

across time & genre

reading & writing japanese women's texts

focusing on
Japanese women
and their
contributions to

poetry
fiction
essay
memoir
historiography
criticism
theatre
film
painting
calligraphy



from the pre-modern
to the post-modern

Across Time and Genre:
Reading and Writing Women's Texts

Conference Proceedings
University of Alberta

Edited by

Janice Brown Sonja Arntzen

With the assistance of

Brad Ambury

Copyright © 2002 by the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Alberta

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in a review, no part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, without prior written consent from the publisher. Please address inquiries to Department of East Asian Studies, Room 400, Arts Building, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta Canada T6G 2E6.

Papers from a conference held at University of Alberta, August 2001.

ISBN 1-55195-166-5

Cover: Design by Lois Kim.

Printed by Quality Color Press.

Conference Programme And Table of Contents

Keynote Addresses

- The Construction of Gendered Discourse in the Modern Study of Japanese Literature.
SHARALYN ORBAUGH.....1
- “Full of Sentiment, But Weak:” Is There a Woman’s Voice in Waka.”
LAUREL RASPLICA.....9

Panel 1: Surfing the Second Wave: Japanese Feminist Writing, 1970 - 1990

- Versions and Subversions of a Woman’s Life: The Autobiographies of Hiratsuka Raichō.
JAN BARDSLEY.....21
- Life in the Limelight: Kirishima Yoko and Her *Three Little Pigs*.
AKIKI HIROTA.....24
- Refusing to be Trapped, But How?: Matsubara Junko and the Liberated West.
HIROKO HIRAKAWA.....29
- Depicting Women: Reading Atsugi *Taka’s Memoirs of a Female Documentarist* (Josei Dokyumentarisuto no kaisō).
RONALD P. LOFTUS.....33

Panel 2: Japanese Women’s Texts and Voices: The Muffled Sounds of the Fifteenth to Seventeenth Centuries

- Impersonal Texts: Women’s Voices at the Court of the Warring States Era.
LEE BUTLER.....37
- Behind Curtains: Creating or Hiding the Text of Hino Tomiko’s (1440-1496) Power.
LINDA CHANCE.....40
- A Tapestry of Embroidered Truths: The Silhouette of Hosokawa Gracia (1563-1600).
JANET IKEDA.....45
- Empress Tōfukumonin (1607-78) and Documents (in Word and Image).
ELIZABETH LILLEHOJ.....48

Panel 3: Yoshiya Nobuko and Women Audiences

- Becoming a virgin: Female Growth and Sexuality in *Yaneura no nishojo*.
MICHIKO SUZUKI.....52
- Death of a Lesbian in *The Woman’s Classroom*.
MIHO MATSUGU.....56
- Bringing the Colonies ‘Home’: Yoshiya Nobuko’s Popular Fiction and Imperial Japan.
SARAH FREDERICK.....61
- Remaking Culture and Gender: *Haha no kyoku* and *Stella Dallas*.
CHIKA KINOSHITA
- Lesbianism and the Writing of Yoshiya Nobuko in the Taishō Period.
KAZUE HARADA.....65

Panel 4: Woman as Creator, Woman as Critic

- Miyamoto Yuriko: Theory and Practice.
HEATHER BOWEN-STRUYK
- When the Sun Rises in the West: the Art of Karen Tanaka.
PIOTR GRELLA-MOZEJKO68

Lone Woman Vs. Final Girl: Reading Saitō Minako's Feminist Media Criticism. MARK DRISCOLL	
Mariko Mori: Homage, Beauty, Appropriation, Gesture and the Proto-Female Being. ZITA FARRELL	
Panel 5. Embodying Woman	
Women in the <i>Yamai no sōshi</i> . GAIL F. CHIN.....	73
Writing Kanoko's Body. MIMI LONG	
Women Writing the Postwar Body. DOUG SLAYMAKER.....	78
Embodying the Human Body: Ogino Anna's Narrative Experiment in <i>Half Dead Half Alive</i> . MIDORI McKEON.....	81
Panel 6. For Better or For Worse? Marriage, Family, and Literature	
Love and Marriage in the Ancient Classics of Japan: Literary Artifacts and Takamura Itsue's Historical Imagination. YASUKO SATO.....	85
To Marry or Not To Marry. SACHIKO SHIBATA	
Izumi Shikibu's Lament to her Father: Poetry Within the Constraints of Social Status SUMIKO SHINOZUKA.....	90
What Is To Be Done? Children in the Works of Yū Miri. MELISSA L. WENDER.....	95
Panel 7. Transgendered Expressions: Staking Claim to a Traditionally Male Territory	
Pursuing "Women's Words": The Poetry of Ema Saikō MARI NAGASE.....	100
Demon in a Summer Robe: Katsura Yukiko and the Avant-Garde. ALICIA VOLK.....	103
Kinuyo Tanaka (1910-1977): The First Woman Director in Postwar Japan. KEIKO McDONALD.....	107
Japanese Women Composers and the World of Western Music. TERUKA NISHIKAWA.....	110
Panel 8. Dial M for Murder (...Monsters, Man-Slaughtering, Miyabe Miyuki, and Masculinity)	
Monsters or Imps? The Dynamics of Diabolical Desire in Kōno Taeko's Fantasy Fiction. MARYELLEN T. MORI.....	113
Killing Patriarchy: Man-Slaughtering in Li Ang's <i>The Butcher's Wife</i> and Kanai Mieko's <i>Rotting Meat</i> . MEI-YAO CHEN.....	118
"M is for Murder; K is for Kirino Natsuo:" Japanese Women mystery Writers and the Constructed Family. REBECCA COPELAND.....	123
Migrancy and Translation in Tawada Yōko's <i>The Gotthard Railway</i> . YUKO YAMADE.....	127
Panel 9. Lest We Forget	
Against Essentialist Identity Politics: The Status of Difference in the Critical Writings of Yamakawa Kikue. INDRA LEVY.....	130

Discomfiting Performances: 'Comfort Women' and the Fictions of 'Japanese Womanhood'.
SUZANNE O'BRIEN

Writing Feminist History: The Historical Scholarship of Takamura Itsue and Yamakawa Kikue.

E. PATRICIA TSURUMI.....	135
Memory and Literature.	
MISELI JEON.....	138
Women Questioning the Present: The <i>Jūgoshi Nōto</i> Collective.	
VERA MACKIE.....	144

Panel 10. Women on the Borderlines: Negotiating Cultures

Shibichūdai: Chinese Female Rulership in Japanese Context.

JESSEY J.C. CHOO

"A Japanese Woman with Education:" Ume Tsuda's Correspondence with Adeline Lanman.

FEBE PAMONAG.....149

Negotiating Ainu-ness in a Tokyo Home Setting: Chiri Yukie's 1922 Summer Diaries.

SARAH M. STRONG.....153

An American *Sanba*: The Life of Toku Shimomura, a Japanese-American Midwife.

SUSAN L. SMITH.....157

Ōba Minako's *Oregon yume jūya*: A Hybrid Autobiography.

SUSAN FISHER

Panel 11. Who Are You This Time? Problematized Identities

'Translating' Discursive Systems: Interactive Narration in *The Kagerō Diary*.

LYNN MIYAKE.....161

Cultivating the Universal Self: Two Women *Kanshi* Writers in the Late Edo Period.

YU CHANG.....167

Being Ambiguously Women: Dresses, Deep Pockets and '*Kawaii Onna*'

MICHIKO NIIKINI WILSON.....172

"If I stretch out my arm I touch you, that is intimacy": Haptics in Kawase Naomi's
Katatsumori.

LIVIA MONNET.....175

Panel 12. Women on the Move: Travel and Transgression

Mad Woman Walking: Higuchi Ichiyō as a Flaneur.

ATSUKO SAKAKI.....181

The Wandering Text: Hayashi Fumiko's *Diary of a Vagabond*.

CHARLOTTE EUBANKS.....186

What Did They See in the Tropics? Colonial Ethnography and Gender in Nogami Yaeko and Kubokawa (Sata) Ineko's Travel Writings.

FAYE YUAN KLEEMAN.....189

Tomaru hito, yuku hito: Pushing the Envelope of Female Space.

VALERIE HENITIUK.....195

Panel 13. Nikki: Writing and the Female Self

Lady Ise as Text.

JOSHUA MOSTOW.....200

Two Different Aspects of Identity in *Kagerō Nikki* and *Sarashina Nikki*.

MOTOKO TANAKA.....203

Flight to Narutaki and Her Defeat in *Kagerō Nikki*.

AKEMI TAKIZAWA.....206

Formation of Japanese <i>nikki bungaku</i> as an Autobiographical Genre. KAZUMI NAGAIKE.....	209
Panel 14. Thinking Back Through Our Mothers	
The Sei Shōnagon versus Murasaki Shikibu Debates and the Role of Heian Women Writers in the Formation of National Literature. NAOMI FUKUMORI	
The Literary Creativity of Heian Literary Women and their Social Conditions. CHIGUSA KIMURA-STEVEN.....	213
The Legend of Ono-no-Komachi. TOSHIKO IMAZEKI.....	218
Memoirs of a Real Geisha: Masuda Sayō's <i>Geisha: Half a Lifetime of Pain and Struggle</i> . GAY ROWLEY.....	222
Panel 15. Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman: Coming of Age	
Coming-of-Age Her Style: Saegusa Kazuko's <i>Hibikiko's Smile</i> . AMY CHRISTIANSEN	
The Line of Running Women in Japanese Literature: From Izanami to Modern Women Writers. KAZUKO INOUE.....	226
From Sachiko to Machiko: Nogami Yaeko's Evolving New Woman. ELEANOR J. HOGAN.....	231
Miyamoto Yuriko's <i>Nobuko</i> as an Autobiographical <i>Kunstlerroman</i> . YUMI SOESHIMA.....	234
Panel 16. Gender Identity	
Rewriting Genji, Reconfiguring Gender: Imitation and Innovation in the Late Twelfth-Century Court Monogatari 'Ariake no Wakare' ('Parting at Dawn'). ROBERT OMAR KHAN.....	239
The Role of Gender and Education in the Works of Heian Women Writers. MORIYUKI ITOH.....	244
Shimizu Shikin Employing Sexual Strategies. LESLIE I. WINSTON.....	247
The Writings of Tadano Makuzu: Enlightenment as a Tool to Rise above Gender. BETTINA GRAMLICH-OKA.....	252
Panel 17. Female Sexualities and Pairings	
Women consuming Women: Resistance or Appropriation. YUKI HIRANO.....	256
Kōno Taeko: The Art of Masochism. NINA LANGTON.....	258
Alternative Modern Families and Female Writers of the 1980s and 90s. JUNKO SAEKI.....	263
Vision, Power and War in Kōno Taeko's <i>Miira tori ryokitan</i> . GRETCHEN JONES.....	266
Panel 18. The Visual Body and Beyond	
Bodily Circuitries in 19 th Century Japanese "Books of Nature." CHRISTINE MARRAN.....	272
Yoko Ono, Fluxus, and Postwar Avant-garde Performances of Self. CATHY STEBLYK	
What's wrong with pink? Gender anxiety and <i>shōjo</i> manga. ALWYN SPIES	

<i>Enjo Kōsai</i> and the Female Body in Japanese Contemporary Culture. SHIGEMI NAKAGAWA.....	275
Ideas of Freedom in Henrik Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i> and Enchi Fumiko's <i>The Waiting Years</i> . TAKAO HAGIWARA.....	278

Panel 19. The Sacred and the Secular: Women, Religion, and Myth

Transformed Representations of Chūjōhime in Texts and Images from the 13 th -17 th Centuries. MONIKA DIX.....	280
Murasaki Shikibu in Hell or Paradise? Literature, Salvation, and Gender in Medieval Performative Preaching. LORINDA KIYAMA Yuko Yuasa's Biblical Noh Play, <i>Hannya Miriam</i> . AMPARO ADELINA C. UMALI.....	284
Narrating the Sublime in Courtly Chaos. S. YUMIKO HULVEY	289

Panel 20. Poetry: Personal, Public, Political

Cosmic Tanka: Recreating Universes. AMY V. HEINRICH.....	292
The Passionate Style of Yosano Akiko's <i>Tanka</i> Anthologies. AIDA SOULEIMENOVA.....	298
Ishigaki Rin, the Venus of Tokyo. JANINE BEICHMAN.....	301
Rewriting Texts as Text: The Creation of Yosano Akiko's <i>Midaregami</i> . LEITH D. MORTON.....	304

Storytelling: The Power of *Makoto* (Words of Truth).

The Power of <i>Makoto</i> CINDY CHAN.....	309
A Story of A Child of Tungyangkuei AKIKO TSUTSUI.....	313

**Killing Patriarchy: Man-Slaughtering in Li Ang's
The Butcher's Wife and Kanai Mieko's *Rotting Meat***

Mei-Yao Chen

Introduction

With increasing feminist consciousness, women writers in the modern period have begun writing against patriarchy, attempting to expose the collusion between ideology and cultural practices, and to deconstruct predominantly male cultural paradigms. Such writing intends to unmask and indict the economies of power in which women are always assigned to perform passivity. One rare but important theme in such writing is man-slaughtering. In Asian literature, some feminist works adopt a similar violent theme to reveal the brutal realities of patriarchal exploitation toward women, and to subvert the inequities of power in patriarchal ideologies. In this paper I make a comparative study of two literary texts, one from Taiwan and one from Japan, that feature the theme of man-slaughtering. The first is *Shafu* (*The Butcher's Wife*, 1983), a novel by Taiwan's controversial feminist writer—Li Ang.¹ The other is *Funiku* ("Rotting Meat", 1972), by Kanai Mieko, well known for her fairytale-like shocking stories.² In both works the male protagonists kill pigs for a living, and both end up being murdered by the female protagonists. Neither work, however, is simply a revenge narrative; therefore, it is worth exploring the underlying subversive nature of these works.

Although coming from different cultural and historical backgrounds, both authors accidentally share a similar structure, narrative style, and feminist writing strategy to critique the patriarchy. Both of them blend a feminist critical perspective with postmodern techniques, such as exploring multiple narrations and breaking down traditional symbolic systems.

As Laurel Richardson points out, postmodernism questions "all truth claims of masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural and political struggles...The postmodernist context of doubt distrusts all methods equally."³ Postmodernism brings up ontological questions on the modern sense of the self and subjectivity, the ideas of history as linear and evolutionary, and questions the possibility of

representation and totalization.⁴ In the postmodernist condition all texts are partial, gender-specific, local, and historically and culturally situated. They exercise parody and pastiche, and leave the reader with a sense of uncertainty, bewilderment and loss. They are often playful rather than earnest and despairing, but the challenge of reading them may be daunting.⁵ In this sense, I would argue that both *The Butcher's Wife* and "Rotting Meat" exhibit most of the postmodern characteristics sketched above. Both works employ sarcasm and irony in multiple voices to challenge and deconstruct traditional semiotic systems.

Nonetheless, I am convinced that to reverse power relations between male and female in order to claim the female protagonist as victor is *not* the writers' intent, because the act of simplistic dichotomizing offers no solution. Rather, the writers are concerned with the process of deconstructing the patriarchy and the display of the irony and absurdities of the power structures that relentlessly trap men and women.

It is no exaggeration to say that Li Ang (b. 1952) is one of the most controversial and influential writers of fiction in Chinese. Li has been publicly attacked by male critics and has encountered public disapproval because of her writing on topics blatantly related to sexuality, gender and power. However, in spite of various obstacles, she completed *The Butcher's Wife* in 1983—one of the most controversial and disturbingly powerful works in the history of Taiwanese literature. The significance of this work is expressed not only in its insights into domestic sexual abuse, but also in its attempted challenge to the literary conventions of women's writing.⁶

Unlike most contemporary female writers, Kanai Mieko (b. 1947) has been remarkable for a sustained productivity in poetry, fiction, essays, and literary criticism. Much of her early fiction is extremely short and filled with scenes of blood, cannibalism, dismemberment, and incest. The characters in her fiction usually transgress both the normal laws of physics and narrative realism. In "Rotting Meat," the heroine, a physically and mentally exploited prostitute, kills her patron who is a butcher.

¹ Li Ang. *Shafu—Lucheng gushi* (Husband-killing: Stories of Lucheng) (Taipei: Lianhe, 1983). Citations from Li's novel are based on Howard Goldblatt and Ellen Yeung's translation. *The Butcher's Wife: A Novel by Li Ang* (San Francisco: North Point, 1986).

² Kanai Mieko. "Funiku" (1972). In *Chikuma gendai bungaku taikai*, vol. 93. Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 150-53. All translations are from Mary Knighton's "Rotting Meat" *Fictional International* 29 (1997): 110-15. Hereafter, further citations from this source are given in text, beginning RM.

³ In "Writing: A Method of Inquiry," *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 517.

⁴ Linda Nicholson, and Nancy Fraser, "Introduction" to *Feminism/Postmodernism* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 1-16.

⁵ Raoul, Valerie. "Postmodernism/ Poststructuralism/ Feminism," Handouts from her seminar "Issues in Interdisciplinary Feminist Research: Are Poststructuralist and Feminist Approaches Reconcilable?" held in Term 1, 2001 at U.B.C.

⁶ In Chinese literary history women's writing has long been marginalized and classified under the category of *Gueixiu pai*, or feminine group. Such feminine writing deals with conventional themes such as love, marriage, and romantic relations from a sentimental perspective. *The Butcher's Wife* is an attempt to break away from the mainstream "feminine" writing. As Li Ang declared in the preface to the novel, it is a feminist work.

In large part, both Li Ang and Kanai Mieko have been influenced by Western feminist thinking. In the 1970s, Li spent two years in graduate school in the United States, and was fascinated by the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, and Germaine Greer, among other feminist writers.⁷ In the author's preface to *The Butcher's Wife*, Li openly admits that she approached the writing with a number of feminist ideals.⁸ Kanai is also knowledgeable in Western literary and cultural theory. Although Kanai herself claims that she has no interest in producing feminist work, most critics have persuasively argued that much of her work is, in effect, feminist.⁹

Compared with *The Butcher's Wife*, "Rotting Meat" is extremely short; however, like the former, it has two narrators—a frame narrator and an internal narrator. In *The Butcher's Wife*, both the frame and the internal narrators are third-person, whereas in *Rotting Meat*, they are first-person narrators. Also, as in *The Butcher's Wife*, the male frame narrator in "Rotting Meat" represents an epistemological world and the internal narrator depicts an ontological one. The frame narrator is situated in the real world with which the reader is familiar; while the internal narrator depicts the weird world that is removed from reality. The frame narrator, just like the *waki* in a *mugen* Noh play, bridges the gap between the everyday world of reader/audience and the extraordinary one inhabited by the internal narrator (Orbaugh, 133). The narration of the news reports in *The Butcher's Wife* and that of the man in "Rotting Meat" fulfill this bridging function.

The strategy that both Li Ang and Kanai Mieko employ to write against patriarchy is one of the methods in Sharalyn Orbaugh's classification on women's fiction that attempts to write against the dominant economies of power; "to maintain the current binary configurations of power, but to reverse the gender coding of the hierarchical power roles."¹⁰ As Orbaugh points out, in such deconstructive writing women can speak instead of being silent; they can use their eyes instead of being the

object of the gaze; they can kill instead of being killed; they can dominate instead of being dominated. However, the triumph is always temporary, and the reversals end in tragedy. Linshi in *The Butcher's Wife* is sentenced to death, whereas the prostitute in "Rotting Meat" is left in a desperate and hopeless situation that she could not have a thriving career any more.

The Butcher's Wife

The Butcher's Wife undisguisedly portrays the female protagonist, Linshi, as being sexually abused and brutally repressed. Li Ang unfolds the inhuman practices with regard to sex and economic power relations, such as arranged marriage, control of food, and sexual abuses, in an appalling and terrifying way. Her novel attempts to deconstruct the phallogocentric world and to shock the readers into awareness. The story is set in Lugang, the author's hometown, in the 1930s when Taiwan was colonized by Japan. Linshi and her mother were forced to roam the streets after her father died when she was only nine years old. Arguing that Linshi's mother would remarry, her uncle dispossessed them of the tile-roofed house that was their only possession. One day Linshi's mother was caught in the family's ancestral hall while having sex with a stray soldier. It is not clear whether she is raped by him or has consented to sexual intercourse. However, what is evident is that she is greedily chewing on rice balls which seem to be provided by the soldier in return for her sexual availability. Not knowing how the clansmen punished her mother, Linshi never saw her mother again, and was sent to live as a servant with her uncle's family in the tile-roofed house. A few years later, her uncle, to his own advantage, arranged a marriage for her with Chen Jiangshui—a butcher with an unsavory reputation. Chen Jiangshui, who by nature is destructive, uses food and violence to control Linshi in order to satisfy his own sexual drive and desire to dominate. After several failed attempts to escape from her husband's control, Linshi falls into a completely helpless and hopeless situation. One night, after another unbearable torment, Linshi seems to be in a trance, and feels drawn by the butcher's knife gleaming in the pale moonlight. She slaughters her husband in the way he slaughters the pigs.

The main text of *The Butcher's Wife* is framed by two news reports, presented as a prologue, and one appendix as an epilogue. In the two news reports, readers are informed that Linshi is an "immoral" woman who killed her husband for the sake of her extramarital affair. The anonymous reporter accuses Linshi of murder in an authoritative, 'logical', and 'rational' tone. At the beginning, the reader is led to accept the false reality the news coverage represents. The news reports frame an epistemological realm that introduces and concludes the main text. However, the main text, told by a third person (internal narrator) in an ontological sense, gradually converts Linshi's image as a debauched woman who should be severely punished into an inhumanly abused wife. In the appendix, presumably published after the

⁷ See Chien, Ying-Ying. "Women Crossing the Wild Zone: Sexual/Textual Politics in the Fiction of Ding Ling and Li Ang." *Fu Jen Studies* 28 (Feb. 1995): 1-17.

⁸ See the author's preface to Li Ang's *The Butcher's Wife*.

⁹ See Kitada Sachie's "Usagi Kanai Mieko;" Komata Yūsuke, "Kanai Mieko—Gengo geemu no hatsuwa," "Feminizumu: Josei kukan no genzai" (Feminism: The Contemporary Space among Women), *Kokubungaku: kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* 37, no.13 (November 1992), and Sharalyn Orbaugh's "The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women's Fiction." In *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing*. Eds. Paul Gordon Schalow, and Janet A. Walker. (California: Stanford University Press, 1996), 119-64.

¹⁰ The other two strategies are: "to maintain and describe the current configurations of power, exposing the harm done through them; to maintain and describe the current configurations of power, but to invert the hierarchy of value, to valorize the object/passive side of the equation." Orbaugh, 123-24.

sentencing of Linshi, the reader is told that the entire story was based on an actual homicide that occurred in Shanghai in the 1930s. In reality, the man-slaughtering woman escaped the death penalty because of a general amnesty. By introducing another voice, this appendix boosts this polyphonic novel to a richer and more dynamic level. Not only does it signify the disruption of the total domination of the patriarchal order, but it also arouses some hopes for the resisting heroine in fiction and in reality.¹¹ Unfortunately, however, the appendix is omitted in its English translation which might result in a misrepresentation of this work.¹²

In the novel, Li uses a parallel structure and several analogies to develop the plot. Sex and food, being bound to one another, are men's means to control women. The scene in which Linshi's mother has sex with the soldier and the one in which Linshi has sex on her wedding night are comparable. On Linshi's wedding night, having eaten very little all day, she is exhausted, and emits pitiful screams and faints when her drunk husband brutally claims his 'conjugal privilege.' After his savage desire is quenched, Chen Jiangshui rouses her with wine and fetches her a big piece of pork.

With bloated cheeks, she chewed on the pork, making squishing noises as fat oozed out the corners of her mouth and dribbled down in rivulets to her chin and neck, all greasy and wet... She looked down to discover that her pants were still down around her ankles. She had eaten this wonderful meal while she was naked from the waist down!" (23)

Sex is exclusively associated with male violence and power. To Chen Jiangshui killing pigs is a sexual experience. As a professional butcher, he was proud of his slaughtering skill.

As the knife was withdrawn and the blood spurted forth, he was infused with an incomparable sense of satisfaction. It was as though the hot stream coursing through his body was converted into a thick, sticky white fluid spurting into the shadowy depths of a woman at the climax of a series of high-speed thrusts. To Chen Jiangshui, the spurting of blood and the ejaculation of semen had the same orgasmic effect. (75)

The butcher's knife is obviously a phallic symbol. The squealing of struggling pigs corresponds with Linshi's screaming on the bed. Chen Jiangshui's sadistic sexual desire cannot be satisfied without women's groaning. In

other words, women's moaning reconfirms his power and female subordination. Indeed, for Chen Jiangshui, Linshi is similar to the pigs whose helplessness provides him the pleasant sensation of male dominance.

The red wedding dress Linshi's mother wears in the scene with the soldier symbolically equates Linshi's virginal blood and the blood of slaughtering pig. The wedding dress also symbolizes Linshi's marriage as a repetition of forced prostitution. The redundant images of a mouthful of food, saliva dripping down, and eating while half-naked, create a resonant composition that enriches the artistry of this work.

There is a recurring dream that has been haunting Linshi for years during her suffering life with her husband:

Several pillars, so tall they impale the clouds, disappearing into a pitch darkness that stretches on endlessly. Suddenly, a rumble of thunder, moving inexorably nearer and nearer. Then a loud boom. Not a trace of flames anywhere, yet the pillars become instantly charred, without so much as wobbling. Finally, after the longest time, dark red blood begins to seep from the cracks in the blackened pillars. (10)

Some critics, such as Chien, have pointed out that the image of the pillars in this dream symbolizes Linshi's unresolved fear, anxiety, and sexual repression from past traumatic experiences (272). However, since the pillars resemble the ones in Linshi's ancestral hall, a place where only men have the right to speak, and where her mother was caught and punished by the clansmen/male authority, I would argue that the dream rather symbolizes the violent male penetration of the female's body. The image of the black bloody pillars represents the phallic power exerted upon Linshi.

The climax of the plot is the scene in which Linshi slaughters her husband. Linshi grips the butcher knife, stabs downwards, and, recalling what she had been forced to behold at the slaughterhouse, butchers her husband. However, she thinks she is killing a pig, and keeps telling herself: "it must be a dream" (Ang 139). While she is wielding the knife, suddenly, many memories flash into view: the face of the soldier who has sex with her mother, a squealing, struggling pig with a butcher knife buried at an angle in its gullet, and the nightmares that have been haunting her for a long time. It seemed that all of the suffering, torment, and nightmares are hacked away by the knife. Finally, she can have a dreamless and tranquil sleep. When Linshi takes over and wields her husband's knife—a symbol of phallic power—she reverses the existing relationship between male and female.

In contrast to his sadistic abuse of Linshi, Chen Jiangshui's relationship with the prostitute Golden Flower reveals his gentle, humorous, humane, and protective characteristics. Throughout the story Chen Jiangshui does not once call Linshi by her name (mostly, he calls her a "slut"). He always remains quiet even when his colleagues make obscene jokes about him.

¹¹ Chien, Ying-Ying. "Deconstructing Patriarchy/Reconstructing Womanhood: Feminist Readings of Multicultural Women's Murder Fiction." *Tamkang Review* 26, nos. 1 and 2, Autumn & Winter 1995: 263-87.

¹² Although there is reference to the Shanghai case in the preface to *The Butcher's Wife*, it does not offer any information on the amnesty of the murderess's death penalty.

...ness, when he visits Golden Flower, they do not have sex but an openhearted and intimate conversation. As a prostitute Golden Flower has some economic independence. Her customers have limited access to her, and must follow certain rules when consuming her as a "commodity." More importantly, her independence protects her from the savage, brutal sexual attacks which Linshi, as a wife, endures regularly without any warning. In this sense, Chen Jiangshui has less dominating power over Golden Flower, who has more sovereignty over her own body than does Linshi, and is self-reliant (she decides to quit prostituting and start a new business with her mother-in-law). As such, Golden Flower has a relatively more equal status to Chen Jiangshui than does Linshi.

Also, because of his lowly occupation—it is superstitiously believed that a butcher will descend to hell after death—Chen Jiangshui is the last man with whom any woman would like to marry. An orphan like Linshi is the best marriage he can get. His treatment of Linshi shows not only his destructively patriarchal nature, but also his resentment of taking up this occupation (there is not much choice for a man from a poor low-class family). Linshi, in an attempt to achieve independence, once tries to use her deflowering money given by her husband to raise a brood of ducklings so that she can have an income. However, the ducklings end up being slaughtered by Chen Jiangshui. Obviously, financial independence is one of the prerequisites for women to attain equality with men. It is a bitter irony that marriage provides Linshi with neither security nor benefit, but only torture—the unbearable tortures that even a prostitute like Golden Flower would never experience. Chen Jiangshui, whose name literally means 'stream,' is a fierce flood to Linshi, but a nurturing resource to Golden 'Flower,' whose depictions always associate her with mother earth. Chen Jiangshui's need to exert his male power through sexual abuse is only expressed toward his wife, not toward the prostitute.

"Rotting Meat"

In comparison to *The Butcher's Wife*, the plot of "Rotting Meat" is much shorter. The absurd plot and the narrative technique Kanai employs result in a general elusiveness, which baffles the reader of "Rotting Meat." Less interested in plot, Kanai is more concerned with psychic processes. Compared with *The Butcher's Wife*, "Rotting Meat" is written in a more subtle and vague way. It does not mention when or where the story is set, nor does it provide a name for any of the characters. Characters are referred to as *kanojo* (she), *otoko* (man), *otokotachi* (men), or by occupation, such as *fudōsan'ya* (the real estate agent) and *tosatsujin* (the butcher). The story starts with a male first-person narrator — the frame narrator — stating what he knows and what he is sure about:

While I'm sure that I've been to her room before, finding it again would be difficult. The moment I

left that room, deep inside I knew it: if I leave here, I won't be able to get back again. Deep inside I knew it. I knew I probably wouldn't even be able to find the realtor who had taken me to the room if I did try and find it. Yet when I saw that bloody, rotting meat, I fled from that room, only able to think of getting outside for air as fast as I could. (RM 110)

The man is expressing the epistemological world that he knows with certainty. Being a writer he was looking for a quiet place where he could escape from writing. He moved into a small apartment which was shown by a real estate agent who had terribly bad breath. The offensive odor in the room, which he thought was the lingering effect of the realtor's bad breath, led him to a built-in wardrobe in the room where he found a woman (internal narrator). The second paragraph switches from the man to the woman whom we later discover is a prostitute.

She tells the man about her former livelihood. She had been a thriving prostitute who received valuable things from her patrons, such as gold watches, jeweled lighters, and, of course, cash. But one of her patrons, a butcher, brought her something far more unusual—the meat of a whole, freshly butchered piglet. Since the jealous butcher treated her body so roughly that she could not see other customers after his visits, she killed him and shoved the corpse under the bed. As soon as the man (frame narrator) looks at the lump of bloody, decomposing meat, and realizes that it is the butcher's corpse, not pig meat, he flees the room as quickly as possible.

At the end, the story returns to the frame narrator expressing his desire to look for the prostitute again. He wants to find the room and propose marriage to her. He even fantasizes that he will become a slice of rotting meat to be swallowed up by her internal organs. Recently, he says, his body has been rotting away little by little from the inside out, and his own breath has become horrifyingly bad, just like that of the realtor who seems to be the prostitute's pimp (RM 115). The man is suggesting that any man who encounters the prostitute will eventually submit himself to her and become meat to her.

"Rotting Meat" is a work that appeals to the senses, especially that of smell, for example, the stench of a rotting body that spreads throughout the story. Although there are few physical descriptions of the characters, body discourse is primary in the work. The human body, not edible whether dead or alive, will be a corpse after death. On the contrary, a pig will be meat but never a corpse. However, since the female protagonist is a prostitute who sells her body for a living, any man is allowed to consume her body as long as he can pay for it. Therefore, her body is consumable meat to men when alive, and will become a corpse when she dies. When referring to the distinction between a corpse and meat, both the frame and the internal narrators agree that meat is edible/consumable and a corpse is not. Yet the

difference between the two remains obscured. The woman confesses that it is often hard to distinguish meat from a corpse. In the prostitute's eye, the piglet is more like a corpse than meat. As Orbaugh suggests, due to her occupation, the internal narrator/the woman identifies herself with the piglet (Orbaugh, 138). That is, since she is usually called meat because of her occupation and because her dead body would be a corpse, she "elevates" the piglet, which is supposed to be meat, to a corpse — the same status with her.

In a patriarchal society men who hold economic power have the right to consume women. In *The Butcher's Wife* Linshi, who is not a prostitute, is given deflowering money by her husband after the first night of sex. Like the prostitute in "Rotting Meat", Linshi (her mother, and Golden Flower as well) has to trade her body for food. In this sense, women/prostitutes are equal to meat, whereas men/butchers are the consumers. However, at the end of both stories, this paradigm is inverted. Both butchers end up being killed/consumed. The reason that the prostitute kills the butcher also inverts the ordinary paradigm.

As for that one, he absolutely hated me to get along with any other man but him. Give up this business, and let's set up a household, he said. Am I the sort who is able to act out that bit of common pretense? Still, though, I really did love him. That's why it was only natural that he be killed, you know." (114-5)

The prostitute kills the butcher not only because of her resistance to his sexual violation, but also because of her love for him (he probably is the only person who proposes marriage to her).

Although the prostitute does not consume any meat (neither the butcher's corpse nor the piglet), the frame narrator fantasizes that she is a cannibal, and he desires to be killed and eaten by her. The man's cannibalistic fantasy associates itself with the image of a Japanese legendary figure, the *Yamamba*, a female demon with superhuman strength dwelling deep within the mountains and devouring men. If the figure of a man-eating female demon suggests men's desire to marginalize and alienate women due to their fear of women's 'uncontrolled' power, then the male frame narrator's fantasy of being swallowed and digested by the prostitute completely reverses the power structure between men and women. His fantasy shows his complete submission to the prostitute.

The man who is a writer intends "to escape from writing, to escape to the extreme point of not writing...waiting for death..." (113) As a male writer he is in a subject position, and has the right to 'speak.' His renunciation of power reverses the binary paradigm of the male and female relationship. Judith Butler's performative theory of identity suggests that our gendered identities do not express an authentic inner "core" self, but are the dramatic effect of our

performance. The illusion of an "interior and organizing gender core" is itself a "fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies" through our performances. She further proposes that the "natural" or "essential" nature of gender could be challenged from within the resources of the system itself, through the parody of it.¹³ Obviously, the man's desire to perform 'female' passivity can be seen as a parody. Through such a parody, Kanai demonstrates that female can perform male, and vice versa. That is, instead of being consumed and victimized, women can consume, like the prostitute; instead of consuming and being victimizers, man can be consumed, like the butcher and the male writer. Thus, Kanai blurs the boundary between two genders, the boundary between body and mind, and the boundary between the fantasy and the real world.

Conclusion

Both *The Butcher's Wife* and "Rotting Meat" are political works that protest sexual violence against women by depicting its reality. Through manslaughter, the patriarchy is killed metaphorically, and, symbolically, women's status is elevated. In *The Butcher's Wife*, Linshi's triumph is only temporary as she is sentenced to death as a murderer at the end of the story. Some critics contend that Linshi's breakdown at the moment of the murder does not mean any self-awareness or self-assertiveness but mere a total collapse. Therefore, she is not a "true" feminist heroine.¹⁴ However, as author Li Ang has argued, it is unrealistic for an illiterate peasant like Linshi to be consciously aware of her oppression and rebel.¹⁵ Thus, Linshi's rebellion has to be on a subconscious level. In the story, the female protagonist tries to seek economic independence twice but in vain. In a sense, this implies the difficulty of women throwing off restraints put up by patriarchal society.

In contrast to *The Butcher's Wife* that concludes with a punishment for the female protagonist's act of rebellion against patriarchal society, there is no punishment of any sort for the prostitute in "Rotting Meat." Unlike Linshi, a peasant woman who does not have a sense of self and autonomy, and whose rebellion is more on a subconscious level, the prostitute in "Rotting Meat" has a more feminist consciousness. However, it is inappropriate to consider her a victor. Instead of being

¹³ *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 171-77.

¹⁴ See Cai, Yingjun. "Nu zuojia de liangzhong he qi kunjing" (The Dilemma of the two Stereotypes of women Writers). *Wen Xing* 110 (1987): 96-101. Joyce C.H. Liu, "From Loo Port to Taipei: The World of Women in Li Ang's Works." *Fu Jen Studies* 19 (1986): 65-85. Sheung-Yuen Daisy Ng, "Feminism in the Chinese Context: Li Ang's *The Butcher's Wife*." *Modern Chinese Literature* 4, nos. 1,2, Spring & Fall 1988: 177-200.

¹⁵ Chien, Ying-Ying. "Women, Feminism, and Creativity: An Interview with Li Ang." *Chung-Wai Literary Monthly* 17, no. 10, March 1989: 184-85.

confined by a simplistic power paradigm between men and women (men are hunters/victimizers, women are food/victims), Kanai introduces a new binary paradigm—men can be eaten/passive and women can eat/be active. By reversing the male-dominated power paradigm with irony and parody, Kanai provides the reader with a window of opportunity to ponder the ways women could behave in the power context, and further, the issue of female subjectivity.

In both stories, the writers attempt to resist and subvert male-constructed “truths” and, further, to reconstruct women’s own stories and to give them voice. Both of these stories reveal the brutal fact that women experience the economies of power directly through the body. Indeed, both stories are composed of many shocking, grotesque, and bloody scenes; however, advocating the killing of violence by resorting to violence, as both female protagonists do through brutal revenge, is not the message in either story. Rather, they are attempting to graphically present unequal gender relations in patriarchal societies, and moreover, to show how patriarchy constitutes gender in society. As Kurahashi Yumiko points out, an artist does not paint an apple because she wants to eat an apple.¹⁶ The process of uncovering women’s oppression under patriarchy in these two works is more important than the violence both female protagonists commit to. Without such a tradition of fantastic writing in the field of Taiwan’s women literature, Li Ang’s *The Butcher’s Wife* comes out more realistic in its writing style. Nonetheless, the act of manslaughter in both stories is clearly a symbolic protest and rebellion against patriarchal domination.

**"M is for Murder; K is for Kirino Natsuo:"
Japanese Women Mystery Writers
and the Constructed Family**

Rebecca Copeland

Western observers of the detective genre note that when women writers take control, the story inevitably involves family. This is not to suggest that the mystery itself concerns family issues (though frequently it does) but rather that the detective, the victim(s), and even the murderer are presented through a web of familial connection. Unraveling this web is often what leads the investigator not only to solve the mystery — the “whodunit” — but to offer explanations for the “whydunit.” And in most mystery stories, it is the latter — the whydunit — that occupies narrative interest. As Kimberly J. Dilley observes in *Busybodies, Meddlers, and Snoops: The Female Hero in Contemporary Women’s Mysteries*, the murder is just the hook to draw readers in. The subsequent story is more about life — how it is led — than death.¹ Of women mystery writers she notes: “The women’s mystery novels examine and highlight life. They involve relationships, the details of the everyday, and the construction of community...The detective story involves reading the details of life as an important narrative” (Dilley, 139-140). My brief sampling of mystery fiction by Japanese women writers reveals a similar impulse. The mysteries are frequently centered around the home, involve characters whose identities are developed through family affiliations, and are frequently solved when family connections are unraveled and revealed. In this essay I will explore the implication of family in *Tenshi ni misuterareta yoru* (The night the angels forgot, 1994) by Kirino Natsuo. I am particularly interested in the way Kirino suggests the importance of family while simultaneously uncovering the bankruptcy of traditional values in a postmodern society.

For feminist critics of Japanese society, the family structure has long been described as the origin of female abjection. The oft-cited adage “Women have no home in three realms,” for example, reveals how women have been so confined to tightly prescribed roles of daughter, wife, and mother, that they have had little opportunity to establish identities for themselves that are independent of these roles. And so the modern woman has worked to remove herself from the self-negating space of the home and to make her way into the public realm — a realm often associated with danger and disorderliness and, because of the woman’s entrance into it, a disruption of moral certainty.

Murano Miro, the female detective in *The Night the Angels Forgot* exemplifies both the effort to escape the home and the alienation that ensues. Murano is the classic “hardboiled” female detective not unlike her

¹⁶ Kurahashi Yumiko. “From the Author of *Blue Journey*”; quoted in Sakaki Atsuko. *The Intertextual Novel and the Interrelational Self: Kurahashi Yumiko, a Japanese Postmodernist* (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 1992), 7; quoted in Orbaugh, 154.

¹ (Vermont: Greenwood Press, 1998), 79. Further citations from this source begin “Dilley.”