Monsters have haunted the Japanese literary imagination since the earliest recorded writing. Eight-headed snakes, giant spiders, water spirits, mountain goblins—frightening, supernatural creatures of all sorts infest premodern Japanese literature. Spectacular bodies to behold, colorful demons, and human-animal hybrids adorned the pages of religious anecdotes and vernacular tales. But monsters are not just creations of the past; modern Japanese literature is haunted by myriad monsters, not remnants of an earlier time but new creatures imagined through advances in technology and medical sciences. This book is about the rise of these modern monsters and the stories told about them.

To understand the significance of these modern monsters, I will be situating them in relationship to the scientific discourses of a modern Japanese empire hell-bent on improving the bodies of its citizens. During the modern period, from the Meiji era (1868–1912) through the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1937, Japan witnessed an enormous shift in the perception of human anatomy. New scientific discourses imported from Europe fed into this reimagining of the body, bringing the human anatomy to the forefront of debates over how best to move the nation forward into modernity. As a result, the individual body became the object of study, scrutinized by the eyes of the empire. Through scientific discourses such as hygiene, reproductive science, and eugenics, modern citizens were encouraged to regulate and improve their health and physique, to “think of their bodies as plastic, in the sense of capable of being molded, and as adaptable, pliable, and transformable through new hygienic regimens of nutrition and physical exercise.” For the first time in history, they were
made to understand their bodies as collectively constituting the nation, as something inseparable from the national body politic. Within this context of promoting new and improved national bodies, images of monstrosity also proliferated: pathogenic women, evil twins, psychological doppelgängers, and humanoid automata. These strange beings found their way into literary fiction as a new kind of monster. Whereas so many of the monsters in premodern literature took on strange physical shapes, the monsters of modernity were more elusive—their weirdness was not physically marked but more subtly encoded, legible only through the scientific discourses that promoted bodily enhancement.

I use the term “monsters” to describe these literary bodies because they came to be narrated as beings that evoked fear. Although they were often marked by a bodily difference that was indiscernible to the naked eye, this subtlety made them all the more frightening. The monster tales in this book all share a common storyline. There is a character that appears to be an ordinary being, but the reader is told that this being is actually different, that the character is hiding his or her otherness in order to pass as a normal being. The reader cannot determine whether this information is correct, for this bodily difference is never obvious. This initial confusion leads to an anxiety that permeates the narrative: Is the body really monstrous? If so, how can one tell? In these tales, the monstrous element is always presented as a secret to be unraveled, and there is a delaying of the answer, for a specific knowledge is required to determine the truth. The horror here is marked by this postponement and unexpectedness—one that arises from the doubt and uncertainty caused by a character with a bodily secret. This is the type of fear that these new monstrous bodies produce, a fear that comes from an encounter with what I am identifying as the uncanny.

To introduce this notion of the uncanny is almost inevitably to invoke the theoretical structure that Freud set forward in his famous essay, “The ‘Uncanny’” (1919). In one of the essay’s most quoted passages, Freud claims that “everything is unheimlich (uncanny) that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light”; it is the moment of fear that comes about when something traumatic that one had repressed is triggered by an event, “that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.” This moment of fear, when the present is disturbed by the past and the “familiar” becomes unfamiliar, has come to be known as “the return of the repressed.” Freud’s essay was written to explore the psyche of veterans suffering from shell shock and
trauma in the aftermath of World War I, and it reveals his shift from examining the pleasure principle to examining the death drive after observing the tendency of his patients to compulsively relive their traumatic experiences.\(^5\) The uncanny is the return of the original moment of shock and terror, a haunting by the past. It is a temporal disturbance, when one’s repressed memory is suddenly unearthed. This familiar repression model of the uncanny will become useful at certain important moments in the chapters that follow, moments at which the role of repression in the construction of Japanese modernity (especially the repression of colonial violence discussed in the middle chapters) influences our understanding of the literary monsters.

But whereas Freud’s theory offers a good starting point to consider the signification of modern monsters, it tends to obscure another very useful definition of the uncanny. Early in his essay, Freud cites Ernest Jentsch, whose work points to a specific kind of confusion that the uncanny addresses: “Among all the psychical uncertainties that can become a cause for the uncanny feeling to arise, there is one in particular that is able to develop a fairly regular, powerful and very general effect: namely, doubt as to whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate.”\(^6\) Although Freud generally develops his psychoanalytical model of the uncanny in contradistinction to Jentsch’s approach, he never completely rejects Jentsch’s original definition. He describes the automaton Olimpia in E. T. A. Hoffmann’s “The Sandman,” for example, as a body that encapsulates “uncertainty whether an object is living or inanimate.”\(^7\) He makes a similar statement about twins, psychological doubles, and waxwork figures—the representative figures of the uncanny, what Terry Castle calls the “itemized tropology of the weird.”\(^8\) All of the examples that Freud discusses in the essay are in fact marked by the Jentschian uncanny—a fear arising from uncertainty over whether an object is animate or inanimate. Even though Freud tries to distinguish himself from Jentsch by redefining the uncanny as “the return of the repressed,” the question of animation persists in his imagination. Lydia Liu, among others, has thus observed that Jentsch’s study of the uncanny has been “repressed” by the more popular Freudian version.\(^9\)

It is in fact the Jentschian definition—the fear arising from the uncertainty of an object being animate or inanimate—that has been emerging as the more prominent, popular understanding of the uncanny in recent years.\(^10\) One good illustration of this definition is roboticist Mori
Masahiro’s theory of the uncanny valley (bukimi no tani). In 1970, Mori, currently professor emeritus of Tokyo Institute of Technology, set out this theory in the form of a graph (fig I.1). The graph is a study of the subjective reactions of humans to various kinds of robots and other humanlike objects. The horizontal axis represents “human likeness,” and the vertical axis represents “affinity”—the human audience’s sense of comfort with the likeness of the robot or other object. The graph reveals that at first, the more humanlike the objects become, the more people are attracted to them and express positive sentiments. However, as soon as this humanlike factor approaches but falls short of lifeliness, people become revolted. The uncanny valley is the site of this anxiety. It represents the human repulsion stemming from an object that provokes confusion between what is human and what is nonhuman, what is animate and what is inanimate, just as Jentsch observed.

This concept of binary confusion plays an important role in the literature I examine. The central binary of this book, however, is not the animate/inanimate distinction of Jentsch and Mori. Rather, it is a binary that was
produced in modern Japan by the newly imported scientific discourses on the body—the binary of the *normal* and the *abnormal*. This book focuses on the decades leading up to the Pacific War, precisely because scientific discourses such as hygiene and eugenics were introduced to Japan in the mid-1800s and arose as dominant forces throughout the imperial era. By the end of the 1930s, images of healthy, “normal” bodies proliferated in various journals and newspapers, as voices against “abnormal” and “deviant” bodies intensified. The Japanese empire upheld the well-trained physiques of its soldiers and their healthy mothers while monitoring the bodies of the unhealthy as an effort to efface them from the national image. There was a constant effort, in other words, to demarcate those who belonged to the empire by dividing them from those who did not.

This book thus treats the uncanny as a discourse of the body. The uncanny requires the element of fear, but in this case, it is a very specific fear embedded in the discourse of modern science. I aim to historicize the uncanny, to explore it in conjunction with the discourses that were targeted to improve the Japanese body. In this approach, I am inspired by scholars like Sabine Frühstück and Jennifer Robertson, who have similarly claimed that scientific discourses were part of the imperial project. As both scholars have shown, the improvement of the human anatomy was one of the foremost goals for modern Japan’s project to construct a “civilized” nation. Frühstück has discussed how the individual body became tied to the national body through a strict regimentation of hygienic cleanliness and “correct” sex education. She has revealed how the binary of normalcy and deviance became marketed in both academic and popular writings as the key knowledge for improving the Japanese national body. Robertson has similarly described Japanese modernity as a “eugenic modernity” in which scientific methods functioned as “the primary means to constitute both the nation and its constituent subjects.” She has elucidated how scientific discourses such as eugenics and hygiene were instrumental in the creation of the category of the “stigmatized other.” The two scholars’ concept of “internal colonialism”—the imperial state’s indoctrination of its own people via the regulation of their bodies—has greatly informed my reading of monstrous bodies.

What underlies my work, then, is the kind of skepticism that Michel Foucault exhibited toward the value systems created in modern Europe. Foucault argued that a certain power, distinct from any forms of power preceding it, emerged in the nineteenth century: *the power of normalization*. This power appears to be inclusive and productive: “The norm brings
with it a principle of both qualification and correction. The norm’s function is not to exclude and reject. Rather, it is always linked to a positive technique of intervention and transformation, to a sort of normative project.” Its function is to declare what is both medically and legally acceptable for society, at the same time justifying the powers of such boundaries to “transform judicial power as well as psychiatric knowledge and to constitute itself as the authority responsible for the control of abnormal individuals.” As Foucault makes clear, the discourse of normalization was a new power of regulation that penetrated each individual. It created, for the first time in history, the concept of the “abnormal individual” and educated each citizen to strive toward social norms by disciplining the individual body.

As I will show, the uncanny in modern Japan arose as a by-product of this kind of bodily regimentation—the “internal colonialism” governed by the power of normalization. The impetus to improve the Japanese national body was never quite straightforward. It was not simply that the modern empire enforced scientific ideologies, to be subsequently followed without question. With the obsession to define the ideal body of the nation came a fixation with the opposite—the unhealthy, nonreproductive bodies unfit for the new nation. The motivation to understand the normal required a new attention to and an endlessly expanding knowledge of the abnormal. Delinquents, perverts, and the diseased—what Foucault calls the “human monsters”—all became visible, dominant figures precisely because of the effort to define their opposite. This ironic turn is a critical focus within my project: the normal bodies of modernity were not threatened by the abnormalities of deviant bodies (which were necessary to define the very concept of the normal) but by the ambiguous bodies that resisted classification. As the aforementioned sociohistorical works have shown, the binary of the normal and the abnormal was constantly being undermined in modern Japan, the categories continually reestablished and rewritten. It is the articulation of this anxiety—the uncertainty about whether or not the normative binary could be sustained—that lies at the crux of the uncanny.

This book contends that literature registers this anxiety over how science and technology changed and shaped understandings of the body, especially how they demarcated the divisions between the normal and the abnormal. What I am calling modern monsters are anatomies, informed by newly imported sciences, that ignite an uncanny sense of terror by blurring the normal–abnormal binary. These characters only become
"abnormal" when a scientific gaze is directed at them. Throughout the book, I will illustrate how modern sciences contributed to the imagining of these modern monsters and show how they were born from the divisions that these scientific discourses were so carefully crafting.

The book is organized chronologically, starting from the mid-Meiji period and proceeding through the 1930s. The chapters trace, in historical order, the demarcations of normal and abnormal in Meiji hygienic discourse; the emphasis on “healthy Japanese” bodies in Taishō-era Japan (1912–26); the eradication of the “mentally unstable” in psychological writing during the early Shōwa period (1926–89); and the emphasis on the healthy, reproductive female body by birth control activists and eugenicists during mid-Shōwa Japan. Each chapter explains how the monster’s emergence is tied to a dominant, contemporary scientific discourse.

Chapter 1 examines how the discourse of hygiene and the virus came to be translated in the literary language of Izumi Kyōka (1873–1939), an author known for his hygienic obsessions. I focus especially on the figure of the mysterious woman in Kōya hijiri (The holy man of Mount Kōya, 1900), who produces hybrid monsters by having intercourse with men. I outline the shift in the trope of the monstrous woman in the Meiji period by focusing on the role of modern hygiene in the creation of a new scientific language for capturing the otherness of the female anatomy. Kyōka purposefully takes up the popular image of the monstrous female in the Edo period (1603–1867)—a female body fused with that of animals—but develops the image further by inscribing it as a diseased, unsanitary vessel that poses a threat to the modern nation. This chapter thus attempts to capture the first instance of scientific vocabulary entering the fantastic literary domain in order to better describe the monstrosity of both diseased and female bodies.

Chapter 2 investigates the image of twins as monstrous births in eugenic writings as well as the detective story “Sōseiji” (Twins, 1924) by Edogawa Ranpo, “the Father of Japanese Detective Fiction” (1894–1965). Twins were traditionally viewed as abhorrent and monstrous in Japanese culture, and they continued to be seen as inferior beings in the modern period. In the 1920s, the Japanese picked up the famous nature-versus-nurture debate taking place in Western eugenics and began to experiment with twins to prove whether heredity (nature) or social circumstances (nurture) was the key to determining a person’s characteristics. Around
the same time, in 1923, the Great Kantō Earthquake occurred, followed by the massacre of thousands of Koreans (among other minorities). This chapter situates Ranpo’s fiction against the historical background of 1920s Japan and explores how the unspeakable violence following the 1923 earthquake, brought on by the volatile relationship between Japan and its colonial other, came to be expressed through the metaphor of twinship.

Chapter 3 examines the rise of doppelgänger literature and psychology in early Shōwa Japan. I focus on the works of writer Yumeno Kyūsaku (1889–1936), especially his famous novel *Dogura magura* (Dogra magra, 1936), which revolves around a Japanese protagonist haunted by a Chinese double. I read the figure of the double as a metaphor for the relationship between Japan and its colonies and try to shed light on the dual nature of colonial discourse, one that assimilates and welcomes its colonial subjects on the one hand, but also excludes and rejects them on the other. I also examine how the psychological double is inseparable from the idea of schizophrenia, a term that was used to describe war trauma (post-traumatic stress disorder today). A writer known for his depictions of mixed-blood children or *konketsuji*, children born between a Japanese national and a colonized other, Yumeno’s works consistently explore how to represent figures that waver between national borders.

Chapter 4 outlines the birth of robots, commonly known as *jinzō ningen* (artificial humans), in 1920s literature. With the introduction of Karel Čapek’s (1890–1938) play *R.U.R.* (*Rossum’s Universal Robots*) in 1923, Japan witnessed a boom of literature about robots. Early Shōwa Japan was undergoing a rapid mechanization process through which machines were incorporated into the modern landscape, and these robots became the epitome of the machine’s power and authority. At the same time, however, they also brought about great anxieties about the mechanization of the human body and its reproductive process. I offer close readings of two stories that were each titled simply “Jinzō ningen” (Robot): Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke’s (1892–1931) from 1929 and Takada Gichirō’s (1886–1945) from 1927. I argue that these figures pointed to a new anxiety, not only about artificial reproduction but also about “natural,” biological reproduction, for in all these robot tales, human women mysteriously stop giving birth. I situate the two representative stories against the rise of the birth control movement at a time when imperial authorities were desperately trying to increase the birth rate for their colonial endeavors. I then continue to explore how these stories pointed to a specific social problem: how
to represent illegitimate children—an identity that did not legally exist during the early Shōwa period.

The conclusion reexamines the book’s central questions: Why was there such a proliferation of these uncanny bodies in prewar Japan? What observations can we make about the modes of the uncanny in the Japanese context? After discussing the uncanny in Japan as a mode informed by science, I elaborate on what makes these monsters “modern,” not in the sense of there being a clear schism between premodern and modern but because of the texts’ close alignment with the empire. I reemphasize the fact that what makes the figures within these texts both modern and monstrous is their conflation of the normative binary, and that the confusion does not revolve around any ontological binaries (animal and human, dead and alive) that we traditionally associate with monsters. These monsters represent the “abnormal” bodies of the modern empire—diseased beings, colonial subjects, and illegitimate existences—bodies marked by the uncertainty of whether they fit the modern imperial definition of the normative. I thus end by highlighting the close relationship of the uncanny mode to the concept of normativity.

The book examines fiction of both canonical, famous writers (Izumi Kyōka, Edogawa Ranpo, and Yumeno Kyūsaku) and more marginal writers who have never received critical attention (Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke and Takada Giichirō). All of these writers produced fascinating works that revolve around monstrous bodies, but they have never been read together. By examining these literary works together with a wide range of media—film, hygiene textbooks, abnormal psychology journals, eugenic debates, and popular science textbooks—I weave a literary history of modern monsters grounded in the historical rise of modern science and the empire. I show how literary writers, even the lesser-known ones, participated in both reinforcing and questioning bodily norms in imperial Japan.

My discussion of literary history is oriented by specific questions about the general reception of these authors, who have generally been understood as representative writers of fantastic fiction (gensō bungaku). Izumi Kyōka especially is often hailed as the forerunner of Japanese fantastic fiction. The other four writers—Edogawa Ranpo, Yumeno Kyūsaku, Takada Giichirō, and Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke—were all associated with the journal Shin seinen (New youth), known for its erotic grotesque nonsense (ero guro nansensu) aesthetic: “the prewar, bourgeois
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cultural phenomenon that devoted itself to explorations of the deviant, the bizarre, and the ridiculous.”20 The identification of these authors with the fantastic is particularly important, because scholars of fantastic fiction have often emphasized the genre as a subversive mode. Tzvetan Todorov originally defined the fantastic as a “hesitation” experienced by the story’s characters and readers when they were uncertain about whether the supernatural event in the story was “real” or not. His definition began the trend to contrast fantastic fiction with the “real” and with so-called realistic fiction.21 Rosemary Jackson and Susan Napier then built on this definition to claim that fantastic fiction is more than just escapist literature, that it is a “literature of subversion”—literature that criticizes the dominant ideologies and norms of the time. In her seminal work on Japanese fantastic fiction, Napier states that “the very *raison d’être* of fantastic fiction is its existence in contrast to the ‘real,’” the “real” defined as dominant political and social ideologies and the literature associated with them.22 Fantastic fiction thus came to be viewed as a marginal genre that originally arose in opposition to the realistic novel and the ideological project carried out by it.23

However, as Napier herself states, “Fantasy is *most importantly* a literature of subversion,” which to me says that subversion is but one aspect of the literature.24 My own study therefore draws on these discussions of fantastic literature while suggesting a more open reading of the fantastic. By focusing on the literary bodies of monsters in relation to scientific discourses on the body, this book demonstrates how these fantastic fictions could also be read not as subverting but as complicit with imperial ideologies aimed at disavowing deviant bodies. The uncanny fear that the reader experiences comes from uncertainty about whether the object is normal or abnormal. Although these fictions might be considered subversive insofar as they often undermine scientific binaries and bring about anxiety, they are also, ideologically speaking, complicit, for they privilege imperial sciences as the proper mode of knowledge for locating the abnormal element, a privileging that often results in depicting these figures as, indeed, monstrous. These literatures thus cannot be accounted for by any simple dichotomy of subversion versus complicity. As the chapters show, they embody all the ambiguities, uncertainties, and multiplicities of the modern experience—what Harry Harootunian called the “unevenness” of modernity—that existed in imperial Japan.25

Although there is a great deal of scholarship concerning traditional monsters—folkloric figures, religious entities—the meanings of the new
monsters of the modern landscape are still in question.\textsuperscript{26} The few works that exist on the relationship between modernity and the monstrous have focused on the figure of \textit{yōkai}. Gerald Figal, for example, showed how today’s commonly accepted binary of rational and irrational or civilized and uncivilized was carefully constructed during the Meiji period.\textsuperscript{27} Under Meiji Japan’s project to bring civilization and Western knowledge to the nation, folkloric monsters (\textit{yōkai}, \textit{bakemono}), along with many of the older supernatural traditions, were placed under the rubric of the irrational—as things impossible to prove by modern science. For the first time, these monstrous figures became marked as representatives of an outdated, uncivilized past, in contrast with the nation’s idealized image as a Westernized, enlightened nation. My uncanny monsters greatly differ from these folkloric figures, dubbed as “premodern” and “uncivilized,” for they are products of modern scientific discourses employed for the “civilization” project.

Furthermore, the monstrosity I examine is not one associated with such temporality—that is, the equation of the monstrous with premodernity. This is also where my application of the uncanny veers away from Marilyn Ivy’s evocation of the term to describe modern Japan. Ivy defines the uncanny as “the movement of something passing away, gone but not quite, suspended between presence and absence, located at a point that both is and is not here in the repetitive process of \textit{absenting}.”\textsuperscript{28} For her, absenting (or \textit{vanishing}, as she calls it) is grounded in a sense of loss and nostalgia that accompanies modernization and technological progress. In other words, the uncanny always carries with it a sense of impossibility of returning to the origin, and for Ivy, it is a rearticulation of the Freudian “return of the repressed,” when the past disturbs the present.

Both Figal’s and Ivy’s works have been instrumental in my research on the relationship between the monstrous and modernity. Ivy clearly situates the uncanny as a product of Japanese modernity, and Figal highlights how the binary of modern and nonmodern was always carefully constructed. As I have outlined in this introduction, however, this book does not treat the uncanny as a haunting by the past; it is concerned with what kinds of new monsters were produced by the scientific discourse of the body. For this reason, the one work that this project most closely aligns itself with is Michael Dylan Foster’s astute analysis of the \textit{yōkai} in modern Japan.\textsuperscript{29} In his chapters on Meiji Japan, Foster illuminates the conflation of the supernatural and scientific thought: in the effort by the founders of \textit{yōkaigaku} (folkloric monster study) to separate the “false
mysteries” from the “true” ones, Western science (electricity, human psychology) came to function as the “true” explanation behind the occult, replacing traditional beliefs in monsters and spirit possession. That is, yōkai did not simply disappear; they were “a common language, a shared set of metaphors to explain otherwise unexplainable terms,” and this language was transformed and informed by modern technology and scientific knowledge.30

Modernity, in this manner, often allied itself with the monstrous, creating new uses for familiar monsters. Foster’s conceptualization of the monster as a kind of language that can translate newly imported scientific concepts has been fundamental in my research. Modern monsters are often evoked to explain and narrate the “correct” application of modern sciences, which were themselves not without ambiguities. Chapter 1 is precisely about this kind of translation, in which a certain discourse of modern science becomes rewritten into a special brand of “supernatural language.” Ironically, nowhere is this transmission of modern scientific knowledge more visible than in the fantastic works of Izumi Kyōka, a writer regarded as being atavistic and premodern, disinterested in rational, modern discourses like Western sciences.