

**“The One Glimmering Point of Light”**  
**By Yūko Tsushima**

“Pathology, by making things larger and coarser, can draw our attention to normal conditions which would otherwise have escaped us. [...] If we throw a crystal to the floor, it breaks; but not into haphazard pieces. It comes apart along its lines of cleavage into fragments whose boundaries, though they were invisible, were predetermined by the crystal’s structure. Mental patients are split and broken structures of this same kind. [...] They have turned away from external reality, but for that very reason they know more about internal, psychological reality and can reveal a number of things to us that would otherwise be inaccessible to us. We describe one group of these patients as suffering from delusions of being observed. They complain to us that perpetually, and down to their most intimate actions, they are being molested by the observation of unknown powers-- presumably persons-- and that in hallucinations they hear these persons reporting the outcome of their observation: ‘now he’s going to say this, now he’s dressing to go out’ and so on. [...] How would it be if these insane people were right, if in each of us there is present in his ego an agency like this which observes and threatens to punish, and which in them has merely become sharply divided from their ego and mistakenly displaced into external reality” (Freud 72-73)?

**DIRECTIONS:** Use Yūko Tsushima’s “The One Glimmering Point of Light” and the materials in the source packet (material by Freud) to complete the activities that follow.

**Assumption:** The only completely reliable information in “The One Glimmering Point of Light” resides in the details of the death of the narrator’s child, viz., he accidentally drowned while taking a bath. Assume also that the narrator is being accurate when she says that she was not directly responsible for his death-- that it was, in fact, an accident (Tsushima 15).

**Hypothesis:** This traumatic event colors the narrator’s perception and memory of every other event in the story. The repressed guilt from this occurrence has allowed the internal functioning of preconscious and unconscious processes to be interpreted as external reality (as Freud describes above). Thus, every perception and memory is, on some level, delusional. This is manifested both in the way that she (mis)perceives or (mis)remembers events and the way that she (mis)interprets them (including the relative importance she ascribes to details of those perceptions and memories).

**Task:** Using the story (required), at least one of the two Freud readings in the source packet (required), and the biographical data from the source packet (optional), construct a reading of the story that explains the obvious and not-so-obvious divergences from reality in the narrator’s account. It does not have to be exhaustive, but it should be thorough (though you can thoroughly examine one aspect of this task). You are, in other words, to play psychoanalyst and attempt to make sense of what the narrator is revealing to the reader and how the disconnected episodes are really manifestations of the central conflict (a woman cannot face the reality of the death of her child).

**Format:** The most obvious format is a written argument. It does not have to be an essay, however, as long as it includes portions that explain (in some depth) the connection between the ideas of Freud and the unreliable portions of the story. In other words, I do not care how you organize or format this information, as long as you meet the requirements of the task. However, non-essay formats still need significant amounts of writing to earn a good grade.

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**Other Requirements:** You must cite your sources with parenthetical reference in MLA format.

**Hints:** Look for commonalities between the sections (especially in conflicts). If someone is feeling guilty, having difficulty perceiving, having difficulty coping, describing deaths or disappearances, you should be trying to connect them back to the what we are hypothesizing to be the central conflict (psychological trauma stemming from the death of the narrator’s child).

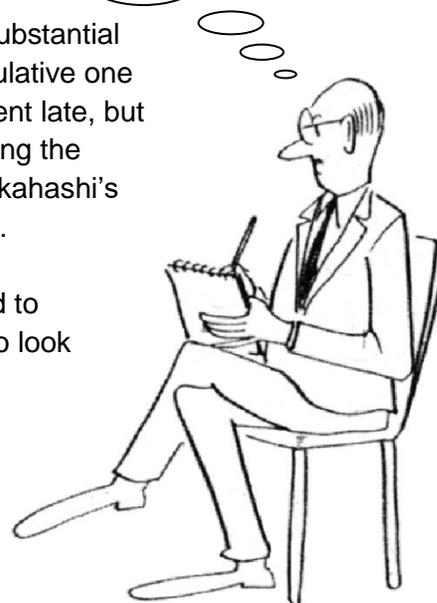
**More pointed hint that can serve as an example of the process you should be adopting:** Tsushima describes a “burial” in the first section. How is this similar to repression? Is the murderer a manifestation of the narrator’s psyche? How do we know that the murder could not have happened as she describes? How can the narrator be both murderer and witness to the crime?

**How to use the author’s biography and historical data from the presentation from “Bone Meat”:** How does the structure of Japanese society decrease female agency and increase the potential for psychological alienation? How could some of these societal attitudes have been integrated into the narrator’s super-ego?

**Minimum expectations:** I would expect fully developed explanations of at least two examples from the story. More credit will be earned if these examples have some sort of organic connection to one another and are part of the same overarching argument.

**Due dates and late work:** The assignment is due Monday October 1, at midnight. If you turn in the assignment early enough, I will mark it up with corrections and comments as if it were a timed writing draft. If you turn in the assignment at any point before the due date, you will receive a small incentive bonus (+3 points). If you miss the midnight deadline but turn in the assignment before eight hours have elapsed, there will be a small point deduction (-3 points). If you turn in the assignment between eight and twenty-four hours late there will be a larger point deduction (-10 points). If you turn in the assignment at any point after that, there will be a substantial point deduction (-20 points; this is a flat deduction, not a cumulative one based on the number of days late). If you turn in the assignment late, but do not want points deducted, you may earn back credit by doing the assignment AND doing the assignment again with Takako Takahashi’s “Doll Love” (supplemental story from the instructor’s web site).

I'm not a psychologist,  
but I play one in class.



**Additional help and modeling:** There will be a model posted to the instructor’s web site. Even if you are not usually inclined to look at such things, I would highly recommend you make an exception for this assignment. By Monday, there should also be a Freud tutorial in the AP Writing section of the web-site as well.