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History, adaptation, Japan: Haruki Murakami's 'Tony Takitani' and Jun Ichikawa's *Tony Takitani*

ABSTRACT

Haruki Murakami's short story, 'Tony Takitani', first published in Japan in 1990, and the film adaptation directed by Jun Ichikawa, released in 2004 under the same title, are important critiques of society in late twentieth-century Japan. I focus on the socio-historical framework that Murakami constructed in the short story and that Ichikawa instantiated in his adaptation. I suggest that Murakami's 'Tony Takitani', an incisive portrayal of unsustainable consumption and social disconnection, is a prescient work that anticipated the bursting of Japan's economic bubble in the early 1990s – and that Ichikawa's film confirms the accuracy of Murakami's dark prescience, but offers a counterpoint to it in an extended storyline that reveals a muted optimism grounded in the possibility of social reconnection.

KEYWORDS

Tony Takitani
Haruki Murakami
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Haruki Murakami's short story, 'Tony Takitani', first published in Japan in 1990, and Jun Ichikawa's film, *Tony Takitani*, released in Japan in 2004, have been widely circulated as Japan-inflected expressions of postmodern loneliness and detachment.¹ In the United States, a translation of the story appeared in the *New Yorker*

1. The Japanese titles of both the short story and the film (romanized as *Tonī Takitani*) are written in katakana script, used mainly

for foreign names and words carried over into Japanese and adapted to the pronunciation system.

magazine (Murakami 2002), and was subsequently included in the anthology *Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman: Twenty-Four Stories* (Murakami 2006). *Tony Takitani* (Ichikawa 2004) opened in US theatres in 2005, and has been licensed and distributed in almost two dozen countries (Wilco Co. Ltd. 2010). Murakami (1949–), a bestselling novelist, short story writer and translator in Japan, has a broad, transnational reputation; his readership extends to some 35 countries (Seats 2006: 26). Ichikawa (1948–2008), a director often compared with Yasujiro Ozu (1903–1963), whose work he emulated, created a body of work particularly notable for its finely detailed portrayals of the Tokyo cityscape and the interpersonal relationships that unfold within it – elements that can be seen in *Tony Takitani*.

The purpose of this article is to open up ‘Tony Takitani’ and its adaptation in film to examination as important critiques of society in late twentieth-century Japan. To do so, I focus on the socio-historical framework that Murakami constructed in the short story and that Ichikawa instantiated in his adaptation. Despite the relative brevity of the story (seven pages in the *New Yorker* translation) and the film (75 minutes), in both works a wide swath of time – some 50 years from the 1930s until the 1980s – is highly condensed in a succession of quick verbal, visual and aural references to Japan’s war, defeat, recovery and, finally, consumer-driven euphoria. Murakami’s ‘Tony Takitani’, with its direct appeal to historical memory, is a prescient work, an incisive portrayal of unsustainable consumption and social disconnection that anticipated the bursting of Japan’s economic bubble in the early 1990s. As the years passed, the accuracy of Murakami’s vision was borne out. It was at this time, too, that Ichikawa, having already achieved success as a director of television commercials, began simultaneously building a new career as a film-maker – winning accolades for, among others, *Byōin de shinu to iu koto/Dying at a Hospital* (1993), *Tōkyō kyōdai/Tokyo Siblings* (1995), *Tokiwasō no seishun/Tokiwa: The Manga Apartment* (1996), *Tōkyō yakyoku/Tokyo Lullaby* (1997) and *Tōkyō marigōrudo/Tokyo Marigold* (2001). *Tony Takitani*, although certainly riding the crest of Murakami’s widespread popularity early in the new millennium, draws its power from the particular idiom Ichikawa developed as a film-maker: the adaptation is a quietly controlled film that confronts the past, confirming Murakami’s dark prescience while at the same time offering an updated counterpoint to it in an extended storyline that reveals a muted optimism grounded in the possibility of social reconnection.

Murakami and Ichikawa portray characters who, in a sense, choose not to participate directly in historical events, but who cannot escape being affected by them. Tony’s jazz-musician father, Shozaburo, rides out the war playing his trombone in Shanghai, only to be imprisoned and nearly executed by the Chinese army after the end of hostilities with Japan because of his wartime ‘connections’ (Murakami 2002: 74). Eventually freed, he returns to a devastated Tokyo early in 1946, finding that his parents died and his family home was destroyed in the air raids that reduced much of the city to ashes a year earlier. His one brother never returns from the Burmese front. As if trying to reconstitute some semblance of family at this stage of his life, Shozaburo marries a distant cousin. She dies shortly after giving birth to their son, Tony, around whom the rest of the story revolves.

Motherless, without an extended family to take him in and with his father out making a living as a musician, Tony nevertheless thrives within his own solitary world. He becomes self-sufficient and independent, with only a housekeeper to take care of his childhood needs. In school he develops a talent for precise and detailed drawing. When Tony reaches university age in the 1960s, he rides out the struggles of his time, just as his father had done 30 years earlier. Although

not on the scale of the all-out war experienced by Shozaburo's generation, it was nevertheless a period of ideological intensity and violent demonstrations in Japan as elsewhere – especially on college campuses. Tony unswervingly keeps his focus on refining his skills as an illustrator of mechanically efficient and rational machines that represent order in the chaos of everyday life. He goes on to achieve great success in his career, but he cannot escape the effects of history: marrying at the age of 37, he suffers devastating grief when he loses his wife – both metaphorically and literally – to the great surge of consumption that marked the wildly prosperous Japan of the 1980s.

Linda Hutcheon (2006) has applied the term 'knowing audience' to those who are already familiar with the material being adapted. Ichikawa embraces the knowing audience by often using exact phrases and sentences from Murakami's story in the third-person voice-over narration and in the characters' dialogue. A corollary to this is the way Ichikawa challenges conventional notions of narration and provocatively blurs the line between the diegetic and the non-diegetic aspects of the film: he has the actors playing Tony (child and adult), Eiko and Hisako on-screen and in character share in the narration by, for example, starting or completing the voice-over narrator's lines. The characters are thus rendered in a more complex way, becoming in effect observers who speak objectively (again, often exactly quoting Murakami's published words) about their own unfolding lives.

Within and outside of Japan, Ichikawa's *Tony Takitani* is an example of an adaptation for which a knowing audience is, additionally, one that is acquainted with the socio-historical frameworks that both the director and Murakami use. As Hutcheon has observed: 'An adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context – a time and a place, a society and a culture; it does not exist in a vacuum' (2006: 142). The ahistoricized and decontextualized stereotypes that have tended to dominate readings of 'Japan' are well documented (see e.g. Sugimoto 2010). However, as Rebecca Suter has noted in connection with the strong sales in the United States of Murakami's writings, there is 'a different Japan that America seems to be confronting in a less exoticizing and more understanding manner' (2008: 37). Both 'Tony Takitani' and Ichikawa's film adaptation exemplify Suter's point.

HISTORY/CONTEXT

Echoing the words inscribed in the first line of the short story, the voice-over narrator tells the film viewer at the outset: 'Tony Takitani's real name was really that: Tony Takitani'. Although unremarkable in a linguistic and social environment like the United States, where given names precede family names and where names of 'mixed' ethnicity are commonplace, the appellation immediately gives the central character an identity as a figure in Japan's history. Tony Takitani was not (and is not) a 'normal' Japanese name.

The apolitical, trombone-playing Shozaburo, mourning the death of his wife, names his son after an Occupation soldier – 'a jazz-loving American Army major' with whom he 'often jammed together' and in whose quarters he would 'listen to the happy jazz of Bobby Hackett, Jack Teagarden, and Benny Goodman' (Murakami 2002: 74, 76). The American from New Jersey leaves an indelible mark on the Japanese baby who bears his given name:

Tony was no name for a Japanese child, of course, but such a thought never crossed the major's mind. When Shozaburo got home, he wrote

the name Tony Takitani on a piece of paper and stuck it to the wall ... Not bad. Not bad. The American occupation of Japan was probably going to last awhile, he thought, and an American-style name just might come in handy for the kid at some point.

(Murakami 2002: 76)

However, the society in which the young Tony needed to make his way was one in which children 'whose blood was half American G.I.' – even though his was not – and whose names were 'half American G.I.' – even though he was 'one-hundred-per-cent genuine Japanese' (Murakami 2002: 74) – were marginalized. Tony's hybrid name was emblematic of the instability of the defeated nation: what did it mean, people in Japan asked themselves in the late 1940s when Tony Takitani was born, to be 'Japanese' in the postwar world? The anger and confusion that sprang forth at that point in Japan's history in response to a half-American, half-Japanese name was not merely a figment of Murakami's and Ichikawa's imaginations.

Whereas Shozaburo's brother died as a soldier in Japan's war, Murakami places Tony's father on very different ground in the 1930s and 1940s. '[F]our years before the Second World War broke out he was forced to leave Tokyo because of a problem involving a woman' (2002: 74). Shozaburo's ticket to survival in 1937 and afterwards is a globalized jazz that had long before reached Japan (see Atkins 2001) – and that allows him to stand outside of time:

he took it easy through the upheaval of the war – from the Japanese invasion of China to the attack on Pearl Harbor to the dropping of two atomic bombs. He played his trombone in Shanghai nightclubs as the struggles took place somewhere far away. Shozaburo Takitani was a man who possessed not the slightest inclination to influence – or even to reflect upon – history.

(Murakami 2002: 74)

Like most ordinary people, Shozaburo just wants to satisfy his desires and live comfortably. During the years of Japan's empire-building and pursuit of war, men were made to leave the shores of Japan as soldiers. In marked contrast, Shozaburo's departure suits his own convenience. A 'problem involving a woman' sent him out of Tokyo; it is his choice to go all the way to Shanghai, the jazz-steeped 'colonial playground for transients from over 20 nations' (Atkins 1999: 6). However, he cannot escape the forces of history. The world as he knew it changes: 'Life: I'll never understand it', he reflects as, freed from the Chinese prison, he sails out of Shanghai on his way back to Japan (Murakami 2002: 74).

Ichikawa's *Tony Takitani* amply displays what Manning and Shackford-Bradley refer to as the 'multi-chronotopic potential of film' – its 'rich resources for conveying the sights, sounds, rhythms, and auras of a particular space and time' (2010: 38–39) – to lay down Shozaburo's history. Like an album filled with memories, there is a succession of frames displaying black and white and sepia-toned photographs of 1930s and 1940s Shanghai. Composer Ryuichi Sakamoto's spare, lyrical soundtrack embeds strains of jazz accessed from old, scratchy records to underscore visual evocations of time and place. The most intensely rendered aspect of Shozaburo's past is the prison cell in which he is held in solitary confinement, the silence pierced by the terrifyingly intermittent explosions of the executioners' gunshots nearby. He lies shivering on the floor in a foetal position. Many frames later and long after the war years have all

but been forgotten in Japan, his son lies in a similar position on the floor of a similar, prison-cell-like enclosure – the oversized empty closet purposely built to hold his wife's absurdly enormous collection of high-priced clothes.

The crux of the story for both Murakami and Ichikawa is the paradoxical nature of the frothy prosperity that defined Japan in the 1980s. In ruins only a few decades earlier, the Japanese economy had become the second largest in the world. Growth seemed unstoppable until the bubble suddenly burst in the early 1990s. Shozaburo's son, Tony, personifies 'the dominant paradigm of postwar Japan – namely, the ethics of hard work [...] and the belief in moving forward' (Otomo 2007: 117). But, while he is working hard, the units of society are coming apart. Evidence of this can be seen early on in the relationship between this father and son: 'Shozaburo Takitani was not well suited to being a father, and Tony Takitani was not well suited to being a son' (Murakami 2002: 77). Having survived the repercussions of his hybrid name, so isolating especially in early postwar Japan, and his motherless (and virtually fatherless) upbringing, Tony becomes the postmodern man, who, on an impersonal, objective level, is well able to function in society but who is detached from it in a personal, subjective way. At a young age – no more than twelve or thirteen – Tony calmly dismisses the housekeeper Shozaburo had hired to cook and clean and watch over him; Tony does not need or want someone whose only role is to do the tasks he can well manage on his own. Having no 'real' family, he rejects an artificial one.

SOCIETY/DISCONNECTION

The 22-year-old woman with whom Tony suddenly falls in love incarnates the crisis of unsustainable consumption and social fragmentation that marked 1980s Japan. At the age of 37, Tony has already forged a successful career and has accumulated a wealth of assets. But the emotional isolation that marks his personal history has left him vulnerable. He does not realize how 'lonely' he is until he meets one particular woman. She is a mid-1980s icon: young, attractive and employed as an assistant in a publisher's office (the kind of stylish job desired by legions of bright, young, educated women); she is the model consumer of the consumer-driven moment. 'Most of my money goes on clothing', she tells Tony (Murakami 2002: 77). Fifteen years younger than him, she is of another generation – born in 1963, maybe 1964, the year of the Tokyo Olympics, an event that symbolically marked Japan's post-war recovery.

Whereas Tony's generation grew up during Japan's rebuilding, learning to be cautious even when they 'splurged' (and, following their parents' example, saving as much money as they could), the woman's generation arrived at the point that rebuilding was complete and grew up with little awareness of or interest in all of the self-denying hard work that had just been done. For her cohort, the restrictions of cautious consumption were swept away by the expansiveness of responding without restraint to the desire for the finest that money can buy – signified by a taste for the astronomically priced brand-name clothes to which the woman is uncontrollably drawn. It is perhaps this unrestrained expansiveness that is the ineffable quality that first draws Tony with such force to the woman –

that gave [his] heart a violent punch... The next thing that caught his attention was her clothes. He generally took no particular interest in

what people wore, but there was something so wonderful about the way this girl dressed that it made a deep impression on him; indeed, one could even say it moved him ... He had never seen a woman wear her clothes with such apparent joy.

(Murakami 2002: 77)

Tony's infatuation with the woman, which ruptures his well-ordered life, can be interpreted as a kind of delayed adolescence on the part of a postmodern man trying – before it is too late – to capture the modern world that he never fully experienced the first time around. As Fuminobu Murakami has argued:

In most romantic works, individual freedom is usually reconciled in a happy unification and can be understood as the unfulfillable adolescent desire to reunite with the mother. That is the reason why modernists in their adolescence, when they are forming their self-identities, fall desperately in love with others.

(2005: 41)

Growing up, when the young people of his generation were making social attachments, the circumstances of Tony's life build up in him a tolerance for disconnection that paradoxically enables him to survive and, eventually, succeed in a career that was itself at a remove from social interaction:

While the young people around him were agonizing over the paths they should follow in life, he went on doing his mechanical drawings without a thought for anything else. And, because it was a time when most young people were acting out against the establishment with passion and violence, none of his contemporaries saw anything of value in his utilitarian art...His classmates criticized it as lacking in ideological content. Tony himself could not see what was so great about *their* work, with its ideological content. To him it looked immature, ugly, and inaccurate.

(Murakami 2002: 77)

Tony falls in love at the exact instant that the world catches up with him, when the world around him became postmodern, detached. A fissure opens up in him, creating a need for connection, exposing a longing for companionship he had not felt before. The physical and psychological presence of the woman – unnamed by Murakami, but called Eiko in the adaptation by Ichikawa – speaks to yearnings that erupt from inside of him. For the young woman, on the other hand, the relationship with Tony opens up the floodgates of a different set of yearnings.

Michael Seats has cited a 2005 essay that Murakami published on the tenth anniversary of the Kobe earthquake as an example of the writer's 'publicly declared personal sense of social engagement and "commitment" [that] would have been unthinkable in the first decade of his career as a writer, when he used very different methods for carrying out his project of cultural critique' (2006: xi). 'Tony Takitani', which appears around the end of that first decade, sharply questions the success of Japan's postwar rebuilding at the height of Japan's twentieth-century prosperity. Tony's vocational achievements – and the careful management of his financial resources – give him the money that permits the exponential increase in spending by a woman about whom Murakami reveals little except that her impulse to acquire beautiful clothes knows no limits. To store the items in her ever-growing

collection, they buy armoires and cabinets. Tony 'had an entire room redesigned as a walk-in closet... she could change outfits twice a day and still not repeat herself for almost two years' (Murakami 2002: 78).

In Europe on their honeymoon, with Tony willingly underwriting her purchases, his wife becomes a caricature of well-heeled 1980s tourists from Japan: 'In Milan and Paris... [t]hey did no sightseeing at all. Instead of the Duomo or the Louvre, they saw Valentino, Missoni, Saint Laurent, Givenchy, Ferragamo, Armani, Cerutti, Gianfranco Ferré' (Murakami 2002: 78). It would seem that Tony's money suddenly had a new and important purpose: to buy clothes that give joy. But that 'joy' is an illusion. When the couple went on dates they spent hours talking: 'It was as if they were filling up each other's emptiness' (Murakami 2002: 77). In Ichikawa's adaptation, Eiko significantly tells Tony that she buys clothes to fill up *her* emptiness. Later, when Tony asks her to 'consider cutting back a little' on her shopping (Murakami 2002: 78) and she tries not leaving the house, all energy is drained from her. She *is* empty.

Tony's wife enacts history by becoming an avid consumer and then by being annihilated – killed by a truck at a traffic intersection after going to a boutique. Although she went there not to acquire more, but to return a few pieces, she cannot realign her thinking. Behind the wheel of her car on the way home, she is lethally distracted – 'seeing' only the clothes from which she cannot separate herself. The richer Tony is and the richer society is, the more goods that can be bought, but the transformation of wartime ruins into a world where fantastic luxuries are possible has come at an enormous cost to society.

Ichikawa strongly amplifies his critique of social disconnection in 1980s Japan in a scene that belongs exclusively to his adaptation. He inserts the particular episode into the narrative at the point that Tony is anxiously waiting for Eiko to tell him whether she will accept his marriage proposal. The setting is a grocery store. Pushing her cart, a twenty-something woman (analogous in appearance to Eiko) pauses at a display of fruit, reaching out to examine one of the pieces. As she walks on, pieces tumble to the floor behind her. She glances back, but makes no move to retrieve them. When an older female store employee nearby looks exasperatedly at her, her reaction is an instantaneous denial of responsibility. Tony, pushing his own cart, is a random observer, but is the one to whom the woman directs her claim that she did not do anything wrong ('It wasn't me, right?'). Tony looks powerless. Here Ichikawa has captured a late twentieth-century paradigm shift: social relations have become fragmented. The woman with the shopping cart shows no empathy for the older store employee, who will have to pick up the fruit and reassemble the kind of attractive display consumer society demands. The disengaged woman looks sullen; her tone of voice is unfriendly. Tony does not move to help pick up the fallen fruit either.

The grocery store scene, although a creation of Ichikawa, is reminiscent of points made by Murakami in *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche* (first published in Japan in 1997), a disturbing compilation of first-hand accounts narrated by victims of the sarin gas attack that was carried out by the Aum Shinrikyo cult in the Tokyo subway system on 20 March 1995. While not helping to pick up fallen fruit cannot be equated with passing by a person in need of urgent medical care, the issue of fractured community is at the core of both. A 41-year-old victim named Mitsuo Arima observed:

[I]f someone had fallen down right in front of me, I like to think I'd have helped. But what if they fell fifty yards away? Would I go out of my way

to help? I wonder. I might have seen it as somebody else's business and walked on by. If I'd gotten involved I'd have been late for work ... Since the war ended, Japan's economy has grown rapidly to the point where we've lost any sense of crisis and material things are all that matters.

(Murakami 2000b: 65)

Fuminobu Murakami's point about the character Nagasawa in Haruki Murakami's novel *Norwegian Wood* can also be applied to Ichikawa's depiction of the woman with the grocery cart in *Tony Takitani*: 'His nasty character is a result of a lack of empathy – a facet of the apathy typical of postmodernists' (2005: 42). Ichikawa further underscores the issue of disconnection by expanding the narrative of the short story to include a first-time encounter between Tony and another 'nasty' character, the man with whom Eiko broke up to marry Tony. The setting is a cocktail party-type reception to which Tony appears to have been invited by a professional associate. Looking for revenge and, at the same time, a strange kind of male bonding with Tony, the 'ex' – who is attending the same event – attacks the memory of the deceased woman. 'Wasn't she a pain?' he asks Tony, derisively referring to Eiko as 'aitsu', a word that is skillfully, if a bit too mildly, rendered in the film's English subtitles as 'that chick'. Tony's quiet, but forceful response, is to brush away the man by saying that he has 'forgotten'. As time passes the vividness of Eiko's image may be fading from his memory, but he will not tolerate anyone referring to her in dismissive terms. The man responds by verbally lashing into Tony, saying that he is dull, just like his drawings. Having briefly found the warmth of one-to-one intimacy in his love for Eiko, Tony is hurled back again into isolation.

ADAPTATION/DOUBLING

One of the most striking aspects of Ichikawa's film is the casting: Issei Ogata is both Shozaburo and Tony and Rie Miyazawa is both Eiko and Hisako. This doubling allows the director to perform several unexpectedly effective feats of 'repetition without replication' (Hutcheon 2006: 7) in his adaptation of Murakami's story. On the one hand, having Ogata play father and son binds psychological and spatial (connection/disconnection) aspects of the work with temporal (past/present) elements, bringing to the father-son relationship a more nuanced, even tender, complexity than the published story indicated. On the other, Miyazawa's corporeality recuperates 'Eiko' through Hisako, offering up the prospect that it is not too late for Tony to find emotional safe ground in a sustainable relationship.

In capturing on film the lack of empathy evident in the encounters of everyday life (the woman in the grocery store and the 'ex'), Ichikawa makes the rare, but deeply felt, meetings between Tony and his father seem far more preferable. Ichikawa presents three scenes in which he brings Shozaburo and Tony together. In each case the viewer 'sees' the father and son in the same room at the same time, even in close proximity – while simultaneously knowing that 'they' are Ogata alone. The first meeting takes place in the public space of a bustling hotel lobby, a favourite rendezvous location for busy Tokyo urbanites on the go. Life seems to be going well for the two men and they relax in the well-upholstered chairs arrayed there. Tony's announcement that he has fallen in love and is thinking of getting married evokes a warmly delighted reaction from Shozaburo – especially

when Tony tries to verbalize the reason for his attraction to the woman and winds up simply telling his father that she was born to wear clothes. Playing the trombone is Shozaburo's skill, drawing is Tony's (Ichikawa also briefly depicts him playing the guitar) and wearing clothes in a marvellous and radiant way in a prosperous age when there are so many beautiful ones to be had is the woman's. In the second instance, Tony and Eiko, following their marriage, go to see Shozaburo perform at a nightclub. The same incident occurs in the short story, but in Murakami's hands it is almost matter of factly motivated: Tony's wife initiates the visit because she had never heard her father-in-law perform. In the film, however, Ichikawa has Shozaburo telephone Tony with the request that he come hear him. In both texts the outcome of the encounter is momentous for Tony. Although he rarely hears his father play, he is subconsciously imprinted with his father's sound. What he experiences startles him with the shocking realization that his father's music has slightly, yet perceptibly, changed: Tony 'hears' in his ageing father's trombone playing an intimation of the illness (liver cancer) that will soon take Shozaburo's life and irrevocably separate them. Ichikawa's point is that time is slipping away, and the father feels the need to reach out to his son. The final scene between the two men takes place in a hospital room. Eiko has already died. Tony is at the bedside of the dying Shozaburo. They gaze at each other with soft smiles. In all three scenes – and especially in the last one – Ichikawa is pointing to deep, if belatedly acknowledged, emotional ties that join the two men. The doubling – Ogata as Shozaburo and Tony – is a visual indicator of fulfilment and connection between two individuals who have been mostly disconnected from each other over the course of their lives.

Miyazawa appears as Hisako only after Eiko has died, but both characters, too, are intimately conjoined in the narrative. The woman Tony marries is insubstantial, a kind of clothes-wearing spectral presence. This is driven home when, not long after her death, Tony places a help-wanted ad to find some anonymous person who will temporarily wear the clothes that have been left behind so he can get used to the fact that the woman who temporarily dispelled his loneliness is gone forever. Despite the outlandishness of the idea, a body-double candidate (Hisako) emerges. (Like Tony's wife, she is unnamed by Murakami.) Although dubious about Tony's request, she is out of work, the pay is good and Tony does not seem to be a bad person. Ushered into the huge closet-room where the clothes hang mutely, she breaks down and cries as she hesitantly gazes at, touches and tries on the garments. It is possible that this unspectral newcomer desires what is displayed in the high-end shop windows. However, unlike Tony's wife, she is 'connected enough' so that she does not fall victim to them. The clothes, as both she and Tony know, have been transformed into 'mere scruffy shadows, cut off from the roots of life and steadily withering away, devoid of any meaning whatsoever' (Murakami 2002: 80). Overwhelmed by the pointlessness of the scheme soon after the woman leaves with some items in hand – 'It's all over now, he told himself. No matter what I do, it's over' (Murakami 2002: 80) – Tony phones to tell her not to return. The charade never takes place, but in Ichikawa's adaptation Hisako's tears – an expression of her metaphysical despair – give Tony the release he sought. The act of beholding the material remains of the dead woman's life – the very things that filled up her emptiness – have the opposite effect on Hisako: they produce in her a sense of profound and painful emptiness. Hisako's spontaneous, emotional response 'heals' Tony,

cleansing him in a sense, and drawing him, however tentatively, towards new connections.

Ichikawa brings closure to the film by artistically exploiting the possibilities that the technique of doubling allowed him. Murakami's story concludes with Tony's house emptied of his wife's clothes and of the inherited collection of his deceased father's jazz records that came after them: 'Once the records had disappeared from his house, Tony Takitani was really alone' (2002: 81). Ichikawa pushes the storyline further, starting with a scene that has Tony leaving his house, perhaps seeking – but not finding – solace among the families and friends enjoying time together at a neighbourhood summer festival – a readily recognizable manifestation of continuity and community in Japanese culture. The ambient liveliness that swirls around, but does not include, Tony only serves to emphasize his return to solitariness, which culminates in the angry encounter with Eiko's 'ex' and, immediately following, the image of Tony in a near-foetal position on the floor of the empty closet that once held Eiko's clothes and then Shozaburo's trombone and jazz records. Ichikawa inserts a flashback to Shozaburo in the same position in his prison cell in China before returning once more to Tony lying on the floor of the closet. The doubling – father and son played by the same actor lying on the floor of the same real/metaphorical prison – embodies the melding of time-past and time-present in *Tony Takitani*.

The full intensity of the doubling is achieved when the image of Hisako, the memory of her shedding tears in that very same space, floats into Tony's mind as he lies on the floor of the empty room. He longs for her as a living woman who exists in this world, who cried when she saw all the rows of beautiful clothes that instantly became forever-inert, forever-useless artefacts when their owner died. Earlier, in the midst of discarding and burning old papers, the detritus of time-past, Tony had recovered from the flames Hisako's employment application with her telephone number. It is as if, having brought the urn containing Eiko's ashes back home after her funeral and cremation, Tony is now snatching Hisako, who instinctively perceived the crushing meaninglessness of his dead wife's clothes, back from an oblivion where he cannot reach her. He dials the phone. As it rings, Hisako is standing just outside of the place where she lives, delayed from entering her apartment to answer the ringing phone by a woman who is perhaps her landlady or just a well-intentioned neighbour – someone who has received two pairs of gloves and wants to give Hisako one of them. It is an expression of connection between people living in close proximity to one another – evidence that one person is watching out for another. But Hisako declines the overture. The experience with the dead woman's clothes has left her at least momentarily incapable of accepting even a simple pair of gloves, an offer that has little to do with the monetary value or desirability of the object being proffered.

The telephone call Tony makes to Hisako at the conclusion of Ichikawa's adaptation is reminiscent of the final scene in Murakami's *Norwegian Wood*, an instant bestseller in Japan when it was published in 1987, three years before 'Tony Takitani'. Watanabe, the university-age protagonist whose world has been shattered by the deaths of his two best friends – one of whom is Naoko, with whom he had fallen deeply in love – phones Midori, the fellow student whose affection for Watanabe he has yet to reciprocate: "I have to talk to you", I said. "I have a million things to talk to you about... I want the two of us to begin everything from the beginning" (Murakami 2000a: 293). At the beginning of the novel, which focuses on the protagonist's younger

self, Watanabe is 37 – exactly the same as Tony when he meets the woman he marries. Midori asks Watanabe where he is. But, he cannot answer: ‘Where was I now? I had no idea... Again and again, I called out for Midori from the dead center of this place that was no place’ (Murakami 2000a: 293). It is uncertain – perhaps even unlikely – that Watanabe and Midori will build a lasting connection. As Fuminobu Murakami has noted, Watanabe

has unconsciously transformed himself from a modernist to a postmodernist. But, he is still drawn towards the empathic and romantic love of the modernists, embodied in his love for Midori. Once he decides to act on that empathic love, he unavoidably loses his place in modern society because of his postmodern characteristics.

(2005: 43)

Murakami’s Tony Takitani is also lost, but, unlike Watanabe and Ichikawa’s Tony, he never makes a phone call. In Ichikawa’s film, Hisako hears the phone ringing, but by the time she says ‘no’ to the offer of the gloves and goes inside, Tony has hung up. It is unclear whether he will ever call back.

Tony and Hisako have no basis for a relationship. It is almost impossible to believe that Hisako would reciprocate even if he did call back and she answered the phone. It is not only the difference in age: she is well aware that she was meant as a mannequin-like substitute for Tony’s deceased wife – just as Midori knows that Watanabe is turning to her after the loss of Naoko. Like Watanabe, Tony is a postmodern man trying to become ‘modern’ to gain the connections he now so painfully needs; once he has known closeness, he cannot willingly go back to his former solitariness. ‘For Murakami, this world has already lost human empathy, but is still not entirely indifferent to human relations’ (Murakami 2005: 51). Ichikawa drives home this point by concluding his adaptation with Tony’s attempted phone call to Hisako.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction to their 1989 study, *Postmodernism and Japan*, Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian refer to ‘the crazed world of Tokyo consumerism’ (1989: xii) – of which Murakami’s 1990 story ‘Tony Takitani’ is a chilling indictment. The economic bubble was about to burst. Murakami understood what was happening, expressing his vision concisely and dramatically in the violent death of Tony’s wife. Miyoshi has criticized Murakami for not addressing serious issues in his fiction (see Suter 2008: 47–49). However, the hyper-expensive French and Italian brands that Murakami catalogues are not the trophies of Japan’s capitalist enterprise: they are signifiers of a confused craving that points to deep social dislocations in late twentieth-century Japan. In Ichikawa’s film, Eiko’s feet restlessly crisscross the cobblestones that pave the boulevards and plazas of Milan and Paris where she and Tony spend their honeymoon. Her shopping – for which the stylish shoes on her rapidly moving feet are metonyms – is replicated and intensified back in Tokyo, which famously helped enrich the luxury goods producers of Italy and France. In the 1980s (as now) Tokyo became a major marketplace for high-status ‘global’ consumption.

The condensed 1930s to 1980s socio-historical framework of Murakami’s story and Ichikawa’s film provides the context for the critique contained in the two works. The film opens with Tony as a child fashioning a battleship

out of sand – perhaps at a beach or a playground – while the figure of a businessman wearing a raincoat and carrying an attaché case, a visual representation of Japan's nascent economic recovery, walks by. Tony is alone and absorbed in his task. Japan's real battleships were sunk, but Tony's precise sculpture hints at the tremendous effort and perseverance that will bring about colossal economic success for Japan in the new era. Ichikawa references Shozaburo's life in prewar and wartime Shanghai, his return to a ruined Japan and Tony's childhood in 1950s Tokyo, deftly illustrating those decades, documentary-style, in several sequences of old photographs. Geography cannot be separated from history. In Ichikawa's adaptation, Tony's sleek and spacious house – the reward for his hard work and career success – sits high up on a rise overlooking the built-up density of Tokyo. It is in sharp contrast to the desolated city to which Shozaburo returned in 1946. Murakami's evocation of Tokyo through place names (the pricey enclaves of Aoyama, Ginza and Setagaya) and the images of the densely built city that Ichikawa captures on film point to what Michael Seats has referred to as 'the epistemological and ontological matrices of the urban space, the representational logic and limits of the city, which have played a crucially determining role in the production of all manner of artistic discourses in the era of Japanese modernity' (2006: 36).

In Murakami's story and Ichikawa's film, consumer goods – like Eiko's clothes and even Shozaburo's records – are, in the end, stripped of meaning without the lives associated with them. They can become unendurably oppressive to those left behind. The key to both texts is social disconnection – of which unsustainable consumption is a contemporary manifestation. While Hisako is waiting to hear whether she will be hired by Tony as the body-double assistant he thought he wanted, she is shown sweeping the walkway in front of her home. Willing participation in such clean-up tasks was once a near-universal expectation of neighbourhood life in Tokyo. Unlike the young woman who makes no move to pick up the fruit that fell to the grocery store floor, Hisako – equally young and making the decisions that will define the trajectory of her life – accepts the 'old-fashioned' responsibility to do her part, even if it means sweeping up refuse that anonymous others have dropped. Hisako's first appearance in the film was in a sunlight-filled wedding-party room alive with the trivial, yet emotionally nourishing conversations that bind together family members and friends. Ichikawa confirms Murakami's vision of disconnection, but in the hints of a closeness between Tony and Shozaburo and especially in the person of Hisako – the one individual to whom Tony wanted to reach out after Eiko and his father have passed on – he signals the possibility of social reconnection.

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