

TRACING THE CRIMINAL WOMEN IN EDOGAWA RANPO’S STORIES

AYŞE SELİN KOT

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

2022

TRACING THE CRIMINAL WOMEN IN EDOGAWA RANPO STORIES

Thesis submitted to the  
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
Asian Studies

by  
Ayşe Selin Kot

Boğaziçi University

2022

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Ayşe Selin Kot, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

Signature .....

Date .....

## ABSTRACT

### Tracing the Criminal Women in Edogawa Ranpo's Stories

Edogawa Ranpo is a Japanese author whose works concentrate on detective fiction. This study focuses on the portrayal of criminal women in his detective fiction works, *Appearance of Osei* (Osei Tōjō), *Beast in the Shadows* (Injū), and *Caterpillar* (Imo Mushi). The study analyses their roles as wives, lovers, and aggressors in their surroundings, and argues that by getting his female protagonists to murder their husbands, Ranpo liberates these women from the social pressure and burden of the patriarchal structures placed on them. To discuss the patriarchal oppression and these women characters' agency, this research adopts a context-based analysis through the structuration theory. The thesis also argues that by bending the norms of the structures they are restricted in, these criminal characters can be considered as a statement against the *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) ideology of Meiji Japan.

## ÖZET

### Edogawa Ranpo Hikayelerindeki Suçlu Kadınların İzinde

Edogawa Ranpo genellikle polisiye kurgu alanında eser vermiş önemli bir Japon yazardır. Bu çalışma yazarın *Osei Sahnede* (Osei Tōjō), *Gölgedeki Canavar* (Injū) ve *Tırtıl* (Imo mushi) adlı eserlerindeki suçlu kadın karakterlere odaklanıyor. Çalışma bu hikayelerdeki kadın karakterlerin kendi çevrelerinde eş, aşık ve suçlu olarak oynadıkları rollerini incelemekte ve Edogawa Ranpo'nun kadın kahramanlarına eşlerini öldürterek onları ataerkil yapının sosyal baskısından kurtardığını savunmaktadır. Bu karakterlerin failliğini ve ataerkil baskıyı tartışabilmek için çalışma, yapılandırma kuramından üzerinden hareketle içeriksel analiz yöntemini benimsiyor. Tez aynı zamanda suçlu kadınların, içinde bulundukları baskıcı normları esneterek Meiji döneminin “iyi eş, akıllı anne (*ryōsai kenbo*)” ideolojisine karşı bir tepki gösterdiklerini iddia ediyor.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support of many people. First and foremost, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my advisors Assoc. Prof. Oğuz Baykara, who guided me patiently with his endless knowledge in Japanese literature during my research and writing process, and Asst. Prof. Hale Eroğlu for her invaluable constructive feedback. I would also like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Assoc. Prof. Johnathan Ross for his precious comments and input, and Prof. Selçuk Esenbel for sharing her extensive knowledge on Japanese history with me.

I would like to express thanks to the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK), for supporting me during my graduate studies through the National Scholarship Programme for MSc students (TÜBİTAK BİDEB 2210).

I am extremely grateful to my wonderful friends for their unwavering faith in me, even for the times when I felt completely lost. I would like to express my love and gratitude to Merve Yahşi, Asya Borahan, and Semiha Karaoğlu. Finally, I want to thank my mother Serpil, my sister Duru, and my father Cengiz for their unconditional love and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	8
2.1 Concept of agency .....	8
2.2 Giddens' structuration theory .....	10
2.3 A feminist approach to agency .....	15
2.4 The structure of patriarchy.....	17
2.5 Summary .....	25
CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....	27
3.1 Japanese women in pre-industrial era.....	28
3.2 Japanese women in Meiji era (1868-1912).....	35
3.3 Japanese women in Taishō and early Shōwa period (1912-1949) .....	46
3.4 Summary.....	51
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSES OF STORIES .....	53
4.1 Analysis of “Appearance of Osei” (お勢登場 - Osei Tōjō, 1927).....	54
4.2 Analysis of “Beast in the Shadows” (陰獣 – Injū, 1928).....	61
4.3 Analysis of “Caterpillar” (芋虫 - Imo Mushi, 1929).....	72
4.4 Summary.....	84
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	85
5.1 Dependence on husband .....	86
5.2 Sexual activity .....	87
5.3 Connection between sexuality and criminality .....	88
5.4 Emancipation of heroines .....	89
5.5 Mythification of ryōsai kenbo: Sexuality over morality.....	91

APPENDIX: AN OVERALL ANALYSIS – THREE STORIES OF EDOGAWA

RANPO .....	93
REFERENCES.....	94



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Known as the founder of the Japanese mystery genre, Edogawa Ranpo (江戸川乱歩)<sup>1</sup> is one of the most significant and influential writers of his time that shaped Japanese literature thoroughly. He lived in the periods covering 1894 to 1965, witnessing most of the modernization period of Japan. Ranpo's love for the crime and mystery genre developed gradually, starting from the writings of Japanese detective fiction writers. His mother was engrossed with detective stories of Kuroiwa Ruiko whose works guided Ranpo to the realm of crime and mystery fiction. Ruiko was one of the early translators of Western detective fiction into Japanese, he was known for adaption of foreign novels.<sup>2</sup> Even before Ranpo was old enough to go to school, his mother used to tell him the stories of Ruiko as bedtime stories.<sup>3</sup> However, his encounters with the writers of Western detective fiction—such as Edgar Allan Poe, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and G.K. Chesterton—during his years in university built his writer persona we know as Edogawa Ranpo today.<sup>4</sup> Among these writers, Ranpo was fond of Edgar Allan Poe most. Poe's influence on Ranpo was so enormous that it was evident even from his pen name to his first published work entitled *Nisen Dōka* (The Two-Sen Copper Coin) in *Shin Seinen* (New Youth) magazine. His chosen pen name Edogawa Ranpo was a tribute to Edgar Allan Poe, it

---

<sup>1</sup> Kanji chosen for Edogawa Ranpo name is also another double entendre. The literal translation of Edogawa (江戸川) is Edo River which was a frequented place for the Tokugawa era merchant culture and also 20<sup>th</sup> century Tokyoites. It was appointed as *shita-machi* (downtown, or literally low-city) because it embodied the sense of change and modernity of the new era. The word Ranpo (乱歩) consists of the kanji for the disorder (乱) and the kanji for walking (歩) and together it means leisurely walking.

<sup>2</sup> Silver, *Purloined Letters*, 63-4.

<sup>3</sup> Ranpo, "My Love for the Printed World," 246.

<sup>4</sup> Silver, *Purloined Letters*, 135.

was the reading of Poe's full name in Japanese. Second, his story *Nisen Dōka*, published in 1923, was heavily influenced by the ratiocination<sup>5</sup> method employed by Poe in his story *Gold Bug*. This fact was also highlighted by Ranpo himself during the events of the story. His stories, however, turned out to be completely authentic and not as merely Japanese adaptations and imitations of Poe's works. Ranpo took the grotesque and ratiocination components of Poe's mystery and horror tales and merged them with Japanese *ero guro nansensu*, erotic grotesque nonsense wave.

Derived from the English words erotic, grotesque, and nonsense, *ero guro nansensu* is a cultural movement that emerged in Shōwa era Japan. It refers to the mass culture of the modern period that is circulating in the media and daily life. *Ero* symbolizes sexual promiscuity and the eroticism of the male and female bodies.<sup>6</sup> *Guro* refers to the perverseness and criminality present in society.<sup>7</sup> *Nansensu* delivers the absurdity and ironic elements of this combination.<sup>8</sup> This influence of *ero guro* in Ranpo's writings opens a different phase in his career as an author. Literary critics remark an unanticipated shift in his works from "scientific" to "perverse" detective fiction.<sup>9</sup> In his essay titled "Edogawa Ranpo Ron"<sup>10</sup> (An Essay on Edogawa Ranpo), literary critic Ryū Tōun groups Ranpo's literary works into three phases: first stage, "healthy and serious detective fiction" which starts with the publication of his story *Nisen Dōka* in 1923, second stage, "irregular" detective fiction covering a period from the publication of *Yaneura no Sanposha* (Stalker in the Attic) in 1925 to *Injū* (Beast in the Shadows) 1928, and third stage "full-length detective novels" starting

---

<sup>5</sup> Ratiocination refers to the logical thinking ability. Poe introduced this term to the literary scene by calling his detective fiction stories as "tales of ratiocination." The detective character in his stories solves the mystery based on the deductions and analyzes he made from the facts.

<sup>6</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Saito, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Japanese Novel*, 237-8.

<sup>10</sup> Ryū, "Edogawa Ranpo ron," 39-41.

with the publication of *Nanimono* (Who) in 1929 and lasts till the end of his career.<sup>11</sup> This “irregular detective fiction” phase is where we witness as readers Ranpo's uninhibited side as a crime author.

Moreover, the *ero guro nansensu* trend contributed immensely to Ranpo's literary fame. His name was usually associated with this movement due to the intriguing nature of his stories, integrating gory murder scenes and brilliant reasoning and appealing to readers' sense of terror. Explicit eroticism and abnormal sexuality present in his works further contributed to his popularity. He was not shy about covering abnormal themes, characters, and concepts in his works compared to his contemporaries. Perhaps he can be considered as a progressive person in this sense; for example, his story titled *Kotō no Oni* (Demon of the Lonely Isle) includes a homosexual character, and he leaves the gender of the main character of his book *Kuro Tokage*'s (Black Lizard) ambiguous.<sup>12</sup> What Ranpo desired to aim was to perplex the reader with the absurdity, ghastliness, and unpredictability of the situation.

Ranpo's works have been translated by many other translators and Japanese literature scholars, with an eye to analyzing the hidden meanings underlying his grotesque stories. His selected stories were recently translated into Turkish by Alper Kaan Bilir in 2022. It was one of the prominent translators and scholar who studies Ranpo's literary works, Seth Jacobowitz's remarks what made me research this topic in particular. In his introduction to *The Edogawa Ranpo Reader*, he mentions the criminal married woman profile in Ranpo's works whose “modest demeanor hides a transgressively sexual appetite.”<sup>13</sup> Professor Sari Kawana, too, briefly touches upon

---

<sup>11</sup> Saito, *Detective Fiction*, 238.

<sup>12</sup> Ishikawa, “Edogawa Ranpo.”

<sup>13</sup> Jacobowitz, introduction to *The Edogawa Ranpo Reader*, 42.

these criminal female characters of Ranpo in her book *Murder Most Modern*. She concentrates on the Shizuko, heroine of *Injū* (Beast in the Shadows) in particular and asserts how Ranpo constructs Shizuko as a modern criminal who uses the gender stereotypes assigned to her as a cover for her aggressor side.<sup>14</sup>

This study aims to analyze the criminal female characters depicted in Edogawa Ranpo's stories: *Osei Tōjō* (The Appearance of Osei, 1927), *Injū* (Beast in the Shadows, 1928), and *Imo Mushi* (Caterpillar, 1929). These are not all the stories of Ranpo in which a woman character is portrayed as a criminal. However, they have several significant mutual aspects. First of all, they belong to the era of Ranpo that is heavily influenced by the *ero guro nansensu* trend and they are published a year apart from each other. Second, the transgressor character in these stories is a married woman, and her husband cannot perform the roles of the traditional masculinity that came with the Meiji period, which celebrated the spirit of samurai and patterned itself on the national heroes of the past.<sup>15</sup> These husband characters either have heavily deformed bodies, are absent from the home for a considerably long time, or their health condition is extremely fragile. Finally, the female characters portrayed in these stories can be extremely dangerous if they wish to discover their other nature. They become the center of the attention of these stories regardless of the tone of the narrator. By analyzing how the agency of these female figures reveals itself in their roles as wives, lovers, and aggressors, I aim to answer the following questions:

- What are the common patterns of these female characters? Are they identical or are they individual characters with distinguishable characteristics?

---

<sup>14</sup> Kawana, *Murder Most Modern*, 88.

<sup>15</sup> Karlin, *Gender and Nation in Meiji*, 21.

- How did Ranpo reflect the patriarchal oppression of the structures of Shōwa Japan inflicted on these female characters?
- Does Ranpo villainize these figures? If so, is there a social message behind this decision?
- To what extent can we consider these women characters' killing their husbands as a reaction to the *ryōsai kenbo*<sup>16</sup> (good wife, wife mother) mindset of Meiji Japan?

This research focuses on the agency of these female characters Osei of *Osei Tōjō*, Shizuko of *Injū*, and Tokiko of *Imo Mushi*, and how they are shaped by the patriarchal structure of their environments. When we scrutinize the life of these female characters, we realize that their agency and ability to mobilize are restricted by the presence of their husbands. Essentially, they are all female figures who cannot share their domestic space with their husbands. This thesis suggests that by killing their husbands, Ranpo indirectly emancipates these women from the social pressure and burden of the patriarchal structures placed on them. Moreover, this research questions whether these female characters show resilience or any kind of indication to change the oppressive attitude towards them in their social environment. Taking this claim a step further, this paper also argues that these female figures show resistance against the patriarchal norms of social life and searches whether any indications are present in these texts that support this idea. Finally, it discusses whether we can consider these characters as a statement against the *ryōsai kenbo*, the mindset of the interwar period Japanese government dictated for Japanese women.

---

<sup>16</sup> This phrase was created in 1875, Meiji period Japan by Nakamura Masanao—a scholar who was among the prominent individuals of the Meiji era. This slogan also resembles the German slogan that emerged in the 1890s “Kinder, Küche, Kirche” (children, kitchen, church) which dictates a woman’s role in the German Empire.

This thesis adopts a close reading method to analyze the stories to find the evidence that supports these hypotheses. Chapter Two outlines the theoretical framework that will be used in this research; first, it will explain what agency is, then employ the term ‘agency’ explained under the “Structuration Theory” of Anthony Giddens. In structuration theory, Giddens argues that agency and structure should not be considered independent of each other. Then, this study considers patriarchy as a structure to analyze these female characters’ agency. I will employ the definitions of patriarchy based on the works of Kate Millet and Sylvia Walby. Kate Millet’s work *Sexual Politics* provides us the necessary framework of the discussion that revolves around patriarchy and Walby’s *Theorizing Patriarchy* contributes to the theorization of the patriarchy as a structure.

Chapter Three provides the necessary historical background context for this research by presenting a rough summary of the status of women in Japan before and after the Meiji Restoration. This chapter constructs the background information regarding the Japanese women in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods and how their identities were shaped by the patriarchal policies of the previous eras.

Chapter Four presents the analyses of the stories in the light of these theories and given concepts so far. Stories are introduced in a sequence based on the years they are published. Prior to the analysis part, a story overview is given regarding the information about the plot, characters, and the setting of the stories in the beginning. Character analysis of the main characters will be examined in three fields: their role as wives, lovers, and aggressors. While explaining their roles as wives in the stories, I will examine their agency in the household production, whether they partake in family economics or not, and whether they correspond with the ideal wife image prescribed by the inner circles of the characters. In their portrayals as lovers, I will

look into the sex appeal of the characters. I will question to what extent their erotic image was sensationalized and whether they are conscious of their decisions regarding their sexual relationships with men or they are subjected to the desires of men. For their representations as aggressors, I will investigate their motives for committing these crimes and analyze the power relationship between these women as “aggressors” and their husbands as “victims.”

In Chapter Five, the findings from the stories will be discussed and a summary of the research will be given. In these three chosen stories from Ranpo, we see a pattern of women who partake in sexual activity with men willingly but must constantly spend their time at home with their husbands. On top of that, they are struggling with the expected chores of family life and being a dutiful wife. This research suggests that all the female characters in these stories who cannot fulfill the duty of “good wife, wise mother” imposed by society cause the death of their husbands directly or indirectly. Their resistance to the fragile male authority and their wish to explore the outside world could be their motivations in this sense, and this finding could be related to the newly emerging modern woman figure in early Shōwa Japan.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The intricate relationship between society and individuals has always been among the most hotly debated topics of social theory. Do the roles and positions in specific groups or societies designate the personality and decision-making procedures as well? The representations of individual selves and entities in society carry a tremendous meaning when entering a discourse concerning the consequences of our moral actions. This study will employ the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens, his concept of agency in explaining the relationship between actor and the structure. I will elicit Giddens' concept of agency and structure to analyze the female agency and the patriarchy in descending order. Lois McNay's idea of a feminist agency will assist this theoretical framework necessary to consider female agency. Lastly, I analyze the patriarchy as a male dominant structure based on the definitions of Kate Millett and Sylvia Walby and argue that even though the probability of changing a deeply rooted structure, like patriarchy, in this case, is an arduous work, women actors may unsettle this existing system through their acts.

#### 2.1 Concept of agency

One of the definitions provided for the meaning of "agency" in the dictionary is "the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power." Even in ancient times, the existence of agency was acknowledged yet not defined legitimately. The "human agency" as a concept was born in the Enlightenment period with the debate over deciding the most accurate way to define human freedom: instrumental rationality or



moral and norm-based action.<sup>17</sup> Philosopher John Locke supported the idea in which freedom of people was dependent upon their self-involvement. A strong follower of Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau discovered a different approach to this subject: he introduced the term moral will. Thereupon, Immanuel Kant asserted the ramification mentioned in the beginning in the description of agency that agency as a rational concept or a normative approach which questions the knowledgeability of agents.

Another debate that concerns agency in social sciences is whether the structure or human agency is the determining factor over individuals' behavior and if it is possible to evaluate these individuals as the driving force that shapes and changes the existing social order. On the relationship between power and the subject, Michel Foucault argues that subjectivity of individuals depends on power and potential outcomes produced through this bilateral relation.<sup>18</sup> The discourses in which individuals engage designate their status in social and cultural environments. He employs the term "regimes of truth" which essentially refers to the fact that what constitutes truth is based on the relation between power and knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, he implies that knowledge is also a form of power and exploited in the establishment of subjectivity. However, Foucault does not come up with a theory of agency, nor does he explain why some subjects do not follow some specific discourses or how some groups and individuals are produced through disciplinary practices that can resist power. Feminists and scholars engaged in identity politics find Foucault's description of the subject as a "docile body" inadequate because this definition robs the subject of the agency that is required to take political action.<sup>20</sup> In his later works, Foucault comes up with a new approach to the concept of agency and introduces "the

---

<sup>17</sup> Emirbayer and Mische, "What is Agency?" 964.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 781.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 277.

techniques of the self.” Now, subjects can discover their “selves” sexually—as the subjects of desire<sup>21</sup>, and this can create the possibility for resistance and change. Foucault suggests another component to bring the subjects’ self into life, and that is ethics. According to Foucault ethics plays a significant role in shaping subjects to be good people in their everyday life. By ethics, he refers to having good relations with other individuals by asserting limited domination as possible.<sup>22</sup> Foucault proposes that one can argue that agency may occur under the presence of ethical discourses and that “agency is a discursive construction exemplifying the productive character of power.”<sup>23</sup> A critic of Foucault’s concept of agency, Anthony Giddens sets forth a different definition and setting for this concept. The next section will present Anthony Giddens’ “Structuration Theory” and his own concept of agency.

## 2.2 Giddens’s structuration theory

An acclaimed British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, came up with the “Structuration Theory” in his book *The Constitution of Society* which was published in 1984. Giddens was not satisfied with the existing theories explaining the relationship between human agency and social institutions; thus, he developed a new one by bringing a fresh perspective that suggests that neither a micro-sociological nor a macro-sociological approach is sufficient to understand this relationship. His ideas do not conform with Talcott Parsons’ action theory which was generally accepted by scholars of sociology in explaining the actors’ position in social systems. Giddens argues that object (society) dominates the subject (the knowledgeable human agent) in Parsons’ action theory, despite Parsons’ employment of the term “the action frame

---

<sup>21</sup> Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality*, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom,” 299.

<sup>23</sup> Barker, *Cultural Studies*, 278.

of reference” which actually refers to the capability of actors making choices in environments that limit their options.<sup>24</sup> He also disagrees with Foucault for wiping out the term agent in the narration of history.<sup>25</sup> In a nutshell, Giddens does not agree with the post-structuralists who argue that structures in which individuals exist are determined for the individuals themselves, and the idea of volunteerism which defends human beings are uninhibited while creating the environment and structures they live in by making their own choices and decisions without being under influence of anything.

In structuration theory, Anthony Giddens focuses on the concept of duality and argues that human agents have an impact on the social structure they live in, as much as the structure has on them. Giddens describes the structure as “the rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction; institutionalized features of social systems have structural properties in the sense that relationships are stabilized across time and space.”<sup>26</sup> By way of explanation, we can consider the society we live in or the institutions we utilize in our lives as the members of this society as structures. He visualizes the rules that construct a structure in two different forms: normative elements and codes of signification.<sup>27</sup> For instance, if we consider language as a structure, we may understand these components that establish structure better.<sup>28</sup> Language is formed of strict rules, definitions, and sets of grammar fabrications. Normative elements are these formulaic rules of the language. However, when a speaker is communicating in a certain language, the message is conveyed through the speaker’s tone and her knowledge of this language. Thus, codes of

---

<sup>24</sup> Giddens, introduction to *The Constitution of Society*, xx.

<sup>25</sup> Barker, *Cultural Studies*, 279.

<sup>26</sup> Giddens, introduction to *The Constitution of Society*, xxxi.

<sup>27</sup> Giddens, introduction to *The Constitution of Society*, xxxv.

<sup>28</sup> Lamsal, “The Structuration Approach of Anthony Giddens,” 114.

signification are the products of social practices. Resources, too, have a significant role in the theory of structuration. Giddens suggests that resources are the instruments of power; they define the capability of the actors, and they are distributed unevenly among them. He groups resources under two kinds: authoritative resources that originate from the coordination of the agents' activity, and allocative resources that signify the management of the material elements or the concepts of the physical world.<sup>29</sup>

Giddens suggests that social systems are made up of three main structural dimensions: signification, domination, and legitimation.<sup>30</sup> The signification component emphasizes the origin of the meaning and how it exists through the interaction of the agents.<sup>31</sup> The legitimation component establishes a social order through the adaptation of norms, values, and standards.<sup>32</sup> The domination component is related to the production and exertion of the power that comes from the possession of the resources.<sup>33</sup> According to Giddens, for a social system to be classified as a structure, its forms of social conduct must be reproduced constantly across time and space.<sup>34</sup> What Giddens means by this remark is that the social actions of the individuals extended over time and space shape the social institutions we are using today. As for the micro-level aspect of his argument, Giddens employs the terms human agent and actor interchangeably. He argues that actors or agents have the ability to understand the actions they took while committing them. Essentially, Giddens questions how the structural part of the social theory can treat agents as less knowledgeable than they really are. So, what does agency mean for Giddens, then?

---

<sup>29</sup> Giddens, introduction to *The Constitution of Society*, xxxi.

<sup>30</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 30.

<sup>31</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Lamsal, "The Structuration Approach of Anthony Giddens," 114.

<sup>33</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 33.

<sup>34</sup> Giddens, introduction to *The Constitution of Society*, xxi.

### 2.2.1 Agency in the structuration theory

The agent according to structuration theory has the ability to establish rules and the instinct to follow them. The continuation of the structure depends upon the agent.

Giddens' description of human agency develops through the form of self-identity and consists of three elements: discursive consciousness, practical consciousness, and unconscious motives (cognition).<sup>35</sup> The unconscious element of agency is influenced by Sigmund Freud to demonstrate the parts of our beings that we cannot completely control, beyond our actual intentions.<sup>36</sup> The practical consciousness term is derived from Harold Garfinkel to prove that individuals' actions are not solely dependent on external factors, and they can set up rules and routines to follow.<sup>37</sup> The term discursive consciousness is inspired by Alfred Schuts' work which asserts that individuals consider and contemplate their social actions before executing them.<sup>38</sup> They can weigh the alternative solutions and options present before acting on them. The discursive consciousness also helps actors to place meaning upon their social actions by reflecting on these acts.

Agents reproduce the conditions that create their environment, which also enables their activities in return. Giddens suggests a stratification model for agents' action. This model includes three steps: reflexive monitoring, rationalization, and the motivation of action.<sup>39</sup> Reflexive monitoring refers to the monitoring of the action enclosed by the dimensions of time and space. It is a routinized part of everyday activities and involves other individuals aside from the agent.<sup>40</sup> Reflexivity here corresponds to the self-consciousness and monitored aspect of the current social life.

---

<sup>35</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Best, *A Beginner's Guide to Social Theory*, 187.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 5-7.

<sup>40</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 5.

Reflexive monitoring of the action is dependent on rationalization which is a process entirely determined by the competency of the actors.<sup>41</sup> The rationalization process addresses the “intentionality” of the process and is evaluated by the other actors.<sup>42</sup> The motivation element is described as not essential to the continuity of action, rather a potential for the action. Motivation is the aspect where reflexive monitoring differs from rationalization; reasons refer to the root of action, motives refer to the desire that prompted it.<sup>43</sup> Motives also give the opportunity to break away from the existing order or routine in relatively exceptional circumstances. In other words, it is possible for agents to manipulate “the factual boundaries of social life,” also known as norms, if they have the motivation for it.<sup>44</sup>

### 2.2.2 Power dynamics in structuration theory

What is referred to as agency in structuration theory is not the intentions of people on committing these actions, but rather their capability of doing these actions in the first place. Giddens describes it as follows: “Agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently.”<sup>45</sup> An agent may be responsible for the things she had done unintentionally, but the focus of this theory is the relation between what is intentional and unintentional. The consequences of the intended or unintended acts of the agents are the situations that would not have happened if they behaved in a different manner, yet which are not in the frame of agents’ power to engender them.

---

<sup>41</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 6.

<sup>42</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 4.

<sup>43</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 44.

<sup>44</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 47.

Agency and power have a complex but understandable relationship in structuration theory. Being able to act differently in a situation is equal to being capable of intervening in the world. Individuals may choose to avoid partaking in such intervention, this also may cause an effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs. What is meant by this statement is that agents have the potential to exert power in their lives and they also can influence others who also possess the same kind of power. Giddens underlines the necessity of the power for an agent and states:

Action depends upon the capability of the individual to 'make a difference' to a pre-existing state of affairs or course of events. An agent ceases to be such if he or she loses the capability to 'make a difference', that is, to exercise some sort of power.<sup>46</sup>

In other words, an actor who is deprived of power loses her ability to act, hence her agency.

### 2.3 A feminist approach to agency

As we established the critical relationship between agency and power, now we can discuss what women's agency means. The concept of agency, in general, is an integral part of feminist theory. Describing agency as a normative or descriptive category is also a topic of debate among feminists. Many feminist scholars argue that agency cannot be considered independent of the boundaries of the social environment, similar to the thought reflected by Giddens in the structuration theory. Feminist analysis of female agency is naturally related to the emancipatory political projects of overcoming gender inequality.<sup>47</sup> Then again, this emancipatory aspect of

---

<sup>46</sup> Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> McNay, "Agency," 39.

agency is a fragile subject because it may denote an essentialist meaning to the concept of femininity.

Lois McNay argues that feminist scholars are in favor of an agency that is a situated, embodied, and relational phenomenon<sup>48</sup> instead of a ‘sovereign agent’ which reflects the expectations of a masculinist view. The situational position of agency refers to the evaluation of agency from a subjective perspective based on an individual’s own experiences, rather than an exclusively objective view.<sup>49</sup> The explanation and reasoning behind the individual’s comprehensibility of her own actions that motivates or even perhaps hinders her from behaving that way should be taken into consideration. The embodied nature of agency suggests that agents’ actions do not develop solely from their rational decisions and preconceived intentions.<sup>50</sup> It is implied with this sentiment that individuals are susceptible to emotive and sentimental changes and actions happening around them, and from a feminist approach, this affects female individuals through the forms of social control which are internalized as bodily norms. These types of social action take shape in the established and routinized practices, and this embodiment can be considered as proof of hierarchical structures of class, gender, and race. These embodied constructions of social activity are naturalized in daily life and disguised in their “invisibility.”<sup>51</sup> The relational phenomenon of agency according to feminists regards the dual emphasis on the constitution of agency via the interactions between agents and the power hierarchies in the structures.<sup>52</sup> Feminist idea desires to emphasize the significance of the relationships between individuals and the power dominations in hierarchies,

---

<sup>48</sup> McNay, “Agency,” 41-2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> McNay, “Agency,” 42.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



rather than stressing the existence of single individuals regardless of their personal relations with society when discussing the presence of agency. Agency is not dependent on the singularity of the individual—“solipsistic assertion of the individual.”<sup>53</sup> On the contrary, it is shaped through the web of social relations between individuals that stimulates the variance of the common ambitions and activities among them.

Feminist theorists believe that the power to change women's inferior position and status in society is hidden in the depths of the structuration of society and the present moment. “Rediscovering” the disregarded and neglected forms of the female agency may become a way to empower women and an instrument to challenge the gender inequalities present in society.

#### 2.4 The structure of patriarchy

As we have established what is structure and agency independently based on the proposition of the structuration theory and defined a broad framework for the definition of agency, this paper suggests analyzing the patriarchal system as a structure and therefore employs the definitions of Kate Millett and Sylvia Walby on patriarchy as an oppressing system towards women.

The word patriarchy is of Greek origin and means “the rule of the father.”<sup>54</sup> It is described as the social system in which men governed societies as the heads of the households and they use their power for their own benefit. Max Weber employs this term to describe a system of government that is used in societies by man as the head of the households.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Sultana, “Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis,” 2.

<sup>55</sup> Sylvia Walby, “Theorizing Patriarchy,” 214.

Kate Millett was a second-wave feminist writer who considered politics as a “power-structured relationship” in which a group is dominated by the other.<sup>56</sup> In her book *Sexual Politics*, she analyzes the sexual themes covered in literary works of D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet, and argues that Lawrence, Miller, and Mailer approach sexual relations with women in a completely chauvinist and sexist manner, while Genet, who was homosexual himself, addresses this topic meticulously since he identifies himself with the female figure and delivers the power dynamics between masculine and feminine in a more realistic manner in his writings. She aims to demonstrate sex as a “status category with political implications”<sup>57</sup>, in her own words. Millett argues that discrimination based on birthright is decreasing considerably yet one group prevails its domination over the other one since the beginning of humankind, and that is sex. She explains the domains of patriarchy in eight different spheres: ideological, biological, sociological, class, economic and educational, force, anthropological, and psychological. In sexual politics, the ideological element of patriarchy stands on the socialization of men and women with regard to the temperament, role, and status of both genders. Status refers to the political component of patriarchal ideology and means that being a male in society equals a superior status compared to the inferior female. Temperament constitutes the psychological component and implies the formation of human personality based on the conventional lines of sex categories and it suggests that favored characteristics of individuals are based and dictated according to the demand and values of the dominant group, whose gender is man for this case. Millett exemplifies this with the association of the adjectives according to genders;

---

<sup>56</sup> Millett, *Sexual Politics*, 23-4.

<sup>57</sup> Millett, *Sexual Politics*, 24.

aggression, intelligence, force, efficacy in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, “virtue” and ineffectuality in the female. The sociological component of patriarchal ideology according to Millett is the sex role. It determines the function of the individuals based on their biological sexes, for instance; domestic service and infant care are assigned to women but professions that concern human achievement and ambition are attributed to men. Millett argues that all these three factors that construct patriarchal ideology are integrated with each other, and they form a chain together for the continuation of the patriarchy.

Kate Millett does not consider the biological differences between men and women as a reason for male dominance. She believes that socialization and the value system based on these temperamental differences between two sexes deepen the gap between them and exacerbate sexual politics. Millet argues that the main unit of patriarchy is the family because it reflects and conforms to the norms and rules of the patriarchal structures of the society, acts as a unit of the patriarchal state government which controls its citizens via the family heads, who are generally male.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, women’s participation in society is also monitored by the structures of patriarchy. She states that patriarchy holds power over women’s economic empowerment and right to utilize the education system. Even though women have the right to work and gain their income, the income they make is not equal to the ones their male counterparts make, thus this creates a cycle of economic dependence of women to men.

Millett asserts that the boundaries of patriarchy are not limited to a single class or group of people; men of lower status tend to claim authority with their virile strength and are forced to share the economic power with the women of their class.

---

<sup>58</sup> Millet, *Sexual Politics*, 33.

Even though we rarely see obvious instances of patriarchal dominance in the middle and upper class, she argues that it is demonstrated discreetly. Millett regards chivalry as a way of demonstration of patriarchy to elevate its subjects, women in this case, to pedestal level. Moreover, she argues that the class aspect of patriarchy disrupts the sisterhood between females. It creates a contrast between chastity and fornication, the figures of “whore” and “mother,” career woman and housewife.

Millett believes that the implementation of patriarchy does not require any external force since it is internalized through socialization or the process of acquiring learned behaviors, except for the act of rape since it demonstrates a physical domination of women against the men.<sup>59</sup> She explains this as: “So deeply embedded is patriarchy that the character structure it creates in both sexes is perhaps, even more, a habit of mind and a way of life than a political system.”<sup>60</sup> Millett does not portray shared characteristics of women oppressed, but rather underlines the common problem of them, which is the patriarchal structure of the society. However, she does not develop a theory that explains the foundations of patriarchy but rather proposes a discussion about patriarchy within the scope of power relations. Like many other second-wave feminists she believes that women were denied knowledge—and hence power—through the process of socialization which was controlled by men. Moreover, she attributes the longevity and universality of the patriarchy as its greatest assets.<sup>61</sup> While Millet does not touch upon the social structures explicitly in explaining the formation of patriarchy, her definition of patriarchy resembles the production of the structures. Like the construction of the structures in the structuration theory, patriarchy, too, takes its shape through the routinized and

---

<sup>59</sup> McCann, Carroll, Duguid, and Gehred, et al, *The Feminism Book*, 208.

<sup>60</sup> Millett, *Sexual Politics*, 63.

<sup>61</sup> Millett, *Sexual Politics*, 58.

internalized actions of the actors. Another feminist writer Sylvia Walby develops a definition for patriarchy partially similar to Kate Millett's, however she employs the structuration method to theorize the patriarchy as a concept.

Sylvia Walby is a sociologist and in her work *Theorizing Patriarchy*, she analyzes women as a subordinate group in our society and the reasons that led to this outcome. Walby conducts her analysis on patriarchy in contemporary Western societies; however, the model she proposes in her study can be applied to other cultures and nations as well. She defines patriarchy as a system of social structure that is deeply intertwined with gender inequality and argues that six main structures are composing a patriarchal system: paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence, and the state.<sup>62</sup> Walby employs the term social structure here deliberately because it denotes "the rejection of both biological determinism, and the notion that every individual man is in a dominant position and every individual woman in a subordinate one."<sup>63</sup> In her work, she argues that patriarchy can take different forms in different cultures, therefore elaborating a generalized notion of patriarchy might not be compatible for all times and all spaces. By taking Anthony Giddens' structuration theory for its aspects of continuity beyond the actors and duality of reflexive human action to mold her own model, she develops a more adjustable version of patriarchy which has two distinct forms as private and public and is composed of six interdependent structures that all have a different level of relevance for each woman living in different continents and different eras.

These six structures that construct patriarchy are the patriarchal mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male

---

<sup>62</sup> Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 20.

<sup>63</sup> Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," 214.

violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural relations in broader terms. Walby concentrates on the patriarchal production relations in the household as her first economic patriarchal structure and argues that women's labor in the home is expropriated by their husbands or cohabitees.<sup>64</sup> The labor here may refer to housework, cooking, cleaning, tending for the husband and the children. Women accomplish these tasks as housewives for their husbands or their fathers as their daughters. Yet, they are not rewarded with money for their services, only sometimes they are rewarded with allowance, and this is established as an integral part of the husband-wife relations in the household production. Walby claims that the husband has possession of the wife's labor power and its products, thus he can expropriate it. She states that "domestic division of labor is a major form of differentiation of men and woman, and this has significant effects on other aspects of social division, and this is a significant form of an inequality by itself."<sup>65</sup> She does not refuse the notion that women find marriage as a beneficiary for themselves but argues that most marriages present limited options to many women. The other economic structure of patriarchy is the patriarchal relations in paid work. These relations explain the patriarchal structure in the work environment and demonstrate the exclusion of women from the more desirable forms of work and insulating them into the unfavorable jobs which are demanding less skill. Walby calls this division between genders "occupational segregation"<sup>66</sup> and further argues that it entails the probability of different wage rates being paid.

Another patriarchal structure, according to Walby, is the state. She argues that women are left out of the state resources and power that are specified for the

---

<sup>64</sup> Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 21.

<sup>65</sup> Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," 221.

<sup>66</sup> Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," 215.

patriarchal system. There are two reasons for that: the gendered political forces implemented by states and women's presence being relatively excluded from the state because of it. Therefore, these state policies have significant impacts on gender relations, such as shaping the rules of divorce and marriage, fertility, and abortion—the fields which concern women directly. The fourth patriarchal structure is male violence. Male violence is an individualistic and diverse form of patriarchy, yet still has rooted connections with the state. Men use violence to have an impact and power on women. Walby does not generalize this to entire gender of men, but she emphasizes this exertion has a regular social form and because of its routinized nature, it shapes women's actions. This violence against women is systematically condoned and legitimated by the state's refusal to intervene against it, except in exceptional instances, such as rape, wife-beating, and sexual harassment.

Patriarchal relations in sexuality are also a critical structure to explore. Walby emphasizes the compulsory heterosexual aspect of patriarchy and its double standards imposed on women. She argues that how marriage is shown as an eligible goal and close female friendships are stigmatized via sexualization or negative evaluation.<sup>67</sup> Walby refuses to reduce the core of patriarchal relations solely on sexuality. However, she accepts Kate Millett's account on *Sexual Politics* because she is providing examples of patriarchy through the sexual analysis of the literary works of male writers. The last structure of patriarchy is the cultural institutions. These institutions create a representation of women and gendered subjectivity through a patriarchal gaze in several fields, such as religions, education, and media, which control and divert the opinion of the masses.

---

<sup>67</sup> Walby, "Theorizing Patriarchy," 226.

Walby argues that patriarchy is not a fixed concept in history. It is subject to change through the modifications in gender relations; however, this does not mean the change is always towards a positive one—there might be progress, regress, or involving no overall change at all.<sup>68</sup> She divides patriarchy into two forms: private and public. Private patriarchy is “the exclusion of women from areas of social life apart from the household, with a patriarch appropriating women’s service individually and directly in the apparently private sphere of the home.”<sup>69</sup> In private patriarchy, man is the direct oppressor and beneficiary, individually and directly, of the subordination of women as fathers or husbands. While this form of patriarchy seems to stress the household production more, it does not ignore the other structures of patriarchy. Women are intentionally excluded from the public space, which implies a significant activity in other structures of patriarchy. Public patriarchy, on the other hand, does not discriminate women from specific fields and rather tends to subordinate women in those. Walby explains public patriarchy as follows: “In public form of patriarchy the exploitation of women takes place at all levels, but women are not formally excluded from any. Yet in each institution women are in disadvantage.”<sup>70</sup> This is more of a collective form of patriarchy rather than an individual one. She argues that private patriarchy has given way to public patriarchy.<sup>71</sup>

Walby suggests this flexible concept of patriarchy composing of two distinct forms and based on six different structures to better challenge the gender inequalities rooted in human history. Both writers, Millet and Walby, argue that despite having come a long way on the road for gender inequality for their respective times,

---

<sup>68</sup> Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 173.

<sup>69</sup> Walby, “Theorizing Patriarchy,” 228.

<sup>70</sup> Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 178.

<sup>71</sup> Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 174.



breaking the deep-seated structure of patriarchy is almost impossible for now and there is still a long way to go to accomplish this end.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter has outlined the theoretical framework that this study will use to analyze the stories of Edogawa Ranpo and women's positions in the late Meiji and Shōwa periods in Japan.

I have chosen the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens for the present research given its broad definition of agency, and the openings it has provided to agents for breaking the cycles of structures. Through structuration theory, Giddens describes human agents as the entities that can form the rules that regulate societies, and these rules form structures.

To discuss an agency that is compatible with feminist perspective and structuration theory, Lois McNay's definition of agency that is situated, embodied, and relational phenomenon is explained. McNay's agency definition stresses that decisions of women actors do not depend on rational reasoning alone but also on the bodily norms around them. The web of social relations between actors also shapes the agency of the actors.

Women actors, who cannot have easy access to resources that shape their agency, are dominated by men in their own surroundings. The section titled Structure of Patriarchy explains this domination of women with respect to the works of Kate Millet and Sylvia Walby. The chapter, then, examines Millet's discussion on patriarchy within the scope of power relations and Walby's stratification model of patriarchy under six groups (paid work, housework, sexuality, culture, violence, and the state).

To understand the agency of the female characters, this study will analyze the three main characters' agency in terms of six patriarchal structures defined by Sylvia Walby.

## CHAPTER 3

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter will provide the historical background necessary for the analyses of the women characters in *Osei Tōjō*, *Injū*, and *Imo Mushi*. These stories were written in the years 1927, 1928, and 1929 respectively. Therefore, I will give extra emphasis while describing the eras which are closer to the publication date of these stories.

This study covers a specific timeline and does not include the era after World War II. It starts by briefly touching upon the topic of Japanese women in ancient and classical era Japan. Then, it will move on to explain the status of women in feudal Japan. Under this sub-title, this part will mainly focus on Edo period (1600-1868) Japan and the diffusion of Confucianism and its ideology. Next, it will illustrate the Meiji period and the novelties that came with the restoration, and how did they affect Japanese women. 1896 Meiji Civil Code and *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) ideology will be analyzed in detail under this subheading. Under the Meiji period section, I will explain *dokufu* (poison woman) figure as a transgressor female figure, why she is thought to be poisonous, and what made her do what she did. Finally, I will depict women's situation in the Taishō (1912-1926) and early Shōwa periods (1926-1989). These last two periods were heavily influenced by the trends of democratization and modernization; therefore, it is possible to argue that it gave women the space which was much needed for them to exist. I will briefly explain the female figures appeared in these periods: *atarashii onna* (new woman) and *modan gyaru* (modern girl).

By analyzing the lives of women in these periods, I believe we will have a better understanding of the woman characters of the stories.

### 3.1 Japanese women in the pre-industrial era

Japanese women's status in the early days of the history painted a rather optimistic picture considering the succeeding ones; they were in the prestigious and authoritative positions when it comes to the governing of the nation.<sup>72</sup> Yet, this depiction does not indicate that the gender equality is established in the country. A prominent Japanese literature scholar Rebecca Copeland argues that the male creator god Izanagi retorts to the female creator god Izanami for speaking before he does as it is depicted in *Kojiki*<sup>73</sup> can be considered as an implication of suppressing the female voice and domination of women against men.<sup>74</sup> Yet, the existence of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, who wins a battle against her brother the Storm god Susa-no-wo and becomes the mother of all emperors, may counterbalance this suggestion.

Furthermore, women rulers occupied a significant space in the dawn of the history of Japan. Japan was considered as a matriarchal society until the Muromachi period, which covered the years between 1336 and 1573.<sup>75</sup> It has powerful female authority figures such as Queen Himiko who was unmarried, had thousands of servants, and engaged in sorcery and magic, according to the Chinese sources.<sup>76</sup> In addition to Queen Himiko, half of the rulers of the Asuka (538-710) and Nara (710-794) periods were women.<sup>77</sup> For instance, Empress Suiko (592-628) was considered to be the first woman who assumed the role of empress. She was known for her support in promoting Buddhism, Chinese culture and civilization in Japanese

---

<sup>72</sup> Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun*, 5.

<sup>73</sup> *Kojiki* (古事記) is "the record of ancient matters" by its literal translation. It contains ancient Japanese myths, legends, hymns, folklores, oral traditions that concerns the imperial family, and historical accounts. *Kojiki*'s existence bears an utmost importance to Japanese because it legitimizes the rule of the imperial family and provides a cultural account for the nation's history.

<sup>74</sup> Copeland, "Mythical Bad Girls," 18.

<sup>75</sup> Iwao, *The Japanese Women*, 5.

<sup>76</sup> Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun*, 6.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

society.<sup>78</sup> Another woman empress, Empress Genmei (707-715) had initiated the collection of Kojiki, which contains the myths and legends of Japan as we know today.

What made these powerful and capable female rulers vanish from the political scene of ancient Japan then? There are several reasons behind this. First and foremost, the increasing influence of Buddhism and Confucianism prompted people to re-evaluate women's position in society. Prevailing in Japanese society, Buddhism had crucial views on women that they were of evil nature, and this sentiment eventually caused women to assume a submissive role in society.<sup>79</sup> This influence of Buddhism and Confucianism not only altered the existing view on religion; they also transformed the governmental structures, social practices, and even the relationships between common people.<sup>80</sup> The more patriarchal frame of mind became established among the warrior class in the Muromachi period, more women's competency and entity in legal and administrative matters were ignored. They lost their inheritance rights and their voices in their families with the escalation of the civil wars' turmoil happening inside the country.<sup>81</sup> Once the provincial wars were over and Japan was unified under feudal rule, Japanese women's oppressed status was redefined with the development of the feudal society.

---

<sup>78</sup> Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Silva, "Women in Ancient Japan: From Matriarchal Antiquity to Acquiescent Confinement."

<sup>80</sup> Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun*, 12.

<sup>81</sup> Hsia and Scanzoni, "Rethinking the Roles of Japanese Women," 311.

### 3.1.1 Japanese women in feudal Japan

Tokugawa era<sup>82</sup> Japan (1600-1867) brought a new social classification to establish and protect the unity and the stability of the country. This was stratification of the Japanese people based on their social status. It was called four divisions of the society (*shinōkōshō*) and based on the Confucianist teachings. According to this system, apart from the nobility class which includes the Emperor, court, shogun<sup>83</sup>, and daimyos<sup>84</sup>, the rest of the ordinary Japanese society was composed of four classes: samurai warriors (士, *shi*), peasants (農, *nō*), artisans (工, *kō*) and merchants (商, *shō*). This model of social hierarchy positioned the samurai over the top of other classes and made the families of the samurai class as the smallest unit of the government.

Confucian school of thought was re-shaped in Tokugawa era and became Japanese Neo-Confucianism to expedite the governing of Japanese people to some degree for the benefit of the ruler class. While commercial developments were taking place in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the prosperity gap between families widened and this threatened the authority of the ruling class by increasing the risk of munities. Therefore, daimyos and shogun chose to implement the moral teachings in order to invoke a sense of commitment and responsibility inside individuals.<sup>85</sup> They used the terminology of three bonds and five relationships that constituted the Confucian thought. These five human relations are the love between father and son, duty

---

<sup>82</sup> Edo period is often remembered by the name of its shogunate—Tokugawa Ieyasu. Since the class was a hereditary concept, successors of the shogun came from the same family line, Tokugawa, and thus, this period was commemorated with the name of its ruler line.

<sup>83</sup> Shōgun is the head of the military of the samurai class and selected by the emperor himself. He has the authority to govern Japan next to the symbolic presence of the emperor. It was a hereditary position that belonged to the Tokugawa clan.

<sup>84</sup> They are the feudal lords who were responsible for their own private land. They hired samurai for the protection of their property and provided shelter and food to them in return for their services.

<sup>85</sup> Sugano, “Filial Piety,” 171.

between the ruler and the subject, distinction between husband and wife, the precedence of the mature over youth, and faithfulness between comrades.<sup>86</sup> Three bonds were given the utmost importance out of others: the one between the ruler and his subjects, father and son, and husband and wife—they were also known as Three Cardinal Guides. To create a peaceful society, ten duties (shi yi, 十義) of an individual were formed based on these five relationships. These duties are:

1. The father must treasure his son,
2. The son must be a respectful child towards his father in return.
3. The ruler must reward his subjects.
4. Subjects must be loyal to their ruler.
5. The husband must be dutiful to his wife.
6. The wife must obey and listen to her husband.
7. Elders must be courteous towards the youngsters.
8. Young must obey their elders.
9. A friend must help other friend in need.
10. And you must repay your debts to your friend for the help you received.<sup>87</sup>

Even though filial piety between father and son is considered as primary by the Confucian thought of school, husband and wife relations also have a significant place. Man and woman often are described as complementary to each other in the Confucian teachings:

The lord is yang 陽, the retainer is yin 陰; the father is yang, the son is yin; the husband is yang, the wife is yin. The way of yin cannot proceed anywhere on its own. ...Therefore, the retainer depends on his lord to gain merit; the son depends on his father; the wife on her husband, yin on yang, and the Earth on Heaven...The Three [Fundamental Bonds] of the kingly way can be sought in Heaven.<sup>88</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup> Encyclopedia of Confucianism, 664.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Knapp, "Three Fundamental Bonds and Five Constant Virtues," 2253.

According to this depiction of husband-wife relations, we see an image of woman who is secondary to her husband in the order of importance. Woman is the yin, she is the passive one, thus carrying the negative qualities attributed to her, while man is the yang who is bursting out with energy, virile, carrying the masculine spirit. A renowned Japanese anthropologist Takie Sugiyama Lebra argues that gender roles of Japanese society under Confucian system should be analyzed under three principles: dichotomy in role spheres, gender hierarchy, and sexual difference.<sup>89</sup> Dichotomy in role spheres defines the role of genders inside their environments. Women must be dutiful, docile wives and wise mothers. She must not interfere in the public space where men are more in number, unless she is not representing her husband, son, or father. Sexual distance is strongly advised by the Confucianism to draw a strict line between two genders. Man and woman should be in separate places starting from the childhood. This rule would apply until the marriage. Even after marriage public displays of affection and intimacy is prohibited. Gender hierarchy denotes to the inferior position of women against the men. A Japanese neo-Confucianist moralist who was famous for introducing Confucianist beliefs and values into Japanese culture, Kaibara Ekken's writings on women would be an obvious example for this. In his text titled *Greater Learning for Women (Onna Daigaku)*, Ekken describes the duties of a wife to her husband in her marriage as:

In her dealings with her husband, both the expression of her countenance and style of her address should be courteous, humble, and conciliatory, never peevish and intractable, never rude and arrogant—that should be a woman's first and chiefest care. When the husband issues his instructions, the wife must never disobey them. In doubtful case she should inquire of her husband, and obediently follow his commands.<sup>90</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Lebra, "Confucian Gender Role," 249.

<sup>90</sup> Ekken, "Women and Wisdom of Japan," 38.



Furthermore, he goes on elaborating the five worst flaws women have which are indocility, discontent, slander, jealousy, and silliness.<sup>91</sup> He claims silliness is the worst quality out of these five features and he states:

The foolishness of woman fails to understand the duties that lie before her very eyes, perceives not the actions that will bring down blame upon her own head, and comprehends not even the things that will bring down calamities on the head of her husband and children.<sup>92</sup>

Also, the book includes a part where Ekken explains seven reasons for divorcing the women: (i) Disobedience, (ii) Infertility<sup>93</sup>, (iii) Lewdness, (iv) Jealousy, (v) Leprosy, (vi) Talking too much, and (vii) Stealing. These depicted divorce reasons explicitly favor men compared to women. If these conditions had been met and husband decided to divorce his wife, he could give her written notice and demanded her to leave the house without her children.<sup>94</sup> Kaibara Ekken's writings and all these infirmities of the female sex according to the Japanese Confucian beliefs constitute women's inferior position against men and destroy women's agency of their own.

### 3.1.2 *Ie* system in feudal Japan

Another significant aspect that shapes women's position in society is the *ie* system. Literal translation of the word "ie" means house in English and from a functional perspective it corresponds to a household illustrated as "a corporate body of co-residents, each member of the ie performing their roles to maintain it."<sup>95</sup> This concept of household is different from what we know as family, it also highlights the hereditary class divisions and economical continuity.

---

<sup>91</sup> Ekken, "Women and Wisdom of Japan," 44.

<sup>92</sup> Ekken, "Women and Wisdom of Japan," 45.

<sup>93</sup> This deficiency, however, can be tolerated if woman's heart is virtuous and her acts and heart free from jealousy, then man can adopt a child from the same blood and does not have to divorce his wife—men have right to have concubines.

<sup>94</sup> Figal, "Chapter Eleven: Good Wives and Wise Mothers."

<sup>95</sup> Lebra, *Japanese Women: Constraint and Fulfillment*, 20.

Lebra defines two components of *ie* to analyze its symbolization in Japanese society: spatial and temporal.<sup>96</sup> Spatial component of *ie* refers to the personification of the members. They define themselves physically, socially, and symbolically with the household they belong to. Members may leave their *ie* and enter into another one and become a member of it. Its temporal aspect refers to the continuity of the *ie*. Lineage and ancestor worship are two essentials for the survival of the *ie* culture.

The *ie* system constitutes a crucial component of Japanese Confucianism. Authority depends on the gender and the seniority of the members of the *ie*. The eldest male has the right to claim to be the leader of the house. In terms of structure, *ie* is consisted of parents and one child staying under the same house even after his or her marriage—it resembles a stem family. The head of the house is usually male, the eldest son succeeds after the retirement of his father. If there are no male heirs of the household, then, one of the daughters' husbands can be adopted into the family and take over the role of the household head.

The *ie* system considered the samurai family as its foundation in essence. The samurai class was regarded as the smallest unit of the state and had a more privileged position compared to other classes such as peasants and merchants. Similarly, the ethics of Confucianism and Buddhism also came to be identified with the Samurai class. For instance, *Onna-Daigaku* was given to the girls who were marrying someone in the samurai class, since literacy was a sign of higher class in that period.<sup>97</sup> Contrary to this, women of the lower class were not controlled as their sisters in the upper class. Due to the economic difficulties that they had to confront, peasant women had to work with their husbands outside from time to time, which

---

<sup>96</sup> Lebra, "Confucian Gender Role," 250.

<sup>97</sup> Ueno, "The Position of Japanese Women Reconsidered," 75.

provided them the opportunity to exist outside of the house. Moreover, rural women could divorce their husbands, and they were free to travel wherever they please, once they had assigned their position and responsibilities in the family to their daughters or daughters-in-law.<sup>98</sup>

In conclusion, regardless of their social class, Japanese women were subjected to numerous challenges laid on them by the patriarchy in the Edo period. Women from the higher class were more prone to suffer under the weight of the family traditions and the authority of the male figures of the house. While peasant women were not monitored and oppressed by patriarchy as much as their sisters in the samurai class, they had to divide their time and attention for both chores outside and inside of their home due to the impracticability of their economic conditions. However, with the Meiji restoration, the *ie* system merged with the nationalist state ideology and became a traditional symbol of the state which marked an entirely different path for the future of the Japanese women from all different classes.

### 3.2 Japanese women in Meiji era (1868-1912)

In 1854, following Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan and forcing his way into signing the Treaty of Kanagawa opened a whole new reality for the Japanese elites of the ruling class. Unless they did not step up, they would be dominated by the western powers, just like their neighbor China did in the Opium Wars against a western colonial power, British Empire.

Japan experienced a political turmoil in 1868 which changed the ruling organization of the nation radically. The Meiji Restoration or Revolution took place as we know today and transformed the power balances between shogun and emperor.

---

<sup>98</sup> Walthall, "The Life Cycle of Farm Women in Tokugawa Japan," 60-66.

It aimed to create a centralized state which can compete with the modern world states of the nineteenth century. Published in 1868, Charter Oath contained relatively progressive remarks when its publication time is taken into account. It marked an era where tradition blended with the change of modernization for Japan.<sup>99</sup> New government dismantled the hereditary class system and “the evil customs of the past”<sup>100</sup> were beyond the new modern state now. The presence of the emperor became more visible in appearance, and he was considered as the ultimate ruler of the country, but in theory, the nation was governed by the prime minister who was elected by the Privy Council. Shogun retired after the restoration, and the emperor who used to reside in Kyoto now moved to Tokyo to take up the position of shogun to govern the nation.

However, this new international society in which Japan was planning to enter was constructed by “Western” values, and such values demanded intense competition, strong will of participation, and being on alert for discovering new locations to colonize in order to expand the nation’s borders.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, improvements and innovations were made to the existing systems and some concepts and values of the West were adopted. Women’s status in society was one of the fields that were improved. One of the best-known intellectuals of the enlightenment movement of the Meiji period, Fukuzawa Yukichi was a strong advocator for empowered Japanese women. During his visit to United States in 1867, he encountered a book which had a passage stating that “half-civilized nations treat their women as slaves. China, Japan, Turkey, and Persia are the principle countries of this

---

<sup>99</sup> Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 336-7.

<sup>100</sup> Fourth article of the Charter Oath states that: “*Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.*”

<sup>101</sup> Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 360.

class.”<sup>102</sup> This expression made him re-evaluate the women’s position in Japan, and therefore he argued that Japan must reconceptualize the traditional ideas on ethics, politics, history, international relations, or even the process of thinking and learning itself in order to not be subjected to western aggression or exploitation.<sup>103</sup> He opposed the teachings of Confucian moralists that are based on the hierarchical power dynamics, and out of the five relationships that constituted the Confucian thought he mostly concentrated on husband and wife. He criticized how Confucian teachings reduced the relationship between men and women to only a physical level and believed that there is no reason for women to be inferior of men.<sup>104</sup>

Education of girls was given utmost importance by the government institutions. In 1871, five Japanese girls were sent to the United States to receive education. The government developed a nationwide school system by 1873 which mandated primary school education to both female and male children.<sup>105</sup> Tokyo Jogakkō (Tokyo Girls School) and Tokyo Joshi Shihan Gakkō (Tokyo Women's Normal School) was founded in 1872 and 1875 respectively. However, while the opportunity for the education of women was increasing considerably, state officials and institutions were giving contradictory remarks on femininity of Japanese women and their duties to their families and country. Published by the Ministry of Education in 1887, *Meiji Onna Daigaku* (The Meiji Greater Learning for Women) advised to Japanese women that “the home is a public place where private feelings should be forgotten.”<sup>106</sup> On top of that, new Japanese government prevented women’s participation to politics by issuing a ban in 1890. While they were allowed to cast

---

<sup>102</sup> Anderson, *Women’s Rights in Meiji Japan*, 5.

<sup>103</sup> Blacker, “Fukuzawa Yukichi on Husband and Wife Relationships,” 145.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 146-147.

<sup>105</sup> Nolte and Hastings, “The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women,” 153.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 156.

their vote in place of the male house heads in Tokugawa period, this right was later revoked in the Meiji period.

It is inevitable to deduce from these acts that all these education reforms were conducted for customizing the womanhood of Japanese women according to the wishes of government officials, and the political rights of women were denied because they were needed at the domestic sphere for the sake of the stability and the continuity of the state. This assumption is even more so exacerbated by the introduction of 1896 Meiji Civil Code and the creation of the *Ryōsai Kenbo* (Good Wife, Wise Mother) ideology.

3.2.1 The resurgence of the *ie* system with the introduction of Meiji Civil Code  
Preparations for the new Meiji Civil Code of new modern Japan was a challenge itself. The new government wanted to appoint the French civil law as the foundation model for the modern Japanese law. However, when the first draft of 1888 was presented, it was criticized for being too much influenced by the concepts of western ideal family, spousal and familial relationships and accused of ignoring the Japanese values and concept of the traditional family.<sup>107</sup> For example, a professor of Tokyo Imperial University, who was a strong advocator of the vision of the state as a *kokutai* (national body), Hozumi Yatsuka criticized this draft of the new Meiji Civil Code in his article named “The civil code destroys loyalty and filial piety” in 1891.<sup>108</sup> Some amendments were made on this constitution; however, they did not please the critics. As a result of all the criticism it received again, a new civil code was prepared in 1896 based upon the German Civil Code.

---

<sup>107</sup> Ochiai, “Debates over the *Ie* and the Stem Family: Orientalism East and West,” 106.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Since concepts like liberty, patriotism and national identity was foreign to Japanese and were obtained from Western culture, this newly developed Japanese democracy must have some fragments that are authentic to Japanese culture. Meiji era Japan decided on placing *ie*—its traditional familial system—as its cultural symbol.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the citizens are described under the term of “Japanese subject” in 1889 Constitution which implying their eternal bond and unspeakable loyalty to Emperor. Therefore, it is possible to decipher the *ie* system as an extension of the imperial state policy. The state can be thought as a large family, and people should pay their respects to emperor, just like children do to their parents, to fulfill their duty of filial piety.

Thus, the 1896 Meiji Civil Code functioned as a medium to standardize the *ie* system in to-be modernized Japanese society. Not only did it consolidate the bond between emperor and its subjects, but also it acted as a medium in the “samuraization” process of the entire peasant class by imposing the norms and values of samurai class onto the entire Japanese nation.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, supporting *ie* system became obligatory for the rural class who was able to customize this family ideology according to their circumstances in the Edo period. This new concept of *ie* imported the intimacy and family sentiment that came with the notion of the modern family. Nevertheless, it combined the sense of affection emanating from the family with the patriarchal sentiment and strictness of Confucianism with the oncoming wars concerning the nation, which contributed to the image of a traditional Japanese family in line with the state’s ideology. This new civil code gave the male house-heads complete control over other members of the family. If a woman with children

---

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ueno, “The Position of Japanese Women Reconsidered,” 78-79.

were to divorce her husband, she had to leave her children with her ex-husband's family.<sup>111</sup> Male house-heads are in charge of the management of family property, inheritance, and the decisions over who can enter or leave the family. Women can replace men for the role of household heads only in some exceptional cases. In addition to their obligations in the private space, women's duties in the public space, too, are specified with this civil code, in Article 804 of 1896 Meiji Civil Code reveals that:

In the daily affairs of the household the wife is deemed to represent her husband.

The husband may wholly or partly deprive her of such power, but he cannot set up such deprivation against third persons acting in good faith.

Japan's insistence on being a colonizing power on the world stage exacerbated the importance given to this *ie* ideology and assigned new responsibilities and duties to women both in public and private circles. *Ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) motto occurred because of the need to define such roles attributed to women.

### 3.2.2 Emergence of *ryōsai kenbo* and its mindset

During the Meiji Period many slogans were employed to describe the goals for the nation. *Fukoku Kyohei* (Rich Nation Strong Army) referred to having a competent military force with its advancing industrialization process, while *Bunmei Kaika* (Civilization and Enlightenment) corresponded to the changes in the cultural system. Another significant slogan that emerged during the late Meiji period was *ryōsai kenbo* which means good wife, wise mother in English.

The term is used for the first time by Masanao Nakamura in his essay entitled "Creating Good Mothers" in 1875.<sup>112</sup> Masanao was impressed with the British

---

<sup>111</sup> Reese, "The Meiji Reforms and Obstacles for Women."

<sup>112</sup> Sievers, *Flowers in Salt*, 22.



education system during his study trip to England in 1866, and he wanted to implement the same educational system to Japan.<sup>113</sup>

Masanao's suggestion for the education of women, even though how progressive it was of him considering the time he came up with this idea, carried the implications of the patriarchal social order. The initial motivation for the emergence of the good wife wise mother mindset was for the education of women for being a better guardian for her children and a capable companion to her husband. However, it would be unfair to deem Masanao as a misogynist in this respect, because he only wanted women to have the same opportunities of education as men do. His intention was not to suggest an inferior status for women in society compared to men.<sup>114</sup> Furthermore, this phrase was not a call for women who worked outside to provide for their families to return to their homes in Meiji era, because women workers constituted a significant portion of Japanese industrial economy during that period. For instance, in the textile industry, women workers outnumbered men.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, with the onset of the First Sino-Japanese War in 1894, this mission took a whole different route. First, the curriculum of the education the girls received was changed into a more "domestic" one—it included subjects such as sewing, craft, Japanese, Chinese classics, and arithmetic.<sup>116</sup> This approach towards the female education was naturally criticized, it was accused of limiting the education scope of the women and restricting them with solely domestic subjects, traditional thoughts, and practical skills.<sup>117</sup> Second, this ideology was promulgated as a state policy to underline the maternalistic side of women. To achieve nation's urbanization and

---

<sup>113</sup> Sato, *The New Japanese Women*, 86.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Nolte and Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women," 153.

<sup>116</sup> Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun*, 43.

<sup>117</sup> Ying, "Schoolgirls Resistance of Ryōsai Kenbo," 156.

industrialization goals, a supplement in work force was needed, which implied an increase in the population. This need was echoed in the race for the colonization, too. Therefore, it was repeatedly announced by the government officials and social commentators that a woman's most significant duty was child rearing.<sup>118</sup> They must raise the new generation of Japan with all power they have; they must cherish, discipline, and educate their children, while also managing all the housework. As a result of this overemphasis on women's duties as child rearing and being a better half to their husbands may have caused a dilemma for those working women to choose between home or work.

Conversations about the women's place in public were never just about women.<sup>119</sup> This was a politicized issue which concerned the creation of a new shape for the state, defining the meaning of civilization and Japan's status among the so-called civilized nations. It drew a strict line between men and women's position in the public space. It confined women to a private sphere which was their house and placed them into an inferior position compared to men.

The good wife, wise mother ideal was strongly intertwined with the *ie* system. It created a perfect female figure for the continuity of the family system, and the continuity of the imperial state, too. *Ie* system provided so little legal rights to women, and *ryōsai kenbo* mindset taught women that this was natural. She must support her home country with her hard work at home, managing the household account with what is available to her, taking care of old, young, and ill, and of course, raising children who will be useful to their country in the future.<sup>120</sup> When she accomplished these duties that were expected of her, she was celebrated and

---

<sup>118</sup> Figal, "Chapter Eleven: Good Wives and Wise Mothers."

<sup>119</sup> Anderson, *Women's Rights in Meiji Japan*, 6.

<sup>120</sup> Nolte and Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women," 152.

cherished by others around her. Her private sufferings were turned into public virtues.<sup>121</sup> How did the government control those who dared to deviate from this norm and commit horrendous crimes then? The answer is simple: by intimidating women via showing the stories of criminal females and allowing the circulation of such publications in the mass media.

### 3.2.3 Emergence of the *dokufu* stories

*Dokufu* was the name given for the women who committed murder or robbery and usually lived under the Shogunate rule. Its literal translation into English is poison woman. She was introduced to masses in 1870s via serialized novels, Kabuki plays, and woodblock-printed books, and then she became a figure of Japanese popular culture. These circulating images of poison woman and her stories were immensely popular because her terrible deeds were sensationalized by media. She killed people, sometimes by poisoning and sometimes with other methods.

The most notorious *dokufu* was Demon (*yasha*) Takahashi Oden, she was rumored to kill her leprosy-ridden husband by poisoning him to be free of having to tend for him. However, she was not convicted because of it. After the death of her husband, she invested in the silk trade. Meanwhile, she got herself another lover and to help him with his financial troubles, she convinced another man to invest in the silk trade and tried to get a loan from him.<sup>122</sup> One night, she invited this man to her bed and slit his throat. She was found guilty after this murder and executed. Another poison woman “Night Storm” (*yoarashi*) Okinu was rumored to have poisoned her patron in order to get rid of him who was in her way to live with her

---

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>122</sup> Adams, “Modernization and Dangerous Women in Japan,” 39.

lover, a kabuki actor.<sup>123</sup> First poison woman story was serialized in 1878 and it was about the story of a woman, Omatsu, who had to prostitute herself in order to not starve.<sup>124</sup>

Writing about female criminals was not something new to Japanese written culture. It started with rise of the newspaper serials. Female criminals were the topics of the columns with their given flashy nicknames such as Demon Oden, Night Storm Okinu. But the attention female criminals received was unexpected, because while men are executed considerably more than women for their crimes, they did not gain the same spotlight as their female counterparts from the public eye. Moreover, while men were executed thirty times more than women from 1876 to 1881, death penalties given to women were surprisingly high in frequency; between around 8 and 17 women were punished with the death penalty a year.<sup>125</sup>

Since the Meiji era was a transformation phase for Japan, the criminality of these women can be considered as evidence of women suffering from social change. These representations of female criminals can be regarded as a caution from the state against women's entrance into public space outside their family. These women were autonomous, sexually appealing, and free to do as they please. The bodies of the poison women were considered as the marks of a new sexual difference by some scholars. For instance, according to Matsuyama Iwao, the invention of this figure was an intentional move regarding the sexual difference on the classification and interpretation of the social relationships.<sup>126</sup> He believed that these stories were brought about intentionally with the outset of the new emperor to demonstrate the production of a national body. These national bodies required a space for exclusion.

---

<sup>123</sup> Marran, introduction to *Poison Woman*, xiii.

<sup>124</sup> Marran, introduction to *Poison Woman*, xiv.

<sup>125</sup> Marran, *Poison Woman*, 17.

<sup>126</sup> Matsuyama, *Uwasa No Enkinhō*, 72-73.

Therefore, a marginalized group was needed to define the core society. Moreover, criminals were needed for the promotion of the status quo and the reproduction of the symbolic order.

Since most of the poison women stories are narrated by men, the autonomy and agency of these women in writings were considerably reduced. Belin Morrissey depicts three techniques that cause the denial of the agency of criminal women:

- vilification or monsterization,
- mythification,
- and victimism.<sup>127</sup>

Vilification or monsterization erases female criminal's agency by dehumanizing her. She is deprived of her human agency; she has acted upon on her decision which threatens the social order and lost her humanity as a result.

Mythification is the result of the monsterization process. She turns into a figure to be condemned by the public and draws harsh reactions from her community and legal institutions. Finally, victimism denies her agency by emphasizing her powerlessness and oppressed state. Agency of the poison woman was mostly denied through the vilification and mythification. She was considered a sexual and social anomaly in Meiji era.<sup>128</sup> She was the deterrent example for those who were outside the norm of *ryōsai kenbo*. She was deemed as poisonous because she might taint the existing social and domestic space and cause chaos in society, which was previously stabile, healthy and in a process of modernization.<sup>129</sup> The emergence of the *dokufu* figure in this period signifies a deviation from the good wife wise mother role. *Dokufu* challenged the morality, chastity, and patriarchal authority. She posed as a threat to

---

<sup>127</sup> Morrissey, *When Women Kill*, 24-27.

<sup>128</sup> Marran, *Poison Woman*, 111-112.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 112.

existing social status quo. Therefore, her agency was reduced to her sexuality while narrating her crimes.

*Dokufu* figure and criminal women's desire to commit crime were attributed to their sexual desires by various scholars. She is overly eroticized and sexualized. Nozoe Atsuyoshi argues in his work entitled *Women and Crime (Josei to hanzai)* published in 1930 that men and women have different motives for committing crimes. The female body is more hormonal, sentimental than male body, thus increase in sexual desire might trigger a desire in committing a crime. Heterosexual male, on the other hand, commit crimes because they cannot cope with their struggle in the material world. They must deal with the challenges that come with the modernization and industrialization, and they must actively participate in this new world building process, thus they are mentally charged. Women, on contrary, "follow their instincts uncontrollably."<sup>130</sup>

Despite the backlash they received, there were some circles who came to the defense of poison women in the early Shōwa period. Modernization wave spread throughout the nation and women were curious to discover public now, more than ever.

### 3.3 Japanese women in the Taishō and early Shōwa period (1912-1949)

The Taishō period covers the timeline between 1912 to 1926 to the death of Emperor Taishō. It is a period where liberalistic movements gained power during the emperor's reign. Moreover, it also marks an important date: the first World War occurs during this period. Japan was also quite confident in its ability to compete

---

<sup>130</sup> Nozoe, *Josei to hanzai*, 12.

with western powers now: the victory over Russia in the 1904-5 Russo-Japanese War gave a boost to their image as a colonial power in the world stage.

The question of women's rights and place came into prominence once again in this atmosphere influenced by the trends of modernization and democratization. Women magazines started to emerge in the popular mass media; a magazine named *Sekai Fujin* (Women of the World) was published in 1907 and it questioned the emancipation of women.<sup>131</sup> "A New Woman" figure (*atarashii onna*) emerged in 1910s who challenged the social restrictions, questioned her dependence on men and challenged the existing gender relations in the society.<sup>132</sup> This increase in the access to education and career opportunities deemed new woman as financially independent, and active in terms of social, political and sexual relations. These attributions of New Woman showed a rejection of the good wife, wise mother ideology. While the existence of this New Woman figure is significant in feminist context, her representation was limited to the portion of women who were able to enjoy these activities.<sup>133</sup> This figure of New Woman was discussed by the feminist thinkers of the period such as Hiratsuka Raichō, Yosona Akiko, and Yamakawa Kikue in a literary magazine called *Seitō* (Blue Stockings)<sup>134</sup> which was founded by women to promote equal rights for women in society. Moreover, women organizations such as *Shin Fujinkai* (New Women's Organization) were formed to defend the suffrage right of Japanese women in 1920.

---

<sup>131</sup> Hsia and Scanzoni, "Rethinking the Roles of Japanese Women," 324.

<sup>132</sup> Sato, *The New Japanese Women*, 13.

<sup>133</sup> Lowy, "Nora and the 'New Woman': Visions of Gender and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century Japan," 76.

<sup>134</sup> The name *Seitō* is a reference to the Blue Stockings Society which was founded in England in eighteenth century by women to have intellectual conversations with each other and educate themselves.

In 1923, the Kantō region was hit by a devastating earthquake that destroyed the whole city structure in the region, Tokyo in particular. Therefore, the change in the society took place not only mentally, but also physically in terms of urban planning. New department stores and shops influenced by the western commercial products were opened, new technologies were introduced to the public, such as metro, cinema, radio, and television. Miriam Silverberg argues that the 1923 Kantō earthquake marked a rupture from the tradition and past for Japanese people, also including those produced with the modern state ideology.<sup>135</sup> This new wave of modernism generated a consumerism and commodification culture, thus expedited the social change that Japan was undergoing. Such a rapid transformation enabled women to take more active roles in society. There was a significant increase in the middle-class working women population, which was prompted by the nation's economic necessity, awakened women's consciousness, and job availability. Moreover, women were deemed more profitable by employers because their wages were almost one-third of those of their male counterparts even though they performed the same job with equal competence.<sup>136</sup> In addition to new woman, now there were café waitresses (*jokyū*), working women, and the housewives who assume a more dynamic role in their family and enjoy reading women magazines.

Another emerging cultural trend in this period was *ero guro nansensu* which is a phrase derived from the English words erotic, grotesque, and nonsense. *Ero guro nansensu* trend was a conspicuous part of Japanese culture from 1920s to 1940s, post-WWI period. Some leftist intellectuals criticized this movement as “anti-worker, unproductive, and hedonistic”<sup>137</sup> and refused to be a part of it. Greater portion of the

---

<sup>135</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 18.

<sup>136</sup> Nagy, “Middle-Class Working Women During the Interwar Years,” 209.

<sup>137</sup> Sato, *The New Japanese Women*, 37.



public, on the other hand, was already captivated by it. Miriam Silverberg describes the *ero* of the *ero guro nansensu* as the concept that is usually attached to “the sexual promiscuity and the configuration of the female (and sometimes the male) body.”<sup>138</sup> She associates the social inequalities emerging from the financial struggles of the members of modern consumer culture with *guro*. She considers the *nansensu* part of the *ero guro nansensu* as the ironical sense of humor generated by the rapid modernization process which essentially was the adaptation of western culture and norms. While I completely agree with Silverberg’s definition of *ero guro nansensu*, I would make an addition to the *guro* part of it. I believe *guro* also implies the strict imperial policies of the state and tense atmosphere and violence of the wartime.

The *ero guro nansensu* movement paved the way for the new female figures to emerge in late-Taishō Japanese society. Modern girl (*moga*) was one of them. The term modern girl was usually associated with Jun’ichirō Tanizaki’s novel *Naomi* published in 1924. Modern girl represented the commodified culture of 1920s Japan, and her identity was shaped by cultural and social changes of her era.<sup>139</sup> She wore western style clothes and hair style, worked outside of her home as a café waitress or a shop assistant, was sexually promiscuous, and had no desire to be a mother. Silverberg argues that modern girl was distinct from the New Woman figure who preceded her, because modern girl desired to change the existing status quo around her and offer an alternative everyday existence, while new woman, who also showed resistance to old-fashioned traditions, did not provide any solution.<sup>140</sup> Modern girl was braver than her contemporaries because she took risks that new woman was afraid of and transgressed social borders of the society. Christine Marran states that it

---

<sup>138</sup> Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 29.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 51.

<sup>140</sup> Silverberg, “Modern Girl as Militant,” 247-248.

can be argued that the figure of *moga* took the place of *dokufu* for representing the feminine desire for sexuality, freedom, and transgression.<sup>141</sup>

Women's partial liberation and the impact of *ero guro nansensu* made some scholars to rethink the *dokufu* figure of late Meiji. A renowned author whose name was constantly remembered with this *ero guro nansensu* trend, Umehara Hokumei, gave special attention to the stories of these women, Takahashi Oden in particular. He aimed to check the validity of these stories, many of which were presenting false information about Oden and considered them as too sensational.<sup>142</sup> Another writer who revisited *dokufu* figure in order to give her a more objective stance was Yokose Yau. He published a book named *Stories of Early Modern Poison Women (Kinsei dokufu den)* in 1928. Yau too criticized this portrayal of female criminals of the Meiji period. He regarded them as crass and provocative reflections of the women in question who were in fact miserable and abused.<sup>143</sup>

Modern girl, new woman, poison woman, all these female figures wanted something for themselves from the male-dominated social order. Modern girl desired to be an agent of her own without being tied down by filial piety to her parents, husband, or children. New woman challenged the good wife, wise mother ideal and questioned her place in her family. Even notorious poison woman gets a chance to be re-evaluated again. They no longer wanted to be considered by the labels assigned to them by patriarchal order which was considered as a transgression towards a family ideology determined by the state. The early Shōwa period provided the opportunity and space for these figures to exist in society and even let them accomplish some of their wishes, albeit partial. This looseness from the patriarchal authorities was a sign

---

<sup>141</sup> Marran, *Poison Woman*, 24.

<sup>142</sup> Marran, *Poison Woman*, 113.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 113-114.

of some liberation for women. Unfortunately, even this semi-liberation of women did not last very long. The surge of extreme nationalism emerging from the Second Sino-Japanese War and military coups and economic struggles generated by the Great Depression slowly put the concerns and questions about women's place in public second place again. Furthermore, with the onset of the Second World War, government re-established its authority and good wife, wise mother ideology returned its central position with a more coercive force this time. This deep-rooted traditional ideal for Japanese woman continued even after the post-war period.

### 3.4 Summary

This chapter has outlined the patriarchal institutions and structures that encircle Japanese women mainly from Tokugawa to early Shōwa period. While pre-feudal Japanese women were able to inherit property and divorce their husbands, they were stripped of these rights with the rise of the samurai class in Muromachi period. When samurai declared their supremacy over other classes in Tokugawa period, this also marked the ultimate subjugation of Japanese women to patriarchal values.

The Meiji era, on the other hand, provided some opportunities for women to develop their personality in limited space. However, it also hindered their potential from fully blooming in the public place. Women were able to receive mandatory education alongside men, they constituted a crucial part of Japan's work force in textile industry, and they were slightly more visible in public, compared to Tokugawa. On the other hand, women were deprived of their political rights, and they were assigned with the duty of being a good wife, wise mother to their households. During this period, the emergence of *dokufu* figure in stories signified a deviation from this role. *Dokufu* figure challenged the morality, chastity, and

patriarchal authority. She posed a threat to existing social status quo. Therefore, her agency was reduced to her sexuality while narrating her crimes.

In the Taishō and early Shōwa period, it is possible to see the reflections of the democratization movement on women's status in society. Women played more active, dynamic roles in public space, worked alongside men, and established intimacy with men. They constituted the significant part of the consumerism culture that boomed with the modernization. However, their autonomy and agency once again were challenged by the patriarchal institutions and ideologies that came with the modernization movement for this particular time period.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSES OF STORIES

In this chapter, I will analyze the female main characters of the stories *Osei Tōjō*, *Injū*, and *Imo Mushi*. These stories were chosen as the subject of this research because all of them cover a story about a female perpetrator. The transgressor female character in these stories is married, and she kills or severely injures her husband at the end of the story. Moreover, the publication dates of these stories are sequential; they were published one year apart from each other.

First, I will provide basic information about the characters, plot, and setting of the stories. Then, I will move to the investigation of the women characters. I aim to examine their personality under three spheres: their roles as wives, lovers, and aggressors. I will incorporate the six main spheres of patriarchal structures defined by Sylvia Walby into their character analysis and will provide an evaluation of how patriarchal structures shape their autonomy in their roles as wife, lover, and aggressor. Under their images as wives, I will investigate to what extent these characters gain their agency in the household environment, whether they contribute to family finances or not, and how they are perceived as a wife figure by others around them. In their portrayals as lovers, I will scrutinize the sex appeal of the characters. I will question whether they are free agents in their sexual relations or they are subjected to the desires of men. I will also analyze the tone of the narrator in conveying this side of the characters and see if these characters are condemned for their sexuality or not. Finally, I will examine their roles as aggressors, and determine what motivated them to commit these crimes. I will also analyze the power

relationship between these characters and their husbands in this sub-section and verify if there is a specific type of violence that exists in their relationship.

#### 4.1 Analysis of “Appearance of Osei” (お勢登場 - Osei Tōjō, 1927)

##### 4.1.1 Story overview

###### 4.1.1.1 Characters

- Osei: Osei is the female main character of this story. Her name, Osei<sup>144</sup>, is written as “お勢” in Japanese, the kanji “勢 (*sei*)” is also used for the word 勢い (*ikioi*) which means energy, vigor, spirit, and power.<sup>145</sup> She is depicted as the wanton, nonchalant, deceitful wife figure in the story
- Kakutarō: Kakutarō<sup>146</sup>, who is Osei’s husband, is the other main character of the story. His usual character is described as pleasant (*ikana ohito to yoshi no kane mo*), he is terribly upset by his wife's frequent visits outside, suspects her of being unfaithful, and even briefly considers divorcing her. Despite having known his wife’s infidelity and people around him constantly rubbing up this fact, he does not want to divorce his wife.
- Shōichi: Kakutarō and Osei’s seven-year-old son. His nature is described as mischievous and adored among his friends (*gakidaishou*), but the strain in

---

<sup>144</sup> Usually used for the honorific mentions the “お (お)” prefix can be added to names as well. During Edo, Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa periods, it was a common practice to give girls short names, generally consisting of two syllables. This addition of the “o” syllable not necessarily refers to a level of prestige, but to produce a more phonetic pronunciation. It also gives a more feminine character to the names.

<sup>145</sup> Spahn, Hadamitzky, Fujie-Winter, *The Kanji Dictionary*, 300.

<sup>146</sup> His name Kakutarō is written with the kanji “格太郎” which is a quite masculine name with an emphasis on strength, health, and manliness. In contrast to his name, Kakutarō’s health is in a fragile state due to his tuberculosis, and he has been depicted as weak and skinny.

their household also affects him negatively. He seems to cherish and deeply adore his father and resent his mother because of her absence in the house simultaneously.

- Kakujirō: Kakutarō's younger brother. Despite his usually good-natured (*zennin*) character, his stance on Osei and Kakutarō's relationship is quite stern, he does not want his brother to suffer in this tormenting relationship. Moreover, he does not understand his brother's relationship with Osei and why he keeps tolerating the lies of her and does not divorce her immediately.

#### 4.1.1.2 Setting

The story takes place in Kitamura Household which reveals the last name of the characters to us and describes a day in their life. Osei leaves the house in the morning and comes back around 3 pm when the climax of the story occurs.

#### 4.1.1.3 Plot

One day, when Osei is away from home under the disguise of tending her sick father, but meeting with her lover, their son, Shōichi brings his friends home to play. Having been fed up with sitting at home all day, Kakutarō decides to be a part of their game and joins the hide-and-seek game of the children. He gets into an old chest in his study room and hides in there. However, somehow the lock mechanism of the chest gets locked by itself, and he is trapped inside. He tries to smash the chest inside, however, his body weakened with sickness does not possess enough strength. With the lack of oxygen, he gets delirious inside the chest and when he completely abandons his hopes of surviving, his wife comes in the room, returning from her secret rendezvous with her lover. Osei hears the scratching noise inside the chest and

hurries up to open it, but a devilish idea comes up to her mind. She closes back the chest just before she barely opens it and imprisons her husband inside. Then, she goes back inside just like she did not leave her husband to death minutes before and tells the maids that her husband is missing. Much later, they open the chest and find the dead body of Kakutarō inside. His last message to the living world is Osei's name carved by his nails inside the lid of the chest. At the end of the story, Osei inherits a huge amount of money from her late husband and starts leading her new life by selling the old chest to an antique store.

#### 4.1.2 Character analysis of Osei:

##### 4.1.2.1 Osei as a wife

Since it is not clear in the text whether Kakujirō lives with his brother's family or not, this research assumes that their family consists of three people: Osei, Kakutarō and Shōichi—a perfect example of the stem family that creates *ie*. Ranpo does not reveal the source of the livelihood of the family or whether Kakutarō has a profession or not, but it is obvious that they are a prosperous family. Even Kakutarō being sick and not able to work does not affect their financial status. Osei does not have to work to support her family, neither does she have the obligation of doing housework. They have several servants in their home to help her with these chores and take care of her ill husband and child. However, she does have authority over the servants of the house. The excerpt in the story given below will provide an insight to understand her relationship with the maids:

From the puffy look of her face, the maid appeared to have just awoken.  
“Are you alone?” Osei asked, making a point of holding in check her usually provocative manner.  
“Um, Otake is doing the wash behind house.”



“And my husband?”  
“He is in his study, I imagine.”  
“But he doesn’t appear to be there, does he?”  
“Oh my, are you sure?”  
“What’s going on here? You must have fallen asleep. How irresponsible. And where is my son?”<sup>147</sup>

Based on the excerpt above, it is safe to assume that she is an authority figure for these servants; she controls their work and keeps them on their toes. However, her frequent disappearances in the house provide an opportunity for maids to neglect their work and compromise her strict image in the house. The fixed presence of Kakutarō in the house also exacerbates this damage, since he is depicted as a soft-spoken and gentle man in the story. Moreover, the maids feel a strong sense of pity and sympathy towards this sick man who is constantly left alone in their home, waiting for his traitorous wife to return.<sup>148</sup>

Regarding Osei’s financial status, she does not have to struggle for making a living, while living with her husband, the operative phrase in this sentence is living with her husband. Even if Osei had property prior to her marriage, all of them are transferred to her husband’s management. Article 801 of 1896 Meiji Civil Code states: “The husband is the manager of his wife's property. If the husband is not able to manage it, she is the manager for herself.”<sup>149</sup> Since Kakutarō is mentally and physically healthy enough to be considered as the household head, Osei cannot demand to manage her own assets. On the other hand, if Kakutarō were to finally divorce her accusing her of adulterous behavior, not only the custody of their child would be given to the husband<sup>150</sup> but also, she would not be able to contract a marriage with her lover due to the accusation of adultery.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, she would no

---

<sup>147</sup> Ranpo, “The Appearance of Osei,” 87.

<sup>148</sup> Ranpo, “The Appearance of Osei,” 77.

<sup>149</sup> Meiji Civil Code § 801.

<sup>150</sup> Meiji Civil Code § 812.

<sup>151</sup> Meiji Civil Code § 768.

longer be a part of Kakutarō's beneficiaries as a result of their possible divorce. This also does not cover the shame of being an unfaithful wife in society, and the stigmatization that comes from it. She has already been labeled as the adulterous wife by the ones around her—Kakujirō, maids, and even her own son suspects she is doing something suspicious.

She uses her sick father as a cover story to meet with her lover. In other words, she exploits her responsibilities as a dutiful daughter. She creates opportunities to leave the house and spend her time with her secret lover. Even though Kakutarō is aware of the situation and follows her every movement in the house, he does not try to limit her movements. There are several reasons for that. First, he is aware that if he gets pushy with Osei and tries to control her movements, this will estrange her more than before and he does not want to be apart from her. Second, he lacks enough physical power or intimidation force to stop her from doing so.

#### 4.1.2.2 Osei as a lover

There is a strong emphasis on the sexuality of Osei in the story. Her infidelity is a key feature to describe her character by the people around her. Moreover, we can deduce that she is a passionate lover both from Kakutarō's devotion to her despite her betrayal and her profound yearning to be with her secret lover. Ranpo describes Kakutarō's affection for Osei as in the excerpt given below:

When she was not busy playing games with her secret loves, she did not neglect to devote her spare energy to Kakutarō. Though he was ashamed to admit it, Kakutarō was content with even the most threadbare display of her affection.<sup>152</sup>

---

<sup>152</sup> Ranpo, "The Appearance of Osei," 76.

Osei, on the other hand, falls into a guilt trip returning home after her rendezvous with her lover. She considers her marriage as a failure (*hatan*) and waits for “something that might prove it different.”<sup>153</sup> However, the sexual drive and passion she has for her lover help her to overcome the guilt for ruining her marriage and eventually murdering her husband. My interpretation is that her portrayal as a lover works like a defense mechanism for Osei in discussing her aggressor side. In the part given below she dismisses her regrets and remorse for the death of her husband by imagining her secret lover:

If this was beyond Osei to fully appreciate the torment he felt, at least in the bounds of her own thoughts she pitied her husband's excruciating death and reproached herself for her callousness. Yet there was no turning back for a femme fatale caught up in a once-in-a-lifetime affair. In her mind, the funeral that may be ahead for the dead man in the now-silent closet is replaced with the image of her lover.<sup>154</sup>

In the original text, Ranpo describes Osei as *akujo* (悪女)<sup>155</sup>, while Seth Jacobowitz translates it as femme fatale. The literal translation of *akujo* is evil woman. By choosing this wording to describe Osei, Jacobowitz also emphasizes Osei's sex appeal which has been stressed in the text several times by Ranpo.

#### 4.1.2.3 Osei as an aggressor

Osei's portrayal as a perpetrator overlaps with her role as a lover. Ranpo states in the text that she is not so corrupted that she would plot her husband's death by the time she realizes he is trapped inside the chest:

Now, if Osei were an evil woman, would not the speed with which she hatched her cruel plan reveal her true colors far more clearly than keeping a

---

<sup>153</sup> Ranpo, “The Appearance of Osei,” 86.

<sup>154</sup> Ranpo, “The Appearance of Osei,” 91.

<sup>155</sup> The original text includes this sentence as: “*Demo, akujo no unmei-tekina furin no kokoromochi wa, akujo jishin ni mo dō shiyō mo nakatta,*” which translates into “However, even the devil woman herself cannot help with the feelings of her fated affair.”

secret lover in violation of her marital vows? It just so happens that she had scarcely unlocked the chest and begun to lift the lid.<sup>156</sup>

Her decision on taking her husband's life away by deliberately locking him inside is a spur-of-the-moment act that she committed without hesitation. In this scene, we see a clash of powers between Osei and Kakutarō. While Osei is refastening the lock of the chest, Kakutarō is making his last attempt to survive. It does not take much effort from Osei's side to physically empower him because of his fragile health condition. After locking him inside the chest, she waits for his inevitable end, trying to endure his screams.

During this gruesome scene, Osei suffers inner turmoil. She is vicious because she is hearing the last screams of her dying husband begging to be saved, but she refrains from doing anything. She is bothered by it, but she turns a blind eye to the scene in front of her in the literal sense. On the other hand, she is not as cold-hearted and cold-blooded while committing this slow agonizing murder of her husband as we would expect her to be. She feels the guilt, the remorse, and her conscience gnawing inside her. Furthermore, there is also the fact that if she were to listen and save her husband at the last minute, after deliberately locking him inside the chest, it would probably be her end. Kakutarō would be furious with her knowing his unfaithful wife had attempted to kill him and had failed to heed her conscience, and perhaps he would even divorce her for real this time. In the end, the promise of a life with prosperity owing to the inheritance coming from her late husband and living her life as she pleases weigh more than her conscience, so she keeps her composure and lets her husband to the cold hands of death.

---

<sup>156</sup> Ranpo, "The Appearance of Osei," 88.

Despite showing terrific acting by discovering her husband's dead body in the chest, her conscience does not leave her till the end of the story. She deliberately avoids having eye contact with the body of her husband. It is a grotesque and hideous sight and forces her to confront her conscience, making her question her acts and come clean with this murder once again. She resists, though. She accepts her true evil nature and starts a brand new chapter in her life with endless resources and possibilities around her.

## 4.2 Analysis of “Beast in the Shadows” (陰獣 – Injū, 1928)

### 4.2.1 Story overview

#### 4.2.1.1 Characters

- Shizuko Oyamada: Shizuko<sup>157</sup> is the wife of Rokurō Oyamada. She is from Shizuoka originally and went to a girl's school there. Just before graduating from school, her family experiences bankruptcy, and they leave their hometown to escape Hikone, away from their creditors, and meets her future husband, Rokurō, there. She likes reading, she is a fan of detective fiction in particular. This hobby of hers enables her to form a friendship with Samukawa, whom she asks to investigate some serious matters.

---

<sup>157</sup> Her name Shizuko (静子) is composed of the kanji for quiet and child, and the literal translation for the kanji combination is a quiet girl.

- Samukawa: Samukawa<sup>158</sup> is a detective fiction author and the narrator of this story. After befriending Shizuko at a museum, Samukawa decides to help her with the threat letters coming from her ex-lover Ōe Shundei, who turns out to be his colleague with whom Samukawa has an unspoken rivalry between them. Samukawa's writing style differs from Shundei's in the tone he employs in his stories. Samukawa prefers a bright manner that reflects ordinary moral values.
- Rokurō Oyamada: He is an entrepreneur, owner of Roku Roku trading company, and Shizuko's husband. Shizuko says to Samukawa that her husband is deeply in love with her, and despite being over-ten years older than her, he has a very gentlemanly, ambitious, and energetic character. They have been married for seven years; he was absent for the last two years of it due to being on a business trip overseas.
- Ōe Shundei / Hirata Ichirō: Ōe Shundei (大江春泥)<sup>159</sup> is also a famous detective fiction writer whose style is gloomy, sickly, and grotesque according to Samukawa.<sup>160</sup> Samukawa depicts him as “extremely anti-social (*Hijou na hitokiraide*)”<sup>161</sup> and says he does not attend any writer's gatherings and does not accept people to his home, yet he uses his wife to do the talking

---

<sup>158</sup> While his first name is not revealed throughout the story, his last name Samukawa (寒川) literally means cold river. Ranpo tends to employ foreshadowing devices in his narrative, therefore it is possible to interpret his name as a sign of a flash forwarding element that signifies the place of Shizuko's lifeless body that will be found at the end of the story.

<sup>159</sup> On the names of these two characters, Seth Jacobowitz suggests that Ranpo makes a play with the kanji combination of these names since both of the names include characters from both his pen name Edogawa Ranpo (江戸川乱歩) and his real name Hirai Tarō (平井太郎). In addition to the similarity between the characters' names and Ranpo's, names of the stories written by Shundei reflects Ranpo's writings. Ranpo makes obvious references to his previous works. For instance some of the stories of Shundei mentioned by Samukawa are “Yaneura no yūgi” (Playing in the Attic) which is a reference to “Yaneura no sanposha” (The Stalker in the Attic), “Issen dōka” (One- Sen Copper Coin) resembles Ranpo's first work Nisen Dōka (Two-sen Copper Coin), and “Panorama Kuni” (Land of Panorama) is an allusion of “Panorama tou Kidan” (A Strange Tale of Panorama Island.)

<sup>160</sup> Ranpo, “Beast in the Shadows,” 345.

<sup>161</sup> Ranpo, “Beast in the Shadows,” 327.

for the negotiations of manuscripts or pressings for him. For a while, he does not publish anything till Samukawa hears about him from Shizuko. In the letters he sent to Shizuko, he reveals his true identity to her as Hirata Ichirō (平田一郎) and states that themes of suspicion and cruelty in his stories are related to his past with Shizuko and engorged by the hatred he feels towards her. He further claims that now he will take his revenge on her.

#### 4.2.1.2 Setting

This story takes place in Tokyo, mostly around Sumida River and Asakusa where the Oyamada mansion is located. Samukawa states that these events took place last year and starts telling the events of the story from mid-October to the beginning of March.

#### 4.2.1.3 Plot

While aimlessly wandering in a museum, Samukawa meets Shizuko Oyamada. They build a friendship through their shared passion for detective fiction works, and Shizuko reveals that she is a fan of Samukawa's works. She tells Samukawa that she is being watched by Hirata Ichirō, her ex-lover before her husband. In a threat letter Hirata sent to Shizuko, he reveals he is writing detective fiction under the name Ōe Shundei, and Samukawa gets invested in this matter both because he is fond of Shizuko and he wants to search for the secrets of his competitor, Ōe Shundei. From that point on, Samukawa starts frequently visiting the Oyamada household. Following the threat letters, Shizuko's husband, Rokurō Oyamada's corpse, is found in the water hole of a public toilet, completely naked apart from his underwear with a wig on his head. He has been stabbed several times.

Following the death of the husband, Samukawa starts a romantic relationship with Shizuko. With the death of Rokurō, the threatening letters suddenly stop. After thoroughly contemplating on this matter, Samukawa comes to believe that Shundei and his wife are the same people, and they are Shizuko in disguise. He confronts Shizuko on his deduction and beats her with the whip out of his anger towards her for deceiving him all this time. While he accuses Shizuko of all these claims, Shizuko neither denies nor accepts these accusations, but cries in silence. The next day, Shizuko commits suicide by throwing herself into the Sumida River. A passenger finds her body. Samukawa doubts his deduction skills and considers the option that Shizuko might have been telling the truth. After Shizuko's death, Shundei also disappears without a trace. To make sure of his theory, Samukawa asks Shizuko's village if someone called Hirata Ichirō has lived there, and it turns out there was, but he went missing a while ago. The story ends with a vague ending, and we never know if Shizuko is the culprit and killed herself to not get caught by Samukawa or if Shizuko is the real victim of all this incident and Samukawa not only left her to her inevitable end but also blamed her in vain.

#### 4.2.2 Character analysis of Shizuko:

##### 4.2.2.1 Shizuko as a wife:

Shizuko's place in her family does not really strike the reader as grueling. Her family consists of her and her husband who has been absent for the last two years of their marriage. She does not have a child or elderly parents to take care of, both her parents are already dead. Moreover, she does not have the obligation to see to the daily chores of her house by herself, she has maids and servants at her service at



home. Money obviously is not an issue for her, her husband has a profound business and earns a considerable income from it.<sup>162</sup> She lives in a mansion in a metropolitan like Tokyo, near Asakusa which provides her with lots of opportunities to be discovered.

She also has an intellectual side. She likes wandering around deserted museums, reading detective fiction, and holding brilliant conversations about them. She was also about to graduate from the girls' school in Shizuoka. In the Meiji period, daughters of wealthy families were encouraged to pursue education at higher schools. These girls' schools aimed to promote the image of the ideal Japanese woman, who was supposed to be a virtuous good wife and wise mother.<sup>163</sup> However, through the end of the Meiji period, the reputation of these schools was deteriorating among the public, because the girls who attended these schools were accused of displaying immoral behaviors, like being sexually promiscuous, which contradicts the feminine ideals determined by the state. Despite being very close to graduating, Shizuko had to leave her education because of her father closing down their business with a debt problem. The change in her parents' financial status is a turning point for her. Before this unfortunate incident, we deduce that they were a well-off family, but then it all turned upside down. They ran to another town, Hikone, from the debt collectors, and there, Shizuko's life changed completely.

Shizuko loses her father shortly after moving to Hikone and experiences financial difficulties alone with her mother. Soon after, she meets her future husband, Rokurō Oyamada. Rokurō falls in love with her immediately after seeing her.

---

<sup>162</sup> In Ian Hughes's translation, it is stated that Shizuko is a partner of the Roku Roku trading company; however, when we look at the original Japanese text, it says she is the wife of Rokurō Oyamada who is one of the investing partners of the Roku Roku trading company: "...*kanajo wa gōshigaisha Roku Roku shōkai no shusshi shain no hitoridearu jitsugyōka Oyamada Rokurō-shi no fujin...*" Therefore, I decided to interpret Shizuko as an unemployed individual in my analysis.

<sup>163</sup> Czarnecki, "Bad Girls from Good Families: The Degenerate Meiji Schoolgirl," 50.

Shizuko, on the other hand, is indifferent to this man. Rokurō is over ten years older than her, and not rakishly handsome, but he is ambitious and dressed like a gentleman. What is more important, he could give the financial stability Shizuko and her mother needed so desperately. Therefore, it is safe to assume that her marriage with Rokurō has financial intentions. Despite this, people around her do not question her motives or intentions regarding her marriage, she gives the impression of an earnest and devoted wife outside.

#### 4.2.2.2 Shizuko as a lover:

Shizuko is described as an attractive woman from the onset of the story through Samukawa's eyes. He spends great detail depicting Shizuko's facial features and the figure of her body.<sup>164</sup> He finds her smile graceful and mysterious and likens her to Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa painting. In addition to her graciousness and unspeakable beauty, we also witness the eroticization of Shizuko from a male perspective:

Visible on the nape of her neck was a swollen line like a red weal that looked as though it went deep down her back. While it seemed to be a birthmark, I also wondered whether it might not be a recent scar. The dark red weal wormed over the smooth white skin of her soft nape, and strangely the cruelty of it bestowed an erotic impression.<sup>165</sup>

In this scene, Samukawa is not aware of Shizuko's eccentric sexual activities, and it is his first time seeing her. Despite not knowing the cause of the scars on her back is from whipping, he senses a deep surge of eroticism only by glancing at them.

---

<sup>164</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 322-323.

<sup>165</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 323.

The narrator also places a strong emphasis on the startling power that radiates from Shizuko's fragile physique. He even illustrates her fingers in the same sexualized manner, and eventually connects this depiction to her image as a whole:

Supple, fine, and graceful, but not overly thin, the fingers seemed to symbolize her whole body. Nor did their paleness reflect any ill health, for while their delicacy suggested that they might vanish if pressed they had an uncanny strength.<sup>166</sup>

All the men around Shizuko seem to be attracted to her looks. Her husband, Rokurō, also fell for her looks at the first sight. Her easy-on-eyes physical appearance gives her an image of an ideal woman who seeks protection and love from men, thus making men put great effort into pleasing her in any way they can. Her marriage with Rokurō does not strike the reader as a strenuous one. On the contrary, he puts great effort to please his wife in the bedroom, he orders a wig to cover his baldness to look attractive to his wife:

Actually, Rokurō had gone to the trouble of ordering this and having it made to hide his unattractive baldness in bedroom romps with Shizuko and although she had laughed about it and sought to stop him, such was his considerable sensitivity on these matters that he went off to place the order as serious as a child.<sup>167</sup>

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Rokurō and Shizuko do not have any secrets between each other regarding their spousal relations. She does not reveal her previous relationship with Hirata to her husband, because she is ashamed of the fact that she had committed sex out of wedlock. She is afraid of her husband's reaction knowing that she had not been a virgin when she married him.<sup>168</sup> Having sex outside of marriage was not a taboo in pre-industrialized Japan. However, the introduction of modernism with the Meiji Restoration brought several changes regarding the liaisons

---

<sup>166</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 328-329.

<sup>167</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 439.

<sup>168</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 270.

between men and women. First, the 1871 family registration law stated that the patriarch is the household head and controls all family property and this title transferred to the eldest male member of the next generation via the blood relation. In that period, it was believed that blood from previous sexual partners of a woman remained in her body after intercourse, thus preventing the “pure bloodline” necessary for the paternity of the future offspring.<sup>169</sup> Second, the Western concepts on sexuality and love, such as chastity, virtue, and pure love started to be adopted as the key values of modern relationships. Even though she was not a virgin before her marriage, there is no indication of Shizuko being unfaithful to her husband throughout their seven-year marriage. Moreover, she seems protective of her husband’s well-being when Shundeï makes threatening remarks at him in his letter to her.

The romantic relationship between Shizuko and Samukawa develops gradually in the story. We know that Samukawa is deeply enamored with her even from their first encounter, but it takes a while for Shizuko to see him in the same light in the story. First, they bond as friends over their love for detective fiction. Then, Shizuko confides in him about his fears of the threat letters. The death of her husband embeds a different level in this relationship. She breaks down with sorrow over Rokurō’s death into Samukawa’s arms and they share the same trauma and guilt over his death which deepen their bond. Eventually, Samukawa kisses her on the commemoration date of her husband, a month after his death.

Before their relationship takes a romantic turn, Samukawa discovers the unusual bedroom habits of Shizuko and Rokurō. He connects the dots between seeing a riding whip in her bedroom and the marks on her nape and back. His first

---

<sup>169</sup> Czarnecki, “Bad Girls from Good Families: The Degenerate Meiji Schoolgirl,” 65.

instinct is to assume that it was Rokurō's idea to bring a whip to bed. He does not want to sully Shizuko's image as a virtuous wife by having a sadomasochism fetish in her private life. He does not even consider the idea that it might be Shizuko who suggested it in the first place and completely ignores her agency, consent, and preferences in bed. Following their first kiss and the amorous aspect of their relationship, one day Shizuko brings the same whip to their bed and insists Samukawa use it on her. At first, Samukawa is shocked and appalled by the idea and thinks it was Rokurō's doing for Shizuko to have this kind of bizarre sexual fantasies: "Having suffered cruelty at Rokurō's hands for such a long time, the perversion had taken root in her and she was now plagued by the irresistible appetite of a masochist."<sup>170</sup> However, he grants her wish and starts to enjoy this type of sexual encounter which is completely unbeknownst to him.

#### 4.2.2.3 Shizuko as an aggressor:

To analyze Shizuko's profile as an aggressor of the story, we will go with the ending in which she is indeed the killer of her husband, and disguises herself as Hirata Ichirō, Oe Shundei, and Shundei's wife. Shizuko is not only able to over-power her husband physically and kill him, but also can develop a master plan to hide her career as a successful crime fiction writer and manipulate the people around her. Shizuko's profile as a criminal contradicts the views of Meiji doctors and Taishō and Shōwa criminologists on female criminals which assert that women are not capable of committing complex crimes and their motives for these crimes are only sexual.<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>170</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 438.

<sup>171</sup> Kawana, *Murder Most Modern*, 88.

Shizuko's "unique" intellectual side is mentioned several times by Samukawa throughout the story. He is impressed with her refined taste because she prefers to go to deserted museums despite being the young woman that she is.<sup>172</sup> He is also proud that she likes his detective fiction works. Moreover, she has an educational background. She is capable of associating the grotesque stories she wrote under the pen name Ōe Shundeī with the murder of her husband. As a result, this imaginary person would be announced as the killer, and this act alone requires an immense fineness as a criminal.

Shizuko as a character represents an unordinary stance to the concept of power. First of all, she looks like a lithe, fragile, and delicate woman, but via the observations of Samukawa she gives the impression that she is stronger than she looks. It has been stated by Samukawa that despite her fragile looks she holds a strange strength.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, Shizuko likes being submissive and obedient during sexual intercourse, a very unexpected trait of someone who comes up with twisted plots like her stories have and killed a man. A character who has deep moral beliefs, Samukawa cannot believe that Shizuko herself could be the one who suggests something sinister like getting whipped to get sexual stimulation to her husband, therefore he thinks it was Rokurō's fault that Shizuko has these abnormal sexual preferences. However, we learn that Shizuko likes this kind of sexual play, since she requests the same thing from Samukawa too. She is not afraid of getting hurt or injured during sexual intercourse, so we can deduce that she likes the thrill of pain. According to Sari Kawana, we can interpret Shizuko's submissive sexual preferences as a camouflage for her criminal character preferentially. Kawana argues that by

---

<sup>172</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 324.

<sup>173</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 399.

emphasizing her femininity and the passive nature of her sexuality and allowing Samukawa to discover all aspects of her body, Shizuko demonstrates that she is not the culprit and has got nothing to hide.<sup>174</sup>

Despite all her submissive traits, why did this docile woman kill her husband? During seven years of their marriage, Rokurō was away from home frequently, he was gone on an overseas work trip for years and is finally back at home at the onset of the story. While he was gone, Shizuko was free to do whatever she pleases, but after his return, her freedom has vanished. When Samukawa realizes that it might be Shizuko who wrote these stories, he says: “You are blessed with uncommon sagacity and literary talent for a woman.”<sup>175</sup> Samukawa’s opinion on Shizuko’s literary talents reflects an old Confucionist saying in his way of thinking on intellectual women: “a woman without talent is therefore virtuous.” Even though he has a derogative implication in his wording, Samukawa had a point: it was not common for a woman at that period to write this kind of grotesque, perverse, and sick works. Therefore, Shizuko hid her real identity from the public and wrote her works under the name of Ōe Shundei. Her unique style brought her unanticipated fame and put her anonymity as a writer in danger. For that she kept changing her locations, using disguises, and hiring other people to pose as Shundei. However, all her great efforts evaporated when her husband returned to Japan permanently. For this reason, she decided to kill her husband and persuaded another detective fiction writer, Samukawa, to help her on this incident to prove her innocence.

After finding out truths, Samukawa wants to learn why Shizuko did this:

But why did you decide to commit that awful crime? As a man, I cannot understand well what you felt, but texts on the psychology of perversion

---

<sup>174</sup> Kawana, *Murder Most Modern*, 92.

<sup>175</sup> Ranpo, “Beast in the Shadows,” 467.

indicate that women with a tendency to hysteria often send threatening letters to themselves. There are numerous cases of this both in Japan and overseas. There is a desire to attract pity from others even by scaring oneself I am sure this is your case.<sup>176</sup>

He considers her a lunatic, hysteric person, and makes sexist remarks on her condition, referring to Freud's work on women and hysteria. Samukawa reduces Shizuko's agency and motivations as a murderer by creating a gender gap between himself and Shizuko and attributing her deviant acts to pathological syndromes.<sup>177</sup> It is quite possible to interpret Shizuko's call on Samukawa to interfere in this murder case to clear herself from the suspicions of being the culprit. However, if her real aim is to annihilate her husband, then why did she trouble herself by including Samukawa in this incident? A smart woman like her would have known that Samukawa might be trouble for her in the future as a witness since he also has a tendency to investigate things as a detective fiction writer. Another interpretation of this move of her might be that she wanted to beat Samukawa in her own game. They were rivals as detective fiction authors, and she was already aware of Samukawa's bitterness over her succession; perhaps she wanted to teach him a lesson. Even in the end, she leaves Samukawa with an unending uncertainty and guilt over her death.

#### 4.3 Analysis of “Caterpillar” (芋虫 - Imo Mushi, 1929)

*Imo Mushi* is one of the best-known works of Ranpo. Its renowned fame comes from not only its graphic content but also the contradictions associated with it in its period. Despite being published in 1929 without any restraints regarding its content, the story was banned in 1939 by government censors. The re-publishing of this story in 1939 coincided with critical points in Japanese history; the country was amid the

---

<sup>176</sup> Ranpo, “Beast in the Shadows,” 469.

<sup>177</sup> Kawana, *Murder Most Modern*, 93.



Second Sino-Japanese War, which lasted eight years from 1937 to 1945 and caused great loss for both nations. Re-published two years after the onset of the war, *Imo Mushi* became a victim of the strict censorship policies of imperial Japan. The tragic portrayal of a war veteran and his unstable wife contradicts the image of a militarist nation and enduring woman emphasized by the government and its media organs.

While Ranpo denied that he wrote this story as a criticism of the war politics of the Japanese government, he did not deny the traumatic effect of the battlefield that helped the creation of the characterization process and the plot of this story.<sup>178</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Story overview

##### 4.3.1.1 Characters

- Tokiko: Tokiko (時子)<sup>179</sup> is the wife of Sunaga, who lost his legs, arms, and sensory organs except for his eyes in the war. She has been assigned with the role of taking care of her invalid husband for three years without getting any help outside. She sometimes visits General Washio's wife and daughter in the daytime; however, she cannot leave her husband for a long time because he gets restless and furious when left alone. Her obligations and responsibilities as a wife of a disabled war veteran place a heavy strain on her more than she ever acknowledges.
- Sunaga: Sunaga<sup>180</sup> is the disabled war veteran husband of Tokiko. He was a lieutenant, serving under Major General Washio before the attack. His first

---

<sup>178</sup> Tyler, *Modanizumu*, 421.

<sup>179</sup> Her name is composed of the kanjis time and child, its combination also denotes the meaning of the capability of getting things done.

<sup>180</sup> The kanjis used in his name means mandatory (須) and eternity (永). The name Sunaga also bears the connotations of power, endurance, and sharpness.

words after regaining his consciousness were "newspaper" and "decoration," he wanted Tokiko to bring him the newspapers that announces his bravery, and the Order of the Golden Kite decoration which was Japan's highest level military reward for his sacrifice to his nation. He can communicate with Tokiko by writing—he can hold a pen in his mouth and scribble the things he wants to say. He cannot hear the voice of his surroundings; therefore, Tokiko also speaks to him via writing.

- General Washio: Major General Washio was Sunaga's former commanding officer at the front when he was serving in the army. He was there when Sunaga recovered his consciousness at the hospital, giving him the precious military decoration and showing the newspapers about his bravery. His monitoring of Sunaga does not end when he is discharged from the hospital. He opens his small cottage on his country estate to this impoverished couple without asking for payment, because their old house was not suitable for tending a man in Sunaga's state.

#### 4.3.1.2 Setting

The couple lives in a two-storied cottage on General Washio's country estate. They are isolated from the town and the crowd, making them even more dependent on each other. The distance between the main house of the Washio's and the cottage is almost a half of the city block and this route is deserted with over-grown weeds and snakes crawling in the grass with rustling noises. There is also an abandoned well, which is covered by thick weeds. Time does not play a critical role in this story. We know that it has been three years since Sunaga has returned from the war and Tokiko has been taking care of him.

#### 4.3.1.3 Plot

Having barely survived the war, Sunaga is a war veteran—his arms and legs are severed, and most of his face is deformed in the war battles. His only sensory organ are his eyes after the incident; therefore, he can establish communication with his wife, Tokiko, through writing by holding a pen with his mouth. One night, waking up from a nightmare-like state and feeling extremely delirious, Tokiko finds her husband staring at the ceiling at a certain point. When realizing his wife is near him, Sunaga turns his gaze to her. With a drastic change of behavior, Tokiko gets incredibly disturbed by her husband and deems him crazy. Then she suddenly gouges her husband's eyes out on the spur of the moment. When her mind comes to her senses and she realizes what she has done, she is instilled with guilt and remorse and hurries to find a doctor to help her husband. The next day, she is filled with the need to confess her crimes to someone, thus she goes to Sunaga's senior general Washio from the army. When General and Tokiko come back home to see Sunaga, he is not in his bed. He leaves a note saying “I forgive you” to his wife and commits suicide by throwing himself from a well in the garden.

#### 4.3.2 Character analysis of Tokiko:

##### 4.3.2.1 Tokiko as a wife:

Although there is no concrete information about Tokiko and Sunaga's marriage before Sunaga became permanently disabled, we are able to surmise that they loved each other. When she first received the news that her husband was wounded and will be transferred to Japan, her abiding worry for him finally lessens by knowing that he

is “at least alive.”<sup>181</sup> She is considered more fortunate than the women who lost their husbands at the war.

Her first meeting with Sunaga after the incident is another tragedy. She knows he has serious wounds from the news about her husband published in newspapers, but she does not know the extent of it. Therefore, seeing him up-close for the first time is a shocking and excruciating experience for her:

She tried to speak, and then to scream, but no sounds came out of her throat. She, too, had been rendered momentarily speechless. God! Was this all that was left of the husband she loves so dearly! He was no longer a man, but only a plaster bust.<sup>182</sup>

Seeing once a healthy and loving man of her husband in a helpless condition like this makes Tokiko burst into tears and people around her in the garrison hospital trying to console her, telling her to be brave for her husband, and that it is a miracle for him to be alive at this point.

After spending six months in hospital, Sunaga is transferred back to his home. Their old home is barely enough to shelter them, moreover with Sunaga's current state they need a bigger space, thus General Washio offers them his detached cottage in his country estate without any charges in return for Sunaga's bravery and sufferings he had for the sake of his nation. This marks another bitter truth for the unfortunate couple: they do not have an abundant financial income to support their family. In the Meiji period, the support and aid from the Japanese government for those with post-war injuries or diseases was not enough to support a family alone.<sup>183</sup>

---

<sup>181</sup> Ranpo, “The Caterpillar,” 106.

<sup>182</sup> Ranpo, “The Caterpillar,” 107.

<sup>183</sup> However, a veteran in Sunaga's condition would have received much more pension to continue their life without relying on somebody else. In the late Meiji and Taishō periods, there was a significant increase in military relief funds. In 1906, with the introduction of the Cripple Soldiers Institute Bill, the government provided accommodation and relief to those who are injured during their military service without the support of a household. In addition to this facility, the state increased the relief pensions for war veterans with the Military Relief Law in 1918 and Servicemen's Pension Law in 1923. See Lee K. Pennington, *Casualties of History: Wounded Japanese Servicemen and the Second World War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

There are two reasons behind this decision. First, conscription was considered as a mandatory service, a type of tax by the Japanese government, so they believed there was no obligation to attend for the families of soldiers who lost their lives during their services and disabled war veterans who are incapable of work and continue their own. Second, the social solidarity, generosity, and strong sense of belonging to their community of Japanese society which the government intensely promoted and gain from at the same time, helped these families to survive.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, it is safe for us to assume that the couple make their living through the goodwill of the Washio family.

There is no specific information in the story whether Tokiko had a job when Sunaga was in the army or not, but regardless she would have to quit her job in order to take care of her disabled husband full-time. Therefore, she becomes the full-time caregiver and nurse of her disabled husband as their relatives, friends, neighbors, and society expect of her. She is constantly reminded that it is a natural duty of a virtuous wife to take care of her husband who was injured at the war. She gets incredible praise for her selflessness and sacrifice, and thus people encourage and celebrate her moral resolution and never doubt her abilities and determination. However, no one offers any kind of help to her. She is all alone to take care of her husband in a wrecked state. She occasionally visits Washio's household when the old general is not at home and has conversations with his wife and daughter. Whenever she runs into Major General Washio during her visits, he speaks highly of her husband and Sunaga's indebtedness to her:

As for you, however, your continued faithfulness has deprived you of all your former pleasures and desires. For three long years you have sacrificed everything for that poor crippled man, without emitting the faintest breath of complaint. You always contend that this is but the natural duty of a soldier's

---

<sup>184</sup> Imajoh, "Disabled Veterans," 1.

wife, and so it is. But I sometimes cannot help feeling that it's a cruel fate for a woman to endure, especially for a woman so very attractive and charming as you, and so young, too. I am quite struck with admiration. I honestly believe it to be one of the most stirring human-interest stories of the day. The question which still remains is: How long will it last? Remember, you still have quite a long future ahead of you. For your husband's sake, I pray that you will never change.<sup>185</sup>

Tokiko avoids encounters with General Washio on purpose because his presence and his encouraging words keep reminding her of her invalid husband at home. Apart from the Washio family, they are alienated from the outside world for two reasons: their impoverishment cannot afford a house in the city center, and the grotesque physical appearance of Sunaga lost its charm over time. People's curiosity about the unfortunate war veteran is satisfied with one visit to their home, and nothing is interesting about them anymore.

Spending time only in each other's company, Tokiko and Sunaga become so accustomed to each other. Sunaga has become the baby that he has no possibility of giving to her. He, too, throws tantrums like a baby does when Tokiko does not comply with his request immediately or leaves him alone unattended for a while. Despite having a hard time at getting used to his crude behaviors and manners, Tokiko feels a strange sympathy towards her husband:

There seemed to be but one consolation for her miserable "career" as a nursemaid to a cripple: the very fact that this poor, strange, thing which not only could neither speak nor hear, but could not even move freely by itself, was by no means made of wood or clay, but was alive and real, possessing every human emotion and instinct—this was a source of boundless fascination for her.<sup>186</sup>

She cannot completely reduce her husband to an innocent baby or a grotesque animal. She is aware of his feelings, emotions, and knows he is still capable of thinking. However, the crumbs of humanity remaining inside Sunaga are not enough

---

<sup>185</sup> Ranpo, "The Caterpillar," 94-95.

<sup>186</sup> Ranpo, "The Caterpillar," 111.

for her. For instance, one night she wakes up from a nightmare with a painful scream, and she looks at Sunaga to see whether he noticed her distress or not. Yet he is looking at the same spot on the ceiling indifferent to her cries.

Her mental health starts deteriorating after taking care of her husband alone for three years, and she starts having violent thoughts about him. She no longer takes pride in taking care of her invalid husband just like an honest, faithful, and good wife would do. She feels guilty and ashamed of satisfying her sexual needs with her husband, despite having conflicted thoughts about his appearance and manners. Another reason why Tokiko avoids having conversations with Major General Washio is that she does not find his praises towards her sincere. She believes everyone around her is aware of her ulterior moves in her relationship with her husband and a voice inside her head whispers to her: “Under the cloak of faithfulness you are leading a life of sin and treachery!”<sup>187</sup> She believes her sexual entity as a woman is what is keeping her from becoming a faithful wife, therefore she detests and adores her husband at the same time.

#### 4.3.2.2 Tokiko as a lover:

Sexuality plays a critical role in the characterization of Tokiko and her relationship with Sunaga. In the beginning, she is the meticulous, lovely, coy wife of a war veteran. She is seen as a saint due to her selfless antics and profound devotion to her husband by the ones around her. The impotency of her husband stirs the feelings of mercy and pity in her. Interestingly, his state of inability starts to arouse her, too:

Like a beast of prey, or as if possessed by the devil, she had begun to feel an insane urge to gratify her lust! Yes, she had changed—so completely! From

---

<sup>187</sup> Ranpo, “The Caterpillar,” 96.

where did this maddening impulse spring, she asked herself. Could it be attributed to the mysterious charm of that lump of flesh?<sup>188</sup>

She feels guilty over her extreme sexual drive. Another matter of concern for Tokiko is her body image. The presence of her husband not only increases her sexual appetite but also her desire for consuming food. Since Sunaga's only activities in the house are sexual intercourse and eating, Tokiko has no other choice but to partake in those. Therefore, she is also gaining weight alongside her husband. This, in fact, demoralizes her because she believes her plump physical appearance belittles her efforts and underlines her feminine voluptuous image. This self-image of hers is so deeply seated in her unconscious that she sees it in her dreams. In her nightmare, Tokiko sees a human torso like her husband's and a thick woman's figure having sex which strongly reminds her of Sunaga and herself.<sup>189</sup> Since this vision both frightens and excites her at the same time, she deems herself disgusting and sexually perverted.

The unbalanced dependency in their relationship makes it unhealthy. Sunaga does not wish to be left alone at the house for a long time, so he wants Tokiko always to be by his side. Tokiko, on the other hand, sometimes needs other people's presence beside her husband and visits the General's wife and daughter. Long absences of his wife make Sunaga uneasy and restless; he gets jealous asking her if she is tired of him.<sup>190</sup> He is also afraid of the possibility that his wife will leave him for another man and let him rot in a state like this. Tokiko occasionally gets overwhelmed being with her disabled husband all the time and reassuring him that she is not abandoning

---

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Ranpo, "The Caterpillar," 105.

<sup>190</sup> Ranpo, "The Caterpillar," 101.



him. Nevertheless, she also feels guilty for leaving him unattended for three hours. She apologizes to him and promises that she will never leave him.<sup>191</sup>

Sex is a means of reconciliation for their relationship. Tokiko uses it to appease her husband and for her own pleasure. Even though his outer appearance is a gruesome sight for her, it is not enough to stop her from having sex with her husband. She likes the submissive position her husband takes under her: “The cripple, kissed with such passion, writhed in the agony of being unable to breathe and distorted his face oddly. As always, this sight excited Tokiko strangely.”<sup>192</sup>

#### 4.3.2.3 Tokiko as an aggressor:

Tokiko’s personality as an aggressor develops with her new career as her husband’s caregiver. She is described as a meek and docile woman but has a weird side that enjoys tormenting helpless creatures: “As for Tokiko, although hers was a timid heart, she had always entertained a strange liking for bullying the weak. Moreover, watching the agony of this poor cripple aroused many of her hidden impulses.”<sup>193</sup>

Her side as an aggressor coincides with her sexuality. She discovers her sadistic and cruel side during the intercourse. The first descriptions of their sexual relationship give the impression that it is consensual on both sides. Sunaga likes the attention and care he receives from Tokiko during their intercourse and expresses his feelings through his facial expressions and eyes. Later on, Tokiko starts to enjoy seeing him suffer under her erotic ministrations:

This was a phenomenon that occurred whenever there was something wrong with her body. On such occasions, especially during her monthly periods of physical indisposition, she would maltreat the poor cripple with real venom. The barbarity of her actions had grown wilder and more intense with the progress of time. She was, of course, fully aware of the criminal nature of her

---

<sup>191</sup> Ranpo, “The Caterpillar,” 102.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ranpo, “The Caterpillar,” 104.

deeds, but the wild forces rising inside her body were beyond the control of her will.<sup>194</sup>

It is argued that in the early 20th century during the menstruation period women's crime rate increased.<sup>195</sup> The emphasis on her menstruation cycle and the abuse she is inflicting on her husband point out a strong connection to her femininity and her portrayal as a perpetrator. This new uninhibited, sexually empowered, dominant, and violent side of her frightens and arouses her at the same time. Therefore, she wants to perceive her husband as an unanimated object, a non-autonomous creature. If she dehumanizes her husband, she can undertake her new role as a “caregiver, patient wife” without having any second doubts about the future of their relationship.

In addition to sex, isolation plays a tremendous role in her aggression. She and Sunaga are left to their own devices to tend themselves for the rest of their lives. Their storylines resemble each other to an extent; Sunaga's loss of his body and agency are masked under the pretense of honor and sacrifice of a loyal soldier, while Tokiko's responsibility as a wife is over-romanticized due to society's expectations. They both experience heavy trauma and each deal with this on their own terms. Sunaga becomes over-dependent on his wife and Tokiko starts regarding her husband as a “beast.” Therefore, seeing him displaying human emotions and behaviors is an extremely disturbing occurrence to her:

What could he possibly be thinking about?" she asked herself with a shiver. Although she felt extremely uneasy, hers was even more a feeling of intense hatred of his attitude. Her hatred again awakened all her inherent desires to torment him—to make him suffer.<sup>196</sup>

When she makes no sense of her husband's actions, she goes and confronts him and gets irritated by the look in his eyes. She finds the angry look of his outrageous

---

<sup>194</sup> Ranpo, “The Caterpillar,” 112.

<sup>195</sup> Marran, *Poison Woman*, 117.

<sup>196</sup> Ranpo, “The Caterpillar,” 113.

feelings, and this reminds him that she is the one who has the authority here and tells him to stop staring at her.<sup>197</sup> When Sunaga refuses to comply with her orders, she gets even more delirious, ending up gouging his eyes out. It can be argued that what might have caused this sudden agitated outbreak of Tokiko could be because she sees the reflection of herself through the eyes of Sunaga and cannot stand the person she sees before her. In a moment of wrath, she takes the only communication organ Sunaga has and imprisons him into eternal silence.

After coming to her senses, she immediately regrets her attack and runs to tend her wounded husband. She goes to the country doctor to demand him taking a look at Sunaga. She sits with him through the night and constantly apologizes to him by writing "forgive me" (*yurushite*) on his chest. Then, the guilt and remorse she feels over the injury she caused her husband devour her and she goes to General Washio's house to confess her crime.

Ranpo does not reduce the human aspects of Tokiko while portraying her struggle with her caregiver and good wife image. She regrets her crimes and confesses them to someone else. Moreover, previously praising her accomplishments and commitment to her disabled husband as a faithful wife, General Washio does not verbally criticize or condemn her after her confession. He goes to their house to assess the situation and see Sunaga, but they cannot find him at the house. Sunaga commits suicide by leaving a farewell note to his wife saying, "I forgive you" (*yurusu*) despite everything she has done to him. By choosing to end his story like that, Ranpo not only glorifies the self-inflicted death of a war veteran but also abates the punishment and guilt that Tokiko will carry the harm she caused on her husband.

---

<sup>197</sup> Ranpo, "The Caterpillar," 113-114.

#### 4.4 Summary

This dissertation includes a comparison table of these stories in the Appendix. It is possible to trace a recurring pattern while scrutinizing the lives of these women characters: women whose agency is restricted by the patriarchal structures around them. They, as agents, demonstrate the rule-following aspects of agency stated in the structuration theory. The embodied nature of their agency demonstrates the impact of the patriarchal structures on their characters. They internalize the societal norms established through the social structures. The main limitation structures for these women are *ie*, the stem family, the state's policies asserted on women, and society's expectations of them. These institutions are molded with patriarchal ideology and as a result, they become the products of such an ideology.

Yet, these female agents reproduce the existing social order around them through their own actions. They are active and knowledgeable agents who can destroy and re-built their own structures. While they are not completely deprived of their agencies, they become complete agents through the annihilation of their husbands. Their sexual agency, on the other hand, is not repressed; therefore sexuality plays a significant part in their journey of self-realization as an aggressor and an individual. By committing criminal acts, like murdering or harming their husbands, these women, also referred to as criminal women, re-create their own place in Japanese society and re-establish their own agency in the public eye. In other words, these acts are manifestations of the enabling effect of the structures had on agents. Women figures dealt throughout this thesis try to break free from the shackles of the patriarchal institutions and overcome this illegitimate dominion asserted on them. In a nutshell, they manage to become the agents who tear through the structures of patriarchal institutions around them and assert their own dominion.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the contextual and historical research conducted on the *Osei Tōjō*, *Injū*, and *Imo Mushi* written by Edogawa Ranpo to grasp the essence of the heroines of these stories and understand their motives. Chapter Two explained the methodology of the research which consisted of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory and his definition of agency, Lois McNay's ideas on feminist agency, in addition to Kate Millett's take on the patriarchy, and Sylvia Walby's theory of patriarchy as a structure. Chapter Three explored the status of women in Japanese society till the early Shōwa period, focusing on the critical transformations Japanese society undertook in terms of gender relations. The *ie* culture, good wife wise mother ideology, the Meiji 1896 civil code, and *dokufu* figure are emphasized in particular. Chapter Four encompassed the analyses of the selected stories and sociological findings obtained through them.

In this study, what we witness from the historical events of Japanese history is a transformation from traditional to modern. Thus, Ranpo reflects this change in these stories. The surge of modernization was felt by every class and field of society. Such a change can be observed through the attitude towards women and their image in the public, too. With the modernization wave, there is a transformation in the patriarchal structures of Japan from private to public. Public institutions dictate women's place and act as a social control mechanism out of their private space. These stories, too, can be considered as proof of this statement. While the husband figure may not seem like the oppressor force in the stories, we feel the invisible presence of the patriarchal state, the ideal wife expectations generated by “the good

wife, wise mother” ideology, and the social norms, values, and traditions of the past. This thesis shows that, by killing their husbands, Ranpo indirectly emancipates these women from the social pressure and burden of the patriarchal structures placed on them. Similarly in the structuration theory, motive provides the opportunity to break away from this existing order of patriarchal structures. Agents (women) can manipulate the norms of social life if they are motivated enough.

In the first chapter, I determined some objectives to answer based on the findings of the analyses of these stories. These questions were whether there were any similarities between these characters, how Ranpo reflected patriarchal oppression of the period infected these women, whether Ranpo villainize these figures, and to what extent we can consider these female characters as a response to a good wife, wife mother ideology of Meiji Japan. The following sections will discuss the agency of the female characters under their shared characteristics.

### 5.1 Dependence on husband

These women are financially dependent on their husbands. Osei relies on the wealth of her husband to continue her life. Shizuko, too, depends on her husband's income to maintain her livelihood. Her family's financial condition was not stable before her marriage to Rokurō, so this union eased the financial burden on her family. Only Tokiko chooses to remain by her impoverished and disabled husband's side, but the reason she decides to do so is that she believes she must accomplish the requirements of the ideal wife figure.

All these women do not have an independent income from their family funds. Their agency as financially dependent actors are obscured by the power hierarchies present in the social structure. Perhaps this finding explains their reason for marriage.

Marriage is the most convenient option to sustain their lives considering their life opportunities. If they decide to break from their marriage and divorce their husbands, they will most likely experience a significant decrease in their living conditions. Thus, marriage is the only eligible option for these women, when they cannot earn their livelihood because job opportunities are not available to them due to patriarchal obstructions in the labor market.<sup>198</sup>

## 5.2 Sexual activity

These female characters embrace their sexual side. They engage in sexual relations with men in their respective storylines, some of them have several partners even. Osei has an adulterous relationship, despite being married to another man at the same time. Her agency, as a sexual being, is completely in her control. She satisfies her sexuality with her lover while entertaining her sick husband out of the pity she feels towards him. Shizuko has aberrant masochistic tendencies in bed and initiates sexual intercourse with men. Even though her unusual preferences in sexual activities were reprimanded by Samukawa, Ranpo makes it clear that she is giving her consent to this act by suggesting the same sexual play with her new partner, too. In contrast to Shizuko, Tokiko discovers her sadistic side in sexual intercourse with her disabled husband. Being in a dominant position for once during the sexual intercourse changes her perspectives on sex ultimately; Tokiko discovers her sadistic side, and it frightens her. The reason for her fears might be because she believes that her sexual needs are her true intentions which are hiding behind her disguise as a loyal war veteran's wife portrayal.

---

<sup>198</sup> Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 88-9.

Their autonomy in sexual situations is described through their subjectivity and the relational side of their agency. They are not forced to engage in sexual activity with men, on the contrary, they are the ones who have an enormous sexual appetite. Another specific feature that highlights their agency in the sexual context is their relations with the other party, hence the power hierarchy between two consenting adults. However, their sexuality often conflicts with their moral actions. Osei feels the guilt of deceiving her sick husband, Shizuko hides her masochist identity from the public eye, and Tokiko is ashamed for having this much sexual drive despite having an invalid husband at home to take care of.

### 5.3 Connection between sexuality and criminality

These characters radiate the docile and modest wife image that conceals their highly transgressive sexual appetite.<sup>199</sup> There is a strong connection between the sexuality and criminal portrayals of these women.

Osei's character as an aggressor and a sexual enigma is blurred with each other; thus, when she feels the guilt over the murder of her husband, she reminds herself of the existence of her lover and the bright new future now she can have with him. Shizuko's storyline as a murderer also intertwined with her sexual side. Her crimes are given from a sensationalized perspective, her masochistic side is overly emphasized. While her masochist nature underlines the ideal meek persona of a docile wife, it does not suit the patriarchal ideology, because she is the one who suggests it. Her agency and autonomy are visible and appear at the forefront of the sexual scenes. Tokiko's agency as a sexual being activates her aggressor side, and

---

<sup>199</sup> Jacobowitz, introduction to *The Edogawa Ranpo Reader*, 42.



she ends up gouging the eyes of her husband to get rid of the constant monitoring that follows her all the time.

Sex is not solely a motive for their crimes but works as a medium in this respect. Osei uses the memories of her sexual escapades with her lover as a defense mechanism from the guilt of murdering her husband. Shizuko uses her passive sexuality to cover her criminal persona. Tokiko discovers her violent side with her awakening sexual appetite. Their sensationalized sexual characterization may lead us to identify these female characters with *dokufu* figure, but Ranpo does not depict a stereotyped female criminal figure in his stories. He does not villainize or condemn these characters for the crimes they committed in the stories. His intention is not to tell a story that presents a moral dilemma to readers. As an alternative suggestion, his objective approach to these criminal women characters can be considered as a critique of the rapid modernization wave that took over the whole nation starting with the Meiji Restoration. The anxieties of the people regarding this modernization period reflect on this criminal behavior.

#### 5.4 Emancipation of heroines

By not explicitly making these female characters the scapegoat of the stories, Ranpo emancipates these women from the patriarchal institutions they are imprisoned in, to a certain degree. He shows this by implicitly referring to the oppressive social structures that surround these women. Therefore, we can argue that these women re-establish the existing social structures with their own actions. We, as readers, acknowledge the effect and oppression of state policies and family as a patriarchal institution have over these women, since we know the historical background of these characters. While we witness the patriarchal pressure from the social circles and

families of the characters in the stories, the presence of the patriarchal state policies is not as explicit as these two, yet a reader who possesses the basics of Japanese history will realize these subtle hints.

Osei's agency is limited by her family, her duties as a wife, and sanctions imposed on divorced women by the state. If she were to divorce her husband, she would be denied all of the properties they share and those she owned before her marriage. She is surrounded by men for her to nurse, either staying home and taking care of her sick husband or going back to her father's home and taking care of her father on his deathbed. While Osei's character line demonstrates a conflict of emotions at the beginning, Ranpo depicts her as a character who embraces her true evil nature at the end of the story. He even sensationalizes her character as a *femme fatale* with the overemphasis on her infidelity. However, when we consider the expectations of society from women like Osei's position, we get a better view of her motivations for Kakutarō's murder.

Shizuko, too, is oppressed by the patriarchal institutions similar to other women characters. First, the permanent return of Rokurō will limit her to the space of their home and her character as a housewife, therefore she wants to get rid of him. Second, her persona as an author is disguised by a secret identity of a male. Her competency as a writer was belittled by the narrator once her true identity is revealed. Samukawa sees her as a rival before disclosing her identity and knowing her as Ōe Shundei; however, when he learns that his biggest competitor was a woman indeed, he says "she is blessed with an uncommon literary talent for a woman."<sup>200</sup> Edogawa Ranpo intentionally left this story with an open ending,

---

<sup>200</sup> Ranpo, "Beast in the Shadows," 467.

despite the objections from his editors.<sup>201</sup> While my interpretation of the story accepts the end in which Shizuko's secret identity as Ōe Shundei and she really killed her husband to continue her career as a detective fiction writer freely, the story also suggests an alternative ending that proclaims Shizuko as innocent. If she was indeed innocent, and Ōe Shundei is a real person and really stalking Shizuko, then we witness her silent screams for help being ignored by the male narrator of the story who is too busy solving this identity mystery.

Out of three characters, Tokiko's character development arc is the one that strikes the reader most. Her representation is the epitome of the caring and devoted wife at the beginning story. She is told by the members of the society to be the patient, diligent, and loyal wife of a war veteran. However, she is struggling with this heavy burden placed on her shoulders without getting any help from outside. The mental strain she endures blurs her rational thinking ability and she harms her disabled husband critically. Nonetheless, unlike Osei, Ranpo gives Tokiko a chance to redeem herself. She apologizes for her immoral act, but Edogawa Ranpo does not return her to her old position as a caregiver wife. With Sunaga's suicide, she is free of her unwanted responsibilities and accusations for her crimes, and she can continue her life without anything holding her back.

### 5.5 Mythification of ryōsai kenbo: Sexuality over morality

This research motivates the readers to consider the stories of these female characters as a renouncement of the repressive policies and mœurs of the Meiji period towards women, such as the good wife, wise mother (ryōsai kenbo) ideal. While these women are epitomized as the ideal wife image that society imposes, they perform acts that

---

<sup>201</sup> Kawana, *Murder Most Modern*, 88.

contradict such an image. They are sexually autonomous and dangerous creatures. They are fertile, but not mothers. Even if Osei has a child of her own, she does not display the characteristics of a good mother. They, as agents, manipulate the existing rules, norms, and orders of their social structures, and create a space of their own. Ranpo, too, approaches them with sympathy in this regard. He turns a blind eye to Tokiko's horrifying attack on her poor husband and deigns Shizuko with sufficient mental abilities to beat the men in a complex criminal game. Even though he explicitly does not approve of Osei's doings, he stresses her existence and autonomy in the story instead of her husband's. Seth Jacobowitz, too, underlines this fact: it is the appearance of Osei, not the “disappearance of Kakutarō.”<sup>202</sup>

In this thesis, I aimed to illuminate the social repercussions of the criminal female characters in Edogawa Ranpo's stories. I focused on the motives of these characters as aggressors, and how their agency and autonomy are shaped through the patriarchal institutions of her time. I hope this study will contribute and bring a fresh, feminist perspective to the research on Edogawa Ranpo's writings. The scope of this research does not include the women victims of Ranpo's stories. Therefore, further research can be conducted on the profile of the female victims of Edogawa Ranpo's stories and how they differ from these criminal women.

---

<sup>202</sup> Jacobowitz, introduction to *The Edogawa Ranpo Reader*, 43.

## APPENDIX

### AN OVERALL ANALYSIS - THREE STORIES OF EDOGAWA RANPO

STORIES	STORY OVERVIEW			CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF HEROINES			MUTUAL FEATURES OF HEROINES		
	Heroine	Setting	Criminal Act	Heroine as a wife	Heroine as a Lover	Heroine as an aggressor	Financial Dependence on Husband	Sexuality	Connection between sexuality and criminality
<b>Osei APPEARS</b> <i>(OSEI TÔJÔ)</i>	<b>Osei:</b> Osei is the deceitful wife character who cheats on her husband, Kakutarô, behind his back.	The family lives in the Kitamura Household with their little son Shôichi and their servants.	Osei murders her husband intentionally by not unlocking the chest he has been trapped in.	She continues her role as a wife because of the financial difficulties she will experience in case she divorces her husband. Yet, she demonstrates sufficient attention and love to her husband.	She is a passionate lover both from Kakutarô's devotion to her despite her betrayal and her profound yearning to be with her secret lover.	She easily traps her husband to chest despite his protest. She eases the guilt she feels towards the murder of her husband with the image of her lover in her head.	Her financial stability is tied to her marriage. Even if Osei had property prior to her marriage, all of them are transferred to her husband's management. +	She satisfies her sexual needs with her lover, but also feels guilty for deceiving her husband, so she tries to spend time with him, too. +	Osei uses the memories of her sexual escapades with her lover as a defense mechanism from the guilt of murdering her husband. +
<b>BEAST IN THE SHADOWS</b> <i>(INJÛ)</i>	<b>Shizuko:</b> She is the young wife of Rokurô Oyamada, who was stabbed to death by a mysterious culprit.	This story takes place in Tokyo, mostly around Sumida River and Asakusa where the Oyamada mansion is located.	Shizuko's husband is found dead, and all the evidence found are points out that she might be the one who did it.	She married to her husband after losing her father, and they apparently had a loving spousal relationship.	She is an attractive woman whose husband and lover take great efforts to please her.	She kills her husband with a meticulous plan and disguises herself as an old lover of hers who seeks revenge on her.	Her marriage to Rokuro eased the financial burden on her family, her livelihood depends on her husband. +	She has masochistic preferences in bed, gives her consent to these type of sexual play in bed. +	Shizuko uses her passive sexuality to cover her criminal persona. +
<b>CATERPILLAR</b> <i>(IMO MUSHI)</i>	<b>Tokiko:</b> She is the wife of Sunaga, who lost his legs, arms, and sensory organs except for his eyes in the war. She has been taking care of her invalid husband for three years on her own.	They live in a cottage of Washio's country estate. They are isolated from the town making them more dependent on each other.	She gauges her husband's eyes out of their socket. The next day the husband leaves a note saying, "I forgive you" and commits suicide.	Tokiko married Sunaga before he became permanently disabled during the war and they loved each other.	Sex is a means of reconciliation for Tokiko, and she uses it to appease her husband and for her own pleasure. She likes his submissive position	When she gets irritated by the look in his eyes and tells him to stop staring at her. When Sunaga refuses to comply with her orders, she ends up gauging his eyes out.	Tokiko remains by her poor husband's side to for the sake of being an ideal wife	Tokiko is dominant in sexual act, but she finds her sadistic side later	Tokiko's sexuality activates her aggressor side, and she gorges her husband's eyes to get rid of his looks

## REFERENCES

- Adams, K. A. (2009). Modernization and dangerous women in Japan. *The Journal of Psychohistory*, 37(1), 33–44. Retrieved from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/38031731>
- Anderson, M. S. (2010). *A place in public: Women's rights in Meiji Japan*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Barker, C. (2016). *Cultural studies: Theory and practice*. London: Sage Publications.
- Best, S. (2003). *A beginner's guide to social theory*. London: Sage Publications.
- Blacker, C. (2005). Fukuzawa Yukichi on husband-wife relationships. In H. Tomida & G. Daniels (Eds.), *Japanese women: Emerging from subservience, 1868-1945* (pp. 145–156). Kent: Global Oriental.
- Copeland, R. (2007). Mythical bad girls: The corpse, the crone, and the snake. In L. Miller & J. Bardsley (Eds.), *Bad girls of Japan* (pp. 15–32). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Czarnecki, M. (2005). Bad girls from good families: The degenerate Meiji schoolgirl. In L. Miller & J. Bardsley (Eds.), *Bad girls of Japan* (pp. 49–64). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dorling Kindersley. (2019). *The feminism book*. London: Dorling Kindersley Limited.
- Ekken, Kaibara. (1905). *Women and wisdom of Japan*. [by Kaibara Ekken.] With an introduction by Shingoro Takaishi. (S. Takaishi, Ed.).
- Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, 103(4), 962–1023. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1086/231294>
- Figal, G. (2006). *Chapter eleven: Good wives and wise mothers 良妻賢母*. Figal-Sensei.org. Retrieved from [http://figal-sensei.org/hist157/Textbook/ch11\\_main.htm](http://figal-sensei.org/hist157/Textbook/ch11_main.htm)
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777–795. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1086/448181>

- Foucault, M. (1992). *The use of pleasure: The history of sexuality: volume 2*. London: Penguin Books.
- Giddens, A. (1985). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. Cambridge Malden: Ma Polity Press. (Original work published in 1984)
- Hsia, H.-C., & Scanzoni, J. H. (1996). Rethinking the roles of Japanese women. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 27(2), 309–329. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.27.2.309>
- Imajoh, T. (2021). Disabled veterans and their families: Daily life in Japan during WWII. *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 19(1), 1–17. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1479591421000085>
- Ishikawa, T. (2021, October 28). *Edogawa Ranpo's world of mystery and terror. Nippon*. Retrieved from <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-topics/g01199/edogawa-ranpo's-world-of-mystery-and-terror.html>
- Iwao, S. (1995). *The Japanese woman: Traditional image and changing reality*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Jansen, M. B. (2000). *The making of modern Japan*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Karlin, J. G. (2014). *Gender and nation in Meiji Japan: Modernity, loss, and the doing of history*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Kawana, S. (2008). *Murder most modern: Detective fiction and Japanese culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Knapp, K. N. (2009). Three fundamental bonds and five constant virtues sāngāng wǔcháng 三綱五常. In K. Brown, W. Chai, & L. Cheng (Eds.), *Berkshire Encyclopedia of China* (pp. 2252–2255). Berkshire Publishing Group LLC. Retrieved from <https://chinaconnectu.com/wp-content/pdf/ThreeFundamentalBondsandFiveConstantVirtues.pdf>
- Lamsal, M. (2012). The structuration approach of Anthony Giddens. *Himalayan Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 5, 111–122. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3126/hjsa.v5i0.7043>

- Lebra, T. S. (1992). *Japanese women: Constraint and fulfillment*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii.
- Lebra, T. S. (2007). *Collected papers of Takie Lebra: Identity, gender, and status in Japan*. Kent: Global Oriental.
- Lowy, D. (2004). Nora and the “new woman”: Visions of gender and modernity in early twentieth-century Japan. *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal*, 26, 75–97. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42771912>
- Marran, C. L. (2007). *Poison woman: Figuring female transgression in modern Japanese culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Matsuyama, I. (1993). *Uwasa no enkinhō*. Seidosha.
- McNay, L. (2016). Agency. In L. Disch & M. Hawkesworth (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of feminist theory* (pp. 39–60). London: Oxford University Press.
- Nozoe, A. (1930). 近代犯罪科学全集 第5篇, 女性と犯罪 / *Kindai hanzai kagaku zenshū. 5, Josei to hanzai*. Bukyōsha, Shōwa 5.
- Millett, K. (1970). *Sexual politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Morrissey, B. (2003). *When women kill: Questions of agency and subjectivity*. London: Routledge.
- Nagy, M. (1992). Middle-class working women during the interwar years. In G. L. Bernstein (Ed.), *Recreating Japanese women, 1600-1945* (pp. 199–216). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Nolte, S. H., & Hastings, S. A. (1992). The Meiji state's policy toward women, 1890-1910. In G. L. Bernstein (Ed.), *Recreating Japanese women, 1600-1945* (pp. 151–174). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ochiai, E. (2000). Debates over the ie and the stem family: Orientalism east and west. *Japan Review*, 12, 105–128. International Research Centre for Japanese Studies, National Institute for the Humanities.
- Pennington, L. K. (2015). *Casualties of history: Wounded Japanese servicemen and the Second World War*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.



- Rabinow, P. (Ed.). (1994). The ethics of the concern of the self as a practice of freedom. In R. Hurley (Trans.), *Ethics, subjectivity and truth* (pp. 281–301).
- Ranpo, E. (1930). My love for the printed word Katsuji to boku to – shōnen no dokusha ni okuru. In S. Jacobowitz (Trans.), *The Edogawa Ranpo reader* (pp. 245–262). Fukuoka: Kurodahan Press.
- Ranpo, E. (1956). *Japanese tales of mystery & imagination* (J. B. Harris, Trans.). Tokyo: Tokyo Tuttle. (Original work published 1956)
- Ranpo, E. (2006). *The black lizard and beast in the shadows* (I. Hughes, Trans.). Fukuoka: Kurodahan Press.
- Ranpo, E. (2008). *The Edogawa Ranpo reader* (S. Jacobowitz, Trans.). Fukuoka: Kurodahan Press.
- Ranpo, E. (2021). *Edogawa Ranpo denshi zenshū*. Kenbun.
- Reese, L. (n.d.). *Meiji Reforms - Kishida Toshiko, (1863-1901) - Japan - Primary Source*. Retrieved from <http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/WR-04.html>
- Robins-Mowry, D. (2021). *Hidden sun: Women of modern Japan*. London: Routledge.
- Ryū, T. (1980). Edogawa Ranpo ron. In Nakajima Kawatarō. (Ed.), *Edogawa ranpo hyōron to kenkyū* (pp. 39–41). Tokyo: Kōdansha.
- Saito, S. (2012). *Detective fiction and the rise of the Japanese novel, 1880-1930*. The Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center.
- Sato, B. (2003). *The new Japanese woman modernity, media, and women in interwar Japan* (R. Chow, H. Harootunian, & M. Miyoshi, Eds.). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Sievers, S. L. (1983). *Flowers in salt: The beginnings of feminist consciousness in modern Japan*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Silva-Grondin, M. A. (2010). Women in ancient Japan: From matriarchal antiquity to acquiescent confinement. *Inquiries Journal*, 2(09). Retrieved from <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/286/women-in-ancient-japan-from-matriarchal-antiquity-to-acquiescent-confinement>

- Silver, M. (2008). *Purloined letters: Cultural borrowing and Japanese crime literature, 1868-1937*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Silverberg, M. (1992). The modern girl as militant. In G. L. Bernstein (Ed.), *Recreating Japanese women, 1600-1945* (pp. 239–266). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Silverberg, M. R. (2006). *Erotic grotesque nonsense: The mass culture of Japanese modern times*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Spahn, M., Wolfgang Hadamitzky, & Fujie-Winter, K. (1996). *The Kanji dictionary*. Charles E. Tuttle.
- Sugano, N. (2012). State indoctrination of filial piety in Tokugawa Japan sons and daughters in the official records of filial piety. In D. Ko, J. Haboush, & J. R. Piggott (Eds.), *Women and Confucian cultures in premodern China, Korea, and Japan* (pp. 170–189). Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Sultana, A. (2012). Patriarchy and women's subordination: A theoretical analysis. *Arts Faculty Journal*, 4, 1–18. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3329/afj.v4i0.12929>
- The Civil code of Japan* (L. Lönholm, Trans.). (1898). Maruya & Co.
- Tyler, W. J. (2008). *Modanizumu: Modernist fiction from Japan, 1913-1938*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Ueno, C. (1987). The position of Japanese women reconsidered. *Current Anthropology*, 28(S4), S75–S84. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1086/203592>
- Ueno, C. (1996). Collapse of “Japanese mothers.” *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement*, 10, 3–19. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42772092>
- Walby, S. (1989). Theorizing patriarchy. *Sociology*, 23(2), 213–234. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038589023002004>
- Walby, S. (1990). *Theorizing patriarchy*. Hoboken: Blackwell.

Walthall, A. (1991). The life cycle of farm women in Tokugawa Japan. In G. L. Bernstein (Ed.), *Recreating Japanese women: 1600-1945* (pp. 42–70). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Xinzhong Yao. (2012). *The encyclopedia of Confucianism*. London: Routledge.

Ying, J. (2020). Schoolgirls' resistance of ryōsai kenbo in late Meiji period. *5th International Symposium on Social Science*, 415, 155–159.