

**MIYABE MIYUKI'S PLACE IN
THE DEVELOPMENT OF JAPANESE MYSTERY FICTION**

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the mystery fiction of Miyabe Miyuki (b. 1960) in the context of the development of mystery fiction in Japan. In the hands of Matsumoto Seichō, Japanese mystery fiction was transformed in the postwar period: the focus of mystery fiction shifted from the puzzle-solving schema to uncovering the motives and psychology of the criminals. Miyabe Miyuki has become a master of the techniques of the genre. But she deploys them for broader purposes other than entertainment. The extraordinary popularity of Miyabe's fiction is surely due to the fact that it teaches us how to respond to, or at least think about, a chaotic world full of deception. In this sense, it represents the best of what Japanese mystery fiction has had to offer in the postwar period. Miyabe incorporates mixed genres in her mystery fiction, but her overriding concern has been the realistic depiction of her contemporary society and the social problems it faces. In this sense, she has inherited the mantle of Matsumoto Seichō. Indeed, as Japanese fiction has become more interior and consumer oriented or, much in line with what critics have called postmodernism – Miyabe's brand of mystery fiction can be seen as the inheritor of Japan's distinguished tradition of realism from naturalism to social realism. This study points out that the basic structure of most of Miyabe's mystery fiction coincides with the generic framework of mystery fiction. This observance of generic markers grounds the narrative in a clearly comprehensive and entertaining story.

At the same time, however, Miyabe emphasizes characterization and motivation, which are more important in her fiction than the puzzle-solving aspect. Thus, the process of solving the crime often “teaches” the reader about real life issues: identity theft, excesses of the mass media, and so forth. Even when Miyabe incorporates mixed genres, such as, features of horror, science fiction, or fantasy in her works, she consistently uses these to the larger purpose of delineating the social problems that afflict contemporary society.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study examines Miyabe Miyuki's mystery fiction in the context of the development of mystery fiction in Japan. First, the study illustrates the form that mystery took as an imported genre into Japan through an analysis of a parody of early Japanese mystery fiction. The study next argues that the reason for the genre's extraordinary popularity in the pre-World War Two period was its response to the pressures of modernization and what it taught the reading public concerning scientific methods of deduction and proof. In Chapter Three, I demonstrate how, in the hands of a number of exceptionally innovative writers, notable among them Matsumoto Seichō, Japanese mystery fiction was transformed in the postwar period as the genre that broke out of the formal literary constraints of the past to portray a society undergoing unprecedented change.

Chapter Four takes up the works of Miyabe Miyuki in the context of the historical background provided in the first three chapters. Miyabe is one of the most popular writers in contemporary Japan. Her mystery fiction not only encompasses the history of the formal characteristics of the genre as it developed in Japan, it also takes the genre in entirely new directions, including the incorporation of other genres of popular

fiction: science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, and so on. For reasons that are not altogether clear, contemporary Japanese fiction that is deemed “serious” has not been particularly effectively in portraying the everyday life of ordinary people. One need only refer to the works of Murakami Haruki, which could be set anywhere in the world; or those of Murakami Ryū, whose most popular works have been set in the environs of American military bases. Likewise Yamada Eimi’s most famous novel concerns a love affair with an Afro-American G.I., who is a deserter, and Yoshimoto Banana’s best known work is confined to a westernized kitchen. A host of other writers of horror or science fiction are not adept at providing a sense of place or of common urban life in contemporary Japan.

It is ironic that a writer of popular fiction, Miyabe Miyuki, is in some respects the person who is carrying on a tradition of descriptive realism that was the sine qua non of serious fiction from at least the time of the rise of Japanese naturalism in the first decade of the twentieth century. On the other hand, making a living as a professional writer today doubtlessly involves working in recognizable genres of popular fiction. In Chapter Four, I will analyze the ways that Miyabe Miyuki transforms mystery fiction as a genre to deal simultaneously with contemporary social problems, represent working class characters and their neighborhood environs, and appeal to a mass readership. I will also examine the personal factors in Miyabe’s life that led her to so completely absorb the features of mystery fiction from the past, as well as the personal experiences that led her to identify with the kinds of characters and neighborhoods she portrays.

Before I begin my discussion of the development of mystery fiction in Japan as a prelude to the discussion of the works of Miyabe Miyuki, it is best to arrive at a definition of the term “genre” as well as a definition of mystery fiction in terms of genre. For the purpose here, following Bakhtin, genre can be described as follows:

Literary language - both spoken and written - although it is unitary not only in its shared, abstract, linguistic markers but also in its forms for conceptualizing these abstract markers, is in itself stratified and heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system, that is, in the forms that carry its meanings. This stratification is accomplished first of all by the specific organisms called *genres*. Certain features of language (lexicological, semantic, syntactic) will knit together with the intentional aim, and with the overall accentual system inherent in one or another genre. ...Certain features of language take on the specific points of a given genre: they knit together with specific points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents characteristic of the given genre.¹

Meanwhile, Todorov claims that “A genre, literary or otherwise, is nothing but the codification of discourse properties.”² Another definition is provided by Martin as “A discourse community [that] has developed and continues to develop discursal expectations. Genres are how things are done when language is used to accomplish them.”³

Mystery fiction constitutes a genre because it organizes literary and extra-literary language diversity in such a way as to meet the expectations of a community of readers. Certain features of language/discourse are woven together to constitute mystery fiction. But just as there is no pure theory without facts, so too there is no pure genre without its

inherent validation in any given literary work by a community of readers. What these expectations were and are and how they were formed will be examined below in historical terms in the case of Japanese mystery fiction during the prewar period.

The general consensus is that the recognition of mystery fiction as a genre in Japan came about two decades after it was first created in the West by Edgar Allan Poe.⁴ Todorov, in terms of genre, argues that “A new genre is always the transformation of an earlier one, or of several: by inversion, by displacement, by combination.”⁵ The creation of a literary work within the parameters of a given genre requires following the rules and breaking them to find original expressions that appeal to readers’ needs and interests that, as it will be argued below are formed by historical circumstances. There were certainly reports of crime, executions, famous criminals, and the supernatural during the premodern Tokugawa period, but these were usually transmitted through broadsheets, oral storytelling, or official reports. The process in literary narrative of the discovery of the truth of a crime or the identity of a criminal through rational deduction was, with few exceptions, not a popular form of literature in the premodern period.

However, it is undeniable that mystery fiction became extraordinarily popular in Japan once it started to be created or translated in Japan beginning in the 1880s. In response to readers’ enthusiastic demand, leading writers of the day, such as Mori Ōgai, Tsubouchi Shōyō, and others began working in the genre. Why did mystery fiction as a genre develop in Japan? One reason is the evolution of the form in response to the readers’ expectations. In a parallel case, Kathy Ragsdale has shown how in case of the genre of Katei-shōsetsu, (domestic novel) serialized in newspapers in the Kansai area, readers’ expectations played a large role in the creation of the genre. Katei-shōsetsu was

created with the authorial intent of furthering the government's agenda to promote the good housewife and mother. At the same time, authors were also responding to demands from readers for more progressive themes and plots.⁶ We can assume that Japanese mystery fiction was likewise formed in part in response to readers' expectations. Furthermore, it is still evolving to respond to the readers' expectations.

Two plausible reasons have been advanced concerning the popular appeal of mystery fiction. These are 1) the psychoanalytical or psychological explanation (Raskin, and Pederson-Krag), and 2) the socio-historical explanation (Kelly and Bloch).⁷ The first posits the universal appeal of mystery fiction based on an essential human nature. The second sees the appeal of mystery fiction in historical and social trends, most importantly modernization.

Geraldine Pederson-Krag maintains that reading mystery fictions allows "the reader to gratify his infantile curiosity with impunity, redressing the helpless inadequacy and anxious guilt remembered from childhood."⁸ R. Raskin lists three identifiable elements that would attract readers. The first element is "puzzle solving" which is the pleasure of solving "Who-donnit?" Second is "identification with the motive of crime," i.e. readers' identification with the imagined motive for acting on impulses of revenge or violence. Third is "the relief of guilt" that results from the individual's resignation to facelessness and mediocrity in understanding that acts of revenge or violence are ultimately discovered and punished.⁹ In short, when one reads a mystery story, one is involved in one or another form of play; wish-fulfillment, in which compensatory or vicarious gratifications are central and tension-reduction results from the detective story's capacity to dispel feelings of guilt or anxiety. Although Raskin admits that the second

and third elements are the byproduct of “puzzle solving,” he emphasizes that the popularity of mystery fiction mainly results from the “wish-fulfillment” element. In addition, Aydelotte maintains that mystery fiction permits the gratification of fantasies of dependence and aggression deeply inimical to the democratic ethos. This constitutes the equations of “the detective equals a dictator” and “the criminal equals the scapegoat.”¹⁰

While we will have frequent occasion to refer to the puzzle-solving aspect of mystery fiction, the other psychological explanations do not seem adequate to the Japanese case because they do not advance reasons why mystery fiction became so popular so quickly during the process of modernization from the 1880s on. More convincing is the socio-historical explanation. If mystery fiction satisfies such deep-seated needs, why does it (or something comparable) not exist in pre-modern societies with high literacy rates, such as Japan? Why does the genre, both in the Western nations and Japan always accompany modernization? Furthermore, Raskin’s hypothesis is based upon the specifics of Western mythology as applied through the Freudian tradition. Since mystery fiction takes up specific social situations in which the genre occurs, it is difficult to see how the Freudian tradition would apply to Japanese religious and cultural contexts. To gain perspective on the rise of mystery fiction in Japan, one must review the socio-historical explanations for its popularity.

One socio-historical explanation traces the popularity of mystery fiction to the European enlightenment and the need to prove guilt rather than extort it. The new dependence on the scientific method rather than religious torture reflects the rise of the bourgeoisie.

Concerning the determination of finding guilt by torture, Ernest Bloch wrote, “The effect was unthinkable atrocity, the worthless extortion of guilt, against which the Enlightenment rebelled for both humane and logical reasons. Since then, evidence is necessary and must be produced; it is the basis for proof before the judge and jury in most cases... To this extent, the depiction of the evidence *gathering* work of the detective is no older than the evidentiary hearing itself.”¹¹ This means that the detective can only come into existence in rational enlightened societies that have undergone, or are undergoing, the process of modernization.

As Kenneth Kenniston has noted, narrative fiction often functions as a social act and provides strategies for living.¹² The universal appeal of mystery fiction in modern societies, no matter what differences in cultural history might exist, probably owes a great deal to the strategies it advances for living in the modern world. This is what Japanese readers respond to and what the authors struggle to provide. In short, mystery fiction arises as an aspect of modernization.

The figure of the detective is extremely important in Japanese mystery fiction from the 1880s on. He represents ratiocination. The detective is entirely modern, being the protector of modern social institutions. From this perspective, detective fiction articulates a desire for a complete form of knowledge. The omniscient detective is portrayed as an outsider, superior to the narrator. “[R]ationalism and empiricism represent ways of understanding the world that are linked to different social formations--rationalism to the superior capabilities and values of the aristocracy--empiricism to the

creation of a democratic, industrializing society built on philistine values.”¹³ The detective represents this empiricism and is almost always a force for maintaining the social order by discovering and eliminating threats to its stability.

Language in mystery fiction is by its nature strategic and often cannot be trusted. In this sense, mystery fiction in Japan provides an excellent source of objective lessons in pragmatic discourse analysis in a large context such as literature. Japanese and English share next to nothing in common in linguistic terms, but both exist in similar social environments. The social environment in the United States, so conducive to mystery fiction, is summarized most effectively by Kenniston:

[E]ven to survive for one day, the average urban American requires a kind of personality organization that in many societies even the most outstanding individual does not possess: a capacity to govern his own behavior, to make his way in a world of strangers, to do a job requiring years of training in the basic skills of literacy, to cope with unexpected situations and unfamiliar people....[M]ost desirable positions in our society require advanced and specialized training, and, with it, high levels of dispassionateness, ability to remain cool under stress, capacity to concentrate, to maintain long-range goals yet to adopt rapidly to new conditions, to deal with remote and distant situations, to abstract, to co-ordinate complex operations, to synthesize many recommendations, to plan long-range enterprises, to resist distraction, to persevere despite disappointment, to master complex conceptual assignments, to be impartial, to follow instructions.¹⁴

Likewise, in Japan, one of the reasons mystery fiction has attracted such a large readership is that it provides, through realistic narrative, imaginary lessons for readers to survive in a modern society that requires certain skills: the ability to discern modern

forms of deception, knowledge of the law and politics, acquaintance with the basic theories of economics, social stratification, psychology, and the like. The point here is that mystery fiction in Japan requires a conscious interest in the development of the technology and society.

Further, Gordon Kelly has argued the central issue in modern life in urban environments involves trust and mutual dependency. Mystery fiction serves as a textbook or instruction manual on how to determine truth and dependability in modern society. It illustrates deceit in the institutions we depend on and the ways by which we can determine what is a lie. Kelly also maintains that mystery fiction enables a strategy for acting in situations of high-consequence risk in which reliable knowledge of others is both essential and difficult to achieve--a situation intrinsic to modernity and hence, with the expansion of modernity, relevant to the experience of increasing numbers of people.¹⁵ The popularity of mystery fiction in Japan is attributable to the fact that it instructs people on how to live in modern times. The dark side of this enlightenment is Foucault's notion of the disciplinary society, a society transformed by the extension of technologies of observation and control in schools, factories, the military, and prisons.

Ervin Goffman's ideas concerning the structure of narrative are relevant. His passage on pragmatic language usage below is of particular relevance to an analysis of the appeal mystery fiction as a literary genre. He posits language as a kind of stage for the struggle of the survival of the fittest: "If individuals were not highly responsive to hints of danger or opportunity, they would not be responsive enough; if they carried this response far on every occasion of its occurrence, they would spend all their time in a dither and have no time for all the other things required for survival."¹⁶

The kind of specialized scientific or pseudo-scientific registers incorporated in mystery fiction appeals to people because they enable us to survive in Goffman's "dog-eat-dog" world. Mystery fiction needs techniques of detection of untruth that are derived from such fields as medicine, psychology, anthropology, phrenology, forensics, psychology, and other modern disciplines. Recent Japanese mysteries exhibit a myriad of specialized disciplines as countless detectives use their specialized knowledge in mystery fictions to explicate and resolve threats imposed by the modern condition.

Among Japanese mystery writers, we find the characteristics discussed above. For example, Matsuoka Keisuke, a psychologist who writes mystery novels, uses his specialty in his novels in which his heroes and heroines employ their knowledge of hypnotism to solve crimes. Takagi Akimitsu, a lawyer, uses his knowledge of the legal system to solve crimes. Although Miyabe is not a financial specialist, in one of her stories, Kasha (All She was Worth), the reader can learn the detailed processes of identity theft and the methods by which a person can declare bankruptcy. She did extensive research on the Japanese financial system to inform her readers of the threats lurking in everyday life.

The formal requirement of mystery fiction is realism. The accurate depiction of facts, the portrayal of actual streets, regional manners, and dialects, the citations of the law, police procedures, all reflect realism in the sense of providing recognizable evaluative articulation of and conclusion to the chaos of everyday life. In the ensuing chapters, it will be argued that Japanese mystery fiction gradually evolved from a plot driven, generically bound formula to the most descriptively realistic genre in contemporary Japanese literature. Miyabe Miyuki's fiction exemplifies this trend. The

appendix to this study is a translation of a short story that is intended to illustrate how Miyabe Miyuki broke with many of conventions of mystery fiction to realistically portray her contemporary urban settings.

But how do we recognize a given narrative as a given genre? Bönnemark has adopted Labov's theory of narrative to analyze mystery fiction, and she isolates the following structure of recognition.¹⁷

- 1) Abstract: information imparted by the title, newspaper articles, a photograph, or other such framing device, information which tells the reader what kind of narrative to expect.
- 2) Complicating Action: most often presented in pedantic detail as befits a pseudo-scientific analysis of events in the process of discovery of the evidence.
- 3) Orientation: provides the specifics of character, setting, and time, often one and the same as complication of action.
- 4) Evaluation: the indispensable element of mystery by which the evidence is weighed and assessed.
- 5) Resolution: that which reveals the solution to the mystery of the crime.
- 6) Coda: provides the aftermath to the story.

As will be illustrated below, this is the standard form of the genre of mystery fiction that was adopted by Japanese writers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In my examination of the evolution of this genre in Japan, we will see how Japanese mystery fiction came over time to differentiate itself from this formula a tendency exemplified by the works of Miyabe Miyuki.

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- ¹ Michael Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays, Michael Holquist ed., C Emerson, & M Holquist, trans. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986): 288-289.
- ² Tzvetan Todorov, "The Origin of Genres," Genres in Discourse (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990): 162.
- ³ Samuel Martin, A Reference Grammar of Japanese (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975): 26.
- ⁴ Kasai Kiyoshi, Tantei shōsetsu ron 2 (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1998): 16.
- ⁵ Todorov: 197.
- ⁶ Kathy Ragsdale, "Marriage, the Newspaper Business, and the Nation-state: Ideology in the Late Meiji Serialized katei shosetsu," Journal of Japanese Studies, 24.2: 252-255.
- ⁷ Richard Raskin, The Pleasures and Politics of Detective Fiction (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992): 71-116. Ernest Bloch, "A philosophical view of the detective novel," The Utopian Function of Art and Literature trans, Jack Zips & Frank Mecklenburg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986): 245-64, 246-47. Geraldine Pederson-Krag, "Detective Stories and the Primal Scene," in The Poetics of Murder eds. G & Stowe Most (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983): 20. R. Gordon Kelly, Mystery Fiction and Modern Life (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998): 174.
- ⁸ Geraldine Pederson-Krag: 20.
- ⁹ Raskin: 71-116.
- ¹⁰ William O Aydelotte, "The Detective Story as a Historic Source," Dimensions of Detective Fiction eds, N Landrum Larry, Pat Broune, & Ray B Browne (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1976): 68- 82.
- ¹¹ Ernest Bloch: 245-64.
- ¹² Kenneth Kennsiston, The Uncommitted: Alienated Youth in American Society (New York: Dell Publishing, 1970): 318-319.
- ¹³ Jon Thompson, Fiction, Crime and Empire: Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993): 45.
- ¹⁴ Kennsiston: 318.
- ¹⁵ Kelly: 36.
- ¹⁶ Ervin Goffman, Relations in Public: Micro-Studies in Public Order (New York: Harper Colphon Books, 1971): 139.

¹⁷ Margrit Bönnermark, The Mimetic Mystery: a Linguistic Study of the Genre of British and American Detective Fiction including Comparison with Suspense Fiction Dissertation (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 1997):102-118. William Labov, “The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax,” Language in the Inner City: Studies in Black English Vernacular (Philadelphia: The University Pennsylvania Press, 1972): 354-396. “Some Further Steps in Narrative Analysis,” Journal of Narrative Life and History, 7 (1-4): 395-415.

CHAPTER 2

THE STRUCTURE OF PREWAR JAPANESE MYSTERY FICTION

To clarify the nature of the genre, I will examine a parody of mystery fiction written by Tokugawa Musei in 1927, during the formative period of the development of mystery fiction as a genre in Japan.¹ The structure of a genre is most clearly revealed through its parody since parody must illuminate the most recognizable features of a genre in order to exaggerate them. Through this parody, I propose to examine the features of mystery fiction as a genre, the linguistic manifestations of the process of detection, the incorporation of specialized vocabulary into the genre, and the strategies of verbal deceit that play such a prominent role in mystery fiction. The parody to be examined is “Obetaiburuburu jiken” (“The Obetaiburuburu Murder,” 1927).

Tokugawa Musei (1894-1971) worked as an orator for silent movies and later became a radio announcer and personality. He started writing in the literary magazines Shinseinen and Bungei shunjū around 1925.² In “Obetaburuburu jiken,” his writing style is marked by a story-telling style which is characteristic of “kōdan,” or the tradition of oral transmission of tales.

The plot of the story is as follows. An English professor died as he was sitting by his window. His wife ran to the scene when she heard his scream. He moved his lips and spoke nonsense words, something like, “o, obe, obetai buru buru,” and thereupon died. A doctor was called to examine him, and he quickly concluded that the cause of his death must have been a heart attack because the professor had suffered from chronic heart problems.

However, his wife, who had heard his dying words, did not believe it was a natural death, so she called the police. The police could not solve the mystery. The famous detective, Rokusha Ieie (a play on the name Sherlock Holmes; *ie* in Japanese is ‘house’ and two houses make a homes ‘Holmes’) was called in to investigate the death. He found a small piece of *konnyaku* (devil’s tongue jelly) with tiny bits of human hair and some germs associated with pinkeye attached. Rokusha concluded that the murderer was a barber with pinkeye. The criminal was arrested and confessed to the crime. He used a cold piece of *konnyaku* to shock the professor into cardiac arrest.

What makes the story comical is that the professor dies in such a completely ridiculous manner. As mentioned previously, he is murdered by a piece of *konnyaku*, which is a kind of hard jelly like food. The young man attaches a piece of cold *konnyaku* to the end of a fishing pole and drags it over the professor’s bald head. This so surprises the professor that he has a heart attack. This use of *konnyaku* is customary in Japanese haunted houses or in amusement parks to surprise visitors. Thus, it is a technique by nature ridiculous. Of course, almost no one is killed in haunted houses or amusement parks.

The motive for the young man's crime is equally improbable. The barber's desire was to gain revenge for his late father. His father was a famous Chinese scholar, but starting around the time of 1860's, the country became westernized. The people of Japan started showing an interest in the English language and lost interest in Chinese. As a consequence, his father lost his position and died in misery. His last words for his son were to take revenge on the English language. While this young man was watching the movie with English subtitles, he remembered his father's words and decided to avenge his deceased father. The result was the murder of the English professor with *konnyaku*.

It should be noted that the most striking difference between modern mystery fiction and the true crime fiction of reportage and fiction based on that which preceded it in the Tokugawa period can be discerned in the following passages in which the criminal confesses his motivation for the murder in "Opetaiburuburu jiken":

(The abbreviations of the capitalized letters are: J: Japanese, W: Word to word translation, L: literal translation, Tp: topic, Q: question, pt: past tense, acc: accusative, nom: nominative, neg: negative, part: particle.)³

J: hitogoroshi wa shite mo keibatsu wa uke-taku-nai
W: murder Tp do Tp punishment Tp receive want not

L: Can commit a murderer but don't want to be punished for it.

J: totemo genzai no seifu de wa mukashi no tonosama no yōni
W: possibly modern of government at at Tp old days of samurai lord of like

L: Probably, impossible, modern government to be like samurai lord in old days,

J: sensu o hiroge te oo shubi-yoku oya no kataki o uttariu ka
W: fan of open and oh successfully parent of revenge acc. do pt. perfect Q

L: opening the fun, and have (you) successfully completed your parents' revenge?

J: kōshi no homare appare -naru zo te na koto wa itte
W: dutiful child of honor well done emphatic that like case Tp say and

L: (You are) an honored child. Well done! Speaking of such thing is

J: kuremai dakara zettai-ni hakkaku shinai hōhō o kangae nakereba-naranai
W: give not thus never reveal do not way acc thing must

L: not given. Thus, (I) need to find a way not to be found out.

Even if I committed a murder, I didn't want to be punished for it. However, unlike the old warlord system, the modern government system would not say "Well done! You are an honored dutiful child. You successfully avenged your parent's death!" Thus, I had to think of a way my crime would not be discovered, and I would get away with it.⁴

This passage clearly indicates that revenge was commendable in old times. In premodern tales of revenge, the actor would not try to conceal the crime. They went to the authorities and claimed responsibility for the crime. For example, the famous revenge story, Chūshingura (Forty-seven rōnin,) shows the pattern of premodern tales based on true event. Following is the summary of the story: One day in the Edo era, at a reception held by the Shogun at Edo castle, Lord Asano drew his sword and attempted to kill Lord Kira. The reason was that Lord Kira insulted Lord Asano. For drawing his sword in the Shogun's castle, Lord Asano was sentenced to commit *seppuku* (a suicide by ritual disembowelment), and the Shogun confiscated Asano's lands and dismissed all the samurai who had served Asano, making them masterless retainers, or *rōnin*. However,

Lord Kira was released without punishment. Nearly two years later, Ōishi Kuranosuke, the high-ranking samurai in Asano clan, led a group of forty-seven *rōnin*. They broke into Kira's mansion and executed Kira and laid his head at Asano's grave. Then, they turned themselves in to the authorities. The government sentenced them to commit *seppuku*. Chūshingura illustrates a primary feudal virtue concerning revenge. If one commits an act of vengeance without official sanction, one should be proud of the fact and announce it to the world, expecting to face death for one's act of loyalty.

However, in modern mystery fictions of revenge, individual actors do not want to be punished or pay the price. Their actions are based on deceit. Obviously, the central tension of mystery fiction is whether the criminal can get away with it or not. In contrast, the traditional tales of murder are almost lacking in the suspense concerning who did the crime; usually the criminal is revealed at the outset.

The central structural feature of the mystery novel is that closure is deferred until a paradigm of deceit, lies, and misinformation is deployed to frustrate revelation in terms of the perpetrator's identity, motivation, or whether a crime has even been committed. A counter paradigm of rationality, objective analysis, and investigation is then employed to clear up the untruths and establish an objective reality. The manifestation of the two conflicting paradigms in modern mystery fiction is what *Musei* parodies in the alternation of pseudo-rational scientific view and the subjective language of emotion. A feature of *Musei*'s parody that reflects this structuring of language to illustrate the essential feature of deceit is his alternation of objective analytical language with the subjective language

of sympathy, horror, or suspicion. The rational analysis dissects and reveals the objective truth behind the deceit made possible in subjective expression. For example, in the passage below, the doctor who has been called to scientifically examine the corpse of the dead professor is a comedic figure.

His explanation mixes the straight scientific analytical language of objective observation with the obsequious politeness of the warmhearted friend. The comic quality of the passage comes from the contradiction between the doctor's role as an infallible scientist and his role as a sympathetic family friend. The contradiction is marked by the redundant use of copulas in the same sentences.

J: hanahada okinodoku de aru desu ga kanete
W: terribly (polite) sorry copula exist copula (distal) but previously

J: hakase ni mo gochūi shite at-ta desu ga
W: professor to Tp warn (polite) do and exist- pt. copula (distal) but

L: Terribly sorry, but (I) have previously warned the professor, but

J: mohaya kō-natte wa teate no shi-yō mo nai desu
W: already this become Tp treat of do way Tp no copula (distal)

L: This already has become, and no treatment is there.

J: ikansen shinzō-mahi de aru desu kara
W: indeed heart attach copula exist copula(distal) because

L: Indeed, because of a heart attack.

“I am terribly sorry, but there is nothing I can do. I have warned the professor about his heart condition many times. Indeed, the cause of his death was a heart attack.”⁵

At the sentence endings of the sentences above, copulas are used twice in one sentence. This multiple use of the copula, in fact, ungrammatical use, gives the utterances of the doctor a humorous tone. As we see in the above example, the impulse to maintain the doctor's dignity as a professional seeking the truth (*de aru*) and his equally strong desire to soften that professional stance and ingratiate himself with the subjective and politeness denoting sympathy (*desu*) are in conflict and work to a comic effect. Constantly parodied is the tension between the language of analysis, the pseudo-scientific narrative, and the language of subjective reaction or emotion. Above all, these modes are exaggerated.

De aru in Japanese is the copula of rational discourse, while “-*desu*” is the polite copula of ingratiation, which distances the speaker and the hearer. Of course, the main function of repetition in the story is comic effect. Makino, 1980, maintains repetition also has a function of poking fun at something or someone. Japanese *manzai*, a comic stage dialogue, extends this concept and tends to repeat the same utterance over and over again. The comical effect in Musei's writing style lies in the effect of repetition.

The comic tension between analytical and emotional is also apparent in this parody by the repetition of the exaggerated language of popular crime headlines. The logical connections between the main and the subordinate clause are not important in the reporter's language which is typical sensationalistic journalism, and it is exactly this lack of rationality that is displayed through the parody. Van Dijk points out this tendency of media discourse: “The relevance of topics in news is specifically marked in the text, namely, by the headline and lead, which conventionally express the main topics. They do so inter-subjectively, however; they express the most important information of the

cognitive model of journalists, that is, how they see and define the news event.”⁶ What Musei is parodying is the sensationalistic language of newspaper headlines, which, as van Dijk points out, are the subjective outbursts of journalists. The following is Musei's “exhibition” of these irrational subjective outbursts:

J: shinbun ni yotte miru ni
 W: newspaper by see as

L: As (we) see by newspaper,

J: eiga o mi te --- gōtō o shi-ta yatsu ga iru
 W: movie acc. see and robbery acc. do past person nom. Exist

L: There was a person saw a movie and did a robbery.

J: eiga o mi te--- hōka o shi-ta yatsu ga iru
 W: movie acc. see and arson acc. do past person nom. exist

L: There exists a person saw a movie and did arson.

J: eiga o mi te--- hito-goroshi o shi-ta yatsu ga iru
 W: movie acc. see and murder acc. do past person nom. exist

L: There exists a person saw a movie and did murder.

J: eiga o mi te--- kantu o shi-ta yatsu ga iru
 W: movie acc. see and rape acc. do past person nom. Exist

L: There exists a person saw a movie and did rape.

J: osoru-beshi eiga no eikyō wa tō-tō to shi te kaku-no gotoshi
 W: terrible must movies of influence tp. rushing as do and this like

L: Movies' influence is rushing and must be terrified.

J: kokumin ima-ni-shite satora- zu- n- ba sui-ni
 W: people now understand neg. nom. sub. finally

L: If the people of Japan do not understand it now,

J: sore eiga bōkoku no hiun o shōchi suru ni itaran
W: the prosperity collapse of the country of tragedy acc. invite do to reach

L: ...it would invite the collapse of the prosperity of the country.

According to the newspaper,
There are people who commit robberies after seeing a movie,
There are people who commit arson after seeing a movie,
There are people who commit murders after seeing a movie, and
There are people who rape after seeing a movie.
As we read the newspaper, it seems like the awful influence of movies infects our society like an epidemic disease. If the people do not realize the serious consequences by the movies at this moment, in the long run, we will grieve over the ruin of the nation.⁷

Musei exposes the irrationality of newspaper articles by repeating these semantically disconnected clauses and through the humorous contrast of the language of sensationalism. Of course, the people who watch movies do not necessarily commit crimes. However the sensationalism of newspapers makes it sounds like that there is a definite connection between crimes and movies. In the next passage Musei criticizes the irrationality of the newspaper discourse on crime by pointing out the absurdity of such statements in the real world by using the narrator's voice:

J: tokidoki eiga o mi te tsumi o okasu mono ga aru kara
W: sometimes movie acc. see and crime acc commit one nom. exist because

L: Sometimes, if because someone who commits a crime after seeing a movie,...

J: eiga o bokumetsu subeki de aru nara
W: movie acc. eradicate must copula exist if

L: Movies must be eradicated...

J tokidoki tōshin jisatu suru ki ni naru yatsu ga iru kara
W: sometimes throw oneself suicide do feel to become one nom. exist because

L: Sometimes, someone feels like committing suicide throwing oneself,...

J: birudingu wa hakai subeki de aru darō shi
W: building Tp destroy must copula exist suppose and

L: supposedly, buildings must be destroyed. And...

J: tokidoki i o waruku -suru mono ga aru kara
W: sometimes stomach acc hurt one nom exist because

L: Sometimes, because someone hurts one's stomach,....

J: shokumotsu wa haishi subeki de aru darō
W: food Tp abolish must copula exist suppose

L: supposedly, food must be abolished.

J: daitai eiga kurai mi te furafura-to
W: generally speaking movie just see and lose oneself

L: Generally speaking, if only just seeing a movie and lose oneself...

J: tsumi o okasu yōna jinbutsu nara
W: crime acc commit like person if

L: ...and he commits a crime...

J: eiga o minakuta-tte itsuka wa onaji tsumi o okasu
W: movie acc. see not even-if someday Tp same crime acc. commit

L: Without seeing a movie, he would commit a crime anyway someday...

J: yakuza-mono da-- to iu-koto ni iwayuru shikisha domo wa kigatsuka-nai
W: gang copula that fact to so-called wise ones Tp notice not

L: ...the wise men in the world can not notice that the one is a kind of person like a gang.

J: to mieru
W: that seem

L: it seems

J: abekobe-ni shikisha bōkoku ron o tonae taku naru.
W: contrary wise ones ruined country theory acc advocate want become

L: Want to advocate the theory of wise men destroying the country.

Should movies be eradicated because people occasionally sees movies and commit a crime? If so, then tall buildings should be destroyed because there are some people who kill themselves by jumping from buildings. Because people occasionally develop upset stomachs by eating excessively, then should we abolish all the food in the world? Generally speaking, if one is the sort of unstable person who would commit a crime just because he or she saw it in the movies that person most likely is a socio-path who would easily commit a crime someday anyway. However, it seems like so-called intellectuals do not see this simple fact. Indeed, I would like to argue that intellectuals jeopardize the nation's existence.⁸

Raskin points out that the characteristics of detective fiction include the playful use of linguistic codes.⁹ In relation to this topic, he mentions gangster speech and coded messages. Although, there is no gangster speech used in the story, a coded message is incorporated in the story. What is being parodied by Musei is the “dying message” that gives the clue to the resolution of the crime.

In this case, the message is “o, obe, obetaiburuburu,” a nonsense phrase, uttered by the professor at the time of his death. The authors of mystery fiction often present an incomprehensible message or set of clues and then they create a context through narrative by which the message or set of clues become comprehensible.

In the case of “Obetaiburuburu jiken,” however, the dying message is so outlandish as to occasion laughter because the phrase “obetai buruburu” is the combination of children’s language and onomatopoeic expression, which is also one of the characteristics of children’s discourse, meaning, “cold and jelly-like texture.” Perhaps

the key to many mystery stories is somewhat outlandish, as this makes for an interesting puzzle for the reader. However, if the context is too strange, the readers will not accept the message. The point is that a secret message has to be uncovered, and the writer has to provide sufficient realistic context to make the message credible. In the case of “Opetaiburuburu jiken,” the context is so improbable that it occasions laughter.

Detectives in Japanese mystery fiction share similar characteristics in common. First, their intelligence makes them independent of the common herd of crime solvers: police, family members, and so on. Second, they are often quirky and eccentric with strange outfits and with strange names. For example, the name of the detective in “Obetaiburuburu jiken” is Rokusha Ieie, which, as noted before, is the Japanese play on the name of the famous Sherlock Holmes. Other examples include Kindaichi Kōsuke in Yokomizo Seishi's mystery series or Ijūin Daisuke in Kurimoto Kaoru's creations. Third, the detectives are skeptical about the normal cause and effect relations of events. A seemingly transparent cause and effect relation is often created by the criminal to deceive. The detectives must go beyond the normal to arrive at the truth. For example, in “Obetaiburuburu jiken,” the doctor forwards a normal cause and effect relation that the victim died of a heart attack. Gordon Kelly writes of Edgar Allan Poe's detective, Dupin, “In Dupin's world then, every effect, correctly understood, has its true cause and every appearance its “reality.” But that connection must be established in the face of appearances that always admit of at least two interpretations: things really are as they seem, or they have been carefully arranged to convey that (misleading) impression.”¹⁰

Musei observes this principle and incorporates it in a very unusual situation with insufficient context, which makes the story funny. According to normal interpretations, the apparent heart attack would appear to be due to the victim's heart condition that he had been warned about by the doctor prior to the incident. However, the detective sees through this normal chain of events and reinterprets clues unaccounted for and bits and pieces of information, such as the victim's last words, or the germs on the *konnyaku*. These clues lead him to the correct solution.

I will summarize the elements outlined above. The elements that are shown in Musei's parody are a) a puzzle solving effect that accompanies the development of the story; b) pseudo-scientific view of the crime; c) the usage of sensational language, e.g., the display of newspaper headlines, or the use of emphatics; d) the dying message; e) the revelation of the motive of the crime; f) the revelation of the truth.

The application of Bönnemark's explication, following Labov, of the structure of mystery fiction to Japanese mystery fiction illustrates that the form of the borrowed genre had been so domesticated in Japan by 1920s that the mass readership of Shinseinen, could easily recognize a parody of the main features of the genre. Musei quite acutely begins his story with the framing device of the headlines condemning movies. This parody of this sensational information corresponds to the abstract, in this case, imparted by newspaper headlines. We see the story being framed by the presentation of documents, specifically the newspaper headlines concerning the deleterious effects of movies and the introduction of the police transcript in *katakana* that provides the final conclusion to the mystery.

Musei also caricatures the orientation aspect of mystery fiction by providing an exaggeratedly detailed depiction of the temporal setting of the crime:

J: totsujō senritsu-subeki jiken ga okotta
W: suddenly spine-chilling incident nom. happened

L: suddenly, spine-chilling incident happened.

J: jikan wa tabun hachiji koro de atta rō wa kokoro-bosoi ga
W: time Tp maybe eight o'clock around at exist recall Tp unpromising but

J: nanishiro hakase no ie ni wa tokei ga muyami-ni atte
W: anyhow professor of house at Tp. clock nom. unnecessarily exist

L: As for the time, as it is recalled, it was around eight, but still a little iffy, but anyhow, as for at the professor's house, there existed unnecessarily (many) clocks, and...

J: sono toki chano-ma no bonbon-dokei wa hachiji go fun mae
W: the time family room of pendulum clock Tp. eight o'clock five minutes before

L: that time, as for the pendulum clock in the family room, it was five minutes before eight

J: oku no tokonoma no oki-dokei wa hachiji jūgo fun
W: inner part of the house alcove of clock Tp. eight fifteen minutes.

L: As for the clock in the alcove in the inner part of the house, it was eight fifteen

J: shosai no mezamashi-dokei wa hachiji nanafun hakase no kaichū-dokei wa
W: den of alarm clock Tp eight seven professor of pocket watch Tp.

L: As for the alarm clock in the den, it was eight seven, as for the professor's pocket watch,

J: (kore wa te-buru no ue ni ok-are te attta) shichiji sanjū-hachi
W: this Tp. table of above at put-passive and exist seven thirty-eight

L: (As for this, it was left on the table.), it was seven thirty eight.

J: fun to sorezore mottomo-rashii jishin arige-na kao o
W: minutes that each serious confident have face acc.

L: That each clock had a serious confident face.

J: shite ita no dakara yottsu tomo uramikko no nai yō- ni heikin
W: do and exist nom. because four all complain of neg. part. Average

L: thus, four of them not to complain, took the average.

J: o toru to oyoso hachiji koro tte koto ni naru.
W: acc. take and about eight around that a case to become

L: it became around eight o'clock.

Suddenly a spine-chilling crime happened. The time was maybe around eight o'clock, which is a bit unpromising. Anyhow, in the professor's house, there were several clocks. When the crime took place, the pendulum clock in the family room marked five till eight, the clock on the alcove in the inner part of the house showed eight fifteen, the alarm clock in the study was eight seven, and the professor's pocket watch, which was left on the table, was seven thirty eight. Each clock seemed so authoritative that we needed to average them out just to be fair.¹¹

In this parody, time is not central to the committing of the crime. Nonetheless, the emphasis placed on linguistic expression of time is a parody of the "scientific, rational" basis of crime detection.

In Musei's parody, the complicating action consists of the main action in the story. The action is reported by direct speech, i.e., reports of doctors or witnesses. Rokusha's weighing of the evidence in portentous, rational language constitutes a parody of the typical evaluation of evidence in many mystery novels. The result, "resolution," is revealed by the emotional outburst presented through transcripts of the man's confession shown below. (The abbreviation for the Officer is marked as O, and the criminal is C.)

O:

J: hidari ni sono chōsho o bassui shite mi yō.

W: left on the documentation acc. excerpt do see vol.

L: Let's show the excerpt of the documentation on the left.

O:

J: ikanaru dōki de hakase o korosu ki ni nat ta no ka

W: what motive by (the) professor acc. kill feel to become past. nom. Q

L: By what motive <you> felt to kill the professor?

C:

J: katsudōshashin o mi te korosu ki ni nari mashi ta

W: movie acc. see and kill feel to become distal past.

L: Saw a movie and felt like killing.

O:

J: doko no katsudō o mi te ka.

W: where of movie acc. see and Q

L: Where of the movie did <you> see and <felt like killing>?

C:

J: musashino kan de ari masu

W: Musashino theater copula exist distal.

L: It was Musashino theater.

O:

J: suruto sono katsudō ni wa konnyaku de hito o korosu

W: then the movie in Tp. konjaku by person acc kill copula

J: gamen ga atta no ja ne.

W: scene gen. exist nom. copula SFP

L: then, as for in the movie, was there a plot <in that someone> killed <someone> by konnyaku?

C:

J: ie sono ban no bangumi ni wa sukoshi mo hitogoroshi no

W: No, that night of movie in Tp. little Tp. murder of

J: gamen wa gozai masen deshi ta
W: scene Tp exist (polite) copula (distal) copula (distal) past.

L: No, as for in that night movie, there was no murder.

O:
J: donna bangumi ja tta.
W: what movie copula past

L: What kind of movie was it?

C:
J: saisho ga chūgi-na inu no shashin de tsugi wa oyakōkō-na segare no
W: first gen. royal dog of picture and next Tp dutiful son of

J: shashin de tori no shashin wa nasakebukai jizenka no shashin
W: picture and last of picture Tp. merciful benevolent person of picture

J: deshi ta.
W: copula past.

L: First picture was about a royal dog, and as for the next, (it) was about a dutiful son and as for the last, it was about a very giving person.

O:
J: fumu *tori* no shashin to wa niwatori ga geitō demo suru shashin ka
W: well bird of picture that Tp. rooster gen. performance say do picture Q

L: Well, bird of picture that is, say, a rooster does performance in the film?

C:
J: ie *tori* to wa ichiban saigo no koto desu.
W: no bird that tp the very last nom. thing distal

L: No. as for *tori*, it is not “bird;” it is “very last.”

O:
J: un. dewa eigo no rui ja ne. ma sore wa dōdemo yoroshi.
W: well, then English of some sort copula SFP. well it Tp. whatever good.

J: hitogoroshi no gamen ga naka-tta chūto konnyaku no gamen ga atta
W: muder acc. scene gen. no- past say konjaku acc scene gen. exist-past

J: ja rō.
W: copula maybe

L: Well, then, must be an English or some sort. Whatever it is, fine. There was no murder scene, then Konnyaku scene existed, maybe?

C:
J: ie arimasen.
W: no exist-not

L: No, there exist not.

O:
J: kora uso o haku to tame ni nar-an zo
W: hey lie acc. spit as sake to become-not SFP

L: Hey, spitting lies out won't help!

C:
J: ie kesshite uso wa mōshimasen seiyōmono bakari desu kara
W: no never lie Tp. tell distal-not Western-thing only distal because

J: daijōbu konnyaku wa arima-sen deshi ta
W: surely konjaku Tp. exist-not (polite) distal past

L: No. Never tell a lie. Only western thing, so no Konnyaku existed.

O:
J: hahan, sōka suruto nani-ga-yue-ni sono-ban no katsudō o mi te hakase o
W: well I see then why the night of movie acc. see and professor acc.

J: korosu ki ni natta no ka
W: kill feel to become nom. Q

L: Well, then, why became to feel killing professor at the night after seeing the movie?

C:
J: muyami-ni taitoru ga de te ki ta kara de ari masu
W: excessively subtitle gen. out and come past because copula exist distal.

L: Because there were too many subtitles.

O:
J: taitoru to wa nani ka
W: subtitle that Tp what Q

L: As for 'subtitle,' what is it?

C:
J: jimaku de ari masu
W: credit copula exist distal

L: Caption is, sir.

O:
J: jimaku to wa nani ka
W: caption that Tp what Q

L: As for caption, what is it?

C:
J: eigo de ari masu.
W: English copula exist distal

L: English, Sir.

O:
J: fun shikaraba eigo o mi te nande hito o korosu ki ni
W: well, if then English acc. see and why a person acc kill feel to

J: natta -n -ja
W: become nom. Copula

L: Well, if then, why after seeing English, you became to feel like killing a person?

In the following, let me show you an excerpt from the documentation. O: "What made you feel like killing the professor?" C: "When I saw a movie, I felt like killing him." O: "Where did you see the movie?" C: "At Musashino theater, sir." O: "What kind of movie was it? Was there a scene of a murder by devil's tongue in the movie?" C: "No, that night, there was no murder scene in the movie. The first short was about a loyal dog, the next movie was about a dutiful son, and the *tori* (finale) was about a benevolent person." O: "Well, you mean, that the *tori* picture had a performance of rooster or something" C: "No, *tori* means 'finale.'" O: "Well, then, it must be a kind of English word, whatever. If there was no murder scene, then there must have been a devil's tongue in the scene?" C: "No,

there wasn't." O: "Hey, telling a lie doesn't help you." C: "No. I am not telling you a lie. The movie was about the Western stuff only, so, of course, there was no devil's tongue." O: "Well, I see, then, why did you feel like killing the professor after seeing the movie that night?" C: "Because they used subtitles a lot, sir." O: "What is 'subtitle'?" C: "Credits, sir." O: "What is 'credits'?" C: "It's in English, sir." O: "Well, if so, why did reading English make you feel like committing a murder?"¹²

Musei uses *katakana* script which is the official mode of legal language. After this conversation, he changes the writing style to a third person narrative in which the murderer explains his motive. His father died in disappointment; he was a famous professor of Chinese, but he lost his tenure track position because English had become more popular than Chinese literature. His father's last words were "Take revenge on English for me!" Moreover, one of the movie orators stole the murderer's girl friend recently; therefore, when he went to see the movie that night, he did not want to listen to the orator (*benshi*). However, because he did not listen to the orator, he had to read the subtitles which were in English. To make the situation worse, English was his father's enemy. This inner voice frustrated the murderer, and when he saw the poor English professor at his window, he decided to take revenge on English, made a strange connection to the English professor, and murdered the professor.

Finally, the coda of the story provides the epilogue by the way of newspaper headlines. It is a joke that simultaneously refers back to the beginning of the story, relates the story to contemporary society, and frames the story by signaling its end. The ending features several newspaper headlines. The first line by a careless newspaper reporter is, "A movie kills, again!" Another headline follows, "Movies should be banned like rat poison!" After the details of the incident are reported in the press, a headline over an

article of film criticism reads, “As we have insisted, the subtitles are definitely useless!” The epilogue related the proceeding narrative to the real world, in this case, a satirical treatment of conservatives who rant and rave about the deleterious effects of movies on public morality.¹³

Generally, most prewar Japanese mystery fiction conforms to the structure of mystery fiction outlined in the examination of the parody above. I have related this structure to the generic structure of mystery fiction advanced by Bönnemark in her adaptation of the ideas of Labov to mystery fiction. I have isolated the major features by which Japanese readers recognized mystery fiction as mystery fiction and have argued that the existence of the parody “Obetaiburuburu jiken” illustrates that mystery fiction had been completely assimilated in Japan by the 1920s.

There are other elements that are present in mystery fiction revealed through the examination of this parody. These are the pseudo-rational scientific view of the crime, sensationalistic headlines, dying messages, deception, and heroes represented by eccentric detectives. Finally, we have seen that while the setting is contemporary and the parody is a strong critique of moralistic censorship of the cinema, the main thrust of the story is making fun of the puzzle-solving aspects of mystery fiction. This is because the overwhelmingly dominant mode of mystery fiction in the prewar period was the puzzle solving mode, and it was highly formulaic. In the next chapter, I will discuss the history of the development of mystery fiction in Japan, and we will see that gradually mystery fiction breaks out of the formulaic mode described above and becomes far more concerned with the portrayal of its contemporary society.

¹ Tokugawa Musei, “Obetaiburuburu jiken,” Shinseinen kessaku sen 2. Nakajima Kawatarō ed. (Tokyo: Tachikaze shobō, 1970): 25-35.

² Nakajima Kawatarō, Nihon suiri- shōsetsu shi 3 (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1993):229.

³ Kuno Susumu, Functional Syntax. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1987)

⁴ Tokugawa: 33.

⁵ Tokugawa: 29.

⁶ Teun van Dike, Elite Discourse and Racism, (London: Sage Publications, 1993): 248.

⁷ Tokugawa: 27.

⁸ Tokugawa: 28.

⁹ Raskin: 71-116.

¹⁰ Kelly: 38-39.

¹¹ Tokugawa: 28.

¹² Tokugawa: 31.

¹³ Tokugawa: 33.

CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORY OF JAPANESE MYSTERY FICTION

3. 1. Chapter Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have shown the elements of prewar Japanese mystery fiction derived from Tokugawa Musei's parody. The purpose of isolating these generic features is that these elements and this structure of mystery fiction remain valid in postwar mystery fiction and form a kind of invisible foundation for the work of Miyabe Miyuki. In this chapter, I will provide a brief history of mystery fiction in Japan as it developed after World War Two, to fill the gap between Tokugawa Musei and Miyabe Miyuki.

In the years between Tokugawa Musei's story and Miyabe Miyuki's first novel, there was a great transformation in Japanese mystery fiction. The history of Japanese mystery fiction can be traced back to the 1880's when the translations of western mystery fiction were published in Kagetsu shinshi (New flower-moon magazine). Nakajima asserts that Kuroiwa Ruika greatly contributed to the popularity of *tantei shōsetsu* (detective/mystery fiction) in Meiji-era Japan. He adopted the form of western mystery fiction into his Japanese works, but he incorporated Japanese names and places into these adaptations to make the readers feel comfortable reading the stories.¹

From the end of the Meiji through the Taishō eras, the translation of Sherlock Holmes series by Conan Doyle was introduced and became extremely popular. In addition, the works of Edger Allan Poe, such as The black cat and The murder on Rue Morgue were translated by Aeba Kōson, and The blind messenger by Michel Strogoff was translated by Yōkaku Sanjin (Morita Shiken). By the turn of the century, mystery fiction was widely translated and had become extremely popular.² Many of the Japan's most prestigious authors, such as Tsubouchi Shōyō, Mori Ōgai, Tanizaki Junichirō, and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke were inspired to write mystery fiction.³

The first authentically Japanese mystery fiction was published in 1888 by Nansui Gaishi titled Shōen kenpō:satsujinhan (Smoke Sword: Murderer). In the same year Kuroiwa Ruika also made an attempt to write his own mystery fiction titled Muzan (Cruel).⁴ At almost the same time, Kōda Rohan, a famed prose stylist, published his own mystery fiction titled Kore wa kore wa (What a Surprise!) in the magazine Miyako no hana (The Flower in the City). After Ruika, many original Japanese mystery stories were published, and mystery fiction in Japan gained popularity. Original Japanese mystery fiction as a genre was established. However, in spite of the contributions made by Ruika, original Japanese mystery fiction lost popularity in the Taishō era and western translation became the mainstream.⁵

After World War Two, there arose a dichotomy between puzzle oriented detective fiction as represented by Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965), Yokomizo Seishi (1902-1981), and others, and the new movement of socially conscious detective fiction represented by

Matsumoto Seichō (1902-1992). Matsumoto's works had an enormous influence on the postwar mystery fiction in Japan. I will illustrate this development by taking up the major writers of Japanese mystery fiction from the time of its greatest prewar popularity to contemporary times.

3.2. Puzzle-solving Aspect

3.2.1. Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965)

In 1922, Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965) first published a short story "Nisen dōka" (A two cent-coin) in Shinseinen (New Youth, 1920-50).⁶ This was a magazine promoting the genre of *tantei shōsetsu* in Japan and was crucial in popularizing the genre among young people.⁷

Edogawa Ranpo's grotesque themes and erotically charged story lines proved enormously popular. He was particularly adept at incorporating the puzzle solving elements of the genre. His influence extended to the postwar period in the works of such writers as Yokomizo Seishi, Waku Shunzō, or Yume Kagerō. Ranpo was extremely influential in the development of Japanese mystery fiction up until the 1980's.

To illustrate something of what Ranpo's mysteries are like, I will summarize one of Ranpo's works that portrays the detective Akechi Kogorō, who was a popular hero (detective) in Ranpo's stories. The title of the story is Kenin-gengi (Inhuman Game).⁸

Summary of Kenin-gengi (Inhuman Game, 1959)

This story was first published in a magazine, Bessatsu hōseki (Special edition of Jewel) in 1959. The main characters of the story are Baron Ōkawara Yoshiaki, his wife Yumiko, Shōji Takehiko, who is a *shosei* (a live-in student) in the Baron's house, two young men who are close to the Baron, and the detective Akechi Kogorō.

The wife, Yumiko, is a very attractive woman, and Shōji falls in love with her, but his love is unrequited. The two young men are also in love with Yumiko, and they both have relationships with her. One day, one of the young men was killed. Shōji, Yumiko, and the Baron happen to witness the death when the man fell from or was thrown off a cliff. To make the situation worse, the other young man was murdered in a locked room soon after the cliff incident.

In the end, Akechi detects that the scene of a man falling from the cliff was not the real murder scene but was artificially created by Yumiko and one of the young men who was later murdered. They helped to create Yumiko's alibi by dropping a mannequin wearing the deceased person's clothes from the cliff. To create her alibi, Yumiko sent a signal to her conspirator while she was with the Baron and Shōji. Yumiko later killed the young man. She created the locked room by using a thin string of copper wire.

Yumiko was caught by Akechi when she was trying to kill Shōji. She took advantage of Shōji's love for her and seduced him. Yumiko confesses to her crime of killing the two men and also to murdering seven other people. She states that when she falls in love with a person or an animal, she has to kill it. The title implies that Yumiko possessed an inhuman nature with a beautiful human face, and the game she enjoyed was killing.

Discussion

The story clearly shows the traditional structure of mystery fiction. The code-solving schema is clearly in the category of “puzzle solving,” as is postulated by Richard Raskin. The story also conforms to Bönneberg’s proposed theory of the structure of mystery fiction. The abstract sets the stage when Shōji comes to the Baron’s house and is infatuated by Yumiko. The orientation of the action is the murders and tricks by Yumiko. After the presentation of the mystery, the complicating action follows, which leads the readers to what to expect in the next event. This corresponds to scenes in which Yumiko invites Shōji to meet her in a shelter, the attempt to kill him, and Shōji’s sexual involvement with Yumiko knowing that she is the murderer. In the resolution, Akechi presents the solution and hears Yumiko’s confession. The coda consists of Shōji leaving the Baron’s house without harm.

The story encompasses the content of mystery fiction isolated from Musei’s parody as well. The puzzle solving effect is seen in the alibi trick at the cliff and in the locked room mystery. The pseudo-scientific view of the crime is provided by the detective, Akechi, solving the tricks that Yumiko plotted, such as the copper wire used to make the locked room, and so on. The sensational framing can be seen in the scene where the body falls from the cliff and the news reports that communicated the event. And the dying message is the revelation of the motive and the truth of the crime which corresponds to the confession letter by Yumiko.

Edogawa Ranpo’s works concentrated on the puzzle solving aspects of mystery fiction and usually ended with an unexpected and an unrealistic solution, such as the one we see in Kenin-gengi. The person who is the most unlikely to have committed the crime,

Yumiko, is the murderer for the unexpected reason that she was a psychopath. To make the puzzle solving schema effective in Ranpo's stories, it seems to be a pattern that the person who is the least likely to commit crimes is the guilty party. Yumiko has the perfect alibi. The paradox is that if a reader is accustomed to Ranpo's plots, he or she will be able to guess the identity of the guilty character in the story.

3.2.2. Yokomizo Seishi (1902-1981)

The inheritor of Ranpo's extremely popular brand of mystery fiction was Yokomizo Seishi. He was born in 1902 in Kobe, Japan. His debut work seems to have been "Osoroshiki shigatsu baka" ("A terrible April Fool") published in Shinseinen in 1921. When he was twenty-three years old, he met Edogawa Ranpo. In 1926, Yokomizo first published a collection of his short stories, Kōkoku ningyō (Advertising Doll). Soon after this, Ranpo invited Yokomizo to move to Tokyo to work with him. When Yokomizo died in 1981, he had published over one hundred volumes of mystery fiction. His works have been continuously adapted to film and television up until the present.⁹

Nakajima Kawatarō discusses an interesting story about the relationship between Ranpo and Seishi. In 1949, Ranpo confessed that Seishi was the ghostwriter of three of his mystery fictions. Ranpo was so popular at that time that he could not keep up with the readers' demands for new stories, and he, thus, asked Seishi to write stories which Ranpo published under his own name. Since Seishi and Ranpo were close friends, Seishi agreed to do this.¹⁰ This, of course, means that Seishi's writing style was very similar to Ranpo's. Seishi's works are also characterized by grotesque and sexually charged elements, often

with the introduction of the supernatural. Kindaichi Kōsuke is Seishi's detective hero, and he plays almost the same role as Akechi Kogorō in Ranpo's stories. To illustrate the similarities between Ranpo and Seishi, I will summarize one of Seishi's stories below. The title of the story is Yatsuhaka mura (The Village of Eight Graves, 1977).¹¹ This mystery novel is one of the most famous in Japan and has been adapted to the screen twice by the famous director Ichikawa Kon.

Summary of Yatsuhaka Mura (The Village of Eight Graves, 1977)

The name of the village originated from an old legend. About 750 years ago, eight samurai escaped from the Heike War and settled in the village. They worked hard and became friends with the villagers. However, the villagers heard that the samurai had a lot of gold hidden somewhere in the village, and the poor people started having an interest in the hidden gold. To make the samurai's situation worse, the villagers heard that the government was after the samurai. One night, the villagers massacred those eight samurai for their hidden treasure and to avoid trouble that the samurai might cause with the government. The leader of the samurai cut off his own head and cursed the village before he died. After that incident, the villagers created eight graves for the deceased samurai. The graves were meant as an apology for the tragedy, so that the curse would not be realized. The treasure was never uncovered.

The main character, Terada Tatsuya, is an ordinary white-collar worker. One day Tatsuya was attracted to a strange newspaper classified ad. The advertisement was created by an attorney who was looking for Tatsuya. When Tatsuya visits the attorney's office, he is introduced to an old man, Igami Ushimatsu, who claims to be his grandfather.

Tatsuya is also told that he was born in Yatsuhaka-mura. However, Ushimatsu is poisoned right in front of Tatsuya. Since Ushimatsu is dead, a young beautiful widow, Mori Miyako, arrives to take Tatsuya to Yatsuhaka-mura. On the way to the village, Miyako tells him that he is the only heir of the Tajimi family, which was the leader of the village, and that now he is extremely wealthy.

Tatsuya's twin great aunts, Kotake and Koume, his sister, Haruyo, and his elder brother are waiting for Tatsuya's arrival. After they introduce themselves, Haruyo tells him the secret of his birth. Their father was an eccentric man. The night Tatsuya's mother fled the village with him as a baby, his father went insane and killed eight people, injured many others, and hid in the mountains. He has not been seen since.

Tatsuya's father was the true heir of the Tajimi family, but he was a madman lost in the mountains, and so Tatsuya's brother has inherited the title of head of the household. He, however, is terminally ill. Therefore, the family needs Tatsuya to return to the village. When Tatsuya comes back to his ancestral home, the villagers fear him because they believe that Tatsuya's returning is a dreadful omen. As if it were the proof of the villagers' premonition, another murder took place in front of Tatsuya. His brother was poisoned while they were talking.

Tatsuya started living in the Tajimi house. One day, he found there was a hidden path leading to maze-like limestone caves underneath the village. He found that his great aunts were making trips to the cave at midnight from time to time. One night, Tatsuya follows them, and finds the mummy of his father in the cave. Soon after that,

Koume, one of the twin sisters, was killed. Haruyo was also attacked and injured. She died in the arms of Tatsuya telling him that she bit off the attacker's pinky finger. Since the villagers believe that Tatsuya is the murderer, he decides to stay in the cave until the real murderer is found. While hiding in the cave, he finds the hidden treasure.

Kindaichi Kōsuke, the detective, appeared in the village at almost the same time as Tatsuya's arrival. Kindaichi was a friend of one of the villagers and happened to be in the area. However, since the murders are taking place, he is forced to be involved in the search for the criminal. While Tatsuya remained in the cave, Kindaichi solves the mystery. The murderer was Miyako. She finally dies of the infection of the injury that was caused by Haruyo's bite.

Kindaichi explains that Miyako killed six people and had a plan to kill Tatsuya as well. She wanted her fiancé, who was one of the Tajimi successors, to inherit the wealth of the Tajimi family. For her fiancé to inherit, she had to kill all of the Tajimi family members who were in her way. Kindaichi also discloses that Tatsuya's biological father was not the man who they believed him to be, but a monk of the temple who had been in love with Tatsuya's mother before the madman fell in love with her.

Discussion

The story clearly contains the essence of early Japanese mystery fiction previously extracted from Musei's parody. The puzzle solving effect is the central theme of the story, which is "Who done it?" The pseudo-scientific view can be seen in the maze and the mad Tajimi master's body fossilized in the maze. Sensational framing such as display of newspaper headlines is also seen. For example, the newspaper is used to find

Tatsuya and newspaper stories inform him of the sensational legend of the village and the origin of the village's name. The dying message is Koume telling Tatsuya information about the attacker. The revelations of the motive to the crime, money, identity of the murderer, Miyako, are revealed by Kindaichi. Bönnemark's narrative structure is applicable to the story as well. The abstract is when Tatsuya is wanted by the Tajimi family and sees his name in the newspaper. The orientation is where Tatsuya meets the lawyer and people who come to bring him to the village. The complicating action is when the serial murders start as Tatsuya arrives at the village. The resolution is the revelation of the motive the killer, and the coda is Tatsuya being told that his biological father is not the madman but a young monk who fell in love with his mother.

As we see in the story above, Yokomizo has an almost identical way of plotting a story as Ranpo. For example, the criminal is the least likely suspect: a wealthy beautiful woman. A grotesque dark tone forms the background of his novels: for example, the shocking and eerie titles, Inhuman game, The village with eight graves, and the like. There is a famous brilliant detective who solves the mystery at the end. Most importantly, there is the strong tendency of the puzzle-solving aspect that it shares in common with Ranpo's work. In Yatsuhaka-mura, the intricate limestone caves underneath the village add to the effect of an intricate puzzle.

The mysteries that were written from the prewar period to nineteen-sixties have the tendency to concentrate on the puzzle-solving aspects of mystery fiction, examples of which have been illustrated above in the discussion of Edogawa Ranpo and Yokomizo Seishi. As is true of the works of Ranpo and Seishi, the structure of pre-nineteen sixties mystery fiction in Japan generally follows that outlined in the discussion of Tokugawa Musei's parody of detective fiction.

3.2.3. Arisugawa Arisu (1959-)

The puzzle-solving schema as the main aspect of mystery fiction that was employed in Ranpo or Yokomizo is still popular in Japan. The authors that represent this aspect are Uchida Yasuo, Akagawa Jirō, Arisugawa Arisu and a number of others. To illustrate this, I will summarize one of Arisugawa's works.

Among current active writers, Arisugawa Arisu concentrates on *honkaku* (orthodox) detective stories, which mainly concern the puzzle-solving aspect of mystery fiction. His story employs a similar structure to Musei's story. His detective stories do not mention the social or economic concerns that surround the criminal. In fact, Ayukawa states that Arisugawa is influenced by Agatha Christie (1890-1976) and F.W. Crofts (1879-1957) in the postscript to Magic Mirror published in 1993.¹²

In one of Arisugawa's important series of works called the "Kunimei series" (Country name series), meaning a series of stories in relation to the names of countries, there are two detectives who play very similar roles to Sherlock Holmes and Watson in Doyle's mystery stories. The names of the two detectives are Himuro and Arisugawa. Himuro is a criminology professor at a famous university and Arisugawa is his friend

who invariably suggests irrelevant solutions. Arisugawa is a mystery writer who always encounters murders, and Himuro is always the one who is dragged into these mysteries and solves them. The following is the summary of one of Arisugawa's stories that is named after Sweden.¹³

Summary of Suēden yakata no nazo (The Mystery at the Swedish Mansion, 1998)

In this story, Arisugawa is a mystery writer and plays the role of the narrator. He goes to an inn in the north of Tokyo where the lakes are famous for their beautiful colors in the winter. By one of the small lakes, he meets a beautiful Swedish lady, Veronica, who lost her son, Lunee, in a small lake near her house four years before. Veronica and her husband, Otokawa Ryū live in a log house called “the Swedish Mansion.”

When Arisugawa is invited to have some tea at Veronica's house, he is introduced to their guests at the Swedish Mansion: Todoroki Sueomi, Ryū's mother, and Veronica's father, Tsunaki Toshimi. Toshimi had a relationship with Ryū, Veronica's husband. Toshimi wanted to marry Ryū, but Ryū loved his son, Lunee, so much that he didn't divorce Veronica. Interestingly, they were also at Veronica's house when Lunee lost his life in the lake. Veronica's husband is a famous fairy tale writer, Otokawa Ryū.

On the night Arisugawa had tea at the Swedish Mansion, it snowed all night. During the night, Toshimi Tsunaki was murdered in a locked room. The trick was the snow. There were only the victim's footprints leading one way to the detached building where the body was found. The strange thing was that when the body was found, a

pillowcase was missing from the murder scene and the chimney on the roof was bent.

The next day, Toshimi's sister, Terumi, came because of her sister's sudden tragic death.

However, soon after her arrival, someone attacked Terumi, and she became unconscious.

Predictably, Arisugawa comes to a mistaken solution to the murder mystery. For example, he concludes that the killer must be either Veronica's father or Ryū's mother, but it turns out they are too old to have committed the crimes. When Arisugawa failed to find a solution for "the locked room mystery," he called Himuro for his help. Himuro comes to the Swedish Mansion and solves the crime.

At the end of the story, Himuro lectures the assembled suspects concerning the solution to the crime. The killer was Veronica. When Lunee fell into the lake by accident four years before, Toshimi knew that Lunee was in trouble, but she didn't rescue him. Toshimi killed Lunee indirectly. Veronica found it out and accused Toshimi. As a result, they got into fight and Veronica accidentally killed Toshimi in the main building. Veronica carried Toshimi on her back to the detached building where Toshimi's body was found. Therefore, there was only one set of footprints in the snow. Ryū also helped his wife to conceal her murder. He also was the person who attacked Terumi because she might have found some evidence of Veronica's murder. The pillowcase was removed because it had a lipstick stain on it, and the chimney was bent to make an excuse for Ryū to go to the detached house to find Terumi's body.

Discussion

In Arisugawa's story, we find the essential structure that we found in Tokugawa Musei's parody. In Suēden yakata no nazo, the most important aspect is the puzzle-solving. The pseudo-scientific view of the crime is represented by Dr. Himuro, a professor of criminology. The sensational framing can be seen in the extravagant descriptions of the beautiful Swedish woman, Veronica, the Swedish mansion, and the countryside of Japan. The dying message is the footprints on the snow and the lost pillowcase, the key to solving the case. The revelation of the motive and the truth come about through the lecture by Dr. Himuro to the assembled audience.

Bönnemark's narrative structure is also applicable to this mystery fiction. The abstract is Arisugawa arriving at the inn in the countryside where he sees a beautiful Swedish woman. The description of the Swedish mansion in the countryside of Japan is the orientation. The complicated action is the puzzle: the single set of footprints in the snow. The resolution is the revelation of the murderer, Veronica. The coda is the truth about Lunee's death.

The most important feature of Arisugawa's work is that the story is constructed around the puzzle solving aspect. There is little or no consciousness of contemporary social and economic trends, no explanation of the psychology of the motive behind the committing of the crime, no attempt to portray contemporary Japanese settings much less the psychology of individual characters. The motive is simple in this story: the old theme of revenge. The genre parodied by Tokugawa Musei has survived into the present.

3.3. The New Movement in Mystery Fiction

While the puzzle-solving aspect of mystery fiction is still well accepted and popular in Japan, Matsumoto Seichō (1909-1992) transformed the genre. He introduced socially conscious mystery fiction in which the focus of the story is not on orthodox puzzle solving, and merely finding out “Who-donnit?” but explaining, “why it was done.” The social, psychological, and economic ramifications of the crime are explained in depth. A characteristic of Seichō’s fiction according to Satō Tomoyuki refers to the comments by Tamura Torahiko that “Matsumoto uses socially weak characters as the protagonists in his stories.”¹⁴

The new trend in mystery fiction came to be called the “social school” (*shakai-ha*). It was very different from the mystery fiction that preceded it. It was socially conscious and concerned with the everyday psychological motives for crimes. Matsumoto Seichō, who was little influenced by Western literature, personified this new movement, and his work will be discussed as context for an examination of some likely causes for the transformation in mystery fiction in Japan that occurred in the years intervening between Musei and Miyabe.

3.3.1. Matsumoto Seichō (1909-1992)

As noted above, Matsumoto Seichō was the pioneer of the so-called “*shakai-ha suiri shōsetsu*” (socially conscious mystery novel). As we have also argued, before Matsumoto, mystery fiction in Japan emphasized the puzzle-solving aspect that was influenced by such Western mystery fictions as the Sherlock Holmes series by Conan Doyle.

Matsumoto's mysteries have, of course, the elements of puzzle-solving, but the central focus of the story becomes "why the crime was committed" not "who done it," and the puzzle-solving element becomes subsidiary. Asai Kiyoshi writes that Matsumoto wanted to study the reality of the circumstances surrounding the criminal. He wanted to illustrate the moment in which the person's mental process collapsed into the state of mind that led him to commit the crime after a long internal struggle. Matsumoto's belief was that the most important element of detective fiction was the motive.¹⁵ Thus, Matsumoto portrays realistic analysis of a character's psychology and the social conditions driving him or her to crime/action. At the same time, Matsumoto analyzes and condemns the socio-economic reality that forced the character to action.

One of the themes that Matsumoto used in many of his stories was that of switched identity. This theme is still popular in Japan and has been used by many writers. In the 1950s when Matsumoto started writing, the prominent features of this new socially conscious mystery fiction were taken from the postwar social situation. People were still struggling with the aftermath of the war, and these characters are the products of that struggle: the fight to escape deprivation by immigrating to the city, there to gain social status and to preserve reputation and security at all costs. Following this schema, many people invented their own identities, and this motif of postwar mystery fiction usually involves a young person who in the confusion of defeat adopts a new identity. The young person prospers as Japan's economy grows in the nineteen fifties and sixties, and he or she is driven to commit crimes to preserve his or her newly won social status by protecting their new identity and concealing their real identity.

To illustrate this internal Japanese migration and the adoption of new identities, I will briefly summarize three of Matsumoto's stories below. They are Me no kabe (The wall of eyes), Suna no utsuwa (A Vessel of Sand), and Kyūkei no kōya (The Sphere of the wilderness).¹⁶

Summary of Me no kabe (The Wall of Eyes, 1958)

In Me no kabe, the main character is a second chief of the accounting department of an electronic manufacturer, which has about five thousand employees. His name is Hagizaki Tatsuo. He is an ordinary office worker until the day his boss, Sekino, commits suicide because he feels responsible for losing his company's money after being victimized in a fraud. Although, Hagizaki doesn't have any skills as a criminal investigator, he decides to solve the mystery of the death of his late boss. As he proceeds with the investigation, he recognizes that the mastermind of a right wing organization, Yamazaki, is behind the crime. In the story, the lawyer who tried to go after these wicked people was killed and his death made to seem like a natural death of starvation. Moreover, Yamazaki, the mastermind, kills one of his most useful soldiers to protect his identity. This person was dipped into a bath of acid after he was killed to mislead the police about the time of the death. Hagizaki finally solves the mystery after much trial and error with help from his friend who is a journalist. In the end, the mastermind, Yamazaki, commits suicide by jumping into the acid bath that he created. Yamazaki's real name is Funakoshi

Hideaki. Funakoshi wanted to conceal his past, which was his miserable childhood in a small village in the countryside of Japan. He didn't want his upbringing to be known by others because there was still a prejudice against people from poor rural villages in Japan at that time.

Discussion

There are at least three clear themes in this narrative that recur again and again in the postwar "social" mystery novel and are often incorporated into Miyabe Miyuki's mystery fiction. First there is the young person up from the countryside in search of a better life. Second, there is the switching of identities or the adoption of a new identity. Finally, in this story, we see a frequent theme reiterated in much of Seichō's fiction and later adopted by Miyabe Miyuki: the notion of a conspiracy is predicated on the situation of a young man in the immediate postwar period who flees an impoverishes and desperate countryside.

In the immediate postwar period, people born in small villages without any hope to become successful have migrated to the city. In Me no kabe, the right wing mastermind was born in a small village and worked hard but was not rewarded for his efforts. Right after World War Two, being born in the countryside often provided justification for discrimination in Japan against "*inakamono* (country people)," and it often prevented people from being successful. To avoid this discrimination, in the social

chaos of the immediate postwar period, there was the temptation to adopt a new identity. Finally, in the immediate postwar period, society was alive with conspiracy theories that held that Japanese elites, right-wing groups, or Western-trained technologists and other mercenaries were plotting to take over control of the population.

These are the social trends that Seichō realistically portrayed. Migration to the city in the postwar mystery novel is often accompanied by mistaken or switched identities. The chaotic society after World War Two made possible this obfuscation of true identity and a popular theme of postwar fiction has to do with changing identity and a person's reinvention of himself or herself. After Japan's defeat, it seemed that an entirely new country had come into existence and the Meiji State had been wiped away by American bombers. The Japanese people were suffering. For example, the lack of the supply left Japan without enough material to sustain its civilian population. For example, the caloric intake per person was less than 1500 calories in 1946.¹⁷ The Japanese GNP dropped down to \$14.2 billion dollars in 1951, which was about half of West Germany and one third of Britain's.¹⁸

As mentioned previously, this motif of postwar mystery fiction often involves a young person who, in the middle of social confusion, adopts a new identity. In mystery fiction, the growing social prosperity of the late 1950s and 60s drive people to commit crimes to preserve their new identity and conceal their old identity. One of the most famous and representative works portraying this reinvention of self is Seichō's Suna no utsuwa first serialized in the evening paper in Yomiuri shinbun and published in book form in 1961. It is a story of a man who is forced to escape his real identity and is driven to murder.

Summary of Suna no utsuwa (A Vessel of Sand, 1961)

The protagonist is a young musical genius, Waga Eiryō, who had stolen the identity of a boy who died in Nagasaki, Japan during the war. The protagonist's real name is Motoura Hideo, and his father died of leprosy. Families of people with leprosy were subjected to discrimination because the disease was incurable and thought to be contagious.

After Waga Eiryō (formerly Motoura Hideo) gained fame as a musician and composer, he became engaged to a fiancé whose father was to become the next prime minister. However, in the midst of preparations for the wedding, he meets the person whom he was afraid to encounter. The man's name is Miki, and he knows Waga's past. Waga kills Miki to conceal his true identity and to preserve his fame. Miki is the man who saved him and his father when they were wandering around Japan. The reason for their travel was that they could not stay in one place for long due to the fear that the father's illness, leprosy would become known. It was a lonely and hard journey for the boy, Hideo. After his father's death, the boy was adopted by Miki and his wife. Dissatisfied with life deep in the countryside, he escaped from his foster parents. He found his new identity in Nagasaki where one of the atomic bombs was dropped; there were thousands of dead unidentified people, and he took the identity of one of them.

After the murder of Miki occurred, the detective searched and tracked down Motoura Hideo and discovered the truth that Waga was, in fact, Motoura Hideo, and that Waga killed Miki to conceal his secret. The discovery came about from the linguistic

analysis of the conversation that was overheard in the bar where Waga and Miki secretly met before the murder. It is revealed that Waga also killed two other people who knew his whereabouts on the night of the murder. In the end, Waga was arrested at the airport just as he was about to leave for his honeymoon in the United States.

Discussion

The background of this novel is nineteen-sixties Japan. At this time, the Japanese economy was growing, and the people became more and more materialistic. On December 27th, 1960, Prime Minister Ikeda announced to the people of Japan that, “I will double your income in three years.” This meant the government would double Japanese GNP in three years. Many people thought that this was impossible. However, this economic goal was attained, and the Japanese economy began to grow at dizzying rates starting with the stimulus provided by the Tokyo Olympics in 1964. World War Two began to be regarded as history, though a history that still had some influence on the present.¹⁹

Suna no utsuwa has proven to be one of the most durable and popular novels of the postwar period. It has been adapted to any number of films and television series, the most recent being a serialized television version that aired in 2007. Its continuing appeal stems from several factors. The notion of adoption of another identity is appealing and seemingly possible in the anonymity of the city. Waga’s crimes are truly horrible. To conceal his real identity, Waga had to kill the kind Miki who helped him and his father. Yet Waga is also dealt with sympathetically. The reader understands the genius of the young man would never be realized if the secret of his birth were revealed. In the end,

when he knows that his crimes and his true identity will be revealed, he composes a brilliant and very human musical masterpiece that reflects his early years of suffering and wandering through the countryside with his outcast father. It is only when he gives up his aspirations to belonging to the cultural elite, a status he had worked toward his entire life, that he brings his art to fruition. As is true of much of Seichō's fiction, the victimizer is also the victim. He or she is a talented but lower class person from the countryside.

The goals—social status, wealth, recognition—which the criminal hopes to accomplish are widely shared and lauded in the newly prosperous Japan, but in Seichō's fiction, they are portrayed as perversion and result in the perversion of the criminal. The true criminality thus lies within society, but this narrative move allows for a complexity of characterization not theretofore possible in the formulaic, puzzle solving mystery fiction that preceded Seichō. Perhaps no other author has so acutely portrayed the social contradictions of Japan in the 1950s and 1960s. It was this increased complexity in mystery based in part on the device of the newly adopted identity that led to popularity of Seichō's socially conscious mystery fiction.

Another theme in Suna no utsuwa, as in much of Seichō's fiction, is the exploitation of common ordinary citizens by Japanese and American elites. These include the cultural, bureaucratic, political elites, and business elites, and the American Occupation and military authorities. Remember, Waga was a prospective son-in law of the prime minister. These elites would remain the main sources of conspiracy throughout Seichō's oeuvre. During a time of extraordinary economic growth in Japan, Seichō kept the focus on the victims, those vast majority of people who aspired

to success but who could only attain it through criminal means.²⁰ It is probably the case that readers even today identify with the sense that unscrupulous men and women in power are manipulating media, political, and economic events beyond the control of the general populace.

Summary of Kyūkei no kōya (The Sphere of Wilderness, 1962)

The switching of identities is also seen in Kyūkei no kōya. The main character of this story is a man, Nogami Keiichirō. He lost his identity at the end of World War Two when he was young. He is a World War Two “ghost.” “A war ghost” signifies a person who is believed to be dead in the war; though in fact, he is still alive. He was not accounted for anywhere when the war ended; thus, he was presumed to be dead.

At the end of the war, Nogami was one of the agents who secretly associated with Japanese enemies, the allied Western countries, and led Japan to lose the war. Nogami believed that ending the war was the most beneficial for Japan. As the result, he lost his nationality and went underground. His family was informed that he died from tuberculosis in a hospital in Switzerland. After thirteen years, Nogami visits Japan secretly. He is no longer a Japanese citizen and possesses a French name and passport.

One day, Nogami’s niece visits temples in Kyoto where her uncle, Nogami, took her many years before. The mystery starts when she stops by a certain temple and finds handwriting very similar to her uncle’s on the visitor's book. She starts to wonder if he could have survived.

The murders start around the time of Nogami's visit to Japan. The murderers are led by a right wing organization, which functions like a cult. These people believe that a Japan led by the military is the only way for the country to flourish. Nogami is their enemy because he helped cause Japan to lose the war. If his survival is revealed to these people, they will try to terminate him.

Nogami's visit to Japan is motivated by two things: first, his desire to see his surviving family, especially his daughter Kumiko; and second, to pay a visit to his late boss' grave. At the end of the story, with the help of Kumiko's fiancé and her uncle, Nogami finally reunites with Kumiko. However, she does not know that Nogami is her father.

Discussion

In Kyūkei no kōya, Matsumoto portrays the guilt caused by war, and how the war altered the fate of whole generations. Matsumoto portrays the inequity of society in that innocent people are forced to struggle against the wicked beliefs of the powerful. It is a struggle against power that human beings face in everyday life. What motivates people is their reaction to historical social forces that are beyond their control. Matsumoto's works are the very antithesis of the puzzle-solving sub-genre of mystery fiction.

Human motivations in real life political contexts are brought to the fore in Matsumoto's novels. His primary concern is to describe his post-war society in terms of historical movements that shape people's lives. The effects of World War Two, and its evil, ideological remnants of poverty, emotional deprivation, and physical injuries have left people tremendously damaged. These are the sources of constant pressure on individuals in Matsumoto's mystery fiction.

The motif of switched or mistaken identities became a minor obsession in the mystery fiction in the nineteen fifties and sixties in Japan. The idea is that when people lose or switch their identities, they can escape from their pasts and start completely new lives; that is, changing identity helps them explore new worlds. Especially, in the aftermath of World War Two, cases such as these may well have happened often. By viewing the world from the perspective of this self-invented character, the reader as well sees society in new, fresh, and strange ways, just as the character does in his or her new sociological position with a different identity.

Discussion of the Structure of Matsumoto's Mystery Fiction

As argued above, Seichō transformed mystery fiction in Japan. However, his mystery fiction is mystery fiction clearly marked by those characteristics of the genre described above. The pseudo-scientific view of the crime also can be seen, in the process of detection of the acid to melt the human body in Me no kabe, or Waga's music that can kill in Suna no utsuwa. An example of a dying message is Nogami's handwriting at a temple in Kyoto in Kyūkei no kōya. Sensational journalistic framing is seen as famous musician, Waga, is arrested at the airport in front of journalists in Suna no utsuwa, or

reporting on the secret organization in Me no kabe. Resolution usually comes at the end in all the stories. We see that Matsumoto especially emphasizes the revelation of the motives in all the stories, such as the right-wing leader, who is one of the weak young men migrating from the countryside and who wants to make it big in the city, or Waga, the talented boy who was at the bottom of society because of his father and who, by chance, was able to adopt a new identity, or the military officer who worked hard for the country but came to be regarded as a traitor. Matsumoto explains that these people were not evil from birth but that the social environment pushed them to commit crimes.

Bönnemark's narrative structure is also clearly discernable in the stories. For instance, the abstract corresponds to the suicide by the main character's boss in Me no kabe, or the murder of Miki by Waga in Suna no utsuwa, or the discovery of Nogami's handwriting at the beginning in Kyūkei no kōya. The orientation can be seen when the main character, Hagizaki, decides to uncover the mystery of his boss's death in Me no kabe, or when the detective starts having doubts about Waga's identity in Suna no utsuwa, or when Nogami visits Japan in Kyūkei no kōya. The complicating action in these stories are the occurrences of strange killings in Me no kabe, and Kyūkei no kōya, and Waga's talent and the lethal music in Suna no utsuwa. The resolutions in these stories are shown as the revelation of the truth, but again, the emphasis is on the background of the criminals. The coda in Me no kabe is the suicide committed by the criminal which marked the end of the search by Hagizaki. In Suna no utsuwa, it is the arrest of Waga at the airport, and in Kyūkei no kōya, Nogami's leaving Japan after seeing his daughter.

As we have seen, Matsumoto's works definitely have the generic framing of mystery fiction. Although, Matsumoto's works employ a structure similar to the works before his era, there is a fundamental difference: he incorporated social problems and put the focus on the criminals not only on the victims.

3.3.2. Mizukami Tsutomu (1931-2004)

Mizukami Tsutomu (1931-2004) was one of the most popular and skilled Japanese writers who worked to meet readers' expectations for a more socially engaged mystery fiction. His most famous novel is Kiga kaikyō (The Starvation Strait, 1963), a work that has repeatedly been adapted to film and TV series.²¹ As is true of many of Seichō's mysteries, the device at the center of the plot is the switched identity of the criminal, and as is also true of Seichō's work, readers come to sympathize with the plight of the criminal as much as censor him.

Summary of Kiga kaikyō (The Starvation Strait)

The name of the protagonist in this novel is Inukai Takichi whose true name is Tarumi Kyōshirō. He is the well-respected member of the local board of education and owns a large food supply company. However, he has a past that he cannot reveal. In his youth, he was called Inukai Takichi and was wanted as a suspect involved in robbery and murder at a pawn shop in northern Japan. The truth was he did not commit the crime but his fellow travelers, Kijima and Numata, did.

Inukai escapes from the prison to which he had been sentenced for a minor crime. He and two others, Kijima and Numata, whom he met by chance, steal a boat to escape Hokkaido and lose themselves in the chaos of the cities of the immediate postwar period. On the small boat in a storm, Takichi witnesses the two criminals fight over booty and in the struggle, they fall overboard and drown. Takichi keeps their ill-gotten money. Because there is a shipwreck in the Tsugaru Strait at about the time the three fleeing men boarded their small boat, the authorities, with the exception of one relentless detective, assume the three men drowned along with the other passengers in the accident. Takichi escapes into the mountains of Honshū pursued by the solitary detective. He meets a prostitute, Sugito Yae, who hides him from the police detective. Takichi gives her a substantial sum of money to be able to get out of prostitution, and she falls in love with him.

Ten years later, Inukai Takichi has changed his name back to his original name Tarumi Kyōshirō. Yae comes to see him after she recognizes his face in the newspaper reporting his donation of a lot of money for the rehabilitation of criminals. When he found out that Yae could still identify him as Inukai Takichi, he killed her to conceal his past because Yae was the only person who knew that Tarumi Kyōshirō was, in fact, Inukai Takichi. He feared that Yae might denounce him to the Police.

The persistent police detective is tipped off by Yae's death and tracks down Tarumi. Tarumi finally confesses to the crime of taking the criminals' money ten years ago, and, far worse, to killing Yae. The detective tells him that Yae loved him and would never have informed on him. At the end of the story, Tarumi remarks that he was starving at that time and the large amount of money in front of him was too attractive, even

though it was stolen. He believed that with the money he could be reborn as a good citizen and live a good life. Changing identity can give the individual a new life and new ways for people to view the world. But this is contingent on a belief in a core of humanistic values, which Tarumi, like many capitalists, does not possess, as evidenced by his murder of the innocent Yae. However, the idea of the changing of identities allows the reader as well to see the world in new ways by relating to the protagonists in the story.

Discussion

On September 26, 1954, a shipwreck occurred in the offshore of Hakodate, Hokkaido. Five commuter ships that connect Hokkaido and Honshū (the main island of Japan) sank due to Typhoon Mary. Tōya-maru, one of the five wrecked ships had the most numbers of victims, about 1400.²² At the same time, the city of Iwauchi in Hokkaido, close to where the ship sank, had a fire due to the same typhoon and almost the whole city was lost.²³ Kiga kaikyō (The Strait of Starvation) is based on this incident.

As mystery fiction became more realistic and based on real life incidents, the formulaic bonds began to loosen and more experimentation was possible. The puzzle-solving aspect is in effect from the perspective of the detective but not from the perspective of the reader. The pseudo-scientific view of the crime is not much seen in the story. There is still sensational framing observable in newspaper reports about the shipwreck and the fire that destroyed the whole city. The dying message as a key to solving the crime can be seen in the newspaper articles that Yae finds and those which report her death to the detective. The revelation of the motive and the truth of the crime are presented to the detective at the end, though are obvious to the reader much sooner.

The difference we see between the pre-Matsumoto and post-Matsumoto works is that after Matsumoto the truth consists not only of the discovery of the criminal, but also the motivations, internal struggles with conscience, and social pressures that drive the individual to murder.

Eighteen years after World War Two ended, when Kiga kaikyō (The Strait of Starvation) was published, people were still suffering from the after effects of the war. The novel was written just before the Japanese economy took off, and the readers relived the terrible want and the desperation that is the backdrop of the novel. The “Social School” (*Shakai-ha*) of Japanese mystery fiction continued to provide some of the most penetrating analysis of Japanese capitalism offered in fiction, and Kiga kaikyō's (The Strait of Starvation) continued popularity perhaps is evidence of reader identification with the necessity of multiple identities in a regimented society.

3.3.3. Morimura Seiichi (1933 -)

Morimura Seiichi's (1933 -) Ningen no shōmei (Proof of Humanity, 1977) has proven to be an enduring classic of postwar Japanese mystery fiction, having been made into several movies and TV versions, the most recent being a 2001 series on Fuji Television starring Watanabe Ken and yet another version broadcasted in 2007 on television.²⁴ The original novel inherits the basic features of the *shakai-ha* mystery fiction: switching or concealment of identities, conspiracy on the part of economic elites, an uncompromising attitude of exposing the corruption of capitalism, and an extensive psychological examination of the criminal, in this case, a woman who is a wife of a powerful politician.

Summary of Ningen no shōmei (Proof of Humanity, 1977)

The main character of the story, the detective Munesue, has a tragic past: when he was a little boy, his father was killed in front of him by some American soldiers during the occupation. His father tried to rescue a prostitute who was being abused by the soldiers in the crowd, but the violence turned on him. After his father was beaten to the ground helplessly, both the soldiers and the rescued girl ran away. No bystanders tried to help this father and son. This incident motivated Munesue to become a detective.

In the present, a young black man was murdered in Tokyo. His name was Johnny Hayward. His dying message was “Sutōha.” Also, the New York police sent a report that Johnny told his friends that he was going to visit “kiss me” in Japan. The Japanese police are at a loss concerning the meaning of these two key words. Munesue started his search for the murderer by deciphering Johnny’s dying messages.

It is discovered that Johnny was born of an African American father and a Japanese woman who coincidentally was the girl prostitute rescued by Munesue’s father, a rescue that resulted in the father’s death. The prostitute’s name is Yasugi Kyōko, and she has become a famous essayist. She concealed her past and married a Diet member, Kōri Yōhei. She has achieved fame and wealth.

“Sutōha” meant “Straw hat” which sounded like “Sutōha” to Japanese people’s ears and “kiss me” was “*Kizumi*,” a place in Japan. Straw hat was the shape of the neon sign on the hotel where Johnny was murdered. It reminded him of the straw hat his mother wore, the straw hat that was connected to his only memory of his mother and father together when they went on a trip to the countryside in Japan as a family for the first and the last time.

In the end, Yasugi Kyōko confesses to the crime of killing Johnny in order to protect her fame and her new family. When Johnny came to see her from the United States, she was afraid that her past as a prostitute might be revealed to the public, and she would lose everything she had gained. This was the motive for the murder.

Discussion

This brief summary above does not do justice to the complexity of the novel. The detective travels to New York to explore the background of the murdered boy, and he discovers there a brutal racism. The flavor of the novel, thus, becomes international, exploring social injustice in both Japan and the U.S. In the nineteen seventies and eighties, the war became less important, and the economic factors in society became far more important. Therefore the war-related ideology, extreme nationalism, also became less important. On the other hand, psychological factors became much more prominent in mystery fiction because individuals had more to lose in contemporary society and thus the motivations of the characters become more complex: racial prejudice, a search for identity in the case of the young murdered man, a desire to gain revenge for his murdered father on the part of the detective, Kyōko's need to preserve her reputation and concomitantly her husband's political career.

The reason for Yasugi Kyōko killing her own son was to hide her past as a prostitute for American soldiers right after World War Two. Because she has established a fair amount of fame for herself and her husband in the present, she is ashamed to have her past made public. She feels psychologically cornered: her obsession with her wealth and fame becomes more important than her own son.

In Matsumoto's works, such as in Me no kabe and Kyūkei no kōya, there are shadows of extreme nationalism. For example, in Me no kabe, the criminals are the right wing extremists, or in Kyūkei no kōya, again, the right wing extremist wanted to claim Nogami's life due to his position during World War Two. However, in Ningen no shōmei, although the war is still mentioned, the ideology, ultra-nationalism, is not strongly communicated in the novel. The reason for the crime is more like political self-preservation, which is not a matter of ideology, but rather pure political opportunism. Here, too, we see that the topics of Japanese mystery fiction are plotted around historical and social change.

Japanese mystery fiction as a genre evolves with Japanese society. Although newer authors still treat the same motif of concealing the past or switching identity, there is an interesting trend in the changing nature of mystery fiction. Before Matsumoto's emergence, villains' lives were treated stereotypically, as not worthy of a sustained treatment. The point of view is usually taken from the victims' side. However, in more recent mystery fiction, more and more attention is paid to the portrayal of criminals, who are treated as human beings who have lives of their own. Therefore, often, the reader cannot help but feel sympathy for the criminals.

3.3.4. Higashino Keigo (1963 -)

A more recent example of this kind of motive oriented, socially expansive mystery fiction is the novel titled Genya (The Hallucinatory Night), by Higashino Keigo.²⁵ In this story, the motif of switched identity is brought about by a new natural disaster, the Kobe earthquake, which occurred in 1995. There is a definite shift in focus from the critique of society and capitalism to the fulfillment of personal longing.

Summary of Genya (The Hallucinatory Night, 2004)

In this story, Mizuhara Masaya kills his greedy uncle. The uncle had threatened Masaya at his father's funeral by showing him a written agreement of debt from his deceased father. The uncle had illegally forced Masaya's father to sign the document before his death. The earthquake hit Kobe on the night of the funeral, and the uncle was immobilized under the rubble. Masaya took advantage of this incident and murdered the wicked uncle.

By chance, there was a witness: Shinkai Mifuyu, a woman who saw Masaya dropping a rock on the uncle's head in the aftermath of the earthquake. However, strangely, she becomes his supporter and lover. She never mentions his crime because she has a dark secret of her own: she stole her friend's identity in the middle of the chaos of the earthquake. When the earthquake struck the city of Kobe, she was staying with her friend, the real Mifuyu, at Mifuyu's parents' house. The real Mifuyu and her parents died when their house collapsed in the earthquake. This was when this woman claimed the identity of Shinkai Mifuyu. Masaya, unknowingly, witnessed the birth of this fake Shinkai Mifuyu as well.

Mifuyu has a strong desire to become very successful. To become successful, her past, which is not described, appears to be an obstacle. She defies her age and conceals her married past, although these are not overtly mentioned in the story. The truth of her past is hinted at in such assertions as Mifuyu went to Los Angeles for several months and came back looking younger and prettier. However, she did not take on a new identity in order to survive or escape from her stigmatized past. Rather, she desires to escape the boredom and constraints of her past life and set off on a new adventurous course.

Through her exotic attractiveness, she comes to control Masaya and uses him to help her engage in criminal activities. For example, Masaya puts a chemical emitting bomb in a jewelry store to cause the manager, who had started noticing Mifuyu's shoplifting, to be fired. Mifuyu also asks Masaya to stalk her colleagues, make copies of some jewelry designs, and sell them as originals, and even to commit murder for her.

In spite of Masaya's devotion to her, Mifuyu becomes involved with the owner, Akihara, of a jewelry company where she used to work. He has both the power and wealth that Mifuyu was searching for. She persuades Masaya that her marriage is just for the achievement of her desired ambition, but that her true love would always be Masaya.

In the end, Masaya detonates a bomb to commit suicide and, at the same time, to kill a detective who discovered Mifuyu's true identity. It was on Mifuyu's wedding night. Mifuyu learns of Masaya's death and the fact that he sacrificed his own life for her, but she continues undeterred with her plan to marry the rich man. Mifuyu's wedding is taking

place at sea, not far from where the bodies of Masaya and the detective lie on the pier. The story ends with a scene with Mifuyu, on a cruiser, looking out at the bay where Masaya committed suicide to save her. She walks away with her new husband to her glorious wedding party.

Discussion

Switching identity appeals to readers because it allows one to vicariously escape from the failures of the past. After World War Two, the sort of things that people wanted to conceal were disease, lower social status, a former life of prostitution, or poverty. Formerly in mystery fiction, people suffered the consequences of past actions and historical events, and they wanted to escape from their former lives and selves and create new ones as a matter of survival. More recently mystery fiction has tended to show characteristics switching identities not for survival but adventure or for a comfortable life. Genya again has the theme of the switched identity, but with a little twist.

Although, the elements of the mystery fiction that we have studied in Musei's parody are still observed in Genya, Bönnemark's narrative structure is applicable but in a different order. The resolution is shown in the beginning and the complicated action that follows. The twist in this story is that although the detective comes close to the truth, he is killed by Mifuyu's boyfriend, and Mifuyu is liberated and walks to her glorious future, which forms the coda. While still recognizably mystery fiction, the most interesting works of the genre written after World War Two have tended to create variations, first in response to changing historical circumstance, and second, because very talented writers turned away from "serious fiction" as the only path to meaningful literature and began

experimenting with popular generic forms of literature, varying the forms to capture greater depths of personal experience and to appeal to the readers of popular fiction who had grown tired of predictable stereotypes.

3. 4. Chapter Conclusion

To summarize, in this chapter, I have reviewed the structure and a brief history of the development of mystery fiction in Japan. Mystery fiction in Japan went through a transformation from the puzzle-solving schema before World War Two to more socially conscious stories with greater depth of characterization after World War Two. Although Matsumoto Seichō's new socially conscious mysteries were enormously popular, mystery fiction that places emphasis on the puzzle solving aspect also continues to have devoted readers. One of the most important figures in this sub-genre is Yokomizo Seishi, whose writing was influenced by Edogawa Ranpo. The characters in Yokomizo's fiction all have the quality of traditional Japanese character types, and the plots exhibit strong puzzle-solving aspects. The motives for murder are usually very traditional, such as the preservation of reputation or the honor of a house or gaining revenge, the sorts of motives satirized in Musei's story.

This chapter has argued that Matsumoto Seichō in the 1960's brought about a transformation in Japanese mystery fiction and that his influence up to the present continues to be very pronounced. The continuities were demonstrated in the works of Mizukami Tsutomu, Morimura Serichi and Higashino Keigo.

Interestingly, the common denominator of socially conscious mystery fiction is that the backgroundings of the plots are taken from actual incidents. For example, in Me no kabe by Matsumoto Seichō, the discrimination against the villagers in the countryside truly existed in Japan in the 1950s when the story was written. Seichō focuses on the background of one of the young men, Funasaka Hideaki, who suffered from that kind of discrimination. In Mizukami Tsutomu's Kiga kaikyō, the disaster that gave the thieves the chance to steal money was the real shipwreck that happened in 1954. In Morimura Seiichi's Ningen no Shōmei, World War Two is the historical backdrop. Finally, in Genya by Higashino Keigo, the Kōbe earthquake that occurred in 1995 is used to construct the plot. These connections to actual incidents give the readers a chance to identify with the story.

In the next chapter, we will demonstrate that Miyabe Miyuki's fiction owes a great deal to the authors of popular fiction who preceded her. I will also show that, based on the foundation of mystery fiction of the past, Miyabe Miyuki was able to develop works that have been, perhaps uniquely, reflective of her contemporary society. Indeed, as I will argue, Miyabe's fiction can be seen as one of the few contemporary extensions of Japan's tradition of literary realism from naturalism to social realism.

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- ¹ Nakajima Kawatarō, Nihon tantei shōsetsushi, 1 (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1993): 22-29.
- ² Nakajima: 36-37.
- ³ Nakajima: 49, 152-167.
- ⁴ Itō Hideo, Meiji no tantei shōsetsu (Tokyo: Futababunko, 2002): 104-110.
- ⁵ Nakajima: 18-32.
- ⁶ Nakajima Kawatarō, Tantei shōsetsu jiten: Edogawa Ranpo shō zenshū 1 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998.): 603. Shiseinen was first published in 1920.
- ⁷ Nakajima: 269-285.
- ⁸ Edogawa Ranpo, Keningengi: Edogawa Ranpo suiri bunko (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1987).
- ⁹ Nakajima Kawatarō, Nihon suiri shōsetsu shi, 3 (Tokyo: Sōgen-sha, 1996): 192-193.
- ¹⁰ Nakajima: 192-193.
- ¹¹ Yokomizo Seishi, Yatsuhakamura (Tokyo: Kadokawa bunko, 1971).
- ¹² Ayukawa Tetsuya, “Kaisetsu,” in Magic Mirror (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1993): 349-355.
- ¹³ Arisugawa Arisu, Swēden yakata no nazo (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1998).
- ¹⁴ Satō Tomoyuki, San-ichi “Chi to haken” sirīzu: Matsumoto Seichō: Seichō to sengo minshushugi (Tokyo: Sanichishobō, 1999): 29.
- ¹⁵ Asai Kiyosi. “Matsumoto Seichō no Miryoku,” Kokubungaku to kanshō: special edition, Matsumoto Seichō no sekai, 1, 2: (Tokyo: Ibundō, 1995):10-22.
- ¹⁶ Matsumoto Seichō, Me no kabe (Tokyo: Shinchō-sha, 1971). Suna no utsuwa (Tokyo: Shinchō bunko, 1973). Kyūkei no kōya (Tokyo: Bungeishunjūsha, 1962).
- ¹⁷ Morisue Yoshiaki et, al., Taiki Nihonshi gyōsho: seikatsushi III (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1976):.449.
- ¹⁸ Fujihara Akira et, al., Shōwa nijū-nen:1945 nen (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1995):81-82.
- ¹⁹ Bandō Kazutoshi, Shōwa shi: Sengo hen (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 2004): 449-450.
- ²⁰ Fujii hidetada, Seichō misterī to shōwa sanjū nen-dai (Tokyo: Bunshunshinsho, 1999): 4-8.
- ²¹ Mizukami Tsutomu, Kiga kaikyō (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1969).
- ²² “Seikan renrakusen (Tōyamaru) tenpuku shitai yaku 200 o shūyō, jōsen 1227 mei,” Asahi shinbun (morning issue, September, 27, 1954): 1. “Shisha nado 1440 nin: Seikan Renrakusen kankei sōyamaru tenpuku jiken,” Asahi shinbun (evening issue, September, 28, 1954): 3.
- ²³ “Yaku 3500 ko o shōshitsu himoto wa taifū hinan no ie _ Iwauchi taika,” Asahi shinbun (evening issue, September, 27, 1954): 2.

²⁴Morimura Seiichi, Ningen no shōmei (Tokyo:Kadokawa bunko, 1969).

²⁵Higashino Keigo, Genya (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2004).

CHAPTER 4

MIYABE MIYUKI

4.1. Chapter Introduction

In the introduction to this thesis, I offered several hypotheses for the reason why mystery fiction attained such popularity in the postwar period in Japan. The psychoanalytical or psychological explanations forwarded by Richard Raskin and Geraldine Pederson-Krag were two of these. Raskin discussed three elements that would attract readers: puzzle solving, identification of the motive of the crime, and the relief of guilt. Pederson-Krag asserted that the reason for the popularity of mystery fiction was the involvement of a kind of form of play which involves wish fulfillment and tension reduction. I stated why I found these psychoanalytical or psychological explanations to be unsatisfactory, and argued that a socio-historical explanation was a more plausible reason for why mystery fiction becomes so popular so quickly during the process of modernization after World War Two and before. Presenting readers with the process of establishing guilt through rational argument based on evidence obtained through specialized scientific or pseudoscientific knowledge in the context of mystery fiction is probably one of the major reasons for its popularity in Japan.

Mystery fiction requires techniques of detection of untruth that are derived from areas such as medicine, psychology, anthropology, phrenology, physical clues, psychology, and other modern disciplines. As this knowledge and pseudo-knowledge develops and evolves within society and history, so too does mystery fiction.

In this chapter, I will discuss the socio-historical implications of the popularity of mystery fiction in Japanese society through the works of one of Japan's most popular mystery writers, Miyabe Miyuki. I will discuss nine of Miyabe Miyuki's mystery fictions in the chronological order in which they were created, and I will present the discussion in the following order: 1) summary of plot, 2) discussion of the characteristics of Miyabe's writing style, 3) similarities and differences between the works presented and the traditional framework outlined in chapters two and three, and 4) the social and historical implications of the work. However, I will first introduce some prerequisite information about Miyabe Miyuki and her career.

4.2. Miyabe Miyuki (1960 -)

Miyabe Miyuki (born Yabe Miyuki) was born on December 23, 1960. She was born in Kōtō Ward, Tokyo which includes the Fukagawa district, traditionally regarded as a typical shitamachi, or working class, neighborhood in old Edo.¹ Her father was a skilled factory worker and her mother a seamstress. Miyuki's extended family, at time twenty members under the same roof, was the fourth generation of the Yabe living in the Fukagawa district.² Of course, Miyabe is best known for her mystery fiction, but she herself has stated that as a youth she was most influenced by oral story telling traditions of kōdan and especially traditional tales of the supernatural.³ In short, Miyabe Miyuki is

of a typical working class family with generational roots in a commoner neighborhood in Tokyo. It has been observed that Miyabe's style, in its oral quality, owes more to traditional Japanese story-telling than to the Western novel. Miyabe still resides and has her office in the Fukagawa district of Kōtō Ward.⁴ She remains committed to the portrayal of everyday life in Tokyo, and her early life experience is also evident in her later turn to historical fiction and tales of the supernatural, all set in the Edo period in *shitamachi* environs.

After her graduation from high school, Sumidagawa High School, in 1979, she failed an initial qualifying examination to become a court stenographer, and she entered Nakane Shorthand Technical College (Nakane sokki gakkō). After this training, she passed the examination to gain qualification as an official stenographer.⁵

Like most of her family for generations before her, she chose a career path in a craft. She started working at a law office and in the evenings took on part-time jobs transcribing tape recordings. She has stated that her five years of experience in shorthand transcription has had a great influence on her development as a writer.⁶ In 1983, she began taking a night course on popular fiction writing sponsored by the mass publishing company Kōdansha, a company known for its emphasis on popular entertainment. Her teacher was Yamamura Masao (1931-1999), a popular mystery fiction writer who became head of the Association of Japanese Writers. Shinoda Setsuko, Kikuchi Hideyuki, Takegawa Sei, Muroi Yuzuki, and Suzuki Kiichirō are professional writers who came out

of the Kōdansha sponsored course under the tutelage of Yamamura.⁷ All, including Miyabe, are known for working in genres of popular fiction: fantasy, science fiction, mystery fiction, horror, and tales of the supernatural. Miyabe Miyuki started writing fiction at the age of twenty three.

After several submissions of her work for literary prizes for new writers, her short story, “Warera ga rinjin no hanzai” (Our neighbors’ crimes) won the 1987 prize for the best work of mystery fiction by a recently published author, a prize awarded by the magazine, Ōru yomimono (All Entertainment), one of the most successful and enduring periodicals of popular literature in Japan. Meanwhile, her story, “Kamaitachi” (The wind cuts like a scythe), was awarded the 1987 prize for new historical fiction by the periodical Rekishi dokuhon. In 1989, Majutsu wa sasayaku (Devil’s whisper), a full-length novel, won The Japan Mystery/Suspense Award sponsored by Nihon Television and Shinchōsha. Receiving critical acclaim and enjoying increased popular sales, in 1989, Miyabe quit her regular employment and part-time jobs and devoted herself to a career as a professional writer.

What followed was a series of critically acclaimed novels and anthologies that were also a popular success. In 1992, Honjo fushigi zōshi (The Mystery booklet in Honjo) won the Yoshikawa Eiji New Writers Award and Ryū wa nemuru (The sleeping dragon) won Japan Mystery Writers’ Organization Award. In 1993, Kasha (All she was worth) won the Yamamoto Shūgorō prize. In 1997, her Gamōtei jiken (The Mystery at Gamōtei) won The Japan Science Fiction Prize. She also is a winner of the prestigious

Naoki Prize for Riyū (Reasons) in 1999. Her Mohōhan (Copy cat) was awarded The Mainichi Publisher Special Award, The Fifth Shiba Ryōtarō Award in 2001 and The Literature Section of the Japan Art Award in 2003. The latest prize she was awarded is the Yoshikawa Eiji Literature prize in 2007 for Namonaki doku (Nameless poison.)⁸

At present count, she has published approximately sixty books, not including short stories and essays appearing in periodicals. It seems clear that both in terms of critical reception and popular sales, Miyabe is the preeminent representative of a new generation of mystery fiction writers in Japan.

Miyabe's youthful experience and her education and training before becoming a professional novelist have influenced her fiction in the following ways. First, there is a commitment to place/neighborhood Tokyo, which probably stems, in part, from her family's deep generational ties to the Fukagawa district.⁹ Miyabe's stories are characterized by faithful and realistic descriptions of the city and its people, and this can be attributed, in part, to deeply engrained familial experience in neighborhood life. Second, Miyabe is of working class origin, and, to some extent, she regarded fiction writing as a craft. One of the aspects of her craft, for example, is her mastery of the representation of vernacular Tokyo speech, which can be attributed to her long years of transcribing Tokyo speech.¹⁰ Third, her lack of a post-secondary university education led her to not place too much value on serious and foreign literature in the original. In short, Miyabe was free of preconceptions about literature. She has little interest in the self-obsession and introspection that mark many of the works of the modern Japanese literary canon. Instead, she seems free to attempt experiments in mixing genres of popular fiction in entirely original ways. Fourth, she is the product of her generation, a high-economic

growth generation that had unprecedented access to various forms and quantities of popular entertainment: manga, historical novels, films, television, translations of foreign popular fiction such as Stephen King's tales of horror, science fiction, and fantasy.¹¹ This enormous variety of popular entertainment has influenced Miyabe, and she has been particularly creative in incorporating contemporary forms of entertainment into her work. Fifth, Miyabe is also a product of her generation in the sense that her mystery fiction often deals with contemporary social problems in working class settings. There are very few writers of popular fiction who are capable of doing this.

Miyabe Miyuki's mystery fiction, then, represents an entirely unique confluence of literary and extra-literary influences. One can say that her work is highly realistic but at the same time she incorporates elements of fantasy, science fiction, and horror. It is often the case that the keys to the conclusion of her mysteries are based on science fiction-like or fantasy-like elements. Consequently, a puzzle solving schema seldom applies in her mystery fiction, if simply because the solution to the mysteries are so "off the wall" that readers cannot possibly guess the solution. Indeed, in her stories, the puzzle solving aspect is secondary. As will be shown below, one more important aspect of her fiction is the unordinary in the ordinary. At the same time, however, the lives of the people in her stories are depicted as ordinary lives. The protagonist can be the next door neighbor. These ordinary people are often accidentally involved in crimes.

What makes Miyabe's novels unique is the adaptation and mixture of genres touched upon in previous chapters. Despite her use of fantastical, non-realistic elements in her works, she, like Matsumoto Seichō, places greater emphasis on character development, place, and social context than on solving the crime. Hayashi Mariko, a

writer, has observed that “Miyabe Miyuki is Matsumoto’s eldest daughter” and that “she is his successor.”¹² The critic Fukuda Kazuya has written that “Miyabe occupies much the same position in modern Japanese literature as Matsumoto Seichō” and that he feels a sense of relief and joy that she has maintained that position. Miyabe Miyuki has herself stated that she closely studied Matsumoto’s work and that she looked up to him as though he were a heavenly body.¹³ In her representations of place and accurate dialects and social registers as well as in her concern for contemporary social problems, Matsumoto’s influence is palpable.

Although, Miyabe Miyuki’s fiction follows the basic structure of mystery fiction, many of her works mix rational reasoning and the fantastic. In other words, her works usually contain socially conscious elements that are actually taking place in Japan at the time the story was written. But they also contain elements of fantasy. In the previous discussion, I have defined the characteristics and structure of mystery fiction. To discuss Miyabe’s mystery, I would like to add the aspect of fantasy, which is an indispensable aspect of characteristics of some of her stories.

Todorov defines fantasy as follows:

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination-and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality-but then this reality is controlled by the laws unknown to us. Either the devil is an illusion, an imaginary being; or else he really exists, precisely like other living beings-with this reservation, that we encounter him infrequently.

The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous.¹⁴ The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. The concept of the fantastic is therefore to be defined in relation to those of the real and the imaginary: and the latter deserve more than a mere mention.¹⁵

In short, we can say that elements of Miyabe's work exist in the uncertainty between real and imaginary worlds. We can now profitably turn to an analysis of Miyabe Miyuki's works of mystery fiction to determine the continuities and differences between her work and what preceded it.

4.3. Stories and Discussions

4.3.1. "Warera ga Rinjin no Hanzai" (Our Neighbors' Crimes, 1987)

The first story to be discussed is "Warera ga Rinjin no Hanzai" (Our Neighbors' Crimes). It was first published in the periodical Ōru Yomimono (All Entertainment) in 1987.¹⁶ The first edition in book form was published in 1993 from Bungei shunjūsha.

The summary of "Warera ga Rinjin no Hanzai"

The main character of this story is a boy, Makoto Mitamura. He is in the 7th grade. His family consists of his father, mother, and his sister, Tomoko. The family moved from Tokyo to a townhouse in the suburbs. Tomoko is not a healthy child. She runs a high temperature easily. The story starts half a year after the family has moved into the townhouse.

At first, everyone was delighted when they moved into this new house because it was only a 30 minute commute to Tokyo and was very quiet with a lot of trees around. However, things didn't go easy. There was a woman who lived next door. Her name was Misako Hashimoto. She is living on the money from a wealthy man. The problem was not Misako, but her little white dog, Millie. Millie barked from morning till night in a high-pitched voice. Her barking always reminded Makoto of the sound of a machine gun in the western movies. Therefore, everybody in Makoto's family was suffering from insomnia, and Tomoko was most affected.

Makoto's uncle, Yoshihiko, who often visited the family, concluded that Millie barked because of stress. Dogs need exercise, but Misako never took Millie out to walk. One day Makoto knocked on Misako's door and said that he would take Millie out to walk. But Misako gave him a mean stare and closed the door on him. Finally, uncle Yoshihiko and Makoto came up with a solution. They would kidnap Millie and find a good owner for her.

They studied the architectural design of the town house and discovered that the ceilings with their neighbors were connected. One day when Makoto's parents were gone they decided to execute the plan. They made certain of Misako's absence. Uncle Yoshihiko went up to the attic of Makoto's room and descended to Misako's closet. After a while, Uncle Yoshihiko came back with a bank statement, but not with Millie. It was evidence of Misako and her boyfriend's tax evasion. Tomoko wasn't supposed to know about the conspiracy, but when uncle Yoshihiko came back from the attic, Tomoko came

to Makoto's room and said she knew what they were up to. She also knew where Misako hid her house key. So uncle Yoshihiko went next door again and this time kidnapped Millie. Millie was always dressed in a fancy jacket and a beautiful collar. They took those off her for later use.

Makoto was very afraid that Misako would report her missing dog to the police. Misako looked for Millie for a while, but uncle Yoshihiko threatened Misako that if she did not stop looking for Millie, he would expose the evidence of her tax evasion. Yoshihiko devised another plot to steal money from Misako. He requested 20,000,000 yen for the ransom for Millie and return of the evidence of tax evasion.

To receive the ransom, Tomoko went to Misako's door with an innocent face and said she found Millie's jacket in the bush at the nearby park. Misako ran off to see it with Tomoko without locking the door. While they were gone, Makoto ran to Misako's house and exchanged the box that was identical to the box that contained the ransom. The box that Makoto left in Misako's room had the evidence of the tax evasion. Uncle Yoshihiko called Misako and told her to take the box to a location where Millie was. At that location, the police were waiting for Misako. The police and Japanese IRS started the investigation into the tax evasion of her boyfriend's business and found clear evidence. Misako moved out of the house next to Makoto's. Millie was adopted into a family where she was well taken care of, and she never barked without reason again. When finally uncle Yoshihiko and Makoto opened the ransom box that Misako prepared, there was one row of 10,000 yen bills, but underneath was only cut up newspaper. So for all their hard work, they earned only 50,000 yen and Millie's happiness. But they were satisfied with this conclusion.

There is an epilogue. One day, the police came to the townhouse next door to Makoto's. This was a different neighbor on the other side of where Misako once lived. It turned out that the evidence that Yoshihiko found was not Misako's but that of the neighbor on the other side. Yoshihiko got lost in the attic and went to the neighbor on the wrong side. These people were committing tax evasion as well. Makoto wondered why Misako had been so upset when she was told that they found the evidence of her tax evasion; Makoto took Millie's collar out and uncle Yoshihiko cut into it. Six diamonds rolled out of the collar. No wonder Misako never took Millie out for a walk.

Discussion

Miyabe won the first literary prize of her career with this short story. Although this is an early immature effort, it contains several characteristics that she would later develop in her long novels.

As for the structure of the story, this mostly follows the structure that I discussed in the previous chapters. "Warera ga rinjin no hanzai" incorporates most of the elements that Tokugawa Musei showed in his parody, such as the puzzle solving aspect and pseudo-scientific view of the crime evident in uncle Yoshihiko's analysis of the reason for Millie barking all the time. This leads to the characters to commit their minor offence, the revelation of the motive of the crime, and the resolution. Although, there was no murder involved, the ransom letter replaces a dying message. The short story also conforms to Bönnemark's schema: 1), the abstract is the family moving to the suburb, 2)

the orientation is Millie barking all the time, 3) the complicating action is of the kidnapping, the planning, and the execution, 4) the evaluation is uncle Yoshihiko's proposal of the ransom for Millie, and 5) the resolution is Millie's happiness and 50,000 yen, 6) the coda is the arrest of the neighbors and the diamonds from Millie's collar.

Miyabe further incorporates the socio-historical aspect in the background of the story. It is the Japanese bubble economy. In December of 1989, the Nikkei index 225 reached an all time high of 38915.17 points.¹⁷ Japan was enjoying the peak of the bubble economy. Around this time, people believed that the economic peak that they were enjoying would never end. This arrogance is portrayed in the story. Tax evasion was committed by the neighbors on both sides of this decent family. Misako was living an affluent life depending on her boy friend's money. Misako and her boyfriend had hid diamonds in her dog's collar, which seems to symbolize the affluent life style and their arrogance in attempting to evade taxes.

In this short story, we see Miyabe Miyuki's early mastery of the basic form of the mystery novel and her willingness and ability to adopt it to portray her contemporary environment.

4.3.2. Perfect Blue (Perfect Blue, 1989)

Miyabe published two novels in 1989. I will first discuss Perfect Blue which was published in February 1989 and is her first long novel.¹⁸ In this novel, Miyabe describes the backgrounds of the protagonists in detail. This would continue to be a prominent characteristic of Miyabe's writing style.

The summary of Perfect Blue

The narrator of this story is a dog Masa, a retired police dog which was adopted by a private detective, Hasumi. Masa helps the detective and his daughters, Kayoko and Itoko, to solve mysteries.

A shocking murder happened in which a high school baseball star was killed and his body was burnt to ash. Masa encounters the scene with Kayoko and the brother of the victim, Morooka Shinya. The murdered boy's name was Katsuya. Katsuya was missing from the day before the start of baseball camp. The police found that his body was burned after his death. He had a big wound in the back of his head. The strange thing was that there was a human-size doll wearing a baseball uniform burnt the night before, as if to foretell Katsuya's death.

The cause of Katsuya's death goes back to an illegal experiment that a medical firm, Daidō Medical, conducted on a boy's baseball team years before. The company offered a free baseball park for the team to practice and gave the children snacks and drinks that contained muscle enhancer. The real aim of the kindness of the firm was to test their new medicine. They wished to test the use of muscle enhancer and a new medicine called "Number Eight." The company could dope athletes in a much shorter period of time by giving the drug to the boys than by conventional means of testing human subjects. The drug had a beautiful color of blue, so it was also called "Perfect Blue." The side effect of this drug was to prevent the human body from discharging copper out of the body. As a result, the boys who unknowingly took the drug suffered from side effects and some died.

The truth about Katsuya's death was that it was an accident; he fell down the stairs. His mother unintentionally bumped him at the top of the staircase. The father, Morooka, took Katsuya's body to the site where the doll was burnt and set fire to his own son's body. Katsuya's parents were afraid that when the truth became public, his mother would be held liable for his death. But more importantly, he feared news about the muscle enhancer that Katsuya had taken without his knowledge would hurt his reputation. If his body had gone through an autopsy, the chemical in his body might have been found.

Soon after the incident, Katsuya's friend, Yamase, who had suffered side effects from the medication, "Perfect Blue," appears to have committed a suicide. He left a death note confessing to Katsuya's killing. However, the truth was that Katsuya and Shinya's father, Morooka, faked Yamase's death as a suicide. He also forged a suicide note. Morooka felt he had to kill Yamase because Yamase knew that Katsuya went home on the night of his death and he knew about Perfect Blue.

The resolution of the story is very complicated. Yamase was the one who burnt the doll the night before. He knew the truth about the Perfect Blue and was blackmailing Katsuya. Moreover, there was another person, Yūki, who was blackmailing Morooka and Daidō Medical. He was the coach of the boy's baseball team and was killed by the power broker of Daidō Medical. In the end, Morooka confesses to his crime, and he and the person who was pulling the strings behind the scenes at Daidō Medical were arrested. After this, Masa and Shinya became good friends.

Discussion

This novel deals with a serious social problem, which is the illegal experimentation on human subjects by an evil corporation. Miyabe has clearly incorporated the notion of “conspiracy” by powerful elites so common in Matsumoto’s fiction. But Miyabe also provides an aspect of the fantastic to the story: the narrator is a dog. This device, often a feature of Japanese satirical fiction but seldom used in mystery fiction, is a way of mixing genres to take the weight off of a serious story. It forms a point of contact between daily life and the unrealistic world in this story. As is the case in much of Miyabe’s fiction, the ordinary is transformed into the extraordinary.

It is with this novel as well that we began seeing another prominent characteristic of Miyabe’s fiction: the detailed description of each character. In this novel, all the characters seem to play major roles. The detailed descriptions of each character’s background makes this so. Each description of the characters is so detailed and vivid that the readers can relate themselves to at least one of the people in the story. We realize that even the criminals are human beings. Morooka, for example, committed the crime to protect his family.

The structure of this story also follows that of the traditional mystery fiction. There is a tendency for puzzle solving, and the pseudo-scientific view of the crime is, of course, the illegal drug experiment on the young humans. The revelation of the motive of the crime and the resolution are revealed as a shocking truth that Katsuya’s and Shinya’s parents are the murderers. A dying message is also incorporated in the form of the forged deathnote by Morooka for Yamase. And the sensationalism of the burning human body is also incorporated.

Following Bönnemark: 1), The abstract is the burning bodies, 2) the orientation is the backgrounding of the relation among people by Masa, 3) the complicating action is the killing and threats made by two different parties, one by Yūki and the other by the power broker at the Daidō Medical, 4) the resolution is the revelation of the illegal drug test and its horrible side effects and the people who were affected by the action, as well as the arrest of Murooka and the power broker, those involved at Daidō Medical. 5) the coda is Masa becoming good friends with Shinya.

The socio-historical problem/aspect of the story is the illegal experimentation on the human subjects. This story reminds the readers of an incident in 1986. Midorijūji Medical in Japan sold the blood coagulator for hemophilia patients contaminated by HIV virus to hospitals. In the process, Japanese people found out that the government did not have specific regulations for the sanitation of blood. As the result of this, many people were infected with AIDS and died.¹⁹ Ordinary people living in their ordinary lives rely completely on the instructions of doctors or hospitals, but people need to recognize that there is always the risk of uncertainties induced by a system that operates more for profit than human welfare. It is with this novel that we began to see most markedly Miyabe Miyuki's tendency to use mystery fiction to help people to learn the skills to protect themselves in this modern society.

4.3.3. Majutsu wa sasayaku (Devil's Whisper, 1989)

The novel Majutsu wa sasayaku (Devil's Whisper) takes place in the daily life of Tokyo and ends with a conclusion that is not resolved by rational everyday reasoning, but by the science fiction device of a hypnosis machine.

Summary of Majutsu wa sasayaku

This is a story about crimes committed by using hypnosis affecting the subliminal consciousness of human beings. The prologue of the story starts as follows. A number of seemingly unrelated incidents occur. The inhumane treatment by newspapers of the incidents does not tell readers the story behind each incident. For example, a young girl says good-bye to her friends when she gets out of the taxicab that they shared. Suddenly, she feels someone is pursuing her. She turns around but doesn't see anyone. Still she is so frightened that she starts running and throws herself in front of the oncoming traffic. The last words she left in the ambulance were, "It's too cruel! I don't deserve this!"

The protagonist of this story is a sixteen year old boy, Kusaka Mamoru. His father has been missing for fourteen years. After his mother's passing, Mamoru is adopted by his aunt's family, the Asanos. His uncle-in-law is a taxi driver whose car has run over the young girl, Sugano Yōko, in the prologue. The girl was pronounced dead in the ambulance. Because there was no eyewitness to the accident, Mamoru's uncle, Asano Daizō, had to stay in the jail longer than his family expected. It appears that Daizō is going to be held criminally responsible for negligence in causing the accident because Sugano Yōko's last words were understood as an accusation that it was the driver's fault that he had hit her.

The accident was reported in the newspapers. Several different people read the news from different perspectives. Asano family's morning started with the newspaper in which the news about their father appeared. Somewhere in Tokyo, a man, Yoshitake Kōichi, read the same article and was speaking to Mamoru's photograph saying, "It's not fair, is it?" At another location in Tokyo, a girl whose name is Takagi Kazuko read the article. She had seldom read the newspaper until "this" started happening. She thought, "This is the third victim." Another man found the article, cut it out, and pasted it with two other articles. He thought, "Three down."

The day after his uncle's accident, Mamoru goes to school and finds a malicious note on the blackboard. It says, "Murderer!!" Pasted next to this word is the article about the accident from the newspaper. This malicious act causes Mamoru to recall a hurtful memory of his father. His father was an official at city hall. After he went missing, it was discovered that 5,000,000 yen had disappeared from the city's bank account. His father had embezzled the money to give to his mistress. Mamoru's mother and he had to live through the cruel criticism from the people around them, even though they were not the ones who committed the crime. Mamoru came to believe that there were many people who were greedy and needed to feel superior to others. People like that have to take things away from others to be satisfied with their lives. Unfortunately, many human beings are like that.

Mamoru has a part-time job as a worker at a bookstore within a department store. One day, his boss comments on the accident and the fact that the police are unable to find a witness. He says if somebody did a little further research, they might be able to find the truth. Mamoru decides to do the research, and discovers that Sugano Yōko was once

connected with the magazine called Jōhō Channel (Information Channel). He determines that it might have something to do with the death of Sugano Yōko and his uncle's being blamed for the accident. Mamoru attempts to find the magazine but discovers that it was out of print. In fact, only four issues were published. The magazine was X-rated with adult content. In the magazine, Mamoru finds Sugano Yōko was featured as a new type of prostitute with three other girls. To his surprise, three out of four girls were recently deceased from unnatural deaths.

While Mamoru is working hard to find the witness to his uncle's accident, Daizō is released from the jail. It turns out that a witness came forward to save Daizō. It was Yoshitake Kōichi, who was visiting his mistress and saw the accident. He didn't come forward right away because he was afraid to reveal his extramarital relationship to his company. He stated that when he learned there were no other witnesses, his conscience forced him to do the right thing. Although Daizō's innocence is proved, Mamoru determines to learn the truth about the facts behind the deaths of the girls.

Meanwhile, Takagi Kazuko decides to attend Sugano Yōko's funeral. On her way back home, Kazuko was terrified because three out of four girls who appeared in the magazine were dead, and she was the last one alive. She senses someone's vicious intention to kill her. Suddenly, she notices that she has missed her train, but she does not remember why she missed it and what she was doing before she went to get on the train.

Takagi Kazuko, Sugano Yōko, and two other girls have worked as prostitutes. Two of the girls and Sugano Yōko have already died by accidents or committing suicide. The prostitution business they were in was not just prostitution. It was a fraudulent business. The purpose of the business was to deceive men and get as much money out of

them as possible. Once a man who was involved with them became serious, they dumped him in a very cruel way. They all believed that it was the men's fault for being tricked easily, but they were too naïve. They almost declared the men should appreciate them for having a good time even for a short period of time. The men were all unattractive; if they didn't have money, no one would make love with them. Takagi Kazuko knew that she was the last target. She was afraid. One day, she received a letter asking her to come to Yurakuchō in Tokyo. The letter says this is the only way that she can survive.

Mamoru finds the man who wrote the article about the girls' prostitution and visits him. The writer's name is Hashimoto Nobuhiko. He recalls an old man who visited him previously and bought all the copies of the magazine, Jōhō Channel. However, Hashimoto dies in a gas explosion before Mamoru has an opportunity to visit him again.

Mamoru is getting very close to the truth behind the deaths of the three girls and Hashimoto. He believes there was somebody controlling the incidents. One day, he receives a phone call from an old man. This old man claims that he can control other people by hypnotism, like a magician. He confesses that by using his skill, he killed four people. He is terminally ill and tells Mamoru that he won't live long. He also says that at the time of his death, his confession letter will be sent to the police.

The man was once a university professor specializing in hypnosis. His advisee at a university was a promising young man who committed a suicide because he was involved with one of the girls, Takagi Kazuko. The girls used the telephone to call lonely men. They became the men's pseudo-lovers and made them to surrender most of all their earnings. The girls enjoyed what they did. In fact, they called themselves "Dream Sellers." The advisee was a sensitive man and truly loved Takagi Kazuko. When Kazuko

dumped him, she sent him a copy of Jōhō Channel to let him know he was just another one of her prey. He despaired of life. After finding many innocent men who had become these girls' victims, the professor decided to take revenge for those men, especially for his beloved student. The man believed the girls were truly evil.

Yoshitake Kōichi has a secret that cannot be revealed in public. He ran over and killed Mamoru's father, who was on the run, fourteen years before. At the time of the accident, Yoshitake was about to get married, and, thus, his mother suggested that he hide the body and run away from the scene of the accident. Fortunately for Yoshitake, because Mamoru's father was on the run from the police, everyone believed that he was in hiding for all those years. Because of his deep guilt, Yoshitake always looked out for Mamoru and his mother. As he came to know Mamoru and his mother, Yoshitake started to love them as if they were his real family. At the time of Daizō's accident, Yoshitake was close by but did not see the accident. He wanted to help Mamoru and did so by committing perjury.

In the end, Mamoru stops Takagi Kazuko from running into traffic. The professor was waiting for him at the corner of Yūrakuchō. The professor informs Mamoru about who Yoshitake really is. The professor knew that Yoshitake did not see the accident and became curious why Yoshitake committed perjury for Mamoru's uncle. By using his hypnosis, he drew the confession from Yoshitake. In the end, the professor gives Mamoru a keyword to make Yoshitake go to the police and confess what he did to Mamoru's father. Mamoru gives the key word to Yoshitake, and he walks into the police station to confess.

Discussion

It is with Majusu wa sasayaku that Miyabe Miyuki begins to come into her own as a mystery novelist. Of course the plot of the novel is preposterous, but then probably no more unbelievable than most “realistic” mystery fiction. In the end, are the works of Raymond Chandler any more “believable”? What incorporating science fiction (mad scientist and all) in her mysteries enables Miyabe to do is portray the ordinary in the unordinary. Mamoru is a young adolescent who starts out in life without much chance of success in the world, like the majority of young people in the world. Yet his instincts to do the right thing, his honesty, and intelligence are portrayed in such a way as to invite the profound sympathy of the reader for an ordinary working class character.

The secondary characters are equally well drawn and defined by social class. The young prostitutes are victims of a consumer society and are intent on fulfilling their desires and get ahead by any means possible. Mamoru’s uncle Daizō has lived an honest and diligent and has shown great generosity to Mamoru. Like most families, however, the Asano family is one or two paychecks away from financial ruin, and the accident, which threatens Daizō’s driver’s license, means the dissolution of Mamoru’s fragile family. In short, ordinary characters are portrayed with extraordinary realism, care, and sympathy, and this ability to portray working-class characters, of course, derives from Miyabe’s own background, but it also probably owes something to the influence of Matsumoto Seichō. The impression of Seichō’s influence is strengthened by the care Miyabe took in describing neighborhood locale, the realistic description of which is a mark of Seichō’s

literature. The streets that Daizō's taxi travels through, the small house where the family lives, the dilapidated department store where Mamoru works – the portrayal of the city and its dwellings serves to evoke in a most immediate way a specific sense of place and time.

The novel generally follows the structure derived above from Tokugawa Musei's parody. In Miyabe's novel, the first death was Sugano Yōko's running into the oncoming traffic, which is a very sensationalistic prelude of the story. The dying message was the words that she said in the ambulance. Further, there is the sensationalism provided by media reports in the newspapers. The pseudo-scientific method of the crime is, of course, hypnosis. Finally, the resolution of the story by the detective is presented in the last part of the story. The role of detective is played by Mamoru.

This story also follows the structure outlined by Bönnemark: 1), the abstract is the girl running into the incoming traffic, 2), the orientation is the backgrounding of the relation among people around Mamoru and his uncle family, 3), the complicating action is the killing and more accidents and suicides while Mamoru is working on the investigation of the crime, 4), the resolution is Mamoru's discovery of the relationship among girls, the journalist, and Mamoru stopping Takagi Kazuko walking into the traffic. Also the confession of the old man to the crime is included, and 5) the coda is Mamoru whispering the magic code to Yoshitake to go to the police and confess to his secret past.

Majutsu wa sasayaku also displays a marked degree of social consciousness. One problem addressed is the prostitution by young girls for the purpose of extravagant shopping for luxury items. The form prostitution takes in the story is the dating organization. In fact, in 1985, the new Regulation of Indecent/Pornographic Businesses

Law was issued in Japan. It required all the adult industries to file their business operations in detail, and it put restrictions on the business hours. This law had a major impact on the industry and many businesses were forced to close. On the other hand, a new business was started and has continued to prosper. It is called “Telephone Club.” It promotes dating through phone conversations. A man goes to a shop and pays by the hour to wait for a phone call from an anonymous woman. The woman doesn’t have to be at the site but can be at home or at a payphone. If the conversation goes well, they arrange a meeting. This dating club system was and is often used for prostitution. The advantage of this system is that the women who work for this business can stay at home until they find their preferable customers. Therefore, women who don’t unusually perform sex work in places of prostitution, women such as high school or college students, can participate in sexual activity and are able to make a great deal of money.²⁰ This phenomenon became widespread. This has become a social problem in Japan because young girls have been making money by prostitution as independent individuals.

In Majutsu wa sasayaku, the author establishes a similar setting to the telephone club. The young women who participated in the activity were office workers or college students, and they are often attractive. The development of technology and the new ideas accompanied by the new restrictions on the sexual service industry resulted in ordinary people going into prostitution and become involved in crime.

Finally, we see in this novel, the growing tendency of Miyabe Miyuki to mix genres. The genres she incorporates into her mystery fictions are not necessarily literary but are probably taken from a variety of forms in the mass media: manga, movies, television, and so on. The novel is resolved by a device taken from popular culture. The

notion of hypnosis machine operated by a “mad professor” with an obsession with killing prostitutes is a plot device that seems to have been taken from a B-grade movie. But this mixing of genres is authentically a part of the culture of Miyabe’s generation, and to my mind at least, does not seem forced or unnatural. Judging from the sales for Majutsu wa Sasayaku, a great many readers were not bothered by this kind reliance on unexpected “puzzle solutions” borrowed from widely recognized images from popular culture.

4.3.4. Kasha (All She was Worth, 1992)

In the previous chapter, we dealt in some details with the motif of switched identity in the works of Matsumoto Seichō and other postwar mystery writers. In Miyabe Miyuki’s Kasha (All she was worth, 1992) we see how she has adopted this motif to deal with more contemporary social problems.²¹

Summary of Kasha

The story is told from Honma Shunsuke’s point of view. He is a detective and taking a long leave from his work due to the injury caused when he was after a criminal. One day, his deceased wife’s nephew, Kurisaka Kazuya, asks Shunsuke to search for Kazuya’s fiancée, who has suddenly disappeared.

Kazuya’s fiancée’s name is Sekine Shōko. It seems she ran away from Kazuya after he found out that she had once declared bankruptcy. Kazuya is broken hearted. Since Shunsuke is getting bored during his time off, he decided to help Kazuya to find his girlfriend. As Shunsuke proceeds on his search for the missing person, he finds out that the reason for her disappearance is not as simple as it looks.

After visiting several places written on her resume, Shunsuke discovers nothing on it was true. Finally, he discovers an attorney who worked to settle Shōko's bankruptcy case. As Shunsuke talks to the attorney, he starts to have doubts about Shōko's identity. The picture that Shunsuke showed the attorney confirmed his doubts. The picture on the resume by the person who claimed to be Sekine Shōko was not the Sekine Shōko who the attorney helped.

Two years earlier, according to the time frame of the novel, 1990, the mother of Sekine Shōko passed away. This was when the "fake" Sekine Shōko appeared. She moved from a suburb of Tokyo to Tokyo proper and created a new family registry which contained only one entry, Sekine Shōko.

Shunsuke began to investigate Sekine Shōko's life. She was from Utsunomiya City in Tochigi prefecture. He meets Shōko's childhood acquaintances, and it is revealed for certain that the woman who claimed to be Sekine Shōko was not Sekine Shōko. The woman's real name is Shinjō Kyōko. She killed Sekine Shōko and stole her identity.

Kyōko used to work in Osaka. The company she worked for was a mail order company which sold fancy lingerie targeted to young women. To subscribe to the mail order catalogue, the company required its customers to fill in a survey asking for personal information. Kyoko began looking into the data among the subscribers for someone who might suit her need to steal a person's identity. She was looking for a woman almost the same age as herself with no family. Sekine Shōko was perfectly qualified for Kyōko's needs.

As Shunsuke was going through the data that Kyōko must have went through, he found Sekine Shōko's name. When Kyōko found a woman who suited her needs; she became friends with her and then later killed her to acquire her identity.

The reason for Kyōko wanting to create a new identity was her father's debt. He was an ordinary white-collar worker in a small company. When he built a house for his family, he didn't have enough funds for the down payment. Thus, he went to a consumer credit company which had a connection to gang members and borrowed money at very high interest. He didn't have enough knowledge about finance or the law to enable him to declare bankruptcy and get out of debt. Miyabe's insight into her contemporary society is incisive. At the end of 1990s in Japan, the laws that protect consumers were not effectively implemented. Kyōko's father found out that he could not repay the loan--the interest alone was already more than the original debt. As a result, Kyōko's family ran away from their house and their life.

However, the gang members were after them in order to collect the debt. The family had to separate to hide from the debt collectors, but Kyōko's parents were finally caught by the gang. After her parents died, the gangs went after Kyōko to collect the still increasing debt. Because of the family registry system in Japan, the gang could always track her. She finally got married, but the marriage was destroyed by the gang members who harassed her and her husband. She had to run again. Kyōko is the victim of a cruel, unremitting economic system based on debt, and Sekine Shōko in turn becomes Kyōko's victim.

After learning of Kyōko's background, Shunsuke is afraid that she might be looking for a new victim. By going through the list that Kyōko used, Shunsuke finds a young girl who would be a good candidate to become Kyoko's next prey. The girl's name is Kimura Kozue. Her sister died in an arson fire several years earlier. He also learned that Kyōko was trying to contact Kozue. He meets with Kozue and explains that she is in danger and that the arson fire that killed her sister was probably set by Kyōko.

Finally, Kozue agrees to meet Kyōko in a restaurant where Shunsuke will be waiting for her. The story ends with Kyōko appearing in the restaurant, sitting down with Kozue, and Shunsuke approaching the table as he very much looks forward to discovering who this Kyōko really is.

Discussion

By the time she wrote Kasha, Miyabe Miyuki had developed the capacity to transcend some of the genetic limitations of mystery fiction that were outlined in the analysis of Musei's parody. The puzzle solving aspect of the novel is only of secondary importance. Midway through the novel, the tension of the plot is sacrificed in order to provide readers with Kyōko's perspective, which of course, the detective is not aware of. Miyabe again emphasizes motivation of characters rather than the discovery of who committed the crime.

What is being taught through the novel has little to do with forensics or the deception practiced by the criminal; rather readers are informed concerning the overwhelmingly ordinary but severe problem of credit card debt. The real villain is predatory systems of the lending industry in Japanese society.

Miyabe Miyuki has succeeded in adapting the standard motif of adopting a new identity so prevalent in the postwar mystery fictions of Matsumoto Seichō and others and applying it to the contemporary problem of identity theft. In her portrayal of the rhythms of contemporary life in this novel, she proved herself to be a worthy successor not only to Matsumoto Seichō but also to Japan's tradition of realism.

4.3.6. “Hitojichi kanon” (Captured, 1995)

“Hitojichi kanon” was published in 2001 in a book form with other short stories.²² The short story “Hitojichi Kanon” was first printed in 1995 in the magazine, Ōru Yomimono from Bungei Shunjūsha. Although this is a short story, the detailed description of the streets at night, the interior of the convenience store and, most of all, the psychological state of the captives show the prominent characteristics of Miyabe's writing style. Since this work is typical of Miyabe's fiction, a translation is provided in Chapter 5, and I will also provide an in depth analysis below.

Summary of “Hitojichi kanon”

This story is told from the point of view of a young woman, Tōyama Itsuko, who lives by herself. She is an office worker. A robbery she becomes involved in takes place in a small convenience store she visits on her way home to her apartment.

When the robber came into the store, there were four people inside: Itsuko, a middle-aged drunk man, a young man with glasses, and the clerk of the store. The robber was wearing a black motorcycle helmet. The robber points a gun at the clerk and tells the customers to listen to him. To make his threat more effective, the robber fires the gun at a

mirror in the store, which shatters in pieces. Then the robber ordered everyone, but the clerk, to lie on their stomach behind the register, and he takes their shoes away. He also told the clerk to lock the front door and he takes the key. When he pushed the key in his back pocket, he dropped a baby rattle with a yellow duck drawn on it.

The clerk was taken to the back room, and the robber took all the money in the safe. The amount stolen was 5,000,000 yen. After the back room became quiet, the customers behind the register went into the room and found that the clerk was tied to the chair and the money was gone.

After a couple of days, a young man, Sasaki Shūichi, becomes the main suspect for the robbery. He works at a nearby garage. Shūichi was a customer of the store and was famous for wearing a black full-face helmet and carrying the baby toy with a duck on it.

One day, Itsuko sees the young man with the glasses, the fellow victim of the robbery at the same convenience store. She and he started talking about the incident. Both Itsuko and the boy agreed that Shūichi was not the suspect because if he were the robber, he would not be wearing the same helmet and carrying the same toy. It is simply too obvious.

After a while, the police arrested a man who had worked at the convenience store until the previous week of the robbery, and they found Sasaki Shūichi's body buried in the mountains. The truth was that Sasaki Shūichi found the toy on the street. It belonged to an old man who had dementia, and Sasaki wanted to return it to him. However, he didn't know the old man's name or his address. Thus, he was carrying it with him all the time to give it back to the old man. The criminal took advantage of his kindness.

After everything has calmed down, Itsuko accidentally saw Kid Glasses at the station. He was with his friends. He recognized her, but didn't make much effort to talk with her and passed right by her. Itsuko was a little disappointed and thought that they were just convenience store acquaintances, not even friends.

Discussion

Even though this is a short story, it clearly shows the characteristic of Miyabe's writing style, which is the detailed description of the protagonists and the background. The setting of the town in a suburb of Tokyo and the inside of the small convenience store are very vivid and familiar to the Japanese readers. This can make the readers feel as if they are in the town and in the store with Itsuko. In addition, the descriptions of the hostages and their states of mind are so detailed and recognizable that the readers can readily identify with such characters, as Kid Glasses who is studying for his entrance exam, or the middle-aged drunken manager who was just demoted to a menial position in a warehouse.

A review of the schema isolated from Musei's parody is useful to observe how Miyabe has adapted the form of the mystery story to contemporary realities. There is one murder involved, but this was revealed toward the end of the story. The initial crime seems to have taken place in a small convenience store. The yellow rattle could be a dying message from Sasaki Shūichi. Sensationalistic media reports are used in the story. The pseudo-scientific method seen in the story was the analysis of the incident by Kid Glasses and Itsuko after the liberation from the crime scene. This in fact has a puzzle-solving aspect as well. The resolution of the story by detectives is presented in the last

part of the story. In this story, Kid Glasses and Itsuko solved the mystery, thus functioning as detectives, but at the same time, the police solved it as well. Of course this is more realistic, for in real life, crimes are almost always solved by the police and almost never by private citizens acting as detectives. The crime is revealed with the recovery of Sasaki Shūichi's body.

The contemporary social aspect of the story has to do with the alienation from community that is a function of life in a big city like Tokyo. Miyabe's narrative clearly describes the situation. In short, people become indifferent to each other. It seems this is true of any big city. People don't pay attention to what others are doing. More and more, people come to value their freedom and individualism. Miyabe illustrates this with her depiction of the "convenience" of convenience store.

In this thesis, I have used Bönemark's content based analysis on the structure of mystery fiction to show a large frame of mystery fiction, for example, what the generic expectation of a mystery fiction is. In this discussion of "Hitojichi kanon" (Captured), I would like to experiment with a structural/functional, a smaller scale, analysis by referring to Labov to illustrate Miyabe's view of her contemporary society.

Before going into the details of the analysis, I would like to mention that Bönemark's "evaluation" is slightly different from Labov's. She asserts that the evaluation is the indispensable element of mystery by which the evidence is weighed and assessed. On the other hand, Labov defines the evaluation as the information/consequences of events which the speaker/addresser signals to the listener/addressee as to why he is telling it, or why it is worth listening to. Thus, the evaluation can be either a clause or a paragraph. The analysis is presented in the

following order: 1) the abstract, 2) the orientation, 3) the complicating action, 4) the resolution, 5) the coda. Further, the evaluation will be mentioned in places where it is applicable because Labov also asserts that “The evaluation of the narrative forms a secondary structure which is concentrated in the evaluation section but may be found in various forms throughout the narrative.”²³ At the end of this discussion, I will present the evidence of Miyabe’s position concerning her contemporary society by presenting some evaluative clauses.

The abstract reports the summary of the narrative; “what this story is about.” In “Hitojichi kanon,” this is represented by the title “Captured.” The book also has a little introduction of the story on the back cover stating, “‘Freeze!’ The robber whom Istuko encountered at the convenience store on her way home left a baby rattle on the floor.” The title and the little preface on the back cover clearly tell the reader what this story is about. This also serves as an evaluation because it tells the reader what to expect in the story. Thus, the readers are given a chance to evaluate if he or she wants to proceed or not by looking at the title and reading the back cover of a book.

The orientation has the function to identify time, place, person, and activity of the situation. In other words, the orientation situates the readers where they are going in the story. In “Hitojichi kanon,” the first orientation appears at the beginning of the story, mentioning that, “As I [Itsuko] was going down the stairs at a station...” (see p.144 below). By this clause, the readers can tell that the main protagonist, Itsuko, probably lives somewhere that allows her to commute by train to her work, which is close to the big city, probably, Tokyo. The next detailed orientation is done by the following sentences:

When Itsuko turns the third corner, there is a small shopping area. But at one o'clock in the morning, most of the stores are closed, except...there is one bright light in front of Itsuko other than the street lamps. The light is coming from the convenience store that is open 24 hours a day... Although "Q&A" is a small convenience store, when their bright light hit Itsuko's eyes, she is lured into the store. (p.146 below)

The paragraph above informs that Itsuko is walking into the convenience store in a small shopping area and the time is one o'clock in the morning. Interestingly, the name of the city where this story takes place, Tokyo, is presented much later in Chapter 3: "Her parents in her hometown insisted on coming to Tokyo to see her ..." (p.163 below). This confirms the readers' prediction that she lives in a town close to Tokyo.

The complicating action denotes a next event, meaning, "then what happened." In the case of "Hitojichi kanon," there are several sub-stories/ vignettes. I will present some major sequences of the complicating action.

There is one critical section in the story. On her way to the convenience store, she sees a lady who is looking for an old man with dementia and discovers that he likes baby toys. This is one of the keys to solve the crime later. The second major complicating action is the robber coming into the convenience store with a gun in his hand:

She [Itsuko] heard the automatic door making the noise again. A half second later, the clerk screamed, "Ahh!" Itsuko turned around. The first thing she saw was the clerk's yellow uniform, then a dark figure standing at the entrance. A man, apparently, is wearing a full motorcycle helmet and a black leather jacket was extending his right hand out to the clerk. Itsuko's thoughts swam in circles, "What does he have in his hand? Wait! It must be a gun! The man is holding a gun in his hand!" (p.149 below)

By this paragraph, the readers are informed that a crime is about to occur in the small convenience store where Itsuko is. Here are other evaluative clauses of Itsuko assessing the object in the robber's hand: "What does he have in his hand? Wait! It must be a gun! The man is holding a gun in his hand!"

The next sequence of the complicating action is when the robber drops a baby rattle: "The object from the robber's pocket rolled onto the floor with a yellowish twirl" (p.155 below). This clause includes the evaluative phrase, the subjective evaluation by the protagonist, "a yellowish twirl." This toy becomes a key to solve the crime later as well. The importance of the rattle is evaluated or clarified here as, "She too couldn't believe her eyes! The object on the floor was a yellow toy rattle with a picture of a duck!" (p.155 below).

The fourth complicating action in the story is the release of the hostages from the crime scene. This is done by such sentences as the following: "They heard a car driving off somewhere away from the store, and the silence fell" (p.161 below). The description of a car driving off and the silence signals the departure of the robber. Please note that, this section can serve as a little resolution in this vignette as well.

The fifth complicating action is the police naming a man as a prime suspect. His name is Sasaki Shuichi. These clauses have the evaluative quality mentioning that Itsuko was surprised by the news: "But, ten days after the incident, Itsuko was surprised at seeing the picture of a young man who was named as a prime suspect in the newspaper. His name was Sasaki Shūichi, and he was 20 years old" (p.165 below).

The sixth is the analysis of the crime by the two protagonists, Itsuko and Kid Glasses. This analysis starts with the clauses: “‘Do you think that Sasaki was the gunman?’ Glasses asked” (p.168 below). By this sentence, the readers are signaled that, probably, the analysis will take place soon after these clauses. Thus, this also can serve as the evaluation preceding the complicating action. The evaluative quality comes from the use of an interrogative; it implies that the speaker thinks Sasaki might not be the suspect, and the readers are questioned as well. The actual analysis of the crime follows this evaluative clause, and the analysis constitutes the complicating action.

There are two other complicating actions. One is after the incident. Itsuko visits Q&A and talks to a new clerk and finds out that there was an employee who quite the job the week before the robbery. Another complicating action is that Itsuko sees a lady with the old man with dementia for the second time and finds out that Sasaki knew that the old man had lost the yellow rattle. The lady and Itsuko go to the police and report the issue.

The resolution is “the most reportable event.”²⁴ In the case of mystery fiction, the findings of the truth, such as the motive and the criminal, are the most reportable events. Therefore, the resolution of the whole story is that Sasaki was, in fact, not the gunman, but the victim and the real robber was the one of the former employees of Q&A. This was suggested by Glasses kid’s analysis of the yellow rattle which belonged to the old man in the previous complicating action.

The coda marks the end of the story. According to Labov, it has “the property of bringing the gap between the moment of time at the end of the narrative proper and the present.”²⁵ The coda is presented by Itsuko seeing Glasses guy at the station, but Glasses

shies away from her. She realizes that they were just acquaintances at the convenience store and no more than that. This coda consists of Itsuko's after thoughts, which is a whole evaluative paragraph:

She imagined that if one of the clerks of "Q&A" had known Sasaki's name and reason for his carrying the baby toy, he would have known that Sasaki was just an ordinary person. Would it have stopped the crime? She didn't have the answer. If it wasn't a convenience store, if it were a different kind of store, a neighborhood store, for example, where people gathered and talked, the clerks would have recognized their customers. In such a store, people pay attention to each other more than in impersonal convenience stores. Perhaps, customers wouldn't keep their helmets on in the atmosphere of neighborhood shops. Such shops don't require warning signs about security measures plastered all over the place. However, convenience stores are not designed for the purpose maintaining a community. The customers are expected to remain impersonal and independent. In other words, no one cares about others (174 below).

This coda serves as the conclusion of the story and helps bring the readers back to present time. It also signals that the readers are now leaving the story.

The convenience stores and big supermarkets offer the perfect place to shop while keeping personal contact to a minimum. For example, as quoted previously in the coda, the evaluative clauses point out this phenomenon: "The customers are expected to remain impersonal and independent. In other words, no one cares about others" (174 below).

To make the situation worse, people tend to judge a person by his or her appearance. As Itsuko recalls of the discussion with one of the store clerks at Q&A. He criticized Sasaki as abnormal because he was carrying a baby rattle, which was not manly or adult-like. The clerk judged Sasaki by his appearance not knowing Sasaki's kind intention to return the rattle to the old man with dementia.

Miyabe's evaluation of the problems of the contemporary individual in the city is clearly represented by Itsuko's thoughts in the following: "[I]f one of the clerks of 'Q&A' had known Sasaki's name and the reason for his carrying the baby toy, they would have noticed he wasn't abnormal; he was just an ordinary person with a kind heart. Would it have stopped the crime? Would he still be alive? She didn't have the answer to it."

In this short discussion, I have attempted a structural/functional analysis of the short story, "Hitojichi kanon," by Miyabe Miyuki. The evaluative clauses inserted in the story clearly communicate Miyabe's position against alienation in the big cities. When we read the story in a larger perspective, we can also find that the notion of alienation/indifference among people killing the kind Sasaki, who represents a supportive neighborhood. This story as a whole represents Miyabe's evaluative statement condemning the spreading alienation in her contemporary society.

4.3.6. Riyū (The Reasons, 1998)

This novel was published in 1998. It has a different structure than the other narratives we have discussed.²⁶ The story consists of an interview style discourse.

Summary of Riyū

The story is told from several different people's perspectives. The first protagonist is Nobuko, a thirteen-year-old-girl, whose father runs an inn. She came to the police station and claimed that the murder suspect for the infamous killing of four in a condominium has been staying at her father's inn. The suspect, Naozumi Ishida, has been

very sick. The truth is that he is not the murderer. He was thought to be the prime suspect because prior to the incident, Ishida had a problem in acquiring the condominium apartment 2025 where the murders took place.

The murder took place on a stormy night in Tokyo. The whole family of four was brutally murdered in the apartment 2025 in one of the city's high-rise condominiums. The room 2025 had a history of many unfortunate people. The victims were an old lady in a wheelchair, and a middle-aged couple. Also, a young man's body that looked like the son of the family was found in the backyard of the condominium right below the room where the murders took place. The family was called the Koito family, and they owned 2025. However, a strange truth was uncovered in the investigation of this crime. The family, the Koitos, who were supposed to have owned and resided in the apartment where the murder took place, were no longer there. The people killed at the condominium were a fake family consisting of strangers.

The brother of Takarai Ayako, Yasutaka, recalls that a little while before the killing in the room 2025, Ayako introduced her boyfriend, Yūji Yashiro, to her family. She was pregnant. However, Yashiro claimed that he had no intention of marrying her. He didn't want a family of his own. Ayako decides to have the baby on her own though she knew that Yashiro was a sociopath. Ayako confesses the truth to Yasutaka. Yashiro Yūji killed three of his fake family members because Yashiro had conspired to make easy money. He secretly had contacted Ishida to pay him 10,000,000 yen, and in turn, he would have the fake family move out of the apartment. The motive of the murders was the detection of this deceit by other members. When Ayako visited Yashiro at the condo, it was right after Yashiro's murdering the three people. When Yashiro told Ayako to help

him to hide the bloody bodies, Ayako could not take it anymore. Ayako pushed him off from the veranda of the condo on the seventeenth floor. Thus, there were two crimes committed; Yashiro killed three of his fake family members, and Ayako killed Yashiro.

The old lady in the wheelchair had been missing from a nursing home in Shizuoka prefecture for some time. She was a robbery victim. When she went out to do some shopping, she was attacked by a gang of boys. She hit her head on the pavement and lost her memory. While she was wandering around without any memory of her past, a man, Mr. Sunada, kindly took her under his care. He was the man who was killed in the same room. Her family had been looking for her.

The next speaker is the sister of Koito Shinji. The Koito family was the previous owner of 2025. She explains how her brother, whom she hasn't seen for many years, suddenly showed up and asked to borrow money. Knowing his wife's, Shizuko's, spendthrift ways, she refused. The sister describes the increasingly straitened circumstances under which the Koitos found themselves due in large part to Shizuko's psychological problem of shopping dependency.

A middle-aged couple tells of how Mr. Hayakawa, who is the president of a real-estate firm, helped them to keep their house. They used to own a toy shop in a small town. Because of the new discount stores in the area, their business went bankrupt.

Mr. Hayakawa was intent on using the Koitos and told them to hide for a while. Thus, the Koitos were on the run. By hindering the execution of the bank/court auction of condo 2025, Mr. Hayakawa prohibited or blocked the route for Ishida to occupy his property. If Ishida gave up the right to buy condo 2025, Mr. Hayakawa could buy the room very cheap and resell it for a large profit. This was the way he ran his business.

The trick was set up very slyly. It made it almost impossible for Ishida to obtain the condo. Hayakawa made up a fake lease agreement with the victims that was signed before Ishida's bid and had the victims live in condo 2025. Japanese real estate law requires a complicated process to prove the fact that the signing was done after the bidding, especially, when there are actual people living in the property, and it takes forever to have the people evicted. Ishida needed the victims to be physically out for him to gain the right to obtain condo 2025. This was the reason why Ishida was considered as the prime suspect.

The story ends with an interview with Ishida a year later. The reason for Ishida's fleeing was that Ishida was an eyewitness to Ayako killing Yashiro. Because Ishida knew Ayako had a baby, he wanted to help her and the baby. In the end, Ayako surrenders to the police, and Ishida finally obtains the condo, which he puts up for sale right a way. The final thoughts of Koito's son conclude the story. He confessed that he had visited the fake family several times. He was very comfortable with them, so he wanted to move back into condo 2025. Then he wondered if he had gotten tired of the fake family, would he have killed them as Yashiro did?

Discussion

The setting of Riyū is the Arakawa ward, a traditional working class district close to where Miyabe herself was brought up. In some ways, it is the most personal of Miyabe's novels in that it represents a sort of mourning for a neighborhood Tokyo that seems to be disappearing. The narrative proceeds from various perspectives, much like Kurosawa's Rashōmon.

The backgrounds of the people connected to condo 2025 are detailed and vividly drawn. In addition to the principals, there is the testimony of the isolated families living in the surrounding condo apartments. Often referred to by the numbers of their condos, they all occupy isolated positions high up on the air, separated from their neighbors. Indeed, as Kasai in 2024 states, one of the reasons her husband wished to live in this very expensive high rise building was to avoid the troublesome relationships that occur when living in traditional neighborhoods.

The families who live on the street level, the old couple who runs the tiny toy shop, Koito's sister who tutors students, the small restaurant owner Takarai, the local barkeeper, and so on are faced with a world gone insane with the fever of real estate speculation. The histories of all these families are described in detail, and we see that a number of these long-standing families are in danger of breaking up in the face of rising land prices. The fake family, a collection of victims of Japan's bubble economy and exploitation by Hayakawa, could never hope to live in such a splendid condo as 2025 under normal circumstances. Their personal backgrounds that brought this collection of different individuals to the condo are described in great detail, and their ultimate fates become all the more moving as the reader sees this fake family begin to cohere and care for each other like a real family.

Riyū is without doubt one of the masterpieces of postwar fictional social criticism. In this work, Miyabe describes the modern destruction of an older Tokyo first by the rapid industrial expansion of Japan's "economic miracle" in the 1950s and 1960s and then by the lifeless chaos created by the real estate bubble of the 1980's:

(マンション)の建築予定地の敷地の八割までは、かつては株式会社ニッタイと言う合成染料製造会社のものであった。(株)ニッタイのロゴマークを横腹につけた大煙突は、長い間この町の目印になっていた。しかし地元住人と(株)ニッタイが織り成してきた歴史は、一面で、絶えることの無い騒動の歴史でもあった。高度成長期以来、荒川の上流のこの辺りを住宅開発の波が洗い始め、住居専用地域と準工業地域が複雑なジグゾーパズルの混在をし始めるに至ってからこちら、紛争の火種の尽きることは無かった。騒音、異臭、廃水処理、運送トラックによる交通事故————

About eighty percent of the property of the prospective construction site for the condominium was once owned by a company called Nittai Corp., which manufactured simulated dyes. The gigantic chimney with a Nittai logo on its side has been a symbol of this town for a long time. However, the history created by the residents of this town and Nittai has been a history of endless conflict. Since Japan's economic boom has started, the new housing project also has rapidly advanced. The area around Arakawa was not an exception. The result was a complicated puzzle-like mixture of industrial and residential areas. Since then, there have always been problems, such as noise, odor, sewage, traffic accidents and so forth.²⁷

She also documents the alienating affects these rapid changes in cityscapes had on the residents of the city:

超高層マンションの居住空間としての適切性には不安な部分を指摘する向きが多い。通常の高さのマンションに比べてエレベーター内での犯罪の発生率が高くなる傾向のあることや、高所に暮らすことによる居住者の心理的負担、上り下がり億劫なのでどうしても閉じこもりがちになり、居住者同士にコミュニティとしての一体感、連帯感が生まれにくく、隣家で事件が起こっていても気付かない、気付いても何の手も打たないなどの無関心さを生み出すこと————

There are concerns about living in high rise condominiums. The crime rates in the elevators are higher than regular-sized condominiums. The psychological effect on the residents who live high up in the air is another concern. Moreover, people feel stressed by taking elevators up and down to go out; and, therefore, they tend to stay in their own spaces. As a result, they don't develop a sense of unity or solidarity as one community. Many people don't notice, or worse, they don't care what is happening in their neighborhood. This results in people becoming indifferent to each other.²⁸

The story, however, is clearly mystery fiction and conforms, albeit loosely, to the schema distilled from Musei's parody. Many of the characters learn of the murders and their possible connection to them through the sensational reporting of the mass media. The "scientific" means of solving the crime is the unraveling of the very complicated paper trail to determine who actually owns the condo, and this process as well teaches the reader something about the tricks played by rapacious real estate brokers. The resolutions of the multiple crimes—murder, real estate fraud, credit card fraud, fleeing the scene of a crime, and the like—are revealed from various perspectives in interviews with the participants in the action; no specific person is in the role of detective. The motif of switched identity is a constant throughout the novel and encompasses multiple characters.

Bönnemark's study is helpful in analyzing how the narrative is organized; however, it is interesting to note that when narrative structures become very complex, as in Riyū, it becomes more difficult to apply this methodology in a comprehensive way. One would expect the revelation of the criminal would come at the end of the story, but Miyabe, as Matsumoto Seichō often does, reveals who the guilty parties are midway through the novel and devotes the rest to exploring the motivations of the numerous characters. Especially effective are the roles of the juveniles: Nobuko, the daughter of the innkeeper who is going to junior high school, the brother of Ayako, who is 13 years old, and the son of the Koitos, Junichi, who is going to primary school. All are working with a sort of innocent intelligence to protect their families.

The economic bubble burst in Japan in 1989 or thereabouts. The good times had created a kind of hysteria with seemingly endless opportunities for making large amounts of money. Properties in old working class neighborhoods were suddenly worth

unbelievable sums, and high rise apartment buildings and condominiums began to change the class compositions and textures of life of their surroundings. Before and after the bubble burst, these older urban neighborhoods were subject to extraordinary destructive impulses, as the isolated families in the high rises found their investments floundering and the traditional residents at street level were harassed by yakuza gangs and unscrupulous real estate brokers to abandon their homes and businesses. This is the situation that Miyabe Miyuki chronicles so accurately in her novel. Once again, we see how she has adapted the form of the mystery novel to deal, perhaps more effectively than anyone else, with her contemporary reality; in this case, the extraordinary destructive effects on family and neighborhoods wrought by the 1980's bubble and its aftermath.

4.3.7. Mohōhan (Copy Cat, 1998)

This novel, Mohōhan, was published in 1998. It concerns another contemporary problem: the role of the media in sensationalizing and thus fostering senseless and brutal crimes.²⁹

Summary of Mohōhan

One day in September in 1996, the right arm of a young woman was found in a trash bin in a park in Tokyo. Since a young girl, whose name was Furukawa Mariko, had been missing for three months, everyone suspected that the arm was hers. However, a phone call to a TV station said, "It is not Mariko's. The girls are buried in an undisclosed place." The criminal implies that there were more bodies other than Mariko's. The voice was mechanically altered. The murderer also tried to contact Mariko's grandfather and

forces him to do many foolish things to humiliate him. The journalist, Maehata Shigeko, who has had an interest in missing women's issues for years, started to investigate the crime.

While the police are working hard to arrest the criminal, at the end of that month, the strangled body of a high school girl was found in a playground in another part of Tokyo. The police decided that both murders were done by the same criminal. A special division to investigate the crime was created. The police started going through the criminal records. However, as if the murderer was ridiculing the police, Mariko's bones were delivered to her grandfather. Prior to this delivery, the murderer again called a TV station and proclaimed the return of Mariko's skeleton.

The investigation confronted another turn. At the beginning of November, a car ran off a mountain road and caught a fire. They recovered three burnt bodies from the car. The police identified that one body was Kurihashi Hiromi, and another was Takai Kazuaki. Kurihashi and Takagi were residents of Tokyo. They were classmates in high school. The police found another body in the trunk of the car whose identity was unknown. Soon after this accident, the police publicly announced that Kurihashi and Takai were the prime suspects in the serial kidnapping and murder cases because they found the collection of the parts of the skeletons, clothing, pictures, and videos of the murdered young girls in Kurihashi's room.

Shigeko published her report of this shocking crime and her book sold very well. However, there was another twist to the crime. One day, the young sister of Takai, Yumiko, came to see Shigeko and claimed that her bother Kazuaki was innocent. At the

same time Takai's and Kurihashi's former classmate, Amikawa Kōichi, published a book titled The Prime Suspect is Mr. X: Takai is Innocent. Amikawa started getting public attention and became a star of the talk shows.

Meanwhile, Yumiko and Amikawa began dating. However, one day Yumiko jumped from a building and died. She didn't leave even a note to explain her suicide. After Yumiko's death, Shigeko started looking at the crime from a different angle, and noticed the peculiarity of its circumstances. It looked like the criminal enjoyed fooling the public and emphasizing that the crime was the original. He always wanted to be in the spotlight of the news.

Shigeko finally discovered that Mr. X was Amikawa and that he had done all the planning of the crimes. Kurihashi assisted Amikawa. He was also a sociopath and enjoyed killing. Since there was no evidence, Shigeko decided to trick Amikawa. In the news program, Shigeko confronted Amikawa and pointed out that the prime suspect kept emphasizing that the crime was original. She provoked him by declaring that the crime wasn't original but was previously described exactly in a mystery novel published in the United States. Having a big ego and distorted sense of self-esteem, Amikawa stood up and shouted, "IT IS MY ORIGINAL! I AM NOT A COPY CAT!"

Discussion

As is true of much of Miyabe's fiction, it is ordinary people, especially young people, who invite our sympathy, even if they are only secondary characters. For example, there is a boy, Shinichi, who first finds the arm of a girl in the park. His unfortunate background is explained in detail. Shinichi was the sole survivor in a family gruesomely

murdered. His father, mother, and sister were slaughtered by a man whose name was Higuchi. Higuchi has lost his business and wanted the money that Shinichi's father had inherited. Higuchi was arrested and was now in the prison. However, Higuchi's daughter, Megumi, is stalking Shinichi. She thinks it was Shinichi's fault to reveal the secret about the money, information which led her father to commit the crime. Consequently, she lost her comfortable life with her father.

Takai Kazuaki, who was the victim of Amikawa and Kurihashi, also has his background explained in detail. The narrative covers his childhood and the friendship between him and Kurihashi. We see that he is mentally challenged and desperately wants to be accepted. He values the friendship of Kurihashi and Amikawa, who exploit him relentlessly, but when he finally realizes the murderous intentions of his two friends, he cannot abide with them, and it is his reaction that causes the car to go off the road and results in a temporary cessation to Amikawa's sociopathic actions.

The story generally conforms to our treatment of Tokugawa Musei's parody. Sensationalistic media reports give the "common view" of the crimes. There is a complicated puzzle to be solved. The reader is "taught" about the functioning of the media in dealing with sensationalistic cases and how it may be possible to hack into and take over a broadcast network, as Amikawa and Kurihashi do. Maehata Shigeko plays the role of the detective. Yet the revelation of the motive of the crimes would seem almost self-parody in the realistic fiction of thirty years before. Yet today, the idea of performing multiple murders in order to gain the attention of the media does not seem unrealistic.

This brings us to the social aspect of the novel. Amikawa's sociopathic personality can only be understood in the context of the sociopathology of the mass media. It is the new strategy of narcissistic criminals to attract public attention by taking advantage of the media. Such criminals announce and confess to the media their crimes and they enjoy the instant fame and the terror that would terrify and attract people.

This novel reminds of us the serial child killing in Kobe in 1997. A seventeen-year-old boy killed a handicapped boy and put his head on the gate of a primary school. He also announced his crimes through the media naming himself the “酒鬼 薔薇 聖斗” (Intoxicated Demon of the Roses).³⁰ Such crimes seem commonplace today, but they would be impossible without the broader complicity of the mass media. Once again, we see that Miyabe uses the form of the mystery novel to describe and critique her contemporary society. Ten years after the publication of this novel, a murderer used the media to publicize his killings. The weekly magazine Time reported:

“I will kill people in Akihabara,” wrote factory worker Tomokoro Kato, 25, in a message posted via cell phone to an online bulletin board on June 8. Then he apparently did just that. Dressed in a pale suit, he drove about 60 miles (95 km) from his home to the popular shopping district and plowed his rental truck into a crowd before leaping out of the vehicle and frantically stabbing innocent bystanders. Seven people were killed in the incident.³¹

As we have seen, in many of the mystery fictions of the postwar period, the motive for committing crimes has been survival, as in the works of Matsumoto or Yokomizo. Miyabe explores a whole new society-complicit sort of crime: “Gekijō-gata hanzai” (performance style crime).³²

4.3.8. Namonaki doku (Nameless Poison, 2006)

This story was first serialized in three newspapers--Chūnichī, Tokyo, and Nishi-Nippon -- from March to December of 2005. After the serialization was completed, it was published in book form in 2006.³³

Summary of Namonaki doku

The narrator of this story is Sugimura Saburō. He is an editor of the promotional magazine of the company that he works for. His wife, Nahoko, is the daughter of the CEO of the conglomerate, Imada Zaibatsu, to which his company belongs. He and Nahoko have a five-year-old daughter, Momoko.

The topic of this story is “poison.” There is a poison everywhere in many forms, such as the real poison to kill, the poison in our environment, or the poison in the human heart: evil intentions that hurt others. There are basically three kinds of poison dealt with in this story.

The first poison mentioned in the story is a real poison, hydrogen cyanide. A sixty-year-old man, Furuya Akitoshi, was killed by drinking some oolong tea in a small container he bought at a convenience store. He was the fourth victim of the murders that looked like a serial murders. One day, a suspect in the serial poisoning turned himself into the police, and confessed to two of the four killings. He bought the poison on the internet. Meanwhile, one of the two remaining unsolved deaths was solved. It wasn't a murder but a suicide. Akiko, the daughter of the old man, was the prime suspect and was questioned day and night by the police. Akiko had a motive to kill her father. Her father was going to leave all his property and money to his girl friend. However, his girl friend

committed suicide soon after his death. She jumped from her window on the fourth floor of her apartment. There was a death note saying everything was her fault. Although, it was not a straightforward confession, the police determined that the killer of Furuya Toshiaki was his girlfriend.

As it turns out, however, the real killer was a boy, Sakito Kenji, who worked at a convenience store. He was depressed because he had asthma, and his grandmother was terminally ill. He and his grandmother were very poor, and his asthma was from the pollution in the ground of their property; this is the second poison discussed in the story, the poisoning of our environment. He bought the poison on the internet and thought of killing his grandmother. However, he couldn't do it. Instead, he got angry at the world and his anger ended up in the oolong tea in the convenience store where he worked.

The third poison is the poisoning in the human heart, such as anger and envy that expand to hurt other people. Sugimura had started a new project that involved interviewing supervisors at his work. One of the supervisors that he interviewed was Mr. Kuroda whose daughter was supposedly suffering from "sick house syndrome." However, Mr. Kuroda finally found out that the poison that was making his daughter ill was not chemical but the poison in the human mind. She was harassed by her classmates.

There was another sort of poison encountered by Sugimura. Harada Izumi was Sugimura's assistant. She had been a problem at his work. She had an emotional problem. She was disturbed easily and accused people around her when things didn't turn out according to her expectation. To make things worse, her expectations were usually very self centered and irrational. Although her resume was perfect, she did not show proof of it in her actual work. Sugimura and his boss, Sonoda, finally decided to fire her. When

Sonoda told Izumi that she was fired, Izumi came to the company and got violent. Izumi threw a packaging tape holder at Sonoda's face and hurt her forehead. While somebody called for the security guard, Izumi ran away.

Izumi's harassment of Sugimura and his colleagues started. Two weeks after the incident, Izumi wrote a letter of complaint to the Chairman of the conglomerate. The incidents she recorded in the letter were all lies she made up. However, the problem is that she sounded like she believed in her own stories.

The Chairman ordered Sugimura to investigate Izumi's background. He first went to the publisher, Aruku, where her resume said she worked before she came to Imada Zaibatsu. He found out that Izumi had counterfeited her professional history on her resume. She had been a problem at Aruku as well.

No matter how Sugimura tried to calm Izumi down, she persistently kept harassing him and his office workers. One day, she put a lot of sleeping pills in the office water and those who had coffee made with the water were all hospitalized.

After a while, Izumi's father came to the office to apologize. He told them that Izumi had been a problem child. She always had to be the center of attention. One of the examples was that at her brother's wedding party, Izumi suddenly confessed that the groom, her brother, had sexually abused her. She was jealous of her brother becoming happy and leaving her, and she, thus, wanted to destroy her brother's happiness. Izumi's family has been hiding from her ever since.

Izumi kept stalking Sugimura and finally broke into Sugimura's house and held captive their five-year-old daughter, Momoko. Izumi was angry at the world; she believed that everybody and everything in the world was unfair. She felt that the people

she encountered were intent on hurting her and that no one cared if she was hurt or not. To redress this injustice, she kept trying to hurt others. In the end, a man who was the cousin of Sugimura's current assistant sneaked into the kitchen where Momoko was held and rescued her. Izumi was arrested.

Discussion

Miyabe is an excellent short story writer, and in a number of her short stories set in contemporary Tokyo, there is no crime committed at all. This novel draws on her ability to sketch vignettes of contemporary life. In each of the vignettes that form the novel, the characters are exceptionally well drawn.

For example, the state of the mind the boy, Sakiyama Kenji, who put the poison in the tea in the convenience store, is explained thoroughly. We fully understand why he felt he had to put hydrogen cyanide in the drink in the refrigerator in the store. He lived alone with his grandmother. He had asthma due to the chemical in the soil where his house was located, the cause of the "sick house syndrome." To make the situation worse, his grandmother was very old and needed his assistance all the time. He was suffering and tired of him being sick, helping his grandmother, and being poor. He finally bought hydrogen cyanide on-line. He wanted to kill his grandmother, but he couldn't. Instead, he decided to kill somebody, anybody. He was angry at the world, which never extended a helping hand to him. Similarly, Miyabe depicts the emotions that drove Izumi to feeling the same kind of rage. Miyabe goes into each person's personal history and explains the motives behind the crime.

The random, vignette-like structure of the novel reflects the random, irrational nature of crime in contemporary Japan. This novel focuses on the motif of poison. Models for these kinds of random crimes involving poison are numerous, but some of the most sensational are as follows. In 1977, someone put hydrogen cyanide in cans of coke. At that time, at least four people were killed. In 1985, someone put insecticide in health drinks and as a result, at least eleven people died. Copycat crimes followed one after another.³⁴ The most famous incident internationally is the sarin poison gas incident released in the subways in Tokyo on March 20th in 1995. This was a terrorist act done by Ōmu Shinri Kyō headed by Asahara Shōkō. In that incident, twelve people were killed and 5510 people were injured.³⁵

The pollution in our environment, including the “sick house syndrome,” is becoming a social problem. Poor health can also affect the human heart, as we see in the case of the boy putting the poison in the tea that caused the old man’s death. Consequently, in this story, Miyabe seems to put the emphasis on the poison in human heart. The “ijime problem” (bullying problem) is discussed in the story. Bullying in the schools is another manifestation of the poison in the human mind. At one point in the novel, Miyabe writes:

A long time ago, in the Jungle, there were beasts that ran in the dark. Confronted by their gleaming fangs, humans were powerless. However, one day, one of the beasts was captured and the name “lion” was given to them. Once the humans had given the beasts a name, they learned how to deal with them. The name given to the beasts changed the perspective of the humans. What had formerly been a formless horror now took shape by virtue of its being named. How I wish the poison inside us could be named! Please, someone tell me, what is the name of this poison within us?³⁶

Elements isolated from Tokugawa Musei's parody are reflected in the novel. The crimes are committed to form intricate puzzles to be solved. Readers are informed in a pseudo-scientific way concerning the "sick house syndrome." For example, Sugimura's wife, Nahono, does extensive research on the soil and the material that are used in houses. The motives of the crimes are revealed precipitously towards the end of the novel. The role of the detective is mostly played by Sugimura.

That said, it is also the case that once again we see Miyabe adopting elements of the mystery novel to portray incidents in contemporary society that are not really crimes at all. The vignette-like structure of the novel enables her to digress within the form of mystery fiction to take up subjects that have little to do with the central mystery.

4.3.9. Rakuen (Paradise, 2007)

This is the latest novel by Miyabe Miyuki. In it, she reintroduces in the role of detective Maehata Shigeko, the woman journalist who previously appeared in Mohōhan.³⁷

Summary of Rakuen

Maehata Shigeko is a journalist. We remember her from Mohōhan (1998). One hot summer day, a middle-aged lady, Hagiya Toshiko, visited her. Shigeko found it hard to believe what the woman described. She said that her deceased son, Hitoshi, had extrasensory perception. Hitoshi, unfortunately, died in March of that year in a traffic accident. Though Hitoshi was only twelve years old, he was a very talented artist and had won prizes. However, there was a peculiarity about his drawings; he drew two kinds of

pictures. One kind was very descriptive and beautiful award winning pictures, but the others were messy and chaotic like the pictures little kids draw. When he drew pictures that looked like a little child's, they always contained a message that seemed to communicate something that he had foreseen.

For example, a couple of days before his death, Hitoshi had drawn a yellow truck driven by a man wearing sunglasses. Strangely, it was the exact description of the vehicle that took his life. One of Hitoshi's pictures was a picture of a girl buried under a house. In fact, right around that time, a big topic in the media was the sensational news about a girl, Akane, who was murdered by her parents, and her corpse was hidden under the house for sixteen years before it was discovered. Akane's parents confessed to the crime, but because of the statute of limitation, fifteen years, they weren't punished.

Toshiko insisted that since the crime was only discovered recently, there was no way for Hitoshi to know about the girl in March. Shigeko finally came to believe that Hitoshi, in fact, had the supernatural power to foresee the future because she found a picture that looked like proof of his power. It was a picture of a crime (the crime in Mohōhan discussed previously) that Shigeko was involved in previously. Hitoshi's picture depicted evidence that only a person who was at the crime scene would have known. Shigeko started investigating why Akane's parents had hidden her body under the house for such a long time as well as the proof of Hitoshi's supernatural talents. Shigeko started finding out that Akane's parents had been blackmailed by somebody.

After much trial and error, Shigeko met Akane's mother. Akane's mother confessed to Akane's killing at the meeting. She admitted that Akane was a delinquit. She was always with her boyfriend, Miwa Akio, who was also a delinquit. They enjoyed

committing crimes, such as robbery, arson, and so on. Akane's parents lived in fear that their daughter might be committing horrible crimes. One day, they found out that Akane and Miwa had killed a girl. They accidentally hit the girl with their car and to hide their carelessness, they killed the girl and buried the body in the mountains. Akane did not regret the crime but was afraid of getting punished. Akane's parents finally decided they had to kill her to prevent her from committing more crimes. They buried her body under the house to prevent Akane's sister's life from being destroyed by Akane's criminal acts. Shigeko proved that Toshiko was right in that Hitoshi did have extrasensory perception, and this ability to foresee things helped to solve the crime.

Discussion

In this last novel, we see Miyabe's abiding concern, from her early works to her latest novel, with portraying in detail, with care and sympathy, the lives of working class characters. This care and sympathy is not limited to the main characters. We see how the life of Akane's sister, Seiko, was affected by her parents' crime, even though the parents were not prosecuted because of the statute of limitations. Seiko's friends are also described very vividly. The young man at her favorite dry cleaning store is large and rough, but he has a warm heart and he works to protect his childhood friends. Another of Seiko's friend, Naoko, is portrayed as very active and cheerful. She is also ready to protect her friend whenever it is necessary. Although these characters are unimportant to the storyline, these small detailed portraits are linked together to form a milieu of a decent and supportive neighborhood community.

As in Mohōhan and other works, Miyabe incorporates other genres into her novels. In this case, however, the foundation of her portrayal of her contemporary society remains mystery fiction. We see the basic structure of Tokugawa Musei's parody in the novel. The nature of crimes—the disclosure of Akane's body under her house and Akane's crimes in the past—are revealed from the perspective of a news reporter, Shigeko. How Shigeko finds out the truth, in this case that Hitoshi really had supernatural power and why Akane was killed and hidden, correspond to the puzzle solving aspect of the story. The role of detective is played by Maehata Shigeko. The pseudo-scientific view of the crime is provided by Shigeko's research into the nature of Hitoshi's extrasensory perception. The revelations of the motive of the crimes come at the end through Akane's mother's confession and the discovery of Hitoshi's ability.

Bönnemark's general schema for narratives also applies. The abstract is, Toshiko, Hitoshi's mother's visit to Shigeko to ask her to prove that Hitoshi had supernatural power. The orientation in the story is Shigeko's discovery of evidence in Hitoshi's drawing that was not released in the public, and her decision to start the research on his ability. The complicating action is Shigeko following the chronology of Hitoshi's drawings and her discovery of many facts about Akane, the girl buried under her house for sixteen years. The evaluation is Hitoshi's prophesy of Akane's house in his drawings. The resolution corresponds with the revelation of the truth: the confession of Akane's mother to the murder of Akane and that Akane was a sociopath and committed crimes with her boyfriend. Finally, the coda is that Shigeko discovers the proof that Hitoshi had real supernatural power.

As we have noted, however, Miyabe is never satisfied in her mystery fiction to just present a puzzle-solving entertainment. Since the beginning of her career, she has been vitally concerned with exploring social contradictions in Japan. One of the main themes of this novel is the crimes that are committed within the family. The latest statistics show that the rate of murders among relatives makes up 50% of the murders in Japan. Hisada discusses the reason for this increase in domestic family crime. The family model popularized by the media has made the expectations of each member of the family too high to be accomplished by ordinary people. Hisada specifically discusses the popular cartoon, *Sazae-san*. In *Sazae-san*, the whole family lives in a perfect harmony. Those who grew up watching this kind of cartoon expect to live a life like the cartoon, which is not real. Of course, *Sazae-san* is only one example, but the media's projection of the "typical family" is utterly unrealistic and creates expectations that are impossible to live up to.³⁸

Let us review some of the crimes committed among the families. In 2005, a high school boy started the gas explosion to conceal his killing of his parents in Itabashi, Tokyo. The reason for this was that he didn't like his father.³⁹ In June of the same year, a fifteen-year-old boy killed his elder brother with a hammer in Kawagoe, Saitama. The motive for this killing is unknown.⁴⁰ In October, 2005, a high school girl attempted to murder her mother by putting thallium in her mother's food for several months in Shizuoka prefecture. She updated her mother's suffering on her website. In this incident,

her mother survived.⁴¹ In 2006, a high school boy started a fire and killed his stepmother and his half-sister and brother. The motive for this was that his father's expectations for him were too high. What pushed the boy over the edge was that he has received a D in his English exam, and he didn't want his father to know about his failing in English.⁴²

In July in the same year, the infamous "Akita Renzoku Jidō Satsujin Jiken" (the serial children murders in Akita prefecture) occurred. In April, a nine-year-old girl, Ayaka Hatakeyama's body was found in the river in Noshiro city, Akita. The police concluded that she was drowned. However, in May, a seven-year-old boy, Yoneyama Gōken's, body was found nearby the area. He was strangled to death. In July, the mother of Hatakeyama Ayaka confessed that she killed her own daughter and the boy. She thought Gōken saw her pushing Ayaka from the bridge.⁴³ In October 2006, Shindō Mika tortured her four-year-old son with her boyfriend and when the boy became unconscious, she dumped him in an agricultural ditch in Daisen city in Akita prefecture.⁴⁴ We will give two more examples from 2007. In February 2007, a young man killed his younger sister and dismembered her body. The reason was that she accused him of not being serious about his life.⁴⁵ In May of the same year, a high school student killed his mother and turned himself into the police with his mother's head in his arms.⁴⁶ The media continues to broadcast gruesome killings among families. Thus, Miyabe's novel, Rakuen, portrays what is indeed a significant social problem in Japan.

4.4. Conclusion

I have discussed nine of Miyabe Miyuki's works. They are "Warera ga rinjin no hanzai" (Our neighbors' crimes, 1986), Perfect blue (1989), Majutsu wa sasayaku (Devil's whisper, 1989), "Hitojichi kanon" (Captured, 1996), Kasha (All she was worth., 1996), Riyū (Reasons. 1998), Mohōhan (Copy cat, 2001), Namonaki doku (Nameless poison, 2005), and Rakuen (Paradise, 2007). The purpose of this discussion has been to place Miyabe Miyuki in the context of the history of the development of Japanese mystery fiction. We have argued that the appeal of mystery fiction is based on a number of factors but most particularly on its ability to respond in a relatively realistic manner to historical, technological, and societal change.

I have explored the origins of mystery fiction in Japan and have isolated its basic structure following a parody written by Tokugawa Musei. We then documented that, in the prewar period, mystery fiction was primarily oriented toward puzzle-solving and informing in an entertaining manner about the latest technological innovations and pseudo-scientific ideas: phrenology, spiritualism, the evils of homosexuality and other "sexual perversions," and so on. We then argued that in the postwar period, in the hands of Matsumoto Seichō and others, mystery fiction became far more realistic, character driven, and concerned with societal and political issues.

This study has argued that Miyabe incorporates all of these preceding tendencies in her mystery fiction, but that her overriding concern has been the realistic depiction of her contemporary society and the social problems it faces. In this sense, Miyabe has

inherited the mantle of Matsumoto Seichō. Indeed, as Japanese fiction has become more interior and consumer oriented, much in line with what critics have called postmodernism, Miyabe's brand of mystery fiction can be seen as the inheritor of Japan's distinguished tradition of realism, from naturalism to social realism.

In support of this argument, it was noted that the basic structure of most of Miyabe's mystery fiction coincides with that of Musei's parody and also Bönnemark's schema. This observance of generic markers grounds the narrative in a clearly comprehensive and entertaining story, which in part accounts for Miyabe's extraordinary popularity. However, I also noted that her work diverges from the prewar model in the following respects.

First, I noted that in all of her mystery fiction, Miyabe employs very detailed and precise descriptions of identifiable neighborhoods in Tokyo. It is her commitment to portraying neighborhood Tokyo that gives her work substance. Similarly, she constantly invests great care in portraying major and minor characters in the context of the milieu of their neighborhoods. Almost all of her characters are from working class backgrounds and most, even the criminals, are realistically and sympathetically drawn. For example, the grandfather of the murdered girl, Mariko, in Mohōhan is a small shopkeeper who sells his handmade tofu. The small convenience store in the suburban area of Tokyo in "Hitojichi kanon" is typical of a myriad of such stores, and the background of ordinary patrons, a kind of cross-section of people one might encounter in a suburban

neighborhood, are provided with a fair amount of detail. We have also seen that often the protagonists in Miyabe's fiction are young adults who are working part-time or at some position that requires technical training. In short, they are, like most Japanese, not college bound or college educated.

It follows from the care Miyabe expends on characterization, that motivation is more important in her fiction than the puzzle-solving aspect. Thus, the process of solving the crime often "teaches" the reader about some real life issues: identity theft, excesses of the mass media, and so forth. This marks a departure from the pre-war tradition which tended to "teach" about exotic ideas, devices, and sexual perversions from the west.

That is not to say that Miyabe is above exploiting the exotic in her work to entertain her readers. I have noted that she often incorporates into her mystery novels other genres that she herself enjoys and that are popular among her contemporaries. As reviewed above, these include science fiction and horror fiction. These other genres often serve as a kind of *deus ex machina* providing an easy solution to the crime while relieving Miyabe of setting up intricate puzzle-like plots and allowing her to concentrate on portrayals of character background, motivations, and place. This "genre mixing" is not original to Miyabe. We reviewed a previous example in *Suna no utsuwa* by Matsumoto Seichō (discussed in Chapter 3). It has a rational conclusion; but the story has a science fiction aspect. The young pianist, Waga, composes music that actually can make people sick, or sometimes his music can kill people. Miyabe takes this mixing of genres further.

In case of mystery fiction, the readers always know that the natural/rational explanation does not work; we expect a conclusion that is somehow fabricated. Mystery fiction keeps suspending the reader from the resolution, and the reader gets an unnatural

explanation which somehow sounds natural. Miyabe Miyuki's work often shifts the reader from detective story to science fiction and even to socially conscious serious novels. As we have seen in Majutsu wa sasayaku, Perfect blue, and Rakuen, the genres of fantasy and science fiction were incorporated in these works.

Even when Miyabe incorporates features of horror, science fiction, or fantasy in her works, however, she consistently uses these to the larger purpose of delineating the social problems that afflict her contemporary society. These issues are not abstract. They affect ordinary lives in immediate ways. As we have seen, the bubble economy was one of the themes in "Wareraga rinjin no hanzai." In Perfect blue, illegal experimentation by pharmaceutical corporations on human subjects was the issue raised. In Majutsu wa sasayaku, Miyabe examines the problem of prostitution by non-professional women. In "Hitojichi Kanon," human alienation among urban residents is foregrounded. Kasha takes up the related problems of credit card fraud, identity theft, and the "living hell" of too much consumer debt. Riyū highlights the deficiencies of the legal procedures in the acquisition of the foreclosure property and the pressures exploding property prices placed on traditional neighborhoods. In Mohōhan, we see performance-style crimes committed merely to attract the attention of the media and the problem of how the media exploits such crimes with little concern for the many victims. Namonaki doku deals with various kinds of poison including pollution and the poison in the human heart that causes us to hurt people. Rakuen takes up the problem of parents killing their children because of the perceived dishonor they have brought to the family.

If the following passage from Miyabe's novel Riyū is an indication, Miyabe herself believes that literature, one part of the media, should deal with the real world:

We live in a society where the media is so advanced that ordinary people by sitting in front of the television can obtain in 30 minutes the amount of information it once took much longer to obtain. But there is a problem. People can't discern the difference between the real world that they live in and the world they acquire through the media. In other words, people cannot perceive the boundary between the real and the virtual worlds. If we can't see the difference between real experience and reported hearsay, the information we acquire through the media, then how can we tell what is real and the truth? In fact, there is the tendency for people to merge the two completely different realms of information.⁴⁷

Miyabe's mystery fiction keeps bringing us back to reality. As has been established in this examination of her work in the context of the development of mystery fiction in Japan, Miyabe has become a master of the techniques of the genre. But she deploys them for broader purposes than entertainment. It might even be argued that in this age of the prominence of postmodernism in serious literature—Murakami Haruki, Yoshimoto Banana, and Murakami Ryū comes to mind—that Miyabe's mystery fiction is exceptional in its commitment to Japan's contemporary reality. The extraordinary popularity of Miyabe's fiction is surely due to the fact that it teaches us how to respond to, or at least think about, a chaotic world full of deception, and in this sense, it represents the best of what Japanese mystery fiction has had to offer in the postwar period.

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- ² “Interview with Miyabe Miyuki,” Chūgokushinbun (Hiroshima: Chūgokushinbun, January, 3, 2004.)
- ³ Miyabe Miyuki, “Watashi ga jidaishōsetsu o kaku yō ni natta riyū,” Rekishi kaidō (Kyoto: PHP Kenkyūjo, May, 2005): 62-66.
- ⁴ Ōsawa Arimasa, Enpara (Entertainment Paradise) (Tokyo: Kōbunshabunko, 2007):95.
- ⁵ Chagi Norio, Atogaki in Henji wa iranai by Miyabe Miyuki (Tokyo:Shinchōbunko, 1994):280.
- ⁶ Nagaya Hideo & Miyabe Miyuki, “Interview with Miyabe Miyuki,” Hon to computer. 1, (Tokyo: Dainippon Insatsu Kabushiki Kaisha, Summer 1999.)
- ⁷ “Bokutachi no sukina Miyabe Miyuki,” Bessatsu takarajima (Tokyo: Takarajimasha, Oct. 2003):130-133.
- ⁸ Taigokukyū, <http://www.osawa-office.co.jp/index.shtml>.
- ⁹ Miyabe, Heisei okachi nikki: 175.
- ¹⁰ Ōta Hideo, Watashi no Miyabe Miyuki ron (<http://homepage.nifty.com/yamamomo/sub1.htm>, 17 May. 2000)
- ¹¹ “Miyabe Miyuki no ‘Atama no naka’ o daikōkai,” CREA (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, September 1. 2008): 46.
- ¹² Oku Senkō & Miyabe Miyuki, “Interview with Miyabe,” Ōru yomimono (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, Nov. 2004).
- ¹³ “Hon yomiuri dō: chosha raiten,” Yomuiiri shinbun (Tokyo:Yomiuri shinbun. morning issue Nov. 21, 2004).
- ¹⁴ Todorov discusses two genres, Uncanny and Marvelous, in his work “the Fantastic”: The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions; either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination ---the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality ---but then this reality is controlled by laws un known to us. Either the devil is an illusion, an imaginary being; or else he really exists, precisely like other living beings ---with this reservation, that we encounter him infrequently. The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty (p.25).” Within the uncertainty occupied by fantastic, there are uncanny and marvelous. Uncanny is explanation/reasoning on the supernatural experience and the reader seeks for the reasoning of the supernatural event according to the natural law. On the other hand marvelous can not be explained by the natural law and the reader accepts as the way the event occurs.
- ¹⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, “The Origin of Genres,” Genres in Discourse (Cambridge: CambridgeUniversity Press, 1990): 25.
- ¹⁶ Miyabe Miyuki, “Wareraga rinjin no hanzai” Wareraga rinjin no hanzai (Tokyo: Bunshunbunko, 1987).
- ¹⁷ Angus Madison, The World Economy: a Millennial Perspective (Paris: Development Center of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2001).
- ¹⁸ Miyabe Miyuki, Perfect blue (Tokyo: Sōgensha, 1989).

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- ¹⁹ Joanne Cullinane, “Tainted Blood and Vengeful Spirits: The Legacy of Japan’s *Yakugaieizu* (AIDS) Trial,” Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry (New York: Springer Science + Business, Media, Inc., 2005): 5-31:29.
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- ²³ Labov, Language in the Inner City: Studies in Black English Vernacular: 369.
- ²⁴ Labov, Journal of Narrative Life and History: 414.
- ²⁵ Labov: 365.
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- ²⁷ Miyabe:14
- ²⁸ Miyabe: 95.
- ²⁹ Miyabe Miyuki, Mohōhan (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2001).
- ³⁰ Koshiro Eiko, “Kobe shōgakusei satsugai jiken hōdō ni okeru shikisha komento no naiyō bunseki: ryō teki bunseki ni okeru yakuwari no kentō,” Shakai shinrigaku kenkyū, 15:1 (1999): 22-33.
- ³¹ “Tokyo: A Fatal Rampage,” Time June, 23. 2008: 20.
- ³² Koshiro Eiko, “Gekijō-gata hanzai” to masu kominyukēshon (Tokyo, Nakanishiya shuppan, 2004): p. 13; Oda Shin, Shōnen to hanzai (Tokyo, Seidosha, 2002): 180-181.
- ³³ Miyabe Miyuki, Namonaki doku (Tokyo: Tōgensha, 2006).
- ³⁴ Kamata Tadayoshi, Meikyūiri jiken to sengo hanzai (Tokyo: Ōkokusha, 1989).
- ³⁵ Murakami Haruki. Underground (Tokyo:Kōdansha, 1997).
- ³⁶ Miyabe Miyuki, Namonaki doku (Tokyo: Tōgensha, 2006): 452.
- ³⁷ Miyabe Miyuki, Rakuen (Tokyo: Bungeishunjūsha, 2007).
- ³⁸ Hisada Megumi, Ocha no mizu booklet (Tokyo: Ochanomizu Gakujutsu Jigyōkai, 2007):3.
- ³⁹ “Kanri nin Fūfu korosareru: kubi nado ni sashikizu,” Asahi shinbun Jun. 21. 2008: 39.
- ⁴⁰ “15 sai ani naguri koroshita; Kawagoe de taiho: Tōbu ni hanmā,” Asahi shinbun Jun. 2. 2005: 15.
- ⁴¹ “Haha no yōtai Burogu ni: Dokusatsu misui yōgi jishi kōkō sei: Dansei mei de kakikomi,” Asahi shinbun, Nov. 2, 2007:35.
- ⁴² Kusanagi Atsuko, Boku wa papa o korosu koto ni kimeta (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2007).

⁴³ “Hatakeyama Yōgisha o saitaiho: Akita kenkei, chōjo satsugai no utagai,” Asahi shinbun July. 13, 2006: 1.

⁴⁴ “Danji henshi, haha o taoho: Akita kenkei satsujin yōgi: Kōsai aite no danse mo,” Asahi shinbun Nov. 13, 2006: 1.

⁴⁵ “Chiken ichibu hōdō wa uso: joshi tandaisei satsugai, satsujin de ani kiso,” Asahi shinbun Feb. 15, 2007:30.

⁴⁶ “17 sai naze haha ni kyōkō, Tsūgaku oyamoto o hanare geshuku,” Asahi shinbun May. 15, 2007:15.

⁴⁷ Miyabe, Riyū: 134.

CHAPTER 5

TRANSLATION OF “HITAJICHI KANON (CAPTURED)”

5.1 Chapter 1 of “Hitojichi kanon”

As I was going down the stairs at a station, my thoughts went to the money I had just paid. How much does 10,000 yen or 5,000 yen weigh? One gram, or it might not be that much, maybe 500 milligram? Since currency is made of very thin paper, it might be lighter. How many grams in total had I just spent? I was drunk, so I couldn't think straight. At the bottom of the stairs, I was blown off balance by a gust of strong north wind, and I hit my back against the wall. I murmured to myself “Ms. Itsuko Tōyama is really drunk,” and laughed at myself. I straightened myself with a grunt “uuf!” and started walking toward my apartment. It is only a 15 minute walk from the station to my room, but somehow, it feels very far tonight.

It is a custom at Itsuko's job to have a little early year-end-party organized and held only for the female workers. Itsuko's coworker, Satomi Kawada, and two new girls prepared the party this year. It seemed like a lot of work for them to organize this party.

The fee per person was a little high, however it was a rather boring party, as Itsuko could clearly tell from everybody's face. So, having nothing to do, other than keep drinking, Itsuko drunk more than usual.

There are four corners to turn to get to Itsuko's small apartment room. At the first corner, there is a Bentō (boxed lunch) shop which is closed at nine P.M. every evening. At the second corner, there is a garage that tends to be making noise until midnight. However, tonight, this garage put the light on the sign out early, and the street seems empty and dark. All she sees are the florescent street lamps.

Itsuko is not afraid of walking alone on the empty street at night because she had never encountered any kind of danger before. This area is pretty safe. Because most of the people in this neighborhood are native to the city, there are not many apartments or condos. People here all know each other well which means that there is not much space for newcomers who tend to commit crimes. People in the neighborhood have lived here generation after generation, and as one might expect, the population of elderly people in this area is pretty high. Thinking of her neighborhood reminds Itsuko of an interesting incident.

It must have been almost two months ago since Itsuko bumped into a middle-aged lady in a white apron. It was about the same time as today because Itsuko remembers that she arrived at the station by the last train of the day. The lady was almost out of breath and asked if Itsuko had seen an old man around here. The lady was looking for her father who had dementia and wandered out whenever he felt like it, even in the middle of the night. She looked lost, so Itsuko wanted to help, but she hadn't seen anybody on the street that night. Itsuko told her that she hadn't seen anyone, and the lady ran off toward

the station. Several days after the incident, at a nearby grocery store, Itsuko saw the lady walking hand in hand with an old man whose back was bent with age. They were buying chocolate at the sweets section. The old man was holding a red toy trumpet in his empty hand blowing on it from time to time, like, “honk! honk!” He was acting like a child. Itsuko thought, “It must be very difficult to take care of seniors, especially those with dementia.” Itsuko thought about her parents in her hometown and felt a little depressed.

As Itsuko turns the third corner, there is a small shopping area. But at one o’clock in the morning, most of the stores are closed, except...there is one bright light in front of Itsuko other than the street lamps. The light is coming from the convenience store that is open 24 hours a day. The street is dark and still, but the convenience store is bright and shining. Usually, Itsuko can see their customers in the store through the glass shop windows. The clerk with the yellowish top was there, and several customers were shopping. The name of the store is “Q&A.” Itsuko always thought it sounded like a joke. It must be a minor chain store among other big convenience store chains. She has not seen any “Q&A” in other town. The store in Itsuko’s town appears to be struggling to survive. For example, the ‘7/11’ there or ‘Mini Stop’ here seem to have many more customers than “Q&A.” It always seems more deserted than other convenience stores.

Although “Q&A” is a small convenience store, when their bright light hit Itsuko’s eyes, she is lured into the store. After a social gathering, she usually gets hungry at about the time she gets home by herself. So she often shops at the store when she comes home late, like after the party this evening. Why? It must be the location and timing. Even though, this convenience store doesn’t have many items of variety, it is still attractive because it is located on her way home and always open.

The automatic door opened with a rattle. The store clerk greeted her, “Welcome to Q & A!” He must be a student part timer. He is pretty young and looks like a new employee. It must have been only half a month or so since he started working here.

The clerk was diligently sorting the receipts. Itsuko started shopping. Her hands seemed almost frozen but started warming up in the warm temperature of the store. The shopping basket is the same yellow as the clerk’s uniform. Itsuko picked it up and started walking as she tried to raise the strap of her shoulder bag on her shoulder; the strap kept falling.

As you enter, there are magazines on the right hand side of the store. There are daily commodities, such as shampoo or detergent on the left hand side. Itsuko remembered that there was not much toilet tissue left in her room and picked up a four-pack of toilet tissue from the upper shelf. When she goes to a grocery store in town, she buys daily necessities, like toilet tissue or laundry detergent, only when they are on sale. But the funny thing is that somehow she puts these items in her basket without thinking about their prices, though their prices are much higher than in the grocery stores when she has seen them.

When Itsuko went to the frozen food showcase in the back of the store, she observed a gentleman in a dark grey suit with his coat on his arm on the other side of the frozen items. He is by himself. He is glaring at the snack food shelf. But his serious manner makes it seem as if he is going to buy a house. He is chubby and his hair is almost half gray. She knows many managers who look like him at her work. His face is red and he is blinking his eyes as if he were going to fall asleep. He must have had some drinks on his way home. Itsuko thinks that choosing a bag of potato chips doesn’t have to

be such a serious business. This must be, presumably, that kind of fastidious characteristic particular to many middle-aged drunken men. He must be obsessed with the thought whether to buy those “Wasabi Beef Taste” or “Hokkaido Butter Taste” chips.

The path between the display cases was narrow. If Itsuko unexpectedly touched his sleeves or looked into those completely reddened glaring eyes, it might create a problem (because he is very drunk). The milk Itsuko wanted was in the freezer right behind that drunken guy, but the timing didn't look good. Itsuko carefully changed her direction trying not to meet his eyes. She went around to the right to avoid him, gave up on getting her milk, and headed toward the cashier.

Right at that moment, Itsuko heard the rattling noise made by the automatic door opening. Itsuko looked up. At the same time, the clerk called out “Welcome to Q&A!” There was a boy whose height was about at Itsuko's shoulder. He was probably in the first year of middle school, or, at the most, second year. He was rather tall for his age but skinny and delicate looking. He wore glasses with big black frames. The boy didn't look around the store, but went straight to the right hand side of the cashier and glanced at the magazine racks. To the right hand side of the register is the shelf for sandwiches.

Itsuko smiled. She often sees him in this convenience store. This must be the fifth or sixth time she has seen him. Of course, she doesn't know his name, but he is a familiar face to Itsuko, now. These kinds of things often happen at convenient stores. Customers become familiar with each other because they often shop at the same store at around the same time. It seems Glasses guy's mother doesn't prepare midnight snacks while he is cramming for his exam, so he often comes to Q & A to feed himself.

Kid Glasses is studying the sandwiches very closely. Itsuko passed in front of the cashier once and went to the dessert shelf. The shelf was almost empty. There were two custards a-la-mode left, but the whipped cream on them looked dry and hard.

While Itsuko is sighing over the desserts, Kid Glasses has already chosen his sandwich and has walked towards the back of the store where the red-eyed manager is. Itsuko wanted to buy some milk but doesn't want to get too close to that weird guy. Let's see what happens with Kid Glasses who might accidentally become an experimental subject. He went directly to the fridge where the milk cartons are displayed and pulled the door open. The middle aged red-eyed manager was still standing there, like a big tree trunk. The door Kid Glasses opened was almost touching the guy's back. "Ah, excuse me" Kid Glasses said. He must have been very well disciplined because he didn't pull the door without giving any notice to the red-eyed manager guy. However, the man did not promptly respond. He didn't move nor even turn around to see him, and then he moved aside but didn't change his posture with his eyes fixed on the chips. The door opened all the way, and Kid Glasses safely removed a carton of milk.

Itsuko hesitated. If she went over while Kid Glasses was still holding the door, she could get the milk out. However, the red-eyed guy's reaction to Kid Glasses was that of a drunkard. Itsuko thought "Oh, No. He's really plastered." Itsuko concluded that it was lucky for Kid Glasses that he hadn't had a problem with the guy. The guy looks like he might explode at any moment at the slightest provocation "Well, I am not buying milk tonight" Itsuko thought as she turned away from the refrigerator. She heard the automatic door making the noise again. A half second later, the clerk screamed, "Ahh!" Itsuko turned around. The first thing she saw was the clerk's yellow uniform, then a dark figure

standing at the entrance. A man, apparently, wearing a full motorcycle helmet and a black leather jacket, was extending his right hand out to the clerk. Itsuko's thoughts swam in circles, "What does he have in his hand? Wait! It must be a gun! The man's holding a gun in his hand!"

5.2 Chapter 2 of "Hitojichi kanon"

Itsuko was sure that there was a sign saying, "Please do not wear motorcycle helmets in the store" by the front automatic door of the convenience store. It was not printed on a sheet of paper but was a plastic sign. All the convenience stores around the city had it. It was, of course, for the prevention of crime, like the one today.

The image of the sign flashed through Itsuko's mind. She thought about the sign, and then her brain went blank from the shock. The dark figure standing in front of the automatic door said "Freeze!" in a Darth Vader like voice muffled through his helmet. No one was moving. Neither the store clerk nor Itsuko moved. The store clerk was holding his hands up. Itsuko was just standing with her shopping basket hanging from her hand.

The gun in the robber's hand was gray and smooth on the surface. It looked like a chrome plated toy. The barrel of the gun was very short and the whole thing looked a little stubby. Itsuko was not sure whether the gun was real or fake, and she didn't know how to judge the situation. The robber was wearing a pair of gray thin plastic gloves. She focused on the fact that his gray finger was firmly on the trigger.

Itsuko remembered the red-eyed drunk man and Kid Glasses. They were in front of the frozen food case at the back of the store. Itsuko knew that there was a backdoor by that freezer. If one of them moved quickly enough, they might be able to run. But the robber was aware of the door. Itsuko thought he moved his head quickly, but didn't move the aim of the gun, and looked up at the mirror on the corner of the store. Well, anyhow, since his face was behind the helmet, Itsuko just guessed. Itsuko looked up with him, and, sure enough, there were the distorted figures of Kid Glasses and the red-eyed guy in the convex mirror.

“Hey!” The robber moved his eyes from the mirror and yelled towards the back of the store. “You two, over there! Come out or I will shoot!” His voice was pretty muffled. But it was clear that he said he would kill the clerk whose head he was aiming at, not the two in the back. Itsuko watched them in the mirror. The two people there, well at least, the one who is not intoxicated, meaning, Kid Glasses, looked lost. He was just standing there. He looked confused, “Who? From where? How can I be shot?”

Itsuko prayed silently, “Run! Run! You are close to the door!” She wanted to yell, “Just run out and call the police! Please...” But, Alas! The clerk with his hands up said with a trembling voice, “Please listen to him. He's aiming the gun at me.” Itsuko was disgusted. “Who in the world would ruin his only hope to survive?” (But the stupid store clerk did.) It would have been difficult for the drunken man to run, but the young boy could have escaped. If he did, other people in the store could have been saved.

“Pleeease!” The clerk repeated. “Please listen to him, please!”

In the mirror, Istuko saw Kid Glasses start moving towards the front of the store. He came right behind her where he saw the robber with a gun. Though she couldn't turn around, she felt Kid Glasses freeze. "You! Understood!?" it seemed like the robber threatened Kid Glasses, but the robber's voice was all muffled in the helmet, so it was a little difficult to tell.

It seemed to Itsuko that what shocked Kid Glasses was not the robber's presence, but the clerk who had the gun pointed to his head and was shaking. As if to affirm Itsuko's thoughts, Kid Glasses spoke to the clerk "Are you all right?" The clerk didn't reply; but that was only natural since it is difficult to talk with a gun pointed at your head.

"There's one in the back." The robber said. Indeed, in the mirror, there is the drunk red-eyed fellow who is still glaring at the potato chips. Itsuko took a deep breath and said, "He's drunk," to the robber, "He won't move. I don't think he is aware what's going on here." Itsuko couldn't see the robber's facial expression, for it was hidden behind the helmet. But the clerk closed his eyes very tight. He must have thought he was going to get shot. "You go and get him," the robber ordered Kid Glasses, pointing by moving his chin; well, more precisely, with his helmet. Kid Glasses didn't move right a way. When Itsuko looked at him, wondering why, he was putting his milk and sandwich on the shelf. Then Kid Glasses went to the back of the store. Everybody heard him saying, "Sir, will you please come to the front of the store where the register is? This convenience store is being robbed!"

“What!?” the drunk man spoke for the first time. “The store is being robbed!” the voice of Kid Glasses was a little shaky, too. “The store clerk is being held up!” Itsuko was still looking at the mirror. The drunken fellow stared at Kid Glasses for a while, and then he pushed him aside and started walking towards the front of the store. Itsuko could smell strong alcohol exuding from him. The smell faded away as his gray suit passed by her. Itsuko saw him appear in front of her by the register.

“A robbery?” the drunken fellow said. “Please listen to him,” the clerk wept, “I’m gonna get killed.” The eyes of the drunk man dully moved and saw the gun. “That? You don’t know if it’s fake or not.” No sooner had he finished the utterance than he barged forward toward the robber. Itsuko felt her heart leap to her throat. She turned pale and her blood seemed to stop circulating.

The response from the robber was very quick. The hand with the gun moved from the head of the clerk and it aimed at, not as Itsuko thought, the drunk, but instead at the ceiling. Itsuko reflexively looked up the mirror. The gray metallic color danced on the mirror for a second, and next moment, there was a loud bang as the mirror was blown into pieces. It was as if there was a gun in the mirror that shattered it from inside. To escape from the falling shards, Itsuko immediately covered her head with her both arms and fell to the floor. She expected another bang, but there wasn’t one.

When Itsuko looked up, the robber was in the same position as before the shooting; his gun again pointing at the clerk’s head. The only thing that had changed was the clerk’s face; it was paler and his hands were held up higher. “Understand!?” said the

robber. The drunk was very close to the robber, but now he started moving backwards, trying to distance himself from the robber. Itsuko moved slightly sideways and grabbed the drunk's arm to rescue him or, maybe, it was to comfort herself by hanging on to someone's arm?

“Don't move!” the robber said. He turned his head towards the clerk and said “Lock the door!” The gun was still pointing at the clerk's head. The clerk started moving in slow motion and took the key out from underneath the register. He walked out from behind the register counter and headed towards the entrance again in slow motion. It looked like he had weak knees. While the clerk was doing what he was ordered to do by the robber, the robber's gun was still pointing at his head.

The robber turned and said “If you guys do something stupid, his head will be gone!” His remark wasn't necessary because everybody knew that. Itsuko, the drunken guy and Kid Glasses not only could not move a muscle, but couldn't even hold their hands up like the clerk was doing. It must be very terrifying to have a gun aimed at you. However, one also has to think twice when the slightest movement may be responsible for somebody's death. Besides, there was no way one of them could throw something at the robber to divert his attention and quickly run out the backdoor.

The clerk looked at the automatic entrance door. The robber cunningly went behind the clerk and lowered his gun to hide it from the view of the incidental passerby. Itsuko hoped for the entrance of a new customer who could report this crime to the police. But, then she rethought that if it actually happened, the situation might get worse. The new customer or the clerk might get shot, or worse everyone in the store might get killed. Sustaining the current status quo might be better than having somebody jump in.

The clerk is locking up the store; the one lock above, one below, and one in the middle of the door. It surprised Itsuko that a store that was open 24 hours a day had locks on the door! What did they have in their minds when they built this store? It was the first time the robber showed his back to the hostages. Itsuko noticed that the hem of his leather jacket was pretty much worn out. There was one more thing. His pants! They were khaki cotton pants, and they were worn out as well. Nothing remarkable about them, but the hip pocket on his left hand side was bulging awkwardly. It looked like something had been pushed in.

“Give me the key!” the gunman ordered when the clerk finished locking up the store. The clerk was still facing the door, unable to move from the horror. He moved his hand backwards to give the key to the robber. The gunman received the key in his left hand and tried to push the key in his left backpocket which was occupied by something bulky. He looked frustrated. Itsuko held her breath and watched.

The robber suddenly used the tips of his fingers to dig out the stuff in his pocket. He pulled the object out of his pocket, threw it on the floor, and put the key in the pocket. The object rolled onto the floor with a yellowish twirl. Itsuko felt Kid Glasses stagger, and the drunken fellow blinked in disbelief. She too couldn't believe her eyes! The object on the floor was a yellow toy rattle with a picture of a duck! It was about four inches, small for that kind of toy. It must have been made for small babies. Why in the world would a gunman carry such object? Itsuko felt the impulse to call out to the man, “Mr. Robber, you dropped your ducky thing.” But, of course, she didn't. He must have known

he had dropped it. She was about to laugh, but her feet moving slightly on the bits of the glasses made a little noise and brought her to her senses. She suppressed her impulse to laugh. Though the robber carried a cute little toy that didn't fit the image of a vicious robbery, he also has the real gun. "Don't forget about the gun" Itsuko told her self.

As soon as the door was locked, the robber grasped the clerk's collar and whispered, "Step back!" He obviously didn't want anyone outside viewing the scene in the store. "Everybody, behind the counter!" The gunman ordered. "Lie face down on the floor and put your hands on your heads! Do it now!" The robber nudged the clerk's head forward with the gun. It had the desired effect of communicating with everyone, "Don't do anything strange"

Itsuko asked, "Can I put down my shopping bag?"

"Drop it at your feet!"

Itsuko obeyed. Kid Glasses didn't have anything in his hands. The drunken fellow never had anything in his hands from the beginning. Itsuko started walking ahead of the others. She thought "Lucky, I am wearing loafers." If she had worn her favorite pumps, she would have been sorry because there were pieces of glass on the floor which would have damaged her shoes. "Here I am horrified and my knees are weak. Why think about this kind of trivial thing?" Kid Glasses followed her, and then the drunken guy followed her. He was still red-faced and wobbling. The effects of alcohol don't seem to wear off even in the crisis like this.

As everybody started to lie on the floor, the robber commanded, "Take your shoes off and put them on the counter!" Itsuko's loafers, Kid Glasses' sneakers, and the manager guy's worn shoes with new shoe laces were placed on the counter. The robber

poked the clerk again. “You pick up the shoes, all of them!” The clerk held all the shoes in his hands. He panicked a little when Kid Glasses’ sneaker was about to fall out of his hands.

Itsuko slowly lay down on the floor. The linoleum floor was dirty with the foot marks and pieces of glasses, but she couldn’t complain. To survive this crisis was more important than getting a little dirty. KidGlasses, for some reason, got down on his back. Itsuko said, “Idiot! Lie on your stomach!” She exclaimed. Glasses blinked and turned over onto his stomach. The manager guy groaned because his protruding belly prevented him from lying flat on the stomach.

“OK! Take me to the office in the back.” The robber ordered the clerk when he saw that everyone was on the floor with their hands on their heads. Itsuko knew that the robber and the clerk went down middle aisle of the store by listening to the noise made by their stepping on the broken glasses. She heard the robber’s voice above her saying, “Don’t forget! If you try to do anything, this guy will be gone. You will all be responsible for his death! Understand!?”

Itsuko closed her eyes and waited for the robber to go away. She thought, “You fool! We have a phone here behind the counter.” At that instant, she heard the robber’s voice. “I’m going to disable the phone.” Then, there was a noise made by ripping the phone cord off from the wall.

There was the sound of leaving footsteps. The footsteps on the shattered glass changed into footsteps on the linoleum floor. The door opened and closed right at that moment. Then, the lights and the music in the store were turned off; there must be a control in the office. Strangely, Itsuko has never paid attention to the music, but

somehow she missed it when it was gone. It must have been a cable radio on a recent pop hit. A young man's voice was repeating the phrase "I love you." over and over again. When the power went off, it was cut off in the middle of the phrase, like, "I Lo..." The silence fell. The store disappeared in the dark. The dark and quiet convenience store seemed like a zombie of a convenience store.

Kid Glasses whispered still facing the floor, "Can't somebody outside notice our problem?" Itsuko whispered back. "It's almost impossible; there is not much traffic outside." "Do you think the sign is off, too?" "Probably." "Won't somebody see it and think it is strange?" "Well, if no one is on the street, no one notices it."

Shattered glass covered the floor behind the counter where they lay. Itsuko blew slivers of glass away so as to get them away from her face. Glasses said, "Isn't it funny? We aren't tied up but can't move." He was pretty calm in this situation. Itsuko looked up at the drunken fellow. His head was down and his eyes closed. She was impressed. He seemed pretty tough, too! "That drunk doesn't look nervous!" Itsuko started to calm down a little. The best thing about this situation was that the gunman was out of sight. She was aware that the clerk's life was still in danger, but she somehow felt safer. Still, she couldn't stand up and call the police. Her hands were up on her head, and she was afraid to disobey the robber and move them.

"That guy's pretty smart." Itsuko whispered to Glasses guy. "He's he cut off the phone line, locked the door, and taken the key with him. He also took our shoes away, and we can't walk on this broken glass in our barefoot." To her surprise, Kid Glasses chuckled. "Don't you know? When he took our shoes, I knew, he was just imitating 'Die Hard,' the movie." "Is there a scene like that in the movie?" Itsuko asked.

“Haven’t you seen it? It’s famous!”

Itsuko thought that maybe everyone but her had seen the movie.

“Did you recognize that yellow object sticking out from the gunman’s pocket?” Kid Glasses asked as he blew the slivers of glass away on the floor with his nose.

“It’s a baby’s toy,” she replied.

“Why did he have to have such a thing?”

“I don’t know. But the fact that he threw it away means it was nothing important to him.”

“But it was in his pocket!” Glasses guy said pushing his glasses up with his fingers. “Did he drop it on purpose?”

At that moment, there was a noise in the office. Itsuko’s heart leaped to her throat. Glasses Kid tried to stand up. Itsuko jerked him down by his sweater. “Don’t! You might get shot!”

“There is only one gun. He can’t shoot both the clerk and me at the same time.”

“If you make noise and divert the gunman’s attention to you from the clerk, he might be able to get away, but you will be shot.”

Kid Glasses flattened himself on the floor again,” “Makes sense to me.”

Itsuko and Glasses didn’t talk for a while. The drunk was breathing hard. “Are you OK, sir?” Kid Glasses asked, but the drunk didn’t respond. His eyes were still closed. Glasses shook the man’s shoulder. The drunk opened his red unfocused eyes. “Was he about to kill us” he slurred. “No idea,” Glasses guy replied, “but honestly, if one of us got killed, then the two of us have a chance to survive.”

“Then, let’s abandon the clerk and run away!” The drunk declared. Both Itsuko and Glasses were at a loss for words. Finally, Itsuko responded calmly, “But, realistically, how do we get out? The door’s locked.” The drunk asked, “Can’t we break the glass with something?”

“Then, the gunman would hear the noise and come to kill us.” Glasses guy continued. “It’d be worse if we survive and the clerk dies. We would be responsible for his death. The media would come after us. I wouldn’t like that.”

Itsuko concluded that Glasses guy was right. It would be immoral to leave the clerk behind knowing he would be killed.

The drunkard murmured. “He can kill me, then.” Itsuko stared at him. His round face was shadowed by the street lamp. She told the guy, “We still have a chance. You shouldn’t be so desperate!”

“I’m not desperate. My life insurance will pay off the mortgage. Then, my family will live an easy life. I’m better off dead.” The man addressed Glasses guy who turned to him in surprise. “After I worked so hard at the same company for thirty years, the company decided to transfer me to the warehouse. Can you believe it? To the warehouse! They said it was a part of the company’s restructurization program.” Itsuko thought, “No wonder he is so drunk.” “Thirty years.” He repeated. “This is Christmas! They said that’s convenient. They could have the Christmas and the farewell party for me at the same time.”

“But that certainly can’t be reason enough to get killed,” Kid Glasses argued.

“It’s none of your business,” the drunk replied.

“If I get killed here, the thought suddenly occurred to Itsuko. “No one will really miss me except my parents.” Somebody would be able to take over her work easily enough. “My colleagues may miss me for awhile, but it won’t last long. Satomi, who likes to be in a spotlight, will enjoy the attention from the media and will thank me for having been killed so dramatically.” Thinking about this made her a little sad. She suddenly blurted. “If I’m to be killed, I’d rather it be in a convenience store or pub in a fashionable area, such as Jiyugaoka or Shimokitazawa.”

“Wherever you are, you’re not more than yourself or less.” The drunk observed laughing. Itsuko was a little hurt

“Then you are not more than yourself or less wherever you are, like, whether you’re working in a warehouse or in the office.” Glasses rejoined. The drunk became quiet for a while and then muttered, “Kids! They don’t know anything about the real life.”

They heard a car driving off somewhere away from the store, and silence fell in the store. Itsuko asked Glasses, “Where are your parents? I suppose they must have started worrying about you.”

“My dad’s in bed sound asleep. He works like a dog, so he is always exhausted.”

“Where is your mom, then?”

“She’s a nurse. She’s working the night shift today.”

“How come you are out this late?”

“My house is right around the corner. I come here all the time when I get hungry.”

He smiled a little and looked at Itsuko. "I think I run into you here every so often."

"Yes, I know you." Itsuko said.

"Do you live by yourself?"

"Yes."

"I guessed that." The way he said it, kind of rubbed her the wrong way, but she let it go. "What are they doing? It's so quiet," he continued.

"He should be back to grab the money from the register." Itsuko said.

"That's true, but he didn't look at the register at all."

"Maybe he was thinking of coming back later."

They waited and waited on the floor behind the counter, but the robber didn't return. Keeping her eyes on the watch, Itsuko stood up after exactly one hour passed. She had to work up her courage, though.

The shattered glass on the floor sparkled in the light from the street lamps and in the light coming from the office, the door of which had been left open! KidGlasses also stood up and said, "Let's take a look in there." The drunk didn't move, so Itsuko and Glasses guy walked over him and emerged from behind the counter. Itsuko went to the right and Glasses guy went to the left of the door and peered into the office. There was no sound of anyone moving around. Itsuko was thirsty and getting a headache from the stress. Suddenly, Glasses called into the office, "Is anyone there?" No reply. Good thing there wasn't a bullet in place of a vocal response. There was some kind of murmuring

sound and an irregular scratching that seemed like someone was moving a chair. Itsuko and Kid Glasses quickly entered the office. The clerk was tied to the chair with rope and his mouth was covered with packaging tape. On his side was an empty safe, its door wide open like a mouth that was laughing at them.

The drunk rushed out of the backdoor, running as fast as he could to the nearby police station. Before the police arrived, Itsuko and Glasses Kid sat on the floor avoiding the shattered glass and helped themselves to canned coffees from the hot drawer. The shaken clerk was sitting between them. Before the police showed up, Itsuko had walked toward the front to confirm the object that the gunman dropped was a baby's toy. For sure, it was a yellow baby's rattle with a picture of a duckling on it.

“Don't touch it! It can be used as evidence against the robber,” Glasses declared. Itsuko didn't touch it with her hands, but rolled it softly with her toe. She wanted to hear what it sounded like, and it sounded cheerful.

5.3 Chapter 3 of “Hitojichi kanon”

When the media broadcasted the news of the crime at the convenience store, Itsuko was suddenly cast in the spotlight. Many of her colleagues called her or visited her. They were concerned about Itsuko, but also wanted to hear about her horrible experience as the living witness to a crime in progress. The buzz around her became so annoying that she decided to use up her paid vacation. She had to take days off anyway because the police wanted her as a witness.

Her parents in her hometown insisted on coming to Tokyo to see her, but she told them not to. Her father's health had been declining since last year; moreover, she wanted to be left alone for a while. She was sure that if her parents saw her, they would insist on her leaving Tokyo and returning to her hometown. She still wanted to live in Tokyo. But, when she heard her mother crying in relief over the phone, she cried a little, too. She felt a little better because she knew, for certain, that someone cared deeply about her.

The detectives who investigated the crime and talked to Itsuko were middle-aged tired looking men. They, somehow, resembled Itsuko's boss at work. They were nothing like the images of cool young detectives in the movies. Too bad for Satomi, Itsuko's coworker, because before the police interview, Satomi had asked Itsuko to introduce one of them to her if young and handsome. The detectives were very gentle and nice to Itsuko. She didn't know their attitude towards the other three convenience store victims who shared the same experience in that night. They interviewed them separately and asked them not contact each other for awhile. They explained "Your memories about the crime might be confused and distorted by talking to each other. That could obstruct the arrest of the criminal" they explained. Itsuko told the police everything she saw and felt on that night, and her account was accepted without further questioning. On the other hand, the detectives didn't tell her anything about the investigation of the crime.

The detectives also requested that Itsuko not talk about the baby's toy that fell from the pocket of the gunman. One of the detectives said, "It is very important that the media not know about the item. This is information only we should know." Itsuko promised to keep it secret. At the same time, she asked them to do her a favor, "Will you let me know why the gunman carried such a baby's toy when you make the arrest?"

“Sure, but why do you want to know?”

“I’m just curious. It was odd to see the gunman with such a thing.”

Later, Itsuko found out by reading a newspaper that 5,000,000 yen was stolen from the safe in the office that night. As she had guessed, the business at “Q&A” wasn’t going well, so the owner had decided to sell the property. The stolen money was the down payment he’d received. The robber somehow knew that the money would be in the safe in the office on that day. The headline of the newspaper read: “The Robber Knew the Internal Affairs of the Store!?” The first thing that came to Itsuko’s mind was the face of the frightened store clerk. “It can’t be! He looked truly scared.”

Itsuko went back to work a week after the incident. Of course, she was asked many questions by her coworkers, but after a while, things calmed down. She thought it was a good idea to take a week off after the incident. The media soon stopped reporting about the incident. Itsuko started thinking that since no one had been hurt in the crime, it must have no longer been of interest for the reporters to pursue the incident further. But, ten days after the incident, Itsuko was surprised at seeing the picture of a young man who was named as a prime suspect in the newspaper. His name was Sasaki Shūichi, and he was 20 years old. As she read the article, she was surprised because the suspect worked at the garage that she always passed by before arriving at “Q&A.” According to the newspaper, he has been missing since the night of the crime. His motorcycle was left in front of his apartment, but his helmet was missing. The article mentioned that fleeing on his motorcycle must have been too noticeable and risky, so he used another mode of transportation to escape. She suddenly remembered the noise of the engine of a car while she was under the counter. Sasaki had a stern face. He looked a little older than his actual

age. Since the gunman was wearing a helmet, Itsuko only saw his eyes, it was, thus, hard to say; but she felt Sasaki was not the gunman. She however knew she would recognize the gunman from his voice.

So, Itsuko decided to go to “Q&A” before talking to the police. The clerk was not in the store. The new clerk, in his thirties, said that the frightened clerk has been absent since the incident, and he would probably quit the job. When Itsuko said she was one of the hostages, the clerk suddenly started talking. “Oh, you aren’t one of the mobs of the curiosity seekers. We have many customers who are only interested in the crime.”

“I was one of the captives, but, I don’t know anything about the investigation. Do you know why Sasaki became the prime suspect?” Itsuko asked. The clerk looked around the store. Fortunately, there were no other customers. The clerk said “It was the baby’s toy.”

“Yes, I saw it right in front of me.”

“When the police mentioned the toy, we, I mean, there are six, well, five workers here, and we all knew him.”

“Was he a customer?”

“Yes, he commuted from the nearby town to his garage job. He often shopped here around midnight after his work. It has been a year or so since he started coming. The thing is, he started carrying that baby’s toy in the past month or so. He always had that toy in his pocket.” Sasaki Shūichi often kept his motorcycle helmet on when he shopped; probably he got a little lazy about taking it off, but the store clerks didn’t bother to take the time to tell him not to. So for a long time, his nickname had been “The helmet boy,”

but recently his nickname was changed to “Abnormal boy” since he started showing up with the baby’s toy in his back pocket.

“Why abnormal?” Itsuko asked.

The clerk laughed cynically and replied, “Of course he is abnormal! A grown up normal person doesn’t walk around everyday carrying a baby’s toy.”

“But, how come he brought the toy with him when he was going to commit the robbery? And how did he know that there would be 5,000,000, yen in the safe on that day?” Itsuko thought. When she put her thoughts into words, the clerk suddenly became defensive. “No, no, don’t jump to that conclusion,” he declared. “We are all bothered by those kinds of remarks lately. Would anyone commit a crime like that at your job? The employees would be the first suspects.”

“Well, I suppose that’s true, but...”

“We all have the contracts with the next owner as well. We had no reason to commit a robbery like that.”

“Well, I suppose that’s true, too.” Itsuko was about to leave when she suddenly remembered that the clerk had miscounted the number of the employees in the store. He had said “six... well, five...,” “What was that all about?”, “Has anyone quit or been fired lately?” She asked the clerk.

“You’re acting like a detective.” The clerk responded, frowning as if she were an allergen that was making him sneeze.

“Then, there’s some one?”

“Yes. He quit last weekend, but so what?”

“He’s right.” she thought. “So what! Still...”

Itsuko was restless that night and couldn't sleep. She kept glancing at the clock all through the night. Finally, at exactly the time when she witnessed the robbery, she put her jacket on and went outside. Of course, she was going to "Q&A." She was surprised to see Kid Glasses in the store. "We must have telepathic communication." She thought. But as she tapped on his shoulder from his back, he said without turning, "You must still be afraid because I haven't seen you in here lately."

"What about you?" she inquired.

"I was back here the night after the robbery, and I've been coming ever since."

"He must be pretty tough," she thought. "Weren't you scared?" she asked.

"Not at all! Why should I be?" he answered waving the sandwich in his hand.

"But my parents would be angry at me if they found out." Itsuko bought some snacks, and looked around the store. It seemed as if nothing had changed; only the mirror had been replaced. "Do you think that Sasaki was the gunman?" Glasses guy asked. "What do you think?" Itsuko replied.

"Is it a rhetorical question? You're acting like a detective." Glasses guy replied laughing.

"I really don't know. We, I mean, the four of us who were here at the crime scene don't know either the gunman's face or his voice. But, the clerks here are sure about Sasaki being the gunman. You know, they thought he was abnormal." Itsuko replied smiling sulkily.

Glasses said flatly, "It's too simplistic. I guess the guy who carried out this crime has that kind of simplistic brain as well." Itsuko stopped walking down the aisle. "What do you mean?" she asked.

“I think Mr. Sasaki picked the toy up on the street.”

“Picked it up on the street?”

“Yes, he usually drove back on this street when he was done with work. Then, one day he saw it on the street and picked it up.”

“Then, how come he carried it with him all the time?”

“I think he wanted to give it back to the owner. See? That’s the way I see it.”

“It doesn’t make sense to me. If he knows who had it, why didn’t he call or visit the person to give it back?” Glasses shook his head. “Sometimes, it’s not that easy. For example, you and me, we’re acquaintances, but do you know my name, or where I live? I don’t know anything about you. If I found something you lost, I would probably carry it around until I saw you next time.”

“He sees things very well through his eye glasses.” Itsuko was impressed. “We need to know who dropped that toy,” Glasses guy concluded. Itsuko continued thinking constantly about the crime everyday at her work, at the computer, while filing the paper work, and even in her sleep. A half month after the incident, she attended the year end party at her company. She had to run to catch the last train to take her home. She walked in the wind which was much colder than the night of the crime. When she was passing in front of the garage where Sasaki used to work, she stopped and looked at the front door for a time. They said that the gunman who threatened everybody in the store used to work here, but it sounded very unrealistic to her. The gunman she saw didn’t look like a person who would carry around a baby’s toy in order to return it to the original owner. “That’s only if Glasses Kid’s hypothesis is correct.” Itsuko sneezed once and started walking again. As she turned the corner, she spied a pale small figure running towards her.

It was the middle of the night, and Itsuko felt slightly nervous. But it turned out to be the lady who was looking for her old father, the woman Itsuko saw on the night of the incident. “Excuse me...,” the lady said in the same tone as that night. “Has your father missing gone again?” Itsuko went ahead and asked before the lady could finish her question.

The lady put her hands to her cheeks reddened by the cold wind, and asked, “How come you know about him?”

“I’ve seen you before.”

“You have? He often comes this way.” The lady dropped her head and sighed. “He’s been a problem. He just wanders out whenever he feels like it. The weather doesn’t stop him, hot or cold. I lock up the house, but somehow he gets out. Sometimes, I feel like he might be faking his dementia.”

“I didn’t see him. Did you report it to the police?” “Itsuko replied.

“I always do.” She came one step closer to Itsuko as if she was trying to keep her conversation partner for a while longer in the cold. “What can I do? He has been a little depressed since he lost his favorite toy, and somehow he got out tonight.” “A TOY!?” The word, “toy,” rang a bell in Itsuko’s head. “He lost his toy?” Itsuko recalled the scene when she saw the old man at the grocery store. He was acting like a child and looked so happy when he got his chocolate. Didn’t he have a toy trumpet in his hand?” Now, it was Itsuko who took one step closer to the lady, “Does he like children’s toys?”

“Yes. He has many. He plays with them all the time. When we get old, we seem to revert to our childhood.” Itsuko took another step closer to the lady. “Is the lost toy a rattle with a yellow ducky on it?” The lady’s eyes grew wide in surprise. “How did you know that?”

Itsuko and the lady, her last name was Imai and she lived in the area, went to see the detective the next day. Mrs. Imai said she had met a man on a motorcycle about a half year ago when she was looking for the old man. “He was a total stranger to me, but he was very kind. He looked for my father with me and when we found him, Mr. Sasaki went to the police for me to let them know that we’d found him. I haven’t seen him since. Yes, I remember that my father had the rattle with a baby duck on it. It was his favorite toy. He always carried it with him, which is probably why he lost it. I think it was about a month ago. I didn’t know his name, but he said he had a grand father who was over 80 years old in his hometown. He sympathized with my caring for an old man. I recall he had some accent in his speech” Mrs. Imai wasn’t aware that Sasaki was a prime suspect of the crime in that convenience store. “I don’t have time to read newspapers or watch TV. I just can’t take my eyes off my father for a moment.” She declared.

Within three days after the interview, the real criminal was arrested. A detective was staking out the suspect’s friend’s house when the suspect dropped by. He was a 19 year old young man, and his only income was from part-time jobs. As Itsuko had suspected, he had quit “Q&A” the weekend before the robbery. The police followed the instructions provided by the young man in his confession and found the body of Sasaki Shūichi buried deep in the mountains east of Tokyo. He had been beaten to death. The police also found Sasaki’s blood and hair in the suspect’s car. It was a very expensive car

and was brand new, but he had only made the first month's payment on the loan. He used this car to flee from the crime scene and the engine noise that Itsuko heard on that night on the floor in the store was from this car.

There were many unfortunate reasons why Sasaki had become the victim of the crime. For one, he carried the baby rattle with him all the time so that the clerks at the convenience store remarked on his being abnormal. Also, he seldom removed his helmet when shopping in the store. To make the situation more unfortunate for him, his work place was close by, so the suspect easily found his apartment. Mr. Sasaki was never aware of the shrewd plan being formulated with him as its center. The ex-clerk, the gunman, only had to wear the helmet and carry the baby toy into the store. He knew that his mere appearance would provide enough evidence against Sasaki. All he had to do was to get the baby toy and kill Sasaki before breaking into the store. Sasaki lived alone, and he always worked late. The criminal concluded that Sasaki was a strange, lonely misfit, and no one would miss him. Sasaki was the perfect choice for the cunning robber to frame for the crime. Indeed, the clerk at the register on that night was completely misled by the robber's cheap charade. Moreover, when the other clerks heard about the story from the frightened clerk, they all concluded that there was no doubt that the guilty party was "the Abnormal Toy Carrying Guy."

However, the police were not misled by the charade. The police knew that the ex-clerk was the robber, so they tried to trick him by announcing that Sasaki was the prime suspect. The robber confessed that he wanted money to play around, and worse, he had had the dark desire to use a gun. He had carelessly left the gun, which he had bought from a Japanese mafia and used in the crime, in his car after committing the crime.

“How ironic! What had Mr. Sasaki’s life been for?” Itsuko thought “If Sasaki Shūichi had not become acquainted with the old man and Mrs. Imai, if he had not been so kind hearted to remember the old man’s baby’s rattle and carried with him to return it, he would still be alive.” Itsuko was depressed by the thought and didn’t go to work the next day.

Itsuko did not go back to “Q&A” for a while. It was too difficult for her to accept the fact that Sasaki had been killed, and she is safe and sound. One day, she happened to see Mrs. Imai and her father in front of the station. The old man was hand in hand with Mrs. Imai waiting for a bus. The old man was wearing a knitted cap, and there was the yellow baby rattle in his hand! Itsuko stopped to look at them for a while. Probably, the police had given it back to him. She was somewhat relieved because that was what Sasaki had wanted to do, give the toy back to the old man. She hadn’t had a chance to see the drunken manager since the incident. She hoped that he was able to go back to work and give up the idea that he was better off dead than alive. Probably he won’t. She remembered the image of his back as he ran as fast as he could to the police station. However, by chance, she saw Kid Glasses on the platform of the station. It was two days after the real criminal’s arrest.

Glasses was with several of his school friends. He was getting off the train when she was getting on. Itsuko wanted to tell him that his hypothesis about the crime was right. He saw Itsuko and tried to come over to talk to her. But the timing wasn’t good. His friends kept talking, and he was distracted responding to his friends’ talk. The boys’

conversation continued. Itsuko followed for several steps, and Glasses guy's eyes made contact with hers, but when he reached the stairway to the outside, he gave up, shrugged his shoulders and left with his friends. He didn't try to leave his friends and come to her.

Waiting for the next train and standing alone on the platform at the station, Itsuko realized that she and Kid Glasses were only brief acquaintances at a convenience store, nothing more and nothing less. We hadn't spoken anywhere else, only in the convenience store. It is a place outside of daily life, like the twilight zone.

Itsuko's thoughts were on Sasaki's face that she saw in the newspaper, until the next train came and surprised her with the noise. She imagined that if one of the clerks of "Q&A" had known Sasaki's name and reason for his carrying the baby toy, he would have known that Sasaki was just an ordinary parson. Would it have stopped the crime? She didn't have the answer. If it wasn't a convenience store, if it were a different kind of store, a neighborhood store, for example, where people gathered and talked, the clerks would have recognized their customers. In such a store, people pay attention to each other more than in impersonal convenience stores. Perhaps, customers wouldn't keep their helmets on in the atmosphere of a neighborhood shop. Such shops don't require warning signs about security measures plastered all over the place. However, convenience stores are not designed for the purpose of maintaining a community. The customers are expected to remain impersonal and independent. In other words, no one cares about others.

In the train, Itsuko started humming a song unconsciously. It was the song that was played on the night of the crime. She softly sang. "I love you. I love you..." but she couldn't finish the song in much the same way as the song in the store was left unfinished when the gunman cut off the power.

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