

NARRATING THE ORDINARY: REPETITION, TEMPORALITY, AND CONTINUITY IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE FICTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how contemporary Japanese fiction constructs everyday life as a narrative form that sustains affective continuity without conventional resolution. Focusing on *All the Lovers in the Night*, *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, the study moves beyond thematic readings of “healing literature” to analyze how repetition, routine, and temporal suspension function as formal strategies. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s theory of everyday life as cyclical repetition, Michel de Certeau’s concept of everyday practices, and Rita Felski’s framework of recognition, the paper argues that these texts do not resolve alienation but instead sustain it through continuity. Through close readings of labour, memory, and relational structures, the study demonstrates that narrative meaning emerges not through transformation but through persistence. The ordinary thus becomes a central aesthetic principle that reshapes narrative form in contemporary Japanese fiction.

KEYWORDS: Contemporary Japanese Fiction, Everyday life, Narrative Form, Repetition, Narrative Structure, Temporality

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Japanese fiction is frequently described through the language of quietness, minimalism, and emotional restraint, often grouped under the category of “healing literature.” While such descriptions capture certain tonal qualities, they risk reducing these texts to

thematic explorations of comfort and recovery, overlooking their formal complexity. Works such as *All the Lovers in the Night*, *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, and *The Housekeeper and the Professor* do not merely depict everyday life but construct it as a narrative system that organizes temporality, subjectivity, and affect.

Theoretical approaches to everyday life provide a crucial framework for understanding this narrative mode. Henri Lefebvre argues that everyday life is structured through “the repetitive and the cyclical,” which produce a sense of continuity while constraining transformation . Michel de Certeau develops this further by suggesting that everyday life consists of “practices” or “tactics” through which individuals navigate structured environments . Rita Felski, in contrast to critical traditions that privilege distance, emphasizes that literature engages readers through “recognition,” allowing them to see aspects of their own experience reflected in the text. Together, these frameworks enable an analysis that moves beyond thematic interpretation toward a consideration of narrative form.

This paper addresses a gap in existing scholarship by examining how contemporary Japanese fiction organizes everyday life as a formal structure that sustains affective continuity without resolution. Rather than moving toward closure, these narratives remain within states of incompleteness, where repetition replaces progression and familiarity substitutes for transformation. By analyzing labour, memory, and interpersonal relationships, this study demonstrates that the ordinary is not a passive background but an active structuring force within narrative.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative methodology grounded in close textual analysis, focusing on how narrative form is constructed through repetition, temporality, and affect. The primary texts include *All the Lovers in the Night*, *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*. Selected passages are analyzed to examine how everyday life is structured at the level of language and narrative organization.

In *All the Lovers in the Night*, the protagonist’s labour as a proofreader provides a key site for analyzing repetition. Her routine is described as cyclical, as she “went back to my desk and repeated the same process, again and again” (Kawakami 8) . This passage is examined in relation to Lefebvre’s concept of cyclical time.

In *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, analysis focuses on the episodic encounters between Tsukiko and Sensei, particularly their recurring meetings and shared routines . These interactions are interpreted through de Certeau’s notion of everyday practices.

In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, the Professor's condition, described as one in which "his memory lasts precisely eighty minutes" (Ogawa 14), is analyzed as a structural device that enforces repetition and disrupts linear temporality.

These textual observations are interpreted through the theoretical frameworks of Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Felski to examine how everyday life operates as narrative form.

Everyday Life as Narrative Form: Repetition, Temporality, and Affective Continuity

Repetition operates in these texts not merely as a thematic element but as a formal principle that reorganizes narrative temporality and readerly experience. Lefebvre poses the question of how everyday life can appear to be "forever unchangeable, unchangeable in its boredom, its greyness, its repetition of the same actions", a condition he identifies as the dominant temporal experience of ordinary life under industrial modernity (227). For Lefebvre, repetition is not incidental but foundational, producing a temporal rhythm that privileges continuity over transformation. In *All the Lovers in the Night*, *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, this cyclical logic is not only represented but embedded within the narrative form itself, shaping how time unfolds and how meaning is produced.

In *All the Lovers in the Night*, repetition is most visibly structured through the protagonist's labour as a proofreader, where time is organized into cycles of verification and correction. Her statement that she "went back to my desk and repeated the same process, again and again" (Kawakami 8) foregrounds repetition as both action and structure. The insistence on "again and again" signals not progression but recurrence, where each completed task immediately generates the need for repetition. This produces a temporal field in which forward movement is suspended. Lefebvre's observation that "economic reality" is acted and "concealed" which also creates a veil "forever being born and reborn" from ordinary transactions becomes materially legible here, as the narrative itself mirrors the repetitive logic it depicts (57). The protagonist's labour does not accumulate into development but instead sustains a continuous present.

This temporal suspension is further reinforced by the protagonist's reflection on memory, where she describes her recollections as consisting of "countless characters of text, printed in straight lines on white paper" (Kawakami 12). The reduction of memory to textual fragments suggests that lived experience has been subsumed by routine. The "straight lines" evoke both the visual order of printed text and the monotony of repetitive labour, where variation is minimized and difference flattened. Time, in this context, is no longer experienced as a sequence of events but as a continuous repetition of similar actions.

Michel de Certeau's concept of everyday practices offers a complementary perspective. As de Certeau argues, everyday practice operates by inhabiting imposed structures rather than escaping them, establishing "within it a degree of plurality and creativity" through what he calls "an art of being in between" (30). In Kawakami's novel, the protagonist's adherence to routine can be read as such a practice, where repetition functions as a means of sustaining stability. However, the narrative complicates de Certeau's emphasis on agency, as these practices do not produce transformation or resistance but instead maintain a condition of suspended development. The protagonist's routines do not alter her circumstances but allow her to endure them, suggesting that repetition can function as both structure and constraint.

A more explicitly structural form of repetition appears in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, where the Professor's memory loss imposes a strict temporal limit on experience. His condition, described as one in which "his memory lasts precisely eighty minutes" (Ogawa 14), transforms repetition into a narrative necessity. Each interaction must be reestablished within this temporal frame, preventing the accumulation of experience that would typically drive narrative progression. The Professor's reliance on written notes, including the statement "my memory lasts only eighty minutes" (21), further underscores the cyclical nature of his existence. These notes function as markers of repetition, reminding both the character and the reader that each moment is simultaneously new and already lost.

Lefebvre's notion of cyclical time "forever being born and reborn" (57) becomes literal in this context, as the narrative unfolds through repeated beginnings rather than linear development. However, this repetition does not produce narrative stagnation. Instead, it generates a different kind of continuity, one that is sustained through repeated interaction rather than accumulated memory.

In *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, repetition is embedded in the structure of relational encounters. The meetings between Tsukiko and Sensei follow a recognizable pattern, often involving similar sequences of ordering food, drinking, and conversing. Their initial encounter, in which they independently order identical dishes, establishes a pattern of mirrored behaviour that recurs throughout the narrative. This repetition creates a sense of familiarity that gradually deepens into intimacy, even as the narrative resists linear progression. Each encounter is both a repetition and a variation, producing a rhythm that sustains the relationship without transforming it.

Rita Felski's concept of recognition provides a crucial framework for understanding the affective dimension of this repetition. She argues that literature engages readers through "recognition," a process by which readers identify with situations, emotions, or patterns that

resonate with their own experience (40). In these texts, repetition facilitates recognition by presenting patterns of behaviour that become increasingly familiar. The repeated routines in *All the Lovers in the Night*, the cyclical interactions in *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, and the recurring encounters in *Strange Weather in Tokyo* all produce a sense of familiarity that draws the reader into the narrative. Affect emerges not through dramatic change but through the persistence of recognizable patterns.

This emphasis on repetition and recognition reconfigures narrative temporality. Instead of moving toward a climax or resolution, the narratives sustain a continuous present, where meaning is generated through repetition rather than progression. The refusal of linear development does not result in narrative emptiness but produces a different kind of engagement, one that is grounded in continuity and familiarity. The ordinary, in this context, becomes a formal principle that shapes both the structure of the narrative and the experience of the reader.

Across all three texts, everyday life is thus transformed into a narrative form defined by repetition, cyclical temporality, and affective continuity. Lefebvre's theory of cyclical time, de Certeau's concept of everyday practice, and Felski's framework of recognition converge within these narratives, demonstrating how the ordinary can function as a site of formal innovation. By foregrounding repetition as a structuring principle, these works challenge conventional narrative models that prioritize progression and resolution, offering instead a mode of storytelling grounded in persistence and continuity.

Everyday Labour and Temporal Suspension

Labour in these texts functions not merely as a thematic element but as a central mechanism through which temporality is organized, experienced, and ultimately suspended. Rather than driving narrative progression, labour produces a cyclical structure in which time is repeatedly folded back into itself. Henri Lefebvre's assertion that everyday life is constituted through "gestures of everyday life" that create a sense of continuity while limiting transformation provides a crucial framework for understanding this dynamic (7). In *All the Lovers in the Night*, *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, labour does not move the narrative forward but instead sustains a temporal field defined by repetition and persistence.

In *All the Lovers in the Night*, labour dominates the protagonist's existence to such an extent that it reshapes her perception of time. Her work as a proofreader is characterized by meticulous repetition, where each action leads back into the same process. The statement that

she “went back to my desk and repeated the same process, again and again” (Kawakami 8) reveals how labour produces a temporal loop in which completion is perpetually deferred. This repetition is not simply a feature of her work but becomes the organizing principle of her daily life. Even moments of rest are instrumentalized, serving only to enable further labour. Time, in this context, is not experienced as a progression toward an endpoint but as a continuous cycle of activity and repetition.

This temporal suspension is further articulated through the protagonist’s reflection on memory. When she attempts to recall her experiences, she finds that her life is reduced to “countless characters of text, printed in straight lines on white paper” (Kawakami 12) . The reduction of memory to textual fragments suggests that labour has absorbed the entirety of her temporal experience. Lefebvre’s observation that everyday life often appears as a “meeting place, bond, common ground” of repetitive actions becomes evident here, as the protagonist’s existence is structured by routines that allow little room for variation (97). Labour does not simply occupy time but encloses it, producing a form of temporal suspension in which change is minimized.

Michel de Certeau’s concept of everyday practices provides a further lens through which to interpret this dynamic. He argues that everyday life is composed of “ways of operating” that individuals use to navigate structured environments (xiv) . In Kawakami’s novel, the protagonist’s repetitive labour can be understood as such a practice, a means of maintaining order within a limited social world. However, the narrative complicates this framework by suggesting that these practices do not produce transformation or resistance but instead sustain a condition of stasis. The protagonist’s labour becomes less a tactic of navigation than a mode of endurance, where repetition ensures continuity without offering the possibility of change.

In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, labour takes on a relational dimension, yet it continues to produce temporal suspension through repetition. The housekeeper’s daily tasks, including cooking, cleaning, and caring for the Professor, are structured by the constraints of his memory. Because “his memory lasts precisely eighty minutes” (Ogawa 14) , each day begins anew, and the housekeeper must repeatedly reestablish the conditions of their interaction. Labour here is not cumulative but cyclical, as each action must be performed again without the benefit of memory.

The Professor’s condition transforms labour into a stabilizing force that sustains a shared present. The repeated introductions between the Professor and the housekeeper, along with his habitual questions about numbers, create a rhythm that replaces narrative progression. The presence of written notes pinned to his clothing, including reminders of his condition, further

reinforces this cyclical temporality. These notes serve as external markers of memory, yet they also underscore the impossibility of temporal accumulation. Each moment is both new and already predetermined by the structure of repetition.

At the same time, the Professor's engagement with mathematics introduces an alternative temporal logic. His explanation of abstract concepts, such as the existence of numbers "in here," accompanied by a gesture toward his chest (Ogawa 11) , suggests that knowledge can persist independently of memory. Mathematics becomes a domain in which repetition produces depth rather than stasis, where concepts can be revisited without losing significance. This contrasts with the housekeeper's labour, which must be repeated without accumulation, highlighting the different ways in which repetition can structure temporality.

In *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, labour is less explicitly foregrounded, yet everyday practices such as eating, drinking, and moving through urban space function as forms of routine that structure the narrative. The repeated visits to the bar, where Tsukiko and Sensei encounter each other, establish a pattern of interaction that becomes central to the narrative. Their shared activities, including ordering similar dishes and drinking together, are repeated across multiple scenes, creating a rhythm that sustains the narrative without driving it toward resolution.

De Certeau's account of everyday practices as creative and productive activities is particularly relevant here, as these routines operate through "innumerable" and often unnoticed actions embedded in daily life (xxii). The act of eating or drinking is not merely functional but becomes a way of structuring time and interaction. These practices do not lead to significant change but instead maintain a steady rhythm that defines the narrative. Labour, in this broader sense, extends beyond formal work to include the everyday activities that sustain life.

Rita Felski's concept of recognition helps explain the affective dimension of these routines. She suggests that readers engage with literature through the recognition "calls on us to engage seriously with ordinary motives for reading – such as the desire for knowledge or the longing for escape" of familiar patterns and experiences (19). In these texts, the repetition of labour and routine produces a sense of familiarity that allows readers to connect with the narrative. The depiction of everyday practices, whether in the form of proofreading, caregiving, or shared meals, resonates with lived experience, creating an affective continuity that persists despite the absence of dramatic events.

Across all three texts, labour thus functions as a mechanism of temporal suspension, where repetition replaces progression and continuity substitutes for development. Lefebvre's

concept of cyclical time, de Certeau's understanding of everyday practice, and Felski's framework of recognition converge to illuminate how these narratives transform ordinary activity into a formal structure. Labour does not move the narrative forward but sustains it within a continuous present, challenging conventional models of narrative temporality and foregrounding the ordinary as a site of aesthetic innovation.

Framgedted Intimacy and Non-Linear Relationships

Interpersonal relationships in these texts are structured not through linear development or emotional culmination but through fragmentation, repetition, and discontinuous interaction. Rather than progressing toward clarity or resolution, relationships unfold across partial encounters, pauses, and repeated gestures that resist narrative consolidation. This produces a form of intimacy that is sustained through continuity rather than transformation, aligning with theoretical accounts of everyday life as structured by repetition and practice.

In *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, the relationship between Tsukiko and Sensei is defined by episodic encounters that accumulate meaning without forming a continuous narrative arc. Their first meeting is marked by hesitation and partial recognition, as Tsukiko initially struggles to place Sensei, even while sensing familiarity. The interaction unfolds through small details, including the moment in which they independently order identical dishes, creating an immediate yet understated connection. This scene establishes a pattern of mirrored behaviour that recurs throughout the narrative, where repetition becomes a substitute for development.

Subsequent encounters follow a similar structure, often taking place in the same bar and involving comparable sequences of ordering food, drinking, and conversing. These interactions are marked by pauses, silences, and indirect communication, as the characters navigate their relationship without explicit articulation. The absence of dramatic progression means that intimacy is not achieved through a clear turning point but emerges gradually through repeated contact. Michel de Certeau's notion of everyday practices as "ways of operating" is particularly relevant here, as these repeated encounters function as practices that generate meaning over time (xiv). The relationship is thus constituted through doing rather than becoming, through repetition rather than transformation.

The episodic structure of the novel reinforces this non-linear relationality. Each chapter presents a discrete encounter that can be read independently, yet these moments are connected through repetition and familiarity. The relationship does not move toward a definitive resolution but remains open-ended, sustained by ongoing interaction. This aligns

with Henri Lefebvre's understanding of everyday life as composed of repetitive sequences "Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities" (97) that produce continuity without development. The narrative does not impose a teleological structure but instead allows the relationship to unfold within the rhythms of everyday life.

In *All the Lovers in the Night*, relational fragmentation takes a more internalized form, rooted in the protagonist's difficulty with social interaction and her experience of isolation. Her recollection that she was "left entirely alone" in the workplace, spoken to only when necessary (Kawakami 9), establishes a social environment in which connection is minimal and discontinuous. This absence of interaction is not framed as a dramatic conflict but as a normalized condition, embedded within the routines of everyday life. Relationships are thus defined less by presence than by absence, where the lack of connection becomes a persistent background.

When interactions do occur, they are marked by hesitation and uncertainty. The protagonist's engagement with others is often mediated by her difficulty in interpreting social cues, resulting in exchanges that remain partial and unresolved. This produces a fragmented relational structure in which moments of connection do not accumulate into sustained intimacy. Lefebvre's observation that everyday life often reproduces social relations "the relation between 'the same and other' as" through routine practices helps explain this dynamic (xxii). The protagonist's isolation is not an exceptional condition but a product of everyday structures that limit the possibility of connection. Her routine, dominated by solitary labour, reinforces this fragmentation, creating a cycle in which the absence of relationships is continuously reproduced.

At the same time, the narrative suggests that intimacy can emerge within these constraints, albeit in a limited and unstable form. Brief interactions carry a disproportionate weight, as they interrupt the continuity of isolation without resolving it. This aligns with Rita Felski's concept of recognition, which emphasizes the importance of affective moments "rendition of the densely packed minutiae of daily life" that resonate with lived experience (40). Even fragmented interactions can produce a sense of connection, not because they lead to transformation but because they are recognizable and meaningful within the context of everyday life.

In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, relational fragmentation is produced by the Professor's memory loss, which prevents the accumulation of shared experience. Each interaction between the Professor and the housekeeper begins as if for the first time, as his memory resets every eighty minutes. This condition disrupts the possibility of a continuous

relationship, as past interactions cannot be retained. The statement that “his memory lasts precisely eighty minutes” (Ogawa 14) establishes a temporal framework in which relational continuity is constantly interrupted.

However, the narrative transforms this limitation into a distinct form of intimacy. While the Professor cannot remember previous encounters, the housekeeper and her son retain their memories, allowing continuity to be maintained from their perspective. The repeated introductions, in which the Professor asks the same questions and receives the same answers, create a pattern that is both repetitive and meaningful. These interactions exemplify what de Certeau describes as everyday practices that generate meaning through repetition. Intimacy, in this context, is not built through accumulation but through recurrence, where each interaction reaffirms the relationship.

The Professor’s naming of the housekeeper’s son as “Root,” based on the shape of his head, provides a particularly striking example of this dynamic. The name persists across repeated encounters, creating a stable point of recognition within an otherwise unstable temporal framework. Although the Professor does not remember the act of naming, the repetition of the name sustains a sense of connection. This illustrates how intimacy can be maintained through repeated gestures, even in the absence of memory.

Felski’s concept of recognition is crucial for understanding the affective dimension of these relationships. She argues that recognition involves “recognition is triggered by a perception of direct similarity or likeness,” creating a sense of connection that is not dependent on narrative resolution (40). In these texts, recognition operates both at the level of the reader and within the relationships themselves. Characters recognize each other through repeated interactions, shared routines, and familiar patterns, even when these interactions are fragmented or incomplete.

Across all three texts, intimacy is thus redefined as a process rather than an outcome. Relationships do not progress toward stability or closure but remain within states of incompleteness, sustained through repetition and familiarity. This challenges conventional narrative models that equate intimacy with development, suggesting instead that connection can exist within conditions of fragmentation and discontinuity. The ordinary, in this context, becomes a site where intimacy is both limited and sustained, shaped by the rhythms of everyday life and the persistence of repeated interaction.

Affective Continuity and the Refusal of Resolution

A defining feature across *All the Lovers in the Night*, *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, and *The Housekeeper and the Professor* is their sustained refusal of conventional narrative resolution. Rather than moving toward closure, transformation, or catharsis, these texts maintain a steady affective continuity grounded in repetition, familiarity, and the persistence of everyday life. This refusal is not a deficiency but a formal strategy that reconfigures narrative expectations, shifting emphasis from culmination to continuation. In doing so, these works challenge dominant narrative models that privilege development and instead foreground the ordinary as a site of sustained affect.

Henri Lefebvre's conception of everyday life as structured by cyclical time provides a crucial framework for understanding this refusal of resolution. He argues that everyday life is characterized as something that "repeat and merge with every moment of your lives" (126). In these texts, this cyclical temporality is translated into narrative form, where events do not accumulate into transformation but return to a state of continuity. The absence of resolution is thus not an absence of meaning but a different mode of organizing it, one that privileges persistence over change.

In *All the Lovers in the Night*, this dynamic is evident in the protagonist's relation to both labour and self-awareness. While the narrative introduces moments that might traditionally function as turning points, these moments do not lead to decisive transformation. Instead, they are absorbed back into the structure of routine that governs her life. Her work continues to dominate her temporal experience, as reflected in her description of memory as consisting of "countless characters of text, printed in straight lines on white paper" (Kawakami 12). This formulation suggests that even moments of reflection do not disrupt the continuity of repetition but are themselves structured by it. The narrative thus resists the expectation that insight will produce change, maintaining instead a state of ongoing persistence.

The protagonist's routines can be understood as practices that sustain her existence within a limited social and emotional framework. However, these practices do not lead to transformation or resistance in any conventional sense. Instead, they maintain a condition of continuity, where change is neither dramatic nor definitive. The refusal of resolution, in this context, reflects the persistence of everyday life itself, where routines continue despite moments of disruption.

In *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, the refusal of resolution is articulated through the structure of the relationship between Tsukiko and Sensei. While their interactions gradually deepen in familiarity, the narrative does not frame this development as a conventional romantic arc.

There is no singular moment that resolves the ambiguity of their relationship. Instead, their connection is sustained through repeated encounters that follow a consistent pattern, such as shared meals and quiet conversations. These encounters accumulate effect without producing closure, creating a sense of continuity that remains open-ended.

The episodic structure of the novel reinforces this dynamic. Each encounter functions as a self-contained moment that contributes to the overall relationship without leading toward a definitive conclusion. This aligns with Lefebvre's understanding of everyday life as composed of repetitive sequences that do not culminate in resolution, and rather historical or emotional rupture collides with repetitive normality (21;150). The relationship between Tsukiko and Sensei is thus defined not by transformation but by persistence, where intimacy emerges through repetition rather than culmination.

Rita Felski's concept of recognition provides a crucial framework for understanding how these narratives sustain affect in the absence of resolution. She argues that in literature "recognition is triggered by a perception of direct similarity or Likeness", where readers recognize aspects of their own experience within the text (40). In these works, repetition facilitates such recognition by presenting patterns of behaviour that become increasingly familiar. The absence of resolution does not diminish readerly engagement but instead allows it to persist, as the narrative remains open and ongoing. Affect is generated not through dramatic events but through the continuity of recognizable patterns.

In *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, the refusal of resolution is structurally embedded in the Professor's condition. His memory loss ensures that no experience can accumulate into lasting transformation, as each new memory overwrites the previous one. The statement that "his memory lasts precisely eighty minutes" (Ogawa 14) establishes a temporal framework in which closure is impossible. Any development that occurs within one cycle is erased in the next, preventing the narrative from moving toward resolution.

Yet this absence of resolution does not result in narrative emptiness. Instead, the text produces a strong sense of affective continuity through repeated interaction. The housekeeper and her son continue to engage with the Professor, and each encounter, though technically new for him, carries emotional resonance for them. The Professor's consistent behaviour, including his curiosity about numbers and his gentle manner of interaction, creates a stable affective environment that persists across cycles. His explanation of mathematical concepts as existing "in here," accompanied by a gesture toward his chest (Ogawa 11), suggests that affect operates independently of memory, allowing continuity to exist even in the absence of narrative progression.

This dynamic redefines the relationship between temporality and affect. In conventional narratives, affect is often tied to development, intensifying as the plot progresses toward a climax. In these texts, affect is sustained through repetition rather than escalation. The repetition of routines, interactions, and practices creates a stable emotional field in which variation is minimal but continuity is strong. This aligns with Felski's argument that literary engagement is grounded in attachment and recognition rather than solely in narrative tension. Across all three texts, the refusal of resolution thus emerges as a formal strategy that reconfigures narrative temporality and affect. Rather than moving toward an endpoint, the narratives remain open, sustained by cycles of repetition and familiarity. This challenges dominant narrative paradigms that prioritize closure, suggesting instead that meaning can emerge from persistence and continuity. The ordinary, in this context, becomes a dynamic structure that shapes both narrative form and readerly experience.

By foregrounding affective continuity over resolution, these texts offer an alternative model of storytelling that reflects the rhythms of everyday life. Change, when it occurs, is gradual and often imperceptible, embedded within ongoing routines rather than marked by decisive moments. The refusal of resolution thus becomes a way of representing the temporal logic of the ordinary, where life unfolds not through dramatic transformation but through the persistence of everyday practices.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that contemporary Japanese fiction reconfigures everyday life as a formal narrative structure rather than merely a thematic concern. Through detailed analysis of *All the Lovers in the Night*, *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, and *The Housekeeper and the Professor*, it becomes evident that repetition, routine, and temporal suspension are not incidental features but central organizing principles that reshape narrative form. These texts do not simply depict the ordinary but construct it as a system through which meaning is generated, sustained, and experienced.

By drawing on Henri Lefebvre's conception of everyday life as structured by cyclical repetition, the paper has shown how these narratives replace linear progression with temporal continuity. Time in these works does not advance toward resolution but circulates through recurring patterns of labour, interaction, and routine. The protagonist of *All the Lovers in the Night*, whose life is defined by the repetition of textual labour, the episodic encounters between Tsukiko and Sensei in *Strange Weather in Tokyo*, and the eighty-minute memory cycle in *The Housekeeper and the Professor* all exemplify forms of temporality that resist

development and instead sustain a continuous present. The statement that “his memory lasts precisely eighty minutes” (Ogawa 14) encapsulates this logic, where narrative movement is repeatedly reset rather than extended.

Michel de Certeau’s concept of everyday practices further illuminates how these narratives operate at the level of action. The repeated gestures of proofreading, caregiving, and shared meals function as ways of operating that generate meaning through their persistence . These practices do not lead to transformation but sustain forms of continuity that allow characters to inhabit their conditions rather than overcome them. In this sense, repetition becomes not a sign of stagnation but a mode of endurance, through which narrative coherence is maintained. Rita Felski’s emphasis on recognition provides a crucial framework for understanding the affective dimension of these texts . The repetition of everyday practices produces patterns that readers can recognize, creating a sense of familiarity that sustains engagement in the absence of dramatic events. Affect is generated not through climax or resolution but through the persistence of recognizable routines, interactions, and emotional states. The reader’s investment in these narratives is thus grounded in continuity rather than anticipation.

Taken together, these texts challenge conventional narrative models that privilege progression, transformation, and closure. Instead, they propose an alternative aesthetic in which meaning emerges through repetition, relationships are sustained through fragmented interaction, and affect persists without resolution. The ordinary, in this context, is not a static background but a dynamic structure that shapes both narrative form and readerly experience.

This reconfiguration of narrative form has broader implications for literary studies. By foregrounding everyday life as a site of formal innovation, these works invite a reconsideration of how narratives can operate outside the logic of development and resolution. They suggest that continuity, persistence, and repetition can serve as alternative organizing principles, offering new ways of understanding temporality, affect, and relationality in literature. In doing so, contemporary Japanese fiction contributes to a broader shift in narrative theory, one that recognizes the aesthetic and theoretical significance of the ordinary.

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