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Morisaki Kazue's Diasporic Interventions in Language[1)]

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"Colonial Discourses studies, when they concentrate only on the representation of the colonized or the matter of the colonies, can sometimes serve the production of current neocolonial knowledge by placing colonialism/imperialism securely in the past, and/or by suggesting a continuous line from the past to our present" (Spivak 1). This well-known axiom given by literary critic and theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak makes clear how theoretically and practically difficult it is to approach others without involving any conceptual appropriation. A shift in focus is necessary to get through colonial/neocolonial discourses; but how, and to what should the focus be directed? Japanese poet and writer Morisaki Kazue (1927–) would suggest paying attention to institutionalized ways of knowledge and language, and in so doing explore a more inclusive language with which to address others in a less-institutionalized, if not un-institutionalized, way. If there is a discourse that would make it possible to approach others in a way in which not to distort their knowledge, values, or ways of life, Morisaki's work implies, such a discourse would be based on an all-inclusive language with which different values could negotiate and accept—not control or be controlled by—each other.

From her early works in the 1960s onward, Morisaki's attention has largely been focused on the language of the oppressed. It is a language that has not necessarily been given verbal expressions but nonetheless has been *lived* and shared by people of certain cultures. Morisaki finds such languages functioning among those living in places such as coal-mining towns, coastal villages, and remote islands—places that are historically, politically, and socially marginalized in the course of modernization. Instead of focusing on the relationship of the dominant power vs. the oppressed, her work explores a new linguistic matrix in which to evade compartmentalized ways of knowledge and to approach others more independently and autonomously. In this paper, I wish to examine Morisaki's exploration of new language and the diasporic nature of her approach to discuss how her work helps question not only a colonial view but also a postcolonial view of language.

There are several places that demonstrate to Morisaki a way of language that has sim-

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ply been *lived* by residents and has not necessarily been conceptually articulated. Yoron, an island which is located 20 kilometers north of Okinawa and was the closest Japanese land that Morisaki could travel to before Okinawa's reversion to Japanese rule in 1972, is one such place. In her essay on language and identity, Morisaki introduces the following story of a traditional open-air burial in Yoron; for her, this story illustrates what a *lived* language is like.

The story goes like this. On the island of Yoron, people used to rest the body of the deceased in a cave; family and relatives would visit the cave with *sake* and water. After three years or so, people would find that "the bones were all clean." Then, in the cave, the oldest daughter would hold the skull of her parent, gently rubbing it clean with a white cloth. An elderly woman, who used to live in Yoron, recalls: "After three years, bones turned pure white; they are quite beautiful. We would carefully collect the beautiful—*churasa*—bones, while talking about the person" (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 30–31). Such a careful and faithful treatment of bones, Morisaki's account implies, illustrates not only people's respect for the deceased but their belief in the continuation of life. This, in fact, does not seem uncommon in human history; the least perishable part of the body, bones "represent the physical manifestation of life and the continuance of the species" (*Dictionary of Symbols* 109). In some cases, people would find bones with flesh still attached: "If flesh is still on a bone, we would rub it with both hands like this, and the bone would be all clean. While rubbing off the flesh, we would talk about the person, saying that he or she 'must have been of great strength'" (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 31). Carefully and gently rubbing—or it might be more like caressing—a bone, people would cherish the memory of the deceased, not only talking about but taking *to* the person. Rubbing and caressing are more than physical acts: they are a *language* as well.

The act of rubbing as a means of communication is seen not only in people's attitudes regarding the dead but also in their relationships with the living. In Yoron until some time ago, Morisaki's account continues, people used to rub the body of others as a gesture of intimacy, just like they do to bones of their families. As an example, she introduces a story told by another ex-resident of Yoron that, when he came back from the battlefield, his mother kept rubbing his body for a couple of hours, verbally and physically expressing her being grateful for having her son's beautiful, *churasa* body back. Just like their attitude to the dead, Yoron people's act of rubbing others—their *churasa* bodies—demonstrates unconditional acceptance of and deep affection for them, and their lived language of intimacy.

In this manner, Morisaki's essay entitled "Sei no hajimari, Shi no owari " [The Beginning of Life, The End of Death: Two Languages, Two Souls (2)] displays how the act of rubbing represents the Yoron culture's inclusive vision that extends across life and death, as well as self and others. Morisaki suggests, as the essay's title implies, that such an inclusive vision makes the conventionally accepted boundary between life and death obscure and uncertain. Interestingly, Morisaki implies in a subtle way that, although there are some other intimate acts such as hugging and embracing, none of them can attain the

same degree of intimacy as the act of rubbing does. Unlike hugging and embracing, rubbing involves perpetual motion, moving your hand(s) back and forth, and because of this motion, rubbing generates heat, physically and figuratively speaking; we rub our hands when cold, and when rubbing others, it brings about warmth between people physically and emotionally. It is tempting to think that rubbing helps transform a boundary between two different entities into an interface between them; in the process of rubbing, the boundary that separates is turned into an interface that combines. And perhaps because of such a transformative power of rubbing, Yoron people's close relationships with others—and their linguistic universe based on such intimacy—may only be manifested in their art of rubbing.

In Yoron, Morisaki observes, "people's direct contact with the concrete plays the role of a language" (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 34). The act of rubbing *is* the language with which family and friends communicate to the dead, as well as parents to their children. In a language of rubbing, Morisaki finds a way in which "the concrete meets the concrete" and observes its fundamental difference from modern knowledge in which reality is formed by a conceptual language rather than direct contact with the concrete (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 33). In this way, the Yoron culture of rubbing demonstrates "a language that is *lived* by people," which Morisaki contrasts with "a language that is merely *used* by people" (Morisaki, "Kotoba" 213; italics mine).

Morisaki's approach to issues of language and culture is diasporic. It does not allow one particular perspective—either hers or others'—to dominate; instead, her attitude perpetually intends to unsettle conventional borders of knowledge. This is largely due to her geopolitical background of being born and raised in Korea during Japan's occupation, a point which I will discuss shortly. In her examination of issues of diaspora, cultural critic Rey Chow suggests that diasporas represent transnationalism due to their embodiment of "the question of borders": "The 'question of borders' should not be a teleological one. It is not so much about the transient eventually giving way to the permanent as it is about an existential condition of which 'permanence' itself is an ongoing fabrication" (Chow 15). What Chow observes from a transnational perspective may explain Morisaki's diasporic attitude to language. In the case of her contact with the culture of Yoron and their language of rubbing, for instance, obviously Morisaki is interested in the Yoron culture which is based on the direct connectedness between different entities, yet her fascination does not fall into a simplistic appraisal of a lost culture of intimacy. Morisaki's attention is not directed only to the language of rubbing; as I have discussed, she does not allow one particular value to dominate in any way, hence, neither the purification of a language of intimacy nor the assimilation of it into standard Japanese.

Instead, what is sought in her literary exploration is a channel—or a larger linguistic matrix—with which to form a bridge between disparate languages. Morisaki narrates the story of Yoron in a way that implies not only her fascination with the Yoron people's language of rubbing but also the lack of a channel between their language and that of Morisaki. A lack of shared ground between them brought an awkward ending to their

conversation: "Even though people from Yoron embody such a new system [of value] to me, neither of us knows how to communicate with each other, and I finished the conversation in a hurry," she recollects (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 33). Like this, Morisaki's approach to other languages and cultures does not fall into an easy celebration of an intimate language of the past or an uncritical attack of the abstract language of the present.

It is important to notice that, in her approach to language in Yoron, Morisaki sees that "neither" language—hers nor theirs—is sufficient. Not idealizing the concrete language of the native islanders nor simply attacking modern abstract language, which she recognizes is the only available language for her, Morisaki searches for a linguistic matrix which would be inclusive enough to provide grounds for different languages to negotiate and understand each other. She claims, "I desire a system of the concrete, and such system cannot be represented by a system of the abstract . . . . In negotiating the two can we see how to bridge the gap between different languages" (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 44). As this statement exemplifies, her efforts to address different languages and cultures carefully avoids stereotyped value assessment. In other words, Morisaki uses a vocabulary of difference such as concrete and abstract, and native and non-native, in a way to avoid developing them into a conventional binary opposition, which usually sets an ideology of hierarchy.

Morisaki's tactic of working towards an inclusive language is actively passive. For instance, she claims: "I do not want to speculate on the [reality of those who have different values] from my point of view. I should not. [Their reality] is completely foreign to me. I will wait for what such foreignness would say to me" (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 42). To wait and listen to others. Her attitude described as such is, in fact, reflected in her writing style and structure. For instance, her essay on the culture of Yoron that I have discussed earlier includes a number of quoted words that she depicted as having heard from people she met, interweaving them with her thoughts on issues of culture and language. Writing oral history is actually characteristic of her works, especially her early works written in the 1960s and '70s, such as *Makkura* [Pitch Black], which collects the oral stories of female ex-coal miners in northern Kyushu, and *Karayuki-san* [Sold Overseas], a hybrid text of her extensive research and creative nonfiction regarding those who were sold overseas from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.

Morisaki's literary dependence on oral history can be interpreted in the following two ways. On the one hand, it displays her lack of a linguistic and epistemological foothold. As I will discuss later, an awareness of absence—absence of home, language, and identity—characterized Morisaki's literary stance, particularly in the early stage of her career when she suffered a lack of language and identity due to her background as a second-generation colonist who was born and brought up in Korea during Japan's occupation. Perhaps because of the sense of absence, Morisaki might have chosen to transcribe the voice of those who embody a culture in which people's identity nurtures and is nurtured by their language. It is passive in that Morisaki does not seem to independently approach others, yet it is active in that Morisaki has others' voices to provide a basis on which to

develop her observations and thoughts on issues of language and identity. On the other hand, her interest in oral history—the stylistic dependence on other voices by means of quotation and transcription—also seems to represent her desire not to impose her views but to "wait to hear what [foreignness of a different culture and language] would say to [her]" (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 42). Quoting and transcribing others may work as a strategy for allowing them to manifest themselves, and in this way oral history can be regarded as a carefully and strategically chosen method of approaching others.

It is her resistance to both idealization of a place-based language of intimacy and to un-self-reflective criticism of a modern language that characterizes Morisaki's work as truly diasporic. To a certain extent Morisaki is physically diasporic for her being a second-generation colonist born and raised in Korea. In her essay entitled "Two Languages and Two Souls," Morisaki describes her birth as a "crime" due to her politically and historically convoluted position:

> To talk about Korea is a burden. It makes me feel so heavy-hearted, I hardly know how to begin. I was born in Mikasa-cho, Taegu, Kyongsangpukto, Korea.
>
> Sensing that your birth—not the way you lived your life, but the fact of having been born—was in itself a crime is not something you speak about easily . . . . It does me just as little good to think that I was only a child, that I wasn't born in Korea because I wanted to be. It is the very fact that I was born in that land without having chosen to do so, that I absorbed its culture, which in turn gave shape to my being, that gives rise to my dilemma. I find it impossible to remain objective about Korea or the activities of Koreans; I lose my composure. The hair of my Korean mother and my Korean nanny who carried me on their backs sticks to my lips. It fills my month with memories I never would have had had we parted in a different way. Each strand is more filled with the contents of my soul than words will ever know. I have not the power to compromise. Words are shrunken, unable to contain the fullness. Korea raised me, fed me at its breast. (Morisaki, "Two Languages" 153)[2]

Morisaki's affection for Korea is obvious.[3] The description of her memory of Korea, which is so concrete that she could not think of the women whom she affectionately called her "Korean mother" and her "Korean nanny" without the feeling of their hair on her lips, demonstrates how people and the environment in Korea shaped and colored Morisaki's childhood. If we call the place of our childhood self-formation "home," Korea, in which she "absorbed its culture which in turn gave shape to [her] being," is nothing but home. But Morisaki's sense of being "raised" by Korea never corresponds to her sense of who she is, because the historical fact of her being a second-generation colonist does not allow her to see Korea as her home.

More so than in her personal background, Morisaki's diasporic idiosyncrasy is most clearly displayed in her attitude toward language. Her awareness of not having her home in either Korea or Japan or anywhere else forms a basis of her diasporic perspective of language. Instead of lamenting the absence of home, Morisaki operates her awareness of absence in a way that develops a critical perspective from which to seek an all-inclusive language, a language that would allow her diasporic being as well.

There are mainly three significant topoi for Morisaki's literary explorations of language. They are Korea, Okinawa, and Munakata. As is displayed in her 2004 book title, *Inochi eno tabi: Kankoku, Okinawa, Munakata* [A Journey to Life: Korea, Okinawa, Munakata], those three places provide ground from which Morisaki seeks an un-institutionalized way of life. Morisaki's essay on Yoron—a place which she perceived as being in the same category as Okinawa—is an example of how such places have unsettling effects on conventional notions of language. Munakata is located in northern Kyushu, a town close to what was once the largest-scale coal-mining region in Japan. Morisaki lived in a coal-mining town in northern Kyushu from the late 1950s through the 1970s, developing her literary activism on language and culture by means of her contact with the peculiar culture of coal miners. Munakata is also close to coastal villages where she frequently visited to learn about female abalone divers and their open relationships with others, relationships that Morisaki finds similar to those of female coal miners whose erotic self and social self are not separated as they are in modern societies. Korea is, as I have mentioned, where Morisaki was born and raised; it is the place which nurtured her language—"a Japanese language for an overseas territory" (Morisaki, "Minshu kotoba" 28). It is the same language that her Korean contemporaries were forced to use, and Morisaki describes such a language as "a system of language which does not have a home outside the language itself" (Morisaki, "Minshu kotoba" 29). It is indeed a language lived by people like Morisaki, yet unlike the language in Yoron, it does not originate in the concrete.

All those places—Okinawa/Yoron, the coal-mining region, the coastal villages, and Korea as Japan's colony—are considered to have suffered from Japan's modernization that advanced from the late nineteenth century onward. Morisaki's attention is directed not to victimization aspects of those places but their peculiar culture, which seems to have evaded being appropriated by a nationalistic ideology. Usually places such as coal-mining towns, isolated coastal villages, and remote islands are perceived as marginalized, exploited, neglected, and thereby victimized in the course of the nation's modernization and industrialization. It is not uncommon to describe those marginalized people and places as victims of modernization, especially in a postcolonial discourse. I do not deny that such a view helps illuminate that which was previously concealed or hidden in a modern discourse of power. However, as is demonstrated by Spivak's observation that I mentioned at the opening of this essay, if a postcolonial view merely replaces a colonial view, still one single story dominates individual and societal perceptions of other people and cultures. This accompanies what Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie calls "the danger of a single story." In her TED speech, Adichie states:

> It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is "nkali." It's a noun that loosely translates to "to be greater than another." Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent

> on power. (Adichie, no page)

Whether being just or not, having, telling, and believing in a single story is dangerous in that it cannot be free from a particular power structure. Having many stories, Adichie argues, helps alleviate such danger if not annihilate it.

In a similar vein, Morisaki's attitude toward marginalized people and places allows for different stories, approaching the *lived* world of those who are often interpreted as historically, socially, and politically victimized. There is no doubt that a story of their being victimized is in a way an illustration of their reality, and it is not always easy to distinguish what is lived by natives from what is conceptually perceived by non-natives. What I wish to emphasize as a notable characteristic of Morisaki's approach is her desire to un-institutionalize conceptually established views of people and places.

Her attempt to make her own conceptual realm un-institutionalized is recognized in her positive acceptance of *absence* as her epistemic footing. According to Japanese critic and translator Fujimoto Kazuko, a major characteristic of Morisaki's work is found in the writer's keen awareness of absence—absence of home, identity, and even language with which to articulate herself (Fujimoto 147). Such a consciousness of absence is at once a burden and strength for Morisaki, as is discussed in a subtle way in the following passage from her "Two Languages, Two Souls":

> Two different and overlapping cultures color my perception of "I." This is no self-protective subterfuge. "I" is innately a comprehensive expression of the historical structure of the individual. The word is thus compromised of two appositive dynamics—the reductive dynamic that distinguishes between the individual self and others and the extensive dynamic that encompasses the area of shared experience that exists between self and the other and that necessitates the inclusion within "I" of an indefinite number of others without whom "I" would have no meaning. Ordinarily, as it is used in everyday parlance in Japan, the latter function of the word is closer to the surface. Through it the range of responsibility the individual must accept for everyday life is more or less ambiguously defined.
>
> I came to Japan after the war and learned that the Japanese used the word "I" around the axis of the latter function. In my life in Korea my use of the word had been biased in favor of the former function. I thought to myself quizzically that the Japanese were a people unable to grasp the full functional range of "I." (Morisaki, "Two Languages" 154–55)

This passage illustrates where Morisaki culturally and linguistically locates herself: she sees Japan rather objectively without making herself conceptually assimilated as Japanese.[4)] Such a stance would be positively evaluated as cosmopolitan in the present context of globalization, but a positive mood is totally incompatible with Morisaki's position from which she reflects on her past life as a second-generation colonist. Moreover, although the quoted passage shows that the Japanese usage of "I" appeared strange to Morisaki, who "absorbed [Korean] culture, which in turn gave shape to [her] being," it does not imply that Morisaki's attitude is rooted in Korean culture. Rather, Morisaki's geopolitical recognition of her background does not allow her to rely on Korean values, as she claims that she "[has] simply lost the means to express what there is to say" (Morisaki, "Two Lan-

guages" 154). Thus, Morisaki suffers the absence of a language with which to articulate her thoughts, her feelings, and herself. But at the same time, the consciousness of absence works positively, providing a tabula rasa for Morisaki, who seeks a place from which to approach others and other cultures in a way that evades institutionalized thinking.

What makes Morisaki's perspective on language unique is her scrutiny of power structures among the various regional languages. Usually, scholarly attention goes to hierarchical differences between regional languages and homogeneous, standard languages, but Morisaki points out the similar hegemonic structure working among regional languages as well. In her "Minshu kotoba no hassei" [The Birth of People's Language], Morisaki discusses three regional languages: an Okinawan language, that of a coal-mining town in Kyushu, and the Japanese used by Koreans during Japan's occupation. They are all usually considered languages used by victims, yet Morisaki does not view them that way. Instead, she points out the complex structure of victimization within regional languages as well. For instance, observing how people from Okinawa were treated on the mainland, she claims, "Because of their spoken language, those who left Okinawa for the Japanese mainland have been oppressed and segregated in many different places, even in a place like a coal-mining town in Kyushu where nobody is native" (Morisaki, "Minshu kotoba" 32). Such a recognition is seen in her essay regarding the open-air burial in Yoron, too. Morisaki sees her informant—an old woman who used to live in Yoron and who moved en masse with others around 1900 to work at the Mitsui Miike coal mines in Kyushu, Japan's largest coal mine, which played a major role in promoting the nation's industrialization from the 1880s until other fossil fuels took over in the 1950s—as not so much a victim of modernization as a victim of linguistic segregation. Morisaki asks "if the greatest suffering in [the old woman and her husband's] lives after their relocating to the mainland is not being able to utter Yoron's native words of celebration, *uhbe hahbe uhbe hahbe*, in front of strangers, rather than the capitalistic exploitation" (Morisaki, "Sei no hajimari" 29–30).

Like this, Morisaki points out the structure of victims within victims. Yet, again, her attention is not directed towards such a chain of victimization, as she claims: "A fundamental basis on which to face the power that suppresses languages is not merely concerned with the power configuration of a central language vs. regional languages (Morisaki, "Minshu kotoba" 39). Her interest is not in the power structure of the oppressing vs. the oppressed, whether it is between a regional language and a standard language or between regional languages. Instead, Morisaki's attention is oriented towards a larger linguistic matrix within which different languages would negotiate and accept each other. The following passage regarding political and general perceptions of Okinawa illustrates her stance as such:

> . . . did the mainland's perception of Okinawa differ from the dominant power's perception of Okinawa? . . . did the general public really try to face people in Okinawa independently and integrate the meaning of their anti-power protest with their own history as well as that of Okinawa? Unless they did so, they could not overcome their narrowness to create a world

truly for the general public, a world free from a bias for Okinawa or for the mainland, as well as a language truly for the general public, which is different from standard Japanese. (Morisaki, “Minshu kotoba” 33–34)

In order to attain a “language truly for the general public,” Morisaki argues, it is indispensable for different people and cultures to face each other, compare their histories with others, and orient towards common ground. Morisaki’s frequent journeys to remote places all over Japan, from Okinawa to Hokkaido, partly demonstrate her efforts to “face” others to work towards a common ground of language.

I have delineated and discussed how Morisaki’s perspective towards others aims to turn borders that separate into an interface that combines. In concluding this essay, I would like to locate Morisaki’s exploration of language in the present context of globalization so as to make its implication clearer. Morisaki’s work operates in a way in which to erode the conventional understanding of language.[5] She does not suggest an alternative but operates absence as a foundation for an exploration of language. Such a creative force of absence seems suggestive in the age of globalization, where fewer people have a solid footing. In Morisaki’s literary struggle to approach others is indicated a possibility of diasporic perspectives in creating a common ground with others.

Notes

1) Throughout this essay, name order follows the cultural convention of the country where the named person is originally from. Therefore, Japanese are referred to with a family-name given-name order.
2) A minor change is added to the English translation by changing “nanny” to “my Korean nanny.”
3) What I discuss in this paragraph is from my book (Yuki 206).
4) What I discuss in this paragraph is from my book (Yuki 208).
5) This “eroding” function is similar to what Rey Chow discusses as a major function of intervention performed by a writing diaspora. Discussing intellectual treatment of the idea of “borders,” Chow claims:

> Because “borders” have so clearly meandered into so many intellectual issues that the more stable and conventional relation between borders and the “field” no longer holds, intervention cannot simply be thought of in terms of the creation of new “fields.” Instead, it is necessary to think *primarily* in terms of borders—of borders, that is, as *para-sites* that never take over a field in its entirety but erode it slowly and *tactically*” (Chow 16).

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森崎和江の作品における言語へのディアスポラ的介入

結　城　正　美

本稿は、森崎和江の作品におけるディアスポラ的な言語実践を分析するものである。自己と他者を分け隔てる境界を、両者をつなぐインターフェイスとしてとらえ直そうとする森崎の文学的試みは、具体に根づいた（土着の）言語を称揚するのでも、抽象世界で自己完結している言語を単に批判するのでもなく、異質な言語をつなぐ新たな言語の希求というかたちで展開する。確たる参照点を持たず欠落の意識を手だてとする森崎のディアスポラ的言語探求を、森崎作品における三つの重要なトポス——沖縄／与論、朝鮮、炭坑——に着目し分析する。