Risks and Rewards: Reading *Nihonbashi* as a Gothic Novel

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In his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, Chris Baldick says that Gothic "travels only with great difficulty across cultural borders."[1] This claim is based mainly on an understanding of Gothic as a historically situated genre that originated in Europe and the Americas in the late eighteenth century. "Traditional" or "classic" Gothic, in this interpretation, is properly seen as revealing the particular fears of an emerging Protestant middle class that constantly seeks to reaffirm its identity through the quasi-ritualistic sacrifice of aristocratic and religious tyrants. These fears are given concrete expression in the form of such familiar devices as the medieval castle or abbey, the Gothic villain, the persecuted maiden, and the existence (real or imagined) of supernatural agents. These devices, in turn, are linked to themes that often imply the subversion of established social conventions and acceptable codes of behavior. Gothic subversiveness is held to apply to gender as well, so that much of Gothic's continuing appeal, for example, is to be found in the way it portrays modern woman struggling against the oppression of a patriarchic social system in an effort to establish an identity of her own.[2]

This rather crude description of Gothic origins and thematic interests scarcely does justice to the subtlety with which critics have approached the study of Gothic fiction in the past twenty-five years. Nevertheless, it may serve to indicate just how closely Gothic is associated with European cultural history in general and with a fairly well-defined group of British and American writers in particular.[3] This historical and cultural specificity is no doubt one reason why Japanese critics avoid characterizing a writer like Izumi Kyōka as a Gothic novelist. Instead he is usually called a "romantic," and his works of fiction are typically categorized as fantasy literature (*gensō bungaku*) or marvelous tales of the strange and unexpected (*kaiki shōsetsu*).[4] To my knowledge, no standard history or dictionary of Japanese literature even brings up the subject of Gothic in connection with Kyōka.

All the more puzzling, then, that in English translation Kyōka should be in the process of developing a reputation as a Gothic writer. On just what basis can Kyōka be called a Gothic novelist if most Japanese readers do not consider him one? If such a basis exists, surely it ought to be clearly identified and argued in some detail, especially when applied to so prolific a writer. In fact, however, characterizations of Kyōka as a Gothic writer by English-speaking critics tend to rest on fairly broad assumptions about the nature of Gothic and focus on a narrow range of material, always relatively short works. Here I want first to review five of these characterizations, briefly pointing out their strengths and shortcomings. Then, within a specifically Gothic framework, I plan to discuss the full-length novel *Nihonbashi* (1914). For unless Kyōka's longer works can be seen to contain Gothic elements, Kyōka's status as a Gothic writer will at least have to be qualified to the extent of calling him the author of Gothic stories rather than a Gothic novelist.[5]

Probably the first direct mention in English of Kyōka as a Gothic writer comes in a short article by Juliet Carpenter titled "Izumi Kyōka: Meiji-Era Gothic" (*Japan Quarterly* 31 [1984]: 154-158). The article focuses mainly on the novella *Kōya hijiri* (The Holy Man of Mt. Kōya, 1900) and concludes that in this story Kyōka created "a world of poetry and myth that transcends everyday reality and that still has power to grip the reader and hold him spellbound" (158). The word "Gothic" appears only once — in the title — and Carpenter apparently feels no need either to define the term or relate it to the stories she discusses. The comments she makes about *Kōya hijiri* and the two other works she summarizes are unexceptionable, but it is finally the reader who is forced to draw any connections with Gothic as a genre. The conclusion, quite orthodox in its emphasis on Kyōka's expressive powers, is simply that "through his versatile command of language and the storyteller's art, his eerie mix of reality and fantasy, and his profound veneration of beauty, especially feminine beauty, Kyōka created his own world" (158). The "Gothic" of the title here serves as little more than an attention-getting device.

Similarly cursory attributions of Gothic qualities to Kyōka's work can be found in discussions by two Kyōka specialists, Cody Poulton and Charles Shirō Inouye. Poulton's "The Grotesque and Gothic" (*Japan Quarterly* 41 [1994]: 324-335) is essentially an introduction to three works: the short stories *Gekashitsu* (The Surgery Room, 1895) and *Keshin* (Chimera, 1897), and — very briefly — the play *Tenshu monogatari* (The Castle Tower, 1917). Once again, the only explicit mention of Gothic is in the title, so that the reader is forced to suppose that the use of the supernatural and the portrayal of victimized women (along with the "medieval" setting in the case of *Tenshu monogatari*) are the relevant elements linking Kyōka to Gothic. Of more interest to the student of Japanese and comparative literary history are Poulton's observations regarding the importance to Kyōka of premodern literary and cultural values. In particular, the discussion of *Keshin* — which pits the ideology of social Darwinism against a "traditional" Japanese pantheistic view of the relationship between man and nature — suggests a specifically Gothic approach based on a comparison with, for instance, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) and H. G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896).[6] Such a comparison, I think, would indeed serve show that "the satire of [*Keshin*] is sublimated into a fantastic vision that emphatically precludes any social context" ("The Grotesque and Gothic," 330). In other words, where the Western stories produce a critique of the limits of rational knowledge in a manner that itself turns out to be quite discursive (lengthy justifications of motivation are offered in both works), *Keshin* expresses a personal vision that has more in common with wish-fulfilling fantasy than with social criticism. In the event, however, Poulton does not make even this rather obvious comparison with Western Gothic, and as a result his article must be called suggestive rather than satisfying.[7]

Inouye has published a book of translations of four of Kyōka's shorter works titled *Japanese Gothic Tales* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996). In his introduction, however, he restricts his discussion of Gothic to a single Western writer, Poe, and on the first page justifies using the term with reference to Kyōka as a way of calling attention to "the [cultural] dissonance the category creates." For Inouye, this means a questioning of the usual paradigm used to

construct modern Japanese literary history, a paradigm based on the realistic and naturalistic techniques developed by nineteenth-century Western novelists and partially adopted (in the form of Naturalism) by Japanese writers. The point is well taken, and argued at length in Inouye's critical biography,[8] but when Inouye says that — in contrast to Poe — Kyōka's writing is "a frontal attack on the barbarous and uncouth values to which Western gothic supposedly owes its genealogy" (1), one wonders precisely what definition of Western Gothic he has in mind. Certainly, Inouye seems to underestimate the strength of the "dissonant" aspects of late nineteenth-century Western fiction itself (even if the question ultimately becomes one of the restricted imaginative scope of Japanese translators, writers, and critics). But even more importantly, traditional Gothic (especially in the 1790s) was nothing if not an assault on the barbarous values of an earlier age.[9] To adduce Poe as the prime example of the Western Gothic tradition is misleading in the extreme. Inouye is a careful and perceptive reader of Kyōka, but interpreting Gothic as an inherently postmodern genre (as he seems to want to do) runs the risk of taking the genre out of history and making it into a shadowy image of the present.[10] One can appreciate the attempt to extend the idea of subversiveness in Kyōka to the meta-field of literary history while also pointing out that Inouye has not really troubled to engage Gothic as a genre, nor has he explicitly related Gothic to the translations he has made, either in terms of technique or the selection of the stories themselves. Cultural parallels are identified, but at the cost of categorical and historical confusion.

Three other discussions of Kyōka are based on a greater demonstrated awareness of Western Gothic. Leith Morton, in a paper delivered at the International Research Center for Japanese Literature in April 1996, briefly summarizes the traditional Gothic period in English literature and — quite understandably, since it is an oral presentation — restricts his discussion to the single topic of rhetorical excess as a technique for putting pressure on surface reality in order to reveal a more meaningful psychological reality lying underneath.[11] This approach, based on the argument made by Peter Brooks in *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode*

of Excess (1976; New Haven: Yale UP, 1995), has an immediate intuitive appeal in the case of a writer like Kyōka, who has always been admired as a stylist. Yet one is unsure of how completely Morton has succeeded in assimilating Kyōka to Brooks's argument, which in any case is not a discussion of Gothic literature per se (the topic does not arise) but a Freudian interpretation of melodrama as a secular mode of dramatizing moral conflicts that finds its locus classicus in the plays of early nineteenth-century France. According to Brooks, melodrama is world where the moral middle has been excluded to allow access to a Manichean field of battle where virtue can be seen to triumph clearly over evil (36, 204). While this does not mean that the conflict must be simply portrayed, good and evil in melodrama are not subject to compromise, and at most the reader is left to speculate on the indeterminate grounds for deciding moral issues in the modern world.[12] Morton, in contrast, claims that Kyōka's "metaphorical" style encourages the blurring of the boundary between the real world and the fantasy world by reversing and confusing the roles of tenor and vehicle. This viewpoint has the effect of introducing thematic ambiguity into the equation, thereby calling Brooks's original formulation of melodrama into question and conflating rhetorical issues with problems involving dramatic structure and narrative point of view. The result is an unsubstantiated claim of Kyōka's close stylistic resemblance to Emily Brontë and the dubious assertion that because Kyōka actually believed in ghosts and spirits, he is much closer to the Western Gothic tradition than a writer like Arishima Takeo.[13] Of the various characterizations under consideration here, I find Morton's to be the most intriguingly concrete in treatment. But for it to be completely persuasive, a clearer distinction between Gothic and fantasy is needed; more attention must be paid to the claims of early Gothic (Morton sees Gothic primarily as an aesthetic offshoot of Romanticism, suggesting a late nineteenth-century focus); melodrama needs to be more convincingly reconciled with thematic ambiguity; and a broader consideration of Kyōka's oeuvre is in order (Morton mentions only the stories *Gekashitsu* and *Kōya hijiri*).

The remaining two characterizations of Kyōka as a Gothic writer have both been made by specialists in American literature. The earlier

one is also the more ambitious: "Familiarity of the Strange: Japan's Gothic Tradition" by Henry J. Hughes (*Criticism*, 42.1 [2000]: 59-89).[14] The strengths of this wide-ranging article are its placement of Kyōka within an Asian literary tradition (especially with reference to Chinese tales of the supernatural) and explicit, if perfunctory, references to such early Western Gothic novels as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764; the online text mistakenly dates it 1765), Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820; the online text misspells the name as "Melmouth"). Hughes is quite right to complain that "the critical and translation history of Japanese fiction in English has not included specific discussions of the Gothic" (16). I also think that he makes a valid point by drawing on the work of Masao Miyoshi to argue that Buddhist ideas of the self must be taken into account when considering the nature of the salvation obtained by the priest who is the nominal hero of *Kōya hijiri* (10, 13-14). This argument has the added salutary effect of directing the reader's attention to the thematic implications of the story's narrative frame and to the plot as a whole rather than simply to the central "Gothic" episode.

Hughes's strengths are also his weaknesses, however, for the desire to draw as many East-West Gothic parallels as possible prompts him to make sweeping generalizations that most specialists in Japanese literature would be reluctant to accept without serious qualification. For example, Hughes gives the impression that a continuous Gothic line can be drawn from *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, ca. 1000) to *Konjaku monogatari* (Tales of Times Now Past, ca. 1120) and *Heike monogatari* (The Tale of the Heike, before 1219), and then on to the eighteenth century work of Ueda Akinari and extending to Kyōka, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Mishima Yukio in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thus, on the basis of scant evidence, he asserts that "allusions to *The Tale of Genji* appear throughout Japanese Gothic fiction" (4) and that "violent descriptions from the *Heike* appear in Gothic fiction from Akinari to Mishima" (5). Another breathtaking claim that I simply do not think Hughes is justified in making is that "doubleness

occurs throughout Japanese literature" (12). Perhaps this is true if one somehow defines "doubleness" in terms that are suitably vague and inclusive, but I very much doubt whether Hughes can cite any major Japanese critical work on the topic that has the scope and authority of, say, Karl Miller's *Doubles*. In fact, the only concrete literary examples Hughes offers of the "remarkable continuity in the Gothic tradition" (7) between Akinari's *Ugetsu monogatari* (Tales of Moonlight and Rain, 1776) and Kyōka's *Gekashitsu*, published some 120 years later, are a hastily summarized *yomihon* ("book for reading") that appeared in 1805 and Tsuruya Nanboku's 1825 Kabuki play *Tōkaidō Yotsuya kaidan* (Ghost Story at Yotsuya on the Tōkaidō).[15]

Acknowledging the possibility that some may see his essay as calling for "genre appropriation in the form of colonialism" ("Familiarity of the Strange," 2), Hughes disingenuously defends his application of the term "Gothic" to Japanese literature by calling it a "translation term" used to describe a similar tradition observable in Western and Japanese literature (19, note 41). Since he never mentions the Japanese word of which "Gothic" is presumably a translation, he is clearly begging the question. In fact, Hughes claims authority for his conclusions by referring to a set of timeless and universal "human qualities" — the subversion of social and religious norms, an obsession with sex and death, and a fear of the supernatural or unknown — that are "not the province of any one culture" (2). In this way, Hughes not only takes Gothic out of historical context but removes it from a cultural context as well, a gesture that threatens to undermine the validity of the very observations he makes about cultural difference later in the essay.[16] Finally, despite the impressive list of Western novels, very little is said about any of them, and what is said is not necessarily informed.[17] Granted that the main purpose is to discuss Chinese and Japanese stories, a mere catalog of Western authors and titles is hardly enough to make a convincing argument for similarity. Hughes's essay makes a start in the right direction for future theorizing, but at this stage many of his generalizations must be regarded as unsubstantiated and at times even misleading.

The most recent characterization of Kyōka as a Gothic writer comes in the entry for him by Frederick S. Frank in *Gothic Writers*, eds.

Douglass H. Thomson, Jack G. Voller, and Frederick S. Frank (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2002). Frank is a well-known scholar of Gothic literature, and he and the other editors of *Gothic Writers* are aware that by including both Akinari and Kyōka in their book they are challenging the conservative definition of the genre (ix-xi). It is an aggressively liberal stance to take, and one that, as I have already pointed out, requires the editors (and the reader) to forgo the analytical clarity afforded by reference to a specific historical and cultural context. Whether or not one agrees with this stance, the problem of selection in a reference work like this is sufficiently vexed to warrant the attempt to be comprehensive. In line with the universal definition of Gothic assumed by Frank, the characteristic features of the "Kyōkan Gothic" would appear to be "Gothic intensity" (230) and a "transgression against the cloying realities" (231). That is, the idealistic transcendence of reality (with a melodramatic touch of grotesqueness) is the distinguishing mark of Kyōka's Gothic fiction and plays, a conclusion not substantially different from that of Carpenter. Unfortunately, the argument relies for support on a handful of shorter tales, the play *Tenshu monogatari*, and rough summaries of studies by Kyōka scholars that are themselves filtered through a rather thick Gothic lens. In his bibliographical note to Inouye's *The Similitude of Blossoms*, for instance, Frank remarks, "Comments extensively on Kyōka's Gothicism" (231). In fact, the term "Gothic" will not be found in the book's index, and Inouye does not even use the term to characterize *Tenshu monogatari*, the one work above all to which one would think "Gothic" applies. I find own dissertation appearing to say, "Vital to an understanding of [Kyōka's] Gothicism is his repeated use of two motifs…" (231), when I never actually mention Gothic at all.[18] In addition, there are a number of basic errors of both fact and interpretation.[19] For example, Frank, who takes a special interest in Poe, is so eager to find similarities between the two writers that he states Kyōka's mother was an actress (227) and that Kyōka became an "itinerant journalist" to support himself after moving to Tokyo from Kanazawa in 1891 (226). Neither remark is accurate.[20] Frank also unsatisfactorily describes the ending of *Gekashitsu* and important aspects of *Kōya hijiri*.[21] His claim to discern "the tangible

presences of other Western Gothic writers such as E. T. A. Hoffmann, Guy de Maupassant, and J. K. Huysmans" (230) is overstated and not backed by any hard evidence. The entry on the whole is quite impressionistic in treatment, and it is hard to escape the feeling that it was hastily written.

From the preceding account it should be clear that not enough care has been taken in applying to Kyōka's work a Western literary term that has itself only recently been subjected to intense critical scrutiny. Too much is assumed, too little substantiated. In particular, more concrete analysis of individual cases seems necessary before generalization of the kind outlined above is feasible. My second purpose in this essay, therefore, is quite simple: to start with a definition of Gothic proposed by a Western scholar and attempt to apply it to a novel that is long enough to avoid the temptation of reducing the significance of Gothic fiction to intensity of vision and the iconic representation of desire. To that end I plan to refer mainly to the two early Gothic novels *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* to explore the question of whether *Nihonbashi* uses expressly Gothic devices and thematic motifs in a similar way. My own assumption, perhaps not so different in kind from that of the critics I have discussed, is that useful knowledge can result from such an attempt even when there is very little question of direct cultural influence. I do not see a good way of proving this assumption other than empirically; like a belief in the possibility of translation, it may be that at the deepest theoretical level a leap of faith is involved.[22] In any case, first things first.

The definition I would like to start from is the one Baldick gives in *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* to justify extending the category of Gothic to the works of writers beyond the early nineteenth century:

As this [later Gothic] tradition of fiction has evolved, it has adapted the archaic atmosphere of early Gothic fiction, with its usual time of action in the late Middle Ages or the early modern period, to later periods, even in some cases to the author's own time. It has done this by abstracting certain leading features of these original Gothic settings, retaining especially the enclosed space of an old

building, with further associations of the past's destructive cruelty. ... In principle and in practice it is perfectly possible to have a Gothic story set in the author's own time, provided that the tale focuses upon a relatively enclosed space in which some antiquated barbaric code still prevails (xv).

The two points Baldick mentions as distinguishing features of Gothic from all periods — an enclosed space and an oppressive moral code — are handled rather differently in the two Western novels I have listed. *The Castle of Otranto* is, of course, the short novel that is universally regarded as the progenitor of Gothic fiction.[23] The enclosed space that constitutes its site of oppression is the medieval castle itself, the master of which, Prince Manfred, is a usurper. Manfred schemes to perpetuate the family line by divorcing his wife and marrying the young woman originally betrothed to his son (who is crushed on his wedding day by a giant helmet that falls from the sky). Manfred is ultimately thwarted in his ambition by the grandson of the rightful prince, the father of the young woman persecuted by Manfred, and the ghostly intervention of the former prince himself. In the process Manfred mistakenly kills his own daughter, and at the end both he and his wife enter religious institutions, leaving the castle to its rightful heir, Theodore, who marries the young woman Manfred wanted for himself. The story is thus informed by a historical awareness of sorts, although that awareness is essentially conservative: a usurper is displaced and an aristocratic line restored to power. Restrictive feudal customs do not go unchallenged, however: a certain amount of recognition is accorded to the claims of personal merit and desire over dynasty and duty (Theodore's noble birth is not revealed until well after his courage starts the love interest going). From the viewpoint of the eighteenth century, "good" feudalism is apparently able to accommodate the limited expression of personal desire.

This thematic outcome, moreover, is achieved through an episodic plot structure that is propelled forward largely by suspense surrounding the meaning of the mysterious prophecy introduced at the beginning of the story — a prophecy fulfilled in deus-ex-machina fashion by a frankly supernatural agency. In this way, setting and theme are bound up with the problem of dramatic structure.[24] In Barthian terms, both the proairetic and the hermeneutic codes (that is, the code of actions and the code of enigmas and answers) operate in a story to create a plot in which the "dilatory space" formed by suspense allows the reader to work toward the meaning.[25] The question of "Why?" is superimposed on the question of "What next?," and the skillful and sustained use of this combination (heightened through the use of the supernatural) can be called a lasting contribution of Gothic fiction to the modern novel. In addition, despite the obvious contrivance of the plot, it is important to notice that the ending is not simply an unambiguous resolution of the conflict between good and evil. Theodore defeats Manfred, it is true, and he marries a woman whose family has a legitimate claim to the throne of Otranto. She is also the woman Theodore helps escape from Manfred, so their marriage is a logical thematic outcome. Yet the woman Theodore really loves is none other than Manfred's slain daughter, Matilda. His subsequent marriage to the also-ran Isabella is justified by describing it as a way in which he is able to indulge the melancholy of his soul, making for an ending that can be called bittersweet at best: personal desire is not fully satisfied by the "realities" of life. This thematic ambivalence — which constitutes a compromise between reality and the ideal — is a further characteristic of Gothic fiction that appears in numerous descendants of *The Castle of Otranto*.[26]

The Mysteries of Udolpho is the much longer and more highly accomplished novel that is almost invariably cited as the epitome of classic Gothic fiction.[27] Here again we encounter a willful, aristocratic tyrant in a medieval castle who persecutes his stepdaughter, Emily, frustrating her desire to marry the man of her choice and attempting to deprive her of her rightful inheritance. Emily escapes from the castle with the help of another young man, aided also by a servant and her lover. In the process she discovers the castle's secret (Udolpho once belonged to the woman who killed her aunt) and with it the secret of her own identity (she belongs to a family with a tragic history).[28] Marriage once again signals the successful outcome, which finds Emily possessed of both property and a husband. In historical terms, this return to "sentimental domesticity" at the end of the novel suggests a distinctively

female middle-class sensibility that is achieved by freeing oneself of the fear of being used for property and then discarded. [29] The novel sends the message that it is not simply middle-class identity that is to be defended against aristocratic encroachment, but in particular the identity of a middle-class (if gentrified) woman. The novel therefore also contains a potentially subversive message regarding gender roles: if not quite as blatant as *Jane Eyre* in imposing virtue on a penitent suitor as a condition of marriage, there is no question that in the novel Emily's husband is relegated to a morally and even economically dependent role.

Turning to the relationship established in Gothic between space, oppression, and dramatic structure, suspense in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* might be called the novel's most problematic feature. This is because, first of all, the tension associated with the fear created by use of the supernatural and the horrible (the "enigmas-and-answers" aspect of the plot) becomes quite attenuated in the course of the novel (the mystery of the black veil, for example, is stretched out over a space of some 400 pages). In addition, any thematic significance that might be attached to the fear Emily feels is frequently denied through direct rational explanation (from the mysterious light that appears at the tip of a guard's lance to the wax figure behind the black veil). Motivation is removed from plot development directly by the author, leading to a split between the reaction of the main character and the reaction of the reader. This may perhaps be taken as one sign of the breakdown of narrative coherence that has been leveled against Gothic fiction. [30]

But while recognizing that the novel does contain very real structural flaws, it is important to remember that Udolpho is not the only important thematic "space" created in the novel. Leaving aside La Vallee, the expansive domestic space from which Emily is excluded at the beginning of the novel and to which she returns at the end, Chateau-le-Blanc (and by association the abbey at which Sister Agnes resides) is no less central to the theme of confinement than Udolpho itself. The chateau, in addition to hosting supernatural events of its own, is also clearly the site of oppression, being associated with both the forced marriage of Emily's aunt to the chateau's previous owner and her death at

the hands of Agnes, who acts under the influence of her obsessive love for the aunt's husband. This latter aspect serves to complicate the theme considerably, for it means that the freedom to indulge in personal desire after escaping from external restrictions is not unlimited. In other words, the feudal restrictions on personal freedom represented by Count Montoni of Udolpho and the Marquis de Villeroi at Chateau-le-Blanc are balanced on the opposite side by the destructive lack of restraint in love as personified by Agnes. Emily, caught in the middle, must watch out for both, so that her final marriage and return to La Vallee once again represent not just the achievement of freedom and the gratification of desire but the conscious acknowledgement of the need for emotional restraint. [31] This is the ambivalent (if firm) sense of identity Emily succeeds in winning for herself at the end of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

History in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* can perhaps be called a much more deeply personal affair than in *The Castle of Otranto*. No doubt this is because the narrative focus throughout remains on Emily herself. An additional factor, of course, is the correspondence between the heroine's delicate sensibility and the description of the natural scenery, Radcliffe's unique and influential contribution to Romanticism and the concept of the sublime. [32] In any event, the treatment of enclosed space and oppression becomes much more sophisticated than in *The Castle of Otranto*, and the subjectivity of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* also gives it a stronger feeling of the modern by foregrounding the tenuous nature of individual identity.

The preceding discussion has taken us a bit further into Gothic than the original definition I set out, but that is only to be expected when actual works are taken under consideration. The point is that now we have a framework for looking at *Nihonbashi* in terms of four basic features of Gothic fiction: an enclosed space, the existence of oppression (historical and patriarchal), the relation of both of these to dramatic structure, and the problem of thematic ambivalence. Let us now address the question of how well these features can be said to characterize Kyōka's novel.

The enclosed space in *Nihonbashi* equivalent to the oppressive spaces of *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is the

Inabaya, the residence of the geisha Okō. The house might even be called haunted, for the ghost of the previous owner, Owaka, is said to appear at the entrance to the side street that the Inabaya faces. Owaka, whom Okō had actually known when the former was alive, suffers the fate that always threatens to overtake geisha: the loss of patronage, the loss of love, and finally the lonely loss of life. The message that this is the ethos of the pleasure quarters as a whole is reinforced by the interpolated story of the kept woman Owaka, who was slain at the entrance to same alley and whose spirit (in the Japanese form of a *hitodama*, a bluish-white flame that flits through the air) also continues to appear. A historical regression of sorts is set up whereby the life of a geisha is portrayed as leading almost invariably to a tragic end.[33] Okō herself has a lover who is quite literally bestial in nature, and eventually she goes half-mad, languishing in the Inabaya in a manner very much like the house's previous owner. The women of the pleasure quarters, their freedom constrained by the financial necessity that caused them to become geisha in the first place and functioning chiefly as the objects of desire for men, appear forever doomed to repeat an unhappy past in which emotional fulfillment remains an empty dream.

This historical ethos finds an additional parallel in the life of Katsuragi, the main male character. His current worldly success as a university professor is due directly to the sacrifice his own sister made by becoming the mistress of a wealthy man who paid for her brother's education. Katsuragi's sister disappeared from Tokyo once Katsuragi graduated from college, and his own search for happiness in love takes the form of finding a substitute for his sister in the person of the novel's other main female character, Kiyoha of the Takinoya. Katsuragi is trapped emotionally by the memory of his sister no less than the geisha are trapped, both financially and emotionally, by the ethos of the pleasure quarters.[34] Katsuragi escapes from his dilemma at the end of *Nihonbashi* by giving up his plan of going on a pilgrimage in search of his sister and renewing his studies in Europe. Kiyoha superficially escapes from her dilemma by taking over the ownership of the now flourishing Inaba. Both seem to be successful romantically as well as professionally, with Kiyoha undertaking to fulfill the last request of

Okō to provide emotional support for Katsuragi.[35] The tragic ethos of the pleasure quarters is dispelled and the gratification of personal desire achieved.

As with our Western Gothic examples, this thematic process relies on suspense to drive it forward. The question of whether the tragic influence of past "ghosts" will overpower Kiyoha as they eventually overwhelm Okō is answered in the negative when Kiyoha finds an answer — true love — that deprives those ghosts of their power. Katsuragi's hope to make Kiyoha a substitute for his sister — signaled by the recurrent image of a sacrificed doll and associated also with a puzzling dream and an imaginary symbol on a trolley ticket — is realized after Katsuragi learns to interpret his sister's sacrifice as the impetus for future growth rather than as binding him forever to memories of the past. In terms of plot, this process reaches a high point two-thirds of the way through the novel when Kiyoha rejects Katsuragi as a lover, prompting him to undertake the necessary transition to maturity that allows the novel to end with Kiyoha reversing her earlier decision. The plot is episodic, producing a series of narrative parallels that add a degree of thematic complexity while also attenuating suspense.

Yet immediately a number of key differences with *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* also present themselves (besides the obvious lack of a medieval building, which is allowed for by the original definition). Above all, there is no typical Gothic villain to personify the role of the oppressor in the stereotypical manner of Prince Manfred of Otranto and Count Montoni of Udolpho. The closest obvious candidate is Igarashi Dengo, Okō's degenerate lover. But he is never a real threat to Katsuragi, who actually rather sympathizes with him — and no wonder, since Igarashi, like Katsuragi, takes up with Okō after being rejected by Kiyoha. Despite their occasional strange lapses of malevolent resolve, Manfred and Montoni do at least inspire genuine fear in the female characters. Igarashi, however, is coolly brushed aside by Kiyoha and thoroughly intimidated by the sight of Katsuragi working in his laboratory. The real source of dramatic conflict in *Nihonbashi* is thus not so much between the two geisha and Igarashi or between Katsuragi and Igarashi as between Katsuragi and himself. The novel, in

other words, finally becomes a search for identity — not unlike *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in that respect, but with the focus shifted to the chief male character, who must find a way to leave behind both the sexual immaturity of a boy and the emotional immaturity of a young man. Katsuragi succeeds in this goal, attaining a new, higher level of maturity that sacrifices a part of the past in the interest of future happiness. And yet the victory that Katsuragi wins over himself also points to a type of thematic ambiguity that, while analyzable in Gothic terms, casts some doubt on our ability to classify *Nihonbashi* as a purely Gothic novel.

From one point of view, Katsuragi's final victory can be seen to constitute an acceptance of his own complicity in the type of oppression that took his sister away from him. That is, his sister's sacrifice should have taught Katsuragi that the pleasure quarters exist for the purpose of exploiting women as property. Yet at the end of the novel he is quite willing to allow Kiyoha to continue working there with no explicit prospect of removal through, for example, the expedient of marriage. Katsuragi travels abroad to continue his studies, while Kiyoha remains in the same place — indeed, moves into the very house that has served as the site for the two major tragedies described in the novel. In *The Castle of Otranto*, the castle is partly destroyed by the giant apparition that appears at the end of the novel, after which it becomes inhabitable by the rightful heir; in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, Emily escapes Udolpho (and leaves Chateau-le-Blanc behind) to find domestic happiness in a rural setting. The former signals the defeat of the "bad" aspects of feudalism; the latter signals the achievement of independence. In *Nihonbashi*, however, the site of oppression itself becomes the site of liberation.

Although there is no question that emotional freedom is attained by both Katsuragi and Kiyoha and that Katsuragi has acquired increased maturity, it would seem that a double standard still prevails. Katsuragi is free to come and go in Nihonbashi as he pleases, his abandonment of Okō (the reason for her madness) is forgotten, and he is absolved of guilt for his sister's sacrifice; Kiyoha is "free" to run a flourishing geisha establishment and to provide continued emotional support for

Katsuragi. [36] It is, in short, a highly wishful and self-centered ending that perpetuates the very system it purports to question. This added element of wishfulness in which desire is liberated within the enclosed space itself — a characteristic of many of Kyōka's other stories, including all those mentioned earlier in this essay — steers the story away from Gothic and more toward melodramatic fantasy. The compromise Katsuragi arranges on the inner, personal level between the ideal and reality is not matched by a similar compromise on the external, social level: exploitation is simply eliminated through the power of romantic love. A male oppressor of women has somehow succeeded in becoming their liberator, thereby effacing the image of the Gothic villain.

Thus, thematic ambivalence in *Nihonbashi* takes on a somewhat different coloring than in either *The Castle of Otranto* or *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In a way, it seems to combine the fanciful romance of the former with the hard-won maturity of the latter. *Nihonbashi* is set in a restricted space, it portrays an oppressive moral and social code, and its plot follows a fairly clear pattern of growing suspense and subsequent resolution. But there is also an affirmation of the oppressive code that makes the outcome seem more contradictory and paradoxical than in either of the Western Gothic novels.

It may not be possible solely on the basis of the analysis attempted here to say that this difference disqualifies *Nihonbashi* as a Gothic novel. Western Gothic itself allows for greater variety than I have permitted myself to include in my basic definition. I suspect that it might be more accurate to call the novel an adult fantasy with Gothic features, although even this qualified definition does not take into account the problem of Kyōka's style, among other issues. [37] But despite the unavoidable tentativeness involved in drawing a conclusion, approaching *Nihonbashi* even from the limited Gothic perspective adopted in this paper does, I think, shed light on an important distinction between Gothic and fantasy that obtains in much of Kyōka's other work. It is a distinction that deserves to be explored more fully, and such study would surely benefit from the continued careful application of Gothic terminology.

Notes

1. Chris Baldick, ed., *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales* (1992; Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), xxiii. Out of the thirty-seven tales collected in this anthology, only five first appeared in languages other than English.

2. For a convenient overview of critical approaches to Gothic since the late 1970s, see the "Appendix on Criticism" in the second edition of David Punter's *The Literature of Terror* (London: Longman, 1996), 1:209-216. The first edition of this two-volume work, published in 1980, was the most comprehensive study of the Gothic up to that point, and was followed by a flood of critical studies. Punter considers readings of the Gothic based on gender "perhaps the most energetic" of current approaches (211).

3. Several of these will be mentioned below. Introductory surveys of the genre I have found useful include, besides Punter's books, Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996); Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2000); and (for early Gothic writers) Robert Donald Spector, *The English Gothic: A Bibliographic Guide to Writers from Horace Walpole to Mary Shelley* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984). Baldick's introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, mentioned above, does an admirable job of putting the genre into concise perspective.

4. Naturally, such classifications as "romantic" and "fantasy" involve interpretive problems of their own, especially when working across cultures. The point to be made here is that both of these categories are broader and therefore more accommodating than the category of Gothic. I confess to being nonplussed by the fact that more than one Japanese-English dictionary defines *kaiki shōsetsu* as "Gothic novel" — a very loose sort of definition indeed.

5. This distinction is important in English literary history, where the "classic" Gothic novels of the 1790s go on for hundreds of pages. The Gothic short story in English can be said to have been perfected by Edgar Allan Poe, well after the Gothic period as it has traditionally been defined (from the 1760s to the 1820s).

6. Poulton does mention Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in connection with *Tenshu monogatari*, but only briefly in terms of technique.

7. This is not to say that *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau* succeed in presenting a consistent and unified and social argument. For a discussion of the unresolved problems in these stories, see Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, 2:1-16.

8. Charles Shirō Inouye, *The Similitude of Blossoms* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 1998).

9. Baldick points out that "the most troublesome aspect of the term 'Gothic' is, indeed, that the literary Gothic is really anti-Gothic" (*The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, xiii). Inouye seems too willing to give short shrift to the rich thematic ambivalence that results from this paradox. When opposing the romantic to the modern, it is easy to forget that to a large extent the romantic *is* the modern.

10. This potentially misleading historical sleight of hand — whereby the Victorian age becomes our own Gothic period, standing in a relationship to the present similar to the relationship postulated between the medieval age and the eighteenth century — has been discussed in detail by Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall in "Gothic Criticism," *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 209-221. Their key complaint against much modern Gothic criticism is that it is characterized by "the collapse of history into universal psychology" (218). My own reservations surrounding the use of the term "Gothic" to refer to Kyōka's fiction parallel those set out by Baldick and Mighall. Even in the case of Poe, the writer to whom Kyōka is most often compared, one should not forget that a specific historical context can be used to elucidate the Gothic features of his stories, as Teresa A. Goddu does in "The Ghost of Race," *Gothic America* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997), 73-93.

11. The paper, delivered in Japanese and given the English title "Gothic Fiction in Modern Japanese Literature: Izumi Kyōka and Tanizaki Jun'ichirō," may be found at the following URL from the Web site of the International Research Center for Japanese Literature: <http://www.nichibun.ac.jp/text/fn84.html>. Morton is a specialist in Japanese literature. Due to the one-page online format, I am unable to provide page citations in the text.

12. Brooks says, for example, that "for Balzac melodramatic consciousness and modes of representation do not mean a reduction of the ethical complexity of reality, but a clarification of it" (*The Melodramatic Imagination*, 145). Flaubert is subsequently mentioned as "the initiator of the modern tradition that most consciously holds out an alternative to melodrama, that discerns the void but refuses to read it as the abyss of occulted meanings, that rather lets it stand as

the regulatory principle of aspiration" (198).

13. Baldick bluntly rejects the idea that faith in discarded folk beliefs is a necessary condition of Gothic (*The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, xiii-xiv). Instead, he says, Gothic works to place such beliefs under suspicion. This would seem to imply that a naive faith in folk beliefs should not be considered Gothic.

14. Since the paper version of this article was not available to me, I have used the online edition located at <http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m2220/1_42/63819091/p1/article.jhtml>. Page references are to the numbers assigned by this site, from 1 to 22. Issues of *Criticism* may also be accessed by subscribers to the *Literature Online* Web service at <http://lion.chadwyck.co.uk/>.

15. Judging by the names of the characters as given by Hughes, the unidentified *yomihon* is Santo Kyōden's *Sakurahime zenden akebonono zōshi* (The Complete Story of Princess Sakura). I imagine that many Japanese scholars would also be taken aback by Hughes's attempt to enlist Mishima's debut novel *Kamen no kokuhaku* (Confessions of a Mask, 1949) in the Gothic cause ("Familiarity of the Strange," 9). Hughes elsewhere rather startlingly identifies Charles Inouye (whom I first met when he was an undergraduate at Stanford) as a "Japanese critic" (1), and, very embarrassingly for an essay like this, informs the reader that Akira Kurosawa's film *Kumonosu-jō* (English title: *Throne of Blood*) is an adaptation of *MacBeth* [sic] (6), when of course it is based on *King Lear*.

16. One further indication of Hughes's psychologically based definition of Gothic comes when he says that in the "Eastern tradition" he finds "East-West similarities in the psychosexual matrix through which the Gothic expresses the struggle of the spirit and the flesh" ("Familiarity of the Strange," 8).

17. Hughes, for instance, says that Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is "a long account of Emily's struggle to maintain her self" ("Familiarity of the Strange," 16). The usual (and more precise) view is that Emily conducts a search — perhaps ironic in its outcome — for her true identity. With respect to *The Monk*, Hughes says that the villain Ambrosio "earns eternal torture in hell" (7), which may be true but is certainly not the ending the novel describes. I would also hesitate to accept without question Hughes's characterization of both Japanese and Western Gothic as defined by "totalizing metaphysical dread" (4).

18. Poulton's full-length study of Kyōka's plays, *Spirits of Another Sort* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001), which came out too late to be included in Frank's bibliography, also avoids the use of the word "Gothic" (except in a passing reference to the essay I have already discussed), perhaps because there is no such thing as modern Japanese Gothic drama. Instead Poulton relies on such terms as "supernatural," "fantasy," and "melodrama."

19. I am excluding typographical errors from the main discussion. I would also have expected Frank, a respected bibliographer, to have double-checked sources thoroughly enough to be aware that *Kanmuri Yazaemon* was published in 1892 not 1895 (this information appears in English even in my 1984 dissertation, and Inouye also gives the correct date), and that the *Izumi Kyōka shūsei* he lists under "Modern Reprints and Editions" actually comprises a total of 14 (not 10) volumes published in 1996-97 and is by no means restricted to fiction.

20. In English, the relevant biographical information is provided in the first three chapters of Inouye's *The Similitude of Blossoms*.

21. Frank says that the dramatic question posed by the narrator at the end of *Gekashitsu* is ambivalent when it is clearly meant to attach a definite moral to the story (227). Frank does not adequately describe the structure of *Kōya hijiri*, apparently attributes the duality of the mysterious woman's character to reincarnation (only a flood and the woman's change from a girl to a sexually aware adult are involved), and inaccurately calls the husband ("slug-man") of the mysterious woman "an example of her hideous work" (his condition is due to illness, and in fact the woman has always been solicitous of him).

22. The question of source-language target-language correspondence is in fact one of the stickiest problems in translation theory and, indeed, language study as a whole. Useful discussions of the issue can be found in Edwin Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories* (London: Routledge, 1993) and George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Third Edition, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998).

23. A convenient edition is W. S. Lewis, ed., *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), in the Oxford World's Classics series.

24. That the structure of *The Castle of Otranto* owes a great deal to stage drama can be seen in its five-chapter organization, an obvious parallel to a five-act play. See Charles Beecher Hogan, "The Theatre of George III," *Horace Walpole: Writer, Politician, and Connoisseur*, ed. Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven: Yale UP, 1967), 227-240; summarized in Spector, *The English Gothic*, 97.

25. This formulation is given in Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1992), 18.

26. The type of ambivalence to be found in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* will be described below. Botting (*Gothic*, 53), refers to the ambivalence of *The Castle of Otranto* as a reflection of uncertain tone and style, and calls it the novel's "cardinal sin." I am inclined to regard it as a function of plot development and take it to be the only really interesting aspect of an otherwise unremarkable work. Either way, it is certainly true, as Botting says, that the novel's later offspring share the same trait.

27. Bonamy Dobree, ed., *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998). Rictor Norton, in *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (London and New York: Leicester University Press, 1999), goes so far as to call it "perhaps the most poetic novel in the English language" (133). Robert Miles, however, in *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995), makes a sustained and persuasive argument in favor of *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) as Radcliffe's greatest work. Both critics support the claim that Radcliffe's mature novels provide even a modern reader with a high level of aesthetic pleasure.

28. There is one mystery of Udolpho that, despite its centrality, Emily apparently does not learn the answer to: that of the horrible figure behind the black veil in one of the castle's rooms. The information that it is only a wax doll is related directly to the reader by the author.

29. The phrase "sentimental domesticity" is taken from Ellis (*The History of Gothic Fiction*, 66). The interpretation of Emily's central fear is that given by Miles (*Ann Radcliffe*, 143). Ellis seems inclined to think that Emily's return is anticlimactic; Miles is especially concerned to refute the idea of Radcliffe's conservatism.

30. The most prominent attack on narrative coherence in Gothic fiction is Elizabeth R. Napier, *The Failure of Gothic: Problems of Disjunction in an Eighteenth Century Literary Form* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1987). Problems of "divisive tension" and "uncertain focus" are discussed broadly in Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1972).

31. Surely this is why Emily marries Valancourt rather than Dupont, who actually plays a more active role than Valancourt and also comports himself more like a lover, but who at the end of the novel must content himself with merely having earned Emily's respect. It also explains why Radcliffe may justifiably be considered an Enlightenment author. For a suggestive discussion of the ambivalent role of Gothic fiction in terms of the definition of the Enlightenment, see James P. Carson, "Enlightenment, Popular Culture, and Gothic Fiction," *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 255-276.

32. See Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England*, 65-80.

33. The stories of both Owaka and the other woman recall events in living memory, so the reference is not to a time in the distant past, but the Nihonbashi district had a long history as one of the most prestigious pleasure quarters in the city. The fact that the newer ghost, Owaka, appears in more concrete form than the older ghost, who is unnamed, effectively suggests the passage of time even within a relatively short period.

34. A chapter in my PhD dissertation, *Aspects of Narrative Structure in the Work of Izumi Kyōka* (Stanford University, 1984), analyzes the process in detail. I think I tend to belabor the point and would now slightly revise my conclusions, but the basic argument seems sound enough.

35. The content of Okō's last request is made explicit in the stage version of 1917. The novel forces the reader to peer between the lines.

36. Based on the sacrifices made by women in other Kyōka novels, it is even possible that Kiyoha is supporting Katsuragi financially.

37. A more realistic treatment of the attempt to find love in the pleasure quarters that is almost contemporaneous with *Nihonbashi* is Osanai Kaoru's autobiographical novel *Ōkawabata* (The Sumida River, 1912).

Errata

Sometimes one focuses so intently on catching potential mistakes by Japanese printers that more serious problems can go overlooked. Below are the corrections identified so far that should be incorporated into the paper.

[p. 3]

Original: Such a comparison, I think, would indeed serve show that "the satire of *[Keshin]* is sublimated into a fantastic vision that emphatically precludes any social context" ("The Grotesque and Gothic," 330).

Correct: Such a comparison, I think, would indeed serve to show that "the satire of *[Keshin]* is sublimated into a fantastic vision that emphatically precludes any social context" ("The Grotesque and Gothic," 330).

[p. 8]

Original: I find own dissertation appearing to say

Correct: I find my own dissertation appearing to say

[p. 12]

Original: This may perhaps be taken as one sign of the breakdown of narrative coherence that has been leveled against Gothic fiction.

Correct: This may perhaps be taken as one sign of the breakdown in narrative coherence that has been alleged to characterize Gothic fiction.

[p. 14]

Original: the interpolated story of the kept woman Owaka, who was slain at the entrance to same alley

Correct: the interpolated story of an unnamed kept woman who was slain at the entrance to same alley

[p. 20, note 15]

Original: informs the reader that Akira Kurosawa's film *Kumonosu-jō* (English title: *Throne of Blood*) is an adaptation of *MacBeth* [sic]

Correct: [Unfortunately, the embarrassment here is mostly mine, for although Hughes has erred in the accepted capitalization of the title of Shakespeare's play, I myself have conflated Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* with *Ran*, the latter of which is based on *King Lear*. *Throne of Blood* is indeed based upon *Macbeth*.]