

(Self) Indulgent Listening: Reading Cultural Difference in Yokohama, California

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I INTRODUCTION: REPOSITIONING THE READER

Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), which played an influential role in the development of American literary modernism, provided the model for Toshio Mori's *Yokohama, California* (1949), a short story cycle by a nisei who grew up in one of the many west coast Japanese American communities that were destroyed during World War II. Mori's work offers a unique, profound, and ultimately critical response to Anderson's classic, but remains little known outside the field of Asian American studies. Like much minority writing, *Yokohama, California* raises questions about the criteria governing circulation, analysis, and evaluation of literary works, but its critique is not obvious. Indeed, overt narratological and thematic similarities between the two books, coupled with Mori's acknowledgment of Anderson's influence during his formative period, support readings of *Yokohama, California* from within the paradigms of self and community that inform *Winesburg, Ohio*. However, Mori's representation of community cannot be fully understood without moving outside the cultural frameworks in which *Winesburg, Ohio* has been conceived and read. This relocation of critical perspective opens up an analysis of what *Yokohama* signifies that is not represented by *Winesburg*.¹

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Both writers depict intersubjective relationships through episodes of listening, but Anderson emphasizes alienation while Mori represents listening as a form of enabling dependency. I will argue that this contrast reflects different cultural assumptions about the nature of self and others, differences that can be articulated by reading Mori's narrative through a Japanese social practice and discourse of dependency called *amae*. Such a strategy enables a fuller analysis of Mori's pioneering work and a different perspective on *Winesburg, Ohio*. A reading of both texts as narratives of (self)indulgent listening repositions readers outside the frameworks in which *Winesburg, Ohio* as well as *Yokohama California* have been commonly understood and evaluated.²

II AMAE, "YOKOHAMA," INDULGENT LISTENING: "THE WOMAN WHO MAKES SWELL DOUGHNUTS"

My understanding of *amae* is based on Takeo Doi's *Amae no Kozo* (1971), translated into English by John Bester under the title *The Anatomy of Dependence* (1973)³. Doi asserts that (self)indulgent dependency is a defining feature of Japanese culture, and his discussion of this concept and social practice provides a way into a critical reading of Anderson's influence on Mori.

A person seeking *amae* wants to be passively loved in order to avoid the necessity of negotiating for the satisfaction of desires, the prototypical case being a newborn infant who is normally indulged as a matter of course. Adult seekers of *amae* likewise want or expect those depended upon to understand and minister to their specific needs even in the absence of explicit requests. Further, the seeking and providing of *amae* is distinguished in the Japanese language by the intransitive and transitive verbs *amaeru* and *amayakasu*, respectively. For example, children seeking reassurance or comfort *amaeru* towards others; caregivers *amayakasu* when responding appropriately. In Mori's fictional world, the practice of *amaeru* and *amayakasu* is as diverse and pervasive as it is in the Japan described by Doi. Memorable examples of tolerant indulgence in Yokohama include the flower shop owner who puts up with a young clerk's idealism, the nurseryman who allows a little boy to waste marketable flowers in an educational experiment, and the attentive patient in a dentist's chair who gives new meaning to the phrase "captive audience."

Doi's interest in *amae* grew out of his experience of cultural disloca-

tion in the United States, where he had gone to study psychiatry. Even after accounting for culture shock, homesickness, and second-language difficulties, he felt a persistent “awkwardness arising from the difference between [his] ways of thinking and feeling and those of [his] hosts” (11). Eventually Doi realized that whereas *amae* existed in Japan as an “everyday word for passive love” (21), it was not likewise named and therefore not accorded a similar status and function in American culture, and he came to feel that Americans put too much value on self-reliance. Recalling, for instance, his discomfort at being continuously required to assert and specify his preferences whenever he was invited to dinner at an American’s home, Doi observed that a Japanese host frequently assumes all responsibility for what, how, and when to serve a guest. While acknowledging that placing responsibility on a guest could be understood as a form of American politeness, Doi nonetheless felt that such “deference” was really a form of self-assertion: “What a lot of trivial choices they were obliging one to make . . . almost as though they were doing it to reassure themselves of their own freedom” (12). Similarly, he observed that a host’s “please help yourself” serves notice that “nobody else will help you” (13), whereas a practice of taking all decisions out of the guest’s hands can be construed positively as showing “sensitivity in detecting what [is] required” (13). Doi also observed that the norm of self-reliance seemed to shape American psychoanalytic practice, accounting for what he felt was the remarkable insensitivity of American doctors to “the feelings of helplessness of their patients” (21). The American psychiatrists he observed appeared to be generally unaware of or perhaps intentionally ignoring a concealed need for *amae* “that lay in the deepest parts of the patient’s mind” (21). Thus, while agreeing that therapy’s goal is to produce a functionally independent self, Doi implied that reaching this desired end required detecting and indulging a patient’s inexpressible desire for attachment.

Amae facilitates an analysis of listener–speaker interactions from the point of view of comforting and being comforted. In *Yokohama, California*, the “therapeutic” function of *amae* relationships within normal social situations is fully defined in a story called “The Woman Who Makes Swell Doughnuts,” which provides a paradigm of “indulgent listening.”⁴

The story describes the narrator’s typical visit to Mama’s house, where host and guest make small talk about the weather and grandchildren or just enjoy the silence and homemade doughnuts. The event being nar-

rated is at once thoroughly unremarkable yet extraordinarily significant. The narrator experiences an almost mystical rejuvenation—

When I sit with her I do not need to ask deep questions, I do not need to know Plato or The Sacred Books of the East or dancing. I do not need to be on guard. But I am on guard and foot-loose because the room is alive—⁵

which is simultaneously demystified and embedded in material reality—

[H]er little room, her little circle, is a depot, a pause for the weary traveler, but outside, outside of her little world there is dissonance, hugeness of another kind, and the travel to do. So she has her little house, she bakes the grandest doughnuts, and inside of her she houses a little depot. (25)

The heart of this story is one particular woman's attentive, enabling receptivity to one particular guest. It is a kind of sustenance that usually takes totally unremarkable forms, but that is nonetheless supremely important to our day-to-day well being. The providing, receiving, and savoring of such sustenance are symbolically encapsulated in the doughnuts, while the narrator of this story, as I will argue later, circulates throughout Yokohama providing the same kind of sustenance to others through sympathetic listening.

If "Swell Doughnuts" can correctly be read as a paradigm of indulgent listening, what this paradigm emphasizes is the embodied, inter-subjective relationship without which indulgent listening cannot exist:

Instead I take today to talk of her and her wonderful doughnuts when the earth is something to her, when the people from all parts of the earth may drop in and taste the flavor, her flavor, which is everyone's and all flavor; talk to her, sit with her, and also taste the silence of her room and the silence that is herself; and finally go away to hope and keep alive what is alive in her, on earth and in men, expressly myself. (25)

By asserting that Mama's "flavor" is "everyone's and all flavor," Mori appears to celebrate the woman's universality, but the semantic flow of this one-sentence conclusion to the story underscores a connection between two particular individuals. Not only is "her" repeated nine times, but a repeated reference to the entire global population and the earth itself comes to rest in the one particular guest who is actually present. Further, readers familiar with Asian American history will have already situated the story on Seventh Street in Oakland, California in the years prior to World War II. Thus the real focus of the passage is an exchange between two particular individuals who are specified and sit-

uated on many levels: geographically, historically, racially, culturally, and by age and gender. The phrase “everyone’s and all flavor” thus signifies not “universality” but all of the embodied particularities of every and any individual’s life. The passage implies that a person’s particular “flavor,” or subjectivity, cannot be apprehended except through concrete acts of embodied, intersubjective communication. There is no substitute for face-to-face conversation.⁶

III *YOKOHAMA*: CIRCUIT OF COMMUNICATION

The kind of close encounter that comprises the entire narrative of “Swell Doughnuts” recurs throughout *Yokohama, California*. Nearly every story is, like “Swell Doughnuts,” a close-up of one particular indulgent relationship between two people, often the narrator and one of his acquaintances. Technically, it is possible that each story is told by a different narrator, but because all of these possible narrators exist solely through function (witnesses to acts of indulgence who narrate these acts for the reader) and are never named, described, or identified in other ways (such as changes in rhetorical style or voice), we can speak of a single “typical” narrator without invalidating the all-important fact of each narrator’s embodied particularity. This “typical” narrator, whom I call “Mori’s narrator,” embodies the creation and maintenance of a circuit of communication that simultaneously anchors individual characters to the community while creating for the reader a sense of *Yokohama* as a communal entity. Mori’s narrator is both a character and the author’s device; he interacts with characters while revealing, explaining, and judging them for the reader.

Indulgence appears in every story in *Yokohama, California*, but is perfectly enacted only in the first story, “Swell Doughnuts.”⁷ This is because the recipient of indulgence in “Swell Doughnuts” is Mori’s narrator, who normally plays the role of listener or dispenser of indulgence. This story is the only instance where the reader of *Yokohama, California* hears an “expert’s” report on indulgent behavior while seeing it performed. However, although the narrator’s perfect (self)indulgent relationship with Mama is only imperfectly replicated in other stories, these imperfect acts of (self)indulgence nonetheless comprise a therapeutic circuit of communication. When the narrator receives guests at his house or visits them at their homes, workplaces, or other settings, the circuit of communication he thus literally constructs is one that absorbs stress, pro-

vides reassurance, and ministers in various other ways to the emotional needs of Yokohama's inhabitants. They, in turn, having been enabled to express their needs before a receptive audience, achieve some measure of the rejuvenation experienced by the narrator at Mama's house. Thus, the narrator's strange "prediction" about Mama's immortality makes sense—"I think she will grow, and her hot doughnuts just out of the oil will grow with softness and touch" (25)—since he is confirming the value of a social practice and its perpetuation through his own indulgent listening.

I turn now to "The Eggs of the World" to show how the paradigm of indulgent listening is actually played out in the fictional world of Yokohama. The indulgence-seeker featured in this story is Sessue Matoi, an unemployed alcoholic who believes he has broken the "shell" of social conformity and is no longer trapped in life as a stagnating "egg." He is Mama's antipode, portrayed as an uninvited guest rather than rooted in his own dwelling. Matoi's need for fellowship can somehow only be expressed through provocation, and when his persistent talk about rotting eggs creates tension, Hasegawa, his host, tries to change the subject by producing an especially fine *sake* and asking for Matoi's assessment. But instead of the expected compliment, Matoi answers with a riddle: "All brands are the same to me, all flavors match my flavor. When I drink I am drinking my flavor" (118). Hasegawa presses Matoi again for an opinion but the answer is the same: "When you wish to taste the flavor of sake which I drank then you must drink the flavor which I have been spouting all evening" (120). Once again, Hasegawa cannot respond as Matoi desires. Since Hasegawa is preoccupied with being a proper host and thus with his own expression of self, he is not attuned to Matoi's emotional needs or the loneliness that brought him to the house as an uninvited guest.

When hints and riddles prove ineffective, Matoi finally pleads his case directly in a last ditch effort to win indulgence:

"I cannot go a day without drinking because when I drink I am really going outward, not exactly drinking but expressing myself outwardly, talking very much and saying little, sadly and pathetically. . . . Think of me as the mess I am. I am a mess. Then laugh very hard, keep laughing very hard. Say, oh what an egg he has opened up! Look at the shells, look at the drunk without a bottle." (119)

Even after this outburst, however, Hasegawa cannot risk abandoning the

safety of politeness. He therefore withholds what Matoi truly seeks: affirmation and acceptance of his actual, messy existence.

Yet this is not a story of failed hospitality. Hasegawa keeps his uninvited guest supplied with liquor although it is common knowledge that he “did not tolerate drinking bouts” (113). He absorbs Matoi’s provocation despite being unable to enjoy or explain it. Thus, however flawed Hasegawa’s listening is from Matoi’s point of view, it nonetheless enables Matoi to be part of a community he both repudiates and needs. Intelligent, humorous, and hungry for company, Matoi is at the same time emotionally weak and alienated from people by his critical perception of their social posturing. Yet however repellent Matoi’s manner of socializing, at least one person in Yokohama indulges him.

IV *WINESBURG: COMMUNICATION SHORT-CIRCUITED*

Matoi’s counterparts in Winesburg cannot presume emotional dependence on others. Indulgent listening is unavailable to them. Anderson’s unifying signification of the self’s relationship to community is not a woman who makes swell doughnuts but a “grotesque,” a condition of psychological deformity that represents the wasting and distortion of human lives through the obstruction of a need for emotional, spiritual, and creative expression. In Winesburg, deterioration into grotesqueness always revolves around a failure to speak to and be heard by other people.

Criticism of *Winesburg, Ohio* offers various explanations for the transformation of normality into grotesqueness. Thomas Yingling, for example, situates the narrative in the rise of industrial capitalism and its concomitant destruction of “an oral culture of proximity” in pre-industrial communities like Winesburg.⁸ Acute forms of loneliness and alienation in Winesburg therefore manifest the breaking down of a more intimate social order that existed before the rise of modern urban and suburban landscapes, where isolation becomes a normal rather than “grotesque” social condition. Feminist readings, like Sally Adair Rigsbee’s, interpret “grotesqueness” as a product of gendered social identities. Drawing upon Jean Baker Miller’s *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (1976), Rigsbee argues that *Winesburg, Ohio* endeavors to recuperate and valorize “qualities associated with the feminine—vulnerability, tenderness, and the need for intimacy.”⁹ Cultural explanations, like John Updike’s, view the sexual and psychological repression of Winesburg as a legacy

of Protestant culture. Summarizing the grotesque as a “bundle of stalled impulses and frozen grievances,” Updike situates Winesburg among the “Protestant villages of America,” where “[t]here is something perilous and maddening in the accommodations such communities extend to human aspiration and appetite.”¹⁰ Each of these explanations is indispensable to a full understanding of *Winesburg, Ohio*, but all of them are limited by the cultural boundaries of the text. Whether it is capitalism, gender, or culture that the critic uses to interpret *Winesburg, Ohio*, white mainstream culture remains the assumed framework within which explanations are sought. Re-reading *Winesburg, Ohio* through *Yokohama, California* involves a relocation of critical perspective to a point outside of white hegemonic frameworks. Thus, rather than explaining “grotesqueness” within western paradigms, I use the practice and theory of Japanese *amae* to link what is depicted in “Yokohama” to what is unrepresented in “Winesburg.”

The absence of indulgent listening in Winesburg is marked by the presence of grotesque speaking. Wing Biddlebaum, Wash Williams, Enoch Robinson, and Joe Welling either erupt into terrified, terrifying speech only once or are taken for crazy babblers. Those who talk for a living—Kate Swift the teacher and the Reverend Curtis Hartman—find that their very vocations entrap them in a sense of alienation. The sole case of listening that seems to promise therapeutic results—when Elizabeth Willard reveals her anguish to Doctor Reefy—ends prematurely out of the couple’s mutual terror of being overheard and exposed as lovers.

The relationship between the presence or absence of indulgent listening, and whether speaking becomes therapeutic or dysfunctional, becomes clear when certain pairs of stories are cross-examined. Let me begin with Mori’s “The Seventh Street Philosopher” and Anderson’s “The Philosopher.”

Anderson’s story concerns the shabby Doctor Parcival who is obsessed with talking to George Willard about his past. He tries to create a personal history to replace the disappointing life he actually lives, but his fragmented stories contain nothing remarkable and in fact only serve to reveal the poverty of a childhood that continues to limit his imagination of a better life. George feels hounded by the needy Doctor, whose exaggerated sense of victimization leads him to compare his life to Christ’s crucifixion. The story ends with Doctor Parcival still in pursuit of a listener, but neither George nor the narrator responds to his final plea—“You must pay attention to me.”¹¹ By terminating abruptly with

these words, the story suggests that Doctor Parcival's desire for indulgent listening will not, cannot, or should not be satisfied.

Yokohama's "philosopher" is a bachelor launderer who lives on the fringes of town, venturing in whenever the urge to speak his mind takes hold. Lacking Matoi's sharp tongue, Tsunoda is easily ignored and ridiculed by most people, but he is often accommodated at the narrator's home until the wee hours of the morning. In the most dramatic performance of his life, Tsunoda lectures to an audience of nine adults and two babies in nothing less than the town hall. Tsunoda's passionate and utterly incoherent speech is understood by the narrator as a form of "broadcasting to the world in general the apology of being alive" (28), which in fact is what every grotesque in *Winesburg* aspires and fails to do because receptive listeners in the flesh are hard to find. *Winesburg's* grotesques are fully heard and understood only by the omniscient narrator, but in *Yokohama* the one who fully perceives someone's plight is also the one who receives his or her story in person.

Anderson's "Loneliness" and Mori's "Akira Yano" comprise another pair of stories centered on the absence or presence of indulgent listening. Anderson's story concerns a failed artist, Enoch Robinson, who is moved for the first and only time in his life to try to explain the events that led to his self-destruction as a painter. When Enoch is overcome by anguish midway and seems unable to continue telling the story, George changes from a self-effacing, gentle listener to an aggressive, demanding information-seeker, pushing the agonized man to continue and leaving abruptly without a word of comfort or parting as soon as the story ends.

In Mori's "Akira Yano," the narrator initiates a relationship with Akira Yano when he notices the latter reading a copy of *Winesburg, Ohio*. This allusion creates a link between Mori's narrator and Mori himself, and the resulting suggestion that the narrator is a writer or understands the ambitions of a writer underscores the importance of his conscious decision to play the role of reader and listener only to another aspiring artist: "Each time we met it was the same. He would talk about prose. And I would sit and listen to everything he said and knew about prose" (66). The narrator is a committed listener even though he knows Yano's writing is awful, and in contrast to George's abandonment of Enoch, remains indulgent even beyond the conclusion of both the relationship and the story: "Perhaps I will hear from him again real soon. I don't know. Anyway, it is several years since he wrote to me about having signed up

with a major book publishing company in New York” (70). Akira Yano may eventually have suffered the same degree of isolation as Enoch Robinson, but if so it happens beyond the borders of his hometown and outside the framework of available indulgent listening. The narrator’s final gesture—wondering whether he will hear again from Yano, and thus keeping the lines of communication open—embodies the antithesis of the “short circuit” in Winesburg.

V “TOSHIO MORI” AND “LIL’ YOKOHAMA”: SELF, COMMUNITY, AND THE ART OF INDULGENCE

George Willard and Mori’s narrator are the primary listeners in Winesburg and Yokohama, respectively, and in both cases their listening behaviors are connected to artistic ambition. In this final section, I examine the implications of indulgent listening for the practice of art and the relationship between artist and community.

Theoretically, George’s episodes of listening may be understood as an apprenticeship in *amayakasu*, a learning how to indulge another’s speaking and through such accommodation developing the sensibilities that will ground artistic production. But at the same time, George’s very desire to be a writer, or a speaker himself, interferes with his ability to use episodes of listening for the cultivation of indulgence. As illustrated by his interactions with Doctor Parcival and Enoch Robinson, George’s interest in people as future subjects of his writing seems to prevent him from being able to focus on their present existence as needy speakers. This aspect of George’s behavior is more pronounced in the book’s concluding stories, which affirm his ambition to become a writer and the necessity of separating from others to make that ambition a reality.

In the last two stories, George finally reaches an understanding with Helen, the banker’s daughter, whose acceptance of George as her sweetheart serves to bless his departure from Winesburg. In addition, shortly before George’s climactic meeting with Helen, his only enduring tie to Winesburg is broken by the death of his mother. The last image in the book is of George in the train, remembering to glance out the window only after Winesburg is no longer visible. In other words, the affirmation of George’s artistic ambitions through a representation of connectedness to the two most important individuals in his life at the same time requires George to disconnect himself not only from them but his entire

community. The association of separation with artistic endeavor characterizes George and Helen's rendezvous, the climactic moment of *Winesburg, Ohio*:

The presence of Helen renewed and refreshed him. It was as though her woman's hand was assisting him to make some minute readjustment of the machinery of his life. He began to think of the people in the town where he had always lived with something like reverence. He had reverence for Helen. He wanted to love and be loved by her, but he did not want at that moment to be confused by her womanhood. . . . With all his strength he tried to hold and to understand the mood that had come upon him. In that high place in the darkness the two oddly sensitive human atoms held each other tightly and waited. In the mind of each was the same thought. "I have come to this lonely place and here is this other," was the substance of the thing felt. (135)

The moment of intense communion ostensibly being narrated here is undercut by a sense of disjunction in the figure of "two atoms" embracing. More tellingly, George resists becoming involved with Helen's "womanhood," backing off from the commitments that an actual relationship with a particular woman would entail. George's resistance is inconsistent with the fact that his changed view of Winesburg has come about precisely through Helen's receptivity, yet it is not inconsistent with his self-indulgent listening.

Similarly, George's newly acquired "reverence" for Winesburg's inhabitants emerges at precisely that moment when he is as far away from them as possible without actually leaving town. This physical distance is carefully detailed in the description of the deserted place George and Helen have chosen for their moment of communion: a "decayed" grand-stand at the far edge of the fair ground, itself located on top of the "hill rising out of the valley of Wine Creek" that commands a panoramic view of the town (134). Thus, although George is explicitly presented as the one character able to penetrate the social isolation of Winesburg's grotesques and form meaningful, intimate relationships with others, he can be read as another embodiment of social isolation wherein his departure represents rather than releases him from the condition of alienation defining Winesburg.

This critical perspective on George's listening behaviors and development as an artist can also be arrived at via the concept of "embodied" knowing through which some feminist philosophers critique the foundational concept of "self" in traditional western philosophy. Virginia

Held, for instance, summarizes the difference between a traditional “self” and a feminist reformulation of “self” thus:

The region of “particular others” is a distinct domain, where what can be seen to be artificial and problematic are the very egoistic “self” and the universal “all others” of standard moral theory. In the domain of particular others, the self is already constituted to an important degree by relations with others, and these relations may be much more salient and significant than the interests of any individual self in isolation. The “others” in the picture, however, are not the “all others,” or “everyone,” of traditional moral theory; they are not what a universal point of view or a view from nowhere could provide. They are, characteristically, actual flesh-and-blood other human beings for whom we have actual feelings and with whom we have real ties.¹²

George’s separation from home and hometown, which concludes *Winesburg, Ohio*, follows the traditional paradigm of self-development described by Held:

The young man’s mind was carried away by his growing passion for dreams. . . . With the recollection of little things occupying his mind he closed his eyes and leaned back in the car seat. He stayed that way for a long time and when he aroused himself and again looked out of the car window the town of Winesburg had disappeared and his life there had become but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood. (247)

As noted earlier, Thomas Yingling reads *Winesburg, Ohio* as a reflection of the social costs of industrial capitalism. In Yingling’s analysis, the book’s concluding passage pronounces the loss of George’s capacity to mediate between the inhabitants of Winesburg, contrary to the portrait of George that has been developed all along. By implication, George’s departure from Winesburg also means the demise of pre-industrial communities like Winesburg, where face-to-face interaction provided the structural foundation of communal identity (125).

Mori seems to have consciously rejected the route taken by George because the writer-narrator in *Yokohama, California* is rooted in a community and his writing and listening skills are realized only within and through a domain of particular others. Mori’s views on the relationship between self and others, including the self as artist, are revealed through “Toshio Mori” and “Lil’ Yokohama,” stories whose titles invite comparison by hinting at some kind of relationship between the individual and community.

By naming the main character of “Toshio Mori” Teruo, Mori simul-

taneously reveals and masks his position as a writer. Teruo is the only *amae* seeker without a listener in *Yokohama, California*, and through him Mori offers a veiled yet candid look at his own artistic achievement. The story narrates an acute bout of loneliness which propels Teruo toward the home of a particular female friend whom he believes is the only one capable of understanding his mood. (The situation is similar to George Willard seeking Helen's company in "Sophistication.") But Teruo's friend is already hosting two other male guests, and thus begins a fruitless search for an alternative listener. Although Teruo's occupation is not identified, the description of his living arrangements together with biographical information about Mori support a reading of Teruo as the author's self-representation. However, the title alone is enough to suggest that Teruo's restless evening wandering the streets of Oakland stems from a lapse of faith in his chosen path as a writer and an attempt to find a sympathetic listener to alleviate the anxiety. As "Toshio Mori," Teruo knows the pain of being unable to make the leap from desire to achievement.¹³ On this night, all he seeks is someone like the narrators of "Akira Yano" or "The Seventh Street Philosopher" who will acknowledge his need to speak and his existence as a writer. But after several failed attempts to find sympathy, Teruo/Toshio must return home and minister to himself. All he can do is wait for anxiety to subside, knowing that it will not disappear so easily: "He was aware that the night was almost over, that tonight was almost through with him. But he knew he was not through with the state of his feeling" (44-45).

The story itself, however—"Toshio Mori"—can be read as an antidote to the frustrated search for indulgence being narrated. On one level, it is Toshio Mori's confession and complaint, an unabashed writer's act of self-indulgence to sustain himself in the same way other characters in *Yokohama, California* are sustained by acts of indulgence. In this sense, "Toshio Mori" actually narrates a failure in Yokohama's circuit of communication, but a failure that only underscores the value of indulgent listening. On another level, however, this "failure" transfers a plot and ethics of listening from within the narrative proper to the world inhabited by the reader. Through a self-representation called "Toshio Mori," the author explicitly seeks the reader's indulgence; the story is a request to hear him out and affirm his existence. If the reader understands that the point of the story is to bear witness to Teruo/Toshio's pain and accept him as he is, then a key to understanding the whole of *Yokohama, California* materializes. For the reader's indulgent listening is the same

kind of thing that transpires in other stories between characters or between narrators and characters. The reader's indulgent listening in "Toshio Mori" is thus equivalent to hearing what the book says about the construction of community in places like "Yokohama."

"Lil' Yokohama" can be understood as "Toshio Mori"'s dramatic and rhetorical complement, a "daylight" affirmation of the collective existence of Yokohama as a domain of particular others who are bound together by relationships of accommodation.¹⁴ The narrator of "Lil' Yokohama" speaks with an implied omniscient perspective but clearly places himself in the opening sentence among the "characters" he identifies. His narrative task, which is compared to that of a teacher calling roll, is to assert that a town peopled mostly by residents bearing names like Mori, Matoi, and Tsunoda is as "natural" a part of the American scene as the weather. As the opening passage declares, "In Lil' Yokohama, as the youngsters call our community, we have twenty-four hours every day . . . and morning, noon, and night roll on regularly just as in Boston, Cincinnati, Birmingham, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Emeryville. . . . And when the people are sometimes missing from Lil' Yokohama's roll, perhaps forever, it is another matter; but the news belongs here just as does the weather" (71).

Further, Yokohama's aliveness is asserted not only through an assumption of its identity as a "normal" American place, but through an assertion of its health as a community where various kinds of embodied difference are accommodated. The concluding passage alludes to the same generation gap that informs Anderson's narrative of Winesburg as one main cause of social estrangement, but here age differences support a description of social interconnectedness:

And today which is every day the sun is out again. The housewives sit on the porch and the old men sit in the shade and read the papers. Across the yard a radio goes full blast with Benny Goodman's band. The children come back from Lincoln Grammar School. In a little while the older ones will be returning from Tech High and McClymonds High. Young boys and young girls will go down the street together. The old folks from the porches and the windows will watch them go by and shake their heads and smile.

The day is here and is Lil' Yokohama's day. (76)

Highly rhetorical titles like "Toshio Mori" and "Lil' Yokohama" suggest what is in fact borne out by the narrative strategies and contents of these two stories—that together, they enunciate and foreground a vision of

community operating throughout the text. This vision of community, which encompasses the artist's own social relationships as well as the act of creating art, questions hegemonic cultural assumptions about the development of "self" that ground the narrative of *Winesburg, Ohio*, especially the notion that maturity and creativity require detachment from the specific, often messy needs of family, kin, neighbors, acquaintances, and other individual members of one's larger community.

VI CONCLUSION: HER FLAVOR, EVERYONE'S AND ALL FLAVOR— DOUGHNUTS AND SUKIYAKI

The final scene of *Yokohama, California* is marked by the distinctive "flavor" of life in a prewar Japanese American community. Like Mama's doughnuts, Hatsuye's sukiyaki dinner represents both producer and product of Yokohama's ethic of indulgence:

Hatsuye is back in the kitchen watching over a steaming pan of rice, cutting sukiyaki meat for a sukiyaki, and washing the leek and cutting them in small pieces. This sort of stuff is going on every minute, every hour, every day in the house and Hatsuye is still going strong. While she is moving about day in and day out it is not whether she is brave and courageous or tragic and pathetic that is important about her life, but it is her day that is present and the day that is tomorrow which is her day and which will not be. (166)

Hatsuye, as the narrator puts it bluntly, is "ugly, the ugliest young girl you ever saw" (162). Hatsuye will probably remain in Yokohama as a single woman keeping house for her parents, but far from facing a life of diminishment like the lonely unmarried women of *Winesburg*, Hatsuye is thoroughly alive. Indulging neither in self pity nor self delusion, she is sustained by a sense of membership in the community: "She knows she is no beauty but she is hopeful that she is not all ugliness to others" (165). She performs unvarying domestic labor with cheerful competence, a stance that is open to criticism but that also invests such necessary work with the value and respect it is seldom accorded. The narrator sums up his regard for Hatsuye by calling her a "swell homemaker," thereby connecting her to the book's other dedicated and "alive" (165) homemaker whose material and emotional sustenance introduces the reader to Yokohama.

A fuller analysis of the gendered indulgence embodied by housework, as well as a contextualization of housework within the portrayal of occu-

pations and working central to both *Winesburg, Ohio* and *Yokohama, California*, unfortunately lie outside the focus of this paper, but I dwell on Hatsuye because she indicates Mori's consciousness of the differences between "Yokohama" and "Winesburg." Through the passage quoted earlier, we take leave of Yokohama from the kitchen where Hatsuye presides, energetic and committed, producing and asserting her existence through yet another specific, routine chore that is somehow "alive and enormous" (165). Hatsuye's various labors remind us that listening is only one of many specific kinds of indulgent work, all of which are necessary to feed or sustain each individual in a community and therefore the life of the community itself.

Whereas in Winesburg only George (and through him Helen) has a future and all others are trapped in the past, the deliberately inverted title of Hatsuye's story—"Tomorrow and Today"—implies connectedness and equivalence between the future and the present. A combined "tomorrow and today" fills the empty space between George's unrealized future and the grotesques' hopeless present, for it is not a disembodied or generalized conception of potential but "future" pluralized and realized continuously in the present through embodied social relationships and rootedness within a particular community. And by ending with a candid appraisal of Hatsuye's limitations—her tomorrow "which will not be"—the narrator underscores the social necessity of indulgence that has been exemplified by his own listening practice.

NOTES

¹ For their indulgent reading of earlier versions of this paper, I thank Candace Fujikane, Mark Heberle, David Mayer, Stephen Murphy-Shigematsu, George Uba, Sauling Wong, and Amy Ling (in memoriam). For help with interpreting the discourse and practice of *amae* in present-day Japan, I am grateful to Hideo Masuda and Takao Sato.

² Peter Horikoshi, "Interview with Toshio Mori," in *Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America*, ed. Emma Gee (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, UCLA, 1976), 472–79; Lawson Fusao Inada, "Standing on Seventh Street," in Toshio Mori, *Yokohama, California* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985), v–xxvii; Elaine H. Kim, *Asian American Literature: An Introduction to the Writings and their Social Context* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982); David R. Mayer, "Toshio Mori and Loneliness," *Nanzan Review of American Studies* 15 (1993): 20–32; David R. Mayer, "Toshio Mori: Chronicler of Japanese-American Oakland," in *Door Stoops and Windowsills: Perspectives on the American Neighborhood Novel* (Nagoya: Nanzan University, 1992), 55–77; David Palumbo-Liu, "Universalisms and Minority Culture,"

Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies 7.1 (1995): 188–208; Sau-ling Cynthia Wong, *Reading Asian American Literature: From Necessity to Extravagance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and Hisaye Yamamoto, “Introduction,” in Toshio Mori, *The Chauvinist and Other Stories* (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, UCLA, 1979), 1–14. Subsequent references to these works are cited in the text. Except for Inada and Mayer (“Toshio Mori and Loneliness”), there is little discussion in Asian American literary criticism regarding Mori’s relationship to Anderson or the formal integrity of *Yokohama, California* as one narrative rather than a collection of stories. I have thus far been unable to locate Dorothy Ritsuko McDonald’s unpublished essay, “Toshio Mori: *Yokohama, California* and Sherwood Anderson,” apparently written in 1976 and cited in Yamamoto (8).

³ Takeo Doi, *The Anatomy of Dependence*, trans. John Bester (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1973). Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text.

⁴ Dorinne K. Kondo, in *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1990), draws connections between Doi’s analysis of *amae* and the *uchi / soto*, or “inside / outside” concept which also permeates Japanese social organization and paradigms of self. *Amaeru* and *amayakasu* represent indulgence within the most intimate “inner” circle of relationships (home, family), while another analogous pair of behaviors, *tanomu* (requesting) and *enryo* (holding back), represent indulgence in the sphere of less intimate relationships made up of coworkers, acquaintances, and people in the public realm whose services are desired. Thus, Kondo situates *amae* within a larger framework she charts as follows (150):

	Expression of Self	Withholding of self
<i>Uchi</i>	<i>Amaeru</i>	<i>Amayakasu</i>
<i>Soto</i>	<i>Tanomou</i>	<i>Enryo</i>

Listening in *Yokohama, California* is an *uchi* relationship; “Yokohama” is a realm of insiders who assume and presume upon their membership within the same group. Whereas *uchi / soto* distinctions in Japanese society are not centered on one social axis, such as class, race, or gender, the fact that Mori represents “Yokohama” as functionally “one” group reveals the centrality of race in the lives of Japanese Americans.

⁵ Toshio Mori, *Yokohama, California*, Introd. Lawson Fusao Inada (Caxton, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1949; repr. Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1985), 24. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text.

⁶ Critics have placed special emphasis on “Swell Doughnuts.” Wong reads it as a vision of “right eating,” the salient feature of the ideal nurturing community in Asian American literature which is defined against the far more numerous literary representations of eating associated with deprivation and suffering (*Reading Asian American Literature*, 71, 74–75). For Inada, “Swell Doughnuts” encapsulates an extraordinary representation of healthy, integrated Japanese American subjectivity, something which he and other writers who grew up in the shadow of a repressed history of internment have struggled to articulate and assert (“Standing on Seventh Street”).

⁷ According to Inada, “Swell Doughnuts” was the lead story in the manuscript accepted by Caxton in 1941 and slated for publication in 1942, but when *Yokohama, California* finally appeared in 1949, two stories which Mori had written while interned at Topaz Relocation Center had been added, one of which became the new lead. See “Standing on Seventh Street” for a fuller analysis of the publisher’s racially motivated changes.

⁸ Thomas Yingling, “Winesburg, Ohio and the End of Collective Experience,” in *New Essays on Winesburg, Ohio*, ed. John W. Crowley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 125. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text.

⁹ Sally Adair Rigsbee, “The Feminine in *Winesburg, Ohio*,” in *Winesburg, Ohio: An*

Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism, ed. Charles E. Modlin and Ray Lewis White (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 188.

¹⁰ John Updike, "Twisted Apples," in *Winesburg, Ohio: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Charles E. Modlin and Ray Lewis White (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 193.

¹¹ . Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio: Text and Criticism*, ed. John H. Ferres (New York: Penguin, 1977), 56. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text.

¹² Virginia Held, "Feminist Reconceptualizations in Ethics," in *Philosophy in a Feminist Voice: Critiques and Reconstructions*, ed. Janet A. Kourany (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 105.

¹³ According to Hisaye Yamamoto, Mori's unpublished work includes several hundred short stories and five novels. He told her he had collected enough rejection slips to "paper a room" ("Introduction," 4, 8).

¹⁴ Mayer also draws on psychology (mainly Erik Erikson) to explain the difference between the relative failure of lonely characters in Carson McCuller's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *Winesburg, Ohio* compared to the considerable number of adjusted or "accommodated" lonely people in *Yokohama, California* ("Toshio Mori and Loneliness," 25). Although we reach the same conclusion about the existence of "accommodation" in Mori's work, my discussion focuses on the "how" of accommodation and its critique of hegemonic psychological and philosophical paradigms of identity.