

FFT Collective Chronicles 2017: Yana Thönnnes (THE AGENCY)

Monday, 20.03.

I wake up in my guest apartment at Morishita Studio, Tokyo. Through the small opening I left between the white and the brown curtain a stripe of sunlight falls into my room, touches my pillow and my underarm. As in the nights before my mornings are made of dreams in worlds of high consolidation. Small rich world segments i am locked in. My body feels heavy. I know that's a jetlag result but though it troubles me. As I take my phone from the bedside table I see it is 7 a.m. I decide to lift this heavy thing, get up now and prepare the interview I got today with Mr. Morioka.

Mr. Morioka has written about one of the phenomena I research about here in Tokyo: The so called "herbivore men" - At the moment for me the phenomenon oscillates between a description of a group of socially awkward young heterosexual males in their 20ies, a scapegoat label old conservatives use to insult young males who are trapped by traditional gender roles and choose rather not to tick the step-by-step-checklist of dates, marriage, breadwinner, kids - or a male feminist movement that is the complete opposite of the alt-right movement in the US. Mr. Morioka also send me a pdf version of his latest book about the lolita complex, about the attractions of miniskirts and school uniforms and the feeling of emptiness after ejaculation. I have to stop reading this.

I am not sure what to expect in this upcoming interview situation arriving at Jinbocho station with the horror of a disastrous fight with a japanese philosophy professor in a noble hotel restaurant. I am happy to see Taro picking me up here, who is the one who takes care of me from Saison Foundation that grants my residency - If I had to write Taros job description it would be somewhere between artistic mentoring and social caring and I am so happy he is here.

When we go up on the hill to the hotel and up the stairs we pass a white gothic architecture terrasse room embedded in this flat-roof hotel with a wedding chapel decorated with fake cherry blossom and super cheesy classic music. The interior of the hotel resembles western-germany post-war, my grandma's living room atmosphere, dishes with gold seam, 3D printed cakes. Mr. Morioka arrives. The back of the chair is taller than him. He hands me over his business card carefully. He orders hot chocolate.

I start to ask him about the so called "herbivore men". I am interested in whether he thinks "herbivores" are a movement, a label or a syndrome - and if they are still around. He speaks fast and with a low voice. For him, it seems herbivores are a *phenomenon* that occurred recently and that is still around - young men who focus on other things than the heteronormative ticklist. Who tend to be peaceful, who are post-aspirational concerning a career, who focus on one thing, who are inexperienced in love and sex and do not seek for it.

When Mr Morioka speaks he does not look into my eyes. He looks at my mouth or this region at least or he looks at my forehead. I realize he identifies with the phenomenon of herbivore men quite much. I tell him my concern about the label "herbivore". That I think it is misogynistic. Reducing women to flesh, reducing men to creatures running after flesh, dividable into herbivore

or carnivore type. He kind of gets what I mean, but it is not his perspective. For him, being herbivore means being peaceful. It is not that herbivore men were feminists he says - but it could be possible that feminists could find a good partner in them, he says. When I ask him what feminists in Japan say about it he answers: *I talked with many of my feminist friends about it. But they do not want to talk about it. It doesn't look like anything to them.*

Taro and me take the metro to Akihabara. I want to visit a cuddle café. We walk around the blogs full of gaming and manga atmosphere and look for the best place - they offer various versions and packages: Massage, full "Love", chatting, hugs, lying down together. We pick the one with the full love offer and the the elevator to the 5th floor.

As the doors open it smells like artificial peach. The entrance situation is kinda nail studio, a glass ball with violet water inside shimmers, the girl behind the desk wears a school uniform and no shoes, she hands over a menu full of variations and instructions like no adult entertainment - no violence against our girls - no violent language against the girls - no sexual contact. I stick to my decision of a full love package, 30 minutes, 8500 Yen. English might be difficult with the girls she tells me. Taro handles the price and package decision with impressive neutrality. He leaves, see u in 30 min.

The girl behind the reception gives me some granny slippers. We walk along a small corridor between different boxes passing an aquarium and girly posters at the wall. Adele sings Hello. In the 3 square meter box I will have my cuddling session in she makes me sit down on the brown mattress. Please wait. A minute later she returns. "Sorry it will be me." I guess she changed clothes but I am not sure. "We will start with a hand massage." She grabs the pinky peach lotion next to the mattress.

In the whole session she will guide me step by step very clearly with a shivering voice. We lie down on the mattress next to each other without touching. We do not lie close. I turn my upper body towards her to look at her. "No eye contact, she says, I am shy". I lie myself on the back again and look at the white ceiling liners. She chats a bit with me, also looking at the ceiling, how do you like Japan small talk, every time it is silent I feel her holding her breathe. "In the package it says: hug - interested in a hug?" - "Yes - How do we do it?" We hug somehow, she has a distance closeness, though it works somehow, i smell her hair. The 15 seconds are longer than 15 seconds. She makes me lie down again. You like japanese green tea? She leaves me alone on the mattress. She knocks at the box before she opens the lace curtain. I sit up. "The time is over. Please stay here". She leaves again. She returns with a portemonnaie. The costs for the session are 8500 Yen (about 70 Euro). I ask for a receipt. It is no problem.

Before I take the elevator she says thank you, arigato and Danke.

Tuesday, 21.03.

I wake up. It is raining in Tokyo for the first time of my stay. As I open facebook on my mobile, I realize Trisha Brown must have died.

This morning I stay at my guest apartment and prepare the talk I will give about the work of THE AGENCY and my research in Tokyo on thursday. Before I start writing I have a shower in my small bathroom and I put in my new eye lenses in in front of the enormous mirror: Colorful

lenses that make your eyes much bigger, not the pupil, but the colorful part. I bought them yesterday at a 5 floor shopping center in Akihabara after realizing how many girls wear these prosthesis in the district. The shopping center, filled with loads of pictures of School Girls, Maids and all kinds of Cosplay, has a huge offer of all kinds of lenses: Any kind of color or color combination. The advertisements on the products and beneath show girls with an asian facial shape, dark hair and super white and rosé skin so that their eyes are even more the focus: wide and dark eyes.

The music in this part of the floor level is *perfect romance* plus the products themselves got some sound as well. Eye lenses are girly talking to you. I choose a darker color than my own eyes, more brownish. As I set them into my eyes now I look at myself in the mirror. I am a very honest and caring version of myself now. Maybe I am younger too. Maybe I am on drugs. I am definitely a lie.

Taro and me enter the 5th floor - as the glass door opens automatically to the right side it smells like strawberry and a bit sticky. A young girl dressed as a maid comes around the colorful dividing wall and greets us. Welcome home my master and princess. She makes us wait. The sound behind the wall is children party like, McDonalds park-with-balls area. Another maid comes and guides us around the wall into the room. She makes us sit down at a table in the crowded café. She wears a special hair decoration, overknee socks, flat dark leather shoes and a garter. She smiles as she is explaining the menu to us. Her eyes are dark and wide. Another Maid grabs the mic and asks two boys to come on stage. In the menu all drinks and food got faces on them. It is mostly faces of pets. We choose a dessert-set and a drink set. Set means: Plus photo with our maid. She hands over a lookbook where we can see "Our maids today" - they are divided in "maids" and "premium maids". We shall pick the one we like most for our photo. She smiles to write down our choice that is not her.

Next to us there is a table with 3 boys in their early 20ies. They are watching a maid preparing their scrambled egg at the table - as she makes a long vertical cut in its middle. Then she opens it slowly to the left and right in an oval shape. They put a charm on it all together. The boys repeat her words happily. She claps her hands and giggles. She is connected with her "masters" completely in this moment. There is no question to it. The connection between maids and masters is a childish one, playful. It is a children's party and the youngest on these party are the maids, performing youth and organizing the cafe at the same time. It takes ages until my dessert arrives - It is a cake with a poodle face.



Wednesday, 22.03.

I knew it, but I completely forgot about it. It is dawn. I am standing on a vast square that is empty under my umbrella and look up. Behind the roof of the temple there is the Eiffel Tower, lit, red, pink, sparkling. I walk by the cemetery of the temple, crossing the smell of wet incense sticks. Under the Eiffel Tower remake they built a hall, like a shopping mall. It smells like Crepes. Since I feel a bit lonely today I can totally relate to this kinda cheesyness and buy a ticket to go up the *Tokyo Tower* at the well dressed staff. I enter the shopping mall size thingy. The entrance hall is a noble hotel. A girl in a dark blue and gold uniform looks at me and smiles. She guides me the way on the red carpet to the elevator. The elevator boy opens it for me with a push on the button in his white gloves. There is a melody of romantic success occurring when the elevator starts to move. The young couple next to me looks at each other smiling. Our elevator boy has a microphone. While we go up he holds a pitch (like the first real elevator pitch I ever saw!!!), Tokyo occurs around us through the glass walls of the elevator, the pink lit ceiling changes its colors, we arrive. On the platform there is a gift shop: THE SKY - official shop. Fake cherry blossom decoration. A model of the Tokyo tower in pink glitter turning in front of a mirror, couples and BFFs all around the platform. Disney Music. There is very few light up here. The glass windows that are divided into sections of approximately 1m x 1,5 m, which turns out to be the perfect size of a posing background. In front of it the poses of romantic relationships are being set up with a joyful pragmatism. Hugging. Dissolve. Leaning at the shoulder. Dissolve. Holding hands. Dissolve. [Love me love me say that you love me](#). Tokyo Tower is 333m. Eiffel Tower is 327. Love it. I go to the Sky to buy some gifts. I decide for a hand-fan with Tokyo Tower print.

We meet Ai Aoyama in her clinic. We go up the stairs to the 5th floor, there is no elevator. Next to her entrance door there is a fairy sculpture. She opens the door with a golden dog on her arms. The aquarium sound is soothing, we take off our shoes in the tiny hall and step up on the violet fringe carpet. She leads us to the room she uses for the sessions. She makes me sit on the bed while Taro and her sit down on the carpet. Behind her I can see Roppongi Tower through the huge windows. She turns on the heating. Her dog sits close to me on the bed. At the wall there is a classy depiction of an octopus eating out a girl tenderly. As she does not speak english Taro translates for us.

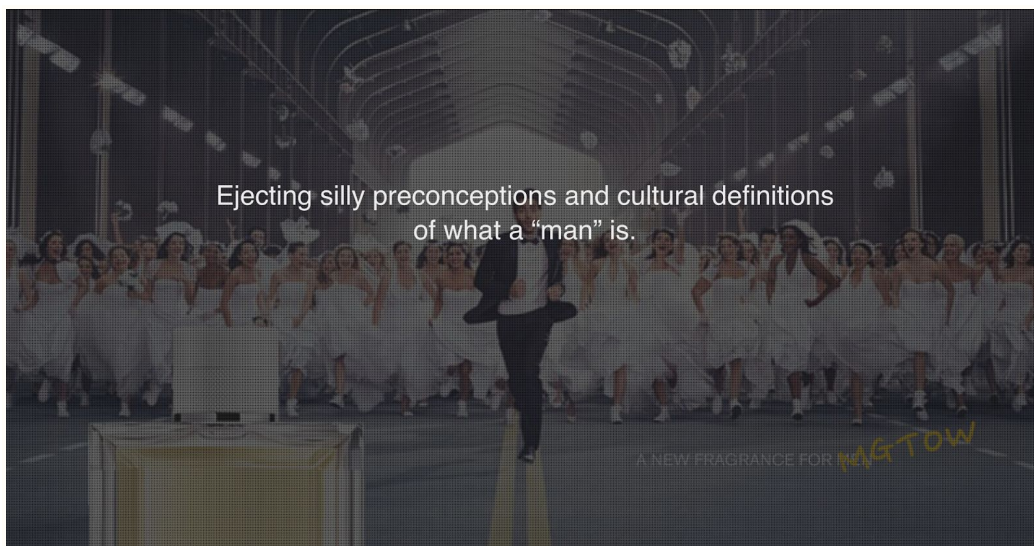
Approximately 90 % of her clients are male, 50% of them she considers "herbivore". The problem herbivore men came to her with to get a consulting is lack of confidence she says. They only have "small dreams". Her method to coach them combines different skills that she collected in her career - Ai Aoyama worked as a dominatrix, she had an aesthetic salon, she knows about the rituals of mountain priests and she works with hypnosis. Thus, she is an expert in how to bring the body to a kind of next level. When she gives a consulting she starts with hearing the clients problems and then gives a massage to open up the body. When she works with hypnosis afterwards it is about vision building. It is about "big dreams". The herbivore thing here is more a syndrome than a phenomenon, Ai says, and it is a young thing. She associates it with boys growing up in overcaring families, with being protected and hence with the result of

not wanting to get hurt - with the idea of a love that goes without pain. She calls it “oversexual mothers”.

Later in our interview she tells that when couples come to her and there is a “herbivore-man problem” she tends to start with a hypnosis of the female partner. The idea about that is to lower the pressure for the male part that comes up with the expectations of a “typical male behavior” the female partner might have. As I ask her about her personal opinion about “herbivore men” she says that she hopes they will find confidence to be able to handle the *girl* better.

Thursday, 23.03.

It is the third time I am preparing the keynote presentation that my *** Mac does not safe with pictures but with question marks instead. I am sitting at my desk at Morishita studios and got my notes ready. I know what I want to present. But I like to leave a bit of an adrenalin space in my presentation. Preparing a keynote for the third time feels so not adrenaline. To keep my hormone level up I am deeply diving in forums of the MGTOW phenomenon and try to find out about what they think about herbivore men. Several times I got to look fascinated at the opener of the MGTOW website. It works with a statement that could easily derive from a gender-study student with a leftist background who is marching on a women's march:



In the coming seconds of the video that statement is combined with a revolutionary gesture by adding words as “not bowing” or “not serving”. The statement: “It is the manifestation of one word: *No.*” reminds me of the Bartleby statement “I'd prefer not to.”

The opening pictures of the MGTOW website are celebrations of pictures of heterosexual manliness such as the lonely cowboy image - but with a guy in casual clothes focusing his way, the war pilot - flying over Hollywood in his jet ready to fight against the pictures of manliness, the bridegroom hundreds of women are running after. These men are all depicted alone but on the move. They are depicted as individuals. They are not an organized movement. They also do not seem to have any fun in the situations we watch them - often we cannot even see their faces.

But mostly they seem to have a way or a goal - at least they got stripes on the floor or a road that they follow. Their goal is to gain "self-ownership". To stop what they call "gynocide", to stop their feeling of "being disposable" and to "do their own thing" - this obviously can be a lot of things - as long as women are not involved. Though women should not be involved they are one of the main topics in their forums. Mostly women are their thread, their enemy and the ones who make them feel all these horrible feelings they describe. These feelings must be so severe they take them as evidence.

As I have not seen any of these feelings-based descriptions by or of the so-called "herbivore men" I want to know about their relation and if there is any. One of the posts I read about the relation between "herbivore men" and MGTOW opposes self-description, the picture and the way "feelings" are used to describe. I copy some part of the conversation as follows:

H-MGTOW:

[@keymaster](#) and all others MGTOWs

After a long conversation with so called "Herbivore Men" the Guys in Japan don't like this name. They prefer Single Man or nothing.

I came to the conclusion that I was fully wrong with what I said, and I'm Sorry for that.

What the guys from Japan said, has shaken me honestly awake.

They said shortly:

MGTOW right now is more a Movement of Haters, look you all blaming other Men, call them Manginas, White Knights etc. thats all not your Bussiness.

MGTOW startet as a Philosophy, now its a Movement, there the people talk about MGTOW City, Island etc. (Youtube)

Many MGTOW trying to making money with it, what are you MGTOWs etc.?

We are just Single Men in Japan and nothing more and nothing less, we dont need forums etc.

we have something better to do than to complain about the women.

We do not blaming Women and other Men, this is not Adult.

Everyone lives his life the way he wants.

For us you just look like little Children.

MGTOW is right now "Male Feminism" with no difference to the "Female Feminism". Guys you are all "Singles", why you need a special Name for it (MGTOW), forums, community etc.?

Are you so insecure with yourself?

We have read many topics of the MGTOWhq, mgtow.com and others, facebook, youtube etc. and all what we found there, are just "Men blaming Men" things or "Men blaming Women" things. You look like Male Feminists and worser.

Hardcore-MGTOW (and I was a part of it) next step to extremism, than the Hatecore-MGTOW movement that stands against all MGTOWs and against all that have anything to do with Women.

Ghost, Monk, Stealth, Phantom-MGTOW anykind of Levels? Are you in a Console Wolrd, where you have levels?

You like blaming others, but if someone says something to you, then you attack. This is not Adult, this is Stupid!

What is next? Crime against Women, against other Men (White Knights, Manginas etc.) a MGTOW-Religion?

Guys be Single and live your lifes. Stay away from all of this, this ruins you and its not make you happy, you all MGTOWs, looks like a big "Hate-Sect".

Well, I was completely blown away.

And quite honestly a bit embarrassed.

And they are right I was not better, see the H-MGTOW next step to extremism, thats insane, I was insane. What I have wrote, blames other MGTOWs and other Men (Manginas, White Knights etc.

Since 2005 I lived as a Single no forums, no needs, lived my life. Never blamed anyone, not even women. Since 2013 i lived as a H_MGTOW till now. I started blaming MGTOWs, Men (Manginas, White Knights etc.), Women.

Thats not right, thats wrong, totally wrong!

I was wrong. And for that I apologize.

I'm away now, from the MGTOW and especially from my own Hardcore-MGTOW, I'm no longer a Part of this Movement of blaming and hating.

"I'm just a "Single Man" and whats all, no more & no less."

Think what ever you want about me, starting blaming me, when you want etc. Thats not my problemm.

And I'm sorry for my Bad English, I'm from Germany.

VerityPhantom:

MGTOW isn't a movement... It's a REVOLUTION! I don't mean to be so blunt with you, but I refuse to just sit back and let you, or anyone point their finger AT ME and not expect any retaliation. Real men don't lock themselves in a room and let time erode them, as a PROUD MGTOW I will be the change I want to see in this world. And we all come here to support each other. Not bash, do you see me going into Jezebel forums to bash? FB? Any type of social media platform? This is OUR safe space and if you don't like it you know where the door is brother.

What is striking in the post with the quotation of a so called "herbivore man" is the pragmatic way to describe ones situation: being single. In comparison to that the description from the MGTOW side in the comment of *Verity phantom* uses the words of "REVOLUTION, change, retaliation" combined with the field of "proud, real, refuse" as well as words like "support, brother" - the *urgency to act* and the "we" that is produced this way is something the description of the "herbivore men" lacks completely. In fact the description of the herbivore men lacks a

goal, a way, a we. It clearly opposes feminism - as something that is confronting. The statement works without confrontation - except the one not wanting to be labeled as part of MGTOW. These posts make me think about the fiction of a movement to come: Is it possible to think of a movement that is pragmatic and not confronting? I have to stop now. There is enough adrenaline. I will go to Studio A now to make the last preparations for my talk that will start soon.

Friday, 24.03.

Ney looks at the name tags: "that one". A male voice occurs as he pushes the button. The door that felt it was one behind they stored the trash opens. Behind that an elevator. We step in. Wow weird, that's for connoisseurs, Ney says. We arrive on the 6th floor and take the door to the front - a man in after work look welcomes us. He moves his toes in the at-home plastic sandals while he is explaining the menu which is a laminated colorful A4 sheet that is attached to a leather jotter. There are various options available concerning time frame, activity and the garcons outfit. It can be Karaoke, watching a movie, going somewhere to drink, going to game center - and shall they dress up in suit or casual? Suit! I would really like to look around the corner of the hallway. As we are two persons it must be two garcons - they only do one-on-one. Alright. The flyer pictures behind us in the hallway show around 20 garcons, all in suits that seem to not really fit and different gestures of intellectual manliness, the mouth sometimes a bit smiling, sometimes duckface-like, often straight. The background is shiny, the single pics are photoshopped together to a group. We take a small package as it is already quite expensive - 45 min for 5400 Yen. Then we leave the flat and Ney goes straight to the elevator. Ah, I thought it is a club - what will happen now? We wait for them downstairs.

Standing on the street waiting for our rental tomboyfriends the situation feels like a situation. Like waiting for a girl you pick up. They arrive at the stairs and stand still there for a second looking down to us. As they dissolve that they smile and walk down to us. To my shock Ney starts describing the two my research project on service intimacy. One of them looks at me, comes closer and says I am Ichigo. I am Yana. Ichigo takes my left hand and we start to walk. That's how we hold hand boyfriend/girlfriend he says and smiles at me. He pulls me so close that his hand touches my leg. I feel his body and he is laughing. People look at us I notice. We giggle and laugh. I realize I did not laugh so often in 5 minutes since I am Tokyo. Ichigo knows the way perfectly well. We go down the stairs, there is the photo booths. We create a picture of who we are now. Ichigo makes me pick one of the booths that got special filters. Since Cinderella is not available I pick the beauty couple love one. We put our jackets to the right in the box. The shimmery photo light in the booth is reflected on Ichigos skin. He comes close to me as the machine starts to shoot. When you have to keep the pose we keep it a bit too long. When it shoots Ichogos face touches mine. I see him closing his eyes pragmatically joyful in one shoot. On the picture later it will look as if he was smelling my hair. As we decorate the picture in the next booth Ichigo writes our name under the photograph and adds the date. He puts little glitter hearts on it. You look so cute. He picks the printed photo and cuts it in half. I wanna have some of them OK? He laughs. I gotta laugh too. The end of my

scarf falls of my neck. Ichigo takes it carefully looks into my eyes and puts it around my neck again, touching my throat.

Saturday, 25.03.

We meet Koro in a burger shop on the 9th floor in Shinjuku. She has a tablet in front of her with a questionable colorful soft drink on it. Her hair is dyed blond and it is short. She has been working in the escort club I visited yesterday. It was a part time job she said. Koro is a director leading her own company. Her boyish way of talking is relieving. The most important technique she tells me is admiring the customer. To do so it is a good idea to imagine you as the prince. And never speak real to the other. Her answers are tough. Even though she speaks Japanese I can tell from Taro's translation and his puzzled gaze. Admiring someone can be done by creating skinship she says. If that is too close: Smiling. Carrying the others bag. Her name as an escort was "Taro". Koro turns the straw in the ice cubes remaining in her plastic cup. You should admire the customer for something that could be true, sth you can see for example a clothing that you can describe as special. Something basic and visible. Koro looks at my half transparent vest. Listen to the other. Try to have a real conversation. Do not small talk. Concerning the setting and management she tells me it is never allowed to enter an individual private room during the session - the most private is a karaoke box. Because it is not a sexual service. I perform intimacy.

That's why married people like to use the service - it does not officially count as an affair. Some of them just like tomboys. Some of them are shy. 90% of the clients are women. Some clients are stars and are so famous that they are not allowed by their agents or do not want to take the risk of decreasing their female value by having a real relationship in public. What is most important about the service Koro says, is that all taking part in it are enjoying the fake. But when I leave a client and have the feeling she enjoyed I would say *When will I see you again?*

Sunday, 26.03.

Celebrating my Tokyo morning routine of sitting in a lotus in my bed at Morishita Studios, the coffee next to me on the bedside table, laptop on my knees. Today I will meet Maki Fukasawa, the journalist who used the term "herbivore men" first in 2006 and thus can be called the creator of that buzzword. Our meeting will take place in a hotel in Shinjuku, 20th floor.

Maki Fukasawa sits down at the table in the 2nd floor café. 20th was completely full and Taro and me even queued half an hour for this one. As soon as Ms Fukasawa has put the cat-shaped-print-pillow to the side she starts asking the questions - why was I interested in herbivore men at all? Well I am highly interested in the term herbivore men because it is an ambivalent term, that could eventually throw over the order of gender and thus a whole economic system that it supports. She puts some cream in her royal black tea. Her eyes get wide. I know it's kinda naive but it's the artist card I am playing. I would like to find out if this herbivore men thing has the potential of a movement and how come that it is described as phenomenon, syndrome, pathology. (Actually I would also like to find out how Ms Fukasawa who obviously is a feminist could come up with a term that has the connotation of

women=flesh). Without me asking, Ms Fukasawa says that as she invented the term it was a small scale decision and she did not expect it to become viral. However the term herbivore is connected to the buddhist idea of a life that creates no more suffering but even shall solve earlier suffering. Thus being herbivore is a sign of consequence and advanced level. So for her the term was completely positive and described a young male generation that is able to think of heterosexual relationships as equal since they experienced the violence that non-equal relationships create.

The détournement that happened to the term later by an older mainly male generation using it to insult young post-aspirational men as losers and responsible for shrinking birth rates, was due to the threat of the older generation what could happen if the young would stop to work in a system of mainly capitalist ideas. Ms Fukasawa is squeezing the cat pillow as she is talking. Though she describes the term as generation-related she experiences the younger ones using their herbivore side as a technique, as a skill that could potentially be subversive. We have a cake break. Taro shakes his hand relaxing from writing and drawing sketches in his notebook while translating. I go to get some fresh air. The cafe and the square that is more artificial than squares usually are, are surrounded by skyscrapers. One of them fakes the Big Ben clock. In Berlin 6.000 people are walking for the EU right now. The toilets are through the white entrance hall up the escalators and to the left. As I enter the cafe again Maki Fukasawa smiles at me and opens her arms wide.