Introduction

THIS BOOK WAS BORN from the conviction that Tanizaki Jun'ichirō is saying something exciting for feminism, and from the equally strong conviction that I didn't know what.

The project began in the 1990s when in the United States there was a great deal of feminist interest in perversion. Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992) had just proposed that masochism contests the "dominant fiction" of male power and privilege. Teresa de Lauretis's *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (1994) argued that fetishism offers a nonphallic model of feminist fantasy. Diana Fuss's *Identification Papers* (1995) showed how orthodox identities are constantly undone by the psychoanalytic process of identification itself. Most exciting of all were Judith Butler's books *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993). Exceeding the paradigm of two sexes to speak of what seemed like an infinity of genders, Butler argued that sex was a cultural construct, and that as such it was inherently vulnerable to cultural perversion. As one of my favorite lines from *Gender Trouble* explained, "If there is no radical repudiation of a culturally constructed sexuality, what is left is the question of how to 'do' the construction one is invariably in" (31).

In his famous explorations of masochism and fetishism, Tanizaki definitely seemed to be "doing" his male and female constructions with the performative flair that Butler celebrates. Especially in the works on which I wanted to focus, from what Nakagami Kenji calls Tanizaki's "overripe" period in the 1930s ("Monogatari" 130), relations among and between the sexes seemed no less perverse, and no less promising. The problem was that Japanese feminists were not impressed. The same period in the early 1990s saw the publication of two withering critiques, one by Saegusa Kazuko in *Ren'ai shōsetsu no kansei* (The trap of love novels), the other by

Ueno Chizuko, Ogura Chikako, and Tomioka Taeko in *Danryū bungakuron* (Theory of men's literature). According to Saegusa, Tanizaki portrays women as toys, or as goddesses, but he is unable to conceive of them as fellow subjects, and this dooms him to being a "man who cannot love," "a writer who cannot write love novels" (65).[1] The authors of the second book draw similar conclusions, observing that Tanizaki's novels treat women as a "category" rather than as separate individuals, so credible heterosexual relationships are missing from his work (234).[2] In the 1990s, this focus on love seemed boring to me. Wasn't femininity as "category" precisely the point? Didn't heterosexual love smack of heteronormativity? At that time I argued that perversion in Tanizaki is fascinating for the way it critiques the same gendered categories that it stages so deliberately. A colleague recently summed up how I was feeling then. Her comment reflects how strong an influence Butler, especially, still has on many feminists in the American academy. "First of all," she said, "there's no such *thing* as nonperverted love, and even if there were, who would *want* that?"

She was reacting to the title of this book, a title that marks the coming-full-circle of my thinking both about Tanizaki and about feminism. True, Tanizaki shows that modern subjectivity makes nonperverted love impossible. But in the end I *did* want that, and I thought Tanizaki did too. Continuing to read his narratives together with psychoanalysis, I sensed that what had seemed boring in Saegusa and the *Danryū bungakuron* trio might actually be the key to a much more compelling feminist reading. In our impatience to skip from two sexes to a myriad of genders, had we disavowed the fact that perhaps even "two" was a lie? In other words, was it worth "doing" the construction "toy" or "goddess" if those categories represent not femininity but an overdetermined male projection? The more faithfully Tanizaki recites what turn out to be classically psychoanalytic terms for perversions such as masochism and fetishism, the more clearly we see that modern subjectivity can define femininity only in a dichotomy with masculinity, as its opposite, complement, or lack. This means that even in Tanizaki's most "perverted" scenarios we are dealing not with sexual difference but with what French philosopher Luce Irigaray calls "sexual indifference." Does femininity really exist if all we have are men and their self-patterned others? Saegusa and the *Danryū bungakuron* authors attribute the scandal of the missing woman to Tanizaki in particular. This book, however, proposes that Tanizaki's insight is to expose that scandal's universality. Precisely because he shares their interest in a nonperverted love, his writing explores the degree to which such a love remains impossible in a monosexual economy.

It seems safe to say that when theorists like Silverman and de Lauretis seek feminist solutions within the psychoanalytic paradigm, it is because they hold that paradigm to be accurate and inescapable, the "mother tongue of our modernity," as Joan Copjec puts it (*Imagine* 10). On the one hand, a Japanese author who reproduces many of the basic tenets of psychoanalysis without reading Freud could be taken as proof of this claim.[3] Oedipus has simply followed capitalism in its global travels, in a manifestation of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's claim that in modernity "we are all little colonies, and it is Oedipus that colonizes us" (265).[4] On the other hand, Tanizaki's fascination with perversion can also be taken as evidence of his critical stance toward modern subjectivity, and of his first step in imagining an alternative. He was, after all, writing from a nation that had only recently and only partially joined the ranks of the world's great powers. In the years leading up to and including the Fifteen Years' War, many of Japan's intellectuals were still hoping to use what Harry Harootunian calls this "doubling" of modernity to advantage, addressing its ills dialectically rather than simply being absorbed into them. No doubt his time and place played key roles in keeping Tanizaki from a stance of simple resignation. There is also the fact of his having derived the various formulae of psychoanalysis from his own modern urban milieu rather than from readings. Leo Bersani has explained that what enables him and many others to read Freud progressively is the "fractured, incomplete and self-contradictory" nature of the texts in question. Bersani writes, "Our interest in Freud even suggests that we are drawn to theoretical texts to the extent that their theoretical positions fail to be formulated" (10). One of the joys of learning psychoanalysis from Tanizaki is that we can cut to the chase. His theoretical positions are formulated with often staggering clarity, and there is no equivalent of a Jacques Lacan to come afterward and insist, for instance, that feminists should make peace with psychoanalysis because phallus and penis are not the same.

Although this book proposes that we learn psychoanalysis from Tanizaki, and learn it critically, I imagine there will still be resistance to positing the universality of modern subjectivity.[5] Universality has been a hotly contested concept among feminists, Butler primary among them. "The universal" is regarded as a hegemonic category for relegating difference to a constitutive outside that is never recognized for its role in sustaining the binary. It is interesting to note, however, that the critique of universalism has been less straightforward for Japanese feminists, who often find themselves erased by its binary schema. Ehara Yumiko describes "a strange distortion of postmodern feminism in Japan" (63) that calls on feminists to reject both the universalist conceit of a Japanese modernity indistinguishable from Western modernity and the competing nativist conceit of a unique Japanese culture. "What is at stake," she writes, is "the very possibility of a feminism that questions modernity from the position of a subject situated in the locus called Japan" (64). Along similar lines, Ueno Chizuko points out that although "Japanese feminism is under the cultural injunction to distance its arguments from Western thought in order to prove that it is not an importation" (qtd. in Kano, "Toward a Critique" 546), the overdetermined femininity of the Japan that gets constructed in opposition to the West is always claimed by male intellectuals, leaving Japanese women with no position. "Unless a third way is presented," Ueno says, "the pendulum movement between the two poles of Orientalism [that is, "Western thought"] and reverse Orientalism [that is, 'Japan as unique and "feminine"'] will keep swinging for a while" (546).

I think Luce Irigaray may be offering one such "third way" with her theory of sexual indifference. In postmodern feminism as Ehara concisely defines it, the idea is to critique a universalism that "grants the privilege of being considered human only to those who fit the masculine standard, while [affixing] to others the label of remaining within the natural order of their sex" (61). Thus, postmodern feminism rejects the idea of "the natural order of sex" because it is not natural but rather the product of a marginalizing masculinist discourse. We can see why historicization plays such an important role in this approach. To give sex a history is to show that what is held to be physical and to change only with the slow calendar of human evolution is actually cultural and changing continually, with intersecting discourses about race, class, sexuality, and so on. The historicist approach has been enormously productive for mapping the gendered terrain of all the fields it has influenced. When Irigaray advocates a different approach, it is not to supplant this one but to point out that it leaves certain problems unaddressed. To the degree that "sex" really is constructed as the disprized other to a universal masculine, no amount of exposing its historical contingency will change the fact that it is born from what she calls "the logic of the one" (*To Speak* 231). We think we are starting with two entities, but because one defines the other solely in terms of itself, we are not actually talking about difference. According to Irigaray, the task is not to deconstruct the binary or historicize its disprized term but to ask what was sacrificed by its construction and how to find language to describe it. In other words, Irigaray's "third way" is to ask how we start writing the history of something that has never existed.

I hope that, in the end, whether or not readers accept my claim that Tanizaki and Freud are talking about the same subjectivity will depend not on misgivings about positing universals but on the strength of the parallels I draw between the two writers. For feminists, these parallel perversions are of paramount importance because it is only by discerning them that we are able to see how Tanizaki is imagining a beyond. This beyond does not come in the form of the "eternal woman" (*ei'en na josei*) already exhaustively documented in studies of his literature. It has nothing to do with her predictable combination of mother, lover, prostitute, and savior. The same "eternal woman" dominates Freud as well, and we already know the perverse history of her "love."[6] Instead, Tanizaki's beyond is unexpected and elusive, sometimes even impossible; I do not find it in all the works I analyze. For it is no small feat not just to "do" but to do more, to do other, than the constructions we are already in. At the same time, we appreciate why Tanizaki wanted so badly to try. With his overripe novels and stories from the 1930s, he begins to write the history of a love that is much more loving, more worthy of the name.

The chapters in this book unfold in order of increasing attention to this new and different love, with two early chapters documenting the inescapability of perversion, and two later chapters focusing more on what exists beyond.

Chapter 1 offers a psychoanalytic look at the intellectual climate of 1930s Japan. It reads three Tanizaki essays famous for celebrating the finer points of Japanese aesthetics and cultural values: "In'ei raisan" (In praise of shadows) "Ren'ai oyobi shikijō" (Love and sexual desire), and "Geidan" (Speaking of art). In these essays there is an undertone of suffering not usually acknowledged when Tanizaki's work is classed with other "culturalist" writing that extolled Japanese uniqueness in the 1930s. I argue that Tanizaki shows this suffering to be the product of Japan's successful Westernization, and that what makes his essays so interesting is the way he documents that suffering in excruciating little pockets of national self-loathing tucked intermittently into his own writing on culture. Using Freud's writing on "moral masochism," I show Tanizaki to be portraying a severe authority that has been internalized as the prerequisite to Japan's emergence as one of the world's civilized nations. Operating as a stern Western superego, this authority issues the contradictory injunctions "You must be like me!" and "You may not be like me!" These impossible commands keep the nation's intellectuals in a state of endless anguish, even as they are born of the satisfaction of Japan's desire to Westernize. In turn, the same anguish makes seeking refuge in the comforts of "Eastern tastes" that much more attractive. I suggest that what Tanizaki accomplishes by putting the pain and its fetishistic antidote side by side is to rewrite the "essentialism" of Japanese culturalism as a palliative response to the nation's crisis rather than as any pure or prior identity.

Such a reading has the advantage of distinguishing Tanizaki from other culturalist writers with whom he is often grouped. I argue that "Love and Sexual Desire" is a spoof on Watsuji Tetsurō's *Fūdo: Ningengakuteki* *kōsatsu* (Climate: an anthropological study) and thus challenges Watsuji's justification of Japanese imperial aggression rather than endorses it. I also propose that "Speaking of Art" is saying something quite different from what Kobayashi Hideo claims in his 1933 essay "Literature of the Lost Home," where he dismisses Tanizaki's "return to the East" as an atavistic desire unthinkable for a new generation of cosmopolitan critics like himself. However, my objective in beginning the book with an essay on Tanizaki and empire is not primarily to contribute to the growing body of scholarship on Japanese imperialism. Rather, my aim is to pursue the consequences of Tanizaki's realization that to be a Japanese intellectual in the 1930s was *always already* to be a masochist. When we appreciate his experience of interwar subjectivity as an experience of mandatory perversion, we begin to see how he would have been led to ask whether it is possible, even in a domestic frame, to experience a subjectivity and a sexuality that were not perverted, and in which perversion itself did not turn out to reveal, rather than a proliferation of genders, the total erasure of women.

Chapter 2 begins with a reading of a solemn autobiographical essay that Tanizaki wrote for the best friend to whom he ceded his wife in what is known as the "wife-passing incident" (*Saikun jōto jiken*) of 1930. Published in 1931, "Satō Haruo ni ataete kako hansei o kataru sho" (An account of the first half of my life, for Satō Haruo) shows the author coming to terms with the idea that domestic homosocial intimacies in the personal sphere are no less vulnerable to melancholic hauntings by the rival than intellectual intimacies in an international frame. What interests me about this essay is that Tanizaki wrote it at exactly the same time he wrote the first two installments of his boisterous faux-historical novel about a masochistic sixteenth-century samurai, *Bushūkō hiwa* (The secret history of the Lord of Musashi, hereafter *The Secret History*). Could the two texts, so different in tone, be related? The chapter proposes that the second text pushes the consequences of the first to their logical conclusions, translating the inertness of a wife who could be passed but not loved into the universality of a female "subjectivity" that is incapable of interaction and therefore perversely attractive to men whose attempts to sever male relations always end in failure.

The chapter also presents Tanizaki's portrait of the samurai alongside Freud's account of the death drive to show how both authors describe aggressivity according to a hydraulic model. That is, the death drive originates from within and must be either spent in the world as destructiveness or channeled back inward as guilt. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud points out that modern conscience is thus in the business not of ending aggressiveness but only of sending it back to where it came from in the persona of an internalized lost male love. In *The Secret History*, Tanizaki shows that this model of conscience makes aggression's most "civilized" itinerary synonymous with a snarl of painful homosocial identifications epitomized by the distinctly modern injunction to "follow one's lord in death." He also shows that it is precisely this snarl that makes "femininity" seem like an attractive alternative in the mind of his protagonist, a samurai who longs to become a noseless, hacked-up "woman head." With this image, I think, Tanizaki provides an unforgettable icon for Freud's claim that "masochism, as people say, is truly feminine" ("Femininity" 117). As *The Secret History* illustrates, it is "truly feminine" to the exact degree that we are talking about what Freud calls "primary masochism"—the phenomenon of the death drive simply failing to leave the body. To the degree that we are talking about "secondary masochism"—which happens when civilization sends aggression back to the self—we are still in the realm of masculinity. The chapter argues that these are the impoverished terms for sexual "difference" as *The Secret History* presents them.

Why then does Tanizaki posit these terms at the start of his novel and proceed to use a tone so hyperbolic and over the top as to suggest a parody? Analyzing William Haver's argument for the novel's success as a parody, I introduce an observation by Irigaray to ask whether the novel might actually be staged as the deliberate failure of parody. According to Irigaray, Freud's model of the libido is disturbingly resonant with the first and second laws of thermodynamics. This means that on some level the explosive nature of the death drive always feels incontrovertible, the stuff of "hard science." Irigaray maintains that, scientifically and militarily, the history of the twentieth century has been the history of these first and second laws, of tension, release, and the return to homeostasis. Against Haver, I argue that *The Secret History* is a historical novel only in the sense that it is the history of our violent present and, barring any definition of femininity that would allow for actual difference, our violent future as well. My hope is that this feminist framing of the novel will open new directions for thinking about war and aggression in the field of Japanese studies at large.

Two examples come to mind. In literature, many of us admire James Fujii's reading of Sōseki's *Kokoro*, which relates the novel's canonization to the way it averts its gaze from Japanese military expansion in Asia to focus on the domestic tragedy of a modernity so severed from history as to rob its Sensei of any legacy to leave his student save suicide. In Chapter 2 I agree that *junshi* is a fitting metaphor for the circuit of punishing male identifications that Freud says is commensurate with modern "civilization." However, if this circuit, as Tanizaki suggests in *The Secret History*, is the self-directed version of an aggression for which the only alternative is to be directed outward, is it still true that novels of homosocial suffering like *Kokoro* remain aloof from the problem of military aggression? It seems to me that when *Kokoro* documents what Fujii calls the "chain of institutionalized patriarchy and death that threatens to persist in Japanese society" (148), it is also documenting the threat of death that will persist in and between *all* modern societies as long as we fail to challenge the "science" of a death-driven libido that makes men choose between harming the self and harming the other.

A second example, related to the first, comes to mind because this book was written when George W. Bush was enacting an increasingly dangerous series of responses to the attacks of September 11, 2001. Philosopher Ukai Satoshi has written a trenchant critique of Bush's "war on terror":

> In its bid to counter bin Laden's slogan "Hiroshima in America," the slogan of an America that proclaims its right to the preemptive use of nuclear weapons can only create a second or third Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or a second or third Hiroshima and Nagasaki of the world. It is precisely in order to intervene in the automatic reflex between these two slogans, bin Laden's and Bush's, that we seek a critique of terrorism. (251)

Nothing could be more welcome than the intervention of which Ukai speaks. However, part of his strategy is to show that the distinction between what has and has not been considered "terrorism" has proven entirely arbitrary across the imperialist conflicts of the twentieth century, so the task is to learn how to "think of the differences between violences without recourse to binary oppositions" (240) and to effect "a critique of violence that is not simple condemnation" (242). I can't help asking: Why can't we simply condemn violence? If condemnation is untenable, is it only because, as Ukai argues, nonviolence always turns out to be implicated in a larger scheme of violence? Or could it also be, as *The Secret History* shows, that nonviolence is shunned because it is conceived as feminine? Because it is commensurate with the bloody woundedness of a short-circuited death drive? The noseless "woman head" that represents the novel's fantasy of reprieve from the endlessly internalized violence of a "civilized" male subjectivity is a brutal index of how little femininity and feminism have been allowed to contribute to a debate in which, as Ukai points out, "the term *human beings* means citizens" and "[t]hose who are citizens are actually combatants" (247). Irigaray is routinely dismissed for the essentialism of her claim that female sexuality could offer an alternative to the common sense of this equation between "human being" and "combatant." One of my aims in presenting Tanizaki's psychoanalytic account of the intransigence of aggressivity is to underscore how much is at stake in her proposal.

Chapter 3 considers Tanizaki's contribution to the feminist debate on maternity. *Yoshinokuzu* (Arrowroot) juxtaposes its narrator's search for the Japanese imperial line with his friend's search for his maternal line. In some tantalizingly brief statements scattered across his writings from the late 1970s, Nakagami Kenji hinted that the mother might be a member of Japan's *buraku* underclass (*hisabetsu burakumin*). Expanding Nakagami's thesis in the 1990s, Watanabe Naomi and Komori Yōichi embraced Tanizaki's novel as a brilliant treatise on abjection that shows how the process of tracing her family line converges with the process of tracing the discrimination on which Japan's emperor system is founded. This chapter asks, Do we have to make the mother into a *burakumin* to make her political? And is this really what Nakagami is doing?

I begin the chapter with a reading of the childhood singing games of the friend, Tsumura, to propose that *Arrowroot* provides a textbook example of the psychoanalytic truism that to acquire language is to give up one's relation to the maternal body. I sketch Julia Kristeva's theory of "semiotic" articulation as a means of recouping that lost relationship, and I show how Tsumura's anthem "Cry of the Fox" is semiotic. Then I take issue with Kristeva, introducing Irigaray's competing claim that the semiotic, with its attendant feeling of abjection, is not a way back to the mother so much as proof that we have sacrificed her anew. In my reading, *Arrowroot* maps out the debate between Kristeva and Irigaray by contrasting the ill-named mother love of Tsumura with the much more loving encounter with the maternal origin staged in Yoshino by Tsumura's friend the narrator. Writing the narrator's "return" in a quasi-biologistic vocabulary of skins, membranes, and mucous, Tanizaki exceeds the psychoanalytic paradigm to explore a maternal relation of safety and mediation rather than danger and pollution. I use Irigaray to argue that such a relation is essential to a subjectivity not founded in the dereliction of the other, and I reinterpret Nakagami's elusive remarks to suggest that he too is invested in a language that would acknowledge indebtedness to origins rather than erase them.

Of all the readings in this book, it is the one in this chapter about which I feel strongest, but also most nervous. I imagine readers will be interested in the argument that abjection is a dead end for feminism, but I expect resistance to the argument that *Arrowroot* is experimenting with what Irigaray calls an "elemental" vocabulary, "suggest[ing] to women a morpho-logic that is appropriate to their bodies" (*je, tu* 59). For American feminists trained after Judith Butler's work became paradigmatic, the very mention of such a vocabulary evokes automatic opposition. If we make the mistake of giving the feminine content, saying what it is rather than keeping it an open question, will we not "ground" feminism? Will we not break into factions, arguing over which differently classed, raced, or gendered "femininity" has the right to claim that category for itself? Acknowledging Irigaray's importance, Butler has made peace with her, but only to the degree that Irigaray can be championed for her "radical citational practice" (*Bodies* 37) vis-à-vis the great philosophers, and for keeping the question of sexual difference a "dense moment of irresolution within language" (*Undoing* 177). When Irigaray exhorts us to invent words that speak the mother's body *independent* of irresolution, *outside* the injurious terms of the symbolic, Butler withdraws her support.[7] In response, much has been written in defense of Irigaray's recent, noncitational work, emphasizing that what she means by "morphology" is not any empirical female body but an idealized and mostly unrealized embodiment invested less in its own identity than in an ethics of relationality.

Rather than use these defenses to shelter my reading of Tanizaki from a Butlerian critique, I want to use Tanizaki to reconsider the intellectual climate that makes such defenses necessary. What can we learn by approaching this feminist debate from the perspective of 1930s Japan? *Arrowroot* reveals a Tanizaki who had already sensed in 1931 that if he wanted access to a "mother love" worthy of the name, he would need to do more than re-cite and subvert what he already knew. For what he already knew—and what we still know all too well—was subjectivity founded in the dereliction of a mother who then haunts us with anxiety, phobia, and disgust. The question is not whether feminists will argue about who may claim this maternity, but whether feminists will be able to imagine an alternative to a maternity that no one should want to claim. In Japan, debates among psychologists, ethnographers, sociologists, Marxists, and even Deleuzeans have gathered momentum at regular intervals during the last half-century, intent on characterizing the nation as a *bosei shakai* or "maternal society." As Tomiko Yoda has shown, however, claims that Japanese society promotes cozy mother-child dynamics such as intimacy, indulgence, and protection are always accompanied by claims that the same dynamics make Japanese society infantile, suffocating, and pathological.[8] Given the inevitability of its abject inverse, the "maternity" of this society is both a political and a psychic liability. If we are not willing to consider an outside to its discourse, to go back to mother-as-origin and conceive of a different relation to her, we will continue to rob ourselves of the opportunity to conceive a model of subjectivity not always already founded in the dereliction of its very first other. Chapter 3 embraces Irigaray's elemental vocabulary to point out that until such a model is found, other ethical projects will remain severely compromised.

Chapter 4 turns its attention to the problem of vision in order to propose that Tanizaki anticipated many of the most intense debates in feminist film theory in a series of cinema essays from the 1920s and in a famous novel about self-blinding from 1933. The film essays have recently received a great deal of attention in English. Joanne Bernardi's *Writing in Light* (2001), Eric Cazdyn's *The Flash of Capital* (2002), and Thomas Lamarre's *Shadows on the Screen* (2005) all provide compelling accounts of what Tanizaki wrote during a fervent period of cinemaphilia when he was scripting, producing, and directing movies for the Taishō Katsuei film company in Yokohama. What these books downplay or attempt to reconcile, however, is the cinematic disappointment that caused Tanizaki, by 1935, to remark that he had "long since stopped caring about cinema." The occasion for his remarks was the news that his novel *Shunkinshō* (Portrait of Shunkin) was being made into a movie. This chapter argues that the novel, not the essays, may well represent Tanizaki's most trenchant writing about cinema. Reading it this way, I propose not only that the seeds of his cinematic discontent had been sown a decade earlier, but also that they were sown precisely around feminist issues of power and pleasure in the visual field.

The chapter traces the debate in feminist film theory over two laws of human vision as described by psychoanalysis—first, that we always sense something lacking in a given representation, and want to see exactly what is missing; and second, that representation is itself compensation for the absence of the missing object. I discuss how three feminist film theorists—Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, and Joan Copjec—have grappled with the way cinema equates "woman" with lack and absence. All three theorists accept that psychoanalysis is telling the truth about how we see, and therefore remain within a psychoanalytic paradigm. In contrast, I show Tanizaki rejecting that paradigm even as he recognizes its intransigence in brilliant scenes of Freudian fetishism. Using Gilles Deleuze's work on disavowal, I propose that self-blinding in *Portrait of Shunkin* represents a repudiation of Freudian subjectivity, with the novel's multilayered narrative indicting subjectivity's foundational cruelty. I also discuss the sadism of a dominant strain of criticism surrounding the novel, showing that some powerful figures in Japan's genteel "national literature studies" have embraced a reading that casually repeats the very sadism that Tanizaki's text critiques.

In *Undoing Gender*, Judith Butler remembers the "high" she felt reading French feminism in the 1980s, when the importance of sexual difference to ascendant discourses such as psychoanalysis meant that accounts of the speaking subject could no longer ignore the subject's sex. She explains:

> To understand the exhilaration of this theory for those who were working within it, and for those who still do, one has to understand the sea-change that took place when feminist studies turned from being the analysis of "images" of women

> in this or that discipline or sphere of life to being an analysis of sexual difference at the foundation of cultural and human communicability. Suddenly, we were fundamental. Suddenly, no human science could proceed without us. (208)

Despite her excitement, Butler remembers being dismayed by French feminism's heterosexism, and wanting a theory of gender trouble to write about "the lives of those who live at some distance from gender norms" (207). In this book I argue that Tanizaki's own attempts to "trouble" gender only expose the *absence* of heterosexuality, and the difficulty of ever achieving much distance from the norms that that absence imposes. I also argue that among French feminists, Irigaray is better read not as a theorist of "sexual difference at the foundation of cultural and human communicability" but as a theorist of how sexual difference is erased by that foundation. Nevertheless, Butler's account of the exhilaration she felt in the 1980s moves me deeply, because I think the principle behind it still applies. We *are* foundational. It is just that what Irigaray calls the derelicted "maternal-feminine" is buried a little more deeply in the foundation than we thought. For Tanizaki, the 1930s were the moment of exhilaration when it all became clear. As long as psychoanalysis remains the lingua franca of our modernity, the good *and* bad news for feminists is that this moment of exhilaration will continue.