A Touchstone for Transnational Feminism: Discourses on the Comfort Women in 1990s Japan[1]

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Abstract: This article reconstructs feminist discourses that evolved in Japan in the 1990s, with a focus on the differences as well as the overlappings of so-called "minority"and "majority" positions, and within the context of transnational feminist developments in Asia and beyond. The "turn towards Asia" that characterized Japanese politics, media and academia during the 1990s also occurred within feminist movements and among feminist academics in Japan. It was the history of Asian women who were forced to serve as "comfort women" for the Japanese military that sparked the new feminist interest in Japan's past as an aggressive invador and colonial power in Asia, and in the relationship between Japanese women and other Asian women. This article focuses on a controversy about the comfort women that evolved between two feminist academics, one of them belonging to the Japanese majority, the other one being a Korean resident of Japan. This controversy highlighted the tensions existing between majority and minority feminists in Japan, that is, between a concentration on gender, on the one side, and an insistence on ethnicity, on the other. However, the analysis carried out in this article suggests that these seemingly opposite standpoints converge in their basic understanding of the self and of feminist politics, and points to the importance and viability of feminist discourses and coalitions across ethnic boundaries.

Introduction

In the early 1990s, the Japanese public was confronted with the testimonies of women from South Korea who had been forced to serve the Japanese military as so-called "comfort women" (*ianfu*), during the Asia-Pacific War.[2] It was within feminist movements and among feminist academics of

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[2] Two books introducing the results of fundamental research on the comfort women system, by male Japanese historians, are available in English (Yoshimi

Japan that these testimonies were given the most sincere reception and spurred the most controversial debates. In this article, I reconstruct one segment of feminist discourse on the comfort women, focusing on a controversy that evolved between one leading feminist from the ethnic majority and one Korean-Japanese feminist.[3] I also examine publications by other feminist scholars of Japanese as well as Korean-Japanese background, which are related to the issues raised in this central controversy. Beyond the issue of the comfort women, the discursive background of these debates was constituted by the global tide of redefining women's rights as human rights as well as by the post-Cold-War necessity to rethink Japan's relationship to the rest of Asia. Ultimately, the discourses reconstructed in this article centered around the issue of how to re-conceptualize ethnicity and gender in a framework that accounts for connections and intersections between the two categories.

My objective in examining these debates is to contribute to the growing research on transnational feminisms. In reconstructing the positions of key authors in the feminist discourse on the so-called comfort women, my aim is not so much to isolate different positions on this particular issue. Rather, my objective is to examine strategies, point out difficulties and learn about

2000, Tanaka 2002). For stylistic reasons I will, hereafter, use the term "comfort women" without quotation marks that indicate the contentious nature of the term, even though this contradicts the convention governing most Japanese texts. I will do the same with other contentious terms, like "minority", "majority", "colonizer," "colonized, "third world" and "first world," using quotation marks only upon the first appearance of these terms.

[3] I felt the need to address the fact that ethnic background accounts for great differences in the lives of individuals in Japanese society and, therefore, ended up using the terms "minority" and "majority," or "mainstream," even though this contradicts my purpose to deconstruct some of the implications of the dichotomical construction of "majority-minority." I avoided the use of "Yamato-Japanese" to account for the majority because I feel that this term reproduces racial (and, thus, racist) aspects of Japanese self-conceptions. Another term signifying majority Japanese is *Wajin*, but this has primarily been used with regard to the relationship between Ainu-Japanese and non-Ainu-Japanese. I also had some problems deciding how to refer to Korean residents of Japan. The Japanese term *zainichi Kankokujin* (or *Chōsenjin*) is often translated as "Korean-Japanese." I am, however, using that term with some hesitation as it seems to imply that these people are Japanese citizens. Actually, most of them are not "naturalized" – many as a result of the difficulties in obtaining Japanese citizenship, but some also as an expression of protest and pride (see Jung 1999: 108–109). On the history of the Korean community in Japan as well as the situation of its members in contemporary Japanese society see, for example, Weiner (1997), Lie (2001: 104–109, 138–146), and Fukuoka (2000). A journalistic but well researched account is Hicks (1997).

the potential of transnational feminist discourses in the Japanese context. I focus on how these authors construct or deconstruct "nation," "ethnicity" and "woman" in their discussions on the comfort women and in reflections on their personal identity, which were sparked by that issue.

My analysis proceeds in two seemingly opposite directions. On the one hand, I aim at deconstructing the perceived dichotomy of minority versus majority feminists. To achieve this, I demonstrate that both share some important concerns involving the deconstruction of fixed identities, and that differences in practical use and theoretical understanding of identity exist not only between, but also within, the groups perceived to be opposites. On the other hand, I needed to confront the fact that the authors' own ethnic or national identities, whether these were self-declared or defined by other participants in the discourse, played an important role in some of the central arguments of the debate. That is, such identities and oppositions were not only projected onto but also produced by the actors themselves. Deconstructing the subject positions of majority and minority with too much theoretical rigor will not help to understand or solve the problems that prevail between feminists from different ethnic groups. Asymmetries of power as well as the responsibilities and chances of certain subject positions must be accounted for. Indeed, the importance of Korean-Japanese standpoints in revolutionizing mainstream Japanese feminism during the 1990s emerges as one of the results of this study.

In the following, I will first outline the theoretical premises of this study. Then, I will explain the issue of the comfort women, which constituted the immediate background of the feminist positions discussed in the subsequent, main chapters.

REFLECTING ON OPPOSITIONS AND HIERARCHIES, FEMINISMS AND NATIONALISMS

In the last two decades, an awareness has emerged that essentialist notions of gender are not a useful tool for opposing sexist discourse. Likewise, it has become apparent that "(m)odels predicated upon binary oppositions (like colonizer-colonized or center-periphery) cannot move us out of the paradigms of colonial discourse" (Kaplan and Grewal 1994: 9). However, the reality of transnational feminist politics indicates that in politically strained and controversial situations, the deconstruction of such binarisms seldom proceeds without the erection of new oppositions and hierarchies. Indeed, the strategies typically employed in such situations are bound to create new oppositions between "colonizers" and "colonized," "center" and "periphery." When feminists belonging to the so-called cen-

ter endeavor to deconstruct oppositions and hierarchies, they often end up reintroducing a universal and ultimately hegemonic "subject of feminism." The best-known assertion of a universal subject of feminism is, probably, white US feminist Robin Morgan's call for "global sisterhood" (Morgan 1984). In Nelly Richard's words, this kind of politics may be described as follows:

> The center, though claiming to be in disintegration, still operates as a center: filing away any divergences into a system of codes whose meanings, both semantically and territorially, it continues to administer by exclusive right. (Richard 1987/1988: 11)

On the other hand, resistance against the hierarchical opposites of colonizer-colonized from the so-called periphery tends to express itself in a reversal of the established order of rank by claiming the moral superiority or political correctness of the colonized. It is from such a position that nationalisms on the side of the oppressed are hailed as inherently good or, at least, necessary.

Research on women and the State, feminism and nationalism has come to proliferate since the late 1980s, owing partly to the collapse of the Cold War system and its ensuing developments, which include accelerated processes of globalization, on the one hand, and the widespread emergence of new ethnic nationalisms, on the other. Many of these recent studies suggest that women's movements in countries that were formerly colonized are, typically, also involved in class struggles and/or national or ethnic liberation movements. Often, this characteristic is portrayed as being in contrast to middle class feminisms of Western or highly industrialized countries. These are described as having confined themselves to gender as their political tool, and having concentrated on men of their own group as their foremost enemies. In general, these may be rather apt characterizations but they run the risk of constructing two ideal and opposite types of feminism, which are conceived to be at war, not only across the borders of the so-called "first" and "third worlds" but also within countries like the United States or Japan, with minority feminists pitted against majority feminists.[4]

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[4] With regard to the use of the terms "first world" and "third world", the same caveat applies as with terms like "minority" and "majority" (refer to note 3), "North" and "South", colonial" and "postcolonial." Even though I am critical of the binary oppositions they create and of some of the meanings they imply, it sometimes seemed necessary to use them to point to actually existing differences. For a discussion of the term "third world," see Bulbeck (1998: 34–43).

The recognition of differences among women arguably constitutes the most important paradigm change in the history of feminism. It was black feminists in the United States and, subsequently, women from all parts of the postcolonial world, who postulated and theorized differences between women and their political agendas (e.g., bell hooks, Nawal El Saadawi, Chandra T. Mohanty and Trinh T. Minha). However, constructions of a binary opposition of "first world women" versus "third world women," which have in some instances accompanied this important paradigm shift, entail the risk of compartmentalizing otherness and reifying differences between women into insurmountable, fixed identities.[5]

Such identities do not allow for positions in-between. One example of such a position from the context of Japan is problematized by Ainu activist Keira Tomoko. Keira's feelings of in-betweenness can be gathered from her account of her participation in the 1995 Beijing Conference on Women:

> In this world, many groups of native and minority peoples exist who were driven away from where they were previously living, who are starving, and dying. I was wondering what I as an Ainu coming from the "advanced nation of Japan" and, albeit being poor, neither starving nor threatened with the loss of my life could tell these [women]. (Keira 1995: 62)

While, within Japan, Keira thinks of herself as a member of an oppressed minority group, when faced with the much worse conditions of minorities in other parts of the world, she feels compelled to identify with "the advanced nation of Japan" (for a more detailed discussion, see Wöhr forthcoming a). Conversely, Japanese feminists have pointed out that Japanese women who were forced to serve the army as prostitutes during the war were on the colonizers' side as ethnic Japanese, but as women and members of the lowest classes they were, nevertheless, victimized in ways not much different from the abuse suffered by so-called comfort women from other parts of Asia (Wöhr 2003).

Binaries like "colonizer–colonized," "first world–third world," or "majority–minority" work to foreclose constructions of such multiply constituted identities (Kaplan and Grewal 1994: 10). Moreover, these dichotomies seem to imply that homogeneity prevails within these categories. In opposition to this, Chandra T. Mohanty and others have criticized the construction of the "'Third World Woman' as a singular monolithic subject in

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[5] These problems were also addressed by Sara Suleri in her article "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition" (Suleri 1992), and by Caren Kaplan and Inderpal Grewal in the introduction to their collection on transnational feminism (Kaplan and Grewal 1994).

some recent (western) feminist texts" (Mohanty 1988: 61). Similar criticism should be leveled at the "first world woman's" monolithic construction as privileging gender over other categories such as, for instance, class or nation. The least that can be said against such a construction is that it is a-historical in that it ignores, for example, feminist nationalist movements in 19th and early 20th century Europe[6] as well as present-day feminisms in regions with strong separatist movements like, for instance, Northern Ireland (Roulston 1997) and Quebec (LeClerc and West 1997). However, seen from the perspective of many feminists from the postcolonial world, the nationalisms of feminist movements in Western countries are not limited to such cases, but exist generally. "White" or "first world" women were, thus, reminded of the ethnic and national limitations of their own feminist agendas. Korean-Japanese feminist Kim Puja, (Japanese transcription: Kimu Puja) who will be quoted extensively further down, identifies the main problem the comfort women issue raises for Japanese feminism to be "how Japanese women … will overcome nationalism" (Ikeda et al. 1999: 6).

The critical responses of postcolonial feminists to the vision of "global sisterhood" might be taken to imply an assertion of "global feminist nationalism." At the time of the 1985 World Conference on Women held in Nairobi, Kenya, this seemed to be the central message of participants from postcolonial countries. Their voices have confronted us with the fact that feminist nationalism in a broad sense is pervasive, and inevitable, as long as the world is divided into nations. However, feminists have long reached across national and ethnic borders, and across the lines dividing first world and third world, in order to overcome this stalemate and create new political platforms and coalitions. One example of such a process is shown by the discourses reconstructed below. They testify to the viability of recent transnational feminist efforts, but also remind us that these necessarily entail struggles against falling back into old universalisms, against producing undue inclusions as well as tacit exclusions.

Following Inderpal Grewal, I define transnational feminist practices as being concerned with "working through differences based on multiple

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[6] These movements were theorized by Karen Offen as "relational feminism," defined to emphasize "women's rights *as women*" and to insist "on *women's* distinctive contributions in these roles to the broader society" (Offen 1988: 136; italics in original). Offen explains "relational" to be in opposition to "individualist," the latter implying an emphasis on "more abstract concepts of individual human rights" and on the "quest for personal independence" (ibid.). Offen's attempt at "defining feminism" does run the risk of creating new fixed oppositions (Wöhr forthcoming b). Still, it is significant in the context of this paper as it points to a diversity of feminisms within Europe, and permits the construction of similarities between first world and third world feminist movements.

subjectivities and trying to find dissimilar but overlapping positions that enable specific coalitions and struggles on nonessentialist grounds" (Grewal 1994: 236). In this sense, transnational feminisms aim to transcend the national. However, the political actions of most people are still determined by their relationship to nation-states. "As citizens of a particular nation-state we have the 'right to have rights'; as migrants, we may lose the right to make claims against the nation-state" (Mackie 2001: 185). I therefore agree with Vera Mackie, who asserts that the tension implicit in "transnational" makes it useful as a term "which keeps the nation firmly in focus" (ibid.: 184). This aspect becomes particularly important when, as in the discourses reconstructed below, it is the meaning of "nation" and the history of particular nations that emerge as objects of struggle between feminists in their efforts to transcend the nation.

The Impact of the Comfort Women Issue

In December 1991, three former Korean comfort women sued the Japanese government and, for the first time in Japan, came forward publicly with their testimonies about how they were sexually exploited during the Asia-Pacific War by the Japanese military. As I will explain below, the existence of the comfort women system was, by no means, unknown in postwar Japan, and some women's groups took up the issue as early as the 1970s. Nevertheless, the lawsuit of 1991 seems to have come as something of a thunderbolt to many Japanese feminists. According to one commentator, "with the issue of the 'comfort women' ("*ianfu*" *mondai*) as a turning point, the Japanese … women's movement entered a new era" (Yamashita, A. 2000: 264). The main reason for this upheaval was the encroachment of the category of ethnicity on the self-assured preoccupation of most Japanese feminists with the discrimination against Japanese women in Japanese history and contemporary Japanese society.

Two external factors can be seen to have contributed to the far-reaching impact of the comfort women issue in the 1990s as compared to the rather isolated responses of the 1970s and 1980s. The first factor is the recent increase in self-confidence, which characterizes the relationship of many of the nations on the Asian continent with Japan, and conversely the Japanese public's interest in Asia and in Japan's position within Asia, which also greatly increased during the 1990s (see, e.g., Gatzen 2002 and Phillipps 2002). The second factor is the global emergence of postcolonial feminist movements and theory pointing out the biased nature of first world feminist movements. Just as "white" feminists in North America and Europe have had to face the challenge of postcolonial feminisms, mainstream

Japanese feminists could no longer evade the questions put to them by women of other ethnicities and nationalities residing within Asia, and even within Japan. Indeed, the comfort women issue initiated or, in other cases, epitomized a painful process of reflection among Japanese feminists, not only on Japan's position within Asia but also with regard to their own position as part of the majority population within Japanese society. At the same time, when former comfort women of the Japanese military in many Asian nations started to tell their stories, this had a great impact on the women's movements in these countries, as well as on feminists originating from these nations but residing in Japan.

During the 1990s, majority Japanese feminists were confronted with criticism from minority women belonging to various groups, including, for instance, Ainu women (e.g., Chikap 1977; see my discussion in Wöhr forthcoming a) and women from the Philippines (e.g., Go and Jung 1999). However, the most frequent and most focused contributions to the debate came from members of the Korean-Japanese community, which constitutes Japan's largest minority. The reasons for this imbalance are not just mere numbers but also several other facts. The Korean minority has a tradition of political resistance older and more established than, for instance, that of the Ainu. Koreans, including Korean women, have been more successful in making headway into mainstream Japanese academia than any other minority group.[7] And, not least, with about 80 percent of the former comfort women originating from Korea, this issue provided Korean-Japanese feminists with a case that exceeded the levels of so-called women's or minority issues. In Japanese foreign politics as well as in the Japanese media, the comfort women were treated as primarily a "Korean" problem.[8] In this context, contacts between the South-Korean women's movement and Korean-Japanese feminists were made at an early stage. These contacts have, on the one hand, strengthened the feminism of Korean women residing in Japan. On the other hand, these developments have made feminists with a Korean-Japanese background become aware of the complex relationships between feminism and nationalism as well as between gender and ethnicity, and have induced them to theorize these relationships with regard to their own situation.

Their high level of theorization, together with their appearance in mainstream media or, at least, in fairly accessible non-mainstream media are the

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[7] All three Korean-Japanese women cited in this paper are affiliated (at least as part-time instructors) with well-known Japanese universities, and there are numerous other examples.

[8] About the way the comfort women issue has been presented in the Japanese media, see Rechenberger (2002).

principal reasons why, in this study, I chose to concentrate on positions of Korean-Japanese feminists, which were developed in relation to the comfort women issue, rather than on positions of women from other minorities of Japan.

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MAJORITY JAPANESE FEMINIST CONCEPTIONS OF "ASIA" AND THE COMFORT WOMEN FROM THE 1960S TO THE EARLY 1990S

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Before examining the controversy evolving from the mid-1990s, I will introduce some instances of majority Japanese women turning to "Asia"[9] before the history of the comfort women became known in all its cruel details, as well as two early 1990s responses by majority feminists to the claims of former Korean comfort women. I believe that this will help to contextualize the discourses analyzed in the following sections.

Let me, first, identify some important manifestations of a Japanese feminist awareness of the Asian continent before the 1990s.[10] The earliest one goes back to the 1960s, when "in Japanese society the tendency to look down upon other Asian countries and people [*Ajia shokoku=Ajiajin*] prevailed and there were even intellectuals who held strongly discriminative views of other Asians" (Yamazaki 2004: 9). In 1966, three Japanese women, one Japanese man and one Korean man (each of whom was married to one of the women) founded the "Group for the Study of the History of Interchange among Asian Women" (Ajia Josei Kōryūshi Kenkyūkai), embarking on a project that might, today, be called a "transnational history of Asian women" (ibid.: 10–11). In November 1967, they proceeded to publish their own journal, *Ajia Josei Kōryūshi Kenkyū* ("Study of the History of Interchange among Asian Women"),[11] where they stated their aims as follows:

> Our purpose is to abolish (*shiyō*) nationalist invasions, and in order to establish intellectual as well as social interchange and solidarity be-

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[9] I chose to use quotation marks, here, to point to a common Japanese usage of the term "Asia," which implicitly excludes Japan and constructs "Asia" as the "other." Hereafter, I will discontinue the use of quotation marks around this term.

[10] See Germer (2003a) for a more in-depth analysis of how some Japanese feminists, namely, Takamure Itsue and Yamazaki Tomoko approached Asia before the 1990s. See also Germer (2003b).

[11] Eighteen issues of *Ajia kosei kōryūshi kenkyū*, which consisted of mimeographed copies of typewritten manuscripts, appeared in irregular intervals until February 1977. The history and contents of the journal await further research, which will be greatly facilitated by a complete reprint that came out in 2004 from the publisher Minato no Hito (Kamakura).

tween women from all Asian countries, we aim to shed new light on Asian women's history and thought, which have been completely buried in oblivion. (Yamazaki 2004: 20)

The first issue of *Ajia Josei Kōryūshi Kenkyū* focused on three aspects of the sexual exploitation of Asian women. Most pronounced was the case of Japanese women who, from the late Early Modern period onward, were taken to other Asian locations in order to serve, in the beginning, mainly Japanese expatriates. Another focus concerned Japanese and Korean comfort women of the Asia-Pacific War, and yet another one, the Japanese women who were forced to work in brothels established for the American occupation forces, after the war. Sadly, the article on the comfort women had been solicited from a former Japanese soldier who mixed compassionate accounts of the miserable situation of these women with assertions of their patriotic merits, and exaltations of their diligence (Ito 1967). Numerous articles throughout the history of the journal treated topics related to minority women in Japan, especially Korean and Ainu women. Issue number 14, published in December 1973, reported on Japanese men's sex tourism in Korea and on the protest which South Korean women leveled against this disgrace – a movement that climaxed in 1973.

Three years before that event, a group called Shinryaku=Sabetsu to Tatakau Ajia Fujin Kaigi (Conference of Asian Women Fighting Against Discrimination=Invasion; later abbreviated to Ajia Fujin Kaigi) was founded by Japanese feminists in Tokyo, whose ideas were reminiscent of the concerns of the Ajia Josei Kōryūshi Kenkyūkai. They postulated a connection between sexual discrimination and discrimination against ethnic and other minorities, under the postwar political system, and aimed to relocate Japan and their own feminist struggle in an Asian context. They also questioned the allegedly peaceful role of the U.S.-Japanese alliance in Asia. In 1973, the Ajia Fujin Kaigi joined the above-mentioned protest movement of South Korean women against Japanese men frequenting the South Korean prostitution industry (Mackie 2003: 148, 205).

This movement seems to have been the first occasion for a number of Japanese feminists to turn their eyes to Japan's Asian neighbors. According to several of the women active in the Tokyo-based Ajia no Onnatachi no Kai (Asian Women's Association), which was founded in 1977,[12] the existence of the comfort women was first brought to their attention by this movement of South Korean women (Matsui Yayori in Kim et al. 1997: 6; see also

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[12] Concerning the Ajia no Onnatachi no Kai, see Mackie (2003: 202–204). About discourses on the comfort women that emerged from the journal of this group (*Onnatachi no 21seiki*) during the 1990s, see Wöhr forthcoming c.

Gotō 1983, and Matsui 1997: 3). They attributed their previous ignorance to the fact that the Japanese have continuously seen themselves as victims rather than inflictors of the Asia-Pacific War, Japanese feminists who joined the pacifist movement after the war being no exception to this rule (Matsui 1997: 3; see also Suzuki Yūko in Kim et al. 1997: 3). These statements show that, from the beginning, Japanese feminists' responses to the issue of the comfort women implied solidarity with women in other Asian countries as well as criticism of Japanese men and male-centered Japanese society.

While, in the 1970s, the sex tours of Japanese men to other Asian countries were at the focus of these Japanese feminists' activities, in the 1980s, they were called on to respond to the newly emerging issue of discrimination against Asian women within Japan – mainly Korean, Thai and Philippine women working in the bars and massage parlors of Japanese cities. Vera Mackie suggests that for Japanese feminists who had already turned toward "Asian" topics and other Asian women, this issue resulted in further denaturalizing national boundaries and in calling into question the notion of nationally defined, "natural" feminist concerns (Mackie 2003: 206).

Journalist Matsui Yayori[13] was one of the protagonists of the movement toward Asia, which came to be of central importance for an increasing number of Japanese feminists. Matsui's account of the development of her own consciousness of Asia and feminism (see Matsui 1987: 1–10) provides an example of how ethnicity and gender may intersect in majority Japanese feminists' identity constructions. As a special correspondent for the newspaper *Asahi Shinbun*, Matsui had been based in Singapore and had made visits to eighteen Asian countries from 1981 to 1985. Her stay coincided with the latter half of the UN Decade of Women, and all over Asia she witnessed the formation of feminist movements against what she called the "triple oppression" of Asian women: as third world people, as members of the working class, and as women (Matsui 1987: 9). Matsui's solidarity with the feminists of these countries and her newly conceived "Asian feminism" did not ignore the gap between Japan and the other Asian countries. This gap was mediated, however, by her identity as a woman, implying her own opposition to the oppressive acts of her country's government and male-centered society.

However, the optimism which Matsui Yayori and her work represented and which also nourished the ideas and activities of the other women

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[13] Matsui, who died at the age of sixty-eight in December 2002, presided over both the *Ajia Josei Shiryō Sentā* (Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center), which succeeded the *Ajia no Onnatachi no Kai* in 1995, and VAWW-Net Japan (Violence against Women in War-Network Japan). She was one of the most dedicated supporters of the former comfort women in Japan.

mentioned above – the optimism that womanhood will grant solidarity against all political, cultural and economic divisions – came under attack in Japan in the 1990s, when the first testimonies of former "comfort women" became public.

Below, I will examine articles by two majority feminist authors, philosopher Ōgoshi Aiko and sociologist Ehara Yumiko. These two feminist academics were among the first to react to the testimonies of the Korean women. They offered slightly differing answers to the basic questions that they were both asking: "What are the cultural roots of the wrong that Japan has inflicted on Asia?" and "What needs to be changed to stop and prevent such injustice?"

Ōgoshi Aiko offers an analysis of Japanese culture that reverses many of the affirmations typical of *Nihonjinron* (or *Nihon bunkaron*), a genre that has been creating and perpetuating popular beliefs in the uniqueness of Japan. Ōgoshi's main point of criticism concerns the acclaimed sexual freedom which is supposed to have prevailed in Japanese society before the onslaught of Westernization. She maintains that this was a freedom to be enjoyed by men only. For the women, this "sexual freedom" meant that they were not even entitled to protection by some kind of sexual taboo, or to pacification by the pretext of "love," which has been used in the West to conceal the power structure of sexual relationships (Ōgoshi 1992: 18–19, 21–22). Together with an accepted dissociation of body and mind, or conscience, this has led to the phenomenon of the Japanese rapist imagining himself as the victim of his own sexual desire, and the raped woman as the merciful boddhisattva who will save and forgive him (ibid.: 18–25). According to Ōgoshi, this severely misogynist sexual culture was used by those in power to control the masses. Such politics were epitomized by the comfort women system of the Asia-Pacific War (ibid.: 25–29).

With regard to identity Ōgoshi takes a dual stance, embracing ethnicity as well as gender. Her cultural approach suggests the complicity of all members of a certain culture, and she explicitly postulates the responsibility of the Japanese nation as a whole (ibid.: 17). She also states that the Korean origin of the vast majority of the comfort women makes the history of the systematic abuse of women by the Japanese military a problem that cannot be reduced to sexual discrimination (ibid.: 29). In line with her critical approach to Japanese culture, she warns of a new national chauvinism (*Nippon shugi*) in the guise of an "Asian feminism" celebrating the oneness of all Asian nations without taking responsibility for Japan's crimes against the rest of Asia (ibid.: 33). At the same time, however, Ōgoshi emphasizes the task of investigating the roots of Japanese sexual culture as a system causing discrimination against Japanese women as well as Korean and other Asian women, up to the present (ibid.: 17).

Also in 1992, Ehara Yumiko published an article on the comfort women issue, in which she critically investigated Japan's discursive culture, or "politics of memory" (*kioku no seijigaku*). Ehara starts out from the question of why it took so long for the history of the *ianfu* to gain public recognition in Japan. One of the characteristics of Japanese society which, according to the author, have caused this delay is the construct of Japan as an "imagined" (*gensōtekina*) "community of fate" (*unmei no kyōdōtai*). According to her analysis, the post-war concealment of the truth about the *ianfu* by those who knew about or took part in the crimes was continuously justified as a selfless act intended to protect this "imagined community" of Japan. Ehara warns that, as long as the Japanese perpetuate such a community of avoidance of individual responsibility, they will, in return, continue to be asked to take responsibility and apologize as a nation (Ehara 1992: 36).

Although Ehara, like Ōgoshi, characterizes the comfort women issue as a problem of sexual discrimination as well as of nationalism and colonialism (Ehara 1992: 35), her main thrust in this article is against those same constructs of national or ethnic identity. Her criticism of Japan as a "community of fate" is, in fact, taken to the point of questioning the principle of collective guilt (ibid.: 36). Also, Ehara's use of the category of gender functions to deconstruct the dichotomy of colonizer versus colonized. She suggests that a double standard with regard to male and female sexuality exists in both the Korean and the Japanese societies, and that it is this twofold pressure which forced the former *ianfu* to keep their secret for so long (ibid.: 39–40).

Both authors seem to emphasize sexism to be the primary cause of the Japanese military's abuse of Japanese, Korean and other Asian women as comfort women. However, an important difference exists between the two positions. While Ōgoshi emphasizes the particularity of Japanese sexism, and the necessity for Japan as a whole to take on the guilt for the committed atrocities, Ehara points out the dangers of resorting to that "whole" and, furthermore, stresses the universal aspects of discrimination against women.

"Daughters of the Perpetrators and Sisters of the Victims," or How Feminism Might Transcend Nationalism

The slight differences emerging between the interpretations by Ōgoshi and Ehara foreshadowed theoretical positions which, in the next stage of feminist discourse on the comfort women, crystallized into opposites and became imbued with implications about the ethnicity of the actors taking

either stance. During the second half of the 1990s, a debate about the comfort women evolved, which came to be understood as a controversy between a minority and a majority standpoint and, ultimately, a struggle about the "correct" feminist consciousness. The main adversaries in this debate on gender, ethnicity and historical responsibility were Korean-Japanese historian Kim Puja and Japanese sociologist Ueno Chizuko. The controversy that evolved between them has been mentioned in some recent English language articles.[14] However, these either focus on problems of historical epistemology, which have also been raised by Ueno, or concentrate on Ueno's part in her controversy with Kim. Below, I will give a detailed account of the positions constructed by each of the main adversaries in this debate on gender and ethnicity, feminism and nationalism.

The controversy began at a workshop on the comfort women issue, which was held at the NGO Forum of the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. The workshop was a conscious effort to present and discuss the viewpoints of both majority Japanese women and Korean-Japanese women, its title being "Concerning the 'Comfort Women:' From the Viewpoints of Japanese Women (*Nihon josei*) and Resident Korean Women (*zainichi josei*)." Both Ueno and Kim were members of the organizing committee. In her presentation at the workshop, Ueno emphasized the necessity for feminist movements in Japan and Korea to transcend nationalist politics in order to solve the problems raised by the comfort women issue (Ueno 1998a: 194). A Korean-American woman from the audience rejected Ueno's assertion, which she took as a demand for Korean women to forget their country's history of colonization by the Japanese. She charged Ueno with "the same ethnocentrism that has been displayed by Western feminism (*ōbei feminizumu*)" (cited from Kim 1996: 258; see also Yamazaki 1995a: 65). Ueno later repeated her criticism of the nationalist (*minzoku-shugi-teki*) discourse of South Korean feminists supporting the former comfort women, drawing on an analysis by Korean-Japanese feminist academic Yamashita Yeong-ae (Japanese transcription: Yon'e) (Yamashita 1996). Ueno pointed out that by constructing an opposition of Korean survivors as victims forced into sexual slavery versus Japanese survivors as whores by their own free will, the Korean supporters of the former comfort women reproduced prejudices against prostitutes and created an undue division of these women by their nationality (Ueno 1998a: 129).

Kim Puja who, already prior to the Beijing conference, had emphasized that the comfort women issue posed problems of sexual discrimination as

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[14] See the translators' prefaces to translations of works by Ueno Chizuko (Sand 1999, Yamamoto 2004) and Yoshimi Yoshiaki (O'Brien 2000), and a review article by Bob T. Wakabayashi (2003).

well as colonial oppression (e.g., Kim 1994: 254–257) took up the criticism leveled against Ueno at the Beijing conference, and emphasized that the Japanese movement of women supporting the former *ianfu* had to be based on this dual perspective of gender *and* ethnicity. To Kim, the comfort women issue provided an important chance to overcome nationalism: between women of the "perpetrating nation" (*kagaikoku*) and the "victimized nation" (*higaikoku*) as well as between women of different "victimized nations," like China and Taiwan (Kim 2001: 211). However, the differences between aggressors and victims, or colonizers and colonized could not be forgotten. Kim was asking majority Japanese feminists and historians of Japanese women's history to admit that colonialism rather than patriarchy constituted the decisive force and distinctive feature in the victimization of Korean women by the Japanese military. Their fate of being sexually exploited as women had been aggravated by their being discriminated against as colonial subjects, and by being exploited for the sake of a war fought by a nation which was not their own (Kim 1998: 195). Kim was calling upon majority Japanese feminists to recognize these facts. They needed to acknowledge their guilt as "daughters of the perpetrators" (*kagaisha no musume toshite*) and, only on that basis, identify themselves as "sisters of the victims" (*higaisha no shimai toshite*):

> How Japanese women, in face of the concrete task of [solving] the "*ianfu*" problem, will overcome nationalism – I believe that this will have to be [by identifying] as daughters of the perpetrators and as sisters of the victims. In other words, I believe that only a sisterhood on the basis of admitting one's own guilt will make solidarity in its true sense possible. (Ikeda et al. 1999: 6)[15]

Ueno Chizuko, in contrast, maintained that overcoming national borders and identities should be the primary goal of feminism. Only by transcending nation and ethnicity would feminism be able to reveal that patriarchy had victimized Japanese and Korean women alike and, in fact, constituted the basis of constructs like ethnicity and nation. Consequently, Ueno refused to take on Japan's guilt, and rejected colonialism as a useful category to approach the comfort women issue (Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā 1998: 62). While criticizing the Japanese government for not taking responsibility by paying redress to the victims, she explained that to take responsibility for one's country's deeds in the way suggested by Kim

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[15] See also Kim's argument in Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā (1998: 74–75). Kim gives credit to majority Japanese feminist Yamazaki Hiromi for coining the term "daughters of the perpetrators and sisters of the victims" (ibid.: 74).

would mean to revive and strengthen those same notions of national identity and ethnic community that had been causing racism and colonialism (ibid.: 77–78). In the same vein, she criticized notions of citizenship, which might have been used to call the individual to account for the crimes committed by his or her nation, but had, in fact, also been deployed in discourses denying individual responsibility (ibid.: 60–61). To Ueno, the notion of direct and personal redress, which had guided the demands of the comfort women and their supporters, marked an important paradigm change as it implied that the State, or nation, cannot represent the individual. Feminism, thus, was seen to be the decisive force in the deconstruction of the nation's claims to representational power (ibid.: 29; Ueno 1998b: 122).

In more general terms, the argument dividing Kim and Ueno might be summarized as follows. According to Kim's position, feminist solidarity across the ethnic and national lines dividing colonizers and colonized is only possible on the basis of women of the colonizing nation acknowledging their complicity in their country's imperialism of the past and present. Ethnicity (or nationality) as well as gender are understood to be inevitable categories of identity, and the order in which they are applied is imbued with political meaning. In the case of women of a colonizing nation facing their country's history, ethnicity is to be ranked above gender. Ueno reverses this ranking, and insists on the preeminence of gender over ethnicity. Ueno does not deny that imperialism and national chauvinism are important enemies. Nevertheless, she deems it of primary importance to unite as feminists against patriarchy – an ideology that not only implies sexual discrimination but also forms the basis of the modern constructs of ethnicity and nation. Thus, by fighting patriarchy, feminists also fight nationalism. Ueno postulates the use of gender as a tool for the deconstruction of ethnicity (or nationality), her main charge against Kim being that her argument results in reifying the categories of nation and ethnicity.

In my reading of this debate, I was careful not to reduce the argument to simple oppositions. As was explained above, such oppositions are often constructed along the lines of minority or third world feminisms understood to be committed to national or ethnic goals, versus first world feminisms seen to be concerned exclusively with deconstructing gender roles and fighting discrimination against women. These same categorizations are sometimes also employed to suggest a binarism of postcolonial movements supposedly holding on to modern fallacies, on the one hand, versus postmodern feminist theorizing, on the other. Postcolonial feminist movements are regarded as remaining occupied with essentialized categories like "woman" and "nation," while more "advanced" feminist theorists are seen to have left modernity and its essentialisms be-

hind.[16] However, a closer look at the controversy between Kim and Ueno shows that both share so-called modern concerns as well as ideas associated with postmodernism, or postmodernity. In the following, I would like to point out some significant convergences between Kim's and Ueno's positions, before I turn to discussing the differences. Let me concentrate on three interrelated issues, and demonstrate that these are of concern to both parties: (1) plurality of the self, (2) contradictions of identity politics and (3) necessary functions of identity.

First, both, Kim and Ueno maintain the plurality of the self. Ueno asserts the fictionality of individual as well as of group identities.[17] According to her, the "I" is neither determined by its nationality (*kokumin*) nor by its individuality (derived from the understanding of "individual" in a modern, Western sense), but is constituted by numerous categories including gender and citizenship (*kokuseki*) (Ueno 1998a: 197). Kim, too, deconstructs the notion of an unchanging and solid identity. She provides a powerful example of the plurality of self when she describes her own political practice explaining that, in Korean-Japanese contexts, she always speaks out against sexual discrimination, whereas in front of Japanese feminists she takes the perspective of ethnic discrimination (Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā 1998: 73).[18]

Second, both women warn about the contradictions of identity politics. Ueno does so, for example, in her criticism of notions of citizenship which may, so she explains, be used to contradictory political ends (Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā 1998: 60–61). Kim's above cited account of her own political practice shows that she is well aware of the reductionism of both a feminist politics which isolates the category of gender, and a rhetoric of ethnic liberation which neglects differences within the group.

Finally, both Kim and Ueno seem to agree that it is necessary to deploy categories of identity in certain political contexts. Kim, apart from mentioning her own political uses of identity, emphasizes that it is a political duty for Japanese feminists to take responsibility as Japanese nationals whatever their theoretical stance might be (Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō

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[16] This view is even supported by voices from third world countries which are "attacking postmodernism as a purely western 'import'" (Kaplan and Grewal 1994: 8).

[17] The fictionality of group identities is implicit in Ueno's assertion of the radical subjectivity of history (Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā 1998: 30).

[18] One early instance of Kim's taking the gender point of view is her criticism of the misogyny of Korean society and of the hidden gender bias in one male Korean author's account of the history of the Korean comfort women (Kim 1992: 160–170).

Sentā 1998: 94–95). Ueno follows Joan Scott in maintaining that gender history does not aim at establishing a universal and objective truth, but rather at making apparent the particularistic status of any historical knowledge (Ueno in Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā 1998: 26–27; Scott 1988: 7). Taking Scott and Ueno further, we might say that feminism as well as gender history are political projects based on emphasizing the gender aspect as preceding other aspects of discrimination and, thus, taking gender identity as their starting point. Consequently, we might infer that Ueno, too, acknowledges the inevitability of identity politics.

From the above discussion, it seems that there is no fundamental difference between the theoretical understanding of self and identity developed in Kim's and Ueno's contributions to the debate. The postmodern condition is reflected in the deconstruction of fixed identities, which both these authors pursue. Still, there are differences between the two feminist positions, which ultimately account for the tensions between them. Ueno's emphasis in describing the "I" is on detachment, which is to be brought about by the relativization of one single category like "nation" or "citizenship" through an awareness of all the other categories constituting the "I." It is this detachment which enables the "I" to stand up against nation and State, not only for her own sake, but also for the sake of the "you," and not only against her own State, but also against the State of the "you" (Ueno 1998a: 196–198).

In contrast, Kim's emphasis is on belonging, albeit to multiple groups or categories. While Ueno's concern is with the right to intervene in the other's political affairs, in order to protect the "other," Kim refuses to grant this right by resorting to historically (not biologically, or racially) defined categories of belonging. She introduces the idea of a "speaking position" (*kataru ichi*) and a "listening position" (*kiku ichi*), both of which are determined by one's belonging to a historically and/or socially constituted group. Someone who does not share a certain speaker's position, or whose listening position is not identical with the position of those for whom the utterance was intended, is not entitled to quote and make use of this utterance for her own purposes. Kim develops this idea with reference to Ueno's way of criticizing South Korean feminists and charges Ueno with misusing the "self criticism" of Yamashita Yeong-ae to support her own argument. In accordance with this theory of "standpoint" (*ichi*), Kim stresses responsibility, or "consciousness of one's own involvement" (*tōjisha ishiki*) which, in her view, is lacking in Ueno's approach (Kim 1998: 194, 197–199). This lack, again, is analyzed by Kim to have historical reasons:

> Because [Ueno Chizuko and other majority Japanese feminists] were
> born as [members of] a 'dominant people (*shihai kokumin*)', they were

able to live their lives without facing [the problem of ethnicity] … (this differentiates them from women of dominated countries [*hishi-haikoku*]). (ibid.: 198)

Clearly, neither of these positions is wholly unproblematic. Ueno's claim to the right to intervene, in the name of "feminism," in any politics perceived to discriminate against women reintroduces a universal "subject of feminism" which, actually, is no more than a particular feminist agenda elevated "to be the mark by which all feminist practice is to be judged" (Grewal 1994: 237). Also, it should be pointed out that Ueno's "I" does not always remain as free-floating as she claims it to be. Ueno refuses to be ascribed the label of "colonizer," criticizing the concept of colonialism for its essentialization of the "nation." In discussing postwar modes of historical consciousness, however, she herself repeatedly constructs an opposition of "victorious nation" (*senshōkoku*) versus "defeated nation" (*haisenkoku*) (Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā 1998: 30–31; Ueno 1998a: 182–185 and 2002: 34–36).

Although I appreciate Ueno's stance that women's participation in war must become a topic of research across the lines between totalitarian and democratic states,[19] I feel that by introducing the categories of "victorious nation" (*senshōkoku*) versus "defeated nation" she achieves just the opposite. Ueno's use of these terms results in the reification of the nation in spite of her continuous efforts to deconstruct the nation-state. These categories also imply a "Pacific"-oriented perspective emphasizing the Japanese-American dimension of the War and neglecting its Japanese-Asian dimension; and they suggest a moral judgement that seems to elevate the "defeated nations" over the "victorious" ones. To explain the latter two of these arguments in more detail: Ueno criticizes Japanese women's historians who have pursued what she calls a "reflexive women's history" (*hansei joseishi*) for remaining trapped within the limitations of their own national history (Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā 1998: 30–31). At

[19] Ueno uses the term "reflexive women's history" to signify a paradigm shift from viewing women as passive victims to positing them as active subjects of history. Applied to modern Japanese women's history, this approach lead to the emergence of a history of women as active participants in the crimes of Japan's imperialist war (Ueno 1998: 181). Ueno maintains that this type of a reflection of women's war collaboration emerged only in "defeated nations" like Japan, Germany and Italy, and that, unless a critical assessment of wartime nationalism of women in the "victorious nations" becomes possible, nationalism and imperialism will continue to be considered crimes of the former fascist states, only (ibid.: 182–185). For a critique of Ueno's assertion that the "victorious nations" did not produce a "reflexive women's history," see Oka (1998: 231–232).

the same time, she seems to censor the "victorious nations" for not producing such a "reflexive" history, thereby implying the intellectual and moral superiority of the "defeated nations." Moreover, Ueno's categorization of Japan as a defeated nation lacks consideration of the fact that Japan (like former West Germany) eventually emerged as one of the victorious nations of the 20th century. Ueno, thus, ends up coming dangerously close to presenting her own country as victimized or colonized, neglecting Japan's history as victimizer or colonizer of other Asian nations, and implying a certain moral superiority *vis à vis*, for instance, the United States.

The controversy between Kim and Ueno constituted the center of a highly politicized and often polemic debate within the "conscientious" intellectual community of Japan, including majority as well as minority feminist scholars and activists, but also male scholars from majority and minority backgrounds.[20] During these debates, Ueno usually stood alone and was attacked for her "universalist" views and "colonialist" abuse of power (e.g., Oka 1998: 221–223), whereas Kim's position was explicitly or implicitly supported. From the point of view of this study it is, of course, necessary to scrutinize Kim's arguments in the same way as Ueno's.

Kim's position seems straightforward in her denial of any intervention in the name of feminism, but her own ideas about how Japanese feminists should behave, namely her demand to give analytical and political priority to ethnicity over gender, are not free of normative conceptions of a universal "subject of feminism." Also, her concept of belonging and responsibility, even though it does not resort to biological or racial arguments, ultimately raises the question of representation – that is, who within a particular ethnic group has the right to speak and act for whom, and on what grounds. It should also be pointed out that Kim does not problematize her own subject position to the extent seen, for example, in the words of Ainu activist Keira Tomoko, which were quoted at the beginning of this article. It may be interpreted as an unconscious slip, in this context, that in the above quote from Kim (1998: 198), "dominant people" is put in quotation marks, whereas "dominated countries" remains without such a hint at relativity. Kim speaks out for the former comfort women from her standpoint as a fellow Korean (woman). While strictly distinguishing between a "Japanese" and a "Korean" feminist "standpoint" (*ichi*) (Kim 1998: 194, 197–

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[20] The documentation of the 1997 Symposium on "Nationalism and the 'comfort women' issue" (Nihon no Sensō Sekinin Shiryō Sentā 1998) provides a good introduction to this debate.

199 and Kim 2000),[21] she does not theorize the differences between, e.g., Koreans living in South Korea and Korean residents of Japan.[22] To reflect on her own position as part and not part of Japan – a position that actually separates her from most of the former comfort women of Korean origin – would jeopardize the "Korean" identity that provides the basis for Kim's claims to representing these women.

CONSTRUCTING HYBRIDITY AND IN-BETWEENNESS

The heated controversy which Kim and Ueno found themselves at the center of may have induced them to make their arguments more pointed, eliminating any nuances that might be interpreted as weaknesses or contradictions by the opposite party (thereby, sometimes, producing just these contradictions). Therefore, it seems advisable to take a look at some other authors' writings, which were not a direct part of the dispute. In the following, I focus on publications by two scholars whose perspectives, like that of Kim Puja, have been strongly influenced by their descent from Koreans who came to Japan as a result of Japan's colonial rule. They address problems of feminist consciousness and national or ethnic identity, similar to those analyzed above, but in more narrative, autobiographical modes. What seems most powerful about their texts are the reflections on their own hybridity, or their in-betweenness, being part and not part of "Japan," part and not part of "Korea."

Yamashita Yeong-ae is Korean on her father's side only. In one of her articles, she explains her identity as being torn between North Korea (her father's origin), Japan (her mother's country, where she grew up) and South Korea (the country where she studied, lived and took part in *ianfu* politics for several years) (Yamashita, Y. 2000: 27). One instance of her being made painfully aware of her un-belongingness was during her stay in South Korea when, regarding the issue of the comfort women, she took a stance that contradicted the views of the vast majority of South Korean feminists. In this controversy, Yamashita argued against dividing the victims of Japan's system of military sexual slavery into Korean sex slaves versus Japanese

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[21] It should be mentioned, however, that Kim, at times, invokes the category of "woman" in more essentializing terms, for instance, when she advocates "feminization" of the political process to recompense the former "comfort women" as the "basic solution" to the problem (Kim 1997: 15–16).

[22] As the number of Kim's publications on the comfort women issue is immense, I may have overlooked something that would prove me wrong. However, in the writings connected to the debate between herself and Ueno, I found nothing on this topic.

whores, or into upright Korean survivors opposing the Japanese govern-ment versus corrupt Korean survivors taking bribes from the Japanese (ibid.: 27–28).[23] Essentially, Yamashita criticized the sexual politics inher-ent in ethnic identity politics by pointing out how an overemphasis on eth-nicity has sometimes muted feminist arguments that might reveal the former Korean comfort women's oppression by Korean men (see also Ya-mashita 1996). As a result, she was told by South Korean activists that, be-cause she was "half-Japanese," she would never be able to understand "us Koreans" (Yamashita, Y. 2000: 28). In trying to come to terms with the harsh opposition she met from those who had, until then, been her com-panions in the movement, Yamashita came to acknowledge the impor-tance of the category of ethnicity (*minzoku*) for the South Korean people, including the South Korean feminist movement. She explains that, as a re-sult of their as yet unresolved history of colonial oppression, the people of South Korea as a whole are, although not to the same extent as the former comfort women, suffering from a syndrome of post-traumatic stress dis-order. Yamashita reflects on the possibility that South Korean feminists' activities in support of the former comfort women may partly be motivat-ed by a desire to heal their own wounds (ibid.: 29–30).

On the other hand, Yamashita's personal history and her ideals, which were conceived as a result of that history, do in themselves pose a chal-lenge to the category of ethnicity. Yamashita emphasizes that, "for me, the concept of feminism has worked as a force integrating my identity, which had been divided by nationalism" (Yamashita, Y. 2000: 30). The feminism she envisages is one that "has the potential to overcome nationalism" (ibid.) but, at the same time, acknowledges differences or, rather, is consti-tuted by these differences:

> What Japanese feminism, including Korean-Japanese [*zainichi*] femi-nism, requires for the ever-continuing struggle aimed at realizing this [feminism that will transcend nationalism] is neither to disregard the standpoint of the other [*aite*] nor to purposely exclude the standpoint issue altogether. What is required from every single [feminist] is per-

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[23] Way into the 1990s, mere mention of the fact that, during the war, Japanese women had also been exploited as comfort women tended to be taken by Ko-rean activists as an attempt to play down the sufferings of Korean survivors (Yamashita 1996: 44–45). About how the issue of the Japanese comfort women has been treated in majority Japanese feminists' writings, see my discussion in Wöhr (2003). "Bribes" from the Japanese, refers to the so-called "Asian Wom-en's Fund" (*Ajia josei kikin*), a nominally private fund which was initiated by the Japanese government in 1995 to meet the claims of survivors without having to pay official government reparations.

sistence in her efforts to construct her own independent framework [*riron*] for understanding others [*tasha*], who exist in Japanese society in many different ways. (Yamashita Y. 2000: 30)

Jung Yeong-hae (Japanese transcription: Chon Yonhe), a sociologist born of Korean parents in Japan, has also devoted a large part of her work to the topic of ethnicity and gender. Jung seems to be less optimistic about the chance that feminism will, one day, overcome nationalism. Her writings, in fact, mirror and also consciously reflect the contradictions invariably arising where feminist and ethnic politics meet. On the one hand, Jung's perspective on the relationship between "feminists of Japanese ethnicity" (*Nihonjin feminisuto*) and minority feminists resembles the view of the Korean-American woman whose criticism of Ueno Chizuko was mentioned above. Jung, too, perceives the attitudes of majority Japanese feminists towards minority women or women in other Asian countries to be mirroring attitudes of Western, or white feminists towards third world women or women of color. In her words: "Minority women of Japan are criticizing feminists of Japanese ethnicity in the same way that black feminists have criticized white middle class feminists" (Jung 1993: 91). Jung also refers to Nawal El Saadawi (1980), who maintains that

> it is only the Arab women themselves, who can criticize, and do something to change the discrimination against Arab women. Feminists of the "advanced Northern countries," especially the American and European countries which are exploiting Arab society have no right to interfere. Their task is to break the structure of domination, which the society that they themselves depend on has extended over the Arabs. (quoted from Jung 1999: 113)

Jung urges majority Japanese feminists to keep this in mind in their reactions to sexual discrimination in Korean society (*Chosen no seisabetsu*) (ibid.).

While thus asserting important differences between majority and minority feminists, Jung's objective is, on the other hand, to deconstruct the nation and notions of citizenship tied to the nation, as these are constructs that will, inevitably, continue to produce minorities and majorities (see especially Jung 1999). Also, while telling majority feminists to more or less mind their own business, she is relentless in her analyses of the minority position and in her reflections on the tasks of minority feminists. Jung maintains that ethnic identity politics tends to cover up discrimination occurring within the respective ethnic group. Her foremost example for such intra-group discrimination is the suppression of Korean women by those same Korean men who are fighting against oppression by the Japanese

(Jung 1999: 109). With regard to the situation of the former comfort women, this implies that "even if the Japanese government had officially apologized and paid [these women] a sizeable sum of money in compensation, the problem of the 'comfort women' would by no means be solved as long as sexual discrimination continues to be a stern reality in Korean culture" (Jung 1995: 4). However, Jung does not limit herself to criticizing Korean men's sexism, but goes on to point to the "inner colonizer" which may cause minority women to discriminate against sexual minorities or handicapped persons within their own ethnic group (Jung 1999: 109).

Jung is not aiming to replace a lost identity with a new one (e.g., that of "woman"), but questions the rationality and effectiveness of identity politics per se. She argues that by resorting to and stressing an identity as a minority, one accepts and reinforces the labels attached to one's own group by the majority, and also confirms the majority's self-representation as universal (Jung 1996: 21–22). Jung explicitly draws on postcolonial theories maintaining the complexity, or "hybridity" of the self, and valuing the awareness of one's own "impurity" as the momentum from which radical social criticism becomes possible (e.g. Pītāsu 1995, Takemura 1995 and Supibakku 1992, all cited in Jung 1996: 7–9, 19–21, 23–24, respectively).

Although she criticizes the negative repercussions of identity politics, Jung admits that in her own political work, for example, her proposal for a shelter designed to help battered Korean-Japanese women (Jung 2001: 16–18), she confronts situations where the necessity arises to define categories of identity or eligibility which, in turn, create new exclusions. Jung's wish that these limitations of her own project could be compensated for by a multiplicity of such projects does not, as she herself admits, quite live up to her own theoretical claims (ibid.: 17–18). It is such discrepancies that remind us that the theory and practice of feminist as well as ethnic politics are in a constant process of refraction and redefinition – particularly in instances where concerns about gender and ethnicity intersect.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have reconstructed feminist discourses in 1990s Japan, introducing three majority Japanese and three Korean-Japanese feminists' approaches to the issue of the comfort women. The central dispute between Kim Puja and Ueno Chizuko was shown to have evolved along the opposition of an emphasis on ethnicity versus an emphasis on gender, and of a focus on belonging and responsibility versus a deconstruction of identity and a refusal of representation. On the one hand, this controversy seemed to support the assumption of a basic difference between minority

discourses and majority discourses. However, in my attempt to deconstruct such divisions, I have demonstrated that many of the seemingly opposite strategies associated with these positions are actually used across this divide, and often by one and the same person. Also, both strategies, that of gender and that of ethnicity, were shown to imply similar concerns about identity.

My reconstruction of the views of Yamashita Yeong-ae and Jung Yeonghae, taken together with Kim Puja's position as it emerges from the controversy with Ueno Chizuko, pointed to the diversity of minority standpoints. Similarly, the contributions by Ōgoshi Aiko on the one hand, and Ehara Yumiko and Ueno Chizuko on the other, cannot be said to converge into one typical majority standpoint, with their radically different views on identity, representation and responsibility. Ultimately, all contributions to the discourse analyzed here can be seen to involve attempts to deconstruct restrictive identity positions while retaining a political stance or, conversely, to constitute political moves towards identification while trying to avoid exclusion and discrimination.

One important result of the debate of the 1990s was, certainly, to make visible some of the differences among women that had been invisible to most Japanese feminists. Categories like "women," "Japanese women," or "Asian women" have been shown to be anything but homogeneous, and such categories have been criticized for the invisible exclusions and oppositions which they create. It was also the developments of the 1990s which enabled minority feminists in Japan to clear a space for themselves – in Jung's words, " a space where we can meet and converse with our own selves" (Jung 1995: 5).

At the same time, there seems to be a common understanding that emphasizing ethnic or national divisions between women will not serve either of the projects of eliminating sexual discrimination or eliminating ethnic discrimination. As some majority Japanese feminists have explicitly acknowledged, it was the interventions of Korean and Korean-Japanese feminists that revolutionized Japanese feminism in the 1990s. Yamazaki Hiromi, for instance, relates that Japanese-Korean women, with their

> double perspective on the [comfort women] issue, i.e., racism and sexism … made me realize a consistent pattern of evasion by the Japanese women's postwar movement of the history of colonization and invasion, which in turn sustained the imposition of assimilation on Korean women in Japan as well as the discrimination against them. (Yamazaki 1995b: 53)

Furthering cooperation among Asian women, including the women of Japan, remains an important task. The issue of the comfort women symbol-

izes the continuing importance of solidarity across the borders between first world and third world, and between majority and minority. It is these same issues that have made majority Japanese feminists as well as Korean-Japanese feminists more sensitive to the interrelatedness of the issues of identity, liberation and discrimination. At the beginning of the new century, there is certainly more clarity with regard to these connections than in the mid-1980s when pioneer Matsui Yayori proclaimed her "Asian feminism."

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