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THE COMPATIBILITY OF CONTAINMENT AND AUTONOMY
IN LYDIA MINATOYA'S *THE STRANGENESS OF BEAUTY*

by

Rachel Jeppsen Lewis

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of English

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Rachel Jeppsen Lewis in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

THE COMPATIBILITY OF CONTAINMENT AND AUTONOMY

IN LYDIA MINATOYA'S *THE STRANGENESS OF BEAUTY*

Rachel Jeppsen Lewis

Department of English

Master of Arts

Subaltern studies has overwhelmingly privileged subaltern resistance as a means for the subaltern to attain autonomy. While the group's project has made breakthroughs in rewriting Indian subaltern history, their emphasis on resistance to oppression has also essentialized what it means to create autonomy. A 1999 novel, Lydia Minatoya's *The Strangeness of Beauty*, challenges this essentialist view by portraying alternative behaviors that indicate autonomy. The novel is set in 1920s Japan when transnational excitement and anxiety provided opportunities for one subaltern group, Japanese women, to gain autonomy. While some feminist movements in Japan substantiate the notion that autonomy must be gained through rebellion, *The Strangeness of Beauty* suggests that this

is merely one possible method for gaining autonomy—and an undesirable method at that. The relationships among three women—a mother, daughter, and granddaughter—emphasize that both the elite and subaltern can do more than just oppress or rebel to express autonomy. Rather than responding to the other antagonistically, the characters in *The Strangeness of Beauty* indicate that autonomy can best be reached through beneficent acts toward the other. I hope to demonstrate that these beneficent acts also foster autonomy. Because resistance and beneficence widen the spectrum of behaviors that foster autonomy, subaltern studies must identify new spheres of autonomy and enact a non-essentializing beneficence in their methodology.

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INTRODUCTION

Westernization and Womanhood in 1920s Japan

After two centuries of isolation, and under duress, Japan opened its ports to the West in the mid-1850s. Western products and ideas flooded the island nation, forcing the Japanese to reconcile their ways with Western ways. Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), “the most popular and widely read intellectual of the Meiji period” (Varley 242), denounced many Japanese traditions while staunchly advocating Westernization. He wrote this scathing critique of Japanese traditions:

If we compare the knowledge of the Japanese and Westerners, in letter, in techniques, in commerce, or in industry, from the largest to the smallest matter . . . there is not one thing in which we excel. . . . Outside of the most stupid person in the world, no one would say that our learning and business is on par with those of the Western countries. Who would compare our carts with their locomotives, or our swords with their pistols? We speak of yin and yang and the five elements; they have discovered 60 elements. . . . We think we dwell on an immovable plain; they know that the earth is round and moves. We think that our country is the most sacred, divine land; they travel about the world opening lands and establishing countries. . . . In Japan’s present condition, there is nothing in which we may take pride vis-à-vis the West. All that Japan has to be proud of . . . is its scenery. (qtd. in Varley 244, ellipses in original)

Fukuzawa’s anxiety and endorsement of Westernization spread throughout Japan and this prescribed need to catch up with the West shaped Japanese government, military,

education, religion, business, and culture—especially after the Meiji Restoration (1868) excised the Tokugawa Shogunate. Every aspect of Japanese life was affected. For example, when the Japanese military discovered that Western armies had music bands, they “quickly established a new, enduring tradition of Western-style military music” in 1871 (Gordon 108). The Japanese military also had its men cut their topknots, arguing that the traditional male hairstyle was “primitive and unbecoming to the citizens of a modern Japan” (Varley 240). Similarly, Japan shifted its views on religion. The previously persecuted Japanese Christians¹ now enjoyed limited religious freedom² rather than enduring oppression that the anti-Christian laws of the Tokugawa era (1600-1868) enforced.

Other changes swept into the smaller aspects of Japanese tradition. Architectural transformations began to rely less on wood and more on Western materials such as brick and glass (241);³ Japanese literature began experimenting with romanticism and naturalism (Gordon 159); and Japanese cuisine, which traditionally excluded red meat, began promoting beef dishes (Varley 241).⁴ The Westernization of these and other practices demanded that the Japanese reassess their identities as individuals, their

¹ Or “hidden Christians” [*kakure kirishitan*] that were persecuted, killed, or forced into hiding during the Tokugawa era.

² This religious freedom was guaranteed insofar as it remained, as the 1889 constitution declared, “within the limits not prejudicial to peace and not antagonistic to duties as citizens” (qtd. in Gordon 110).

³ The motive behind making this change (and others) was *not* solely to catch up with the West. This change had a practical basis, for buildings made of wood carried a constant danger of fire. Varley notes, “In 1874, after a fire that gutted the Ginza area of central Tokyo, the government took the opportunity to order the construction of a row of some three hundred two-story brick buildings for the use of merchants on this bustling thoroughfare. [. . .] The government hoped that the Ginza would serve as a model to encourage others to build these new fireproofed buildings” (242).

⁴ The author Kanagaki Robun (1829-1894) wrote, in one of his “witty books,” “we should be grateful that people like ourselves can now eat beef, thanks to the fact that Japan is steadily becoming a truly civilized country” (qtd. in Varley 241).

identities as part of Japanese heritage, and their identities as part of an exciting albeit daunting intercultural world.

However, while modernization seemed to touch every facet of Japanese life, it also flew beyond the grasp of Japanese women who chased it. Japanese men were transforming from samurai to salarymen [*sarariiman*]⁵—replacing their traditional garb with Western suits—but Japanese women were still donning their kimono and obi. The government’s educational reforms reflected this selective, gendered modernization. Even though the Fundamental Code of Education (1872) stated that both boys and girls should have equal access to education, the number of girls attending elementary schools remained far below the number of boys attending. And girls’ public education stopped after elementary school once the Education Act of 1880 “formally excluded girls from public middle schools” (de Bary 115).⁶ The division between men’s and women’s educations grew wider after elementary school—not simply because of women’s exclusion from higher education, but because men and women were expected to pursue different ends as adults. De Bary notes, “The official view persisted that beyond primary schooling, the purpose of female education was training women to be ‘good wives and wise mothers [*ryōsai kenbo*],’ not independent professionals” (115).⁷ Even in elementary

⁵ The term, *sarariiman*, represents the Japanese pronunciation of “salary man,” signifying a businessman. It first appeared in the 1910’s cartoon, “salary-man heaven” and “salary-man hell.” As the term became more commonly used, it “coexisted with numerous other expressions such as ‘intellectual class,’ ‘new middle class,’ the more colloquial ‘brain worker,’ and the familiar ‘lunch-box class’” (Gordon 155)—all expressing a new identity for the Japanese man. But by the end of the 1920s, *sarariiman* “became the most common label for a city-dwelling man of the middle class” (155).

⁶ While the government saw little need to extend women’s education beyond elementary school, others found it a necessity and provided such opportunities. The private sector, “where Christian missionary schools and the efforts of individual promoters [. . .] helped fill the void” (de Bary 115).

⁷ The phrase “good wives and wise mothers” cropped up in magazines and newspapers until it became the state’s slogan for “the official female role model” in the 1890s (Wöhr 17). One-time Minister of Education, Fukuzawa Dairoku, declared this slogan as the aim of women’s education by stating, in 1909:

school, some curricula highlighted the division between boys and girls, depicting boys' vocational futures and girls' homemaking futures. One 1884 etiquette textbook, *Shōgaku Sahō-sho* [*An Etiquette Book for Elementary Schools*], states, “As for manners, males should behave as bravely as possible and females should behave as gently as possible even when they are just playing” (qtd. in Saito 137).

The aim to make men the primary, “brave” figure in serving the state and women the “good wives and wise mothers” that “gently” supported the men persisted even after the government began to provide higher education for women in 1898. A 1907 textbook for women's high schools, *Joshi Shūshin Kyōkasho* [*Moral Education for Girls: A Curriculum Guide*], reveals the continuing endorsement of “good wives and wise mothers.” In outlining women's manners of speech, the text states, “Talkativeness is not good even for males, much less for females” (qtd. in Saito 140). Promoting women's silence kept Japanese women in a quiet Neo-Confucian role,⁸ adding another exclusion to educational segregation: exclusion from modernization. These exclusions gradually

Our female education, then, is based on the assumption that women marry, and that its object is to fit girls to become “good wives and wise mothers.” The question naturally arises what constitutes a good wife and wise mother, and the answer to the question requires a knowledge of the position of the wife and mother in the household and the standing of women in society and her status in the State. . . . [The] man goes outside to work to earn his living, to fulfill his duties to the State; it is the wife's part to help him, for the common interests of the house, and as her share of duty to the State, by sympathy and encouragement, by relieving him of anxieties at home, managing household affairs, looking after the household economy, and, above all, tending the old people and bringing up the children in a fit and proper manner. (qtd. in Smith 75, ellipsis in original)

The woman's role, as described here, is always in reference to those around her: her husband, old people, and children. Thus, the Japanese woman who fulfills the “good wife and wise mother” role is one that sacrifices self-interest for the interest of others. This would come to conflict with competing notions of individualism.

⁸ The Tokugawa Shogunate turned to Neo-Confucianism to help restore peace and organization to Japan. Many of the Neo-Confucian principles promoted during the Tokugawa era persisted in the Meiji era. One principle that would help Japan modernize during the Meiji era was “the understanding of things [that] can only be derived from an understanding of the principle [. . .] operating behind them. This empiricism would form the predominant characteristic of Japanese Neo-Confucianism” (Hooker, par. 4).

generated a “modernized” gender gap between women’s and men’s Westernized identities, which continued to grow through the Meiji Restoration into the 1920s. A 1926 textbook, *Gendai Joshi Shūshin*⁹ [*Moral Education for Today’s Girl*], also directs women away from Westernization’s individualism through outlining proper female speech. The textbook prescribes, “Using foreign expressions, vogueish words, and vulgar jokes makes people feel uncomfortable. You should be careful about choosing graceful words that are appropriate for females” (qtd. in Saito 142). By making “foreign expressions” inappropriate, the government promoted one aspect of the “good wives and wise mothers” role that required the Japanese woman to sacrifice her participation in Westernization.

Strangely enough, denying women Westernization was not a clear-cut aim for educational leaders. Many thought “good wives and wise mothers” embodied America’s “cult of domesticity” (Smith 75), a nineteenth-century American ideal for womanhood that emphasized four characteristics: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Thus, an education directed to this end was the very essence of Western womanhood. However, the “good wives and wise mothers” role could also be interpreted as embodying Confucian views on woman’s role being wholly confined to the home. Thus, the slogan’s contradictory interpretations created confusion over what “good wives and wise mothers” finally signified. Was this slogan traditional or modern? Confusion was further

⁹ “Shūshin” literally means “self-study,” but it also names a particular course taught in elementary and middle-school curricula during most of the Meiji era and through the early Showa years (1872-1945); as a course, “Shūshin” was designed to teach students a nationalistic, traditional morality centered in filial and patriotic loyalty and responsibility. In the Meiji era, “Shūshin” was considered the “most important subject in the list of curricula” (Khan 74).

compounded by Japan's general desire to use the Western term, *individualism*, to create a distinctive Japanese identity (Saito 143).

While the Japanese generally viewed individualism as desirable after the Meiji Restoration, these views varied on what individualism entailed. Sharon Nolte identifies three different definitions for individualism that were repeatedly expressed by Japanese writers during both the late Meiji era (1868-1912) and, more prolifically, the Taishō era (1912-1926). These three “incompatible” propositions were labeled “statist, privatist, and liberal (or reformist)” individualism (670). The Japanese woman, again, was caught up in a dizzying struggle for both her womanhood and her individualism. First, should her individualism and womanhood be statist? The statist individual used her talent “to strengthen the state, and to foster a more active commitment of individuals to state policies” (670). Thus, should the Japanese woman be a “good wife and wise mother” that supported her husband's duties, hence contributing to the state? Or should she be directly involved in local and state politics?

Or should her individualism and womanhood be privatist? The privatist individual was one whose “personal autonomy and self-expression were legitimate within a restricted ‘private’ sphere, which coexisted in uneasy tension with the dominant values of the ‘public’ sphere” (670). Would the modern Japanese woman continue to endorse the “good wives and wise mothers” role and save personal autonomy for times when she could quietly and privately express herself without offending custom? Or did private individualism mean that she expressed personal autonomy in her restricted role as “good wife and wise mother”?

Finally, should her individualism and womanhood be liberal, even reformist? This type of individualism was “an open-ended individualism that refused to accept class and gender as insurmountable barriers or to regard state goals as the purpose of individual development” (677). Was it justifiable that the Japanese woman disregard the state’s sanctioned “good wife and wise mother” slogan if it interfered with her own individual development?

These conflicting questions swirled around Japanese society, adding to an already perplexing mix of what it meant to meet modern expectations of Japanese womanhood. One feminist leader, Hiratsuka Raichō, would attempt to support multiple forms of individualism. Her statist individualism sought help for mothers as well as political participation for women. And her liberal individualism sought to undo the gender barriers that kept Japanese women in the home. Similarly, many other Japanese women pursued variations of individualism despite—or perhaps because of—these and other conflicting expectations.

Imported images of the Western woman sent still-more contradictory messages about what it meant to be modern, or a Western for that matter. First, American female Christian missionaries, who helped many Japanese women continue their education beyond elementary school, “propagated a cult of domesticity that contributed substantially to the orthodoxy of ‘good wives and wise mothers’” (Hastings 1040). However, this image was gradually challenged by media that portrayed the Western woman not only as unhindered by the cult of domesticity but as inclined to reject it. The catalyzing image that directly attacked the “good wives and wise mothers” slogan was Nora’s character in Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*—a play whose Japanese premiere

occurred in 1911 at the Theater Institute of the Literary Society [*Bungei Kyōkai Engeki Kenkyūjō*].¹⁰ Nora, the play's protagonist, is a wife who finds herself capable of earning money by secretly working, yet who pretends, in her husband's presence, to be empty-headed and childlike. The depiction of Nora's final rebellion (she leaves her husband, slamming the door behind her) unsettled Japanese audiences. Laurel Rasplica Rodd discusses the implications of Nora's portrayal, stating, "*A Doll's House*, with its suggestion that marriage is not sacrosanct and that man's authority in the home should not go unchallenged, created an immediate sensation in a society where women had few, if any, rights" (175). Following this first performance of Ibsen's play, Ihara Seiseien wrote a review highlighting two female audience members who cried when Nora defied woman's expected subservience to her husband. Ihara "recalled thinking at the time that these were 'truly new women,' inspired by Western theater models to reconsider women's lives" (175). Ihara's phrase, "new women" [*atarashii onna*] became the term that would stand up to the "good wives and wise mothers" slogan; it came to signify the struggle to deliver new answers to old questions that troubled Japanese womanhood.

Japan continued to import portrayals of Western women that would both spread the new-woman slogan and complicate it. American actors, in particular, began to grow in popularity during and after World War I, circulating a tangible ideal of the Western woman.¹¹ Mary Pickford became a popular image (Tosaka 133)—a figure immortalized

¹⁰ As Laurel Rasplica Rodd points out, around 1901, women were once again permitted to act on the stage "after a three hundred year banishment" (175). Thus, Matsui Sumako, who played Nora and became a famed actress, came to represent the "new woman" of the "New Theater" (Kano 123).

¹¹ Tosaka points out, "There was even a common saying in the late 1910s that the child who did not know the name of the prime minister would have no trouble naming Chaplin" (142).

in Junichirō Tanizaki's *Naomi*,¹² where Naomi, the new woman, is idolized for looking like this American actress. Also, Clara Bow's face graced magazines and posters in the 1920s, depicting the sultry and sexy yet approachable and genuine American flapper (Fujiki 3). Bow's contradictory persona reflects Japan's own contradictory perceptions of the modern woman that (though not necessarily sexual in nature) seemed both Western and Eastern, new and old, modern and traditional—an agonizing ambiguity that increased the tension and confusion surrounding Japanese womanhood.

The generalized preoccupation of the Japanese with individualism, and the similar preoccupation Japanese women had with how individualism intersected with womanhood, added to these debates over femininity. Women writers surfaced to lead these debates. Rodd points to four women writers in particular—women whose varying ideas on Japanese womanhood antagonized one another greatly:

Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) advocated a feminism grounded in equal legal, educational, and social rights and responsibilities for women. Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1942) propounded a doctrine of motherhood that called for state protection of and special privileges for mothers. Yamakawa Kikue (1890-1980) embraced a socialist view of history that traced women's subordination to the system of private property and so set the destruction of that system as her goal. Finally, Yamada Waka (1879-1957) held a more traditional view of women as “good wives and wise mothers.” (176)

¹² Tanizaki began writing *Naomi* in 1924, and it was published serially in *Osaka's Morning News*. However, publication had to stop as the public decried its content. *Naomi* later finished its serial publications in the periodical *Female*. It was first published in 1947 (Huang 78).

The debates among such women centered on the ideal model for womanhood. Such struggles for ideological domination of Japanese womanhood often follow what has been outlined in subaltern studies' discussions, which focus on individuality and autonomy. Just as Japan generally saw individualism and autonomy as desirable, those that participated in the feminist movement disagreed about what it should accomplish—a dispute similar to the fixation subaltern studies has with autonomy. The Japanese were asking if individualism and autonomy were best “cultivated to strengthen the state,” or if such qualities were the sole domain of the “‘private’ sphere,” or if they were “fundamental value[s] by which state and society should be judged” (Nolte 670). Similarly, subaltern studies has asked how and where autonomy could be made, concluding finally that autonomy emerged through resisting domination.

The Dilemma of Subaltern Studies

Questions concerning autonomy have plagued subaltern studies since their first publication in 1982. Since that time, scholars of subaltern studies have revered and used Antonio Gramsci's (1891-1937) idea of subaltern autonomy. Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* critiqued Marxism and added to “the positivist interpretation of Marxism as a science of society, yet beyond social will” the idea that historical forces did not “predetermine and make inevitable the direction or nature of social action” (Hawley 585). In other words, collective will and consciousness—or the term *autonomy* that subaltern studies consistently employs—subsist despite dominating forces. The subaltern studies group celebrated the subaltern's newfound autonomy that challenged previous views of the subaltern as spontaneous rather than conscious beings. Because of Gramsci's

optimistic assessment of peasant autonomy, subaltern studies used his ideas to guide their initial goal to rewrite and centralize indigenous Indians' colonial histories.

Even though subaltern studies founded its methodology on an assumed subaltern autonomy, the group has since been plagued with *how* to adequately identify and assess autonomous behavior. Which behaviors, they asked, were autonomous, and which were not? At first, subaltern studies staunchly advocated Gramsci's idea that the collective will emerged through "the creation of a counterhegemonic force" (586). Ranajit Guha, founder of subaltern studies, established the "counterhegemonic [subaltern] force" as one that antagonized the elite's rule. In the "Preface" of the 1982 *Subaltern Studies*, Guha wrote, "We believe that we are not alone in our concern about such elitism and the need to combat it" (36). Guha concluded that the subaltern must rebel because his or her autonomy hinges on this act. This belief is similar to Japan's liberal or reformist individualism, which did not see social or ideological hierarchies as "insurmountable barriers" to selfhood (Nolte 677). Thus, the subaltern begins "a process of self-creation and emancipation" (Hawley 594) by creating a "counterhegemonic force," thus combating elitism and surmounting hierarchical barriers.

While contributors to subaltern studies have long acknowledged that rebellion can be displayed in many ways besides peasant insurgency, subaltern studies has nevertheless privileged insurgency as a moment that gives "us a glimpse of the undominated region in peasant consciousness" (Chatterjee 22). Thus, while Guha inaugurated subaltern rebellion as necessary for developing autonomy, scholars gathered numerous samples of Indian peasant insurgency and claimed that these moments of rebellion were moments of peasant autonomy. However, even as such scholars commenced rewriting colonial India's

history with the subaltern Indian peasant at the helm, others like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, questioned the essentialist claim that autonomy developed through rebellion. In her 1983 lecture, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Spivak challenged Guha’s founding assertion by stating, “Guha constructs a definition of the people [. . .] that can be only an identity-in-differential,” and then calls Guha’s methodology “essentialist and taxonomic” (2201). Seeing subaltern autonomy as “an identity-in-differential” means that the subaltern’s rebellion does *not* create autonomy; rather, the subaltern’s rebellion is a reaction dependent on the elite other. Thus, the subaltern who 1) rebels becomes much like the subaltern who 2) substantiates and mimics the elite’s ideologies, for both behaviors are prompted by the elite’s presence. Spivak’s suggestion deflates Guha’s investiture of rebellion on autonomy’s throne, which in turn deflates the methodology that uses rebellion to identify class consciousness. Prathama Banerjee states, “The consciousness of protest and resistance was always already implicated in the terms of the dominant discourses themselves [. . .] subaltern histories [. . .] appeared most often as tragic, as stories of failure and of the self-alienation of the subaltern” (par. 11). Such tragedies occurred because, as Spivak implied, rebellion could not gain the subaltern her autonomy—but nor could substantiation and mimicry. Thus, it appeared that the subaltern could *not* gain autonomy, but would forever be consigned to define herself against the elite. Scholars of subaltern studies lamented the tragic nature of these rewritten Indian histories that suddenly no longer represented autonomy, and they wondered if autonomy was even a practical frame that could support their work.

While Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” agitated such serious concerns, Spivak would also provide subaltern studies with some hope. With 1984’s fourth volume

of *Subaltern Studies*, these failures, as Banerjee suggests, had turned “around into a story of success” (par. 12). Where Spivak’s deconstruction of the elite and subaltern classes had before made autonomy a futile goal, this same deconstruction “became proof of the intrusive and subversive impact of the subaltern-effect that subalterns operated ‘from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structures, borrowing them structurally’” (par. 12).¹³ The positive spin of this deconstruction made the subaltern into a counterhegemonic hero; nevertheless, this idea carried the still-weighty implication that the subaltern could not create autonomy since identity was merely an “identity-in-differential.” This problem plagued subaltern studies just as it plagued Meiji era Japan’s discussions of individualism and womanhood. The Japanese woman who radically defied elitist conventions was definitely “intrusive and subversive,” but because her very defiance was dependent on the conventions she wished to overthrow, her true independence from elitism was thrown into question. In the context of subaltern studies, then, how are identity issues of the 1920s Japanese woman to be reconciled?

In 1994, Homi K. Bhabha posited further reconsiderations of the “autonomous domain.” Rather than necessitating rebellion as the process to autonomy, and rather than labeling that process as futile, Bhabha’s notion of “hybrid culture” suggests that the elite/subaltern relationship contains potential “productive capacities” that lead to autonomy. Bill Ashcroft describes the “productive capacities” of Bhabha’s interstices (or “Third Space”) between elite and subaltern in these words: “For [Bhabha], the

¹³ Banerjee quotes Spivak’s “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography.” *Subaltern Studies* 4 (1985).

recognition of this ambivalent space of cultural identity may help us overcome the exoticism of cultural diversity in favour of the recognition of an empowering hybridity within which cultural difference may operate” (119). For Bhabha, the very immersion into the “Third Space” enacts a tug-and-pull between elite and subaltern that is essential to creating autonomy. This idea reinvigorated the hope of subaltern studies that peasant autonomy exists and can be created.

The limitations behind Bhabha’s hybridity surface, however, when subaltern studies tries to make hybridity into a methodology. As Banerjee points out, the earlier founding methodologies of subaltern studies—negation and deconstruction—implied action, for both were verb-forms. Banerjee differentiates these methodologies from hybridity, stating that negation and deconstruction “denoted the subaltern-effect to be, and to be the product of, a kind of practice. Hybridity, on the other hand, appears as primarily the noun-form of an adjective, making itself prone to becoming a mere description of a certain inevitable reality, the proper name for a kind of post-colonial existence, irrespective of practice” (par. 20).

With this limitation in mind, Banerjee pronounced the resultant state of subaltern studies, which appeared to have returned to its previous, troubling questions. He states, “Clearly the issue, as it was earlier, is no longer whether the subaltern can save an autonomous space for him/herself, beyond the hegemonic reach of the dominant. Now what works is the realisation that there can be no autonomous space *per se*” (par. 15). Again, this troublesome autonomous space afflicted both subaltern studies and Japan’s 1920s feminist movement. The Japanese mulled over discovering which female behavior truly took woman to an autonomous space. However, Bhabha’s hybridity implies that one

cannot pinpoint a particular behavior as an indicator of autonomy—that there only exists the “inevitable reality” of a hybrid existence.

Guha’s, Spivak’s, and Bhabha’s discussions of autonomy carry troubling implications for the methodologies of subaltern studies. On the one hand, autonomy appears as non-existent, and on the other, autonomy is an unidentifiable state of being. But even though Banerjee may claim “there can be no autonomous space,” by giving up autonomy as a possibility he further confines the effort of subaltern studies to draw the subaltern out of obscurity. As I hope to demonstrate, subaltern studies should *not* give up the search for subaltern autonomy—nor should it define autonomy as an inert state of being. Rather than laying the autonomous space to rest, subaltern studies must resurrect autonomy as an active, identifiable process.

Reviving Autonomy in *The Strangeness of Beauty*

The sample from 1920s Japan may appear to simply substantiate the claims of subaltern studies that decry hierarchy and lament the loss of the subaltern’s autonomy. However, by examining Lydia Minatoya’s 1999 novel, *The Strangeness of Beauty*—a novel set in 1920s Japan—we can find samples of transnational excitement and anxiety that both challenge the methodology of subaltern studies and resuscitate the group’s seemingly lifeless notions of autonomy. While *The Strangeness of Beauty* has yet to be examined by scholars in subaltern studies, and while the word is removed from both 1920s Japan and from early subaltern studies scholarship because of its contemporaneity, the novel’s efforts to cast the destructive nature of hierarchies in a new light asks that we

re-examine both the novel's historical backdrop as well as the underlying assumptions concerning autonomy that subaltern studies forwards.

But beyond the autonomy and hierarchy that connect Minatoya's novel to subaltern studies, the two share parallel transnational concerns. Both Minatoya's novel and the work of subaltern studies were preceded by similar distress regarding transnational anxiety and excitement. Many scholars contributing to subaltern studies were born in India but received Western educations and immigrated to Western countries. Those that came to the United States, such as Spivak and Chatterjee, entered the country during the 1970s during a surge of Indian immigration: before 1965, there were fewer than 15,000 Indians living the United States, but between 1965 and 1985, that number exceeded 500,000 (Gibson 28). This surge heralded the first publications in the field of subaltern studies in 1982, which launched a view of the subaltern as conflicted and oppressed by transnational pressures. While subaltern scholars focused on the autonomy of the Indian peasant in colonial India, their discussions often reflected their own experiences with transnational identity.

Similarly, Minatoya's novel reflects her own Japanese American heritage and transnational identity formation. The novel opens with two couples who immigrate to the United States in the 1910s and 1920s—a time when the number of Japanese immigrants coming to America had increased dramatically. Between 1902 and 1924, tension and excitement heightened as Americans increasingly viewed immigrant Japanese as another “yellow peril” phenomenon that “lay in imperialist Japan's alleged designs to take over

America” (Bayor 118).¹⁴ American fear of the Japanese, however, was balanced with curiosity. Etsu Inagaki Sugimoto’s autobiography, *A Daughter of the Samurai*, was published only one year after the Immigration Act of 1924 prevented Asians from entering America, yet it was warmly received.¹⁵ Minatoya’s novel draws directly from both *A Daughter of the Samurai* and her own extended family’s immigrant experiences, thus replicating the complex feelings of anxiety and excitement that naturally accompany transnationalism. However, the novel does not merely parallel the concerns of subaltern studies. Because *The Strangeness of Beauty* complicates the depiction of transnationalism and hierarchy that subaltern studies essentializes, the novel is equipped to progressively expand subaltern discussions of autonomy.

Specifically, three of the novel’s main characters—three generations of women—play out the transnational anxiety over women’s autonomy in the 1920s. Chie, the matriarch figure, is a Japanese of samurai descent, and raised with samurai training. Etsuko, Chie’s daughter who was raised by a farming family, moves to America as a young bride and adopts an American viewpoint on individual choice. While in America, Etsuko’s sister dies in childbirth, leaving behind Hanae, an American baby. Etsuko begins to raise Hanae, eventually returning to Japan—to Chie—for assistance. Thus, a Japanese woman, a first-generation Japanese American woman [*Issei*], and a second-generation Japanese American girl [*Nisei*] all live under the same roof, trying to reconcile

¹⁴ The Japanese “yellow peril” differed from the Chinese “yellow peril,” which “was imagined as an endless horde of coolies” (Bayor 118). Since “Japan was not a backward semicolonial nation like China but a modern imperialist nation,” it “inspired both respect and anxiety in the West” (118).

¹⁵ One review states, “What makes [*A Daughter of the Samurai*] so beautiful and thrilling is the intimate and personal character of the anecdotes which it contains, as well as the delicate and charming manner in which they are narrated. Under such circumstances strange manners and customs cease to be merely strange or quaint; they become intelligible and human” (Park 127).

their differing transnational viewpoints and behaviors. As all three negotiate their identities in terms of each other and their society, they portray a distinctive and useful method for constructing autonomy. Unlike 1920s Japan and subaltern studies, *The Strangeness of Beauty* does *not* dwell on the uselessness of hybridity as a methodology for locating autonomy, nor does it lament autonomy as being merely “identity-in-differential.” Through close depictions of relationships among these three women, Minatoya’s novel not only argues that the autonomous sphere exists, but demonstrates how one can find or obtain this sphere through what I label destructive and beneficent hierarchies.¹⁶ The novel’s examination of beneficent hierarchies widens subaltern studies’ discussions of autonomy, which currently focus on destructive hierarchies. By widening these discussions, we can conclude that the subaltern can gain genuine autonomy through means other than rebellion—they can achieve autonomy through acknowledging and even utilizing hierarchies in non-antagonizing and non-destructive ways.

My first chapter, “Fear and Celebration as Motive to Contain the Subaltern,” utilizes Guha’s method for identifying the autonomous domain by looking first at the elite’s system of domination. Guha asserts that subaltern autonomy must emerge in opposition to elitist domination. Such domination, or strategies of containment, are variously motivated by fear or celebration of the subaltern, as both 1920s Japan and *The Strangeness of Beauty* suggest. Because we can identify varying motivations of the elite,

¹⁶ Throughout the remainder of my argument, I will define these labels as follows: 1) in destructive hierarchies, both the elite and subaltern pursue self-interest at the expense of the other; 2) in beneficent hierarchies, the elite and subaltern focus on elevating the other’s autonomy, even at the expense of the self.

we can conversely identify varying spheres for autonomy that subaltern studies has overlooked.

Chapter two, “Appropriating Autonomy in Destructive Hierarchies’ Blind Spots,” focuses on destructive hierarchies that actively suppress the subaltern. This chapter demonstrates that the elite inadvertently create blind spots as they try to contain the subaltern, and that these blind spots can provide places where the subaltern can seek refuge from the elite gaze. Such places are also sites where autonomy can be developed. However, the subaltern inhabiting these sites cannot depend on privacy alone to shape autonomy: he or she must also learn to coexist with and even depend on the opposing other, the elite.

Chapter three, “Enabling the Subaltern and Elite through Beneficent Hierarchies,” focuses on celebration-motivated hierarchies, which I consider the context of ideal elite/subaltern relationships, for such relationships promote productive hybridity rather than peaceful coexistence or estrangement from antagonism. My final chapter emphasizes that, while all hierarchies will naturally contain the subaltern to some degree, celebratory hierarchies are necessary for both the subaltern and elite to construct a whole and healthy autonomy.

FEAR AND CELEBRATION AS MOTIVES FOR
CONTAINING THE SUBALTERN

The Strangeness of Beauty opens by portraying two positive marriage relationships in Japan during the 1910s and 1920s. The husbands in these marriages, Akira and Tadao, revere their wives and enjoy their wives' intelligence and candor. However, both Akira's and Tadao's veneration diverges from Japan's traditional views of marriage. The 1898 Civil Code, which was still in force at both the time of Akira's and Tadao's marriages, set up traditional and hierarchical roles for husbands and wives. The man was to head the household and could exercise "almost complete authority over the lives of [the household's] other members, including his wife" (Smith 72). Women were to remain in the home and support the male head. As Smith states, "It was a woman's lot to obey three men in her lifetime, first her father, then her husband, and finally her eldest son" (72). While the Civil Code set up an ideological containment founded on Confucian ideals, Akira's and Tadao's egalitarian marriages demonstrate that ideological containment is not all-powerful—that its restraints do not guarantee its enforcement.

But Minatoya does not depict containment as a force merely to be shrugged off at one's will. *The Strangeness of Beauty* also illustrates how containment can impose crippling limitations on the subaltern in various forms. This multifaceted depiction of containment varies greatly from the depiction subaltern studies presents. The containment in *The Strangeness of Beauty* is complicated, shifting, and transient; the containment subaltern studies defines is simply an elite strategy motivated by fear of the subaltern. In

fact, subaltern studies has labeled the elite's strategies of containment as "strategies of domination," and the elite themselves as "dominators" (Chakrabarty 268; Chatterjee 10). These loaded terms determined that the elite must *always* dominate and the subaltern must *always* resist if they are to express autonomy. *The Strangeness of Beauty*, on the other hand, presents various, intricate strategies of elitist containment and subaltern response—not just domination and resistance. Given that this variety of responses creates meaningful autonomy, Minatoya's novel may open subaltern scholarship to wider discussions of containment and autonomy.¹⁷

Fear-Motivated Containment

Subaltern studies has pointed to domination as a strategy of containment motivated by fear of subaltern rebellion. Partha Chatterjee states, "It is always the spectre of an open rebellion by the peasantry which haunts the consciousness of the dominant classes [. . .] and shapes and modifies their forms of exercise of domination [or containment]" (22). But, is it "always" potential rebellion that inspires elitist fear and their ensuing strategies of containment? Homi K. Bhabha suggests another, somewhat ironic, subaltern behavior that inspires the elite's fears regarding the subaltern: subaltern mimicry. Subaltern mimicry is, perhaps, a cause for more alarm than subaltern rebellion. The subaltern who mimics elite ideology disrupts the behaviors expected in elite/subaltern relationships of domination and resistance.

¹⁷ As essentialist as the methodology of subaltern studies is, this methodology also provides a useful frame in which we can examine this wide spectrum of behaviors and identify other forms of autonomy. Guha's methodology begins by looking at the elite's strategies of containment ("domination and exploitation"), and then identifies the subaltern's "opposed aspect" (resistance) (Chatterjee 11). Guha believed that finding this "opposed aspect" would reveal the place for subaltern autonomy. Thus, if we too begin our pursuit of subaltern autonomy by looking at the elite's various strategies of containment, we should be able to identify the subaltern's "opposed aspect," and hence her autonomy.

By examining two figures that elicited elitist fears—one through rebellion, the other through mimicry—we can determine that subaltern studies has excessively limited its examination of elite containment, a phenomenon that has also limited its understanding of subaltern autonomy. The two figures are Hiratsuka Raichō, a real-life Japanese who was at the forefront of the “new woman’s” rebellion in the 1910s; and Miss Langley, an American character in *The Strangeness of Beauty* whose awkward plunge into Japanese culture instills both fear and endearment in the Japanese around her.

Since subaltern studies so strongly endorses rebellion as a path to autonomy, it almost certainly would have celebrated Japan’s new woman of the 1910s. The new woman rebelled against the “good wives and wise mothers” tradition by reading, writing, and questioning her dependence on men (Sato 13)—a rebellion that echoes what Guha states in the “Preface” of the first *Subaltern Studies* publication (1982):¹⁸ “We believe that we are not alone in our concern about such elitism and the need to combat it” (36). These women saw unbearable elitism in the “good wives and wise mothers” slogan, in a patriarchal system, and even in simple Japanese traditions such as wearing a kimono and obi. But as Guha’s term, “combat,” suggests, their rebellion did not smoothly replace elitist ideologies with their own—instead, battle commenced to determine whose ideology would persist.

As one of the most influential women who promoted the new woman and led the fight for this figure’s inauguration, Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1971) established the new

¹⁸ Guha’s 1988 compilation, *Selected Subaltern Studies*, includes his 1982 “Preface.”

woman's hopes in her literary women's magazine *Bluestocking* [*Seitō*].¹⁹ In the opening lines of the first issue (September 1911), she writes:

In the beginning, woman was the sun,²⁰

An authentic person.

Today she is the moon,

Living through others.

Reflecting the brilliance of others. [...]

And now, *Bluestocking*, a journal created for the first time with the brains and hands of today's Japanese women, raises its voice. (qtd. in Sievers 163)

Hiratsuka's call to Japanese women asked them to question, rather than merely follow an imposed model for womanhood. However, this call did not immediately return woman to the shining sun status Hiratsuka praised. Instead, Hiratsuka had to contend with groups that feared the new woman as a threat to Japan's social structure, and to Japaneseness itself. As soon as Hiratsuka had sent out her call, media outlets that felt threatened by this

¹⁹ The journal *Bluestocking* took its name from England's Bluestocking Society, which was founded in the mid-18th century by Elizabeth Montagu. The group increased intellectual activities for women by inviting scientists, writers, and other intellectuals to attend their activities. The society got its name from an exchange with one of these guests, Benjamin Stillingfleet, a botanist and publisher who didn't have the means to wear appropriate attire to one of the society's activities. As Frances Burney recalls:

[Bluestocking] owed its name to an apology made by Mr. Stillingfleet, in declining to accept an invitation to a literary meeting of Mrs. Vesey's, from not being, he said, in the habit of displaying a proper equipment for an evening assembly. "Pho, pho," cried she, with her well-known, yet always original simplicity, while she looked inquisitively, at him and his accoutrements; "don't mind the dress! Come in your blue stockings! (qtd. in Pohl and Schellenberg 3)

This incident inspired the group's name while highlighting the importance of ideas over appearances.

²⁰ Hiratsuka's phrase, "woman was the sun," alludes to Amaterasu, the sun goddess in Japanese mythology and the mother of Japan's first emperor.

real-life “new woman” tried to increase hatred against her, and thus force her back to what she herself would have called a reflective moon status.

The intensity of these groups’ reactions against *Bluestocking* suggests that, precisely as subaltern theory predicts, subaltern rebellion heightens the elite’s fear that their position in the hierarchy is in danger; and that, in response to this, the elite mount opposition through aggressive strategies of containment. Thus, while Hiratsuka had felt contained by the “good wives and wise mothers” slogan even before her publication was born, once *Bluestocking* had publicized Hiratsuka’s rebellion and amplified the elite’s fear-motivated strategies of opposition, it learned how determined the Japanese hierarchy was to contain its women. The groups opposing Hiratsuka and *Bluestocking* found several ways to combat the new woman. The media scathingly labeled *Bluestocking* “a nursery for Japanese Noras” (Rodd 177)²¹—pitting *Bluestocking* against the ideal female role of “good wives and wise mothers.” The media also slandered *Bluestocking*: they “delighted in the sensation they could cause by misreading the magazine” and portrayed *Bluestocking* members as sexual-pleasure seekers. These increased strategies of containment inspired hostility among the Japanese public: Hiratsuka’s house was stoned and she received death threats (177).

The fear that inspired such containment, while ultimately assignable to the elite’s fear of an unstable hierarchy, was multifaceted. Some Japanese thought Hiratsuka’s Western feminism contradicted their interpretation of the “good wives and wise mothers” slogan, which they saw as following another Western ideology: America’s cult of

²¹ Ironically, the January 1912 issue’s scholarly article about *A Doll’s House* argued that “Nora should not have abandoned her home and family for the goal of self-realization” (Rodd 177).

domesticity. With this interpretation, the new woman stood in the way of Westernization and needed to be fought insofar as she inhibited progress. Other Japanese, however, saw the new woman as a threat to the revered Neo-Confucian philosophy that defined “good wives and wise mothers” as women who stayed in the home. Thus, the new woman was seen as a destroyer of tradition. However, whether the new woman jeopardized tradition or modernization, she nevertheless inspired many Japanese to a common, active opposition that tried to keep the new woman contained through threats and insult. Even many of the group’s original members were threatened by elitist strategies to contain their rebellion, and they chose to resign from *Bluestocking* (177).

Thus far, the new woman’s rebellion—and society’s oppositional responses—reinforce Guha’s claim that the elite and subaltern find their autonomy through domination and resistance respectively. The new woman fought through various strategies of domination to eventually emerge as a widely accepted figure embodying a meaningful ideology—an ideology identified by this struggle. However, the claim of subaltern studies that “resistance [is] the aspect of the power relation through which the peasantry [express] its distinct and autonomous identity” (Chatterjee 11) necessarily minimizes the consequences of rebellion by equating a moment of rebellion with a moment of autonomy. Since open rebellion prompts the elite to further contain the rebel, the elite jeopardize the subaltern’s autonomy insofar as it is dependent on rebellion—a problem suggesting that domination and resistance should *not* be depended on as the chief autonomous acts of the elite and subaltern. Instead, we must identify similar relations between the elite and subaltern that develop autonomy, but through less debilitating—and temporary—methods.

Gautam Bhadra places subaltern behavior into two categories: defiance and submissiveness (63). But Bhabha notes that another behavior, mimicry, challenges this categorization, as mimicry has been labeled both a submissive and defiant act. Whether or not mimicry is an act of defiance or submission, it nevertheless induces fear in the elite. Minatoya's *The Strangeness of Beauty* indicates that subaltern mimicry can stimulate as much as, if not more elite fear than subaltern rebellion.

A prominent American character in Minatoya's novel, Miss Langley, does not rebel against Japanese tradition. In fact, she "seems anxious to please" (Minatoya 187). And initially, the Japanese like her, finding "her willingness to be pupil—to cheerfully engage in humiliating displays of public awkwardness—to be an endearing demonstration of character" (184). As Bhabha's theory of mimicry suggests, however, the Japanese accept Miss Langley's early mimicry not because it brings her closer to them, but because it once again establishes crucial differences between them—they like her because her "humiliating displays" emphasize or reveal her subaltern position. As Bhabha would say of Miss Langley, she is "almost the same, *but not quite*" ("Of Mimicry and Man" 127).

But Miss Langley's eagerness to learn from the Japanese eventually creates fear among them, for she represents a transnational anxiety that asks, "Because Japan is Westernizing, is it possible—or permissible—for the West (as represented by Miss Langley) to become like Japan?" As Miss Langley's Japanese improves and she begins to respond more naturally to Japanese customs, she reduces the distance between her subaltern self and the Japanese other. As this distance closes, the Japanese begin to view Langley's mimicry as a "menace" (Bhabha 127). The Headmaster compares the guileless

Langley to a “poor *dangerous* boy” he once knew who stood out socially and academically, but who later hanged himself. In the comparison, the Headmaster states, “I *refuse* to let some maverick, no matter how appealing, seduce [the students] toward self-destruction” (Minatoya 209). The subaltern’s self-destruction through mimicry is, as the Headmaster suggests, a threat to the elite self. As the subaltern enters the unknown Third-Space that dissolves boundaries between elite and subaltern, the subaltern also dissolves the elite’s autonomous domain or power to dominate, and hence the elite’s identity.

Minatoya pinpoints this fear, writing, “When people can’t recognize their present and are scared to imagine their future, a kind of nihilistic fever takes hold” (200). With their identity at stake, some of the Japanese catch this “nihilistic fever” and think they can heal only by containing the source of the threat: Miss Langley. Thus, the Japanese enact a fear-motivated strategy of containment designed to maintain the elite/subaltern boundary between themselves and Miss Langley: they withdraw their children from her school. Where Miss Langley was once allowed to drift between her Western and Eastern identities, the Japanese now limit the places within the Eastern domain where she can develop autonomy. One of Miss Langley’s pupils identifies this containment in terms of the autonomous domain by stating, “Miss Langley doesn’t belong. She did for a while, she made her own place, but now people are scared and won’t let her” (214), thereby suggesting that Miss Langley was finding an autonomous sphere that reconciled Eastern and Western ideologies, but because of a fear-motivated strategy of containment, all recognizable hybrid spheres were closed to her.

Miss Langley demonstrates that seemingly benign behaviors like mimicry can induce the elite to wage strategies of containment motivated by fear. However, because

mimicry is a disputable term that some scholars have labeled autonomy's opposite binary,²² we must examine other types of containment *not* motivated by fear to suggest that, not only does the subaltern have more options for gaining autonomy, so too do the elite.

Celebration-Motivated Strategies of Containment

While some elite in a hierarchy may fear the subaltern, other elite celebrate the subaltern. The elite who support the subaltern's developing autonomy often enact celebration-motivated strategies of containment. These differ from fear-motivated strategies of containment because celebration-motivated containment has little need for maintaining a strict difference between elite/subaltern: in fact, the elite *hope* the subaltern will achieve autonomy and penetrate the hierarchy's imposed boundaries. However, as positive as these supportive elite/subaltern relations are (something I will examine more closely in the chapter, "Enabling the Subaltern through Beneficent Hierarchies"), they also tend to enforce a strategy of containment similar to fear-motivated containment. This similarity emerges when the elite begin to fear the subaltern's failure to gain autonomy. Of course, celebratory fear emphasizes the subaltern other—not the elite self, or rather, the focus on the self that motivates fear-motivated strategies of containment. Because of this crucial difference, celebratory containment has the potential to be a positive condition of the subaltern. In *The Strangeness of Beauty*, the celebratory, hierarchical

²² Frantz Fanon describes *both* rebellion and mimicry as futile efforts to achieving autonomy. He states, "Whether a turncoat or a substantialist, the native is ineffectual precisely because the analysis of the colonial situation is not carried out on strict lines. The colonial situation calls a halt to national culture in almost every field. Within the framework of colonial domination there is not and there will never be such phenomena as new cultural departures or changes in the national culture" (1587). Because the subaltern's behaviors respond to the elite, Fanon suggests their behaviors are never fully autonomous.

relationship between a mother and daughter (Chie and Naomi) questions the focus of subaltern studies on the elite's need for domination and the subaltern's need for resistance, and suggests instead that subaltern studies can focus on less antagonizing elite/subaltern behaviors as sources of autonomy.

Chie's mother-love for her daughter, Naomi, prompts Chie to give Naomi many unusual opportunities for early 1900s Japan. She allows Naomi to read Western literature, to become educated, and to think freely. This loving relationship is built on a parental hierarchy with Chie as the elite mother and Naomi as the subaltern daughter. The elite, in this case, wants the subaltern to succeed—to rise up from her subalternity. But rather than dominating to maintain hierarchy's boundaries, Chie "dominates" (a word I hesitate to use here) only to further her daughter's reach for autonomy. In fact, rather than dominating her daughter, Chie cares for her, sacrifices for her, leads and guides her, and enables her maturing autonomy—Chie celebrates her daughter.

Despite Chie's overwhelmingly positive desires for her daughter, her celebrations nevertheless contain Naomi in ways similar to fear-motivated strategies of containment. Chie wants Naomi to marry well, but when Naomi's love, Akira, approaches Chie to ask permission for marriage, Chie responds with fearful antagonism. Chie worries that Naomi's marriage to Akira—an unlucky, second-born twin whose family owes debts—will stagnate her intelligent, independent daughter's future. Minatoya writes, "Marriage is a matter of gravity. How could Chie consent unless she was positive, absolutely certain, that she could see the full course of Naomi's marital life stretching forward without any shadows?" (166). Chie's worry over Naomi turns into active containment when Chie researches Akira to see if he is a suitable match, and then refuses to grant permission

when she concludes he is not. Chie's efforts to stop her daughter's marriage may seem inseparable from a fear-motivated strategy of containment. But Chie's interest isn't egocentric as the dominator's fear-motivated strategies certainly are. Her motivation to contain her daughter subsists because she celebrates Naomi—and hopes to continue celebrating Naomi's maturing autonomy: Chie does not want to see Naomi's autonomy obliterated.

Subaltern studies relates with this celebration-motivated containment, for the group enacts this very thing: subaltern studies celebrates the subaltern, trying to recover the subaltern's history and autonomy, but like Chie, they too end up containing the subaltern. Dipesh Chakrabarty scrutinized this problem stating, "Whenever we, members of the privileged classes, write subaltern histories [. . .] a certain pedagogic drive comes into play in our writing. We write, ultimately, as part of a collective effort to help teach the oppressed of today how to be the democratic subject of tomorrow" (272-73).²³ Even though subaltern studies celebrates the subaltern, the group has already defined the subaltern's autonomy: the subaltern will be the "democratic subject"—or the image the privileged academic chooses. Thus, subaltern studies mimics Chie, who "enjoyed the span of Naomi's wings, the arc of her ambitions" (167), but who nevertheless enforced strategies of containment that, for the subaltern's own safety,

²³ To amplify this claim, Chakrabarty examined the colonial European elite's treatment of Indian subaltern's superstitions and religious beliefs. In this example, Chakrabarty questions why the European elite considered the peasants' beliefs in ghosts and gods negligible and asserts, "My contention is that scientific rationalism, or the spirit of scientific enquiry, was introduced into colonial India from the very beginning as an antidote to (Indian) religion, particularly Hinduism, which was seen, both by missionaries as well as by administrators [. . .] as a bundle of 'superstition' and 'magic'" (259). Because this strategy of containment toward the Indian subaltern would either belittle them for upholding their religion, or influence them to revoke their former beliefs, the subaltern was contained by an imposing ideology.

attempted to keep her from flying too high. If subaltern scholars would look at the subaltern methodology of celebration, they would discover some rather terrifying similarities between their own strategies of containment and the fear-motivated strategies of containment they denounce in their historiographies. Such considerations may lead to fresh starting points for discovering alternatives to subaltern autonomy.

Subaltern studies, Minatoya, and Japan's new woman demonstrate that relationships between the elite and subaltern span more than just domination and resistance. As the new woman threatened an ideological hierarchy that depended on domination to subsist, she provoked a difficult battle for dominance, and the elite and subaltern held more tightly to domination and resistance, respectively, as methods for creating autonomy—thereby substantiating the claim of subaltern studies that these two behaviors—domination and resistance—foster autonomy for both the elite and subaltern.

Minatoya's *The Strangeness of Beauty*, however, depicts other possible responses between elite and subaltern: the subaltern can mimic or disregard the elite, and the elite can celebrate the subaltern. Despite this spread of behaviors from rebellion to substantiation, it appears that Chatterjee's claim is correct: the "significance" of both elite and subaltern is "to be established only in relation to its other" (11). But because various types of elite containment inspire various subaltern responses, and because each of these relationships may potentially lead to autonomy for both parties, we must become more attentive to identifying and charting alternative paths to subaltern and elite autonomy. In short, subaltern studies should not continue to limit the subaltern's autonomy to rebellion and the elite's to domination.

Indeed, Chakrabarty suggests that subaltern studies must relax its grip on the subaltern instead of effectually determining its dialogue with the elite. He states, “A dialogue can be genuinely open under one condition: that no party puts itself in a position where it can unilaterally decide the final outcomes of the conversation” (273). In addition to relaxing its grip, subaltern studies should also be guided by Chakrabarty’s conception of hierarchy. Rather than unilaterally deciding that hierarchical autonomy depends on domination and resistance, subaltern studies must openly consider the potential variety of hierarchies, and should give specific attention to those that celebrate the subaltern. Subaltern studies must more fully allow subaltern behavior to point to the locus (or loci) of subaltern autonomy. As Chakrabarty states, “This is where we, the middle classes, children of the state, go to the subaltern in order to learn, learn to imagine what knowledge might look like if it were to serve histories that were fragmentary and episodic” (274).

APPROPRIATING AUTONOMY IN THE BLIND SPOTS
OF DESTRUCTIVE HIERARCHIES

Bluestocking [Seitō] was unique among Japanese magazines directed at a women's readership: women wrote, edited, and published it. Most Japanese women's magazines emerged in the 1890s and were produced by men; predictably, the vast majority propagated the "good wives and wise mothers" slogan. These magazines also "exhorted [women] to be the pillars of the nation's morality" although women were "denied even the most basic political rights" (Wöhr 18). *Bluestocking*, however, confronted the tradition of the Japanese women's magazine, shocking much of Japanese society who grew to view *Bluestocking* with distaste. Soon, because of the *Bluestocking* influence, women's magazines in general began to be viewed as vulgar and harmful—as shaping Japanese women into "innocent victims" by corrupting them with images of financially, politically, socially, and sexually free women (28). The disparagement of women's magazines escalated after 1912, when social critics attempted to influence the Japanese public to view *Bluestocking* and other women's magazines as frivolous trash that was not to be taken seriously. Still, while the critics vilified *Bluestocking*, much of society disregarded it, both parties enacted behaviors that damaged the growth of *Bluestocking*, whose publication run lasted only five years (1911-1916).

The magazine's struggle to survive imitates the domination-resistance model of subaltern studies, which views hierarchies as oppressive and destructive. Destructive

hierarchies seek to suppress or obliterate subaltern autonomy, often through fear-motivated strategies of containment that vilify or disregard the subaltern. Thus, the elite view the subaltern either antagonistically (wanting the subaltern to fail in her appropriation of autonomy) or indifferently (they do not care what the subaltern does as long as she does not threaten the elite's position). The elite in such hierarchies care primarily for their own position and autonomy and try to preserve the hierarchical boundaries that separate them from subalterns.

In *The Strangeness of Beauty*, the early relationship between Chie and Etsuko—mother and daughter—depicts a destructive hierarchy where Chie tries to maintain the boundary between her own elitist state and Etsuko's subaltern existence. Chie maintains the boundary through indifference, which denies the subaltern, Etsuko, interaction with her. Given that Etsuko cannot interact with Chie, she is effectually denied the option of rebelling against Chie. And using Guha's paradigm, the inability to rebel is also the inability to gain autonomy—which constitutes the ultimate subaltern failure. However, while Guha suggests that the subaltern moves toward autonomy by rebelling against and wholly separating herself from the elite/subaltern relationship, in actuality, stepping away from hierarchy is a difficult if not impossible challenge. Indeed, Etsuko finds that she cannot escape Chie's hierarchy.

But Etsuko also finds that she can temporarily distance herself from the hierarchy and thereby initiate the development of her autonomy.²⁴ Etsuko's example suggests that the subaltern must initially move as Guha predicts, but with an eye to retaining, and even

²⁴ Autonomy comes through a long and complicated process—and temporary separation is only the first step. Etsuko's autonomy depends upon an acceptance—or celebration—of her relationship with Chie.

embracing inevitable hierarchical relationships. This counterintuitive act—involving movement both toward and away from hierarchies—suggests that even where strategies of containment such as vilification and disregard are enforced, the subaltern can find “blind spots” or “holes” in oppression where hierarchical separation is possible and the process towards autonomy can be initiated.

The Lost Autonomous Domain

Before analyzing the novel’s examples and their implications, we must first deal with a current claim of subaltern studies that suggests the autonomous domain may not exist. As Banerjee has phrased this claim:

Clearly the issue, as it was earlier, is no longer whether the subaltern can save an autonomous space for him/herself, beyond the reach of the dominant. Now what works is the realisation that there can be no autonomous space *per se*, and certainly not a space which is defended by the dominant as autonomous of and safe from the subaltern. (par. 15)

Questioning subaltern autonomy emerged with Homi Bhabha’s notion of hybridization, which refused to grant the elite and subaltern their polar-constructed identities (par. 14). Bhabha calls these binaries too reductive, being overly “defined by ‘fixity’ or an essential core” (“Homi K. Bhabha” 2377), and suggests instead that cultures gain meaning or identity in moments of *negotiation* between the subaltern and elite rather than in moments of *negation* (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 37). Bhabha states, “We should remember that it is the ‘inter’—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (56). Because the

eventual and inevitable meshing of elite and subaltern tends to blur or even dissolve the poles of hierarchy—poles Guha depends on to define both subaltern and elite autonomy—Bhabha’s “*in-between* space” also dissolves Guha’s autonomous domain, and hence any possibility for autonomy. However, by simply concluding that autonomy is lost, subaltern studies misses the possibility that autonomous spheres can exist within the Third Space and still remain “beyond the reach of the dominant.” The events portrayed in *The Strangeness of Beauty* indicate that such spheres can indeed persist, even in destructive hierarchies, as long as two apparently contradictory components are in place: 1) privacy and 2) openness. With the subaltern finding privacy yet retaining an openness to the elite other, these spheres (while perhaps temporary and continually evolving) become “beyond the reach of the dominant.”

Necessary Privacy

While Chie and Etsuko’s initially damaging relationship will be the major focus of this chapter, we must foreground its analysis with another example from the novel. Where both Chie and Etsuko—even in the tenuous beginnings of their relationships—make occasional efforts to reach toward one another with either understanding or help, fully destructive hierarchies in the novel rarely perform such munificent acts. Rather, in many hierarchical relationships the benevolent hand is replaced by the fist of vilification or disregard. Etsuko experiences the destructive hierarchy of a highly censorial government for example, but still manages to find a place to develop autonomy without antagonizing the elite. Etsuko discovers that the Japanese government overlooks the ability of many publications to defy the government’s standards. By overlooking these

works, the government inadvertently creates places where subaltern rebels can gather and continue their secret subversion.

At first Etsuko merely observes this disregard when she discovers an antiwar advertisement (a censor-worthy topic of the time) in an English-language version of a Japanese newspaper. She states, “It’s curious how topics so strictly censored in formal Japanese publications breeze by as if nonexistent when crudely distributed or published in any foreign language” (Minatoya 223). Mrs. Kawai, who submitted the advertisement for the antiwar meeting, had found a space where the dominant faction could not dictate her behavior. Etsuko remarks, “To me it seems a government attitude both arrogant and naïve, although highly convenient for the public” (223). Etsuko would later utilize this “convenient” blind spot to distribute censored information—amply taking advantage of the hole in the government’s attempted containment. Etsuko and some of her women friends begin collecting international women’s magazines, which were “still not banned because of their perceived triviality” (276). As the women read about homemaking and fashion, they also looked for censored news. Etsuko recounts, “Whenever we uncovered some piece of censored news [. . .] we distributed the information” (276). Etsuko and her friends successfully subverted government controls because “as long as [we] appeared to be a gossipy group of harmless hotheaded women, the authorities mostly left [us] alone. They’d forgotten that babbling water can wear away stone” (276).

Etsuko makes this blind spot into a place from which she can mobilize her rebellion. Yet Etsuko’s actions apparently are not motivated by desires for autonomy. Rather, her actions mimic the rebellion of the *Bluestocking* group—a rebellion that, because of its publicity, drew droves of critics that would further attempt to contain them.

The privacy of Etsuko's combat is the all-important difference. Etsuko's rebellion draws followers but avoids provoking fear-motivated strategies of containment that would, in turn, provoke her to react antagonistically in order to survive. Thus, Etsuko's surreptitious step away from the government's eye maximizes her freedom by stopping the elite's further efforts to contain her.

The private space Etsuko discovers is, finally, the crucial private space of the autonomous domain, for it remains the most unfettered by strategies of containment. Privacy, however, does not comprise the whole of the autonomous domain. The terms *private* and *privacy* imply a separation from external influence—an implication that returns us to Guha's autonomous domain, where the subaltern must completely remove herself from dominant influences. But again, the elite's and subaltern's complete removal from a hybridized culture cannot occur. Even in a distant but defensive (and not necessarily destructive) hierarchy the subaltern and elite coexist, but only if both are unable to draw close to one another are their autonomous domains limited to spheres of privacy. As Bhabha suggests, because identity and meaning emerge in the boundary *between* elite and subaltern entities—where the elite and subaltern draw close—privacy or separation from the other would create an incomplete autonomy (*The Location of Culture* 2). This autonomy is incomplete because full privacy represents the refusal to acknowledge a fundamental and real aspect of both elite and subaltern identities—that of hybridity.

While permanent and full privacy will not create autonomy, neither will full immersion in hierarchical relationships. Bhabha's notion of hybridity implies a continuous immersion into the Third Space—an immersion that prevents any movement

toward the private or away from “in-between-ness.” Somehow, both elite and subaltern must learn a balancing of the private sphere with Bhabha’s immersion. Such a balancing of the two arguably results in hybridity. Otherwise, the subaltern is destined to a polar fixity of subalternity, and her autonomy is frustrated.

Separating and Immersing Privacy

Chie and Etsuko’s early relationship—a destructive hierarchy—reinforces the need for privacy when initiating the process of developing autonomy, but also suggests that more than just privacy is needed. Etsuko, as a subaltern to her elite mother, faces two severe maternal rejections that establish her relationship with Chie as one of disregard. First, after Etsuko’s birth, Chie looks at her new daughter and says, “That’s not my baby” (Minatoya 93), and sends Etsuko to be raised by a family who had recently lost a child. Second, after being raised by this second set of parents, Etsuko meets her birth mother on her tenth birthday, unaware that her adopting mother was not her “real” mother. Etsuko panics when she is presented to Chie, recalling, “I wheeled around, searching wildly for an ally, and caught sight of Chie. [. . .] She yawned and looked away. [. . .] My blood ran cold. [. . .] There was no tenderness in her body. She was like a cat stalking a squirrel: rigid with attention” (108). Following this encounter, Etsuko returns to the home she grew up in, but now with the perception that Chie, a woman from a wealthy samurai family, does not care for her.

A more noticeable containment occurs when Chie and Etsuko reunite and live together in order to raise Hanae, Chie’s granddaughter and Etsuko’s niece. Here, the two are forced into the Third Space, where the binary entities of elite and subaltern can begin

to dissolve as the parties negotiate one another. Chie's indifferent treatment of Etsuko is not immediately affected by their physical proximity. At their reunion, Etsuko sets a gift of great sentimental value at Chie's feet: a wedding mirror Chie had anonymously given to her beloved daughter Naomi, and which was similar to a mirror Etsuko had received at her wedding. But Chie does not acknowledge this gift of reconciliation, simply saying, "Take this with the other baggage." The greater slight, however, is that Chie "barely gave [Etsuko] a glance" (122). Etsuko feels the fixed, hierarchical distance between Chie and herself and says, "The mirror rested between me and Chie. Gleaming glass rose from the base of a satiny word. [. . .] Elegant and serene, it belonged to the House of Fuji. [. . .] Not I" (123). This moment marks the beginning of a tense relationship, where Chie's disregard confirms, again and again, Etsuko's subalternity. While disregard may seem to open opportunities for Etsuko to retain a private sphere for herself, Etsuko notices that she distinctly feels Chie's constraints, and has difficulty removing herself from them. For example, as Etsuko writes her autobiography, or "I-story,"²⁵ she knows she must write about Chie—an integral part of Etsuko's identity—but this proves difficult. Etsuko writes, "My History with Chie. [. . .] [T]his is the narrative point where [my "I-story"] should go. But the truth is that whenever I begin to delve into my relationship with Chie, my writing goes suddenly flat" (76). Having Etsuko's voice stiffen when she confronts Chie in her writing, Minatoya's novel suggests that passive disregard can be as containing as actively vilifying a subaltern, if not moreso. Because of the potency of such containments,

²⁵ By the 1920s, the predominant style of Japanese writing was the "I-novel," or autobiography that "attempted to re-create the psyche of the author" (Gordon 159). Etsuko describes this cultural phenomenon as a common place where the Japanese could reconcile the collision of "the self-consciousness of modernism [. . .] with the tradition of reticence" (Minatoya 11).

the subaltern may require more than simply escaping to a private sphere if she is to develop autonomy—she may need the hierarchy’s presence.²⁶

Etsuko’s “I-story” is one private sphere where Etsuko negotiates her autonomy in terms of her relationship with Chie. But first, because Etsuko identifies a moment of constraint in the supposedly private space of her “I-story,” does this mean that all private spheres of the subaltern will be contaminated by the elite’s strategy of containment? Certainly not. Up to this point in the narrative, Etsuko has reciprocated Chie’s disregard by avoiding writing about their painful history. But finally, as Etsuko realizes there is “no way around” writing about “[Her] History with Chie” (76), she begins to free herself from both the constraints Chie places on her. More significantly, perhaps, she also considers the constraints she places on Chie. Etsuko confronts her elite mother via writing in private and finds that, for the autonomous domain to be fruitful, she must use her private field for two ends. First, somewhat predictably, she must separate from her elite mother and plunge into the implications of her position in an apparently oppressive mother/daughter hierarchy. Second, she must also consider ways in which she may retain power over Chie, ways in which she may be constraining her mother, and ways in which she is effectually elite and Chie subaltern.

²⁶ There are parallels between Etsuko’s writing and Japanese women’s magazines. Despite the vilification *Bluestocking* endured, their magazine persisted to push the “new woman” standard. And, while *Bluestocking* only lived for five years (1911-1916), their call for a new womanhood spread through Japan, becoming a viable option for womanhood that firmly competed with the traditional “good wives and wise mothers” model. The elite that vilify the subaltern appear to enact a more stringent method of containment, for vilification actively asks others to suppress the subaltern. However, it appears that disregard silences the subaltern most, since the *Bluestocking* group “raises its voice” so confidently in the elite’s face (qtd. in Sievers 163), but Etsuko’s voice becomes timid in the privacy of her “I-story.”

Within the privacy of her “I-story,” Etsuko acknowledges and negotiates Chie and her strategies of containment. Etsuko also equates her “I-story” to a private, objective place where autonomy can develop. She states, “The point [of the “I-story”] isn’t so much to advance the action as to try and discern who you are” (319). But if the purpose of the “I-story” is to develop autonomy, then why is the content of Etsuko’s “I-story” surprisingly devoid of “I”? Etsuko spends most of her “I-story” observing others. This counters Guha’s belief that autonomy emerges when the subaltern separates herself from relationships of domination and then focuses on self. Etsuko demonstrates that even in her private sphere, where she has theoretically “removed” herself from external influence and can focus on herself, she depends on the absent presence of hierarchy—even destructive hierarchy—to gain autonomy. Etsuko does this as she devotes much of her “I-story” to writing about Chie, often attempting to do so from Chie’s perspective. As Etsuko assesses her efforts to understand Chie, she states, “What this might mean is that, though I can write about a more humane Chie, in real life I may begrudge her any traits beyond wry, blunt, opaque, and rejecting. [. . .] Chie may, in fact, be someone totally different! I pause and try and picture her. Hesitant? Vulnerable? Needing of others’ acceptance?” (128).

Only in Etsuko’s private imaginings does her relationship with Chie begin to become vivid. Here, Etsuko can view Chie as multi-dimensional instead of one-dimensional, or “wry, blunt, opaque, and rejecting.” Here, Etsuko also seems to think that by imagining Chie as one-dimensional, she effectually contains her mother. Thus, Etsuko’s imagined history with Chie—in the private sphere—becomes more productive for Etsuko than their “real” history. Gradually, as Etsuko opens her vision of Chie, she

helps alleviate the tension of reciprocal disregard while fostering her own autonomy, and her “real” history with Chie begins to parallel her imagined history as Etsuko gains power in both “real” and imagined hierarchies.

Etsuko recognizes that both privacy and immersion are necessary for autonomy to grow. She states, “Therein lies the purpose of human connections. They’re jarring. [. . .] They demand you pay attention to life. [. . .] We all need to be rescued sometimes, from the recesses of our too clever minds” (182). Etsuko stresses that human relationships must interfere with privacy, for privacy alone can be dangerous to the autonomous self. She credits human relationships for abating the dangers of privacy, concluding that both work to foster autonomy.

However, because Etsuko depends on Chie for her own identity, is she moving towards a genuine autonomy? Or is her quest futile and unproductive as some labeled the *Bluestocking* group’s work? Before answering such a question, we must recognize that Etsuko’s response to and utilization of strategies of containment are very different from those of the *Bluestocking* group. The *Bluestocking* group’s public displays invigorated the combative responses of those who feared its members, and such responses in turn, more and more insistently sought to contain the new woman by outlining her identity for her. That is, the new woman’s responses to strategies of containment retained an emphasis on herself, paradoxically leading to her being defined by her antagonists. Thus, her quest for autonomy—wherein she depended on others’ strategies of containment in order to respond—was grounded in a fruitless antagonism toward the other and an emphasis on the self. In contrast, Etsuko achieves much more freedom than the new woman who always had to be prepared to defend herself or to attack. Etsuko can focus on the

relationship between her mother and herself rather than constantly emphasizing—or worrying about—her own situation. She accomplishes this by initially moving away from Chie’s strategies of containment into the privacy of her “I-story”—a place where she can avoid responding antagonistically as the new woman was forced to do. After removing herself from the elite’s constraints, Etsuko then seeks to negotiate her relationship with the elite within spheres of privacy, recompensing that open antagonism towards the destructive hierarchy of her mother only limits her own autonomy. Finally, as subaltern Etsuko moves toward her mother with the intent to embrace rather than attack, she finds the move necessary for negotiating her position in the hierarchy and necessary for establishing her own autonomy.

Subaltern studies has often lamented the inability of the subaltern to gain autonomy in oppressive hierarchies, but Etsuko’s experiences demonstrate that one can find places that damaging oppression overlooks—places the subaltern can inhabit to being to develop autonomy. Instead of doubting the existence of the autonomous domain, we can change Banerjee’s question into a statement: the subaltern *can* save an autonomous space for him/herself beyond the reach of the dominant (par. 15). This space, however, is inclusive—it does not carry the assumed emphasis on “I” that often accompanies discussions of the autonomous domain. Rather, for the autonomous sphere to be fully utilized, the subaltern must take responsibility for herself as well as for others, including, somewhat paradoxically, the elite. This space beyond the dominant’s reach becomes, as the next chapter will explore, the place where both elite/subaltern and self/other can gain individual autonomy not *apart from* but *through* each other. As Bhabha states, “To dwell ‘in the beyond’ is also [. . .] to be part of a revisionary time, a

return to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality; *to touch the future on its hither side*. In that sense, then, the intervening space ‘beyond,’ becomes a space of intervention in the here and now” (10).

ENABLING THE SUBALTERN THROUGH
BENEFICENT HIERARCHIES

Hiratsuka Raichō and the “new women” of Japan’s 1910s endured the potential damage of a destructive hierarchy whose actions were motivated by fear. The new woman’s daughter of the 1920s—the “Modern Girl” [*modan garu*], or *moga*—faced similarly damaging strategies of containment; however, the *moga*, who donned flapper dresses and bobbed hair, also enjoyed a host of followers, fans, and supporters whose actions were motivated by the desire to celebrate her. These supporters furthered the existence of the *moga*—an existence threatened by those who felt she was a negative, amoral influence.²⁷ However, the power such supporters had to lift the *moga* also translated into a power that inherently contained the *moga*. Thus, the *moga* had to deal with two forms of containment: one that feared and tried to oppress her, and another that celebrated and tried to liberate her. Yet, while celebratory strategies of containment in some ways limited the *moga*, they were also an enabling force that moved the *moga* toward autonomy. As people celebrated the *moga*, she became a powerful figure who was praised for “puncturing the hypocrisy of the world where only men enjoyed economic

²⁷ Ironically, many scathing criticisms of the *moga* emerged from Japan’s new women. These intellectuals condemned the *moga* for not basing her actions on reason. One woman, among many who wrote similar critiques, wrote:

I think it is interesting to compare today’s *modern girl* with the so-called new woman who appeared more than ten years ago. The *new woman* was an enlightened woman. Her way of thinking was intellectually sound, and she was able to understand innermost problems. [. . .] The modern girl, however, has no intellectual basis for her way of thinking, tends to be concerned only with outward appearances. [. . .] She is nothing more than a fad. (qtd. in Sato 55)

Because the *moga* had “no intellectual basis” but was frequently associated with the new woman, she presented a threat to the new woman. The new woman thought the *moga* could invalidate the group’s progressive work by reducing all avant-garde feminists to self-gratifying, empty-headed rabble-rousers.

independence and sexual as well as political freedom” (Gordon 157).²⁸ Thus, her figure’s “radical break with convention offered [society] a growing spectrum of women” who represented Japanese womanhood (Sato 51).

Where destructive containment is quite clearly antagonistic to subaltern autonomy, given that such containment seeks to stunt or obliterate it, celebratory containment seeks to enable a subaltern’s development. Celebratory containment is beneficent—a containment that adopts Bhabha’s “productive capacities” of hierarchies, which become an “empowering hybridity” that creates and shapes autonomy (Ashcroft 119). In *The Strangeness of Beauty*, Chie and Etsuko’s relationship reflects a continuum of containment: their relationship begins as a destructive hierarchy, but gradually evolves to peaceful coexistence, and then becomes an enabling relationship. Chie and Etsuko’s relationship with Hanae (their granddaughter and niece, respectively) also presents a hierarchy built by beneficence. This latter hierarchy suggests that celebration-motivated containment is *not* counter to producing the self; rather, without celebratory containment, the subaltern cannot develop complete autonomy. Expressed in this way, the complementary nature of beneficent hierarchies seems to greatly benefit the subaltern, but may not appear to benefit the elite. However, as Chie and Etsuko celebrate Hanae’s

²⁸ In the 1925 edition of *Fujin Kōron* [*Women’s Review*], an intellectual women’s magazine, Kon Wajirō conducted a survey to compare men’s and women’s clothing. He wanted to know who was wearing Western clothes. The results were surprising. Of the 1,180 people Kon studied on the Ginza, 67 percent of men wore Western clothes, including suits, vests, bowler hats, and gloves. Compared to this percentage, only 1 percent of women wore Western dress, including dropped-waist dresses, high heels, spectacles, and gloves (Siliverberg, fig. 5). How, then, was the *moga* such a powerful figure? Sato states, “It is perhaps no wonder, then, that the modern girl outwardly resembling the American flapper, only one in a hundred, stood out from the crowd. [. . .] [S]he came to epitomize a shift in the history of Japanese women’s fashion. More significant, she was associated in the public mind with defiance—defiance of a lifestyle many women presumed impossible to transcend” (50-51).

growing autonomy, their own autonomy also develops, suggesting that both the elite and subaltern gain more complete and genuine autonomy through beneficent hierarchies.

The Subaltern's Autonomy through the Elite

As Etsuko demonstrates, two elements are needed for the subaltern to appropriate autonomy under containment: privacy and an openness to the elite other. Hanae, under her aunt's and grandmother's beneficent hierarchy, reinforces this idea as she seeks separation from them at the same time she depends on them to support and guide her. While Hanae, as a subaltern, does not initially restrain herself from the occasional rebellious act, she gradually develops a more permanent autonomy dependent on separation and immersion.

Separation is necessary since all hierarchies, destructive or enabling, enact inherent strategies of containment. Etsuko even confesses a tendency to contain Hanae declaring that her "intention was to detain" Hanae's innocence so that Hanae didn't miss the joy of childhood (Minatoya 72). It is important that Etsuko's strategy of containment differs from fear-motivated strategies of containment. Unlike the self-elevation that fear-motivated strategies display, Etsuko's efforts to detain Hanae are not primarily for Etsuko's pleasure or security, but for Hanae's happiness. Thus, Etsuko carries on a celebration-motivated strategy of containment focused on the subaltern rather than herself. Etsuko's words also demonstrate that, while separation is a necessary component of autonomy, immersion in a beneficent hierarchy contributes to, fosters, or even creates that same autonomy. This hierarchy creates a productive hybridity between subaltern and

elite that moves beyond mere coexistence—both subaltern and elite invest in one another and foster one another’s growth towards individuation.

At Hanae’s 1939 graduation, Hanae demonstrates how her growing autonomy is fostered by Chie and Etsuko when she delivers a short speech challenging the evening’s pro-war mood. The mayor has, throughout the evening, encouraged excitement toward the war effort by getting the crowd to chant the name of the imperial reign: “Showa.” But when Hanae takes the microphone, she reveals her developing autonomy by questioning the popular pro-war stance. She states:

Triumph can blind. We can stay a course, not because it’s just or good, but because we’re grateful it has brought us glory. [. . .] Now we are engaged in a broadening war that we say is to benefit Asia. [. . .] What I ask tonight is that each of us, in our personal and national decisions, consider our motives for acting. (366-67)

As someone yells, “Silence her,” Hanae becomes scared and begins to stumble offstage as the angry atmosphere heightens with the chant: “SILENCE! SILENCE!” Yet amid this opposition that sought to silence her, Hanae is bolstered by one voice. Chie silences the crowd by yelling, “BE PROUD, HANAE!” and then quotes Abraham Lincoln in the same tone: “TO REMAIN SILENT WHEN THEY SHOULD SPEAK MAKES COWARDS OUT OF MEN!” (367). Chie’s words loosen Hanae from the constraints the crowd places on her by trying to silence her, and gives her permission to continue in her autonomous path. By quoting Lincoln, Chie also emphasizes that one individual’s autonomy takes precedence over a dominant ideology because the autonomous individual alone is capable of challenging destructive hierarchy. While the crowd may look upon

Hanae as a reckless youth (and therefore subaltern, for they trivialize her), Chie's words tell both Hanae and the audience that all participants in a relationship of domination—and not just the elite—carry weight in determining not only personal identity but the larger character of the culture itself.

Even with her guardian's encouragement, Hanae remains uncertain that her speech represents her autonomy. Etsuko compliments Hanae's speech, calling it "brave and true," but Hanae disagrees. She exclaims, "But it *wasn't*! It was just words, the kind of things I've heard from Mrs. Ito and the others. Don't you see? It wasn't me. That speech wasn't really *mine*!" Etsuko reaches to hold Hanae tight, seeing "self-doubt ravage [Hanae's] features like an explosive tossed at her dreams." Etsuko wants to reassure Hanae's concerns about her autonomy and says, "It *was* you! [. . .] *You* sent those words into the air! Your genuine impulse!" (370). Again, in a moment of crisis, the elite mother-figure "saves" her subaltern charge from the despair that accompanies autonomy's potential failure. Instead, Etsuko reminds Hanae that autonomy does *not* mean complete originality or separation from others, but in fact depends upon others, like Mrs. Ito.

Still, as the subaltern depends on others, immersing herself in a hierarchical relationship, she risks being dominated by containment. Thus, the subaltern must find hierarchies that will celebrate her autonomy, foster it, and allow her room to choose her autonomous path—not hierarchies that seek to maintain themselves at her expense.

The Elite's Autonomy through the Subaltern

While the subaltern may risk domination by the elite when she immerses herself in hierarchy, the elite also risk their privileged position, potentially “being rendered finite by the presence of the [subaltern] Other” (Chakrabarty 275). Why, then, should the elite risk their benefits through acting in behalf of the subaltern? As Etsuko and Chie learn, they too must continue developing autonomy through separation and immersion.

Having taken on the role of surrogate mother to Hanae when Hanae's mother died, Etsuko knows the risks and sacrifices that accompany immersing the self in a beneficent hierarchy. She knows her new role will require her to be “rendered finite” because of her responsibility to Hanae. Despite this, Etsuko realizes that, as much as she would like to “detain” Hanae in childhood, her larger hope is to see Hanae develop autonomy. She states, “And maybe *that* was my answer, my own genuine impulse. Forcing me to suddenly want what [Hanae] wanted—her adulthood, her belief in herself—much more savagely than I wanted to keep her” (370-71).

Because of this hope, Etsuko takes on an elite role that requires sacrifice. Etsuko's efforts to foster Hanae's autonomy reduce the time Etsuko has for herself. However, her sacrifice in embracing the title and role of mother does not diminish her own identity, but allows it to blossom. Etsuko compares her role as mother to the *kuroko* role in Kabuki theater, where the *kuroko* is the black-clad assistant who helps another actor perform his role in the drama. The *kuroko*, Etsuko says, is “meant to provide unobtrusive assistance” and “remain in the wings” (148)—the ultimate role of the *kuroko* and mother “is to support the *real* players of life's dramas” (148). This metaphor highlights immersion into

the hierarchy, even suggesting, perhaps, that Etsuko's weighty new role could subsume her by always keeping her in shadow.

But does immersion into the hierarchy mean that the subaltern's autonomy is wholly contained within it? No, for Etsuko realizes she "can't rely on [Hanae] for [her] meaning" (357). She discovers this when Chie and Etsuko decide to return Hanae to America and her father. As Chie and Etsuko reflect on this difficult separation, Chie laments, "What a thing love has turned out to be! Nothing but loss after loss" (356). While Chie's "loss" refers to Hanae's physical separation from them, it also represents the "loss" of a hierarchical relationship where the elite and subaltern have been immersed in celebrating one another. No longer will Chie and Etsuko have such an active role in guiding Hanae—and no longer will their identity be placed at the apex of the mother/child hierarchy. Instead, they will have to reconstruct their identities under a new family model.

Etsuko responds to Chie's lament with an exclamation: "Not loss, *gain!*" (356). Even though Etsuko has, in many ways, relied on Hanae to shape her own identity as woman and mother, she concludes the necessary separation from Hanae will finally complement her identity (and presently, Hanae's identity as well). Chie has told Etsuko earlier that she should "find your own purpose if you want to love wisely. Don't expect that to come from another" (355), suggesting that celebratory hierarchies, with the subaltern and elite highly dependent on one another in the shaping of their respective autonomy, should not view such dependence or hierarchical immersion as permanent. To sustain their autonomy, there must eventually be some form of separation.

The necessity of separation in celebratory hierarchies indicates the fluid nature of relationships; the goal of the elite and subaltern is *not* always to cling to such relationships, but to enable both immersion and eventual separation. Etsuko observes the transitory nature of immersion and separation in familial (and celebratory) hierarchies as she describes individuals as planets and families as solar systems. She states, “Like members of a solar system we move along our individual orbits. [. . .] Familiar and mysterious, necessary and useless. Trusted, even when not visible, to be there” (330). Because each planet has “different climates and needs [. . .] we can do nothing beyond sending up lantern flashes and Morse code clicking” (330). Here, Etsuko underscores the distance between one individual and another—a distance that is not closed by dragging the other into one’s orbit. Rather, Etsuko acquiesces that one’s immersion in a relationship with the other must end in some kind of separation. She states:

Knowing full well our powerlessness to prevent our loved ones from straying into traffic, from having hearts broken, from being taken away to war—we circle round. Flashing and clicking and stitching our sen’ninbari: hoping our loved ones will glance toward the sky and find in our coded communications some warning and warming beacon. (330-31)

Etsuko finds that the impulse to drag the subaltern into her orbit is a futile effort of containment that incapacitates Bhabha’s “productive capacities” of hierarchies. These efforts of constant containment equate to negative and stumbling steps backward, for they hinder both parties’ movements toward autonomy. The most Etsuko can do is extend herself to the other, hoping that the other will engage in a returned celebration of

hierarchy confirming that containment is *not* counter to producing the self, but that, in fact, without beneficent containment one cannot be made whole.

The Balancing Power of Beneficence in Destructive Hierarchies

So far, I have displayed a rather neat continuum of destructive through beneficent hierarchies, but rarely is this continuum so neatly evident in real life. When Hanae gives her graduation speech, one hierarchy, the crowd, tries to silence her voice, while another hierarchy, Chie, encourages Hanae's expression. As Etsuko and Chie protect Hanae from the damaging limitations of destructive hierarchies, their example suggests that people and groups simultaneously experience or live within—or are responsible to—multiple hierarchies.

Similarly, Etsuko's relationship with her husband, Tadao, depicts how beneficent hierarchies provide balance in the face of destructive hierarchies, allowing the subaltern to continue moving toward autonomy. Upon arriving in Seattle, Etsuko and Tadao face many disappointments. No employer is willing to avail himself of Tadao's skills as an airplane engineer and Tadao is left to take a job as a cook on a fishing boat. Seattle does not have the "international dynamism" Etsuko and Tadao expected and their first view of the city is one of "eroding hills stubbled with severed tree trunks, the fish offal in the harbor—the mud and guts that were much of Seattle" (31). Most importantly, with Seattle businessmen in the process of forming the Anti-Japanese League, "it became clear to [Etsuko] that she wouldn't be going anywhere first-class" (31). Thus, Etsuko and Tadao enter a largely destructive hierarchy motivated by fear of the Japanese. Yet Etsuko and Tadao have each other. While their relationship is egalitarian rather than hierarchical,

their beneficent treatment toward each other works toward the end of developing mutual autonomy. Etsuko finds herself elevated from the oppression of destructive hierarchy through Tadao's optimism. Tadao says of her, "You're cannier than you let show. It grants you a great deal of freedom" to which Etsuko reflects, "The statement seemed a total misconception—but I had heard the word 'freedom,' a word I'd never associated with myself. And it awakened a kind of ambition" (25). Within a dual setting of destruction and beneficence, Etsuko receives permission to be free, and this permission enables her to respond in a non-reactionary manner to the domination surrounding her and to continue her pursuit of autonomy. In turn, Etsuko's own canny nature inspires Tadao to act against Japanese tradition that placed the husband over his wife, and so both become freed from the constraints of their society.

As the previous chapter argued, the subaltern *can* find autonomy even under destructive hierarchies and without the presence of beneficent hierarchies. But this form of autonomy is not ideal—nor is it complete, for such autonomy either provokes greater containment or requires the subaltern to remain in hiding. The presence of beneficent hierarchies allows the subaltern to openly separate from and immerse herself in relationships with others. Through such hierarchies, the elite are also granted similar openness and freedom. Thus, beneficent hierarchies become the ideal relationship fostering both elite and subaltern autonomy and naturally carrying both toward individuation and wholeness.

To subaltern studies, the term beneficent hierarchy is a misnomer because any form of containment suppresses rather than enables subaltern autonomy. This view persists because subaltern studies has promoted Guha's conclusion that the elite gain

autonomy through domination and the subaltern through resistance. Thus, even though subaltern studies has tried to act in the role of benevolent elite by nurturing the subaltern's "class consciousness and effective political action" (Arnold 28), its efforts to "teach the oppressed of today how to be the democratic subject of tomorrow" (Chakrabarty 273) render the subaltern's autonomy a closed or static condition—the subaltern can only be "autonomous" if she fits the rebellious and individualist mold.

However, because in any real-life situation the elite and subaltern both exhibit countless behaviors that do *not* reflect either domination or resistance, subaltern studies has limited its goal to "recover [the subaltern's] place in history" to a few privileged subalterns (Guha, "The Prose" 84). This is not to say subaltern studies is not aware of various subaltern behaviors and their potential to reflect or influence autonomy; nevertheless, by privileging subaltern and elite behaviors of resistance and domination, subaltern studies has endorsed the perspective that hierarchies must necessarily oppress the subaltern. Japan's new woman of the 1910s and her 1920s daughter, the *moga*, substantiate such endorsement: both groups responded *against* repression. However, the rebellions of the new woman and *moga* were not simply liberating moments of autonomy, they were also limiting moments that induced greater repression. If not for the groups that celebrated such figures, the new woman and *moga* may not have persevered in reestablishing the hierarchy of Japanese womanhood. Instead, their moments of rebellion may have been merely short, intense flames of autonomy that were quickly quenched, thus constituting "stories of failure" (Banerjee, par. 11).

As the new woman and *moga* provoked a wide spectrum of strategies of containment (some fear-motivated, others celebration-motivated), their example also

challenged the view of containment and hierarchy as polar fixities, point instead to the understanding that containment and hierarchy are fluid entities that shift and change as both elite and subaltern develop autonomy. Subaltern studies needs to examine these places of change without enforcing Spivak's "epistemic violence" on the subaltern ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 2197). Instead, they must adopt Chakrabarty's openness that requires subaltern studies to relinquish its "benevolent" hold on the subaltern and "go to the subaltern in order to learn" (274). Chakrabarty asks the elite "to allow the subaltern position to challenge [their] conceptions of what is universal, to be open to the possibility of a particular thought world, [. . .] being rendered finite by the presence of the Other" (275).

But Chakrabarty's openness goes only halfway. In Chakrabarty's world, the elite ideally become open to rethinking *their* own world, to challenging *their* own assumptions, and to creating *their* own autonomy more wholly—a formula essentially requiring the elite's emphasis to remain on themselves. By focusing on the elite self, the elite arguably stunt what Bhabha calls the "productive capacities" (see Ashcroft 119) inherent in celebration-motivated hierarchies. Thus, subaltern studies must learn to enable Bhabha's "empowering hybridity" that focuses on the naturally "productive capacities" of the hybrid's in-between space (Ashcroft 119). Bhabha states:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory . . . may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of

cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. (qtd. in Ashcroft 119, ellipsis in original)

While Bhabha's theory of hybridization promotes an existence rather than an action, we can translate hybridization's incapacitation into action. The phrase "willingness to descend" suggests that the elite must risk their position to the subaltern; likewise, the subaltern must also risk being dominated as they too descend into "that alien territory." With both parties entering into a contract of beneficent hybridity, they also enter into a sphere with the greatest capacity to produce autonomy.

The new form of hierarchy which I forward here supports Spivak's "theory of change" (Spivak, "Introduction" 4). As Spivak suggests, subaltern studies (and any hierarchical relationship) needs to move its focus from shaping the subaltern's autonomy to establishing a "theory of change" allowing the subaltern to develop autonomy. Rather than seeing the subaltern as an "object of their strategies" (Chatterjee 9), the elite must consider the "compatibility of subaltern autonomy with elite domination" (Arnold 36). Through this new vision of compatibility, three steps for attaining autonomy within a relationship of domination emerge: 1) one must first accept that containment is inherently connected to hierarchy, 2) one must find spheres for developing autonomy within hierarchy, and 3) one must use resulting relationships to enable others' freedom.

In Minatoya's *The Strangeness of Beauty*, the relationship among three generations of Japanese women presents a microcosm of these three steps. Set as a foil against the novel's historical backdrop on Japan in the 1920s, the novel's three central characters demonstrate that even in celebratory hierarchies, containment still exists; that even in destructive hierarchies, one may still create autonomy by at once separating from

and immersing oneself in the elite other's containment; and finally, that celebratory hierarchies provide the ideal setting for both elite and subaltern autonomy. In the end, Minatoya's novel demonstrates that not only is subaltern autonomy on the line, but so too is the elite's.

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