

The Father-Daughter Relationship in Contemporary Japanese Women's Literature

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This study examines the father-daughter relationship in literary texts by three women writers: Kurahashi Yumiko (1955-2005), Yū Miri (b.1968), and Kakuta Mitsuyo (b.1967). The aim of this research is to explore the representation of the father's desire for his daughter; furthermore, it investigates how daughters resist such desire and escape controlling fathers.

From the 1970s through the 2000s, the themes of the absent father and the dominating mother attracted considerable attention in Japan, with the latter becoming a paradigm in the study of the portrayal of the family in Japanese literature. As a result, while the mother-daughter relationship in Japanese literature has been widely discussed, the theme of the father-daughter relationship has been overlooked or oversimplified. In comparison to the mother-daughter relationship, the father-daughter relationship has been interpreted as less complicated; some literary critics have argued that in post-war Japan it is relatively easy for the daughter to fight against an oppressive father. However, it is important to note that this view of the father-daughter relationship has overlooked the father's desire for his daughter and the consequent mechanism which forces daughters to respond to that desire.

By focusing on the power dynamics between fathers and daughters as they are created and narrativized within patriarchal social structures, this study illuminates new aspects of modern and contemporary Japanese literature and discusses the possibility for both fathers and daughter to escape the reproduction of stereotyped gender roles within the family.

In Part I "Love and death in the father-daughter relationship: Father-daughter stories in Kurahashi Yumiko's literature," I analyze how Kurahashi parodied master narratives in five works: *Seishōjo* (Divine maiden, 1965), "Nagai yumeji" (The long passage of dreams, 1968), "Kakō ni shisu" (To die at the estuary, 1970), "Himawari no ie" (The house of sunflowers, 1968), "Kamigami ga ita koro no hanashi" (A story from the time gods existed, 1971). In Part I, I explore the rewriting of the master narrative of the father-daughter plot by analyzing the relationship between Kurahashi's texts, postwar girls' novels, and ancient Greek myths and tragedies. By investigating the meaning of incestuous love expressed in these texts, I address the question of how the father's desire manifests itself and how the daughters respond to such desire.

In Part II "The father's control and the daughter's self-emancipation: An analysis of Yū Miri's texts," I compare the author's life to the episodes of violence portrayed in her fiction. I explore the possibilities for the fictional daughters and the author herself to escape the father's control through an analysis of "Fuuru hausu" (Full house, 1995), *Umibe no yurikago* (The cradle by the waterfront, 1997) and *Famirii shiikuretto* (Family secrets, 2010). In addition, I focus on *Ame to yume no ato ni* (After the rain and the dream, 2005), *Tsuki e nobotta Kentarō-kun* (Kentarō climbed to the moon, 2007), and *Kuro* (Black, 2007). In doing so, I examine the relationship between Higashi Yutaka, who

is considered the father of Yū Miri's literature, and his so-called literary daughter. In particular, I explore how Higashi's words dominated Yū's life and works, and how by writing about his death Yū managed to emerge from the role of the devoted daughter and emancipate herself as a writer.

In Part III "A new father-daughter relationship in Kakuta Mitsuyo's literature," I investigate the portrayal of fathers and daughters in Japan during the 1990s and 2000s via reading Kakuta Mitsuyo's works. Through an analysis of "Yūbe no kamisama" (God of the evening, 1992), and "Chichi no bōru" (My father's ball, 2006), I explore the theme of the father's violence and the mechanism that forces daughters to devote themselves to abusing fathers. The analysis of *Boku wa kimi no oniisan* (I'm your brother, 1996) and *Kiddonappu tsuaa* (Kidnap tour, 1998) reveals the possibility of overcoming hegemonic masculinity and creating a new father-daughter relationship. In the last chapter, I discuss the daughter's aversion for the father within the 'modern family,' and the possibility of overcoming hegemonic family ideologies through an analysis of the following three stories: "Choro Q" (Choro Q, 2002), "Kagi tsuki doa" (The locked door, 2002), both included in the collection *Kūchū teien* (The hanging garden, 2002), and the short story "Chichi to gamu to kanojo" (My dad, the chewing gum, and her, 2008).

Therefore, by focusing on three authors with different backgrounds and different approaches to literature, this study sheds light on a twofold quality of the representation of the family in contemporary Japanese literature: on the one hand, it highlights how the father's desire for the daughter has been produced and reproduced within the patriarchal culture, and on the other hand it explores the possibility for both fathers and daughters to escape the reproduction of stereotyped gender roles within the family; that is to say, the dominating father and the devoted daughter.