

Speaking Intersectionally

Disability, Ethnicity, and (Non-)Representation in Kin Kakuei's Kogoeru kuchi

As I have argued up to this point, Zainichi and colonial Korean writers faced a set of representational impossibilities as a result of the intersectional nature of colonization by a non-Western empire and the imbrications of Japanese and American imperialisms. Yi Kwangsu's innovations toward a modern Korean literature, Kim Saryang's attempts to bring Korean literature to the world, and Kim Sôkpôm's project of carving out space for Korean-language fiction in Japan all arise out of the contradictions inherent in this intersection. However, the writers examined thus far ultimately did little to problematize the internal coherence of the literary categories within which they were writing—colonial, Korean, or Zainichi.

By contrast, the writers I take up in the second half of the book worked within a more obviously fraught relationship to the genre of Zainichi literature and the Zainichi community itself. One of the earliest writers to turn a critical eye toward the political project of Zainichi literature after its emergence in postwar Japan was Kin Kakuei.¹ As with Yi Yangji and Yû Miri, the subjects of the following chapters, the tension between Kin and the Zainichi literary establishment arises from his marginalized position *within* the Zainichi community. Both Yi and Yû have been accused of subordinating ethnic concerns to issues of gender, but in Kin's case it is the disabled rather than the gendered body that undermines the Zainichi nationalist narrative of a cohesive minority community.² In this chapter, I explore the representational conundrums arising at the intersection of disability and ethnicity through a reading of Kin Kakuei's *Kogoeru kuchi* (*Frozen Mouth*, 1966).

The rise to prominence of writers like Kin, who foregrounded axes of identity aside from Zainichi ethnicity, coincided with a broader contestation over political representation of the Zainichi community. Kin's career began in the late 1960s, on

the heels of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and South Korea that was brokered by the United States. The mass demonstrations opposing the terms of the treaty were at the time the largest since the Anpo protests in 1960.³ The movement brought together a diverse coalition: Japanese leftists and progressives opposed the talks on the grounds of its further entrenchment of US Cold War interests in the region (with the escalating war in Vietnam in the background) and viewed the mobilization as a practice run for the renewal of Anpo approaching in 1970, while Zainichi Koreans on both sides of the ideological thirty-eighth parallel decried their lack of representation in the negotiation process itself.

Members of the North Korean-aligned General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chōngryōn) naturally objected to the recognition of South Korea as the only legitimate state on the peninsula. Meanwhile, dissidents within the South Korean-aligned Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan) faulted the Park Chung Hee regime's overly accommodating bargaining posture, which capitulated on issues of war responsibility and reparations in exchange for economic aid from Japan. South Korean negotiators also excluded Zainichi representatives from the process and failed to prioritize their demands. Nevertheless, the normalization treaty, signed in 1965, did allow Zainichi Koreans to obtain passports by applying for South Korean citizenship. As this option provided more stability and freedom than the travel documents issued by Chōngryōn, the late 1960s saw a massive shift from *Chōsen-seki* status to *Kankoku-seki*, and an accompanying influx of membership from Chōngryōn to Mindan, which became the consular apparatus for South Korean nationals in Japan. At the same time, Japan's acknowledgment of only the southern regime further entrenched the division of the peninsula and dimmed hopes for timely reunification—the condition for a happy return from exile, which was originally the ultimate goal of both Chōngryōn and Mindan. Thus, not only was the organizational structure of Zainichi politics fracturing and shifting, the peninsular orientation of both organizations was becoming increasingly obsolete as the younger generation demanded representation that acknowledged the overwhelming likelihood of continued division and an ongoing Korean presence in Japan. With generational, political, and intersectional fault lines forming across the Zainichi community, the 1960s witnessed a bitter fight over who could claim the legitimate right to speak for the Zainichi.

Kin Kakuei's fiction-writing career sits atop all these fault lines. Born in 1938 in Gunma Prefecture and educated at the University of Tokyo, he is situated solidly within the "second generation" and frequently mentioned alongside Kim Sōkpōm and Ri Kaisei as one of a trifecta of canonical Zainichi writers from this transitional era. However, whereas Kim and Ri were embraced by the Zainichi intellectual establishment due to their commitment to Korean ethnonationalism in diaspora—what John Lie calls "Zainichi ideology"—Kin's reputation would have to be rehabilitated by later critics taking issue with Zainichi nationalism.⁴

Rather than focusing on the ethnonationalist politics of the Zainichi collective, Kin's work is largely concerned with the issue of stuttering, which the author himself struggled with until he took his own life in 1985.

In fact, the specific accusation lobbed at Kin (and many of the similarly anti-nationalist writers who followed him) was that his writing failed to transcend the personal and achieve an "ethnic consciousness" (*minzoku ishiki*). One contemporary critic compared Kin unfavorably to Ri Kaisei precisely by arguing that the main difference between the two lies in their attention to the personal versus the collective. Whereas Ri is ostensibly concerned with both the personal and the political, Kin's work is concerned first and foremost with "whatever is inside himself, in his case the stutter, but in the same way that if someone were born with a toothache that went on for twenty years, he could never face an external problem without first dealing with the toothache."⁵ Even more favorable assessments of Kin's work see his contribution to Zainichi literature as a reassertion of the personal, as opposed to the collective.⁶

In *Kogoeru kuchi*, his best-known work, Kin engages directly with the dichotomy of personal versus political in the context of the normalization talks. In the words of the story's protagonist, Sai, a stutterer like the author himself:⁷

To tell the truth, the South Korea–Japan talks are a secondary problem to me. It's the stutter that I have to deal with first and foremost, the stutter that is the most pressing problem holding me back. Compared to that, the South Korea–Japan talks, and not only that but all political problems—no, not just political problems but any problems besides the stutter—barely feel like problems at all.⁸

Here Kin (or at least his fictional alter ego) would seem to agree with both his critics and his champions: that he is not a political figure if the only possible subject of politics is the nation-state.

This fissuring of personal from political (qua national) is ironic when read in juxtaposition with the national allegory discussion in the previous chapter. The question of whether Kin's narratives can even be reduced to the personal in the first place—rather than being inevitably co-opted by the collective—has interesting implications for the framing of Zainichi literature as "third-world," "minor," or even "ethnic." The uneasiness with Kin from the standpoint of Zainichi ideology dovetails neatly with the supposed inevitability of national allegory by being the exception that proves the rule. That is, thinly veiled behind every critique of Kin's work as overly "personal" is the implication that his fiction is *too Japanese*, too assimilated, insufficiently Zainichi. If Kin's work is decidedly not allegorical of a collective, then it is no longer a Zainichi narrative, but instead belongs to the colonizer.

However, in Kin's case, the personal is shorthand for disability, which can hardly be divorced from politics. Kin's narratives of stuttering are, if not dismissed as merely personal, read as allegories for ethnic subjugation and the obstacles

to “speaking” from a minority position.⁹ In this way, a circular logic emerges whereby any personal narrative written within the rubric of Zainichi literature is inevitably read as transcending the personal and becoming representative of the collective, even as attempts to represent collectives other than the Zainichi (as ethnonation) are *depoliticized* and reduced to the personal, ergo trivial. This incoherence embedded in the hermeneutics of representation forecloses the possibility of an intersectional narrative.

As such, I argue in this chapter that Kin’s response to this structural incoherence is to take a pessimistic outlook toward representation itself as a path to solidarity and personal or political liberation. Instead, he looks to the body. By focusing on the embodied nature of speech, we can see how the disruption of normative speech might actually enable alternative, non-representational modes of articulating difference and building relationality. Crucially, these radical alternatives, as well as the representational impossibilities from which they emerge, are only visible through an intersectional lens, acknowledging the politics of disability as they interact with ethnic and language politics at the site of the speaking—or especially the silent—body.

THE IMMATERIAL BODY

Kin’s *Kogoeru kuchi* exemplifies intersectional incoherence by weaving a complex web of human connections mediated not only by ethnicity and disability, but also gender and sexuality. The novel begins by introducing Sai, a graduate student in chemistry. This biographical detail, like his stuttering, overlaps with that of the author.¹⁰ The day the novel takes place, Sai has to give a research presentation, which ends in failure when he loses control of his stutter. Feeling depressed, Sai reminisces about his Japanese friend Isogai, also a stutterer, who has died by suicide. The narrative then flashes back to Sai’s first meeting with Isogai and recounts their friendship, up until Sai receives Isogai’s suicide letter. The letter then takes over the narrative, flashing back yet again to Isogai’s turbulent childhood, when his battered mother found comfort in the arms of a Korean paramour, coincidentally also named Sai. When the affair is discovered, Isogai’s mother throws herself on the train tracks. In his depression, Isogai begins to visit a prostitute, and develops a sexually transmitted infection as well as tuberculosis. Before the illness can claim his life, he chooses to end it himself. Isogai concludes his personal confession by asking Sai to look after his sister, Michiko. The narrative then shifts back to Sai’s perspective in the present day, where he heads from the lab to Michiko’s apartment, and it is revealed that they are now dating. The novel ends as Sai and Michiko finally have sex.

One of the most conspicuous aspects of the novel, aside from this complex nested structure, is its constant references to the physical body. The word *shintai* (身体, body) occurs repeatedly throughout the text, not to mention the abundance

of references to parts of the body, particularly those involved in producing speech: the chest (*mune*), the throat (*nodo*), and of course the mouth (*kuchi*) of the title. While many of these references describe bodily sensations related to the central character's emotional state, the most conspicuous of these phrases are the ones describing the physiological aspects of his stutter as part of the main thread of the narrative. Much of the novel's treatment of stuttering hinges on whether the stutter is an impairment of the body or the mind, and to what extent its physical and mental aspects can be disentangled from each other.

On the one hand, the narrator makes it clear that his stutter is not only a psychological problem, but that there are physical properties to it as well. In the opening chapter he describes his disability as follows: "My thoughts don't translate smoothly into words. I can't say anything easily. I'm not saying I can't psychologically, it's that I physically can't" (13). Hence, perhaps, the emphasis on the body throughout the text. Whatever traits of personality, social position, or mental state might create obstacles to Sai's speaking, he emphasizes that these are not what ultimately create the impediment. It is not, in other words, in his head. The stutter is grounded in the material reality of the body.

This is not to say that Sai's stutter, or stuttering in general (according to him), does not have non-physical causes. He explains:

In certain atmospheres, I have trouble—stutterers have trouble saying anything at all. When we try to voice our thoughts, no sound comes out. Even the stutterer himself doesn't understand why this happens. In such an atmosphere, the mind and body (*shinshin*, 心身) grow tense. This tension exerts a sort of influence over the diaphragm, the vocal chords, the throat, the tongue, the lips, and other organs related to breathing and speaking, causing a kind of cramping, and that is most likely what blocks the voice from coming out (14).

It is worth noting here that Sai conflates his own experience of stuttering with that of stutterers (*kitsuonsha*) in general. He starts the first sentence making himself the subject (*boku wa*), then immediately stops and expands the subject to be categorical (*kitsuonsha wa*). With this move, he creates a collectivity based on shared bodily experience, with himself as its representative. What follows sounds scientific, like a description of stuttering in medical terms. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether this description is actually generalizable or merely extrapolated from Sai's personal experience. Ironically, whereas this medical explanation of stuttering lends it a kind of authority to apply generally to all stutterers, its emphasis on the body makes the process described impenetrably personal. It happens within Sai's body and is thus inaccessible to anyone outside. The body is at once the grounds for universalization and for irreducible differentiation. From the outset, then, Kin's emphasis on the body is a way of exposing the contradictions at the heart of broader Zainichi debates over the personal and the political, the individual and the collective, and the irreconcilable representational tensions between the two.

Tobin Siebers outlines a similar problem in one of the foundational texts of disability studies, “Tender Organs, Narcissism, and Identity Politics.” In this essay, Siebers advocates for the recognition of disability as a basis for social identity. In doing so, he notes the difficulty of mobilizing a disabled collective when the discourse surrounding disability remains focused on medical solutions to individualized problems rather than the struggle for rights of disabled people as a coalition, largely because disability is so thoroughly bound up with narcissism in cultural narratives.¹¹ In other words, the popular stereotypical perception of people with disabilities sees them as overwhelmingly and exclusively concerned with the self—once again reducing disability to mere personal (as opposed to political) matter. According to Siebers, it is this perceived link between disability and narcissism that renders an identity politics of disability so difficult to form:

The association between narcissism and disability makes it almost impossible to view people with disabilities as anything other than absolutely different from each other. Physical and mental disability are more difficult to overcome than prejudices against race and sex not only because people are less likely to identify with a blind person, for example, but because the perception of the individual with a disability is antithetical to the formation of political identity—which is to say that individuality itself is disabled for political use in the case of people with disabilities.¹²

While I am not certain disability is “more difficult to overcome” than racism or sexism—all three are intersectionally constituted—the idea that disability is difficult to collectivize when viewed as an experience of the individualized body certainly resonates with Kin’s writing and its reception. Rather than as its own form of political identification, disability in Kin’s life and work is viewed as something that can only differentiate his granular individual experience from Zainichi politics. Only the ethnic aspects of identity can be connected to such a politics. However, this difficulty in reconciling individual and collective concerns is not limited to disability. In fact, it calls to mind one of the central tenets of intersectional analysis of race and gender: not only are both categories internally heterogeneous, but any deviance in experience from the imagined normative representative of such a category is dismissed as a personal matter, not relevant to the collective.¹³ Even outside the realm of disability politics, a model that grounds itself in the body and examines the impacts of intersecting identity hierarchies thereupon exposes the violence of single-axis frameworks.

On the other hand, returning to the novel, after thoroughly situating Sai’s stutter in the body at the outset, *Kogoeru kuchi* goes on to exhibit a slippage, attributing the stutter to mental or often atmospheric factors rather than portraying it in terms of the body. This slippage arises in part because of a slippage in Sai’s actual stutter, which disappears and reappears depending on the context. In the stressful environment of Sai’s research presentation, he is able to speak without stuttering at all until about halfway through the talk, when his concentration is broken by a single

difficult word. Despite having read pages of complicated scientific material (several paragraphs of which are reproduced in the text), Sai finds the word “tetrahydrofuran” (*tetorahidorofuran*) almost impossible to pronounce without stuttering. (Many readers, I imagine, can sympathize.) Once that barrier is broken, Sai enters a vicious cycle in which his stuttering makes him more nervous, and his nervousness makes him stutter all the more. In this scene, the only lengthy mimetic reproduction of Sai’s speech in the text, the physical aspects of his stutter are barely mentioned. The focus is squarely on his emotional state and its effect on the quality of his speech. In other words, the stutter originates from a nervous energy in Sai’s mind which then manifests itself on the body, rather than the other way around. This dynamic seems to be confirmed by the fact that Sai never stutters in front of Isogai, with whom he feels at ease: in the absence of the fear of stuttering, Sai’s stutter ceases to exist.

In this way, the actual functioning of Sai’s stutter over the course of the text conforms less to his initial physiologically grounded description of his impairment, and more to the qualified version of that description that follows shortly thereafter: “If a word feels difficult to say, it’s fair to say I almost always stutter. Or perhaps I stutter *because* a word feels difficult to say. Perhaps it is this feeling that a word is difficult to say that manipulates my organs into hindering my speech” (16). He continues, “In my case, the stutter was not just a stutter anymore, but had become a neurosis” (16). Here the narrator particularizes his own stutter, as opposed to earlier descriptions generalizing it to represent all cases of stuttering. Rather than a strictly physiological process observable across any number of equivalent stuttering bodies, the narrator’s stutter is now a product of his unique psyche, which, according to the conceits of the novel, is never fully transmittable to the outside world. Kin quickly establishes the experience of stuttering as something incommensurable itself, even as the stutter is, if not the cause for, then at least a metaphor for incommensurability in general.

Indeed, the trope of disability is often interpreted metaphorically. In “Impaired Body as Colonial Trope,” Kyeong-Hee Choi notes the proliferation of images of disabled bodies within colonial-period Korean literature, particularly in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴ Choi interprets these bodies in texts from this period as a trope standing for the incomplete text and the silenced author within a disabling colonial censorship regime:

I view the trope of disability as a metaphor linking the character, the writer, and the text: the character, the literally ‘ill-formed,’ who is hampered by an environment that imposes material and conceptual limits; the writer, as disabled as his or her main character by the constraint of censorship imposed from without and internalized within; and finally, the censored literary work that is impaired, like both its creator and its protagonist, as a textual body.¹⁵

While this schema offers a productive mode for reading colonial Korean texts written under the eye of the censor, it follows a trend in criticism of narratives

of impairment wherein disability is seen as a mode of narrating every marginal identity other than itself. This tends to elide any serious discussion of *disability* as a social category that intersects with colonialism.

Even outside (post)colonial contexts, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder have theorized a similar interpretive trap with respect to disability, which they call “narrative prosthesis.”¹⁶ Narrative prosthesis refers to the notion that literary narratives constantly depend on disability as a means of representing difference. According to Mitchell, this is the necessary condition for the telling of all stories, which “operate out of a desire to compensate for a limitation or to reign in excessiveness. This narrative approach to difference identifies the literary object par excellence as that which has somehow become out of the ordinary—a deviation from a widely accepted cultural norm.”¹⁷ However, even as disability functions as a metaphor for any number of modes of social difference, it is almost never recognized as disability itself.

Literature borrows the potency of the lure of difference that a socially stigmatized condition provides. Yet the reliance on disability in narrative rarely develops into a means of identifying people with disabilities as a disenfranchised cultural constituency. The ascription of absolute singularity to disability performs a contradictory operation: a character stands out as a result of an attributed blemish, but this exceptionality disqualifies the character from possessing a shared social identity.¹⁸

That is to say, the specificity of disability is erased as the disabled body is put into the service of representing every other type of difference.

Here intersectionality acts as an important check on the temptation to read a disabled Korean body as standing in for a colonially “disabled” Korea. To the extent that we read such a body in text *as* a body, then it is necessarily both disabled and Korean. Or, as Paula-Irene Villa writes, “Embodiment is *per se* intersectional in its form . . . it exceeds any categorical frame.”¹⁹ The body is the site at which the impacts of Japanese and Western imperialisms, as well as social hierarchies within the Zainichi community itself, are felt. As such, the allegorized disabled body is inherently intersectional: it stands for some other form of difference, but cannot escape the reality of disability. A reading grounded in the body is thus more equipped to navigate around the homogenizing logic of identity categories, including disability.

Reading Sai’s stutter as a metaphor for ethnic disempowerment, then, is not only an oversimplification of the novel’s complex intertwined modes of difference and belonging, but also contributes to the erasure of disability itself as one such mode. If the stuttering body is meant to “represent” the repressed state of being Zainichi, then it necessarily imagines Zainichi as a collective to which many *metaphorically* disabled members can comfortably belong. But ironically, it is Sai’s *actual* disability that prevents his ethnic belonging. Only by attending to the intersection of ethnicity, disability, and other modes of identification is it possible to

stage a critique of “Zainichi-ness” as the putative norm from which bodies can deviate. This, in turn, allows for a foregrounding of the fundamentally unstable and relational location of center and margin, revealing the inevitable reduction of any single-axis narrative of marginality to a retrenchment of the center it orbits.

At the same time, focusing on the body both brings intersectionality to the fore and reveals the particular representational conundrums of disability. For instance, the erasure of disability as a category of social difference is only one part of the problem with narrative prosthesis. As Mitchell explains, once a physical impairment has set a narrative in motion, the actual limitations imposed by the disability in question can be largely ignored: “The identification of deficiency inaugurates the need for a story but then is quickly forgotten once the difference is established.”²⁰ *Kogoeru kuchi* adheres to this pattern. In its prosthetic function, the stutter marks Isogai and Sai with an aberrance that necessitates the story’s telling—not only for the reader of Kin Kakuei’s text, but also for Sai, the reader of Isogai’s text within the text. Sai meets Isogai for the first time during self-introductions in one of his university classes, and states that “it was because he stuttered [that I noticed him]. If he hadn’t stuttered, I probably would have forgotten his name, would never have given it a second thought, just as I could have cared less about the rest of my classmates’ names” (45–46). Notably, in Isogai’s confession, he singles out the same moment, recalling that he remembered Sai’s name in particular because it was a Korean name, and because he had known another man named Sai (65). Here we see ethnicity acting as the marker of difference that prosthetically enables the narrative in direct parallel with Isogai’s stuttering.

Nevertheless, once Isogai’s difference is established, his stutter plays no role at all in propelling his story forward. He mentions that he has always struggled with the stutter at the beginning of his letter to Sai, but afterward continues with the story of his family’s dysfunction and eventual shattering, and on to his own mental and physical breakdown, leading to his suicide, without ever mentioning his speech again. In fact, even outside the letter, it is easy to forget Isogai’s stutter exists, as it is never mimetically represented in the text. Whereas Sai’s speech is occasionally marked with the use of extra punctuation, such as commas and ellipses occupying the space of the pauses, Isogai’s stutter is mentioned only at the diegetic level. Readers never learn what, if any, effect Isogai’s stuttering has on his day-to-day life or relationships. Once Isogai is presented as an object of interest, his stutter becomes a non-factor in the development of his character and the plot of the story in general. His disability starts the narrative, but then plays no part in it—another sense in which disability in the novel is able to represent anything but itself.

But in a perhaps overly literal sense, how could disability ever represent itself in text? Insofar as impairment is a physical reality of the body, it will always remain somewhat uncaptured by textual representation, as with actual speech. In fact, because the textual body is not a body at all, a textual disability never actually disables the body. This slippage is visible in *Kogoeru kuchi*, wherein Isogai’s stuttering

voice is translated into text that is completely stripped of the mark of difference. As noted above, Sai's "voice" is sometimes punctuated in a way that reproduces the stutter, but the very inconsistency of this mechanic reinforces the inconsistency of Sai's stutter itself. Both stutters seem to vanish any time it is convenient for the narrative. Ironically, within the narrow bounds of Kin's text, the stutter as disability serves in almost all instances to *enable* the stuttering character to speak. That is, it allows them to form the human connections that they repeatedly lament their inability to achieve. Although the disability is deployed to conjure the mark of difference, it never produces actual disability—and indeed, never could.

Reading *Kogoeru kuchi* in this light has the potential, in turn, to complicate Mitchell and Snyder's schema of narrative prosthesis. In discussing disability as the central metaphor that allows for the expression of difference, Mitchell states that "the corporeal metaphor offers narrative the one thing it cannot possess—an anchor in materiality. Such a process embodies what I term the materiality of metaphor."²¹ However, it must be emphasized here that this materiality is an oxy-moron, as it is to the end a strictly imagined materiality. The textual body can have no disability that is not strictly discursive. While the text can create an illusion of grounding in the material body, the actual body is always displaced, existing in a space the text can only posit. Its paradoxically immaterial substance supplies a medium for radical non-representation. The very inaccessibility of the body in text offers an alternative to speech, a rejection of its representational burdens.

CONFESSION AS IDENTIFICATION

Perhaps the quintessential representational burden in the canon of modern Japanese literature is the task of writing the self, a project no less impossible on its face than reproducing the body in text. Nevertheless, *Kogoeru kuchi*, like many works of canonical Japanese fiction, revolves around acts of confession and self-revelation.²² In fact, Kin's novel is structured around at least two extended confessions: Isogai's letter to Sai revealing his backstory and the reasons for his suicide, and the narrator's revelation (to the reader) of his internal struggle with stuttering. A third confession—the confession that Sai wants to make to Isogai but never actually carries out—also haunts the narrative, its possibility foreclosed from the outset. This contradictory desire to confess but inability to do so exists alongside a paradox of identification. That is, how can Sai identify himself to Isogai as a stutterer when he never actually stutters in his presence? Is he a stutterer at all, to Isogai? And if not, was there any concealed identity to confess in the first place? There is an inherently relational and intersectional quality to the process of identification that can be glimpsed by unpacking the various ways in which *Kogoeru kuchi* identifies characters specifically as "stutterers" (*kitsuonssha*).

In the first instance of such an identification, the narrator, addressing the reader, declares that he is a stutterer. Because the text is our only window into

the reality of its world, his statements do not simply reveal a reality of which he has privileged knowledge; they create that reality in the very moment he reveals it. In other words, the narrator's confessions of identity are the only mode through which his identity comes into being. For a substantial portion of the novel, his statement that he is a stutterer is the reader's only way of identifying the narrator at all, since he does not "confess" to being Korean until the second chapter, and never even reveals his name until the third. In this way, Sai is literally stutterer first, Korean second—and both before he is "Sai."

Notably, however, he does not state directly "I am a stutterer" (*Boku wa kitsuonsha*), but rather makes the revelation in the following context: "When [Isogai] died by suicide, I felt as if a part of myself had died rather than someone else. Maybe it was because he was a stutterer like me (*boku to onaji yō ni kitsuonsha datta*). So perhaps I saw myself in him" (8). In other words, the narrator's first announcement to the reader of his stuttering—his initial confession—serves to establish his connection with Isogai rather than his alienation from others. From the beginning, then, stuttering offers the possibility of a social bond. In fact, all the acts of confession performed in the novel, and even the one Sai fails to carry out, are involved in the formation and maintenance of this bond between Isogai and Sai.

However, there is an important difference between the narrator's self-identification versus his recognition of Isogai as a stutterer. Returning to the scene in which Sai and Isogai first meet, Sai hears Isogai stuttering, and through this recognition identifies him as a fellow stutterer. If the narrator becomes a stutterer by confessing such an identity to the reader, then Isogai has neither the opportunity nor the need to make such a confession, because he is readily recognizable as such. His identity is audible, allowing for his *identification* as stutterer, and thus preempting his possible agency in *identifying* as stutterer. This is certainly not to suggest that identification, as disabled or otherwise, is either an active or passive process with no overlap. On the contrary, I wish to point out that *Kogoeru kuchi* plays cannily with the complex relationship between the embodied performance of a given identity (in this case that of the stutterer) and the discursive enunciation of identity (Isogai *is* a stutterer).

Stuart Hall theorizes this interaction of ostensibly interior psychological factors with the external ideological aspects of identity in the process of subject formation itself, in what he calls a process of "articulation." Using the by now familiar metaphor of speech as political agency, Hall writes:

Identity is the meeting point, or the point of future, between, on the one hand, the ideological discourses which attempt to interpellate or speak us as social subjects, and, on the other, the psychological or psychical processes which produces us as subjects which can be spoken. So I certainly don't want to restore the notion of identity as unified essence, something continuous with the self, an inner truth that can be discovered. On the contrary, I understand identities as points of suture, positions of *temporary* attachment, as a way of understanding the constant transformations of who one is or as Foucault put it, 'who one is to become.'²³

Not only is the malleable nature of the connection between self and subject position obscured by the rhetoric of confession, the particular subject position of disability further complicates the picture by introducing the body (and the embodied nature of speech) into the equation. If, in Hall's formulation, subjects articulate subject positions or identities in order to attain the autonomy to speak, then what happens when the subject position articulated is one that is ideologically interpellated as disabled from speaking?

On the other hand, disability highlights the intersections of discursive and performative modes of identification. In the case of speech disability, a stutter is only recognizable in the context of a speech act, meaning that a subject can both enunciate and embody an identity in a single action. In other words, Sai could simultaneously claim a disabled identity by saying "I am a stutterer" and, if he stuttered as he said it, *perform* the identity he was claiming in the same speech act. In this hypothetical speech act, the two ostensible modes of identification are collapsed into the same utterance. More provocative, however, is the hypothetical speech act whose possibility the novel forecloses: Sai's confession to Isogai that he, too, is a stutterer. Since Sai does not stutter in the presence of Isogai, a tension arises between the two means of becoming stutterer: declaring oneself a stutterer versus performing the physical act itself.

In more concrete terms, *Kogoru kuchi* portrays Sai's stutter as almost completely a matter of social context. The severity of the impediment varies based on Sai's moods, his interlocutors, and, in an admittedly circular logic, whether he is already stuttering. Crucially, he admits that in Isogai's presence, he never stuttered at all.

Any time I spoke to Isogai, I didn't stutter at all. Even I found it strange. Could it have been because of the relief that came from knowing he was a stutterer too, and in fact a more severe stutterer than I? Listening to his broken and faltering speech, I felt as if my awareness of myself as a stutterer was absorbed by his stutter, and the stutter that usually inundated my whole self was drained away into nothing. To tell the truth, with Isogai, I should have been free to stutter without embarrassment. But whenever I'm free to stutter, for whatever reason I don't. And whenever I can't bear to stutter, that's when I stutter the worst. And so, I had never once stuttered in front of Isogai (51).

The fact that Sai never performs the act of stuttering in Isogai's presence raises the question of what it would mean for Sai to confess to being a stutterer when, as far as Isogai is concerned, he is demonstrably not.

This foreclosed confession can be productively analyzed through Lacan's formulation of the subject's appearance in language. In Lacan's well-known example of the statement, "I am lying," the paradox of the utterance is resolved by teasing apart the subject of the enunciated (the pronominal "I") and the subject of enunciation (the unconscious, the subject that comes into being through discursive

contact with the other).²⁴ If the “I” in this sentence transparently represents a stable enunciating subject, then the statement is nonsense. However, by acknowledging the instability of the pairing, it becomes possible to interpret the statement as referring to another subject at a different moment, who could be lying even as the subject of the enunciated tells the truth about the lie. If Sai were to utter “I am a stutterer” in the presence of Isogai without stuttering, he would create the same kind of paradox, which could again be resolved by acknowledging the temporal disjuncture of the enunciation and the instability of the self across time. In this way, his confession could never reveal a hidden, fixed identity, and could only reveal the ambivalence of such an identity. If, on the other hand, he did stutter while saying “I am a stutterer,” then there would be no apparent contradiction, but there would also be no need for the enunciation in the first place. In fact, it is the very failure to produce normative, communicative speech that brings the subject as stutterer into being. This is not to say that the subject as stutterer is a stable entity, but rather to suggest that such a subject cannot be accessed via speech. If, in Hall’s sense of identity as articulation, subject positions are required in order to say anything at all, then the stuttered confession or non-confession suggests the power of *not* saying.

To sum up, Sai’s desire to confess to being a stutterer without ever actually becoming a stutterer emphasizes the instability of the constructed category of “stutterer” by disrupting the smooth interaction of modes of identification. In other words, in a context in which Sai the stutterer does not stutter, it becomes clear that his identification as stutterer, whether through his own claim to such a Self or his recognition as such by an Other, occurs independently of his actually *embodying* a stutterer. Whatever material, biological, or essential elements of stuttering are involved in the process of Sai’s identification vanish the moment he engages with Isogai. As a result, if enunciation, recognition, and embodiment work together to shape a sense of identity, then here this mechanism is shattered into its constituent parts, and a coherent identity fails to take shape.

And yet, despite this incoherence, the bond between Sai and Isogai is able to form. Even as Sai fails to embody a stutterer, Isogai is still able, somehow, to recognize in Sai an affinity that readers are led to believe arises from their shared identity. While the narrator emphasizes that the basis for Sai and Isogai’s friendship is their common impairment, we receive no real insight into Isogai’s perspective until his suicide letter to Sai. There Isogai suggests that his affinity for Sai is related to his being Korean—perhaps an indication that he sees their mutual marginalization as their basis for camaraderie—but also subtly hints that Sai was uniquely able to understand the experience of stuttering. After insisting that Sai knows nothing about him, Isogai confesses to being a stutterer, while admitting that this confession is not necessary, as Sai must already be aware. He continues, “You know that I have a stutter (*domori*), a quite severe stutter even. You know, and yet you never mentioned it. I know it was out of compassion and sympathy for me that you

didn't" (64). Isogai's claim that Sai is the one who knows nothing about him (rather than the other way around) flips on its head the structure of knowledge privilege erected by Sai's unconfessed secret. Not only that, his invocation of "sympathy" (*dōjō*) suggests that their emotional bond is independent of the mutual *knowledge* either confession would create. Isogai's solidarity with Sai is founded on recognition without recognition, or identification without identification.

This uncanniness gives rise to the possibility of confession even as it forecloses that same possibility. In other words, in order for Sai's confession to be possible, his identity must be hidden from Isogai, which can only happen because Sai never stutters in front of Isogai. At the same time, Isogai's recognition without recognition defies the whole logic of confession. Once the two are placed into this ambiguously sympathetic relationship, Sai's hypothetical confession to Isogai that "I am a stutterer (too)" could only result in confusion. Isogai's recognition, such as it is, would evaporate in the face of this claim, which would appear false precisely because Sai is not recognizable as a stutterer, having never embodied a stutterer before his eyes (or, more literally, his ears).

Nevertheless, even though Sai's confession never occurs, his desire to confess in itself allows him to take ownership of the stuttering subject position without also having to own its disabling elements, neither the material stuttering nor the breakdown in solidarity between him and Isogai. Ironically, this sense of community can continue only so long as the confession of common identity is not carried through. As a result, when Isogai ultimately dies and Sai's confession to him is deferred in perpetuity, the unstable relationship among the enunciation, embodiment, and recognition of his identity, as well as all of the possibility that emerges from this flux, can extend indefinitely into the horizon. The impossibility of confession—or, if you prefer, the impossibility of speech—need not preclude solidarity, and may in fact enable it.

AURAL-VISUAL DOPPELGÄNGERS AND THE MEDIUM OF TEXT

In *Kogoeru kuchi*, the impossibility of confession and the impossibility of narratively representing the body come together in the rupture of embodied speech from text. Speech, like the disabled body, is of course never literally present in text, but like the disabled body it is easy to imagine speech as that which the text sets out to represent, the authentic or original material that text can only mimic.²⁵ Yet even if the text does not mimic embodied speech, it may conjure it within the reader's sonic imagination. Similarly, Sai's confession is perpetually deferred to a temporality outside that of the text, just as Isogai's stutter is displaced. Neither is materially represented in the text. The material and discursive aspects of the body explored in Kin's novel prompt readers to attend to the question of sensory medium—that is, the question of how the visual medium of text (imperfectly) represents the sounds

of spoken language. With its focus on speech disability, *Kogoeru kuchi* is of course concerned with this specific representational problem, but also more generally with speech as stand-in for political expression.

This figurative understanding of speech as subjectivity or political agency is used in countless metaphors, from “voicing the voiceless” to “freedom of speech,” and perhaps most relevantly in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s rhetorical query, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”²⁶ As is well known, Spivak’s answer to this question is no, within a language whose terms are always already dictated by masculinist imperialism, the subaltern cannot speak. Her key intervention is essentially an intersectional reading of the Western theoretical project of decentering the subject, whose failure Spivak locates “precisely through Deleuze’s and Foucault’s double incapacity to recognize, on the one hand, the nonuniversality of the Western position and, on the other, the constitutive place of gender in the formation of the subject—as the subject of language not only in the grammatical sense but in the sense of having a voice that can access power.”²⁷ Within such a structure of subject formation, the third-world woman is relegated to a place that is inevitably misread or illegible.

By way of illustration, Spivak ends her essay with the enigmatic image of an Indian woman, Bhuvaneshwari Bhaduri, who hanged herself while menstruating. She had been tasked with a political assassination and committed suicide when she lost the nerve to carry it out. Spivak reads her choice to die specifically while menstruating as a defense against any *misinterpretation* of her act as being caused by the shame of an illicit pregnancy.²⁸ Spivak’s use of Bhuvaneshwari’s suicide has been criticized as a rather literal example of subaltern “muteness,”²⁹ but I want to suggest the slippage her essay exhibits between speech, text, and representation—without regard for the corporeal specificity of each mode—runs the risk of reducing subjectivity to speech. Once again, the actually mute body is co-opted into a project of critiquing a strictly figurative muteness.³⁰

This is not to suggest that such a conflation undermines Spivak’s conclusion that speech is impossible from subaltern positions, since she is not in the business of recovering lost voices or texts, but rather of critiquing the ideological constraints that render them unrecoverable in the first place. Instead, I wish to note the irony of mounting such a critique while engaging in what we might call critical (rather than narrative) prosthesis: the opening up of a representational aporia into which the disabled subject slips, in much the same way as the subaltern. More importantly, the Bhuvaneshwari Bhaduri story also suggests that greater sensitivity to the irreducibility of speech, text, and body can reveal that there is in fact a kind of corporeal agency that exists even in silence—outside language, outside the possibility of being understood.³¹

Indeed, Kin’s text utilizes this dynamic to develop the overarching theme of the novel: the alienation of all embodied subjects, not only those who stutter. However, it is not as simple as reading the stutterer as universally representative of

the human condition, trapped within the narrow confines of the self by what Sai describes as an inability “to be understood by others just as I am” (14). This alienation is a result of a metaphorical rather than literal inability to speak. Thus, the stutterer is situated as a particular rather than universal subject as the novel goes on to draw attention to the gap between written and spoken language. Isogai, who ostensibly stutters so severely that he is essentially unable to communicate orally, makes use of written language in the single instance in which he claims to “want to be understood by another” (*tanin ni rikai shite moraitai*) (64), that is, his suicide letter to Sai. If Isogai’s speech disability (or Sai’s for that matter) is meant to serve as a metaphor for his inability to make himself understood, then the ease with which he writes undermines the utility of that metaphor. Isogai has no difficulty communicating his thoughts via the written text of his letter, bypassing the need for speech in the first place. If he is isolated by his disability, it is not because he is unable to “speak” in the broader sense, but rather because the disability marks him as other. His case highlights the gap between written and spoken media as they relate specifically to the body, in addition to foregrounding the ableism inherent in the reduction of political articulation to speech.

Isogai’s confessional letter also offers an implicit critique of autobiographical narrative as transparent window to the self.³² Isogai’s letter disrupts the flow of Kin Kakuei’s I-novels narrative and reconfigures the structure of the novel as a confession within a confession, creating a series of doubles that accompany this telescoping structure. Whereas the structure itself doubles the layers of written media obstructing what is supposed to be a transparent communication from the narrator-as-author’s self to the audience, the doubling of the “self” in question further undermines this communication. By virtue of their shared struggle with stuttering, Sai views Isogai as a part of himself, which is perhaps one reason that Isogai’s personal narrative is embedded in his own. The two “selves” being revealed here, due to the doubled structure of the novel, begin to overlap and eventually to blur into each other. As a result, Kin’s “I-novel” has no consistent “I,” even in terms of the first-person pronouns used by its narrators. There is the “boku” (I) of the main narrative, and the “ore” (I) of Isogai’s letter, and even this choice of pronoun is transferred to Sai at least once following the suicide note.

In a segment of Sai’s inner monologue, when his Korean friend has just asked him to attend a political event, he thinks to himself, “But it’s only my body I will be carrying there. My mind will be trapped somewhere else altogether. Somewhere else, not outside of me but within, inside my stutter” (85). In each case here the personal pronoun is “ore” rather than “boku,” despite the fact that prior to this, Sai’s inner monologue has always used the “boku” of the narrator’s discourse. Not only does this pronoun slippage introduce a slippage into the “I” or “self” being related in the novel, this passage reiterates the mind-body fissure that is at issue throughout the narrative. In addition, the destabilization of the “I” reintroduces the question of whether interiority can ever be transmitted to the outside—in

other words, whether the whole exercise in self-revelation of the I-novel is inherently futile.³³

This questioning of the possibility of self-revelation is a refrain throughout Kin's text. Isogai opens his confession with doubts about whether even Sai, his closest friend, could ever really understand him. Near the end of the same letter, Isogai introduces yet another corporeal metaphor for human isolation, quoting the Book of Exodus wherein Moses refers to himself as "[I] who am of uncircumcised lips" (74).³⁴ As Isogai explains, Moses argues that he should not serve as God's messenger because of his "uncircumcised lips," which Isogai interprets as a stutter or other speech impediment. Immediately after quoting this passage, Isogai rewords it as "[I] who am of uncircumcised heart," invoking another scriptural circumcision metaphor as a description of his own condition: "My heart will die without ever being circumcised, and thus, I will never have truly touched my heart to that of another" (74).

This analogy serves as yet another mechanism for binding Sai and Isogai not only to each other, but also to an abstracted universal human condition. As Sai muses on Isogai's letter at the end of the novel, he universalizes the notion of the uncircumcised heart. He asks, "Couldn't these words apply to every human being, not just Isogai? . . . Can mutual understanding ever really go beyond an understanding of mutual isolation?" (96). He then extends this discussion to incorporate the metaphor of the "uncircumcised lips" as well, arguing it is not only stutterers who can never fully express their thoughts to those around them, but all human beings:

When Moses uttered these words, 'I who am of uncircumcised lips,' they were not just the words of Moses the stutterer. Wasn't he speaking as a representative [*daihyōsha*] of all humankind, including non-stutterers? The only one with truly circumcised lips, or as Isogai put it, the only one with a circumcised heart is God, and before him human beings, all of them, have uncircumcised lips which can never be circumcised, and their hearts remain uncircumcised as well (97).

This, the conclusion of the novel, is its central conceit: that the stutterer is the "representative" of the world, trapped in her own mind, unable to make a real connection with another. In the end, the stutterer is normalized, assimilated into "all humankind." In this way, at least, *Kogoeru kuchi* still falls into the trap of narrative prosthesis, and the stutterer is explicitly "representative" of everything but the particularity of disabled experience.³⁵

Even this representation, however, is not direct, but rather filtered through the sets of doubles created by the novel's narrative structure.³⁶ Sai and Isogai are the most obvious set of doubles, both acting as the stuttering "representatives" of all humankind, as if to de-emphasize their ethnic difference. But there are also the two Sais, presenting the ethnic version of this isolation. Furthermore, I-novel discourse suggests yet another double to add to this set—the author himself. By layering these figures together, just as Isogai's narrative is layered into Sai's, Kin

is able to destabilize the equation of author with protagonist. In the same way, the various stuttering representatives of the human condition, each with his own particular set of ethnic circumstances, sabotage the universalizing function of the novel's logic of representation.

Curiously, even as Kin deploys these doppelgangers, he eschews what is arguably the most visible instrument of doubling in the genealogy of colonial and Zainichi Korean literature in Japanese: textual heteroglossia. *Kogoeru kuchi* displays none of the visible linguistic hybridity we have observed up to this point. As I argued in the case of Kim Sōkpōm's work, the insertion of Korean-language glosses between the lines of Japanese text creates a sonic doubling effect that draws attention to the text as medium and frustrates its claims to transparent representation. The layers of text created by such interlinear glosses are not dissimilar in function to the layers Kin creates with his nested autobiographical narratives. It is surprising, then, that he would not make at least some use of the bilingual *furigana* technique employed by other Zainichi writers.

Where this effect is most striking is in Kin's refusal to attach a *furigana* gloss to Sai's name. Even in texts of Zainichi literature that forgo extensive glossing, the readings of proper nouns are usually provided. Kin could easily have included a single gloss of the name in the first instance to determine whether it should be pronounced "Sai," as in the Japanese reading of the character, or "Ch'oi," as in the Korean. With the practice of *furigana* glossing so common in Korean and other (post)colonial Japanese-language texts, the lack of even a single gloss in *Kogoeru kuchi* is, counterintuitively, the more conspicuous choice. Especially with such a common Korean name, even Japanese-language readers with little to no background in Korean topics may be aware that this character is often glossed as "Choi" (チヨイ) in katakana for the Korean "Ch'oi." Thus, even readers with the strongest preference for reading the character as "Sai" may hesitate to wonder whether that reading is correct. Conversely, it is also possible to imagine a reader, perhaps one with a Korean-language background, with a strong preference for reading the name as "Ch'oi." In the absence of *furigana*, this reader too may hesitate, reproducing a sort of stuttering within the process of reading itself. Transliterating the name into English, needless to say, requires a blunt decision, or perhaps a textual representation of the undecidability: Sai/Ch'oi. The ambiguous reading of the name, then, is another marker of the gap between text and speech as linguistic media, but is also a specific *political* choice. Rather than legitimizing one side of the fraught battle over how Zainichi Koreans should pronounce their names—which is itself a product of the history of imperial assimilation efforts to alter or erase those names—Kin leaves the reading ambiguous, such that this battle is refought each time the reader encounters the name and cannot decide how it should sound.

This insistence on ambiguity, or the invisible doubling of sound, is perhaps an even more radical practice than the insertion of the double directly into the

text. Even in this case, when the possibility of reading the name as “Chòi” is not explicitly suggested by a gloss, the suggestion still emerges from the history in which the text is embedded.³⁷ In other words, the double layers of sound attached to the character 崔 are still there, even when they are not visibly or materially present.³⁸ This invisible doubling, occurring on the central character’s name, creates one final set of doppelgängers: “Sai” and “Chòi.” This coexistence of two “selves” doubles the narrative itself, creating two separate paths for reading the novel once the split is made. There is the version of the story revolving around “Chòi,” and a different version revolving around “Sai.” In a text so concerned with the politics of sound and self-definition, and to a lesser extent with ethnicity and colonial history, the reader’s choice of name for the novel’s central character cannot help but color the entire story.

Moreover, a third option exists for naming the character, one that is enabled by the *absence* of speech: the strictly visual element of the name, the always not yet pronounced textual component itself, 崔. The tension between the visual representation of the name and its multifarious pronunciations draws our attention yet again to the particularity of linguistic media. Just as the visual medium of text enables the speech-disabled characters to “speak,” the rupture of text from sound draws attention to the somatic implications of the gap between writing and speaking. The disabled body insists on this kind of specificity. At the same time, it points us in the direction of silence, and all the possibility it entails as an alternative to the foreclosures of coherent representation.