

CHALLENGING THE TRADITIONAL NOTION OF JAPANESE NOVEL: GREEK MYTH IN KURAHASHI YUMIKO'S *AMANONKOKU ŌKANKI*

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Abstract: *This essay explores the rewriting of the myth of the Amazons in Amanonkoku ōkanki (Record of a Voyage to the Country of Amanon), by Kurahashi Yumiko. Moving from the analysis of the function of myth in Kurahashi's literary work, this paper investigates how the mythological subtext redefines the boundaries of the traditional Japanese novel and contributes to the construction of Kurahashi's "anti-world". In Amanonkoku ōkanki, the myth of the Amazons – the barbarian opposite of Greek civilization – mirrors the reverse side of Japanese reality, exposing its incongruities and questioning the transparency of its language. Moreover, by reverting the traditional archetypes of the Greek hero and the Amazons, the novel plays with the construction of sexual identity and undermines the narrator's point of view.*

Keywords: *Japanese literature, Greek myth, Amazons, Kurahashi Yumiko, gender, language, novel.*

Introduction

The recurrent reference to myths, together with fairy tales and folktales, is a characteristic of Kurahashi Yumiko's literary works, which are inspired by a wide range of both Western and Japanese literary sources. Explicit references to Greek mythological motifs might be found in *Hanhigeki* (Anti-tragedies, 1971), based on the tragedies by Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus, and in *Otona no tame no zankoku dōwa* (Cruel Fairy Tales for Adults, 1984),¹ which retells myths such as Pandora and the Gorgons. This essay will focus on *Amanonkoku ōkanki* (Record of a Voyage to the Country of Amanon), which apparently contains only marginal and covert references to the myth of the Amazons. However, as my analysis will point out, the reworking of mythology in this text is interestingly linked to the construction of Kurahashi's "anti-world" and to the paradoxes of language and sexual identity.

Among the scholars who have examined the use of myth in Kurahashi's fiction, Faye Yuan Kleeman² has compared Kurahashi's writing to mythological narrative based on the use of imitation – in other words, the use of preexisting stories to produce new narrations, whose value is by no means diminished by the

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¹ Kurahashi Yumiko. *Amanonkoku ōkanki*. Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1968.

² Faye Yuan Kleeman, *The Uses of Myth in Modern Japanese Literature: Nakagami Kenji, Ōe Kenzaburō and Kurahashi Yumiko*, Berkeley: University of Berkeley, California, University Microfilms International, 1991.

fact that they are “reproductions.” In fact, since antiquity, myths have survived through a continuous process of retelling, where the difference between “original discourse” and “copy” has been effaced. Similarly, Kurahashi retells Greek mythological motifs to produce new narrative forms where the “original discourse” and its “imitation” coexist, as the narration continuously shifts between the ancient myth and its modern retelling.

Concerning the function of this mythological retelling, Kurahashi herself explains that it is part of a literary experiment to enlarge the boundaries of the traditional Japanese novel. She clarifies this concept in the afterword of *Hanbigeki*, where she describes her experiment to “transplant” myth in the novel. Obviously, Kurahashi is aware of the irreconcilable differences between these two kinds of narration: while mythological stories portray a supernatural world of gods and heroes, the world of the novel is circumscribed to “ordinary people’s neurotic behavior”, and to events that are likely to happen in real life. However, in this very difference lies the potential function of myth as an element that redefines the boundaries of the traditional novel, breaking the frame of realistic narration. Significantly, the rejection of realistic, autobiographic narration – one of the most popular literary genres in Japan – is a constant characteristic of Kurahashi’s literary works. In opposition to the so-called *watakushi shōsetsu* (the Japanese confessional novel where the narrated events correspond to the author’s life), she aims at creating a new kind of anti-realistic narration, the *han-shōsetsu* (“anti-novel”). As she points out in the essay “Shōsetsu no meiro to hiteisei” (The Labyrinth of fiction and negativity),³ Kurahashi distances herself from the novels that describe political or social problems, because her interest lies in the “anti-world”: “What I want is not to portray a certain problem, but to use this problem to reproduce a world that is not this world – in other terms, the anti-world” (Kurahashi 289).⁴

Kurahashi’s “anti-world” is not a transparent imitation of the “real word”, but rather its distortion.⁵ It undermines the traditional categories of space and time, exposes the aporias in the construction of reality, and questions the concept of narrative authorship. In this deformed narrative world, the characters are named after the letters of the alphabet and tend to have fixed characteristics: more than human beings, they are “variables” used by the author to create a story. Even though, with her artistic maturity, Kurahashi has mitigated the extremisms of her literary theories,⁶ the distortion of reality has remained one of the main features of her literary works. Moving from these premises, my analysis connects the rewriting of mythology in *Amanonkoku ōkanki* with Kurahashi’s “anti-world” and with its deformed representation of reality.

³ Kurahashi Yumiko. “Shōsetsu no meiro to hiteisei.” *Watashi no naka no kare*. Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1970. 285–295.

⁴ All the quotations from Kurahashi’s essays and from *Amanonkoku ōkanki* have been translated by the author of this essay.

⁵ “Thus, the relationship between the ‘anti-world’ and the ‘real’ word is clarified. The former is not a representation of the latter, and yet it is a deformed version of the latter and thus subject to it”, Atsuko Sakaki, *The Intertextual Novel and the Interrelational Self: Kurahashi Yumiko, a Japanese Postmodernist*. Columbia: University of British Columbia, 1992, p.9.

⁶ See: Kurahashi Yumiko. “Shōsetsu ni tsuite.” *Eureka* 13(3). Tokyo: Seidosha, 1981. 52– 55.

The Greek hero versus the Amazons

Amanonkoku ōkanki is the chronicle of the voyage undertaken by P, a missionary from a country called Monokami, to convert the inhabitants of the Amanon Empire to the *Monokamiist* religion. From the very beginning, the narration draws a subtle parallel between Amanon and the mythological motif of the Amazons, because P is trained for a religious mission in a dangerous “barbarian country”, inhabited only by savage women. The name of this country is ambivalent, because it evokes two different sets of meaning: as Shimaoka Akira explains,⁷ in the dialect of Kochi prefecture, where Kurahashi was born, *amanon* is a derogatory term indicating an effeminate man; however, as the novel is set in a country ruled only by women, this word strongly recalls the Amazons, the women warriors portrayed in Greek literature and mythology. The reference to the Amazons becomes explicit when the protagonist talks to Toraion, one of the few men living in Amanon:

(P) “In mythological legends, there is the country of the Amazons, which is inhabited only by women. Is there any relation with it?”

(Toraion) “It is true that some popular beliefs maintain it, but they are completely wrong. There are neither linguistic nor historical relations.”

(P) “In the case of the Amazons, it seems that these women warriors fought against other nations and had children with foreign men. If they gave birth to male babies, they killed them, in order to keep their country only under women’s power. In Amanon, how do they get rid of male babies?” (Kurahashi 204).

Even though Toraion seems to deny any relations between the Amazons and Amanon, when he talks about the history and the social system of his country, the similarities with the myth are evident. Like the woman warriors who fought against the Greeks, the inhabitants of Amanon waged war against Monokami to preserve their freedom of religion. However, as a consequence of their defeat, all their men and their pregnant women were exterminated by the enemy. The surviving women created a new matriarchal nation, where heterosexual intercourse was forbidden, and procreation took place exclusively through seed banks. In these places, the male fetuses unfit for procreation were disposed of, while the others were used to breed laborers for the reproduction of the Amanon race. The destiny of these babies was determined from the day of their birth: they were bound to be permanent workers in the seed banks and later, when they would no longer be able to perform their task, they would continue to serve the country as eunuchs. While men were castrated or confined in seed banks, women were raised, trained, and educated to become the political elite of the nation. Obviously, this peculiar social system recalls the country of the Amazons, who used men for procreation purposes and raised their children differently, depending on their sex: they killed or enslaved the male offspring, while they kept females and trained them to the art of war.

While Amanon is ruled by a matriarchal system, Monokami is described as a patriarchal nation that imposes its culture on the neighboring countries (the very

⁷ See Shimaoka Akira. “Kurahashi Yumiko no ‘suikyō’.” *Bungei Kenkyū*. Vol.102. Tokyo: Meiji Daigaku Kenkyūkai, 2007. 5-14.

(https://m-repo.lib.meiji.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10291/7411/1/bungeikenkyu_102_5.pdf).

word *monokami*, which literally means “one god”, emphasizes the absoluteness of the *Monokamiist* vision of reality). For its opposition to Amanon, Monokami might be associated with the Greek civilization that constituted the “cultural opposite” of the Amazons’ uncivilized tribe.⁸ Significantly, P thinks that Amanon is inhabited by *yabanjin* (barbarians), mirroring the attitude of ancient Greece towards the other nations. Greeks used to call people from other countries βάρβαροι (barbarians) – an onomatopoeic word evoking the babbling sound – because to speak a language other than Greek was equivalent to not speaking at all. Similarly, P does not understand the language of Amanon because he does not recognize it as such. In fact, during the preparatory course for his mission, he studies an ancient, obsolete language that is no longer spoken in Amanon. As a consequence, when he reaches his destination and first meets some local people – a group of fisherwomen –, he cannot understand them. However, far from questioning the validity of his language training, he blames the women’s ignorance, because he thinks that the barbarians are too poorly educated to speak correctly. Nonetheless, unconcerned with the fact that his audience cannot understand his words, he proclaims the purpose of his mission with a messianic discourse:

I have been sent from the far-away Monokami paradise, to teach the Word of God to all the people in Amanon, to heal the sick, and to realize Monokami paradise in the country of Amanon (15).

However, the fisherwomen, who cannot grasp the meaning of P’s speech, reach the conclusion that he is a poor lunatic. The linguistic misunderstandings increase when P asks them about their *goshujin* – the Japanese term standing both for “husband” and “lord”. The fisherwomen, who ignore the institution of marriage and the hierarchy of the patriarchal system, are perplexed, and wonder about the meaning of this word. However, once again, P interprets their words according to his own cultural codes: he thinks that they don’t know who the husbands are because they are widows, so he extends his condolences and takes pity on their sad destiny.

In its arbitrary interpretation of reality and its religious implication, P’s mission recalls Columbus’ “discovery” of the New Continent. As Tzvetan Todorov⁹ points out, Columbus has a twofold attitude when encountering the American natives: either he rejects their “otherness” (he keeps considering them West Indians and ignores all the evidence that they are the inhabitants of another continent), or misinterprets their linguistic codes, because he is misled by his own prejudices. Like Columbus, P does not acknowledge the otherness of the women of Amanon, because of the cultural stereotypes instilled in his mind. Not only does he misinterpret their communication codes, but he also denies their identity,

⁸ “Herodotus puts his account of the Amazons into a general description of Scythia, ‘a country no part of which is cultivated, and in which there is not a single inhabited city’ (4.97), a land beyond the pale, with strange, interesting and occasionally admirable customs that are in general demonstrably inferior to those of Greeks. It is important to note that in Herodotus’ account every feature of Amazonian society has a direct antithesis in ordinary Greek practice”, Mary Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986, p. 4.

⁹ Tzvetan Todorov. *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*. Transl. Richard Howard. New York: Harper & Row, 1984.

because he fails to understand that most of them are women. He is misled by appearances, because they dress and act like men; however, he has no hesitation to define as women the *sekure*, the young secretaries who are the politicians' lovers. On the other hand, when he meets the Prime Minister and the political elite, he suppresses his instincts – “It's quite a beautiful woman! Ah no, it's a handsome man” (138) – and forces himself into thinking that they are men, regardless of the evidence to the contrary. His vision of reality is filtered by his own prejudices: under his gaze, all the politicians are men, while the people who have a lower social position and are considered “sexual commodities” become women. For this reason, P embodies the patriarchal gaze, and significantly his name might stand for Pope, priest, patriarch, and penis.¹⁰ P's role as a personification of the phallogocentric point of view is reinforced by the stunning epilogue of the novel, where readers discover that he is a spermatozoon inoculated in the womb of a virgin from Amanon, in an experiment carried out by the scientists of Monokami. The space of Amanon or, in other words, the female womb, thus becomes the battle field where the two sexes fight for power, as Susan Napier points out.¹¹

However, far from being passively dominated by the male gaze, the “space of the Amazons” questions it. In ancient Greek culture, the myth of the Amazons embodied the threat of the subversion of natural (male-dominated) order. Similarly, Amanon functions as a deforming mirror that distorts the point of view of Monokami, together with P's language and identity. P's linguistic codes are questioned when, after proclaiming himself “the Savior of Amanon”, he is arrested for breaking the immigration laws. Ironically, what he had defined a “Messianic mission” is interpreted by the authorities of Amanon as an attempt of illegal immigration. He fails to convey the purpose of his voyage and is escorted to the police station in a floral-patterned robe borrowed from the fisherwomen. When the perplexed police officer is confronted by a man in female attire, the hairs sprouting out his décolleté dress, the image of the Greek hero turns into that of the *amanon*, the effeminate man in Kochi dialect.

After being arrested for the misinterpretation of his salvific mission, P becomes alienated from his own language during the police interrogation. He is asked several times to account about his criminal deed but, when the eunuch police officer shows him the charge sheet, P feels that his own words have been altered – “Every time they made me read the charge sheet, the things I had said become more and more distorted” (26).¹² After a farcical interrogation, which

¹⁰ “Amanonkoku ōkanki (The voyage to Amanon, 1986) is a satirical epic about a priest P (standing for Pope=priest=patriarch=penis)” from Monokami Koku (Monotheist Country) who ventured into the Amanon Koku (Amanon Empire)”, *The Uses of Myth in Modern Japanese Literature: Nakagami Kenji, Ōe Kenzaburō and Kurahashi Yumiko*, p 315.

¹¹ “In the long run, however, all the characters in *Amanonkoku ōkanki*, both male and female, are fighting for power, since the (Amanon's) elite hope to manipulate P as much as he plans to use them. [...] In this regard it is important that the ultimate site for this fight for power is the womb”, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature – The Subversion of Modernity*. London: Routledge, 1996, p.175.

¹² This scene reminds Kurahashi's readers of *Partei* (Political party), where the protagonist has to write an account of her life in order to enter a political party.

recalls Kafka's *The Trial*, he eventually gives up the idea of conveying his point of view and cooperates in creating a misrepresentation of reality, in order to shorten the bureaucratic procedures. Even when he is inexplicably released from prison and is welcomed by the head of State as a guest of honor, his identity is not acknowledged. Ironically, at the official party organized for him, the host forgets to introduce P, so nobody understands who the special guest is. Similar episodes recur several times in the narration, but the denial of P's identity starts from the first time he meets the inhabitants of Amanon. In fact when the fisherwomen see him, one of them, horrified, exclaims: "This is not a human being! This is a man!" (16).

In this confrontation against the patriarchal gaze, the Empire of Amanon might appear as a feminist utopia. However, on a closer examination, readers discover that, far from being a perfect female community, the society of Amanon is based on the denial of femininity. In fact, when women become adult, they have to change their name and their way of dressing, in order to look like men. The very word "woman" is considered an insult, and the people who use it are legally prosecuted. Only the young secretaries – the only women recognized by P as such – have a feminine appearance, because they have not "grown into malehood" yet. However, they are treated like animals, because the political elite can trade or sold them as they wish – when Rev. Muin gives his own *sekure* to P, he talks like "an owner who gives away his pet dog or his horse" (163).

Consequently, in terms of affirmation of female identity, the matriarchal utopia of Amanon turns out to be a failure, but on the other hand, the mission of the Greek hero against the "Amazons" does not have a successful outcome either. In fact, P gives up his religious mission and creates a live television sex show, called *monopara* (a short form standing for "Monokami paradise"), to reeducate the inhabitants of Amanon to heterosexual relations. His show is very successful, as the women of Amanon rediscover their sexual instincts, but he is almost castrated by his *sekure* during a live performance. Moreover, while living in Amanon, P changes his opinion about his own civilization and ends up thinking of it "in barbarian terms." For instance, after having tasted the delicious local dishes, he realizes that the food in Monokami is "barbarian". Finally, reverting his heroic role, P betrays his own country and cooperates with Amanon's Prime Minister for a plan to attack Monokami. By the end of the narration, both P and the women of Amanon have been changed by the reciprocal encounter: while the Greek hero has understood the limits of his own civilization, the "Amazons" have rediscovered their femininity and their sexual desires.

From Greek myths to contemporary Japan

Apparently, the narration takes place in a far-away country represented as the image of the Other. This perception is reinforced by the references to Greek myths, which are part of a world culturally distant from Japanese modernity. However, like a Lacanian mirror,¹³ Amanon reproduces an alienated image of

¹³ Jacques Lacan theorizes that infants recognize themselves through their reflection in the mirror, which is initially perceived as the 'image of the Other.' Therefore, self-recognition implies a

Japanese contemporary society and provides Japanese readers with an uncanny vision of their own reality. In fact, the main cities of the Empire of Amanon are called *Tokio* and *Kioto* (the pronunciation is almost the same as that of Japanese, but they are written in *katakana*, to create a sense of distance from reality and alienate readers from their own language). The reference to the lifestyle in Japanese urban areas is even more evident when *Tokio* is compared to an enormous “nest of termites” (Kurahashi 93), which is similar to the oppressive Japanese society described in Kurahashi’s essay “Gakusei yo, ogorunakare” (Students, don’t be extravagant): “All pressed together, we must rush towards a mechanism shaped like an enormous nest of bees. We must keep our position as humble working bees” (Kurahashi 17).

Moreover, on an intertextual level, the description of P’s arrival in *Tokio* recalls the first lines of Kawabata Yasunari’s *Snow Country*. It is the famous scene of the train coming out of the tunnel into a suggestive, far-away land:

The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country. The earth lay white under the night sky. The train pulled up at a signal stop (Kawabata 3).¹⁴

The train came out of the long tunnel, and *Tokio* appeared in the golden light of the sunset. What had previously looked as the world of a monochrome Japanese painting grew into a town of small houses, in a quiet, luminous, and almost illusionary atmosphere (Kurahashi 64).

By creating an implicit link between Amanon and the surreal “snow country”, this scene activates readers’ expectations about the suggestive image of traditional Japan. With its dream-like landscape, Amanon appears like a *sumie*, a Japanese monochrome painting; however, the word “illusionary” (the Japanese term is *uso*, which literally means “lie”) reveals that this perfect image of Amanon – and of Japan itself – is only a mystification. Significantly, compared to Kawabata’s novel, the spatial movement is inverted: in *Snow Country* the scene of the train describes Shimamura’s trip from the center to the periphery or, in other words, from Tokyo to the Japanese countryside, while in *Amanonkoku ōkanki* the train moves from the periphery to the center of the empire, *Tokio*.

The “country of the Amazons” becomes thus a looking glass that conveys a reverted representation of Japan, showing the flip side of an apparently perfect reality. With its striking contrast between external appearance (*tatema*) and reality (*honne*), it mirrors a disturbing image of Japan. In fact, along with the narration, P discovers that the beautiful natural landscapes of Amanon, the sky, the moon, and the sun are artificial. Even the peace and the prosperity of the country are fictitious, because they are based on a strict plan of birth-control and on the repression of every form of opposition (P finds out that some groups of men have raised against the government, but nobody knows about it because their insurrection has been promptly repressed).

Also *Shintokyō* and *Buddakyō*, the most popular religions in Amanon, overtly parody the Japanese religious beliefs. Apparently, the inhabitants of the

stage when the subject is alienated from itself. For further references see: Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary to Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 1996.

¹⁴ Kawabata Yasunari. *Snow Country*. Trans. Edward G. Seidensticker. New York: Vintage, 1996.

Empire of Amanon are free to choose their religion, but actually there is a secret agreement between the religious leaders, in order to divide the market share for “the mutual prosperity and coexistence”: while *Buddakyō* has the monopoly of funerary services, *Shintokyō* makes money from marriages, school-entrance ceremonies, and other events. The head of *Buddakyō*, Rev. Muin, talks about religion in business terms, explaining that he hires “professional believers” to make a good impression on the new, inexperienced people who pay the participation fees for his seminaries. When he hears about P’s religious mission, he wants to discuss with him about his business, and finally P tells him that Monokami aspires to the monopoly of the religious market (since *Monokamiism* is a monotheistic cult, there is an ironic parallel between Christian religion, Monokami, and monopoly).

The similarities between Amanon and Japan concern also their political systems: like Japan, Amanon is ruled by a male emperor – a paradox in a country ruled by women – who is regarded as the descendant of the Gods. However, when P meets him, he realizes that his power is illusory. P is disappointed when he discovers that the imperial palace is set in a surreal and desolated place, at the end of a strange, labyrinth-like path. He is welcomed by a *miko* (a maiden in service of Shinto shrines) who introduces herself as the employee of a service company, in charge of collecting money for the entrance music to welcome guests. As soon as P inserts a coin in the music machine, he becomes the spectator of a grotesque scene, whose dynamics recall the theatre of the absurd: the emperor makes his entrance with his imposing bearing and his rich garments, but, at a closer glance, he looks like an aged, small *origami* doll, folded in a sitting position. Even his precious and elegant robes turn out to be made from layers of rags. The emperor’s role itself is paradoxical: even though theoretically he is the head of the country, he leads a very retired life with a few servants – two employees hired by a service company. The sovereign explains that, a long time ago, he entered the country forcing the barriers at the borders (like pre-Meiji Japan, Amanon has a strong policy of national isolation). He offers to nominate P as his successor because, according to the laws, the emperor must be a man. However, the protagonist turns down this offer because he is disappointed by the sovereign’s role: he had originally planned to ask his support to spread the *Monokamiist* Gospel all over the country, but now he ends up wondering about the reason of the emperor’s existence. Obviously, for his ambiguous political role, his divine ancestry, and the laws concerning his male lineage, the sovereign of Amanon strongly recalls the Japanese emperor.

For several aspects, the country of Amanon parodies modern Japan, with its social and political contradictions. However, for her overt rejection of propagandistic and realistic novels, Kurahashi cannot be defined as a politically committed writer. Even though she reworks the myth of the Amazons to create a world that pokes fun at Japanese society, her interest in myth is not finalized to convey a political or a social message to readers. In fact, in the essay “*Watashi no bungaku to seiji*” (My literature and politics, 1960), written in the period of the

anti-ANPO¹⁵ protests, she takes distances from the so-called politically committed writers, criticizing those who “cook and sell reality using language as a knife” (42). Kurahashi explains that she is interested in reality only as a tool to create a surreal world:

Some readers have defined me as “a side observer wearing an existentialist mask”. Of course, I agree with them. In this moment, I am eager to take the negative of the real world, photographed with my lens. I am interested in worldly matters only because they become the material to create a surreal world (43).

As Kurahashi herself points out, her surreal world refers to reality in terms of opposition, like the negative of a picture. Consequently, in *Amanonkoku ōkanki*, she chooses the myth of the Amazons – the barbarian opposite of Greek civilization – to create an anti-world (Amanon) that functions as the reverse side of Japanese reality. By mirroring the “real world”, Amanon exposes its incongruities and questions the transparency of its language. The battle between the Greek hero and the Amazons becomes thus a metaphor of the miscommunication between the two sexes, exposing the aporias of language. In fact, the recurrent misunderstandings between P and the inhabitants of Amanon undermine the concept of language as a neutral medium of meaning. Moreover, by reverting the traditional archetypes of the Greek hero and the Amazons, the novel plays with the construction of sexual identity and shows its fictional nature: P turns out to be an anti-hero – an effeminate man, a foul, an illegal immigrant, a traitor, etc. –, while the “Amazons” reject their femininity, as the narration twists the mythological motifs and plays with the readers’ expectations about sexual roles.

Concerning the issue of narrative authority, the “country of the Amazons” undermines the narrator’s point of view by questioning P’s vision of reality. In fact, even though the novel is narrated by a third-person, supposedly omniscient narrator, it is constructed only through P’s perspective, as Napier points out.¹⁶ Significantly, in the first encounters between P and the leaders of Amanon, the narrator omits to specify that all of them are women, implicitly supporting P’s vision of the world. This creates a gap between the readers and the narrator: the readers, who can easily guess the politicians’ sexual identity, start questioning not only P’s point of view, but also the narrator’s interpretation of reality. By questioning the narrative authority and by retelling the same story from different viewpoints (the original myth, its “imitation”, the adventures of a spermatozoon inside a womb, P’s mission to colonize Amazon, etc.), *Amanonkoku ōkanki* deforms the representation of reality and fragments it into multiple versions.

¹⁵ Treaty of mutual cooperation and security between the United States and Japan, which allowed U.S. military bases to remain on Japanese soil.

¹⁶ “The fact that the novel is constructed only through P’s perspective allows the reader to vicariously participate in his consistent morselization of the female body. Kurahashi plays on the reader’s normal desire to identify with the main character [...]”, *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese Literature*, p.174.

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