror genre’s
“continued application of apocalyptic conceits as a variable response to a transforming Japanese
political and cultural landscape at the dawn of a new millennium” (136). McRoy’s view of the
spiral within Ito’s *Uzumaki* as entropic isolation and individualism which progresses only in an
inward descent is typical of melancholic readings of the horror genre that regard horror as only
the precursor to trauma. Horror, rather, is instead both the precursor of and reaction to trauma.

My reading of the *Uzumaki* deviates from McRoy’s view of the spiral in that I see not
only the movement inward toward destruction (or isolationism), but also a simultaneous
movement outward toward construction (or inclusion). *Uzumaki* depicts both the destruction of
the town of Kurouzu and its transcendence, the end point of its specific temporality and its
eternity. My reading of Itō’s *Uzumaki* builds upon my previous critiques of Anglo-American
transhumanism by setting posthumanism in the light of Paul de Man’s foundation of “blindness,”
Nishida’s concept of *mu no basho*, and Maruyama Masao’s critique of inter-subjective thinking
in order to understand the figure of the spiral as it displays subjectivity. To accomplish this, I
will first study the unique aspects of Itō’s representations of subjectivity to highlight the same
features considered in Murakami’s short fiction and Kawakami’s inverted logic of *Chindōgu*. I
will then revisit Nishida Kitarō to link the spiral form in *Uzumaki* to previous Japanese
constructions (or destructions) of subjectivity. I argue that the subjectivity uncovered in Itō’s
*Uzumaki* may broadly contain potential for the expanding of Anglo-American posthuman theory
in so far as it allows for an alternative figuration of subjectivity which is not bound by modern humanist modes of thought. The spiral thusly acts as the figuration of a subjectivity lacking in Anglo-American discourse.

**Itō’s Horror Manga, *Uzumaki***

Itō utilizes the *manga* form of storytelling, building upon its history within Japanese culture. I read the rich and precise visual acuity of *Uzumaki’s* graphic images as further evidence of a distinctly Japanese posthumanism within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*, one that engages not only with the blurred borders of post-subjectivity but also with reestablishing the borders of the self and other. As a form, *manga*, according to Kinko Ito, “are closely related to Japanese history and culture, including such areas as politics, economy, family, religion, and gender” (26) by visualizing difficult (and sometimes taboo) concepts. They are powerful social tools that both “reflect and shape” Japanese culture. Images used for entertainment and storytelling have been traced back to eighth century Japanese temples depicting “caricatures,” eleventh and twelfth century *Chōju giga* (The Animal Scrolls) – humorous drawings of animals – and twelfth century *Jigoku Zōshi* (hell scrolls) and *Gaki Zōshi* (hungry ghost scrolls) depicting a visual passage through different layers of reality and through hell (26-27). Even the pictorial Chinese language system adopted by the Japanese as “kanji” creates a fundamentally intertwined concept of words and pictures for the Japanese. Modern *manga* is said to truly begin with Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989), the “God of *Manga*,” who utilized cinematic storytelling techniques in order to portray dense and engaging visual narratives (35-36). Kinko Ito expertly chronicles the rise of *manga*

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183 In “*Manga in Japanese History* (2008).” Kinko Ito is not related to Itō Junji. I write her name in a traditional western style because she is American and typically writes her own name this way.
throughout Japan’s history and pays close attention to its influence (or reflection) on social themes throughout post-war Japanese society (including issues of sexual orientation, eroticism, and feminism). She claims that it was in the 1980s, tied to the bubble economy which saw a dramatic increase in individuals with disposable incomes, that manga began to explode in popularity (43). The popularity within Japan soon led to the exportation of manga, and as this occurred, manga became more and more legitimized as a cultural focal point of Japanese society (46-47). For Kinko Ito, “Manga’s power is tied to its versatility as a visual medium of communication. It creates fascinating images and text that can provide political and social commentary, instruct, socialize, and entertain in any number of ways. It is also a commercial engine with the potential for economic and cultural impact” (46-47). Such a medium not only establishes a conduit through which narratives may effect change in society, historically, its very form demands such an influence. Itō’s work exemplifies the weight of manga’s influence in Japanese society, with the power not only to entertain, but also to “reflect and shape.”

In the deluxe English edition, Itō’s Uzumaki: Spiral into Horror, the image which begins the story depicts our young narrator, Goshima Kirie, standing on a hillside overlooking the small fictional town of Kurouzu-Cho. The town appears to be any normal sea-side village in Japan – the houses are nestled close together in the plains between the mountains and a lighthouse overlooks the bay. However, even in this idyllic scene, we glimpse the first hints of spirals in the grass. These spirals will ultimately “contaminate” the town, causing death,

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184 The “Deluxe Edition,” published in English in 2013, offers a single compilation for volumes one through three. This edition boasts some augmented art. Several pages, sparsely positioned throughout the text are rendered in color. This reveals something noteworthy within the first few pages – the narrator, Kirie, is a red-head. This choice is interesting as her hair color is never mentioned within the text and may be ambiguous within purely black and white renderings. This choice generally defines Kirie as either a foreigner (since natural red hair is extremely rare within Southeast Asia) or one who continuously colors her hair. Logistics within this story make the latter seem unlikely.
destruction, and the reformation of structures, streets, and people. They act as the story’s antagonist but are never personified. Johannes Ramö Streith points out that, “The absence of [a distinct and personified antagonist as is seen in many Western horror pieces] is replaced with something bigger, more diffuse, associated with our inner selves, our morality, our belief, nature, the universe, or simply the unknown” (2).\textsuperscript{185} The nebulous nature of this villain, however, does not equate to impotence. Nothing is safe from the spiral as it penetrates the environment, built structures, and even the bodies of human beings. Neither human nor environment escapes the basic arrangement of the spiral shape, the \textit{Uzumaki}. The first acknowledgment of this crisis comes from Kirie’s boyfriend, Shuichi, who claims “…The winding streets … it all gets on my nerves. Yes, winding … I’m getting wound up … Spirals … This town is contaminated with spirals …” Itō Junji, \textit{Uzumaki} (17).\textsuperscript{186} He is one of the only characters who sees clearly the immediacy of the problem.

Beyond the first image, following Kirie down the hills entering the town, the panels begin to show more and more spirals until the composition of the frame displays mostly (overwhelmingly) the fields of grassy yellow swirls. While seemingly benign, the spirals in \textit{Uzumaki} depict three distinct modes of thinking concerning the human within its environment

\textsuperscript{185} In his article, “YOKAI och SKRÄCKMANGA Fem serieläsare diskuterar Uzumaki” (Yokai and Horror Manga: Five Comic Readers Discuss Uzumaki). Quote translation mine. Original Swedish: “Avsaknaden av detta element ersätts med något större, mer diffust, förknippat med vårt inre, vår moral, vår tro, naturen, universum eller helt enkelt det okända.” I use this Swedish thesis project, overseen by Anette Göthlund and Cecilia Andersson of Konstfack, University College of Arts, Crafts, and Design, in order to include a wider range of critique that is missing in English.

\textsuperscript{186} そうだ … ひっかき回すんだ … 湯… 渕だ… うずまきだ… この町はうずまきに汚染され始めている (sōda … hikkaki mawasunda … uzu … uzu da … uzumaki da … kono machi wa uzumaki ni osensare hajimete iru). I was wary of the word “contaminated” at first because it felt off. However, “osensare” is clearly “contaminated” or “polluted,” in the passive voice. What feels odd about it is the passive voice, as if some unseen force was polluting the town with spirals rather than the spirals themselves having agency. And the fact that these spirals, which will shortly be seen as that which may blur lines between humans and environment, are the products of pollution is worth noting. The act of disturbing the natural through pollution unveils the roots of the Japanese state. And these roots or foundations, as we saw when discussing Murakami, are now exposed for questioning. Here Itō ties in the natural and the critical within Shuichi’s exclamation.
through horrific transformations. First, the spiral is incorporated into subjectivity from its place in nature and artistic representations. Second, the spiral connects across subjectivities enacting the transhumanist (postsubjective) theories that understand subjectivity as networked or linked. And third, the figuration of the spiral shows not only an interconnection of bodies or minds, but also the penetration of a singular being’s form (which ultimately consumes an other into its being). In this way, Uzumaki displays a figure which incorporates both autonomous humanism and postsubjective transhumanism within a singular form, the spiral.

Itō introduces us first to natural spirals, spirals that appear in the environment surrounding and penetrating the town’s borders, in grass, on the bark patterns of trees, within curved whips of clouds, in small whirlwinds, and in the curvature of an empty snail shell. However, once the main characters reach the streets of the city and exit the train, the natural swirls and curves have relented to the strait lines of constructed buildings and light poles. This begins to set up a binary of natural spirals against a straitened man-made modernity. The borders of this binary however, are soon transcended as the first victims of the spiral, begin to create their own artwork - pottery, because ceramics is “the art of the spiral” - based on the circular figures forsaking for the first time nature’s domination of the form (18). This soon becomes an obsession that sees one man forming his own spirals in everything from art, to the liquids of his soup bowl, to the waters of his evening bath. When the family throws away his “collection,” the

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187 There are many instances of the spiral in nature (particularly the logarithmic spiral) such as: the approach of a hawk to its prey (their sharpest view is at an angle to their direction of flight; this angle is the same as a spiral’s pitch), the approach of an insect to a light source, the arms of spiral galaxies (our own galaxy, the Milky Way, has several spiral arms, each of which is roughly a logarithmic spiral with pitch of about 12 degrees), the nerves of the cornea (this is, corneal nerves of the subepithelial layer terminate near superficial epithelial layer of the cornea in a logarithmic spiral pattern), the bands of tropical cyclones (such as hurricanes), many biological structures including the shells of mollusks or the construction of the human cochlear, logarithmic spiral beaches can form as the result of wave refraction and diffraction by the coast (Half Moon Bay (California) is an example of such a type of beach).
man exclaims, “I don’t need spirals anymore! I finally realized that you can make spirals yourself! You’ll see! You can express the spiral though your own body!” (29). This statement is visually expressed as the character moves his eyes in a circular motion (but each eye in different directions), in the unnatural curling of his tongue, and in the final (and fatal) spiraling of his own body within a circular bath. Within this first chapter, Itō has initially set-up the spiral as natural as opposed to man-made, then relocated the spiral within man-made objects or collections, and ultimately expressed the spiral through human embodiment(s). Such a structure mimics the progression of spirals from natural occurrences to their representations within art, architecture, and narrative. What then Itō intimates is the next stage of the spiral - that is, the inextricability of its form with subjectivity and embodiment. This progression, the movement beyond the borders of both natural and artistic representations, becomes the progenitor of horror within Uzumaki.

Itō then proposes how the spiral may be used to entwine human subjects. The chapter entitled, “Twisted Souls,” depicts a pair of star-crossed lovers whose final act of love Kirie witnesses. This act mimics a spiral twist from nature (two snakes making love) and employs it in the fulfillment of these individuals at once separate and entwined. The bodies of each are twisted in on themselves first and then wrapped around the other. However, the fate of these two lovers is not idyllic or romantic, but horrific as their faces appear to be silently screaming and their eyes, solid white. At this point several people including the girl’s father attempt to separate them, but according to him, they are like “steel wire” (169). At this the lovers regain their senses and deny any attempt to try to separate them. They are together, forever. And at this, the two of them, acting as a single animal, slither into the sea.

The Uzumaki series ends with a similar image of interconnection. The two main characters, Kirie and Shuichi, seemingly the last two beings alive in the town who have not yet
turned into a spiral of some kind, venture toward the center of town (a town that has now transformed itself into a single-lined spiral of row houses leading to an old pond. The pond has drained into a well and Kirie and Shuichi descend in the hopes of discovering, “the cause of the spiral curse haunting this town” (585). What they discover underneath the town are more spirals, great stone spirals, townsfolk who have turned into spiral shapes, ruins of spirals, and yet they find no origin, no telos, no mastermind behind the spiral, only more spirals to “suck things in” (606). At this, unable to continue on, the two embrace and link arms and joints in the inhuman twisting of a spiral. This act seems to have been the final piece of the puzzle as the ground around them then spirals upward to “complete” the spiral in the center of town.

Because of the prominence placed on the interconnection of and bonds between subjects and bodies, the manga, Uzumaki, resists McRoy’s interpretation of the film as a cautionary tale against isolationism when he claims it as a, “postmodern critique of isolationism and endogamy that posits entropic dissolution as both an end to be feared, as well as a means to potential corporeal and social transformation” (137). While the town is indeed isolated from the outside world, this appears to be more of a plot device to prevent the rescue of the main characters rather than the basis for a unifying theory. It is not a choice of the people to be shut-ins, but rather a reaction to the horrors outside their doors. Isolationism, if it exists within the story, only reacts to the spiral which has quite literally forced everyone inside. And with fewer and fewer shelters available, the townspeople become so enmeshed with each other inside these buildings that they begin to intertwine their limbs and bodies, creating a mass of curved body parts inseparable and

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188 This begs the question of what is at the center of Itō’s spirals. Once the individuals reached what they thought was the center, “Dragonfly Pond,” they realized that there was still further to descend. Always in the hopes of attaining the meaning of this construction (the epistemological foundation), the two continue onward. However, the meaning is forever deferred and they are left with no more knowledge than a guess (which I suppose is some knowledge). This foreshadows the return of Nishida’s mu no basho (place of nothingness) as the potential center of the spiral subjectivity (as explained later in this chapter).
indistinguishable at times (Itō 508-511). However, his observations of a unique view of apocalypse and disaster concerning *Uzumaki* seems commensurate with the *manga* for two reasons. The first hints several times throughout the story that the town of Kurouzu-cho, had once been shaped like a giant spiral (the exact same shape that the town becomes at the end). This supposes that every so often, the town twists and turns its structures and people into a spiral through similar occurrences of disaster and trauma. It is repetitive without end. The second reason employs a difficult and perhaps contradictory view of time. As the characters discovered, on the outskirts of the spiral, time had sped up, and within the center of the spiral, time had slowed. It slowed to the point of an infinite moment in time, the embrace of Kirie and Shuichi. This moment, being infinite, surpassed notions of present, future, or past, and end the series with this description.

And with the spiral complete, a strange thing happened … The curse was over the same moment it began, the endless frozen moment I spent in Shuichi’s arms. And it will be the same moment when it ends again … when the next Kurouzu-cho is built amidst the ruins of the old one. When the eternal spiral awakes once more. (610)

The eternality of the spiral is not eternal in progress, but rather bends and twists back on itself, regressing at times and progressing at others. It is a symbol which contains two contradictory attributes as it relates to disaster and trauma, a sense of stasis on one hand (the frozen moment of embrace) and a sense of movement on the other (the resolution that such a disaster will inevitably occur again). These two contradictory binaries, movement/stasis, exist simultaneously within the spiral of *Uzumaki*.189

189 Not only thematically or poetically does this occur, but mathematically as well. The Logarithmic spiral, for example, has no beginning or ending (unlike other spirals). This means that a line drawn as a radius from any point along the spiral to its center has a finite distance while the distance to the center following the spiral cannot be measured. At once, the logarithmic spiral is finite and infinite.
Beyond the interconnection of characters through networked and rhizomatic forms of the spiral, a movement outward from the body to incorporate others and environment, there are numerous cases within the text of the body twisting in on itself, spiraling inward in the entropic sense of individualism that McRoy had initially sensed. *Uzumaki*, however, displays both within its pages, though perhaps the most grotesque images stem from the spirals which penetrate the body. Here, Itō displays a young girl whose forehead had been pierced with a developing spiral. The spiral in her face had grown so immense that it eventually sucked in her eyeball which flowed down the whirlpool and disappeared into the center.¹⁹⁰ Several things are striking about this image (which is perhaps the most iconic from the *manga* series); the first is the limits of the penetration of the spiral within this girl. The spiral does not go through her, but into her. The eyeball is removed from her façade and swirls down deeper into her being, never ceasing.¹⁹¹ This is the penetration of her bodily form, a seamless movement from the external to the internal. The second is a motif that this dissertation re-experiences within *Uzumaki*, the inclusion (or origin) of trauma as it relates to subjectivity. The young girl pictured above is named Azami. She is a reserved, pretty girl in the same class as our narrator, Kirie. But for some reason, boys are drawn to her (mesmerized by her). Kirie befriends her and learns about a small scar on her forehead shaped like a crescent moon. Apparently, when Azami was young, in order to impress a boy, she climbed some playground equipment but fell and cut her forehead open. This scar, however, throughout the next couple days, grows into a spiral and cuts deeper into her forehead until it

¹⁹⁰ While the English onomatopoeia for this particular sound is “SLRRRR,” the Japanese is ごろっ (*Goro*), a mimetic term for “heavy rotation” or “flopping.”

¹⁹¹ The removal of the eyeball specifically reminds us of a type of “blindness” which reminds us of the Western critic Paul de Man’s conception of “blindness as insight.”
ensnares her eyeball, pulls in another male classmate, and then consumes her own limbs and torso until there is nothing left (106).\(^{192}\)

Azami’s tale begins with trauma, the mental anguish of not receiving the attention of boys, and the physical pain of a fall. The manifestation of this trauma, the trace of the trauma and its reactivation, becomes the spiral which ultimately consumes her bodily form. The classmate pulled into Azami also disappears completely hinting at the interconnection previously displayed by the two lovers; and yet, after the external becomes internal, (via Azami and the classmate’s bodies) nothing remains. Or as Kirie puts it, “Azami Kurotani was devoured [by the spiral] from head to toe … without leaving a trace behind (106). The nothingness that remains is in stark contrast to the interconnection of the lovers whose entwined bodies created a separate worm-like being which was able to act on its own and slither into the sea. Azami’s interconnection is solely inner-connection without an external manifestation. It is partly individualist as McRoy might argue (in the way that the spiral consumed her own embodied presence perpetually reducing it in an entropic pitch until nothing remains), and yet the consumption of the classmate hints at something else, an infinitely deferred interconnection, a dialectic of two bodies which resists synthesis. In this way, Itō’s depiction of a spiraled subjectivity mimics the critique of transhumanism we’ve heard from Cary Wolfe and Neil Badmington; that is, the erasure of individual autonomous embodiment into post-subjective interconnection requires the same liberal humanist modes of thinking (mastery, progression, elimination) that define the

\(^{192}\) Itō’s conception of subjectivity as expressed through the figure of the spiral calls for not only a reexamination of subjectivity within Anglo-American posthuman theories, but also for what this could mean concerning contemporary trauma theory (Dominik LaCapra and Cathy Caruth predominately). For example, the circular motion of the traumatizing moment and the desire for its return (death drive) is complicated in a spiral subjectivity whose non-existent origin or end might resist the tidy nature of bringing trauma full circle. Freud’s Fort/Da limits the possible illimitable nature of a spiraling trauma, a trauma without clear borders (or with contradictory borders). A spiraling trauma, one which resists foundation or conclusion, appears closer to the depictions of trauma during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. And because of such revelations during a time of particular upheaval, I do not believe the Japanese conception of subjectivity and their depictions of trauma are unlinked.
cornerstones of precisely what transhumanism is attempting to surpass. Such a critique implodes in on itself (not unlike Azami’s spiral). The result is nothingness for both transhumanism’s misguided attempt at separation from humanism and Azami’s external embodiment. There is no trace left of either.

Azami is not the only example of human bodies succumbing to the spiral. Several other individuals develop the warped and twisted form (always to their own detriment): young men slowly turn to snails with logarithmic spirals on their shells, a boy who was hit by a car is fused with a large spring, and his corpse bounces around. Others merely have parts of their body infused with the spiral - hair, tongues, ears, wombs. However, in Chapter thirteen “The House,” spirals on parts of the body spread to the whole. The chapter begins with Kirie’s family looking for a place to stay because their own house was destroyed in a hurricane. The only vacancy left in town was an old (pre-nineteenth century) “row house.” The row houses (long simple houses with sections partitioned off for multiple families) in Kurouzu-cho are the only structural remnants of the previous spiral structures that constituted the town (as well as foundational precursors to what Kurozu-cho will become, a single spiral structure). At the present moment in the story (chapter thirteen), the row houses act as individual units, and yet their origin as well as their telos is the singular spiral form that takes over the town. Their potentiality lies in the yet unseen singular form. The spiral is latent in each “individual” row house. The age of each house marks an interesting point in Japanese history as well. If they are “pre-nineteenth century,” They are pre-modern (in that the modernization of Japan didn’t fully begin until the late 1800’s).

Though modernity crept into the town in the form of modern houses (and is subsequently destroyed by a large spiral – the hurricane), a return to the pre-modern appears inevitable. Thus the architecture of the town, its destruction and reformation, mimic the spiral subjectivities of the
town’s folk. The structures hold simultaneously two seemingly contradictory forces, the individual row-houses that are at once part of a greater whole. This also mimics the theoretical methodology of this dissertation in that while a new theory of human subjectivity emerges it cannot do so without a critical remnant. That is, the Japanese posthumanism expressed within these cultural products includes shades of pre-modern/pre-war subjectivities as articulated in the reflexive self and the other within the self from Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney and the contradictory self-consciousness of Nishida Kitarō, both examined in the first chapter.

Ito begins to utilize the visual nature of the manga to force the reader to recognize their own act of looking and gazing into these lives through his placements of perspectives and framing. When Kirie’s family moves in, they meet a neighbor, Mr. Wakabayashi, who appears friendly. However, this neighbor begins to peep on the family (Kirie in particular) through a small hole in the wood partition. The first image of this occurrence zooms in on the hole from Kirie’s side. An eyeball is seen in the space watching Kirie and staring at us, the reader; then we are placed on the other side of the wall, with the peeper; however, this does not allow more visual information as what is seen on this side is still only the illuminated eyeball, wide with excitement. Finally, this series of images ends with a view looking through the hole as if we are the peeping Mr. Wakabayashi seeing Kirie again now framed by the edges of the hole. Such a movement through the images is almost dizzying as it is nearly an exact 180° shift in perspective. While we are denied the information of who is looking, we experience the act of looking itself (being the object watched, seeing the watching, and then being the watchers). Such an emphasis on sight uncomfortably conflates our own act of reading the images with the peeping action the images portray and links to horrific spirals soon after this scene. The interconnection of watching and being watched blurs the borders of individual perspectives, and
through the form of the *manga*, the reader experiences the thematic spiraling of subjects. The connection of the spiral with vision occurs elsewhere within the *manga* collection. Beyond the voyeuristic moments of this chapter, we recall that it was Azami’s eye that was first “sucked in” to her spiral and the small spiral on her forehead began to mesmerize those around her (an action which fulfilled the childhood need for attention). And in another chapter that I have yet to reference, Kirie becomes the center of attention (or the object of the town’s gaze) when her hair begins to curl into spirals. The spiral’s ocular association with mesmerism utilizes the visual form of the *manga* and the visual nature of Japanese culture itself to expand the theoretical presence of the spiral into culture. This suggests that the visual form of *manga* is paramount to examining the societal implications of the spiral.

The fact that the spirals in chapter thirteen begin as warts, immediately ground us again in the bodily. Each of the individuals who live in the row house finds the warts on his/her hands and feet first, then the warts spread all over their bodies and begin to grow in spiral shaped horns and thorns protruding out from the skin and eventually piercing clothing. These wart spirals progress so dramatically, they eventually take over the person’s body, cause madness, and eventually death. Another neighbor who had been living in the house longer than Kirie’s family, came down with this skin condition and died of it. This moment is presented in a series of images that again forcibly shape our point of view, limiting our knowledge. We see Kirie’s face as she discovers the body but are prohibited from seeing the corpse itself. When the paramedics come to remove the body we see them remove it from the house covered by a sheet, and we see mysterious holes in the floor where the body had been (caused, no doubt, by the protuberances). The warts get worse and worse and another hurricane prevents the family’s escape to a hospital for help. When they finally notice that around the hole through which Mr. Wakabayashi had
been peeping, large spiral thorns now penetrate the wooden partition, the wood then breaks revealing a grotesque body of spiraled thorns, unrecognizable as their neighbor and barely humanoid. When we see Mr. Wakabayashi’s face, we finally discover the ultimate stages of this spiral condition, a monster comprised of horns and thorns that twist and shift not only coming from the skin but transforming parts of the body (teeth, eyes, hair) into these spiral shapes. The eyes in particular are pronounced within this page’s final image, horned spirals reaching out toward Kirie at once attempting to grasp the object of his peeping while blinding him from her. This horned monstrosity, with spirals for eyes, lunges for Kirie and follows her out into the storm. A flying piece of debris ends Mr. Wakabayashi’s life before he could reach Kirie, and he falls to the ground with a thud. From here, the story quickly moves on, the storm passes, and as the family leaves the row house; their warts disappear.

This chapter depicts a spiral infection within the body that turns the person into spirals, spreading from distinct individual warts and finally consuming the entirety of the body. And this was coupled with a dual (contradictory) mode of sight, the peeping penetration of sight into the lives of these individuals (from both Mr. Wakabayashi and the reader) and the manipulation of our sight that limits one’s knowledge of the spiral. This dual act, performed by and upon the reader, mirrors the spiral form itself which holds distinct and opposite occurrences within tension of each other (its infinite and finite natures, dual movements inward and outward, the limits that must be placed on it in order to perceive it). The limited sight of both the character of Mr. Wakabayashi (through a small framed hole) and the reader (through the small framed panels of the comic) restrain the potential and place borders on the borderless. Viewed in these terms, a subjectivity that follows the motif of the spiral throughout Itō’s work is also bordered and

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193 Again we come across Paul de Man’s figurative use of sight and blindness ascribed to the foundations of meaning within his particular brand of deconstruction.
borderless, restricted and unrestricted, a single autonomous individual whose ultimate interconnection with the environment, the structures of the town, and the other townspeople is latent in their current limited forms.\textsuperscript{194} What Itō brilliantly accomplishes within the images of this chapter dedicated to seeing and watching in both revelatory and restricted fashions is the sudden revelation\textsuperscript{195} our own contradiction mirrored within these simultaneous binaries of seeing, our own limited limitlessness.

While Itō’s \textit{Uzumaki} depicts in figurative fashion the subjectivity that both Murakami and Kawakami have displayed in their own realms of art and thought during the \textit{Ushinawareta Nijūnen}, we must not ignore the horror of its presentation. The horror genre often rests its tropes on the punitive nature of its tropes; that is, the morality of horror depictions is displayed through punishments which focus the moral determinants on the ethical fiber of the characters (those who are innocent tend to live or at least die in less torturous ways). This is true of \textit{Uzumaki} as people succumb to the horrors of the spiral through vanity, perversion, sloth, greed, lust, etc. And yet, the fact that the innocent tend to suffer as well, and even those who do cross moral boundaries have similar connections to trauma and their environment, suggests that trauma will not be discriminatory to morality, but universally applied to humanity. Childhood traumas, and the experiences of natural disasters in the area bond many of the townspeople together. The first time Kirie is struck by spirals (her hair has curled into unnatural, mesmerizing swirls above her head)

\textsuperscript{194} It is necessary to point out that each of these not only complicates modern forms of environment, structure, and subject, but displays also distinct modern forms of control, mastery, and separation as well. For example, while the town is mysteriously subject to natural forces (among which the spiral may be counted) such as the hurricanes that destroy houses or the mountains which seclude the town, Kurouzu-cho also has moments of complete control over nature such as the sudden production of whirlwinds by the people and the renegades who ride the winds they make. And while the structures of the town are literally deconstructed throughout the series, they are reformed into a much more economical shape. Such a reformation feels modern in its brutal efficiency. This also aligns with this project’s theory that true posthumanism cannot simply surpass humanism, but must allow for it to remain because to erase humanism is to utilize liberal humanist modes of thinking.

\textsuperscript{195} Not unlike, \textit{ἀποκάλυψις – apokálypo} meaning “uncovering” or “disclosure.”
she claims, “I ended up like this because of this town … Because this town is cursed by the spiral.” It is not necessarily the individual sins of the people which cause the horror, but the space they occupy. Somehow, they are marked as potential (inevitable) victims of this horror merely because of their proximity to it. It is inescapable. However, the narrator, Kirie, and her boyfriend, Shuichi, somehow persevere until the very end, experiencing the least amount of torture from the “contamination.” It seems that if the horror of the spiral is indeed tied to morality, then the only respite is a direct understanding of one’s place and the acknowledgment of the spirals themselves.

That we see this within Kirie and Shuichi but within no one else indicates that some knowledge (or wariness) of the imminent threat the spiral poses guards against its horrors. Shuichi is the first to recognize the penetrating foundations of the spiral within Kurouzu-cho and it appears that his recognition of their pervasiveness is what keeps him alive (though a bit mentally unstable). And Kirie’s introductory image was her gazing over all of Kurouzu-cho, acknowledging her place within the environment around her, walking amongst the flowers, discussing her town. While their “death” is inevitable, it appears peaceful and certainly on their own terms as their final moments are not fearful or loud but unified in a peaceful embrace. Such a visual creates a moral out of the horror. Throughout the series, Itō draws our attention to these many traumas and to the environment itself (the space in which the humans of Kurouzu-cho find themselves), dual aspects of life in which the Japanese culture at large must also acknowledge during this period (the trauma of the Tokyo Subway Gas Attacks and the environmental disaster of the Kobe Earthquake). The horror and destruction is not ultimately caused by the spiral, but rather exists as the accumulation of past traumas and the sudden recognition of complex and contradictory borders between the human and the other-than-human (environment, animals,
constructs). In this way, a national allegory emerges from *Uzumaki*: the presence of trauma (its sudden entrance into one’s consciousness or the abrupt recognition of its latent presence) stimulates a cultural reexamination of human subjectivity within Japan. The spiral thusly acts as the figure of Japanese posthumanism – a dialectic subjectivity catalyzed by the national tragedies of the 1990s.\(^{196}\)

**Nishida and the Spiral Form**

To ground the reading of Ito’s *Uzumaki* in the context of Japan’s history of subjectivity, I revisit (from my examination of Japan’s early-twentieth-century historical development of subjectivity in Chapter One) Nishida Kitarō’s “*Nishida Kitarō Zenshū*” (1945). His philosophy of subjectivity, allows for a self that may simultaneously critique modern humanism (*shutaisei*) without totalizing its antithesis – post-subjective transhumanism modeled as the interconnectedness of pre-war Japanese society. Such a critique occurs through the rejection of Western perceptions of a unified and substantive self (particularly Descartes). From this critique of a unified self, (mirrored in Murakami Haruki’s *after the quake* as I examined in Chapter Two), cultural products within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* arrive at a critical subjectivity that requires both a separation from and inclusion of the other (evidenced within the *Chindōgu Cyborg* and metaphorized through the spiral in *Uzumaki*). For such a critique of humanism, Nishida may be regarded a type of posthumanist even though Japan had not yet historically experienced the

\(^{196}\) We spoke little of the spiral’s effect on human/animal relations. And while few animals are mentioned or depicted within the work, several humans cross the line between the two and become giant snails (one might argue that they become a human/snail hybrid, but very little of the human seems to remain in them, and in the most dire of circumstances, they become food blurring the lines even further). Along with eco-critical studies of *Uzumaki* (within the “pollution” of the spirals and the reformation of the town’s structures and spaces), animal studies would also be a fascinating (though brief) point of study.
philosophical humanism which my project critiques within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*. To recall, his conception of the *mu no basho* (place of nothingness) expressed a contradictory subject whose foundation was negation. I introduced this concept with Murakami Haruki’s subjects because they offered clear examples of individuals wrestling with the “something” or “nothing” inside them. Nishida rejoins our conversation here as his concepts bare similar attributes to the spiral form.

For Nishida Kitarō, the concept of “*Basho*” (place) acts as its own dialectic in that contained within it are several other *basho* (the “world” of matter and objects and the “world” of consciousness or intentional acts for example where the former is set in the affirmative and the latter, the negative). According to Ronnie Lessem and Alexander Schieffer in their book, *Integral Renewal: A Relational and Renewal Perspective*, Nishida’s dialectic of *Basho* contains what Japanese contemporary sociologists Nonaka Ikujiro and Takeuchi Hirotaka refer to as the “evolutionary spiral” (345). Lessem and Schieffer explicate Nonaka and Takeuchi’s perspectives by saying the,

… spiral is a continuous, self-transcending process through which you transcend the boundary of the old self into a new self by acquiring a new context, a new view of the world, an evolved consciousness and knowledge, indeed a new social construction. In short, it is a journey ‘from being to becoming’. You also, in the process, transcend the boundary between self and other, through interactions amongst individuals or between them and their environment. (345)

While Nonaka and Takeuchi utilize Nishida’s philosophy to emphasize social interactions and fields of knowledge over “being and becoming” they therefore create a societal spiral from Nishida’s “place of nothingness” *mu no basho*. One must not overlook the “*mu*” (nothing) of “*mu no basho*.” The Japanese “evolutionary” spiral propagated by Nonaka and Takeuchi ignores part of Nishida’s dialectic by placing a substantive, “consciousness–based perspective” upon

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197 I examined this at greater length within the second chapter.
organizations and knowledge gathering systems (346). While Nonaka and Takeuchi indeed work to complicate the self within their system of knowledge, they too begin to utilize liberal humanist mindsets to complicate the liberal humanist subject. By claiming that “you transcend the boundary of the old self into a new self,” Nonaka and Takeuchi must first perceive the distinctions and borders to be transcended; you then must believe that the new has overcome the old – that the new has replaced the old. This liberal humanist language doesn’t necessarily match the subject – critical of humanism – that “transcend(s) the boundary between self and other, through interactions amongst individuals or between them and their environment.” Such a “transcendence” from humanism while still utilizing humanist modes of thought recapitulates the problem of transhumanism in Anglo-American posthuman theory reified here in Japanese social theory (based itself on Western theory).198

In his work, Nishida resists an interpretation of basho that creates a stable foundation from which the new self may overcome the old self. Discussing further the mu no basho (place of nothingness), he claims that,

… we know the self in self-negation … When the self thus knows its own eternal death, when it knows its own eternal nothingness, the self is truly self-conscious. To say that the self exists in such self-consciousness is an absolute contradiction. But to know the nothingness of the self is not merely to make the judgement that the self is nothingness … This is indeed a contradiction. (205)199

True, self-knowledge exists and it is knowledge of “eternal nothingness.” In this way, Nishida thinks the self as centered on absence rather than presence. While Lessem and Shieffer seem to

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198 Which was actually an argument of Gianni Vattimo’s who in his introduction to End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture, was critical of the idea that postmodernity may come “after” modernity by bringing about a new condition or order. Vattimo states, “The idea of ‘overcoming,’ which is so important in all modern philosophy [in which humanism firmly rests], understands the course of thought as being a progressive development in which the new is identified with value through the mediation of the recovery and appropriation of the foundation-origin” (2).

199 From “Religious Consciousness and the Logic of the Prajnaparamita Sutra from the Logic of Place and a Religious World-View.”
highlight the presence of the “basho” in order to build from such a foundation organizational knowledge and power relations (a Western understanding of the presence of self), they appear to ignore the contradictory nature of “mu,” that is, the contradictory dialectic between the immanent and transcendent.\textsuperscript{200} Simply put, Lessem and Shieffer’s is a subjectivity more highly invested in substance and presence over negation and contradiction. Nishida goes on to explain the subject’s link to and distinction from consciousness by saying,

The self functions in the form of consciousness. But the self does not merely exist within consciousness. Of course, it does not merely exist outside of consciousness either. As a self-identity of the contradiction between immanent and transcendent, the personal self expresses the world within itself, but at the same time the personal self, which is both free yet immanently necessary, exists at the point of determining itself as one focal point of the world, i.e. at the point of being creative. The personal self exists only in the world of the self-identity of absolute contradiction which is absolute nothingness, and self determining. (209-210).

Here, Nishida describes a subjectivity always deferred from consciousness which dually “expresses the world within itself” and “exists at the point of determining itself as one focal point of the world.” In this way, Nishida’s philosophy displays a subjectivity that both spirals inward and is a single point along a spiral which swirls in from the world. The self, imagined as a single “focal point of the world,” limits the illimitable to an arbitrary point between the external and the internal, the point of “self-determining.” That self, furthermore, is determined by its finite and constructed (arbitrary) borders rather than by its infinite ontology. In this way, the human subjectivity is at once finite and infinite. The spiral depicted in \textit{Uzumaki} also inhabits these contradictory expressions of subjectivity (the transgression of boundaries between humans, the world, animals, and other humans, as well as the arbitrary nature of boundaries which may express either humanist individualism or transhumanist interconnection). This subjectivity (the

\textsuperscript{200} The knowledge of negation, here, epistemologically locates in the subject something similar to Paul de Man’s “blindness as insight.”}
personal self as Nishida calls it) expresses its boundaries as “self-determined” consciousness which may blur the lines between nature and society, the self and the other, and the individual external and internal just as *Uzumaki* expressed the spiral. Examining the link between Nishida’s philosophy and the subjectivity articulated within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* (best represented as the spiral) also answers the question of what lies at the center of the spiral subject … it is a foundation and an orientation of nothingness. Such a foundation, that is no foundation at all, suggests that what is built upon it – the construction of the self – in not ontologically bound to specific borders. Rather, such borders that delineate the self are arbitrarily affixed to a foundationless structure. In this way Nonaka and Takeuchi were right to infer a spiral from Nishida’s work but must remember the contradictory and postmodern nature of such a foundation (which is no foundation at all).

**Translating the Spiral Subjectivity of a Japanese Posthumanism**

Because Anglo-American posthumanism’s theoretical target is the human itself, it can benefit from these Japanese posthumanist subjectivity that extend its insights of the human self. Currently, American accounts of posthumanism, such as Cary Wolfe’s and Neil Badmington’s, lack a full account of a subjectivity that resists neither humanist individualism nor transhuman postsutjectivity. The Japanese “spiral” that emerges in the *Ushinawareta Nijunen*’s literature, *manga*, film, and *Chindōgu*, (rather than within an established academic discourse of posthumanism) embodies such an approach by requiring the simultaneity of conflicting attributes. Japan’s *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* establishes evidence for the complication of modern humanist ontology and requires a subjectivity which may not altogether surpass humanism.
Informed by Japan’s early mythoi, periods of ultra-nationalism, early 20th century philosophy, post-WWII humanist turn, responses to sudden national tragedies (both natural and man-made), and the proliferation of cybernetic technologies, the Japanese posthuman subject contains contradictions by upholding and blurring the binaries of humanism/posthumanism, self/other, and human/environment. The fact that neither the thesis nor the antithesis of these binaries is fully subsumed under the synthesis is precisely the point. The synthesis that is the Japanese posthuman subject is not a synthesis which erases its parts into unity but must be thought as a synthesis-of-components.

How may one translate such a subject so culturally bound to Japan into something useful for an American posthuman discourse? I believe that the figuration of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* subject as a spiral helps bridge this divide for two reasons. The mathematical language of the spiral introduces a simple clarity of contradiction into logic (whereas something like the Schrodinger’s Cat analogy, though apt, becomes mired in language and theoretical potentialities); and secondly, there is already some precedent for foundational complication in Western discourse (Hegel, Barthes, Benjamin) with regards to spirals and similar infinite/finite geometric forms, which I explore below. From this history, we glean an already complicated and seemingly contradictory figure already established within Western discourse.

Critic Nico Israel’s thought-provoking list of spirals and their intricacies in Western culture, particularly within the art and literature of modernism since the turn of the twentieth century, provides my starting point.\(^1\) While not an exhaustive list of the shape, Israel takes great care to include numerous mentions beyond his primary texts and uncovers similar threads.

\(^{201}\) Department of English – Hunter College.
of critique brought about through philosophies that employ it. In an effort to collect Western histories and influences of the spiral, Israel links Barthes’ dialectics to Benjamin’s “emergence” and the “dialectical image” (though he also acknowledges their differences) through the spirals both of them used to represent their theories. He also discusses Beckett and Smithson whose “spirals expressed a recoiling entropy that calls into question the very foundation of the project of modernity and the colonial-imperial project and man-centered histories it subtended” (8). Such an act was shown to be mirrored in Murakami’s short fiction and in the decentering of the human within Kawakami’s inventions and Itō’s spiral. Yeats to Tatlin, Duchamp to Joyce, Israel collects the spiral moments within the work and life of individuals not in order to express a grand narrative of spirals (such an action would appear to conflict with the emergence of a form critical of modernity and its foundations), but rather to express a series of “snapshots,” creating a type of flash that Benjamin associated with the dialectical image (8). Israel’s work focuses on the twentieth century and leads away from narrativising history by embracing a type of image that, in Benjamin’s terms, “decays” (188). He reinforces the dialectical nature of the form in Western theory, philosophy, and art by showcasing its seemingly contradictory attributes, its simultaneously progressive and regressive nature, its return through difference, and its ability to uproot foundations of modernity. This figuration thusly holds many anchor points which may allow for the translation of the Japanese subject into Anglo-American posthuman theory via the spiral already immersed in these Western histories.

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202 With such attention to blurring borders with contradictory figural images, it is no wonder that his other book is entitled, Outlandish: Writing Between Exile and Diaspora (2000).

203 From, Israel’s Spirals: The Whirled Image in Twentieth-Century Literature and Art (2015). In this, Israel does extensive work on the history of spirals and its use in many modernist works of art. Although, it does weigh heavily on Western understandings of spirals.
When one considers the figuration of subjectivity as a spiral in Western thought, Hegel’s understanding of consciousness is an essential touchstone. Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* supposes that the dialectic self begins with the self as thesis and spirals outward to include a recognizing other. Hegel’s self-certainty, according to Robert R. Williams, resists choosing “between … unsatisfactory alternatives [either/or] but rather mediate[s] them and work[s] out a third alternative.\(^{204}\) This alternative requires that subjectivity be expanded to intersubjectivity and that freedom itself be intersubjectively mediated” (18) resulting in Hegel’s world spirit (*Geist*). Robert R. Williams claims of Hegel that the dialectic of intersubjectivity contains the whole relation in each of its consisting parts, the “sharp distinction” between self and other and the union of self and other (51). This perfectly encapsulates the need for posthumanism to retain such a sharp distinction of forms while rightly understood as a dialectic. This spiral, a helix, begins in thesis, incorporates the antithesis, becomes the synthesis, and then turns that synthesis into a new thesis which may find a new antithesis. And yet, such a form requires enlightenment and liberal humanist modes of cognition, namely: the point of departure for Hegel (the thesis, the consciousness) is stable and unified and such a spiral of syntheses and new antitheses always progress toward a point of absolute truth/telos. These types of thinking ignore the other within the self which, once incorporated, may create a dual motion for the spiral (outward toward external others and inward toward anarchic others, pieces of the self). This also ignores the double nature of each synthesis (both synthesis and thesis) which assumes that any thesis is already the synthesis of other parts, preventing any originary solidarity. This progression also assumes a telos of meaning, an endpoint for the human against which one may finally differentiate him/herself from all that is other-than-human. Such a grand narrative does not exist

\(^{204}\) Within his piece entitled, *Hegel’s Ethics of Recognition*, claims that Hegel’s phenomenology of self is born of a mutual recognition (the recognition of another recognizing agent which in turn recognizes the initial self).
for the *Ushinawareta Nijunen* subject whose existence is innately critical of such humanist modes of thinking. However, another type of spiral expands Hegel’s dialectic for posthuman use (that is, a denial of telos and an absence of a starting point), the logarithmic spiral. This spiral (also known as the “Equiangular Spiral,” “Golden Spiral,” or the “Spira Mirabilis” – the marvelous spiral) is created through the golden ratio (the Fibonacci sequence) whose growth rate occurs every quarter turn of the spiral.205 The name *Spira Mirabilis* was coined by Jacob Bernoulli (1654-1705) a mathematician who became enthralled by the distinct properties of the spiral. His phrase, “Eadem mutata resurgo” (changed but the same, I rise), refers to the seemingly contradictory way that the spiral maintains the exact same proportional dimensions when you zoom in or out of the spiral.206 Even though it has a fixed, finite dimension of distance from any point along the spiral to the center, there is also an infinite distance to the center along the curved, spiral path. In this way, the logarithmic spiral retains contradictory characteristics while seemingly progressing or regressing along its lines. While Bernoulli certainly devoted a substantial amount of time to this figure, he was not the one who discovered it. This honor resides, ironically (because I am using it to describe the critical posthuman subject), with René Descartes in his *Traité de la Mechanique* (published posthumously in 1668). Descartes’ application of this shape to the mechanics of the world perhaps helped, according to Nico Israel, influence “Descartes’ famous philosophical deduction *cogito ergo sum*” by speculating on “the notion of a fixed or static point (or “eye”) [or I] around which energy swirls” (Israel 30).

However, the eye (or I) of the logarithmic spiral never comes to fruition. While it is infinitely advanced upon, it is never reached. Perhaps the better metaphor for Descartes logarithmic spiral

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205 The Fibonacci sequence is the rate of growth (golden ratio) where a number in the series is always the sum of the two previous numbers (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13 …).

206 According to Eli Maor, in his book *E: The Story of a Number* (127).
is Nishida’s *mu no basho*, the place of nothingness around which the self swirls, forever preventing the moment of stasis. The application of the logarithmic spiral to Hegel’s dialectic subjectivity broadens his concept to accommodate the insights derived from Japanese posthuman subjectivity from the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen*.

Beyond Hegel’s phenomenology, Roland Barthes also examines the spiral in terms of the resurgence of reading and interpreting (precursors to poststructuralism), as Israel again explains, by examining the distinctions between the circle and the spiral.

“*The Circle,*” [Barthes] writes, “is religious, theological; the spiral, like a circle distended to infinity, is dialectical: on the spiral, things recur, but *at another level*; there is a return in difference, not repetition in identity. Thanks to [the spiral], we are not constrained to believe: *everything has been said,* or: *nothing has been said,* but rather: *nothing is first yet everything is new*” (22)

Here, Barthes examines not only the similarities between the circle and the spiral, two curved forms, but the latency of one in the other. Seemingly, the spiral, “like a circle distended to infinity,” is born of the circular form. What is striking is not the spiral’s new claims to infinity, the circle is just as infinite (if not more so, compared to many spirals), but rather the use of “distended.” Barthes thus describes the spiral as a warped circle, something just as infinite, and yet turned or shaped into something else. Not only do things recur “on the spiral,” but the spiral itself mirrors its function within its form as a recurrence of the circle in difference. In a certain way, the circle is repeated and yet not identical in the spiral (and this is especially true of the helix whose top/down perspective in a two dimensional environment looks indistinguishable from a circle. It requires the third dimension to distinguish itself. Applying this to meaning and reading he critiques the biblical verse from Ecclesiastes, “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing

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under the sun.” Barthes employs the contradiction, “nothing is first yet everything is new,” in order to bring the dual natures of the concept into the spiral. Meaning, reading, and interpretation, though never first, are always new. This is what the spiral may offer that the circle may not.

The human subject, represented as a spiral, retains the core concept of otherness within us in order to connect with the otherness outside of us. This is the posthuman “thinking” required by Anglo-American theorists and presented within Japanese cultural products. And because of these thinking processes, the borders among humans remain conceptual rather than actual, elastic rather than fixed, separated from the non-self in certain performances and joined in others. The Japanese posthuman subject frees posthumanism from succumbing to the totality of separation or the totality of interconnection as both instances of thinking the human reside in liberal humanist modes of thought. Humans are at once individuals and assemblages and components.

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208 Ecclesiastes 1:9 KJV.
Conclusion:  
The Potential Applications of the Spiral Posthuman  

What returns to haunt the victim … is not only the reality of the violent event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known.  

*Unclaimed Experience* by Cathy Caruth (6)  

Whether here or in the real world, you can cry when it hurts.  
There’s no rule that you can’t show feelings because it’s a game.  
-Itô Tomohiko’s *Sword Art Online*  

In the preceding chapters, I have uncovered not only a Japanese posthuman subjectivity presented through the culture of the *Ushinawareta Nijûnen*, but also speculated on the terms of its emergence. This led me to examine a brief history of Japanese subjectivity (premodern, modern, and postmodern conditions of Japanese self-making practices). I considered the impact of Japan’s national traumas which acted as catalysts in the *Ushinawareta Nijûnen*, along with the critique of pre-war interconnected subjectivity which led to ultra-nationalism and a newly minted humanist subjectivity, *shutaisei*. Understanding the Japanese historical and cultural conditions in which the subjectivity of the *Ushinawareta Nijûnen* positions itself allows for the recognition of a historically and culturally based subjectivity that strikingly diverges from earlier Japanese iterations and historically congruent Anglo-American views of subjectivity.  

I first examined this subjectivity through Murakami Haruki’s short fiction collection, *after the quake*. The collection expresses a direct critique of *shutaisei*. In his novel *Kafka on the Shore* (2002), Murakami turns from the disassembly of *shutaisei* to the construction of a possible emergent subjectivity. He describes it as:  

… a small sandstorm that keeps changing directions. You change direction but the sandstorm chases you. You turn again, but the storm adjusts. Over and over you play this out, like some ominous dance with death just before dawn. Why? Because this storm isn’t something that blew in from far away, something that has nothing to do with you. This storm is you. Something inside you. So all you can do is give in to it, step right inside the storm, closing your eyes and plugging up your ears so the sand doesn’t get in, and walk
through it, step by step. There’s no sun there, no moon, no direction, no sense of time. Just fine white sand swirling up into the sky like pulverized bones. (5)

This potential subjectivity, expressed in Murakami’s representation as a swirling contradiction without orientation or foundation, anticipates the subjectivity conceived in both Kawakami Kenji’s useless (chindōgu) cyborg and Itō Junji’s horror manga, *Uzumaki: Spiral into Horror*; both are cultural depictions of the human within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* that complicate shutaisei by showcasing attributes of subjectivity which seem at once separated and conjoined with the other-than-human (including things, objects, tools, environments, animals, even other humans). This subjectivity leads us, with the help of Itō’s *Uzumaki*, to the figure of the spiral, a mathematical form that holds within it contradictions involving space, time, borders, and form that serves as a powerful figuration of the posthuman subjectivity of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* that I call “the other within.” The spiral’s contradictions, furthermore, may be used to bridge the gap between Japanese posthumanism and Anglo-American posthumanism, since Western theory, literature, and art together have already expressed the contradictory elements of the spiral in various forms throughout history (as we have seen in Nico Israel’s excellent study of modern artistic depictions, *Spirals: The Whirled Image in Twentieth-Century Literature and Art*).

Informing the complex and contradictory borders exposed in the Japan’s *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* is an association with trauma and epitomized by the Kobe Earthquake or the Tokyo Subway Sarin Gas Incident as well as within the personal histories of the portrayed subjectivities examined in this project. The distinctness of Japanese posthuman subjectivities thus combines the historical foundations of Japan’s particular progressions of self-making practices with culturally shared reactions to traumatic events.
A posthuman theory whose scope is large enough to include changing historical depictions of the human subject and across national borders must be flexible enough to critique the autonomous individualism of humanism while preventing the erasure of individual borders in post-subjective transhumanism. Whereas current theories of Anglo-American transhumanism require liberal humanist modes of thinking (mastery, autonomy, separation, foundation, orientation, origin, or progression) in order to surpass humanism, this project offers evidence for a different model. The posthuman subjectivity on offer here instead allows for the seemingly contradictory influences of both humanism and transhumanism within posthumanism; it therefore begs for the reconsideration of Anglo-American posthuman theories in such a light.

The products I have examined from the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* are indicative of the cultural shift in subjectivity but are hardly exhaustive. Numerous other works during this period deserve recognition and more thorough analysis than this dissertation format allows.\(^{209}\) However, this conclusion does not merely mention other moments of this emerging Japanese subjectivity, but also plots a trajectory for instances of critical subjectivity by pinpointing a theme that begins within the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* and travels beyond its temporal borders into contemporary Japanese culture: the avatar. The Japanese employment of the avatar is distinctive and

\(^{209}\) For example, the animated films of director Kon Satoshi which include *Perfect Blue* (1997), *Millenium Actress* (2001), *Tokyo Godfathers* (2003), and *Paprika* (2006) expertly blur the lines of subjectivity and consciousness within their images and experimental narratives. They wrestle with identity, self-construction, the scope of the human mind to recognize the self, the crossing of borders (sexually, physically, and mentally), and the slim lines between fiction (as expressed in films, dreams, or celebrity) and reality. I would also like to briefly mention the fashion boom of *kogaru* (young, Japanese, female fashion-istas), and in particular the style of *ganguro* (black face) that approaches the “other within” in quite different terms. In the 90’s young teenage girls would tan or darken their faces, enlarge their eyes and mouths with makeup, and attempt to transcend the normative styles of Japanese women (if not also the normative look of their ethnicity). For further reading on this subject I suggest, “The Emergence of Trendsetters for Fashions and Fads: Kogaru in 1990’s Japan” by Tadashi Suzuki and Joel Best. This article contemplates the cultural terms of the emergence of daring fashion choices while linking the sudden popularity of commercial fashions to social organization. Such a popular movement toward transcending the borders of what was considered proper (and thus Japanese) eludes again to the rising power of Japan’s cultural revolution of subjectivity during this period.
exemplifies the complex and contradictory self while its escalating cultural popularity within Japan and abroad) suggests a cultural desire for such complications of subjectivity.

I suggest that Japanese visual cultural products dealing with avatars and representations of digital landscapes within video games or virtual spaces act as the inheritors of these critical posthuman subjectivities today. An exemplary film dealing with such avatars is Hosoda Mamoru’s animated film *Summer Wars* (2010), in which the concept of avatars and digital spaces play key roles. In *Summer Wars*, a world called Oz (a virtual space in which most human activities now occur) is under attack by an exceptionally powerful virus (digitally embodied in a Deity-like avatar) that threatens to disrupt all linked human systems. While the heroes of the film attempt to imbue their avatars with greater power, the traditions of Japan (honor, family, cooperation, sacrifice) finally defeat the virus. Though it would be easy to ascribe a type of individualistic transhumanism to this virtual world of digital bodies and environments because of its reliance on the technological progression evident within the film, it is one that should not, and cannot, exist without the traditional family roles and the bonds of communities. This amalgamation of technological progression and traditional face-to-face interactions epitomizes the remnants of the past which are present in a future that has attempted to surpass it. *Summer Wars* attempts to conjoin old and new expressions of subjectivity to form a better, safer society, without exchanging a traditional human relationship for technological progress in the end. Instead, the film stages the emergence of a dialectic of the modern and the postmodern within these transformed humans, a dialectic which mirrors the need for a humanist remnant within the transhuman.

In 2002 the cultural product entitled, * hack* (pronounced “dot hack”) the concepts of digital avatars and the complications of this Japanese posthumanism surge to the fore in more
nuanced and complicated terms. In particular, this cultural conglomerate reinforces technology’s part not only by absorbing humanist individualism into technological unity (as transhumanism attempts to do), but also by critiquing such humanist modes of thinking as evidence of notions like progression, hierarchy, binaries, and mastery. This critique occurs while engaging in the cultural practice of posthumanism that this dissertation proposes – the recapitulation of humanist individualism during the advent of blurred bodies/minds/technologies into networked and digitized corporealities. Beginning in 2002, .hack, a multi-media franchise narrative/world which spanned novels, manga, anime, and video games, saw its first iteration within the anime called .hack//sign (“dot hack sign,” directed by Mashimo Kōichi), which featured an MMORPG (Massively Multi-player Online Role Playing Game) entitled The World as the story’s setting. The narrative follows a young boy named “Tsukasa” who discovers one day that he is trapped inside the game and cannot log out. This particular theme continues into the future allowing a fascinating thread to emerge.210 Nearly the entire story follows Tsukasa who is the avatar of a player, although it is important to mention that the avatar and the player are necessarily at once the same and not the same. Though the latter controls the former and speaks through the former, there is a distinction that remains. Not the least of which is the fact that Tsukasa’s player is actually female in reality.

210 In this way the plot is similar to another light novel series entitled, “Sword Art Online,” whose characters are also trapped in the game. While Sword art online also breached genre and media boundaries to become an anime and a video game, these occurred just outside of the Ushinawareta Nijūnen. Because of this, I chose to focus on the prior anime here, but many of the same issues I will discuss, appear in both franchises. Another similar plot, though published in 2011, was Log Horizon, a manga series written by Tōno Mamare. This series begins with a scene in which the phrase, “This isn’t a game. It’s our new reality,” is uttered. And very similar subjectivity questions are raised within it including identity. The first episode, the one in which they discover their new reality and their digital bodies, is entitled, “Apocalypse.” This should remind us of the view of apocalypse as “revelation” or “uncovering” rather than purely massive destruction. In this case, the revelation is their new embodied virtual reality.
The term “avatar,” though commonplace among gamers, has its roots in religion. In Japanese, we see this linguistically as different terms of “avatar” take on different uses: 化身 [keshin, meaning incarnation, personification, and associated with Buddhism] or the reference most often used in popular culture, アバター [abatā, a loan word referencing digital computing or video game avatars]. Religiously, the “avatar” is an incarnation of a deity (such as Vishnu in Hinduism, Jesus in Christianity), the embodiment of an ideal or philosophy, or the digital representation of person within a virtual space.211 Within Buddhism (Mahayana specifically) the term “avatar” refers to the “being in whom the divine is incarnated” and “is both divine and human … at the same time. He is divine inasmuch as he reflects or manifests or is one with the Trikaya, yet he is nevertheless distinctly animal, human, or devil, etc. In this respect he is unlike the Christian conception of God the Son and His Incarnation.”212 According to McGovern, what separates the “avatar” from mere embodiment of the divine (as Jesus was viewed, for example) is the contradictory ability of the avatar to unite a Deity/embodiment binary and the body alone; whereas Jesus could not be seen as only man separated from the Lord. This iteration of “avatar” more closely matches the normalized term now used in video-gaming.

The digital embodiment of the self within a virtual space is at once the player (who matches the avatar in control, agency, and even emotions) and separate from the player (in that the player does not feel the sting of the avatar’s wounds or the pains of death). This dual nature alone, however, does nothing to complicate the modern autonomous player. In most versions of avatar games the player always understands the separation from his or her avatar can be achieved at any point, when he/she puts the controller down and steps away from the game’s virtual space.

211 The etymology of the word is Sanskrit, from avatārana meaning “descent.” Not unlike the motion of an entropic spiral.
212 From “Notes on Mahayana Buddhism” by Wm. Montgomery McGovern.
No part of consciousness or embodiment is left behind with the avatar in the game, and so this
player-avatar relation actually reinforces humanist tendencies of separation and mastery.
However, in \textit{.hack//sign}, the separation between player and avatar is mysteriously and
immediately erased, and the only consciousness the player has is embodied somehow within the
digital avatar, in that they are no longer aware of their player-body and only perceive the world
now through their avatar-body. This fusion is never fully explained within \textit{.hack//sign} though it
is explored further in subsequent iterations of the product.\textsuperscript{213} The player now fears pain and
experiences the “real” threat of death in their digital form.

Even though there is now no difference between the incarnated player’s avatar and the
virtual environment around them (all are digitally constructed lines of code whose root substance
is indistinguishable from the rest of the game’s), the avatars still attempt to retain autonomy from
their environment.\textsuperscript{214} They fear the monsters around them. They jump over the pitfalls and traps
within the dungeons. They progress along a path, surpassing other players, and dominating
others in skill and performance. These are the actions of an autonomous individual who
understands him/her/it-self as a separate entity. The conflation of player and avatar whose
embodiment is at once separate from and interconnected with the virtual space around them, may
only truly occur in the game when the player is “trapped” within the avatar and experiences no
stimulation from the “real world.” In fact, within the simulation of \textit{.hack//sign}, \textit{The World}
becomes the world for Tsukasa: that is, the only environment Tsukasa experiences is this digital

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{213} These explored more the system “Morganna Mode Gone,” created by Harold Hoerwick, which sought to stall
the growth/birth of another one of his creations, the ultimate AI, Aura. Somehow, Tsukasa being pulled into the
game was the first of these stall tactics.

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{214} Though perhaps this mimics, the atomically interconnected world we inhabit that sees little difference between
the human body and the solar
one. This follows more closely the Mahayana Buddhist conception of avatar than other religious instances of similar incarnations.

The avatar embodiment of Tsukasa within *hack//sign* connects for us human subjectivity and identity within gaming in ways that recapitulate the dynamics of the other within, at the same time expanding upon the inclusion autonomy within the digitized and networked body. Tsukasa, reveals at one point to another character that he thinks he might be a girl in real life. What exactly triggers this in Tsukasa is unknown, but it raises questions of gender, identity, and performativity within real and virtual spaces. While it is not uncommon for a player to play a character of a different gender within videogames, there tend to be distinctly (and exaggerated) gendered avatars from which to choose.

Tsukasa’s digital body, however, resists (or straddles the line between) typical Japanese gender markers. Tsukasa’s design (pictured center) resists the exposed torso musculature or slim clothing and debonair hair of his masculine counterparts as well as the exposed midriffs and typical curves of the female forms. Tsukasa, instead, dons loose fitting clothing that hides both bodily curvatures and musculature, wears his hair unstyled and somewhat long, speaks in soft, mid-range tones, goes by a unisex name, and moves infrequently and somewhat clumsily to skirt the more gendered attributes of power or grace imbued within character movement. While there are no substantial gender markers in Tsukasa’s design, all of the characters interacting with him know that he is male. The confidence within these exchanges leads the viewer to also assume that Tsukasa is male in that his androgyny allows for interpretation. However, this leads one to question how gender becomes known within a virtual world since it appears that the characters in *hack//sign* have some sort of knowledge beyond visual markers or the foreknowledge associated with Tsukasa’s player’s gender identity. Since there are no genitalia, hormones, brain
chemistries, Adam’s apples, musculatures, fat deposits, or any other biological indicators associated with certain sexes within these digital bodies, what determines sex in the virtual space? In this case, the answer cannot simply be the curves of breasts and hips of the designed characters since Tsukasa’s design (who is immediately recognized as male) prevents these visual cues. The answer instead lies not in the digital avatar’s body at all, but in the choice of the player who picks to play as female or male by clicking a button. No matter how the avatar is presented to other players, the codes of the game become clear within the virtual world. In this way, avatar gender has nothing to do with physical (or digital in this case) embodiment, but everything to do with the conscious choice of the reality outside of the game.

What becomes useful for the purposes of discussing a posthuman subjectivity within Japanese culture during the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* is Tsukasa’s tension between “reality” and the virtual space, male and female sexuality and gender, and human embodiment and digital avatar embodiment. Each of these binaries appears to be distinct from and interconnected with one another. During the brief glimpses outside of the game into reality, the color fades and the image becomes grainy, adopting a style closer to that often used in memories rather than reality itself. To display Tsukasa’s “real” form to the audience, we hear Tsukasa’s (the Avatar’s) voice which fades into Tsukasa’s (the player’s) actual voice finishing her sentence. She contains typical, feminine visual markers and meets another character in “real life,” Subaru, a young woman in a wheelchair. However, just before they embrace, the screen freezes, glitches (as if still in a game) and dissolves into game tiles before fading from the scene. We are left to wonder if the reality

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215 I place quotation marks around reality to highlight the complication associated with the term in this case. On the one hand, the reality within *hack* may not necessarily be the upper levels of reality but perhaps another simulation itself, on the other hand, the figural truth of this complication bleeds into our own reality which in turn is very similar to the complication uncovered in this virtual space. Several more scare quotes will be applied to terms in a similar fashion during this discussion.
Tsukasa “returned” to is indeed reality itself, or some other simulation (or that thematically one must consider real life to be just as fake or contrived as the game).

These tensions produce a friction between ontology (the authentic) and identity (the performative and provisional) when expressed through the subject of Tsukasa, whose existence somehow allows for the reality of both the avatar and the player (though not simultaneously as Tsukasa must choose to return to reality). Tsukasa (the player) chooses the body of Tsukasa (the Avatar) in order to perform either a particular gender or perhaps, due to the extreme androgyny of Tsukasa, genderlessness. And this choice becomes so normalized within the anime series that the reveal of Tsukasa’s (the player’s) gender in reality creates an immediate dissonance in the viewer. The performed gender of the avatar is what is “real” within the story and world of *hack//sign* and the gendered body of Tsukasa (the player) becomes a type of anomaly. It also becomes difficult to discuss gender in the “reality” of this anime series since Tsukasa (the player) is no more or less real than Tsukasa (the avatar). It is a mistake to clearly delineate the real (the realm of choices and the player) from the virtual (the realm of the game, digital embodiment, and performance of self). Not only has Tsukasa’s consciousness somehow transgressed these borders, but certain enemies within the game seem to also be able to adversely affect the players’ real bodies. Here, *hack//sign* suggests that identity and subjectivity are arbitrary distinctions allowed within the terms of the player’s ontology rather than determined by the ontology. In terms resonant with the “other within,” we disconnect the idea of unity with self or subjectivity, and rather see any unity as merely one distinction among many. There is nothing in the biological, physical being of Tsukasa that requires a certain performance within Tsukasa’s avatar. In fact, rather than a stable unified presence, it is the instability of Tsukasa which determines her performance within the game’s virtual space.
The fact that this instability of self stems from her previous (and rarely mentioned) trauma(s) suggests another line of continuity between .hack//sign and its predecessors in this dissertation by immediately associating a complex and contradictory subjectivity with the reference to trauma (probably concerning her father), hinted at when she says, “I’m no longer afraid of you or my father” and “It’s okay, I’m used to pain.” Confronting this supposed trauma is what “frees” Tsukasa from the game (if he was trapped at all). Tsukasa actually does not appear to want to log out of the game at first and must be coaxed into confronting the “final boss” which Tsukasa seems to conflate with her father (becoming a rare moment where Tsukasa (the player) is distinguished in speech from Tsukasa (the Avatar). While others view him as trapped in the game, Tsukasa feels emancipated in that this new reality is the perfect escape from the trauma of the old one. The story line then appears not to save Tsukasa from the game, but help him to desire to return at all.216

Posthumanism’s Futures I: Trauma Theory

The Japanese posthuman subjectivity epitomized in .hack//sign and uncovered within this dissertation would seem to contradict the understanding of subjectivity central to Western trauma theory, in so far as it imagines the resolution of trauma to consist in the unification of traumatically divided or fractured selves and their defining temporal crises. And yet (as we’ve

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216 Describing the end of this section, I suddenly find the pronoun use for Tsukasa very difficult. This is due, I believe, to my turn from discussing his avatar embodiment to the inner life (and trauma) of Tsukasa. Would this inner life reflect the exterior or is it the connection between the avatar and the player. For example, when I discuss who is running from the monster it seems right to refer to Tsukasa as the “him” of the avatar which the game portrays, and yet when discussing why Tsukasa may be afraid of the monster, is this not also (or wholly) the player’s fear? While this conflict within Tsukasa becomes hard to linguistically describe, it links perfectly to a Japanese subjectivity whose inner-self is comprised of the self as well as the anarchic other (an other who becomes Tsukasa’s link to other player/characters).
seen in the posthuman subjectivity in Japan) posthumanism appears interlinked with trauma, at the least responding to the exposed foundations of humanism that Japan’s critical traumas laid bare. In .hack//sign, avatars are part of a representational practice that exceeds the conceptual parameters of posthumanism as they’ve currently been outlined in Anglo-American posthumanism or transhumanism. At the same time, those avatars gesture toward Dominick LaCapra’s and Cathy Caruth’s psychoanalytic trauma theory while critiquing the heavy reliance on humanist ideals of unity through the ways they expose the other within as a traumatic symptom.

The association of trauma with the emergence of critical subjectivities suggests a deeper relationship between the two, a relationship the scope of which may go beyond the boundaries of this project.217 A large segment of trauma theory highlights the sudden break within the self that is caused by the trauma yet which may be integrated and unified again through therapies of varying kinds. Two names within this field, Dominick LaCapra in Writing Histories, Writing Trauma and Cathy Caruth in Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History and Violence and Time: Traumatic Survivals, borrow from Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle to develop a psychoanalytic response to pain and trauma (in terms resonant with humanist subjectivity). That is, each claims that the repetition of the post-traumatic stems from “the unassimilated nature” in which the psyche attempts to return to the moment of unknowable self-separation caused by trauma.218 For Caruth, the moment of reassembly occurs when one has again united the fragmented pieces caused by the trauma, and LaCapra sees a progression toward

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217 Were posthuman theory (of the sort conceived here as the spiral subjectivity) to be pursued beyond Japan’s Ushinawareta Nijūnen and its cultural history – e.g. the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the occupation of American forces, the student revolts of the 60’s, the Kobe earthquake, the Tokyo Subway Gas Attacks, the bursting of the Japanese asset price bubble, etc. – we might find a wider application of its insights.

218 From Caruth’s Unclaimed Experience (4).
“working through” over “acting out” that rely on a sense of unity, progress, hierarchy (humanist modes of thought) to deal with the complexities of the traumatic. What plagues such trauma studies is also what plagues the sufferer: the problem of pain that initiates a psychic fragmentation. The ideal of this psychic integration should be reconceived in conjunction with the question of untranslatability of pain.\(^{219}\) Pain is not only inexpressible to others, but also to the self (Caruth would say, “unknown to the self”), and in this way, the other within is revealed as that which remains anarchic within the body during trauma. Rather than the other created by the trauma (as Caruth claims), a Japanese posthumanist reading of trauma would argue that this other has always already existed and is just now uncovered.\(^{220}\)

So pain and trauma within the subject creates a dual (and contradictory) movement, a desire to connect with another through empathy and sympathy or the “voice in the wound” (Unclaimed Experience 3) combined with the impossibility of this connection (through its inexpressibility). Caruth is helpful here in her turn to trauma to discuss the other within; however the proposed anarchic other (caused by the trauma) retains a telos and an origin in the unified self. This whole and singular self, is the fame for the broken and disjointed self which must be

\(^{219}\) The issue of communicating (or miscommunicating, rather) trauma or pain is something that Elaine Scarry discusses at length in the introduction to The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World. Scarry directly speaks of pain’s inexpressibility when she says, “Vaguely alarming yet unreal, laden with consequence yet evaporating before the mind because not available to sensory confirmation, the pains occurring in other people’s bodies flicker before the mind, then disappear” (4). Trauma, rather than Plato’s “forms” is not something wholly distanced and objective from ourselves, for haven’t we all experienced physical pain or loss? But the agony of others remains ultimately foreign to us. This, Scarry argues, is recognizable in the individual’s (in)ability to know and doubt communications of pain. The failure of communicating pain, of representing pain, according to Scarry, leaves one with only preverbal grunts and moans. In this reversion, pain destroys language (4) and signification.

\(^{220}\) Such a method has already been applied to understanding trauma on a social scale within this dissertation. In Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche, Murakami sees posits that the traumas, “… arriving as they did at a time when Japan’s ‘bubble economy’ burst, marking the end of those times of rampant excess, ushered in a period of critical inquiry into the very roots of the Japanese state. It was as if these events had been lying in wait for us … Both were nightmarish eruptions beneath our feet – from underground – that threw all the latent contradictions and weak points of our society into frighteningly high relief” (237). Reaffirming this act on an individual scale rather than on a societal one is a posthuman act.
made whole again. The Japanese posthuman subjectivity of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* makes space for a theory of self which always already contains the other within the self and resists the totalizing natures of a self that has been “healed” in this way. While treatment protocols for trauma operate like *da* of Freud’s *fort/da* game\(^{221}\) – a game in which trauma mimics the something rent from the self in an act of anarchic dissociation – an act of *fort*, or a posthuman understanding of the self that recognizes that the self is already rent and in thrall to the anarchic would willfully evade the promise of *da*.\(^{222}\)

**Posthumanism’s Futures II: Wolfe, Badmington, and Beyond**

With *.hack//sign*’s Japanese posthuman avatars in mind, let me revisit Anglo American posthumanism in order to identify how the posthuman model proposed in this dissertation demonstrates its conceptual limits. Among the voices who currently speak for the present iteration of American posthumanism – Hayles, Haraway, Alaimo, Kroker, and Bryant – is a tendency to disregard transhumanism as the transcendence of humanist autonomy through liberal humanist modes of thinking. Neil Badmington and Cary Wolfe mark this tendency as humanist rather than posthumanist, regardless of the ways prosthetic extensions of the human through technology seem to imply another kind of subject. However, even these critical posthumanisms lack a notion of subjectivity which recognizes the “other within” as it is expressed in this dissertation as a spiral posthumanism. The concretization of such a figure bridges theory and

\(^{221}\) A game Freud witnessed in his grandson and wrote about in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, where the utterance of *fort* (gone) when a child’s ball was removed from sight was only ever completed upon the reappearance of the ball, *da* (here). In this way, *da* is always already latent in *fort* and is in fact the satisfaction of *fort.*

\(^{222}\) Such a theory of trauma aligns much more closely with sufferers of chronic pain rather than a single healable wound.
practice via a movement from posthumanism (theory) into the posthumanities (applied theory). I turn to this field in particular because it exemplifies the first branch of Anglo-American posthumanism which recognizes the problem of transhumanism to be one of totalization (e.g. the totality of transcending the autonomous subject).

Badmington and Wolfe hint at the posthuman thought processes needed to differentiate a posthuman subjectivity from a transhuman one, and yet lack a figure (such as the posthuman spiral) which truly embodies the contradictory thinking that constitutes the other within. I reiterate, Japan’s *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* generates such a figure in the ontological spiral which adheres to a dialectic of self – connecting to and autonomously resisting the other. Thinking the self as spiral allows us to bring Japanese posthumanist insight to Anglo-American posthumanism. The Japanese posthuman subject (realized as the unuseless cyborg, the *hack* avatar, or the posthuman spiral) allows for an ontology which is divorced from the inevitability of a given potential because it sees the human as at once individual, assemblage, and component; that is to say, a Japanese posthuman ontology may be expressed either as autonomous humanist subjectivity or transhumanist interconnected subjectivity and is founded upon an ontological foundation which expresses both. Such an ontology requires a performance of subjectivity that is arbitrary, changeable, and includes the potential for individualism and interconnection simultaneously (much like Schrodinger’s Cat exists in contradictory potentialities). This does not diminish the post-subjective attributes of people, animals, systems, or environments, but rather emancipates interconnection from liberal humanist thought by allowing seemingly contradictory elements to occur in the human (separation and assembly). Wolfe and Badmington share a reliance on R. L. Rutsky’s concept of delineating the human and Derrida’s “crisis of verses,” and “*differance*” to shape their particular brands of posthumanism, but would equally be enlivened
by an examination of a culture that has, independently, developed a very similar posthumanism, one that may both critique and enrich their theories.

If we consider Wolfe and Badmington in the light of Japan’s *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* posthumanism several things become obvious (namely that “Alien Love” stems from the alien within and that distinctions and complications of the self need not only be theorized but also organically cultivated and expressed within culture). Wolfe ends his book *What is Posthumanism?* with a combination of the digital, the analog, and the spectral when he claims that what transcends the reduction of the human to a digital “pixarization” is not “an ontology or an anthropological authenticity – but rather a “beyond” … that is at the same time radically intimate, a beyond that is not … a place” (299). Here, the Japanese posthumanism of the *Ushinawareta Nijūnen* offers up a concretization of his examination within cultural products that, at least in part, are built on the foundations laid by Nishida Kitarō’s *mu no basho* [place of nothingness]. This place of nothingness (or “a beyond that is not a place”) functions as an unstable foundation for the construction of self. And rather than the uniqueness found in alien-love culture, or the transhumanist threat of deciphering the essence of the human into code-like information, or even a current technological shift in understanding our world, Badmington gets closest to a cultural figure of the posthuman within the Alien. However, though he employs “the trace” of inhuman in the human (157), like Wolfe, the invocation remains merely theoretical as his discussion of Aliens does not quite locate the “other within” the subject, but within “us” and between “us” and ourselves.” Badmington’s theoretical efforts desire to mimic this Alien love within the self as he claims in the final moments of his book *Alien Chic*, “Posthumanism, as I see it, is the acknowledgement and activation of the trace of the inhuman within the human” (157). And yet, this brilliant analysis (based on R. L. Rutsky’s *High Technē* and Derrida’s concept of
Différance) quickly retreats from the individual and is situated within the larger group as “‘Man’ secretes the other within” (157). This again blurs the lines between “Mankind” and its others, but reconstitutes the individual as something unified and stable. The human individual is thusly a component, but is not yet an assemblage itself. This is where a spiral posthumanism offers a figure for consideration as it requires the individual to become part of a greater assemblage just as it is itself already an assemblage. I believe Badmington suspects this already because the cover of his book is not simply a crop circle representative of Alien Chic as a metaphor for human subjectivity, but is also a spiral.

Looking forward, the next step in the process of further developing this dissertation’s theory would be to develop a philosophical ontology of the human which may incorporate the reexamined subjectivities of posthumanism, an ontology this project anticipates but without establishing its philosophical foundations. Such an ontology has the potential to reshape assumptions about subjectivity in several different fields, including phenomenology, eco-criticism, animal studies, video game studies, and cybernetics, as well as fields which deal with the unity or autonomy of individuals such as trauma studies, and even social justice fields concerned with identity such as ethnic and cultural studies and gender studies. I want to demonstrate the potential of this reconception through the example of trauma theory since my project has already relied upon its understanding of the cultural psychology of the Ushinawareta Nijūnen. Western trauma theory, furthermore can provide exemplary site for exploring the impact of this new posthuman approach on Western theoretical models.

Thus, the possibilities of the posthuman subject uncovered during a traumatic and turbulent time in Japan’s recent history are not limited by corporeality alone (as we see within the complex digital bodies of avatars), but become a new way of thinking the self. This “new”
way of thinking emerges from new material conditions, possibilities, and challenges, even as it
inevitably references the past. Such a recurrence to the past mimics not only Western theories of
trauma, but also the shape of the spiral as it perpetually returns with difference. The posthuman
subject is a spiral which progresses without the hope of teleological enlightenment by spiraling
forever around the center of the self, a self which is something closer to Nishida’s “place of
nothingness” or Wolfe’s “beyond that is not a … place.” And while a knowable ontology of self
is still perpetually deferred, the evidence of its existence as a type deconstruction surfaces within
the representation of subjectivity. This subject recognizes its own unknowability and builds off
of a foundationless substructure. This is not to say that posthuman subjectivity is relative or
empty, but rather that it consistently wrestles against the certainties of the liberal humanist way
of thinking. The posthuman is ultimately uncertain. It is contradiction and complexity. It is
unuseless. In this vein, my suggestion for the continued scholarship of the post-humanities is that
such works embrace the indeterminacy of its primary focus, a perception that is no less real or
imperative than any other work in the humanities.
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