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Somewhere I Belong: Women's Urban Experiences  
in Kirino Natsuo's *Grotesque*

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Asian Studies, the University of Auckland, 2014.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Lawrence Marceau for continuous support on this research project. He offered me pertinent and motivating comments when I doubted myself. Dr. Marceau is an exceptional mentor and friend, and most important, the reason why I am pursuing the career of an academic. I am grateful to Dr. Rebecca Copeland, a brilliant translator and a warmly supportive academic. I consulted Dr. Copeland many times on matters regarding the translation she did for *Grotesque*, and she always replied with tremendous patience and enthusiasm. She is a significant contributor to this thesis. Moreover, I would like to thank sincerely Dr. Susan Ingram who introduced me to urban studies and thus made a difference in my academic life. I would also like to recognize the School of Asian Studies at the University of Auckland and my family for their support. Last but certainly not least, I want to thank my AIKOM friend Son Joonwoo (Kuma-san) for providing the photographs of Shibuya which I have inserted into this thesis.



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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

*It's a real mystery of human nature what will connect a person with no tie to crime a person related to crime. If law imposes order on our emotions, it's the job of a novel to pick up all those nuances that fall through the system.*

—Kirino Natsuo

### The Author: Kirino Natsuo

Kirino Natsuo (1951- ) is a major detective/ crime writer in contemporary Japan who has won several prestigious literature prizes including the Edogawa Rampo Award, the Naoki Prize, and the Tanizaki Prize. She is featured as one of five contemporary Japanese female crime novelists (among Miyabe Miyuki, Nonami Asa, Shibata Yoshiki, and Matsuo Yumi) by Amanda Seaman (2004). As of the date in which this thesis is being written, six of Kirino's works have been translated into English: *OUT* (1997) translated by Stephen Snyder as *OUT* (2003), *Gurotesuku* (2003) by Rebecca Copeland as *Grotesque* (2007), *Riaru waarudo* (2003) by Philip Gabriel as *Real World* (2008), *Zangyakuki* (2004) by Philip Gabriel as *What Remains* (2008), *IN* (2009) by Philip Gabriel as *IN* (2013), and *Joshinki* (2008) by Rebecca Copeland as *The Goddess Chronicle* (2013).

Kirino's *OUT* (in English translation) was a finalist for the 2004 Edgar Allan Poe Awards, which has won the author readership and scholarly attention in the West. However, the number of her works translated amounts to only a small portion of her oeuvre. Moreover, her prize-winning novels *Kao ni furikakeru ame* (Her face, Veiled in rain, 1993) (Edogawa Rampo Award) and *Yawaraka na hoho* (Soft cheeks, 1999)

(Naoki Prize) from her early years have not yet appeared in English. This lack of English translations, belated and limited in number, restricts the development of criticism on Kirino in English. Most existing criticism on Kirino focuses on her most notable work *OUT*.

Amanda Seaman and Rebecca Copeland stand out as two important specialists on Kirino in English scholarship. Seaman's greatest contribution to the criticism of Kirino and of Japanese contemporary detective fiction is that she proposes to examine detective fiction from the perspective of urban studies. Seaman quotes Margaret Crawford in *Bodies of Evidence* (2004), "Due to its 'historical link[s] with both urban reality and urban imagination,' detective fiction's 'continuing evolution [...] offers rich possibilities for rethinking the connections between subjectivity, interpretation, and urban space' " (7). In her article "Inside *OUT*: Space, Gender, and Power in Kirino Natsuo" (2006), Seaman suggests that Kirino uses space and place to portray "social, sexual, and economic injustice" (213). The city of Tokyo, set in *OUT*, is "a world of margins, where those [are] excluded from the centre" (Seaman 2006:201). The physical lived space of female protagonists renders their social marginalization (Seaman 2006:201), which echoes the social separation of pregnant women in Matsuo Yumi's *Baruun Taun no satsujin* (Murder in Balloon Town, 1994) (Seaman 2004:141). On the other hand, Copeland explores the elements of transgressive sexuality and constructed family in Kirino's *Tenshi ni misuterareta yoru* (The night overlooked by angels, 1994). Copeland points out the unconventional forms of kinship and family presented in Kirino's Miro series noting that, "At every turn convention is undercut"

(2004:267). This also provides an opportunity to examine the formation of the character's identity "socially and physically as a self-in-relation" (Munt 1994:49 quoted in Copeland 2004:263).

Despite the limited academic publications on Kirino's criticism, there are postgraduate students working on Kirino in the field. I am aware that, Oyvor Nyborg at Faculty of Humanities, the University of Oslo, has done a Master Thesis special on Kirino's *Grotesque* in 2012. Nyborg's thesis is titled "A Critical Analysis of Natsuo Kirino's *Grotesque*", and is a cultural study of how the characters are represented in relations to one another and the society. The frameworks Nyborg uses are Judith Butler's theories of gender performativity and interpellation, and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitué and field, and different forms of capital. Kathryn Hemmann, a student at the University of Pennsylvania, has also done a dissertation concerning Kirino's fiction, titled "Women Writers and Women Readers: The Female Gaze in Contemporary Japanese Literature". In the dissertation, Hemmann explores the highly gendered realms of narrative discourse in the works of Kirino and CLAMP (a group of female comic artists). Hemmann has also done researches on *Grotesque* and *Real World* examining the implication of misogyny in Kirino's narratives.

Although Kirino is well known for her Miro series, novels with Murano Miro, a female private investigator, as the protagonist, she has been incorporating different themes and techniques in her later fiction such as *Grotesque*, *What Remains*, *Tokyo-jima* (Tokyo Island, 2008), and *The Goddess Chronicle*. These works continue to involve sexuality, power, isolation, and conflict between the sexes, but in the forms of

novelistic narrative. Nevertheless, there is little English scholarship on Kirino's works especially her recent novels. My thesis aims to fill in this blank by providing an analysis of Kirino's Izumi Kyōka Prize winning novel *Grotesque*.

The work: *Grotesque*

*Grotesque*'s storyline follows the lives of two street prostitutes, Hirata Yuriko and Satō Kazue from their high school days to their murder by a customer, Zhang (although Zhang claims that he is not the killer of Kazue in his confession). The narrative voice throughout the story is that of Yuriko's sister who remains nameless. She recounts the lives of Yuriko, Kazue, and herself to a listener, presumably a journalist. In her narration, she provides the journalist, thus the readers, with Yuriko's and Kazue's diaries and the confession of the murderer Zhang. At the end of the narrative, we learn that Yuriko's sister herself has become a street prostitute. The whole story is written in the first person. Yuriko's sister, Yuriko, Kazue, and Zhang take turns telling the story from her or his own perspective. Chapter 1, 2, 4, 6, and the final chapter comprise Yuriko's sister's narration; Chapter 3, Yuriko's journal; Chapter 5, Zhang's confession; Chapter 7, Kazue's journal. This particular narrating technique by Kirino makes *Grotesque* more offbeat and bewildering. Her work deals with the subject matter of female deviance and offers meticulous and multi-layered psychological descriptions of the female protagonists.

*Grotesque* is a story inspired by an incident known as the 東電 OL 殺人事件 *Tōden OL satsujin jiken* (Murder of Watanabe Yasuko). Oyvor Nyborg (2012) has

explored some of *Grotesque*'s plots' links with real life events, such as Mitsuru and the Aum Shinrikyo Sarin Gas Attack, and Kazue and the Murder of Watanabe Yasuko in one chapter of her thesis. Nyborg (2012) suggests that Kirino bases *Grotesque*'s narrative on the cruel reality of modern Japanese society in order to reveal the problematic situations occurring in such a competitive environment (70). My thesis intends to focus on feminist issues embedded in the narrative and therefore will not cover the correspondences between *Grotesque*'s plots and the actual events.

Given the rich content of *Grotesque*, there are other elements that may appeal to readers, such as the lives of 在日外国人 *zainichi gaikokujin* (foreigners in Japan including those enter and stay illegally: e.g., Zhang) and ハーフ *hāfu* (Japanese children of mixed parentage: e.g., Yuriko and Yuriko's sister). Moreover, Kristina Iwata-Weickgenan (2012) suggests that Kirino is active in practicing contemporary proletarian literature by speaking for the "working poor" in her works (e.g., *OUT*, 1997 and *Metabola*, 2007) (for more references see Iwata-Weickgenan 2012) (142). In *Grotesque*, we can also find elements of class conflict (e.g., the isolation of middle-class students at Q School). This and other similar scholarship may therefore demand the exploration of issues of ethnicity and class in *Grotesque*'s narrative. Nevertheless, this thesis will focus on the feminist issues raised by Kirino in *Grotesque* from the perspective of feminism and urban theory. The analyses will place the central emphasis on women's experiences in urban space, leaving those issues which are secondary to my main argument to future research.

## The Framework of Patriarchy

The notion of “patriarchy/ patriarchal” will frequently appear in this thesis because the rebellion against patriarchy by women is central to *Grotesque*’s narrative. Patriarchy is an essential notion in critical discourse and can be applied effectively to support many interpretive analyses. Therefore I will define the meaning of patriarchy in the context of this study before going further.

In *Grotesque*, Kirino uses dense words such as “家父長 *kafuchō*”, “社会 *shakai*”, and “男の社会 *otoko no shakai*” without clarification. I emphasize these words with boldface in the below quotations of both the original and the English translation. For example, [Yuriko’s sister:] “和恵の父親の言い方はまさに**家父長**の皮を被った世間だとわたしにはわかったのです” (I saw through the way Kazue’s father talked that he was definitely hiding behind the mask of a **patriarchy** order) (Kirino 2003:118)<sup>1</sup>. [Yuriko’s sister:] “あの父親が代弁する**社会**に狙撃された痕” (the scar of having been shot by **that society** which fathers represent) (Kirino 2003:121)<sup>2</sup>. [Kazue:] “あたしが知った**男の社会**というものはひどく権威に弱く、権威を持った人間は必ずや馬鹿になる” (In **the men’s world** that I knew, men have a weak spot for authority, and the ones who possessed authority would definitely become idiots) (Kirino 2003:437)<sup>3</sup>. Kirino also uses pronouns that indicate the sexes “男 *otoko*” and “女 *onna*” to make generalizations about larger groups of characters in the narration sequences. For instance, [Yuriko’s sister:] “男もまた、そういう女の

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<sup>1</sup> This part has been cut from the English translation. For more information, please see the note at the end of this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The English translation: “Yet I can still feel the way Kazue father’s glare bored into my back like a bullet that night” (Kirino 2008:95).

<sup>3</sup> The English translation: “From what I knew of their world, most men who were obedient of authority figures, as well as those who had earned authority positions, were always idiots” (Kirino 2008:375).

感情を受け止めざるを得ない時もあるのです” (There are times when **men** have to accept such feelings in **women**) (Kirino 2003:536)<sup>4</sup>.

“Patriarchalism” is a set of principles which dominates Japanese familial and social operations. This ideological orthodoxy has guided social relations in both the private and public sectors in Japan since the Tokugawa period (1603-1867) (Raddeker 1997:21). Different from the Western notion of patriarchy, which emphasizes gender differences, the code of patriarchalism or paternalism in Japanese culture has its core in Confucianism, in which families are considered as units of society. The hierarchy of a patriarchal society emphasizes “fixed and eternal binary distinctions between heaven and earth, rulers and ruled, fathers and sons, men and women” (Raddeker 1997:22). In such a society, women and children are put in a vulnerable place where they are relatively inferior to men in social and economic terms. This in turn determines the “cause” that the female characters in *Grotesque* fight to attain. Thus the figures of the Father (e.g., Kazue’s father, Yuriko’s father) and men (e.g., prostitutes’ clients) in general are the target of women’s rebellion in the narrative. To implement the rebellion against patriarchy, the female characters’ resistance starts out with family units (e.g., family relations fall apart) and then expands to society (e.g., the female characters engage in prostitution).

## Preview

In this thesis I will examine the representation of female beauty and its impact

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<sup>4</sup> The English translation: “[...] but then men have the capacity for countering such feelings in a woman” (Kirino 2008:467).

on women's experiences in urban space in the narrative of *Grotesque*. I identify Yuriko's sister, Yuriko, and Kazue as three heroines (or anti-heroines)<sup>5</sup> and focus my analysis regarding beauty/ un beauty on their characterization. Expanding on Amanda Seaman's insight concerning marginalized women represented in a socio-spatial dimension, I employ Maeda Ai's methodology and Henri Lefebvre's theories of space to locate the lives of these three (anti-) heroines in different regions of Tokyo, and further explore dichotomies, as listed in Table 1.1 (on page 10 of this thesis). The dichotomies are represented in the female characters' experiences of living in urban space, which I have termed *machigurashi*<sup>6</sup>.

I argue that location and space condition women's urban experiences, and that women's self-exploitation of their beauty and sexuality serve as mobile means for them in *Grotesque*'s narrative. The patriarchal society dominates women by the means of placing them, by which women end up separating into different categories based on their physical appearance. Furthermore, three female characters strike to reserve spaces of resistance, contend for mobility, and challenge the patriarchal demarcation, each find their own reasons to turn to prostitution.

The main body of this thesis consists of seven chapters. I will first examine the characterization as this is the foundation for further analysis of the characters' psychological activities and behaviors. Then I will explore the notion of beauty and un beauty in context of *Grotesque*, which forms the motivation for characters to turn to prostitution. Prostitution itself is also endowed with profound meaning by the narrative

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<sup>5</sup> Oyvor Nyborg in her thesis identifies Yuriko's sister, Yuriko, Kazue, and Mitsuru as four main characters. I justified my choice of focus in Chapter Two.

<sup>6</sup> The explanation for *machigurashi* is in Chapter 7 "Machigurashi at Q School".

of *Grotesque*—it is the link between the characters and the environment within which they live and struggle. The last section is about the characters’ urban experiences. This analysis threads together the elements of beauty/ un beauty and prostitution with the characters’ moving traces, telling their life stories of unconventional rebellion.

I suggest that in *Grotesque*, Kirino locates female experience and struggle in the urban space of contemporary Tokyo and questions what it means to be an un/beautiful woman in today’s Japanese society from an alternative perspective. To quote Annie Cranny-Francis (1992, writing about James Tiptree Jr. alias Alice Sheldon), “She gives voice to the real experience of women’s lives, in which they are, as de Lauretis puts it, both women (active subjects negotiating various discourses and their material practices in the course of their everyday lives) and Woman (the idealist, patriarchal construction of femininity which denies their autonomy and the very conditions of their existence) (de Lauretis 1987)” (171).

*Please see Table 1.1 on page 10.*

	<i>OUT</i>	<i>IN</i>
Social Stance	Outsider e.g., contract worker (契約社員)	Insider e.g., regular employee (正社員), employer
Gender	Feminine	Masculine/ Patriarchal
Power Relation	Subordinate	Dominate
Location	Private (interior) Domestic e.g., home	Public (exterior) Social e.g., restaurant, night club, corporation
Physical Appearance	Unbeautiful	Beautiful
Space	Marginal/ Peripheral	Central

*Table 1.1* The dichotomies in terms of urban space and location in *Grotesque*

Note:

Quotations from the text of *Grotesque* used in this thesis are taken from the English translation by Rebecca Copeland published by Vintage in 2008. Some content is omitted from this version. Therefore quotations in this thesis will also refer to the original Japanese text published by Bungei Shunjū in 2003. I have translated these

parts. Under certain circumstances, I provide my own English translation alongside with the Copeland translation and the Japanese original for the sake of my textual analysis.



## CHAPTER 2 ANTI-HEROINE

*Stories do not happen to women who are not “beautiful.”*

—Naomi Wolf

### Not Becoming a Heroine

What does being a heroine mean? Does a heroine have to be beautiful? Naomi Wolf (1991) claims that in the dominant/ patriarchal culture, stories only happen to beautiful women. In other words, heroines of novels are often endowed with physical attractiveness in order to enable the narratives. “[I]n Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*—why did the light of description fall on her, and not on any other of the healthy, untutored Wessex farm girls dancing in circle that May morning? She was seen and found beautiful, *so things happened to her*—riches, indigence, prostitution, true love, and hanging. Her life, to say the least, became interesting, while the hard-handed threshing girls around her, her friends, not blessed or cursed with her beauty, stayed in the muddy provinces to carry on the agricultural drudgery that is not the stuff of novels” (Italics in the original) (Wolf 1991:61).

Although Wolf has a point, so many heroines in literature beg the difference. At the top of the list may be Jane Eyre who is “poor, obscure, plain, and little”, or Elizabeth Bennet who is “not half so handsome” as her sister. However I intend not to base this denial on Victorian heroines and the like. This is because they are not portrayed as “beautiful” in conventional terms, but their “beauty” can be read in other ways. The Victorian heroines, as well as many other physically unattractive heroines, have what Ellen Lambert (1995) calls “*difficult* beauty”, which means their beauty is “difficult for us to perceive on the aesthetic level, and, on the physical level” (70).

Their beauty takes root in their inner personality. For instance, Elizabeth's "playfulness of her manner" and "the mobility of her whole person" attract Darcy (Lambert 2005:70). Taking Fanny Burreney's words in *Camilla* (1796) to describe characters who embody this difficult beauty, "though neither perfect nor regular, [...] it was not till [they were] absent the seizure was detected" (Lambert 2005:74-75). Their invisible beauty becomes tangible when their other traits sparkle.

Better examples of unbeautiful and even ugly heroines can be drawn from elsewhere. For instance, Ruth Patchett in Fay Weldon's *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil* (1983), and Mieko in *Onna men* (1958; *Masks*, 1983) by Enchi Fumiko. These heroines are not physically beautiful; nor do they have what Lambert terms "difficult beauty" to impress the opposite sex. Distinguished from the "not-handsome" Victorian heroines, they are far from "gentle, innocent, truthful womanhood" (Fahnestock 1981:326), and a marriage proposal from a gentleman is not what they are after. Monstrous and ugly women such as Ruth and Mieko allow for a new dynamic in these narratives. They serve as "anti-heroines", characters "with whom we might identify, but only in wilful resistance to prevailing codes of morality and behaviour" (Bennett & Royle 2009:70).

In *Grotesque*, Yuriko is doubtlessly beautiful, and things *do* happen to her—incest, dating for profit, prostitution, murder. However, Yuriko's sister and Kazue, who are not beautiful, play significant roles in the narrative as well. Not only judging from the length in the book taken up to portray Yuriko's sister and Kazue, but also in theory, it can be argued that these two characters are heroines as much as Yuriko is.

Some may identify Mitsuru as a main character as well, but Mitsuru does not serve as a “heroine”. As readers, we are not given a glimpse of her inner world in the form of an independent chapter in the book as we are of Yuriko’s sister, Yuriko, and Kazue. Moreover, in women-centered realistic novels, a heroine functions to pursue a coherent and integral self through the story, in other words, as a metaphor of self-realization (Brownstein 1994:xxii). Yuriko, Yuriko’s sister, and Kazue are all characters who go on the journey of searching and meeting their inner self, their “grotesque” side—to become prostitutes in the end. Mitsuru does not go through with this process, therefore cannot be categorized as a heroine.

Based on the controversial narrative and unconventional characterization applied in *Grotesque*, I identify the three female protagonists here as anti-heroines. A hero or heroine is defined as a character “with whom we [as readers] ‘identify’, with whom we sympathize or empathize, or whose position or role we imaginatively inhabit” (Bennett & Royle 2009:70). The conventional heroines represent feminine ideals at the time, and are generated for (female) readers to look up to as inspirational role models (Brownstein 1994), for example, *Jane Eyre*. The three female protagonists in *Grotesque*, like Ruth and Mieko, on the other hand, are portrayed as neither beautiful on the outside nor on the inside. They are physically hideous (even Yuriko loses her beauty in the end), asocial or unkind in nature, and degenerate: to conclude with one word, “grotesque”. As the title of the book indicates, these characters are created to provoke repulsion rather than inspiration. We can identify with them only in resistance to norms. Therefore, they become “anti-heroines” by definition.

I argue that the characterization of anti-heroine is essential to Kirino's resistance to the category of feminist literature which "reflects the essentialist, moralistic, and anti-male tendencies within the feminist movement" (Mori 1996:207). The same approach can be found in Takahashi Takako and Kōno Taeko's writing. Martellen Toman Mori's analysis of Takahashi's portraiture of anti-heroines which "challenges [the] polarized outlook" applies here as well, "Rather than celebrating femininity, her stories deconstruct stereotypes of female nature and desire, and thereby unsettle gender categories themselves. They debunk myths of women's innate disposition to such traditional feminine virtues as maternal feeling [e.g., Yuriko's abandonment of her son], empathy [e.g., Yuriko's sister's malice], sexual passivity [e.g., practice of prostitution], and nonviolence" (Mori 1996:207).

The figure of the anti-heroine is common in Japanese literature throughout history. The jealous, infatuated, and deviant Lady Rokujō in *Genji Monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*) may be the earliest anti-heroine in Japanese literature, followed by transmuted women in *kaidan* in the seventeenth and eighteenth century who inherit her characteristics. The leading anti-heroines in the modern period are the "Westernesque *femmes fatales*" (Levy's term 2006) who play with men's affection/ fetish, and are created by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, such as Sonoko and Mitsuko in *Manji* (1947; *Quicksand*, 1993), Naomi in *Chijin no ai* (1947; *Naomi*, 1985), Ikuko in *Kagi* (1956; *The Key*, 1960). In the contemporary period, anti-heroines begin to participate in more deviant and violent roles as murderers and avengers, for instance, Seno Kyōko in *Koori ko ka* (2006; *The glory of ice*) by Amano Setsuko, and Moriguchi Yūko in *Minato*

Kanae's *Kokuhaku* (2008; Confession).

However, one most notable difference between these examples of anti-heroine and the three heroines in *Grotesque* is that, Yuriko, Yuriko's sister, and Kazue are all *powerless*. Judging from these circumstances, the author Kirino denies the myth of the *femme fatale* (i.e., beauty/ sexuality empowers women). To be specific, unlike the beautiful *femme fatale* who conquers all that often appears in literary works and films, the female protagonists in *Grotesque* are anti-*femmes fatales*, grotesque monsters that are loathed by normal men. Eventually all three female characters must hold on to some traits they possess in order to survive. Yuriko is born with stunning beauty (“美貌 *bibō*” Kirino 2003:110). Nevertheless beauty does not endow her with power; instead, it increases her vulnerability. Born without beauty, Yuriko's sister uses malice (“悪意 *akui*” Kirino 2003:205) to protect herself, but her fortress disintegrates eventually because of her intolerable loneliness and isolation. For Kazue who is perfectly ordinary, it is her effort (“努力 *doryoku*” Kirino 2003:110). Kazue attempts to gain recognition by exerting herself in order to enter a good university and a good company, but in the end she becomes a victim of others' opinions and destroys herself. As Yuriko's sister says, “We live in a world where almost anything you try to accomplish will be met with failure. Am I wrong?” (Kirino 2008:86). The three (anti-) heroines all go down the same path, disregard their physical appearances. Resembling the characterization of Isabel Archer by Henry James, the characterization of such female characters in *Grotesque* reveals Kirino's empathy with “the situation of women who seek to outwit their cultural fates” but fail (Pollak 1993:11 quoted in Lamm

2011:249), and the common “cultural fates” shared by women represented in *Grotesque* is to be discussed in this thesis.

Furthermore, the unconventional beauty-oriented characterization enhances the representation of realist feminism in *Grotesque*. By abandoning the archetype of *femme fatale* and creating instead more lifelike female characters, Kirino enacts a gender discourse which contradicts that of patriarchal femininity (Cranny-Francis 1992:171). The anti-heroines are more appealing to readers. In order for the narrative to reflect social problems realistically, the characters have to be true to life as well. The following section will provide analysis of each (anti-) heroine’s basic characterization.

*Truly man is the king of beasts, for his brutality exceeds theirs. We live by the death of others: We are burial places!*

—Leonardo Da Vinci

### Wild Kingdom

“Before we women can write, declared Virginia Woolf, we must ‘kill’ the ‘angel in the house’ ” in order to break free from the patriarchal tradition of writing (Gilbert & Gubar 1979:17). Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) that women writers should go beyond the binary definition (i.e. angel/monster) of femininity in characterization so they can expand the boundaries of their creativity (17). The image of pleasing and meek Japanese womanhood is once again shattered by a tale of female deviance, *Grotesque*. Yet, in *Grotesque* the three anti-heroines have gone over the top of any feminine expectations. They are neither

angels nor monsters; the most shocking part of all is that they are portrayed vividly and substantially as humans, flawed, malicious, and mortal humans. Kirino's novelistic realist approach to characterization serves to produce lifelike female characters and to challenge aesthetic ideals created by male artists (Gilbert & Gubar 1979:17). This situation intensifies the female protagonists' struggle.

*Grotesque* features an indifferent narrative voice, just as in Kirino's other works. Illustrating her characters from a distant perspective allows Kirino to explore the full extent of ugliness within human nature presented in the work. Here Kirino has the characters (e.g., Yuriko's sister and Professor Kijima) use metaphors related to biology repeatedly. It is also worth noticing that Professor Kijima is a biology teacher in the narrative. The characters are coldly made analogous to other species, all living in wild nature, fighting for territory, eating or being eaten. The story-telling functions as cameras tracking these creatures, and readers become the audiences of the old nature television program *Wild Kingdom*, looking in on their struggles and death from the sidelines. To hint the essence of the narrative, the covers for the original *Grotesque* published by Bungei Shunjū in 2006 were designed to be an illustration of the food chain that includes predators and prey (see Image 2.1). The following is a textual analysis of the three main characters which aims to construct the foundation for further analysis. Moreover, as the characters are depicted as animals, the urban space of Tokyo turns into a brutal battlefield for these characters where they must bring their A game in order to survive.



Image 2.1 The covers of the pocket book edition of *Grotesque* published by Bungei Shunjū in 2006

*Of all the animals, man is the only one that is cruel. He is the only one that inflicts pain for the pleasure of doing it.*

—Mark Twain

#### 1. Scavenger: Yuriko's sister

In the opening of *Grotesque*, Yuriko's sister confesses that, “Whenever I meet a man, I catch myself wondering what our child would look like if we were to make a baby” (Kirino 2008:3). However, Yuriko's sister is repelled by the idea of how “men and women perform to produce these children” (Kirino 2008:4). Her view of the production of a baby is simply biological—“When a sperm and an egg unite, they create an entirely new cell” (Kirino, 2008:3). At the very beginning of the narrative, Yuriko's sister's clinical imagination of fertility indicates that she is emotionally detached and remote<sup>7</sup>. This characteristic suggests that she could survive by preying on

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<sup>7</sup> Yuriko's sister's emotional remoteness toward men and fertility may be exaggerated because she tries to avoid competition with Yuriko (also refer to Chapter 4 “Unbeauty”).

the dead without remorse or guilt. And from then, she pictures a world which is like an “artist’s re-creation of the Burgess Shale fauna”, where “the bizarre children I have produced from my phantom unions with men” swim in the dark sea (Kirino 2008:4). This hypothetical illustration is later referred to as well.

But in the world of my hypothetical chart, Yuriko and I and our step-brothers are all swimming vigorously in the bright blue of the brackish sea. If I draw another analogy to the Burgess diagram of the Cambrian Period I love so much, Yuriko, with her beautiful face, is queen of the watery realm. So she has to be one of those animals that devours all others. That would make her the *Anomalocaris*, I suppose, the ancestor to the crustacean, a kind of creature with massive forelegs, like a lobster’s. [...] Me? Without a doubt I’d be the *Hallucigenia*, the thing that crawls through the mud of the ocean floor covered in seven sets of quills, looking for all the world like a hairbrush. The *Hallucigenia* feeds on carrion? I didn’t know that! So it survives by eating dead creatures? Well, then, it fits me to a T, since I live by soiling the memories of the corpses of the past.

(Kirino 2008:101-102)

In her chart, Yuriko’s sister makes herself a *Hallucigenia*, a kind of scavenger that feeds on refuse and other decaying organic matter. Though she admits it fits her well because she lives by “soiling the memories of the corpses of the past”, Yuriko’s

sister being portrayed as scavenger might also hint at other significant characteristics she possesses. Yuriko's sister is like a vulture that could catch the scent of degeneration and death. Instead of showing empathy for the decayed, she takes pleasure in Yuriko and Kazue's misfortune. Commenting on Yuriko's murder, she says that, "Yuriko had been a monster all her life; it was only natural that her death would be unusual. [...] Fortune may shine brightly on a woman like that, but the shadow cast is long and dark. It was inevitable that misfortune would come eventually" (Kirino 2008:8). Explaining her relationship with Kazue, she claims that she could sense the negative energy around her and draw it to herself. "I got a dark feeling from [Kazue]—a negative energy so palpable I felt I could take it in my hand. It was this sensitivity of mine that attracted Kazue to me" (Kirino 2008:8). From this perspective, she is the scavenger active around dying animals, circling over them for their carrion. She even admits that she has contributed to Kazue's death in the long run for leading her to Yuriko (Kirino 2008:8). As Yuriko writes in her journal, Yuriko's sister is "self-centered" with "malicious observation" and "solid defense system" who enjoys watching others falling apart (Kirino 2003:147). After Yuriko descends to a life of street-prostitution, Yuriko's sister shows unprecedented enthusiasm in Yuriko's life. [Yuriko:] "I daresay my sister must take great delight in my decline. That's why she calls me all the time" (Kirino 2008:126). As Yuriko's sister concludes in the final chapter, "I was a woman sensitive to the shadows in others. [...] The dregs that I live off were only what I gleaned from other people, their hatred and confusion" (Kirino 2008:462).

Moreover, Yuriko's sister is the one who pushes Yuriko and Kazue to the edge. She bullies Yuriko when they were little and informs against Yuriko to the school, getting her expelled. She isolates Yuriko from the family she has formed with their Grandfather. Yuriko's sister's behavior has the effect of isolating Yuriko from the home, thus indirectly pushing Yuriko to Johnson and other men who are eager to exploit her sexuality, eventually leading to her destruction. She instigates Kazue to chase after Kijima Takashi as well as to lose weight which aggravates her eating disorder and mental instability. When Kazue returns to school after sick leave, she shows signs of breakdown and becomes the target of classmates' ridicule. [Yuriko's sister:] "[Kazue] turned back to look at me for support. I instinctively looked away, but not before I could sense she was thinking. *Help me. Get me out of here!* I suddenly remembered that snowy night in the mountains when Yuriko had chased after me. That overwhelming impulse to use all my strength to ward off something horrible. The exhilarating feeling following the moment I thrust her away. I wanted to do the same to Kazue now, so badly I could hardly stand it" (Kirino 2008:202-203). Yuriko's sister repels Yuriko out of spite for the strong and mistreats Kazue out of contempt for the weak. In other words, she can neither befriend with people has higher status than her, nor those of lower status than her, because she is both envious and malicious in her nature.

*There is no exquisite beauty...without some strangeness in proportion.*

—Edgar Allan Poe

## 2. Mutation: Yuriko

Yuriko, in her sister's hypothetical chart, is without a doubt a predator. Yuriko's sister says so because she attributes monstrous beauty to Yuriko, beauty which often crushes men. Johnson is divorced by his wife Masami because of his affair with Yuriko and thus loses his reputation, money, and job. Professor Kijima's approval of Yuriko's admission eventually costs him his job. Johnson goes from working as a foreign securities trader to becoming a third-rate English teacher; and Kijima descends from working as a teacher at a prestigious high-school to becoming a dormitory manager. Both Johnson and Kijima are preys of Yuriko's beauty.

“[Professor Kijima] is the professor who approved my admission to the Q School system. On the day of the interview, when I entered the classroom, there was a huge brown turtle that they were raising in an aquarium. I'd just flown in from Switzerland and was about to die from exhaustion. On top of that, my marks on the entrance exam had been really bad. I knew I wasn't going to get in so I was totally depressed. And then I saw the turtle. There was this snail crawling slowly along the glass of the aquarium, and the turtle just stuck out its neck and snapped the snail up, right in front of my eyes. Professor Kijima asked me what kind of turtle it was. I told him it was a tortoise, which apparently was the right answer. Since Professor Kijima is the biology teacher, that was enough to satisfy him and he decided to pass

me.”

Johnson erupted in laughter, letting the bourbon dribble out the side of his mouth.

“Ha! It wouldn’t have made a difference if you’d called it a tortoise or a terrapin. ‘What’s this square thing?’ Kijima could have asked. ‘Oh, it’s a desk,’ you’d have said, and he’d have passed you!”

Johnson was convinced that I was crazy about sex and too stupid to do schoolwork. Just like Kijima’s son. Just like my sister. [...]

“I named the tortoise Mark, after you,” I told him.

Johnson shrugged his shoulders exaggeratedly. “I’d rather be the snail. Let’s name the tortoise Yuriko, after a woman who lives off of eating men. I bet Kijima what’s-his-name would like to crawl into the aquarium and get snapped up by Yuriko.”

(Kirino 2008:150-151)

However, Yuriko is not simply a predator—“a woman who lives off of eating men”; she also gets eaten herself. When Yuriko returns to Japan and starts to live with Johnson, Johnson whispers in her ear, “I’ve finally captured you” (Kirino 2008:129). Yuriko reflects on the scene of the snail being eaten by the tortoise, realizing that her physical appearance makes her attractive but also consumable (Kirino 2003:156). [Yuriko:] “Captured. My body shocked at my reflection of the snail eaten by the tortoise. The grinded shell inside tortoise’s mouth. I was the snail put into aquarium. A

woman to be consumed by men. Unless I accepted my fate, I could never be happy” (Kirino 2003:156; Kirino 2008:129). Then becoming a prostitute seems inevitable for Yuriko who is too young to know how to control and utilize her overwhelming beauty. In and even outside school, everyone assumes that Yuriko is stupid and treats her as a “little plaything” because they think it would be unnatural and unfair for her to be both beautiful and smart at the same time (Kirino 2008:134). Facing her inflicted fate, Yuriko feels mentally fatigued as if she could foresee her decline with a consumed body after midlife, “I was fifteen years old. And in an instant I had become an old woman” (Kirino 2008:129). Therefore “predator” is not an appropriate term to illustrate a woman such as Yuriko whose youth and beauty are depleted by men.

Yuriko is rather a mutated species as Professor Kijima points out (Kirino 2008:311). In Yuriko’s sister’s words, “[W]hat if, when the sperm and the egg unite, they are full of animosity for each other? Wouldn’t the creature they produce be contrary to expectation and abnormal as a result?” (Kirino 2008:4). In the narrative, Yuriko is seen as abnormal for her striking beauty. Captivated by her beauty, Professor Kijima admits Yuriko to Q School for his curiosity in seeing a mutant among an otherwise “normal” population. Professor Kijima is full of regret for having done that later in the narrative. He writes to Mitsuru, “I should have known better than to introduce such an abnormally beautiful creature into a population of her normal peers” (Kirino 2008:311). Because of Yuriko’s existence as a mutated species in normal population, other individuals are influenced and change the mode of their own living. Kazue is an example of how a normal individual gets crushed under Yuriko’s

tremendous beauty.

*Almost all absurdity of conduct arises from the imitation of those whom we cannot resemble.*

—Samuel Johnson

### 3. Parasite: Kazue

Kazue can be seen as a parasite because she is dependent on her external environment and craves attention and recognition at the cost of her dignity and even her own life. When Kazue is unable to receive the attention from the outside that she expects, she collapses emotionally in the same way that a parasite withers away without its host. [Professor Kijima:] “When population figures are low, individual life-forms learn to survive independently in isolation. When individuation intensifies, life-forms develop group survival strategies, changing in size and structure as they do. But girl students can’t help but feel that they can’t survive in isolation” (Kirino 2008:313). Kazue is one of those girl students who cannot survive in isolation. She has a strong desire to be “in” as she knows that she is an “outsider” at Q School (also refer to Chapter 7 “Machigurashi at Q School” for the notion of “outsider”)(Kirino 2008:170).

Kazue has been a parasite even before she meets Yuriko. To imitate the “inner circle” at Q School, Kazue embroiders her ordinary socks with red thread to make it look like the Ralph Lauren logo (Kirino 2008:49). She wants to be considered as coming from a wealthy family. Yuriko’s sister explains, “Kazue’s brand of rationalism,

which tried to accommodate itself to the wealth of the school, was ridiculous. Kazue has smallness of character ingrained within her. That was why nobody liked her” (Kirino 2008:50). Kazue’s efforts to fit in are not appreciated but only make her situation even worse. [Mitsuru:] “Kazue put all her energy into trying to fit in with the others. [...] But it was her very determination that marked her as a target for bullying. The harder she tried the worse it was” (Kirino 2008:341).

After seeing the “prefect” Yuriko, Kazue begins to imitate Yuriko wishing to become popular and finally loses sight of her authentic self. [Kazue:] “I wish I looked like Yuriko! If I’d been born with a face like that... I can’t even imagine how much better my life would be [...] if I could get where she is without having to study, I’d be glad to become a monster too” (Kirino 2008:180).

After Yuriko enters Q School, Kazue starts paying more attention toward perfecting her physical appearance to imitate Yuriko. She tries to curl her hair and use cosmetic glue to give herself double eyelids. However she only makes herself a laughingstock among her peers. Yuriko’s sister suggests that, “[T]his new transformation was thanks to Yuriko, which made it all the worse” (Kirino 2008:178). Kazue even stalks Yuriko (Kirino 2008:194). Kazue’s motivations for this stalking remain unknown in the narrative. It might be that Kazue tries to watch Yuriko more closely in order to imitate her even more fully, or purely out of her own curiosity or worship for someone she is trying so hard to become. Whatever Kazue’s motivation is, her life goes downhill after meeting this seemingly perfect, while at the same time monster-like, woman—Yuriko. She builds up her sense of self-worth and chooses her

path based on Yuriko's charismatic power over her.

To win men's attention like Yuriko does, Kazue begins a dual life as an OL (short for "office lady" or female white-collar worker) in the daytime and a prostitute at night, imitating her role model Yuriko who has been sleeping with men for money ever since her high school days. Kazue makes her street name "Yuri" after Yuriko (Kirino 2008:350). On some level, Kazue is exploiting Yuriko, her metaphorical host, as the source of her imitation. Even in her late thirties, Kazue still lives dependently under the shadow of Yuriko and maintains the illusion of becoming her. Moreover, Kazue is delusional regarding her own sexual charm and gradually loses control. [Kazue:] "I stepped into the tiny bathroom and changed into a blue miniskirted suit. [...] Next I put on a long-haired wig. The hair fell all the way to my waist. Kazue Satō had turned into Yuri. I felt I could do anything" (Kirino 2008:353). Kazue even thinks of herself as Superman Clark Kent with a secret identity. [Kazue:] "I was fashionably thin and men paid attention to me. I had it all, which in and of itself was extremely cool, I thought. By day I was respected for my brains; by night I was desired for my body. I felt like superwoman! It made me grin as I thought about it" (Kirino 2008:360). The ironic contrast of "By day a businesswoman; by night a whore" empowers Kazue's vanity (Kirino 2008:377). "Tonight I look beautiful, full of life" (Kirino 2008:377).

In the company she works for, Kazue finds herself another example of perfection as well as object of imitation, in other words, her new host—Yamamoto. "Yamamoto was a typical A-student, and was good-looking too. She could easily

accomplish any task assigned to her. [...] I kept my eye on Yamamoto. If Yamamoto bought a new suit, I'd ask her where she got it and buy the same one for myself. I also imitated Yamamoto's signature gesture—pressing her fingers against her forehead when she is deep in thought. In meetings when Yamamoto brought up a question I'd immediately raise my hand to propose one as well. When the supervisor asked Yamamoto to his office, I'd feel so disturbed that I couldn't do any work, wondering instead whether the supervisor was assigning her some special task behind my back, or praising her ability" (Kirino 2003:425). Yamamoto replaces Yuriko as Kazue's new host. Kazue watches Yamamoto and imitates her to the finest detail in the hope of getting approval from her co-workers.

Deep down in Kazue's heart, she is crying out loud for recognition especially from men. [Kazue:] *"I want to be respected. I want to be someone whom everyone notices. [...] Someone speak to me. Call out to me and take me out. Please, please, I'm begging you, say something kind to me. Tell me I'm pretty, tell me I'm sweet"* (Italics in the original) (Kirino 2008:365, 370). In Yuriko's sister's words, "It's not just that she didn't see the world around her. She couldn't even see herself" (Kirino 2008:211). Kazue's tragedy lies in her lack of introspection and independence. In chasing after recognition, Kazue has lost herself. Yuriko's sister also declares quite rightly, "A woman who does not know herself has no choice other than to live with other people's evaluations. But no one can adapt perfectly to public opinion. And herein lies the source of their destruction" (Kirino 2008:211). Kazue's life ends in her lifelong imitation of her role model—she dies in the same way as Yuriko does, being

killed by a customer.

In conclusion, creating anti-heroines is the key to the heroine-portraiture in *Grotesque*. The biological analogue shows female characters' adaption to the cruel environment they are surrounded. The primary characterization analysis suggests that disparity in physical appearances and growing environments result in different characteristics and behaviors. It seems that three anti-heroines go on separate ways for life. Yet, their paths cross and fates united in the end. This distinctive characterization enables Kirino to use a specific tone to represent beauty and interpersonal relationships, which make *Grotesque* stand out vis-à-vis other literary works with themes of prostitution and female struggle. The following two chapters will examine the representation of beauty and un beauty, and how the element of (un)beauty drives characters apart and reunite them eventually, thus underscores the gender issues in *Grotesque*.



## CHAPTER 3 BEAUTY

*Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.*

—Dorothy Parker

### Divide and Conquer

Three centuries ago, Edmund Burke wrote down the following words in *A Philosophic Enquiry Into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), “I call beauty a social quality; for where women and men, and not only they, but when other animals give us a sense of joy and pleasure in beholding them, (and there are many that do so) they inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them” (Burke 1958:42-43). Burke’s aesthetic treatise is later criticized by eighteenth-century feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft and Hannah More for the anti-social consequences of fetishizing female beauty (de Freitas Boe 2011). Yet ironically Burke’s view that “beauty made social order possible” is still practiced in the contemporary Japanese society represented in *Grotesque*.

Beauty is an essential element in the narrative of *Grotesque*. The narrative has a great deal of exploring the notion of female beauty in contemporary Japanese society. The story revolves around Yuriko’s monstrous beauty, and the lives of her and those around her impacted by that beauty.

Yuriko possesses beauty when she is only a child. [Yuriko’s sister:] “Her brown hair clung to her exceptionally white forehead. Her brows arched in a bow. And her large eyes slanted downward slightly. Child though she was, the bridge of her nose was

straight and perfectly formed. Her lips were plump, just like a doll's. Even among interracial children, a face as perfectly proportioned as Yuriko's was hard to find" (Kirino 2008:18).

Yuriko's outstanding beauty revealed at a young age places her in the whirlpool of men's desire too early. [Yuriko:] "When I was a girl I was abundantly endowed with that certain something that attracts older men. I had the power to arouse a man's so-called Lolita complex" (Kirino 2008:112). Yuriko loses her virginity to her uncle Karl when she is fourteen. This occurs in spite of the fact that in Yuriko's diaries, she writes about how she has intentionally produced the opportunity of them being together alone and how she has enjoyed their sexual intercourse. Having sex with a minor is legally defined as "rape" in many civilized nations all over the world, including Japan and the United States. As much as Yuriko is reluctant to admit that she is "used" by Karl, she has been clearly disappointed because she fails to receive what she expects from him, or any other men with whom she has intercourse. [Yuriko:] "Whatever is sacred to men disappears once they've slept with it. As for me, who descended to the position of a sex object, I was always treated this way by men who used to worship me" (Kirino 2003:141). "The awe and admiration that I had found in Karl's gaze disappeared after he had finished with me. [...] Maybe that is why I am always in search of a new man. Maybe that is why I am now a prostitute" (Kirino 2008:115). Yuriko's beauty attracts men but fails to keep them, and thus she turns to seducing more men in order to prove her beauty. She takes passive pleasure in being looked at by men. Yuriko's beauty becomes a subject of what Freud called

“scopophilia”, the love of looking (Lambert 1995:19). Yuriko thus becomes a victim of the male gaze and a prisoner of her own beauty.

[Yuriko:] “And in the pupils of my wide-open eyes is something I no longer possess: a fear of men and a longing. I seem to project an uneasiness over the fate that has befallen me. [...] A woman to be consumed by men. Unless I accepted my fate, I could never be happy” (Kirino 2008:124, 129). The character Yuriko, with her beauty, her profession as a prostitute, and her destined “fate” symbolizes the intense relationship between feminine beauty and male desire. Yuriko is imprisoned by her own beauty. As Mary Wollstonecraft proposes, women are “slaves to their bodies, and glory in their subjection [to male desire]” (1793:72). In contemporary terms, women should abandon the patriarchal ideal of feminine beauty in order to gain social equality (Wollstonecraft 1793). “Taught from their infancy that beauty is a woman’s scepter, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round in its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison” (Wollstonecraft 1793:74). “If women do not resign the arbitrary power of beauty—they will prove that they have *less* mind than men” (Italics in the original) (Wollstonecraft 1793:35). Patriarchal aesthetic principles which celebrate feminine beauty and make beauty a “social quality” that places women in an inferior state.

However, Yuriko is left with little choice than to utilize her beauty. Because of her stunning looks, she is deprived of other characteristics such as intelligence or creativity. Yuriko knows that she is a born plaything for people (“他人の玩具”) and she plays along with it (Kirino 2003:164). It is the society’s presumption of women which constrains Yuriko—women are allowed a mind or a body but not both (Wolf

1991:59). This is also reflected and reinforced through cultural products in patriarchal society, for example, the heroines in culture, Helena and Hermia in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Glinda and Elphaba in the Broadway musical *The Wicked* (Wolf 1991:59-60). Lori Lefkowitz (1987) also notices unequal consequences for the sexes in terms of character. "To say that a man has character is to admire what is unconventional about him; to say the same of a woman is to imply that she lacks beauty" (Lefkowitz 1987:13). The narrative has Yuriko explain the reason for her lack of character herself. "I began to train myself to suppress my subjectivity when being with others. Who would have taken a doll-like person seriously anyway?" (Kirino 2003:164). Yuriko yields to what society expects of her, to be beautiful but nothing more. She gives up on the enrichment of her mind, and turns instead to "cashing out" her body.

Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth: How the Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (1991) suggests that women's beauty is converted into currency by patriarchy and is in circulation among men (Wolf 1991:12, 20). Examples of common phrases in English are, "She looks like a million dollars", and "You don't need money with a face like that". Yuriko's beauty endows her with wealth in a world of male desire. She starts to engage in 援助交際 *enjo kōsai* (dating for profit), when she is in middle school and continues in high school. "I just commodified my body. That was all" (私は単に自分を商品化していたに過ぎない) (Kirino 2003:164). "Beauty" is a means of patriarchal control over women and aims to create competition and separation in women (Wolf 1991:12-14). The interpersonal relationship among female characters

represented in *Grotesque* is a good example of isolation caused by beauty, which will be discussed later in this section. Wolf asserts that, “The beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men’s institutions and institutional power” (1991:13). It shows that, on the surface, the beauty myth is an aesthetic matter, but deep down it is political and economic.

When Yuriko’s sister sees her again at Q School, she is amazed that Yuriko has become even more attractive. [Yuriko’s sister:] “I hadn’t seen Yuriko for some time, and in the interim she had grown even more beautiful. Her breasts were now so full it looked as if they would come bursting through the white blouse of her school uniform at any minute, and her hips, high and round, pressed tightly against her tiny tartan skirt. Her legs were long and straight and perfectly shaped. And there was her face: her white skin, her brown eyes, and her expression, so soft and beautiful; she looked as though she were constantly getting ready to ask a question. Even an immaculately crafted doll could not have been as lovely” (Kirino 2008:168). This description focuses on Yuriko’s development of secondary sexual characteristics in adolescence—her full breasts, rounded hips, and slim legs. In this description, Yuriko’s body is objectified by its beauty, while the listener and thus readers are masculinized as spectators by the text (Lefkowitz 1987:18). From the perspective of the spectator (i.e., the male gaze), Yuriko has been transformed from a cute doll to an alluring sexual being, and is sexually desired by almost every man. Lefkowitz asserts that, “Physical descriptions, of beauty in particular, enforce the power of male spectatorship” (1987:18). Because there is no universal aesthetic standard (even though the Western ideal of beauty may be dominant)

(Wolf 1991:12) and beauty is culturally constructed, “beauty” in literary works is created to appeal to the authority of pre-existing ideals through the rhetoric of description (Lefkovitz 1987:18). This description of Yuriko which heavily depends on her sexual nature implies that her “beauty” is prepared for the benefit of men and to be consumed by men.

Furthermore, women with great beauty such as Tess are more likely to be victimized by their beauty in forms of sexual exploitation, in Wolf’s words, “*things happened to her*” due to her own beauty (Italics in the original) (1991:61). Women’s physical beauty is often used as excuse for men’s bestiality. Disney’s 1996 adaption of Victor Hugo’s *Notre-Dame de Paris* (1831; *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, 1833) has Claude Frollo sing a song in which he blames Esmeralda’s beauty for his crime, “It’s not my fault. I’m not to blame. It is the gypsy girl, the witch who sent this flame. It’s not my fault. If in God’s plan He made the Devil so much stronger than the man. [...] But she will be mine, or she will burn”. Tess and Esmeralda’s beauty involve them in misfortune. In contemporary popular culture, there are also films which discuss this paradigm, for example, the Korean film *Beautiful* (2008) directed by Juhn Jai-hong. This film deals with elements of cursed beauty, unwanted attention, rape, self-disfigurement, and suicide. Even the heroine’s corpse is molested by staff at the morgue in the ending. The film is a product of artistic exaggeration, but the alarming line from the offender who has raped the heroine, “I did it because you’re so beautiful” has implications in reality. As Binder (1995) suggests, in judicial narratives of sexual assaults, the imagery of female beauty and male bestiality inevitably reinforces the

dominant assumptions about sexuality (265). There is a “cultural fascination with beauty, violence, and sexuality” (Binder 1995:265). Violence and abuse against beauty seem to be justified by the cultural fascination. Cranny-Francis (1992) suggests that patriarchal masculinity is structured as the audience for the objectification of women, and thus women are transformed as “individual subjects into objects for male sexual gratification” (104). And violence against women is justified through the dehumanization of women and is represented as “the fault of the victim” (Cranny-Francis 1992:105). With her blessed as well as cursed beauty, Yuriko yields to her victimized “fate”. She confirms this many times in the narrative, identifying herself as “A woman to be consumed by men” (Kirino 2008:129).

On the surface, Yuriko’s life is made much easier than her ordinary-looking peers (e.g., Kazue) by people who judge her based on her beauty *only*. [Masami (Johnson’s wife):] “Yuriko-chan, smile! You’re so pretty when you smile. If you smile you’re sure to pass the interview. Well, it’s a paper test, but in name only. I know they’ll want to have you around for a long, long time since you’re so pretty” (Kirino 2008:128). So Masami says to Yuriko before her interview for Q School’s admission. Although Yuriko doubts if a smile could help, she finally gains admission because of her looks, even though her scores are “the worst of the bunch” in the entrance exam (Kirino 2008:128). The cheerleader squad wants Yuriko too, just to show her off and use her for advertising. [Yuriko:] “Nakanishi ignored me and lifted my uniform skirt to get a look at my legs. ‘Your legs are long and pretty. You really are a perfect beauty. We have to show you off!’” (Kirino 2008:135). Yuriko, to the cheerleader squad, is

only a 看板娘 *kanban musume* (Japanese phrase which means signboard girl, usually referring to attractive waitress) to garner attention.

The Q School is therefore an epitome of Japanese contemporary society which goes by the social order largely affected by physical appearance, especially women's beauty, as in Edmund Burke's eighteenth-century world. Yuriko's sister comments on the inequality of the social environment they are in: "To be honest, personality, aptitude, or anything like that, are only weapons cultivated by mediocre species in order to survive this competitive society. For me, it's my malice. For Mitsuru, it's her brain. We've had to temper ourselves in the struggle to survive in Q School, because we are not monsters who can suppress and overthrow others by their looks" (Kirino 2003:205). Furthermore, because of the inequality caused by society's biased attitude toward women's appearances, women tend to blame the beautiful ones among them for the unfair treatment they experience. And this is how the beauty myth keeps women "separate from one another and subservient to male desire" (Fisher 2008:69). Within the patriarchal discourses of beauty, a vicious circle is formed to ensure that female beauty is objectified and exploited.

*True beauty is something that attacks, overpowers, robs, and finally destroys.*

—*Mishima Yukio*

*La Beauté c'est la Mort.*

—*Mishima Yukio*

## The Flesh

“I have no idea how best to describe her [Yuriko], but if I were to come up with one word, it would be *monster*. She was terrifyingly beautiful. You may doubt that a person can be so beautiful that she is monstrous. [...] People who saw Yuriko were first overwhelmed by how gorgeous she was. But gradually her absolute beauty would grow tiresome, and before long they would find her very presence—with her perfect features—unnerving” (Italics in the English original) (Kirino 2008:6-7). This is what Yuriko’s sister says about Yuriko’s beauty, a kind of beauty so overwhelming that it results in extreme reactions such as uneasiness and fear. Moreover as mentioned earlier, Yuriko, as a beautiful mutant, is the “abject”.

Julia Kristeva explores the implication of abjection in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) and defines the abject as something that disturbs the social order, “the dissolution of boundaries, limits, identity, and flesh” (Covino 2000 n.p.). Within the awareness of pre-existing codes and borders, there lies the abject—“To each ego its object, to each superego its abject” (Kristeva 1982:2). Yuriko’s sister accepts their parents, herself, and their ordinary-looking peers as the norm and thinks of Yuriko as a “mutant”. Yuriko’s beauty is considered as something that has crossed the boundary from the normal to the abnormal and it thus becomes the abject. This is why some people in the narrative are averse to Yuriko.

Once in an outdoor bath, Yuriko’s sister notices that, “Yuriko’s eyes gave off no light. Even a doll’s eyes will have a white dot painted in the center to suggest light, won’t they? As a result, a doll’s face is sweet and charming, yet Yuriko’s eyes were

dark ponds”, and she is startled by Yuriko’s “creepy” face (Kirino 2008:18). Yuriko is alienated and demonized by her own beauty. [Yuriko’s sister:] “[Yuriko] was a child who was fated from the beginning to be different. Fortune may shine brightly on a woman like that, but the shadow cast is long and dark. It was inevitable that misfortune would come eventually” (Kirino 2008:8). The lifelessness of Yuriko also hints at the horror and calamity that shadow her excessive beauty.

There seems to be a fine line between beautiful and fearsome. Beauty brings power, and power intimidates others. As an embodiment of beauty provoking abjection, the portraiture of Yuriko resembles Tomie, a well-known Japanese horror comic character, both with a beautiful face and body as well as licentious blood flowing beneath the skin. Yuriko can be seen as a re-characterization of Tomie, but unlike Tomie, mortal. Tomie, a schoolgirl-cum-deathless monster, was created by manga artist Itō Junji in the comic series titled *Tomie* (1987) and has been adapted into a series of films, with the first directed by Oikawa Ataru and leased in 1999. Tomie intentionally irritates men to get herself killed in the most brutal way possible so that she could multiply herself, regenerating a new Tomie from every piece and bit of her dismembered body (Kalat 2007:70). Her body provokes sexual arousal and is beautiful, but her way of regenerating the body provokes sheer physical repulsion and is thus abject. In terms of characterization, Tomie is portrayed as fatally attractive, but at the same time, “selfish and self-centered; desirable yet unapproachable and cold; catty and jealous; needy and demanding”—“an exaggeration of a teenage boy’s misogyny” in David Kalat’s words (2007:70).

Moreover, this set of characteristics can be expanded to include the representation of misogyny detected in all men. Johnson once says this to Yuriko when he is sexually abusing her, “You’re just a heartless whore. A cheap slut. You make me sick!” (Kirino 2008:155). Johnson abhors her beauty while simultaneously desiring it because he fails to gain full control and possession of that beauty. The uncontrollable aspect of women’s beauty reminds men of their lack of authority over beauty and provokes men into viewing women as abject creatures. The “abject” are females such as Tomie, who is flirtatious and unapproachable, and Yuriko, who adores sex by nature and enjoys engaging in sexual intercourse with different men. Nevertheless, there are additional reasons for men’s abjection of women.

Yuriko, just like the combination of beauty and abjection Tomie, becomes even more abject when she ages to the degree that she used to be attractive to men. An old Yuriko explains, “At present the customers I have are either weirdos who want wacky women or men without money. By wacky I mean grotesque. In this world there are people who prefer beauty after it’s gone away or the dregs of a prosperity depleted. With my monstrous beauty and my monstrous desire, I suppose I’ll now become a full-fledged beast” (Kirino 2008:126). Yuriko is a metaphorical monster, a “prosperity depleted”, while Tomie is literally a monster and the product of residue. Deborah Covino (2000) proposes that one of the reasons why women have greater share of abjection is due to women’s fleshiness, early asserted by Aristotle and later consolidated into modern philosophy and aesthetics. Because “woman is of the flesh” and not associated with the mind, the beauty they possess is impermanent (Covino

2000 n.p.).

The example of female fleshiness can be found in Japan's earliest mythological work, the *Kojiki*. In Japanese mythology, when the goddess of creation Izanami gives birth to Hi no Kagutsuchi no Kami (the fire-deity), she burns her private parts and dies (Philippi, 1968:57). Barbara Creed expands Kristeva's theories of abjection, and suggests that women's reproductive organ "signifies sexual difference and as such has the power to horrify woman's sexual other" (1993:57). According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the act of birth itself is represented as "grotesque" because the body opens up and reveals its innermost depths (Creed 1993:58). Thus the female body, pregnant and in delivery, becomes abject due to the "loss of boundaries" (Creed 1993:58). In ancient Japan, the process of reproduction is also regarded as impure. People build special dwellings for pregnant or menstruant women to live separately (Philippi 1968:66). The buildings for delivery are called *ubu-ya* (childbearing-houses), and this phenomenon appears in the narrative of *Kojiki* as well (Philippi 1968:66). After Izanami "divinely passed away", Izanami's mate Izanagi follows her to the land of *yomi* (the realm of the dead), but is frightened by seeing what Izanami has become—a rotting form of flesh with maggots running over it. "At this time, maggots were squirming and roaring [in the corpse of Izanami-no-mokoto]" (Philippi 1968:62). Even as a goddess, Izanami could not escape the fate of decay, on the other hand, Izanagi remains his divinity. With reproduction being the cause of Izanami's death, her fleshiness can be seen as being due to her sex as a female. From the representation of birth and death in the earliest Japanese surviving text, we can see the notion that "woman is of the flesh" and the

grotesque and abjective imagery of the female body are embedded in Japanese culture as well.

Covino even argues that such a dichotomy between male and female exists in Immanuel Kant's writing, "For Kant here, women are always threatening to become a grotesque as she ages and displays her withering skin, graying hair, and shriveling body" (Covino 2000 n.p.). [Yuriko:] "I sit in front of the mirror putting on my makeup. The face reflected there is that of a woman who has aged at terrific speed ever since passing thirty-five: me. The lines around my eyes and mouth can no longer be concealed, no matter how many layers of foundation I apply. And the round dumpiness of my body looks exactly like that of my father's mother. The older I get, the more I am aware of the Western blood coursing through my body. [...] While peering into my mirror, I stare at my eyes, which have lost their contours, and draw a thick line with my eyeliner pencil. [...] My ghastliness has increased along with my age. I've written it any number of times already, but I do not feel lonely. This is the true figure of the woman who was once a beautiful girl" (Kirino 2008:124, 125, 126). Yuriko has become a "grotesque" as she loses her value as a woman to men—youth. She fails to stay young as the desirable Lolita, fails to meet men's wishes (e.g., Johnson)—"Yuriko, don't ever grow up" (Kirino 2008:131). Because women are seen as "flesh", they are thought of more vulnerable to the threat of aging and death than men, which is the case of Yuriko in *Grotesque*. Betty Friedan in her book *The Fountain of Age* (1993) broadens the discourse of ageism being a form of victimization and exploitation of women (Silver 2003:385). Women's aging is represented negatively in culture as being

associated with “passivity” and “decay” (Silver 2003:383). For example, women’s menopause is described as the “fatal touch of death itself”, and postmenopausal women are considered as “useless and ‘abject’ ” according to Kristeva, “having lost both reproductive power and sexual attractiveness” (Silver 2003:383).

Kirino has once written about schoolgirl prostitution and aging in American photographer Misty Keasler’s publication of photographs *Japanese Love Hotels* (2006). She refers to the objectification and commoditization of female body and sexuality, and states that in Japan the younger the prostitutes are, the higher their values are. Kirino also asserts that female bodies serve as “merely ingredients in a male fantasy” in sexual intercourse.

The boom in schoolgirl prostitution, or “compensated dating” as it’s called, has been going on a decade. The steady supply of girl students willing to sell their bodies has gone way up, as their age has gone down. And girls, accepting this, have changed as well. [...]

[...] In Japan, the younger they are, the higher their value as sex products, and young girls who, since they were children, have seen other girls get into compensated dating, get the impression that selling one’s body is nothing special.

In love hotels, centered around men’s fantasies, what do young women provide them? Not love, it would seem. Or even sex. They’re merely ingredients in a male fantasy.

(Kirino 2006)

In *Grotesque*, Kirino speaks through Yuriko. Yuriko has from twenty-year experience of prostitution learned about men's nature—what she believes men truly desire from women and the origin of their misogyny. “What the customers see in young prostitutes is not their bodies. Youth promises a future. And they want to buy the time those young ones own. We are different, that's why we upset normal men. The customer I just had seemed very lonely after sleeping with me. I guess men must be weak, because they can't stand the fact that women become ugly and negative as they age. We expose the weakness they possess. Men who are into monsters like us, love us for our decay and ugliness. They have us decline till we break into pieces, and kill us eventually” (Kirino 2003:486). Yuriko prophesies her own misfortune. Ironically, this metaphor of brutal killing Yuriko uses resembles the plot of Tomie being dismembered and her body parts thrown off a cliff. What triggers their murder (by men) is that they are both “abject” to them. Exploited by men in every way possible, trading body, energy, and youth for a moment of attention and the possibility of being loved<sup>8</sup>, Yuriko is spiritually torn apart by men, just as Tomie is physically dismembered.

[Yuriko:] “I have tried to imagine any number of times what might, in the end, ruin me. Will I collapse of heart failure? Will I suffer an agonizing illness? Will a man kill me? It had to be one of the three” (Kirino 2008:119). Tomie invites her own death,

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<sup>8</sup> Yuriko has asserted that “I don't need anybody's love” in the narrative (Kirino 2008:153). However it can be argued that she gives up on “love” because she assumes men only use “love” as an excuse to possess her beauty and body. [Yuriko:] “My body is my own, why should anyone else think they owned it? Why should a person who loved me think he should be entitled to control my body? If love was that restricting, I was happy to live without it” (Kirino 2008:152-153).

which on the other hand, Yuriko knows that “[d]eath awaits” and yet is determined to approach her “fate” (Kirino 2008:423). The male chauvinistic obsession with beauty leaves beautiful women such as Tomie and Yuriko few alternatives in life. They are expected to be submissive and forever young by men because uncontrollable beauty frustrates men. When Yuriko can no longer provoke sexual arousal in men as she ages, they turn to resent her failure to excite them. Yuriko, with her worn out body, is chased to a dead-end by men.

[Yuriko:] “My lascivious blood leaves me no choice but to lust for men. [...] It’s the retribution for a divinity that no one can sustain forever. I suppose you could say my ‘power’ was little more than sin” (だが、私の淫蕩の血は男を求めてやまない。[...]それが、誰も持ち得なかった**神性**への**罰**なのだ。だとしたら、私の魔力というのは、**罪**に近いものだったのだろうか) (Kirino 2008:112). The original Japanese text is quoted here because it shows seeming biblical references such as divinity (“**神性** *shinsei*”), retribution (“**罰** *batsu*”), and sin (“**罪** *tsumi*”). Elaine Lawless (2003) theorizes through Kristeva’s study of abjection that Eve’s *sin* leads to the cultural and religious view of female as creatures of loathing and defilement (244-245). Lawless (2003) further suggests that the notion of the female as abject rationalizes men’s abuse and violence against women (e.g., Johnson’s physical and verbal abuse against Yuriko discussed on the page 39 of this thesis). From Eve, who lets her curiosity take over and leads to the Fall of Man by eating the apple, to Lilith, the licentious and defiled demon who conducts promiscuity, the Bible renders women as the abject (Osherow 2000; Lawless 2003). From a more conventional aesthetic

perspective (e.g., Burke and Kant), women can be “beautiful” or “grotesque”, but being “sublime” is for men only (Covino 2000 n.p.). The crucified Christ is an example of a masculine grotesque figure made sublime, which is also central to Western aesthetics (Covino 2000 n.p.), while the feminine grotesque remains abject.

The same patterns of characterization—fleshiness, desirable yet grotesque, abject—can be found in *femmes fatales* in popular culture such as Tomie, creations based on misogyny and male-centered aesthetics. In *Grotesque* Yuriko is also portrayed with a “Divine Beauty” and yet to be punished for her sin of being a woman. Her femininity does not empower her, but victimizes her, because men are out to control those “vital, powerful, and sacred” women (Osherow 2000:74). As Robin Roberts comments on gender issues in science fiction, “[C]ontrolling the female alien is a way of controlling the abject, the unknown, the terrifying” (1993:46 quoted in Osherow 2000:74). To conclude with Mary Daly’s words, “As long as the myth of feminine evil is allowed to dominate human consciousness and social arrangements, it provides the setting for women’s victimization” (quoted in Lawless 2003:237). Nonetheless, in contrast with Yuriko, the unattractive females have sinned for simply being “unbeautiful” to men’s eyes.



## CHAPTER 4 UNBEAUTY

*Beauty belongs to the sphere of the simple, the ordinary, whilst ugliness is something extraordinary, and there is no question but that every ardent imagination prefers in lubricity, the extraordinary to the commonplace.*

—*Marquis de Sade*

### Light and Shadow

Yuriko's sister comments on Kazue's murder, "Kazue was not pretty. She wasn't beautiful, and yet she died exactly the same way Yuriko did. It was unforgivable" (Kirino 2008:8). What is so "unforgivable" indeed? Yuriko's sister sees this kind of misfortunate ending as a privilege available only for those with extraordinary beauty. She envies Yuriko for her beauty, and she envies Kazue for successfully imitating Yuriko even with her death. This is a salient example for showing the bitterness of Yuriko's sister for living her whole life in Yuriko's shadow.

Yuriko's sister wants to imitate Yuriko as much as Kazue does, but she has not done anything outrageous because she is more introspective than Kazue. She says to the listener, "I recognize that I am homely enough to have harbored an inferiority complex toward my younger sister, Yuriko" (Kirino 2008:327). Her only chance to feel closer to the image of Yuriko is to be with Yurio, her blind nephew (Yuriko and Johnson's son). "Even if I was reflected in Yurio's beautiful eyes, the image would never be transmitted to his brain. So the meaning of who I was would also change. Because of Yurio, I would exist only as voice or as flesh. He would never see my thick squat body or my ugly face" (Kirino 2008:327). The scene in which Yuriko's sister

grabs Yurio's hand and puts it against her face is preposterous and bitter. "I'm the exact image of your mother. Your mother had a face like this. Just touch it and see. [...]" People always said your mother and I were really pretty. Here, feel this? Double-fold eyelids. My eyes are large and my nose is thin. My eyebrows look like yours—with a nice elegant arch. My lips are full and pink. They're like yours too, but I don't suppose you can tell" (Kirino 2008:335). This reveals the self-contradiction of Yuriko's sister. She claims that Yuriko's beauty is "monstrous" and "unnerving" (Kirino 2008:6-7), yet she longs for someone to recognize her as "the exact image of [Yuriko]". She has been in denial of the beauty which she craves but cannot possess.

Furthermore, the whole life of Yuriko's sister is a confrontation with Yuriko's beauty. Just as Kijima Takashi says, "Your friend here [Yuriko's sister] had long nurtured a violent jealousy of Yuriko. It was her nature" (Kirino 2008:330). The Japanese original features an even more assertive tone, "お姉さんの人生は、ユリコへの嫉妬によって成り立っているんです" (Kirino 2003:385), literally translated as, "Your life is built on your jealousy of Yuriko". Yurio says that, "I think you're poor. [...] I get the sense that you depended on my mother" (Kirino 2008:464). Yuriko's sister develops her malice from living as "Yuriko's sister". Of course, Yuriko's sister wishes to be beautiful (Kirino 2008:327). However as Zhang says in his confession, "Once children realize that their wishes could never be granted, the despair nurtures a dark jealousy and ugly envy in the bottle of their hearts, like a tree whose roots are stymied and twisted (願いが叶わないと知った子供はひねくれた木の根っ子のように、心の底で黒い嫉みや醜い妬みを育てるのかもしれない)" (Kirino

2003:274). The malice thus becomes a necessary part of Yuriko's sister's living (Kirino 2008:328). Her whole life, Yuriko's sister has been "living under Yuriko's shadow", which is "a kind of dependence" and "a form of weakness and poverty" (Kirino 2008:464). It is because she is never paid attention to under Yuriko's brilliant ray, and shadow cast is what she clings onto. She generates malice from the darkness as her defense and builds up fortress around her with the malice. Yuriko's sister remains nameless throughout the narrative. Even Professor Kijima refers to her as "Miss Hirata's older sister (I forget her name, but you must remember her; she was in your class, a fairly drab person)" in his letter to Mitsuru (Kirino 2008:311). "She" is destined to be bound as "Yuriko's sister". The only way for her to construct an appealing identity is through basing it on Yuriko.

[Yuriko's sister:] "[Y]ou ought to try to live with a younger sister who is monstrously beautiful. Can you possibly imagine what it is like, I wonder, to have your own individual nature denied before you are even born? From the moment of your infancy the way people react to you is so clearly different from the way they react to others. How would you feel if you had to experience that, day in, day out?" (Kirino 2008:328). The ugly duckling may not realize its own ugliness until it sees the differences between itself and its siblings. The comparison renders the good better and the bad worse. "In the neighborhood and again at our elementary school, I was always in the limelight as 'Yuriko's older sister' who looks nothing like her" (Kirino 2003:373). Comparing to Yuriko, she is always "the ugly one". Because of this, she *has to* live with malice, pretending not to care about others' evaluation and feeding on

others' misery. She raises this idea to a fatalistic level and implements it. "Was it my lot in life to stand forever on heaven's shores watching the glittering swirl of celestial bodies on the other side? I felt as if I had discovered a new and private pleasure. When you think of it, it was probably my destiny. [The fate of me, who was born to be Yuriko's sister] (思えば、これがわたしの**運命**かもしれません。ユリコと姉妹に生まれたわたしの**宿命**)" (Kirino 2003:72; Kirino 2008:55, boldface mine).

The characterization of two sisters—one superior and one inferior—can also be found in Kirino's novel *Joshinki* (2008; *The Goddess Chronicle*, 2012). In *The Goddess Chronicle*, Kamikuu is the beautiful sister who is destined to become the Oracle, and Namima, the inferior one, is made to preside over the realm of darkness. " 'Separate' is not quite the right word. Our paths were more distinctly different, as if she were to follow the day and I the night; or she the inner road and I the outer; she to traverse the heavens and I the earth. That was the 'law' of the island—that was our 'destiny' " (Kirino 2012:19). Moreover, Kamikuu as the Oracle bears the burden of reproduction, while Namima has to remain a virgin till her death. "The elder daughter [Kamikuu] is responsible for continuing the Oracle's lineage. She must give birth to a daughter. The second sister [Namima]'s lineage ends at one generation. She must not have union with a man" (Kirino 2012:67). The destiny of Kamikuu and Namima resonates with these words uttered by Yuriko's sister, "Yuriko was always under the sun, while I hid in the darkness of the night at all times" (常に陽の当たる側のユリコ。いつも暗い夜の面のわたし) (Kirino 2003:382). "I was very strongly aware of the fact that I lived to be Yuriko's other side, her negative image" (Kirino 2008:460). Also

in *Grotesque*, Yuriko is portrayed as a “whore” and her sister a forty-year-old virgin. “The younger sister’s a whore, the older one a virgin. That’s just too much” (Kirino 2008:125). The narrative elements that *The Goddess Chronicle* and *Grotesque* share in common reflect the author’s concern regarding issues of women’s self-consciousness of their physical appearances and inferiority, and the relationship of their consciousness to female sexuality.

French female director Catherine Breillat explores these issues in her controversial film *A Ma Soeur!* (2001; *Fat Girl*). In the film, the fat and ordinary-looking girl Anais is experiencing sexual frustration in adolescence. She is self-conscious with the existence of her older sister Elena who is slim and attractive. In the bedroom Anais and Elena share, a young man they have just met, Fernando pressures Elena into giving her virginity to him, in Anais’s presence... In the end of film, a stranger brutally kills Elena and their mother, and rapes Anais. However, Anais claims to the police that she was not “raped” afterwards.

Like Anais who also lives under the shadow of a beautiful sister, Yuriko’s sister’s sexuality is suppressed. Anais, in the film, presents a careless attitude towards virginity and says that she would rather lose it to a “nobody” just to get it over with, as opposed to Elena who wants to save her virginity for her true love. Anais’s attitude can be seen as self-denial of her ability to establish intimate relationships out of low self-esteem. Yuriko’s sister displays similar behaviors. She claims that she is not interested in men. “Unlike Yuriko, I don’t crave sex. I don’t even like men. They’re sneaky, and their faces, their bodies, and the way they think are boorish. They’re

selfish and will do anything to get what they want, even if it means injuring the people close to them; they don't care. Besides, all they worry about is the façade; they have absolutely no concern for what's beneath" (Kirino 2008:466). Nyborg discusses Yuriko's sister's "ambiguous sexuality", and suggests that her avoidance of heterosexuality might be "a (conscious or unconscious) choice in order to avoid being compared with her sister, as well as to fortify her position as the absolute opposite of Yuriko" (2012:41). In the above quotation, Yuriko's sister points out "unlike Yuriko" especially in her assertion. She believes that men care about "the façade" only, therefore the fact that she is more intelligent than Yuriko is none of men's concern. Yuriko's sister withdraws from the competition to avoid her doomed failure. "All I ever wanted was not to be compared to Yuriko. And since I was going to lose whatever competition we had, I decided to withdraw from the game altogether" (Kirino 2008:460).

Moreover, I suggest that Yuriko's sister denies her heterosexuality in the same way she denies Yuriko's beauty, both due to her lack of access. In other words, she disparages things she could not have, as the fox calls sour grapes in Aesop's Fables. Although she criticizes men's obsession for physical appearance and claims this being the reason for her disinterest, she herself is a mania for "the look". Mitsuru points out her obsession to her, "I remember not so long ago you were more than a little obsessed with looks. How should I put this? You just cared about faces. I knew you had an inferiority complex because Yuriko was so pretty. But you went way beyond a complex; you were a fanatic" (Kirino 2008:302). Yuriko's sister's self-contradiction shows in the

narrative many times. For example, when Mitsuru refers to a baseball player to illustrate her effort during their conversation, Yuriko's sister narrates "I'm only interested in athletics with pretty faces, and really bad at remembering their names", and asks Mitsuru, "Is that guy handsome?" (Kirino 2003:352). Mitsuru replies, "Why are you saying such boring thing? Face or whatever, that's not even the point!" (Kirino 2003:352). And in her recounting of the New Year party at Johnson's house, she expresses her contempt for Mrs. Norman. "Norman was only forty-something himself, a strong man who ran on the mountain road wearing gym shoes. His wife was an old hen with dry white hair, whose face looked yellow without any makeup. Was this really his wife? Astonished, I was observing her wizened fingers and eccentric glance. I couldn't believe that they were in love because of the wide gap in their appearances. I then, didn't know how men and women could be together despite the great disparity in their looks. I still don't, even today" (Kirino 2003:27).

From the above examples, it is clear that Yuriko's sister judges people by their physical appearances, and does not understand the essence of intimate relationships. This passage reveals that she is no different from men who care only about "the façade" and "have absolutely no concern for what's beneath" (Kirino 2008:466). In fact, she roots for men's values—endorsing the young and the beautiful while despising the old and the unattractive. Therefore her contempt for men has no solid ground and is likely to be a disguise. She sees herself as impotent in attracting the opposite sex. "In my situation, inconspicuousness meant living forever as a virgin, a woman who would have no contact with men" (Kirino 2008:460). It can be suggested that Yuriko's sister

and Anais, with self-consciousness of their inferior physical appearances, both have an unspeakable fear of ending up as “[a] permanent virgin” (Kirino 2008:460). Reacting to their fear, Anais sets free her sexuality, while Yuriko’s sister turns to an utter denial of hers till the extreme release at the end of the narrative (i.e. turn to prostitution).

*The basis of shame is not some personal mistake of ours, but... that this humiliation is seen by everyone.*

—*Milan Kundera*

### Monster

Two objects which are the most significant to Kazue in her life are Yuriko and men. All Kazue wants is to be like Yuriko, the woman with monster-like beauty, and to be chased after by men. Therefore when Kazue’s mother says to the Kazue who has become a prostitute, “You’ve really become a monster. It’s frightening” (Kirino 2008:361), Kazue is not irritated. Being monster-like might be her way of imitating Yuriko. By then, Kazue has long lost her judgment and aesthetic. She thinks of herself as a beauty who is “fashionably thin” and popular among men (Kirino 2008:360). The traumatic experiences in Kazue’s adolescence wreck her self-esteem and distort her values. She does not realize that she has gone too far to re-attain the self-worth she lost during high school. The reification of her unreason and misery is her anorexia nervosa.

At Q School, Kazue has a crush on Kijima Takashi, Professor Kijima’s son. In order to become beautiful and to be with Kijima, Kazue is cautious of her dining. [Kazue:] “I’m watching what I eat. After all, I want to be as beautiful as a model”

(Kirino 2008:181). And Kazue's condition becomes severe:

[Yuriko's sister:] Occasionally I'd notice that the minute Kazue ate her lunch, she'd run to the bathroom to throw it up. I say lunch, but there really wasn't much to it: just a tiny rice ball and a tomato or a piece of fruit. Kazue often brought a cheap kind of cookie made from soy flour. But as soon as she'd eat it she'd be so overcome with remorse that she'd rush off to the toilet to puke. Everyone in the class knew what she was doing, so whenever Kazue would start rustling through that sack of cookies, the other students would poke one another with their elbows and titter knowingly. Yes, Kazue had an eating disorder. [...] We just resented Kazue for her unbalanced diet and her habit of throwing up after a meal.

(Kirino 2008:194-195)

The miserable adolescence negatively affects Kazue's self-esteem. People's mocking at her only makes her crave recognition more. Kazue is trapped in the illusion of perfecting her image by constantly losing weight. When Kazue begins unhealthy diet again in her middle age, she is obsessed with a weight-loss product called "Gymnema". She takes the medication instead of having proper meals. In the later phase of her eating disorder, Kazue begins to display the typical symptom of anorexia nervosa—having delusional perception of her body image and body concept as Hilde Bruch has pointed out (Boskind-Lodahl 1976:343). To other people, Kazue is

“awfully thin”, “practically skin and bones”, and her health is at stake (Kirino 2008:382). However, Kazue regards women with body fat as “ugly”. “At any rate, anytime I see a fat woman it revolts me. I think she must be stupid to look like that” (Kirino 2008:382). Moreover, Kazue pathologically enjoys this awful outcome of her diet. “I was trimmer now than ever. The lighter I grew, the happier I felt. At this rate I was just going to melt away into thin air. I was ecstatic. The weather might be oppressive, but I was in a jubilant mood” (Kirino 2008:437).

Noelle Caskey (1985) suggests that in contemporary times body fat “has come to signify ‘feminine’ status in a way that is perceived as negative” (262). Marlene Boskind-Lodahl (1976) studies eating disorder from a feminist perspective, and argues that the psychological root in women’s anorexia nervosa and bulimia is their concern for their femininity. “Far from rejecting the stereotype of femininity—that of the accommodating, passive, dependent woman—these young women have never questioned their assumptions that wifeness, motherhood, and intimacy with men are the fundamental components of femininity. [...] Their attempts to control their physical appearance demonstrate a disproportionate concern with pleasing others, particularly men—a reliance on others to validate their sense of worth” (Boskind-Lodahl 1976:345-346). In a scene, after prostituting herself to a homeless man, Kazue feels her worth is validated by their sexual intercourse. “I had never been so free or so happy. I could satisfy any demand a man might make of me. I was a good woman” (Kirino 2008:398). Kazue relies herself on male (sexual) desire (“男の欲望 *otoko no yokubō*”) (Kirino 2003:460).

In Kazue’s case, she fears that her body weight might jeopardize her femininity, which directly results in unsuccessful social relations. Her phobic fear of fat is her fear of rejection from men. In other words, Kazue’s condition is related to issues of gender relations. As Figure 4.1 “Development of bulimarexic behavior” in Boskind-Lodahl’s research (1976) shows (346), Kazue’s problem with socializing with men as an adolescent girl results in her abnormally low self-esteem and excessive need for validation from men in her adulthood. The experiences of being isolated and rejected at both Q School (i.e., in adolescence) and the company (i.e., in adulthood) aggravate Kazue’s obsession with her appearance and her body. Her ambivalent emotions “desire and disgust” toward men make up another factor of the vicious cycle which destroys Kazue physically and mentally.

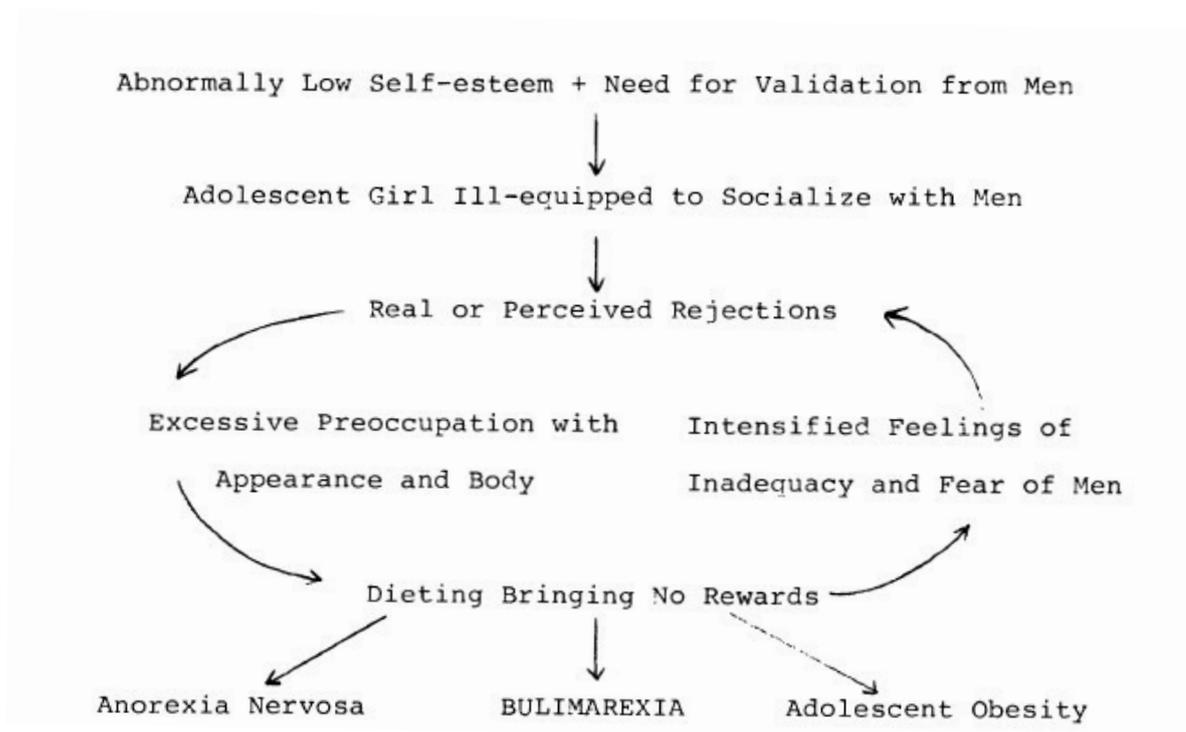


Figure 4.1 Boskind-Lodahl’s figure of “Development of bulimarexic behavior”

“I had to be the best at everything I did. It was important to me as a **woman**. And that made me want to show off. I wanted **men** to watch me, to appraise me. Moreover, I wanted them to approve of me” (Kirino 2008:452, boldface mine). In the Japanese original, it is stated clearer that Kazue manages her image in order to impress men as a woman. “女としてイマイチというコンプレックスが、あたし見栄を張らせる。あたしは男に品定めされたがっていたのね (My inferiority complex with regard to being less than ideal as a woman causes me to show off. I wanted to be appraised by men)” (Kirino 2003:515, boldface mine). There is an aching need in Kazue to please men and be appraised for it, which is the cause of her anorexia nervosa.

Men’s evaluation and demands for women deprive Kazue of her pride and self-worth and twist her values. Kazue is critical of this. [Kazue:] “Men have excessive demands. They want a woman to be educated and to have a proper upbringing and a pretty face, and they want her to have both a submissive character and a taste for sex. They want it all. It is difficult to meet those demands and to live in a world where demands like this take precedence” (Kirino 2008:351). Nevertheless, exactly like Yuriko’s sister discussed above, Kazue has also given in to the patriarchal standard for women while being critical. For instance, when being told she is “awfully thin”, Kazue thinks to herself, “So I’m thin, so what’s wrong with that? Men like women to be thin and have long hair; isn’t that practically a given?” (Kirino 2008:382). Kazue tries hard to meet men’s excessive demands in exchange for their attention and company.

Both Yuriko’s sister and Kazue are victims of unequal gender relations.

Because women are traditionally seen as subordinate to men, women who are not needed or desired by men are thus considered of less value. They are defined by their relations with the opposite sex. Those who are not able to contain good relations with males are considered as feminine failures by the public<sup>9</sup>. In the narrative of *Grotesque*, women with unattractive physical appearances are regarded as inferior and not feminine by society. Prostitution thus becomes the remedy for their self-esteem and self-worth. On the night street, Kazue runs into Yuriko. The beautiful in the old days has now become the abject, and the unbeautiful a monster. At the end of the narrative, Yuriko's sister comes to understand Yuriko and Kazue, and decides to follow their path. As women, the fate they share (i.e., to be consumed by men) brings them together. They sell their grotesque bodies to men as their mockery and revenge to the male-dominated society and the patriarchal aesthetics embedded in it. The paths for the beautiful and the unbeautiful merge into one—towards destruction.

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<sup>9</sup> In Japan, women who are over thirty and unmarried are referred to as “負け犬 *makeinu*”, which literally means a dog which has lost a fight.



## CHAPTER 5 PROSTITUTION AS REBELLION

*Nothing inspires forgiveness quite like revenge.*

—*Scott Adams*

### Women's Path

Beautiful or not, the three anti-heroines have one thing in common—all of them become prostitutes at some point in their lives. In Chapter 3 “Beauty”, I have suggested that Yuriko’s beauty victimizes and condemns her, and partly results in her choice of prostituting herself. In Chapter 4 “Unbeauty”, I have suggested that Yuriko’s sister and Kazue, who are not beautiful, long to resemble and imitate Yuriko, which includes replicating her relationships with men. In the following chapters, I will further examine the implications of prostitution in the narrative of *Grotesque*. As well as (un)beauty, prostitution is another essential element throughout the narrative. The nature of prostitution is that (presumably male) customers pay prostitutes for sexual acts. Prostitution involves with issues such as commodified body and constructed self-identity. As Yuriko writes in her journals,

I suspect there are lots of women who want to become prostitutes. Some see themselves as valued commodities and figure they ought to sell while the price is high. Others feel that sex has no intrinsic meaning in and of itself except for allowing individuals to feel the reality of their own bodies. A few women despise their existence and the insignificance of their meager lives and want to affirm themselves by controlling sex

much as a man would. Then there are those who engage in violent, self-destructive behavior. And finally we have these who want to offer comfort. I suppose there are any number of women who find the meaning of their existence in similar ways.

(Kirino 2008:143)

The characters have various reasons for becoming prostitutes. Each motive reveals a hidden side of their lives, and sends out an alerting social message. In *Grotesque*, prostitution represents an intensified form of gender relations and allows a perspective of social activities of those women who live on the edge. In this chapter and Chapter 8 “Machigurashi in Society” about women’s urban experiences, different implications of prostitution in the narrative will be discussed. This chapter will focus particularly on the aspects concern men’s roles in prostitution.

*I picked prostitutes as my victims because I hate most prostitutes and did not want to pay them for sex.*

—“*Green River Killer*” Gary Ridgway

### Money for Sex

Since the infamous serial killer “Jack the Ripper” who targeted prostitutes as his victims in London 1888, there have been many male serial killers who prey on sex-trade workers for their killing worldwide. Zhang in *Grotesque* is also an alleged

serial killer who targets prostitutes<sup>10</sup>. One of the reasons for this particular choice of victim is that sex-trade workers are low-profile and low-risk potential victims, in other words, they are relatively easy to be abducted or transferred into a vehicle, and they are less likely to be reported missing after the crime (CBC 2008). Another essential reason for the men's hatred directed at sex-trade workers is that male sexuality is devalued in the trade of sex. As Cranny-Francis (1992) analyzes, men are made the "source of income" by women who trade sex, and men are thus victimized by their male sexuality (sexual rapacity) (105). Therefore when "the patriarchal illusion of power" bursts and they finally realize they are as powerless as the prostitutes are, they become irritated.

Use of a prostitute is another expression of this same violence. What the woman sells is not simply her body, but her status as an individual subject. The man buys the "right" to treat her as sub-human, to abuse her by reducing her to sub-human (object) status for his own satisfaction. He may feel powerful in his ability to buy this satisfaction, but it is inevitably a short-lived power trip. He will also become aware that he has been used as a source of income by the woman; that she is playing the same game as he is and that he is no more a person (a subject) to her than she was to him. The patriarchal illusion of power results in his unwitting objectification of himself as he is reduced to the "natural" function which defines his sexuality

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<sup>10</sup> Using the word "alleged" here is because in *Grotesque's* narrative, Zhang never claims responsibility for Kazue's murder. Also, by traditional definition, a serial killer is a person who has murdered three or more people.

according to patriarchy. This motivates him into another round of competition and objectification as he tries in vain to fill the gap which defines patriarchal desire—the gap which is essentially his own self-respect.

(Cranny-Francis 1992:105)

Men's desire to purchase women's dignity in order to feel powerful is shown in the narrative of *Grotesque*. Before having sexual intercourse with Kazue, Zhang bargains and makes a clear statement about his attitude towards women and prostitutes. [Kazue:] "Zhang placed three thousand-yen notes over my body. One on my chest, one on my stomach, and one on my crotch" (Kirino 2008:455). Zhang places notes on Kazue's naked body as a means of disparaging her and her status as a woman. And then Zhang gives a grand speech about the differences between women and prostitutes, "You're not worth more than three thousand yen. What do you think? Do you want the money? If you don't, you'll become a normal woman, not a prostitute. But you know I'm not interested in normal women, so I don't sleep with them. So what will you be, a whore who's worth no more than three thousand yen or a normal woman I don't want to touch? [...] I can't do it with a woman unless I pay for it. Even if it's just a paltry three thousand" (Kirino 2008:455). Zhang keeps emphasizing the monetary value of Kazue's body and sexuality. The fact that he could not sleep with a normal woman reveals that he enjoys the satisfaction from devaluing women through sex trading even more than the sexual intercourse itself. This is also shown in an earlier scene where Zhang verbally insults Kazue during sex trading. [Zhang:] "We're constantly having

our value appraised. [...] People evaluate us like they'd rate animals. Surely it's the same for you. You're in the business of selling your body, so you ought to be used to people sizing you up for they settle on a price" (Kirino 2008:417).

Ueno Chizuko (2003) also suggests the significance of "money" in the process of *enjo kōsai*, another form of prostitution. "When girls are promiscuous, they are called delinquent. On the other hand, when they receive money, they are called prostitutes. Money does not serve an determinant indicator to distinguish one from the other, as they both know that it is stigmatized, once it comes out" (Ueno 2003:320-321). As discussed in Chapter 3 "Beauty", Naomi Wolf (1991) suggests that women's beauty is converted into currency by patriarchal ideologies, and that this is practiced in social life (12). Yuriko's body which attracts male desire implies monetary value. [Yuriko:] "I just commodified my body. That was all" (私は単に自分を商品化していたに過ぎない) (Kirino 2003:164). By taking money from men, prostituting becomes a means for Yuriko to claim her own possession of her body. In Ueno's research, a girl who engages in *enjo kōsai* says during her interview, "As far as I take money from those middle-aged men, I feel confident my body does not belong to them" (Ueno 2003:321). Money serves as the key to the prostitutes' sense of sovereignty and autonomy. In Kazue's case, Kazue convinces herself that she prostitutes for cold cash, and cash confirms her value. [Kazue:] "My night work was strictly cash-based. The money I made had a completely different feel from the salary that was deposited directly into my bank account. I loved the touch of the paper bills so much I could hardly stand it" (Kirino 2008:424-425). Because during the sex trade, money assures

the prostitutes' value as the "sexually desirable object, which in turn contributes their own self-esteem" (Ueno 2003:321). The money men pay for Kazue's sexuality compensates her sense of inferiority.

Cranny-Francis's analysis of women using men as sources of income in prostitution applies well to the narrative of *Grotesque*. Kazue tries to take an advantage from men, using the money she earns from prostituting herself to prove her value. [Kazue:] "Men have excessive demands. [...] And yet women have no choice but to try to manage, searching as they go for some redeeming value to their lives. Well, my greatest value was my ability to achieve a balance—and to earn money" (Kirino 2008:351). Kazue has her eyes on money in prostitution. For example, when Kazue takes the customer, Tanaka, who has no bathroom at his apartment, she thinks to herself, "If you do business with a man who has a handicap like that, you can turn it to benefit yourself. Serve him shorter and charge him more for the inconvenience" (Kirino 2008:352). When Zhang rambles on about his sister after their sexual intercourse, Kazue thinks, "Enough with the talking. Why don't you just pay me so I can be on my way? (話はもういいから、早く料金を払ってくだらないだろうか)" (Kirino 2003:477).

Kazue is determined to objectify herself in order to enjoy prostituting herself without feeling shame or pain. Through doing this, Kazue decreases men's satisfaction. "I pondered my own bitterness. The pain of being treated like a mere object. And a sense that this pain would turn into pleasure. It would be best if I could just think of myself as a thing" (Kirino 2008:357). This self-volunteered objectification of female

body and sexuality can be read as a gesture with certain influences of feminist ideology. The situation in the visual arts is comparable here. For example, the feminist artist in the 1960s, Hannah Wilke, uses her nudity arts to address the need for women to reclaim their objectness (Fisher 2008:73). “Wilke saw the asserting of oneself as an object to be an equally essential act of female agency and was aware of the need for both assertions if one was to attempt to live freely and fully integrated as an embodied feminist” (Fisher 2008:73). Joanna Frueh (1989) comments on Wilke’s works and says that, “In contemporary usage, the word object applied to a woman is considered negative. She is solely a sex object, a thing perceived without empathy or compassion. However, an object, defined as something that is or is capable of being seen, touched, or otherwise sensed, exists; thus, respecting objecthood can be an assertion of existence” (Frueh 1989:44 quoted in Fisher 2008:73). Kazue, who feels invisible at work, therefore turns to prostitution in order to be seen and touched by men. Her acts of objectifying her own body prove her subjectivity. Kazue’s objectification of her own body and sexuality confirms a self-assertion of her existence and of her agency.

Kazue despises her customers. This confirms her objectification of men who engage in sex trading with her. When asked by a customer who is a university professor, Yoshizaki, why she prostitutes herself since she has a good background, Kazue answers with “adventure” and she derides Yoshizaki and all men inwardly, “Adventure? So cliché! Men purchased women as commodities, yet they looked for stories from these women. They wanted a fantasy along with the purchase (冒険だつてさ、何と陳腐な常套句だろう。男は自分が即物的に買ったくせに、相手の女

には物語を求める。物語そのものを買ったつもりなのだ” (Kirino 2003:435).

Moreover, Kazue despises male desire. “Tonight, for the first time I experienced joy that I was not born a man. Why? Because I thought men’s desires trivial. And because I had become the entity that acknowledged those desires” (Kirino 2008:419).

As Kazue confesses earlier in her journals, she has ambivalent attitudes toward men. “Desire and disgust. These two conflicting emotions always accompanied my thoughts of men” (Kirino 2008:344). Applying Cranny-Francis’s theory of prostitution to the narrative of *Grotesque*, prostitution is a perfect activity for Kazue to express these two conflicting emotions at the same time. Kazue makes her status sub-human to her customers during sex trading, and sees her customers as sub-human as well. She sells her body and sexuality as commodities, and also uses male sexual desire as her source of income. Both parties are both powerful as well as powerless during sex trading. Desire and disgust for men are blended in Kazue’s acts of prostituting herself.

The downfall comes when Kazue realizes that her sexuality loses monetary value. Zhang’s payment of only three thousand yen (approximately \$24 US) has an impact. “The stunt with the money really brought it home. Was that really my worth? Not likely! Not for an employee of G Corporation who pulled down a salary of ¥10,000,000 a year” (Kirino 2008:456). With the decrease in the monetary value of her body, the illusion of pride provided by prostitution vanishes.

### Women of Pleasure

Ueno Chizuko (1996) studies Edo literature and states the binary categories for

women, *yujo* and *jionna*. “[A] professionally trained *geisha* of Yoshiwara in this context was regarded as *yujo* [遊女], woman of pleasure, which contrasted sharply with *jionna* [地女], woman of the soil or land, which was the standard image of a Japanese man’s wife” (Chaplin 2001:60). From the meanings carried within the words, it is clear that *yujo* has relatively more freedom and mobility than *jionna*. In Laura Nenzi’s research in women’s identity construction in Edo period, she suggests that *yujo* are “self-assertive women who claimed agency by means of their bodies traveled the roads” and that they are both “geographically and socially mobile” (Nenzi 2008:73-74).

“*Jionna* is the label for those destined to keep house and bear children, while *yujo* designates a category of women who are suitable for sexual activity and pleasure [for men]” (Ueno 1996:110) Home and pleasure quarter are two distinctive spaces for women to identify themselves with. Those who choose *ie*, the traditional Japanese household or home, become housewives stuck in the interiors, and those who choose the pleasure quarter become “women of pleasure” who lie outside the bounds of society. Although becoming a woman of pleasure involves with trading one’s body, “Not all women [...] could wait to acquire mobility along legally defined and socially accepted line” (Nenzi 2008:86).

As opposed to *yujo*, *jionna* are seen as lack of feminine sexual charm (Ueno 1996:110). “[A] *jionna* is alienated *from* pleasure, a *yujo* is alienated *for* pleasure. A *yujo* is *bound to* sexuality; a *jionna* is *banned from* sexuality” (Italics in the original) (Ueno 1996:110). Chaplin (2001) refers to Ueno Chizuko’s research and states that

“since feudal times, the mother of a man’s children was not thought of as seductive or capable of giving or receiving intimate pleasure, and was often equated with boredom, lack of sophistication, darkness, ugliness, and terrestrial ties” (Ueno 1996b:125 in Chaplin 2001:60). Yuriko denies her motherhood to stay compatible with sexuality. The author Kirino may be aware of this dichotomy of *yujo* and *jionna*. The narrative of *OUT* is structured around the rebellion of housewives. In the narrative of *Grotesque*, Kirino explores another form of women’s rebellion in terms of prostitution. Because in either categories, the women’s needs “were not considered, let alone attended to” (Chaplin 2001:60-61).

Prostitution gives a rise to women’s sexual desire to Yuriko’s thinking. She describes her first time in the following sentences, “It hurt a lot more than I had expected, but at the same time it brought such complete pleasure that I was convinced I liked it more than I could stand” (Kirino 2008:114). Yuriko seeks pleasure in sexual intercourse with men. What is more significant in her first time is that she breaks a “taboo”. [Yuriko:] “A woman’s own desires present obstacles for men and are best ignored. Besides, desire is always for man. It’s his role to make advances on women and to protect his women from the advances of others. I was a woman who was seduced by a member of her own family. Among the rules in a man’s world, this was a big taboo” (Kirino 2008:115). Through her acts of sexual liberation, Yuriko violates the code of patriarchal household and asserts women’s own sexual desire. Instead of being merely the object of men’s desire, Yuriko rises up to take control of their desires for her and to use them to for her own pleasure. “In the first place, my desire was not

some paltry affair that could easily be protected by some man” (Kirino 2008:116).

In the narrative of *Grotesque*, or in Yuriko’s journals, her craving for sex is rendered monstrous as much as her beauty. “I loved sex. I loved sex so much I wanted to screw as many men as I could. All I wanted were one-night stands. I had no interest in lasting relationships” (Kirino 2008:143). When being asked by Kijima Takashi what she wants to achieve in school life, Yuriko answers frankly, “I guess it’s sex. [...] I love it” (Kirino 2008:138). However, because Yuriko is after “sex” and not interested in “lasting relationships”, men’s status is devalued. Yuriko thus seems less of a victim in prostitution. Prostitution provokes anger in some men when they feel that their sexual performances are not good enough to satisfy or subjugate their partners—the prostitutes. Johnson once verbally insults Yuriko, “You’re a heartless whore. A cheap slut” (Kirino 2008:155). “Heartless” is often referred to prostitutes as they go from one man to another, just like Yuriko who is sexually and emotionally untamable. “[I]n the Japanese context it reveals the extent to which a woman who expresses any form of desire, passion, or power, is regarded as evil or strange” (Chaplin 2001:61).

### *Raison d’être*

This is my virtue. It is also my biggest flaw. I can’t deny a man. I’m like a vagina incarnate—female essence embodied. If I ever were to deny a man, I would stop being me. [...] I had never even once denied a man who begged me for sex. My body as well as my heart would be loaded with desire the moment I felt the man’s desire for me, regardless what he was

like. [...] If there was no desire, then I wouldn't exist. If I didn't even exist in the first place, then nothing mattered. Because I was always desired by someone.

(Kirino 2003:119, 171, 187)

In the above quotations from Yuriko's journal, we can see that Yuriko's reason for existing and living is her being sexually desired by men. Her intention is thus best served by prostituting herself. Kirino sets Yuriko as an extreme example of the "patriarchal feminine"—a woman constructed in patriarchal discourse, beautiful and sexually alluring (Cranny-Francis 1992:135). As Cranny-Francis (1992) analyzes, the patriarchal femininity promises power as the woman complements the sexual rapacity of the patriarchal masculinity (142). "This construction of feminine and masculine sexuality demonstrates the interrelationship between the teasing naivety of the woman and her fascination with rapaciousness of the man and his (almost) irresistible physical craving. [...] This positioning must have some pay-off for the individual female subject in terms of her definition of her own sexuality. She can exploit this 'natural' sexual rapacity of the patriarchal man by flirting, which is perhaps the symbol of patriarchal femininity" (Cranny-Francis 1992:143-144).

Prostitutes are the ultimate form of the patriarchal feminine, women who live off men's sexual rapacity. Yuriko is a figure of the patriarchal feminine. She has the beauty and body to manipulate men, that is, the "socially approved" source of her power. Patriarchy offers women power through the historic positioning of genders

which complement each other (Cranny-Francis 1992:144). The patriarchal feminine and masculine “are not in conflict, but in total cooperation” (Cranny-Francis 1992:144). “She may also see herself as a martyr to ‘his’ masculinity; but this even has its compensations, not the least of which is its coercive power in relation to both men and other women” (Cranny-Francis 1992:145). The narrative proves that Yuriko does live off her patriarchal femininity for a while. She learns to deal with men as a means of survival. “私は幼いなりに学習したのだ。私にとってのサバイバルとは、男とどう渡り合うか、なのだ”(My lessons came at a very early age. I learned that in order to survive there was only one way I could fight a man)” (Kirino 2003:137; Kirino 2008:110). [Kazue:] “Ever since Yuriko had been a little girl, she brought the world to her feet by using her sexuality. In her treatment of male desires of all kinds, she had built a world entirely out of men—even if only for the briefest of moments. [...] She was able to bring the world to her feet by one method and one alone—because she was able to make men ejaculate” (Kirino 2008:419). To sum up with a common expression, that is, “Women conquer the world by conquering men”.

However, Kirino clearly does not believe in the power granted by patriarchy. The narrative turns out that Yuriko is as powerless as her sister and Kazue, who are not as beautiful as she is. Neither men nor sex is the means for women to obtain control over their own lives. After Yuriko and Kazue both descend to become street prostitutes, Yuriko says to Kazue, “I hate men, but I love sex. It’s the opposite for you, isn’t, Kazue? [...] If you and I became one, we’d be perfect. We’d be able to live the ultimate life. But on the other hand, if it’s the perfect life you want, best not to be born

a woman” (Kirino 2008:404). In the Japanese original, Yuriko says that “うまく生き  
たところで、女に生まれた以上、何の意味もないわ (It is meaningless if you are  
born as a woman anyway, no matter how well you live your life)” (Kirino 2003:467).  
This statement denies the power of the patriarchal feminine. Being defined as the  
opposite of men, women are therefore bound by the binary conception. In patriarchal  
society, women have to perform according to patriarchal codes and to be socially  
approved in order to gain their share of power. In other words, women play by the  
rules of patriarchy.

When Kazue feels a customer ejaculating inside her, “For a brief second I was  
drunk with the feeling of mastery” (Kirino 2008:419). However, reality follows. Kazue  
comes to the realization that the “feeling of mastery” is only a dream. “Was this reality,  
a place like this? Then what were the orgasms I’d had? And that momentary taste of  
control? The feelings I had earlier welled up again. But why? Welcome to reality.  
That’s precisely why I wanted to live forever in the dream where I get to rule the world”  
(Kirino 2008:420-421). In reality, prostitutes are not victors who manipulate male  
sexual desire, but women “who exist[s] only for the benefit of a few lousy cc’s sperm”  
(Kirino 2008:421). The tragedies of Yuriko and Kazue indicate that, “women conquer  
the world by conquering men” is nothing but a misleading illusion.

### Fight for Freedom

Because prostitution allows women to outplay men in terms of sexuality and to  
live an unconventional life, it can also be read as a blow against patriarchal society. As

Mitsuru comments, “[E]veryone acts like they were shocked when they found out about Yuriko and Kazue. But I wasn’t. Those two were always defiant, swimming against the tide. Especially Kazue” (Kirino 2008:298). Mitsuru’s comment in Japanese emphasizes the fact that the women are defying all of society, “あの人たちは反抗していたのよ、この世の中にね (They were so defiant—toward society, you know)” (Kirino 2003:349).

Yuriko chooses the life style of *yujo* to be free from the patriarchal household and positioning. Prostitution offers her a sense of sovereignty and freedom (which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 “Machigurashi at Q School” and Chapter 8 “Machigurashi in Society”). [Mitsuru:] “If you look at it that way, the one who was freest of all was Yuriko. She was so liberated, I wondered if she didn’t come from an entirely different planet. Such a free spirit. She couldn’t help but stick out in Japanese society” (Kirino 2008:343). Yuriko mocks the family life aspect of patriarchal society. On the other hand, Kazue mocks the work life aspect of society (which will be discussed further in Chapter 8 “Machigurashi in Society”).

Mitsuru also suggests that Yuriko’s sister resents Yuriko because she does not share Yuriko’s liberation. “The reason you haven’t been able to overcome your sense of being Yuriko’s inferior is not just because she was beautiful but because you could never share her sense of freedom” (Kirino 2008:343). The whole narrative ends with the plot of Yuriko’s sister becoming a prostitute as well. She thinks that women prostitute themselves out of hatred and vengeance, which are provoked by men and society. [Yuriko’s sister:] “Kazue grew hideous and exposed her ugly body to others.

She took her revenge on herself and on the rest of the world by making men buy her. And now I am selling my body for the same reason. Yuriko was wrong. Women have only one reason for turning to prostitution. It's hatred for others, for the rest of the world" (Kirino 2008:467). Moreover, speaking through Yurio, the narrative suggests that prostitutes are exalted because they are closely related to society from a different perspective. [Yurio:] "I can't help but think that they were really great people. [...] Because they were deeply engaged with this society (偉い人たちに思えてならないんです。 [...]世の中とディーブに関わったからです)" (Kirino 2003:531). Even in its most negative forms, prostitution still can send out positive feminist messages for challenging patriarchal norms.

## CHAPTER 6 PROSTITUTION AS GENDER SOCIALIZATION

*One's limbs/ may not be free, and yet – if one has but the will to die, death is freedom.*

—Kaneko Fumiko

### W's Tragedy<sup>11</sup>

Using women's sexual adventures as the subject matter of art is not exclusive to female authors such as Kirino Natsuo and Hayashi Fumiko. In English, Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) wrote *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722) and *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724), basing these narratives on the unconventional lives of (anti-) heroines Moll Flanders and Roxana. In Japan, after the success of *Koshoku ichidai otoko* (1682; *The Life of an Amorous Man*, 1964), Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) made his protagonist of this *koshokumono* (erotic tale) a woman and created *Koshoku ichidai onna* (1686; *The Life of an Amorous Woman*, 1963). Both Defoe's and Saikaku's works have comparative values in the analysis of Kirino's *Grotesque*. This chapter will use the feminist criticism of Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* in favor of the interpretation of *Grotesque*, and examine the pattern of narratives which *Grotesque* shares with Saikaku's *The Life of an Amorous Woman*.

In his analysis of *Moll Flanders*, Nicholas Marsh (2011) suggests the passage in which Moll Flanders “learns about masculine power” from being rejected by the elder brother of her husband-to-be in an early stage of the narrative. Taking a fresh twenty-first century perspective, Marsh states that this scene is significant because it serves as a stage of Moll's “gender training”, when Moll comes to the realization of

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<sup>11</sup> Wの悲劇 (1982, W's Tragedy) is a renowned novel by Japanese female writer Natsuki Shizuko. W stands for Women.

“the man’s power, and the woman’s vulnerability” (2011:108). “What this scene underlines for us is the self-interested battering and bullying from a patriarchal world that bashes Moll into her compliant shape; and the pain and fear she experiences during the process of gender-socialization” (Marsh 2011:108). Moll develops her understanding of gender difference through her lover’s abandonment in which she is in total submission and intimidated by his discourse.

He spoke this in so much more moving Terms than it is possible for me to Express, and with so much greater force of Argument than I can repeat, that I only recommend it to those who Read the Story, to suppose, that as he held me above an Hour and a Half in that Discourse, so he answer’d all my Objections, and fortified his Discourse with all the Arguments, that human Wit and Art could Devise.

(Defoe 2004:46-47)

From there, Moll “began to see a Danger that I was in, which I had not consider’d before, and that was of being drop’d by both of [the two brothers she has relationships with], and left alone in the World to shift for myself” (Doe 2004:47-48). Moll feels intimidated by masculine power. After this point, Moll turns to use men instead of depending them. She finds means to “shift for [herself]” in her femininity.

By contrast, Ian Watt (1970) argues that “Moll Flanders’s character [...] is not noticeably affected [...] by her sex” (24). Watt suggests that Moll’s character is

“essentially masculine” (23). Moll’s character is of complexity in terms of gender traits. In her life adventures, Moll shows that she “accepts none of the disabilities of her sex”; and as a heroine, Moll Flanders “fully realized one of the ideals of feminism: freedom from any involuntary involvement in the feminine role” (Watt 1970:23).

Nevertheless, sex differences and gender issues are central to all of Moll’s life choices and how she presents herself. In examining the intersection of femininity and criminality in *Moll Flanders*, John Rietz refers to John J. Richetti’s analysis of Roxana, “As a woman suddenly stripped of her domestic identity, Roxana is an open field, a deserted psycho-social space in which anything can be enacted and in which a newly thorough self-consciousness is possible. The cultural implications of Defoe’s book are that female identity in a normal social order is so limited and fragile that once ordinary conditions are altered, a woman is turned into a pure opportunity for free-floating selfhood” (Richetti 1982:33 qtd in Rietz 2004:472). Out of their domestic environment and identity, Defoe’s heroines are released to use their every trait in services of their own survival. For instance, Moll uses her appearance—beautiful and elegant, a “gentlewoman”, as a cover for becoming a con artist, shoplifter, and pickpocket. In short, the core of the heroines’ behavior lies in gender issues. Furthermore, I suggest that in *Grotesque*, the heroines’ choice of turning to prostitution can be interpreted as a part of their process of their gender socialization. As Virginia Woolf asserts that Defoe uses his heroines to display the “peculiar hardships” of women (Chaber 1982:213), Kirino does the same in *Grotesque*.

Furthermore, Lois A. Chaber (1982) and Nicolas Marsh (2011) suggest that

Defoe's heroines are "outsiders" to the society, which is another element of Defoe's works that resonates with Kirino's *Grotesque*. "Defoe uses Moll's role as criminal and woman—both outsiders—to criticize emergent capitalism, but in so doing he also reveals the more long-standing evils of sexism. [...] Because Moll is a member of 'the second sex' her criminal aggression becomes at once a parody of the alienating features of a primitive capitalist society and a justified defiance of that society" (Chaber 1982:213). In *Grotesque*, the three anti-heroines are also portrayed as outsiders and alienated from the centre (see more discussion on "outsider" in Chapter 8 "Machigurashi in Society").

#### 1. Kazue

The first paragraph of Kazue's journal describes the scene, in which Kazue has a glimpse of man's power. As the beginning of Kazue's journal, this scene carries significance. It is an epitome of Kazue's struggle. This scene hints that Kazue is under patriarchal oppression; meanwhile she submits herself to patriarchal power. "The man ahead of me kept glancing back vigorously over his shoulder as he walked. I assumed he was trying to spot a cab. The rain bouncing off his umbrella splashed onto the front of my Burberry trench coat, causing it to stain. I fumbled angrily through my purse, looking for my handkerchief. I pulled out the one I'd stuffed in my bag yesterday and patted busily at the raindrops. [...] I quietly cursed the man as he climbed into his cab. 'Hey, asshole, watch what you're doing!' But as I did so I recalled the vibrant way the rain had bounced off his umbrella, and that led me to think about **how strong men are**

**in general.** I was seized with a feeling of **desire**, soon to be followed by **disgust**” (Kirino 2008:344, boldface mine). Kazue is impressed by the man’s physical strength, which also hints masculinity’s dominating power over femininity in a patriarchal environment. This small incident reveals sex-related differences that are often hidden in everyday life. Kazue identifies herself as a woman, and is attracted as well as frustrated by patriarchal power (i.e., desire and disgust). From the beginning of Kazue’s journal, the narrative demonstrates the complex gender relations in Kazue’s world.

The teenager Kazue used to have absolute faith in “efforts” and that “you can succeed even if you’re female” (Kirino 2008:85). Before entering society, Kazue is ignorant of sex-related differences, in the same way that she is ignorant of the dynamics of Q School. She despises her mother for using her gender as an excuse for being unsuccessful. “For the longest time I set my sights on trying to outdo my mother. [...] Being raised to be a woman is pathetic, isn’t it? That’s what she always says. She uses being a woman as her excuse for not getting ahead in life. But if you really try your best, you can succeed even if you’re female” (Kirino 2008:85).

Kazue’s father has been brainwashing her with his emphasis on efforts and thus keeps close control over her life. He hammers the idea of Kazue’s mother’s inferiority into her mind, using Kazue’s mother as a negative example in order to motivate her.

“Kazue’s the smartest girl in our family,” he would say to me.

“Well, what about Mother?”

“Once your mother married she stopped studying, didn’t she? Why, she never even reads the newspaper.”

My father whispered that in my ear as if I were his co-conspirator. It was Sunday, and my mother was in the garden tending to her plants. I was in junior high at the time, studying for the high school qualifying examinations.

“Mother reads the newspaper!”

“Only the society page and the television schedule. She doesn’t even glance at the articles on economics or political affairs. That’s because she can’t understand them. Kazue, I think you should get a job with a first-class company. You’ll be able to meet an intelligent man, someone who will stimulate you intellectually. There’s no need for you to marry, though. You could just stay on in this house. You’re bright enough to out-do any man out there.”

I was convinced that women who married and became housewives end up as laughingstocks. I wanted at least to avoid that. Or if I did marry, I’d have to marry a man who was more intelligent, so he could appreciate my abilities. At that time, I didn’t understand that smart men don’t always select smart women. Because my parents did not get on that well, I believe it was because my mother wasn’t very smart and never really tried to apply herself.

(Kirino 2008:359-360)

Kazue's parents do not have a close relationship and her family functions based on a strict power hierarchy. It can be seen as a patriarchal society in miniature. "Because in our house there is an order to things. [...] Everyone automatically knows the order of things—who has the most prestige and authority, I mean. And you accede to that order accordingly. No one needs to explain it, but everyone obeys it. Everything is decided according to this order—like who has the right to take a bath first and who gets to eat the best food. [...] Mother lost out to my father from the very start, and there's no one in the family who can best him" (Kirino 2008:85). The figures of her Father and Mother are in competition to Kazue. Kazue loathes her mother who represents idleness and powerlessness, and identifies with her father who represents effort and power. As a result, Kazue's perceptions of issues such as sex-related differences and gender relations in reality have been lopsided since her childhood.

Once Kazue enters G Company, she comes to a late and painful realization of those things she has ignored before, in the corporate world and contemporary Japanese society. Women are not equal to men in the work place. Kazue finds out that women are expected to be beautiful, diligent, and caring at work. She has trouble adapting to the work environment. That is, she has trouble adapting to the feminine role expected of her at the work place, partly due to her reluctance to resemble her mother. Growing up in an unbalanced family, Kazue has difficulty with interpersonal relationships. Many plot elements indicate that Kazue has highly problematic relationships with all of her colleagues.

Kazue performs as an isolated individual rather than part of the group, which only worsens her situation. As a way of gain attention, Kazue wears earplugs at work and isolates herself from others. She is thus perceived as a disharmonious factor by others in the office. As an anonymous letters she receives says, “All the noise you make is annoying. Please do everyone a favor and try to be a little quieter when you’re working. You are inconveniencing others in the office” (Kirino 2008:346). Her co-worker Kamei carefully comments that, “Ms. Satō always uses earplugs, so I don’t think she really notices the noise she makes” (Kirino 2008:348). Kazue inspires fear and repulsion among her colleagues, and she is proud of this.

The part-timer in the filing department and our office assistant were already in the kitchen preparing tea for a horde of people. The part-timer was a freelancer and the assistant had been sent over from a temp agency. [...] Both of them looked uncomfortable when they saw me enter, so I knew they’d been bad-mouthing me. I pulled a clean coffee cup off the counter and asked, “Is there any hot water?”

“Yes.” The part-timer pointed to the thermos. “We just poured it in the pot.”

I poured hot water over the instant coffee I had just purchased. The part-timer and the assistant stopped what they had been doing and watched me. They looked annoyed. I spilled some of the hot water on the counter, but I just left it there and returned to my desk.

In Japanese corporations, female employees are expected to do housekeeping work and run small errands such as preparing tea for everyone, washing cups, printing, and photocopying. Kirino refers to this as “女の仕事 *onna no shigoto*”, women’s work<sup>12</sup>. Nevertheless, Kazue refuses to do this “女の仕事” out of her pride and her contempt for the image of the housewife. This dull and ordinary image of dull and ordinary housewives which Kazue tries to avoid comes from her own mother, as her father has taught her to despise the mother figure. Being thus inculcated by her father, Kazue deeply believes that she is no ordinary woman (like her mother), but “bright enough to out-do any man out there” (Kirino 2008:360).

Furthermore, this dysfunctionality in Kazue’s family results in her inability to form intimate relationships with other people. “It was not like I never planned on having a man in my life. But I didn’t know how to get along with men. And I knew all the male employees kept their distance from me. Therefore I acted like I had no interest in men. Besides, I felt contempt for Yamamoto’s wish to become a housewife” (Kirino 2003:427). Pretending that she has no interest in the opposite sex, Kazue promotes her image as unfeminine and intends to direct people’s perception of her to the intellectual level.

Kazue is perceived as not feminine, and thus unacceptable, in society. All her efforts—“I’m able to work a real job. I’ll have you know I graduated from Q

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<sup>12</sup> Please refer to “男以上に働いて、女の仕事もして、両方に気を遣ってくたびれて” (Kirino 2003:427).

University and I work at the G Firm”—end up “[a]ll totally worthless” under the patriarchal principle (Kirino 2008:371). Femininity is the priority under the patriarchal principle, so Kazue falls short by definition. “As a woman you’re less than average. You’d never be able to get a job in Ginza” (Kirino 2008:371). Kazue’s lack of feminine attractiveness underscores her failure as a woman.

When Kazue realizes that she is fighting alone in the “man’s world” as Moll Flanders does, she becomes desperate to prove her femininity (refer to Chapter 8 “Machigurashi in Society”). The change in Kazue’s attitude indicates the process of gender socialization. As Richetti suggests with Defoe’s Roxana, without a domestic identity, Kazue takes the “opportunity for free-floating selfhood” (Richetti 1982:33 quoted in Rietz 2004:472) and releases her femininity in the form of prostituting herself. Although Kazue has always consciously known that prostitution is dishonorable behavior, she seeks revenge in the act of prostituting herself.

I was going to get revenge. I was going to humiliate my firm, scorn my mother’s pretentiousness, and soil my sister’s honor. I was even going to hurt myself. I who had been born a woman, who was unable to live successfully as a woman, whose greatest achievement in life was getting in Q High School for Young Women. It had been all downhill since. That was it—that was why I was doing what I did, why I turned to prostitution.

(Kirino 2008:380-381)

The direct reason for Kazue to turn to prostitution is embedded in her self-perception of her gender role. As a woman who is “unable to live successfully as a woman”, exploiting her own female body and sexuality is her way to avenge the patriarchal society.

## 2. Yuriko

Among all three (anti-) heroines, Yuriko is the one who first realizes man’s power and women’s vulnerability in this patriarchal society. “My lessons came at a very early age. I learned that in order to survive there was only one way I could fight a man” (Kirino 2008:110). The “only one way” would be to overpower men with her beauty and sexuality. She calls it “運命” (Kirino 2003:156), her destiny (also refer to Chapter 3 “Beauty”). Yuriko is a victim of the male gaze. However, on another level, Yuriko victimizes herself as she thinks of it as her destiny as a woman.

Kijima Takashi says that being killed by a customer is Yuriko’s “本望” (Kirino 2003:378), her “long-cherished dream”. He says to Mitsuru and Yuriko’s sister, “And now for Yuriko to wind up getting murdered by a stranger! But when you come right down to it, that was probably her long-cherished dream. [...] Yuriko always told me she knew she’d be killed by one of her customers someday. It frightened her, but she seemed to be waiting for it to happen. She was a smart, complicated woman. [...] Still, am I wrong to assume that you [Yuriko’s sister] also believe Yuriko would wind up like this someday, once she went down the road she selected for herself?” (Kirino 2008:324).

Yuriko's preparedness and resignation to her fate are due to her early consciousness of the essence of female sexuality as a consumer good in patriarchal society. She sees herself as destined to be consumed by men. Therefore she takes the designated path for desperate women, becoming a prostitute. In the narrative, Takashi and Mitsuru both understand and sympathize with her choice of turning to prostitution. Takashi sees her as smart and complex, “頭のいい、複雑な女” (Kirino 2003:378); and Mitsuru sees her as liberated and free like a bird, “解放されていたし、自由な鳥のようだった” (Kirino 2003:400). Even Yuriko's sister has to admit that Yuriko is different from Kazue, and that Yuriko has no illusions regarding the environment they are in. “I lied. Yuriko was far from being like Kazue. From the very start, Yuriko had never believed in the rest of the world—in other people” (Kirino 2008:463).

Yuriko sees right through the cruel essence of men and patriarchy. She has a deep comprehension of gender differences based on her experiences. She seeks freedom in death and sees prostitution as a suicidal mission. Similar to female rebels in Imperial Japan Kanno Suga (1881-1911) and Kaneko Fumiko (1903-1926), Yuriko constructs herself as “victor over death, and yet victim of life” (Raddeker 1997:33). From a different perspective, all three: Takashi, Mitsuru, and Yuriko's sister, identify with Yuriko's viewpoint that women are in a vulnerable position in this patriarchal society, and that prostitution is a form of women's passive resistance to patriarchy. Through prostitution, Yuriko confirms her cognition of gender relations.

### 3. Yuriko's sister

Yuriko's sister is as precocious as Yuriko. For instance, at Kazue's house, Yuriko's sister recognizes Kazue's father as a representative of patriarchal society. "I had managed to adapt myself to this man's sense of values. I knew of no one else who was as clear-cut as he on what was worthy and what was not. But it terrified me that he would force his biased logic on me" (Kirino 2008:92). At the age of sixteen, Yuriko's sister learns to fear patriarchal power. "Being told that 'You're worthless' by an adult for the first time was a real shock to me. However, I saw through the way Kazue's father talked that he was definitely hiding behind the mask of a patriarchy order (和恵の父親の言い方はまさに家父長の皮を被った世間だとわたしにはわかったのです)" (Kirino 2003:118). Yuriko's sister discovers that Kazue's father represented society as it was enveloped by the father as head of the household. To Yuriko's sister, Kazue's father is an outstanding example of men who live and act according to the patriarchal principles and become "self-centered and powerful (身勝手に強い奴)" (Kirino 2003:119).

However, with the same knowledge, she goes on a different path from Yuriko at an early stage of her life due to her inferiority complex. Instead of turning to prostitution, Yuriko's sister remains a virgin. Yuriko's sister avoids contact with men in order not to be compared with Yuriko (also refer to Chapter 4 "Unbeauty"). Later triggered by Yuriko's change, Yuriko's sister's castle of malice crumbles completely. "But my determination [to prostitute myself] takes control. I have been confronted with a desire to transform both myself and the hatred I feel for Yuriko, who has begun to

despise me” (Kirino 2008:467). Yuriko’s sister eventually comes to seek revenge just as Kazue has done. This is the ultimate revenge toward society from the unbeautiful woman. “Kazue grew hideous and exposed her ugly body to others. She took her revenge on herself and on the rest of the world by making men buy her. And I am selling my body for the same reason” (Kirino 2008:467). Being invisible and ignored her whole life, Yuriko’s sister finds her value only in this bitter revenge.

Prostitution, in *Grotesque*, is a path shared by both beautiful and unbeautiful women. This also answers Yuriko’s sister’s previous doubts, “Kazue was not pretty. She wasn’t beautiful, and yet she died exactly the same way Yuriko did” (Kirino 2008:8) (also refer to Chapter 4 “Unbeauty”). In a patriarchal society portrayed in the narrative, there is no exception to women’s destiny—women are “to be consumed by men” “男に食べ尽くされる女” (Kirino 2008:129; Kirino 2003:156). Loaded with hatred for men and patriarchy, prostitution therefore becomes the final step of women’s gender socialization.

*But there’s a story behind everything. How a picture got on a wall. How a scar got on your face. Sometimes the stories are simple, and sometimes they are hard and heartbreaking. But behind all your stories is always your mother’s story, because hers is where yours begin.*

—Mitch Albom

### Mothers as Models

The alumnae of Q School are not the only female characters in *Grotesque*.

*Grotesque* also portrays the figures of the mothers who appear in the narrative—Yuriko and her sister’s mother, Kazue’s mother, Mitsuru’s mother. There is a common pattern in the characterization of these mother figures. All three mothers are portrayed as weak, vulnerable, and unable to adapt themselves to the society. Because of this, the main female characters have conflicting and intense emotions toward their mothers.

#### 1. Yuriko and her sister’s mother

Yuriko’s sister never conceals her aversion toward their mother. She resents their mother for her weakness and failure to protect her from their father. Yuriko’s sister is even “surprised” that “Mother had the courage to take her own life” (Kirino 2008:36). [Yuriko’s sister:] “I was not sad. It’s strange, but I felt I’d lost my mother long ago. I’d done all my mourning while I was little, so I hadn’t even felt particularly lonely or sad when my mother left me for Switzerland back in March. When I heard she’d died, I felt she’d already left for some place far, far away, so feelings of sorrow were quite a different for me” (Kirino 2008:64).

Yuriko’s sister feels abandoned by their mother because of her negligence. According to Yuriko, “When we lived in Japan, Mother had never once allied herself with my sister against our father’s bad moods” (Kirino 2008:117). Nevertheless Yuriko feels the same way because “once we got to Switzerland, she thought only of my sister” (Kirino 2008:117). [Yuriko:] “If my mother had abandoned anyone, it was me. I didn’t look like anyone in the family. I’d been left to my own devices” (Kirino 2008:117). As a result, Yuriko becomes estranged from their mother. “I despised my mother’s

spinelessness. I hated her negligence” (Kirino 2008:117).

Their mother is a great failure in terms of playing her familial role as wife and mother. Her marriage is at stake due to her husband’s affair, and the relationships with her two daughters deteriorate. She fails in establishing intimate relationships, even inside her own family. The family is collapsing and so is she. In the narrative, she never once makes efforts to improve the situation. [Yuriko:] “A hassle. That was Mother’s favorite word. Trying to learn German was a hassle. Doing something new was a hassle. My mother remained so unaccustomed to Bern that she easily got turned around whenever she ventured out into the city. It was not long, therefore, until her personality began to undergo some kind of collapse” (Kirino 2008:118). Yuriko is critical of Mother’s passivity.

Mother evades unpleasant encounters in life. As the ultimate escape, she takes her own life. Her suicide leaves an indelible impact on the children’s adolescence, changing their lives forever. To Yuriko, “What her death brought me was a clear understanding of the consequences of adult selfishness” (Kirino 2008:118). To Yuriko’s sister, “Indeed, Mother abandoned me and Yuriko, going off and disappearing on her own like that. [...] She made her farewells, leaving only problems behind. So cunning! (確かに、母はわたしとユリコを置いて、一人でさっさと消えてしまったのでした。[...] 問題だけ残して自分だけおさらばするなんて、狡いじゃん)” (Kirino 2003:125). In sum, to her daughters’ mind, she is not only incompetent, but also selfish.

## 2. Kazue's mother

Kazue's mother is also portrayed as an irresponsible figure. She is a housewife who lives isolated at home and only cares about her garden. When Kazue starts to prostitute herself, her mother notices signs, but is too afraid to speak up or act upon this. She lives off the money Kazue brings home. Therefore the content of their communication is limited to her reminders to Kazue to keep up with her work performance, for example, to change her clothes, and not to be late for work. She does not assume responsibility as a mother and care for Kazue's well-being as she clearly needs at this point.

What creates divergence in Kazue's relationship with her mother is their family adversity. Kazue blames her mother for her father's death and her resulting heavy work load.

My father had collapsed in his bath. If we'd discovered him right away, we might have been able to save him. I couldn't help secretly blaming my mother. She was at home, but she'd already gone to bed. I just couldn't get it out of my mind that she was somehow to blame. [...]

I took on as many tutoring jobs as I could and spent all day running from one to the next. And what did she do, my mother? She just sat at home fussing over the plants in her garden. What a big fat zero. A worthless woman. I looked at my mother in total disgust.

(Kirino 2008:362)

To Kazue, her mother represents the type of woman who gives up struggling and resisting in the patriarchal society. Kazue's mother blames everything for being born as a woman, and lives under the presumption that women cannot succeed. She is not respected by her spouse in her marriage. Under the ranking system her husband has established, for example, she does not have the right to eat *soba* (a kind of Japanese noodle) with guests, but has to eat leftovers instead. Therefore she compensates by devoting all her attention to the garden. Her excessive care for her garden is the externalization of her separation from society, her unhappy family life, and her self-abandonment. This also triggers Kazue's contempt for her mother. Kazue despises both her mother and her garden.

The rain had begun to come down in torrents. The flowers in the garden that Mother was so proud of had been flattened: hydrangea, azaleas, roses, little flowering grasses. They were all bent down. I turned to the garden and cursed the stupid plants. As soon as the rains let up they'd bounce right back, perkier than ever from all the moisture. The little bastards! I despised my mother's precious garden.

(Kirino 2008:437)

### 3. Mitsuru's mother

Although Mitsuru is identified as a supportive female character in this thesis, Mitsuru's mother plays as equally a significant role as Yuriko's mother and Kazue's mother to the narrative. Mitsuru looks down on her mother just as Kazue does on her own mother. In Yuriko's sister's words, Mitsuru's mother does not "measure up to Mitsuru's ideal" (Kirino 2008:72). Mitsuru thinks of her mother as a "coward". "My mother's a real piece of work, huh? But she just plays at being bad. I can't stand it. Someone who goes out of their way to say hateful things like that is really a coward, don't you think? [...] I feel I said good-bye to my mother long ago too. Now I'm just using her, you know, for rides and such" (Kirino 2008:72).

The root of Mitsuru's total rejection of her mother may be the orientation incident—her mother's ignorance results in her being bullied at school (Kirino 2008:73). Because of the mother's naïve attitude and her expression of exhilaration for her daughter to be a part of Q School before the Parent-Student Association, Mitsuru becomes a target for bullying.

That morning there was a drawing of my mother on the blackboard. She was dressed in a bright red suit with a big diamond ring and alongside the drawing were the words *Finally, a Q student!* But what it meant was, whether I had entered at elementary school or junior high, I would *never* be one of them.

(Italics in the original) (Kirino 2008:74)

Mitsuru's mother's ignorance of the social environment disappoints her. [Yuriko's sister:] "Mitsuru's mother had no idea that there was a strict and unshakable hierarchy existing in such a small world. When she realized it, then it would be too late. She'd be eaten up like dessert" (Kirino 2003:97). Mitsuru's mother causes trouble for Mitsuru in her school life. Mitsuru has to repair the damage done by her mother all by herself. Mitsuru arms herself against the bullying in her own terms (e.g., lending fake notes to classmates) and survives Q School using her brain. In all of Kazue, Mitsuru, Yuriko and her sister's cases, as mothers are unable to provide protection for their children, the family bond between the two parties becomes loosened.

\*Yuriko as Mother and Yuriko's Grandmother as Mother

There are two more significant "Mother" figures in the narrative of *Grotesque* that are easy to overlook—Yuriko herself and Yuriko's grandmother. From the perspective of her life experiences, Yuriko is disappointed by family and other blood ties. Yuriko's difference from her mother in physicality symbolizes their distant relationship. On the other hand Yuriko's grandmother is a figure which symbolizes Yuriko's ties to the family. Because Yuriko's mother tells her, "Your fingers are exactly the same as your Grandma's", Yuriko quits the habit of biting her nails in order to preserve the only part of her body that resembles this passed relative (Kirino 2003:158). "Mother said that I resembled her mother who I had never met or heard anyone talk about. That meant the same blood was flowing in me" (Kirino 2003:158). The absence

of Grandmother from the beginning of the narrative hints at the weak connection between Yuriko and her mother. In Yuriko's narration, Grandmother's death is depicted as mysterious, and she is portrayed as suicidal from Yuriko's perspective. Later on, Yuriko is convinced that her own mother "hated" her (Kirino 2008:116), and that children such as herself are only products of adults' selfishness. "しかし、私が生まれたのは、大人たちの勝手な所業の産物でしかない" (Kirino 2003:144).

As a result, Yuriko abandons her own child—Yurio. "私は赤ん坊を産み落としたことがある。それは事実だ。ただ、自分の血を分けた子供など要らない (I have given birth to a baby. That is true. However, I have no use for a child who shares my blood)" (Kirino 2003:182). Yuriko gives the child to Johnson to raise, and continues living her life as if she had never had a child. Her family had victimized her as a child and she turns around to inflict pain on others by becoming a selfish and irresponsible adult/ parent. In the same way that Grandmother jumps into the water and leaves Yuriko's mother, and that Yuriko's mother takes sleeping pills and leaves Yuriko alone, Yuriko chooses to become an absentee mother to her own child.

Yuriko's sister and Kazue, who in contrast do not have the opportunity to establish a romantic relationship and have a child, are, like Yuriko, victims of dysfunctional families. Unable to learn about intimate relationships from their parents, all three anti-heroines have trouble dealing with "人間関係" *ningen kangei*, relationships or interactions with others, as they grow up. [Yuriko:] "Earlier I wrote that I imagine I became a prostitute because I didn't want to have long-lasting relationships with other people" (Kirino 2008:148). [Yuriko's sister:] "わたしはおそ

らく、人間関係マニアなのでしょう (I'm afraid that I might be manic about human relationships)” (Kirino 2003:50). [Kazue:] “Yamamoto had what I would never be able to obtain. [...] [A]ll of them had the ability to interact with others: friends, lovers, someone to whom they could open their hearts, someone with whom they could share conversation, someone they longed to see once work was done. [...] I had nothing outside of work” (Kirino 2008:369-370). In the narrative of *Grotesque*, dysfunctional families foster children who have problems relating to the outside world. These children grow up to form more dysfunctional families and relationships. Yuriko's relationship with Yurio verifies this vicious circle.

In summary, the characterization of the four characters' mothers is based on one model—the passive, vulnerable, and weak female who capitulates to patriarchy in either the domestic or the social environment. Furthermore, the mothers are role models of gendered behaviors to their daughters. The mothers' experiences observed by the (anti-) heroines serve as a significant process of the (anti-) heroines' gender socialization, thus cultivating their cognition of sex-related differences in Japanese society. The (anti-) heroines' repulsion to their own mothers implies their strong desires to be different from them. The mothers' experiences inspire the (anti-) heroines to take a path that diverges completely from the one the mothers have followed—to confront, rebel, and take revenge on the patriarchal society, even when that takes a self-destructive form such as turning to prostitution.

*I may have lived in this world by selling my body, but is my heart itself polluted?*

—Ihara Saikaku

### Double Standards

Earlier in this chapter, I examined the gender issues in *Grotesque* in comparison with Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*. The analogy to Defoe's works in Tokugawa Japan, which also resembles *Grotesque* in its theme of women's sexual practice, is *The Life of an Amorous Woman* by Saikaku. According to Ivan Morris (1963), Saikaku is analogous to Defoe for the shared social realism and bourgeois spirit in their works (32, 51). In style, *The Life of an Amorous Woman* has its heroine tell her life story as a confession which is similar to *Grotesque*, both works constructing authentic and convincing characters that also provide some psychological depth. The most significant resemblance between *The Life of an Amorous Woman* and *Grotesque* is found in how the heroines end up. As Morris (1963) analyzes,

[A]part from her highly erotic nature, the heroine is endowed with physical beauty [...] The courtesan's life, however, is no longer pictured in the rosy colors of the earlier works, but is revealed with full realism as a place where money rules the day and where sensual desire is rarely relieved by tenderness. As the heroine's beauty begins to desert her with advancing age, she sinks to the most sordid fields of commercial venery

and finally becomes a common streetwalker. In [*The Life of an Amorous Woman*], then, Saikaku evokes the dark, gloomy aspect of sex and shows us the reverse side of the medal, as it were, of the *kōshoku* depicted in his first books.

(Morris 1963:25-26)

However, it is important to note here that the protagonist of Saikaku's earlier *kōshoku-mono* (好色物; sensuous works), *The Life of an Amorous Man*, is male. The ending of *The Life of an Amorous Man* is uplifting, and the wealthy and successful protagonist Yonosuke embarks on his final adventure full of hope. In contrast, the tale of the heroine of *The Life of an Amorous Woman* ends on a dim note. In this case, the medal of licentiousness has two sides, but the gender of the protagonist is crucial to determining the side flipped.

Money and love are two great themes of Saikaku's *ukiyo-zōshi* (浮世草子; genre of "fiction of the floating world") (Morris 1963:34), and both are related to beauty. For women, their access to money and love is denied as their beauty flees. As discussed in Chapter 3 "Beauty", the fleshiness of women and their increasing physical inferiority to men as they age are represented in both *The Life of an Amorous Woman* and *Grotesque*. Like middle-aged Kazue and Yuriko, the heroine in *The Life of an Amorous Woman* goes downhill as she loses her beauty. She has difficulty finding a job, "being furrowed with the waves of age" (Ihara 1963:192). Eventually, she returns to the gay quarters of Shinmachi where she has once been a courtesan, but this time she

“assumed the role of supervising other courtesans” (Ihara 1963:192). After this job, she is forced to walk the streets for money. However, reality is harsh to women without their beauty.

[A]nd nowadays, even when it is only a matter of hasty diversion, a woman who is old or ugly is promptly turned down. “For a thousand men who see, there are a thousand blind.” So the saying goes; but on that night, alas, I did not meet a single one who was blind!

Finally dawn began to appear: [...] Yet I persisted in walking the streets, until the hour when the blacksmith and the bean-curd dealer opened their shutters. But no doubt my appearance and demeanor were not suited to this calling, for during the entire time not a single man solicited my favors.

(Ihara 1963:203)

*Grotesque* has similar depictions of the predicament of Kazue and Yuriko. Having experienced so much physically and mentally, they have turned into monsters which normal men cannot even look at. They are desperate, wretched, and miserable.

The students noticed me standing there in the dark and looked over at me as if they’d seen a ghost. I called out to them, “Hey, fellas, would

one of you like to party?” They looked bewildered and poked each other with their elbows.

“Come on. It’ll be fun. Let’s party.”

The students were young. They looked at me in disgust, turned away, and ran. [...] I headed off in the direction the two boys had taken.

“Let’s party our brains out. Come on. I’ll do you both. We can go to a hotel and I’ll do you both for fifteen thousand yen. What do you say?”

The two were speechless. They practically started running when they saw me behind them. But I can’t let my prey get away! And then, at that instant, I heard someone call out, “Try me. I’ll do you each, one by one.”

[...] [Yuriko] tried to block the boys from going past her. The boys, completely taken aback, came to a halt. [...] The boys, now completely panicked, ran past her. She looked back after them and then turned around and shrugged.

(Kirino 2008:402)

On the other hand, the equally amorous hero of Saikaku, Yonosuke, lives an enjoyable and fulfilling life till the end in *The Life of an Amorous Man*. Opposite to the dismal depictions of the heroine’s tragic life, the atmosphere of the latter is “optimistic, fresh and lively” with a focus on “the pleasurable aspects of love” (Morris 1963:24). The anonymous heroine has her retribution for promiscuity, losing her beauty, fame,

and social standings, in the end of the narrative of *The Life of an Amorous Woman*. However Yonosuke becomes more successful and respected as he experiences more sexual practices with different kinds of women. Furthermore, his health is not comprised from licentious conduct as the anonymous heroine's is. In the end of the narrative, he is still physically well and prepared to conquer more women in terms of sexuality, in Morris's word, "indefatigable" (Morris 1963:24). Instead of being punished for *kōshoku* like Saikaku's anonymous heroine and Yuriko in *Grotesque*, Yonosuke is rather rewarded for his *kōshoku*, which emphasizes on "gallantry, rakishness and straightforward sexual enjoyment" in *The Life of an Amorous Man* (Morris 1963:23-24).

In the second last episode of the book, there is a scene in which a group of courtesans sing and dance for Yonosuke, and the lyrics imply the indefatigability of Yonosuke. "And what [Yonosuke] saw was a thing of sheer sumptuous delight. [...] [The thirty-seven courtesans] danced in wild abandon: Under the shade of pines ever green, Shall flow the wines of Iwai/ For ages eternal" (Ihara 1964:228). As a man, Yonosuke's awesome nature goes beyond physical conditions, and therefore remains timeless. In comparison, as a woman, the anonymous heroine's radiance is limited to carnal conditions and vanishes as she ages (also refers to Chapter 3 "Beauty").

This patriarchy presumed perception of gender differences disadvantages women in their social activities, as represented in the narrative of *Grotesque* also. In an interview, Kirino once said that the "gender inequality" is shown in the ageist bias

targeted at female and disfavors female in fulfilling their physiological needs<sup>13</sup>. This “gender inequality” also shows in the contrast of *The Life of an Amorous Man* and *The Life of an Amorous Woman*, that men and women conduct exactly the same behaviors but still might look at entirely different outcomes. Kirino has her character Kazue said that, “Why is it, in this world of ours, women are the only ones who have a hard time surviving? (この世でどうして女だけがうまく生きられないのか、わからないわ)” (Kirino 2003:487; Kirino 2008:4234). Similarly, in *The Life of an Amorous Woman*, a woman who has lesbian sexual acts with the heroine expresses her wish to reborn as a man. “When I am reborn in the next world, I will be a man. Then I shall be free to do what really gives me pleasure!” (Ihara 1963:188).

Both sexual and social experiences are gender-specific due to society’s conventions and expectations, thus giving rise to gender inequality and women’s hardship. In a patriarchal society, such as that depicted in *Grotesque*, women’s experiences in every aspect are marginalized compared to men’s. For female characters in *Grotesque*, life is harder than it is for male characters, and they resent this social inequality. This is why Yuriko turns to prostitution to live as she feels she is “destined” to and to find freedom within her own spirit. Prostitution is the means for Kazue to gain revenge and for Yuriko’s sister to express her hatred. Prostitution for these women is “an absolutely sublime struggle, the struggle between an individual and the rest of the world” (Kirino 2008:463). Through prostitution, the (anti-) heroines go through their bitter gender socialization by living out their self-defined destinies as women in

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<sup>13</sup> Kirino (2007) says in an interview, “There is gender inequality, but I also think that women are sexually unfulfilled. Japanese men don’t see their age as equals”.

such a social environment. This exchange of currency and sexuality between the two sexes connects women to society in an extreme sense and enables them to reveal the core of patriarchy. Prostitution hereby is endowed with enhanced meanings. Their self-sacrificing efforts make the “deep connections with this world (世の中とディープに関わった)” which Yurio refers to, and thus make them “great (偉い)” in an unprivileged child’s eyes (Kirino 2003:531).



## CHAPTER 7 MACHIGURASHI AT Q SCHOOL

*The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.*

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*You may leave school, but it never leaves you.*

—Andy Partridge

### Machigurashi

The term *machizukuri* (まちづくり) was first used by Professor Masuda Shiro as an academic notion in 1952 (Watanabe 2007:40). It is often used to describe citizens' participation in city planning or their contribution to community (e.g., in inner-city development in Tokyo in the mid-1990s) (Watanabe 2007:40). However this notion has been ambiguous and referred to under different conditions (Watanabe 2007:40). The *machi* here is written as *hiragana* (まち) in order to include both physical (街) and non-physical (町) aspects of urban space (Watanabe 2007:54). I would like to propose a similar concept *machigurashi* (まち暮らし) in this thesis for the analysis of the women's living experiences in Tokyo represented in *Grotesque*. In the context of this thesis, I define *machigurashi* as living experience in urban space, which is affected by the social, political, and economic elements embedded in the city's geographic districts. The term emphasizes "living (暮らし)". Just as *flâneur*<sup>14</sup> refers to a person who explores the city by wandering on the streets, the subjects of *machigurashi* experience the city in their everyday life through their means of living, and they are presumably (but not necessarily) native to the city. *Machigurashi* concerns people's experience at places such as homes, workplaces, parks, restaurants, and roads. The practice of

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<sup>14</sup> The Japanese translation for *flâneur* is 都市遊歩者 *toshi yūhōsha*, literally meaning "somebody who walks for pleasure in the city" (Schulz 2012:185). For the discussion of Japanese equivalents for *flâneur*, see Schulz 2012.

machigurashi can be both active and passive. In other words, a person, as the subject, lives in and experiences the city, but at the same time, s/he may be the object of the pre-existing norms embodied in urban space. For example, when a person jogs, s/he might have to stop at an intersection to wait for a traffic signal (i.e., norms established through urban planning governance); a person goes shopping in the CBD but carefully strays from the dangerous high-crime zones (i.e., norms established by non-governmental artificial factors). Here I will examine the struggles of female characters through their machigurashi.

Furthermore, In *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994), Massy Doreen argues that “[S]pace must be conceptualized integrally with time” (2). Neil Smith also points to the significance of time period to social and spatial practices, “[D]ifferent societies and different modes of production produce space differently; they produce their own kinds of spaces [...] specific societies and specific periods have distinctive spatial codes [...] that] are integral to the social and spatial practices of a given place and period” (1998:54 quoted in Dimmer 2012:74). The urban space of Tokyo as an artifact represented in the narrative of *Grotesque* is limited to Tokyo from the 1970s to the 2000s<sup>15</sup>. This time setting is especially essential because Kristina Iwata-Weickenannt (2012) suggests that Kirino’s works often denounce growing inequality and precariousness in post-bubble Japanese society and that Kirino is a writer of “proletarian literature (*puroretaria bungaku*)” (142). In *Grotesque*, Tokyo is set as

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<sup>15</sup> In *Grotesque*, all main female characters are born in the early 1960s. Yuriko is born in 1963, and Yuriko’s sister, Kazue, and Mitsuru, born in 1962 (they are classmates at Q School, and Yuriko’s sister is one year older than she). Therefore, we can infer that when they enter high school, the time is the 1970s. The trial of Zhang’s alleged murder is set in 2000.

post-economic bubble capital, where issues of unfair workplace practices arise, because Kirino is aware that women's machigurashi has been influenced since "globalization and the continued recession" (Kirino 2006). This will be further discussed in the analysis of Kazue's case. I identify the dynamics in the characters' machigurashi as locating their lives on both geographical and metaphorical maps.

### Maeda Ai's Methodology

In analyzing of the characters' machigurashi in *Grotesque*, I will employ Maeda Ai's methodology found in his interpretation of "*Maihime*" ("The Dancing Girl", 1890) by Mori Ōgai (1862-1922). Maeda explores the dichotomies embedded in the places and locations in the narrative and establishes boundaries between the polarizations. For example, "The history of Toyotarō's everyday life in Berlin leads from **open, externalized** space of **Unter den Linden** to the **closed-off and interiorized** space of **Klosterstrasse**; it is a history marked by a momentous transformation that comes when Toyotarō crosses the boundary between the two spaces" (Maeda 2004:312, boldface mine). Maeda explores the essence of spaces which are weaved into the narrative. "**Unter den Linden** stands as monumental space, both *remote and expansive*, **Klosterstrasse** represents an **erotic space that coils in on itself**" (Italics in the original) (Maeda 2004:312, boldface mine). Maeda links the psychological activities of narrators to representations of urban space on the part of a narrator and suggests that the perspective taken by the narrator impacts on the narrative. For instance, "Ōgai has Ōta Toyotarō discover the perspectival axis that draws together the baroque space of

**Berlin in tight geometrical formation.** [...] [B]y refusing to allow himself a sympathetic response to the object world, he chooses, however unwittingly, the ideal of the **modern epistemological subject**—a subject that aims to reify and abstract all things” (Maeda 2004:305-306, boldface mine). Furthermore, Maeda draws a topography of the narrative in order to analyze characters from their spatial movements. For instance, “the **topography** of ‘The Dancing Girl’ can be summed up schematically as follows: Toyotarō moves from **exterior** into **interior** space; he passes through a period of cohabitation with Elise; he finally returns once again to **exterior** space” (Maeda 2004:320, boldface mine). By employing the above methodology, I will reveal the characters’ struggle in relation to their placement in the cityscape.

### Home, Sweet Home

To start with, I will examine the location of the characters’ residence which serves as an essential part of their machigurashi, and I will identify the dynamics of main characters’ machigurashi from the analysis. The location of residence is the manifestation of the owner’s wealth and social status. Some people live in Beverly Hills, some under a bridge. From this kind of difference, we see the classification through spatial practice. As Lefebvre puts it, “The space of this social practice becomes a space that *sorts*—a space that *classifies* in the service of a class. The strategy of classification distributes the various social strata and classes (other than one that exercises hegemony) across the available territory, keeping them separate and prohibiting all contacts” (Italics in the original) (1991:375).

In competitive and prestigious private high schools such as Q School, the locations of students' homes function as their name card. This kind of plot can be found in other literary works. In Murakami Haruki's *Norwei no mori* (1987; *Norwegian Wood*, 1989), the high school that Midori goes to resembles Q School in *Grotesque*, she recounts the locations of the students' residences, "[T]his school [...] had nothing but upper-class girls—almost a thousand girls with good backgrounds and good grades. *Rich Girls*. [...] Out of a hundred and sixty girls in my class, I was the only one from a middle-class neighborhood like Toshima (豊島). I looked at the school register once to see where others lived, and every single one of them was from a rich area [千代田区三番町、港区元麻布、大田区田園調布、世田谷区成城]. [...] I was the only one in the whole school who lived in a place like Kita- Otsuka Toshima (豊島区北大塚)" (Italics in the original; English text in Murakami 2000:60-61) (Japanese text in Murakami 2008:128). Murakami here provides details to illustrate the gap between Midori and her classmates embodied in their home addresses. In *Grotesque*, Kirino also guides readers through different regions of Tokyo as they are significant to the characters' machigurashi at Q School, where it all starts.

First of all, the social environment of Q School is not just an artifact created by Kirino, but actually a reference to a real school environment. It has been suggested by both readers and academics that Q University in the narrative refers to Keio University and Q High School for Young Women refers to Keio Girls Senior High School, which Watanabe Yasuko (the prototype of Kazue) went to in reality. Just like Keio University, Keio Senior High School is a prestigious private educational institution. It implements

男女別学 *danjobetsugaku* (single-sex education) and 中高一貫教育 *chukō ikkan kyōiku*, which allows students of their junior high school division to enter the senior high school division directly (Keio University 2013a). The students are therefore categorized into two groups, 外部受験者 *gaibu jukensha* (external candidates who take entrance exams) and 内部進学者 *naibu shingakusha* (internal students who proceed to the next stage without taking exams). Moreover, almost every student of Keio Senior High School can enter Keio University without taking an examination. This privilege attracts many candidates and makes Keio Senior High School one of the most difficult schools in the metropolitan area to enter. It fits all the characterizations of Q School in *Grotesque*'s narrative. Even the pedagogical doctrine of Q School “独立独歩” (translated as “independence, self-reliance, and self-respect”) (Kirino 2008:61) is very similar for the one of Keio Senior High School “独立自主” (independence and self-respect) (Keio University 2013b). Kirino attends to every detail in her construction of Q School in the narrative in order to make it convincing. The realistic portrayal of Q School and the characters' school life renders the issues (e.g., *enjo kōsai*, bullying and discrimination, inequality) much more compelling.

The dynamics in Q School are central to the dichotomy of 内部生 *naibusei* and 外部生 *gaibusei*<sup>16</sup>, and this dichotomy expands to create more binary notions which drive the dynamics of their relationships (see Table 7.1). The *naibusei* are students who have been in the education system of Q since elementary school, and who mostly hail from wealthy upper-class families. The *gaibusei* are students who have received their

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<sup>16</sup> In the English version, *naibusei* and *gaibusei* are translated as “insiders” and “outsiders”. To avoid confusion of these categories of students with the sociology terms, in this thesis the categories of student will be referred to as the original Japanese words in Roman characters.

education from other schools and passed the entrance exam to enter the high school level of Q System. They mostly come from middle- or lower-class families. Therefore *naibusei* and *gaibusei* represent two different classes. In Mitsuru' words, "It's because their circumstances are so different. Because they come from such different backgrounds, their attitudes toward the value of things are completely different. [...] Here we have the class-based society in all its repugnant glory. [...] It must be worse here than anywhere else in all Japan. Appearance controls everything. That's why the people in the inner circle and those orbiting around them never mingle" (Kirino 2008:54). I identify this kind of social control as "spatial strategy", a Lefebvrian term.

Each spatial strategy has several aims: as many aims as abstract space—manipulated and manipulative—has "properties". Strategic space makes it possible simultaneously to force worrisome groups, the worker among others, out towards the periphery; to make available spaces near the centres scarcer, so increasing their value; to organize the centre as locus of decision, wealth, power and information; to find allies for the hegemonic class within the middle strata and within the "elite"; to plan production and flows from the spatial point of view; and so on.

(Lefebvre 1991:375)

“ <i>naibusei</i> ” (内部生)	“ <i>gaibusei</i> ” (外部生)
Insider	Outsider
Inner circle (主流)	Those orbiting around the inner circle (傍流)
“the true-blue princesses, the daughters of fathers who own giant cartels” (Kirino 2008:54)	“the children of salary men” (Kirino 2008:54)
Enjoy bullying	Targets for bullying
Club members	Not embraced by the clubs
Occupy upper-class regions	Live in ordinary neighborhood

Table 7.1 Class-based society reflected in Q School

Mitsuru is surprised when she finds out that Yuriko’s sister lives in P Ward (Kirino 2008:55). P Ward is a fictional place in the narrative, but inferred from all the information given in the text, P Ward may be a codeword of Edogawa-ku (江戸川区). “P Ward is located in the eastern part of the city. Chiba Prefecture lies just across the wide river” (Kirino 2008:9). P Ward is a place for the common people, with many apartments created through government housing projects, or called 公団 *kōdan* (公団住宅) (Kirino 2008:27; Kirino 2003:36). Kirino illustrates this with the following passage:

P Ward is in the scruffier part of downtown Tokyo, in the so-called Low City. It’s mostly flat there, with hardly any tall buildings. A number of

large rivers run through the ward, slicing it into smaller sections. The large levees along the rivers obstruct one's line of vision. The surrounding buildings are not very high but, because of the levees, they look oppressive. It is in fact a very peculiar area. Just beyond the levees, an immense volume of water<sup>17</sup> flows by at a normally languid pace. Whenever I'd climb the banks of the levees to gaze down into the brownish water of the river below, I'd imagine all the different life-forms swirling around beneath the surface.

(Kirino 2008:27)

Given the class and social status it represents, P Ward is as far as one could be from the world of Q School. The residents of the *kōdan* where Yuriko's sister lives are mostly elderly people who have little access to sources of economic and political power. The picture of the neighborhood Kirino illustrates is a dim and stifling one. However, Yuriko's sister sees something good in it once she has found out from her grandfather that this area used to be under the ocean.

“Under the ocean?” I gasped in spite of myself, completely forgetting the bonsai. I suddenly realized that the love that had been ignited between my mother and father, and the energy it had generated, dissipated the moment conception took place. The new life-form that was to become me

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<sup>17</sup> This water may be Arakawa River (荒川).

ought to have been released then and there into the sea that opened up between them. I'd thought that for a long time. And now at last I had found my release in this new life that I shared with my grandfather, a life that was the sea itself. My decision to live with my grandfather in his tiny pomade-permeated apartment, the fact that I had to listen to his ceaseless chatter and live in a room surrounded by bonsai, was for me the sea, the very sea itself. This coincidental congruence made me happy, and that's what led me to decide to stay in this area.

(Kirino 2008:34-35)

In her fantasy of being released from her parents and into a new life, Yuriko's sister finds comfort. This narrow and oppressive living space becomes tolerable to her because of the freedom embodied in it. Yuriko's sister gains this freedom through giving up on her parents. As Yuriko puts it, "As a half, I was always feeling unsettled due to the lack of sense of belonging. If my parents had loved each other, I could have sought some comfort in their embrace. Nevertheless they didn't have enough affection to ease the uneasiness of their children. I envied my sister for dropping her hope on them so quickly" (Kirino 2003:157). Yuriko's sister claims her emotional independence from her parents by her "decision" to stay with Grandfather in the isolated P Ward. From P Ward, there begins Yuriko's sister's life as a loner.

Hearing Mitsuru's response, "There's not another student at this school who lives in P Ward. A couple of years ago I heard there was a student who commuted in from

one of the neighboring wards, though”, Yuriko’s sister thinks to herself, “The place where I live had once been the sea. It’s a wonderful area with streets nicely arranged, home to any number of odd and ancient people. What is so ‘inconvenient’ about it? It’s only because Q School is such a narrow-minded society (何と不自由なことでしょう。ここは実にせこい社会なのです)” (Kirino 2003:73<sup>18</sup>; Kirino 2008:55). In the Japanese original, Kirino uses the word “不自由” (not liberated) instead of “不便” (inconvenient). The choice of words reveals that the society deprives people of liberation through the housing options made available to them.

Martina Löw in *Raumsoziologie* (2001, *Sociological Theory of Space*) refers to spacing as “the act of placing (positioning) artefacts, social goods and beings, including selves, in particular arrangements to form a space” (Getreuer-Kargl 2012:168). Space and the practice of spacing are manifestations of power relations, because “the question of *who* may place *what* and *where* is a process of negotiation and therefore a question of power” (Italics in the original) (Getreuer-Kargl 2012:168). The students at Q School have less power in their negotiation with the larger environment, and the authorities, on the matter of locating their residences. Therefore they *have to* place themselves in the good neighborhoods, following the intangible codes at this hierarchal school.

The locations of the students’ residences are judged; the judgment thus constrains their mobility. In other words, because of the invisible barrier the society sets between insiders and outsiders, people must locate themselves in the designated area in order to

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<sup>18</sup> The original English translation is “But it’s hardly a convenient place to live, especially for a student who has to commute to such a status-conscious school as this” (Kirino 2008:55). Here I use my own translation to emphasize Yuriko’s sister’s rebellious tone.

be accepted as an in-group. Finding the “right” home becomes a formal procedure for the outsiders once they enter Q School if they want to “fit in”. Mitsuru is an example of a *gaibusei* compromising with the class boundaries drawn at Q School. Mitsuru’s house is in P Ward just as Yuriko’s sister’s is. However to avoid being bullied, her mother rents her an apartment in Minato Ward (港区), which is a rich neighborhood. “My mother told me not to let anyone know, and she rents an apartment in Minato Ward—just for me. Of course, we pretend we own it. [...] Because I’d be bullied otherwise” (Kirino 2008:56). In Peter Saunders’s studies of “Domestic Property and Social Class” (1987), he demonstrates that the ownership of real estate is a means of “acquiring wealth under capitalism”, in other words, “real capital accumulation” (Gottdiener 1994:167). From a Marxist urban analytical perspective, we can find that “[T]he cleavage between homeowners (e.g., the *naibusei*) and renters (e.g., the *gaibusei* such as Mitsuru) is of a class nature” (Gottdiener 1994:167).

Mitsuru’s words express that she is reluctant to ally herself with this absurd cover-up, “I hate it. I hate myself for going along with it. And I hate my mother for it too. But if you don’t cooperate, you draw attention to yourself at a school like this, so you have no choice” (Kirino 2008:56). The strict hierarchy at Q School denies people of their initiative, compels them to “go along” and “cooperate”, and eventually shapes them into a homogenous mass. [Yuriko’s sister:] “I heard that students who commuted from the Shōnan area (湘南) would have their families buy condos for them in top neighborhoods inside the metropolitan area (都内). These kinds of places became the assembly spots of these students” (Kirino 2003:73).

At Q School, the *naibusei* represent the capitalist class and the *gaibusei* represent the working class<sup>19</sup>. Taking Q School as a society or a metropolis, the authorities are practicing gentrification by relocating the working class (Wacquant 2008). The authorities' ultimate aim is to make invisible the urban proletariat (Wacquant 2008), and thus to become able to keep up with its reputation and public image. "Students were encouraged to do whatever they wanted because only they had responsibility for their own growth" (Kirino 2008:61). It seems that the school promotes the cultivation of students' self-determination. Nevertheless, Lefebvre suggests that the production of space is interfered with by the authorities and is strategic, and it serves only "dominant economic interests" (1991:375). With the school's encouragement, the *naibusei* turn school club activities into luxury upper-class banquets. "The gap between the insiders and outsiders widened as a result of the school's indulgency" (Kirino 2003:82). The invisible forces at Q School coerce the *gaibusei* to gloss over their own class origins, for they will be punished if they refuse. And little by little, the working class vanishes from the picture, as the authorities wish.

In Mitsuru's opinion, Yuriko's sister can be free of evaluations at Q School, because her status is even beyond "the outsiders". "I didn't think there could ever be such a student here. [...] Outsiders? Damn, you're like an alien, you know? No one laughs at you or tries to bother you. You just go about your business without a care in the world!" (Kirino 2008:55). On the surface, it seems that Yuriko's sister escapes the bullying. Nonetheless, she lives in others' ignorance of her existence.

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 3 "Marxian Political Economy" of Gottdiener (1994) for more discussion on the conflict between "capitalist class" and "working class" over urban space.

Andrew Sayer in *The Moral Significances of Class* (2005) suggests that “Class matters to us not only because of differences in material wealth and economic security, but also because it affects our access to things, relationships, experiences and practices which we have reason to value, and hence our chances of living a fulfilling life. At the same time it affects how others value us and respond to us, which in turn affects our sense of self-worth” (1). At Q School, Yuriko’s sister is denied the opportunities to join clubs or make friends freely as she had dreamed because of her social status. “But reality tore these dreams to shreds. Basically, cliques were my undoing. You couldn’t make friends with just anyone, you see. Even the club activities were ranked and ordered into hierarchies of their own, very clearly delineated between the coveted and the peripheral. The basis for all the ranking was of course this sense of elitism” (Kirino 2008:45). The fact that Yuriko’s sister is from a lower-class constrains her access to relationships (e.g., friendships), experiences (e.g., club activities), and any other aspects of school life.

The hierarchical and status-conscious environment of Q School places conditions on “a fulfilling life” or in this context, a quality machigurashi, which obviously many cannot afford financially. The setting of boundaries in machigurashi can be seen as a means of social control through spatial practices, which starts with targeting students’ homes. Yuriko’s sister uses malice as a technique to stand on her feet during high school. Years later, when Mitsuru confronts Yuriko’s sister for her wrongdoing against Kazue, she reveals Yuriko’s sister’s strategy for survival at Q School. “Both you and Kazue were amazed, when you entered high school, by the disparity between

yourselves and the other girls there. How you wished you could narrow the gap a bit. Fit in more. [...] but you finally just gave up because you didn't have the money to compete. You pretended not to have any interest in fashion or boys or studying. [...] You had decided to act like a lone wolf; that was your strategy for survival" (Kirino 2008:341). Knowing that she will remain "the peripheral", or "alien", Yuriko's sister performs in order to be seen as "weird", and "do[es] everything [her] own way" (Kirino 2008:81). Yuriko's sister decides to act on her own, pretending she never cares in the first place, in the same way that she is in utter denial for things she could not access (as discussed above in Chapter 4 "Unbeauty"). She uses malice to conceal her sense of loss and being misfit and endures the loneliness that comes with it. Therefore I identify the main dynamic of Yuriko's sister's machigurashi as her drive to drift from the center and stay at the periphery.

On the contrary, the dynamic of Kazue's machigurashi is marked by her efforts to transgress from the periphery to the center. As Mitsuru comments, "You [Yuriko's sister] and Kazue were exactly alike in many ways. [...] On the other hand, Kazue put all her energy into trying to fit in with the others" (Kirino 2008:340-341). The reason why Kazue does not give up as easily as Yuriko's sister does is due to Kazue's status as marginal middle-class. "She came from a family that had some money. She was smart. So she thought she could wiggle her way in with the rest of us" (Kirino 2008:341).

Kazue's social stance shows in terms of her home location. Kazue's house is located not in the center, but on the outskirts of a good neighborhood—Setagaya Ward (世田谷区). Her family owns a house which is built on rental land.

We took one of the private railroad lines and got out on the outskirts of Setagaya Ward, at a station so small there was only one platform. Kazue turned down a residential street that looked exactly as I expected it would—quiet, peaceful, and lined with moderately sized houses. Although there were no expensive mansions to be seen, neither were there any clumps of cheap apartment buildings.

Tasteful plaques graced the gatepost to each residence, and just beyond were small lawns. [...]

Having come to the end of the road, Kazue waved me over to the front of another house. [...]

It was a large two-story structure surrounded by a dingy gray wall of Ōtani stone. The house was painted brown and the roof was covered with heavy tiles. The garden was planted thickly with shrubs and trees, the lot larger and more established than those of the neighboring houses.

“What an impressive house! Is it a rental?”

Kazue looked startled by my question. Then she thrust her chest out and replied, “We rent the property, but we own the house. I’ve lived here since I was six.”

Diamond-shaped cutouts lined the stone wall, perhaps for ventilation. I peered through the holes into the garden, which was dotted with azaleas, hydrangeas, and other common shrubs. Potted plants were jammed in

nearly every nook and cranny.

(Kirino 2008:78-79)

Kazue's house is "impressive" at first glance. However, this is only a "façade"—meaning the front as well as a false appearance. It is the dress-up of dwelling-places (Lefebvre 1991:223). Henri Lefebvre in *Production de l'espace* (1974; *The Production of Space*, 1991) suggests that the introduction of a decorated façade is a process of superficial socialization which "the homes of the moneyed classes" undergo (1991:223). With the rise of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism, the façade and façade effects become thoroughly developed (Lefebvre 1991:275). According to Lefebvre, façade serves as an ornament of buildings or dwelling-places and a declaration of social messages from the owners. Kazue's family tries to advertise themselves as a part of prosperous and cultivated middle-class (or even upper-class) through maintaining an impressive façade. However, their social status is loosely constructed. Kazue, as well as her family, is standing on the very margin of the world they wish to belong to, and looking in from the borderline. This explains Kazue's illusion of and urge to be on "the other side".

Moreover, "The façade tells us much—and much that is surprising. [...] The notion of façade [...] implies a front and a back—what is shown and what is not shown—and thus constitutes a seeming extension into social space of an asymmetry which arose rather late in the evolution of living organisms as a response to the needs of attack and defense" (Lefebvre 1991:273). What the façade does not show reveals the

true essence of Kazue's family—a house permeated with “[t]he atmosphere of stingy frugality” (Kirino 2008:99). In Yuriko's sister's words, “I get the impression that he [Kazue's father] is just a run-of-the-mill salary man with a low income trying to pretend to be wealthy” (Kirino 2008:99). Yuriko's sister's detailed description of the interior of Kazue's house shows that Kazue does not even stand a chance of becoming an insider at Q School.

There were hardly any lights on in the house. I smelled nothing to suggest dinner was ready. It was as quiet as a grave, not even the sound of a TV or radio. Once my eyes adjusted to the gloom, I could see that though the house was impressive on the outside, on the inside it was constructed with cheap veneer. [...] And throughout the house wafted the smell of frugality. [...] In this house, every corner reeked of it [...].

Kazue started up the stairs ahead of me. They creaked. There were two rooms on the second floor. The large room above the hall was Kazue's. Her bed was pressed up against the wall, her desk in the middle of the room. She didn't have a TV or stereo set. Her room was Spartan, like a dorm room. [...]

(Kirino 2008:80-81)

I stared up at the light fixture, beginning to notice that the evening's darkness was creeping into the room. In the center of the yellowish veneered ceiling was the kind of stark fluorescent light you'd see in an office building.

When Kazue had switched it on, it made a slight hissing noise, like the sound of a flying creature flapping its wings.

(Kirino 2008:84)

The only noticeable feature in the cramped sitting room was the wood-paneled walls. [...] The dishes on the shelf directly across the room were all the kind you would buy at a supermarket. And the dining set, sofa, and chairs were the cheap preassembled kind. *If the Q gang were to see this they'd have a field day, I thought. Kazue would be toast!*

(Kirino 2008:86, Italics mine)

Kazue dreams about being accepted into the world of the *naibusei* at Q School because of her delusions regarding her own social stance. She believes that she is お嬢さん *ojōsan* (young lady with a good background), and her future is bright (Kirino 2003:107). “Kazue was supremely ignorant, insensitive, ill prepared, and utterly outmatched by the harsh realities that confronted her” (Kirino 2008:60). Her logic is based on her belief in “equality” and her faith in “effort”, yet both fail her. As a result, she is bullied and abused at Q School. “This world is not equal. [...] Kazue shouldn't have entered Q School. There was no other place more revolting, vain, and complicated than this. Yet, Kazue thought she could pull through with her values toward effort and diligence” (Kirino 2003:81).

The incident which indicates Kazue's attempt to move from the outside to the inside is her application to the cheerleading squad. [Yuriko's sister:] “It is a club

exclusive to beautiful girls. People who lack confidence in their looks won't even think of applying; they will only embarrass themselves. All the insiders know this perfectly clear, so they sit and wait for invitations" (Kirino 2003:80). Kazue, as an *gaibusei*, dreams of "equal opportunities" (機会均等). She files an application and never hears back. [Kazue:] "That girl said to me, 'I'm sorry. You failed the interview.' I protested because there *was* no interview! And she said that the senior came to the classroom and sneaked a peek at me. This is unbelievable! Isn't it awful to select members from their own preference? [...] I told her, their interview process was strange. She laughed grimly and said nothing in return. How mean! [...] It is unfair if everyone doesn't have an opportunity. What's wrong in trying to join? Aren't clubs supposed to be that way?" (Italics in the original) (Kirino 2003:81). Due to her ignorance, Kazue suffers her first failure in fitting in. This kind of failure becomes a repetitive pattern of Kazue's life.

Just like her marginal home location and social status, Kazue is accepted into a marginal club—the ice skating team, at school. Her position in the club is also marginal. The club accepts *gaibusei* only to cover their own financial hardship. "The team had to dole out a lot of money to pay the Olympic-class coach they'd hired and cover the cost of renting the rink for lessons. Because of that, they'd accept any girl who wanted to join. It didn't matter if she couldn't skate a lick; as long as she could help with the costs, they didn't care. The students at this school were absolutely indifferent to the hardships their own pleasures imposed on those around them" (Kirino 2008:162). In addition, Kazue is used by other members of the club for lending her class notes (Kirino 2008:202). No one shows sympathy toward Kazue's situation.

## The Homeless

Yuriko's residence, however, presents a different case from her sister's and Kazue's. After her mother commits suicide and her father brings his mistress home, Yuriko feels abandoned by her biological parents. "My own father, of course, did not love me. Or at least his love for me was thwarted" (Kirino 2008:120). "If my mother had abandoned anyone, it was me. I didn't look like anyone in the family. I'd been left to my own devices. The only people who paid me any attention were the men who desired me" (Kirino 2008:117). The deviance of Yuriko's family strengthens her bond with men. Through men's desire for her, she finds herself a surrogate family, the Johnsons.

Yuriko insists on returning to Japan out of her grudge towards her father, but she does not have a place to stay. Yuriko's sister blocks her attempt to stay at their grandfather's. She therefore has to lodge with Johnson and Masami.

I was a child who lodged with a family I was not related to. No, I was the one who asked them for lodging. What could happen to a child in this situation was never my sister's concern I guess. Because she was living with our grandfather with whom she had a blood relationship. Although I had only seen grandfather a couple of times when I was little, I liked him for his detached attitude. Now, since he was taken by my sister, I had to live all by myself.

[...] My new family was the Johnsons I had met when we were at the maintain cabin. My only tie to them was Johnson's desire for me. My sister could never understand my feelings of living in such a precarious environment.

(Kirino 2003:157)

Roofless, Yuriko is forced by the situation she finds herself in to use her beauty and sexuality as leverage for finding a place to live. Her body serves as her "own device". Moreover, Yuriko has lost financial support. She becomes dependent on Johnson for her tuition fees and living costs. "If I was accepted [to Q School], what then? It would cost more than my father could pay to send me to this school. But then Johnson had agreed to put up half the tuition. Wasn't I little more than a prostitute then?" (Kirino 2008:128) "Prostitutes sell their bodies for money. And I, a homeless (行き場なくした) middle-school student, sold myself for living cost and tuition. Isn't it the same thing?" (Kirino 2003:154; omitted from Kirino 2008 passage).

Johnson's house is in a good neighborhood. To Yuriko's sister, it must guarantee a quality and happy machigurashi. Yuriko's sister thinks that "Clearly [Yuriko] was now eating up all the attention the Johnsons were dishing out and rolling in the luxury of their swank house in upscale Minato Ward (港区)" (Kirino 2008:96). But the reality is not like that. "Johnson's house was behind the Nishi-Azabu (西麻布) Tax Office. The room that Masami had prepared for me was on the second floor. The curtains, the bedspread, even the pillows were all done in the same Liberty print fabric, clearly

Masami's taste. I had no interest in interior design and found the whole business overly fussy, but what did I care?" (Kirino 2008:128-129). In Watson and Austerberry's interview with homeless women, they include, as one definition of homelessness: "Homelessness is nowhere to put your personal belongings—things mean a lot to a single person. You can't express yourself in your furnishings as an individual. It's an affluent age and you feel you're on the outside looking in" (Watson & Austerberry 1986:98, quoted in Morrell & Kuehne 2000:111). The interior design of Yuriko's room taken care of by Masami embodies of Yuriko's status as an outsider to this household. She does not have the freedom to choose or make decisions. Lodging with the Johnsons, Yuriko is deprived of autonomy. Yuriko, "on the *outside* looking in", is an outsider, or in her own words, "a pet" of the household. This is also part of the reason why Yuriko "chooses" to engage in prostitution to exercise her free will.

If I did not agree with what Masami did, I couldn't very well complain to Johnson. And even if I had, it was unlikely he would have gotten angry with Masami. Everyone was out for personal gratification. For Masami, without a child of her own, I was a pet. For Johnson I was a toy. That was all there was to my existence. I was born to be used.

(Kirino 2008:130)

Morrell and Kuehne (2000), in their research on homeless single women in Oxford, also suggest that, "Unattached women in the city were perceived both to pose

a threat to sexual morality [...] and to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation” (102). In Yuriko’s case, she trades her sexuality for residence because she is abandoned by her own family. Furthermore, financial hardship often follows homelessness. At the Johnsons’, Masami takes care of Yuriko only to impress Johnson, and she neglects Yuriko’s other needs, for instance, [Yuriko:] “[Masami] never once bought me underwear or socks” (Kirino 2008:130). Masami’s behaviors compromise Yuriko’s living condition. Feeling abandoned both by her own family and by her surrogate family, Yuriko abandons herself to despair by means of prostitution. “I had to buy those things [such as underwear and socks] from my own measly allowance. Occasionally, when I got tired of trying to scrimp and save, I responded to the men who approached me in order to get money from them” (Kirino 2008:130). In homelessness, financial hardship, and emotional abandonment, Yuriko exposes herself to prostitution and sexual vulnerability. She starts to engage in *enjo kōsai*. In the narrative, *enjo kōsai* becomes a way for Yuriko to claim the independence of her body and her agency. [Yuriko:] “I’ve just been following my own path, doing what I enjoy doing. [...] I’m not exploiting myself” (Kirino 2008:152). Yuriko’s choice of prostituting herself suggests that she is capable of acting from her free will. Her prostitution is her practice of female agency.

In Ueno’s research on *enjo kōsai*, she suggests that *enjo kōsai* is a product of the modern Japanese family (Ueno 2003:321). Yuriko, who comes from such a family background and also has abandonment issues, commits *enjo kōsai* from her trauma. Because Yuriko feels abandoned by her own parents, she abuses her body as revenge

and re-assurance of her value. [Yuriko:] “And it is men who give me the proof I need now to feel I’m alive” (Kirino 2008:117). “Even in its negative form, they [girls who engage in *enjo kōsai*] exercise the sovereignty on their body, by giving the revenge to parents” (Ueno 2003:321). (For more analysis on female protagonists’ relations with their parents, refer to Chapter 6 “Prostitution as Gender Socialization”.) “Sexuality gives them a clue of independence from the parent’s control, and money assures her agency from the customer” (Ueno 2003:321). (For more analysis of female agency through prostitution, also refer to Chapter 6 “Prostitution as Gender Socialization”.)

As feminist psychologist Ogura Chikako (1989) writes, entering adolescence, girls become aware of the male desire for their bodies and begin to develop “feminine” consciousness of their own sexuality (Ueno 2003:322). At Q School, Yuriko starts to assert control over her body and seeks power through trading it for money. “When they [the girls who engage in *enjo kōsai*] exchange the use of their body for money, they exercise the right of ownership of their own body, claiming that you cannot use my body without my permission. Then money turns as a sign of sovereignty over their body” (Ueno 2003:323). Yuriko, who views women’s fate as to be consumed by men, turns to make her fortune out of the male gazes fixated on her. Yuriko exercises what Ueno (2003) terms “self-determination of sexuality”, as she claims, “[M]y body is my own” (Kirino 2008:152).

Nevertheless, Yuriko’s practice of agency is not entirely spontaneous, but also shaped by structure. To be specific, Yuriko’s knowledge regarding *enjo kōsai* comes from the pre-established social system (e.g., rules to be followed and resources

available), and the knowledge thus gained results in her actions (Sewell 1992:4-5). In other words, Yuriko's knowledge and capabilities are structurally molded (Sewell 1992:4). According to Anthony Giddens's (1981) theory of "the duality of structure", structures are "both the medium and outcome"; they "shape people's practices, but it is also people's practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures" (Sewell 1992:4). In *Grotesque*, the very structure of society gives an individual the capacity to act; thus Yuriko's practice of *enjo kōsai* can be interpreted as partly a production of the patriarchal structure. As Ueno (2003) argues, this kind of behavior will only reinforce patriarchal sexuality in the long run (323). On the other hand, Yuriko's practice can also be seen as an attempt to constitute (and reproduce) the patriarchal structure, that is, an act of rebellion against patriarchy (Sewell 1992:4).

The dynamic of Yuriko's machigurashi thrusts neither inward as is the case with her sister nor outward as with Kazue. Yuriko's motion presents a more complex dynamic. She is able to cross boundaries regardless of her background. Yuriko's beauty endows her with a certain degree of mobility. "There is one way you can enter the inner circle, and one way only. [...] If you're beautiful beyond compare, exceptions can be made" (Kirino 2008:55). For example, Yuriko is invited to join the cheerleading squad. Nevertheless, she remains in a grey area in-between the worlds of *naibusei* and *gaibusei*—a prostitute at school who is standing "on the outside looking in". The dynamics of Yuriko's sister, Kazue, and Yuriko in their machigurashi continue even after they leave school and enter society.

## CHAPTER 8 MACHIGURASHI IN SOCEITY

*Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere.*

—*Helen Gurley Brown*

### Going Nowhere

Women's identities can be constructed through the daily routine of their *machigurashi*, namely the tracks of their motion. For instance, Sarah Chaplin (2001) studies modernizing spatial practices on the part of Japanese women in relation to the reconstruction of their identities in the modern period. The theoretical framework for the analysis of *machigurashi* in this chapter is Shirley Ardener's theory that the social construction and experience of the world of men and women differ fundamentally, which results in different perceptions, including perceptions of space (1993:19). Ardener (1993) argues that men and women live "worlds apart", that "women experience the world differently from men, regardless of whether or not innate differences are significant" (19). In this chapter I will examine the female characters' *machigurashi* in terms of their negotiation with interior and exterior spaces, focusing on gender-specific issues from a feminist perspective.

Yuriko's sister still lives in the peripheral area, and never leaves P Ward. She continues to live alone in her grandfather's apartment. In terms of career, Yuriko's sister is also on the margin. "[...] I've been working part-time for the P Ward Office in Tokyo. [...] My job with the Day Care Section of the Welfare Division is to help investigate wait-listed applicants" (Kirino 2008:9-10). "After I graduated from the university and before I took the job at the P Ward Office, I did all kinds of things. I

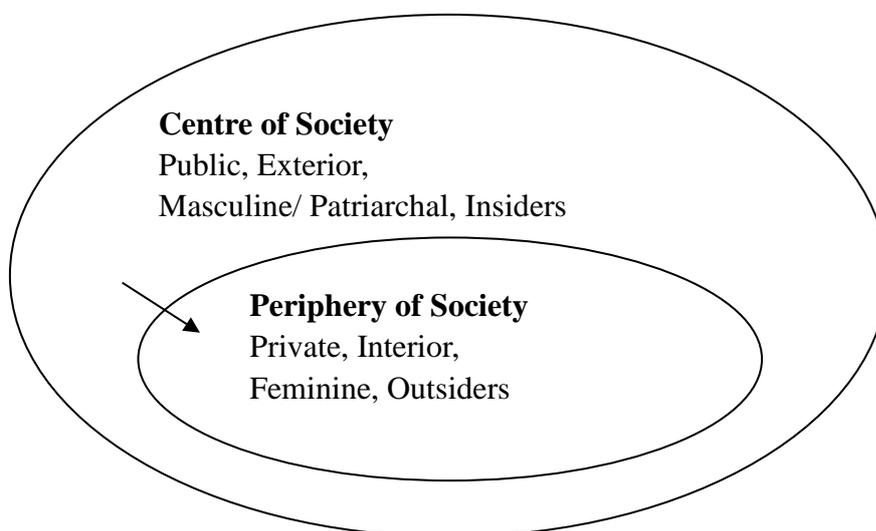
worked for a while in a convenience store, and I went door-to-door trying to sell subscriptions to a monthly study guide” (Kirino 2008:14).

Not only does she never give marriage “a moment’s thought” as she claims, she is without a friend or family in her personal life (Kirino 2008:14). “I’ve taken the exam of interpreter but failed. To be honest, I doubt myself for being competent even if I had passed. Because I’m bad at interpersonal relationships” (Kirino 2003:21). Yuriko’s sister is a “middle-aged, part-time, unattached freelancer” in her own words (Kirino 2008:14). As Figure 8.1 shows, Yuriko’s sister retreats to her comfort zone she has been in since Q School. She excludes herself from the outside world and relationships, and thus remains a secluded outsider to the society.

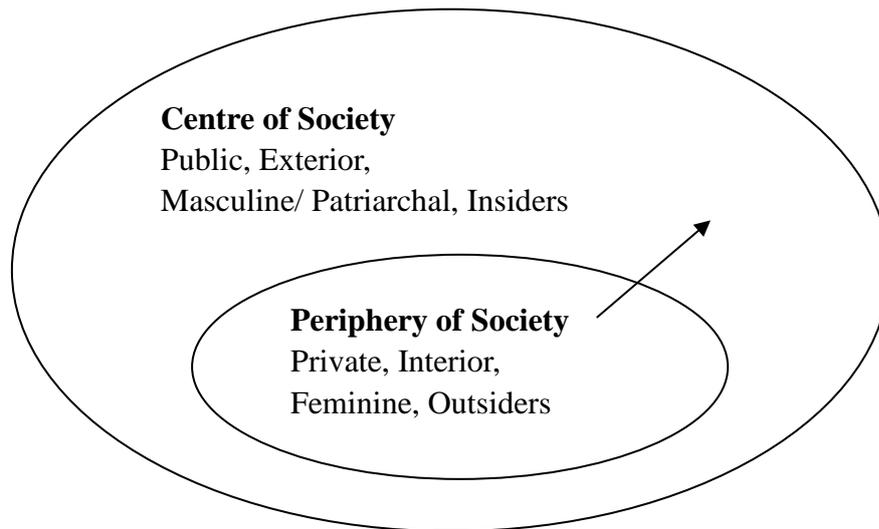
Furthermore, Yuriko’s sister’s motion in urban space, home to work and back home, indicates her relative fixity in machigurashi. Gender-constructed mobility “happens both through the opposition of relative flow and relative fixity, where masculinity is coded as mobile and femininity as static, and through the construction of different kinds of mobility that exist in relation to one another (the tourist and the domestic servant for instance)” (Cresswell & Priya Uteng 2008:5). The relative fixity of static femininity found in Yuriko’s sister reveals her vulnerable position in urban life and experience. The comprehensiveness of machigurashi has been compromised by her lack of mobility, as David Kronlid (2008) claims mobility as capability, “intrinsic to men’s and women’s well-being” (15). Shirley Ardener (1993) notes that, mobility is not only determined by the nature of physical space, but also affects the appreciation of space (21). Hamilton and Jenkins (1992) also suggest that

“Stereotyping and misunderstanding together with women’s traditional role in society as the homemaker and carer has effectively ensured their absence from the transport planning and decision making process” (57). Yuriko’s sister’s lonely and monotonous life hints at her later liberation—turning to prostitution, both sexually and spatially.

On the other hand, Kazue still displays an opposite dynamic to Yuriko’s sister in her adult social life, as shown in Figure 8.2. Trying to become an insider, after graduating from Q University, Kazue enters a company with good reputation, G Architecture and Engineering Firm. She longs for recognition and confirmation of her ability and femininity in the company. However, the reality shatters her naïve dream, [Kazue:] “We’re living in an era when even women can work at whatever they desire” (Kirino 2008:82). As an unattractive female, Kazue is edged out at work.



*Figure 8.1* The dynamic of Yuriko’s sister’s machigurashi



*Figure 8.2* The dynamic of Kazue’s machigurashi

The company is a “man’s world” where men judge women by their femininity instead of ability. At the after-work gathering, Kazue is stunned to see drunken male employees “checking out new females”, and “running a poll to find out who the most popular female employee was” (Kirino 2008:364). “I just sat there stiffly on my cracker-thin floor cushion. My dream was falling apart. Men who were competent at work were carousing around and getting drunk” (Kirino 2008:364).

Among the one hundred and seventy new employees of the year, Kazue and six other girls who have graduated from a four-year university are called “*荒野の七人* (The seven in the wilderness)” by colleagues (Kirino 2003:424). [Kazue:] “I don’t know who came up with it [the nickname] first, but I think it really fits. Because where we’re going is a man’s world, built by men and open only to men. It is indeed an uncultivated wilderness to women who’ve never set foot in there” (Kirino 2003:424-425). In the company, women have to play dual roles—working as hard as

male colleagues, and at the same time serving men as subordinates (e.g., washing cups, pouring tea). Women also are judged by their appearances. Kazue, being the only breadwinner of her family, cannot afford to buy pretty clothes and change often, and is accused by male colleagues for her lack of femininity. “So, Ms. Satō, why don’t you wear a different dress to work every day like Ms. Kamei does? It would give us all more to enjoy on the job”, to which Kazue replies, “Yeah? Well, are you going to increase my salary so I can go out and buy a new outfit for every day of the year?” (Kirino 2008:347). Kirino once wrote that:

Meanwhile, globalization and the continued recession have taught Japanese companies how to cut costs. Young workers are seen as disposable labor, and the position of young women workers is particularly precarious. At present, half the women working are not regular employees. They do the same jobs as regular employees but are treated like part-timers. There’s a real possibility that young women, tired from long hours and low wages, will easily fall into selling their bodies.

(Kirino 2006)

Female employees are seen as outsiders and playthings in the man’s world. The unfair treatment, in both financial and emotional terms, Kazue receives at work form her motivation for becoming a prostitute later. Kazue is discontented with the demarcation and exile of women at the workplace. “*A man’s world!* Men trotted that

out when it suited them, forming alliances with one another and excluding women at their convenience. If G Architecture and Engineering Firm was supposed to be one big happy family, women ought to be included in these alliances also. [...] I really was cast out into the wilderness” (Italics in the original) (Kirino 2008:368).

As one of “*荒野の七人*”, Yamamoto says, “We couldn’t become men. [...] I don’t want to fight anymore. We [as women] were destined to fail this battle” (Kirino 2003:427). Yamamoto thinks that a woman is impossible to compete with men in corporations, and that as a woman, one should quit and become a housewife for one’s “own happiness” (Kirino 2003:427), in other words, instead of lingering in a man’s world, women should resign themselves to their subordinated roles. Yamamoto’s quitting symbolizes her transfer from public to private and exterior to interior, to return to the socially assigned feminine domain. However, Kazue, who grows up believing in “effort”, does not give up easily. She reaches out to the other sphere of the masculine domain, “*夜の世界* (the world of night)” in order to access her mobility (Kirino 2003:410).

### Girls on the Move

Cresswell and Priya Uteng explore the connections between gender and spatial practice by focusing on how mobility enables/ disables/ modifies gendered practices in their book *Gendered Mobilities* (2008). As Cresswell and Priya Uteng suggest, the narratives of mobility and immobility are central to the constitution of gender as a social and cultural construct (2008:2). The representation of mobility as spatial

practice is the embodiment of women's challenge to patriarchal demarcation in *Grotesque*.

In the narrative, Professor Kijima also confirms this in his letter to Mitsuru. Professor Kijima draws an analogy between a kind of mutated castaneum and the students from Q School, and indicates that prostitution is a mobile means for Yuriko and Kazue to break out from the suffocating environment.

This mutation was clearly the result of the intensification of a sense of individuation. I believed that modifications resulted in the insect's shape and structure so as to enhance its speed and mobility (移動力). [...] I wonder if perhaps [Mitsuru's] religion—or Miss Hirata's work in prostitution, or Miss Satō's double life—is not an outcome of shifts in the structure and makeup of our populations. Is not this intensification of individuation—this heightened sense of awareness of self—a result of the suffocating burden of being trapped within the same social community (同一の生活環境の中に留まる息苦しき)?

(Kirino 2008:310; Kirino 2003:365)

Kazue once imagines a club hostess saying these words to her, “These are bars for company men. What goes on here is directly related to what goes on in the company. And both are a man's world. All for men and men alone. [...] Women who polish their skills and capture a man are the shrewdest. [...] Did you abandon your

femininity?” (Kirino 2008:371). Night clubs, bars, and companies are perceived as “man’s world”, where women are only allowed to enter if they are willing to provide their sexuality to men.

In the chapter of Kazue’s journal, that narrative provides many realistic geographical references. Kazue’s company is near Shinbashi (新橋) Station of the Tokyo Metro’s Ginza Line (銀座線) in Minato Ward. Many large firms are actually based in this district. Kazue escapes from there to Shibuya Ward (渋谷区). These two districts have completely different atmospheres. The former is a relatively conservative district for company employees (会社員, サラリーマン). The latter is a downtown area with shopping centres, night clubs, and Dōgenzaka (道玄坂) also known as the famous “love hotel hill”. Shibuya has been rendered as a place for erotica and pleasure in many literature and screen productions. The call girl agency Kazue used to work for is located “in a studio apartment among the shops lining Dogenzaka Avenue” in Shibuya (Kirino 2008:350). After she is dismissed from the agency, Kazue wanders around the Dōgenzaka-Jizō (道玄坂地蔵)<sup>20</sup> in Maruyamachō of Shibuya-ku (渋谷区円山町) (which is also known as the “love hotel hill”) to pick up customers (see Image 8.1 and Image 8.2).

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<sup>20</sup> The Dōgenzaka-Jizō serves as a landmark of narratives of prostitution. All of three (anti-) heroines: Yuriko, Kazue, and Yuriko’s sister, have stood in front of the Jizō to look for potential clients. It is as if the Jizō watches over their lives after they turn to prostitution. This religious figure can be seen as a symbol of their self-redemption (i.e., self-destruction as a statement against patriarchy). The significance of the Jizō can be examined in future research.



Image 8.1 Dōgenzaka-Jizō (道玄坂地藏)



Image 8.2 Maruyamachō of Shibuya-ku (渋谷区円山町)

To prove her femininity and to transgress to men's territory, Kazue fights at the company in the daytime and sells her body on the streets at night. Prostitution offers Kazue a sense of liberation because it provides her with the mobility to shift between two different worlds. She turns to prostitution in the same way that the castaneum Professor Kijima studies begins to mutate to enhance mobility. The movement of the subway symbolizes Kazue's mobility and liberated sexuality.

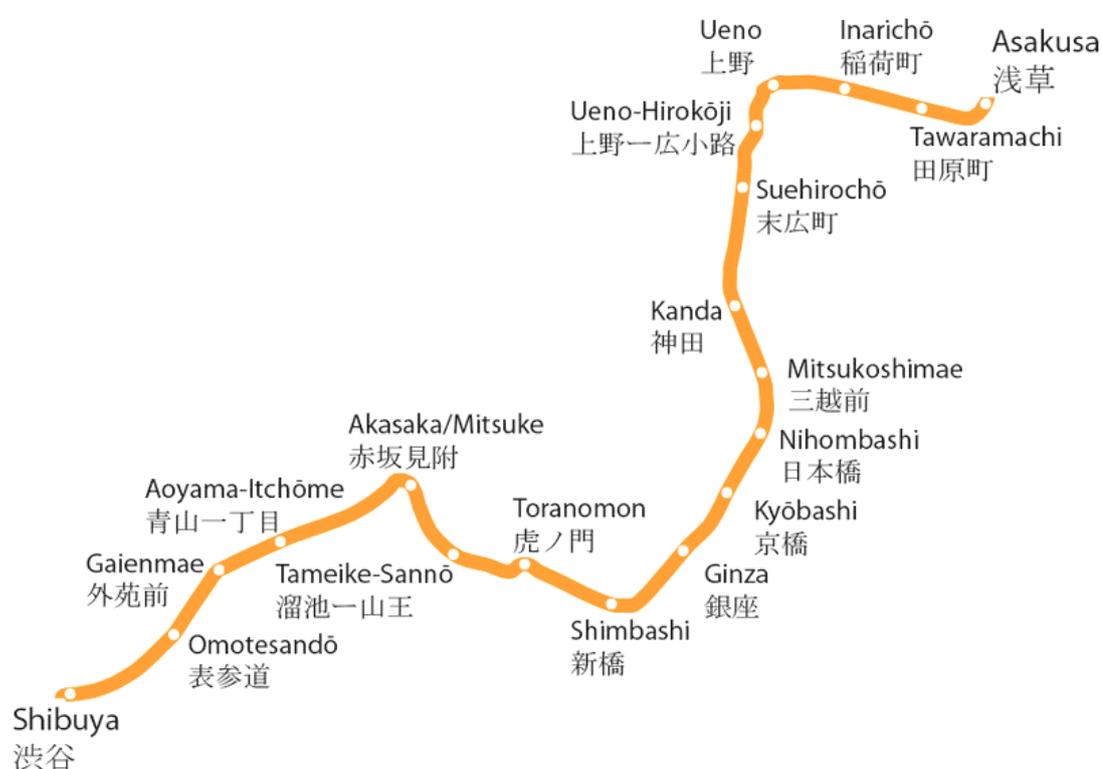


Image 8.3 Route of Ginza Line<sup>21</sup>

The Ginza Line. I hate the orange color of the train. I hate the gritty wind that whips through the tunnels. I hate the screech of the wheels. I hate the smell. [...] There's one more reason I hate the subway. It's what links

<sup>21</sup> In this image from the JR website, "Shinbashi" is written "Shimbashi" because of the adapted Hepburn romanization system used by JR. See also "Nihombashi" in this picture.

me to my firm. The instant I step down into the subway and head toward the Ginza Line, I feel as if I'm being pulled into a dark subterranean world, a world lurking beneath the asphalt.

(Kirino 2008:345)

The subway emerged from underground and headed into Shibuya Station. It was the moment of the day I loved best: rising from deep underground to the surface. It gives me such an immense feeling of relief, liberation. Ahh. From here I head into the night streets, right smack into a world where Kamei would never tread, a world before which the part-timer and the assistant would flinch in fear. A world the office manager could not even imagine.

(Kirino 2008:350)

The subway, as a means of public transport, is used by Kazue to transfer from one world to another. The company is “a dark subterranean world, a world lurking beneath the asphalt”, an oppressive and dark underworld to Kazue. Yet, the night streets of prostitution and crime are free and liberating from Kazue's perspective. Because the night world allows Kazue a new identity—prostitute “Yuri”, completely different from that she embodies in the company. As “Yuri”, Kazue is able to put herself out on the streets, where she can be seen and desired in a man's world, thus feeling like an insider. Kazue's extreme way of realizing her values (i.e., prostitution) results from her ostracization at the company. Kazue attempts to find her place in the

crack between these two worlds.

However, Kazue's ambiguous stance in her dual life results in her ambivalent perception of the outside world.

[I]f I don't I won't look balanced, and if things aren't balanced it is very difficult—if not impossible—to live in this country of outs. That's why I feel both desire and disgust for men and both loyalty and betrayal for the firm I work for. Pride and phobia, it's a quagmire. If there were no dirt, there would be no reason for pride. If we had no pride, we'd just walk around with our feet in the mud. One requires the other. That's what a human being such as myself needs to survive.

(Kirino 2008:345)

Kazue gradually loses the “balance” as well as herself. When Kazue's regular customer Arai wants to leave her because he is going to retire from the company, Kazue asks him for her “retirement allowance” (Kirino 2008:449). She says: “If I'm an employee in your nighttime company, you need to pay me pay retirement allowance. [...] I'm not just a prostitute, I'm also a company employee” (Kirino 2008:449). The boundary between the company/ daytime/ company employee and the night streets/ nighttime/ prostitute blurs. Struggling in-between “pride” and “phobia”, Kazue loses her identity when two worlds become one.

I couldn't help but laugh. Company and prostitute were one and the same? That would make me a company employee both day and night. Or, maybe it's the other way around: I'm a prostitute both night and day!

(Kirino 2008:449)

Nothing wrong with my mental abilities! I got up on time this morning, boarded the train, changed to the subway, and worked like an aggressive career woman in one of the biggest corporations around. At night I transformed into a prostitute sought out by men. Suddenly I remembered the argument I had had earlier with Arai and stopped short. I'm a company employee day *and* night. Or is it that I'm a prostitute night and day? Which is it? Which one is me?

(Italics in the original) (Kirino 2008:452)

Either as a company employee or as a prostitute, Kazue is exploited by men. The dual life and the secretive identity as a superwoman are only her self-fulfilling fantasy, her getaway from the cruel reality. The combination of company and prostitution announces the failure of Kazue's transgression. Approaching the end of her diary, Kazue has finally come to the realization of her powerlessness. "The elation of owning the Shibuya night at that time has died out. I am a street-corner prostitute, the lowest kind of all (あの時の、渋谷の夜を征服したような高揚感はもう絶えてない。あたしは立ちんぼで、最低の娼婦)" (Kirino 2003:511). When Zhang gives her three thousand Yen (approximately 24 US Dollars) for sleeping with her and uses her body

as a sex object, Kazue crumbles spiritually and emotionally.

Zhang had begun to thrust into me violently. He was getting heavier, pressing down on my chest so hard I couldn't breathe. Zhang didn't even notice the woman who had to bear his weight. Most of the men I took as customers were like that. Did they think I was going to go on forever without noticing their contempt? The stunt with the money really brought it home. Was that really my worth? [...]

I didn't know what to believe anymore. I was so confused, I started to scream in the darkness.

“Save me!”

(Kirino 2008:456-457)

Kazue's cry for help further indicates that prostitution is her way of proving her “worth” to the society and to *men*. In the narrative, Kazue's efforts lead to inevitable disappointment and devastation eventually. Yuriko's prostitution, on the other hand, is different from Kazue's in terms of initial motives.

### Grey Area and Beyond

After Q School, Yuriko's life is wealthy for a while. She lives off the money that she sells her body for. Yuriko is born beautiful which means she has a “pass” for entering man's world and is able to live an easier life as patriarchal feminine, in the

same way that she is welcomed to the world of *naibusei* as an insider at Q School due to her beauty. However, Yuriko is unsatisfied with the position where the patriarchal society has placed her—an ornamental pet on exhibition (e.g., being a cheerleader or a model). Yuriko wanders off the grid and into a grey area, because she craves liberation. Yuriko’s craving for freedom is related to the memories of her grandmother, the only person who she truly feels related to. Yuriko inquiring about her grandmother’s death seems like a random plot in the narrative, but this event is significant because it marks the starting point for Yuriko to pursue freedom.

“How did Grandma die?”

Grandfather’s face suddenly blanched. His eyes dimmed.

“Grandma? That day was very hot, just like today. This area was all water back then. She said she wanted to swim because of the weather. The others tried to warn her, but she just went into the water. She was probably possessed.”

This reminded me of the day of my entrance exams at Q School, the pool which I saw when I was sitting in the classroom for the interview, and the moment when I wanted to leave everything behind and swim. Maybe Grandma felt the same way. Life does not go as you wish. Only in your heart, you can find freedom (人生は自分の思うようにならない、心の中にしか自由はない).

(Kirino 2003:163)

Therefore Yuriko follows her heart to find freedom. For example, her affair with Johnson is her way of protesting. “I’ve said it any number of times now, but it is really only in my heart that I was able to enjoy a sense of freedom, a freedom no one else could see. I suppose that is why I derived such pleasure—such a secret sense of affirmation—from deceiving Masami while I was with Johnson” (Kirino 2008:131).

Entering society, Yuriko chooses prostitution as her profession. Prostitution, to Yuriko, is not a form of exploitation, but rather sexual liberation with payment. Spontaneous prostitution offers Yuriko the freedom which she craves. To start with, it gives a rise to women’s desire, and furthermore, their initiatives. Yuriko thinks that women’s desire is underrated and overlooked. “Men live by rules they’ve made for themselves. And among those rules is the one specifying that women are merely commodities for men to possess. A daughter belongs to her father, a wife to her husband” (Kirino 2008:115). In this passage, Yuriko criticizes the patriarchal ideology and the power relation in traditional Japanese households. Daughters and wives are seen as possessions of men, but Yuriko challenges this code by her incestuous conduct (i.e., having sexual intercourse with her uncle Karl) and promiscuity. “Besides, desire is always for the man. [...] I didn’t want to be anyone’s possession. In the first place, my desire was not some paltry affair that could easily be protected by some man” (Kirino 2008:115-116). By sleeping with a large number of different men, Yuriko claims that “My body is my own” (Kirino 2008:152), and she operates by means of *her* desire only.

Moreover, prostitution pulls Yuriko away from patriarchal family and the traditional feminine role for women, which is “good wife, wise mother (良妻賢母)”. Yuriko rejects traditional positioning by rejecting “love”, marriage, and motherhood. “If love was that restricting, I was happy to live without it” (Kirino 2008:153). Yuriko has never been married. She has a child with Johnson but gives the child away for Johnson to raise the child by himself. In her journal, it is depicted clearly that Yuriko does not have maternal bond with her child. Furthermore, Yuriko disdains the role of being a mother.

[Yuriko:] Johnson is raising the child himself: a boy. He’s now a second-year student in junior high. Johnson told me his name but I forgot it. The reason Johnson stays in touch with me and comes to see me four or five times a month is because of the child. Johnson has faith that I secretly cherish a love for this child. I find his faith annoying, but I won’t affirm or deny it. [...]

I have no use for a child who shares my blood. And Johnson’s appeals to a mother’s love only make me wince.

(Kirino 2008:148)

Yuriko is never a wife or a mother. Instead of settling in a household, she drifts from one place to another in order to find freedom in her heart. Sarah Chaplin (2001)

analyzes the Chinese character or *kanji* of “wife” 奥<sup>22</sup>, and suggests that women’s identities are traditionally related to enclosed interior space and limited spatial practices.

As Chinese derived calligraphic ideograms or *kanji*, these convey graphically notions of spatial confinement and boundedness as a condition of identity: the box enclosing a figure, the roof over the family home, and a combination of roof, enclosure and elevation above the ground is evident in the character for *oku*, the polite term for wife, which carries also the meaning of a deep interior space in a temple, and literally translates as ‘honorable lady within.’ In fact the core character enclosed within this complex *kanji* is that of rice, implying a wife’s household duties to provide sustenance.

(Chaplin 2001:58)

Yuriko escapes the enclosed interior space and expands her motions into the exterior. Instead of being the “honorable lady within”, Yuriko chooses to become a prostitute on the streets and refuses to carry out household duties expected from women.

Moreover, Yuriko displays the same pattern with the wandering heroines created

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<sup>22</sup> Another common used word for housewife is *shufu*. Ueno Chizuko (1987) once wrote about the difference between *shufu* and *okusan*, “the former referring to the head of a peasant work collective and the latter modeled on the samurai family, with its sexual division of labor between breadwinning husbands and child-tending wives, in which women were more reproducers than producers” (S79).

by Hayashi Fumiko (1903-1951)<sup>23</sup>. According to Mizuta Noriko (1996), “The heroine reaches womanhood, thanks to her anarchic energy for self-development, while drifting through poverty-stricken and chaotic urban labyrinths, outside the cultured environment of the urban middle class. *Vagabond’s Song* depicts a woman’s freedom of a sort visible only outside the middle-class home” (334). As Hayashi Fumiko’s heroines, Tomioka in *Hōrōki* (1927, *Vagabond’s Song*) and Yukiko in *Ukigumo* (1949-50, *Drifting Clouds*), Yuriko “wanders” and “drifts” to attain freedom (Mizuta 1996). In terms of machigurashi, these are stories of women who “reject the idea, or are denied the chance, of settling down” (Mizuta 1996:331), in other words, women of mobilities.

The heroines of both *Vagabond’s Song* and *Drifting Clouds* are dislocated women, and their drifting signifies that they do not follow the publicly acknowledged roles of women—as wife and mother—within the socially and legally guaranteed space of women: the home. The women of *Vagabond’s Song* and *Drifting Clouds* have no homes; they exist outside the framework established for women, who typically moved from being sheltered daughters to being sheltered wives, from one home to another, and they thus fall outside what might be called the institution of womanhood.

(Mizuta 1996:331)

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<sup>23</sup> In one of her interviews, Kirino says that she likes Hayashi, “I think Fumiko Hayashi’s novels truly embody a sense of freedom of spirit and the joy of living” (Japan Review 2003).

This reconfirms Yuriko's "homelessness". Her dislocation grants her with freedom from patriarchal control in forms of traditional kinship and household. Yuriko thus becomes an independent "woman" who is defined off the patriarchal grid of "daughter", "mother", or "wife".

Furthermore, aging and loss of beauty push Yuriko to continue wandering and falling. As Yuriko becomes older and loses her beauty, she goes from high standard night clubs for foreigners at Roppongi (六本木) to the ones of lower status, beginning to "fall from that world" (Kirino 2008:126). Soon, Yuriko becomes a prostitute at a call girl agency. Since fewer and fewer customers want her, [Yuriko:] "I took to the streets on my own" (Kirino 2008:143). Yuriko goes from Shin-Okubo (新大久保), Shinjuku (新宿) to Shibuya, because "[Shin-Okubo] was cordoned off by an invisible line and if you happened accidentally to cross into their territory you were in for a beating. Police enforced the law in the Shinjuku area, and it wasn't easy to get away with walking the streets there" (Kirino 2008:143). She finally drifts to Maruyama-chō where she "had rarely trolled" before losing her beauty (Kirino 2008:143). Yuriko's motion from Roppongi to Shibuya shows her further degeneration and that she has completely lost her "pass" to man's world. Yuriko's decline confirms that women's machigurashi are impacted by their physical appearance. As they lose their beauty, their mobility and initiatives relatively decline as well.

## Dark Water

In *Grotesque*, there is a place that symbolizes freedom and mobility from the female protagonists' points of view: the water, in both physical and symbolic forms. All three (anti-) heroines depict their own images of swimming or floating in the water with a sense of liberation. Yuriko's desire to "leave everything behind" and swim in the water is related to her grandmother's suspected suicide and her pursuit of freedom (Kirino 2003:163) (refer to page 144 of this thesis). For Yuriko's sister, she finds her release at her grandfather's place on reclaimed land in P Ward because she feels like she has been released into a liberated ocean (Kirino 2008:35) (refer to page 112-113 of this thesis). Water is also the essential element of Yuriko's sister's hypothetical chart. "My children merely swim in an imaginary sea. The water is perfect blue" (Kirino 2008:44-45). Kazue's depiction reveals the other level of significance that water carries implying suicidal tendencies.

I simply ply the waters of the night on my own. I could well imagine the way Zhang's sister looked as she lifted her hand above the surface of the dark sea. Stretching, stretching for help. I wasn't like Zhang's sister. I wasn't asking for help. I would tread the frozen waters of this sealike city until my hands and feet were too numb to move. Drifting down, down, until my lungs collapsed under the pressure of the water, I would let the waves carry me away. There was no better sensation than this! Feeling liberated, I gave a big stretch.

(Kirino 2008:414)

In Kazue's imagination, water brings death, through which she in turn finds liberation. Just as Yuriko, Kazue knows well that "[d]eath awaits" (Kirino 2008:423). Rather than escaping, Kazue embraces death making no effort to seek help. The whole narrative is concluded by a similar portrayal of water with suicidal suggestions, this time from Yuriko's sister's perspective.

I will launch my boat on a sea of hatred, my eye on the far shore, wondering when I might make land. Ahead I hear the roar of water. Might my boat be headed for a waterfall? Perhaps I must first plunge into the falls before I can set out upon the sea of hatred. Niagara? Yguazu? Victoria? My body trembles. But if I can make the first descent, the path that opens from there will be surprisingly pleasant, won't it? [...] So let me shoulder my baggage of hatred and confusion and set sail undaunted. In honor of my courage, there on the other shore, Yuriko and Kazue are waving to me, urging me on, applauding my gallant determination. Hurry up! they seem to say.

(Kirino 2008:467)

Here the water is described as torrential, with the possibilities of a deadly waterfall ahead. Yet Yuriko's sister expects pleasure out of her adventure, because she sees this as a battle against patriarchy. It is clear that she is following the path of Yuriko and Kazue by becoming a "grotesque" prostitute. In her delusion, she sees

Yuriko and Kazue (i.e., the deceased) standing on “the other shore” summoning her.

The text suggests that she will head over to the world of the deceased.

In the narrative of *Grotesque*, water is a metaphor of liberation, while at the same time embodying the female protagonists’ death wishes. The various reasons for their death wish thread through their narrations: women’s fate is to be consumed by men (Kirino 2008:129); women are destined to fail the battle against men (Kirino 2003:427); life as a woman is difficult and meaningless (Kirino 2003:467); and as a woman one can find freedom only in her own heart (Kirino 2003:163). In other words, death is seen as the only solution and the ultimate form of freedom.

As I stated previously that Yuriko thinks of prostitution as a suicidal mission and that Kazue aims for self-destruction as her revenge, death is not something imposed upon them, but something they have sought all along. Their murders can be interpreted as suicides through the use of others. The spontaneity that the female protagonists display in their behaviors is fundamental to the whole narrative. Their choice of prostitution suggests their agency, despite the structure that limits them. The ground for the whole narrative is a discussion and reflection of *the least* a woman can do to gain freedom in a constricting and unequal world. Thus the assumption that their deaths are persecutions carried out by patriarchal forces contradicts the essence of *Grotesque*<sup>24</sup>. As mothers, daughters, sisters, the “beautiful”, the “unbeautiful”, and the “grotesque”, women of disparate physicalities and backgrounds turn to prostitution.

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<sup>24</sup> This assumption also loses validity because the murderer Zhang is not a part of the patriarchal system. In the narrative, Zhang is portrayed as an outsider to Japanese society. He is male, but he is a peripheral figure not in the mainstream just like Yuriko and Kazue. They are bound not only by sexuality, but also by empathy. From this perspective, we can interpret the murder as a double-tragedy involving two kinds of outsiders.

The majority seek novelty in this unlikely choice, but the women's true intentions are underexamined and thus overlooked by others. Kirino, as a female writer, uses her creative skills to pick up these nuances and represent them to all who will listen.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

*Equality may perhaps be a right, but no power on earth can ever turn it into a fact.*

—*Honore de Balzac*

*All things truly wicked start from an innocence.*

—*Ernest Hemingway*

### Conclusion

When interviewed with a question regarding the repetitive theme of crime and women in her writing, Kirino responds, “I don’t think I exclusively tell stories of women criminals. [...] What makes these women special is not that they committed a crime, but the circumstances around these normal women that cornered them into that situation” (Japan Review 2003). In *Grotesque*, Kirino once again tells the hatred and fury of women who have been wronged. She plays with the polarization between beauty and the grotesque in her exploration of women’s common destiny mapped out on the fictional metropolitan cityscape.

With her characterization of the anti-heroines, Kirino embraces an alternative form of femininity. This characterization enables the narrative to challenge patriarchal myths of femininity and male-centered aesthetics. Beauty is an overriding element in the overall narrative of *Grotesque*. The female characters are either beautiful/ abject or unbeautiful/ unacceptable to patriarchal characters in the narrative. The beauty question examined here reveals the patriarchal structure’s objectification of women.

Beauty functions as coordinates on a map. Women are walking elements to be located judging from their physical appearance. The separate placement of beautiful

women and unbeautiful women is the default setting for the patriarchal environment. Beautiful women (e.g., Yuriko) who live up to the patriarchal feminine standard are taken into possession. On the other hand, unbeautiful women (e.g., Yuriko's sister and Kazue) who fail to attain the status of male objects of desire escape the fate of imprisonment, yet become restrained within the private domain. In order to gain access to the masculine/ public domain, exploiting their own sexuality enhances their mobility.

The representation of sexuality in *Grotesque* is intertwined with the portraiture of the heroine centered around the question of beauty. This representation transcends the binary dynamics of male/dominance and female/ submission and vice versa. In the narrative, prostitution is given more meanings than simply "money for sex". In their fervent pursuit of freedom through sexual intercourse, the (anti-) heroines discover more about the nature of themselves, men, and society. Through trading their bodies, these women are able to move in social circles from which they would have been excluded otherwise. The (anti-) heroines attempt to set up a new status quo through their efforts to endow women with mobility in urban space. Moreover, through their actions, Kirino rips off the veil of avoidance regarding sexual inequality in society and exposes the real world where gender issues are left unresolved, and where women are identified as abject and outcast regardless of their looks.

In the narrative of *Grotesque*, the two main focal points of the (anti-) heroines' urban experiences, in other words, machigurashi, are Q School and places in general society (e.g., places related to their occupation). Metropolitan Tokyo in the narrative

can be seen as a grid designed by patriarchal authority, and this thesis traces chronologically the (anti-) heroines' locations and movements on this grid. The dichotomies of inside/ outside, central/ peripheral, public/ private, and masculine/ feminine serve as the axes of this geographical grid. My analysis has suggested that the patriarchal society dominates women by means of their social and economic "placement" on the grid. The (anti-) heroines' attitudes towards the patriarchal authority are reflected in their interpersonal relationships; e.g., with their parents, classmates, teachers, colleagues, superiors, and clients. The interactions among characters function as variables which designate the (anti-) heroines' coordinates on the grid.

In *Grotesque*, Kirino observes and records the tracks of women's movements within the metropolis. Kirino narrates the dilemma women face from a socio-geographical perspective. Women are trapped because of their physicality for which they are desired as well as despised, yet they keep struggling to take the initiative. Rather than being exploited, they thus choose to exploit themselves and ultimately self-destruct. By abandoning their feminine physicality (i.e., becoming "grotesque" and selling their bodies), they become capable of resisting and challenging patriarchal demarcation. Prostitution can therefore be interpreted as both a heroic and a desperate act in Kirino's narrative. The hypotheses stated in the introduction are thus proved.

### Editorial Decisions in the Translation

As noted in the introduction, some contents are omitted in the published English translated version. Some of the cuts delete conclusions or analytical comments on the part of a narrator in several chapters; others include the removal of some lateral plots. Cuts of great length include Yuriko's narrative of her work at night club and her encounter with her grandfather (Chapter 3 "A Natural-born Whore: Yuriko's diary") and the plot of Yurio's practice of male prostitution (Chapter 8 "Sound of the Waterfall in the Distance: The Last Chapter") among others.

For the original manuscript, the translator Rebecca Copeland translated everything. However, "The Press felt that the book would benefit from cuts to streamline it and make it a less daunting read" (Copeland 2013b). The party who proposed the cuts was Lexy Bloom, an editor with Vintage, the publisher which handled the publishing of the paperback edition of *Grotesque*. Bloom was charged with editing the manuscript, aiming at cutting down 20% of the original translation (i.e., from 625 pages to 500 pages). Copeland disagreed with many of these cuts, and spoke up for each scene's significance in the characterization and the overall storytelling. The press insisted on the cuts, though, because they saw some scenes as digressions and were concerned for the readers' reactions. Copeland accepted the Press's decisions.

The press negotiated with Kirino herself regarding this matter and listed rationales for the cuts, including: "[T]o streamline the novel, to make it more coherent and rational and thereby accessible to English-language readers" (Copeland 2013b). Kirino was receptive to the cuts with the exception of Bloom's suggestion to eliminate

the final chapter completely. To Bloom, it “seemed to be going in such a different direction” and “was baffling” (Copeland 2013b). Kirino argued that the final chapter offered a surreal finale which ended with Yuriko’s sister and Yurio taking over the battleground of prostitution after Yuriko’s and Kazue’s deaths (Copeland 2013b). In the end, the press met Kirino part way by keeping a portion of the final chapter. According to Copeland, this editorial decision of the cuts revealed “a kind of ‘equivalence’ approach to translation that sought to ‘domesticate’ the text”, and insisted that no censorship was involved, in contrast to what has been alleged on online forums (Copeland 2013b).

In this case, Knopf and Vintage’s intention was to make *Grotesque* more appealing and effective to English-language readers, however the cuts of great length in the English version seem to have been an exceptional case. *Grotesque* has also been published in Chinese (both simplified and traditional) and Italian to date. Nevertheless, none of these presses, three from Asia and one from the West, tried to use domestication strategy in the publishing of *Grotesque*. The translator for *Grotesque* published in Taiwan and Mainland China is Liu Ziqian. All three versions of Chinese translation (published by Business Weekly Publications, Inc. 商周出版社 in 2005, Rye Field Publishing Co. 麥田出版社 in 2008, and Guangxi Normal University Press 广西师范大学出版社 in 2010) preserved all the content of the original. The Italian *Grotesque*, translated by Gianluca Coci, was published by Neri Pozza in 2008 with all the content preserved.

There is no data suggesting how the abridgement had an impact on the English readership of *Grotesque*. Copeland argues, “anecdotal evidence suggests that readers still found *Grotesque* too long”, one of many examples being an online book review from Onyx website (Copeland 2013d). “*Grotesque* is not an easy book. The vitriol-spewing narrator is relentless, and the tragic trajectories of all of the characters do not make for uplifting reading. The author’s overindulgences swell the book to epic proportions where judicious editing might have helped the story find more focus” (Onyx). Since Kirino herself has shown no interest in publishing an uncut version (Copeland 2013d), there is no access to a comparison of readership between the cut and the uncut.

One fact remains that there has been no note to the readers about the abridgement of the English *Grotesque* published by Knopf or Vintage to this date. English-language readers who have no ability in Japanese or access to the Japanese original are naturally denied the knowledge of the cuts. Moreover, to English-language academics who conduct studies on *Grotesque* and who use this version solely as a primary source, this unreported abridgement might affect the quality of their research results. It seems that the presses tend to view the translation as an original piece of work and they do not feel obliged to remain faithful the Japanese text or readers of the English truncated version (Copeland 2013c). Although this kind of practice is not unusual, the length of the cuts and the significance of the deleted content of *Grotesque* make a striking case, which could well serve as a case study for cultural studies and translation studies in the future.

### Aftertastes of Rashomon

As mentioned in the introduction, the storytelling technique of *Grotesque* is distinctive. The narrative has each main character tell their side of the story in turn. This allows readers to gain different perspectives on the same events. The detail-oriented narration and inner monologue portray a highly nuanced picture. However, the authenticity of each character's narration cannot be detected in the narrative itself. Lies and sophistry arise from their vindications.

Much confusion is related to the depiction of the murderer Zhang. In his confession, he does not mention the deaths of his grandfather, brother or Mei-kun's fiancé. Also, he describes Mei-kun's death as an accident. "Mei-kun tumbled into the water before anyone could catch hold of her. I had boarded the boat ahead of her and tried to grasp her hand but it all happened too quickly. When I reached out to her, my hand clutched nothing but air" (Kirino 2008:283). In Kazue's account, Zhang's roommate Dragon once tells Kazue a different version of Zhang's life experiences than the one Zhang claims in his own confession. "But nothing that loser says is true. [...] [H]e bumped off his grandpa, his older brother, and the man who was supposed to marry his little sister and he had no choice but to skip town. He says he forced his sister into prostitution when he got to Guangzhou<sup>25</sup> and he started running drugs for a gang. [...] Hell, the only reason he came to Japan was to escape the police. [...] I heard it from another guy who made that trip on the same boat with Zhang. He said he pretended to grab for his sister's hand, but it looked to the guy like he'd pushed her

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<sup>25</sup> In the English version, "広州 Guangzhou" is mistaken as "杭州 Hangzhou" here. For more references, see the original Japanese text (Kirino 2003:510).

overboard” (Kirino 2008:446-447). Furthermore, in his narrative Zhang claims that he is not responsible for Kazue’s murder and there is no concrete evidence to suggest otherwise (Kirino 2008:214), which remains the biggest enigma in *Grotesque*.

In some other cases, the paradox arising from conflicting narrations can be fundamental and affect the analysis of the characters. For example, Yuriko’s sister questions the authenticity of Yuriko’s journals. “I’m sure someone impersonating Yuriko wrote that journal of hers. I’ve already noted on a number of occasions that Yuriko didn’t have the cleverness to organize her thoughts or write any kind of extended composition” (Kirino 2008:157). If this were true, then the analysis of Yuriko in this thesis could be called into question. However with hints dropped throughout the narrative, Yuriko’s sister’s doubt is detected as a lie due to her jealousy of Yuriko.

Given this storytelling technique, there is no certain way for the readers to know which one of the characters is telling the truth or whether anyone is telling the truth at all. This “Rashomon” effect adds a mysterious touch to the narrative. There is still much that remains unaccounted for to the readers. Since I have chosen to base part of the analyses on the ordering and interpretation of characters’ life experiences and psychological activities revealed in their own narration, I have conducted my analyses based on a presumption of the veracity of most of characters’ confessions, including that of Yuriko’s journals. As Kazue says, “Everyone lies” (Kirino 2008:446). Yet in every lie, there is a grain of truth. Zhang’s lies divulge his pathological self-confidence. Yuriko’s sister’s lies expose her raging envy. Truth or not, readers get closer to the characters’ inner persona with each word that slips out of their mouths.

## Limitations

This thesis has focused on the interrelation between physical appearance and machigurashi of the female characters. However, it could also be argued that the conclusion applies not only to females but also to males with feminine traits such as Yurio and Takashi. Yurio's biological sex is male, but he is described as a beauty with feminine traits which victimizes him and makes him an object of adults' sexual desire. [Yuriko's sister:] "[Yurio's] face was lovely—the features as becoming for a woman as they were for a man" (Kirino 2008:321). "He was so beautiful" (Kirino 2008:332). His physical disability (i.e., his blindness) increases his vulnerability and further negates his masculinity. In the end of the narrative, Yurio becomes a male prostitute bound to the underworld of Tokyo. Takashi's job has been managing male and female prostitutes since he had dropped out of school. His domain is thus limited to the night world and he is barred from the mainstream of society. Ironically, the narrative reveals that Takashi is homosexual, which makes the character more marginal (Kirino 2008:331). [Yuriko's sister:] "Not just [Takashi's] physique but the way he spoke was round and soft. Like a woman" (Kirino 2008:323). His lack of masculinity and his deprivation of mobility may not be a coincidence. In both cases, effeminized males display the same vulnerability as the female characters in the work. Issues related to this could be examined in future researches on Kirino's fiction.

In the analysis of *Grotesque* in this thesis, I have drawn on examples from a range of literary and artistic works such as novels, feature films, and other visual media. Although these works appear in various forms, they all share something of the themes

and/or techniques with *Grotesque*. Because their genres and authors differ, it is not possible to compare them fully with *Grotesque*. However, the points of similarity do allow for a degree of meaningful comparison. The issues I raise in this study: sexuality, urban space, beauty, power, etc., transcend genre and appear in comparable ways in the other works I have examined.

### Directions for Future Research

Besides using geographical space in reality, Kirino also uses the metaphor of fantastical space in *Grotesque*. For instance, the imaginary sea with Cambrian fossils features in Yuriko's sister's "hypothetical chart" (Kirino 2008:44-45). Depictions of similar scenes can be found in the narrative later on (e.g., Kirino 2008:101 and Kirino 2008:176). Rebecca Copeland (2013a) suggests that "there are islands throughout Kirino's works—if you discuss them metaphorically. The school for girls in *Grotesque* is an island of sorts. And so is the *danchi* [団地 the apartment built as public housing by government authority] that the narrator shares with her grandfather. It is after all built on land reclaimed from the sea. Islands suggest a kind of isolation. And in these isolated arenas you have women pitted against men but also pitted against each other". To Kirino, the island is a microcosm of society with intensified interpersonal relations where themes of survival and femininity play out. The metaphorical space in *Grotesque* carries significances as well as the actual space and is worth researching in the future.

Furthermore, the scenario of ocean, island, and woman appears repeatedly in Kirino's recent works, such as *Joshinki* (2008; *The Goddess Chronicle*, 2013) and *Tokyo-jima* (2008). Both of the narratives of *The Goddess Chronicle* and *Tokyo-jima* are set on a lonely island in the middle of the ocean. In *Grotesque* there is a paragraph of Yuriko's sister's dream, which bears strong resemblance to the plot in *The Goddess Chronicle*. [Yuriko's sister:] "I thought I'd head in that direction when all of a sudden everything around me grew dark. A giant figure had cast a shadow over the surface of the water, blocking out the rays of the sun. [...] I was the size of a child, but Yuriko, with the face and body of an adult, was dressed in the flowing white robes of a sea goddess" (Kirino 2008:176). *The Goddess Chronicle* contains similar characterizations (also refer to page 50-51 of this thesis). Looking into the interrelations among these three works might provide a starting point for a comparative study on feminist socio-geography in literature. The elaboration of grand fantastic space in *The Goddess Chronicle* and *Tokyo-jima* also provides a pathway for further exploring feminist issues raised by Kirino.



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