MIURA AYAKO THE CHRISTIAN WRITER:  
A CRITICAL STUDY OF HER MAJOR NOVELS AND THEIR RECEPTION IN JAPAN

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Dedication

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Abstract

Miura Ayako (1922-1999) was one of the most successful women writers in modern Japan. Yet, despite her literary talent, Miura had until recently been labelled as “a writer of taishū bungaku,” (“mass” literature) and her works had been relegated to the periphery as “popular novels” unworthy of serious criticism or scholarship. My research project is a re-examination of the life and works of Miura Ayako and a case study of how a female Christian novelist survived and thrived in the Japanese literary world. The central thesis of my dissertation is this: “the hitherto negative reception of Miura’s novels by critics in Japan can be attributed to the obstacles she faced as a woman writer of popular novels on Christian themes, working from the off-center location of Hokkaidō.” My dissertation problematizes the distinction between junbungaku (pure literature) and taishū bungaku and questions the authority held by the male-dominated bundan (literary guild) in terms of deciding what is or is not pure literature. As the critic Hirano Ken observes, by the 1930s, the notion of “pure” literature had become established by the bundan in reaction to the rising tide of mass literature. I contend that, just as shishōsetsu (autobiographical I-novel) became equated with junbungaku because it was considered more “purely Japanese,” Miura’s Christian novels had been rejected because they were viewed as “foreign” and “too far from native traditions” to be considered “pure literature.” Through a textual analysis of eight representative works by Miura, including her historical novels, I demonstrate that her novels are by no means “low-brow fiction for mere entertainment”; rather they represent serious works of fiction that explore life and human nature, rivaling the works of Mori Ōgai, Natsume Sōseki, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Ōe Kenzaburō who are counted among the best of modern Japanese writers. I conclude that Miura ultimately succeeded by writing novels that defy a clear distinction between the “pure” and the “mass” and by challenging some of the most basic assumptions held by the literary establishment in terms of what constitutes pure literature, who is qualified to write it, and how it should be written.
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For easy reference and quotation in the main text, I use the following abbreviations for novels written by Miura Ayako:


INTRODUCTION

Miura Ayako (1922-1999) was one of the most successful and prolific writers in post-war Japan. Her debut novel, Hyōten, which sold over 500,000 copies in a short time and sparked off a multi-media, nationwide social phenomenon called the “Hyōten Boom,” not only won her the prestigious Asahi Literary Prize on July 10, 1964, but also turned Miura Ayako into a household name, as well as a best-selling international writer.1 Although Miura saw herself as an evangelical writer, her numerous novels (35 book-length works) and essays are enjoyed by a large reading public, both domestically and abroad, Christians and non-Christians alike.

Miura was a serious writer who addressed in her works some of the most fundamental issues of human existence and the meaning of life – when it comes to examining the problem of egoism, she was no less critical and insightful than her male predecessors, Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927). Despite her success as a writer, and the high quality of her literary works, Miura Ayako has been virtually overlooked by Western scholars. Indeed, a chapter in Philip Gabriel’s 2006 book, Spirit Matters: The Transcendent in Modern Japanese Literature, which focuses primarily on Miura’s debut novel and its sequel Zoku Hyōten, are probably the most in-depth studies of Miura’s early novels by a Western scholar to date. Other than that, a brief entry each in two biographical sourcebooks on Japanese women writers, one edited by Chieko Mulhern (1994) and the other by Sachiko Schierbeck (1994), are what have been produced so far by western scholarship.
My dissertation is intended to be a full-length, critical study of the life and fictional works of Miura Ayako. By examining her writings from a variety of perspectives, I hope to add to the existing body of scholarship by shedding light on the important achievements of Miura Ayako as a woman writer and by bringing to the awareness of the Western reader her unique contributions to the literary culture of post-war Japan. I focus on the art of Miura’s writings and her reception by the reading public and the literary establishment (*bundan*). Specifically, my study is an examination of Miura’s unique approach to literature and a demonstration of how she managed to assert her voice and ultimately succeeded in Japan as a Christian writer.

The apparent lack of scholarly interest can be attributed to the deep-rooted attitude among critics and the male-dominated literary establishment in Japan, that has essentially dismissed Miura Ayako’s novels from day one as “popular fiction,” and therefore unworthy of critical inquiry or serious commentaries. Upon reading *Hyōten*, the influential literary critic Hirano Ken (1907-78) discredited the bestseller in a highly critical review featured in the literary column of *Mainichi Shinbun*. Hirano’s harshest criticism is on the novel’s plot, which he considers “contrived” (*muri*), unnatural (*fushizen*), absurd (*hijōshiki*) and beyond the realm of possibility (*arienai*). Hirano argues that, although covered with a seemingly intellectual coating, the main plot is driven by the old, recycled theme of the “ill-treatment of one’s step-child” (*mamako-ijime*). In order to captivate the readers and to hold their interest, the author creates a world of unreality (*higenjitsu*) that runs counter to the ideal principles of “realism” and “actuality” – that is, faithful representation of the actual world, including real people and places. In Hirano’s view, *Hyōten* fails the test of “realism” and “actuality,” and therefore should not be considered a work of “pure literature.”

Hirano’s review became the standard for subsequent works of criticism on the novels of Miura Ayako and was echoed by another influential critic Odagiri Hideo (1916-2000),
who, like Hirano, equated Miura’s works with popular fiction and attributed his lack of interest in Miura’s works to her being “a popular writer,” stating that “it is customary not to take up such works as a subject of literary criticism or scholarly research.” Hirano and Odagiri seem to agree that Miura wrote popular fiction for the mass readership and that she was not a writer of pure literature. But what exactly is the distinction between the “pure” and the “mass”? A meaningful discussion of Miura’s works would not be possible until we answer this question: “What constitutes pure literature (junbungaku)?”, as opposed to mass literature (taishū bungaku), as conceived by Japanese writers and the literary critics who make up the bundan.

In “The Order of Discourse,” Michel Foucault (1926-1984) argues that discourse operates by “rules of exclusion” concerning what is prohibited. Specifically, discourse is controlled in terms of the objects of speech (what can be spoken of), the ritual of the circumstances of speech (where and how one may speak) and the privileged or exclusive right of the speaking subject (who may speak). He notes “the play of three types of prohibition which intersect, reinforce or compensate for each other, forming a complex grid which changes constantly.”

Commenting on the relationship between discourse and power in the same essay, Foucault writes: “discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.” Simply put, in Foucault’s view, discourse is power in itself – for those who have the exclusive right to participate (in discourse) control discourse and exercise power by privileging certain statements over others. Drawing on the Foucauldian concept of “power and discourse,” I argue that, through the 1960s, when Miura made her literary debut, members of the bundan exercised power over the marginalized (women writers, Christian writers, writers of mass literature, etc.) because they controlled the discourse of what is admissible as “pure” or “high” literature.
In Chapter One, I historicize the concepts of *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* in order to establish a theoretical framework for the discussion of Miura’s novels. Critical discourses in Japan and the West have made clear that the notion of “pure literature” was established in Japan during the 1930s by the *bundan* (literary guild) as a reaction against the rise of mass literature. Matthew Strecher further points out that *junbungaku* became equated with *shishōsetsu* (autobiographical I-novel) during the same historical period when “Japan embarked on a course of radical redefinition of what it meant to be Japanese.” It should be noted that, although Japanese literary critics seem to agree on assigning an elite “high” status to *junbungaku*, they have not set forth clear standards as to what actually constitutes “pure literature,” other than the suggestion that purity is to be found in something personal, essay-like and lyrical, such as the poetic fiction of Shiga Naoya (1883-1971).

I would argue that the distinction between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* is problematic on the following grounds: (1) Historically, the binarism between the “pure” and the “non-pure” was an arbitrary distinction created by members of the *bundan* as a defensive measure against the perceived threat of mass literature; (2) there are no objective standards for determining what is pure and what is not; (3) many of the literary masterpieces that are now considered “high” literature in Japan originated as *popular* literature or performances in the historical past, for instance, *kabuki*, *bunraku* and Ihara Saikaku’s fiction among the best examples; (4) “popular” elements can be identified in the works of major writers both in Japan (e.g., Natsume Sōseki, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, Murakami Haruki) and in the West (e.g., Tolstoy, Dostoevsky), but no one questions the greatness of these writers; (5) the definition of *junbungaku* changes over time – for instance Ōe Kenzaburō’s definition of pure literature in the 1980s was quite different from what the literary establishment had considered *junbungaku* in the 1930s; (6) by the 1980s the line between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* had become so
blurred that a distinction between the two was no longer discernible or even meaningful.

A major focus of Chapter One is to examine the make-up and working of the bundan – the male-dominated, small, enclosed community of like-minded writers, publishers and critics, who decided what qualified as “pure literature” – in order to study the reception of Miura’s writings by the literary establishment. I contend that, despite her talent as a writer, Miura had until recently been relegated to the periphery because she was a woman writer of “popular novels” on Christian themes, working from the off-center location of Hokkaidō. Since her debut, Miura had been labelled variously as “a writer of taishū bungaku,” which implies that her works are no better than low-brow fiction for mere entertainment, and as “a writer of gokyō bungaku” (works in defense of one’s faith), essentially equating her novels with didactic religious propaganda that lacks artistic/aesthetic qualities. While there were grounds for viewing Miura’s works as taishū bungaku (if we use the yardstick of publication and reviews, or absence thereof, in literary journals), the disparaging view that saw Miura’s novels as low-brow popular entertainment unworthy of serious criticism was gender-based and far from accurate. I further argue that, just as shishōsetsu became equated with junbungaku because it was considered more “purely Japanese,” Miura’s Christian novels had been rejected because they were viewed as “foreign” and “too far from native traditions” to be considered “pure literature.” Indeed, it can be argued that the whole idea of gokyō bungaku reflected the mentality that saw Christian novels as a “threat” to the “purity” of “authentic” Japanese literature (perhaps even a threat to racial/ethnic purity and cultural preservation), just as taishū bungaku had been considered a threat to pure literature since the 1920s.

My dissertation builds on the New Historicist premise that, being a product of a specific time and place, a text relates to the circumstances in which it was produced. In
my analysis of Miura’s novels and their reception in Japan, I see the literary texts as a reflection of and a commentary on the historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts that shaped her works and examine them by linking them to the network of institutions, practices and beliefs that defines the mechanism of literary production and evaluation. Furthermore, in the manner of a New Historicist, I challenge the line between “high”/pure literature and “low”/mass literature and argue that such an arbitrary binarism does not do justice to the kind of work that Miura produced.

In Chapter Two, I provide a biographical sketch of Miura Ayako, focusing on major life events that helped launch her career, first as a poet, and then as a novelist. Even before she became a novelist, Miura had manifested her literary gift as a fine poet, contributing regularly to what is perhaps the most prestigious tanka journal in modern Japan – Araragi. Miura’s early experiences with Araragi inform her prose fiction, enabling her to treat with sensitivity and insight the various themes of love, betrayal, life, death and redemption that figure prominently in her novels. Miura is a poet-turned-novelist, and as we shall see in Chapter Four, it shows in her lyrical prose. In Chapter Two, I provide an overview of the life and works of Miura Ayako and argue that, despite the media’s categorization of Miura as an ordinary housewife – the July 10, 1964 issue of the Asahi newspaper referred to Miura, for instance, as an “amiable housewife working as a greengrocer (kisaku na zakkaten no shufu)”11 – she is by no means an amateur writer poorly grounded in literature.

In Chapters Three and Four, I examine in detail five major works of fiction by Miura, namely: Hyōten (Freezing Point, 1965), Hitsujigaoka (Hill of Sheep, 1966), Shiokari Tōge (Shiokari Pass, 1968), Hosokawa Garasha fujin (Lady Gracia: A Samurai Wife’s Love, Strife and Faith, 1975) and Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi (Sen no Rikyū and His Wives, 1980). Chapter Three begins with an analysis of Miura’s debut novel Hyōten, an important work that can be considered the point of departure of her
writings, indeed the very foundation on which all subsequent novels by Miura were to be based. My aim is to show how *Hitsujigaoka* and *Shiokari Tōge* build on some of the fundamental issues identified in *Hyōten* and the manner in which major Christian themes unfold in these works. I see these three novels as being inter-connected, a continuation of the spiritual journey on the part of the protagonists from being lost in an environment totally devoid of love (*Hyōten*), to an awakening to the true meaning of love (*Hitsujigaoka*), and ultimately to the actualization of that love (*Shiokari Tōge*). In my analysis, I focus on one particular Christian motif – that of sin and redemption, which is generally thought to be the central tenet of the Christian faith, and in my opinion, the foundation of Miura Ayako’s writings.

Chapter Four deals exclusively with Miura’s historical novels, focusing on two of her best works in that genre: *Hosokawa Garasha fujin* and *Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi*. In these novels, Miura revisits the prevalent theme of “sin and redemption,” focusing this time on the sin of betrayal, power and control and offering hopes of redemption through the exemplary lives of two historical figures: (1) Hosokawa Garasha (1563-1600), who, despite being the daughter of the notorious traitor in Japanese history, Akechi Mitsuhide (1528?-1582), redeemed her honor by dying as a true woman warrior; and (2) Sen no Rikyū (1522-1598), the great tea master, who defied the authority of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) in his final act of ritual suicide, thereby symbolically purifying the art of *chanoyu* and cleansing it from the sin of worldly power struggles.

A New Historicist approach helps us understand, for instance, why Miura decided to write her first historical novel at the time she wrote it – by situating *Hosokawa Garasha fujin* within the historical and socio-cultural contexts that informed her work. Published during the mid-1970s, which coincided with the high tide of the second wave feminist movement, *Hosokawa Garasha fujin* brings gender issues to the forefront of
literary discourse by characterizing a heroine placed in a patriarchal, militaristic society with little regard for women. Specifically, Miura’s novel is a representation of women’s experiences in Japan during the Warring States Period towards the end of the sixteenth century – a historical period in which women of the warrior class were objectified as possessions of men as well as tools of political strategy, and were deprived of their autonomy and their own identity.

My analysis of Miura’s historical novels in this chapter draws on the works of the New Historicist critic Hayden White, who claims that there is no fundamental distinction between history and fiction. White is known for stating that “histories gain part of their explanatory effect by their success in making stories out of mere chronicles.” In The Content of the Form, White further argues that history is akin to fiction in its methods and tasks, and that historical discourse and literary discourse share the same system of meaning production (the modes of emplotment). My goal of inquiry in this chapter is to examine the relationship between history and literature and to address the question of what it means to be writing historical novels.

The New Historicist is aware that it is impossible for the historian or the literary critic to be completely objective. He acknowledges not only that a work of literature is informed by the author’s beliefs, prejudices, time and history, and shaped by the political, social, cultural and economic circumstances at the time of writing, but that the critic’s response to that work, too, is influenced by his environment, beliefs and prejudices. Historical accounts differ depending on whose point of view history is being told from. Lois Tyson has contended that “the inevitability of personal bias makes it imperative that new historicists be as aware of and as forthright as possible about their own psychological and ideological positions relative to the material they analyze so that their readers can have some idea of the human ‘lens’ through which they are viewing the historical issues at hand.” A New Historicist approach allows for multiple
interpretations of a single historical event. My study of Miura’s historical novels focuses on how she re-interprets major historical events (Akechi Mitsuhide’s betrayal of his lord Oda Nobunaga, the death of Hosokawa Garasha, the ritual suicide of Sen no Rikyū, etc.) from a distinctive point of view – that of a Christian novelist.

In “Fictions of Factual Representation,” White questions the possibility of “a value-neutral description of the facts, prior to their interpretation or analysis”\(^{15}\) and contends that for historians seeking to explain the “facts” of historical events, “what is at issue is not: what are the facts? but rather: how are the facts to be described in order to sanction one mode of explaining them rather than another?“\(^{16}\) In Chapter Four, I will show that authors of historical and literary texts alike are not free from subjectivity and personal bias and, by comparing and contrasting Miura’s novels with the historical fiction of three other writers (Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Endō Shūsaku and Nogami Yaeko), demonstrate how differently these writers describe the “facts” that are supposedly based on the same historical event, thereby sanctioning a particular mode of explanation and interpretation, motivated by the author’s own values and artistic focus. I would argue that, writing as a Christian novelist, Miura, too, is not free from her own evangelical bias, and she portrays historical characters and idealizes them in accordance with her Christian worldview.

In the “Tamakazura” chapter of the *Genji monogatari*, Murasaki Shikibu has Genji speak in defense of the art of fiction, arguing that “historical texts like the Nihon shoki tell only part of the story and it is in the monogatari that one finds the most useful learning and the details of life.“\(^{17}\) Alessandro Manzoni in the west similarly argues that history gives us “events that are known only, so to speak, from the outside, what men have done. But what they have thought, the feelings that have accompanied their decisions and their plans, their successes and misfortunes, the words by which... they have expressed their anger, poured out their sadness... all that, more or less, is passed
over in silence by history: and all that is the domain of poetry.”18 In Manzoni’s and Murasaki Shikibu’s view, literature supplements the function of history by filling in the details and providing an underside (ura) of life. I argue that, writing as a poet-novelist, Miura focuses on the private, emotional responses of the historical characters depicted in her novels and how they react to events in the world around them.

In an essay entitled “Taishū bungei sahō” (How to Write Mass-oriented Literature), Naoki Sanjūgo states the first and foremost condition for writing serious historical novels (rekishi shōsetsu), as opposed to mass-oriented, entertainment-focused “period novels” (jidai shōsetsu): “Unlike popular ‘period novels,’ rekishi shōsetsu are persistently based upon a strict adherence to historical facts (rekishi shōsetsu wa taishū shōsetsu to chigatte, akumade sensei na shijitsu no ue ni tatte inakutewa naranai).”19

Considered by many to be a writer of taishū bungaku himself, Naoki criticizes those specializing in jidai shōsetsu who simply borrow the names of famous historical figures for the sake of arousing the readers’ interest and who distort historical facts to engage freely in the act of wildly fabricating baseless “historical” events. Without a firm foundation built upon historical facts, Naoki argues, it becomes meaningless to write a novel on a historical theme – indeed, it would have been easier for the entertainment-minded writers to simply write a novel set in the modern era.20

In Chapter Four, I examine how Miura combines historical facts with her own poetic imagination to create serious works of historical fiction. My analysis draws on an influential essay by Mori Ōgai entitled “Rekishi sono mama to rekishi-banare” (History as It Is and Deviation from History, 1915), in which Ōgai outlined his approach to historical fiction and stated his general preference that history be recounted as it is.21 I argue that, in general, Miura abided by Ōgai’s principles – historical fidelity was a pressing concern to Miura, as it had been to Ōgai – and contend that her historical novels differ fundamentally from the so-called jidai shōsetsu, which uses the historical
setting only as a backdrop to a story of the author’s imagination, featuring characters who are either totally fictitious, or in the case of actual historical figures, portrayed in imaginary events and situations that are loosely based on and mostly deviating from historical evidence. According to her husband, Mitsuyo, while working on her historical novels, Miura spent numerous hours consulting historical archives and scholarly studies before writing a single line. In Miura’s view, a true historical novel ought to be based upon historical facts. In the process of historical research, Miura discovered historical events and characters of literary interest that aroused her poetic imagination. It was only at that point she picked up her pen to write.

Historical and literary narratives alike abound in conflicting viewpoints, raising the issue as to whether we can legitimize one version of historical events as “true” or “factual.” The problem of author bias calls into question the very meaning of \textit{rekishi sono mama}. When I examine Miura’s historical novels using the yardstick of “faithfulness to history,” I ask the question: faithful to what? Drawing on Karatani Kōjin’s interpretation of Ōgai’s famous dictum, I argue that Miura, like Ōgai, aims at writing about history as it is (\textit{rekishi sono mama}) – in order to do that, she has to be faithful to the nature of historical materials and she has to maintain the inconsistency and incoherence and avoid weaving those materials into a perfectly coherent narrative with no logical contradictions.\textsuperscript{22} That explains why Miura portrayed historical figures in her novels as multifaceted individuals with conflicting sides, and by doing so, Miura succeeded in providing an alternative and insightful interpretation of history.

In order to have a fuller understanding of Miura’s historical novels, I will engage in a close reading and intertextual analysis of \textit{Hosokawa Garasha fujin} and \textit{Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi}. I refer to M.H. Abrams’ \textit{A Glossary of Literary Terms} (10\textsuperscript{th} edition) and use the term intertextuality in the following sense:
The term intertextuality, popularized especially by Julia Kristeva, is used to signify the multiple ways in which any one literary text is in fact made up of other texts, by means of its open or covert citations and allusions, its repetitions and transformations of the formal and substantive features of earlier texts, or simply its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions and procedures that are “always-already” in place and constitute the discourses into which we are born.23

My goal is to illustrate how Miura draws on a variety of historical texts (e.g., chronicles, family histories, memoirs, accounts by missionaries, poems attributed to real historical figures, etc.) and combines these intertextual references with her own artistic imagination to create fascinating works of historical fiction.

Through a textual analysis of Miura’s major novels in Chapter Three and Chapter Four, I demonstrate that, although Miura incorporates many strategies and features commonly used by writers of taishū bungaku – such as the use of plain language, emphasis on storytelling and plot development, idealization of characters, reliance on coincidence, serialization in newspapers, preference for biographical fiction (hyōden) – in order to reach out to the mass audience, her novels are by no means low-brow fiction for mere entertainment; rather they are serious works of fiction that explore life and human nature, rivaling the works of Mori Ōgai, Natsume Sōseki, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Ōe Kenzaburō, who are counted among the best of modern Japanese writers.

In the final chapter of my dissertation, I examine how Miura looks back on Japan’s war experiences in three major novels written towards the end of her literary career: Aoi toge (Blue Thorns, 1982), Haha (Mother, 1992) and Jūkō (Gunpoint, 1994) that depict the horror and futility of war. By documenting the turbulent years of the Shōwa era, these works illustrate Foucault’s notion of the power of discourse and how those in power seek to control discourse by the three types of prohibition: namely, the objects of
speech (what can be spoken of), the ritual of the circumstances of speech (where and how one may speak) and the privileged or exclusive right of the speaking subject (who may speak).

During the 1930s, when Japan as a nation embarked on a course of imperialist expansion, proletarian writers like Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933) were ruthlessly suppressed. No one indeed could say anything that came close to questioning the divinity of the emperor and the validity of nationalistic ideology. Moreover, public speech and literary discourse were censored and controlled by the state, and even educators were thrown into jail for promoting freedom of expression among school-children. I see the later novels of Miura as discourse on the prohibited, which challenge the wartime ideology and give voice to those oppressed by the nationalistic state.

Throughout her writing career, as a Christian novelist, Miura never wavers from her central theme of sin and redemption. Having posed the question of sin in Hyôtèn, dealt with the issue at the individual level in Hitsujigaoka and Shiokari Tôge, and re-examined it in historical perspective in Hosokawa Garasha fujin and Sen no Rikyû to sono tsumatachi, Miura most fittingly concludes her career by examining the sin of her own nation. Aoi toge, Haha and Jûkô indict the atrocities of war that dehumanize people and deprive them of basic freedom. Most significantly, these works give a platform to the subjugated voices of the early Shôwa era, when all oppositional discourses were censored by the militaristic state. In Miura’s later novels, we see a seriousness and a socio-political dimension that come close to the ideals of literature as defined by the Nobel Laureate Ōe Kenzaburô, and it is in these novels that we see the best of Miura.

As an evangelical writer, facing the four-fold obstacles of writing as a woman writer of “popular novels” on Christian themes, working from the off-center location of Hokkaidô, Miura not only survived but thrived against the current of Japan’s literary mainstream. In the final analysis, Miura established herself by incorporating writing
approaches and narrative strategies commonly used in the *taishū* genres, producing novels that combine the seriousness of *junbungaku* on the one hand and the structural cohesion of *taishū bungaku* on the other hand. I conclude that Miura ultimately succeeded by writing novels that defy a clear distinction between the “pure” and the “mass.” As Etō Jun rightly observes, Miura poses a great challenge to the *bundan*—in my opinion, not only in terms of her treatment of non-traditional themes and subject matter, but because her work throws into question some of the basic assumptions held by the literary establishment as to what constitutes pure literature, who is qualified to write it, and how it should be written.
CHAPTER ONE

Pure or Mass Literature?  
Situating Miura Ayako’s Writings

Since her debut in 1964, Miura had been considered a writer of  *taishū bungaku*  and her works had been relegated to the periphery as “popular novels” unworthy of serious criticism or scholarship. Early reviews of Miura’s novels had been mostly negative. While Hirano Ken (and later Odagiri Hideo) called Miura “a writer of  *taishū bungaku,*” which implies that her works are no better than low-brow fiction for mere entertainment, Tagawa Kenzō and Dōmeki Kyōzaburō dismissed Miura as “a writer of  *gokyō bungaku*” (works in defense of one’s faith), essentially equating her novels with religious propaganda that lacks artistic/aesthetic qualities. Because of such labels, academic studies of Miura’s works had initially been limited to those produced by Christian scholars, among them Sako Jun’ichirō, Mizutani Akio and Kubota Gyōichi, or people who were affiliated with the Hokkaidō region, where Miura spent all her life.

It was not until the late 1990s, when the boundary between  *junbungaku*  and  *taishū bungaku*  became almost indistinguishable, that Miura’s novels became a legitimate subject of academic studies and scholarly criticism. A special issue of  *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō*  on Miura Ayako, published in November 1998, includes articles by twenty-nine scholars who examined Miura’s works from various perspectives. Five months before the special issue of  *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō*  on Miura Ayako, in a newspaper literary column entitled “Nihon bungaku no hyaku-nen” (One Hundred Years of Japanese Literature), published in the evening edition of  *Tōkyō Shinbun*  (June 25, 1998), Odagiri Hideo praised Miura’s novels in a complete reversal from his earlier
position (which had disqualified *taishū bungaku* as a subject of literary criticism or scholarly research). Indeed, Odagiri suggested that scholars take a second look to reassess the literary merit of Miura’s works – from her debut novel, *Hyōten*, to the last novel, *Jūkō*:

Generally speaking, popular fiction is not considered a legitimate subject of study by literary critics and literary historians. Even now, that attitude has not changed. [Popular] entertainment that curries favor with the readers is evaluated by how well it sells in the industry; but it has no relations to literature. Although this is the guiding principle, in reality, there are popular novels that are outstanding works of literature, just as there are “literary” works that are not so. Among the various novels by Miura, I found several that are worthy of attention as works of literature. Despite a few problems with Miura’s novels, it is worth reassessing the literary merit of her major works – *Shiokari Tōge*, *Deiryū chitai*, *Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi*, *Haha*, *Jūkō*…, including her debut novel *Hyōten*.

Ippan ni tsūzoku sakuhin wa bunsei hihiyo ya bungakushi ya no taishō ni naranu, to sarete kita shi, sore wa ima demo kawari wa nai. Dokusha no go-kigen o torimubu tame no entateimento wa, sono hō no gyōkai de no ureru urenai no hyōka wa aru darō keredomo, sore wa bungaku to wa nan no kankei mo nai koto na no da. Kore ga gensoku da ga, sate jissai ni wa, tsūzoku to mirarete iru sakuhin de bungaku-teki ni sugurete iru mono mo aru shi, sono gyaku mo aru. Miura Ayako no shosaku no uchi ni wa, bungaku-teki ni kanari ni chūmoku ni atai suru mono ga ari, Shuju no mondai wa aru ni shitemo shusse-saku Hyōten… o mo fukumete, shuyō sakuhin Shiokari Tōge, Deiryū chitai, Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi, Haha, Jūkō nado wa, aratamete hyōka ni atai suru.

How do we account for the hitherto lack of scholarly interest in Miura’s works and the initial negative reception of her novels by the literary establishment? My argument, and the central thesis of this dissertation, is that it is because of her unusual identity as a *woman writer* of “*popular novels*” on *Christian themes*, working from the *off-center location* of Hokkaidō, which presents a “four-fold obstacle” to a writer who is trying to establish herself in the Japanese literary world.
In a 1994 article published in the *Japan Review*, Suzuki Sadami (1947-) argues that “the ambiguous terms of *junbun* (pure literature) exemplified by *watakushi shōsetsu* [also known as *shishōsetsu*] (autobiographical novel), and *taishū bungaku* (mass literature) are conventionally used unrelated to artistic valuation” and that “they should be relativized as historical concept.”3 In this chapter, my goal is to historicize the concepts of *junbun* and *taishū bungaku* and see how the terms were used in literary and critical discourses in Japan. Having done that, I will look at the challenges faced by Miura as a female Christian novelist. I would argue that, unlike other women writers (her predecessor Hayashi Fumiko, for instance), who struggled to gain acceptance by and entry into the literary mainstream, Miura was content with staying on the periphery, where she survived and thrived as a popular writer of Christian novels.

**DEFINITION AND NATURE OF *TAISHŪ BUNGAKU***

*Junbun* is generally thought of as serious, artistic literature characterized by “intellectual depth” and “sophisticated expression.”4 Since the 1920s, *junbun* came to be equated with the *shishōsetsu*, or the so-called I-novels that were meant to be read as a “truthful” account of the writer’s own life experiences. According to the *Kōdansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, “the I-novel is best described as autobiographical or personal fiction... typically devoid of such structural elements as plot, characterization, and dramatic tension...[which is marked by a] confessional tone.”5 In the Japanese literary world, there existed a second type of I-novel known as the *shinkyō shōsetsu* (state-of-mind novel), which the Kōdansha encyclopedia describes as “essaylike sketches focusing on the mental, emotional, or spiritual state of the author and have much about them that is suggestive of the traditional genre of *zuihitsu* (essays or random jottings).”6 Shiga Naoya (1883-1971), revered in Japan as the “god of fiction” (*shōsetsu*...
no kamisama), is best known for this type of I-novel. His masterful piece “Takibi” (Bonfire, 1920), in particular, is often cited as the epitome of junbungaku. In an excellent study of “Tabiki,” Sharalyn Orbaugh points out that, “when reading Shiga’s most ‘pure’ stories..., one must bear all of the images and events in mind until the completed story allows for their integration into a coherent pattern of relationship.”

Orbaugh compares this to “the production of meaning in a waka, a hokku, a renga segment, or a Noh play, where the juxtaposition and interweaving of imagery, pulling together ideas and images not usually associated, induces a sudden insight into a conceptual or emotional complex, a particular human emotion.”

In a typical work of junbungaku, seemingly unconnected elements are related by association, and therefore there is no need for such structural elements as plot, characterization, and dramatic tension that we are used to seeing in the western novel. In contrast, taishū bungaku is usually plot-driven. According to the Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan, taishū bungaku, as the term is used in the modern era, refers to “popular literature, written primarily as entertainment... that includes jidai shōsetsu (historical fiction), tsūzoku shōsetsu (fiction of social manners and problems), and, more generally, adventure stories, humorous books, tales of the supernatural, and science fiction.” Of course, taishū bungaku is not just a modern notion. Throughout the history of Japanese literature, there were many art forms that could be considered taishū bungaku: for instance, e-toki (storytelling by Buddhist monks for didactic purposes using pictures) and the performance of imayō songs by shirabyōshi dancers during the Heian period; religious and secular setsuwa stories during the Heian and Kamakura periods; otogizōshi (short prose narratives often translated as “companion books”), kyōgen (satirical comedy performed between acts in a Nō play) and haikai poetry during the Muromachi period; kabuki, bunraku (puppet theater), ukiyozōshi (books of the floating world) and other gesaku fiction during the Edo period.
Kikuchi Kan (1888-1948), who had previously been associated with pure literature before establishing his name as a writer of popular novels, once defined junbungaku and taishū bungaku in these terms: “A work that a writer writes because he wants to write it is junbungaku; a work he writes in order to please the public is mass literature.”

It seems that the main criterion for distinguishing between the two is the purpose for which a work is written. Tsurumi Shunsuke (1922-), a well-known philosopher and social critic in Japan, also emphasizes the role of the readers in determining the writer's choice of what kind of work they will write: “Taishū shōsetsu [or novels for the mass readers] are novels read by the general populace regardless of whether or not they are well-educated, and whether or not they have a special interest in the literary arts” (tokubetsu no kyōyō no aru nashi ni kakawarazu, mata geijutsu ni taishite toku ni kanshin o motsu to motanu to ni kakawarazu, ippan shimin ga kononde toriagete yomu shōsetsu). A similar definition is given by Nakatani Hiroshi (1899-1971), an influential Japanese scholar of mass literature, who characterizes taishū shōsetsu as “a collaborative work produced jointly by the author and the readers” (sakusha to dokusha ga kyōdō de tsukutte iku). In Nakatani's view, a taishū shōsetsu is “complete only when the readers read it” (dokusha ga yonde hajimete kanketsu suru). Keenly aware of the readers' presence in his mind, the author writes not for his own sake, but for the purpose of being read by them. Thinking of the readers as his clients, a writer of popular novels would exhaust all means to make his characters appealing, and his plot and dialogues interesting. By necessity, writers of taishū bungaku work within the parameters set by their client-readers.

In his book Bungaku nyūmon (Introduction to Literature, 1963), using the mountain as a metaphor, Kuwabara Takeo (1904-1988) compares junbungaku to a “pioneer’s climb” (shotōhan) which is full of adventures, and taishū bungaku to “hiking” (haikingu) which follows a set path. Popular novels, especially historical fiction, are in general
formulaic. They share an identical form (keitai-teki dōitsusei), as Tsurumi Shunsuke observes, with kabuki in terms of schematizing characters into clearly delineated categories such as zendama (good souls) versus akudama (bad souls), and following set structural patterns and narrative emplotment devices. The parallel that Tsurumi draws with kabuki is an important one indeed. Sukeroku, the quintessential kabuki hero, portrayed in Sukeroku Yukari no Edo zakura (Sukeroku: Flower of Edo, 1713) as the champion of the common people, has no problem ridiculing his antagonist, Ikyū, who represents the samurai class. Similarly in Chikamatsu Monzaemon’s renowned bunraku play Sonezaki shinjū (The Love Suicides at Sonezaki, 1703), the character Tokubei is delineated precisely as an idol for the masses, in order to appeal to the audience.

In Tsurumi’s view, a successful popular novelist is one who can easily turn out forty to fifty novels using the same template. That was exactly what Yoshikawa Eiji (1892-1962) did in his historical fiction: Miyamoto Musashi the legendary swordsman and Takayama Ukon the Christian warlord are essentially the same character. When jidai shōsetsu first appeared on the literary scene in the 1910s, authors relied on legends (densetsu) and well-known historical figures such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) to appeal to the masses. In Tsurumi’s analysis, “jidai shōsetsu inherited from traditional folklore (minkan denshō) the mechanism in which the mass readers (minshū) put their hopes and dreams on concrete [historical] characters.”

In chapter four of his now seminal study, Taishū bungaku, Ozaki Hotsuki (1928-1999) states that in jidai shōsetsu “the fictional hero assumes the identity of a historical figure and starts living thereafter as an idol for the mass readers.” According to Ozaki, the idealized hero possesses several traits. He must have virtue and power, in addition to an engaging personality; he must be a man of action, a destructive force that breaks all conventions. Moreover, he must be a man of resistance who challenges the authority and the feudalistic social order. Last but not least, he must be a moral person with a
strong sense of justice. Vengeance stories commonly emphasize the themes of *kanzen chōaku* (encouraging virtue and chastising vice) and *inga ōhō* (karmic justice). Although the mass readers prefer seeing a scuffle between the *zendama* and the *akudama*, from which the good ultimately emerges as the victor, the man of justice does not always prevail. In historical fiction, justice is expressed through sympathy towards the minority, closeness to the oppressed and the outcast, and glorification of the defeated. Commenting on the aesthetics of defeat, Ozaki illustrates how Japanese writers of *taishū bungaku* elevate the tragic hero to the status of a national hero:

In Japan, there were no national heroes like Washington or Napoleon. Instead, legendary swordsmen and defeated heroes took their place as leaders and representatives of the people, pushing the real-life heroes to a corner… The mass readers pin their hopes and dreams on such idealized heroes precisely because they are painfully aware of their own powerlessness… Through the process of oral transmission, the idealized hero comes to be recreated with embellished details according to the wishes of the mass and begins to take on character traits that represent the people.18

Shirai Kyōji (1889-1980), considered by literary historians to be the father of *taishū bungaku*,19 also emphasizes the national characteristic of the genre. In Shirai’s view, *taishū bungaku* can be seen as “a national literature that breaks from formalism and all feudalistic practices – one that rejects the appearance of good taste in order to mingle and blend with the masses” (*subete no inshū, teisai, keishiki o daha shite, taishū to majiwari, tokeau kokumin bungaku*).20

LITERARY DEBATE BETWEEN TANIZAKI JUN’ICHIRO AND AKUTAGAWA RYŪNOSUKE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PLOT (1927)

Ozaki Hotsuki states that, for a *taishū bungaku* writer to be successful, he has to write interesting stories that appeal to the mass readers.21 That was the position that
Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886-1965) took in his famous literary controversy with Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927). Tanizaki started the dispute with an essay entitled “Jōzetsuroku” (A Garrulous Account), which was published in the February 1927 issue of Kaizō. In the opening section of the essay, Tanizaki expressed his distaste for confessional I-novels (shishōsetsu) which had, by that time, come to be considered the epitome of pure literature:

Of late I have developed the bad habit of being interested only in what is untrue, whether in what I myself have written or what I read in the works of others. I have felt neither like writing nor reading works that draw their materials from the unadorned truth or that, even if not factual, are realistic. I think that is largely why I do not feel like reading what our various contemporary authors publish each month in the magazines. One glance at the first five or six lines is enough to make me murmur to myself, “Ah-hah. He is writing about himself. I see.” That is all I need to make me lose interest... It rarely happens that a work based on close-at-hand events or the author’s personal experiences can draw me into it and not give me an unpleasant feeling... I am sure that truthful stories are also valid, but in recent years I have come to prefer the devious to the straightforward and the noxious to the innocuous; and I like complicated things that are embellished with maximum intricacy.²²

As Irena Powell rightly points out, the Japanese Naturalist writers, who instituted the practice of shishōsetsu, “came to the conclusion that to describe truly is to describe what one thought, felt and did oneself. [In their view], truth could not be grasped through a description of others, and as truth was the essence of pure literature, anything that went beyond the description of personal experience was fabrication and falsehood and belonged to the inferior, popular literature (tsūzoku shōsetsu).”²³ By saying that he was “interested only in the untrue” (uso no koto de nai to omoshiroku nai), Tanizaki stressed the importance of fiction, in direct opposition to the Naturalists’ emphasis on factual representation of personal experiences. In Tanizaki’s view, the most important
element in a work of fiction was a plot that holds the reader’s interest throughout (*suji no omoshirosa*).

Whereas Tanizaki focused on plot and readerly interest, Akutagawa questioned the artistic merits of plot-driven stories, including Tanizaki’s and his own. In an essay entitled “Suji no omoshirosa ni tsuite” (On Fascinating Plot), published in the February 1927 issue of *Shinchō*, Akutagawa specifically cited his highly acclaimed story “Yabu no naka” (Within a Grove, 1922), a complex work of fiction with intriguing twists, as an example of artistic failure. By the time of the essay, Akutagawa had given up on plot-driven stories, and was writing autobiographical novels – “Daidōji Shinsuke no hansei” (The Early Life of Daidōji Shinsuke, 1924) and “Tenkibo” (Death Register, 1926) – that seem to have been based on his personal experiences. It was in his most famous essay, “Bungei-teki na amari ni bungei-teki na” (Literary, Too Literary), published in the April 1927 issue of *Kaizō*, that Akutagawa advocated the plotless novel. The essay opens with these lines:

> I do not consider that a work of fiction without a recognizable plot [*‘hanashi’ rashii hanashi no nai shōsetsu*] is the finest variety; consequently, I do not urge others to write nothing but plotless stories. I might mention that most of my own stories have plots. A picture cannot be composed without a *dessin*. In precisely the same way, a work of fiction stands or fails on its plot... To put it more exactly, without a plot there can be no work of fiction.24

Akutagawa acknowledged that there can be no work of fiction without a plot, just as a picture cannot be composed without a *dessin*. Having paid due respect to Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, and Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* – two examples of plot-driven novels that went on to become masterpieces of world literature – Akutagawa argued that it was not an interesting plot, but the purity and poetic spirit (*shiteki seishin*) of a novel that determined its artistic merit: “There are also works of fiction that are close to poems in prose... I do not consider such works to be the highest form of fiction, but in terms of
‘purity,’ they are the ‘purest’ examples of fiction, if only because they lack conventional interest.”25 As Edward Seidensticker observes, “[Akutagawa’s] ideal was fiction as near as possible to poetry. The purest of fiction was that in which the workings of ‘the observant eye’ [yoku miru me] and ‘the sensitive heart’ [kanjiyasui kokoro] were to be detected.”26 To give an example, Akutagawa cited Shiga Naoya’s “Takibi” as an epitome of junbungaku – pure, poetic fiction marked by the absence of a recognizable plot and trivial interest (tsūzoku-teki kyōmi).27 Akutagawa called Shiga a “realist who did not rely on fanciful imagination” (kūso tanomanai riarisuto) and his writing “morally clean” (dōtoku-teki ni seiketsu na).28

In a rebuttal published in the May 1927 issue of Kaizō, Tanizaki defended the importance of plot by comparing what he called “beauty of construction” (kōsei suru chikara) to “architectural beauty” (kenchiku-teki bikan).29 To elaborate further, Tanizaki wrote: “the great novel has the beauty of an unfolding of event upon event, the magnificence of a mountain range rolling on and on.” (rippa na chōhen ni wa ikutsu mo ikutsu mo jiken o tatamikakete kuro utsukushisa – en’en to kifuku suru sanmyaku no yō na ōkisa ga aru).30 In another essay, written two months earlier in response to Akutagawa’s “Suji no omoshirosa ni tsuite,” Tanizaki contended that it was the power to construct (kōsei suru chikara) that he found most lacking in Japanese novels. Quoting Akutagawa’s claim that there was no aesthetic value in a fascinating plot, Tanizaki wrote:

Unfortunately, I cannot agree. The fact that plot is fascinating implies that the way the material is organized – namely, the structure – is fascinating; it implies the presence of architectural beauty. No one can say, then, that such a structure lacks aesthetic value… Of course, the sole value of a novel does not reside in its plot. But, in my view, of all literary genres it is the novel that can make the most of structural beauty. A novelist who refuses to create a fascinating plot is throwing away one advantage that the novel has over other genres. The greatest weakness of Japanese
novelists is that they have no power to construct, no talent for the geometry of building up a complicated plot.\textsuperscript{31}

In the same essay, Tanizaki underscored the fact that Shakespeare, Goethe and Tolstoy – canonical writers in the West – were all \textit{popular} writers. If Akutagawa represented \textit{junbungaku}, Tanizaki certainly spoke for \textit{taishū bungaku}. Rejecting the position of the Naturalists and the I-novelists, who shunned “fabrications” of emplotment, and their view that the truth value of a novel lay in the author’s “accuracy in recording, honesty in disclosure, and sincerity in confession”\textsuperscript{32} of his own life, Tanizaki contended that imaginative fiction – the kind of stories not based on personal experiences – was equally truthful. Refuting the label of “fabrications,” Tanizaki went so far as to argue that “only those who live by their imaginations are qualified to become artists”:

Some of today’s writers – or I should say the great majority of them – are inclined to shun tales that present imaginings, labelling them all as “fabrications.” Yet has there been any poet or man of letters, ancient or modern, who did not make free use of his imagination? Would a writer, even a naturalistic writer, be able to present truth if he were lacking in imaginative power? How could art exist if imagination were eliminated from the realm of art? In my opinion, only those who live by their imaginations are qualified to become artists... The artist justifies his existence only when he can transform his imagination into truth.\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{EARLY USE OF THE TERM \textit{JUNBUNGAKU}: TSUBOUCHI SHŌYŌ AND KITAMURA TŌKOKU}

Among modern scholars, it was Suzuki Sadami who did the most in-depth study of the development of modern Japanese literature in terms of the concepts of \textit{junbungaku} and \textit{taishū bungaku}, producing three seminal works that deal with the subject: \textit{Nihon no bungaku o kangaeru} (Considering Modern Japanese Literature, 1994),
Suzuki points out that the traditional concept of *bungaku* in Japan, which can be traced back to the *Analects* in ancient China, was synonymous with “literary study for political, economic, and moral management of the state.” It referred mostly to works written in Chinese, especially those in the fields of philosophy and history.\(^{34}\) The term *bungaku* was originally used in a broad sense to denote various subjects categorized in modern-day humanities as philosophy, history, political science, and what we now call literature.

In the February 28, 1893 issue of *Bungakukai*, Kitamura Tōkoku (1868-1894), pioneer of the Japanese Romantic movement, published an essay entitled “Jinsei ni aiwataru to wa nan no ii zo” (What does it mean to commit to life?). In this essay, Tōkoku used the term *junbungaku* to refer to “works of literature that focused on the aesthetic formation, as opposed to compositions written for the pursuit of knowledge.” (gakumon no tame no bunshō de naku, bi-teki keisei ni jūten o oita bungaku sakuhin). In response to Yamaji Aizan (1864-1917), Tōkoku wrote, “[That man (Aizan)], with his iron hammer named ‘Historical Treatise,’ preaches that ‘junbungaku’ needs to be crushed and thus endeavors to assail its realm.” (Kare wa ‘shiron’ to nazukuru tettsui o motte gekisai subeki mokuteki o hiromete, shikiri ni junbungaku no ryōchi o osowan to su).\(^{35}\) Ōe Kenzaburō rightly observes that “the term *junbungaku*, as employed by Kitamura Tōkoku, was used as an antithesis to the sciences of philosophy and history with which the Japanese of the early and mid-Meiji era strove to establish the spirit of modernization by borrowing European ideas.”\(^{36}\) Meanwhile, Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935), too, began to use similar terms such as *junsui bungaku* and *junbungaku* in his work *Sensō to bungaku* (1895) to set language arts apart from other fields of humanities. It was around this time, according to Suzuki, that the modern Western concept of
literature became firmly established in Japan. Suzuki further points out that while it had been necessary to refer to language arts as *junbungaku* in order to distinguish it from “literature defined in a broad sense” (that is, history, philosophy, etc.), it had become a common practice by 1904 to drop the “jun” prefix and simply call literature “bungaku.” To substantiate his view, Suzuki points to the new, explicit naming system used at the Tokyo Imperial University which referred to the academic fields of philosophy, history and literature respectively as *tetsugaku, shigaku* and *bungaku* in Japanese.

So what did *junbungaku* mean to Tsubouchi Shōyō and Kitamura Tōkoku – writers who first used the term in literary discourses? Edward Seidensticker notes that, “for Shōyō, the distinction between the pure and the non-pure seems to have been generally the same as the famous distinction in his [book of criticism] *Shōsetsu shinzui* [The Essence of the Novel, 1885] between the modern and the non-modern, the non-didactic and the didactic.”

For Tōkoku, *junbungaku* is that which is closely connected to the [inner] life of man. In one of his best-known essays, *Naibu seimei ron* (On the Inner Life, 1893), Tōkoku writes, “As far as literary art [bungei] (we may also call it ‘pure literature’ [*junbungaku]*) is concerned, it is the mission of those who are engaged in literary activities to convey the essence of life” (*Bungei – junbungaku to iu mo yoshi – no han’i ni oite konpon no seimei o tsutaen to suru wa bungei ni jūji suru mono no nin nari*). Tōkoku rejected Yamaji Aizan’s utilitarian view of literature and his assertion that “flowery words and beautiful sentences... are but empty and vain unless they benefit mankind.” As Seidensticker points out, the purpose of pure literature was, in Tōkoku’s view, none other than “to satisfy the demand of self-awareness, without reference to the practical or the ethical.” It is, in Seidensticker’s assessment, Tōkoku’s “emphasis upon the self” and his “notion
of purity as self-awareness” that pointed to later theories of junbungaku as exemplified by the confessional I-novels (shishōsetsu).42

As Michael Brownstein notes in his doctoral dissertation, Tōkoku found shortcomings in the pleasure-seeking literature of Edo popular fiction because it “treats man only as a creature of physical passions.”43 Tōkoku also had a negative view of contemporary popular novels, which in his days included mainly domestic and historical novels of considerable didactic intent. Seidensticker rightly points out that Tōkoku and Shōyō were “at one in their rejection of Tokugawa didacticism” and that, to each critic, the pure seems to have been generally synonymous with “the modern, the anti-feudal, and the non-didactic.”44

DEFINITION OF JUNBUNGAKU IN THE 1920s: SHIGA NAOYA, SHISHŌSETSU AND PURE LITERATURE

Since the 1920s, junbungaku had become synonymous with shishōsetsu. In the Taishō bundan’s heyday, Shiga Naoya, a seminal writer who helped propel the shishōsetsu to the apex of junbungaku, came to be revered as the “god of fiction.” A “confessional” style of writing is evident in Shiga’s novella Ōtsu Junkichi (1912) and his novel An’ya Kōro (A Dark Night’s Passing, 1921-1937). It should be noted, however, that Shiga is also known for being a master of a different kind of I-novel known as shinkyō shōsetsu (state-of-mind fiction) – a subgenre and perhaps the most introspective form of shishōsetsu. As Edward Fowler points out, shinkyō shōsetsu, as conceptualized by Shiga, are “brief sketches in which the author-sage explores his inner landscape in a setting virtually stripped of people and props...In quiet contemplation, the narrator-hero communes solely with the natural world, and all other human beings recede into the background...Isolated from society, [he] accommodates himself to forces in nature that reduce to insignificance the autonomous, individuated ego.”45 One needs to look no
further than “Kinosaki nite” (At Kinosaki, 1917) in Shiga’s repertoire of short stories for a pure example of shinkyō shōsetsu.

In “Watakushi shōsetsu no niritsu haihan” (Antinomy of the I-novel, 1951), Hirano Ken makes a distinction between what he calls “destructive” I-novels (hametsu-gata) and “harmonious” state-of-mind novels (chōwa-gata). Tomi Suzuki points out that, according to Hirano, “the destructive I-novel depicts a crisis caused by sinful, perverse, or shameful behavior, without presenting an explicit solution or salvation. The harmonious state-of-mind novel, by contrast, expresses an elevated state of mind acquired as a result of overcoming a crisis. The former represents a pessimistic, fatalistic attitude toward life; the latter an optimistic, idealistic attitude.” Hirano explains the distinction in these terms:

If we define the I-novel as destructive literature, the state-of-mind novel can be characterized as the literature of salvation. If the I-novel can be described as the disclosure of an unresolvable crisis, the state-of-mind novel is nothing but the concluding remarks of a surmounted crisis. If the I-novel is rooted in a sense of conflict between the self [jiga] and the outside world, the state-of-mind novel is an attempt to achieve a sense of harmony between the two. In one, there is a life crisis, deriving from a sense of helpless stupidity and sinfulness; in the other, there is a purified sense of fate that emerges from having overcome such a crisis. The I-novel tries to seek salvation in art; and the state-of-mind novel seeks to salvation in real life. The difference derives from the fact that the former originates in the Naturalist school, which espoused a non-ideal and a non-solution, while the state-of-mind novels derive from the idealistic Shirakaba group... There are two identifiable streams: one that runs from Chikamatsu Shūkō through Kamura Isota and reaches Dazai Osamu and another that runs from Shiga Naoya through Takii Kōsaku and reaches Ozaki Kazuo.47

Of the two streams, it was the one from Shiga (chōwa-gata) that was considered by Hirano to have constituted the fountainhead of pure literature (junbungaku no rinen no gensen). Elsewhere in a roundtable discussion with Itō Sei and Yamamoto Kenkichi,
Hirano cited *Nonki megane* (Leisure Spectacles, 1933), a novel by Shiga’s disciple Ozaki Kazuo (1899-1983), as the representative work of *junbungaku*.48

**KUME MASAO AND NAKAMURA MURAO AS PROONENTS OF SHISHŌSETSU**

If Shiga established the *shishōsetsu* as the pinnacle of *junbungaku* through his introspective state-of-mind novels, Kume Masao affirmed the purity of *shishōsetsu* through his theoretical essays. As Edward Fowler points out, for Kume Masao (1891-1952), “the *shishōsetsu* is the purest of prose forms because it allows the author to express himself candidly without having to ‘fabricate’ his thoughts in the guise of a novelistic character.”49 In a famous essay titled “Watakushi shōsetsu to shinkyō shōsetsu” (The I-novel and the State-of-Mind Novel, 1925), Kume calls the *shishōsetsu* “the foundation, right path, and essence of literature” (*bungaku no… konpon de ari, hondō de ari, shinzui de aru*),50 and using the term *tsūzoku shōsetsu* as the binary opposite, further maintains that “all other works are trivial, popular novels” (*shishōsetsu o nozoita hoka no mono wa, subete tsūzoku shōsetsu de aru*).51 Kume is perhaps best remembered for calling Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*, Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, and Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* “*tsūzoku shōsetsu*” – canonical works by undisputed great writers of all time, but popular novels for “entertainment” in Kume’s opinion nonetheless because these authors fictionalized in their works and allowed fabrications to creep in:

The World has known a handful of great authors – true geniuses (Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and in particular Flaubert) – who have been able to communicate something of themselves in their writing. The moment these authors express themselves through other characters, however, they distance themselves from their readers. Inevitably, embellishments and technical flourishes – convenient fictions, all – creep in. Their novels may be superior as entertainment, but they do not ring true to me. Once, during a lecture, I went so far as to say that Tolstoy’s *War and
Peace, Dostoevsky’s Crime and Punishment, and Flaubert’s Madame Bovary were really no more than popular novels [tsūzoku shōsetsu] – first rate examples of their kind, to be sure, but popular novels nonetheless. In the final analysis, they are fabrications – just so much entertainment.52

Ten years later, Nakamura Murao (1886-1949) joined Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Kume Masao in declaring his allegiance to the shishōsetsu as the ultimate form of pure literature:

I regarded the shishōsetsu as the ultimate form of pure literature. It is surely the purest and the most candid of prose forms. In a conventional, objective novel [kyakkan shōsetsu], fiction [uso] inevitably creeps in; it simply cannot be written otherwise. Tolstoy, Balzac, and Flaubert are revered as “gods” of the novel. All their work contains fiction... The subjective passages, in which the author reveals himself directly, are much more real to me than the objective passages, in which fiction prevails. Anyone with a modicum of talent can write a novel. That is why a novel, no matter how deft or serious its fictionalizations, does not claim my respect or appeal to me as pure literature.53

As many have pointed out, shishōsetsu, or confessional I-novels emerged in Japan during the first two decades of the twentieth century as an outgrowth of Naturalism. In 1907, Tayama Katai (1872-1930) – one of the “four pillars” of Japanese Naturalism (the other three being Shimazaki Tōson, Tokuda Shūsei and Masamune Hakuchō) – sent a shockwave through the literary establishment by publishing Futon (The Quilt), a sensational story of a middle-aged married writer’s emotional desire for his youthful disciple, that was based on Katai’s own infatuation in real life with a young beautiful pupil-in-residence named Okada Michiyo. Many consider Futon to be the prototypical (if not the first) work in the I-novel genre.54 Indeed, Katai’s novel displays the most salient feature of a shishōsetsu: candid confession of the author’s life experiences to the point of exposing the most embarrassing moments. Nakamura Mitsuo’s commentary on Futon in his famous essay “Fūzoku shōsetsu ron” (On Novels of Customs and Manners,
1950) reveals an important distinction between *junbun* and *taishū bun*; that is, “*Futon* [and other *shishōsetsu* in the former category] are supposed to be written with a narrow circle of readers in mind – one that is limited to the *bundan* and people around that literary establishment (*bundan to sono shūi no semai dokusha dake o aite ni sezaru o enai*). The typical writer of *shishōsetsu* expects his readers to know the personal history of the author-hero without the need to provide explanation of his background and circumstances – after all, they share exclusive membership in this small, homogeneous community called *bundan*.

### THE ROLE OF THE BUNDAN IN DETERMINING WHAT IS CONSIDERED PURE LITERATURE

To understand the critical role played by the *bundan* in determining what is and is not considered (pure) literature, we need to define the term with more precision. A good definition is provided by Amanda Seaman: “The *bundan* (literally, literal guild) refers to a small but influential group of authors and critics that has played a crucial role in determining the course (and definition) of literature of Japan up to the present... [and] was responsible for the success and growth of the ‘I’ novel, which was held to epitomize ‘pure’ literature.” Perhaps no one knows better than Ōkubo Fusao (1921-2014), a long-time editor of the literary magazine *Gunzō*, how the *bundan* functions as the final arbiter of what qualifies as *junbun*. In his book, *Bunshi to bundan* (Men of Letters and the Literary Guild, 1970), Ōkubo claims that “literature in modern Japan existed only within the *bundan*” (*Nihon no bun* was *bundan* no naka ni shika nakatta*):

In the narrow, enclosed society called *bundan*, members were taught by consensus what qualified as pure literature, and what should be considered popular novels. I am not sure about foreign countries, but one might argue that this didactic function (*kyōiku no kinō*) best characterized the Japanese *bundan*. Literature in Japan
existed only within the *bundan*, not so much because literary works by outsiders were crushed, but because literature was cultivated within the *bundan* by its didactic function.\(^{57}\)

In her book, *Writers and Society in Modern Japan*, Irena Powell notes that Japanese literary scholars saw the *bundan* as “a self-enclosed community of professional writers, where the writers could live according to their own ethical standards, ... a small, experimental environment, where it was possible, although frequently at considerable psychological cost, to ignore almost completely the day-to-day expectations of society.”\(^{58}\) Powell further characterizes the *bundan* in these terms:

The majority of writers in Japan did not develop a strong social conscience. They began their professional lives as exiles from society... In their writings, ...they did not criticize society. They fled from it and entered a small community, the *bundan*, that had the special atmosphere of a haven for social recluses. This new *bundan* came into being about 1907.\(^{59}\)

Powell sees a fundamental link between the medieval tradition of recluse literature, practiced by such poets as Kamo no Chômei (1155-1216) and Saigyô (1118-1190) who had withdrawn from public life to seek refuge in nature, and the modern I-novel written by members of the *bundan* who similarly severed social ties to pursue their artistic endeavors. The literary critic Itô Sei (1905-1969) coined the term *tôbô dorei* (meaning “fugitive slave")\(^{60}\) to refer to these modern writers who fled from society and withdrew into their own community (i.e., *bundan*) where they found it possible to live and create freely. In Itô’s view, the Japanese *bundan* “was a small group of writers and consisted only of people with a special life-style and consciousness which was unacceptable in real society in Japan. Their readers were... a group of young people who held the illusion that they would become free human beings while... actually living as exiles from the real world.”\(^{61}\) Powell elaborates further:
[The inhabitants of the bundan] formed a small group which had no contact with the environment, which lived only for itself and which published works that no one really understood using a coded language comprehensible only to itself... They were harmless as far as society itself was concerned. They did publish chronicles of their immoral and reckless lives, but these works did not reach society. They lived without criticizing politics, without intending to improve society...62

THE RISE OF TAISHŪ BUNGAKU IN THE 1920s

By the mid-1920s, shishōsetsu writers found themselves competing with the aesthetically-inclined modernists of the Shinkankaku-ha (Neo-Perceptionist School) on the one hand, and the politically-minded proletarian writers on the other hand, for the central position of junbungaku. The 1920s also witnessed the rise of taishū bungaku as a new current that challenged the literary orthodoxy of the shishōsetsu. For the first time, writers and critics of the bundan who had hitherto equated junbungaku with shishōsetsu felt threatened by the commercial success of mass literature that targeted the general populace. Considered by many to be the pioneering work of taishū bungaku was a lengthy forty-one-volume historical novel by Nakazato Kaizan (1855-1944) titled Daibosatu Tōge (The Great Bodhisattva Pass). Serialized in various newspapers between 1913 and 1941, and cinematized at least five times between 1935 and 1966, Daibosatu Tōge was one of the longest novels ever written and enjoyed enormous success among general readers. The story of a wandering samurai killing his way through the turbulent final days of the Tokugawa shogunate not only captured the fanciful minds of its readers, but also provided a prototype (the motif of a gifted swordsman or wandering samurai and the use of swaggering action and a formulaic plot) for many more jidai shōsetsu to come.
Despite its immense popularity, Daibosatu Tōge was, as Donald Keene noted, “relegated to a limbo outside the realm of pure literature” and “rarely given serious attention by the critics”63 – a fate shared by other works of the taishū bungaku genre. Indeed, to avoid the stigma of the taishū label, Nakazato insisted that his work be called daijō shōsetsu, or Mahayana novel (as opposed to taishū shōsetsu) because of its portrayal of the karmic consequences of human deeds.64 Such a proclamation might very well have been a calculated move on the part of the author to legitimize his work. Ironically, Nakazato’s emphasis on the moralizing and edifying aspect of Daibosatu Tōge only makes his work less “pure,” at least in the eyes of his predecessor Tsubouchi Shōyō, who rejected didacticism and advocated the realistic novel as the embodiment of junbungaku. As I have mentioned, the equation of junbungaku with shishōsetsu was a later historical development during the 1920s. According to Suzuki Sadami, Shōyō used the words junsui bungaku, which means “pure literature,” and junbungaku, written with a different Chinese character for “jun” and literally meaning “literature with a well-mellowed taste” as in Japanese wine, as early as 1895 when he published Sensō to bungaku (War and Literature) that year in the January and February issues of the magazine Taiyō. Shōyō used the term junbungaku in the same sense as bibungaku which can be translated as belles-lettres.65

Taishū bungaku, as we know it in the modern era, can be traced back to the gesaku fiction of the Edo period (1603-1868) and the transcribed texts of popular oral narratives performed by rakugo artists and kōdan storytellers during the Meiji Period (1868-1912).66 As Inoue Hisashi pointed out, Edo-period popular fiction with illustration – kibyōshi being the most notable example – may be rightly called the “ancestor of modern newspaper novels.”67 In 1884, San’yūtei Enchō (1839-1900), the famous rakugo performer, had his popular ghost story Kaidan Botandōrō (The Peony Lantern Ghost Story) transcribed and published as a sokkibon (short-hand book).68 The venture was a
remarkable success, not only commercially, but also in terms of the story becoming an important milestone in the development of modern Japanese literature: the use of the vernacular style prompted the *genbun-itchi* movement which unified the spoken and written languages. Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909), author of Japan’s first modern novel *Ukigumo* (The Drifting Cloud, 1887), admitted that he started writing the novel in colloquial language following his teacher Tsubouchi Shōyō’s advice that he model after Enchō’s vernacular style. Perhaps more importantly, as far as the development of mass literature is concerned, the printed editions of Enchō’s oral narratives may be considered precursors to modern *taishū bungaku* since they were written in a colloquial style designed to reach the largest possible readership. A third origin of *taishū bungaku* can be traced back to the *kōdanbon* of the Meiji period. Between 1911 and 1925, the Osaka-based publisher Tachikawa Bunmeidō enjoyed wide success in the niche market of juvenile literature. The Tachikawa Bunko (Tachikawa Paperback) series, as it was called, produced some two hundred pocket-sized books, featuring widely popular *kōdan* storytellers and their entertaining tales about real historical characters, as well as fictitious heroes such as the fictional *ninjō* Sarutobi Sasuke. In doing so, the Tachikawa Bunko sparked a nationwide interest in popular literature and created an optimal environment for the flourishing of *taishū bungaku* in the post-earthquake years of the late 1920s.\(^6\)

Kikuchi Kan had feared that the publishing industry would be shattered in the aftermath of the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923. To his surprise, major destruction led to a complete overhaul that revolutionized the logistics for literary production, circulation and consumption. Old printers that had been destroyed by the earthquake were quickly replaced. The period saw the use of new paper and ink by publishers and the introduction of innovative printing technologies such as the typefounding machine and the high-speed rotary press which made mass printing possible. As the economy
became revitalized, companies started to make capital investments and improve their distribution infrastructure.\textsuperscript{70}

Two social phenomena during this period illustrated the epoch-making contribution of the mass media to the development of \textit{taishū bungaku}. First, the circulation of two major newspapers in Osaka – \textit{Osaka Mainichi} and \textit{Osaka Asahi} – hit one million in January 1924, the year after the earthquake. Second, the mass-oriented popular culture magazine \textit{Kingu (King)} was launched the following year in 1925. Marketed by the publishing house that was to become Kōdansha, \textit{Kingu} featured a variety of novels, kōdan stories, humorous episodes, and articles of pragmatic knowledge that were meant to be “at once entertaining and educational” (\textit{omoshirokute tame ni naru}).\textsuperscript{71} Its inaugural issue boasted an amazing sales record of 750,000 copies and subsequent issues did even better. Eventually, \textit{Kingu} was to become the first magazine ever published in Japan to hit the one million mark in circulation.

Another major event happened in the autumn of the same year (1925): the Nijūichinichi-kai (Twenty-first Day Society) was formed under the leadership of Shirai Kyōji. An association of leading journalists and writers who took special interest in the promotion of mass literature, the Nijūichinichi-kai was so named because the inaugural meeting took place on the twenty-first and subsequent meetings on the same day of each month. The initial group was comprised of twelve members, including well-known writers of popular fiction such as Hasegawa Shin, Edogawa Ranpo, Naoki Sanjūsan (later known as Naoki Sanjūgo), Masaki Fujokyū, Kosakai Fuboku, and Shirai himself – plus six others who were journalists employed by major newspapers. The fact that half of the group had journalistic background confirms something we have known all along: the journalistic and literary worlds were so intertwined that one cannot talk about the development of \textit{taishū bungaku} in Japan without making reference to the mass media.\textsuperscript{72}
The Nijūichinichi-kai published a magazine titled Taishū bungei featuring works by popular writers in a variety of genres. Despite its relatively short life span (nineteen issues in total from January 1926 to July 1927), Taishū bungei played an instrumental role in establishing mass literature as a legitimate literary force and in elevating the status of its writers by bringing them from the periphery into the circle of literary and critical discourse. In his seminal study of 1964, Taishū bungaku, Ozaki Hōtsuki notes the serious intent of Nijūichinichi-kai by quoting the words of its central figure Shirai Kyōji:

Centered around Taishū bungei, our job is not only to publish works of literature, but also to do research and criticism on diverse aspects of mass [culture]. When the occasion arises, we should also take action in various ways by consensus…

Our conception of popular fiction was built upon the foundation of providing the kind of literature that is demanded by people other than enthusiasts for pure literature. In the final analysis, if works of pure literature represent a kind of medicine in tablet form, our goal is to dissolve the chemical ingredients and provide liquid medicine that people find easy to drink…

There are readers who are not enthusiasts for literary art, who have no knowledge of literature. Who can say that what they think and what they feel are not the thoughts of human beings? A person is not qualified to be a popular novelist unless he loves those things and treats them with broadmindedness.

Here, we see how Shirai identifies the writer of taishū bungaku as someone who understands and sympathizes with the sentiments of the vast majority. Like Kikuchi Kan, Shirai questioned the elitism of junbungaku that had hitherto dominated the rights of literary production. Shirai, as did Kikuchi, believed that all people – geniuses or ordinary men – should be able to enjoy the pleasure of writing and that no one should be denied access to works that are the expressions of the masses. In March 1920, Kikuchi wrote “Geijutsu to tenbun – Sakka bon’yō-shugi” (Art and Natural Ability: A Case for Ordinary Writers), a critical essay in opposition to seeing literary production as
a special privilege that was reserved only for elite members of the bundan. Kikuchi’s essay opens with a rhetorical question, “Is literature a vocation best left to the select few?” which he answers firmly in the negative:

It is often said that to be involved with art – in this case, literature – you must possess a certain special gift [tenbun]. Without such a gift – disposition, sensibility, sentiment – one cannot be involved with art… But is that so? Is literature a vocation best left to the select few?… The time of lionizing the works of witty and brilliant geniuses as if they were rare gems has passed. The literary aristocracy of a minority of geniuses dominating the rights of creation is a thing of the past. This is an age in which the free expressions of geniuses’ imaginations share the floor with the expressions of average people’s imaginations – imaginations they share with the vast majority.76

During the years following the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923, popular fiction was referred to as shinkōdan (new kōdan narratives) in the journalistic world and as yomimono bungei (reading art) in the literary world. With the rise of such writers as Shirai Kyōji and the publication of Taishū bungei by Nijūichinichi-kai, the term taishū bungei came into common use. In an article entitled “Rironka to shite no Shirai Kyōji shi” (Shirai Kyōji the Theorist, 1941), Nakatani Hiroshi (1899-1971) identifies Shirai as the leader of a literary movement that changed the course of modern Japanese literature. With the establishment of the Nijūichinichi-kai, taishū bungei distinguished itself, in Nakatani’s view, from low-brow popular fiction, and for the first time became part of the literary and critical discourses. Underscoring the serious intent of those who were engaged in taishū bungei, Nakatani writes: “One of the essential differences between taishū bungei and tsūzoku bungaku [i.e., shinkōdan and yomimono bungei] lay in the former’s critical approach to literature. In other words, taishū bungei was a well-defined literary movement [meikaku naru bungaku undō] driven by fresh opinions and youthful enthusiasm, whose proponents had a serious intent to advocate, establish,
and bring to fruition new ideas that had not appeared in the long literary history [of Japan].”

As Naoki Sanjūgo (1891-1934) rightly pointed out in his essay “Taishū bungei sahō” (How to write literature of mass appeal, 1932), it was difficult, however, at the time to define the term taishū bungei because mass-oriented literature was still undergoing evolution. Originally, the term taishū bungei was used to designate a popular, entertaining form of historical fiction known in Japanese as magemono (literally, top-knot piece) or jidaimono shōsetsu (period novel) which flourished after the Great Kantō earthquake of 1923. (Shinsai-go ni oite arawaretaru kyōmi chūshin no magemono, jidaimono shōsetsu de aru). The use of the term was soon broadened to include all works, old or new, that were beyond the realm of geijutsu shōsetsu (artistic novels), including the seven types of novels categorized by Naoki as popular literature, namely: (1) jidaimono (period novels); (2) shōnenmono (youth novels); (3) kagakumono (science fiction); (4) aiyoku shōsetsu (passion novels); (5) kaikimono (mystery novels) or tantei shōsetsu (detective fiction) in a broad sense; (6) mokuteki shōsetsu (novels written for a specific purpose) or senden shōsetsu (propaganda novels); and (7) yūmoa shōsetsu (humorous novels). When Naoki discussed literature of mass appeal in his essay, he used the term taishū bungei in a broad sense. His definition follows: “Taishū bungei refers to literary works that are considered to be of value even though they are written in plain language mainly and simply for the purpose of entertainment or, works that contain within them elucidation of various issues of human life and existence.”

The year 1927 saw a milestone in the development of mass literature in Japan with the publication of the first volume of Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū (The Complete
Anthology of Contemporary Mass Literature, 1927-32), which marked the transition from *taishū bungei* to *taishū bungaku*. The complete anthology, published by the Heibonsha over a five-year period, was a sixty-volume collection of a wide variety of works written by such popular writers as Shirai Kyōji, Osaragi Jirō, and Yoshikawa Eiji, who were known for their “period novels” (*jidai-shōsetsu*), Hasegawa Shin, who was known for his wanderer’s tales (*matatabi-mono*), Edogawa Ranpo, who was known for his mystery novels (*suiri shōsetsu*), and Okamoto Kidō, who was known for his inspector stories (*torimonochō*) and new kabuki (*Shin-kabuki*). In May 1927, when the first volume appeared with Shirai Kyōji’s magnum opus, *Shinsengumi* (1925), Japan’s economy was stagnant and book publishers had to struggle to stay afloat. It was under these economic conditions that Heibonsha staked its company’s survival on publishing the *Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū* at an amazingly low price of one yen for each one-thousand-page volume. The desperate gamble on the part of Heibonsha turned out to be a magnificent success. It transformed the company into a first-rate publisher, prompting competitors to follow suit, and thereby igniting the so-called One-yen-book (*en-pon*) War. The *Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū* did more, however, than bringing about an *en-pon* boom and providing a much-needed boost to the Japanese publishing industry in the late 1920s: it firmly established *taishū bungaku* as a literary force that rivaled the supremacy of *junbungaku*.

The popularity of *taishū bungaku* was propelled to new heights with the publication of popular tabloids, journals and magazines (both weekly and monthly), as well as evening editions of major newspapers, which provided ample opportunities for reaching out to the mass readers. As Matthew Strecher notes, “by 1932, writers of *taishū bungaku* were monopolizing serialized publication in newspapers, and there was confusion among members of the *bundan* about what direction *junbungaku* was ultimately to take.”82 As circulation of newspapers increased, *junbungaku* writers were
passed over by editors of literary columns in favor of rising writers with more popular appeal. Indeed, the prospect for *junbungaku* writers was so dim that one writer, Hirotsu Kazuo (1891-1968), made a desperate call in 1934 to his fellow writers, to reclaim the newspaper novel column. Hirotsu’s warning was never heeded:

[manifestations of] journalism like *Kingu* magazine had gradually begun destroying so-called pure literature’s citadel. Any number of times I begged the members of the literary establishment not to sit idly by dependent on others for their livelihood, but to join forces to acquire a right to life… Now the time has passed and the situation for pure literature has developed into what Kume [Masao] described as “the cries [of a pure literature] controlled by journalism.”

Mass-production journalism fundamentally transformed the literary world and helped blur the line between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*. This process of transformation began in the 1930s. By the early 1960s, the two genres became almost indistinguishable. In an essay titled “Matsumoto Seichō hihan” (Criticism of Matsumoto Seichō), published in the December 1961 issue of *Gunzō*, Ōoka Shōhei (1909-1988) argued that the prosperity of post-war journalism helped eradicate the master-protégé relationship (*oyabun-kobun kankei*) that had hitherto existed in the literary guild and that as far as the relationship between editors and authors was concerned, the distinction between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* was long gone. Writers were expected to “manufacture novels that are made to order” (*chūmon ni āji, shōsetsu o seizō suru*). Such a system of literary production had no room for compromise with the author on the issue of literary worth – it was a world in which market value had the final word in the production of literary works.
In September 1961, Hirano Ken initiated the liveliest post-war debate on jyunbungaku since the plot controversy between Tanizaki Jun’ichirō and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke in the 1920s. Hirano started the debate (which lasted from 1961 to 1962) with an article that he wrote for the Asahi Shinbun on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the literary magazine Gunzō. In the article, Hirano began by characterizing the fifteen years following the end of the Second World War as a process of regeneration (kōshin) of the concept of jyunbungaku on the one hand, and disintegration (hōkai) of the concept on the other hand. In Hirano’s view, literary magazines (bungei zasshi) were the last defenders of an isolated stronghold called jyunbungaku against a coordinated attack by forces of mass communication including women’s magazines and entertainment magazines, weekly tabloids and newspapers, which were led by journals like Shōsetsu shinchō and Ōru yomimono that specialized in the so-called in-between novels (chūkan shōsetsu). Although a great number of literary magazines were launched in the post-war period, Hirano saw Gunzō as the only one (apart from pre-war journals like Shinchō and Bungakukai) that singlehandedly upheld the ideals of jyunbungaku during the early post-war period. Most significantly, in the same article, Hirano called jyunbungaku merely a “historical concept” (junbungaku to iu gainen ga rekishi-teki na mono ni suginai) — an argument that he elaborated on in the following month’s round-table discussion with two other literary critics, Itō Sei and Yamamoto Kenkichi.

Hirano’s central argument was this: “The concept of jyunbungaku was first introduced in 1922 when Arishima Takeo wrote ‘Sengen hitotsu’ (One Declaration). During the next thirteen years, its meaning was firmly established while simultaneously evolving until it came to the verge of ‘degeneration’ (henshitsu) in 1935 when Yokomitsu
Riichi wrote ‘Junsui Shōsetsu-ron’ (On the Pure Novel) (...jūsannenkan ni...junbungaku to iu gainen ga hassei shi, kotei shi, dōji ni henshitsu shikaketa). In another article, Hirano wrote that “the notion of junbungaku became firmly established as a literary term for the first time in the year 1932” (junbungaku to iu kotoba wa Shōwa nana-nen ni natte hajimete kotei shite iru). Hirano emphasized the significance of the year 1932 for he saw a connection between the final establishment of the notion of junbungaku and the increasing sense of crisis within the literary establishment that year as to the future direction to which pure literature was heading (chūi subeki wa junbungaku wa doko e iku toka junbungaku no kiki toka iu teema to musubitsuite, yōyaku sore ga teichaku shite iru jijitsu darō). In a rebuttal to Hirano’s article, Takami Jun pointed out that “by ‘firmly established,’ Hirano referred to the equation of junbungaku with shishōsetsu” – an arbitrary equation in Takami’s view (kono ‘kotei’ to wa junbungaku sunawachi shishōsetsu to iu kotei de aru. Katte na kotei de aru).

As Yamamoto Kenkichi contended in an article that challenged Hirano’s view, the concept of junbungaku had existed long before Arishima Takeo’s writing of Sengen hitotsu (1922), and it had referred to something broader than a simple equation with shishōsetsu. Takami Jun, too, took the same position as Yamamoto by pointing out that the term junbungaku had been used as early as 1892 in Uchida Roan’s Bungaku ippan (A Glimpse of Literature) in reference to poetry. “To overlook the historical change in the meaning of junbungaku, and to focus [exclusively] on a later period to discuss the shishōsetsu as if it were a pronoun for junbungaku,” the way Hirano did, was, in Takami’s view, a “grave error on the part of a literary historian.”

Hirano Ken might have failed to historicize the meaning of “pure literature,” but he was right that junbungaku, interpreted as a synonym for shishōsetsu, had, against the backdrop of taishū bungaku’s rise to prominence, come upon a difficult time during the 1930s, and was losing its relevance by becoming a historical concept. At the crux of the
controversy was Hirano’s suggestion that “junbunakku had degenerated,” and that “the term ‘pure’ was no longer relevant to the realities of modern literature.” Hirano saw 1935 as a watershed year marked by the publication of “Junsui Shōsetsu-ron” by Yokomitsu Riichi. The “degeneration” of junbunakku had begun, however, long before Yokomitsu’s criticism on the current state of pure literature and his advocacy for a middle-of-the-road approach to literary production.

In January 1925, Kawabata Yasunari published an essay titled “Bundan-teki bungakuron” (A Bundan’s view on Literature), which commented on the increasing popularization and commercialization of literature. In Kawabata’s view, the line dividing the pure from the mass had become increasingly blurred:

It really looks like literature has been excessively popularized (yomimono-ka) in recent times, apparently due to the growing influence of the so-called “in-between magazines” (chūkan zasshi) such as Kuraku (Joys and Sorrows) and Kingu. It is difficult to draw a conclusion from the recent trend as to whether high-brow literature has made inroads on women’s magazines, or it was the latter that invaded the territory of high-brow literature. At the same time, pure literature (jun-bungei) and mass literature (tsūzoku bungei) seemed to have met each other halfway. It is not clear, however, whether mass literature has elevated its status to approach pure literature, or pure literature has come downhill to meet mass literature. In all likelihood, the answer is both.

“JUNSUI SHŌSETSU-RON”(1935):
YOKOMITSU RIICHI’S IDEA OF THE “IN-BETWEEN NOVELS”

In “Junsui Shōsetsu-ron,” published in the April 1935 issue of Kaizō, Yokomitsu Riichi argues that “the hope for a true literary revival hinges upon ‘tsūzoku (popular) novels that are pure literature.’” (bungei fukkō to iubeki koto ga aru mono nara, junbunakku ni shite tsūzoku shōsetsu, kono koto igai ni, bungei fukkō wa zettai ni arienai). In his classification, there are five types of literature, namely: (1) pure literature (junbunakku);
(2) artistic literature (geijutsu bungaku); (3) pure novel (junsui shōsetsu); (4) mass literature (taishū bungaku); and (5) popular novel (tsūzoku shōsetsu) – among them the third category, junsui shōsetsu, is considered the highest.\textsuperscript{95} Referring to the most common view that distinguishes tsūzoku shōsetsu from junbungaku, based on the frequent use of “coincidence” (gūzen) and “sentimentality” (kanshōsei) in the former and the absence thereof in the latter, Yokomitsu argues that Tolstoy, too, uses chance and coincidental events in War and Peace, as do Stendhal and Balzac in their narratives – but they are more than tsūzoku writers because they are able to portray the reality of life in works of great intellectual content. In Yokomitsu’s view, the greatest flaw of pure literature in Japan lies in its complete elimination of accident and coincidence, which ignores the fact that in real life, one often finds the most moving experiences in moments of chance.\textsuperscript{96} Yokomitsu sees junbungaku and tsūzoku shōsetsu as descendants from two divergent traditions: the former from diaries (nikki) that produced personal accounts of the author’s life in the manner of a random essay (zuihitsu); and the latter from narrative tales (monogatari) that emphasized the power of imagination and the creative spirit (sōzōteki na seishin).\textsuperscript{97} In his final analysis, Yokomitsu champions a hybrid form called junsui shōsetsu that combines the seriousness of pure literature and the structural cohesion of mass literature, foreshadowing the appearance of widely popular chūkan shōsetsu, or “in-between” novels (mostly written by junbungaku writers) in the post-World War Two years.

In “Junbungaku yogi-setsu” (Pure Literature as Pastime), published in the same month (April 1935) as Yokomitsu’s influential essay on junsui shōsetsu, Kume Masao offers practical advice as to how one can strike a balance between the pure and the tsūzoku. In the opening section of his essay, Kume identifies himself as “a man who produces tsūzoku shōsetsu as an occupation (shokugyō), plays golf as a hobby (dōraku)... and writes pure literature as a pastime (yogi).”\textsuperscript{98} As Edward Mack points out, Kume
considers the pursuit of junbungaku his pastime – “an activity that is not professional, that is done apart from one’s livelihood, as a relief from the true hardships of life (shiken na seikatsu no kyūbatsu)”99:

First of all, what gives people the wrong idea about pure literature’s external social existence – in other words, its market price [shika] – is the belief that pure literature must be professionalized [shokugyō-ka]. Precisely because people think of pure literature as an occupation, they must view popular [taishū] literature as an enemy and an obstacle. If they were to view pure literature as a pastime, they would realize that its market price and everything else about it is simply in a different category.100

It is clear from the above that Kume shares a similar view as Kikuchi Kan in terms of their definition of junbungaku vis-à-vis taishū bungaku: works that are produced as a result of the author’s overwhelming desire to write are pure literature; those that are produced for commercial reasons are not. It is also clear that by 1935, many junbungaku writers found it necessary to write popular novels alongside works of pure literature in order to survive in the marketplace – hence Hirano’s claim that junbungaku had degenerated. Indeed, as Kawabata observed in an essay dated July 1933 that was entitled “Junbungaku no seishin” (The Spirit of Pure Literature), there were now hardly any writers, even among those well established in the bundan, who could make a decent living by producing works of pure literature alone.101 Kawabata, like many other writers of pure literature, was aware of the changing literary landscape in Japan during the 1930s, which was marked by a growing craze for mass-oriented literature. Unlike the alarmists, who predicted an imminent demise of junbungaku, however, Kawabata held the opinion that junbungaku remained the wellspring of taishū bungaku, and that the spirit of pure literature would continue to live on:

*Junbugaku* is the birthplace of *taishū bungaku*, as well as its ultimate destination. *Taishū bungaku* is unthinkable in the absence of *junbungaku*. Although many
writers of mass-oriented literature are dissatisfied with pure literature nowadays, *junbungaku* should not be defined by such a narrow framework. *Junbungaku* is the artistic conscience (*geijutsuteki ryōshin*) that dwells in the heart of *taishū bungaku* writers. Considering the merits of *taishū bungaku*, I found none that had not been demonstrated by pure literature. *Junbungaku* is not dead... and its spirit will continue to live on, even if the literary world were to be dominated by *taishū bungaku* one day.  

“*Junbungaku no seishin*” opens with a powerful statement on the current status of *junbungaku*: “If pure literature is the kind of writing that gets overwhelmed by the popularity of *taishū bungaku* and withers in the latter’s shadow, I would gladly help hasten its demise with no regret.”

Apparently, Kawabata wanted fellow writers of pure literature to reconsider the “spirit of *junbungaku*” and to take a more pro-active stance in their creative endeavors, rather than one of defense and retreat from the advancing tide of the mass production of popular literature.

THE NOTION OF *JUNBUNGAKU* AS AN ARBITRARY DISTINCTION

As we have seen, Hirano argues that by 1935, *junbungaku* had “degenerated” to such a point that the line separating the pure and the mass had become blurred and the two became almost indistinguishable. I would argue that such a line had never been clear to begin with. It seems that the notion of *junbungaku* was just an arbitrary distinction that members of the *bundan* used to denote what they considered “pure,” as opposed to what they considered “popular entertainment.” Nevertheless, a serious attempt was made by the mid-1930s to “clearly” define the boundaries of *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*. As a consequence, Kikuchi Kan, then-editor of the *Bungei shunjū* magazine, established in 1935 (the same year as the publication of Yokomitsu’s “Junsui
Shōsetsu-ron”) the Akutagawa Prize and the Naoki Prize, two of the most prestigious literary awards in Japan. The former is a semi-annual award in honor of the junbungaku writer Akutagawa Ryūnosuke that recognizes the best literary story or novella published in a newspaper or magazine (including coterie magazines) by a new or rising writer; the latter is a semi-annual award in honor of the taishū bungaku writer Naoki Sanjūgo, that recognizes the best work of popular literature in any format (short story, novella or full-length novel) published in a newspaper or magazine (including coterie magazines) or in book form by a new, rising writer or a writer of medium standing.

Ever since their inception in 1935, the Akutagawa Prize and the Naoki Prize have been an important determinant of what is considered junbungaku and taishū bungaku. The criteria for such a determination, however, were never clearly spelled out. In an essay titled “Junsui Shōsetsu-ron no hankyō” (Responses to “On the Pure Novel,” July 1935), Kawabata Yasunari underscores the difficulty of distinguishing between pure and tsūzoku literature:

> It is of course the case that the term “tsūzoku novel” is no more than a term used within the literary establishment for the sake of convenience. Needless to say, the border between tsūzoku novels and pure literary novels is not clear. In comparison with the pure literary novel, which is normally determined by literary establishment criticism, the tsūzoku novel is generally entrusted to the likes and dislikes of the mass of readers, does not have a uniform standard of criticism, and includes a greatly uneven body of very different works. For that reason, it is hard for us to fix our sights upon.”¹⁰⁴

It is interesting to note that at the time that Kawabata was writing the essay, he was also participating in the selection process for the first Akutagawa Prize.¹⁰⁵ Kawabata rightly points out that the definition of junbungaku is determined by the literary establishment. He does not, however, as Edward Mack observes, “name the criteria that determine literary purity,” nor does he “address the process by which a
given work comes under the scrutiny of literary establishment criticism.”  
Instead, he concedes that the border between *tsūzoku* novels and pure literary novels is not clear.

Kawabata ends his essay by predicting that the line between *tsūzoku* and non-*tsūzoku* “may, relatively quickly, become indiscernible”:

For some time I have wondered whether the contemporary novel was not actually more *tsūzoku* than not. In addition, there is reason to believe that the distinction between *tsūzoku* and non-*tsūzoku* may, relatively quickly, become indiscernible and that in the near future there may come a time when *tsūzoku* novels come to be seen as having been a more accurate representation of reality. As various writers have suggested, that is due to the flagging creation of pure literature today.”

As Mack points out, “postwar critics have argued that the literature dismissed as popular (and celebrated by the Naoki Prize) is more truly literary than those works admired as pure (and celebrated by the Akutagawa Prize). Despite his questioning of the internal logic of the divide, however, Kawabata nonetheless believes that it does exist … rather than dismiss the arbitrary binarism [between the pure and the *tsūzoku*], he accepted it in all its ambiguity, accepting it as a *fait accompli*.”

Hirano Ken said it well when he claimed that “the distinction between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* was a calculated political move on the part of the *bundan* to distance itself from works of mass appeal.” Drawing a parallel to the terms *junmen* (pure cotton) and *junmō* (pure wool) that were used during wartime to distinguish high quality textile from staple fiber which seemed to have flooded the market, Nakamura Mitsuo saw the term *junbungaku* as being used by established writers of the *bundan* in reaction against the political, ideological emphasis of proletarian literature on the one hand, and the mass-oriented, entertainment-driven approach of *taishū bungaku* on the other hand – the former gaining popularity among the younger generation during the 1920s, and the latter donning costumes of new literature and gradually becoming the darling of the journalistic world during the same period.
HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NOTION OF JUNBUNGAKU

In his article, Strecher “examine[s] the historical moment at which the distinction between junbungaku and taishū bungaku was defined” and “the ideology that led to the need for such a distinction to be made.”112 Quoting Karatani Kōjin, who saw the 1920s and 1930s as “a time of unparalleled imperialistic outreach – military, economic, and cultural – on the part of the Japanese,” Strecher argues that junbungaku became equated with shishōsetsu during the same historical period, precisely at the time when “Japan embarked on a course of radical redefinition of what it meant to be Japanese.” As “Japan itself became obsessed with defining precisely what it meant to be Japanese… the bundan elected to join the movement, making great efforts to redefine itself in such a way that it might enjoy a privileged position in Japanese letters, and at the same time emphasize Japanese ‘high’ culture as truly and specifically ‘Japanese.’”113 Hence, shishōsetsu came to be considered “pure” and “high class” in the realm of literature, just as junmen and junmō were considered “pure” and “high class” in the economic realm.

THE “HIGH” AND THE “LOW”; THE ELITE AND THE Egalitarian

In “Taishū bungaku hihan,” (Criticism of Mass Literature), published in the July 1961 issue of Gunzō, Ōoka Shōhei has this to say regarding the perceived high-low distinction between junbungaku and taishū bungaku: “The preconception that junbungaku is somehow more ‘high-class’ (kōkyū) [than taishū bungaku] is firmly implanted. Indeed, writers of junbungaku take pride in their profession, even if they fail to produce decent works of literary merit; whereas writers of mass literature have no other recourse but to
console themselves with their own popularity and the high manuscript fee that their works command. I predict that the current state of things will continue for a while.”

Ōoka’s view is echoed by Itō Sei. In “‘Jun’bungaku wa sonzai shiuru ka?” (Can “jun”bungaku exist?), published in the November 1961 issue of Gunzō, Itō claimed that although the distinction between junbungaku and taishū bungaku had become vague, literary works were still being classified by rough standards into one of the two groups according to the author and the venue of publication. In Itō’s view, such a practice was seen as discriminatory (sabetsu taigū) in the eyes of a taishū bungaku writer; to a junbungaku writer, it imparted a vague sense of superiority (aimai na yūetsukan) that somehow his work was of higher quality, while at the same time bringing a sense of unease and misgiving (kigu no nen) as to whether things should continue the way they were.

Junbungaku’s elitism stands in sharp contrast to taishū bungaku’s more egalitarian approach to literature. Indeed, as Ozaki Hotsuki points out, the term taishū originated in the Buddhist tradition, with the two Chinese characters 大衆 (daishu) signifying sangha (saMgha in Sanskrit; sōga 僧伽 in Japanese) – treasured in the Buddhist tradition as one of the Three Jewels (the other two being the Buddha and the Dharma) – that is, “a community of monks who have attained enlightenment and who may help others do the same.” According to Ozaki, the term daishu had appeared in medieval texts of popular war chronicles such as the Heike monogatari and the Hōgen monogatari. Over time, it had lost the original meaning of sangha, and came to be used as a synonym for “people,” “popular” or “mass.”

As Amanda Seaman points out, “Katō Hidetoshi, one of the editors of Handbook of Japanese Popular Culture, opposes the use of ‘popular’ as a translation of the term taishū since ‘popular’ in English has the connotation of ‘nonserious.’ Instead, he points to the Buddhist, egalitarian inflection of the term, according to which ‘there is no distinction
between ‘elite’ and ‘mass,’ ‘literate’ and ‘non-literate’ and so on.”117 As illustrated by the great rain in the *Lotus Sutra* which nourishes universally all kinds of plants, representing living beings with different spiritual capacities, the Buddhist worldview is one of egalitarianism, in which there is no binary distinction between high and low, elite and mass, pure and non-pure. As such, it strikes a chord with the spirit of *taishū bungaku*, which, as we have seen, encourages everyone, genius or ordinary man and woman, to enjoy the pleasure of reading and writing works of literature. It can be argued further that *taishū bungaku* posed no real threat to *junbungaku* as members of the bundan had feared – since each had its own mission and audience, and worked in its own way to tell the truth about life. Here, we see a nice analogy: *junbungaku* is to *taishū bungaku* as the original Buddhist scripture is to medieval *setsuwa* tales or classical *monogatari* – “untrue” perhaps in terms of fictionalization, but an expedient means (*hōben*) nonetheless to help people understand the Dharma.

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ON PURE VERSUS MASS LITERATURE: ITŌ SEI, TAKAMI JUN AND ŌOKA SHŌHEI

In “‘Jun’bungaku wa sonzai shiuru ka?’”, Itō Sei refutes the binary distinction between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku* once and for all: “The distinction between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*, believed to have existed until now, is but a fallacy – for both kinds of works are written on the common ground of literature. Works of literary merit, as well as those that fall short of literary standards, are found in both categories, regardless of the author and the venue of publication.”118

In the same article, Itō Sei concurs with Hirano Ken that *junbungaku* seems to have degenerated over the years. Itō, however, focuses on Japan’s literary scene during the early 1960s when detective fiction was gradually becoming the vogue and posing a
challenge to *junbungaku*. Itō argues that the ideal benchmarks of proletarian literature and *junbungaku* were inherited and achieved respectively by Matsumoto Seichō (1909-1992) and Minakami Tsutomu (1919-2004), two of the most successful *taishū bungaku* writers known for their detective fiction – the former succeeded in portraying the dark capitalist society of the Shōwa era, which the proletarian writers had attempted but failed to do; while the latter managed to blend the [form of] detective fiction with the mood of autobiographical I-novels (*zensha ga puroretaria bungaku ga Shōwa shonen irai kuwadatete hatasanakatta shihonshugi shakai no ankoku no byōshutsu ni seikō shi, kōsha ga… shishōsetsu-teki na mūdo shōsetsu to suiri shōsetsu no musubitsuki ni seikō suru*).119 As Seidensticker rightly points out, Itō argues that “the detective story [*tantei shōsetsu*], heir to autobiography in the case of Minakami Tsutomu, and to social consciousness in the case of Matsumoto Seichō…opens up a bold new in-between prospect.”120

In an article entitled “Junbungaku kōgeki e no kōgi” (Opposition to the Attack on Pure Literature), published in the January 1962 issue of *Gunzō*, Takami Jun contends that *junbungaku* is under attack by publishing capitalists (and their sympathizers) whose aim is to reap the benefit of the entertainment industry.121 While conceding that the term *junbungaku* came into general use during the early 1930s, as Hirano Ken suggested in his articles, Takami argues that *junbungaku* was not a fixed historical concept, nor was it a term that referred only to the *shishōsetsu*, as Hirano contended.122 Even as Takami laments the decay of *junbungaku*, however, he does little, as Strecher points out, to elucidate on the elemental characteristics of what he considered to be pure literature. Instead, he quotes the following passage by Masamune Hakuchō that appeared in a 1933 issue of the journal *Kōdō*, seemingly suggesting that *junbungaku* is somehow better and more high-class than *taishū bungaku*:

> We can understand from this that aspiring writers are irritated by the lack of a new means for expressing themselves; it also tells of the domination of vulgar mass
literature, while pure literature is unfairly ignored by most. Finally, it tells us that many of these young writers sincerely feel the urge to put aside their worldly concerns and produce good literature. I sympathize with them, and foresee hard times ahead for them.123

The hardship awaiting junbunagaku writers that Hakuchō foresaw in 1933 is, Takami concludes, the reality of his time (1960s). In an essay entitled “Hihyōka no jirenma” (The Dilemma of the Literary Critic, 1961), Ōoka Shōhei noted that, during the 1960s, writers and literary critics alike faced harsh economic reality which forced them to make difficult choices as they battled against the popularity of taishū bungaku. Like Masamune Hakuchō and Takami Jun, Ōoka Shōhei was a firm supporter of junbunagaku. Ōoka saw the most challenging problem not so much in the degeneration of pure literature itself, but in the degeneration of the literary critic, who, for economic necessity, found it necessary to write “commentaries” for what Ōoka saw as trivial works of popular fiction. According to Ōoka, himself a writer as well as a literary critic, even the most esteemed critics in his times derived no more than one-fifth of their income from reviews that they wrote for literary magazines. It had become trendy for literary critics to write light “commentaries” on popular novels, in-between novels, and even suspense novels featuring such writers as Matsumoto Seichō to be published alongside the more serious bungei jihyō (literary reviews) in newspaper columns. The title of Ōoka’s essay signifies “the bitter dilemma of the literary critic, caught in the rushing torrent of chūkan shōsetsu and yet compelled to write literary reviews for the lackluster works of pure literature.”124

While conceding that “the concept of junbunagaku [which Hirano Ken equated with shishōsetsu] was a defensive notion that was conceived at the end of the Taishō period in opposition to the rising influence of taishū shōsetsu,”125 Ōoka (as did Takami Jun) took issue with Hirano’s claim that the notion of pure literature was a historical concept and
that by the mid-1930s, *junbungaku* had degenerated to such a point that it had lost its relevance. Specifically, Ōoka warned against the danger of letting mass culture subvert the role of the critic:

By defining *junbungaku* as a historical concept under the banner of modernism, one risks descent overnight into becoming a lantern-bearer for the publisher (*junbungaku o rekishiteki to kitei shite modenjumon o hyōbō sureba, tachimachi shuppansha no chōchin-mochi ni dasuru osore wa nai ka*). In the publishing world, too, the recent trend has been to focus on short-runs (*tanki-kōgyō*). There is a tendency for award-winning writers to become a product of consumption that disappears every six months like celebrities on television. It is suicidal for a literary critic to go with the current and to try to make a living by writing fragmentary commentaries.126

It is worth noting, as Amanda Seaman has pointed out, that “Hirano’s investigations into the nature of *junbungaku* came in the early 1960s, amid an onslaught of American television and other products.”127 and as Matthew Strecher observes, that “attempts to redefine *junbungaku* have coincided with periods in which Japan was most open to outside influences – notably in the 1920s and 1930s, and again in the late 1950s and early 1960s, but also in the late 1980s and 1990s.”128 Echoing Strecher’s view, Seaman concludes:

In each instance, the Japanese literary guild feels threatened by the encroachments of popular literature and thus attempts to protect itself by reasserting the boundaries between the “pure” and the “popular.” This sense of crisis has been exacerbated in recent years not only by the proliferation of mass artistic media, but also by a general feeling that *junbungaku* is out of touch with the reading public.129

As we have seen, the concept of *junbungaku* as *shishösetsu* was first formulated in the 1920s (and later firmly established in the 1930s) in response to the perceived threat of *taishö bungaku* led by the unique genre of “period novels” known as *jidai shösetsu*. During the militaristic years of imperialist expansion following the Manchurian
Incident of 1931, popular *jidai shōsetsu* gave the Japanese people a sense of identity and national character. In a similar fashion, *junbungaku* writers contributed to the spirit of the age by trying to create a boundary for pure literature and by emphasizing the purity and uniquely Japanese nature of *shishōsetsu*.

In the early 1960s, when the famous debates initiated by Hirano on the degeneration of pure literature (*junbungaku henshitsu ronsō*) were in full swing, it was the new genre of detective fiction epitomized by Matsumoto Seichō’s *tantei shōsetsu* that was perceived to be the greatest encroachment on the territory of *junbungaku*. As Strecher points out, “the debates of the early 1960s... came at a time when television, the ultimate mass media of its time, began to pose a serious challenge to print... When Hirano began to question the very foundations of pure literature, he [did it] against the backdrop of a rising middle class, increasingly defining itself in terms of images it saw on television, especially those of middle-class America.”130 The immense popularity of television, promoted by the broadcasting of Crown Prince Akihito’s royal wedding in 1959, and the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, was closely tied to the prominence of *taishū bungaku*. Many works of popular fiction were dramatized no sooner had they been published. Miura’s *Hyōten* was no exception. Two months after the completion of its serialization in the Asahi newspaper, *Hyōten* gained an even wider audience on television as a popular drama series (*Hyōten* was serialized in the *Asahi Shinbun* from December 9, 1964 to November 14, 1965. It was dramatized and broadcast on the NET network January 23, 1966 to April 17, 1966).

Members of the literary establishment saw not only *taishū bungaku*, but also the mass media itself, as an encroachment on the territory of *junbungaku*, which threatened to take away their authority as the final arbiter of literary taste. Whereas the *bundan* had hitherto enjoyed power over deciding what qualified to be considered [pure] literature,
the commercial success of mass literature changed the game and began to shift the balance of power towards the publishers and the mass media.

**ŌE KENZABURŌ’S VIEW OF JUNBUNGAKU**

By the 1980s, it was mass-oriented writers like Murakami Haruki (1949-) – a popular Japanese novelist known for writing like an American writer – who were perceived to pose a threat to established notion of **junbungaku**. While Murakami’s popular novels enjoyed worldwide recognition and commercial success both in Japan and abroad, **junbungaku** writers who refused to see the market value of a work as a measure of its literary worth continued to struggle economically. In “Japan’s Dual Identity: A Writer’s Dilemma,” an address delivered at the Duke University on September 25, 1986, the Nobel laureate Ōe Kenzaburō comments on the contemporary state of **junbungaku**: “Never have there been so many publications in Japan as in the past forty years. The number of **junbungaku** publications, however, is inversely proportional to the increase in the amount of the other publications. Moreover, there is not one work of **junbungaku** to be found in the 1985 list of the ten best-selling Japanese books in either fiction or non-fiction.”\(^{131}\) Ōe’s remark shows how poorly **junbungaku** fared in the late 1980s against the rising tide of popular literature. Indeed, as Ōe notes in his speech, young intellectuals including critics, playwrights, screenwriters, introducers of new and diverse literary theories from the United States and Europe, and even writers whose works are not considered to be in the realm of **junbungaku** say that “**junbungaku** is already dead, or is about to breathe its last.”\(^{132}\) Ōe himself shares the same fear as Masamune Hakuchō, Takami Jun and Ōoka Shōhei that **junbungaku** will eventually die out. In Ōe’s case, he criticizes the young intellectuals of his time for abandoning literature. In his eyes, they represent the younger generation who had lost
their enthusiasm for *junbun* and instead “fell head over heels for new cultural theories from Europe and America.”

Ôe Kenzaburō has high praise for post-war literature of the 1946-70 period, calling it “the highest level of literary achievement since the Meiji Restoration and the onset of Japan’s modernization.” In “Japan’s Dual Identity: A Writer’s Dilemma,” Ôe expresses his view that “the Japanese, through defeat in the Pacific War, saw for the first time the entire picture of the modernization of a nation called Japan” and that “it was post-war literature which depicted most sensitively and most sincerely that very picture of Japan and the Japanese.” Whereas Hirano Ken sees 1935 (when “Junsui Shōsetsu-rón” was written) as the watershed year, Ôe sets 1970 as “the year in which the curtain fell for postwar literature.” Ôe sees the decay of Japanese literature as nothing other than “the loss of the unique status which postwar literature had established in the realm of Japanese culture. In other words, the literary force which postwar literature had once possessed to enlighten Japan and the Japanese to reality and culture is now being lost.”

In Ôe’s view, it is the “seriousness” of *junbun* that is being lost. In his acceptance speech of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Ôe declares: “I am one of the writers who wish to create serious works of literature which dissociate themselves from those novels which are mere reflections of the vast consumer cultures of Tokyo and the subcultures of the world at large.” Ôe is apparently referring here to a new generation of popular writers like Murakami Haruki who seems to display [in Ôe’s assessment] no social commitment or responsibility for Japan’s past. As Tachibana Reiko points out, Ôe “has repeatedly noted the significance of the writer’s responsibility to society, which he or she satisfies through a solid subjectivity rooted in history – this is the task of *junbun*.” From the 1930s, when “Junsui Shōsetsu-rón” was written, to the time of Ôe Kenzaburō (1980s), the concept of *junbun* had undergone a long process of
transformation and evolution. It should be noted that Ōe’s notion of *junbungaku* has a social dimension that makes it very different from the dominant view of the literary establishment back in the 1930s, which equated *junbungaku* with the *shishōsetsu*. Ōe’s emphasis on the writer’s responsibility to society is reminiscent of what Nakamura Mitsuo (1911-1988) wrote in his criticism of the I-novelists: “*shishōsetsu* writers had no awareness of any confrontation between society and the individual. Indeed, they lacked the concept of ‘society’ altogether. Society for these writers was only those people who had a direct impact on their sensibilities: family, friends, lovers, etc.”

Ōe Kenzaburō parts ways with his predecessors by rejecting the Japanese I-novel, which he describes as follows: "In Japan there is the literary tradition of the *watakushi-shōsetsu*… We write about ourselves, about how we get up, how we take our breakfast, and so forth - that is *watakushi-shōsetsu*." Unlike the I-novelists, Ōe emphasizes what he called the “unfolding of free imagination” (*jiyū na sōzōryoku no tenkai*), which refers to the writer’s ability to freely transform an original image that he gets from everyday experiences to come up with novel images (*nichijō seikatsu no keiken ga, wareware ni ataeru imēji. Sono kihonteki na imēji o, jiyū ni tsukurikaete yoku no ga, sōzōryoku no hataraki de aru*). As Ōe himself indicates, “although the overall concept and the various details of Ōe’s novels are [often] based upon day-to-day experiences with his [brain-damaged] son, [Hikari], the final product upon completion of his writing cannot be more distant from actual experiences” (*Boku no shōsetsu no samazama na saibu oyobu zentai no kōsō wa, boku to musuko no nichijō seiktasu ni hasshite iru ga, kakiagereta shōsetsu wa, mushiro genjitsu no keiken kara mottomo tōi mono da*). For that reason, Ōe does not consider any of his novels *shishōsetsu*:

From *Kojinteki na taiken* (A Personal Matter, 1964) to *Pinchi ran’nā chōsho* (Pinch Runner Memorandum, 1976), I do not consider any of my novels as being *shishōsetsu*. In my opinion, the *shishōsetsu* characteristically employs a method that
stoically restrains the working of the imaginative power... In the Japanese I-novel, the protagonist “I” remains within the environment of day-to-day life.¹⁴³

In an interview published in 1994, Ōe contends that “when we look at [the shishōsetsu] in terms of European or international critical standards, it can’t stand up to a world critique, it does not have the elements of a true novel.”¹⁴⁴ Ōe’s idea of junbungaku is very different from that which equates pure literature with shishōsetsu. In addition to “free imagination,” the ideal novel, as exemplified by Ōe’s own works, has a social dimension that goes beyond the narrow framework of shishōsetsu. It is grounded in moral vision and offers a transcendental spiritual experience. It is sublime in the sense that it elevates the readers to a higher level of moral or spiritual purity. Ōe sees writing as a political act that helps change the world. In Ōe’s view, a true novel should have intellectual complexity and the power of imagination, and it should be cosmopolitan – the Japanese novelist should aim, Ōe argues, at “[creating] fiction that can be called novels even when they are held up against the standards of the novels of Europe, America, Asia, Africa, and so on.”¹⁴⁵ Ōe provides a list of whom he considers great modern Japanese writers: Natsume Soseki, Ōoka Shōhei, Tsushima Yūko, Kōno Taeko, Ōba Minako, and Furui Yoshikichi.¹⁴⁶

PROBLEMATIZING THE NOTION OF JUNBUNGAKU

Although the meaning of junbungaku has been transformed over the years, one thing has remained constant – the lingering stereotype that pure literature is artistically and aesthetically superior, and somehow more high-class and serious than taishū bungaku. In an important essay titled “Taishū bungaku honshitsu ron” (On the Essence of Taishū Bungaku, 1934), Nakatani Hiroshi notes that there are many misconceptions about taishū bungaku, among them the disparaging view that “it is presumptuous to do
critical studies [on taishū bungaku], the way we normally do on pure literature, because
they are just low-brow fiction – nothing more than entertainment and recreational
reading for female readers.” (Fujoshi o dokusha to shite iru goraku to ian to no teikyū
bungaku ni junbungaku to onajiku hīhyō nado to wa okogamashii). In a similar fashion,
Matthew Strecher complains that “the academy of Western scholarship relegates
studies of Japanese popular fiction to the periphery,” – a view echoed by John Treat
who writes: “What is trivial in fact is the lingering view of popular culture, be it Japan’s
or our own, as a subject that need not be studied in earnest because such efforts can
only seldom lead to valuable insight into the fundamental workings of a society.

While there is a broad consensus among literary critics (Masamune Hakuchō,
Takami Jun, Ōoka Shōhei, etc.) about the superiority of junbungaku, there have not been
clear statements as to what actually consitutes pure literature. As Seidensticker
observes, critics seem to suggest that the essence of purity is to be found in “an essay-
like, highly personal, and frequently lyrical style most closely associated with Shiga
Naoya,” but other than that, they “do not agree with one another on precise definitions
and often do not even attempt them.” Seidensticker further points out that “probably
no two would have agreed on exactly what works beyond those of Shiga Naoya would
qualify as pure” and that “the temptation would... have been strong to say: ‘I’ll call
your books pure if you’ll call mine pure.’” In the absence of an objective yardstick,
“pure” and “non-pure” are determined arbitrarily based upon the tight, cozy
relationship within the literary establishment called bundan.

Seidensticker finds the notion of pure literature “inadequate and perhaps even
silly,” for it “fails to come to grips with the question of what fiction is and what
distinguishes it from non-fiction, and so comes dangerously close to casting such [great
writers] as Tanizaki and Sōseki into the land of the non-pure or the semi-pure or the
merely amusing.” Seidensticker further points out that, “the term Yoyūha, originally
applied contemptuously to Sōseki and his followers, means something like ‘the Dilettantes,’ and strongly suggests that the work they were engaged in was less serious than that which the Naturalists had undertaken. Indeed, Karatani Kōjin notes that “Sōseki’s writings had been held in low esteem by literati” and that “[the Naturalists] did not grant him recognition until the publication of the autobiographical Grass on the Wayside (Michikusa, 1915)” towards the end of Sōseki’s career.

Meanwhile, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, too, had been criticized for being a “popular” writer. Hirano Ken calls Sasameyuki (The Makioka Sisters, 1943-48) – Tanizaki’s longest and best novel in Donald Keene’s opinion – “the worst sort of popular literature,” labelling it a fūzoku shōsetsu (genre novel), a disparaging term most often used, according to Seidensticker, “to refer to a novel wanting in character, intellectual content, and social implications, and given over to superficial description of what people wear and eat and powder their noses with.”

The term junbunbuku is an ambiguously defined and arbitrary standard used to classify writers. In my opinion, the distinction between “pure” and “mass” literature, and that between highbrow and lowbrow culture is problematic, as revealed in a quick survey of Japan’s literary history from the medieval through the early modern period. Many of the literary masterpieces that are now considered part of the canon of Japanese literature originated as popular literature or performances. Heike monogatari belonged to an oral tradition of popular war tales performed by medieval jongleurs known as the biwa-hōshi. Nō drama originated as sarugaku (literally “monkey music”) before Zeami incorporated aesthetic elements from classical poetry, medieval renga and Heian monogatari, that elevated the popular art to a level worthy of aristocratic recognition. Kabuki and Saikaku’s fiction, too, owed their success to their popular appeal. By the seventeenth century, the line between ga (elegance) and zoku (popular culture) had become indistinguishable. Indeed, at the heart of Bashō’s poetics lay the various poetic
ideals that merged the two elements – most notably his emphasis on awakening to the “high” and returning to the “low” (kōgo kizoku).

In “Junbungaku to taishū bungaku” (the roundtable discussion with Hirano Ken and Yamamoto Kenkichi on October 19, 1961), Itō Sei looks back upon the Heian period and identifies the zuihitsu (miscellany) tradition (as exemplified by Sei Shōnagon’s Makura no sōshi) and the monogatari tradition (as exemplified by Murasaki Shikibu’s Genji monogatari) as the origins and artistic wellspring of junbungaku and taishū bungaku respectively. Most significantly, Itō argues that “popular” writers, with their focus on narrativity, may very well be the true heirs to the monogatari tradition, and that their works may some day come to be considered literary masterpieces, just as the Genji monogatari became a canonical work of Japanese literature. In his final analysis, Itō cautions against being too staunch an advocate of junbungaku, in the name of “purity” and “seriousness,” lest we should be laughed at by future generations for failing to recognize the artistic merit and literary worth of taishū bungaku:

If one were to trace the tradition [of junbungaku] back to the Heian period… not Murasaki Shikibu, but rather Sei Shōnagon would be seen to stand at its head – and indeed in their own day it was she of the two great ladies who was thought the nearer to representing serious [pure] literature. (Genji monogatari ga seiritsu shita toki wa nani no junbungaku de nakatta. Ano toki wa Makura no sōshi ga junbungaku de atta). And following the lines back to our own degenerate age, might we not find that writers called “popular” are the true heirs to the monogatari tradition? (taishū bungaku to iwarete iru mono ga… monogatari bungaku no shuryū ni naru) And might they not be producing masterpieces? And might we not be laughed at for all future generations, even as we laugh at the warped taste of the Heian period, for failing to recognize them?158

Along similar lines, Kawabata Yasunari had argued in 1932 that there were also popular works of fiction, written in colloquial, contemporary language and considered more “vulgar” at the time, that came to be included, from today’s point of view, among the most representative works of the period in which they were written:
During the Heian Period and the Kamakura Period, even if there had been a distinction between *junbun *and *taishū bungaku*, it would not have been discernible from today’s point of view. To say the least, modern readers would no longer be able to make the same kind of distinction as perceived by people of those times. Some works might have been written in more artistic language, while others in colloquial, contemporary language that was considered more “vulgar” at the time; nevertheless, we can no longer tell the difference. What had been disparaged as “vulgar” at the time – description of the most ordinary scenes in an ordinary style – came to be considered, from today’s point of view, as being among the most representative works of the period that best capture the spirit of the age.159

Commenting on three contemporary works in the popular *taishū bungaku* genre – *Shōhai* (Victory and Defeat, 1931?) by Kikuchi Kan, as well as *Nangoku Taiheiki* (Record of a Southern Country, 1931) and *Seishun gyōjōki* (Record of Youthful Behavior, 1931) by Naoki Sanjūgo – Kawabata, a major writer within the tradition of *junbun*, humbly stated that he was no expert on *taishū bungaku* and therefore “not qualified” to say anything, but he found it odd that “some people under the banner of *junbun* would spread canards in fear of the phantom menace of the massive enemy force [called *taishū bungaku*]” (teki no taigun no gen’ei ni obiete ryūgen higo o makichirasu yō na junbun roku no ichibu no hitobito no sawagi o fushigi ni omou). Regarding the aforementioned works by Kikuchi Kan and Naoki Sanjūgo, Kawabata argued that they have qualities that are by no means inferior to typical works of *junbun* (taitei no junbun roku no sakuhin ni mo otoranai mono o motte iru).160

Although the elite Japanese literary establishment of the post-Meiji world cherished the *shishōsetsu* as *junbun*, while downplaying the literary worth of *taishū bungaku* (mass literature), there were some writers who eschewed the confessional genre of I-novels favored by the *bundan* and who saw no problem with popular fiction. Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, for instance, called his own novel
Rangiku monogatari a work of popular literature and argued that “all great masterpieces are popular literature,” including those by Shakespeare and Tolstoy.

MIURA AYAKO: WOMAN WRITER OF “POPULAR NOVELS” ON CHRISTIAN THEMES

Undoubtedly, literary standards change over time, both in Japan and in the West. Initial reviews of Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights in 1847 were less than spectacular, but her novel is now considered one of the great works of English literature. A similar re-assessment of Miura Ayako’s novels seems to have occurred in the late 1990s, as the boundary between junbungaku and taishū bungaku became increasingly blurred, to the point of being almost indistinguishable. As I have mentioned, in June 1998 (one year before Miura’s death), Odagiri Hideo praised Miura’s novels and affirmed their literary merit in a complete reversal from his earlier position, which had treated taishū bungaku with disdain. Five months later in November 1998, a special issue of Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō on Miura Ayako was published. Since 1998, more than ten monographs of critical studies on Miura’s works have been published in Japan. Among the most important are the following books:


More than three decades after Hirano Ken’s initial review, Miura’s novels seemed to have finally become a legitimate subject of academic studies and scholarly criticism – a rapidly expanding field of research indeed that offers opportunities in an increasing number of areas across disciplines, such as social, political, religious, gender and cultural studies.

I have attributed the hitherto negative reception of Miura’s novels by critics in Japan to the obstacles that Miura faced as a woman writer of “popular novels” on Christian themes, working from the off-center location of Hokkaidō. In the remainder of this chapter, I will lay out the arguments that substantiate my view.

During the 1960s, when Miura debuted as a professional writer, women writers relegated to the margin were still struggling to find a legitimate place in the literary mainstream, which was dominated by male writers, publishers and critics. As the feminist critic Joan Ericson points out in “The Origins of the Concept of Women’s Literature,” gender-based characterization in Japan of women’s literature as “feminine” is problematic and the label “joryū sakka” that critics applied to women writers was based on what Ericson calls “presumptions of difference” that stereotypically discredited women’s literature in general as sentimental, unsophisticated, non-intellectual and second-rate, except a few high quality works occasionally produced by such writers as Miyamoto Yuriko, who was then considered a “masculine” exception.165

Questioning the notion that “women’s literature” constituted a distinct female style (joryū) of writing, Ericson points out that “women writers of the 1920’s... often favored a confessional style [like their male counterparts]; however, their works were generally categorized not as watakushi shōsetsu, but rather as jiden shōsetsu (autobiographical fiction)... under the presumption that women’s confessional autobiographical fiction was somehow different from the watakushi shōsetsu composed by men.”166 Although not within the scope of this study, Miura Ayako had, by the end of
her career, published six *jiden shōsetsu* – *Michi Ariki* (The Wind is Howling, 1969), *Kono tsuchi no utsuwa o mo* (Even this Earthen Vessel, 1970), *Ishikoro no uta* (The Song of a Pebble, 1974), *Kusa no uta* (Song of the Meadow, 1986), *Inochi aru kagiri* (As long as I Live, 1996), and *Ashita o utau – inochi aru kagiri* (Song of Tomorrow: As Long as I Live, 1999) – on top of many essays and diaries (*nikki*) that were based upon her life. By definition, fictional elements are inevitable in novels (autobiographical or not); nevertheless, Miura’s *jiden shōsetsu* are generally considered by Japanese critics and researchers to be reasonably “factual” or trustworthy enough to be used as sources of biographical information – perhaps because they were written in the manner of a Christian testimonial (I am aware of the “myth of sincerity” and not arguing here that such a testimony is necessarily more “honest” or “truthful” than, say, a Naturalistic I-novel). As we shall see in the next chapter, *Michi ariki*, was, in particular, a sincerely “truthful” account of Miura’s life lyrically told in the manner of poetic fiction.

It was never easy for a woman writer to survive in the Japanese literary world, much less so for a woman writer of the Christian faith. After all, the *bundan* was dominated by writers, literary critics, editors and publishers who were male. By 1964, the year of Miura Ayako’s debut, fifty writers had received the Akutagawa Prize since its inception in 1935; but among them only five were women – Nakazato Tsuneko (1938), Shibaki Yoshiko (1941), Yuki Shigeko (1949), Kōno Taeko (1963) and Tanabe Seiko (1963). During the 1950s, the decade immediately prior to Miura’s debut, the prestigious award for the best work in pure literature was won exclusively by men (seventeen times in total). From 1935 to 1964, twenty-six members served in the Akutagawa Prize Selection Committee; ALL of them were men. Indeed, it was not until 1987, more than two decades after Miura’s debut, that we saw the first woman writer (Ōba Minako) serving in the Akutagawa Prize Selection Committee. Even Shōno Yoriko (1956-), a talented woman writer who distinguished herself as a rare “triple-crown”
winner of the three most prestigious literary awards for junbungaku writers – Noma Literary Prize for New Writers in 1991, Mishima Yukio Prize and the Akutagawa Prize in 1994 – could not escape the discriminatory forces of the male-dominated bundan. Reflecting on her early experiences as a woman writer, Shōno writes:

I felt as if I had become a writer to fight gender discrimination against women writers. During the first ten years after my debut as the recipient of the Gunzō Literary Prize for New Writers, I had no book publication offers. Despite strong recommendation by the shishōsetsu writer Fujieda Shizuo (1907-1993), who represented the literary magazine Gunzō, a historical leader of post-war literature in Japan, ... I found myself on bad terms with Gunzō’s editor-in-chief... I was living in Kyoto at the time... Readers who are familiar with my works probably know that I have been a writer who derives creative energy from examining issues of discrimination and revealing the sense of discomfort that women feel because of their gender. Yet, my editor had no understanding of my concerns; instead he constantly demanded that I write about the experience of a woman who bears a child out of wedlock, that I should ponder why people live in poverty and indict the bourgeoisie.”

In a postscript to the thought-provoking book, Danryū bungakuron (On Male Literature, 1992), Tomioka Taeko (novelist, poet and feminist literary critic) underscores the issues of power and inter-relations between gender and literary production, as well as reception:

[Male] critics play the central role of authority within the system of literary production and circulation. They affix the seal of approval to what they consider superior works, and recommend them to outsiders – readers who buy these books with confidence, only to realize how boring they are. Thinking that they are to blame for not being able to comprehend the merits of these works, consumers buy another one recommended by the authority. The process repeats itself until those with no moral obligation finally turn their back on literature.
Tomioka writes that, as a reader, she came to question such seals of approval and finds fault with a power structure that centers around an inner literary circle where criticism is done and value judgment is passed in the absence of the female voice (bungaku no uchiwa de no kachi handan ya hihyō gaJosei fuzai de okonawarete kite iru).\textsuperscript{169} In Tomioka’s view, the male authority resists the external forces of change, and tries even more to reinforce his own authority as a countermeasure against possible loss of that authority (ken’i no shittsui o kaihi suru tame ni masumasu ken’i o hokyō suru).\textsuperscript{170}

Being a female author who writes in simple, plain language does not necessarily mean that Miura is a second-rate writer who is only capable of producing trivial fiction for popular entertainment. It should be noted that, Shiga Naoya, a male writer revered in Japan as the “god of fiction,” also wrote in a concise, simple style, using no unnecessary words. Indeed, as Joan Ericson observes: “Although some women writers wrote short, simple sentences... so did many men. The variability in language and style among individual male and female writers was at least as great as the presumed variability between the two groups. The boundaries of women’s literature were thus demarcated by a set of conceptual antinomies, the pure [junbungaku=male] and the popular [taishū bungaku=female], the confessional [shishōsetsu=male] and the autobiographical [jiden shōsetsu=female]...The combined effect of these oppositions implicitly devalued the work of women writers as merely popular and aesthetically second-rate.”\textsuperscript{171}

Interestingly, the mass media used Miura’s gender to launch her career, making her one of the most successful women writers in terms of commercial sales, while simultaneously “marring” her career, in terms of literary fame, by relegating her to the periphery as a “popular novelist of taishū bungaku.” As we shall see, such a perception was created and reinforced by the publishing world that marketed Miura as “an amateur writer who happened to be a mere housewife.”
In 1963, with the encouragement of her husband, Mitsuyo, Miura Ayako entered a ten-million-yen literary contest sponsored by the *Asahi Shinbun* in commemoration of the eighty-fifth anniversary of its Osaka office and the seventy-fifth anniversary of its Tokyo office. Competing with amateurs and professional writers, Miura, a then unknown Christian writer from Asahikawa, surprised everyone including herself by winning the keenly sought-after literary prize with her debut novel, *Hyōten*. Her amazing and sudden rise to literary stardom was reported on the July 10, 1964 issue of the Asahi newspaper following the announcement of the award. On page fourteen, there appeared an eye-catching article referring in its headline to Miura as an “amiable housewife working as a greengrocer” (*kisaku na zakatten no shufu*). Many scholars (Kuroko Kazuo, Kamide Keiko and Okano Hiroyuki among them) have commented on the meaning of this catch phrase. According to Kuroko, it emphasizes the winning of a major literary award by an ordinary housewife and its “total unexpectedness” (*ikanimo sono igaisei o hyōgen shite ita*).172 Okano elaborates further by comparing the phrase to “a camouflage designed by the newspaper company to veil Miura’s prior grounding in literature, and instead presenting her as an ‘amateur’ author [with no literary experience] – a decorative device to leverage the power of ‘unexpectedness’ in order to arouse the readers’ interest and curiosity.” (*motomoto bungaku-teki na soyō no atta Miura Ayako o, dokusha ga ‘ama’ de aru to sakkaku suru yō ni shimukeru tame no, Asahi Shinbunsha ni yoru kamufurēji de ari, igaisē o yobikosu tame no sōshoku de atta no de wa nai darō ka to kangaerareru*).173

I agree with Kuroko’s and Okano’s interpretation that the phrase *kisaku na zakkaten no shufu* serves a marketing purpose by increasing the topicality of the news story. In addition, I would argue that it is important not to overlook the significance of gender stereotype in this label, which implies that being a housewife (*shufu*), Miura could only produce something simple, unsophisticated and non-intellectual – good entertainment
for the general populace, maybe, but not pure literature. Before Hyōten was given any serious consideration in the bundan as to its literary merit – indeed even before it was serialized (from December 9, 1964 to November 14, 1965) – it had been categorized as a novice work by a greengrocer’s wife who had no experience in the production of literature. Because of her gender and by default, Miura’s work was prejudged as marginal and outside the literary mainstream.

The portrayal of Miura as an ordinary housewife poorly grounded in literature was far from accurate. Since her early childhood, Miura had been an ardent reader of literature, from Japanese classics to modern European novels. As Okano points out, two years prior to her literary debut, Miura’s memoir Taiyō wa futatabi bossezu (The Sun Will not Set Again) had been selected for publication in the January 1962 issue of the women’s magazine Shufu no Tomo, and before that another novel entitled Kuraki tabiji ni mayoi shi o (Lost in a Dark Journey) had been published in the monthly bulletin of Miura’s home church, the Asahikawa Rokujō Kyōkai. Moreover, Miura was a gifted poet who published regularly from 1941 to 1961, in Araragi – arguably the most prestigious tanka journal in modern Japan.

Miura’s literary talent, however, received little attention. Once categorized by journalists as a “housewife poorly grounded in literature” Miura would have to live with that image for a long time, and her novels would be considered “low-brow fiction for entertainment” by the elite members of the bundan. Such a gender-based categorization is significant because it reflects the judgment of a writer’s literary merits in the world of journalistic criticism. In an essay published in January 1969 titled “Shirōto rashiku jibun no pēsu de” (At My Own Pace, like an Amateur), Miura reflects on the challenges that she faced early in her career:

“I bet that woman can only write one novel at best.” I heard this kind of harsh criticism on several occasions when my debut novel Hyōten was first published.
I had not written any novels before *Hyōten*, so I lacked confidence as to whether I could continue as a writer. Meanwhile, a defamatory article in a weekly magazine made the baseless claim that *Hyōten* was a vicarious work by a well-known author. I was amused that someone saw my composition as being on par with the works of established writers in terms of quality, and as a result I gained a bit of confidence.175

In another essay, “Shiryō shirabe de kizuita koto,” Miura quotes the slanderer as falsely claiming that the purported ghostwriter was none other than Matsumoto Seichō.176 This is a vivid example of how journalists resort to demagoguery as a means to boost the sale of their magazines. But more significantly, by attributing authorship to Matsumoto Seichō, a popular *male* writer of *taishū bungaku* (detective fiction), whoever wrote the defamatory article seemed to imply that either *Hyōten* was too good to have been written by a female writer, or it was nothing more than popular entertainment similar to a typical detective novel by Matsumoto.

Miura was usually considered a writer of mass literature because she published in popular magazines and wrote in simple, plain language that was easily comprehensible to all readers. Interestingly, Miura recalled that she had begun to read difficult adult novels as a fifth-grader, and had written in an abstruse style before converting to plain language upon reading Niwa Fumio’s “Shinbun shōsetsu sahō” (How to write newspaper novels), which set out practical guidelines for the aspiring writer of novels that were to be serialized in a newspaper. In that essay, Niwa wrote, “A certain author once described the typical reader of *shinbun shōsetsu* as ‘someone who has the reading comprehension skill of a female student who has completed her eighth grade, plus ten years of life experiences’ (*kyūsei jogakkō ninensei sotsu teido no dokkairyoku purasu jinsei keiken jūnen*). I found the characterization quite convincing.”177 Miura wrote accordingly with her target audience in mind while working on her debut novel *Hyōten*, and soon
established herself as a successful newspaper novelist by adhering closely to Niwa’s advice in terms of diction, writing style, plot development and other narrative devices.

According to Niwa, the common practice seems to be to provide a manuscript anywhere from 1,200 words to 1,600 words to be serialized in a newspaper each day. A typical writer of newspaper serials would first sketch out a rough plot, which is to be divided according to the total number of installments, and then proceed from the beginning of the plot, to its development, climax and conclusion, putting special emphasis on the middle sections. In the case of shinbun shōsetsu, plot development (suji) and imaginative narrativity (monogatari-sei) are the most important, taking precedence over description, psychological depiction, and ambiance, which are considered secondary issues. As the success of a newspaper novel hinges upon the opening lines, it is important, Niwa argues, to engage the readers’ attention from the very beginning, lest they should lose interest in the work. Niwa sees Kikuchi Kan, who employs various cinematic techniques in his writings, a master of opening lines for shinbun shōsetsu. Equally important, in Niwa’s view, are the last three lines of each installment. Ideally, the closing section should drop a hint that is to be developed in the next installment. In addition, Niwa offers a few more tips for the aspiring writer of shinbun shōsetsu. First of all, the content of the newspaper novel should not be overly complicated. Niwa himself centers his story around one or two main characters, backed by a supporting cast of two or three. Secondly, conversation should be used abundantly. The success of a newspaper novel is, in Niwa’s opinion, determined to a great extent by the use of dialogues. Thirdly, Niwa cautions against deviating from the common tempo that readers experience in their daily lives. If the serialization of a novel begins in September, then the novel, too, should begin with an autumn scene. Flashback, if employed, should not be so long as to distract from the progression of current events.
Following the advice of Niwa Fumio, Miura found great success serializing her novels in newspapers and other popular venues such as women’s magazines. Whereas Hayashi Fumiko, in a desperate attempt to gain acceptance by the bundan, changed the venue of publication for her immensely popular novel Hōrōki, from the women’s magazine Nyonin Geijutsu\(^{183}\) to the mainstream literary journal Kaizō (Hayashi reportedly understated the number of installments initially published in the former in order to eradicate the stigma associated with the label of “joryū sakka”), Miura Ayako consistently published her works in popular media such as women’s journals (Shufu no tomo and Fujin kōron),\(^{184}\) weekly popular magazines (Shūkan Asahi and Shūkan josei se bun) as well as national and local newspapers (Asahi Shinbun and Hokkaidō Shin bun) – none of her works appeared in mainstream literary or intellectual journals such as Kaizō, Chūō kōron, Bungei shunjū, Shinchō, Bungei, Bungakukai, Gunzō and Subaru. For this reason, Miura had been considered a writer of taishū bungaku.

Prior to her literary debut, Miura had published a memoir entitled “Taiyō wa futatabi bosse zu” (The Sun Will Never Go Down Again) in the January 1962 issue of the women’s magazine Shufu no Tomo. A record of her own spiritual journey in the post-war years, the work evoked a warm reception from the readers. Eight years later, looking back at this early point in her career, Miura wrote in her autobiographical novel Kono tsuchi no utsuwa o mo:

Thanks to this memoir, I keenly realized the importance of publishing in a magazine for the mass readership. It is necessary for Christians to speak to the outside world. I have no talent, but I earnestly hoped at the time that I could somehow be given another opportunity [to appeal to these readers].\(^{185}\)

Watashi wa kono shuki de, taishū no yomu zasshi ni happyō sareru koto no taisetsusa o, tsukuzuku to kanjita. Kurisuchan wa, soto ni mukatte katarikakeneba naranai. Watashi ni wa sai wa nai ga, nan toka shite, futatabi konna kikai ga atae retai to, sono toki setsujitsu ni omotta.
As Igarashi Yasuo observes, “since the publication of ‘Taiyō wa futatabi bosse zu’ [in the popular magazine Shufu no Tomo], Miura was well aware that the route of taishū bungaku was the right path for her.” There is no evidence of Miura’s having submitted her manuscripts to literary journals and subsequently being rejected by their editors. Therefore, I would argue that it was by choice, rather than by necessity, that Miura published almost all of her works in newspapers, women’s journals and popular magazines. Given that Miura considered herself an evangelical writer, it might very well have been the case that she deliberately chose to publish in the more popular venues in order to reach the largest possible audience. Moreover, one can argue that for the same purpose, that is, to reach out to the mass readers, Miura adopted writing strategies that had much in common with the popular writer’s – use of plain language, emphasis on fiction, storytelling and plot development, dramatization using suspense and surprises to heighten the reader’s interest, idealization of the main characters, reliance on coincidence and sentimentality, serialization in newspapers, and partnership with the mass media (such as television and the film industry).

Riding on the waves of the popularity of suspense novels during the 1960s, Miura let the narrative of Hyōten unfold in the manner of a tantei shōsetsu, so closely resembling Matsumoto Seichō in style, as a matter of fact, that some questioned (without basis) if he was not the ghostwriter for Miura. Similarly, Hitsujigaoka was written in the vein of katei shōsetsu (family novel) and ren’ai shōsetsu (romantic novel), for which Kikuchi Kan became famous as a popular novelist. At the peak of her career, Miura demonstrated her literary talent by writing historical novels that were, in my opinion, closer to Mori Ōgai’s in terms of artistry and fidelity to historical fact, than to the so-called “period novels” (jidai shōsetsu) known for deviating from history and fabricating facts and even personages for the purpose of entertainment. Even so, Miura
seems to have borrowed from the taishū bungaku genre the practice of idealizing historical characters and elevating them to the status of a national (albeit tragic) hero. As we shall see in Chapter Four, that is exactly what Miura did in Hosokawa Garasha fujin and Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi. Miura’s novels represent a hybrid form somewhere in between the pure and the mass – one that combines the seriousness of junbungaku and the structural cohesion of taishū bungaku. Indeed, one might argue that Miura successfully produced the kind of “pure novels” that Yokomitsu Riichi had envisioned in his “Junsui Shōsetsu-ron.”

In an article entitled “Futatabi taishū bungaku ni tsuite” (Mass Literature Revisited), published in the August 1961 issue of Gunzō, Ōoka Shōhei commented on the authority of Japanese literary critics and the influence and power that they derived from writing literary reviews (bungei jihyō):

Why do writers care about bungei jihyō? It is because such commentaries get published in major newspapers that hold decisive influence [over their career]… Naturally, they affect the selection and conferring of year-end literary awards, and on top of that, their opportunity to publish in comprehensive and weekly magazines… Bungei jihyō is to all intents and purposes the sword that wields power of life and death over a writer…[The literary critic] Kawakami Tetsutarō said [in a recent round-table discussion] that there are readers who feel like they have read an entire novel of pure literature upon reading the literary review column alone. Kawakami’s statement, if true, indicates the ultra-important role assigned to bungei jihyō in today’s literary establishment.187

Did Miura care about bungei jihyō? Probably a little. This is what her husband, Mitsuyo, has to say about Miura’s reaction to Hirano Ken’s harsh criticism on Hyōten: “There were editors who encouraged Ayako, saying, ‘there is no need to be concerned about that kind of critical review.’ It is not Ayako’s personality to dwell on things, but being the very person who wrote the novel, she must have found it difficult to keep her composure” (Ano yō na hihyō o ki ni suru hitsuyō wa mattaku arimasen yo to, hagemashite
kudasaru henshūsha no ita ga, tō no sakusha de aru Ayako wa, ikura kodawaranu seikaku to wa ie, sō heizen to shitemo irarenakatta ni chigainai). Contrary to Ōoka’s view, however, bungei jihyō was not a matter of life and death for Miura. Negative reviews such as those written by Hirano Ken and Odagiri Hideo might have been a blow to her self-esteem, and they had more than likely precluded Miura from being accepted by the literary mainstream, but to a writer like Miura who had no desire for literary fame, they were by no means as devastating as Ōoka would like us to believe. For one thing, Miura continued to do well financially, producing bestsellers after bestsellers, like many taishū bungaku writers did in the face of hostile criticism by the bundan. In the case of Miura, she had one more reason to celebrate: by establishing herself on the periphery, Miura not only survived, but thrived as a Christian novelist – one who would gladly take the “taishū” label in order to reach the greatest number of readers possible.

It is well known that Miura unabashedly proclaimed herself to be an evangelical writer. For this reason, as Kubota Gyōichi points out, “quite a number of critics had prematurely made up their minds that Miura wrote worthless novels in defense of her religion” (Miura no sakuhin wa kudaranai gokyō bungaku da to kimetsukeru hihyōka mo sukunaku wa nai). Specifically, Kubota cites Tagawa Kenzō who saw Miura’s novels as “nothing more than cheap propaganda hurriedly studded with religious ideologies to create a Christian ambience” (yasude no Kirisuto-kyō kannen o sokosoko ni chiribameru koto ni yotte, Kirisuto-kyō-tekii na fun’iki o sakuhin no naka ni furimaite iru ni sugizu). In addition, Kubota cites the negative criticism of Dōmeki Kyōzaburō, who wrote in Gendai no sakka hyakuichi-nin (One Hundred and One Contemporary Writers, 1975): “The foremost weakness of Miura’s novels is that they have bad characters appear on the scene as trials to strengthen [the protagonist’s] faith; as a consequence such characters become mere symbols of evil, bereft of humanity” (Miura no shōsetsu no ketten toshite mazu agerareru no wa, shinkō o tsuyomeru tame no shiren toshite akunin o tōjō saseru

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tame, akunin wa tan ni aku no mihon mitai ni natte, ningen-rashisa o kanji rasenai ten de arō). In response to Tagawa’s and Dōmuki’s criticism, Kubota writes:

Readers are free to read a novel and come up with their own interpretations, but critics like Tagawa and Dōmuki seem to provide only a lopsided view that ignores the intended wish of Miura, the power of description seen in her works, and their impact on a great number of readers. To be sure, there is the danger that Miura’s Christian characters may be glamorized and patterned, but the Christian view of atonement for one’s sin and the issues of sin and redemption that Miura raises [in her novels] are by no means “cheap Christian concepts,” as Tagawa has argued. Moreover, contrary to Dōmuki, who sees all the good and bad characters in Miura’s novels as bereft of humanity, I would say that Miura describes each of her characters with love and affection, portraying them as fully human by dint of a thorough examination of their psyche and desires.

Dokusha ga dono yō ni sakka no sakuhin o yonde hihyō shiyō to, sore wa dokusha no jiyū de aru ga, Tagawa ya Dōmuki no hihyō wa, Miura ga i zo shite iru negai to sakuhin ni miru byōsharyoku oyobi sakuhin ga ōku no dokusha ni ataete iru eikyō o mushi shita ippō-teki kenkai de aru yō ni omou. Miura no kaku Kirisito-sha ga bika sare pataan-ka sarete shimai kikensei wa tashiki ni aru keredomo, kanojo ga uttaeru Kirisuto no shokuzai-kan ya tsumi to suku ni mondai wa kesshite yasude no Kirisuto kannen to iu beki mono de wa nai. Mata Dōmuki wa Miura no sakuhin ni tōjō suru akunin to zennin ga ‘ningen-rashisa o kanjisasenai’ to iu keredomo, watashi wa shi to wa gyaku ni, Miura wa tōjō jinbutsu no hitori hitori ni aijō o sosode kaite ori, jinbutsu no shinri no ugo ki ya yokubō o shūtō ni kakikonde ite ningen-rashisa o jūbun ni kanjisaseru to ii tai.

In Kubota’s view, the works of Miura Ayako are misrepresented by the labels “gokyō bungaku” and “shujin-mochi no bungaku.” Kubota sees Miura “not as a writer of religious novels in defense of her faith, who would go so far as to fabricate lies in an unnatural way to prove the tenets of Christianity, but as a writer who portrays not only the beauty, but also the filthiness and ugliness of human nature.” (Miura wa… uso o kaite muriyari ni Kirisuto-kyō shōmei no hō ni motte iku yō na gokyō-shōsetsu-teki sakka de wa nashi
ni, ningen no utsukushii tokoro dake de naku, kitanai mono, minikui mono no kaku sakka de aru)\textsuperscript{193}

In an article entitled “Miura Ayako ron: taishū no tachiba o megutte” (On Miura Ayako: concerning her position as a taishū writer), published in the special issue of Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō (November 1998) on Miura, Takano Toshimi, too, contends that, although “Miura comprehends the act of writing as an act of faith” (kaku kō i o shinkō no kō i to kasaneawasete rikai shite iru),\textsuperscript{194} it would be jumping to a hasty conclusion if one were to connect all of Miura works to the propagation of Christianity and categorize them as so-called “novels written for a master,” as some critics seem to have done (Da ga, sono koto tadachi ni, Miura Ayako no sakuhin no sōtai ga Kirisuto-kyō no dendō to musubitsuita, iwayuru shujin-mochi no bungaku de aru to kitei suru no wa tanraku ni sugiru de arō).\textsuperscript{195} Instead, Takano sees Miura more positively as taking her stand as a popular writer of Christian novels who “severed ties with established concept of literature” (kisei no bungaku gainen kara zetsuen shita).\textsuperscript{196}

Critics and scholars of Miura’s literary works had, throughout the 1980s, been limited to Christians who shared the same faith as Miura. Among the early fruit of Christian-based criticism were the following books – pioneering studies of Miura’s novels which serve as the point of departure for my research:


Whereas Christian-oriented scholars and critics gave high marks to Miura’s novels, Members of the *bundan* dismissed her works as “literature in defense of her faith” (*gokyō bungaku*) and “literature written for a master” (*shujin mochi no bungaku*) – a label implying a lack of artistry negative enough to discourage critical inquiry by non-Christian scholars. It was not until 1994 that we saw the first full-length scholarly study by a non-Christian researcher, Kuroko Kazuo, whose book offers a fresh alternative interpretation focusing on what Kuroko calls the root of Miura’s novels, namely, the heartfelt, human desire to pursue “righteousness” and “ideals.”

With the publication of the special issue of *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* on Miura Ayako in 1998, a new generation of twenty-nine Miura scholars, Christians and non-Christians alike – including Ozaki Hotsuki, Asai Kiyoshi, Ishida Hitoshi, Takano Toshimi, Kamide Keiko, Iwabuchi Hiroko, and Egusa Mitsuko, many of them well-known scholars and literary critics – have collaborated to broaden the horizon of research on the writings of the hitherto neglected Christian novelist. The future of scholarship is rapidly evolving with so many scholars showing new interest in the literary works of Miura Ayako, offering new perspectives and possibilities for further critical inquiries.

Why was Miura Ayako neglected for so long despite her popularity and success as a writer? Although not the only reason, the fact that Miura debuted and continued writing throughout her career as a Christian novelist was a significant factor that resulted in the relative lack of scholarly interest in her works until recent years. How does Miura see her role as a Christian writer? How does she reconcile her faith with her writings? Miura herself has this to say in an essay titled “Shinkō to bungaku” (*Faith and Literature*, 1966): “In my opinion, to write novels is to portray true human nature... [In Naturalist writings] the ugliness [of man] is revealed only by perception... and not as a result of sin [as treated in my novels]... When the ugliness of humankind is portrayed
and brought to the surface by the light of God, we are made aware of our deeply sinful
nature, to the extent that it becomes impossible to lift our head.”

In one of the earliest book-length studies of Miura’s works, the literary critic Sako
Jun’ichirō notes that “the ugliness of man portrayed in Miura’s novels is fundamentally
different from that portrayed in Naturalistic novels.” According to Sako, what he calls
“evangelistic realism” (fukuin-teki riarizumu) – as opposed to Naturalistic realism
(shizenshugi riarizumu) – is essentially the same thing as what Miura calls “the light of
God” (kami no hikari). Sako compares it to the X-ray, which reveals as dark spots man’s
illnesses that are invisible to the naked eye. Whereas Naturalistic realism portrays the
dark and the sordid as just that – ugliness of man, Miura’s version of evangelistic
realism goes one step further to portray them explicitly as “man’s sin,” thereby forcing
the readers to become conscious of their own spiritual ugliness. Miura’s novels are
filled with egoistic characters who have no fear of God, and who suffer consequently, in
Miura’s view, because of their self-centeredness.

“As long as I write about ‘the forgiveness of sin,’” Miura continues, “it is
impossible not to write about “the God who forgives’ – Jesus Christ – in my novels. It is
a heavy burden on an immature writer like myself. Nevertheless, I decided to brave the
adventure. Praying that if only I could get the message across to one person, I let my
pen flow.” For Miura, faith is not only compatible with but necessary for her creative
endeavors. In “Shinkō to bungaku,” she compares her Christian faith to the ground
(tochi), and literary works to the trees and flowers which grow and bloom on that
ground (sono tochi ni saita hana ka ki). Miura sees her faith as being the wellspring of her
literary works, just as the soil provides nutrients to the flowers and enables them to
bloom. Miura’s writings is unmistakably faith-based: “To forsake my faith is to abandon
the soil; there would be no trees or flowers if the soil is abandoned (Shinkō o suteru to iu
no wa tochi o suteru koto de ari, tochi o sutetara, hana mo ki mo nai to iu wake desu) … I am
not sure what literature is, but for me it has to be built on the foundation of faith. It would be meaningless [to continue writing as a Christian novelist] if I stop believing in God.”201

Sin and redemption are a central tenet of the Christian faith that many Japanese find foreign, or perhaps even incomprehensible. The fact that Miura boldly uses this as subject matter in her novels partly accounts for the disparaging view of her literary works held at least initially by members of the bundan. Although readers – regardless of faith or absence thereof – love to read Miura’s novels, her works had largely been dismissed as taishū (popular, low-brow entertainment for the less-sophisticated readers), and therefore not a subject worthy of serious criticism and scholarship. It is plausible that those who labelled Miura’s novels “gokyō bungaku” might even consider her works a “threat” to the “purity” of “authentic” Japanese literature, just as taishū bungaku had been considered a threat to pure literature since the 1920s. Interestingly, although Endō Shūsaku was also a Christian (Catholic) writer, he was never called a “gokyō bungakusha.” Indeed, Endō received the Akutagawa Prize (the highest accolade awarded to a writer of junbungaku) in 1954 for his novella Shiroi hito (White Men) – a story set during World War Two of a Frenchman who cooperated with the Nazi occupiers of Lyon in their interrogation and torture of a Catholic seminarian. Endō went on to produce many more works on religious themes, establishing himself as the premier Christian novelist in Japan. He has been called by Leith Morton “a novelist whose work has been dominated by a single theme… belief in Christianity.”202 Despite his Christian emphasis, Endō seemed to have been accepted into the literary mainstream long before the merit of Miura’s novels was re-evaluated after her death. How can we explain this difference in reception?

It is certainly important to note that, while Miura published almost exclusively in women’s journals and popular magazines, Endō published many of his works in Bungei
Shunjū, a major venue of publication specializing in the works of junbungaku. Moreover, Endō tends to write in expressive language, as opposed to Miura’s, which is deliberately simple for the benefit of the readers. I would also argue that in the eyes of the members of the bundan, Endō’s works seem more “Japanese” than Miura’s. Like Miura, Endō portrays characters who struggle with complex moral dilemmas; but unlike Miura, Endō also draws on his background and emphasizes the stigma of being an outsider (Endō was a Catholic) and the challenge of trying to assimilate Christianity in the “mudswamp” of Japan. In his novels as well as essays, Endō discusses the incompatibility of Christianity on Japanese soil – comparing the foreign religion to an ill-fitting suit (awanai yōfuku) imported from the West. Endō frequently wrote from the unique perspective of a Japanese who questions the compatibility of Christianity on Japanese soil, and the difficulty, if not impossibility, of its assimilation with native culture and traditions. It is not surprising, therefore, that Japanese critics found his writings more understandable and acceptable. Miura, on the other hand, appeared on the literary scene as a Christian writer who was also a firm believer of her faith. Unlike Endō, she faced no identity crisis as a Japanese Christian and seemed eager to “evangelize” in her novels (which makes it difficult for Miura to defend herself against accusation of “didacticism”). Whereas Endō questions the silence of God in times of men’s suffering, raising issues about God’s omnipresence and omnipotence, Miura affirms the existence and omniscence of the Christian God, suggesting in her novels that He is the ultimate “authority,” or ken’i aru mono (using the phrase that appears in Hyōten) who forgives man’s sin. In the eyes of literary critics, Miura Ayako – the up-and-coming Christian novelist – was too “foreign,” or too “Western” to be accepted by the bundan, and her approach to literature too much a deviation from what had been considered to be junbungaku.
Taking it one step further beyond the threat to the purity of Japanese literature, one might even argue that, being a Christian novelist, Miura represents a threat to the purity of nationalist identity. As a believer of a monotheistic religion (Christianity), her allegiance to the Christian God conflicts with her expected allegiance as a loyal subject to the Japanese Emperor. Just like Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930), a Christian evangelist and founder of the Non-church Movement, who created an uproar in 1891 by refusing to bow deeply before the portrait of Emperor Meiji and the Imperial Rescript on Education, Miura questioned and openly rejected emperor worship, as she reflected on her war-time experiences during the post-war years. Miura’s anti-war belief was as strong as Uchimura’s and, as we shall see in the final chapter of this dissertation, Miura’s later novels were informed by Christian pacifism and a critical stance that examined the historical facts of Japan’s wartime aggression and what Miura considered to be the “sin” of her own nation.

If it is challenging enough to be a woman writer of “popular novels” on Christian themes, how much more so if working from the off-center location of Hokkaidō. As Edward Fowler puts it: “at the heart of the bundan’s raison d’etre is the junbungaku writer’s elitist consciousness, born of common education (most writers went to universities, typically Tokyo or Waseda or Gakushūin, before launching their literary careers), [and] geography (Tokyo, the hub of cultural activity, was the home or adopted home of virtually every junbungaku writer).”

In terms of educational and geographical background, Miura Ayako had little qualification to join the elite club of junbungaku writers. While the male, elite writers of junbungaku attended prestigious universities in the capital, Miura had only a high school education. Miura was born in the town of Asahikawa on the northernmost of Japan’s main islands, where she remained for the rest of her life. Even after she had become a best-selling writer, Miura remained in Hokkaidō despite pressure to move to
Tokyo – the center of Japan’s publishing world where all the literary activities took place. As a result, she had few opportunities to network with established writers, critics, editors and publishers who were the core members of the literary establishment. Other than being a member of the local chapter of the Araragi School of *tanka* poetry, Miura did not belong to any literary group, nor did she publish her works on a regular basis in literary journals or coterie magazines, which had long been the norm for *junbungaku* writers. Throughout her literary career, Miura remained on the periphery, both in terms of being a writer of *taishū bungaku*, and in terms of producing novels from the off-center of Hokkaidō. As an evangelical writer, Miura seemed to care little, however, about how her work was judged by the literary establishment as long as she succeeded in reaching out to the mass readers.

Although Miura has been considered a writer of *taishū bungaku*, the aesthetic quality and literary merit of her works should not be overlooked. The language that Miura uses is plain and her style deceptively simple, but her prose is at once beautiful and strikingly powerful. Miura is a masterful storyteller who observes the world with poetic perception. As we shall see in Chapter Four, Miura’s historical novels, in particular, are lyrically written and crafted with artistry and skill. Miura’s characters are compelling human beings who struggle with moral dilemma and life crisis like everyone else. Before long, readers find themselves drawn into Miura’s narratives, forming a deep empathic connection with her characters.

Miura had, over the years, withstood critical and unenthusiastic reviews, and by the end of her thirty-five-year-long career, demonstrated the literary merit of her works and proven herself to be a talented woman writer worthy of serious study and academic scholarship. Whether her works can pass the ultimate test of timelessness remains to be seen, but half a century after her debut, Miura’s writings are as popular as ever. A recent publication in the year 2012 by Shōgakukan of the *Miura Ayako denshi*
zenshū (an electronic version of the Completed Works of Miura Ayako), which includes a total of eighty titles (40 novels, 35 essay collections, 4 books of quotations, and 1 book of tanka poetry), attests to that popularity among a new generation of e-book readers.

Having declared her intention from the outset to be an evangelical writer, Miura would seem particularly susceptible to accusation of “didactism.” If we understand the term as “instructive; designed to impart information, advice, or some doctrine of morality or philosophy,” Miura’s novels are didactic. Being an evangelical writer, Miura was, by the nature of her writing, “using literary means to a doctrinal end.” On the other hand, while doctrinal content is present in Miura’s fiction, its prominence is open to debate, and I would argue that Miura succeeded because she never forced Christian doctrine upon her readers. As a novelist, Miura tells entertaining stories without moralizing that interferes with the artistic experience, and she portrays realistic figures with credible worldview, which allows her readers to ponder serious issues of life and death through their experiences. Miura does not alienate her non-Christian readers by crossing the fine line between storytelling and sermonizing (the fact that Miura was widely read in Japan by people of all faiths and lack thereof attests to her skill as a Christian novelist). Virginia Smith, a best-selling writer of American Christian fiction has once said: “A good Christian novel is not merely an entertaining story in which the characters stop every so often to whisper a prayer. The best and most effective Christian novels have a spiritual element woven so intricately into the story that if the element were removed, there would be no story left” – a best description of Miura’s novels in my opinion.

Miura’s novels deal with themes and subject matter – love and forgiveness, self-preservation and sacrifice, loyalty and betrayal, freedom and spirituality – that have appeal to a wide range of readers across gender, age groups, nationalities, languages, cultures and beliefs. As of 2015, Miura’s works of fiction and non-fiction have been
translated into at least fourteen different languages – English, German, Dutch, Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Icelandic, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Indonesian and Mongolian. It was a miracle that, despite harsh initial criticism by the male-dominated *bundan*, Miura not only survived, but thrived in Japan, and not only as a woman writer, but as a Christian novelist.

CHAPTER TWO

The Making of a Christian Novelist

Early Life and Works of Miura Ayako

In this chapter, I look at the making of Miura Ayako, the Christian novelist. Taking the position of a New Historicist, who considers literary texts a product of a specific time and place, I examine the historical, political, socio-cultural and religious forces that shaped the early years in Miura’s life leading to her debut as a professional writer. A biographical study of major events in Miura’s life helps us trace the spiritual path she traveled from nihilism in the post-war years to Christianity, and more importantly, explains the circumstances that inform her works as a Christian novelist.

Miura Ayako (née Hotta Ayako) was born in Asahikawa, Hokkaido, on April 25, 1922, the fifth child of Hotta Tetsuji and Kisa. Brought up in a large family, Miura lived with her parents and nine siblings – three older brothers, one older sister, four younger brothers, and one younger sister, Yōko, who died in 1935 at the age of six. (Almost three decades later, in fond memory of her younger sister, Miura was to name the heroine of her debut novel, Hyōten, after Yōko.)

Miura’s father, Tetsuji, was on the staff of a local newspaper. As the division manager of the sales department, he received a decent salary of approximately 200 yen (elementary school principals made an average of 100 yen at the time) – enough to feed and clothe his ten children.1 However, as the eldest son, Tetsuji was also obliged to take care of his parents’ household in addition to supporting his large family, which put constant pressure on his family’s finances.

Upon graduating from Taisei Elementary School, Miura attended the Asahikawa Municipal Women’s High School. According to her recollections in her
autobiographical novel *Kusa no Uta* (Song of the Meadow, 1986), the only time when Miura was able to pay her tuition on time was the first month. Each time afterwards, her father would insist that he take the tuition money to school himself. It was not until three years later, when a school accountant came to Miura’s house to collect her tuition money, that she finally realized that her father had always been months behind with his payment.2

In a 1992 interview included in the posthumously published essay collection, *Ai to shinkō ni ikiru* (Living in Love and Faith, 2003), Miura looked back on her childhood and described herself as having grown up in “a large family struggling to make ends meet,” so poor that “there was not a single study desk at home.”3 Miura started working when she was in the fourth-grade of elementary school. For the next eight years until she graduated from high school, she had to wake up at five o’clock every morning to go door to door delivering milk.4 In many of Miura’s novels, the reader encounters fictional characters who are depicted as an alter-ego of the author: the hard-working Yōko delivering milk in the midst of freezing snow (*Hyōten*) and the poor but intelligent Yoshiko selling *nattō* in *Jūkō* are two of the best examples.

Unlike many of the major writers in Japan (Natsume Sōseki, Mori Œgai, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Mishima Yukio, to name a few), Miura was neither the brightest student in her class nor a graduate of an elite university. Indeed, she had only high-school credentials and never attended university. Miura’s enthusiasm for literature, however, was by no means inferior to that of the established writers. As a young girl, Miura displayed a precocious interest in literature, avidly reading everything that she could lay her hands on, from Japanese classics to works by modern writers, including both serious fiction (Natsume Sōseki, Mori Œgai, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, Kawabata Yasunari, Dazai Osamu…) and popular novels (Yoshikawa Eiji, Satō Kōroku, Yamanaka Minetarō, Sasaki Kuni…). Her taste in European and Russian
literature included the works of Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875), André Gide (1869-1951), Hermann Hesse (1877-1962), Albert Camus (1913-1960), Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926), François Mauriac (1885-1970), Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893), Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) and Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910). In one of her essays, Miura describes herself as a book maniac:

By the time I became a third-grader, I came to be called “the Bookworm.” I knew why – for no sooner had the bell rung announcing recess than I started taking magazines out of my desk and became engrossed in reading them. Even if it was just a five or ten-minute break, I wanted to read.5

Miura’s interest in literature was first aroused by her grandmother, who read bedtime stories to her each night. In the prologue to Waga seishun ni deatta hon (The Books that I Encountered in My Youth, 1982), Miura writes fondly of her grandmother in these terms:

Why did I become a booklover? I owe it to my maternal grandmother, who nurtured in me the first buds of a love for reading... She knew a lot of fairy tales and folk stories and would read bedtime stories to me, while gently rubbing my back, until I fell asleep. In this manner, her storytelling each night led me as a young child to the world of the narratives.6

Thanks to her grandmother’s influence, Miura had become a booklover. As a nine-year-old, Miura read everything available to her, whether it be women’s magazines such as Shufu no tomo to which her aunt subscribed or books that Miura borrowed from her older siblings and friends. At the age of ten, as a fourth-grader, Miura took up the challenge of adult fiction, reading such works as Daini no Seppun (The Second Kiss, 1925) by Kikuchi Kan (1888-1948) and Hasen (A Wrecked Ship, 1922-23) by Kume Masao (1891-1952). Ironically, Miura was often scolded by her mother for “reading too much.” Luckily, there was an ample supply of books to satisfy her insatiable literary
interest. Miura’s elder sister, Yuriko, was also a booklover, and her enthusiasm for reading, we are told, surpassed that of Miura.7

*Waga seishun ni deatta hon* is a very interesting book that shed lights on Miura’s early reading experience and the kind of literary works that were to have a great influence on the young reader. Best read as a collection of reading journals, the main text of *Waga seishun ni deatta hon* is comprised of seventeen chapters, each of which is devoted to a literary work that has made a lasting impression on Miura and each includes Miura’s own retrospective comment on the work. Among the list of Miura’s personal favorites, one deserves special mention: *La Symphonie Pastorale* (1919), a thought-provoking novel by the French Nobel laureate, André Gide (1869-1951), for it planted the early seed of Miura’s faith-based writing.

Narrated in the form of a diary, *La Symphonie Pastorale* tells the story of a self-deluded pastor, who adopts a blind orphaned teenage girl (Gertrude), justifying it as a pure act of compassion according to Biblical standard, but failing to see his own sin of being romantically attached to the girl, despite the fact that he is a married man with a wife and five children. Gertrude regains her vision after surgery, but the people and things she sees are not as beautiful as what the pastor has led her to believe. Disillusioned and awakened to the ugliness of the world, Gertrude attempts suicide by drowning herself in a river. The novel concludes with a powerful ending: Gertrude confesses to the pastor at her deathbed that the first thing she saw when her eyes were opened was the sin that she had committed with the pastor, and that it was the image of the pastor’s son, and not that of the middle-aged pastor, with whom she had fallen affectionately in love. To Miura, the theme of *spiritual blindness* and what it means to be able to see struck home.

As Miura rightly observes, it is difficult for Japanese readers to fully appreciate European literature because many of the works presuppose a common knowledge of
the Bible and a basic understanding of the Christian faith. As a Japanese reader of the translated novel, Miura read *La Symphonie Pastorale* as a teenage girl before she became a Christian. Not surprisingly, she found the work difficult to understand because of its frequent intertextual references to the Bible. Nevertheless, Gide’s novel captured Miura the young reader. This is what Miura had to say, as a full-fledged Christian writer in 1982, as she reminisced on her early reading of the novel:

*La Symphonie Pastorale* has the power to move its readers and force them to think deeply of human life – even if they have no knowledge of the Bible. If it were at all permissible, I would love to write a diary from the perspective of the pastor’s wife, Amélie. I think it would be quite interesting. It also occurred to me that, if we had all lost our eyesight, our love for each other would be so much deeper, to such an extent that it would penetrate the core of human existence, allowing us to see things that we ought to be able to see.

Writing novels that have the power to “move people and force them to think deeply of human life” – that is the goal of Miura the Christian novelist. It can be argued that Miura’s novels, too, penetrate the core of human existence and cast light on our experiences in this world, where everyone lives in spiritual darkness. As we shall see in the following chapters, the Christian concept of sin was to become a central theme of Miura’s writings.

Miura grew up during the militaristic years when the whole nation was indoctrinated into believing in the divinity of the emperor and the holy war in Greater East Asia and the Pacific. As a fresh graduate from high school, Miura started her teaching career at the Kamoi Elementary School in Utashinai City on the northern island of Hokkaido. A month from turning seventeen, she was too naïve to be aware of the school’s place at the forefront of Japan’s militaristic education. As an elementary school teacher, Miura earned thirty-five yen per month, of which fifteen yen was sent to her parents to defray their living expenses. After two and a half years, out of concern
for her mother, who had been diagnosed with rheumatism, Miura returned to her hometown, where she took up a new teaching post at the Asahikawa Keimei National School in September 1941. This was the year when all elementary schools in Japan were renamed national schools (kokumin gakkō) in accordance with the Wartime Education Law (Kokumin Gakkō rei, 1941), an indication of the extent of nationalistic and militaristic indoctrination within the educational system.

During the seven years of teaching at the elementary school level, from April 1939 to March 1946, when she resigned from her position at the Keimei National School, Miura never questioned the validity of the government’s educational policy that glorified the emperor as a living God and demanded wholehearted support of the war. Miura’s experiences as a teacher are related in her autobiographical novel, Ishikoro no uta. In this work, Miura describes her unquestioning acceptance of the government’s educational policy in these terms:

At that time, Kokutai no hongi (Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan, 1937) was widely read as a textbook for national education. As school teachers, we accepted a curriculum that deified the emperor and glorified those who sacrificed their lives for the imperial cause, without any resistance whatsoever.12

As a teacher, Miura was devoted to a curriculum that aimed at molding children into loyal subjects who would willingly offer themselves to the imperial state. Although she herself was a victim of Japan’s wartime propaganda and indoctrination, Miura turned into a victimizer by helping to propagate militaristic and ultra-nationalistic ideologies in school, fanned by her own “ignorance” and that of the general populace:

It was embarrassing but I had hardly read any newspaper, nor did I possess a radio. I had almost no interest in following domestic events or world movements. Of course I knew Japan was at war, but I had always believed that its action was justified.
“My country is always right.”
“Those who are at the top make no mistakes.”
I was not the only one to believe so – it was a view shared by the general populace.13

For me, war was a distant thing. Not a single enemy aircraft was seen in the vast sky, nor was a single shot of gunfire audible. From the increased production of coal and the acute food shortage, one could easily sense the proliferation of war. And yet, war remained a distant event happening on foreign soil.14

The horror and futility of war did not strike home until after Japan’s surrender. In Ishikoro no uta, Miura recalls how she looked forward to the emperor’s broadcast on the radio with excitement, but ultimately realized that Japan had been defeated.15 In March 1946, having instructed her students to cross out “patriotic” lines with ink from their textbooks, as demanded by the American occupation forces, the twenty-three-year-old Miura resigned her teaching post – no longer sure what was right, what was wrong. In Michi ariki (Wind is Howling, 1969), an autobiographical account of Miura’s own journey from nihilism to Christianity, we find the following description of her struggles at the time:

The children silently obeyed my instructions and crossed out the passages. No one said a word. When we finished the book on ethics, we got out the book on the national language. As I watched the children correcting their books, I made my decision. I could no longer stand in front of a class. As soon as possible in the near future I would resign. It was too painful to be in charge of the children… Had Japan been wrong until now? If Japan had not been wrong, was America wrong? If one was right, which was wrong?

What had I been working for so hard for seven years? If everything I had taught so wholeheartedly was wrong, I had simply wasted those seven years. And then again, there was a big difference between wasting time and being wrong. If I had been wrong, I should apologize on my knees to the children.16

It is not difficult to imagine how confused Miura must have been, waking up one morning only to realize that everything was futile and there was nothing worthwhile in
which to believe. In *Ishikoro no uta*, Miura wrote: “How should I apologize to my students if I were wrong? The thought made it unbearably painful for me to stand in front of them and feign importance as a teacher. How could I possibly have taught [for seven years] without knowing right from wrong? I have quickly lost my confidence.” The harsh reality of Japan’s defeat had plunged Miura into nihilistic despair.

Around this time, Miura found herself engaged to two men almost simultaneously – a terrible indiscretion on the part of Miura that caused her to lose faith in herself and in humanity. One of the two men, Hiroi Kōzō, appears in Miura’s autobiographical novel *Ishikoro no uta* as a glider instructor, whom Miura met at the Asashikawa Patriot Airfield during the summer of 1944, when she and other members of the Girls’ Youth Group (*Joshi Seinendan*) worked there as volunteers. After Japan’s surrender, Hiroi returned to his parental home in Tochigi to recuperate from lung disease, but not before he had met Miura’s parents to ask for their daughter’s hand in marriage. Shortly after the departure of Hiroi, who had promised to return in two years to marry Miura, a distant relative of Miura’s named Nishinaka Ichirō returned from war as a naval officer. Miura’s autobiographical account in *Michi ariki* opens with the appearance of Nishinaka as Miura’s fiancé, and the arrival of his betrothal gifts at her home on April 13, 1946.

As she confesses in *Ishikoro no uta*, Miura seemed to have felt no guilt back then over her double engagement: “Call it fickleness or insincerity, my behavior at that time was beyond description. Embarrassingly enough, I did not fall into a state of self-hatred, nor did I have any feeling of remorse. What on earth was my mental state at the time? I don’t even know myself. I had clearly betrayed [Hiroi], and yet I had no sense of having betrayed him.” A letter came from Hiroi’s family one year later in March 1947. Apparently, Hiroi had committed suicide upon learning of Miura’s engagement to Nishinaka. His body had been cremated together with all the treasured
correspondences from Miura. For the first time, Miura felt pangs of conscience. More than two decades later, Miura wrote in her memoirs: “I was such a dishonest woman!”

According to the account in Michi ariki, Miura collapsed with cerebral anaemia on the day the engagement gift from Nishinaka arrived. Soon afterwards, she became really ill with pulmonary tuberculosis. On June 1, 1946, Miura developed a high fever of almost 40 degrees Centigrade and complained of chest tightness. She was told by her doctor: “If you don’t go into hospital immediately, you will die. You will recover if you stay three months in hospital.” What was supposed to be, according to the doctor, a mild case of infiltration of the lungs turned out to be a severe case of pulmonary tuberculosis. This was the beginning of Miura’s thirteen-year-long battle with the disease. In the 1940s, tuberculosis was as fatal as malignant cancer because streptomycin, the first effective antibiotic against TB, was newly developed and not readily available. Apparently, Miura’s doctor avoided saying the word “TB,” which was no less disheartening than the pronouncement of death sentence in those days.

Depicted as a “serious and faithful person” in Michi ariki, Nishinaka Ichirō, Miura’s then fiancé, “travelled a long way to visit Miura as soon as she became ill and continued to visit her at the sanatorium for several more years.” Patiently waiting for Miura to recover, he would sometimes send her his whole salary to help pay for her medical expenses. Miura’s older sister, Yuriko, too, walked nearly a mile to the sanatorium each morning to help prepare breakfast, since Miura was too weak to cook for herself and food was not provided at the facility. Looking back on this darkest period of her life, Miura wrote in her memoirs: “I could not help thinking it pathetic that my sister should come so early each morning to cook for someone who had no pleasure in living.”

Tormented by physical illness and plagued by a terrible sense of guilt for having betrayed her former fiancé Hiroi and for having inculcated militaristic
thoughts in the minds of schoolchildren, Miura had fallen so deeply into the abyss of despair that she would reject all acts of goodwill and kindness.

By November, Miura was well enough to return home briefly, although still incapable of caring for herself. In August 1948, Miura decided to recuperate again at the sanatorium. In order to defray her expensive medical costs, she worked part-time as secretary for the TB Patients’ Association, preparing and mailing newsletters for about three hundred members. It was four months later in December 1948 when Miura re-encountered her childhood friend, Maekawa Tadashi, the person who would literally change her life forever.

A young, promising medical student and a childhood neighbor of Miura’s, Maekawa was a devout Christian as well as a poet who contributed regularly to the tanka magazine Araragi. When the Maekawas, a fervent Christian family, moved next door to Miura’s home, Miura was seven and Maekawa was nine years old. A year later, the Maekawas moved to a place five or six blocks away, but the two childhood friends still attended the same school together. Maekawa did well academically and was able to enter the Hokkaidō University Medical School upon graduation from a distinguished high school in Asahikawa. He really sympathized with Miura’s illness since his younger sister had died of tuberculosis and he himself was a patient and member of the TB Patients’ Association. It was through the Association’s newsletter that Maekawa learned of Miura’s illness. When he paid her a surprise visit at the sanatorium, Miura was delighted to see her old childhood friend again. From that day on, a special bond was to develop between the two.

Three years had elapsed since Miura’s engagement to Nishinaka. Her condition had improved, but Miura saw no sign of a complete recovery. In April 1949, Miura left the sanatorium. Two months later in June, she told Maekawa that she was going to see Nishinaka to finally break off their engagement. In the end, Miura travelled all the way
to Nishinaka’s hometown, a small fishing village facing the Sea of Okhotsk, to return his engagement money. Although disappointed, Nishinaka uttered no word of reproach, instead offering Miura all the money that he had saved for their wedding. We are told that Miura felt all the more condemned because of Nishinaka’s kindness and generosity.24

Living among the chaos and confusion of post-war Japan, where everything seemed futile and meaningless, Miura had lost all confidence to believe. Sadly, she could not even trust the genuine love of her fiancé Nishinaka Ichirō:

I could believe no one, and everything in the world seemed futile. This emptiness in life destroys a person. Existence itself seems contradictory. Consequently I could not be positive about anything and I could not help losing all love for Ichirō Nishinaka.25

After several years in a sanatorium, Miura still had no guarantee that she would recover. “Isn’t it better to die than cause people even more trouble?” Miura began to think repeatedly of suicide.26 With nothing to live for, she had lost all zest for living. Late that night, Miura slipped out of Nishinaka’s house and tried to drown herself in the Sea of Okhotsk. An early passage in Michi ariki depicts the climactic scene of her attempted suicide:

Soon I reached the stony beach and walking was harder. My feet were trapped between the larger stones and in front of me the black sea thundered. I could see nothing. There was only the smell and the noise of that dark sea. Though I struggled straight ahead, it took a long time. I took one step and my high heels sank in the sand, another and I lurched forward. When the waves dashed coldly on my feet, there was a flash of light on the water, and as I wondered if the white spray was dancing before my eyes, my shoulder was firmly gripped by a man’s hand. It was Ichirō Nishinaka.27

The next day, Miura bade farewell to Nishinaka and returned to Asahikawa alone by train. Before long, Maekawa had become Miura’s best friend, teacher, and spiritual
mentor. He was the one who encouraged Miura to study English and urged her to read the Bible. In *Michi ariki*, Miura described her relationship with Maekawa as one between “a teacher and his pupil” with no romantic undertones [at least initially].

Elsewhere in *Michi ariki*, while admitting her “flirtatious” nature, Miura emphasized that she was not “seeking male company through physical desire, but because [she] wanted to discuss life with them.” If we take Miura’s statement at face value, it stands to reason that she found the best intellectual companionship in Maekawa. As Okano Hiroyuki pointed out in his book *Miura Ayako: hito to bungaku* (Miura Ayako: Her Life and Works, 2005), Miura and Maekawa must have exchanged over one thousand letters in just five and a half years. A survey of their correspondence – published in 1973 under the title *Inochi ni kizamareshi ai no katami* (Mementos of Love Engraved in My Life) – reveals nothing of the sort of what one might expect to find in typical love letters, but instead a panoply of heated debates over philosophical issues and inquiries that Miura made about the Christian faith, followed by Maekawa’s reply.

Okano sees this phase in Miura’s life as a period of trials, during which Miura transformed herself from a person constantly preoccupied with death to someone proactively searching for the meaning of life. Thanks to Maekawa’s influence, a new life has begun in Miura:

> Ever since the war I had been unable to believe in anything and as a result life had been meaningless. Now I had at least begun to look for something. On that dark night when I had tried to end my life in the sea, a part of my life ended and another part began.

> I wanted to discover the one thing essential for living. I thought this thing I looked for must be connected with love.

> It was not easy, however, for Miura to accept the Christian faith. In a letter to Maekawa dated October 20, 1949, Miura wrote referring to Maekawa: “other than you,
I had not seen a true Christian even once before my eyes.”34 Elsewhere in *Michi ariki*, Miura spoke of her doubts and rather contemptuous attitude towards Christians, whom she saw as members of the “spiritual aristocracy,” who “stood on a pedestal and looked down on miserable people,”35 and as “hypocrites,” who “piled up words as they prayed, not for God, but for those who listened.”36 At one point, Miura called them “stupid people” who “kept telling others that there is a God even if they did not really believe so.”37 The whole experience leading up to and following Japan’s defeat had turned Miura into a nihilist who refused to believe in anything: “It seemed to me that believing was only for the simple-minded. During the war, we Japanese had fought believing that the emperor was god, and that our country was invincible because it had been founded by the gods. We were fearful of ever putting our faith in anything again.”38

It was Maekawa’s character, along with his altruistic love for Miura, that ultimately turned Miura around and saved her from the path to self-destruction. The reader finds out in *Michi ariki* that Miura gave up smoking and drinking after this dramatic episode:

“Aya-chan! Don’t do that! You’ll die if you go on as you are,” he almost shouted. He heaved a great sigh and then as if he’d suddenly thought of something he picked up a nearby stone and began to hammer his foot with it. Of course I was taken by surprise, but when I tried to stop him he firmly seized my hand.

“Aya-chan! I don’t know how often I’ve been praying that you will get better and live. I don’t mind dying if it means you will live, but I’m such a poor Christian, I’ve come to see that I have no power to save you. That’s why I’m striking myself, as a punishment for being so useless.”

I gazed at him, speechless with amazement. Before I knew what was happening I was in tears, and there was something human in those tears as they flowed… I felt his love for me penetrating my whole being… Behind his self-condemnation and punishment I felt I had seen a light I had not known before. What was that strange light within him? Was it Christianity? He loved me not as a woman but as a human being and an individual, and I decided, just as I was, to seek the Christ in whom this man believed.39
In addition to teaching about the Bible, Maekawa introduced Miura to the wonderful world of *tanka* poetry. He himself joined the *Araragi* poetic circle around 1949 and played a prominent role locally by helping with the editing and publication of the Asahikawa *Araragi* Monthly Newsletter. It was through Maekawa’s encouragement that Miura tried her hand at composing poetry in the same year. From 1949 to 1961, Miura composed at least 241 *tanka* poems, many of them published in *Araragi* and elsewhere.\(^40\) Kamide Keiko’s analysis of the most representative poems composed by Miura during this period is particularly interesting because it shows how these poems reflect the positive changes in Miura’s outlook on life over time.\(^41\)

One of Miura’s earliest poems was published in the December 1950 issue of *Araragi*:

> Though I return at midnight and sleep in my clothes,  
> These days my parents do not rebuke me.\(^42\)

Miura’s early poems reveal the mindset of a debaucherous young woman who has become disgusted with life and given herself up to despair, as illustrated in the following examples:

> Listening to the rumor that I was a flirt  
> I smiled without admitting it.\(^43\)

> The thought has often come that I could die  
> If I took twice the maximum dose –  
> But the day has come to an end.\(^44\)

> When I am utterly disgusted with myself,  
> The dark and murky clouds overwhelm me.\(^45\)

With the passage of time and under the influence of Maekawa, Miura began to compose poems that were more positive in tone and outlook. Some examples follow:
I read the Vacancies column in *The Housewives’ Friend*
Is there a way for me to make a living, sick as I am?46

I change into a nightdress smelling of formalin
And I am coming to accept it.47

While expressing doubt and anxiety, Miura was at least browsing the vacancy section in the popular magazine *Shufu no tomo* (The Housewives’ Friend) in order to look for a way to make a living. Furthermore, she had come to accept her illness and started to confront the harsh reality of life as a patient of pulmonary tuberculosis. What had started as mentorship between Maekawa and Miura soon blossomed into a romantic relationship. In *Michi Ariki*, we find some of the most affecting love poems by Miura. At once sad and beautiful, the following verses epitomize the sentiment of *mono no aware* (a deep feeling of pathos and sensitivity towards the ephemera). They are also powerfully evocative of the emotions felt by a couple deeply in love with each other, yet destined to be separated by death:

My heart sings like a flute as I hold you close;
Sadness sweeps over me.48

Both of us ill, wondering how long our happiness will last,
We kiss and weep.49

In October 1951, Miura was admitted to the Japanese Red Cross Hospital in Asahikawa for a low-grade fever. Despite spending four months in the hospital, the fever persisted and she continued to lose weight and suffer from severe back pain. During that time, Maekawa visited Miura daily. When they met, Maekawa would sit by Miura’s bedside to discuss literature and the Bible with her.50 Instinctively, Miura suspected that she might have spinal caries (Pott’s disease), but her doctors dismissed
her opinions as “uninformed,” saying that “there was nothing unusual on her X-rays.”51

Reluctantly parting with Maekawa, Miura transferred to the Sapporo Medical University Hospital in February 1952 for more thorough examination. Three months later, Miura’s worst fear was confirmed: she was diagnosed with a severe case of spinal caries that would confine her to a plaster cast for almost seven years.

Foretelling his beloved’s lonely days of hospitalization in a remote city, Maekawa had entrusted the care of Miura to Nishimura Kyūzō – an elder at the Sapporo Kitaijō church. It was Nishimura-sensei, depicted in Michi ariki as a loving Christian who kindly washed out the dirty, blood-stained sputum mug for Miura,52 who, together with Maekawa, guided Miura towards the Christian faith.

Miura’s increasing awareness of man’s sinful nature was further sharpened by the unexpected reappearance of his former fiancé Nishinaka Ichirō, who visited Miura one day, while she was recuperating at the Sapporo Medical University Hospital. It was their first reunion since Miura had tried to take her own life on that dark seashore. Nishinaka reappeared in Miura’s life as kindly as ever, visiting her daily at the hospital. Although he had, by the time, married another woman, Nishinaka seemed to have some lingering affection for his former fiancée, Miura, who now had Maekawa waiting for her back in Asahikawa. Miura confessed in Michi ariki that she looked forward to Nishinaka’s daily visit since he was one of the only two regular visitors while she was hospitalized – the other person being Nishimura-sensei. Looking back at the relationship objectively, Miura became aware that she might well have been wounding Maekawa and Nishinaka’s wife, but at the time it never occurred to her that she was doing anything wrong. A complete lack of the consciousness of sin was what Miura found most frightening:

And then I suddenly became afraid of myself. Supposing the trouble was that I lacked all consciousness of sin? Was it a terrible thing for me not to be conscious of
sin? A murderer would not care, a thief would have no pangs of conscience, and in the same way I also felt no grief for wounding another person by my actions. I began wondering whether it was not the greatest sin of all to be unaware of one’s sin.53

Miura’s acute awareness of sin became ever more pronounced as she waged a battle against spinal caries (tuberculosis), the diagnosis of which helped clinch her decision to be baptized. In Michi ariki, Miura explains her decision using the analogy of undetected mycobacteria which eats away her spine to invisible sin which erodes a person’s soul:

Although my spine was being eaten away by tuberculosis and I stumbled as I walked, we had been blind to its presence simply because it had not appeared on the X-ray. If this ignorance had continued, might not all my bones have been affected? I would certainly have died. And then I thought, “The same could be true of my soul.” Maybe I did not realize my heart was being eaten away or how infected I was, simply because I was unaware of my sin. I found this thought very frightening. My mind was made up. I had come to an end of myself. I wanted to clinch my decision by being baptized as soon as possible.54

In Miura’s statement, we see a person desperately wrestling with the existential problem of sin, like the many characters in Natsume Sōseki’s novels, who often struggle in vain to tackle their problem of egoism. Indeed, in one of his later novels, Mon (The Gate, 1910), Sōseki uses a metaphor that is almost identical to Miura’s, referring to the sin of Sōsuke and O-yone (Sōsuke betrays his best friend Yasui by marrying the woman he loves, O-yone) as “something terrifying and tubercular in nature, invisible to men, that lurks deep in their heart.” (jiko no kokoro no aru bubun ni, hito ni mienai kekkakusei no osoroshii mono ga hisonde iru).55 It is striking that both Miura and Sōseki refer to sin as “tubercular, invisible to men, frighteningly deadly, lurking deep in and eroding the human heart.” Although Sōseki used the word “sin” (tsumi) in reference to Sōsuke and O-yone, he might not have used it exactly in a Christian sense (Sōseki was known for
his dislike of Christianity). Nevertheless, the end result is the same: we are told in Mon that the sin of Sōsuke and O-yone “casts a dark shadow over their entire lives” and engulfs them in lonely isolation, so that they feel very much like “ghosts adrift in the world of men.”\(^\text{56}\) Whereas, Sōseki tried to offer a solution to men’s problem by eventually moving from the position of jiko hon’i (egocentric individualism) to a fundamentally Eastern philosophy of what he called sokuten kyoshi (forsaking the self and conforming to Heaven), Miura realized that problem of human beings lies in their self-centeredness (jiko chūshin) and their bondage to sin which alienates them from the presence of God. In the end, Miura embraced a Western religion – Christianity. On July 5, 1952, lying in bed in a cast, Miura was baptized by Pastor Onomura Rinzō in the company of Nishimura-sensei. As a Christian writer, Miura wrote her debut novel Hyōten on the theme of “sin and redemption” and would return to the same theme throughout her career. If Sōseki’s burning issue was man’s egoism and his increasing isolation and estrangement from society, Miura’s was man’s sin and his eternal death and separation from God.

On July 12, 1953, a week after the first anniversary of Miura’s baptism, Nishimura-sensei died. His abrupt departure left an empty void in Miura’s heart. Three months later, on October 26, Miura was discharged from the hospital and decided to return to her hometown Asahikawa at the suggestion of Maekawa Tadashi. Miura had submitted an elegy in remembrance of Nishimura-sensei, which was published in the November 1953 issue of Araragi. Her delight at receiving the January 1954 issue of Araragi a few days after Christmas soon turned into astonishment when she found in the postscript a member of Araragi accusing her of “plagiarism,” citing similarity in language between the following poems:
You replace the quilt which is slipping off my bed and go home. It is the last time.57

Ayako Hotta

You replace the quilt which is slipping off my bed. It is because you are drunk?58

Tomi Sakamoto

The editor, Tsuchiya Bunmei (1890-1990), concurred with the writer’s judgment and deplored the similarity. In *Michi ariki*, Miura recalls how she blazed with anger and could not sleep that night.59 Maekawa Tadashi was quick to come to Miura’s defense, knowing full well her character, and he did it literally at the peril of his life. Despite coughing blood because of tuberculosis, Maekawa wrote a sixteen-page protest and asked Miura to send it to the editor if she approved of the language. Miura’s regret in *Michi ariki* is most touching: “If I had known he had written this protest from his deathbed, I would certainly have sent it to the publishers.”60 In the end, Miura did not. Instead, she sent her own protest to Tsuchiya because she did not want anyone to defend her:

As for the poem that was put in the coffin, I had no time to imitate anyone, but I am sorry that you go so far as describing the poem I wrote in my grief for Nishimura-sensei as a fraud. I believe that Sakamoto-san of Kyoto probably wrote likewise from her own experience. I am undergoing total rest because of a tubercular spine, and there is also a cavity in my lungs. When the heavy winter quilt slipped down I had not the strength to straighten it. The ward orderlies and visitors always did this for me and there was nothing extraordinary about Nishimura-sensei doing the same. That day he did it as usual, but it was for the last time. Because we look to you as our teacher we trust in the poems that you choose for us. Please have more faith in those of us who trust you.

January 6, 195461

Here, we catch a vivid glimpse of a strong, vocal Miura, who was at once sincere and affectionate. Read in the context of the poem, the lines “you replace the quilt which
is slipping off my bed and go home. It is the last time” turn powerfully evocative. The serious attitude with which Miura approached her writing, whether prose or verse, is apparent. It is also apparent that Miura wrote with her heart, not with her mind or intellect. On receiving Miura’s protest and a letter from the other author, Sakamoto Tomi, the editor Tsuchida Bunmei retracted his previous statement and acknowledged the originality of both poems. Looking back on the incident fifteen years later, Miura admitted that she would have withdrawn from *Araragi* in a fit of anger had it not been for Maekawa’s encouragement: “Don’t let something like this stop you from writing poetry.”

“Don’t give up!” If he had been alive, Maekawa would have said the same thing to Miura when she faced harsh criticism again twelve years later in 1966, this time from the literary critic Hirano Ken of her debut novel *Hyōten*. Unfortunately, Maekawa died on May 2, 1954, five months after he had written that sixteen-page protest in defense of Miura. More than Nishimura sensei’s death, Maekawa’s passing was a devastating blow to Miura. After all, Maekawa was the one who literally saved Miura from nihilistic despair and led her back onto the path to salvation. After Maekawa’s death, Miura wrote each thought of him in a poem and published them in *Araragi* and elsewhere. Among the most affecting:

When I watch a cloud drifting across the sky in May
It is hard to believe you have died.

Must I go on living in a plaster cast
When each day is desolate, now you are dead?

I am increasingly lonely since your death
This morning the first cuckoo called.

I wiped away the tears that ran past my ears
And fresh tears came.
Miura did more than publishing grief-stricken poems after Maekawa’s death. From her sickbed, she continued to exchange letters with TB patients all over the country, among them, Sugawara Yutaka, the editor of Ichijiku (Fig tree), a small Christian magazine which served as a platform for the sick, the condemned, as well as pastors and evangelists to share their thoughts. It was through Sugawara’s introduction that Miura met her future husband, Mitsuyo, a regular subscriber to the Ichijiku magazine who happened to be working for the Asashikawa Forestry Department only a short distance from Miura’s home. Under a misapprehension that “Mitsuyo” was a girl’s name, Sugawara sent Mitsuyo a postcard asking him to visit the bedridden Miura if he had time. Mitsuyo was hesitant at first about calling on a young woman, but eventually complied with Sugawara’s request. When Miura caught sight of Mitsuyo, she was startled by how closely he resembled the dead Maekawa. His quiet voice, his facial features, his spiritual character… in every way he was so like Maekawa that Miura could not help but wonder if “God had secretly taken pity on her because she had longed for Maekawa so much, and had sent someone very like him [to console her].”

When Mitsuyo visited Miura, he would read the Bible, sing a hymn, discuss poetry a little, pray with her, and then go home – always showing concern for her health, but taking care not to exhaust her energy by staying too long. Miura found herself attracted to Mitsuyo although she denied any intention of treating him as a substitute for Maekawa, who had died the year before.

As if to help Miura cut all lingering affection for him, Maekawa had anticipated his imminent death and expressed his last wish in a letter to Miura dated February 12, 1954 (three months before his death):
Aya-chan, I’m so grateful for the wonderfully real friendship we have had together. You have truly been the first and last person in my life. Aya-chan, even though I die, you have surely promised not to give up living or to become negative… I have mentioned this once and I hesitate to repeat it, but I have never asked to be the only person in your life and I want to say so once more. Life is hard and perplexing. If you were compelled to live an unnatural life because of an old promise, that would be the saddest thing of all. I have never discussed you in detail with anyone and I am returning to you the bundles of your letters, my diaries (which have references to you) and my poems. No one else will know what I have thought, and nothing concerning our relationship can fall into other people’s hands… You can start with a perfectly “clean sheet,” and be free of me… what you have said to me will leave no mark. You are free of all restrictions and this is my last gift to you. I have written this early, just in case…

Maekawa’s farewell note to Miura reveals a truly admirable character so full of love and totally devoid of egoistic selfishness. Having led Miura to the Christian faith that promises spiritual freedom, Maekawa’s last wish was to set Miura free from emotional attachment to him so that she would be able to find happiness after his death. Mitsuyo, too, displayed broadmindedness in his own way by telling Miura: “It is important that you don’t forget Maekawa” since she had become a born-again Christian through him. Furthermore, he instilled hope of a complete recovery in Miura by sharing with her the following Biblical verse: “To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see.” (Hebrews 11:1) On July 19, 1956, a letter arrived from Mitsuyo, who used the word “dearest” in reference to Miura. With the long-awaited confession of love came a happy ending. Her physical condition began to improve markedly. Although Miura was once again admitted to the Hokkaidō University Hospital in July 1958, she only stayed in the hospital this time for two months and the result of her detailed examination was nothing but encouraging. Miraculously, the cavity with hemorrhage had completely healed, and so had her spine, thanks to her lying patiently in a plaster cast for seven years. On January 9, 1959, Miura
accepted Mitsuyo’s new-year proposal and she married the man who was to become her life-long partner five months later on May 24, 1959.

Miura writes of her autobiographical novel *Michi ariki* as a “record of self-discovery” (*jiko hakken no kiroku*).\(^70\) A story of her life journey from nihilism to Christianity, *Michi ariki* ends with Miura’s happy marriage to Mitsuyo, a theme picked up in the next autobiographical novel *Kono tsuchi no utsuwa o mo* (Even This Earthen Vessel, 1971), which Miura characterizes as a “confession of love and faith” (*ai to shinkō no kokuhaku*). A record of their marital life and how Miura and Mitsuyo walked and grew together in Christ, *Kono tsuchi no utsuwa o mo* opens with a scene of the wedding night, which symbolizes the couple’s relationship and underscores a kind of love which is more spiritual than sexual. As she confesses in the novel, Miura was a little disappointed that there was no memorable first kiss on her wedding night, but she soon realized that it was not a couple’s sex life, but the formation of character as the husband and wife became united in prayers that established the firm foundation of marital life.\(^71\)

About two-thirds into the memoir, Miura goes on to describe a surgery that Mitsuyo underwent two years after their wedding to remove an inflamed appendix. Misdiagnosis on the part of the first doctor, and an oversight on the part of the nurse who committed the error of administering a contaminated intravenous drip nearly cost Mitsuyo his life. Although a Christian, Miura found their medical errors unforgivable and felt ashamed for having recited the Lord’s prayer – *forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors* (Matthew 6:12) – so many times without knowing its true meaning. “Suppose one of my family members had been murdered by a criminal, would I be able to forgive him?” Miura wrestled with the hypothetical question that would become a prominent theme in her debut novel, *Hyōten*.

Soon after Mitsuyo recovered from his surgery, Miura opened a grocery store in August 1961, against the objection of her husband, who was hesitant about using the
money they borrowed from the Forestry Department for purposes other than building their new home. Miura’s reason for running a grocery store was “to get to know her neighbors and build personal relationships with them in order to share the love of Christ.” While running a grocery store, she pursued her creative writing late at night after work. Miura’s painstaking effort came to fruition when her memoirs Taiyō wa futatabi bossezu (The Sun Will Never Go Down Again) were selected as a work of distinction in the “Record of Love” Writing Competition and published in the 1962 New Year issue of the widely popular Shufu no tomo magazine. Miura’s first published work as a Christian author, Taiyō wa futatabi bossezu was not only a record of love between Miura and Mitsuyo leading up to their marriage in 1959, but also a testimony of faith.

On July 10, 1964, a prestigious literary award was added to Miura’s accolade – although she had yet to turn a professional writer. The Asahi Shinbun, one of Japan’s oldest and largest national daily newspapers, had announced during the previous year a ten-million-yen prize for the best novel, to be awarded on the occasion of the eighty-fifth anniversary of its Osaka office and the seventy-fifth of its Tokyo office. In order to enter the competition, open to both professional and amateur writers, Miura planned to write a story about the vengeance of a husband whose young daughter has been killed because of his wife’s negligence. Mitsuyo found the plot interesting and rallied enthusiastically behind his wife’s effort to prove her talent in creative writing. Given only twelve months to complete her manuscript, Miura wasted no time setting to work, writing diligently with discipline at least ten pages a day. Her main writing hours were from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. since her grocery store stayed open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The end product was Miura’s debut novel, Hyōten, which won her the prestigious Asahi Prize and launched her career towards becoming the most popular and well-known Christian writer in Japan. The fact that this particular novel has been made into a film (1966) and dramatized five times over forty years by almost all of the major television

After 1961, Miura wrote only prose fiction and essays, professing that she had lost interest in poetry. Miura’s shift from poetry to prose has been explained in terms of her happy marriage to Miura Mitsuyo. In an essay entitled “Watashi no naka no tanka,” (Tanka Poetry Within Me), first published in the Asahi Shinbun (November 5, 1977), Miura wrote of her “farewell” to poetry:

Around 1961, I had forgotten all about writing poetry. There is a saying that “literature blooms on the tree of misfortunes.” My poems were born precisely because I was bedridden, not knowing when I would recover. In addition, there was an outpouring of poems after I had lost the person whom I loved dearly [Maekawa Tadashi]. I don’t know why people are unable to write poems during times of joy; to say the least, a lot more poems are composed when one is caught in the depths of sorrow. But I know this for a fact: this new-found happiness in me has nipped my poetic inclination.

Miura clearly did not turn to fiction writing, however, because her poetic inspiration had dried up. Rather, she did so because she conceived of the novel as being a more powerful tool for evangelism:

I had begun to articulate my own thoughts in a different form – not in the form of a poem (utau), but in the form of a narrative (kataru). It was a simple desire to share the love of Christ with my neighbors. Of course, I had always wanted to do that since my baptism, but I realized that it could not be accomplished by poetry [alone].

Although Miura had stopped writing poetry by 1961, her experience as a poet during the Araragi years continued to shape her subsequent career as an author of prose fiction, known for an intensely lyrical writing style. As a poet, Miura considered shasei (copying life) as her guiding principle and followed the footsteps of her predecessors in the Araragi School – Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902), who insisted on the
importance of “depicting life” through shasei, and Saitō Mokichi (1882-1953), who went beyond an “objective depiction of life” by emphasizing the need for the poet to “penetrate the aspect of nature before him, reach to its fundamental nature and identify himself with it,” that is, to “depict life by empathizing with real objects.” Miura’s realism, as does the Araragi style of poetry, aimed at drawing out the truth about life and mankind, and Miura does it by depicting ordinary people (teacher, student, doctor, painter, pastor, railway worker) in an ordinary way. In Michi ariki, Miura writes: “To learn to write about ordinary things in an ordinary way is to live in reality.” She then goes on to explain how valuable her association with the Araragi School of tanka had been and describe its lasting impact on her development as a novelist in these terms:

The Araragi style of poetry drew out the truth about mankind. In Araragi, they lay stress on portraying nature. I was told this means reflecting life, and I adopted this attitude when I wrote... Now I am writing novels, and what I learned from Araragi has been most valuable. Of Course if I had studied it more faithfully my style would not be as poor as it is and I owe an apology to my fellow-members in Araragi for this.

Miura received many letters from readers who had read her memoirs and realized the extent to which their lives were touched by her writings:

When I read these letters, I realized the impact of my own writing. If a nameless writer like me could write something that moved people, imagine if I were to become a professional writer, how much more powerful would the influence be. Rather than running a grocery store, would it not be more effective to write if my purpose was to spread the love of Christ?

Following the auspicious start of her literary career, Miura closed her grocery business in August 1964 and turned a professional writer. Two men played a prominent role in nurturing Miura into a true Christian novelist. Igarashi Kenji (1877-1972), the Christian entrepreneur who established the first dry-cleaning business in Japan
(Hakuyōsha), wrote a letter to Miura, encouraging her to write “good literature that bears witness to God.” More importantly, Miura’s husband, Mitsuyo, brought Miura to God in prayers each day before she started writing: “Allow this novel to glorify Thy name. If not so, please make it impossible for her to continue writing.” Miura’s debt to her husband, Mitsuyo, was immense, not only in a spiritual sense, for he was the one who faithfully transcribed Miura’s words onto paper as she dictated to him each and every one of her novels beginning with her fourth full-length work of fiction, Shiokari Tōge. Physically, it would have been impossible for Miura to become a writer because of her illnesses. In the end, thanks to Mitsuyo’s collaborative effort, Miura was to become a household name and one of the most prolific writers in post-war Japan.

Despite being plagued by multiple illnesses (e.g., thrombocytopenic purpura, herpes zoster, heart disease, rectal cancer and Parkinson’s disease) throughout her three-and-a-half-decade-long career, Miura kept up a steady flow of short stories, novels, and essays, producing over eighty book-length titles, most of them collected in an eighteen-volume sakuinshū (Selected Works of Miura Ayako) published by the Asahi Shimbun sha between 1983 and 1984. This was followed by the publication of a twenty-volume zenshū (Complete Works of Miura Ayako) by Shufu no Tomo sha between 1991 and 1993. Most recently, in a collaborative effort with the Miura Ayako Literature Museum in Asahikawa, and in commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of Miura’s birth, Shōgakukan published in 2012-2013 an electronic version of Miura’s zenshū (Miura Ayako denshi zenshū), which includes forty novels, thirty-five essay collections, four books of quotations and one poetry collection. Miura’s productivity as a writer is amazing and almost unimaginable, considering the nihilistic and suicidal state she was in just a few years before she became a Christian and eventually debuted as a Christian novelist:
I was under medical treatment for thirteen long years. There were times when I felt keenly that, although human, I was no different from unwanted waste – I was just lying there, waiting for people to help me with meals, laundry, and going to the toilet. Medical bills and prescription drugs were costly. All I did was to make people worry, and yet, there was no sign of recovery… I had no idea whether I would recover in five years, or perhaps ten years. Nor did I know when I would die. I could not help wondering if there was a point for a person like me to continue living. Would it not be for the best if I died?\textsuperscript{84}

Miura was in a state of total despair when she wrote this. But she did not give up on herself. Rather, she accepted Christ and presently answered God’s calling to become an evangelical writer. The title of one of Miura’s autobiographical novels \textit{Kono tsuchi no utsuwa o mo} (Even This Earthen Vessel) reminds the Christian readers of what the Apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:7: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”\textsuperscript{85} Miura believed that she was saved from the path to destruction by God’s words and was transformed into a life-changing Christian novelist – a polished earthen vessel pleasing to and treasured by God. In an essay entitled “Kono goro omou koto” (My thoughts these days, 1975), Miura declares unequivocally that “writing novels was part of her faith and spiritual life.” (\textit{shōsetsu o kaku koto wa shinkō seikatsu na no de aru})\textsuperscript{86} In another essay entitled “Seisho to watashi” (The Bible and I, 1982), Miura identifies the well-spring of her artistic imagination, citing the Bible as the cornerstone of her writings:

There is power in the words of the Bible. I knew how a person turned around and abandoned the idea of suicide thanks to a single Biblical verse. The act of novel writing follows as an extension. To date, I have been writing in my own way based on the Bible. As if God has granted my presumptuous wishes, I receive letters almost daily from readers who inform me that they have begun to read the Bible after reading my novels, and as a result, their lives have changed. For that, I am really thankful. I would like to continue writing hereafter building on the foundation of the Bible.\textsuperscript{87}
Although western in orientation, Miura’s belief was compatible with the Japanese notion of *kotodama* (言霊) – the long-held belief since the time of *Man’yōshū* that “mystical powers dwell in words.” Miura sincerely believed that the power of Biblical verses (and by extension the power of words in her own novels) changed lives in a positive manner. If Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s concept of art was that of “art for art’s sake,” Miura’s was best characterized as “art for God’s sake.” As Yamanouchi Hisaaki rightly points out, “in the so-called kirishitan stories, Akutagawa’s concern was neither to defend nor to reject Christian faith – he merely used Christian materials for the framework of his stories just as he did with historical material.”88 In contrast, although artistic in nature, Miura’s novels were primarily faith-based:

I might be accused of writing for evangelical purposes in defense of my religious faith. In literary terms, my writings might even be considered heretical. I am fully aware of such criticism, but still I have continued to date to write in this manner. In any case, in my writings, it is God, before literature, who takes top priority. As a Christian, I believe that what I have to do now in Japan is to spread the words of Christ. For that reason, I suppose you could also say that I have no worries about the incompatibility of “faith” and “literature,” a dilemma faced by other writers who happen to be of the Christian faith.89

Miura daringly assumed the posture of an evangelical writer at the risk of seeing her work labelled as “non-literature” (*hi-bungaku*). Among all the writers in Japan who wrote fiction on Christian themes, Miura distinguished herself as one of the most fervent believers and continued to write with an explicitly evangelical intent throughout her career on the foundation of her Christian faith. For this reason, Miura had often been criticized for producing “literature in defense of her religion” (*gokyō bungaku*). It was a miracle that Miura not only survived in the literary world dominated by such critics, but thrived as a Christian novelist where Christians account for less than
one percent of Japan’s population. To be fair, Miura’s novels are evangelical and thought-provoking, but far from moralizing. The greatest power of her works lies in her ability to shed light on the darkness of the human heart, which Miura examines rigorously, sparing no one including herself. In her novels, Miura portrays not only the beautiful, but also the ugly:

Novels depict the human world. In the human world, there is something true and beautiful beyond one’s imagination. But at the same time, there is also the ugly reality that one finds unbearable to face squarely. Furthermore, this ugliness lurks in the heart of all men and women. It is impossible to turn a blind eye to this ugliness if we are to depict the human world.90

Miura was not a writer who thirsted for fame or recognition. She wrote with a sense of mission and cared little about how literary critics viewed her work. As a writer, she was concerned with a lifelong issue – what she called the “problem of immaturity of her literary expressions”:

When I began to write Hyōten, I wrote in a simple style, understandable to anyone with the reading proficiency of a fifth-grader. In order to do that, I avoided idiomatic expressions as much as possible and opted for plain, simple language unadorned by adjectival and adverbial phrases. My intention was to model my writing on the laconic, concise style of the Biblical text. However, that was just an intention. I realized that I had continued to write clumsy passages over the years.91

Despite her own humble assessment, Miura has proven herself to be an amazing storyteller. In order to reach as many readers as possible, Miura chose to write in plain, simple language reminiscent of the laconic style of the Biblical text. For this reason, she was often characterized as a writer of taishū bungaku. It is true that Miura drew on the popular genres of domestic novels and historical fiction, which were the genres of choice for many writers of popular literature, and her novels were undeniably oriented towards the mass, but their subject matter and themes were unlike those commonly
seen in *taishū bungaku*. Most importantly, Miura wrote not to entertain, but with a seriousness that aimed at driving home the message of love, sin and redemption. While borrowing strategies from the *taishū bungaku* genre to gain access to a wider readership, Miura never yielded to the tide of low-brow fiction which flooded the marketplace with crude, mediocre stories for entertainment and mass consumption. In her novels, Miura examined and revealed the darkest side of humanity, namely man’s egoism, with an intensity and precision only found in the serious work of fiction by major writers such as Natsume Sōseki and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke. What made Miura really stand out was her ability to convey complex ideas – fundamental issues of life and death that penetrate to the core of human existence – with deceptively simple language. Whereas most contemporary writers in the *taishū bungaku* tradition (except Matsumoto Seichō and a few others) have long since fallen into oblivion, Miura has established herself as the most important Christian novelist in twentieth-century Japan. A special November 1998 edition of the reputable academic journal *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* on the life and works of Miura Ayako suggests that, more than three decades after her debut, Miura has finally gained long-overdue recognition by the literary mainstream.

In the following chapters, I will conduct an in-depth textual analysis of the most representative works by Miura. In doing so, I intend to explore the salient features of her writings and illustrate what makes her one of the most successful writers in modern Japanese literature. Let me begin with Miura’s debut novel, *Hyōten*, the award-winning novel that launched Miura’s career as a Christian novelist.
CHAPTER THREE

Major Themes:
Sin, Love and Forgiveness in Miura’s Novels

In this chapter, I will do an in-depth literary analysis of Miura Ayako’s early novels, focusing on three of her most representative works – Hyōten (Freezing Point, 1964), Hitsujigaoka (Hill of Sheep, 1966) and Shiokari Tōge (Shiokari Pass, 1968). Thematically, the three novels deal with such important issues as sin and redemption, the problem of life and death, and the meaning of love. I will demonstrate how these novels are built upon unifying Christian themes that are critical to a better understanding of the works of Miura Ayako, the Christian novelist.

My analysis begins with a study of Miura’s debut novel, Hyōten, a very important work that can be considered the point of departure of her writings, the very foundation on which all subsequent novels by Miura were to be based. I intend to show how Hitsujigaoka and Shiokari Tōge build on some of the fundamental issues identified in Hyōten and the manner in which major Christian themes unfold in these works. Rather than simply identifying the recurring religious themes and elements in my analysis of these novels, I will focus on one particular Christian motif – that of sin and redemption, which is, in my opinion, the central tenet of the Christian faith, as well as the foundation of Miura’s writings as a Christian novelist. Specifically, I ask how these literary texts can be understood and interpreted on the basis of a Christian world view.

Hyōten is a dark melodrama of love, hate and vengeance. It revolves around the heroine, Yōko, whose adoption as a baby girl by Tsujiguchi Keizō, a respected physician, was for the sole purpose of revenge. Keizō secretly blames his wife, Natsue, for having
an affair with his colleague, Murai, and for her neglect as a parent, which caused the murder of their young daughter. In a despicable scheme calculated to inflict emotional pain on Natsue, Keizō adopts Yōko, whom he believes to be the murderer’s daughter, with the intention of revealing her real identity years later, after his wife has given her heart to raising the innocent child. Much of the drama is driven by conflicts within the Tsujiguchi family, but the predominant theme is original sin.

Although Miura raises the question of original sin in *Hyōten*, she refrains from proselytizing and instead lets her readers ponder the question. As a Christian writer, Miura pursues the issue of sin and forgiveness in her next novel, *Hitsujigaoka*. The central characters this time are Naomi and her good-for-nothing “husband” Ryōichi, the former being portrayed as a stray sheep lost in her pursuit of true love, and the latter represented as a decadent artist on a downward spiral in life as a result of uncontrolled alcoholism and his insatiable pursuit of women. Through the myriad trials experienced by Naomi, Miura drives home the message that “to love is to forgive” – not only once but over and over again. The compassionate love of Christ and His authority to forgive all sins (according to the Christian faith), only hinted at in the concluding chapter of *Hyōten*, is vividly portrayed in *Hitsujigaoka*.

*Shiokari Tōge* is one of the most important works by Miura, not only from a biblical standpoint, but also from a stylistic one. The protagonist of the novel, Nagano Nobuo, is modeled after a real-life character, a railway worker in Hokkaidō and a devout Christian by the name of Nagano Masao, who had attended the same church as Miura Ayako (Asahikawa Rokujō Kyōkai) and was known for sacrificing his own life on February 28, 1909, at the Shiokari Pass in order to save all the passengers in a runaway train. Most significantly, the novel takes the form of biographical fiction (*hyōden shōsetsu*), a narrative mode that was to become a trademark of Miura’s writings.
In my view, *Hyōten*, *Hitsujigaoka* and *Shiokari Tōge* can be read together as a spiritual journey of Miura’s protagonists beginning with Yōko, who raises the question of sin and redemption in *Hyōten*, Naomi and Ryōichi, who awaken to the real meaning of love in *Hitsujigaoka*, and finally culminating in the heroic act of Nagano, who lives an exemplary life of faith and self-sacrifice, as epitomized by Jesus Christ on the cross.

One of my main concerns in this chapter is to analyze how Miura thrived as an evangelical writer. I would argue that, while maintaining her serious intent as an author and her commitment to a high level of intellectual inquiry, Miura turned to the popular genre of *taishū bungaku* and incorporated rhetorical devices, as well as strategies that would make her works entertaining, easily comprehensible and accessible to the general readers. What Miura did as an author was not unprecedented: it reminds the Japanese reader of a long history of popular genres in the oral tradition, from Buddhist didactic narratives (*setsuwa bungaku*) of the Heian and Kamakura periods, to *otogizōshi* of the Muromachi period and *dangibon* of Edo popular fiction.

To proselytize the Buddhist faith, authors of *setsuwa* tales such as *Nihon ryōiki* (ca.822) and *Konjaku monogatari* (ca.1120) often presented anecdotes of miraculous events and karmic retribution in an amusing, dramatic fashion, using plain, direct language and character delineation through dialogue and action rather than through description and psychological analysis. Miura achieved her evangelical goals in a similar fashion, relying on plain, direct language and the heavy use of dialogues (which makes her works “*taishū*” in the eyes of literary critics) to make her works accessible to mass readership through the mediation of popular fiction. She did more, however, than simply changing the Lotus Sutra to the Christian Bible – Miura’s novels, unlike the typical *setsuwa* tales, are mostly driven by complicated plots and built on deep psychological analysis of the major characters.
It is not difficult to detect popular elements characteristic of the *taishū bungaku* genre in Miura’s novels. For instance, *Hyōten* reads like a hybrid of domestic (*katei shōsetsu*) and suspense novel (*tantei shōsetsu*); *Hitsujigaoka* a youth romance (*seishun/ren’ai shōsetsu*); and *Shiokari Tōge*, too, incorporated strong biographical elements (*jinbutsu hyōden*) commonly found in the popular genre of historical fiction, or the so-called “period novels” (*jidai shōsetsu*). Perhaps the most important reason that accounts for Miura’s success as a popular writer lies in her amazing talent of storytelling: all of her novels are woven with a rich fabric of *monogatari*-like elements (*monogatari sei*). This emphasis on maintaining readerly interest, or *omoshirosa*, (something that Tanizaki Jun’ichirō also emphasized in his plot controversy with Akutagawa Ryūnosuke), and on holding together a narrative thread is, of course, a trademark of *taishū bungaku*. Nevertheless, to dismiss Miura Ayako’s literature as merely popular fiction unworthy of serious criticism or scholarly research, the way Hirano Ken and Odagiri Hideo did, would be to overlook the literary worth of her writings, which are at once entertaining, intriguing, touching, intellectually stimulating and artistic.

By analyzing three early novels by Miura Ayako in this chapter, I aim to situate Miura’s writings within the literary tradition of post-war Japan, and to demonstrate how Miura devoted her creative energy to writing from an off-center position, physically in Hokkaidō and stylistically incorporating many of the salient features of the *taishū bungaku* genre, producing works of unconventional themes and great intellectual depth that pose a challenge to the mainstream writings of the established *bundan*. I will begin in the following section with a literary analysis of *Hyōten*, Miura’s debut novel which launched her career as one of the best-known Christian novelists in Japan.
HYŌTEN

Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint... The ‘greatness’ of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards.² (T.S. Eliot)

On July 10, 1964, Miura Ayako (1922-1999), a hitherto unknown Christian writer from Asahikawa in Hokkaido, won the prestigious Asahi Prize with her novel Hyōten (Freezing Point). The novel was arguably one of the most successful Christian novels ever written in Japan, a country where Christians account for no more than one percent of the total population. It was an immediate hit when it was serialized in the morning edition of the Asahi Shinbun from December 9, 1964 to November 14, 1965 and created a “Hyōten boom” that prompted a number of television, film, and stage productions in the next two decades. Despite being a popular novel, Hyōten deals with a serious subject matter – the Christian theme of “original sin.”

Bearing in mind that all discourse resists conclusive analysis and opens up to multiple readings, my attempt in this chapter is not to provide a ‘proper’ reading of Hyōten, but to interpret Miura’s narrative text from an ethical, theological perspective, thereby disclosing one of its many possibilities of signification. I am particularly interested in examining the methods of characterization in the novel and will focus on how Miura engages her readers in the process of exploring sinful human nature. In an essay discussing the relationship between literature and religion, T.S. Eliot sees human behavior as the common ground between religion and fiction,³ and it is precisely the behavior of the major characters in Hyōten on which I would like to focus.
Let me begin with a discussion of Miura’s concept of sin. In an essay entitled “Tsumi to wa nani ka?” (What is sin?) Miura classifies sin into three categories: sin against the law, sin against morality, and original sin (genzai). In another essay collected in Ikasarete aru hibi (Days of Blessings, 1989), Miura comments on the unreliability of human law: so long as the penal code is made by men, it can never be perfect. For one thing, law changes easily over time, and so do moral standards. As the character Dr. Takagi points out in Hyōten, it was illegal to perform abortions in Japan during the war years (an offense that could put both the doctor and the mother in jail). Nevertheless, as a result of rapid democratization and liberalization during the post-war years, abortion has become a common practice. In Miura’s view, the fact that abortion was legalized, however, does not make the practice less sinful. It is not clear where Takagi stands on this issue, being a doctor who has performed numerous abortions, but he definitely considers abortion not only a legal issue, but a moral issue:

I doubt if anyone of us has clean hands. Take me, for example. I’ve killed hundreds and thousands of babies in the womb. Those embryos could neither run nor hide from me. They could have come back and haunted me, but they didn’t. Poor aborted babies! But I’m not arrested by the police because I am a law-abiding citizen; respected in my community.

Takagi’s painfully sarcastic remark suggests that it is not adequate to rely on human law or moral standards of the society alone. Although Takagi stops short of saying that, Miura implies that there is a need for a higher ethical standard – that of God. Indeed, the Biblical definition for “sin” is precisely failure on the part of man to meet that higher standard of God. In “Tsumi to wa nani ka?”, Miura uses the metaphor “missing the target” (matohazure) to explain that failure. Just as the archer shoots his arrow and misses the target, man misses the mark – the higher morality and ethical
standard set by God. The extent to which the archer misses the target is irrelevant; what is important is that he misses the mark.

A key concept of “original sin” is that all human beings are sinful and wicked by nature and rebellious against God. The Apostle Paul said: “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:10). In the Christian faith, sin is an existential problem that everyone faces, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). In a study of sin and forgiveness in Hyōten, Philip Gabriel faults the author for “failing to drive home the point of her own theology,”9 or, more specifically, for “failing to clarify the notion of original sin as part of everyone’s existential nature”10 – a position with which I slightly disagree. Indeed, a close reading of Hyōten reveals that Miura actually succeeds in portraying her characters as self-centered individuals who, without exception, fall short of the glory of God. Of particular interest is the manner in which Miura handles the theme of “murder.” The only person in the novel who has actually committed the crime of murder is Saishi, who Keizō thinks is the biological father of Yōko. Saishi kills Keizō’s daughter, Ruriko, on a riverbank and starts the whole drama in Hyōten. From a moral standpoint, however, Miura seems to imply that Dr. Takagi, too, is a “murderer,” since he has killed thousands of innocent, defenseless babies by performing abortions for female patients.

Using the yardstick of biblical standards, Miura further demonstrates that all other characters are guilty of “murder in their heart,” because they harbor anger against another person and are hopelessly caught in a vicious cycle of hate, and “anyone who hates his brother is a murderer” (1 John 3:15) according to the Bible. In the following section, I will examine Miura’s characterization of her major characters and analyze their inner thoughts and behavior, and in so doing, demonstrate that Miura portrays these figures in such a way as to drive home the message of the universality of original sin.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Object(s) of hatred</th>
<th>Description of thoughts and action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keizō</td>
<td>Saishi</td>
<td>この場所でルリ子は殺されたのだ…「憎い！」今ほど、佐石が憎いと思ったことはなかった。(H1:92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keizō</td>
<td>Natsue</td>
<td>啓造はルリ子の死以来、夏枝を憎みはした…殺そうと思ったことさえあった。(H1:183)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keizō</td>
<td>Yōko</td>
<td>ルリ子のあの姿を思うと、わたしは陽子が憎いのだ。(H1:233)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natsue</td>
<td>Keizō</td>
<td>今はただ夫啓造が憎かった…自分が恐ろしい鬼女に生まれかわって行くのではないかと思われた。それほど、啓造がにくかった…(H1:238-9) 整った美貌であるだけに、表情を失った夏枝の顔は能面のように不気味であった。(H1:239)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natsue</td>
<td>Yōko</td>
<td>「陽子ちゃん！おかあさんと死んで…」拍手をされている陽子が憎かった。(H1:244)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>長年の間に、生理的といってもいいほどの陽子への憎しみに、ふいに火がついたような思いだった。(H2:309)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tōru</td>
<td>Keizō and Natsue</td>
<td>徹は憎しみに満ちた視線を二人にうつした。(H2:124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murai</td>
<td>Keizō</td>
<td>ぼくはどれだけ院長が憎かったかわかりません。院長の死んだ夢を何度みたかわからない。(H2:62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yōko</td>
<td>Kitahara</td>
<td>かつて陽子はこんなに人にむかって怒り、憎み、そして惑い、なつかしむ激しさを持ったことはなかった。(H2:260)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As we look at the complicated web of human relationship represented in the novel, one Japanese word stands out: nikushimi (憎しみ) or hate. Keizō’s hatred is not only directed towards Saishi, who murdered his beloved little daughter, Ruriko, on a
riverbank, but also extended to the innocent Yōko, presumed daughter of the murderer, whom Keizō adopts after Saishi’s death, in a twisted plot of revenge against his wife, Natsue. Keizō secretly blames his wife, Natsue, for Ruriko’s death – it was her neglect as a parent, after all, during an extra-marital affair with his colleague, Murai, which resulted in their daughter’s being kidnapped and murdered. Keizō hates Natsue so deeply that he has once thought of killing her. To inflict maximum pain on his unfaithful wife, Keizō adopts Yōko, with the intent of withholding her true identity and revealing it to Natsue years later only after she has become emotionally attached to the lovable child.

Meanwhile, Murai, the other party in the adulterous relationship, hates Keizō for his success as a hospital director, and for his apparently happy marriage to a beautiful wife, so much so that he wishes Keizō were dead even in his dreams. As for Natsue, her hatred towards Keizō is understandable: he has been deceiving her all this time and literally forces her to bring up the offspring of Ruriko’s murderer. Interestingly, Miura compares Natsue’s expressionless face to a Nō mask, a symbolism that carries spiritual connotations and suggests the power of hate to transform a beautiful woman into a demoness (kijo 鬼女). Natsue’s hatred towards Yōko, on the other hand, is depicted as a form of biological reaction. Her impulse to strangle Yōko upon finding out that she is Saishi’s daughter can be explained in terms of her natural instincts. As the drama unfolds, we see how the seed of hatred, originally planted by Keizō, grows and stifles the entire Tsujiguchi family. At the end, it even affects the son, Tōru, who indicts his parents, with an accusing look of hatred and contempt, for hurting his innocent “sister” Yōko.

Yōko, the heroine of Hyōten, is undoubtedly the most positive character in the novel and the least corrupted by sin. Nevertheless, Yōko herself admits that, as Saishi’s daughter, she too has the “possibility of becoming a murderer.” She has her own share
of anger (怒り) and hatred (憎しみ), which Miura identifies as the twin driving forces behind the actual act of murder. Before long, Yōko falls in love with her brother’s friend, Kitahara. Consumed by jealousy and distressed over the appearance of an imagined “rival” for Kitahara’s affection, Yōko finds herself in a violently perplexed state of resentment, hatred and yearning that she has not known before.

We have seen in the above analysis that by hating people, all of Miura’s characters have committed “murder in their hearts.” Indeed, as if to further punctuate her point that original sin is a universal problem for all, Miura comes up with a very interesting physical description of Saishi, the real murderer. Early in the novel, when Keizō, for the first time, looks at a newspaper photo of the man who murdered his daughter, he sees a man who is surprisingly good looking – his thick eyebrows and broad forehead even give Saishi the appearance of having a strong intellect. The narrator observes further that no matter how hard Keizō stares at the man with hatred and antagonism, he detects not a single feature of evil on his face. Miura’s unconventional portrayal of a murderer, in my view, suggests that good-looking, intelligent men and women like Murai, Natsue and Keizō are equally capable of doing terrible things.

Asai Kiyoshi has pointed out that Miura makes extensive intertextual references to works by both Japanese and Western authors in Hyōten and its sequel Zoku Hyōten. In particular, I see a special literary purpose in Miura’s attempt to make connections to the Bible, as well as to Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina and to Emily Brontë’s Wuthering Heights.

In order to underscore the universality of sin in human history, Miura makes an intertextual reference to Proverbs 7:19-22. At one point towards the end of Hyōten, overwhelmed by a guilty conscience, Keizō tries turning to the Bible for possible spiritual guidance:
When Keizō opened the Bible and glanced over the page to which he turned, he was startled.
“My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey.
He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon.”
With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk.
All at once he followed her.”
These were the words from the Old Testament…
“So there were already women who led men to their chamber in the absence of their husband three, four thousand years ago!” Keizō thought to himself. He was astonished upon realizing that adultery had been endlessly repeated from the olden times to the present day and he was sure that it would be repeated over and over again tens of thousands of years from now.

Keizō is startled by the biblical account of the adulterous woman (whose portrayal in the Old Testament closely mirrors that of Natsue in Hyōten). He further realizes that he is not the only man who suffers as a result of his wife’s infidelity (nayanda no wa ore hitori de wa nai no da) (H2:249). Such betrayals happened thousands of years ago and will repeat in the future. But instead of taking comfort in that realization, Keizō falls deep into self-condemnation: “But no other men would be foolish enough to act the way I did – simply because I hate my wife for her infidelity” (Da ga, ore no yō ni, tsuma e no nikushimi no tame ni, jubun no ko o koroshita hannin no musume o hikitoru nado to iu, tawaketa yatsu wa inai darō) (H2:249). In retrospect, Keizō wonders why he has adopted
Yōko in the first place and realizes that, “by using the biblical verse ‘love your enemies’ (Matthew 5:44) [as a pretext for his revenge], he has deceived both Takagi [who helped with the adoption] and himself. Whether willing or not, he cannot but admit that he was the cruel, despicable man who forced his wife to raise the child of the murderer of their own daughter” (‘Nanji no teki o ai se yo’ to iu kotoba de, jibun jishin to Takagi to damashi, jitsu wa Natsue ni hannin no ko o sode saseyō to shita hiretsu de reikoku na ningen ga jibun na no da to iu koto o, Keizō wa iya demo mitome zu ni wa irarenakatta)15

In Zoku Hyōten. Miura makes another intertextual reference through Tatsuko, Natsue’s best friend and a guardian-like character to Yōko:

“Do not seek revenge yourself. It is mine to avenge. I will repay.” Once I read these words in a novel, said Tatsuko. (Zoku Hyōten, v.2, p.191)

The novel that Tatsuko read is none other than Anna Karenina, written by the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, and the allusion in Zoku Hyōten is to the epigraph of Anna Karenina, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay,” which is also a verbatim quote from the Bible (Romans 12:19), to which Tolstoy makes intertextual reference: “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saidth the Lord.” (King James version) Miura’s allusion to Anna Karenina is interesting, for both Tolstoy and Miura underscore the themes of jealousy, infidelity, dysfunctional marriage, and the hypocrisy of having double standards in judging people in their respective works. Just like Keizō, Karenin in Anna Karenina is consumed by a desire for revenge and to make his wife, Anna, suffer when he finds out about her affair with Vronsky. Unlike Keizō, however, Karenin also expresses some willingness to forgive his unfaithful wife. It is interesting to note that, rather than making a direct intertextual reference to the biblical verse in Romans 12:19, Miura alludes to Anna Karenina, which adds a deeper layer of meaning and texture to her own story. Like Tolstoy, Miura’s aim is not to moralize but to do what a psychological novel
does best, that is, to probe the mind of her characters and explain what makes a “sinner” like Keizō or Natsue do what he or she does. All the dramatic action in Hyōten begins when Keizō ignores what the Christian faith teaches him and takes vengeance into his own hands. Early in the novel, Keizō recalls the words of Natsue’s father, Professor Tsugawa: “There is nothing more difficult in this world than the Christian motto ‘love your enemies.’ Other things can be done through personal effort, but it is impossible to love one’s enemies with effort alone” (H1:22). In his mind, Keizō totally rejects the idea of “loving one’s enemies,” thinking that “enemies are not to be loved; they are opponents against whom we should fight” (teki to wa subeki aite de wa nai. Tatakau beki aite no koto da).16

A third example of intertextual reference can be found in the second half of Hyōten, in which we find Yōko absorbed in reading her favorite novel, Wuthering Heights, sitting under a tree in the woods. Yōko’s reaction to her reading is narrated in these terms:

The fact that Heathcliff, the protagonist of Wuthering Heights, was an abandoned boy stirred Yōko’s emotion. She felt as if Heathcliff’s dark passion had transferred to her and she continued reading the novel while holding her breath. Being an orphan, and having grown up with Catherine like brother and sister, Heathcliff loved the girl, so deeply indeed that he continued to yearn for her after she married [Edgar] – so passionately that he went so far as to dig up her grave [eighteen years after her death] so as to die eventually with her. Being an orphan with no idea who her parents were, Yōko found herself identifying with Heathcliff and the intensity of his love for Catherine. (H2:157)
Although *Hyōten* and *Wuthering Heights* share the common themes of jealousy and the destructive force of vengeance, it is the romantic, loving side of Heathcliff that Miura focuses on in this particular intertextual reference to Emily Brontë’s novel. Yōko resembles Heathcliff in terms of being an adopted child and she longs for the kind of intense love that Heathcliff demonstrates in his yearning for Catherine. “Like Heathcliff, a child abandoned by her parents would forever reach out in search of the irreplaceable love of her life, her one and only.” (oya ni suterareta ko wa, Hiisukurīffu no yō ni, ryōte o sashinobete itsu made mo itsu made mo jibun no ai suru mono o ‘tada hitotsu no mono, kakegae no nai mono’ to shite oimotomezu ni wa irarenai n da wa). Yōko reasons in her mind, and then she realizes that it is “the despair of not being the irreplaceable person even to her own biological parents that drives her emotional attachment to a passionate lover like Heathcliff” (Jibun ga oya ni totte sae, kakegae no nai mono de wa nakatta to iu zetsubō ga, konna ni hageshiku ai suru mono ni shūchaku suru n da wa).

While reading *Wuthering Heights*, Yōko tells herself that “she would like to love someone with intensity, and be loved by that person” (Jibun no mata, hageshiku ai shitai to omotte ita. Soshite, ai sareta mono ni omotte ita). It is under these circumstances that Yōko, in a moment of coincidence characteristic of *taishū bungaku*, meets her man of destiny, Kitahara (H2:158).

Japanese critics who hold fast to the ideals of *junbungaku* as epitomized by the *shishōsetsu* might consider *Anna Karenina* and *Wuthering Heights* popular novels, just as they consider *Hyōten* a product of mass literature, based on the argument that these works are driven by an intriguing plot and elements of coincidence and suspense in terms of plot development. *Anna Karenina* and *Wuthering Heights* are generally considered to be serious works of fiction that count among the best in their respective culture and tradition and I would argue that the same thing could be said of *Hyōten*.

Whereas Anna in *Anna Karenina* takes her own life for a “sin” (adultery) that she has actually committed, Yōko in *Hyōten* contemplates suicide for what she believes to
be a “sinful nature” that she has inherited as the child of a murderer. Among the events that lead to the climactic scene of Yōko’s suicide, there are two episodes that foreshadow her action. The first is a disheartening incident that weighs heavily on Keizō’s mind – the suicide of Masaki Jirō, Keizō’s patient and a promising young man who is barely twenty-eight years old. Masaki has completely recovered from a minor attack of tuberculosis and is ready to return to his banking position when he abruptly takes his own life. The problem is: he is no longer sure what he is living for. It seems that whether or not he is present, it does not make any difference to his company. Indeed, his bank prospers during his absence. Masaki comes to the painful conclusion that he is not needed and that his own value of existence is zero.

The fact that Masaki has lost his will to live casts serious doubt on Keizō’s own meaning of existence. Keizō has hitherto taken deep pride in his profession, but now realizes that as a doctor he can only heal the bodies of his patients, and not their souls. Indeed, even if he were dead, there would be other hospitals that could take care of his patients equally well, if not better. Here we see Keizō assailed by a strong sense of futility, a feeling of emptiness shared by the author herself during the years prior to her becoming a Christian. Upon graduation from high school, Miura took a teaching post at an elementary school in Utashinai City and another five years in Asahikawa City. During the seven years of teaching, she never questioned the ultra-nationalistic ideologies that she helped inculcate in the minds of school children. In March 1946, when the American occupation forces ordered Japanese schools to cross out “patriotic” lines with ink from all textbooks, the 23-year-old Miura resigned her teaching post – no longer sure what was right, what was wrong.

It is not hard to imagine how confused Miura must have been, waking up one morning only to realize that everything was futile and there was nothing worth believing in. In Michi ariki, Miura spoke of how she lost all confidence to believe ever
since the day of Japan’s defeat when everything she had believed in during the first twenty-three years of her life collapsed (shinzuru to iu koto ga issai dekinaku natte ita no de aru. Nijūsan-sai no toshi made, shinjitikite kita mono ga, nani mo ka mo kuzuresatta haisen no hi irai, watashi wa shinzuru koto ga osoroshiku natte shimatta)\textsuperscript{18} It was the same kind of fear of an empty life that drives Masaki Jirō to suicide. Miura could easily have ended with the same fate as Masaki, had she not met Maekawa Tadashi – Miura’s lover and the man who eventually brought her to Christ. In the novel, Yōko comments to her father that had Masaki, too, been loved by someone to the fullest, he probably would not have ended his life. What Yōko has in mind is the idea of \textit{kakegae no nai sonzai} (irreplaceable existence), or the fundamental human desire to be loved and to be considered important by someone – a recurrent theme which is to play a very important part in the novel. Yōko has yet to realize, however, that in the eyes of the Heavenly Father, each human being is a unique, irreplaceable person, a being of great worth to God.

The other episode that foreshadows Yōko’s final action appears in the form of a letter from Kitahara (Yōko’s lover), which tells of the attempted suicide of a young woman on the shores of Shari. The woman is saved as she was brought back by the waves and Kitahara attributes this to the Will of some Mighty Being (ōinaru mono no ishi) (H2:188) that transcends the will of man. It can be argued that Keizō’s miraculous survival through the shipwreck of the Tōya Maru (and perhaps Yōko’s own survival of her suicide attempt at the end of the novel, too) is another testimony of this Will of the Mighty One.

Asai has pointed out that the Tōya Maru incident was based on a real life catastrophe that happened in September 1954 and that it was not in the original version of \textit{Hyōten} that won the \textit{Asahi} Prize, but rather added later during subsequent revisions.\textsuperscript{19} Some 1,153 people were reportedly killed as the Tōya Maru sank during a typhoon in the Tsugaru Strait. In Miura’s novel, Keizō realizes how powerless human
beings are in the face of natural disasters. As a doctor, he has seen people dying on a daily basis; but the harsh reality does not strike home until he is forced to confront his own death. Most significantly, Keizō witnesses a Christian missionary who gladly gives up his own life jacket in order to save the life of a female passenger – an unforgettable scene that sends shock waves through his heart. Considering the fact that Miura made a special effort to add this episode to the ending chapter of Volume One, it is perhaps not an overstatement that the Tōya Maru incident represents a turning point in the life of Keizō, a special moment of reorientation towards God in his journey of spiritual awakening.

The drama of Hyōten revolves principally around Natsue, Keizō and Yōko, who, as Gabriel points out, represent varying degrees of awakening to sin.20 Among the three, Natsue is the most self-centered and is either unaware of God’s presence or has no fear for God. Her idea of love is based on physical attraction and has no spiritual content. Her infatuation with Murai Yasuo in the opening chapter of Hyōten, which starts the whole drama, reminds the reader of Eve, who in Genesis disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit for it was “pleasing to her eyes” (Genesis 3:6). Natsue knows perfectly well it is not right for a married woman to be romantically involved with Murai, but her heart is captivated by Murai’s good looks and she cannot resist the temptation of his sweet embrace: “[Murai] shifted his eyes back towards Natsue. His dark eyes are too beautiful for a man, she mused silently. Yet during some moments, gloomy shadows swept across them. She felt strangely drawn to those dark lines” 21 (H1:9-10). In order to be alone with Murai, Natsue asks her daughter, Ruriko, to play outside – indirectly causing her death.

After Ruriko’s death, Murai contracts tuberculosis and has to spend seven and a half years of convalescence at Lake Tōya. The highly anticipated re-encounter with Natsue turns out to be a complete disillusionment – a supposedly tall, handsome prince
has been transformed by fatigue into an unkempt man with a bloated face. Deeply disappointed, Natsue cannot help but wonder if she “has been waiting all these years to give her heart and body to this dirty-looking man” (H1:324). In Natsue’s mind, their “fateful” re-encounter has to be something more “poetic” and “dramatic.” Natsue, who fell in love with Murai’s physical charms, now rejects him for his wasted beauty. In the next chapter, we see Natsue’s preoccupation with physical beauty in the most extreme form:

She just didn’t like ugly people: she couldn’t accept their repulsive bodily features. She felt uneasy at the sight of gruesome people lest her beauty might be somehow violated… She had no sympathy for the unlovely. Homeliness to her was like evil. Without this perverted idea of mankind, she could have been more beautiful herself, but she didn’t seem to know it. (H1:333)

Natsue could have been more beautiful had she been a little more forgiving towards her husband, and a little more caring towards her adopted daughter. In a climactic scene in the first volume, Natsue discovers Keizō’s unsent letter to a mutual friend, Takagi, in which he confesses that his real intention in adopting Saishi’s daughter was to get back at Natsue and make her suffer. Natsue is appalled that her husband has been secretly waiting for her day of misery and vows that she will take her own revenge on Keizō (H1:242). It is revealing that Natsue’s immediate response at this point is to put on makeup in front of a mirror. Remaking herself somehow calms her down, so much so that she thinks that “cosmetics may be a weapon for women” (H1:242). Poor Yōko comes home at the most inopportune time. She makes the innocent remark “Mom, you look so beautiful,” and the next moment Natsue tries to strangle her out of hatred. By having Natsue fix her makeup right before her most evil act, Miura is of course trying to draw a deliberate and vivid contrast between her physical beauty and her spiritual ugliness. In an essay entitled “Keshō o koeru mono” (Beyond
makeup), Miura further clarifies her view that what really matters is the gentleness and beauty in one’s heart: “I wonder if putting on makeup is the only way to become beautiful. When I talk to people, not just women, I perceive the greatest beauty in expressions that exude abundance from within.”  

In *Hyōten*, we see the image of a self-centered woman (Natsue) who loves no one but herself (*jikoai*). We have seen how easily Natsue’s feeling for Murai cools over time – for there is nothing deeper than physical attraction between them. Even upon hearing that Murai’s illness has become life-threatening, Natsue feels no urgency to visit him. In the case of Natsue’s “love” for Keizō, it is based on Keizō’s social and financial status as a hospital director, which allows her to lead an “abundant” life.

Compared to Natsue, Keizō is a more likeable character. Unlike Natsue, who has no sense of guilt whatsoever, Keizō is aware of his spiritual ugliness and makes an effort to tackle his own problem of sin by seeking an alternative way of life that breaks the vicious cycle of hate and resentment. No sooner has Keizō’s wound started to heal, however, than Natsue inflicts a deeper one on him. On a rainy night, Keizō realizes that instead of showing any remorse, his wife has once again allowed Murai to leave a passionate kiss mark on her neck. The next morning, as Keizō stares at Natsue’s lips, he sees a pair of lips that has betrayed him and makes up his mind to carry out his plan for vengeance: “I’ll get you the very best baby of good parentage” (H1:123). In his letter of confession to Takagi, Keizō speaks of his real intention behind adopting Yōko:

Anyway, it was not to love Yōko that I adopted her. I wanted to see Natsue bringing up Saishi’s daughter without knowing it at all. I wanted to see her stamping her feet in vexation when the truth was finally revealed to her. I wanted to see her mortification when she discovered her life had been wasted in loving the daughter of the man who took Ruriko’s own life. You can now understand, Dr. Takagi, what kind of man I am…  

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In Keizō’s confession, we feel the despair and deep anguish of a man who struggles with sin, the kind of spiritual struggle that the apostle Paul described in the Book of Romans: “I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do… It is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me” (Romans 7:14-17). Keizō wanted to forgive Natsue for her transgressions but actually did the exact opposite. By adopting the murderer’s child, Keizō has crossed the point of no return and literally dashed all hopes of rebuilding a happy family with Natsue.

Because of her adultery and negligence, Keizō cannot trust his wife. At one point, the narrator informs the reader that Keizō has gone so far as to see his beloved wife as more than an enemy:

Keizō had forgotten that Natsue, too, must be forgiven and loved in the same fashion as Ruriko’s murderer. Betrayed by his own wife, Keizō saw Natsue as more than an enemy. He hated Murai, too. But Murai had never been an object of love or trust to begin with. Natsue was a different story. To Keizō, a man of strict morals, Natsue was his dearest wife and her role was irreplaceable. Her infidelity, therefore, caused hatred that was much stronger and more complicated than that towards Murai or even the murderer of his own daughter. (H1:126)

Similarly, under the heavy burden of his own sin, Keizō finds himself unable to show the kind of pure, genuine love befitting his role as Yōko’s father. He is unwilling to praise Yōko despite her admirable character, and unable to even pat her head with his hand. In the Tsubute (snowball) chapter, for instance, Yōko endures great physical pain to defend her friend who has thrown a rock hidden in a snowball at her. Natsue is impressed and makes the remark that “Yōko is a wonderful child who doesn’t know how to hate people.” In contrast, Keizō quickly discredits her in his mind: “Being the child of a murderer, Yōko has no right to hate others.” Upon second thought, Keizō
realizes that whoever her parents may have been, Yōko is not to blame and it is a shame that he could not frankly recognize what a wonderful child she was (H1:227).

Keizō is unable to provide the kind of parental love that Yōko yearns for. His notion of love belongs to the realm of the flesh, as opposed to realm of the spirit. In the opening chapter of the second volume of Hyōten, we see Keizō playing with the seven-year-old Yōko, and for the first time since her adoption, Keizō invites his little daughter to sit on his lap. The touch of Yōko’s silky knees arouses in Keizō an erotic, secretive pleasure much different from how grown males feel towards mature women and he even feels as if he could understand the psychology of child molesters. Keizō quickly releases Yōko as he senses the danger of his inner passions and realizes that he is an “ugly man [whose sins] know no bounds” (soko shirenu minikui ningen) : “Such is not love. Am I, after all, only capable of loving people in a sensual way?”(H2:17)

In retrospect, Keizō recalls the missionary on board the ill-fated Tōya Maru, who gave up his own life jacket to save another passenger, and realizes that love is to give one’s own life for others. The missionary’s heroic action, epitomizes the essence of agape love – unconditional, sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, who, according to Christian faith, died on the cross to atone for man’s sins. True, spiritual love, as defined in the Bible, is completely missing in the Tsujiguchi family, for this family is filled with lies, deception, jealousy, hatred, suspicion, revenge and venom. In a most memorable episode towards the end of the novel, Keizō comes closest to seeking God when he finally makes up his mind to go to church. As he looks up at the church, he sees these words on the stained glass window: “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Feeling unworthy and not sure if God’s love is great enough to save a wretched man like himself, Keizō finds it difficult to climb up the stairs towards God’s meeting
place. As he continues to waver in the piercing cold, a middle-aged couple (presumably Christian) pass him by, saying to each other:

“ Aren’t you cold?”

“No, I’m fine.”

Simple as it is, the exchange is full of kindness and sympathy and shows how deeply the couple love each other. As Keizō watches the couple climb the steps in unison, he senses a special warmth that is lacking in his own relationship with Natsue (H2:252). From a Christian perspective, Keizō’s strained relationship with Natsue is a direct consequence of their sin, which is not so much breaking laws as it is hurting people. Ironically, Keizō realizes that, by taking revenge on his wife, he winds up hurting himself the most: “Why did I make Natsue raise Saishi’s daughter? But then, at that time, I couldn’t forgive Natsue… I tried to take revenge, but in the end I suffered the most myself. It was painful not to be able to love Yōko, and it was painful I had to keep this secret from my wife” (H2:130).

When a person sins, he builds a wall between himself and others, in the process becoming more lonely and alienated each day. In Hyōten, Miura uses the words kodoku (solitude) and sabishisa (loneliness) repeatedly and that is precisely what Keizō experiences during his long years of estrangement from his wife. At the end of a dramatic scene in which Keizō and Natsue finally confront each other head on, we are told that, after venting his eleven-year-old wrath, Keizō realizes that the only thing left in him is solitude: “The loneliness of an ugly fight under the broad daylight! What on earth have Natsue and I built during the past sixteen years of our marriage? Nothing but a brittle family. We have a son, Tōru, but our bond is so weak our whole family will come tumbling down with just a light poke. We might look like a happy couple to
others, but frankly, deep at heart, we are even more remote than total strangers” (H2:121).

The novel Hyōten, then, can be read as Miura’s commentary on the collapse of the institutions of marriage and family in post-war Japan. By depicting all the strife within the Tsujiguchi household and tying it to the theme of original sin, Miura seems to suggest that it is man’s ego and self-centeredness that destroy the very foundation of marriage and traditional family. Keizō’s son, Tōru, has been proud of his family: a gentle father, doctor and owner of a respectable hospital; a charming and beautiful mother; a happy, brilliant sister – that is until he learns of the dark secret behind Yōko’s adoption and discovers that his father was a vehemently jealous husband, his mother an unfaithful wife, and his sister the daughter of a murderer. Suddenly, his mother becomes a filthy woman (fuketsu) and his father a cowardly man (hikyō). Understandably, Tōru feels deeply hurt and, furious that Yōko has been victimized, he lashes out at his father: “Take revenge and get even with mom, if that’s what you want. But that doesn’t give you the right to make other people unhappy. Your lack of concern for others really makes me mad!” (H2:128)

There is no true, spiritual bond between Keizō and Natsue, because their sinful nature alienates them from each other and from God. Rather than heart-to-heart communication based on mutual trust, we see lies, deception, pretenses, excuses, accusations, imagination and suspicion. In one of the earlier chapters, Keizō tells Takagi how frustrated he is not being able to understand his own wife: it is as if “I have lived in my old home for many years, and there I have discovered a room hitherto unknown to me” (H1:106). Sensing the crisis in the Tsujiguchi household, Tatsuko, a close friend of Natsue’s, concludes that “there is no hope for this family unless people speak their mind more frankly” (H2:83).
Interestingly, there is a striking parallel between the behavioral patterns of Keizō and Natsue and those of Adam and Eve as they committed the original sin in the Book of Genesis. The fall of man is described in chapter three of Genesis in the following manner. I will quote the most relevant passage in full because it is essential for my analysis:

“You will not surely die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Then the man and his wife hear the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

(Genesis: 3:4-13)

God had commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for they would surely die. And yet, despite the commandment, Eve succumbed to Satan’s words of temptation, thinking that she, too, would be like God, and ate the forbidden fruit because it was pleasing to her eyes. Not only did Eve defy God by eating the fruit, but she also gave some to her husband. The central issue of original sin, then, as seen in the Book of Genesis, is man’s disobedience of God, or more precisely, an attempt on the part of man to put himself on the same footing as God. In
Hyōten, we see both Keizō and Natsue depicted as self-centered characters who refuse to let God influence their lives (as a student Keizō attended Bible study conducted by a missionary in order to learn English, but his teachings did not reasonate with him. Although he did not reject Christianity outright, he has long stopped reading the Bible). The character sketch of Keizō and Natsue is so similar to that of Adam and Eve in the Bible that we are almost certain that Miura had Genesis in mind as she wrote Hyōten.

When summoned by God, Adam panicked and said, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.” In Kyūyaku seisō nyūmon (Introduction to the Old Testament, 1974), Miura calls this jinrui seisō no uso, or the first human lie — for obvious reasons: Adam hid not because he was naked, but because he had broken God’s commandment and was therefore afraid to face Him.

In the same fashion, the reader finds in Hyōten human relationships dominated by lies, dishonesty, and deception. Time and again, Natsue churns out lie after lie, not only to her husband, Keizō, but also to her son, Tōru, her adopted daughter, Yōko, and Yōko’s lover Kitahara. Soon after learning of Yōko’s identity as Saishi’s daughter, in an attempt to put her to shame, Natsue pretends that she is having a white dress made for Yōko’s school play, while secretly looking forward to seeing Yōko embarrassed in front of all her classmates. Natsue literally puts Yōko on stage wearing a red, velvet dress when everyone else wears white for the play (as Gabriel has pointed out, the symbolism of red is of course significant because of its association with sin). When Tōru sees through her lies, Natsue piles one fabrication on top of another to cover up her act: “That tall woman at the shop must have forgotten about my order” (H1:295).

In another episode leading to the Tōya Maru incident, Natsue tells Keizō she has changed her mind and is not accompanying him to Kyoto as previously agreed upon. Her stated reason: “I’m a little worried about our children” (H1:339). The reader knows, of course, that she is actually looking forward to meeting with Murai in the absence of
her husband. The last-minute change in travel plan almost costs Keizō his life, but Natsue is not ready to change her pattern of lies and deception just yet. Jealous of Yōko’s youthful beauty and her romance with Kitahara, Natsue is determined to break up the couple. She goes all the way from Asahikawa to Sapporo in order to return to Kitahara his letter to Yōko, misleading him that “the letter is from Yōko” (H2:228). Her lies apparently hurt Yōko deeply. And yet, when she is challenged later by Kitahara, Natsue compounds her sin by adding more lies: “she did it out of good will” – a mere pretext to expose the secret of Yōko’s birth in front of Kitahara (H2:329).

Natsue’s pretense and her hypocrisy are best illustrated by yet another episode, in which she complains to Keizō for even suggesting that they let Tatsuko adopt Yōko: “You are such a cruel, unfeeling person! Are you hinting I haven’t been loving towards Yōko or good at bringing her up thus far? I’m definitely opposed to giving Yōko to Tatsuko! She should only leave this Tsujiguchi household as a bride!”34 (H2:246)

Natsue’s professed desire to see Yōko off as a bride is, of course, nothing more than a façade. Her honne reveals a much darker side of her human nature. Apparently, Natsue cannot bear the thought of Yōko getting a better education than she has received and of her inheriting Tatsuko’s substantial fortune (H2:245). Innocent and unsophisticated, Yōko takes Natsue’s words at face value and rejoices, genuinely believing in her mother’s sincerity. Natsue’s lies are no more credible, however, than Adam’s in Genesis.

Like his wife, Keizō is guilty of dishonesty. Keizō has always thought of himself as a man incapable of telling lies (H1:134). Nonetheless, driven by uncontrollable anger, he finds himself presenting the child of Ruriko’s murderer to Natsue as a baby of respectable birth – which is in fact the greatest deception of all. At one point, the reader is struck by a dramatic revelation of Keizō’s honne (again Miura puts his thoughts in parenthesis), so vicious that it is terrifying: “Natsue! that child is Saishi’s daughter – a child who looks exactly like Saishi. Love her to your heart’s content!” (H1:134) In one of
her later novels, *Kaerikonu kaze* (Wind of No Return, 1972). Miura warns against the danger of telling lies: “Could there be a person in this world who absolutely doesn’t tell any lies? Telling lies means there’s a possibility of betrayal.”35

The behavioral pattern of Keizō and Natsue resembles those of Adam and Eve in another sense. On top of lying to God, Adam blames his wife (*she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it*), who in turn blames the serpent for deceiving her (*the serpent deceived me, and I ate*). Shifting responsibility to others is exactly what Natsue does in the novel. Sitting in front of the family Buddhist altar, Natsue looks at Ruriko’s picture and laments her daughter’s death:

(Ruriko wouldn’t have been killed if Murai hadn’t visited that day)

Natsue wanted to forget that she was the one who told Ruriko to go outside. She wanted to shift responsibility to Murai. By doing so, Natsue hoped to ease the heavy burden in her heart. She didn’t realize her selfishness was at work... She had forgotten that she was eagerly waiting for Murai’s confession of love. She wanted to put all blame on Murai and forget about everything to her disadvantage.

(Murai, too, should go through some hardships) she thought bitterly. (H1:134)

Keizō is equally skilled in blame-shifting. When Natsue finally confronts him and questions his real intentions behind adopting Yöko, Keizō wastes no time laying the blame on Natsue: “*You brought it up, so I didn’t have a choice but to bring her home!*” (H2:115-6) Despite his own wrongdoing, Keizō has no remorse for inflicting deep wounds on Natsue; he considers her the sole party at fault. The way Keizō chastises his wife reveals the mindset of a character who views his own actions very differently from those of others – everything he did was right and everything Natsue did was wrong. His double standard, however, does not necessarily make Keizō a lesser being, for as Tatsuko points out, *all* human beings have different yardsticks for judging people.
It is not until much later, towards the end of the novel, that Keizō gradually senses how deeply he, too, is caught in the grasp of sin:

(If I heard a man adopted the child of his daughter’s slayer out of hatred towards his unfaithful wife, I would condemn him. Even if I were to cheat on my wife, I would definitely not get angry with myself. And yet, I absolutely won’t forgive my wife’s infidelity. What kind of logic is this? If something done by other people is bad, isn’t it bad too if I did it myself?) …

Keizō marveled at the extent of man’s self-centeredness and the ease with which he was able to forgive himself. (I wonder what self-centeredness really means. Isn’t it the root of all sin?) (H2:277)

The spiritual awakening on the part of Keizō that begins with the Tōya Maru incident culminates here in a fresh awareness of man’s self-centeredness as the root of all sin. In a collection of essays entitled *Kodoku no tonari* (The Brink of Loneliness, 1979), Miura herself identifies the most frightening pitfall awaiting the self-centered man: his tendency to view himself as the law of the land.

In Genesis, Adam blames Eve for giving him the forbidden fruit when he is reprimanded by God. By referring to her as “the woman you put here with me,” Adam is not only blaming his wife, but also blaming God for putting him in an *environment* that subjects him to temptations. Interestingly, among the major characters in *Hyōten*, Yōko seems to be the only person who refuses to blame others. During a conversation with her brother, Tōru, Yōko declares: “I don’t want to blame others for my own problem. I’m the only one to blame. For sure, environment is important, but ultimate responsibility rests with me” (H2:199).

Like Adam and Eve, Keizō and Natsue both have a pattern of deception and a propensity to shift responsibility. In addition, both of them refuse to acknowledge their wrongdoing even when their acts have been exposed. Miura points out in *Kyūyaku seisho nyūmon* that Adam and Eve owed God an apology (they never said sorry nor did
they ask for God’s forgiveness), because they were perfectly aware of their wrongdoing now that they had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.37 In another essay entitled “Tsumi to wa nani ka?” (What is Sin?), Miura discusses, in relation to the yardstick of self-centeredness, two kinds of mentality that explain why people are reluctant to offer an overdue apology: “What I did wasn’t that bad,” or even worse, “I did nothing wrong.”38 Natsue is a perfect example of the former type, and Keizō an illustration of the latter. When confronted by Keizō, who demands an explanation for the purple kiss mark left by Murai on her neck during a recent meeting, Natsue dismisses it as nothing more than a good-bye kiss and asserts she has done nothing that warrants the cruel punishment of having her raise the child of the very man who murdered her own daughter (H2:123). Keizō counters with his own argument: “Do you think any physical intimacy with the opposite sex is permissible as long as it is not fully consummated? Don’t you think that you betrayed me even more by giving your heart to another man?” (H2:123-4)

In Hyōten, we see Miura at her very best in probing the relationship between man’s inner thoughts and his outward action. In a rather disturbing episode, we see Keizō groping Yōko (in her mid-teens) in an erotic dream. Even though it was just a dream, Keizō realizes what an immoral person he is:

He guessed it must be around three in the morning. The summer nights were very short and it was already getting light outside. He absent-mindedly glanced around the room. The steady breathing of his wife reminded him of her healthy body. He felt ashamed of the dream he could never reveal to her and that everyone else was sleeping soundly while only he was awake.39 (H2:273)

The narrator uses some very interesting language in this passage. Natsue has been portrayed as a morally questionable woman. Her son calls her “unclean” (fuketsu)40 and her husband calls her “filthy” (kegarete iru).41 Yet, in comparison with Keizō, whose
lustful desires for his own adopted daughter manifest themselves in a dream, even Natsue seems to look “clean” and “healthy” (seiketsu de kenchō ni omoeta) to Keizō. Once again, Miura emphasizes the inner thoughts in one’s heart – “for [according to the Bible], out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean” (Matthew 15:19). As Keizō reflects upon his dream later that day, he realizes that his dreams and his inner thoughts are a barometer of his spiritual well being and that he is a deeply sinful person (tsumibukai): “Even in dreams, the person there is me. All the thoughts and actions in dreams still come out of me” (H2:277).

I have discussed the behavioral pattern of Keizō and Natsue vis-à-vis Adam and Eve and noted that none of them offer any apologies despite their wrongdoing. In the case of Natsue, she fails to apologize to Keizō or Yōko because she has no sense of guilt. Whatever wrongs she committed, she seems to be always looking for ways to justify her actions. Her heartlessness is most evident in the episode, in which she vindictively replaces Yōko’s valedictory speech to be delivered at the intermediate school commencement exercises with blank paper. Her scheme falls through, however, when Yōko delivers a brilliant impromptu speech in defiance. Natsue’s reaction is disturbing, because it shows no pangs of conscience, only anger and malice:

Natsue’s anger flamed up and leaped out at her from the mirror. Dead tiredness seeped into her soul; suddenly making her feel very, very old. She felt an acidness eating away at her heart. She felt no prick of conscience for what she had just done to her lovely, tender daughter. On the contrary, Natsue felt justified for her actions, believing she was bringing revenge on Ruriko’s slayer. And she was particularly pained she hadn’t carried it off as neatly as planned.42 (H2:146)

Unaware of her own sins, Natsue continues her self-centered way of life hurting others with impunity. In Michi ariki, Miura suggests that it is perhaps the greatest sin of all to be unaware of one’s sin:
And then I suddenly became afraid of myself. Supposing the trouble was that I lacked all consciousness of sin? Was it a terrible thing for me not to be conscious of sin? A murderer would not care, a thief would have no pangs of conscience, and in the same way I also felt no grief for wounding another person by my actions. I began wondering whether it was not the greatest sin of all to be unaware of one’s sin.43

In dealing with the theme of original sin, Miura draws on materials from the Biblical text, specifically the first book of the Old Testament in her essay, and the first book of the New Testament in Hyōten (H2:9-10). Whereas in the Book of Genesis, Adam and Eve disobeyed God, thereby bringing sin and death to this world, in the Book of Matthew, Joseph submitted himself to the will of God and participated in God’s plan to have Mary give birth to Jesus, who was to deliver men from all sins. Intertextual reference to the Bible not only helps strengthen the theological position of the author, but it also serves an important literary purpose. Specifically, Keizō’s struggle to come to terms with his wife’s supposed infidelity is punctuated by Joseph’s own to have faith in God and in the integrity of his betrothed.

Keizō has no problem identifying with Joseph, because he knows how hard it must have been for him, before consummation of marriage, to believe in Mary’s virgin conception through the Holy Spirit. We are told that Keizō is deeply moved by the integrity of Joseph, who took Mary as his wife despite his desire to divorce her because he obeyed the command of the angel sent by God: “Caught in a most unbelievable position, Joseph obediently followed the directions of the angel. Keizō could not help admire his character. He wished he could believe in Natsue, the way Joseph had believed in God and in Mary’s purity. As he stood there jostled occasionally by people coming in and out of the bookstore, Keizō could no longer hold back his tears. He was still holding the Bible in his hands” (H2:10). There is a fundamental difference, however, between Joseph and Keizō – while the former voluntarily submits himself to God’s will,
the latter turns a deaf ear to God’s commandment, “love your enemies,” and instead takes matters into his own hands (adopting Yōko as a means of revenge).

Keizō realizes that his outrage at Natsue’s adultery and his decision to adopt Saishi’s child has brought a dark shadow (kurai kage) over the whole Tsujiguchi family (H1:320). His wife’s betrayal has snatched the light of hope from his life. Having lost this light, Keizō sees nothing but darkness (H1:120). The imagery of light and darkness is of course a common device in literature and in the Bible, it represents an epic battle between good and evil. Keizō’s darkness, then, is a spiritual darkness that results from his self-centeredness and his disobedience of God. In an essay reflecting on her composition of Hyōten, Miura has this to say on the subject of man’s dark shadow and its relation to man’s disobedience of God:

Life with our back turned against God: That is akin to somebody walking with his back turned against light. When a person does that, he will see a dark shadow in front of himself and he will walk with his head drooping in dejection. If the person realizes that this dark shadow is but a consequence of turning his back against light, he will be able to make a 180 degree turn to face light. And at that moment, he will begin to see his own arrogance and his deeply sinful nature. He will no doubt realize the foolishness of playing God and living in ignorance of God’s existence.44

By ignoring God’s commandment “love your enemies,” and by playing God himself and taking vengeance into his own hands, Keizō has fallen deep into the dark, bottomless pit (soko shirenu kurai ana) that exists not only in his heart, but also in Natsue’s heart, and the heart of every human being (H1:122).

If there is a bright spot in the novel, it is Yōko. In the words of the narrator, Yōko has been, as her name implies, “the one beacon of light in this dark Tsuchiguchi family” (H2:132). She is bright, cheerful, intelligent and gentle at heart – so much so that Keizō wonders if she is really the child of the murderer Saishi. Near-perfect as she is, however,
Yōko is not without her own weaknesses. Indeed, the reader is almost relieved to find out towards the end of the novel that she too has her dark side – a characterization of Yōko that is consistent with the notion of original sin. In one episode, Natsue casually places a photo in front of Yōko, misleading her that the beautiful girl with Kitahara in the photo is his girlfriend. When Yōko looks at her face, she finds herself consumed by a jealousy so strong that she could almost twist the girl’s head away from Kitahara (H2:256). She feels “betrayed” by the man she loves because she has been hoping all this time that Kitahara would think of her as an absolutely indispensable (kakegae no nai) person and would love her intensely the way Heathcliff yearns for Catherine in Wuthering Heights. Her anger explodes with such ferocity that she ends up burning all subsequent letters from Kitahara. The reader learns that, for the first time since she was born, Yōko is unable to forgive someone (H2:258). Still, she wants to see Kitahara, especially when she learns that he has fallen ill, although she cannot forgive him for his “fickleness.” At one point, Yōko even wonders if “love” and “hate” are not two sides of the same coin:

(I wanted to see Kitahara so badly; and yet, I just can’t forgive him)  
Yōko was shocked that she was cold and indifferent enough not to drop him a single line while perfectly aware of his illness.  
(I wonder if love and hate aren’t the same after all)  
Yōko felt chagrined at the unbelievable changes in her inner emotions.  
Until now, she had not experienced such an intense feeling of wrath and hate, mixed with perplexity and deep yearning. (H2:260)

The problem with Yōko is that she is trying too hard to be perfect. Soon after finding out, while in intermediate school, that she is just an adopted daughter, an outsider to the Tsujiguchi family, she makes a determined resolution to be a good girl: “That way, I will be praised by my real mother the day I get to see her” (H2:108). Up until this point, Yōko has been depicted as a broad-minded person who does not know how to hate.
Even after the terrible incident in which Natsue maliciously replaced her speech with blank paper, Yōko chooses not to hold a grudge against her mother: “I don’t want to think badly of others for such trifling things. I want to keep my heart pure and clean” (H2:148).

In another episode at the Sōunkyō Gorge, Yōko laments at how the beautiful Ishikari River became polluted by industrial waste and declares to Tōru her refusal to be marred by the impurities and hypocrisies of man: “I’m not a river, I’m a human being... Even if something filthy is showered on me from the outside, that doesn’t mean the inside of my heart has to become dirty from such defilement” (H2:199). However, Yōko’s endurance is stretched to the breaking point when Natsue cruelly reveals the dark secret of her birth in front of her lover, Kitahara. We see shame, guilt, and despair in Yōko’s suicide note to her parents:

Up until now, no matter what had happened, I had been able to endure all hardships with stoic resignation. I had been sustained by the thought that “I’m by no means a bad person” and that “I’m righteous and unblemished.” Now that I knew I’m the daughter of a murderer, I have lost my ground of support... I have lost all hopes of living ever since I was made aware of the possibility of sin that dwells within me...

My heart has frozen. That freezing point is in the painful realization that I’m a sinner’s child. I can no longer lift up my head in front of other people – not even in front of little children. I have the feeling that by going on living and standing up to the fact that I’m a sinful person, I’ll get to understand the true way of life. And yet, that was something I found myself incapable of doing. I think it’s truly regrettable, but I have lost my strength to live – my heart has completely frozen. (H2:342-3)

Yōko has stayed positive all these years relying on her good deeds, but she has now lost all hopes of living because she believes that she has inherited the sins in a murderer’s blood and can no longer claim to be an unblemished person. Yōko
concludes her suicide note by stating that she needs an authority who would tell her in no uncertain terms that “she is forgiven!” (hakkiri yurusu to itte kureru ken’i aru mono) for the sins that flow through her veins (H2:343).

As a Christian novelist, Miura cleverly takes advantage of the ambiguity of the Japanese language, which makes no distinction between the words “sin” and “crime” (a single word tsumi is used to cover both meanings), to examine the issue of original sin within a cultural context that is more easily comprehensible to her readers in Japan. Non-Christian Japanese readers are either unaware or have little knowledge of the Western concept of “original sin,” but they can easily identify with Yōko’s burden of having to live as the daughter of a convicted criminal and the pathos of her desperate search for “an authority who would tell her in no uncertain terms that ‘she is forgiven.’” For Miura, hakkiri yurusu to itte kureru ken’i aru mono refers to Jesus, who is believed by Christians to have the authority to judge and the power to forgive. However, in the case of Yōko, who might not even have awareness of the concept of original sin, she might simply be searching for an authority who could declare that her tsumi for being a murderer’s daughter is forgiven once and for all, thereby removing for her the social stigma associated with that identity.

While Miura sets out to write a novel on the Christian concept of “original sin,” the innate sinful nature that man is believed to have inherited from Adam and Eve, it is doubtful if Yōko, or any other characters in the novel, fully understands that concept. When Yōko speaks of the depth of her tsumi (tsumi no fukasa), she probably has in mind the feeling of “shamefulness” as a result of her identity (i.e., being the daughter of a convicted murderer), and as a result of her (parent’s) failure to meet legal, social, cultural or moral expectations in the Japanese society, rather than a guilty conscience of “sinfulness” that results from internalized convictions of right and wrong or the biblical definition of sin as failure to meet God’s higher standards.
The greatest challenge for a Christian novelist is that there is no concept of original sin in Japan. In *Plum Wine*, a highly acclaimed novel by the American writer Angela Davis Gardner, a young Japanese student has this to say, in a fictional dialogue with an American, about the Japanese idea of sin: “For Japanese, there is no original sin. In Buddhism, belief is that human in original state is pure and our effort should be to return to the pure nature. Wrongdoings are committed through ignorance and lack of compassion.” In the Buddhist view, man is responsible for his own deeds, good or evil. He needs spiritual guidance for enlightenment; not forgiveness of sin by an omnipotent God. In order to make Christian ideas comprehensible to the Japanese readers, Miura needs to assimilate and reconcile her beliefs with native cultural traditions. In *Hyōten*, Miura characterizes Yōko as the child of a murderer, and therefore she is guilty of sin by association with her parent; similarly, in the Christian belief, man is born sinful by association with Adam and Eve, who fell from grace in the Garden of Eden, according to the account in Genesis, because of their willful disobedience to God. By creating an interesting story about the daughter of a convicted murderer, and her awakening to her sinful nature, Miura makes the transmission of Adam’s sin by inheritance intelligible for the non-Christian Japanese readers. In this sense, Miura can be compared to the authors of medieval religious *setsuwa* stories, who used simple, entertaining narratives to guide the readers towards a deeper understanding of Buddhist truth.

In the climactic scene of *Hyōten*, after leaving three suicide notes, Yōko proceeds to the riverbank where Ruriko was killed and there she attempts to end her life by an overdose of Calmotin. By choosing to die at the exact same site of Ruriko’s murder, Yōko has apparently come to the wrong conclusion that there is no other recourse and that committing suicide is the only way to atone for her own sin and that of her father, Saishi. For a strong-minded person like Yōko, who has always been confident in her
own virtues, it is not easy to admit that she, too, is a sinful person: “I have too much pride to even look at one drop of evil within myself. I hate to admit that I’m an ugly person. I detest myself for my spiritual ugliness” (H2:345). At the end, Yōko chooses death.

Yōko’s final journey, depicted in a poetic manner, is so tragically sad and beautiful that it reminds the reader of a michiyuki scene in a kabuki play. Interestingly, Yōko herself marvels at her own natural instinct that reminds her to put on a warm overcoat even before she sets out to die on a cold winter morning (H2:346). On her way to the Biei River, she notices a group of dead crows that almost look beautiful on the pure white snow. The scene fills Yōko’s heart with pathos and bittersweet memories of her brother, Tōru. The fact that Yōko puts on a warm overcoat and carefully picks her way around the dead creatures as she enters a grove of German pines suggests that, even while she departs on a suicidal journey, there is a different Yōko, deep in her consciousness, who instinctively avoids death and yearns for life (H2:347).

In the final chapter of Hyōten, the reader sees Yōko in a coma after her suicide attempt. To borrow Keizō’s words: “It may be that death is not a solution to a problem, but rather the posing of a problem (shi wa mondai kaiketsu de wa naku, mondai teiki to ieru ka mo shirenai).” Yōko’s attempted suicide, too, offers no solution to man’s problems, but it poses some very important questions about sin and redemption for the readers to ponder. It is most appropriate that, as a Christian novel, Hyōten ends on a positive note. The fact that its heroine finally shows signs of responding to injections of penicillin suggests that there is hope of eventual recovery for Yōko. Perhaps, nothing is more encouraging than Tatsuko’s final words: “You’re just sleeping, Yōko. Wake up! A whole new life is waiting for you”(H2:363).

If there is one weakness in Hyōten, it is, from a religious point of view, the failure on the part of the author to offer her readers a clear, explicit path to salvation. As a
creative writer, Miura succeeded in getting to the core of her subject matter (man’s sinful nature) and exploring the conditions of the fallen world and the human desire for redemption that arises from these conditions. But there is no mentioning of God’s love in the final chapter or even who this *ken’i aru mono* might be; nor did Miura offer to the guilt-ridden Yōko any possible course of action other than suicide that would save her from her wretchedness. Upon reflection, Miura herself acknowledged these inadequacies:

When I wrote *Hyōten*, I was thinking of bringing to the readers’ attention the question of original sin. And yet, I hardly mentioned the love of God who forgives our sins. In order to write about original sin, one needs to talk about this loving God. Although redemption by God’s Grace was hinted at in the final chapter of *Hyōten*, it was not a clear reference to God.49

In “Shōsetsu Hyōten ni furetsutsu” (Reflections on the Novel *Hyōten*), an essay reflecting on her composition of the novel, Miura tells the real-life story of a young girl attending high school who was about the same age as Yōko. Like Yōko, the girl was an adopted child and she too committed suicide after reading the serialization of *Hyōten* in *Asahi Shimbun*, saying that adults are all liars and she would die in place of Yōko. The girl’s father sent Miura a picture of his adopted daughter, which she kept in a red album – a painful reminder of the girl’s suicide as an unintended consequence of writing *Hyōten*.50 Understandably, Miura’s heart ached whenever she looked at the girl’s picture, but the tragic incident could possibly be the necessary creative impulse that kept her writing as a Christian novelist, motivating her to write perhaps in a more positive manner that explicitly speaks of God’s forgiving love and his grace of redemption. Five years after the publication of *Hyōten*, Miura, by this time an established literary figure, returned in a sequel, *Zoku Hyōten* (Freezing Point II, 1971), to complete the story begun in the first work, more openly presenting a tale of sin and
forgiveness in accord with the tenets of her faith. And for three more decades until her death in 1999, Miura would continue to write faith-based novels with evangelical fervor.

From day one, Miura’s writing has been firmly rooted in her Christian faith, and the way she handles the theme of “original sin” reflects a solid understanding of the Christian theology. Despite her professed intention to become a “missionary writer” (fukuin no dendō sakka), however, Miura seemed more interested in writing creative fiction that holds the interest of her readers rather than turning Hyōten into a didactic novel for the sole purpose of propagating her religious convictions. In Hyōten, Miura displays her unusual gift as a story-teller and her exceptional skills in creating serious work of fiction based on religious themes, which is also of great literary worth. Miura’s characters are real, their actions believable, and there is no sense that their crises are superficial or contrived.

As a writer of popular fiction, Miura succeeded in producing a narrative that is both interesting and appealing to the general readers by borrowing strategies from the popular genres. Hyōten reads like a hybrid form of mystery novel and domestic novel. It is written in deliberately simple language and emphasizes elements such as readerly interest, a dramatic plot, coincidence, and sentimentality that are trademarks of taishū bungaku. As an evangelical writer, Miura managed to raise some very important issues (without providing a direct answer), such as original sin, forgiveness, and existential worth of the individual, that are at the core of the Christian faith. Perhaps the greatest success of Hyōten lies in a perfect balance of popular and religious elements, a kind of grand synthesis that gave birth to an intriguing work of great depth and insight into the most fundamental problem of human existence.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray. Each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

(Isaiah 53:6)

Like many of her popular novels, *Hitsujigaoka* (Hill of Sheep), Miura’s second novel, was at first serialized in the women’s magazine *Shufu no tomo* from August 1965 to December 1966 and then published in book form on December 10, 1966. The novel, set in the immediate post-war year of 1949, centers on the young heroine Hirono Naomi and unfolds with the heart-wrenching story of her quest for romantic love. With the exception of Naomi’s parents, Hirono Kōsuke and Aiko, all of the main characters in the novel are young and often immature: Naomi’s best friend, Kyōko, and her former high school classmate and archrival in love, Teruko, are in their early twenties; Takeyama sensei (Naomi’s former teacher) and Ryōichi (the good-for-nothing artist with whom Naomi falls in love) are but a few years older in their mid-twenties. As a typical “youth novel” (*seishun shōsetsu*), *Hitsujigaoka* counts among its literary predecessors such works as Natsume Sōseki’s *Sanshirō* (Sanshirō, 1908) and Ishizaka Yōjirō’s best-selling novel *Aoi Sanmyaku* (The Green Mountains, 1947). It also inherits the literary tradition of “romantic novels” (*ren’ai shōsetsu*), a subgenre of *taishū bungaku* written by such writers as Kikuchi Kan and Kume Masao during the 1920s.

Although Miura uses the popular appeal of *taishū bungaku* and focuses on the subject matter of romantic love, it would not do justice to the serious artistic intent of the author to see *Hitsujigaoka* as a mere product of “low-brow” fiction targeted for young women readers. Indeed, far from being low-brow entertainment, the novel
poses a very serious question about the meaning of love and about how we should live our lives. Thematically, it echoes and addresses the greatest concern of Yōko, heroine of Miura’s debut novel Hyōten, namely, the need to have an authority who would tell her in no uncertain terms “she is forgiven!” (hakkiri yurusu to itte kureru ken’i aru mono) for the sins that flow through her veins. In an interview published in the morning edition of the Asahi Shinbun on July 10, 1964, on the occasion of the selection of Hyōten for the prestigious Asahi Prize, Miura wrote: “I’d like to continue writing on the themes of forgiveness, love, and life, using materials found in the Bible”52 (kore kara saki ni tsuite wa, seisho no naka ni daizai o motome, ‘yurushi no mondai,’ ‘ai no mondai,’ ‘seimei sono mono ni tsuite’ nado no teema de shōsetsu o kaite yuitai). That was precisely what Miura did in Hitsujigaoka.

Naomi, the heroine, is depicted as a young, innocent girl who holds a romantic notion of love. She is eager to fall in love and thinks she has found the perfect candidate in Ryōichi. Unfortunately, her approach to love is so idealistic and romanticized that she often fails to see the reality in relationships with the opposite sex. She is attracted to Ryōichi’s “natural mannerisms” (shīzen na shigusa),53 as well as his “incredible ability to put people at ease and allow them to be their genuine selves” (hito o sunao ni saseru fushīgi na mono o motte iru).54 She sees in Ryōichi the image of an honest man who is “pure like a child” (kodomo no yō na junsui na kanji no hito),55 someone who is totally “devoid of hypocrisy or pretensions” (gizen mo giaku mo nai).56

Even sugar-coated words ring true to Naomi – Ryōichi’s confession of love sounds like a simple, artless declaration of love found only in the age of the Man’yōshū (Man’yō jidai no yō na soboku na ai no kokuhaku da).57 In an apparent parody of the famous “love letter” in Aoi Sanmyaku, Ryōichi writes “lonely, lonely, I’m so lonely!” (淋しい、さびしい、サビシイ)58 in a single-line “love note” sent to Naomi, who finds the confession of love “more sincere and genuine than anyone could have written in a long love letter.”59
As the story unfolds, the reader learns about Ryōichi’s past. He is an ex-Communist who deserted the movement for fear of persecution. Besides working as a newspaper journalist, he is also a painter, although he has been unable to produce anything of artistic worth. To forget his past, he indulges in alcohol and women, whom he would not hesitate to abandon as a result of waning interest. Thoroughly enchanted by Ryōichi, Naomi refuses to listen when Takeyama, her former teacher and a close friend of Ryōichi’s, warns her that Ryōichi is not as naïve as she thinks. Nor does she heed the advice of her father, Kōsuke, whose “intuition as a pastor” allows him to sense the dark side of Ryōichi’s past.

Morishita Tatsue, literary critic and special researcher at the Miura Literature Museum in Asahikawa, Hokkaido, points out in his study of the novel that it is Naomi’s pride that makes her choose Ryōichi very much against the wish of her parents, even though she needs to convince herself that they are mutually in love. And again, her pride is at work when Naomi falls for Ryōichi’s words: “If you love me, I might be reborn as a new person” (H:58). Naomi’s decision to be with Ryōichi, reckless and foolish as it may seem, is motivated partly by her resentment towards the critical stance of her parents, and equally significantly by her eagerness to prove her capability of sound judgment. In the first part of the novel, Naomi appears as a confident albeit naïve girl. “Even I am capable of dedicating my love to one person!” (H:103), Naomi proudly declares to her father, to which Kōsuke has this to say in response:

“To love is to enhance your partner and make him a better person. I wonder if you can do that to Sugihara (Ryōichi)... To love also means to forgive – not only once or twice, but on a continual basis. Do you think you can forgive him to the end?” (H:103)

Here, we see the most prominent theme of *Hitsujigaoka*, namely, “to love is to forgive” (*aisuru to wa yurusu koto*). The rest of the novel can be read as a spiritual
journey, on the part of the heroine, of awakening to the true meaning of love. To get to that point, however, Naomi has to go through a multitude of trials and tribulations, which all begin with her decision to leave her parents’ home in Sapporo. In defiance of Kōsuke, Naomi literally elopes with Ryōichi to start a new life in a small town called Hōraichō (literally “town of eternal youth”) in Hakodate.

This marks the beginning of Naomi’s downward fall from the status of a privileged daughter lovingly cared for and protected by her Christian parents in an environment of material comfort and security, to that of a battered woman struggling to survive in an environment of domestic violence. Far from being “married” in the proper sense and receiving blessings from her parents and relatives, Naomi simply “elopes” with Ryōichi to Hakodate, where she is forced into a life of extreme poverty and increasing isolation by her drunk and deadbeat “husband.” When her former teacher, Takeyama, visits Naomi at her new “home” with Ryōichi, he is shocked to find out that the apartment does not even have a proper chest of drawers. The absence of any furniture befitting a new “bride” casts serious doubt in Takeyama’s mind as to Ryōichi’s commitment to the relationship: “Perhaps even his mother has not once considered Naomi a daughter-in-law. Is it not possible that she equates the current relationship with her son’s fleeting associations with all the women who have come and gone before Naomi?” (H:148)

Naomi’s descent is associated with her fall from innocence. In the following passage, which portrays Naomi’s initiation into womanhood by the experienced Ryōichi, Miura captures the pathos of the heroine’s loss of innocence:

When Ryōichi finally retreated from her body, Naomi covered her face and sobbed violently. She had heard of such activity between men and women, but she had never imagined that she herself would experience it so soon, and in this manner. Naomi had no idea why she was sobbing. It was quite different from sorrow. And it was definitely not joy. Nor was it wretchedness or regret. It was the kind of tears
that a baby shed when she was startled. With an air of satisfaction, Ryōichi cast a sidelong glance at Naomi, who still would not stop crying. Thinking that only an inexperienced woman would cry on such an occasion, Ryōichi felt contented. He quietly embraced Naomi when her tears finally subsided.

“Is this what people mean by love?”

“That’s right, Naomi.” (H:114-5)

Unlike Ryōichi, Miura would no doubt answer firmly in the negative in response to Naomi’s question. She wrote in one of her essays: “love (ren’ai) ought to be a matter of total character development – a form of unification, in a deep, aesthetic sense, of one’s will, emotion and rational faculty… I know [from my personal experience] that a man who pursues holistic love does not fall victim so easily to temptations of the flesh.”62 As a novelist, however, Miura finds it necessary to portray not only ideal characters, but also men and women who are weak and ultimately fall from the path of righteousness.

In Hitsujigaoka, Ryōichi is initially depicted as a carnal man who belongs to the flesh -- a self-centered artist who leads a life of decadence driven by sexual impulses – as opposed to someone who belongs to the spirit, which Naomi’s father wants him to become some day. Religion has no place in Ryōichi’s life, because women, alcohol and his paintings are the only things that matter to him. He is a “free” man who refuses to be bound by conventions. He rejects the idea of exchanging wedding vows before the altar as mere formalism and scorns the Christian practice of saying prayers before meals. Indeed, he finds Naomi’s prayers so repulsive that he has once thrown his rice bowl in disgust. While having a relationship with Naomi, Ryōichi wanders off in amorous pursuits. In an episode highly charged with eroticism, the reader once again finds Ryōichi the womanizer in action, this time on a train bound for Sapporo with a familiar-looking woman sitting next to him:
Because of the steam, the interior of the train compartment heated up. Ryōichi took off his overcoat and the woman did the same as if enticed by Ryōichi. Her body was just as he had imagined. Ryōichi smiled. Just by looking at her figure and the strange luster in her eyes, Ryōichi could tell that she was a woman of passion.
(H:95)

This woman of passion turns out to be Teruko, Naomi’s archrival and former high school classmate. If Ryōichi is the man of the flesh, Teruko is the female counterpart. Before long, Ryōichi finds himself in an illicit affair with Teruko, although he has yet to realize that it is this sensual woman who will lead him to his demise. The intertwined relationship between Naomi, Ryōichi and Teruko follows the pattern of a love triangle, which Miura uses to offer fascinating commentaries on gender, desire, and the female body.

In his book *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1961), René Girard argues that people’s desire for an object can be explained not only by the intrinsic values of the desired object that people find desirable or appealing, but also by the fact that the object is desired by someone else. In the latter’s case, a subject’s desire is not autonomous – it is not aroused directly, as one might expect, by the object itself; rather it is mediated and aroused by another – someone who has social prestige or possesses qualities that are deemed desirable in the eyes of the subject, a model who first identifies an object as desirable. Girard represents this *mimetic desire* with the spatial metaphor of an isosceles triangle: “Desire... can always be portrayed by a simple straight line which joins subject and object... The mediator is there, above that line, radiating toward both the subject and the object.”63 Girard’s theory serves as a useful tool for analyzing human desire and the complex network of intertwined relationships in *Hitsujigaoka*. For instance, the triangular relationship between Naomi, Teruko and Ryōichi can be represented graphically in the following manner:
Teruko has no reason to fall in love with Ryōichi: his mother, Nobuko, is a mistress of Teruko’s father and has caused tremendous suffering not only to Teruko, but to her mother as well. Having grown up in a dysfunctional family, Teruko despises Nobuko and her daughter, Kyōko, so vehemently that, at the beginning of the novel, she calls the latter “daughter of a pan pan girl” (pan pan ya no musume). Teruko’s desire for Ryōichi, incredible as it may seem, is best understood as a mimetic desire induced by Naomi, whom Teruko has considered her rival since their high school days. It is the mediator (Naomi) and her desire for the object (Ryōichi) “which makes this object infinitely desirable in the eyes of the subject.”

In a prelude to having physical relations later that night, Ryōichi and Teruko exchange passionate kisses on their way to Teruko’s apartment (after a chance meeting at Takeyama’s place). Here, Miura proves herself a master of women’s psychology as she probes the mind of her female character through the voice of a third-person narrator:

Teruko despised and hated her own father for loving another woman while being married. Moreover, Ryōichi’s mother had been the object of her curse. “This man, too, has a wife called Naomi,” Teruko thought to herself. And yet, amazingly, she had no sense of guilt. Indeed, she felt great about the betrayal, for the mere recollection of Naomi’s deep beautiful eyes was enough to make her burn with jealousy. (H:184)

Teruko is well aware of the meaning of not only inviting a man to her apartment, but also displaying her hair in full length and changing into a night-gown to receive
him. On top of Ryōichi’s passionate kisses, it is her jealousy towards the beauty of Naomi’s chiseled face (H:186), we are told, that drives Teruko beyond the point of no return. As Girard points out, “the jealous person easily convinces himself that his desire is spontaneous, in other words, that is deeply rooted in the object and in this object alone… but true jealousy is infinitely more profound and complex; it always contains an element of fascination with the insolent rival.” Teruko’s fascination with her rival is borne out by another passage in which we see Teruko once again consumed by jealousy: “No matter what, Teruko did not want to lose to Naomi… She was jealous of her soft skin so smooth to the touch and her wide, translucent eyes so irritatingly beautiful compared to her own narrow eyes” (H:310). In Deceit, Desire and the Novel, Girard notes that “imitative desire is always a desire to be Another” and that “the object is only a means of reaching the mediator. The desire is aimed at the mediator’s being.” Through the desired object (Ryōichi), then, Teruko is drawn to the mediator (Naomi), and it is the latter’s physical beauty that Teruko truly desires and seeks to imitate.

We see yet another example of mimetic desire in the triangular relationship involving Naomi, Kyōko and Takeyama sensei. Kyōko has been fond of her former teacher, Takeyama, since her high school days. Her love for Takeyama is intensified by her rivalry (both imaginary and actual) with her best friend, Naomi, whose presence as the mediator both inspires in Kyōko a desire for Takeyama and prevents her from satisfying that desire. While seeing Kyōko as a likeable person, Takeyama finds himself infatuated with Naomi – even after she becomes the domestic partner of Kyōko’s elder brother, Ryōichi. For most of the novel, Kyōko strikes us as a pitiful young woman who suffers the pain of unreciprocated love. Over the course of the novel, Kyōko’s friendship with Naomi turns into a rivalry, in which Kyōko sees Naomi as the obstacle to her pursuit of love.
The following exchange between Kyōko and Naomi sheds light on the psyche of the desiring subject (Kyōko) in relation to the mediator (Naomi):

“Kyōko, you seem to really hate me.”
Naomi could bear it no longer. Startled by her comment, Kyōko looked at Naomi, her shoulders shaking.
“That… might be the case.”
... “But why?”
“You’re just too beautiful. You might not be the party at fault, but Naomi, have you ever thought that there are people who have to suffer because of your beauty?”
“I wonder if I did anything that impeded your pursuit of happiness…”
... “You don’t know anything, Naomi. It is not your fault. But I want you to know how sad it is to be the one who struggles to bloom alongside a beautiful flower.”
(H:268-9)

As Girard correctly observes, “imitative desire is always a desire to be Another… the object is only a means of reaching the mediator. The desire is aimed at the mediator’s being.” Viewed in this light, Kyōko’s desire to be loved by Takeyama (the desired object) reflects a more fundamental desire to be like Naomi (the mediator), who is loved by everyone including Takeyama and Ryōichi, and hence her sadness of struggling to bloom alongside a beautiful flower (Naomi).

To Kyōko, Naomi is always an obstacle to her pursuit of love and to Naomi, Kyōko has become a painful reminder of the failure of her relationship with Ryōichi.
and what could have been true happiness had she married Takeyama instead of eloping with Ryōichi. Naomi had rejected Takeyama when he asked her parents for her hand in marriage. Her seeing Takeyama now as an object of sexual desire is, although largely attributable to the agony of her failed relationship, actually induced by Kyōko, the mediator of her sexual desire. In a third triangle of mimetic desire, represented graphically below, we see Naomi and Kyōko swapping roles as mediator and desiring subject:

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  Mediator (Kyōko)
   /   \
(Desiring subject) (Desired object)
 (Naomi)  (Takeyama)
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Just as Kyōko wants to be like Naomi, Naomi wants to be like Kyōko – still unmarried and hopeful for happiness and the best in romantic life that is yet to come. Whereas Kyōko’s jealousy is directed towards Naomi’s physical beauty, Naomi’s is directed towards Kyōko’s spiritual freedom. The following line is perhaps the most revealing manifestation of Naomi’s mimetic desire: “Naomi felt jealous of Kyōko. It was perhaps not so much that she was jealous of her meeting with Takeyama as she was jealous of the fact that Kyōko was still a single woman” (H:269).

Ryōichi is incapable of loving Naomi because of his egocentric tendencies. “Artists are all egoists. To be an artist, one needs to be violently self-assertive to the point of risking one’s life” (H:144), Ryōichi has once declared, “The most frightening thing I can imagine is to lose track of myself as a painter. So long as art is a form of self-expression, I thought I would have to pursue a lifestyle that is centered on the strength of my ego” (H:251). In the name of “art,” then, Ryōichi justifies his decadent lifestyle –
whether it be drinking, philandering, or even his abusive behavior towards Naomi. Ryōichi’s extreme self-centeredness is evident in the following episode in which Ryōichi the artist demands that Naomi take off her clothes and pose for him immediately (even though she is preparing dinner) so that he can work on his painting before his creative urge disappears:

“Who cares about dinner. You can cook anytime. Take off your clothes now!”

Even though Ryōichi was her husband, Naomi resisted the idea of posing nude for such a frenzied man. As she stood transfixed on the spot, Ryōichi hurled violent words at her: “I’m losing it. Hurry up or my inspiration will be gone!” Without even finishing the sentence, Ryōichi impatiently laid his hand on Naomi’s skirt. (H:144)

Understandably, Naomi feels deeply hurt by Ryōichi’s behavior, which she finds repulsive and demeaning. Ryōichi is so egocentric that he does not care about the feelings of people around him. He is the center of the world. the reader detects a kind of wild, savage, animalistic instincts in Ryōichi the artist. To Ryōichi, Naomi is an object d’art to be possessed, not a person to be loved:

Until now, Ryōichi had never thought of leaving Naomi. To him, Naomi was a splendid work of art. Her round leg so smooth to the touch, the indescribably beautiful line of her back all the way down to her waist… Her beauty was beyond comparison with other women, the kind of beauty that Ryōichi never got tired of gazing at. (H:257-8)

Ryōichi is depicted as a man who sees the female body as a purely sexual object. His first impression of Teruko, revealed through soliloquy, conveys a condescending, patronizing attitude towards women: “The body of this woman is that of a prostitute. She is the easiest type of woman to handle.” (kono onna no karada wa shōfu sono mono da. Mottomo atsukaiyasui onna da) When Ryōichi later takes “possession” of Teruko, both body and soul, his inner thoughts are once again revealed to the readers: “Isn’t this the
kind of body intended for men?” (otoko no tame ni aru yō na karada ja nai ka)? Unlike Naomi, however, Teruko turns out to be a strong woman almost too formidable for Ryōichi to handle. Indeed, we see a complete reversal of gender positions: throughout her relationship with Ryōichi, Teruko is the one in power and control.

Being a woman of the post-war generation of sexual liberation, Teruko enjoys life unbound by traditional morality and feudal customs. She engages in casual sex with multiple partners and feels no guilt entering into an illicit affair with a married man (Ryōichi), literally stealing the husband of her former classmate (Naomi).

As a new woman, Teruko defies and subverts the conventional definition of woman as wife, mother and mistress. After seeing how her mother suffered in the hands of an unfaithful husband, Teruko firmly decides against marriage and against playing the role of the traditional wife. Instead, she seeks bodily pleasure outside marriage. Her voice is definitely that of a feminist when she indicts the inequality and unfairness of a marital system that favors men over women: “Men are expected to fool around outside the family. Even if the wife were to find out, the husband can brazenly deny his infidelity. Imagine the wife doing the same thing, she would no doubt create an uproar and end up being punched and kicked out of the household. I think men are so selfish. Sorry, but marriage is not for me!” (H:191)

Teruko challenges the notion of ryōsai kenbo, an ideology that has continued to relegate women to a subservient role in Japanese society. She has no interest in becoming a ryōsai (good wife) or kenbo (wise mother), although she does use “motherhood” as a weapon against a man – her “pregnancy” is a total fabrication that Teruko comes up with in an attempt to monopolize Ryōichi’s love and dedication to her. By tyrannically demanding that Ryōichi come see her whenever she wants, Teruko effectively reduces him to a “prisoner of love.” Furthermore, in an almost carnivalesque reversal of gender hierarchies, Teruko, far from playing the expected role of “mistress,”
uses her financial resources to turn Ryōichi into a “kept man” (otokomekake), thereby completely refuting the idea of women as sexual objects to be possessed by men.

More than the fact that Teruko claims to be “pregnant” with Ryōichi’s baby, this has the effect of inflicting a deeper wound upon Naomi: “Shocked that her husband had fallen so low as to become patronized by a woman for the sake of drinking money, Naomi found it intolerable even to look at Ryōichi’s face… (there were probably other men who would make women pregnant in an extramarital affair; but for a man to be sponsored by a woman…) ‘Kept man!’ the obnoxious expression sprang to Naomi’s mind” (H:212).

Separated from her parents, lonely and humiliated by Ryōichi’s infidelity, Naomi literally suffers physical pain as well as mental agony – not only is she hit on the forehead when Ryōichi, in an outburst of fury, hurls an ashtray at her, she also has to endure the humiliation of her husband’s betrayal and the painful revelation that Teruko is “pregnant” with Ryōichi’s baby.

Resolved to leave her Ryōichi once and for all, Naomi takes an eight-hour train ride from Hakodate to Sapporo, where she heads towards Takeyama’s apartment as if by reflex. Instead of finding solace there, Naomi receives the final blow to her self-esteem as she witnesses Takeyama and Kyōko in an embrace (H:209-10). Naomi has the feeling of having been deserted by the whole world and, like a stray sheep, she has lost all sense of direction in her life:

Once again, Naomi returned to Sapporo station. It was a lonely, miserable feeling that prompted her to set out on a distant journey. Sitting on the bench in the waiting room, Naomi absent-mindedly gazed at the night train, which became visible through the window as it arrived at the station. Swallowing and spewing out a large number of passengers, the station now looked like a cold, unfeeling place to her. (I wonder where everyone is heading… What could be the purpose of their trips?)… Reflecting on her own life, Naomi wondered if there was a purpose in her being alive. As she looked down at her feet, Naomi realized how her shoes
had been soiled from all the walking. “Those shoes are a symbol of the state I’m in,” thought Naomi… As though in a dream, Naomi stood up. There was no place for her to go. Nor did she have enough money to find lodging for the night. The avenue in front of the station was still bright, but the side streets were deserted – the city has fallen into a slumber. (H:213-4)

In this scene, Miura describes a lonely, miserable world characterized by increasing isolation, cold indifference, physical exhaustion, misery, wretchedness, despair and a sense of being lost and deserted. It is almost non-human – although we see some human activities in this night world, they are nothing more than mechanical movements represented by passengers who are being swallowed and spewed out by a coldly unfeeling (hijō) station.

*Hitsujogaoka* follows the descent of its heroine from her privileged status as the beloved daughter in the Hirono family to that of a vagabond no better off than the prodigal son in Jesus’ parable. Like the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-24, who, upon hitting rock bottom of his descent, makes up his mind to go back to his father and say to him: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” Naomi, too, recalls her loving father back home and feels a strong urge to beg for her parents’ forgiveness:

“Father and Mother, forgive me! It was all my fault. I was a fool who didn’t know how to love Ryōichi.”
Naomi wanted to apologize to her parents.
“Even I am capable of loving one person.”
She was ashamed of her own proud declaration. (H:216)

Naomi decides to return to her parents’ home in Sapporo. The heart-warming homecoming scene that follows reminds the Christian reader of Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son: just like the father in the biblical account, Kōsuke welcomes his daughter with open arms. Indeed, the reader learns that, for over two years, he has left the door
to his house unlocked both day and night in anticipation of Naomi’s return. Before long, Ryōichi arrives at Naomi’s parental home and, in the presence of her parents, begs for Naomi’s forgiveness. When Naomi gives a non-committal answer, Miura, through the words of Kōsuke, reminds the reader of what love truly means:

“Naomi, we human beings are born to be hateful to each other. We are prone to betray each other. No matter how honest a person is, there is no telling how many times he has betrayed someone deep in his heart... Have you forgotten what I told you? ‘To love is to forgive.’ ... Naomi, since we are not God, as long as we live in this world, we will continue to make mistakes. To live under the same roof means we have to keep forgiving each other.” (H:223)

Even Takeyama, perhaps the most honest character besides Kōsuke and Aiko in the novel, is not immune from temptations. Out of brotherly affection for Ryōichi, Takeyama has refrained from putting his friend in a bad light in front of Naomi and her parents. By remaining silent about Ryōichi’s dark history, however, Takeyama actually causes a great deal of suffering to the woman he loves. Throughout the novel, Takeyama appears as a young man who is constantly being tormented by unfulfilled love; consumed by jealousy and flames of passion, he continues to yearn for Naomi even after she marries Ryōichi – at one point taking secret delight at the news that Ryōichi has come down with tuberculosis and hoping for his friend’s premature death. In the process, Takeyama finds himself treading on the dangerous territory of committing adultery, both in real life and in his fantasies:

“Thou shalt not commit adultery!” Takeyama had every intention to follow the commandment. He had not once held hands with Naomi, let alone kissed her; nor had he ever verbalized his affection for her. According to the average ethical standards, then, one could say that he had done nothing that had violated the commandment. However, going by the higher ethical standards, Takeyama had to admit that he had already committed adultery... in his heart for loving a married woman, Naomi, and for betraying [his friend] Ryōichi. (H:250)
Naomi, too, is not unaware of her own weakness, although she is not ready just yet to forgive Ryōichi for his indiscretion:

Confronted with the overwhelming force of attraction between men and women, ethics and morals that people normally possess prove almost powerless. Even I was attracted to Takeyama sensei, knowing perfectly well that it is inappropriate for a married woman to have such amorous feelings... Desire of the heart unrestrained by rational thought – what a scary thing! Naomi could not help thinking that human beings were weak beyond description. And yet, she was unable to sympathize with Ryōichi, who had acted according to that weakness. (H:224)

Because of her pride, Naomi is incapable of truly forgiving Ryōichi from the bottom of her heart. More than anything – Ryōichi’s illicit affair with Teruko, her self-proclaimed “pregnancy,” and the fact that Ryōichi has been receiving financial support from this woman – Naomi finds it humiliating that Ryōichi has been sending to Teruko the same kind of love notes that used to be addressed to herself. Naomi cannot swallow this disgrace as a woman and her indignation at Ryōichi is so intense that “whenever she thinks of him, she feels as though all the cells in her body were soaked with some poisonous fluid” (H:219).

It is at this point of the novel that Naomi’s father, Kōsuke, makes a candid revelation of his own past: Kōsuke had an affair with his wife’s elder sister more than twenty years earlier – just about the time when his wife was about to give birth to their child. Far from blaming her husband, Aiko (interestingly, the name Aiko 愛子 suggests love) forgave her unfaithful husband and her sister, who had both wronged her, saying that she married a human being, not God, and by definition, no man is perfect. Aiko happened to be a Christian; and because of her influence, Kōsuke, too, became a Christian after having learned the power of forgiveness. He later resigned from his job,
attended a seminary and became a pastor. The first child between the couple died of illness, and it was Naomi who was born afterwards.

Aiko has been able to forgive her unfaithful husband because she realizes that, as a flawed, imperfect human being herself, she is prone to sin and can neither stand trial in front of the perfect God nor hide from His scrutiny. In his commentary on the novel, Morishita uses a flow chart to represent the transmission of the love of forgiveness, starting with Christ, to Aiko, and then Kōsuke, Naomi, and finally Ryōichi. The supposedly smooth one-to-one transmission of this love of forgiveness, however, is cut off because of Naomi’s pride. Rather than being forgiven by his wife, Ryōichi experiences the warmth of true love from Naomi’s forgiving parents (Ryōichi has been rejected by his own mother for having contracted tuberculosis; and yet Naomi’s parents receive him with open arms and treat him like their own son). Furthermore, Ryōichi comes to understand what it means to be forgiven directly by Christ as he sees a painting by the great religious artist, Georges Rouault (1871~1958).

Being a person who lives entirely in the present, Ryōichi is a perfect example of what the Swiss thinker, Max Picard (1888-1965), calls a “man without memory”—he has no recollection whatsoever of all the women who have come and gone in his life. As the narrator of the novel tells us:

One by one, Ryōichi had forgotten about all the women in his past as he moved on. Among the group, Satomi was the only woman who had died. To make things worse, it happened during a failed abortion attempt. Nonetheless, Ryōichi had totally forgotten about the incident as though it had happened in a prior state of existence. Even upon learning of Teruko’s “pregnancy,” Ryōichi had no recollection of Satomi, or the tiny little life that had ended up being buried with her. (H:271)

As a “man without memory,” Ryōichi lives entirely for the present moment, who sees no distinction between good and evil, and therefore suffers no pangs of conscience.
Perhaps Picard gives the best description of the mechanism of the momentary:

“Through the mechanism of the momentary, all things become alike, and everything becomes meaningless in its alikeness; where everything is there but for an instant, distinctions no longer exist, not even the distinction between good and evil.” Midori, Satomi, Teruko and Naomi among others are the women who have come and gone in Ryōichi’s life – none of them has found happiness. The reader sees very little distinction between these women, for they are all victimized by the same man – Ryōichi, the callous, self-centered and unbelievably insensitive “man of the instant.” These women are also very much alike in being disjointed fragments in the life of Ryōichi. Ryōichi sees no meaningful purpose in life, chooses to live for “the moment as a fragmentary shred of time, and not [for] the moment of eternity.” It is not until he finally comes to know Christ that all the dots in his life fall together in place. Only then is he able to produce his masterpiece, a work of art that makes a lasting impression on its viewers.

In the climactic scene of the novel, Ryōichi visits Teruko on Christmas eve, in an attempt to make a clean break with her. In order to prevent Ryōichi from leaving her and going back to Naomi, Teruko secretly slips a sleeping drug into his whiskey, which turns out to be the cause of Ryōichi’s tragic death – Ryōichi has no hesitation leaving Teruko and decides to head home to Naomi, but his body is taken over by drowsiness and he ends up falling asleep on the roadside and literally freezes to death in the snowy night. Ryōichi’s descent into the dark, subterranean world is depicted in these terms by Miura, who creates a dreamy atmosphere akin to the one we have already seen in Naomi’s own descent:

He must have walked five steps or so. Suddenly, Ryōichi was overcome by drowsiness, as if there was a curtain weighing heavily on his head. It was a strange drowsiness, a drowsiness that could not be warded off. He squatted down at the
roadside and tried to wash his face with snow. But his hands refused to move freely and he found himself sitting on the snow.
(I feel so sleepy. Why am I so sleepy?)
Ryōichi thought he would die if he were to fall asleep in a cold winter night like this. However, before that turned into fear, he started to doze off. (Just one glass of whiskey...)
Automobiles sounded their horns, their headlights shining on Ryōichi for a split second as they whisked by. Ryōichi fell into a doze. He was unable to recall the face of either Naomi or Teruko. He had been enticed into the pitch-dark abyss of sleep. (H:319-20)

Towards the end of the novel, the narrator informs the reader that Ryōichi has quietly converted to Christianity and has completed a self-portrait as an artistic testimony of his faith. Ryōichi’s newly found Christian faith enables him to break the bondage of his alcoholism and his addiction to sexual urges. Up to this point, Ryōichi has been a “prisoner of love” to the tyrannical and highly manipulative Teruko, but the spell of her enchantment is now broken, and Ryōichi surprises both Teruko and Takeyama by declaring his newly found freedom: “I’ve given up everything – not just drinking and smoking, but women as well” (H:247)! Interestingly, it is at this point that, for the first time, as an artist, Ryōichi is able to draw a sketch that is full of life and vitality: “Ryōichi ran his crayon while gazing at the cosmos in a flower vase put on the desk. Takeyama observed in silence. From the tip of Ryōichi’s crayon, delicate flowers of the cosmos magically started to bloom in profusion. Takeyama could not help admiring the skill of Ryōichi’s dessin” (H:245).

In his commentary on Hitsujigaoka, Morishita identifies two reasons for Ryōichi’s conversion to Christianity: (1) While his biological mother rejected her own son for fear of contracting tuberculosis from him, Aiko and Kōsuke welcome Ryōichi into their household, saying: “Isn’t this your home?” (2) At a deeper level of personal experience, Ryōichi has been brought to Christ by Rouault’s painting.77
Georges Rouault (1871~1958) was one of the greatest religious artists of the twentieth century, as well as an influential painter of the Fauvist movement. According to Morishita, Rouault had a series of paintings dedicated to the subjects of clowns, prostitutes and Christ, which depicts the fundamental sadness of human existence. Among Rouault’s most important works that Morishita identifies in his essay are a series of prints known as “Miserere,” which portrait the misery of men calling out “Miserere!” – a Latin word meaning “Have mercy on us, (O Lord!)” Equally important are the series of prints called “The Crucifixion.” This work, a collaboration with the French poet Andre Suares (1868~1948), who wrote a religious poem on the same subject, portrays the crucifixion of Christ.78

One important characteristic of Rouault’s religious paintings, as Morishita points out, is that there are many works that portray only the face of Christ. Some examples include “O vous, le seul visage” (The Crucifixion 52) and “Ces yeux, ces tristes yeux” (The Crucifixion 10). And among the facial expressions, Rouault chose to focus on the sad look in Christ’s eyes.79 It is such a print by Rouault that captures the heart of Ryōichi the artist:

Should I call it pathos? Or should I call it compassion? When I look at the picture of Christ as portrayed by Rouault, I could somehow feel a deep consolation and it reminds me of the expression “truth, goodness and beauty.” If beauty means truth and goodness, what then are my paintings? While in irritable moods, I have attempted to capture beauty with sharpened nerves. Could that possibly move the human heart? (H:252-3)

Ryōichi realizes that a true work of art, like that of Rouault, touches the human heart and conveys a sense of “truth, goodness and beauty” (shinzenbi 真善美). Christ’s figure, as portrayed by Rouault, in particular, conveys a deep sense of sadness which triggers compassion for others – an emotion hitherto unknown to the self-centered Ryōichi. As Ryōichi himself confesses, although he does not read the Bible, as he looks
at Rouault’s portrait of Christ, he feels something powerful closing in on him, something that one might call “solitude.” For the first time in his life, Ryōichi feels a special bond that draws him to Jesus (H:252). Rouault’s painting of Christ, then, arouses in Ryōichi a sensitivity to the pathos of human existence (aware) and restores Ryōichi’s conscience as a human being. The following observation by the narrator best illustrates the newly awakened sensitivity in Ryōichi and the subtle change in his character: “When Ryōichi saw Naomi these days, his heart ached. She had become taciturn and hardly smiled. Such thoughtfulness and awareness of Naomi’s sorrow had been alien to Ryōichi in the past” (H:258). Perhaps most importantly, Rouault’s portrait of Christ triggers remembrance:

It was Sunday… On this day, too, Ryōichi opened a book of paintings and gazed at Christ’s figure. “I don’t know why this man has to die on the cross, but he sure knows what sadness is.” Ryōichi thought to himself and wondered if he, too, knew the meaning of deep sorrow. Beyond the slightly soiled window, red rowan berries of the mountain ash glittered in the early winter sun. Ryōichi suddenly felt gloomy. There had been a woman in his life who loved red rowan berries. Her name was Satomi. For about half a year, Ryōichi had been frequenting her apartment. From the window of her apartment, mountain ash could be seen. “That tree bears red berries. The whole tree bears lots and lots of red berries!” Satomi had once told Ryōichi. She really looked forward to seeing those red berries, but by the time the tree bore fruit, Satomi had already died – during a failed abortion attempt – and she had long vanished from Ryōichi’s memory. (H:270-71)

In the paragraph that follows, one of the most memorable scenes of self-reflection in the novel, the reader sees not only the sad, pleading look in Satomi’s eyes, but also the first sign of Ryōichi’s awakening of his conscience:

“Go get an abortion!”
With perfect nonchalance, Ryōichi had passed a few thousand-yen notes to Satomi. He now recalled vividly the sad, pleading look in her eyes, as if they were saying: “No! I want to have the baby!” Upon learning that Satomi had died, Ryōichi only thought that the doctor was to blame.
Looking back now, Ryōichi found it incomprehensible that he had felt not the slightest qualms of conscience at that very moment. (H:271-72)

It is within the context of this spiritual awakening that Ryōichi finally completes his artistic masterpiece before his tragic death. What was intended to be a Christmas gift to Naomi – a private confession of love – turns out to be a memento of Ryōichi – a public confession of his Christian faith, an artistic expression of his plea to Jesus, as well as to Naomi, for their forgiveness. Now that Ryōichi is gone, Naomi longs to hear his voice at least through his painting. In front of Kōsuke, Aiko, Kyōko, Takeyama, Ryōichi’s mother and other members of the mourning party, Naomi unveils the parting gift from her beloved husband:

When the white cloth was taken off, revealing Ryōichi’s painting on the easel, everyone heaved a deep sigh of admiration. Blood was dripping from Jesus Christ, hanging on the cross. There was a man beneath the cross, bathed in the blood of Christ, his gaze fixed intently on Him. Wasn’t that the face of Ryōichi? It was, without a doubt. With tearful eyes, so full of repentence, Ryōichi looked up directly at Jesus, whose eyes seemed to overflow with love and mercy. They were so warm that not a single heart remained untouched. “

*Hitsujigaoka* speaks of the compassion of Christ and his merciful love of forgiveness, a common theme in Christian writings. The climactic scene of *Chinmoku*, a highly-acclaimed novel by Endō Shūsaku, for instance, depicts the agony of a Jesuit missionary when he is forced, in Nagasaki during the seventeenth century, to recant his faith by stepping on the *fumie* (a plaque with the image of Christ imprinted on it), and the compassion of Christ who fully understands his pain. If there is a common thread that runs through Ryōichi’s painting, that of Rouault, and Endō’s novel, it is their use of visual images which emphasize the facial expression of Christ, especially the sad compassionate look in his eyes:
Even now that face is looking at me with eyes of pity from the plaque rubbed flat by many feet. ‘Trample!’ said those compassionate eyes. ‘Trample! Your foot suffers in pain; it must suffer like all the feet that have stepped on this plaque. But that pain alone is enough. I understand your pain and your suffering. It is for that reason that I am here.’" (Chinmoku)

“Should I call it pathos? Or should I call it compassion? When I look at the picture of Christ as portrayed by Rouault, I could somehow feel a deep consolation and it reminds me of the expression “truth, goodness and beauty” … I don’t know why this man has to die on the cross, but he sure knows what sadness is.” Ryōichi thought to himself and wondered if he, too, knew the meaning of deep sorrow. (Ryōichi on Rouault’s portrait of Christ)

There was a man beneath the cross, bathed in the blood of Christ, his gaze fixed intently on Him. Wasn’t that the face of Ryōichi? It was, without a doubt. With tearful eyes, so full of repentence, Ryōichi looked up directly at Jesus, whose eyes seemed to overflow with love and mercy. They were so warm that not a single heart remained untouched. (Hitsujigaoka)

These works epitomize the artistic ideal of Miura the Christian author. In Miura’s view, a true work of art touches the human heart and conveys a sense of “truth, goodness and beauty” (shinzenbi 真善美). In the novel Hitsujigaoka, Ryōichi’s final work of art embodies Miura’s own aesthetic ideals. A deeply moving masterpiece that touches the human soul, Ryōichi’s painting is well received at an exhibition held after his death, rightfully gaining the recognition and praise that not even the severest art critic can withhold. As one newspaper commentator has it: “Once again, I was made to realize that painting is not born solely of technique or inspiration -- rather, it is born of the wellspring deep within the soul of the artist” (H:328). As a writer, Miura herself manages to convey a deep sense of sorrow by vividly portraying the sad, pleading look in Satomi’s eyes, the tearful eyes of Ryōichi, so full of repentence, and Jesus, whose eyes seem to overflow with love and mercy. It is a sensitivity to such things that informs the art of
Miura’s fiction. In one of her essays entitled “Akashi no bunshō nyūmon” (An Introduction to Literary Testimonies), Miura speaks of the human heart as the artistic well-spring:

When I write novels, I begin by focusing on matters that move me deeply. Things that I don’t find touching have no impact on the readers. Novels that move my readers to tears are the ones that I wrote while shedding double the amount of tears myself. I cannot write unless I am personally moved to such an extent.84

Like Miura’s novels, Ryōichi’s final painting, an imaginary construct portrayed by Miura in *Hitsujigaoka*, is said to be deeply moving: the character Kōsuke calls it a magnificent confession of faith (*rippa na shinkō kokuha da*).85 Naomi herself admits that she has never seen a painting capable of swaying the viewers’ emotions so violently, indeed, so much so that she feels the urge to kneel down alongside Ryōichi in the picture to beg for Christ’s mercy and forgiveness (H:325).

Ryōichi’s confession, in the form of a painting, not only redeems and purifies him; it has the same healing effect on Naomi – unburdening and liberating her from the sin of judgment, and promising her salvation through reconciliation with Ryōichi and Teruko, and ultimately with God. Towards the end of the novel, in remembrance of her late husband, Naomi makes a nostalgic trip to Hakodate, where Ryōichi and Naomi spent two years and four months of their married life together. Their apartment at Hōraichō is now occupied by a young loving couple, who, upon hearing Naomi’s story, kindly let her see her former residence. It bears no vestiges of the past although it does bring back painful memories – all the harsh words uttered by Ryōichi, and how he overturned the dining table and threw an ashtray at Naomi. In one of the most poignant moments of the novel, Naomi tells Takeyama that she still cherishes her time with Ryōichi – even all the painful experiences have become a fond memory dear to her heart.
(H:332), an indication that Naomi has truly forgiven her self-centered and occasionally violent husband. The healing effect of art is further suggested by Naomi’s changing attitude towards Teruko. Six months after Ryōichi’s death, at the hill of Hitsujigaoka, Naomi inquires after Teruko in her conversation with Takeyama:

“I wonder how Teruko is doing every day.”
Naomi’s voice was filled with gentleness. Her words were not the kind of utterance that would be expected in reference to the woman who had killed her husband by accidentally drugging him to death. Takeyama felt envious towards Ryōichi, who was no longer in this world, for neither Naomi nor Teruko – both women left behind by Ryōichi – seemed to bear a grudge against Ryōichi; far from bearing a grudge, they had begun to love him anew. Takeyama felt a pang of envy that resembled jealousy. (H:334)

Ryōichi’s death seems to have a life-changing impact on Naomi: not only has she forgiven Ryōichi for his infidelity and his violent behavior towards her, but she has also forgiven Teruko, whom she has every reason to despise for causing her husband’s death. Concerned about the well being of Teruko, who has gone half-insane blaming herself for having killed Ryōichi, Naomi even feels the urge to meet with her fatal enemy. Naomi realizes that she is no less responsible for Ryōichi’s demise and that “it was as if her icy cold heart had frozen him to death” (jibun no hiekitta kokoro ga Ryōichi o tōshi sasete shimatta yō ni omowareta) – a metaphor that echoes the title of Miura’s debut novel Hyōten, which refers to the “freezing point in man’s heart.” Naomi herself finds it amazing how the death of one person manages to change the heart of another – it is almost as if Ryōichi has died in order to give her a gentle, loving heart (Naomi wa Ryōichi ga jibun ni yasashii kokoro o ataeru tame ni shinda yō na ki ga shite naranakatta). Starting with Jesus (the ultimate source of love and forgiveness in the Christian belief), and passed down from Aiko to Kōsuke to Naomi, the chain of love and forgiveness is finally completed when Naomi reaches out to forgive Ryōichi and Teruko. Like
Rodrigues in *Chinnoku*, Naomi is able to forgive precisely because she herself is forgiven:

```
Jesus ——— Aiko ——— Kōsuke ——— Naomi
       |            |            |
       |            |            |
       Ryōichi   |            |
       |            |            |
       |            |            |
       |            |            |
       Teruko                                            ``

Ryōichi’s painting, as an imaginary construct in Miura’s novel, suggests the power of love and forgiveness that *heals* not only Ryōichi’s wounds but Naomi’s as well. Towards the end of the novel, we see the rebirth of not only Ryōichi, but also Naomi as a new person – a new Naomi who is mature, positive, sensitive and forgiving and who understands the meaning of love.

In addition to all the foregoing, the title of the novel deserves additional commentary. As noted by Mizutani Akio, Hitsujigaoka is an actual place name referring to the terrain bordered by the Tsukisamu River to the south of the city of Sapporo. It is known not only for its serene pastoral landscape with a flock of sheep grazing in the background, but also for the famous statue of the legendary Dr. William S. Clark, with his words “Boys, be ambitious!” inscribed on the pedestal.88 Mizutani argues, and I agree, that “Miura encourages her readers to follow Clark’s motto and be ambitious particularly in terms of aiming for higher, more meaningful forms of love [that extend beyond romantic love or mere physical attraction]” (*Kuraaku sensei no yō ni, toriwake ‘ai suru koto’ ni oite, kokorozashi o takaku kakageru yō ni to no inori ga komerarete ita no da to mo ieru darō*).89 In resonance with the title of the novel, the memorable final scene of the work paints a similar pastoral landscape with Naomi and Takeyama gazing at the flock of sheep at Hitsujigaoka:

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A cloud of smoke drifted over the Hitsujigaoka fields. With her body leaning against the fence, Naomi gazed at the landscape… Inside the fence, bathed in sunlight of June, more than 200 sheep were grazing on the fields. While the flock busied themselves grazing in silence, a single sheep wandered around in charming movement. (H:322)

Miura’s portrait of Hitsujigaoka using the image of a single wandering sheep echoes the well-known parable in the Gospel in which Jesus compares Himself to a shepherd who leaves his flock to find the one sheep who is lost:

“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish (Matthew 18:12-14).

In the final scene of Miura’s novel, while looking at the sheep on the fields of Hitsujigaoka, Naomi explicitly mentions Sōseki’s novel Sanshirō and asks Takeyama if he remembers the phrase “stray sheep” (sutorei shiipu) that the character Mineko uses on a few occasions in that novel. It is clear that this intertextual reference points to the biblical connection which draws analogies between stray sheep and lost human souls. All the young men and women in Hitsujigaoka – Naomi, Ryōichi, Takeyama, Teruko and Kyōko – are implicitly portrayed as stray sheep, wandering human souls who get lost in the wilderness in pursuit of love. Naomi (as is Mineko in Sōseki’s novel) is a woman of the Christian faith; but as long as she is human, she, too, will continue to have moments of weakness and indiscretion.

In Sanshirō, Mineko comes face to face with her sinful nature when she makes the comments: “for I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.”90 As Jay Rubin points out, “Mineko [also] quotes from the fifty-first psalm, David’s prayer of penitence for his adultery with Bathsheba,”91 which begins with these lines: “Have
mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:1-2). In *Hitsujigaoka*, Ryōichi pleads to God for forgiveness with the same urgency as David’s, and an intensity that recalls the “Miserere” prints in Rouault’s painting.

In the closing scene of *Hitsujigaoka*, Miura borrows the visual image of “fleecy, white [interestingly, these epithets also apply to sheep] clouds” that Mineko loves to watch in Sōseki’s novel:

While gazing at the fleecy, white clouds floating beyond the gently undulating slopes of Hitsujigaoka, Naomi recalled fondly her late husband, Ryōichi. She had the feeling that Ryōichi was now in heaven among the clouds, extending his arms towards Jesus, the way he did beneath the cross in that painting.92

There is a special significance in Naomi’s seeing Ryōichi among the white clouds. The association of Ryōichi with “fleecy, white clouds” signifies his final ascent to heaven, where he is welcome to the place of God’s presence. *Hitsujigaoka* appropriately ends on a bright note, with the line that reads: “Following Naomi’s gaze, Takeyama turned his eyes upon the distant white clouds. The clouds were glittering in the sun, giving off a single momentary flash of light.”93

In *Hitsujigaoka*, Miura demonstrates a remarkable gift of lyricism in her prose and manages to weave a rich fabric of subtle insight that lends artistry to her work. As her husband, Mitsuyo, mentions in *Miura Ayako sōsaku hiwa* (The Unknown Episodes of Miura Ayako’s Creative Writing), *Hitsujigaoka* received high marks from critics. In particular, Nishimura Shinkichi, a Sapporo-based literary scholar who specialized in Russian literature praised the novels as “surpassing Hyōten in terms of literary quality” (bungaku teki ni wa Hyōten ijō desu).94 *Hitsujigaoka* is more than a popular romance novel written with the intention of entertaining young women writers. It is a serious
commentary on the biblical interpretation of love, which emphasizes the need to forgive and be forgiven. In Miura’s view, however, to love is not only to forgive; it is also to sacrifice oneself for the sake of others – for a higher good like saving someone’s life that should be put ahead of self-interest. Refering to 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, Miura comments on the biblical definition of love in a collection of essays entitled *Kodoku no tonari* (The Brink of Loneliness, 1979):

> According to the Bible, love is patience and endurance. It is forbearance. It has no jealousy. It is not proud, it is not self-seeking. It bears no grudge and keeps no record of wrongs. It always trusts, always hopes. This kind of love does not originally exist in us. A deeper understanding of ourselves and others begins with an acknowledgment that such love is lacking in us.

> *Seisho ni wa, ai to wa taeru koto de aru, shinobu koto da to kaite aru. Kanyō de netamu koto o shinai koto da to mo kaite aru. Mata, takaburazu, jibun no rieki o motomezu, urami o idakazu, subete o shinji, subete o nozomu koto da to mo nobete aru. Kō shita ai wa, honrai watashitachi ni wa nai. Sono, nai to mitomeru tokoro kara, jibun to hoka no hito e no rikai ga fukamaru.*

> Whereas Miura treats two kinds of love, namely, *eros* (an affection of a sexual nature) and *philia* (an affection that denotes friendship or brotherhood) in *Hitsujigaoka*, she examines the ultimate, self-sacrificial form of love, *agape*, in *Shiokari Tōge*. In my textual analysis of the novel, I will show the progress of Miura’s characters from a realization of the meaning of love in *Hitsujigaoka* to an actualization of that love in *Shiokari Tōge*.
Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

(John 12:24)

Shiokari Tōge (Shiokari Pass), Miura’s third novel and one of the most memorable works written by the author, had been serialized in the Christian magazine Shinto no tomo (Believers’ Friend) for almost two and a half years – from April 1966 to September 1968 – prior to its publication by Shinchōsha on September 25, 1968. Following the success of Hyōten and Hitsujigaoka, Miura had, by this time, become a prolific writer, producing such works as her first autobiographical novel, Michi ariki (Wind is Howling), and her fourth novel, Tsumiki no hako (The House of Wooden Blocks), both of which were serialized concurrently with Shiokari Tōge.

In an essay entitled “Shiokari Tōge no ren'ai no mae ni” (Before the Serialization of Shiokari Tōge), originally published in Shinto no tomo one month before the serialization was to begin, Miura states the objective of her upcoming work: “In this novel, I would like to think about the notion of sacrifice. There are many things lacking in the modern world: for instance, love and principles [of life]. As for sacrifice, it seems to me that the word has become a lost term in the dictionary of modern man.”

Unlike Hyōten, which was serialized in the Asahi Shinbun, and Hitsujigaoka, which was serialized in the women’s magazine Shufu no tomo, Shiokari Tōge was written for and serialized in a Christian magazine, at the request of its chief editor, Sako Jun’ichirō. As a result, the novel deals explicitly with religious themes (sacrificial love, faith, sin and redemption) and presents the story in an openly Christian context. Indeed, Sako,
the editor, reportedly assured Miura that *Shinto no tomo* was a friendly publication to Christian writers, and since her novel would be read by a receptive audience, there was no need to tone it down: “Feel free to write to you heart’s content, as you would writing a Christian novel; after all, it is the *Believers’ Friend* [that you are writing for this time].”97 In light of the unusually heavy emphasis on religious themes, it is not surprising that *Shiokari Tōge*, while being serialized, drew mixed reviews, from those who expressed high praise for the work, and those who discounted the novel as mere Christian propaganda. What *is* surprising is what Sako Jun’ichirō, writing as a critic, calls a “miraculous literary phenomenon“:

A novel that boldly portrays the Christian essence of *agape* love: not only was it published by Shinchōsha, the most representative literary publisher in Japan, but it has also sold over two million copies, and continues to be reprinted time after time even today – that, in my opinion, is a miraculous literary phenomenon.98

Based on a true story, *Shiokari Tōge* is a moving tale of love, faith and self-sacrifice. The hero of the novel, Nagano Nobuo, is modeled after a real-life person, Nagano Masao (1880-1909), a devout Christian and a railway worker in Hokkaidō, who gave up his life on February 28, 1909, in order to save all the passengers in a runaway train at the Shiokari Pass. Nagano Masao happened to be a member of the same church that Miura attended – the Asahikawa Rokujō Kyōkai – and it was from another member of the church, the eighty-one-year-old Fujiwara Eikichi, that Miura learned about the life of Masao. At the time of the tragic incident at the Shiokari Pass, which happened almost sixty years before the writing of *Shiokari Tōge*, Eikichi was Masao’s subordinate at the railway company, as well as a living witness of Masao’s heroic deed. Although inspired by a journal kept by Eikichi, *Shiokari Tōge* is largely an imaginative work of fiction. As Miura herself stated in the postscript to her novel, very few factual accounts were available: Masao’s correspondence and dairies were all burnt according to his will, his
relatives’ whereabouts were unknown, and a small pamphlet commemorating his death, a few photographs, and a brief church record were about all that the author could work with.99 In “Shiokari Tōge no ren'ai no mae ni,” Miura emphasizes the fictionality of her novel:

Nagano Masao remains a model after all; he is not the protagonist of the novel. As far as I know, Mr. Nagano was a devout Christian, almost too noble to be depicted by my hand. That is why I wind up creating a fictional character in my own special way, and I earnestly hope that he would live the way I think one ought to live. I want the hero of the novel to help me lay bare my own worldly thoughts, so that I may do some soul-searching and be encouraged.100

The fictional character that Miura creates, Nagano Nobuo, possesses the same kind of personal qualities as his real-life model, Masao: integrity, altruism and attributes of truth, honesty and sincerity. Far from depicting him as a Christian saint, however, Miura creates a believable human figure, with his own weaknesses, spiritual struggles and doubts. Shiokari Tōge is a story of Nobuo’s spiritual journey from outright antagonism towards the Christian God to becoming a man of faith, which culminates in the final act of heroic self-sacrifice. The author focuses on the psychological aspects of the character, probing his actions along the way, and documenting the life of an idealistic young man who vows to live according to the teachings of Christ. That is what makes the novel interesting and, more importantly, distinguishes the work from mere propaganda.

Stylistically, Miura wrote Shiokari Tōge in the manner of a fictional biography (hyōden shōsetsu) – a literary approach that reflects the interest of some taishū bungaku writers, especially those who are known for their writing of popular historical fiction known as jidai shōsetsu (“period” novels): Kaionji Chōgorō (1901-1977), Yamaoka Sōhachi (1907-1978), Shiba Ryōtarō (1923-1996), Yoshikawa Eiji (1892-1962), Ikenami
Shōtarō (1923-1990), Fujisawa Shūhei (1927-1997), and Miyao Tomiko (1926- ), just to name a few. These writers produced a great number of *jidai shōsetsu*, which offer multiple perspectives on a wide spectrum of historical figures including, but not limited to: (1) the great unifiers of late sixteenth century; (2) famous warriors of the same period; (3) famous female historical figures; (4) legendary swordsman; (5) famous political figures of the transitional period from the end of the Tokugawa Bakufu to the Meiji Period. “Biographical accounts“ (*jinbutsu hyōden*) presented in this kind of *jidai shōsetsu* are often fictionalized: although the authors deal with historical events and characters that readers know well, their focus is not so much on historical accuracy as on using them as an artistic springboard for unleashing their creativity and imagination.

In *Shiokari Tōge*, Miura used the little known facts about the life of Nagano Masao as an imaginative springboard for exploring the theme of *sacrifice* and what she considered to be the most pressing issues of life and death, as well as love, sin and redemption. In a study of *Shiokari Tōge*, Ōta Masaki highlights the biographical details concerning the life of Nagano Masao, which have found their way into Miura’s novel, among them: (1) early death of his father; (2) his struggle to support his mother and sister as the head of household; (3) his career at the law court; (4) his association with the Christian writer Nakamura Shun’u; (5) his early antagonism against Christianity and subsequent conversion to the Christian faith; (6) his employment by a railway company at the Asahikawa Station; (7) his evangelical zeal as a Sunday-school teacher and his effort to organize the Railwaymen’s Bible Study Group; and most importantly, (8) his heroic sacrifice at the Shiokari Pass. Although these *factual* details are clearly identifiable in Miura’s novel, the author also projects her own voice and personal experiences into the narrative, crafting events and adding *fictional* elements that dramatize the “biography“ – the best example being, as Kuroko Kazuo has pointed out,
the tragic love story between Nobuo and his lover, Fujiko. By writing her novel as a “biography,” Miura makes the protagonist appear as a real-life character of flesh and blood, and therefore, someone with whom the reader can identify. By fictionalizing, Miura gives free rein to her imagination and creativity, bringing her character to life.

Following the success of Shiokari Tōge, Miura published six more novels written in the style of a fictional biography: (1) Iwa ni tatsu: aru tōryō no hansei (Standing on a Rock: Half a life of a Master Carpenter, 1979), which was based on the life of a carpenter by the name of Suzuki Shinkichi; (2) Ai no kisai: Nishimura Kyūzō no ayunda michi (Genius of Love: The Path Walked by Nishimura Kyūzō, 1983) on Nishimura Kyūzō (1898-1953), founder of the Nishimura Confectionery Store; (3) Chihiroba sensei monogatari (The Tale of a Little Donkey, 1987) on a pastor by the name of Enomoto Yasurō (1925-1977); (4) Yū ari asa ari (There are Mornings and Evenings, 1987) on Igarashi Kenji (1877-1972), founder of Hakuyōsha who was credited with introducing dry cleaning to Japan; (5) Ware yowakereba: Yajima Kajiko den (Since I was weak: A Biography of Yajima Kajiko, 1989) on the female educator Yajima Kajiko (1833-1925); (6) Haha (Mother, 1992) on the mother of the proletarian writer Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933), who was tortured to death by the Tokkō (Special Higher) Police on February 20, 1933. In addition to these works, Miura wrote three more fictional biographies in the vein of historical novels, namely: (1) Hosokawa Garasha fujin (Lady Gracia: A Samurai Wife’s Love, Strife and Faith, 1975); (2) Sen no Rikyū to sono tsunatachi (Sen no Rikyū and His Wives, 1980); and (3) Kairei (Hidden Ranges, 1981). Fictional biographies would become a trademark of Miura’s writings. Indeed, as many as ten out of the thirty full-length novels written by Miura belong to this genre.

Except for occasional moments of flashback, the main narrative of Shiokari Tōge unfolds, for the most part, in a linear fashion, following the life of the protagonist. As the novel opens, Nobuo appears as a ten-year-old boy, who, despite his young age,
displays a strong sense of pride in being born into a family of samurai stock. His grandmother, Tose, never fails to remind him that the Naganos belong to the military aristocracy (shizoku) and that they are different from the commoners (heimin). In an early episode, Nobuo gets pushed off the roof by Torao, son of a hawker, whereupon Nobuo tries to hide his embarrassment by telling his father, Masayuki, that he fell by himself: “Do you think I’d let a slum kid push me off the roof?” Masayuki immediately slaps Nobuo on his cheek, and then gives him a lecture on equality, citing the Meiji educator and enlightenment thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901): “Heaven makes neither one man above, nor one man below another.”

In the third chapter, “Haha” (Mother), Nobuo undergoes an identity crisis when he is unwillingly “reunited,” following the death of his grandmother, with his mother, Kiku, and his younger sister, Machiko, who have been separated from him for nearly nine long years. The reader is told that Kiku was actually driven out by Tose for refusing to recant her Christian faith. The joy of finding his long-lost mother, is outweighed, however, by the painful realization that his mother has deserted him for something that she considered more precious than her own son.

Set in Meiji Japan, at the turn of the nineteenth century, Shiokari Tōge offers rare insight into the life of Japanese Christians, who continued to suffer social prejudice, despite their new-found freedom to worship, made possible by the Meiji government’s decision to revoke a 260-year-old ban on Christianity. The manner in which Tose orders Nobuo’s mother, Kiku, out of the Nagano household illustrates the difficult challenges faced by Christians at the time:

“Kiku. Please leave this house!” There was a note of finality in her words. Kiku turned pale... “Kiku! Is Yaso [Jesus, i.e., Christianity] so important to you? Even if it means leaving this house, aren’t you prepared to give up Yaso?... As long as I live, I will not have a Yaso daughter-in-law here... Whatever will our ancestors think if I allow a Yaso daughter-in-law to remain here.”

(ST:41-3)
Miura quickly points out that, terrible as it is, Tose’s bigoted view is but a small piece of the much larger social prejudice against Christians: “In those days there were many instances when even sons were disinherited and disowned by their parents because they became Christians. It could not be said that only Tose was bigoted. If someone explained, ‘My daughter-in-law was a “Yaso”, so we disowned her,” people would only say, ‘Well, there really was no alternative, was there?’” (ST:40)

Brought up by his grandmother, Tose, Nobuo inherited her bias against Christianity. To begin with, Nobuo cannot accept the fact that there can be a mother who would desert her own child the way Kiku did. He has been under the impression, due to Tose’s influence, that it is shameful for a Japanese to worship a foreign god, let alone deserting one’s child to do so! Apparently, Tose’s fear and criticism of Christianity was imprinted in the mind of the ten-year-old Nobuo, to such an extent that he prefers to “have no mother at all, than to have a follower of Yaso for a mother” (ST:37).

He did not know who Yaso was, but he remembered Tose having said that he sucked human blood and ate people’s flesh. He could not forget how she had told him that Yaso was an evil creature who did all sorts of frightening things such as deceiving people by magical powers in order to destroy Japan.

Like his grandmother, Nobuo, in his early childhood, expresses a strong distaste for the worship of a foreign god, although, in his case, there is no sign of the kind of paranoid fear detected in Tose’s antagonism towards Christianity. With the sudden passing of Tose, Kiku and Machiko become members of the Nagano household, literally Christianizing the whole family overnight and causing Nobuo to suffer an identity crisis: suddenly, being the only non-believer, Nobuo feels like a lonely outsider, betrayed even by his own father, who now joins Kiku and Machiko in prayers before meals (ST:48-9). The idea of going to church gives him a creepy feeling (ST:50), and
he feels very uneasy that his mother chooses to ignore her duties of ancestor veneration. Indeed, Kiku has never burnt an incense stick, nor has she offered rice on the family altar (ST:70). Nobuo begins to think of his mother as a cold-hearted woman and see his deceased grandmother as being cruelly neglected (ST:70-1). Nobuo feels so sorry for Tose that he tells his best friend, Yoshikawa: “I want to be a priest and chant sutras for grandmother” (ST:71). Ten years later, chatting with the Christian novelist Nakamura Shun’u, Nobuo explains his dislike of Christianity by way of putting it within the context of cultural conflict:

“To tell you the truth, I don’t like Yaso very much either. It’s a Japanese characteristic, using foreign words like ‘Amen’, believing in a foreigner called Jesus as a god, and it doesn’t appeal to me at all.” (ST:178)

Although antagonistic towards Christianity in his early childhood, Nobuo is portrayed, throughout the novel, as an admirable young man of principle and purpose. His best friend, Yoshikawa, praises his character, saying: “You are absolutely sincere. I never imagined that a person like you existed, here in the very heart of Edo” (ST:205). In Yoshikawa’s view, Nobuo is a good person who “wants to live life seriously, facing up to the important questions, such as death and love,” as opposed to those who live only at a superficial level (ST:199).

At age fourteen, Nobuo begins to ponder spiritual matters. A letter from his best friend, Yoshikawa, forces him to grapple with the issue of death – a predominant theme in Shiokari Tōge. It has been three years since Yoshikawa’s father, heavily in debt, abruptly took the whole family to Hokkaidō. Yoshikawa mentions in the letter that he has suddenly died. Nobuo can find no words of consolation for his disheartened friend, since he, too, is in a state of emotional shock. Wondering what would become of him if
his own father were to die, Nobuo is filled with anxiety at the sight of Masayuki’s ailing body (ST:115).

Nobuo is twenty years old when Masayuki dies suddenly of a stroke. The thought that the same disease attacks twice without warning, striking down both his grandmother and his father by a single blow, is something unbearably frightening to Nobuo, so much so that he is assailed by a premonition of imminent death:

After the funeral [of his father] was over, the house seemed suddenly very lonely. Whenever Nobuo lay on his bed and closed his eyes, he sensed that the word Death, written large, was pressing in on him. Both his grandmother’s and his father’s deaths had been sudden... ‘Maybe I’ll die suddenly too, like Grandmother and Father.’ The thought frightened him (ST:143-4)

As an adolescent, Nobuo has to grapple with not only the issue of life and death, but also the problem of sex. During his final year at high school, his cousin Takashi comes to Tokyo to visit him. Nobuo is twenty at the time and Takashi is thirty. To “celebrate” his graduation, Takashi takes Nobuo to Yoshiwara, the pleasure quarter district. Enticed by his dreams of soft-skinned women, Nobuo allows himself to be led as far as the gate of the Yoshiwara, where he turns around and literally flees in shame.

In a letter to Yoshikawa, far away in Hokkaidō, Nobuo confesses his weakness in the face of temptation:

Yoshikawa, human beings are not free, are they? Tonight, for the first time I came to know the painful fact that men are captives... I confess I have always secretly prided myself that I was superior to most other people. Comparing myself with other young people, I thought I was more discerning and stronger willed than they... I’m ashamed to write this. Tonight, I was on my way to the Yoshiwara, where the prostitutes are... but when I was nearly there I turned around and ran home. It was because of you. When I thought that you would not go to a place like that, I suddenly felt ashamed... Yoshikawa, when I spoke about being a slave, I was speaking about my problem with women... To put it bluntly, sexual desire is my
biggest problem. Yoshikawa, in this area of life I don’t feel like I’m a free man. Many times I have an uneasy feeling that sex is going to be my downfall. Please don’t laugh at me. I wonder if you can teach me the way to freedom. This is a strange letter, but for me, at twenty, this is a great problem. Don’t laugh, but help me, I beseech you, and reply as soon as you can. Today, when I saw the lights of Yoshiwara, I turned and ran back, but I could not trust myself to do the same again.¹²⁰ (ST:134-6)

This is one of the most memorable passages in the novel – and undoubtedly one of the most touching episodes. It is a desperate, yet sincere, cry for help, from the deep recesses of Nobuo’s heart. In his confession, we see a young man who struggles to be a good person by his own power, but fails miserably as he wrestles with his sinful nature. Nobuo’s lament that he is held captive by his sexual desire and unable to break free from its bondage reminds the Christian readers of the Apostle Paul who considers himself a carnal being, “sold as a slave to sin” (Romans 7:14). Indeed, Nobuo’s earnest plea for help at the end of his letter to Yoshikawa echoes the sentiment that Paul expresses in Romans 7:24: “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?” Unlike the Apostle Paul, however, who identifies Jesus as his Savior in the next verse – “Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:25) – Nobuo is, at this point, unaware of God’s power of deliverance, and has no recourse but to rely on his own will in a continuing yet futile battle with sin.

As Yoshikawa observes, Nobuo possesses a “highly developed sense of sin”¹²¹ (ST:204), the awareness of which is heightened further by an unexpected re-encounter with Torao at the law court, where Nobuo works as a secretary upon graduation from high school. For eight long years, Nobuo has not seen Torao, the little boy who used to play with him. It shocks him that such a good-natured person would turn into a criminal, now on trial for robbery and assault. To Nobuo, his sudden change is not only unsettling, but also terrifying:
'I [too] could turn into the kind of person I’d never imagined myself being.‘ Up to the day he had gone to the Yoshiwara he had never imagined himself as doing such a thing. It was certainly not what he would have done on his own. Until now Nobuo had thought of his true self as the one which had run away. But this was the first time the ugly truth had come home to him, that when he had hurried towards the gate of the Yoshiwara it had also been his true self.122 (ST:157)

If the seemingly mild Torao were the real Torao, the real Torao also went about assaulting people and doing evil things. When Nobuo finds himself beset by mental images of a woman’s body and suffers sleepless nights over the problem of sex, that, too, is his true self. As Nobuo reflects on the darker side of himself, he comes to the conclusion that “people are frightening things”123 (ST:158) and that he has no confidence in staying a good person by his own power:

He could not say with certainty that in the decades that lay ahead he would not, like Torao, commit some crime. Whatever the circumstances, he did not think he would become a thief. But... if he was living in a boarding house and there happened to be a young girl there and he was alone with her some time, he could not deny that desire might turn him into a maddened wolf.124 (ST:160)

When it comes to the problem of sex, Nobuo realizes that, although there is no guarantee of success, he can at least try to control his desires by his own will; Death, in contrast, is totally out of his control – there is no escape. The following passage vividly captures the sense of helplessness felt by one who is awakened to the harsh reality of the inevitability of death:

Shortly before his father’s death it had been the problem of sex that had occupied his thoughts. But now his biggest worry had become death. The problem of sex seemed to hold greater possibilities for discussion and solution; there was a way out. But death was an irrevocable, clean-cut loss of life – a predicament from which there is no escape. ‘I don’t know when or where or what the cause will be, but one thing is sure, I’m going to die.’125 (ST:144)
There is no other issue that has the same emotional impact on Nobuo as death. The impending death of Fujiko, Yoshikawa’s younger sister who becomes Nobuo’s lover, in particular, literally changes Nobuo’s entire outlook on life. Nobuo and Fujiko have known each other since childhood. As a ten-year-old boy, Nobuo “became suffocatingly aware of the opposite sex for the first time in his life” when Fujiko hid behind him while playing hide-and-seek. Since then, the Yoshikawas have moved to Hokkaidō. Nobuo’s love for Fujiko is rekindled when the Yoshikawas visit him in Tokyo ten years later. During a card game at his house, Nobuo finds his heart filled with an irrepressible joy whenever Fujiko speaks to him. He realizes how precious Fujiko has become to him when Yoshikawa mentions that she has an offer of marriage. Despite his love for Fujiko, however, Nobuo is not ready to ask for her hand in marriage himself. His loneliness becomes unbearable when a letter comes from Yoshikawa, after they have returned to Hokkaido, announcing the news of Fujiko’s engagement to a respectable man called Sagawa. Thinking that his beloved Fujiko would become someone’s wife, Nobuo feels a sense of irretrievable loss.

Three years later, at age twenty-three, Nobuo decides to resign from the law court in order to start anew in Sapporō. Standing on the deck of the ferry boat heading to Hokkaidō, with thoughts of Fujiko filling his mind, Nobuo recalls, in a flashback, aching memories of the past three years. From Yoshikawa’s letters, Nobuo has learned of Fujiko’s engagement to Sagawa, which is now called off since Fujiko has contracted lung and spinal tuberculosis. Nobuo feels a deep sympathy for her, since patients of tuberculosis were, in the early years of the Meiji period, “so hated and feared that they were even persecuted or forced to leave the neighborhood” (ST:217). Hoping to prolong Fujiko’s life just a little, Nobuo sends her letters with all kinds of pressed flowers – cherry blossoms, tulips, peonies, little flowers and big – attached to his words.
The narrator of the novel brings out the pathos of love, and the sad beauty of *mono no aware*, so very often associated with the transience of things, in the following passage:

Even when he was at work and saw a flower, he saw it in the image of Fujiko’s pale face. He felt a deep pity for her, struck down with tuberculosis, the disease everyone hated. When he looked at a flower he caught something of her feelings, fearing she would not live to see the next year. He could imagine the rose and the peony he had sent her, wet with tears... In time Fujiko’s letters became even shorter, and Nobuo had a foreboding that she did not have long to live. Worrying daily over her, he thought more and more seriously about the problem of life. Even when he saw small children as he was going along the road, he would think of how even they would eventually die. (ST:219-20)

As tragic as it is, Fujiko’s impending death has a positive effect on Nobuo, replacing his fear of *death* with a proactive outlook on *life*. Nobuo has been afraid of death since both his father and grandmother died suddenly. Thanks to Fujiko, who bravely battles a deadly disease that renders her bedridden, Nobuo’s way of thinking about death has changed a little: as someone who would surely die some day, he begins to “consider what is the *best way to live*” (ST:220).

“Death is not the end for anybody” (ST:221). Nobuo remembers what Fujiko has once said as she herself faces death. Even before she becomes a Christian, Fujiko has always been cheerful. When Nobuo finally gets to see her in her sickroom, he is greeted by a bright voice: “Fujiko’s wasted form lay by the window of a small four and a half mat room. But her face was *shining with a radiance* that Nobuo had never seen before” (ST:233). I would argue that, in *Shiokari Tōge*, Fujiko functions as a guiding light that illuminates Nobuo’s path from spiritual darkness to salvation. It is due to her influence that Nobuo begins, not only to ponder seriously the question of life and death, but also to actively seek a solution to the most fundamental problem of human beings. Although he is, at this point, still skeptical when his mother talks about eternal life, Nobuo begins
to wonder if the teaching of Christ could really give a power and meaning to life. “What is the power to live?” Nobuo wishes he could find out both for Fujiko’s sake and his own134 (ST:221-2). In Sapporō, Nobuo begins to visit Fujiko regularly. His love for her deepens each day as he comes closer and closer to an understanding of the Christian faith, to the point where he decides to ask for her hand in marriage and devote his life to loving her, regardless of her health condition.

Fujiko is apparently modeled after Miura herself. Bedridden most of her life, battling the same disease (lung and spinal tuberculosis), Miura knew the pain of being feared and rejected by the community, and the joy of being loved and accepted by her husband Miura Mitsuyo. If Miura is the model for Fujiko, her husband is the inspiration for the character Nobuo. Indeed, as Kuroko Kazuo has pointed out, Nobuo’s first declaration of love for Fujiko in the novel is strikingly similar to Mitsuyo’s own in real life, as recorded in Michi Ariki:135

'I’m sure you are going to get better and then marry me. It may take a long time, but even if you never do, all my life I’ll never marry anyone else.’ ...
‘But... I’m not worthy of such a...’
‘What do you mean, you’re not worthy? I am unworthy of you, with your beautiful nature!’
Nobuo sat up in a straight and formal position.
‘Fujiko, will you be my life partner?’136 (Shiokari Tōge)

So when [Miura Mitsuyo] came to see me later I said, ‘Miura-san, could you have fallen in love with me out of sympathy or a feeling of gallantry?’
He shook his head emphatically and said quietly, ‘There is no hint of mere chivalry or pity in my feeling for you...I love you... for the beauty that has come to you through your suffering.’
‘But when I am ill like this you can’t marry me even if you love me.’
He replied immediately, ‘We’ll get married when you are better. If you don’t get better I shall remain single.’
How wonderful it was to hear that! I was utterly overwhelmed with gratitude.137 (Michi ariki)
Nobuo in *Shiokari Tōge* and Miura Mitsuyo in real life (or at least in his fictionalized image) demonstrate the kind of pure, unconditional love that transcends physical and carnal desires. We see patience, kindness, compassion and beauty in their love. Nobuo has truly come a long way from being a self-centered individual to becoming someone who is capable of putting the welfare of others before his own. Looking back upon his life on the ferry boat to Hokkaidō, however, Nobuo sees a former self who was egoistic and unremarkable at best, and ugly at worst. Comparing himself to Fujiko’s fiancé, Sagawa, Nobuo had come to a keen awareness of his own inadequacies as a human being:

By the standards of the time, when people used to cover their mouths with their hands and run past the home of a tuberculosis patient, Sagawa was a rare and worthy person. He had continued to visit the stricken Fujiko for over a year [before calling off the engagement]. Nobuo thought he would never be able to do that. From far away Tokyo he was sending greeting cards, but if he were closer, would he have the courage to call on her...? He had to consider this.\(^{138}\) (ST:222)

On the ferry boat to Hokkaidō, Nobuo realizes that his get-well card for Fujiko was long overdue and filled with hypocrisies: “The real reason why he had not sent a get-well card [sooner] was that at heart he had been selfish and callous”\(^{139}\) (ST:217). Upon reflection, he finds himself unable to deny that it was because of a fear of Fujiko’s illness. Nobuo further questions the authenticity of his love for Fujiko. Perhaps it was not so much loving Fujiko as enjoying the feeling of being in love with someone. As Nobuo admits to himself, his love for Fujiko was rather irresponsible: until now, “he had never actually said that he loved her, he had made no promises, nor even promised to visit her. It was an unrealistic love, like love for a star in the sky. But worse still, it was a *self-satisfying* sort of love, for in thinking about Fujiko, he found satisfaction”\(^{140}\) (ST:222). Again reflecting on the ferry boat to Hokkaidō, Nobuo realises the fickleness
of his heart. While thinking of Fujiko, he feels his gaze more and more drawn to the women he met on the boat, to such an extent that he begins to wonder if Fujiko might not have been the real object of his “love“:

His own heart was still bent on going ways he had never dreamed of. In its depth he still thought about Fujiko but, he chided himself, rather than Fujiko herself, he was loving a young woman through the medium of Fujiko. That Fujiko had to be the object of his love was not a strong conviction. As he gazed at the drifting clouds, he was all the more astonished at the instability of the human heart.141 (ST:224)

Nobuo’s heart eventually succumbs to the temptations of the flesh. Towards the end of the “Renrakusen“ (Ferry Boat) chapter, Nobuo recalls, in a pensive mood, the loneliness and wretchedness he experienced, on an autumn night two years earlier, when he fell victim to his carnal desires:

One night alone, he gave himself up to his sexual desires, a thing he had long denied himself. When this storm had passed Nobuo felt even more lonely and wretched. With a sense of self-hatred and emptiness, he clearly saw the image of his other self – not the diligent, self-controlled aspiring person, but the shameless individual willing to go any length in dissipation and ruin.142 (ST:225)

Appalled by the dark side of himself, which he has scarcely discerned before, Nobuo jumps up from his bed, opens the verandah shutters and goes out to the well, where he draws three buckets of cold water and pours it over himself – only then does he feel that he has at last returned to his right mind143 (ST:225).

From the discussions above, one can conclude that Nobuo is, at this point of the narrative, very much still a man of the flesh. As in the case of the Tōya Maru incident in Hyōten, Nobuo‘s reminiscences on the ferry boat to Hokkaidō represent a turning point in his life: it signifies the painful awakening to his spiritual ugliness, and at the same time, marks the beginning of a process of transformation into a man of the spirit,
someone like Nagano Masao and Miura Mitsuyo in real life, capable of self-sacrifice and unconditional love. Interestingly, the author seems to tie this spiritual transformation to the topography of Hokkaidō. Miura uses the visual image of “a young tree on the plains of Hokkaidō, with its branches stretching upwards and outwards”\(^{(144)}\) (ST:193) as a metaphor of Yoshikawa’s integrity. Similarly, Miura portrays Yoshikawa and his younger sister, Fujiko, both living in Hokkaidō, as appealing characters who, “as if having lived through long winters in the pure white snows,” are “endowed with a \textit{purity} and \textit{simplicity of character}”\(^{(145)}\) (ST:193). It is the same Hokkaidō, I would argue, that literally cleanses Nobuo and provides him with the nurturing environment of personal and spiritual renewal.

Nakamura Shun’u (1877-1941), a novelist and playwright in real life, as well as a fictional character in \textit{Shiokari Tōge},\(^{(146)}\) has planted the first seed of the Gospel in Nobuo’s heart, long before his relocation to Hokkaidō – three years earlier to be exact. Miura’s portrayal of Nakamura is very interesting – it creates and reflects her ideal image of the Christian writer:

Nobuo had thought of novelists as pompous and degenerate. But there was certainly no pomposity about Nakamura. There was a \textit{candid} light in his narrow eyes...\(^{(147)}\) (ST:165) He thought Nakamura’s face reflected \textit{sincerity}. No, it was more than sincerity, it was \textit{genuine} affection\(^{(148)}\) (ST:178).

In Miura’s novel, Nobuo, at age twenty, gets to know Nakamura, the Christian writer, through the introduction of his cousin, Takashi. Nobuo finds his novel \textit{Ichijiku} (The Fig Tree) so interesting that he finishes reading it at a single sitting. In the novel, Nakamura quotes the biblical verse: “there is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:11), which has a profound impact on Nobuo.

\textit{Ichijiku} is the story of a man named Hatomiya who goes to America, becomes a Christian, and marries an American girl, Emille. On his return from America with
Emille, Hatomiya becomes the minister of a church. But he soon rekindles an old affair with a Japanese girl, Sawa. Meanwhile, Emille makes a home for three beggar children, unaware that one of them is Hatomiya’s illegitimate child by Sawa. Hatomiya’s parents resent having a foreigner in the family and make life difficult for Emille, but her Christlike forbearance and forgiving spirit, even when her husband’s behavior becomes known, finally win them over. At the end of the story, Sawa commits suicide. Unable to forgive himself, Hatomiya, too, kills himself on the railway line\textsuperscript{149} (ST:165-9).

Nobuo finds Emille’s beautiful spirit attractive, although he does not have a high opinion of Hatomiya. Indeed, thinking about Hatomiya gives him a feeling of self-satisfaction: “If a man who has faith finished up in such a way, then I, who do not believe in anything, am better off”\textsuperscript{150} (ST:170). Machiko, Nobuo’s younger sister, does not like the negative portrayal of Hatomiya, either. Brought up in a Christian environment, Machiko has never questioned the validity of her faith. Actually, she is quite naive when it comes to spiritual matters, because she wholeheartedly and mistakenly believes that all church-goers are good people and insists that “a minister would never betray his wife”\textsuperscript{151} (ST:172). Compared to Machiko, Nobuo is a much more convincing and successfully drawn character, because he grapples with issues of life and death, and he aims for the lofty ideals of genuine love and living by a higher moral standard, while showing skepticism and struggles along the way, as opposed to someone who uncritically accepts the Christian faith without wrestling with it.

Machiko has always frowned upon the idea of reading novels, arguing that they are just “made up stories” and that it would be better to read the Bible instead (ST:171).\textsuperscript{152} In a direct conversation with Nakamura, Machiko complains to the novelist in a resentful tone: “Why did you write bad things about a minister?” Nobuo, too, expresses his own doubt, asking Nakamura: “Wouldn’t it have been better if you [as a Christian novelist] had written more in praise of the minister?” Machiko and Nobuo
together pose some interesting questions as to what the role of the Christian novelist ought to be. In response to their questions, Nakamura comments on the purpose and challenges of writing as a Christian novelist:

“A novel is a complicated thing. The minister who betrayed his wife, even when she was so kind and generous, is a picture of ourselves, Christian believers who, although we experience God’s love, still fall into unbelief. It’s difficult to make my purpose understood by everybody, and even in my own church some people got quite angry about it!”153 (ST:184-5)

Like Nakamura, who has no hesitation portraying a Christian minister in a negative light, Miura depicts not only virtuous characters, but also those who sin against man and God (Saishi, Keizō and Natsue in Hyōten), as well as those who struggle at different stages of their respective journey from spiritual darkness to salvation (Yōko in Hyōten, Ryōichi in Hitsujigaoka and Nobuo in Shiokari Tōge). In her novels, Miura examines man’s egoism and sinful nature with surgical precision. Although Miura projects her own Christian sensibilities onto the thoughts and actions of some of her characters, they remain believable figures to the very end, rather than turning into didactic mouthpiece for proselytizing the Christian faith.

In the essay entitled “Shiokari Tōge no ren'ai no mae ni,“ we find the clearest description of Miura’s view on the relationship between religion and literature:

What is shōsetsu? What is literature? To an amateur like me who had not written any novels before Hyōten, that is a difficult question beyond my understanding. I was often asked: “Are religion and literature really compatible?” Uchimura Kanzō once said: “To Christians, literature is a weapon with which to battle against this world.”

Etō Jun wrote the other day, in a literary column for the Asahi Shimbun, that he considered my novel Hyōten a “challenge to the literary establishment”(bundan e no chōsen). Although my fervor is not as strong as Etō might believe, in the end, thanks to his comments, I realized that living as a Christian is a challenge to this
world, whether it be through literature, or painting, or our daily lives. It is with new insight that I recalled the words of Uchimura sensei these days.154

Miura was in total agreement with Uchimura Kanzō, who considered literature “a weapon with which to battle against this world” (kono yo to tatakau buki), and she fought her own battle with her pen, writing as an evangelical writer, creating characters who live the way she thought one ought to live, or those who are struggling to get there.

In Shiokari Tōge (especially the second half of the novel), we see how Nobuo strives to live according to Christian values and principles, which often clash with societal norms and expectations. After settling down in Sapporō, Nobuo starts working for the railway company. Before long, his superior, Wakura Reinosuke, asks him if he would like to marry his daughter, Misa. In defiance of conventional wisdom, however, Nobuo declines the offer, knowing perfectly well that it is a golden opportunity for career advancement. Rather than taking the guaranteed path to success, Nobuo dedicates his love to Fujiko, a bedridden girl with virtually no prospect of recovery or marriage. Like his friend, Nobuo, Yoshikawa has chosen nothing more ambitious than to live for the rest of his life as a railwayman, and he takes pride in it. The following observation by the narrator, although spoken in reference to Yoshikawa, could also be the perfect statement in praise of Nobuo’s integrity:

It was a rare experience to hear anyone talk as Yoshikawa did. In this age when so many young men dreamed of graduating from university with a bachelor’s degree or a doctor’s degree, or becoming a cabinet minister or a millionaire, it took a certain amount of courage to speak as Yoshikawa did.155 (ST:205-6)

It takes courage for Yoshikawa and Nobuo to live the way they do. Their course of action is based on a sense of dignity and propriety and not driven by the ideal of risshin shusse (ambition and self-advancement), which leaves little room for love and virtue,
not to mention sacrifice – the major theme that Miura had in mind while writing *Shiokari Tōge*. Nobuo appears in Miura’s novel as an admirable man of principle and purpose, who chooses not to follow the world.

In *Shiokari Tōge*, there are two characters who play critical roles in guiding Nobuo through his journey of spiritual renewal. The first is Fujiko, who draws Nobuo to Christianity; the second is Mihori Minekichi, Nobuo’s co-worker at the railway company who, although unlikable and perhaps even despicable, gives Nobuo the final push towards his reaffirming his newfound faith. In the chapter “Yuki no machikado” (Street Corner in the Snow), Mihori is caught stealing a colleague’s pay packet at the railway office. On behalf of Mihori and at the risk of his own career, Nobuo pleads with his superior, Wakura, to reconsider Mihori’s dismissal. As a result, both Mihori and Nobuo are transferred to the office in Asahikawa. On a winter’s night in later December the year Nobuo comes to settle in Sapporō, he finds himself drawn to the words of a roadside preacher by the name of Iki Kazuma:

> But listen, everyone, I know the biggest fool in all the world. That man is Jesus Christ... Jesus never did a single thing that was wrong... He taught men what true love was. Do you know... all or you... what true love really is? His voice was urgent and sonorous, but the only one who stayed to listen was Nobuo... ‘Ladies and gentlemen, *to love is to give your most precious thing to somebody else*. And what is our most precious thing, do you suppose? It is our life, isn’t it? This Jesus Christ gave His life to us... Jesus Christ, who never did anything wrong, shouldered the sins of the whole world and was nailed to a cross... When He was on the cross Jesus prayed for the people who nailed Him there, like this: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”... I believe this man possessed the very character of God.”

Writing as an evangelical writer and publishing in a Christian magazine, Miura is apparently projecting her voice here onto that of, Iki. This is perhaps the closest that Miura comes to “proselytizing” in her novels, which, in general, refrain from such...
preaching, and are driven instead by plot and an in-depth examination of her characters’ thoughts and action.

Thinking of Jesus who could love His enemies enough to die for them, Nobuo has a "poignant longing to live in accordance with His teachings – even if the whole thing were a deception" (ST:273). Nobuo hesitates to admit that he is a sinner, however, when Iki asks him if he realizes that he was the one who nailed Jesus to the cross. At the suggestion of Iki, in order to see how far he falls short of God’s perfect standard, Nobuo selects one passage from the Bible – the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) – and tries to put the teachings therein into practice. “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27). God has called Nobuo to live a life of compassion and unconditional love. As a result, Nobuo decides to love Mihori, both as a friend and as a neighbor.

It is no easy task, however, to obey God’s command: Nobuo soon finds himself caught in a dilemma between fulfilling his sense of obligation towards Mihori and being true to his feelings of love towards Fujiko. Nobuo remembers that when he first arrived in Sapporō, no one was kinder to him than Mihori (ST:268). Naturally, out of gratitude, Nobuo feels a strong sense of obligation towards Mihori, whom he considers a neighbor in need – none of his colleagues shows any sympathy towards Mihori; it reminds Nobuo of the man left wounded and half dead on the roadside in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (ST:279).

In accordance with the teachings of Christ, Nobuo realizes that he has to do something for his neighbor, although he never expected that he would be asked to make the difficult choice of saying farewell to his beloved Fujiko, still bedridden with tuberculosis, in order to accompany Mihori to Asahikawa. For a year, Fujiko has been making steady progress; fearing that an announcement of his transfer might affect Fujiko emotionally, as well as physically, Nobuo struggles to break the news to her.
Before heading off to Asahikawa, Nobuo proposes to Fujiko and leans over to kiss her in a dramatic scene:

This time Nobuo leaned right over her and pressed his lips to her quivering ones. In a panic Fujiko tried to push Nobuo off with both her hands. After a moment, Nobuo raised his head. Fujiko was pale and trembling. Her chest rose and fell as she gasped for breath. ‘Fujiko.’ Nobuo spoke her name softly. Fujiko covered her face with both hands and said, ‘Mr. Nagano! I have the lung disease! If it should pass to you...’ Fujiko’s concern for his health was even greater than the happiness of being kissed.160 (ST:298)

This episode vividly portrays the depth of love that the couple have for each other. It also underscores the dilemma facing Nobuo as he searches for a response to the demand of the Christian faith. It is out of a sense of duty, not only towards Mihori, as his friend and neighbor, but more importantly, towards God, as a Christian, that Nobuo finally makes the difficult choice of going to Asahikawa. As a novelist, Miura skillfully exploits the dramatic effect of the conflict between duty and love and gives it a new interpretation with a Christian context: Nobuo loves Fujiko dearly, but he loves God even more. It does not mean, however, that Nobuo’s sense of duty trumps his personal feeling. From a Christian perspective, the conflict is nicely resolved: By loving God, and living the way God wants him to live, Nobuo manages to fulfill his duty to Mihori, as his friend and neighbor, and to God, as a Christian, while loving Fujiko at the same time.

Ironically enough, although Nobuo has gone beyond the call to help Mihori, his sacrifice is not at all appreciated by his “neighbor”:

‘You a friend! Don’t make me laugh. You’re a most dangerous fellow to me, even if you never announce that I stole a colleague’s pay packet.’ Mihori was not listening to Nobuo.
‘Mihori!’ Nobuo could stand it no longer and became severe. ‘Mihori, stop suspecting such things. And you had better stop drinking. It’s disgusting to go
drinking and pick quarrels with people. If you’d just stop drinking, you’d be a decent person.’
‘A-ah, now you’ve shown your true colors...’ Mihori swayed on his feet. ‘Nagano, I’ve got one more thing to say. You want to win my gratitude, but I don’t want anyone doing me any favors.’
He sat down on the step in the porch and searched for his shoes. Nobuo gave him a lamp. Mihori thrust his feet into his worn clogs, bumped into the door with a crash so that it jammed and he had to struggle to open it, and went out.
‘Ah, just a minute, I’ve forgotten something. Perhaps you have designs on Wakura’s daughter? No – I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have mentioned that.’
Mihori went off laughing loudly, leaving the door about six inches open.161 (ST:304-5)

It turns out that Mihori is the one who is after Wakura’s daughter, Misa, which explains why Mihori sees Nobuo as a threat rather than a friend or ally. Mihori has been seeing Misa without Wakura’s knowledge, and he eventually marries her when she becomes pregnant – very much to the dismay of her father. The month after Mihori and Misa are married, they have a pretty little girl. Furthermore, Mihori stops drinking and becomes a diligent worker. Early signs of optimism fall, however, as Mihori’s effort fails to gain the respect of either his wife or his father-in-law. As a result, Mihori remains as cynical as ever.

As the story unfolds, we are told that five years have passed since Mihori’s marriage. During that time, Nobuo has become the Sunday school principal of his church. Fujiko’s health has also improved dramatically – to such an extent that a date for the engagement ceremony has been set. Meanwhile, Mihori has survived the Russo-Japanese war (1904-05) and has returned to Japan as a war veteran. Like many other returning soldiers, he begins to think seriously about life and death. He begins to attend Nobuo’s bible class regularly, although his real motive is to find out how genuine Nobuo’s faith really is (ST:326-7),162 so that he can eventually expose his “falsehood”163 (ST:329). Another goal of Mihori’s is to keep a spiteful eye on Nobuo; he is obviously
jealous of all the extravagant compliments that he keeps hearing from his wife in praise of Nobuo. Indeed, Mihori feels insecure, and perhaps even worthless: in spite of the fact Mihori is a returned war veteran, his wife, Misa, seems to look down on him, while heaping lavish praises on Nobuo’s character (ST:326). Mihori’s spitefulness and cynicism is evident in the following exchange:

‘Mr. Nagano, the person you are going to marry has lung TB and spinal TB and on top of that is lame, isn’t she?
‘That’s right.’
Clearly, Mihori was a little drunk and become bold. Nobuo was used to his rudeness, but when he spoke about Fujiko so contemptuously, even Nobuo became angry.
Mihori went on, ‘A fine person like you, if you had your choice you wouldn’t marry a person like that, would you? There was something about my wife Misa you didn’t like, wasn’t there?’
Nobuo silently pried his chopsticks.
‘Hey, Mr. Nagano, what has this woman got about her that’s better than my wife?... There’s nothing to complain about in Misa, as far as health and beauty are concerned. It’s an insult to prefer a cripple to Misa. It stands to reason that Misa should be annoyed.’ (ST:341-2)

Mihori belongs to the lower class and likes to offend people, especially when drunk, with his acidulous, ascerbic and often sarcastic, remarks. Living in an age in which elitism and egoistic tendencies preclude any possibility of true brotherhood or a sincere showing of human compassion, he is forced into isolation, maliciousness, and cynicism. Mihori totally rejects companionship as he questions Nobuo’s sincerity in trying to become his friend and neighbor. Constantly despised by people and assailed by a sense of worthlessness, Mihori deliberately annoys Nobuo with his pointedly sarcastic comments, as if that were the only way to affirm his existence.

Despite being a member of the supporting cast, Mihori plays a major, perhaps even critical, role as the catalyst for the protagonist’s spiritual recovery. He forces
Nobuo to reflect on his true intentions and makes him take a hard look at his inadequacies as a human being. Nobuo realizes that there is something selfish and impure in his motives for trying to become Mihori’s neighbor. In the name of helping Mihori, Nobuo has actually looked down on him right from the beginning\(^1\) (ST:309).

As Nobuo confesses in his baptismal testimony, when Mihori roughly pushed off his helping hands, he “hated and cursed him in his heart”\(^2\) (ST:309). Nobuo became more and more hateful towards this sardonic “friend” of his, until at last he realized that he himself was the wounded traveler – the sinner who needed help – and that it was really Jesus who was the Good Samaritan: “In my pride, I had taken the place of God and looked down on my friend, I realized what a great sin it was, not to give God His rightful place”\(^3\) (ST:310).

Nobuo has, thanks to Mihori, come to an understanding of God’s love. Having accepted Christ, Nobuo manages to humble himself, despite his long-held pride as a person of samurai descent, in order to sincerely ask for Mihori’s forgiveness:

‘Mihori, it was very impertinent of me. I was conceited and thought that somehow or other I could elevate and change your character. When you first came to this house and angrily told me not to make a fool of you, I had no intention of doing so. But I see now that I was really looking down on you. Please forgive me.’\(^4\) (ST:310-1)

Nobuo’s spiritual maturity, however, seems to have brought very little change in Mihori so far – he is as cynical as ever on the day before Nobuo’s engagement ceremony (and his tragic death at the Shiokari Pass on the same day). The following passage, indicative of Mihori’s attitude at the time, shows a persistent display of scornful negativity and a deep-rooted distrust of Nobuo’s integrity:

‘Don’t you think you’ll be sacrificing yourself for that woman in the end?’...
‘I love her, that’s why I’m marrying her.’

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'Is that so?' I can't completely trust this man Nagano yet. Somewhere you have the smell of a swindler about you. The more fine and noble you appear to be, the less I feel I can trust you. This girl, I suppose she’s rolling in money? he laughed scornfully. He really knew surprisingly little about Fujiko.

In a moment Mihori was asleep and snoring. Nobuo pulled out a mattress, rolled him on to it and covered him with a quilt. It did not matter what he had been saying – when he lay asleep, it was impossible not to love him.
that day would never have forgiven them. For in the world of the samurai, taking revenge on an enemy was an honorable deed.\textsuperscript{(ST:253-4)}

By striving to live in accordance with the teachings of Christ, Nobuo has learned the power of forgiveness – the prerequisite for true love. Mihori has, but a moment earlier, heaped insult on top of injury, calling Fujiko a “cripple” and accusing Nobuo of being a “gold-digging swindler,” and yet, Nobuo finds it impossible not to love him; when Mihori falls asleep the next instant, Nobuo rolls him on to a mattress and gently covers him with a quilt – a small gesture of caring and compassion that epitomizes the love of Christ.

Towards the end of the novel, in a climactic scene at the Shiokari Pass, Nobuo demonstrates what that love really means – sacrificing one’s own life so that others might be saved. It is the twenty-eighth of February. Nobuo and Mihori are on the same train heading back to Sapporō, where the joyful ceremony of Nobuo’s engagement to Fujiko is to take place later that day. As the train passes a sharp curve near the top of the Shiokari Pass, a coupling suddenly breaks and the rear part of the train starts running away. Nobuo immediately begins praying and then pounces on the icy hand brake. Exerting all his strength, he manages to move the wheel a little to slow down the train, but for some reason, the brake wheel would move no further, and the train begins to run away again. We are told by the narrator that Nobuo, in order to prevent an inevitable derailment, does the unthinkable at the critical moment – jumping down on to the railway track and throwing his body under the train to stop it:

‘It’s stopped, we’re saved!’ somebody shouted, and a woman suddenly burst into tears. When someone announced what Nobuo had done, there was silence for a moment and then the passengers broke into rapidly mounting excitement. In twos and threes the men jumped from the high platform into the deep snow. Its pure whiteness was spattered with bright red, and Nobuo’s body was drenched with blood. They
leaned over it and wept. In death, he appeared to be laughing. Mihori, who, right up to the time of Nobuo’s death had sneered and resisted him, could only condemn himself now. Nobuo’s death changed Mihori completely.173 (ST:367)

The symbolic meaning of Nobuo’s death is captured nicely in an earlier passage, in which Yoshikawa talks about the winter landscape in Hokkaido:

Everything is blanketed in white snow, there’s not a speck of green to be seen... Apart from the pine trees, all the trees look dead... At first, when I saw these vast wastes I thought that this was nature shrouded in death. But when, after about half a year of winter, the green grass appears from beneath the snow, I know that winter is by no means a dead season. Lately, I’ve even come to wonder if the death of human beings may not be just like the winter in Hokkaido, and that sometime we will come back again as large as life.174 (ST:199-200)

After Nobuo’s death, in a letter to his mother, Kiku, Fujiko writes that “she has inherited Nobuo’s life, just as if he were alive”175 (ST:371). In a similar fashion, Nobuo’s death has breathed new life into the character Mihori: changing him completely and transforming him from a cynical skeptic to a man of faith. In addition, many lives have been touched and impacted by Nobuo’s act of heroism and self-sacrifice:

In the bath houses and the barbers’ shops, talk about Nobuo flourished...
‘I thought the Yaso were an evil sect, but look how splendidly one of them died. You can’t say Yaso is a bad religion,’ people were saying. At a time when a man had to forfeit his inheritance if he became a Christian, Nobuo’s death dispelled this ignorance. Not only that – ten railway workers, mostly from Sapporo and Asahikawa, entered the Christian faith together. Among them was Minekichi Mihori.176 (ST:366)

As the novel draws to a close, Yoshikawa and Fujiko visit the scene of tragedy at the Shiokari Pass. In remembrance of his best friend, Nobuo, Yoshikawa recalls the biblical verse: “unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a
single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds“ (John 12:24). Nobuo was a true Christian who abided by the teachings of Christ: “You are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven“ (Matthew 5:13-16). By giving up his life at the Shiokari Pass (coincidentally, and perhaps most fittingly, the place name contains the Japanese word shio, which means “salt”), Nobuo has saved not only the lives of all the passengers, but also the souls of many others.

*Shiokari Tōge* is Miura’s most profound statement on humanity: it sheds light on man’s spiritual darkness and moral degradation on one hand, while offering hope of redemption through God’s love on the other. Thematically, the novel deals with the most fundamental issues of human existence, namely: (1) sin and redemption; (2) life and death; (3) love, faith, sacrifice and forgiveness. *Shiokari Tōge* is a powerful novel because it asks all the tough questions that people are either unwilling or afraid to address, constantly forcing the reader to ponder: “What would I do if I am confronted with a similar situation?” It is also a powerful novel because it demonstrates, through Nobuo’s own struggles, how the Gospels challenge us in a profound way to make difficult decisions in our life. If Miura’s goal as a Christian writer was to write a novel of soul-searching and self-discovery, she definitely succeeded.

Early on in her writing career, Miura established herself as a Christian novelist, who created a fictional world grounded on the central tenets of “sin and redemption.“ Her first three novels – *Hyōten*, *Hitsujigaoka* and *Shiokari Tōge* – form a tightly woven trilogy which explores the universal themes of love, forgiveness, conscience and the search for faith. Read together, they represent a spiritual journey on the part of the protagonists, from an icy cold world totally devoid of human warmth (*Hyōten*), to an awakening to the true meaning of love (*Hitsujigaoka*), and ultimately to the actualization of that love (*Shiokari Tōge*).
Miura’s novels portray flesh-and-blood characters who show believable emotions – real people from diverse backgrounds (doctors, pastors, painters, teachers, railway workers...) who love, hate, betray, struggle and repent. As a storyteller, Miura focuses on the way people live their lives (ikikata). Characters like Keizō and Yōko in Hyōten, Ryōichi in Hitsuji-gaoka, and Nobuo in Shikari Tōge are by no means perfect, but they are keenly aware of their inadequacies as human beings and sincerely long for salvation. As we have seen in Shikari Tōge, Miura seemed to have found her formula for success in her writing of fictional biographies (hyōden shōsetsu), a genre which proved so effective that it would become a trademark of her literary works.

In the next chapter, I will examine two fictional biographies written by Miura within a historical context: Hosokawa Garasha fujin (Lady Gracia: A Samurai Wife’s Love, Strife and Faith, 1975) and Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi (Sen no Rikyū and His Wives, 1980). Having established her credentials as a Christian novelist, Miura found more room for artistic pursuit in her historical novels, which are marked by a nuanced, at times poetic, style of writing. Nevertheless, Miura never wavered from her position as an evangelical writer. Indeed, one might argue that her historical novels build on the solid foundation laid out in her earlier works. Set in the late sixteenth century, at the peak of the sengoku jidai, a historical period of constant warfare and political turmoil, Hosokawa Garasha fujin and Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi portray a cynical world of gekokujo, in which vassals repeatedly overthrew their lords in acts of betrayal, and fathers, sons and brothers killed each other fighting for supremacy. It was also a world in which women of the warrior class found themselves overpowered by sheer masculine force and used as political tools at best, and outright hostages at worst. In her historical novels, Miura revisits the prevalent theme of “sin and redemption,” focusing this time on the sin of betrayal, power and control, and offering hopes of redemption through the exemplary lives of two historical figures: (1) Hosokawa Garasha (1563-
1600), who, despite being the daughter of the great traitor Akechi Mitsuhide (1528-1582), redeemed her honor by dying as a true woman warrior; and (2) Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591), the great tea master, who defied the authority of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) in his final act of ritual suicide, thereby symbolically purifying the art of chanoyu and cleansing it from the sin of worldly power struggles. As a writer of historical novels, Miura offers razor-sharp insight into human nature and psychology, focusing on the emotional responses of her characters and the motivating forces that drove historical events. I will now examine how Miura combined historical fact and fiction to create a sense of historical reality, using the proven genre of fictional biography (hyōden shōsetsu).
CHAPTER FOUR

Rekishi sono mama or rekishi-banare?
A Critical Analysis of Miura’s Historical Novels

In this chapter, I will examine two important historical novels written by Miura during her mid-career – Hosokawa Garasha fujin (1975) and Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi (1980). Both novels are set in the latter half of sixteenth-century Japan, a time of chronic warfare and constant political turmoil. It was also a period that witnessed the arrival of the first Christian missionaries beginning with Saint Francis Xavier in 1549. As a result, a number of daimyo converted to Christianity – some out of strong personal faith while others were driven by political and economic ambitions. As a historical novelist, Miura turns to this intriguing period and uses it as a springboard for her artistic imagination. The two central characters in Miura’s novels – Hosokawa Garasha (1563-1600) and the great tea master Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591) – are fascinating historical figures not only because of the tragic and dramatic end to their lives, but more importantly, because of the exceptional qualities in their character – both were “figures of resistance” who refused to compromise their values, beliefs, ideals and principles for the sake of survival.

Hosokawa Garasha fujin is the story of Hosokawa Garasha, a devout Christian known in history as the daughter of Akechi Mitsuhide (1528?-1582), whose sudden betrayal caused the death of his lord Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582) in the Honnō-ji Incident. As the wife of the warlord Hosokawa Tadaoki (1563-1646), Garasha redeemed her honor by choosing death over capture by enemy forces led by Tadaoki’s rival, Ishida Mitsunari (1560-1600), thereby becoming a paragon of virtue and courage. Sen no
Rikyū to sono tsumatachi, on the other hand, explores some of the unanswered questions surrounding the historical fact of Rikyū’s ritual suicide (seppuku) ordered by his lord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536?-1598): Was it because Rikyū had offended Hideyoshi by allowing a statue of himself in the likeness of Buddha erected on the main gate of Daitokuji, literally forcing Hideyoshi to pass under him when he visited the temple? Or was it because he had rejected the advances that Hideyoshi made at his daughter, O-Gin? What about the unsubstantiated charges that Rikyū had sold ordinary utensils at an inflated price for profit? An examination of Miura’s historical novel will offer some interesting insight into the relationship between the great tea master and the most powerful political and military figure of the time. I will argue that, while staying as close to historical fact as she possibly could, Miura also used her poetic imagination to re-interpret the life and art of Rikyū – specifically from a Christian perspective, and she did it by reconciling her Christian beliefs with the native culture and traditions of Japan.

In order to have a fuller understanding of Miura’s historical novels, I will use an intertextual approach. My goal is to illustrate how various texts informed Miura’s works. My analysis focuses on how Miura draws on a variety of historical texts (chronicles, family histories, memoirs, accounts by missionaries, poems attributed to actual historical figures, etc.), as well as scholarly studies of modern times, and combines these intertextual references with her own artistic imagination to create fascinating works of historical fiction.

I will also compare Hosokawa Garasha fujin with Akutagawa Ryūnosuke’s short story entitled “Ito oboegaki” (Memoir of Ito, 1923), and a slightly longer piece written by Endō Shūsaku entitled “Nihon no seijo” (Saintly Woman of Japan, 1980), both dealing with the historical figure Hosokawa Garasha. In addition, I will compare Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi with Nogami Yaeko’s novel Hideyoshi to Rikyū, which portrays Rikyū and his wife, O-Riki, in a very different light. By comparing Miura’s novels with
the historical fiction of these writers, I demonstrate how differently these writers describe the “facts” that are supposedly based on the same historical event, thereby sanctioning a particular mode of interpretation, motivated by the author’s own values and artistic concern. I would argue that, writing as a Christian novelist, Miura, too, is not free from her own evangelical bias, and she portrays historical characters and idealizes them in accordance with her Christian worldview.

My analysis of Miura’s historical novels will be conducted within the context of taishū bungaku, which incidentally became an important genre during the 1930s with the emergence of the so-called jidai shōsetsu, or mass-oriented historical fiction on samurai themes, a prime example being Yoshikawa Eiji’s bestseller Miyamoto Musashi (1935). I would argue that Miura’s historical novels appeal to the mass readership in very much the same way as the Heike monogatari, known for vividly described battle scenes that recount the bravery of medieval warriors who valued loyalty and honor over life. Hosokawa Garasha and Rikyū, as portrayed in Miura’s novels, are both tragic heroes who possess the same kind of epic qualities found in the beloved figures of the Heike narrative (such as Atsumori) – the audience would sympathize with their tragic fate and admire their nobility, integrity and courage.¹ As the biwa hōshi performed from the repertoire of Heike war tales, they added details to fascinate their audience, at times turning average human beings, even cowardly figures, into warriors befitting the ideals of medieval warrior ethics as envisioned by the Heike authors. In the same fashion, Miura, too, uses her artistic imagination to re-create highly idealized and romanticized characters in conformity with her Christian worldview, although some of the representations might not be historically accurate. I will examine the way in which Miura combines historical materials with invention and discuss the literary techniques she uses to recast these characters and to reconstruct their lives according to her own ideological position.
History and literature are considered inseparable in both the East and the West. Both Roland Barthes and Hayden White claim that there is no fundamental distinction between history and fiction. In *The Content of the Form*, White further argues that history is akin to fiction in its methods and tasks, and that historical discourse and literary discourse share the same system of meaning production (the modes of emplotment).² For White, and for Paul Ricoeur, whom White quotes in *The Content of the Form*, plot is not a structural component of fictional stories alone; it is crucial to the historical representations of events as well.³

In an intriguing essay entitled “The Fictions of Factual Representation,” White has this to say about the relation between history and fiction:

> Historians are concerned with events which can be assigned to specific time-space locations, events which are (or were) in principle observable or perceivable, whereas imaginative writers – poets, novelists, playwrights – are concerned with both these kinds of events and imagined, hypothetical, or invented ones… Although historians and writers of fiction may be interested in different kinds of events, both the forms of their respective discourses and their aims in writing are often the same. In addition, in my view, the techniques or strategies that they use in the composition of their discourses can be shown to be substantially the same.⁴

Having thus posited the similarities between historical and literary discourses, White proceeds to challenge the notion of the opposition of history to fiction. According to White, historiography was, prior to the French Revolution, “conventionally regarded as a literary art” and it was in the early nineteenth century that historians began “to identify truth with fact and to regard fiction as the opposite of truth, hence as a hindrance to the understanding of reality rather than as a way of apprehending it.”⁵ White argues that the historian, too, relies on “fictive techniques in the representation of real events in the historical discourse,” employing the same kind of “rhetorical devices, tropes, figures, and schemata of words and thoughts” used by poets and novelists.⁶ He
sees historians of the nineteenth century as “captives of the illusion that one could write history without employing any fictional techniques whatsoever” and faults them for failing to realize that “the facts do not speak for themselves, but that the historian speaks for them [and] on their behalf.” In White’s view, the process of writing history is essentially the same as that of writing fiction:

Novelists might be dealing only with imaginary events whereas historians are dealing with real ones, but the process of fusing events, whether imaginary or real, into a comprehensible totality capable of serving as the object of a representation, is a poetic process. Here the historian must utilize precisely the same tropological strategies, the same modalities representing relationships in words, that the poet or novelist uses. In the unprocessed historical record and in the chronicle of events which the historian extracts from the record, the facts exist only as a congeries of contiguously related fragments. These fragments have to be put together to make a whole of a particular, not a general, kind. And they are put together in the same ways that novelists use to put together figments of their imaginations to display an ordered world.

In classical Chinese literature, too, historical discourse was considered to be the same as literary discourse – The Records of the Grand Historian (Shih-chi) was not only a historical text, but also one of the great works of literature. As Haruo Shirane points out, Heian Japan followed the Chinese model by creating a textual hierarchy which held religious/philosophical texts, histories and poetry in the highest regard while relegating fiction to the bottom – basically sharing the view that history is a form of literature, a higher form than fiction. The famous Italian poet and novelist Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) disagrees with the hierarchy, however, for in his book On the Historical Novel, he underscores the inadequacies of history alone as a form of representation of the human experience:

If one takes away from the poet what distinguishes him from a historian, the right to invent facts, what is left? Poetry; yes, poetry. For what, in the end, does history give us? Events that are known only, so to speak, from the outside, what men
have done. But what they have thought, the feelings that have accompanied their decisions and their plans, their successes and misfortunes, the words by which... they have expressed their anger, poured out their sadness, by which, in a word, they have revealed their individuality: all that, more or less, is passed over in silence by history: and all that is the domain of poetry.\textsuperscript{13}

Murasaki Shikibu, too, essentially made the same argument back in the eleventh century. In the “Tamakazura” chapter of the \textit{Genji monogatari}, she had Genji speak in defense of the art of fiction, arguing that “historical texts like the \textit{Nihon shoki} tell only part of the story and it is in the \textit{monogatari} that one finds the most useful learning and the details of life.”\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Monogatari}, then, in the view of Murasaki Shikibu, as Richard Okada points out, supplement the function of history: they fill in the details and provide an \textit{underside} (\textit{ura}) of life. It is precisely this \textit{private, emotional underside} (\textit{ura}) of human relations, I would argue, that Miura focuses on in her historical novels. We are allowed, as readers, to travel the same spiritual path together with Garasha and to penetrate the psyche of Rikyū in order to come up with one of the many possible interpretations of some of the most significant events in their lives.

In \textit{The Content of the Form}, White emphasizes the difference between “grasping the meaning of a complex sequence of human events,” and “being able to explain why or even how the particular events that the sequence comprises occurred.”\textsuperscript{15} According to White, one might be able to explain why and how every event in a sequence occurred and still not have understood the \textit{meaning} of the sequence considered as a whole. Allowing us to grasp the meaning and significance of historical events -- that, in my opinion, is the value of historical novels. I would argue that what matters to Miura is not so much “historical truth,” but “emotional truth,” and that, as a writer of historical novels, Miura succeeded in enabling the reader to grasp the meaning of the life of Garasha and to make sense of the final act of Rikyū’s ritual suicide.
In an essay entitled “Rekishi sono mama to rekishi-banare” (History as It Is and Deviation from History, 1964), the Japanese novelist and literary critic Ōoka Shōhei argues that, since historical materials deal with the past, they are not as definite as events that unfold before our eyes. Preserved in the form of documents and archives, they are not free from the subjectivity of the author and potential alteration of historical truth. In order to reconstruct history, historians need to use their imagination and power of construction. What is at work here is very much the same as that which is at work in the creative process of the novelist.¹⁶

Like Murasaki Shikibu, Ōoka sees the interior of the human mind as a realm that allows novelists to display their prowess most freely. In Ōoka’s view, Kikuchi Kan and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke excelled as historical novelists precisely because they were able to give new interpretations to historical characters in the manner of a psychologist.¹⁷ The same can be said about Miura, who managed to create a sense of reality in her historical novels by presenting a realistic psychological portrayal of her characters within their social, political and historical settings. In order to externalize the interiority, Miura often juxtaposed a character’s thoughts in parenthesis (italics in English translation) with his or her spoken words and action. Such a tendency to have the narrator deliver judgments and explanations on the characters’ actions and motivations is striking. It is also a narrative technique that has become a hallmark of Miura’s writings. The essence of Miura’s unique narrative style is best characterized by Chieko Mulhern in these terms: “Miura let the characters speak their mind to the reader through the dynamic interplay of what they really want to say but cannot (honne) and what they feel obligated to say (tatemae)... according to the norm and ideal that society dictates... Inevitably, honne tends to reveal the dark sides of human nature, the source of the ‘original sin,’ the message that Miura tries to drive home to her Japanese readers.”¹⁸ In her historical novels, too, Miura reveals the dark sides of human nature.
As a Christian novelist, Miura drives home the message that no one is perfect, not even Hosokawa Garasha or Sen no Rikyū, who have been consecrated and sanctified respectively as a “saintly woman” (seijo) and the “Sage of Tea” (chasei). Perhaps the power of Miura’s novels lies in the fact that all her characters, without fail, are forced to have a direct confrontation with their darker side as they travel through the life journey of spiritual awakening.

In The Historical Novel (1937), Georg Lukács (1885-1971), one of the most influential literary critics of the twentieth century, argues that the true historical novel, which emerges with the work of Sir Walter Scott, presents “an artistically faithful image of a concrete historical epoch” and portrays “the individuality of characters [derived] from the historical peculiarity of their age.”

In Lukács’s view, “the novel must be faithful to history despite its invented hero and imagined plot.” It has to “demonstrate by artistic means that historical circumstances and characters existed in precisely such and such a way.” Citing the work of his predecessor, Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873), in On the Historical Novel, Lukács emphasizes the importance of historical faithfulness and argues that historical facts offer the best clues to human nature:

[Manzoni] asserts that there neither is, nor can be, any fundamental contradiction between historical faithfulness and dramatic individualization. Historical tradition informs us of the facts and the general trends of development. The dramatist has no right to alter any of this. Nor has he any cause to, for if he really wishes to portray his characters as living individuals, then he will find his most important clues and aids in historical facts and the deeper he penetrates into history, the more will this be the case. “Now where can true drama better be found than in what men have really done? A poet finds in history an imposing character who arrests him and seems to say: observe me, I shall teach you something about human nature; the poet accepts the invitation; he wishes to draw this character, to develop him: where can he find external deeds which conform more to the true idea of the man he is proposing to depict than in the deeds actually performed by this man?”
Lukács argues further that a great historical novel “brings the past close to us and allows us to experience its real and true being.” In his view, a portrayal of history is impossible without a felt relationship to the present, which consists in “bringing the past to life as the prehistory of the present, in giving poetic life to those historical, social and human forces which, in the course of a long evolution, have made our present-day life what it is and as we experience it.”

In Japan, it was the quintessential Meiji novelist Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) who established the theoretical framework for the writing of historical novels. In a short but influential essay entitled “Rekishi sono mama to rekishi-banare” (History as It Is and Deviation from History, 1915), Ōgai outlined his approach to historical fiction and stated his general preference that history be told as it is: “When I examined historical materials, I came to respect what is natural in such materials and I hated to make arbitrary changes... Seeing contemporary authors write about their own life just as it is, I wondered if we should not do the same in depicting the past.”

Apparently taking aim at the Japanese Naturalist writers who were dominating the literary scene with their confessional I-novels, Ōgai made the argument that if a frank, undisguised expression of the whole truth was deemed desirable for the present, an unvarnished account of the actual state of things should be considered equally desirable in depicting historical events.

In an essay entitled “Aoki ōkami wa rekishi shōsetsu ka?” (Is Aoki ōkami a historical novel?), Ōoka Shōhei, too, cautions against the danger of distorting history, as one views the past through the filtered lens of modern perspectives and contemporary values: “If you ask me whether it is permissible [for the author] to make arbitrary changes to historical facts for modern-day motives, the answer is ‘No’... If [an author of historical fiction] pays no respect to historical facts, the illusion of history will vanish
and his work will end up being empty and hollow, qualifying neither as history nor as fiction.”

Soon after the death of the Meiji emperor and the junshi (following one’s lord in death) of General Nogi and his wife in 1912, Ōgai began to write almost exclusively in the vein of historical literature. Between 1912 and 1914, Ōgai produced three novellas – “Okitsu Yagoemon no Isho” (The Last Testament of Okitsu Yagoemon, 1912), “Abe Ichizoku” (The Abe Clan, 1913) and “Sakai jiken” (Incident at Sakai, 1914) – all of them demonstrating Ōgai’s meticulous attention to historical detail and his emphasis on telling history as it actually occurred (rekishi sono mama). Following these novellas, Ōgai entered what Eric Johnson calls the “second phase” (spring of 1914 to early 1916) in his development as a writer of historical fiction.28 “Sanshō Dayū” (Sanshō the Bailiff, 1915) and “Takase-bune” (The Takase Boat, 1916), two of the best known works of historical fiction by Ōgai, were written during this time. Although both stories are set in the past, and in the case of “Sanshō Dayū,” based upon a historical anecdote, they are closer to pure fiction than a faithful representation of history. Because of its modern theme of “euthanasia,” “Takase-bune” is considered by most critics to be the furthest point of deviation, on the part of Ōgai, from the historical past (rekishi-banare). It was during this phase, in January 1915, that Ōgai wrote his famous essay “Rekishi sono mama to rekishi-banare” as a postscript to the story “Sanshō Dayū.” Having established his general preference for fidelity to history early in the essay, Ōgai expresses his dilemma as a historical novelist in these terms: “Having a distaste for altering the natural in history, I became bound by history without knowing it. I suffered and gasped for breath under these bonds, and I tried to break loose from them.”29 Ōgai’s statement clearly indicated his desire to break out of the bondage of the factual past and his creative urge to fictionalize. It seemed that Ōgai felt uncomfortable writing in the rekishi-banare mode, however, for he concluded his essay saying: “I wrote Sanshō dayū
wanting to distance myself from history, but when I looked over what I had written, I had the feeling, somehow, that I had not deviated enough from history. This is my honest confession. “30 During the final phase of his writing career (1916-1922), Ōgai would return to his earlier stance of rekishi sono mama, and the use of factual settings with which he felt the most comfortable, producing three long biographies (shiden) of obscure Tokugawa period physicians or scholars – Shibue Chūsai (1916), Izawa Ranken (1916-1917) and the unfinished Hōjō Katei (1917-1921).

In contrast, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke seemed completely at ease using history as a point of departure and deviating from it. As Ōoka notes in his essay, “Rekishi shōsetsu ron” (On Historical Novels, 1968), Akutagawa’s historical fiction tends to deviate from history (rekishi-banare) and can be situated at the opposite end of the continuum. The stories “Rashōmon” (1915) and “Imogayu” (Yam Gruel, 1916) are well known to have been adapted from the setsuwa collection Konjaku monogatari (Tales of Times Now Past), which includes short Buddhist didactic narratives as well as secular tales compiled during the late Heian period (794-1185). The psyche of modern man is unmistakably projected onto the original texts and stories, and historical circumstances therein are used as nothing more than an embellished setting to underscore the theme of man’s egoism.31 Akutagawa sees history as a springboard for his elaborations and inventions. His aim is not to present a faithful representation of history per se.

In a collection of essays entitled Chōkōdō zakki (Chōkōdō Miscellany), first published in the April 1922 issue of the literary magazine Shinchō, Akutagawa explained why most of his stories are set in the distant past:

Supposing I have thought of some particular theme and decide to write a story about it, in order to express this theme as artistically and strikingly as possible, I must include unusual incidents. The more unusual the incidents, the harder it will be to describe them convincingly as events of present-day Japan. If an author
nevertheless insists on making a modern story out of such events, it generally seems unnatural to readers, and the result is that his carefully chosen theme drops by the wayside.\textsuperscript{32}

As Donald Keene correctly points out, although Akutagawa strives to create an impression of verisimilitude in his stories, many of them set in the twelfth century, the late sixteenth century and the beginning of the Meiji era, his historical works are “essentially modern in outlook.”\textsuperscript{33} Akutagawa confesses that he “feels no great yearning for the past even when [he writes] about distant time.” Indeed, he considers himself “far luckier to have been born in present-day Japan than in the Heian or Edo periods.”\textsuperscript{34} As Iwagami Jun’ichi observes, Akutagawa by no means aims for a re-creation of the past, nor is he interested in pursuing historical truth; as a matter of fact, he tends to distort history and deviate from it quite often because he sees history as nothing more than a means to express his own thoughts.\textsuperscript{35}

Miura, on the other hand, seems to agree with Ōgai, who advocates rekishi sono mama, and with Lukács, who argues that the true historical novel should be “an artistically faithful image of a concrete historical epoch” and that it should portray “the individuality of characters [derived] from the historical peculiarity of their age.” Rather than donning modern characters in historical costumes and projecting contemporary views and attitudes back in time (as Akutagawa seems to have done, in the view of Keene and Iwagami), Miura drew her characters in such a manner that the various details of their life reflected the historical, social and cultural context of their existence.

In another essay entitled “Rekishi Shōsetsu” (Historical Fiction), also collected in Chōkōdō zakki, Akutagawa distinguishes between two types of historical fiction: (1) works in which the author sets the past in clear contrast with the present, treating people of ancient times as belonging to a unique generation, as if the author himself was part of that society or culture; and (2) those written by authors who seek commonality
between the heart of contemporary people and that of people of the past. An author writing historical fiction of the first category usually tries to be faithful to the historical and cultural milieu of the time. Accordingly, if she were to depict the relationship between men and women among the Heian court nobles, which was very different from that between modern men and women, she would, in Akutagawa’s words, “write as though she were a friend of the poetess, Izumi Shikibu” (b.974?).36 Akutagawa’s historical stories belong to the second category – his characters, viewed from a distinctly modern standpoint, display values, attitude and psychology of twentieth-century men and women to whom we can relate in our own present-day experiences. In contrast, Miura belongs to the first category: when she wrote Hosokawa Garasha fujin and Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatichi, she wrote as if she were a member of that society witnessing the historical events of the late sixteenth century.

Like Akutagawa, Yoshikawa Eiji (1892-1962), a popular writer known for his “period novels“ (jidai shōsetsu), deviates from history (rekishi-banare). In an essay entitled “Shijitsu nansensu“ (Nonsense of Historical Fact), Yoshikawa questions the validity of historical authenticity and argues not only that “a true, factual account [of historical incidents] is impossible” (even newspaper articles on current events are full of erroneous reports, misrepresentations, and differences in viewpoint), but also that “the shōsetsu is founded on the basic principle of fancy and the power of imagination.”37 Kikuchi Masanori correctly sees Miyamoto Musashi, Yoshikawa’s best known work of jidai shōsetsu, as an example of shakkei shōsetsu [“borrowed landscape“ novels], a work of fancy that uses the historical landscape to set off modern themes and subject matter.38 Jidai shōsetsu such as Miyamoto Musashi tend to foreground storytelling at the expense of faithfulness to historical facts. As a result, they are generally viewed as low-brow entertainment or taishū bungaku as opposed to serious pursuit of literary excellence that writers of historical novels (rekishi shōsetsu) demonstrate in their works.
In Japan, it has been customary to categorize historical fiction into two distinctive types: (1) *rekishi shōsetsu*, which features principal characters who are modeled after real historical figures and a storyline grounded in faithful re-enactment of historical events that unfold more or less exactly as they occurred; and (2) *jidai shōsetsu*, which uses the historical setting only as a backdrop to a story of the author’s imagination, featuring characters who are either totally fictitious, or in the case of actual historical figures, portrayed in imaginary events and situations that are only loosely based on and mostly deviating from historical evidence. While historical novels by Mori Ōgai belong to the first category and are highly regarded as works of junbun Gaku, most works of historical fiction written in Japan since the Meiji period are discounted as *jidai shōsetsu*, among them: *Daibosatsu Tōge* (Daibosatsu Pass, 1913-1941) by Nakazato Kaizan (1885-1944), *Miyamoto Musashi* (1935-1939) by Yoshikawa Eiji, *Kurama Tengu* (The Goblin of Mt. Kurama, 1924-1965) by Osaragi Jirō (1897-1973) and *Hanshichi torimonochō* (The Curious Casebook of Inspector Hanshichi, 1917-1937) by Okamoto Kidō (1872-1939) – all of which are considered popular entertainment or mass literature (*taishū bungaku*), successful and widely read, but unworthy of the name of *junbun Gaku*.

It should become clear in my textual analysis of *Hosokawa Garasha fujin* and *Sen no Rikiyū to sono tsumatchi* that Miura is a writer of *rekishi shōsetsu*, not a writer of *jidai shōsetsu*. Miura’s *rekishi shōsetsu* are based on real historical figures, portrayed in actual or credible events and situations that are closely based on historical record and evidence. Although there are side episodes where fictionalization comes into play, the main plot is grounded in faithful re-enactment of historical events that unfold more or less exactly as they occurred. That is not to say, however, that there is no fabrication in her works. As a poet-novelist, Miura focuses on the inner/emotional world of the historical characters and uses her poetic imagination to speculate how they must have felt in various circumstances and what could have motivated them to act in a certain
way under those circumstances. As a Christian writer of historical fiction, Miura selected the right candidates for her works: Garasha was known to be a devout Christian and Rikyū, although most likely not a Christian, was heavily influenced by a close circle of friends and relatives who were Christians. It is interesting to see how Miura reconstructs, or more correctly, re-creates the life experiences of Garasha and Rikyū from a Christian viewpoint. It is even more interesting to see how she does it by reconciling her Christian beliefs with various aspects of the historical and cultural milieu of Japan.

In his commentary on Inoue Yasushi’s novel *Sengoku jōsaigun* (Fortresses of the Warring States, 1977), Fukuda Hirotoshi summarizes the commonly accepted view on the distinction between *rekishi shōsetsu* and *jidai shōsetsu* since the time of Ōgai:

\[
\text{Rekishi shōsetsu} = \text{faithfulness to historical facts (rekishi sono mama)} = \text{junbungaku} = \text{high-brow literature}
\]

\[
\text{Jidai shōsetsu} = \text{deviation from historical facts (rekishi-banare)} = \text{taishū bungaku} = \text{low-brow entertainment}\]

Fukuda’s equation of *rekishi shōsetsu* with *junbungaku*, and *jidai shōsetsu* with *taishū bungaku* makes sense, although I find it problematic to base such a characterization on the sole criterion of “faithfulness to historical facts.” For one thing, few readers would disagree that the works of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and Mori Ōgai belong to the realm of pure literature (*junbungaku*). And yet, Akutagawa consistently deviates from history, and Ōgai, too, while being a strong proponent of *rekishi sono mama*, confesses that he feels suffocated at times and compelled to deviate occasionally from history for artistic purposes. Indeed, one might argue that if there is no deviation at all, there would be nothing left to distinguish a work of historical fiction from a work of research by a historian.
Ōgai’s statement illustrates how difficult it is to strike a balance between fact and fiction in historical novels – so much so that Manzoni sees the writing of historical fiction as an impossible task to accomplish satisfactorily: “The historical novel is a work in which the necessary turns out to be impossible and in which two essential conditions cannot be reconciled, or even one fulfilled... Though we know it is a work in which history and fable must figure, we cannot determine or even estimate their proper measure of relation. In short, it is a work impossible to achieve satisfactorily, because its premises are inherently contradictory.”

In Manzoni’s view, the historical novel is a difficult, if not impossible, genre. It may have set out, following the Horatian dictum, to “instruct” and “delight” its readers, but in the end it can do neither – it fails to satisfy the aims of either history or fiction. The historical novel fails to “instruct” because readers are left wondering as to which of the events are real and which are invented. As a result, it fails short of achieving one of the two principal purposes, which is to give a faithful representation of history. It also fails to “delight” precisely because the author plainly distinguishes factual truth from invention, thereby destroying the aesthetic pleasure of the narrative. As if to echo Manzoni, Ōgai wrote in 1917 about the challenges of writing as a historical novelist: “Historians, seeing what I have written, will no doubt criticize me for my willfulness. Novelists, on the other hand, will laugh at my persistence.” In the end, Ōgai seemed to have come to the conclusion that history is best told as it occurred, and hence, a return to his earlier stance of rekishi sono mama.

Whether Miura’s historical novels qualify as junbungaku is open to the reader’s interpretation, but they are arguably closer to Ōgai’s rekishi shōsetsu than to the kind of jidai shōsetsu produced by writers of taishū bungaku. Apparently referring to jidai shōsetsu, Honda Shūgo, a respected literary critic, laments that historical literature seems to have been dominated in Japan by works that are nothing more than “donning
historical costumes on top of wild fancy." In Honda’s view, a true historical novel starts with historical research. In the process, the author “discovers historical events and characters of literary interest that arouse his poetic imagination. It is only at that point that the author picks up his pen to write.”44

This is precisely Miura’s approach to historical literature. In order to create and sustain a sense of historical verisimilitude in her novels, Miura spent numerous hours studying the era she depicted in detail. According to her husband, Mitsuyo, Miura consulted multiple sources just to write two or three lines – a tremendous effort that culminated in a list of close to thirty bibliographical references for the novel Hosokawa Garasha fujin alone. When she wrote rekishi shōsetsu, Miura relied on historical resources and studies by contemporary scholars, and she read each one of them in earnest.45 As she noted in one of her essays, the total number of hours spent on historical research was probably ten times more than that spent on actual writing.46 To Miura, fidelity to history seemed to be a matter of pressing importance, as it had been to Ōgai. I would argue, however, that, despite her historical consciousness, Miura, too, uses her power of imagination and occasionally deviates from historical evidence and circumstances in order to heighten the dramatic effect of her narrative, as well as to portray events and characters in such a way that allows the readers to look at human experience from a unique Christian perspective. Like Ōgai, Miura exhibited the traits of a good historian, but she was first and foremost a novelist and a gifted storyteller, and it is in this light that the merits of her historical novels should be judged.
HOSOKAWA GARASHA FUJIN

What matters therefore in historical novel is not the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality.47

(Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel)

Miura Ayako began writing Hyōten in 1963. Ten years later, Miura wrote her first historical novel, Hosokawa Garasha fujin (Lady Gracia: A Samurai Wife’s Love, Strife and Faith), which was serialized in the women’s magazine Shufu no tomo from January 1973 to May 1975 and published in book form on August 1, 1975. In the intervening years, she had written at least ten full-length novels, including Hitsujigaoka (Hill of Sheep, 1966), Tsumiki no hako (Box of Wooden Blocks, 1968), Shiokari Tōge (Shiokari Pass, 1968), Sabaki no ie (House of Judgment, 1970), Zoku Hyōten (Freezing Point II, 1971) and the autobiographical novel Michi ariki (The Wind is Howling, 1969).

Michi ariki tells the story of Miura’s fight against illness over a period of thirteen years. It documents her spiritual journey from despair to hope, which culminates in her marriage to Miura Mitsuyo. In the same vein, Hosokawa Garasha fujin records the life of Hosokawa Garasha (1563-1600) – Gracia (God’s “grace”) being her baptismal name – and her journey from nihilism to the Christian faith. According to Mitsuyo, Miura’s decision to write her first historical novel began with a request from Ishikawa Kazuo, president of the publishing firm Shufu no Tomo-sha, who asked her to “write a biographical novel featuring Hosokawa Garasha, a Michi ariki of Lady Gracia, so to speak.”48
Given that over seventy historical figures appear in *Hosokawa Garasha fujin*, it is amazing how Miura managed to relate historical events with accuracy, while offering razor-sharp insight into the complex web of human relationships among warriors of the Sengoku period. The success of Miura’s novel undoubtedly stems from her thorough research and painstaking effort in ascertaining historical evidence, thanks to the assistance of Higuchi Kiyoyuki, an archaeologist and honorary professor at Kokugakuin University, who found only two or three errors in the whole novel (two volumes, close to six hundred pages in all).49 Indeed, Miura often draws on historical archives and incorporates what was recorded therein as direct speech for her characters. Miura’s insistence on “faithfulness to history” (*rekishi sono mama*) parallels that of Mori Ōgai. At the same time, as we shall see later in this chapter, Miura does not hesitate to “deviate from historical facts” (*rekishi-banare*), occasionally to create a story which is more interesting and artistically satisfying.

The main story of *Hosokawa Garasha fujin* revolves around three major characters: Akechi Mitsuhide (1528?-1582), his daughter, Tama (heroine of the novel), and Tama’s husband, Hosokawa Tadaoki (1563-1646). Let us begin with an examination of Akechi Mitsuhide.

Akechi Mitsuhide was known as one of the greatest traitors in Japanese history. His infamous betrayal in the so-called Honnōji Incident in 1582 led to the death of his lord Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582). In his historical record of Japan, *Historia de Japan*, which covered the years 1549 to 1593, the Jesuit missionary Luis Fróis called Mitsuhide a “tyrannical warlord” who “resorted to cruel punishment.” He was “fond of secret meetings and betrayal.” A “far-sighted schemer,” Mitsuhide “relied on his intellect and guile to win Nobunaga’s favor.” “When it came to war tactics, he was a brilliant strategist who demonstrated patience,” and he reportedly “boasted to his friends that
he had mastered seventy-two ways of deceiving people”⁵⁰ – a mostly negative assessment that helped secure Mitsuhide’s infamy in history.

As a historical novelist, Miura attempts to re-evaluate the character of Mitsuhide, citing his accomplishments in the arts of the tea ceremony and *waka* poetry, and presenting him as a man of culture and sensibility. In an essay entitled “Garasha Hosokawa Tamako,” Miura suggests that what people have learned about Mitsuhide seems to have been a false image. In its place, Miura offers a glimpse of Mitsuhide as a benevolent ruler loved by his subjects, who governed wisely in Tamba (modern day Fukuchiyama in Kyoto Prefecture), where memorial festivals had been held in fond memory of Mitsuhide for over four hundred years.⁵¹

In line with her Christian beliefs, Miura has always emphasized in her writings the difficulty, if not impossibility, of passing judgment on a person’s character, all the more so on that of historical figures. Thanks to her own experiences as a teacher during the Second World War, Miura came to question, during the post-war years, the validity of historical interpretations in Japanese textbooks and warned against the danger of their acceptance at face value. In the above-mentioned essay, we find perhaps the best clue to Miura’s interest in writing historical novels, namely, to shed light on human experiences through the consideration of alternative interpretations of historical events and characters:

> We learned a lot from the defeat of war: we came to realize how textbooks published during the war years were distorted because of censorship by the imperial state, and the fact that certain historical figures who were labelled traitors, far from being treasonous and evil, were actually admirable characters of uncompromising courage.⁵²

In stark contrast to Fróis’s negative portrayal, Miura characterizes Mitsuhide as a good, admirable man who demonstrates qualities of sensitivity and empathy. *Hosokawa Garasha fujin* begins with a memorable episode in which the eighteen-year-old
Mitsuhide declares his unchanging love for his betrothed, Tsumaki Hiroko (1530-1576?), despite the tragic fact that her youthful beauty has been blemished by smallpox. Although the details of the story were probably a later invention, Miura draws on the legend that Hiroko’s father sent his younger daughter (Yae in Miura’s novel) as a substitute bride, whereupon Mitsuhide sent her back with a note stating his preference for the pockmarked Hiroko. In the second chapter of Hosokawa Garasha fujin, Hiroko would fondly recall the gentle voice of Mitsuhide on their wedding night:

“Hiro, in this world of ceaseless wars, it’s truly difficult for people to live faithfully as human beings. Samurai are supposed to live for loyalty, but in fact – for their own ends or just to save their own skins – they will serve one lord today and run off to another one tomorrow. Even the vows between men and women have come to be a tool of strategy. We see fathers kill their children, and younger brothers revolt against older brothers. This is a lonely world; there is no one you can completely open your heart to. Don’t you agree? In the midst of all this, I was brought up from childhood thinking of you, my betrothed, as my other self. Perhaps that’s because, to me, our relationship has nothing to do with politics... You are my other self. When you became ill, I became ill. When your pockmarks appeared, it was just as if they had come out on my body, too. There is no need to be ashamed.”53 (HGF1:27)

There is a pervading tone of sorrow in Mitsuhide’s words, the sadness of a military man caught in the lonely world of gekokujo (meaning literally “the low overcomes the high”), where parents, children and siblings killed each other in endless power struggles. Miura portrays Mitsuhide not only as an ideal lover, but also as an honest man who earnestly seeks to live faithfully as a human being. As if in further defense of Mitsuhide’s integrity, the narrator speaks for Hiroko in these terms: “She knew that people considered [Mitsuhide] to be like cold water, but his mouth and the corners of his eyes show an indescribable gentleness and friendliness whenever he smiles. That gentleness was her husband’s true self”54 (HGF1:34).
Perhaps the most interesting defense of Mitsuhide’s character in the novel comes from Hosokawa Tadaoki, who marries Tama (better known by her baptismal name, Hosokawa Garasha), heroine of Miura’s novel and the beloved daughter of Mitsuhide and Hiroko. As the Hiragumo no kama (The Flat-Spider Kettle) chapter opens, the newly-wed couple are looking at some bellflowers at the Shōryūji Castle, when Tadaoki makes this comment to Tama: “The bellflower is your father’s crest, isn’t it? It’s a strangely gentle crest for such a powerful man.” As the conversation goes on, Tadaoki vows to model himself after Mitsuhide: “Your father is one warlord who combines courage and intellect. I won’t be any less.”

Nobunaga’s laudatory letter is of course a literary construct in Miura’s novel, but it seems to have been based on an actual note by Nobunaga, as documented in the historical record Shinchō-Kō ki (The Chronicle of Lord Nobunaga), which highlights Mitsuhide’s merits in these terms: “During your long campaign in Tamba Province, your tireless exertions have earned you fame and glory second to none.”

The Honnōji Incident is one of the greatest mysteries in Japanese history. Why exactly did Mitsuhide rebel against his lord Nobunaga? Historians searching for some plausible motives are generally divided into two camps: proponents of the so-called “vengeance theory” (enkon-setsu), represented by scholars like Kuwata Tadachika, who argue that Mitsuhide’s revolt resulted from a long-standing grudge against Nobunaga for various reasons; and proponents of the so-called “ambition theory” (yabō-setsu), led
by the historian Takayanagi Mitsutoshi, who argue that the Honnōji Incident was a pre-planned scheme on the part of Mitsuhide to take control of the land.

There are a number of anecdotes and episodes often cited by proponents of the “vengeance theory,” all of which Miura uses as a basis for dramatization in her novel. Kuwata specifically mentions the following in his book, *Akechi Mitsuhide*: 59

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original source</th>
<th>Appearance in Miura’s novel</th>
<th>Details of anecdotes as described in <em>Hosokawa Garasha fujin</em></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Gizan-kōkaku</em></td>
<td>HGF1:82</td>
<td>At a drinking party, Mitsuhide left the room in order to relieve himself. In the presence of more than twenty warlords, Nobunaga suddenly seized a spear and thrust it at Mitsuhide’s throat.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Zoku musha monogatari</em></td>
<td>HGF1:80-81</td>
<td>At another drinking party, a sake cup was offered to Mitsuhide, but he had already drunk more than his limit. Nobunaga whipped out his short sword and thrust it under Mitsuhide’s nose.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Sōkenki</em></td>
<td>HGF1:176-80</td>
<td>During the seige of 1579, Hatano Hideharu of Yakami Castle tried to negotiate peace with Nobunaga. In exchange for the Hatano brothers, Mitsuhide had to send his mother-in-law to Yakami Castle as hostage. By Nobunaga’s order, the Hatano brothers were impaled to death in Azuchi. As a result, Mitsuhide’s mother-in-law was killed by Hatano’s retainers in retaliation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Sofu-monogatari</em></td>
<td>HGF1:282-84</td>
<td>At a victory celebration after Nobunaga had crushed his opponents, Nobunaga grabbed Mitsuhide’s topknot and banged his head against the veranda railing until blood oozed from Mitsuhide’s forehead. It was surmised that Mitsuhide had let out some critical remarks such as “So this is my reward for participating in the campaign?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original source</td>
<td>Appearance in Miura’s novel</td>
<td>Details of anecdotes as described in <em>Hosokawa Garasha fujin</em></td>
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<td><em>Kawasumi Taikōki</em></td>
<td>HGF1:286-87</td>
<td>Saitō Toshimitsu, Mitsuhide’s nephew, had married the niece of Inaba Ittetsu, but had left his service. Ittetsu, using Nobunaga as an intermediary, demanded that Mitsuhide return Toshimitsu to him. When Mitsuhide refused to comply, Nobunaga drew his short sword and charged at Mitsuhide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Taikōki</em></td>
<td>HGF2:16-17</td>
<td>Mitsuhide was relieved of his duty of entertaining Tokugawa Ieyasu, and was ordered to leave Azuchi Castle immediately in order to reinforce Hideyoshi’s western campaign in Bitchū. Mitsuhide was not selected for the prestigious posts of general commander or associate commander, which made him lose face completely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Akechi Gunki</em></td>
<td>HGF2:18</td>
<td>Through an envoy, Nobunaga relayed a message to Mitsuhide, saying that if Mitsuhide succeeded in his military campaign, he would be given the two distant provinces of Izumo and Iwami. In return, his current fiefs of Ōmi and Tamba would be confiscated.</td>
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Miura apparently sympathizes with Mitsuhide and portrays him in the novel as a good-natured, otherwise loyal, retainer who is driven to desperate means by the tyrannical Nobunaga. Proponents of the “vengeance theory” point to repeated bullying, physical abuse and public humiliation by Nobunaga as reasons for a buildup of anger and hostility on the part of Mitsuhide. The removal of Mitsuhide’s power base in Tamba near the capital, in particular, might have been the immediate cause of his revolt against Nobunaga. As a historical novelist, however, Miura is more interested in the emotional state of Mitsuhide and the working of his mind which spurs him to
action. Following is Mitsuhide’s reaction to the envoy’s announcement of the confiscation of his lands:

Mitsuhide spoke to himself without looking around, his eyes fixed on nothing. “All in vain.” Even if he overthrew Nobunaga, he himself would die sometime. Mitsuhide had always lived to his utmost. But now his life seemed inexpressibly futile. His whole life had been rejected by Nobunaga. What was I risking my life for? ... So after all my achievements, the only result is the confiscation of my lands... This is the reward for all my years of toil! Mitsuhide laughed again, His laughter grew gradually louder, and then suddenly stopped.60 (HGF2:24)

In his book, Akechi Mitsuhide, Takayanagi first offers a review of the “vengeance theory” and then tears it down by arguing that most of the anecdotes quoted above were from unreliable secondary sources (such as Gisan-kōkaku and Zoku musha monogatari), and were therefore either fabricated tales or later inventions of the Edo period, rather than corroborated accounts at the time of the historical events.61 Interestingly, The “ambition theory” (yabō-setsu) seems most strongly supported by a poem composed by Mitsuhide himself just a few days before the Honnōji incident (1582). On the twenty-eighth day of the fifth month, Mitsuhide joined Satomura Jōha (1525-1602) and several other poets at Atagoyama in a one-hundred-link renga (linked verse) session, ostensibly to pray for victory over the Mōri. The renga sequence opens with Mitsuhide’s hokku (beginning verse):

Toki wa ima ときは今 The time is now
Ame ga shita shiru あめが下しる the fifth month,
Satsuki kana 五月かな when the rain falls.62

Donald Keene translates the poem as: “Now is the time to rule all under heaven – It’s the fifth month!”63 His interpretation, commonly accepted among scholars, hinges
on a series of cleverly designed word puns. *Toki* means “time,” but it also refers to Toki, the clan-name of Mitsuhide’s family (The Akechi family claimed descent from the Toki, and in turn the Minamoto clan). *Ame* (雨) is the Japanese word for “rain,” but *ame ga shita* (天が下) also means “the realm under heaven” or “the whole country.” Finally, depending on the orthography, *ame ga shita shiru* (天が下治る) can be interpreted as “ruling the country.” Incorporating all the word puns, one can therefore restate the hidden meaning of this verse as: “Now is the time for the Toki to rule the whole country – It’s the fifth month!”

As Keene points out, after Nobunaga’s assassination, Jōha was confronted by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), de facto ruler after Nobunaga’s death, who demanded that the *renga* master explain his involvement. Jōha admitted that “he had suspected Mitsuhide might be planning [a revolt], but felt that it would have been improper to discuss a mere intuition.” Eventually, Jōha managed to clear his name by insisting that the second line of Mitsuhide’s verse had originally been “*ame ga shita naru*” – “the rain falls” – which carried no hidden provocative meaning. Kuwata Tadachika agrees that “*ame ga shita shiru*” was most likely a later revision by someone who had wanted to frame Mitsuhide as a treacherous traitor – his argument being that Mitsuhide was too smart a strategist to reveal his intent of rebellion so carelessly in a *renga* session.

Although Miura generally sympathizes with Mitsuhide, she does not turn a blind eye to the possibility of his being a man of ambitious designs, waiting for his “*ame ga shita shiru*” moment. Indeed, her powerful storytelling penetrates the mind of Mitsuhide and shows how he must have struggled with the crazy thought of “if I were in power...“:

Come to think of it, I’m in no way inferior to Nobunaga. I excel in military strategy and I’m skilled in the military arts. Hasn’t my advice been of vital help to Nobunaga? Could Nobunaga have taken power without my aid?” (HGF1:270)
Mitsuhide is actually superior, in moral terms, to Nobunaga – as seen in the novel. While portraying Mitsuhide as a loving husband and a considerate warlord, Miura demonizes Nobunaga as a “devil” whose “cruelty can hardly be called simply abnormal – it borders on insanity”67 (HGF1:174). Nobunaga burns Buddhist temples to ashes and kills all his enemies mercilessly, including innocent women and children. Ironically, but not surprisingly, Ōta Gyūichi, Nobunaga’s former retainer and author of Shinchō-Kōki, presents his lord as a “benevolent” ruler “whose compassion was exceedingly profound” and whose “ever-increasing prosperity… [was due to] his desire to study the Way,”68 Gyūichi’s view, of course, is totally rejected by Hatsunosuke, a fictional character who appears as a young retainer of Mitsuhide in Miura’s novel: “Lord Nobunaga well knows the Way of the Conquerer (hadō), but not the Way of the King (ōdō). Lord Nobunaga and my lord Mitsuhide are completely different on this point”69 (HGF1:182). The Way of the Conquerer eventually perishes, as does Nobunaga, for, contrary to Gyūichi’s assertion, the Way of Heaven (tentō) does not support the endeavors of the tyrannical Nobunaga.

Mitsuhide realizes how difficult it is to revolt against a lord whose fortune is on the rise: “Nobunaga has no qualms about killing the family members of those who faithfully serve him… Ieyasu’s son, Hosokawa Fujitaka’s brother [Mitsubuchi Fujihide], my mother – Nobunaga killed them all. Everyone hates Nobunaga at the bottom of their heart. But no one opposes him. Why? Because they’re all afraid”70 (HGF2:22). It takes courage and some providential assistance to prompt Mitsuhide to action. “Nobunaga should be overthrown…” It is the voice of the dead Mitsubuchi Fujihide (Hosokawa Fujitaka’s brother who killed himself at Mitsuhide’s castle, at Nobunaga’s order). Interestingly, Miura introduces spirituality as a fictional element, as if to underscore that Mitsuhide has a calling for his action, which is, in the opinion of the author, just and righteous.
In the end, Nobunaga is killed at the Honnōji Incident, and Mitsuhide rules the land for eleven days before dying in a losing battle with Hideyoshi’s army. The second part of Miura’s novel follows the life of Tama, after the death of her father (and literally her whole family), from her lonely days of banishment at the mountainous area of Mitono, to her return to the Hosokawa mansion in Tamatsukuri, where she becomes a Christian, and ends her tragic life in 1600 by dying at the hands of a family retainer (Ogasawara Shōsai) to avoid being taken hostage by Ishida Mitsunari (1559-1600). As a Christian, Tama is not supposed to commit suicide. Following the command of her husband, Hosokawa Tadaoki, Tama chooses death over capture by ordering Shōsai to kill her.

In the postscript to her novel, Miura states the reasons why she finds the historical character Hosokawa Garasha (Tama) appealing as a woman of faith living within the turmoil of the Warring States period (sengoku jidai) towards the end of the sixteenth century:

Now [in this country since after the war], women have come to have almost the same rights as men, even the right to vote. However, if we let down our guard even a little, our humanity starts to crumble. If this is true for women now, I can imagine it would have been even more difficult four hundred years ago when they were considered the possessions of men and tools of strategy. That is why I was deeply impressed by the way of life of Garasha, who was spiritually aware and lived her faith in that age. While writing this novel, I was forced to ponder anew how difficult it is for me to live as a human.71 (HGF2:313)

The power of *Hosokawa Garasha fujin*, then, is vested in Miura’s recreation of women’s experiences during the Warring States Period, when they were considered nothing more than possessions of men and political pawns in the male-dominated world of power struggles. It forces the author, as well as the readers, to ponder the meaning of life, and the way to live as a human being. As a woman writer, Miura
probes the psyche of Tama and other female characters. Her writings reflect a special touch of sensitivity and emotinal depth, which is evident early in the novel. When Hiroko’s father sends his younger daughter, Yae, to Mitsuhide, for instance, in hopes of passing her off as the expected bride, Hiroko’s initial reaction of shock, resignation and envy quickly turns into pity and sorrow, as she realizes the extent to which her younger sister has to suffer, having to give up her own identity in order to marry Mitsuhide as a substitute bride:

Now, for the first time, she realized that perhaps her sister also should be pitied. Her envy of Yae had been extremely shallow. As of today, Yae had to give up her name and live as Hiro. Could she really be happy when Mitsuhide called her by that name? ... She felt keenly that they were sisters in sorrow.72(HGF1:23)

At the end, Hiroko not only sympathizes but totally identifies with Yae because they share the same bond as sisters in sorrow, in this male-dominated samurai world where the importance of the family precludes the pursuit of happiness for women. The above passage is imbued with a sense of *mono no aware*, which is so typical of women writers of classical Heian literature. The kind of psychological insights offered by the author are subtle, and yet profound, and they are of a precision that arguably rivals that of Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972), a Nobel-prize winning novelist known for his skills in depicting female psychology.

The sorrow of a samurai wife is captured nicely in another emotionally charged passage, in which we see a Kawabata-like association of beauty with sadness. A few days earlier, Mitsuhide had an audience with Nobunaga’s sister, Lady Ichi (1547?-1583), and now he reflects on what she said to him at the meeting:

“Lord Akechi, living is more difficult than dying.”
These words had sunk into him. What joy was there for Lady Ichi, forced to come back ignobly and live with the brother who killed her husband? Probably she had come back only to save the lives of her young daughters.
Remembering Lady Ichi’s sad eyes, Mitsuhide now looked down at his weeping daughter [Tama]. She would probably develop into a beauty in no way inferior to Lady Ichi. But, just like her, she might well experience deep sorrow because of her beauty.73 (HGF1:66)

Tama does develop into a beautiful lady and her sorrow is no less than that of Lady Ichi. According to the Akechi Gunki (Military Chronicles of the Akechi), “Tama was a dazzling beauty. Since she was endowed with superb musical talent in the arts of koto and flute, she was greatly favored by her father-in-law, Hosokawa Fujitaka (Yūsai), one of the greatest arbiters of cultural traditions at the time.”74 In Nihon Seikyōshi (The History of Christianity in Japan, 1689), Jean Classet (1618-1692), a Jesuit missionary, describes Tama as a lady of matchless beauty, who was spiritual, gentle, sincere and intelligent.75 Drawing on these sources and perhaps adding a little of her own imagination, Miura portrays Tama’s unparalleled beauty in this manner as perhaps rivaling that of the Shining Princess in the early-Heian classic Taketori monogatari:

The chronicles record that “her appearance was matchless in beauty,” and that “her charming loveliness was like beholding a double-petaled Lady Yang Kuei-fei cherry blossoms.” Her rich black hair, cut at the shoulders, was conspicuously more lustrous that that of her maids. Her rounded white foreheard, her wide, wise-looking eyes, and her lips, perfect as if painted, were all already those of a real beauty. Wherever Tama went, there was a radiance as if a light were shining.76 (HGF1:39-40)

As in the case of Lady Ichi, Tama’s beauty only intensifies her sorrow, which ironically begins with her marriage to Tadaoki, whose father, Fujitaka, is a good friend of Mitsuhide’s. It is not that Tama dislikes Tadaoki; she just finds it “degrading that all women have to marry men without knowing if they will like them or not”77 (HGF1:115). Having grown up seeing the perfect model of marital love, Tama wants to marry because she is wanted – the way her mother, Hiroko, married Mitsuhide. Sadly enough,
as Hiroko observes, “to be the wife of a warrior is to live embracing death”\(^78\) (HGF1:118). In the end, Tama has no choice but to follow the footsteps of her elder sisters, who have been married off strictly for political reasons (Tama’s marriage to Tadaoki, too, is a political one ordered by Nobunaga). The reader is struck by an intense sorrow in Tama’s voice as she declares to her parents: “I will face marriage bravely, putting aside my feelings as if I was already dead”\(^79\) (HGF1:116).

When Tama asks her mother: “So what does it mean to be a woman?” it has the ring of a compassionate cry from her heart, which echoes the sentiment of numerous other women of the warrior class living in the Sengoku Period, who “existed only to be used as a means by which the men could live”\(^80\) (HGF1:117). However, unlike the majority of these women, who accepted their lot with resignation, Tama questions the role of women in her search of identity within the male-dominated world, thereby awakening to herself as a human being:

> It was an age of political strife when men used their wives and daughters as strategic pawns and chattels. Almost all women accepted that as their fate. However, though Tama lived among them, she was awakening to herself as a human being. She felt that the fact that women were treated as tools was the most fiercely unendurable thing. And what had brought her to this self-realization was the model provided by her parents’ marriage and the upbringing Mitsuhide had given her.\(^81\) (HGF1:119)

When Tama first meets her husband’s younger sister, Iya, she is struck by her cuteness and recalls what she herself has been like just a few years before – running around without a care in her parents’ castle. At the thought that Iya, too, would eventually go off as a bride to some warlord, whether she likes it or not, Tama sighs, thinking how happy the little girl could remain if she did not have to grow up (HGF1:135).\(^82\) Her lament is full of pathos and conveyed by the author with a delicate feminine touch which reminds the reader of the works of the woman writer Higuchi
Ichiyō (1872-1896). As if to intensify the pathos, the author uses an omniscient storyteller to foreshadow the terrible tragedy that has yet to befall the ten-year-old Iya:

Was it merely chance that a feeling of anxiety about Iya’s future had sprung up in Tama’s breast? She could have no way of knowing that soon after Iya’s marriage, her husband [Isshiki Yoshiari] would be treacherously murdered by her own father [Hosokawa Fujitaka] and brother [Tadaoki]… In that dog-eat-dog, eat-or-be-eaten world, was murder by treachery simply considered as one of the tactics of war? Was the warrior’s ethics simply “anything for victory”? If so, what a cruel, empty way of life it was!83 (HGF1:136)

Three years later, upon learning that Mitsuhide is behind the proposed marriage of Iya to Isshiki Yoshiari, archrival of the Hosokawa clan, Tama challenges her father in this manner:

“Is Iya’s marriage a political ploy?”
“Tama, don’t put it like that. There’s no suitable bride for Lord Yoshiari in Tango besides the daughter of the Hosokawa family…”
Tama did not respond directly. “But shouldn’t you call her a hostage rather than a bride?”
“Tama, watch your words. You haven’t changed a bit!” Even as Mitsuhide scolded her, he had to admit to himself that he loved this trait in his daughter. He himself could never have spoken that directly.
To speak your mind indicates purity…
“Father,” Tama said, looking directly up at Mitsuhide with her clear eyes, “you have changed.”84 (HGF1:247-48)

Tama is apparently disappointed with her father, for he should know better than anyone else the value of true marriage based on love, as opposed to using marital vows as political tactics. Maybe Mitsuhide really has changed, as Tama fears, over the years. Perhaps he has even forsaken his ideals. If so, it only illustrates the unpredictability and undependability of men. After all, as Okimoto (Tadaoki’s younger brother) observes, “all men have the desire to seize power once”85 (HGF2:35), and Mitsuhide himself
realizes that one cannot judge people prematurely because “once they sit in the seat of power, they get accustomed to wielding that power”\(^86\) (HGF1:181) and are therefore prone to change for the worse.

We see the same kind of unpredictability and undependability in Tadaoki’s marital relationship with Tama, who has within days of their marriage learned something of the ever-changing moods and idiosyncrasies of her husband. On the battlefield, Tadaoki demonstrates fierceness which can be considered a desirable trait in a warrior.\(^87\) According to the historical record *Shinchō-Kōki*, Tadaoki and his younger brother Okimoto (known respectively at the time by their childhood names Yoichirō and Tongorō) were among the first to break into the Kataoka Castle. In a laudatory letter [dated 1577/10/2], Nobunaga commended the brothers, saying that “the youngsters’ bravery was unparalleled.”\(^88\) In another letter [dated 1578/8/11] sent to Mitsuhide, archived in the Hosokawa family history, *Menkō Shūroku*, Nobunaga characterized Tadaoki as “a person of high caliber and strong resolution, who is expected to become a leader of his warrior clan.”\(^89\)

On the negative side, as the reader learns from the narrator of Miura’s novel, Tadaoki tends to be impetuous at times. During the attack on the Naitos of Kameyama Castle, Tadaoki refuses to accept their surrender and rushes up to Mitsuhide, bristling with bloodthirstiness: “Lord Akechi! Why are you letting those men surrender? I’m going to attack from the rear gate.” Mitsuhide manages to restrain him, saying: “a true commander wins without fighting. As human beings, we should not kill people needlessly” (a view that reflects the author’s pacifist stance). Tadaoki finally yields, although the angry look on his face indicates that he is not totally convinced by his future father-in-law (HGF1:105-06).\(^90\)

Moreover, Tadaoki has a tendency to be over-sensitive in certain matters. As the narrator observes, he is “the kind of person who would flare up in a rage or act
heartlessly just when you [are] thinking he [has] a delicate gentleness”91 (HGF1:227). A perfect example can be found in the “Hiragumo no kama” (The Flat-Spider Kettle) chapter. Araki Murashige (1535-1586), father-in-law of Tama’s sister, Rin, is suspected of revolting against Nobunaga. Worried about Rin’s safety, Tadaoki’s younger brother, Okimoto, breaks the news to Tama, despite Tadaoki’s order not to mention anything to his wife. When Tama asks her husband about the matter, Tadaoki gets violently jealous, thinking that someone must be on intimate enough terms with her to tell her about it (HGF1:148).92 Tadaoki’s father, Fujitaka (Yūsai), has to intervene to literally save Tama’s life.

When this marital crisis is over, Fujitaka tells Tadaoki, saying: “Tadaoki, [Tama] is your Flat-Spider Kettle (hiragumo no kama)”93 (HGF1:152) – knowing perfectly well as Tadaoki’s father that his son sees Tama as a treasured object – one that is to be destroyed rather than yielded up as a last resort. According to the Chasō kanwa, a three-volume history of the tea ceremony authored by the Owari clansman, Chikamatsu Shigenori (1695-1778), Nobunaga besieged the castle of Matsunaga Danjō (1510-1577) in 1577, demanding him to hand over the famous tea utensil and surrender. But Matsunaga refused – at the end, he took his prized kettle to the top of the castle and hurled it to the ground.94 Drawing on the famous anecdote and giving it a new twist, Miura portrays Tadaoki as a possessive, controlling man who cannot bear to see his wife fall into the hands of anyone: “Do you understand, Tama? You are my Flat-Spider Kettle. I will never give you up, whoever wants you. Matsunaga died saying there were two things he would never let Nobunaga set his eyes on – the Flat-Spider Kettle and his own gray head – I understand his feelings very well”95 (HGF1:154). Terrifying as it is, Tadaoki’s words foreshadows the tragic death of Hosokawa Garasha in 1600.

The reader sees Tadaoki overcome by wild jealousy in another episode. His younger brother, Okimoto, picks up a scent bag that has fallen out of Tama’s long
sleeves. He is about to call to Tama, but its inexpressible scent reminds him clearly of her scent, and he quickly puts it in the folds of his tunic, without realizing that Tadaoki has come out and seen him. “Tama! Do you have that scent bag I gave you?... You didn’t give it to him, I suppose... Okimoto! Why did you put it inside your tunic instead of giving it back to Tama?” (HGF1:231-34). There is a scathing, sarcastic tone in Tadaoki’s voice. Although Okimoto is portrayed in the novel as being secretly attracted to his sister-in-law, there is no known record or anecdote of the above incident and it might very well have been Miura’s own fabrication. Nonetheless, this invented story seems to be based on historical representation of Tadaoki; the author of Kinsei Nihon kokumin shi calls Tadaoki a “deeply jealous husband” and Luís Fróis, in a letter dated February 20, 1588, characterizes Tadaoki as a man born with a “fierce disposition and suspicious nature.”

On the other hand, Tadaoki has a gentle side as well, and Miura does not hesitate to emphasize that in her novel. In the “Tango no umi” (The Sea at Tango) chapter, Tadaoki gives his wife a surprise gift: a set of one hundred fan-shaped karuta poem cards, beautifully hand made by Tadaoki, with one of the poems from the Hyakunin isshu (Hundred Poets Collection) written elegantly on each card over gold leaf, in Tadaoki’s fine calligraphy. Moved by her husband’s unexpected gentleness, a tear shines on Tama’s white cheek:

She and Tadaoki had been married for three years. He was of uncertain disposition, and she felt that he treated her according to his mood: sometimes gentle, sometimes irritable. Often he would suddenly caress her passionately. That kind of behavior was hard for the proud Tama to endure. At times she had felt lonely, feeling there was no real intimacy between them... But now, picking up the delicate cards that Tadaoki had made, Tama felt her heart melting. An image of Tadaoki at work on the cards rose before her eyes. Just to please her, his wife, in the rare moments of respite from violent battles, he had secretly cut the paper, pasted on the gold leaf, and written the poems with a delicate brush. (HGF1:262)
Tadaoki has considered Tama “a woman of unparalleled beauty, but cold deep down.” At times, she is even “critical in a very unwomanly manner” (HGF1:262). Tadaoki is ecstatic now that she knows the depth of his feelings. With this gift, the unseen barrier between the two has finally come down. Interestingly, the omniscient narrator of the novel appears at this point of her storytelling to inform the reader that “the [Hyakunin isshu] cards made by Tadaoki were destined to be handed down from generation to generation as Hosokawa family heirlooms, and several of them still exist today” (HGF1:263). Indeed, it has come to my attention that they are now in the collection of the Eisei-bunko Museum, and have recently been displayed at the Discovery Museum of Haneda Airport as part of the “Wa-kei-sei-jaku: Chaseki Sen no Rikyū ten” exhibition (April 16-July 18, 2011).

As a writer of rekishi shōsetsu, Miura is at her best drawing on historical artifacts as a springboard for her artistic imagination, thereby creating a romantic love story, at once touching and believable. The fact that readers of the twentieth century can actually see Tadaoki’s poem cards at an exhibition reinforces a sense of historical reality: maybe it is a true story after all, and not something fictionalized or made up (soragoto) by the author. The Hyakunin isshu poem cards, beautifully handcrafted by Tadaoki, are reminiscent of Heian love affairs featuring elegant court nobles who wrote their love poems in delicate calligraphy. In this episode, Miura transforms Tadaoki from a fierce warrior into a man of miyabi and unusual sensibility, who, like his father Hosokawa Yūsai, epitomizes the ideal of bunbu ryōdō (master of both literary and military arts). It is not so much re-creating the image of Tadaoki, however, as focusing on the lesser known side of his character. Commenting on the role of the historical novelist, Miura has this to say in one of her essays:
Tadaoki was a very jealous man: an anecdote has it that he decapitated a roofer for stealing a glance at his wife and laid his head on her dining tray. Even so, when one picks up the elegant poem cards made by him and looks at them, one cannot help but feel that they are permeated with extremely delicate sensitivity and subtle shades of emotions, as befitting the son of the [renowned] poet Hosokawa Yūsai. If a certain aspect of a person’s character is over exaggerated, the other side becomes totally invisible. However, [historical] materials tell us that human beings are multi-faceted individuals.102

Miura highlights Tadaoki’s positive traits in another episode, in which the reader sees a fearless Tadaoki unwavering in his resolve to protect Tama in the aftermath of the Honnōji Incident. His retainer has suggested killing Tama because she is the daughter of the treacherous Mitsuhide. In fierce opposition, Tadaoki states his intent in the clearest possible terms: “I’ll cut down anyone who tries to kill Tama – even Hideyoshi”103 (HGF2:64). Miura portrays Tadaoki as deeply in love with his wife: “Tama, don’t you understand? I love you. I won’t send you away even if it costs me my life. I won’t kill you either... If you died, I couldn’t bear to live.”104 Moreover, Tadaoki appears as an understanding husband who is capable of sympathizing with Tama: “I can understand your father’s position. And Lord Nobunaga was even confiscating his fief. Your father must have acted only after agonizing for a long time”105 (HGF2:43). In the end, as a compromise, Tadaoki has no choice but to hide Tama in the remote mountains of Mitono. Interestingly, the Tadaoki we see in the Hosokawa family history, Menkō shūroku, is far from being the ideal character depicted in Miura’s novel; he offers no words of sympathy or declaration of love. Instead, the only recorded utterance by Tadaoki is this stern statement: “Your father, Mitsuhide, is a foe of my lord, so you and I cannot be in the same household!”106

Throughout the “Yamanari” (The Rumblings of the Mountain) and “Mitono no Haru” (Spring in Mitono) chapters, there are many lyrical passages loaded with
powerful emotions and images that evoke the classical world of *waka* poetry. Skillfully intertwining fact and fiction, Miura draws on the *Hyakunin Isshu*, as well as poems and prose attributed to Hosokawa Garasha (Tama), and combining them with her own artistic imagination to create a piercingly evocative narrative reminiscent of the romances and diaries kept by Heian court ladies. These two chapters demonstrate Miura’s skill not only as a storyteller, but also as an experienced *tanka* poet.

The “Yamanari” chapter underscores the many trials experienced by Tama at Mitono, a mountainous area “difficult even for a man to endure,” so lonely, we are told, that “one could hear the cries of foxes” (HGF2:141) Forced to part with her two-year-old son, Kumachiyo, and her four-year-old daughter, O-chō, Tama leads a dreadful life of solitary confinement, with no hope of reunion with her husband and her family except in a dream. The chapter opens with the following lines which indicate a confused state of surrealistic oscillation between dream (*yume*) and reality (*utsutsu*):

“Where was she? In Sakamoto Castle or Shōryūji Castle? Tama was dozing alone under her quilt. Sensing someone in the room, she opened her eyes. There was Tadaoki, standing tall by her pillow” (HGF2:88). Under the illusion that Tadaoki has come to get her, Tama cries out: “My Lord! You don’t know how much I have missed you!” Before long, Tadaoki is gone. As the reader finds out, it is not the first time Tama has dreamed of Tadaoki, but this is the first dream in which they have lain down together. And this time, he has even said he has come to get her (HGF2:89). The brief happiness Tama has felt in the dream only intensifies her loneliness, so much that she feels the urge to take up her brush in order to capture the dream in poetry. Miura thus creates an emotional highpoint, which she punctuates with three love poems attributed to Hosokawa Garasha (Tama):
Au to mite       逢ふと見て           I thought I was with you.
Kasanuru sode no かさぬる袖の      But your scent did not remain
Utsuriga no       移り香の               on our entangled sleeves
Nokoranu ni koso  のころぬにこそ          So I know
Yume to shirikeru 夢と知りける            it was a dream.

Au to miru       逢ふとみる           How bitter was
Nasake mo tsurashi 情もつらし           seeming to meet you!
Akatsuki no       曇の                  The dawn dew of my tears is deep
Tsuyu nomi fukashi つゆのみ深し         On the pathway
Yume no kayoiji   夢のかよひ路           you trod in my dream.

Wasuren to       忘れむと                 Though I have thrust him
Omoisutetemo      思ひすてても             out of my mind
Madoromeba        まどろめば                If I drowse,
Shiite mienuru    強ひて見えぬる            his face forces its way
Yume no omokage   夢のおもかげ              into my dreams

Tama’s love poems beautifully evoke the passion and misery of the abandoned woman in a typical Heian love affair, forever waiting in vain for her lover to come, and yet unable to thrust him out of her mind. Seeing Tadaoki in a dream is the only solace for Tama, although it inevitably ends with deep tears of dawn. The transition from Miura’s prose narrative to Tama’s actual verses is almost seamless, for they are linked by the common theme of “dream” (yume), which Earl Miner calls “the central image of Japanese courtly love” in traditional waka poetry.  

Following the three love poems, Miura incorporates two lyrically written prose passages attributed to Hosokawa Garasha [Tama], making a narrative shift to the first person to allow the heroine of the novel to articulate her own thoughts:
In the autumn evening, the faint call of the passing geese and the voices of the insects at the foot of the thicket fence – truly, all things that meet my senses keep moving uneasily. The top of the bush clover twist [ceaselessly with an unsettled heart] in the mountain wind blowing wildly from the south…

秋の夕つかた、雁のほのかに鳴き渡るも、籬がもとの虫のこゑごゑ、げにぞ目にふるるもの、みなみの山風あらましく吹きて、小萩が上しづ心なくとまりぬ。

(Aki no yūtsukata, kari no honoka ni nakiwataru mo, magaki ga moto no mushi no koegoe, geni zo me ni fururu mono, minami no yamakaze aramashiku fukite, kohagi ga ue shizukokoro naku tomari nu.)

Up to this point, Hosokawa Garasha fujin has been narrated in colloquial Japanese. Here, we see a switch to classical language, which is natural since the passage was thought to have been written by Tama herself during the period of her solitary confinement at Mitono. Rhetorically, the use of classical grammar and diction evokes poetic associations and creates a sense of historical authenticity, as if we were reading an actual diary kept by Hosokawa Garasha, as opposed to a historical novel written by a woman writer of the twentieth century. Miura notices a parallel between the unsettled heart (shizukokoro naku) of Tama and that of the autumn bush clover (kohagi) which twists ceaselessly in the rough mountain wind, a metaphor of her hardships at Mitono. Furthermore, the “cries of the passing geese“ and the “voices of the insects“ – poetic evocations of autumn in classical waka poetry – deepen the pathos of Tama’s longing for Tadaoki.

The above is immediately followed by another lyrical passage beautifully written by Tama’s hand, one that echoes the nostalgic sentiment expressed in the classic “tsuki ya aranu“ poem by Ariwara no Narihira (825-880):
If the world did not have the custom of viewing the moon, would I feel so keenly
the pathos of that which has passed? The moon shines narrowly between the trees,
and the fallen leaves and the pine roots appear to be overflowing with its light.
How extremely moving it is!113

すべて世間に月見ることのなからましかば、何につけてか、過ぎぬるかたの哀れ
とも、かばかり思い出ん、木の間より洩りくる月のかげ細くして、落葉が上、松
の根に、わざと光をたたへたるやうに見ゆる、いみじうあはれなり。(HGF2:92)

Subete seken ni tsuki miru koto no nakaramashikaba, nani ni tsukete ka, suginuru kata no
aware tomo, kabakari omoiiden, ko no ma yori morikuru tsuki no kage hosokushite, ochiba
ga ue, matsu no ne ni, wazato hikari o tataetaru yō ni miyuru, imijiu aware nari.

Like Narihira, who laments that, since his lover is gone, the moon he is now
viewing is no longer the same moon as he saw the year before, Tama blames the moon
for making her feel so keenly the pathos of that which has passed. It takes a poet of
extraordinary sensibility to savor the pathos (aware) of impermanence experienced by
Tama, and Miura captures the sentiment perfectly in a passage that continues the
narrative:

Soon it would start snowing in the mountains, and communication with home
would eventually be cut off.
Winter!... Will Tadaoki send me a letter before then?
Suddenly Tama decided that she would no longer wait for a letter. A feeling of
anger, even of hatred, rose up in her.
How unreliable is the human heart...
She had been stupid to rely on his heart and spend the lonely months waiting
every day in the expectation that a letter would come that day or the
next...(HGF2:92-93)114

At precisely the most depressing moment, Tama hears the drawn-out sound of a
bamboo flute. The player turns out to be Hatsunosuke, who appears as a faithful
retainer of Mitsuhide in the novel (since Hatsunosuke’s name is nowhere to be found in

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historical records, he is likely a product of Miura’s fabrication). Tama finds her heartstrings resonating with the sound of Hatsunosuke’s flute, as if she were listening to an echo of her loneliness:

Strangely, its clear tones – sometimes high and sometimes low – always sounded just when she needed it, as if it could sense her loneliness… Now, as Tama listened to its voice, she felt her sorrow and resentment gradually melting away. Whenever she heard Hatsunosuke play, the picture of Lake Biwa as she had seen it from Sakamoto Castle rose before her eyes, and she thought of her parents…(HGF2:93)

This is a perfect example of auditory-induced synesthesia in which sound automatically and involuntarily elicits certain visual experiences. Specifically, the heart-wrenching sound of Hatsunosuke’s flute evokes the visual image of Lake Biwa as seen from Sakamoto Castle where Tama has spent her childhood years, which in turns elicits memory of her parents. The reader feels the pathos of Tama’s longing for her dead parents and that of Hatsunosuke’s longing for Tama, the lady whom he secretly admires. As we shall see, following the dying wish of Mitsuhide, Hatsunosuke is to become a “guardian angel” for Tama until her very last moment.

Poetry continues to play a major role in the next chapter (“Mitono no Haru”). This time, Miura draws on the Hyakunin Isshu poems, as well as the karuta poem cards based on them that are hand-made by Tadaoki, to heighten the poetic effect and intensity of emotion. The reader will recall that Tadaoki has spent three years making the poems cards, which Tama now reads over and over in her solitary confinement at Mitono. Perhaps living in the desolate mountains has made her more sensitive; every one of the hundred poems touches her heart deeply, and many of them speak of a painful loneliness, including the following verses:
Waga sode wa わが袖は
Shiohi ni mienu 潮ひに見えぬ
Oki no ishi no 沖の石の
Hito koso shirane 人こそ知らね
Kawaku ma mo nashi かわくもなし

My sleeves are like rocks along the bay
Covered by salt water even at low tide
no one knows them
they are never dry

Nijō-in no Sanuki (1141?-1217?), *Hyakunin Isshu* No.92

Ko nu hito o こぬ人を
Matsuho no ura no まつほの浦の
Yūnagi ni 夕なぎに
Yaku ya moshio no 焼くや藻塩の
Mi mo kogare tsutsu 身もこがれつつ

In the evening calm by the sea of Matsuho
The salt makers burn the brine-drenched weeds
While I, waiting for the one
who does not come
smoulder like those weeds.

Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241), *Hyakunin Isshu* No.97

Se o hayami 瀬をはやみ
Iwa ni sekaruru 岩にせかるる
Takigawa no 滝川の
Waretemo sue ni われても末に
Awan to zo omou あはむとぞおもふ

The rapids of the mountain streams
hit rocks and part
but later meet
Will it not be
like that for us?

Sutoku-in (1119-1164), *Hyakunin Isshu* No.77

Ara zara mu あらざらむ
Kono yo no hoka no この世のほかの
Omoide ni 思ひ出に
Ima hitotabi no 今ひとたびの
Au koto mogana あふることもがな

Too soon will this world
be nothing to me.
But, would that I could meet you
just once more
and gain a memory to keep.

Izumi Shikibu (b.976?), *Hyakunin Isshu* No. 56

Yamazato wa 山里は
Fuyu zo sabishisa 冬ぞ淋しさ
Masarikeru まさりける
Hitome mo kusa mo 人めも草も
Karenu to omoeba 枯れぬと思へば

The mountain village
is most lonely
in winter
For then both visitors
and grasses dry up

Minamoto no Muneyuki (?-939), *Hyakunin Isshu* No.28

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The five poems in this mini-sequence are linked by the techniques of *association* and *progression* that Konishi Jin’ichi, Robert Brower and Earl Miner discuss in their article on the principles of intergration in anthologies and sequences of Japanese court poetry (A.D. 900-1350). They are integrated not only by *association* of words and images, but also by *progression* (in this case *spatial* rather than *temporal* progression). As we progress from one poem to the next, we see a gradual *retreat* from the *sea shore* (first and second poem) to the *mountain streams* (third poem), and ultimately ending up in a *desolate village deep in the mountain* (*yamazato*), where both visitors and grasses dry up in the lonely winter months. The setting in this last poem parallels the lonely landscape experienced by Tama at the mountainous village of Mitono. Even the season matches Miura’s narrative: The “Mitono no Haru” chapter opens with steady snow on the fifth day of the New Year, with no signs of visits or even letters from Tadaoiki. How wretched it must have been for Tama!

It is almost unthinkable that Miura, who started her career as a *tanka* poet before becoming a novelist, would be unfamiliar with the principles of *association* and *progression*, as used in the compilation of imperial anthologies and poetic sequences of the medieval period. Indeed, I would argue that, being aware of such principles, Miura, as a *tanka* poet herself, might have made a conscious effort to re-arrange the order of these *Hyakunin Isshu* poems (No.92 => No.97 => No.77 => No.56 => No.28 as they appear in the novel), integrating them by the techniques of *association* and *progression*, the way compilers of imperial *waka* anthologies would have done, to maximize their poetic effect, and to heighten the emotional intensity of her prose narrative. In Miura’s novel, Tama finds these *Hyakunin Isshu* poems directly relevant to her life. Indeed,

It was almost as if the poets had been writing the poems on her behalf. Tama felt her eyes fill with tears.

*So many people live in loneliness!*
All those poets had experienced love, loneliness, and hardship. And did only poets feel such things? Many people who didn’t know the first thing about writing poetry must have suffered inexpressible hardships as well. 

*I’m not the only one experiencing things like this.*

She felt that her eyes had been opened and Tadaoki was comforting her through these poems.

Lord Tadaoki! (HGF2:117)

Tadaoki comforts Tama not only through the *Hyakunin Isshu* poem cards that he has made for her, but also through the following poem, which, as we are told by the narrator of the novel, is written in Tadaoki’s own handwriting:

```
Na nageki so な嘆きそ  Do not lament
Kareshi to miyuru 枯れしと見ゆる  Though the grass and buds
Kusa mo me mo 草も芽も  seem withered
Futatabi moyuru 再び萌ゆる  In the spring they will
Haru ni awan ni 春にあはむに  swell again with life (HGF2:123)
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While living in seclusion at Mitono, Tama has given birth to a baby daughter, who has sadly died on delivery. Under the watchful eyes of Hideyoshi, Tadaoki refrains from writing a letter to Tama, choosing instead to send her the above poem, which seems to suggest future hopes of having children again despite the terrible loss of their baby daughter. We are told that “the emotions he expressed in the few syllables of the poem [thirty-one to be exact] violently moved her lonely, long-enduring heart” (HGF2:123). The way Tadaoki expresses his grief and sympathy in a *waka* poem touches the human heart, and is most appropriate indeed given the fact that he is the son of Hosokawa Fujitaka (Yūsai), a noted poet of the Nijō school and guardian of the *Kokin denju, Secret Transmissions* of the imperial anthology *Kokin waka shū,* the famous Japanese preface (*kanajo*) to which states that “the seeds of Japanese poetry lie in the human heart and
grows into leaves of ten thousand words.”\textsuperscript{120} It should be noted, however, that the reader is actually \textit{deceived} by the author, who confesses upon completion of the novel that Tadaoki’s poem was none other than \textit{her own composition}.\textsuperscript{121} This is perhaps one of the most significant \textit{rekishi-banare} moment in the novel. It might even have been the case that in real life, Tadaoki never sent a single word, not to mention a love poem, to his poor wife who was forced to live a wretched life of lonely seclusion in Mitono. As a woman, Miura identifies with the misery of Tama; and as a poet, she probably considers a love poem from Tadaoki emotionally necessary, however factually inaccurate such a fabrication might be.

At the end of the “Kikan” (The Long-awaited Day) chapter, Tama is informed of her pardon by Hideyoshi. Initial joy of an imminent return to her husband, however, is quickly overcome by a nihilistic sense of emptiness:

\begin{quote}
Isn’t the day fast approaching that I have long been waiting for? How many times have I dreamed of my husband? But now that I’m facing the actual day of return, why do I feel so empty? Is it because it has happened so suddenly that I don’t yet feel it’s real? \textsuperscript{122} (HGF2:142-43)
\end{quote}

Tama looks forward to seeing her children again, but when she thinks that they may be snatched apart again, her heart sinks. She cannot believe that true human happiness is such a fragile or ephemeral thing, but still she is afraid to go back. What if another disaster occur (and it does later at the climactic moment of the novel) and her happiness turns out to have been but a fleeting joy? Tama begins to feel that she was happier before, waiting at Mitono with at least some hope. When Tama expresses her doubt as to whether the Christian god Deus can take away all her fear, Kiyohara Kayo (Maria), a devout Christian and personal attendant of Tama who has been accompanying her all this time, answers in the affirmative. It is Kayo who, thanks to her
spiritual strength, brings Tama to God and eventually baptizes her against the backdrop of Hideyoshi’s edict that banned Christianity in 1587.

The “Hito no Kokoro to Ten no Kokoro” (The Heart of Man and the Heart of Heaven) chapter is probably one of the most interesting in the novel because of its sophisticated depiction of women’s psychology, and more importantly because it illustrates how Miura, while being faithful in general to historical fact (rekishi sono mama), at times deviates from it (rekishi-banare) to heighten the dramatic effect of her story and to develop her characters.

As the chapter opens, with Hideyoshi’s pardon, Tama moves to the Hosokawa residence in Tamatsukuri in the early spring of 1584, thus ending her confinement at Mitono which has lasted almost two years. By the Eighth Month, she is five months pregnant. Half a mile away from her residence towers the new Osaka Castle, the stronghold of the man (Hideyoshi) who has killed her father, and symbol of the reign of sheer masculine power. Gazing at the glittering tower, Tama reflects on the emptiness of human deeds, thinking that it makes no difference to a person’s worth whether he lives in a lofty gold castle or in a dilapidated hut in the mountains (HGF2:148).123 Ironically, in Tama’s case, her new life at the beautiful mansion is no different from her solitary life of confinement in the mountains: perhaps even worse because her freedom of movement is now limited to the innermost chamber, from which she is strictly forbidden to leave (Tama has come back more beautiful than ever and Tadaoki does not want her to be seen by anyone). It pains her heart to see her children greet her as complete strangers, and how much more so when Tadaoki abruptly thrusts a pregnant woman in front of her eyes in the middle of the night and presents her as his concubine. “It was after you had been in Mitono for a year,” Tadaoki explains to Tama, but his concubine giggles coquettishly, saying “No, my lord, it was a year and three months,”
with a facial expression that says clearly “How can I forget the day my lord first embraced me?”124 (HGF2:153-54)

The woman’s name was O-Fuji. She was the daughter of Kōri Muneyasu (1546-1615) and appeared in historical records as Tadaoki’s concubine. In the novel, Miura keeps the woman’s lineage the same but changes her name to O-Ryō. We are told that, while being confined in Mitono, Tama has come to accept the fact that not only might Tadaoki take a concubine, he might even have to take a new wife (HGF2:153).125 Tama realizes that although her own father (Mitsuhide) and Tadaoki’s father (Fujitaka) have never had a concubine, it is not at all unusual for daimyo to have them. Still, she finds Tadaoki’s treatment of her humiliating:

All those months when I was living by myself in the lonely mountains of Mitono, my whole heart aching in longing for him, every night he was embracing that woman... Doesn’t a man have any feelings for a woman’s loneliness? Besides, if Ryō’s baby was not due till early next year, it meant he had continued his relations with Ryō even after her own return. He clearly didn’t know how unpleasant it would be for her. However, what she hated most of all was his way of letting her know about his concubine – thrusting the pregnant Ryō at her like that while she was also pregnant. She felt humiliated, as if Ryō’s baby had kicked the baby in her own womb.126 (HGF2:156)

As a storyteller, Miura occasionally alters the chronology of actual events to achieve maximum dramatic tension. She has Tama give birth to her second son, Yogorō, later known as Hosokawa Okiaki (1583?-1615), on the second-last day of the year 1584, and has Tadaoki’s concubine Ryō give birth to a daughter, Koho, in the next month, on the thirteenth day of the year 1585. Yogorō and Koho are both real, documented historical figures, but Miura seems to have altered their birth dates for artistic purposes. In her biographical research of the life of Hosokawa Garasha, Tabata Yasuko asserts that Yogorō was born in the year 1583, as indicated in the Hosokawa family history,
Hosokawa-ke Ki, during the time of Tama’s solitary confinement at Mitono, and not after her return to the Tamatsukuri mansion in the year 1584. If that is true, one can possibly argue that the birth and tragic death of Tama’s baby daughter at Mitono in the same year (1583) could have been a historically inaccurate, albeit emotionally convincing, fabrication on the part of Miura the historical novelist.

According to Tabata’s research, Koho, the daughter of Tadaoki’s concubine, was born in the Tenth Month of the year 1582, which means O-Fuji (or O-Ryō in Miura’s novel) had become Tadaoki’s concubine before the Honnōji Incident [1582/6/21] and Tama’s subsequent banishment to Mitono, and not one year (one year and three months if we go by O-Ryō’s account) after Tama had started living there, as we are led to believe in Miura’s novel. Why does Miura want to alter the dates and circumstances of Yogorō’s and Koho’s birth? Most likely, it is to maximize the dramatic impact of her story. By having Tadaoki take a concubine in Tama’s absence during her darkest days of suffering, and having Tama and O-Ryō give birth within fourteen days, Miura creates an intense rivalry between the two women, which is heightened by a strong sense of betrayal and humiliation. Recalling her husband’s comment that it would be “amusing” for her to meet his concubine suddenly, and that it would be auspicious to have two children at the same time, Tama awakens to the painful realization that Tadaoki is no longer the thoughtful, sensitive man she once knew:

Suddenly, Tadaoki seemed like a stranger. He had made the beautiful poem cards for her [and] he was a tea master... She had thought that those things meant that he was a sensitive person. However, now he had demonstrated that he regarded women as just things, like other warlords. He had invited his sister Iya’s husband to Okubo Castle and killed him there, and Iya had had to come back and live with him. Was that not like Nobunaga and his sister Ichi? Whether Nobunaga or Tadaoki, it seemed that all men thought of women only as tools of strategy or as vessels for bearing children.
That is what a man is…
The Tadaoki whom she had longed for in Mitono was not this rough man.\textsuperscript{129} (HGF2:157-58)

In the novel, Miura introduces three minor characters – Takayama Ukon (1552-1615), Hosokawa Okimoto (1566-1619) and Mikami Hatsunosuke – who possess appealing qualities that Tama finds lacking in her husband, Tadaoki, and together epitomize the ideal man. Miura’s portrayal of Ukon and Okimoto is generally in line with historical representation, although she does fictionalize to a certain extent based on what we know about these two characters from historical accounts. On the other hand, Hatsunosuke seems to be a totally fictitious character created by the author’s imagination; we find no historical records of his life, nor is there any mention of his name in relation to the life of Hosokawa Garasha.

Takayama Ukon is a man of integrity. He is also one of the two figures in Miura’s novel who lead Tama to the Christian faith – the other person being Kiyohara Kayo (Maria).

In an essay entitled “Takayama Ukon to Gendai” (Takayama Ukon and the Modern Day), Miura expresses her interest in the life of the Christian daimyo: “If God said he would allow me to meet with three historical figures, I would definitely choose Takayama Ukon. Why? The first and foremost reason is that I find him the most captivating character among all the warriors in Japanese history.”\textsuperscript{130} Miura feels greatly encouraged by Ukon, who proudly upheld his Christian faith even if it meant giving up his position as a daimyo, seeing his fief confiscated, being expelled from Japan, and eventually dying on the foreign soil of Manila.\textsuperscript{131} In her essay, Miura cites the imaginary conversation between Ukon and Tadaoki that appears in \textit{Hosokawa Garasha fujin}:
“What if Christianity should be forbidden? What would you do then?”
Ukon’s expression didn’t change. “The law cannot change people’s hearts. I would
not give up my faith whatever the circumstances.
“But I’m sure you remember how Lord Nobunaga burned the temples. If you were
threatened with, say, losing your fief or being exiled to a foreign country, then
what?
“It wouldn’t matter. Even if my fief were confiscated and I became penniless…
Even if I were sent into exile and had to go abroad to live.”
“What about being impaled to death?”
Ukon laughed. “Even if I were to be impaled or burned alive, I wouldn’t give up.”
He spoke firmly.132 (HGF2:176-77)

What Miura cannot accept is the fact that even a devout Christian like Ukon broke
the commandment “Thou shalt not kill.” If it were possible, she would like to ask Ukon
directly how he resolved the conflict between being a Christian and being a warrior of
the Sengoku Period. Miura thinks that perhaps Yoshikawa Eiji, a popular writer of
“period” novels (jidai shōsetsu), might be able to shed light on Ukon’s dilemma using his
artistic imagination, and she sincerely regrets the fact that Yoshikawa’s historical novel
Takayama Ukon, originally serialized in the Yomiuri Shimbun, remains unfinished.

Miura quotes Yoshikawa as saying that “writing novels about Christian characters
could be troublesome.” What Yoshikawa meant is that he was criticized by a certain
foreigner for writing fictional stories of Ukon’s romances. At the time of serialization of
Takayama Ukon, Ukon was being considered for sainthood in the Roman Catholic
Church. As a result, Yoshikawa gave up on the idea of finishing his novel, abruptly
ending its serialization in just six months.133

In contrast to Yoshikawa, Miura is not afraid to fictionalize as she probes the mind
of Hosokawa Garasha (Tama), although she too has been revered as a saintly figure
(seijo). Indeed, using her own artistic imagination, Miura portrays Tama as an ordinary
woman who feels “strongly drawn by Ukon’s fine character” 134 (HGF1:208), and who,
although pregnant with Tadaoki’s first child and having met Ukon only once, fantasizes about being embraced by Ukon:

Last night, too...
She turned on her side and put her cheek against the pillow. The night before, while Tadaoki was holding her close against him, Takayama Ukon’s face had suddenly floated before her. At the same time she had found herself imagining that the arms embracing her tightly, almost to the point of being rough, were really those of Ukon. She had twisted with a start. A surprising sensation had pierced her body. Then again tonight, Tadaoki had somehow changed into Ukon. Why him? (HGF1:210)

We are told that Tama does not fully understand the workings of her own heart. Perhaps Ukon has attracted the woman in her precisely because he has shown no sign of surprise or admiration for her beauty (HGF1:211). Such psychoanalysis is intriguing, although not very credible. A more plausible reason is that Tama (as does Miura) finds Ukon’s character admirable. Indeed, the narrator quotes the historian Ebisawa Arimichi as saying: “[Ukon] mingled with the people of his fief in a humility and love that were unthinkable for a daimyo. He gave them a model in his own words and actions, he governed in a way based on the Christian spirit, and he showed this to the people” (HGF1:208).

Compared to Tadaoki’s possessiveness and occasionally violent disposition, Ukon’s gentleness, humility and love must have seemed superior. In Miura’s novel, Tama lets her imagination run loose and pictures herself choosing between the two men: “If I had been given the chance to choose between them, which one would I have chosen?... I probably wouldn’t have chosen Tadaoki; yes, I’m quite sure I wouldn’t have” (HGF1:212). Although Tama’s fantasy about Ukon sounds like a fabricated story (rekishi-banare), it is not a wild, baseless deviation from historical circumstances – as Endō Shūsaku points out in his essay, Hosokawa Garasha reportedly told people that
she envied the wife of Takayama Ukon,\textsuperscript{139} it must have been this statement of hers that triggers the author’s artistic imagination.

Five years later, after Tama’s return from Mitono, Ukon happens to drop by the Hosokawa mansion. Tadaoki is eager to have Tama listen to Ukon’s talk about Christianity. Once again, Tama is filled with admiration for Ukon. She cannot help wondering how different her life would have been if she had had faith like Ukon’s (HGF2:180),\textsuperscript{140} and ponders if Ukon would have done the same thing as Tadaoki – shutting her up in Mitono – if she had been Ukon’s wife (HGF2:182).\textsuperscript{141} Tama’s disillusionment with her husband grows in direct proportion to her admiration for Ukon. Tama recalls fondly how Tadaoki, only nineteen at the time, protected her after the Honnōji Incident, saying: “I’ll kill anyone who tries to kill Tama, even Hideyoshi!” and she feels lonely that Tadaoki has clearly become a man of the world:

\textit{Would he say that now, I wonder? Probably not} (HGF2:181).\textsuperscript{142}

As the story unfolds, Tadaoki accuses Tama of calling Ukon’s name twice in a dream and forbids her to see anyone hereafter. Although the excuse is probably the author’s own invention, the outcome matches Fróis’ s account in \textit{Historia de Japan:} “The Lord of Etchū (Tadaoki) subjected his wife to extreme measures of confinement and imprisonment which were unbelievably stern.”\textsuperscript{143} The narrator goes on to depict Tadaoki as a despotic husband with two anecdotes taken from the Hosokawa family history, \textit{Menkō shūroku}. One legend has it that Tadaoki beheaded a roof thatcher who tried to steal a glance at his beloved wife. Tadaoki took the head and put it on Tama’s breakfast table, but she quietly continued her meal without a change of expression. In astonishment, Tadaoki said, “Why, you’re a snake!” Tama responded, “And you, who can kill an innocent man like that, are a devil... And I would suppose a snake is a fit
mate for a devil“144 (HGF2:186). The narrator’s comments that follow the stories are particularly interesting:

These are well-known stories, but of course we can’t tell whether they are true or not. They are most likely just legends, but Tadaoki’s jealousy must have been violent enough to give rise to such stories... And if such things did actually happen, it was no doubt at times like that morning, when Tadaoki was so angry about Tama’s dream. Let’s return to our story... (HGF2:186-87)145

This is a perfect example of how Miura uses historical materials as a backdrop for her storytelling. As a historical novelist, she mixes rekshi sono mama – Tadaoki’s excessive jealousy and stern confinement of Tama within his mansion as recorded in Fróis’ Historia de Japan (Nihonshi) – with rekishi-banare, namely, Tama’s dream about Ukon, in the right amount so as to create a story that is at once entertaining, credible and engrossing.

The episode demonstrates Miura’s brilliance and creativity as a storyteller: drawing from anecdotes (which may or may not be true) that were recorded in historical texts (Menkō shūroku in this case), presenting and discounting them as just legends, and then continuing on to the “main” story, which is supposed to be more “true” and “believable.” By including well-known legends such as the “snake woman” anecdote as “side stories,” and by saying that “if such things did actually happen, it was no doubt at times like that morning, when Tadaoki was so angry about Tama’s dream,” the narrator successfully creates an air of authenticity for her own narrative.

Like Ukon, Okimoto is an appealing character in the eyes of Tama, because he represents what her husband is not. When Mitsuhide requests assistance after the Honnōji Incident, his best friend, Fujitaka, shaves his head, taking the retirement name Yūsai (which signifies his religious withdrawal from the world), while his son-in-law, Tadaoki, cuts off his topknot as a sign of mourning for Nobunaga, both of them

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essentially turning their back on Mitsuhide. Tama’s despair and shock at her husband’s betrayal are best captured in the following passage:

*Father!*

Her heart was torn with concern for her father. Even his son-in-law was giving up on him so soon...

*If I were a man, I would support him anyway.*

...*the reason he won’t join with Father is not that Father did anything wrong, but that he’s not strong enough. If it seemed that he could succeed, doubtless everyone would rush to him. In other words, might is right. In this chaotic world, the strong overthrow the weak. That is the only law.*

Tama felt a great emptiness as if a hole was opening up in the bottom of her heart.\(^{146}\) (HGF2:45-46)

Tama’s frustration and anger are echoed by her father, Mitsuhide, who write these lines in a letter [dated 1582/6/9] addressed to Yusai and Tadaoki: “I hear that both of you, father and son, have cut your hair. I suppose it was inevitable. I was *angry* at first, but, after due consideration, I now realize it was only to be expected... I decided to do my surprising deed to advance Tadaoki...”\(^{147}\) (HGF2:49-50). This dramatic episode is perhaps the best example of *rekishi sono mama* (history told as it is) in Miura’s historical novels. Yusai’s and Tadaoki’s reaction (cutting their hair in mourning for Nobunaga) is well documented in historical texts. And of course, Mitsuhide’s letter, too, archived in the *Hosokawa-ke monjo* and quoted verbatim in Miura’s novel, is a most valuable primary source that provides rare insight into the mind of one of the most notorious “traitors” in Japanese history. Mitsuhide’s feelings of anger, frustration and resignation seem genuine, although the truthfulness of his declared motive (presumably to advance Tadaoki) is open to debate. The reader is struck by Yusai’s response in Miura’s novel as he reads his old friend’s letter: “The words burned Yusai’s eyes. He could vividly picture Mitsuhide vainly waiting for reinforcements from the Hosokawas. However, ...
he had to protect his family, even if it meant abandoning Mitsuhide’s trust and friendship... This is how a minor daimyo survives...“148 (HGF2:50)

In his seminal work, The Historical Novel (1937), Georg Lukács gives the best description of what the genre is all about: “What matters therefore in the historical novel is not the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figures in those events. What matters is that we should re-experience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality.”149 It takes the poetic skill of a major writer like Miura to subtly portray the mind of each of the characters – Yūsai, Tadaoki, Tama and Mitsuhide – and to show how they think, feel and act, as well as to reveal the motives behind their action.

Unlike his father and elder brother, Okimoto acts according to his heart and is more than willing to risk his life to fight for the person whom he secretly loves and the values in which he believes. The following episode amounts to an open declaration of love on the part of Okimoto for Tama:

“Sister, don’t you think the Hosokawa men are all craven cowards?”...
“Master Okimoto, I am ashamed of my father’s thoughtless act... all I can do is apologize.”
“Apologize? Why? Why should you be ashamed? Everyone wanted to overthrow the Minister, but no one thought they could. Your father did what no one else could do... As you see, they’re all cowards. All they say is, ‘It’s the clan that’s important!’ Of course the clan is important, but... there’s something that’s more important to me than the clan.”
“More important?” She looked up, and he fixed his gaze on her.
“Yes, It’s you... It’s you! ... Sister, remember these as my last words. You are more important to me than anything else. Anything!”150 (HGF2:52-53)

The next moment, Okimoto is off to the battlefield. The family later learns that he has taken some soldiers and headed for Kyoto. There is no historical record indicating that Okimoto fought alongside Mitsuhide. Nonetheless, Miura’s idealization of
Okimoto certainly makes him an attractive character in comparison to Tadaoki. We have seen that two and a half years later, Tama, back from her confinement at Mitono, gives birth to Yogorō (later known as Okiaki), who appears in the novel, as he does in historical accounts, as a “weak, skinny baby with a feeble cry”\(^{151}\) (HGF2:171). Whereas Tadaoki looks at his own child with disgust, saying, “You can’t imagine what a weakling it is!” Okimoto picks up the baby with loving care, saying, “Born little, grow big!” (HGF2:172) – Tama finds Okimoto’s words a big comfort.

Again, we see Miura using historical facts as a backdrop of her storytelling. Some years later, Okimoto would adopt Yogorō as his own heir. It is no coincidence that Miura chooses two admirable Christian characters, Ukon and Okimoto, and portrays them as the antithesis of Tadaoki. Organtino Gncechi-Soldo, a Christian missionary, wrote in a letter [dated 1595/2/14] praising Okimoto: “In the summer of 1594, Joan (Okimoto), the younger brother of Lord Etchū (Tadaoki) became a Christian... He is a person of exceptional gift. We expect him to become a firm foundation of the church in the near future.”\(^{152}\)

Mikami Hatsunosuke, too, eventually becomes a Christian. Hatsunosuke first appears in the novel as a young retainer of Mitsuhide, whose dying wish in the aftermath of the Honnōji Incident is to have Hatsunosuke watch over Tama, knowing well that Hatsunosuke adores his daughter and would risk his life protecting her. Visiting (and later serving) Tama at Mitono, Hatsunosuke gives her an account of her father’s last days and the tragic death of her entire family. The sound of his flute consoles Tama as if echoing her loneliness. Even after Tama’s return to the Hosokawa mansion in Tamatsukuri, Hatsunosuke continues to watch over her, helping her, as a guard, to slip out of the Hosokawa mansion on Equinox Day, so that she may talk to Father Cespedes during her only visit to a Christian church.
Under the influence of two model Christians, Takayama Ukon and Kayo, as well as the medieval Catholic Christian text *Contemptus Mundi* (Contempt of the World), Tama has come to accept the Christian faith. At first, Tama was too proud to acknowledge that she was a sinner and had considered her own action beyond reproach. Thanks to the trial of confrontation with Tadaoki’s concubine (Ryō) and her daughter (Koho), Tama awakens to the ugliness in her heart:

Sometimes, at the bottom of her heart, she even wished for Koho’s death. These feelings made her despise and hate herself; she could not bear the fact that such ugliness existed within her.
How can I feel like that towards an innocent child?
Still, whenever Koho was mentioned, she slid into a morass of hatred, and there was nothing she could do to help herself (HGF2:174).

*Contemptus Mundi* represents the Christian rejection of the world of sin and a spiritual quest in pursuit of the clean, pure, and righteous. Through contempt of the world, and all its vanities, one strives for the kingdom of heaven. It is, therefore, a positive world view, rather than a negative escape from the wretchedness and pain that are associated with life. Perhaps Kayo best summarizes the essence of the Christian text. In a conversation with Tama, she explains that *Contemptus Mundi* means “when [people] learn from the Lord Christ, [they] make light of all the empty glory of this world” (HGF2:169). Tama needs to learn from Christ how to submit herself to the will of the Heavenly Father, as opposed to clinging to her own will. As a storyteller, the author interestingly draws on the historical fact that Tama’s second son, Yogorō, was born a weak and feeble child:

Sometimes Tama would get irritated watching Yogoro’s struggles to pull himself along and would hate Koho for walking so early. At times like that, instead of praying, “Thy will be done,” she wanted to pray, “Please God, make Yogoro walk
as fast as possible!“ Then she would realize how much she wanted things done her way rather than according to God’s plan.156 (HGF2:189)

When Tama feels that Ryō, Koho and Tadaoki are all mocking her and she cannot help hating them, she would ask, “What would Christ do?” and amazingly her hatred would subside.157 As Jesus says in Book Four of Contemptus Mundi, “Nothing will make you happier or please you as much as being obedient to the divine will.”158 By imitating Christ, Tama sees herself being transformed into a new being:

The outward situation did not change, Ryō and Koho were still doing well in Miyazu, and Yogoro’s weakness continued. Nevertheless, Tama, as she earnestly followed the path of seeking to know Christ, was gradually building up a new self. Her vacant stares became filled with hope, and her health recovered. Along with that, an inner beauty shone forth. Tama simply set herself to follow in Christ’s footsteps and learn from him, as preached in the [Contemptus Mundi]. She longed for her own character to become like that of Christ. 159 (HGF2:188)

Tama’s positive changes are consistent with descriptions found in historical records. The Christian missionary, Antonio Prenestino, for instance, wrote in a letter [dated 1587] that “Garasha has become a totally different person since she lent her ears to the truth of salvation: she used to be of melancholy disposition, but has now become bright and cheerful; her anger has turned into patience, and her obstinately fierce personality has been replaced with gentle calmness.”160 Tama endures all trials with patience – even persecutions by her husband (Tadaoki was thought to have cut off the nose and ears of her Christian maids to force Tama to give up Christianity). No matter what, Tama upholds her faith.

Tama follows the footsteps of Christ and subordinates herself to God’s will until the very end. After Hideyoshi’s death, at the height of his conflict with Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) leading up to the Battle of Sekigahara (1600), Ishida Mitsunari (1559-
1600) attempts to take the wives of rival daimyo as hostages to prevent them from siding with Ieyasu. In anticipation of Ishida’s move, Tadaoki orders that Tama kill herself to protect her honor – a command that Tama follows with resolve. Quoting the Bible as saying that “a wife is to obey her husband as she would obey Christ”\textsuperscript{161} (HGF2:288), Tama sends her female attendants (Shimo, Kaga and Kayo) off to safety, and then has her retainer, Ogasawara Shōsai, kill her with a halberd – literally following the footsteps of Christ who died on the cross according to God’s will. (Tama was thirty-eight years old when she died on the seventeenth day of the seventh month in the year 1600).

Tama’s final act of valor was recorded in the historical document \textit{Shimojo oboegaki} (Memoir of Shimo)\textsuperscript{162} by Shimo, one of the female attendants who had firsthand knowledge of Tama’s “ritual suicide,” based on her memory of the historical incident that had occurred more than forty-five years earlier. It was submitted by Shimo on the nineteenth day of the second month in the year 1648, at the request of Hosokawa Tadaoki’s grandson, Hosokawa Mitsunao (1619-1650), who wanted to see a written account of his grandmother’s last moment.

\textit{Itojo oboegaki} (Memoir of Ito, 1923), a work of creative fiction by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, follows the same outline as \textit{Shimojo oboegaki} – keeping the same set of historical figures with the exception of Ito, who replaces Shimo as the narrator. In Akutagawa’s story, historical events unfold in the same manner as narrated in Shimo’s original memoir, but \textit{Itojo oboegaki} is by no means a faithful representation of history; rather, it is meant to be read as a sarcastic parody, which offers a novel, although distorted, view of Hosokawa Garasha from a uniquely modern standpoint. With wry criticism and biting humor, Ito characterizes Hosokawa Garasha as a pretentious lady who constantly puts on airs and acts as if she is more important and knowledgeable than she really is. Her sarcastic reaction to Garasha’s somewhat conceited remark that “Japanese women are not intelligent because they don’t read foreign books,” is comical.
and hilarious—“I think my lady should marry a noble man of the West in her next life.”

Although modeling his work after *Shimojo oboegaki*, Akutagawa is apparently interested only in using the historical setting as a springboard for his imagination. As a result, he sacrifices historical accuracy for the sake of art and creative storytelling. In sharp contrast to historical accounts such as *Nihon Seikyōshi*, which portrays Garasha as a “well-loved lady because of her beauty and sincerity,” the narrator in Akutagawa’s story, Ito, brutally dismantles Garasha’s image as an unparalleled beauty:

Shūrin’in (Garasha) loves to be flattered. For instance, the Buddhist nun Chōkon praises her: “My Lady, you are always so beautiful. All men would think that you are just a little over twenty,” as if that was really the case. The truth is: she is far from beautiful. In particular, she has a long nose and her face has a few freckles. Not only that, she is thirty-eight after all, so whether at night or looked at from afar, she absolutely does not look like someone who is slightly over twenty.”

Not only does Ito consider Garasha’s beauty over-rated, she also criticizes the affected demeanor of her lady and even finds her faith bogus. Ito mentions how Garasha “often loses her temper and scolds her and other maids over every little thing, so severely that she finds it even more unbearable than becoming a hostage.” Her critical eyes penetrate through what she considers “feigned religiosity” of Garasha, whose frequent prayers (*oratio*) in Latin sound hollow, and even comical to her maids.

As in the historical document *Shimojo oboegaki* and Miura’s novel, Hosokawa Garasha in Akutagawa’s story also rejects Chōkon’s suggestion that she escape to Ukita Hideie’s mansion to avoid capture by Ishida Mitsunari. The reader gets the impression, however, that her rejection is mostly driven by self-preservation, and not so much by faith. Upon hearing the rumor of Ishida’s plan to take hostages, Garasha feigns calmness by continuing her prayers, although secretly she would love to take refuge
somewhere. Once again, we see the narrator of *Itojo oboegaki* delivering her critical remarks with wit and irony, this time directing them at Garasha’s retainers, Ogasawara Shōsai and Kawakita Iwami, whose “incompetence” makes it impossible for their lady to take the escape route: “As long as they have not recommended taking refuge, it would be difficult for our lady to suggest so. In her heart, our lady feels resentful towards Shōsai and Iwami, for their lack of prudence, and from that time on, her temper has really flared up.”¹⁶⁸ Ito’s sarcasm goes further. In one of the most interesting passages in Akutagawa’s story, she lays bare the “shallowness” of Garasha’s faith and pokes fun at her pretentiousness:

> Before long, we all gathered in front of our lady. Despite what she said: “The time to enter *paraiso* (paradise) is near. I am particularly happy,” *her face turned pale and her voice was trembling somewhat* – an indication that the whole thing was a charade from the outset. Our lady then continued: “There are many obstacles on your road to the other world. You girls lack understanding of religious truth and refuse to accept the Christian faith. I can see you descending into the *inferno* and therein devoured by the devil. From today on, you should change your heart and follow the teachings of the Lord. Otherwise, follow me in ritual suicide, so we can all leave this impure world...” Hearing that, we were all drowned in tears and we all converted to Christianity on the spot.¹⁶⁹

In stark contrast to Akutagawa’s narrative, Miura portrays Garasha as a fearless woman of courage and honor, one who befits the role of a warrior’s wife. When her maids urge her to take refuge with the Ukitas, Garasha speaks commandingly, “No, I must not escape... My lord said that while he is at war, I am not to leave the house. He has his reasons, and, as his wife, I will obey his weighty words with my life”¹⁷⁰ (HGF2:300). By ordering Garasha not to leave the house, Tadaoki is essentially telling his wife to die rather than falling into the hands of his foe, Ishida Mitsunari (HGF2:277).¹⁷¹ Garasha obeys her husband without complaint and chooses death over capture like a true woman warrior. Unlike the wives of Kuroda Nagamasa (1568-1623)
and Katō Kiyomasa (1561-1611), who slip out of their mansions as soon as they have heard of Ishida’s plan, Garasha declares that she is not the least afraid of Ishida (HGF2:287). Even as she faces death, her eyes are calm and her body and soul are composed (HGF2:294-95). Garasha’s last moment is depicted in these terms:

My father and mother, my sisters and brother... all the Akechis have died tragically. Now, I, too, though not yet old, am parting from my children and facing my end. But thanks to God’s grace my death is a glorious death...

Tama’s face shone in the lamplight with an expression of deep thanks and ecstasy. She calmly opened her eyes. “I’m going to God!” She wrapped her long hair around her head, exposing her white neck. For a moment she blushed.

Shōsai crawled up to the threshold of the room and spoke. “I beg you to pardon me, Madam, but it is your breast that I must pierce.” He bowed.

“Ah, so I made a mistake?” said Tama quietly, glancing smilingly at Shimo. “Well then...” She opened wide the folds of her robe.

“Pardon me, Madam, would you mind moving a little more this way? It is not appropriate that I should enter the room, so...”

“Very well...” Tama moved to directly in front of the doorway, shut her eyes and began to pray aloud...

Shōsai backed up and picked up the halberd. “My Lady, are you ready? We will accompany you immediately, but it is hardly appropriate to do it here in the same place where you are. Therefore, we will accompany you in the entry hall.”

Tama had to insist again. “No, Master Shōsai! Let the deaths end with me... Now, act quickly please!”

“Your pardon, Madam!”

The glittering blade pierced straight through Tama’s breast in one thrust. (HGF2:303-05)

Garasha dies a noble death, which transforms the shame of being the daughter of the traitor Akechi Mitsuhide into glory and honor. In the postscript to her novel, Miura mentions that Garasha reminds her of the heroine of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s novel The Scarlet Letter (1850): “As punishment for her sin she was required to wear a scarlet ‘A’ fastened to her breast for her whole life, but because of her faith and good deeds, the
mark changed from a badge of sin to a badge of honor” (HGF2:314-15). Miura’s depiction of Garasha’s final moment follows closely the descriptions in *Shimojo oboegaki* and *Nihon Seikyōshi* (668-672), as well as those that appear in the Annual Jesuit Report on Japan dated the tenth month of the year 1600 except for the following improvisation, which seems to have departed from the historical accounts:

When Shōsai came back, Iwami took the halberd from him and held it up in the red torchlight.

“Listen, all of you! Know that the tip of this halberd is stained red with the blood of our lord’s wife, Lady Tama!”

“I wish you cowards could have witnessed her splendid death,” shouted Shōsai,

“As befitted the wife of our renowned lord, Hosokawa Tadaoki, she preferred death to the shame of capture.”

His white head shaking, Iwami called out again at the top of his voice, “We who are left will now accompany her ladyship. Come and watch!” (HGF2:306)

At that, the entire guard that Tadaoki has left at his mansion, led by Shōsai and Iwami, disembowel themselves and follow their lady in death. This dramatic scene is apparently a product of Miura’s artistic imagination and it reminds the reader of the improvised performance of the *biwa-hōshi*, as they chanted the war tale, *Heike monogatari*, during the medieval period. In both cases, we see a conscious attempt on the part of the author(s) to idealize certain characters and to depict them as heroic figures whose actions reflect the values of samurai ethics. In Miura’s novel, Garasha is depicted as a true woman warrior who dies a splendid death befitting the wife of the renowned warlord, Hosokawa Tadaoki, in an act of loyal devotion, courage and honor that puts the cowardly men of Ishida’s camp to shame. That is precisely the image that the Hosokawa family history, *Hosokawa-ke Ki* (better known as *Menkō shūroku* in modern days), seeks to portray Lady Garasha. In a section following the *Shimojo oboegaki*, *Menkō shūroku* includes a verbatim quote pertaining to the exemplary life of Hosokawa
Garasha, from the Edo period text *Honchō retsujo den* (A Biography of Heroic Women in Japan, 1668), which was compiled and written in kambun by Kurosawa Sekisai (1622-1678), a disciple of the famous Neo-Confucian scholar, Hayashi Razan (1583-1657):

Hosokawa Garasha said: “My husband, Tadaoki, has headed to the east under the command of Tokugawa Ieyasu. I’m his wife. How can I possibly follow [Toyotomi] Hideyori? You don’t bend your principles according to the rise and decline of fortunes, and you don’t change your heart in order to survive – that’s the family code for a warrior. Born into a warrior family, how can I insult its code of honor?”178

This passage is followed by Sekisai’s commentary which extols Garasha’s purity, and a song in praise of her virtues:

The wife of Hosokawa Tadaoki  
A lady of fidelity and integrity  
While being a woman, she embodied righteousness  
She recited the Book of Songs and knew propriety  
In her eyes, death was but a journey home  
Surrounded by maids and attendants  
she had numerous descendants –  
abundant as the leaves and branches  
and was renowned by the world.179

In *Menkō shūroku*, as in *Honchō retsujo den*, Hosokawa Garasha is portrayed as a *retsujo*, a heroic woman of fidelity and integrity, who knows what is considered to be her proper place and demeanor in the Confucian context. To qualify as a *retsujo*, she is expected to and does follow the commands of her husband to the very end. Indeed, her life epitomizes the Confucian ideal of *San Cong Si De*, or the Three Obediences and Four Virtues for women, which require them to “obey their father before marriage; their husband after marriage; and their son when the husband is dead.”180

In Miura’s novel, as in *Nihon Seikyōshi* and the Annual Jesuit Report of 1600, however, Garasha is glorified as a Christian saint (*seijo*), and not much as a *retsujo*. She
obeys Tadaoki to the point of death, not because she feels obligated as a woman to act according to Confucian moral principles, but because she is eager to follow God’s command, as she makes it clear to her retainers: “Master Iwami, Master Shōsai, let’s not feel threatened by force. God has said we are to obey Him rather than men. Also, a wife is to obey her husband as she would obey Christ. So I intend to obey. You don’t have to worry about me. I have no intention of disobeying my lord and being taken hostage”\(^{181}\) (HGF2:291).

As Luís Fróis puts it in his letter dated December 13, 1596: “Up until today, not only has Lady Garasha made an effort to maintain her complete faith in God, but she also made an effort to help her maids maintain theirs.”\(^{182}\) It is Garasha’s concern in spiritual matters that makes her a seijo. In Miura’s novel, Garasha finds it a great burden on her heart that Tadaoki has yet to accept Christ (HGF2:289).\(^{183}\) She wants Iwami and Shōsai to do the same. Indeed, we are told that she urges them in such an eager voice that “no one would have thought that she [is] a woman facing her own death”\(^{184}\) (HGF2:294).\(^{184}\) Noting that anything that does not come from faith – suicide, in particular – is sin, Garasha denies Iwami and Shōsai the honor of following her in death (junshi): “No, you mustn’t do that! Isn’t it enough if I die, I believe in God. I am going to fulfill God’s command to obey my husband, and I am glad to die... Master Shōsai, Master Iwami, when you are dead, where will you go?” (HGF2:293).\(^{185}\) Likewise, Garasha entrusts her young daughters to Kayo (Maria), specifically forbidding her to die in accompaniment: “Maria! ... how would your death stem from faith?... You must not shorten with your own hands the precious life God gave us because of a passing emotion”\(^{186}\) (HGF2:301).

Interestingly enough, Miura seems to be coming to Garasha’s defense by justifying her final act in terms of faith, as if to argue that, since she was trying to follow God’s command to obey her husband, it makes her “suicide” less (?) sinful. Perhaps, it was not
even a *suicide*; strictly speaking, Garasha died *in the hands of* Shōsai, who *killed* his lady by thrusting his halberd straight through her breast (as described in *Menkō shūroku, Kinsei Nihon kokumin shi* and Miura’s novel), or in an alternate version of the story, by beheading her (Annual Jesuit Report of 1600 and *Nihon Seikyōshū*).

In an intriguing essay on the life of Hosokawa Garasha, the Christian novelist Endō Shūsaku has this to say about her death: “In this manner (by dying in the hands of Shōsai), Garasha managed to die without committing suicide – a practice forbidden by the Catholic faith. However, even as Garasha avoided the [sinful] method, the fact remains that she was the one who *sought death*. In a sense, some people might say that it was the same as suicide.” Endō looks at the motivation behind Garasha’s death, characterizing her not so much as a Christian saint, but a woman who is disappointed in her marital relationship and desperately seeking a way out of her predicament. Unlike most authors who glorify or idealize Garasha (Miura is definitely one of them), Endō re-examines the relationship between Tadaoki and Garasha, and explores the nature of Garasha’s faith:

> When I look at the letters that Garasha addressed to Father Cespedes during this period, I notice that she talked about her faith, and salvation of her children’s souls. And yet, there was not a single word mentioning salvation for her husband’s soul... I could not help but ponder the marital relationship between Tadaoki and Garasha, and I had the feeling that Garasha had stopped loving her husband...Was it not the case that she had turned her mind to her own faith and inner peace, rather than love towards her husband? The colder she appeared, the more violently anger and suspicion flared up in Tadaoki. Tadaoki, too, must have been suffering. Most biographies of Garasha focus on her beautification and ignore this suffering of Tadaoki.

In the novella, *Nihon no seijo* (Saintly woman of Japan, 1980), Endō deconstructs the image of Hosokawa Garasha as a Christian saint (*seijo*). The narrator of Endō’s story is an unnamed European irmão who assists Father Cespedes, at the church which
Garasha has once visited during Easter Sunday. Through one of Garasha’s maids (who reminds the reader of Kayo in Miura’s novel), who brings letters and inquiries from Garasha to the church, the narrator learns the motive of Garasha’s spiritual pursuit. “I see... she can’t trust her husband, so she came to church to look for a place of refuge.” The narrator is scolded by Father Cespedes for making such a sarcastic comment in front of the maid. Discontented, however, he voices his grievances in his monologue:

The reason why I made a sarcastic remark to the maid is this: many Japanese seek refuge in religion when they cannot bear the pain of living through the trials of this world. To an European like me, that is just an escape from life, an avoidance of the pains associated with it which results in weakness in living. In Buddhism, this is called gedatsu (deliverance from earthly bondage) or tonsei (withdrawal from secular life). However, I think tonsei means living by discarding all earthly desires; it is by no means the Christian way of living. Why do I say so? It’s because our Lord Jesus Christ will never throw the cross – a symbol of all pains in life – off his shoulder. In other words, a [true] Christian should never escape from the various sufferings in life.191

Not only does the narrator question Garasha’s motive of coming to church, he is also skeptical of her spiritual readiness when she is about to be baptized, saying in another monologue: “Is she not saying that she wants to be baptized in order to further her distance from her husband, to the point of abandoning him?... That’s too far from the world of love taught by Jesus.”192 As we find out from the maid, Garasha has lost faith in Tadaoki, who, in a violent burst of temper, beheaded a roofer and flung his head at his wife (both Miura and Endō draw on this legend about Tadaoki effectively). According to the maid’s report, Garasha just sat there silently with a stony face, whereupon Tadaoki reproached her: “You are a cold-hearted woman like a snake with no blood and tears.”193 While not condoning Tadaoki’s behavior, the narrator (as does
Endō in his essay) expresses his sympathy with a man who “flounders all the more desperately in quagmire, as the heart of his wife turns stone cold.”

As the assistant to Father Cespedes, the narrator helps translate letters from Garasha into English. While doing so, he has the feeling that “Tadaoki no longer exists in Garasha’s world,” and perhaps “he is not even remembered in her prayers.” In his report to the Bishop in Nagasaki, Father Cespedes writes: “Garasha’s baptism was a great joy to all of us... She leads a pure life second to none in the monastic tradition, her heart is fervently devoted to the Lord, her eyes are turned upon God alone, and she has no interest in benefits of this world.” Lies might not be a good word, because the report is factually correct, but the narrator senses a “darkness that one should not overlook” behind this report – a “darkness at the deep abyss of the human heart.”

In one of her letters to Father Cespedes, Garasha mentions that she would like to leave the world behind in order to lead a monastic life in Nagasaki. Fearful of Hideyoshi’s wrath, which might lead to a new round of persecution, Father Cespedes refuses to give his approval, asking her instead to learn how to be patient.

Interestingly, the narrator sees Garasha’s reaction as more Buddhist than Christian, the difference of the two being that, Christians, “rather than seeking deliverance (gedatsu) from sufferings, bear their own cross on their shoulders, the way Jesus did, and walk with it until they die.” Commenting on the religiosity of the Japanese people and their tendency to shun impurity, the narrator wonders if Garasha has not been living under an illusion of what Christianity truly entails:

I wonder why Japanese people think of eluding the soiled and the impure as a religious way of life. The secular world itself is impure, as is the act of living. Marital life, too, is dogged with various kinds of impurities. That’s why the church teaches us not to abandon it. In order to teach us that continuing to live in a muddy whirlpool is itself love, the church forbids divorce and considers suicide a sin. Nevertheless, Garasha’s heart is no longer with her husband; she is thinking of
giving up on life in this world, and she is under the false impression that her way of thinking stems from Christian teachings.201

Endō’s version of Garasha’s final moment follows historical accounts fairly closely. Here, too, we see Garasha dying in the hands of Shōsai, who pierces her breast with a halberd. As in Miura’s novel, Endō’s story ends with the scene of a memorial service, this time featuring the District Superintendent, who extols Garasha as a model of moral purity and emphasizes, as he delivers the oration, the fact that Garasha died in the hands of her retainer, and therefore, it was NOT a suicide: “In this manner, Garasha remained faithful to her husband till the very end, and firmly abided by the teachings of Christ.” The narrator sits there in silence, apparently unconvinced:

No matter how Garasha died, somewhere in her heart, there was the desire to quickly leave this world, rather than prolonging her life any further... That weariness with life (ensei) is not something to be found in the teachings of Christ; rather, I have the feeling that it is nurtured by Buddhist teachings in this country.202

The Superintendent concludes his oration, praising Garasha as a “saintly woman.”

But it is the narrator’s final monologue that leaves a lasting impression on the reader:

The moment I heard the phrase “saintly woman in Japan,” I instinctively dropped my head. I dropped my head in order to erase the blasphemous voice against Lady Garasha that I heard inside my ears: “Abandoning all impurities and sufferings in the real world and yearning for the Pure Land (jōdo) – if that is the essence of Japanese religion, then she did not die as a Christian; she died in accordance with Japanese religion.” -- That was the voice that kept ringing in my ears.203

Endō creates a powerful story in Nihon no seijo. While being faithful to historical facts and circumstances, Endō deconstructs the notion of Garasha as a Christian saint (seijo). He does so by exploring the cultural roots of Christianity in Japan, through the
eyes of a Western missionary narrator, and arguing that Garasha’s faith might very well have stemmed from a Japanized version of Christianity – one that is based on the Buddhist notions of gedatsu and tonsei. Would Miura agree with Endō’s characterization of Garasha’s faith? Probably not. Perhaps the beginning part of the following passage is the closest we can come, in Miura’s novel, to detecting Buddhist sentiments in Garasha as a baptized Christian. Awaiting the arrival of Ishida’s men, Garasha gazes at the Osaka Castle from the vantage point of the Hosokawa mansion:

What use is a castle?
She looked up at the castle, towering domineeringly against the sky.
How many castles are there in Japan? The warlords fight for their lives, trusting in their castles. However, they are not impregnable.
Her father’s castle of Sakamoto had fallen, and Nobunaga’s proud castle of Azuchi was now in ruins.
And how long will this Osaka Castle continue to boast of its strength?
Tama smiled quietly.
Castles are nothing but a vain refuge. The strong and the weak alike will die. And, after death, where will they go? My lord Tadaoki is not yet...

At first glance, this passage seems to echo the Heike monogatari and the Buddhist sentiment of mujō (impermanence) that pervades the medieval war tale. The visual image of the once-proud castles now fallen in ruins also reminds the reader of Matsuo Bashō’s poem: natsukusa ya / tsuwamono domo ga / yume no ato (“The summer grasses – of brave soldiers’ dreams. The aftermath“), which laments how three generations of glory of the Fujiwara of Hiraizumi vanished in the space of a dream. Garasha’s statement that “castles are nothing but a vain refuge“ reflects this notion of ephemerality, although the question posed at the end carries an unmistakably Christian connotation. Rather than looking back and lament the bygone glories, Garasha is more concerned about the future, particularly salvation for her non-Christian husband who has no idea where he will go after death (contrary to the view of the narrator in Endō’s
story – “Garasha’s heart is no longer with her husband” – it seems that Garasha, at least in Miura’s novel, cares deeply about Tadaoki’s soul until the very last moment when she herself faces death).

Unlike Tadaoki, Garasha knows where she is going and has no fear of death. As Iwabuchi Hiroko observes, Garasha has become strong over the years, especially in her view of marriage. Her Christian faith has led her out of despair and hopelessness and allows her to focus on positive things in life. Recalling the old days:

[Garasha] thought of her sister’s marriage more than twenty years before. With a sad smile, she had said to [Garasha], “Getting married is the same as going to your death.” And in the end she had died with the rest of her family in Sakamoto Castle. But in [Garasha’s] case, her marriage had been a place to live, not to die... If Ishida tried to seize her, choosing death will be her way of life. And she was willing to do that. (HGF2:280)

Garasha is prepared to die in the event that Ishida’s men come to take her hostage. She is able to face death with peace because she realizes that “every one dies at the time appointed” (HGF2:280), as suggested in her farewell (jisei) poem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chiri nu beki</th>
<th>散りぬべき</th>
<th>It is by knowing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toki shirite koso</td>
<td>時知りてこそ</td>
<td>the time to fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yo no naka no</td>
<td>世の中の</td>
<td>that blossoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hana mo hana nare</td>
<td>花も花なれ</td>
<td>are blossoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hito mo hito nare</td>
<td>人も人なれ</td>
<td>and humans are human.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hosokawa Garasha’s farewell poem (HGF2:281)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tsuyu to ochi</th>
<th>露とおち</th>
<th>Like dew I came down</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tsuyu to kienishi</td>
<td>露と消えにし</td>
<td>and like dew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waga mi kana</td>
<td>わが身かな</td>
<td>I disappear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naniwa no koto mo</td>
<td>浪華の事も</td>
<td>My deeds at Naniwa (Osaka) too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yume no mata yume</td>
<td>ゆめのまた夢</td>
<td>are but dream within a dream</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s farewell poem (HGF2:254)
The pathos of a *jisei* poem is, in both cases, conveyed by images like scattering (cherry) blossoms and dew, metaphors frequently used in traditional *waka* poetry to symbolize the transience of life. Whereas Hideyoshi’s farewell poem speaks of the vanity of the illusory dream called *life*, Garasha’s farewell poem underscores the fact that *death is a matter of life*; and therefore humans and flowers alike need to know the right time to fall, apparently making an intertextual reference to Ecclesiastes 3:1-11: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die... [God] has made everything beautiful in its time."

Although Miura emphasizes factual accuracy when writing historical novels, she does not let her insistence on “faithfulness to history“ limit the power of her imagination. Miura demonstrates her skills as a historian, but she is above all else a writer of creative fiction. At times, she ignores historical evidence in order to create or heighten dramatic effect. For the sake of storytelling, Miura sees the necessity of slight deviation from historical facts (*rekishi-banare*), three examples of which can be identified in the final chapter leading up to the climactic moment of the novel. Whereas, according to historical records, Garasha presumably entrusted her farewell poem to her maid, Shimo, who would then deliver it to Tadaoki, Miura creates a heart-wrenching parting scene, in which Garasha suggests eternal farewell in her *jisei* poem, the night before her husband heads off to the battlefield:

Tadaoki was holding her to his breast and kissing her lustrous black tresses. Tears glistened in his eyes. The military schedule was set. Tomorrow he would have to go to Miyazu, leaving Tama, his most precious jewel, in this place of death... Tadaoki repeated her words. “It is by knowing the time to fall that blossoms are blossoms and humans are human...” He broke off. “Tama!“ He wanted to ask if that was her farewell poem, but he bit back the words...
“It is by knowing the time to fall...” Again, Tadaoki tried to repeat her words, but his voice broke off. His shoulders shook. The flame of the lamp inside the bed flickered slightly.\(^{(HGF2:280-281)}\)

Not only does Miura \textit{romanticizes} the relationship between Garasha and Tadaoki, but she also \textit{idealizes} Garasha’s action by making her die alone so that all the other women could live. In her memoir, Shimo tells us that originally Garasha’s daughter-in-law, Chiyo, was supposed to accompany Garasha in death, but when the time came, it was found that she had already fled.\(^{(HGF2:282)}\) In Miura’s novel, Garasha dies alone, not because she has been deserted by her relative, but because she willingly bears all the agonies and responsibilities so that others might live. Indeed, she tells Chiyo and Tadaoki’s aunt to escape first, “promising” that she would join them later. For fear of worrying them unnecessarily, she does not even say her final farewell. We are told that Chiyo is so terrified at the scene that she does not even realize that Tama’s white dress \textit{(shiromuku)} means she is prepared to die \textit{(HGF2:296)}.\(^{(HGF2:294)}\) Up until her last moment, Garasha impresses the reader with her heroism and sensitivity.

As Garasha puts on her white death robe, she hears the drawn out sound of a bamboo flute coming to her as it to give her strength. It is Hatsunosuke (who has by this time become a Jesuit brother), playing a hymn \textit{(HGF2:294)}.\(^{(HGF2:294)}\) Ever since the dying Mitsuhide told him to take care of his daughter, Hatsunosuke has been a faithful retainer protecting Garasha in the shadow. We learn from historical accounts\(^{(HGF2:294)}\) that Father Organtino, together with Kayo and the other maids, went to the burned-out mansion, the day following Garasha’s death, to search for her remains. In Miura’s novel, they find some burnt bones, in addition to Tama’s, and the charred stub of a bamboo flute. Suicide is out of the question for Christians, let alone a monk; apparently to follow his Lady in death, Hatsunosuke has secretly committed \textit{junshi} \textit{(yet another \textit{rekishi-banare} moment, since Hatsunosuke is a totally fictitious character in Miura’s novel).
In an era of endless warfare and constant betrayal (fathers, sons, and brothers kill each other for supremacy; Mitsuhide revolts against his lord, Nobunaga; Yūsai betrays his old friend, Mitsuhide; and Tadaoki, his father-in-law), Hatsunosuke’s life tells the story of steadfast loyalty and sacrificial love (as opposed to the kind of possessive “love” demonstrated by Tadaoki). It is no coincidence that Miura selects three Christian characters – Ukon, Okimoto and Hatsunosuke – to represent the epitome of righteousness, courage, faithfulness and love. Together, the three symbolize the ideal Christian man, who Tadaoki is not, for he lacks an understanding of God’s plan for the husband and wife: “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her“ (Ephesians 5:22 and 5:25). Garasha acts like a model Christian, but Tadaoki is unable to fulfill his side of the equation, which is necessary for a balanced, harmonious marital relationship. While demanding absolute obedience from his wife, Tadaoki fails to realize that he needs to love his wife in the same way Christ loves the church – that is, lay down his life for her. Tadaoki’s notion of “love“ is based on possession, and not self-sacrifice, as in the case of Hatsunosuke and Christ the Lord.

As in Endō’s story, Hosokawa Garasha fujin ends with the scene of a memorial service for Garasha. As recorded in a letter [dated 1601/9/30] by the Christian missionary Francisco Pasio, Tadaoki sheds tears of sorrow,217 which Miura, using her artistic imagination, turns into tears of regret:

Tadaoki – completely forgetting his surrounding – let out a strangled sob...
He recalled the night he had sent her to the mountains of Mitono. For almost two years he did not visit her or write even once. He thought of his heartlessness and her loneliness. Moreover, when she came back, he had brought Ryō to see her. Oh, how I regret doing that!
He was especially ashamed of how he had persecuted her when she became Christian and mutilated her maids.218 Tama had endured all things, continuing to
pour her warm love on him. Now, her clear glance and her full breasts were no longer of this world... The fact is, it was I who killed her...
During the sixteen years in Osaka, why did I never let her leave the house?...
He had preferred that she die rather than that she be caught and become the prey of another man (HGF2:310-11).219

Tadaoki’s “repentance” finishes with a striking ending:

In the midst of his deep sorrow over what could not be undone, he felt only one tiny piece of consolation.
In the end she was mine alone...220 (HGF2:311)

One might argue that very little has changed in Tadaoki despite his “repentance” in the wake of Garasha’s tragic death. Tadaoki continues to be his old self treating his beautiful wife as his Flat-Spider Kettle, a prized possession which he would rather destroy than give up.

*Hosokawa Garasha fujin* is a powerful novel that portrays the turbulent life of Hosokawa Garasha and how she struggles to live with human dignity (*ningen rashisa*) in a world in which women were considered nothing more than men’s property. It gives a voice to marginalized figures in history, in this case, women of the warrior class who were confined to subservient roles and subject to control by men through the institution of marriage.

Using historical facts (Honnōji Incident and Garasha’s tragic death) as a starting point, Miura produces a brilliantly artistic re-creation of history by drawing on and creatively combining no fewer than ten ingredients from various sources: (1) chronicles (*Shinchō-kōki* and *Akechi Gunki*); (2) memoirs (*Shimojo oboegaki*); (3) archives (*Hosokawa-ke monjo*); (4) artifacts (*karuta* poem cards presumably hand made by Tadaoki that are now in the Hosokawa family heirloom); (5) Hosokawa family history (*Menkō shūroku*); (6) legends (from various sources); (7) correspondences and historical records kept by
Jesuit missionaries (Fróis, Organtino, Pasio); (8) scholarly studies (Ebisawa, Takayanagi, Kuwata and others); (9) poems (hyakunin isshu, jisei poems by Hideyoshi and Garasha, Mitsuhide’s hokku at the Atagoyama renga session with Jōha, and waka poems attributed to Garasha); and most importantly (10) Miura’s own artistic imagination.

Miura’s success as a historical novelist stems from her ability to strike that delicate balance between historical accuracy and authenticity on the one hand, and literary and artistic pursuit on the other hand. Following the spirit of Mori Ōgai (rekishi sono mama), Miura makes every effort to be faithful to history, to the extent that her power of imagination and creative expression is not stifled by her faithfulness to historical details. At the same time, for the sake of art and dramatic effectiveness, Miura does not hesitate to change chronology, alter details, or even invent fictitious characters and imaginary events, in order to create a commanding story of emotional intensity. It is worth noting that Miura’s deviation from history (rekishi-banare) is not as prominent as that of Akutagawa, who, as we have seen, totally recharacterizes the historical portrait of Hosokawa Garasha in Itojo oboegaki. Miura’s characterization of Garasha as an admirable woman of love and faith mirrors her image fostered by Fróis and other Jesuit missionaries, who idealized Garasha as a model Christian (seijo).

As Manzoni points out, “even the most conscientious, most meticulous historian will not give us, by a long shot, all the truth or as plain a truth as we might wish.” Manzoni further argues that “history… does not lack its tall tales, even its lies.” In line with Manzoni’s argument, my analysis of Hosokawa Garasha fujin problematizes the boundary between history and fiction and demonstrates that history is by no means more “true” or “factual” than fiction. For one thing, authors of historical texts (both primary and secondary sources) and novels alike have their own biases. Therefore, we are not surprised that Ōta Gyūichi, author of Shinchō-Kō ki, would idealize his lord, Nobunaga, as a “benevolent” ruler “whose compassion was exceedingly profound”
while Miura demonizes Nobunaga in her novel to set him in contrast with the more admirable Mitsuhide. It is also understandable that the author of the Hosokawa family history, *Menkō shūroku*, exalts Lady Garasha as a Confucian retsujo, a paragon of virtues who fully obeys the commands of her husband, while Fróis and other Jesuit missionaries glorifies her as a Christian saint (Fróis might have portrayed Tadaoki as exceedingly jealous and restrictive to make Garasha’s unyielding faith look even more remarkable). Miura, too, is not free from her own evangelical bias. In accordance with her Christian worldview, she idealizes her male characters (Mitsuhide, Ukon, Okimoto and Hatsunosuke) and portrays Garasha as an impeccable woman of faith, whereas, in real life, she might very well have been an arrogant, timid woman (as in Akutagawa’s story) who committed “ritual suicide” simply because she was weary of life (as Endō suggests in *Nihon no seijo*).

It is intriguing to see how differently Miura, Endō and Akutagawa characterize Garasha in their respective work of fiction. Historical and literary narratives alike abound in conflicting viewpoints, raising the issue as to whether we can legitimize one version of historical events as “true” or “factual.” The problem of author bias calls into question the very meaning of *rekishi sono mama* (history as it is). When we examine Miura’s novel using the yardstick of “faithfulness to history,” perhaps we should first ask “faithful to what?” In a 1974 essay entitled “rekishi to shizen” (History and Nature), Karatani Kōjin offers an excellent interpretation of what Ōgai possibly meant by being faithful to *nature* in history:

> Historical texts record only the surface of an incident. They are fragmentary, unorganized, and even contradictory. When Ōgai says that he dislikes wanton changes to the nature of historical materials, he is not simply saying that he is against distorting historical facts; rather, he is saying that he does not want to rearrange historical materials and turn them into a unified, coherent idea. To put it in another way, not only does Ōgai want to be faithful to historical materials, he
also wants to be faithful to the inconsistency and silence demonstrated in those materials.\textsuperscript{222}

Miura is aware that to write about history as it is \textit{(rekishi sono mama)}, she has to be faithful to the nature of historical materials; in other words, she has to maintain the inconsistency and incoherence and avoid weaving those materials together into a perfectly coherent narrative with no logical contradictions. For that reason, historical figures in Miura’s novels are multifaceted individuals, as they must have been in real life. In \textit{Hosokawa Garasha fujin}, Mitsuhide appears not only as an ideal husband, but also as a man of ambitious design who ultimately betrays his own lord; Garasha, as portrayed in Miura’s novel, is by no means a perfect \textit{seijo} – like all men and women, she is guilty of the sins of jealousy and hatred. Tadaoki, too, contrary to the historical image of a violently jealous husband, has his gentle side largely unknown to the readers.

Miura’s success as a historical novelist lies in her poetic rendering of peoples’ thoughts, feelings and emotions, and in her ability to reveal to the readers the inner workings of the minds of her characters, thereby offering alternative viewpoints and interpretations of historical events, and the psychological motives that drove those historical events. In Miura’s novels, historical figures come to life and the readers feel as though they are witnessing major events of the past unfolding before their eyes. Being her first historical novel, \textit{Hosokawa Garasha fujin} attests to Miura’s talent as a storyteller and her potential as a historical novelist. As we shall see in the next section, by the time Miura published \textit{Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi} (1980), she had become a full-fledged writer of historical fiction.
Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.

(Matthew 5:8)

“I, Sen no Rikyū, will hereby purify the Way of the Tea Ceremony with my blood.“

Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi

Three years after the publication of Hosokawa Garasha fujin, riding on the success of her first historical novel, Miura embarked on arguably the most ambitious work of fiction she had ever attempted, producing yet another fictionalized historical-biographical narrative. The end product – Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi (Sen no Rikyū and His Wives) – was almost six hundred pages long when it came out in book form on March 26, 1980. Originally serialized in the women’s magazine Shufu no tomo from January 1978 to March 1980, the historical novel traces the life and art of the great tea master, Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591), beginning with a glimpse of Rikyū as a young man of twenty-eight, and following his life journey of spiritual awakening which tragically ended with his ritual suicide at the age of seventy. Throughout the novel, Miura skillfully depicts the love-hate relationship between Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), the undisputed hegemon of the time in the political arena, and Rikyū, the most revered tea master of the nation, as well as being Hideyoshi’s trusted political advisor and his teacher in the art of the tea ceremony (chanoyu).
Rikyū’s ritual suicide by disembowelment (seppuku), ordered by Hideyoshi, remains one of the greatest mysteries in Japanese history. Rikyū daijiten, which is by far the most comprehensive biographical sourcebook available, lists twelve hypothetical reasons for Rikyū’s seppuku, among them: (1) Rikyū allowed a wooden image of himself to be made and consecrated by his Zen teacher, Abbot Kokei Sōchin of Daitoku-ji, who placed the statue on the main gate of the temple, literally forcing Hideyoshi and members of the imperial processions to pass under the image of Rikyū’s straw sandals; (2) Rikyū allegedly lined his pocket by intentional false appraisals, declaring good tea vessels bad and buying them for artificially low prices while selling average utensils at inflated prices for profit; (3) Rikyū refused to send one of his daughters to Hideyoshi’s harem despite the hegemon’s order (the fact that Rikyū’s daughter committed suicide only exacerbated his already-strained relationship with Hideyoshi); and even speculation that (4) Rikyū might have been a believer of the Christian faith.223 None of these theories, in itself, provides a satisfactory explanation of why Rikyū was ordered to commit seppuku, but Miura the historical novelist loves to see this kind of factual void, for it is therein that she finds the perfect canvas for her creative imagination. In an essay entitled “Rikyū hyakkai ki ni omou” (My thoughts on The Record of Rikyū’s One Hundred Tea Gatherings, May 1986), we find the best clue to Miura’s motivation for writing Sen no Rikyū:

Prior to writing this novel, I was working on the novel Hosokawa Garasha fujin. Given that I was writing about a Christian woman, Garasha, it was natural that I visited the church [in Tamazukuri] that Garasha was believed to have once attended. It was there that I observed the rites of the Holy Communion during a Catholic mass. As a Christian, I was deeply moved when I saw how closely the ceremony resembled the etiquettes of chanoyu.224

In what way was Rikyū linked to Christianity? I thought to myself: “If there is an external resemblance in form, there has to be an internal resemblance in spirit as well. As I wrote Hosokawa Garasha fujin, I learned about the seven disciples of
Rikyū, the so-called *Rikyū Shichitetsu*, including Garasha’s husband, Hosokawa Tadaoki. I also realized that many of them were Christians.

It was not difficult to imagine that Rikyū must have learned something [about Christianity] from them. This imagination of mine weighed heavily on my heart as I wrote *Sen no Rikyū*. I have studied more than twenty books on Rikyū and the art of tea ceremony. I also visited Kyoto and had the privilege of learning firsthand from the head (*iemoto*) of the Urasenke School, Sen Sōshitsu and his wife. In response to my inquiry as to why Rikyū had to commit seppuku, Sen Sōshitsu replied without hesitation: “It was because he was a Christian!” The *iemoto’s* words reinforced my conviction that it was indeed the case.225

The theory that Rikyū was a Christian has been rejected by most scholars in Japan. Haga Kōshirō, among the most influential, for instance, states that he found “not a single piece of evidence which suggests that Rikyū might have been a Christian.”226 It goes without saying that the art of the tea ceremony was much indebted to the influence of Zen. After all, it was a Zen master, Eisai (1141-1215), who brought tea seeds from China and propagated its cultivation in Japan. Tea drinking had long been an indispensable part of the highly disciplined monastic life of Zen priests, who helped develope *chanoyu* into an art of religious pursuit. As Yamanoue Sōji (1544-1590), a high disciple of Rikyū, noted in *Yamanoue Sōji ki* (Record of Yamanoue Sōji, 1588):227 “The art of *chanoyu* came from Zen Buddhism and was perfected through vigorous discipline and ascetic practices. Murata Jukō (1423-1502) and Takeno Jōō (1502-1555) were both practitioners of Zen,”228 as were Sen no Rikyū and his teacher, Kitamuki Dōchin (1504-1562), who “saw things through Zen contemplative practice.”229 Kumakura Isao rightly points out in one of his scholarly essays that “Rikyū sought to achieve the Way through Buddhism” and that he “brought *wabi-cha* to perfection through the spiritual means of Zen.”230 In the opening passage of *Nampōroku* (1593?),231 a compendium of Rikyū’s secret teachings purportedly “authored” by one of his disciples, Nambō Sōkei (dates
unknown), Rikyū is quoted as saying that “in chanoyu held in a small tearoom, the first and foremost thing is to practice the Buddhist Dharma and attain enlightenment“.

(Kozashiki no chanoyu wa daiichi buppō o motte shugyō tokudō suru koto nari)

As Kumakura Isao points out, Murata Jukō laid the spiritual foundation of chanoyu by incorporating doctrines of Zen Buddhism into his art. Jukō studied Zen under his teacher Ikkyū Sōjun (1394-1481), from whom he received a scroll of calligraphy (bokuseki) as a formal certification of his having attained enlightenment. Known as the father of chanoyu, Jukō was also credited for inaugurating the practice of hanging Zen inspired calligraphic works at tea gatherings.

Following the tradition of Jukō, Takeno Jōō further propagated the unity of chanoyu and Zen. As Haga Kōshirō notes, Jōō was given this injunction by his Zen teacher Dairin Sōtō: “Realize that the taste of tea and the taste of Zen are the same and absorb the wind in the pines. Then will your mind be undefiled.”

(知量茶味與禅味 吸盡松風不意塵) However, as Kumakura rightly observes, Zen Buddhism was not the only foundation of Jōō’s tea ritual; the art of linked poetry (renge) – particularly Shinkei’s aesthetic preference for the cold and the withered – was equally, if not more, influential.

It was, according to Kumakura, Rikyū who perfected the ideal of chazen ichimi (a phrase meaning “tea and Zen have the same flavor“). Rikyū studied under Shōrei Sōkin and Kokei Sōchin, the head abbot of Daitoku-ji, and was reportedly recognized by the latter as “a disciple who had acquired a thorough understanding of Zen teachings after thirty years of training” (sanjū-nen hōsan no to). The fact that Rikyū made a large donation, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his father’s death in 1589, for rebuilding the Sanmon (main gate) at the Daitoku-ji into a splendid two-story structure further demonstrates his indebtedness to his Zen teacher, Abbot Kokei Sōchin, and his life-long association with Zen Buddhism. As mentioned earlier, the wooden statue of
Rikyū placed on top of the Daitoku-ji gate was believed to be a direct cause of Rikyū’s seppuku two years later in 1591 – perhaps the strongest and most persuasive argument for refuting the assertion that Rikyū was a Christian; if that was indeed the case, Rikyū would not have committed ritual suicide since he lived in an age when Christians were forbidden to take their own lives.

Two poems attributed to Rikyū indicate that he was very much a Zen Buddhist at heart. The first compares the roji (tea garden) that leads a guest to the sōan (literally “grass-thatched hut” where the tea ceremony is to be held) to a spiritual path that leads us to enlightenment. Rikyū reminds us that in order to enter the pure world of chanoyu, we have to shake off the “dust from our hearts” (kokoro no chiri) – power, wealth, fame, and other attachments to this fleeting world (ukiyo):

Rojī wa tada  露地は只  The tea garden path
Ukiyo no soto no  浮世の外の  is none other than a path
Michi naru ni  道なるに  outside the floating world.
Kokoro no chiri o  心の塵を  Why scatter
Nazo chirasu ran  なぞ散らすらん  the dust of our heart?238

Rikyū’s poem echoes the Buddhist sentiment expressed in a famous gātha (Buddhist verse composed for meditative practice) by Hui-neng (638-713), the Sixth and Last Patriarch of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, which ends with the lines: “Fundamentally there is not a single thing – where could any dust be attracted?” (本來無一物，何處惹塵埃)239 We see an even stronger infusion of Zen thoughts in Rikyū’s farewell gātha (yuige): “Seventy years of human existence. Ha! Ha! What does it matter! With this treasured sword, I will kill both Buddhas and Patriarchs – holding this sword of mine, now is the time to throw myself to the heavens.”240 (人生七十 力囲希咄 吾這寶剣 祖佛共殺 堤る我得具足の一太刀 今此時ぞ天に抛) As many have pointed out, Rikyū alluded to the words of the Chinese Zen Patriarch Lin-chi I-hsüan: “If you meet a buddha, kill the buddha. If you
meet a patriarch, kill the patriarch. If you meet an arhat, kill the arhat... Then for the first time you will gain emancipation, will not be entangled with things, will pass freely anywhere you wish to go."²⁴¹(逢佛殺佛,逢祖殺祖,逢羅漢殺羅漢...始得解脫,不與物拘,透脫自在)

One can safely conclude that Rikyū was most likely not a Christian. Yet, Christian influence on the life and work of Rikyū cannot be ruled out, in light of the fact that Rikyū was surrounded by many Christians who formed the closest circle of his friends and relatives, including his second wife and his daughter. As Takeuchi Jō argues in his book Sen no Rikyū, it is unthinkable that Rikyū’s mental attitudes were not somehow shaped by Christianity, although the association might not be as deep as that between Zen Buddhism and the art of the tea ceremony.²⁴² Kaku Kōzō, too, takes the same position, stating that even if Rikyū was not a Christian, it is highly conceivable that he was a man who demonstrated a deep understanding of the Christian faith.²⁴³

Kōshin Sōsa (1613-1672), Rikyū’s great-grandson and fourth-generation grand master of the Omotesenke School, recorded the names of the so-called Rikyū Shichitetsu in his memoir or “summer writings,” Kōshin gegaki (1662-63).²⁴⁴ Among the list of Rikyū’s seven sages – Gamō Ujisato, Takayama Ukon, Makimura Toshisada, Furuta Oribe, Hosokawa Tadaoki, Shibayama Munetsuna and Seta Masatada – the first four were known to be devout Christians while Tadaoki, as we recall, was married to the renowned Christian convert Hosokawa Garasha. Perhaps more importantly, Rikyū’s second wife, Sōon (O-Riki in Miura’s novel, ?-1600), and one of his daughters (probably the one married to Sen no Jōji) were known to be Christians as well. Moreover, Rikyū was closely associated with Hibiya Ryōkei, a wealthy Sakai merchant like Rikyū, but also a baptized Christian, who reportedly hosted Saint Francis Xavier when he came to Sakai as a missionary in 1550 and later converted his three-story mansion to a cathedral in 1564.²⁴⁵ Given the circumstances, it is not totally implausible to suggest that there was
at least a strong Christian influence on Rikyū (and I am not arguing the extent). Recent studies by Japanese scholars have begun to look at the link between Christianity and *chanoyu.* It was in the same spirit that Miura re-examined the life and art of Rikyū in her historical novel.

Despite her conviction, Miura wisely refrained from asserting in her novel that Rikyū was indeed a Christian. Doing so would have invited harsh criticism from literary critics who were eager to discredit her work as outright proselytizing and writing in defense of her religion. Instead, Miura took a more neutral stance by first affirming the Zen roots in Rikyū’s art of *chanoyu* before proceeding to a discussion of the possible influences of Christianity on Rikyū’s art and his outlook on life. In her novel, Miura presents Rikyū as a man who is eager to seek spiritual truth, and yet leaving it open to the reader’s own speculation as to whether he accepted the Christian faith in the end. *Sen no Rikyū* is an interesting story that re-tells the life of Rikyū from a Christian perspective and explains in a convincing manner the meaning of his final act of ritual suicide. It reveals Miura’s talent as a storyteller and once again demonstrates that Miura is at her best when she probes the minds of her characters to offer alternative interpretations of historical events, which often contradict popular belief and established thoughts.

In an essay entitled “*Sen no Rikyū o kakinagara*” (As I wrote the novel *Sen no Rikyū*, 1980), Miura states that she knows little about the art of *chanoyu*:

I hardly know anything about *chanoyu.* I took lessons as a young girl for several months, but that was it... I don’t know the right etiquette. I am not a good judge of ceramics, lacquerware, paintings and calligraphic works. I have no knowledge of architecture or landscape gardening, and I have no idea how to arrange flowers or savor incense... In the field of Nō drama, an art closely associated with the art of the tea ceremony, I am a total layman. In other words, I have no qualifications
whatsoever to write about the great tea master, Sen no Rikyū, who excelled in these arts.\textsuperscript{247}

Despite having such a humble opinion of herself, Miura was apparently quite knowledgeable in the art of \textit{chanoyu}. In particular, she seemed to be drawing heavily on \textit{Yamanoue Sōji ki} as an aesthetic manual. When Rikyū recalls, in Miura’s novel, the famous saying of Takeno Jōō (1502-1555): “Shinkei said that the essence of \textit{renga} (linked poetry) is summarized in three words – \textit{withered, shrunken and cold} (\textit{renga wa kare kajikete samukare}); it should be the same for \textit{chanoyu}” (S1:11), it sounds familiar to those who are seriously pursuing the art of \textit{chanoyu} since it is a verbatim quote from \textit{Yamanoue Sōji ki}.\textsuperscript{248} Rikyū also quotes Murata Jukō (1422-1502), another example of direct intertextual reference to \textit{Yamanoue Sōji ki},\textsuperscript{249} as saying: “It shows refinement to tie a noble stallion to a straw-thatched hut” (S1:33). Like his predecessor, Jukō, Rikyū understands the beauty of fine utensils (noble stallion) set in contrast to a lonely, withered straw-thatched hut. However, Rikyū also sees the possibility of using crude tea vessels in a withered straw-thatched hut (\textit{somatsu na heya ni somatsu na dōgu no chanoyu}), an embodiment of the essence of \textit{wabi}, in which case, the master of the tea ceremony himself would become that noble stallion” (S1:34). By making intertextual references to \textit{Yamanoue Sōji ki}, Miura establishes her credentials as a legitimate discussant of aesthetic principles. Furthermore, she underscores the importance of spiritual character, or fine qualities within the tea master, that makes him a noble stallion.

Early in the novel, Miura includes several episodes that highlight the aesthetic ideals of \textit{wabi-cha}. In one such episode, Rikyū visits Takeno Jōō, imploring the tea master to take him as his disciple. Instead of allowing Rikyū to show his skills, Jōō asks him to tend the garden, which Rikyū does to the point of perfection. Much to his surprise, Rikyū is asked to do it again. Then, he recalls the words of Murata Jukō,
stating his preference for a moon that lies partially hidden behind clouds, as opposed to one that shines brightly unshrouded. Rikyū realizes that the essence of *wabi-cha* lies in the beauty of imperfection – a garden without a speck of dust is too clean; there is no *wabi* in a world of perfection. With all his might, he shakes the branches of the ginkgo tree until a few leaves flutter down to the ground; his heart overflows with joy, we are told. Rikyū only finds out later that Jōō has been watching him all this time with great admiration. Impressed by Rikyū’s unusual sensitivity, Jōō acknowledges the nineteen-year-old boy as his disciple (S1:8-12).

Takeno Jōō died in the year 1555. After Jōō’s death, Rikyū continued to pursue the way of tea, eventually rising to the position of tea master for the hegemon, Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), and after his death, his successor, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598). In *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, we learn that Rikyū reportedly gave this instruction to his own disciple Yamanoue Sōji: “After bidding farewell to your teacher, continue to learn from Buddhist teachings (*buppō*), the Way of poetry (*kadō*), and the art of *Nō drama* ... and treat them as your teacher.” Miura examines each of these elements in a very interesting manner as she weaves spiritual and lyrical fibers into the fabric of her storytelling.

In an early episode, Miura makes an explicit intertextual reference to Case 29 of *Wu-men kuan* (The Gateless Barrier, early 13th century), presenting the case as a famous anecdote that Rikyū uses to instruct his eldest son, Yonosuke (Sen no Dōan, 1546-1607), on the importance of quiet contemplation in the practice of *chanoyu*:

Two monks were arguing about the temple flag waving in the wind. One said, “The flag moves.” The other said, “The wind moves.” They argued back and forth but could not agree. The Sixth Ancestor said, “Gentlemen! It is not the wind that moves; it is not the flag that moves; *it is your mind that moves.*” The two monks were struck with awe. (S1:172)
The Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng’s point is that it is not by looking outward, but by gazing inward that one comes to understand the true nature of one’s self. Hui-neng stresses an inner awakening to one’s Buddha-nature, achieved through the quiet contemplative practices of Zen, which help a person attain the state of non-attachment, or no-mindness (mushin). The two monks in Wu-men kuan are struck with awe by Hui-neng’s wisdom, and so is Rikyū’s son Yonosuke in Miura’s novel, who realizes that there is an inner, invisible world deep within his heart, of which he is as yet unaware (S1:172). As Rikyū points out on several occasions when he practices zazen with Yonosuke, “to practice Zen is to sit quietly and look inward at one’s self... A tea master needs to practice Zen thoroughly. Chanoyu is a religion; as a religious pursuit, it invariably starts with self-examination” (S1:164). Rikyū’s words set the tone for the whole novel, which is best read as a spiritual journey of introspective self-discovery on the part of the great tea master Sen no Rikyū.

In an imaginary dialogue in Miura’s novel, Rikyū and his Nō teacher Miyao Saburō talk about the aesthetic ideal of wabi-cha. When Miyao mentions that his wife O-Riki (she is to become Rikyū’s second wife after Miyao’s death) asked about the meaning of wabi, Rikyū cites the following poem by Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241) from the eighth imperial anthology Shinkokinshū (1205), which Jōō reportedly used (according to Nampōroku) to illustrate the essence of wabi-cha:

Miwataseba 見渡せば In this wide landscape
hana mo momiji mo 花も紅葉も There are no cherry blossoms
nakari keri なりけり And no autumn leaves
ura no tomaya no 浦の苫屋の Evening in autumn over
aki no yūgure 秋の夕暮れ A straw-thatched hut by the bay.

In this monochromatic landscape, colors, as represented by the cherry blossoms and the maple leaves, are conspicuously absent. Miura rightly sees Teika’s poem not
only as a statement of his aesthetic preference for *wabi* (the bleak and the subdued) – unconventional beauty that goes beyond flowers and maple – but also as a key to spiritual understanding. Presenting it in the novel as Rikyū’s own commentary, Miura articulates her understanding of the essence of *wabi-cha* and the religious implications of Teika’s poem in these terms: “Cherry blossoms and maple leaves symbolize the *shoindaisu* style of tea. In that style of *chanoyu*, many hanging scrolls were used in spacious halls (*shoin*), coupled with lavish display of famed tea utensils. In stark contrast, just as there are neither flowers nor maple in a straw-thatched hut by the bay, the ideal tearoom is a realm of nothingness (*muichimotsu*)” (S1:33). Although writing as a Christian novelist, Miura understands the importance of the Buddhist concept of nothingness (*mu*) and how it influenced the thoughts of great tea masters including Rikyū. Indeed, the very first *kōan* in the *Wu-men kuan* describes a monk who asked the Chinese Zen master Chao-chou (778-897) this question: “Has the dog Buddha nature or not?” to which Chao-chou simply replied with a single word, “Mu.” Commenting on this intriguing *kōan*, Wu-men contends that “for the practice of Zen, it is imperative that [one passes] through... the Gateless Barrier, or the Wu-men kuan (無門閥, *Mumonkan* in Japanese),“ which is epitomized by this one word “Mu“ (無). If one does not pass this barrier, he will remain “a ghost clinging to bushes and grasses,“ meaning possessions, fame, power... and the myriad fixations of life that provide the ghost with an illusory identity.254

According to *Rikyū Koji densho*, Rikyū learned two Nō plays from Miyao Saburō – *Sekidera Komachi* and *Fujito*,255 both attributed to the great dramatist Zeami Motokiyo – a fact noted in Miura’s novel. As Royall Tyler notes in his introduction to *Sekidera Komachi*, Zeami’s play builds on the legend of Ono no Komachi (c.825-c.900), which evokes an image of Komachi as a dazzling and passionate beauty. Before long, however, Komachi found herself old and ugly, as if in retribution for her wanton ways.
Unwanted in the capital, she was forced to wander the roads (according to the legend) as a beggar woman and ultimately settled in a wretched hut near the Buddhist temple, Sekidera\textsuperscript{256} (it is worth noting that “seki” is also the Japanese word for “barrier” with religious significance noted above). Komachi appears in Zeami’s play as a hundred-year-old woman who laments that “[her] own life has reached its term, just like the rose of Sharon’s one glorious day.”\textsuperscript{257} The motif of impermanence (mujō) is punctuated starkly by these lines chanted by the shite, or the main actor who plays the role of Komachi: “Blossoms, as the rains touch them and pass, lose the gay brightness of their youth; willow trees, lured on by the wind, soon enough let their fronds hang low. Man is never young a second time.”\textsuperscript{258} Indeed, the chorus later declares in a solemn statement: “winds that sweep down off Osaka Pass bring the news that all born must die.”\textsuperscript{259} In Miura’s novel, Nō plays take on a spiritual significance. Specifically, the masterful chanting of Sekidera Komachi by his adopted son, Shōan, forces Rikyū to ponder the serious questions of life and death:

Ever since he heard Shōan’s chanting of Sekidera Komachi, Rikyū started to think anew about the evanescence of human life. It was not that he had never thought about it until now. He understood the harsh reality of a man being born in the morning and dying in the evening. The two little children he had with O-Riki died one by one. Those tragic events were a painful reminder of the fragility of life. Nevertheless, as he listened to Sekidera Komachi, he visualized the figure of the hundred-year-old Komachi, whose beauty and life had been celebrated in songs throughout the ages. Although old age was creeping up on Komachi, she must have been beautiful as an old woman even in her waning years. However, it was the beauty of someone living on the brink of death, the piteous sight of a decrepit old figure who becomes more and more feeble day by day. (S2:58)

Rikyū was particularly struck by the following lines in the play: “I am forlorn, a drifting waterweed cut off at the root: should a current call, O (even now!) I would go. I am ashamed!” <hazukashi ya, wabinureba mi o ukikusa no ne o taete sasou mizu araba ima mo
inamu to zo omou hazukashi ya>,

which recalls a famous poem by Komachi – the underlined parts being the original verse as it appeared in the first imperial waka anthology, Kokinshū (905). The prose preface to this poem by Komachi, in the Kokinshū, says that it was Komachi’s reply to Fun’ya no Yasuhide’s invitation for her to go with him to Mikawa Province, of which Yasuhide had been appointed a high ranking official. Like Komachi, Fun’ya no Yasuhide (?-885?) was ranked as one of the Six Poetic Geniuses, and was believed to have been involved in a relationship with Komachi. In Zeami’s Nō play, the lyrics were changed slightly to include the words hazukashi ya (I am ashamed) and ima mo (even now): Komachi feels ashamed not only because of her unsightly appearance, and the destitute state she is in, but also because she is as lonely and forlorn as ever, ready to jump “shamelessly“ at a romantic invitation even now at her old age!

This visual image of Komachi evokes deep sympathy in Rikyū, who, as the narrator of Miura’s novel tells us, wonders if O-Riki, too, would not face a similar lonely existence after his death (S2:59). Interestingly, Rikyū sees Komachi’s loneliness as that of a hundred-year-old woman who has no faith in religion, whether it be the Buddha or the Christian God: “The tolling of the Seki-dera bell proclaims the plain truth that all things pass, but these old ears of mine pay it no heed“ (rōni ni wa yaku mo nashi), as Komachi and the chorus chant in the Nō play.261 At her advanced age, Komachi still feels a burning sense of passion in her heart, although she turns a deaf ear to the tolling of the Seki-dera temple bell, which announces the impermanence of all things and declares all colors of the phenomenal world illusory. Ironically, in Miura’s novel, it is Komachi’s rejection of religious faith, and the sight of her piteous existence as she appears in Sekidera Komachi, a Nō play loaded with Buddhist overtones, that gives Rikyū the initial push towards Christianity.
Unlike Hosokawa Garasha Fujin, there are no major fictional characters in Sen no Rikyū. Miura uses real historical figures and their portrayal is generally faithful to historical accounts. Perhaps the only exception is her portrayal of Rikyū’s first wife, Hōshin Myōju (?-1577), known by her secular name, O-Ine. Surprisingly, apart from the fact that she had long been estranged from her husband, very little was known about Rikyū’s first wife – not even her birth date or family background. Miura creates an interesting character profile by depicting O-Ine as the half-sister of a powerful daimyo, Miyoshi Nagayoshi (1522-1564), setting her elitism as a member of the samurai class in conflict with the merchant values of Rikyū and his own pride as a tea master. Early in the novel, we are told that O-Ine respects Miyoshi more than she does her husband. Indeed, she has very little regard for Rikyū and absolutely no understanding of the merits of chanoyu. “A man should fight with bows and arrows on the battlefield. No matter how good you are at the tea ceremony, you will never become the lord of a castle” (S1:7). Rikyū finds O-Ine’s deriding statement bitterly poisonous (S1:12) and he laments that “in front of O-Ine, he can hardly talk about chanoyu” (S1:262). The psychology of an estranged couple is brilliantly captured in the following passage:

Until her death, O-Ine would remain a drag on Sōeki’s life. She was a woman who thought that only warriors qualified as men. That attitude of hers repeatedly hurt Sōeki, a man who took pride in being a [successful] merchant in the city of Sakai. O-Ine also treated her husband with contempt for being a practitioner of the tea ceremony. In her eyes, no matter how much Sōeki excelled in his art, a man without a castle remained a worthless being. (S2:28)

O-Ine takes pride in being the half-sister of a castle-owning daimyo so powerful as to challenge the authority of the Ashikaga Shogunate. Thanks to her lineage, she can indulge in a sense of superiority to her husband. Ironically, Miyoshi means so much to O-Ine (and Rikyū so little to her) that after Miyoshi’s death, it is almost as if she has lost
her whole *raison d'être*. Unable to forgive Matsunaga Hisahide, who literally annihilates the Miyoshi clan, and O-Riki, who has become the intruder and Rikyū’s new love, O-Ine finds her health deteriorating. Her final moment evokes sadness and sympathy, for the reader sees a woman who wants to live with a pure heart and yet is unable to do so because of her hatred:

“That fellow, Matsunaga [Hisahide], I wonder when he’ll die.”
“O-Ine! It’s wrong to curse people. It’s wrong.”
“All right. I’ll stop cursing. *Even I want to live with a pure heart.*”
“You do? That’s great. Now, have a good night’s sleep.”

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“I will not curse people. But that fellow Matsunaga who destroyed my elder brother… I just can’t forgive him!” No sooner had she finished the sentence than she fell asleep, breathing deep with her mouth half open…

Next morning, by the time Sōeki opened his eyes, O-Ine had already breathed her last, ending her life of loneliness. She was fifty-two. (S2:23-4)

As the title of the novel suggests, *Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi* centers on the protagonist Rikyū and his two wives, with the spotlight on Rikyū’s second wife, O-Riki (better known in history by her Buddhist name Sōon). It is in this second marriage that we see a perfectly harmonious relationship based on equal partnership. O-Riki appears in the novel as a refined woman of beauty, both inside and out. The narrator speaks of her fragrance that lingers (S1:260), the gentleness and abundance in her heart (S1:281) and an incomparable charm that is akin to holiness (S1:25). Her charm is by no means sexual; rather, O-Riki seems to exist on higher spiritual grounds (S1:30). Her beauty surpasses that of the heavenly maiden who descended to the Pine Grove of Miho (S1:46). It is a celestial beauty that sparks unspeakable jealousy in O-Ine (S1:84). Unlike O-Ine, her movements are full of grace (S1:84). Hers is a total beauty that is at the same time the embodiment of wisdom (S1:280). On top of and beyond her physical beauty and warm personality, O-Riki possesses a keen sense of judgment, superior even to
accomplished tea masters (S2:164). But above all, it is O-Riki’s purity that captures Rikyū’s heart, a sacred beauty of cleanliness that resembles purity of the tea room (S1:107).

One needs to read only a few physical descriptions to realize that O-Riki is being depicted by Miura as the ideal woman: beautiful, pure, intelligent, and understanding. The narrator mentions her sacred charm (seinaru namamekashisa) and compares her beauty to the spirit of the flower (hana no sei to omowareru hodo no... utsukushisa) (H1:25) Unlike O-Ine who shows disdain for Rikyū’s vocation, O-Riki is not only supportive of her husband’s activities as a tea master, but also an active practitioner of chanoyu herself. Indeed, we are told that she has a keen artistic sense that rivals, if not surpassing, that of Rikyū. Drawing on a well known anecdote from the Edo-period text, Chasō kanwa, Miura describes how Rikyū shortens the legs of the celebrated Chidori incense burner following O-Riki’s suggestion and realizes the extent of her refined aesthetic sensibilities (S2:164-5). 265

As mentioned previously, O-Riki as the historical figure was believed to be a Christian (as was one of Rikyū’s daughters). She had been married to the Nō master Miyaō Saburō – famous for playing the Japanese hand drum (tsutsumi) – and had a son with him named Shōan (1546-1614), who would later become the adopted son of Rikyū and the heir to his art of chanoyu. O-Riki became a widow when Miyaō passed away in 1553 (?), but she waited almost twenty-five years before eventually marrying, in 1578, the man who had long admired her – Sen no Rikyū. Whereas Rikyū had a son, Sen no Dōan (1546-1607), and three daughters (four in some accounts) from his previous marriage to Hōshin Myōju (O-Ine), as well as a daughter named O-Kame (?-1606) in a relationship with another woman, he had only two sons with O-Riki – Šōrin and Šōgen – who, according to historical records, both died as young children. In Miura’s novel, we see O-Riki portrayed as a gentle-hearted woman who treats her step-sons and step-
daughters with respect and sensitivity, although her presence in the Sen family has always been a source of tension. The antagonism between Shōan and Dōan, known in history to have been passed over for succession to the Sen family, is faithfully depicted. And again, Miura draws on historical records of the tragic deaths of Sōrin and Sōgen to create a credible, albeit fabricated, story of O-Riki’s conversion to Christianity.

We are told that O-Riki became pregnant soon after her marriage to Rikyū and gave birth to a boy, who unfortunately died at the young age of three. The devastating loss of her first child with Rikyū forces O-Riki to think seriously about the issues of life and death. Despite having received instruction from Rikyū on Zen Buddhism while being taught chanoyu, O-Riki eventually gives up on Zen in favor of Christianity (she actually apologizes in the novel to Rikyū for her abrupt conversion). As a woman writer, Miura sympathizes with O-Riki and imagines how she must have felt as a mother who has lost her precious little boy. By probing her mind, Miura gives a plausible explanation as to why O-Riki converts to Christianity:

O-Riki had learned that “in Zen, everything was nothing.” If everything was nothing, there would be no birth; nor would there be any death. She was supposed to have been enlightened, but the image of her dead child still hovered in her heart and it refused to go no matter what. Even now, she still could not forget the gentle touch of her beloved child, as she held him on her lap... To O-Riki, her child had come to this world and then gone. Unable to realize that “everything was nothing,” she felt shame at being foolishly unenlightened. No, it was more agony than shame. Such being the case, O-Riki found the Christian teaching of “resurrection of the dead” astonishing. (S1:284)

The essence of Buddhism is based on emptiness (kū in Japanese; shunyata in Sanskrit) and the notion that beings and phenomena have no intrinsic existence and no individual identity except in our thoughts. As the Heart Sutra teaches: “All dharmas are defined by emptiness not birth or destruction.”264 The Buddhist notion of “unborn and
undying” (fushō fumetsu) is precisely what O-Riki cannot accept as a mother who is still grieving over the loss of her beloved son. As a practitioner of Zen and chanoyu, O-Riki knows perfectly well that all things are produced by the mind and that all appearances perceived through the senses, including visual perception and tactile sensations, are but a dream. Still, the perceived reality of her son’s birth and ultimate death is too “real” to be dismissed as “illusory” or “non-existent” – she can still see vividly the image of her dead child and remembers fondly the gentle touch of his skin. The Buddhist emphasis on impermanence (mujō) and the idea that all things are born from emptiness and return to emptiness represent a worldview that O-Riki finds too difficult to accept. Instead, she chooses to believe in the Christian promise of resurrection and eternal life. Indeed, when she is pregnant again with her second child, she feels as if her dead son had been resurrected, alive and well again in his mother’s womb to comfort her in her sorrow (S1:285).

In her novel, Miura depicts a scene of the Christian missionary Luís Fróis preaching on the street. The message comes straight from the core of the Christian faith and touches the heart of O-Riki, a mother who has recently lost her beloved child: “Men die, but that is definitely not the end. Our Savior Jesus Christ died and was resurrected on the third day. Those who believe in the redemption of sin through Jesus Christ on the cross and his resurrection will revive and have eternal life” (H1:283). Fróis’s sermon not only brings O-Riki to Christ, but also awakens her to her sinful nature. After becoming a Christian, O-Riki realizes that by continuing an amorous relationship with a married man, she has committed adultery with Rikyū, not in a physical sense, but by God’s standard, that is, in her heart.

As the narrator notes, it is, of course, not unusual for Sakai merchants to keep mistresses. No one would consider that particularly immoral. Rather, some even take pride in it seeing that as a symbol of wealth and power. In that respect, Rikyū is not
unlike others in terms of moral values (S1:100). As a woman writer, Miura questions the patriarchal view of female identity, which often dehumanizes women by reducing them to sexualized commodities. Interestingly, it is not so much a “feminist” voice, but a Christian voice that Miura seems to be projecting here. As is evident in the following exchange, it is clear that she considers the practice of polygamy morally wrong and adultery a sin against God:

“We, Christians, follow the Ten Commandments, one of them being Thou shalt not commit adultery.”
“What are you trying to say?”
“Both you and I have broken the commandment.”
O-Riki cast down her eyes.
“You are right. I am not your wife.”
“What’s wrong with that?”
“To a Christian, that is unpardonable.”
“Don’t be ridiculous! It might be different in a foreign country, but here in Japan, from the emperor down to feudal lords and merchants, almost every one has mistresses. Even Buddhist priests won’t say it’s bad…”
“Unlike you, my dear, I am a woman. I am happy to be with you like this, but I cannot look up to face O-Ine. Even if I am not spoken ill of behind my back, deep down in my soul, I feel as if a black cloud was hanging over me. I finally realize that it is because I sinned against God. (S1:287-89)

Contrary to historical evidence which suggests that O-Riki may have had a long-standing relationship with Rikyū even before O-Ine died, Miura portrays O-Riki as a woman of faith who refuses to share the same pillow with Rikyū until after the death of his first wife. O-Riki in Miura’s novel considers herself a deeply sinful woman (tsumibukai onna) (S1:232), who has sinned against God, as well as against O-Ine. In what could be a rekishi-banare moment, Miura depicts O-Riki as having a guilty conscience towards O-Ine, which may not have been the case in real life. The historical
fact was that in 1589, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of his father’s death, Rikyū prepared a final resting place for himself and O-Riki. He donated a large amount to the mortuary temple of his family, Jukō-in, to ensure that future memorial services be held regularly for the repose of their souls (eitai kuyō). Surprisingly, the only names that appeared on the donation form were those of Rikyū’s dead parents – Itchū Ryōsen (father) and Gesshin Myōchin (mother), his second wife, Sōon (O-Riki), and the two sons he had with O-Riki, Sōrin and Sōgen, who had died young. Missing were the names of Rikyū’s first wife, Hōshin Myōju (O-Ine) and all the children they had together including the eldest son Dōan and his sisters.265 Indeed, O-Ine was literally excluded, not only on paper, but in actuality from Rikyū’s family tomb.

As Sekiguchi Takeshi argues, no matter how strained the relationship between Rikyū and O-Ine was in real life, without O-Riki’s tacit approval, or perhaps even insistence, O-Ine and her children would not have been excluded from Rikyū’s family grave – after all she was Rikyū’s principal wife. In reality, O-Riki seemed to have joined the Sen family and become the new first lady of the house by 1578, even before the first anniversary of O-Ine’s death.266 It is clear to the reader that, writing as a Christian novelist, Miura romanticizes the relationship between Rikyū and O-Riki, idealizes the latter according to her own values and beliefs, and turns her into a pure, sensitive woman who is to become, for all intents and purposes, Rikyū’s spiritual mentor. Whereas Rikyū is portrayed as an earnest seeker of spiritual truth, a man who is not without his own share of flaws and weaknesses, O-Riki is almost flawless and is painted as the ideal woman of faith, perhaps even more so than Hosokawa Garasha. More importantly to Rikyū, O-Riki is his source of spiritual guidance. It is through her that Rikyū comes to know Christianity. We are told in Miura’s novel that Rikyū makes up his mind to set foot in Hibiya Ryōkei’s cathedral because it is sad for him to be physically united with O-Riki, and yet spiritually apart from her:

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“I have always been a follower of Zen and you are a Christian. I believe religion is the most important thing to all of humanity. I just feel uneasy that you and I are walking separate paths on such an important issue.”

“I’m sorry.” O-Riki lowered her head in apology. Rikyū shook his head.

“O-Riki, you have no reason to apologize. I am just sad that you believe in the teachings of Christ of whom I have no knowledge... sad that we are not of the same faith.” (S2:46)

Rikyū’s visit to Hibiya’s cathedral is not something that was documented in historical records and could very well have been the author’s own fabrication. Nevertheless, the reader finds Rikyū’s frame of mind vividly portrayed and his reaction at the sight of the Holy Communion particularly interesting. At first, Rikyū seems curious but not totally receptive. Foreign hymns and prayers in a foreign language sound pure, but they fail to penetrate his heart. He has learned the meaning of Christ’s crucifixion from O-Riki, but when he actually sees the image of Christ crucified on the cross, he finds it incomprehensible as a Japanese, for he knows that there is no greater humiliation than disgracing oneself in public, the way Jesus died on the cross and the way Christians worship their God who allowed Himself to be crucified with the lowest criminals (S2:62).

Rikyū attentively watches the rite of the Holy Communion, noting that in chanoyu, too, drinking a bowl of tea involves formalized rituals and strict demands of etiquette that parallels the solemnity of the Christian ceremony (S2:65). As he fixes his gaze on the priest, Rikyū is attracted by the beauty of his movements as he cleanses the chalice with the ceremonial cloth (fukusa) (S2:66). After the ceremony, on their way home, Rikyū learns further from O-Riki that, in the past, believers used to drink from the same cup as they passed it around (mawashi-nomi).267 Immediately, Rikyū comes up with a novel idea:
Imagine doing the same thing in a tea ceremony...
Rikyū thought of the possibility of *mawashi-nomi*. The world of *chanoyu* is a world in which the host and the guest need to be united in one heart. In this world, there is no distinction between lord and retainer. As he pictured Nobunaga and himself sipping tea from the same bowl, Rikyū felt his heart leaping with excitement. That was a new approach to tea – a brand new form of tea ceremony. (S2:67-8)

Before accusing Miura of wild fancy, we need to consider the fact that in historical record, Rikyū was indeed credited for initiating the practice of *suicha,* that is, sharing one bowl of thick tea (*koicha*) among the guests. According to one anecdote in *Chasō kanwa,* “in the past, the host prepared a bowl of thick tea for each guest, but it was too time consuming and both the host and the guests got bored, so Rikyū started the practice of *suicha.*” It might very well have been the case, as Miura suggests in her novel, that Rikyū drew his inspiration from observing Eucharistic ritual at a Catholic mass. Whether it be the practice of drinking from the same bowl or the etiquette of cleansing the utensil with a *fukusa* cloth, the resemblance is just too close to ignore. I would argue, however, that it was not so much the ceremonial ritual of the Holy Communion itself as its emphasis on *unity of spirit* that informed the art of the tea ceremony, if there was indeed a link between Christianity and *chanoyu.* *Yamanoue Sōji ki* speaks of the true spirit of tea gatherings as being the establishment of *ichiza* (literally “a group of people sitting together”), where the host and his guests are united in one heart. I would argue that was precisely what Rikyū had in mind when he instituted the practice of *suicha.*

In *Sen no Rikyū,* Miura credits O-Riki for inspiring Rikyū as he comes up with yet another bold concept – that of the *nijiriguchi* (“crawling-in” entrance to a tea house). As Kumakura Isao points out, the traditional explanation for its origin is given in an anecdote in *Chadō shiso densho*: “Finding it to be tasteful and interesting (*wabite omoshiroshi*) that one must crawl into and out of the boats at the dock at Hirakata in
Osaka, Rikyū began to use such a passageway in the small tea room. However, as Kumakura contends, the nijiriguchi was probably not a sudden, spontaneous invention by a single person (as the reader is led to believe in Miura’s novel), but rather the product of a long process of evolution dating back to more than a century before the time of Sen no Rikyū. In either case, Miura seems to have re-invented the story of the nijiriguchi to make it fit into her Christian narrative. In her version of the story, Rikyū is pondering the architectural design for a new tearoom (Taian) at the Myōkian, a Zen temple of the Rinzai sect, when O-Riki comes back from church and starts sharing with Rikyū the message from the day’s sermon about “entering Heaven through the narrow gate”:

I heard [today] that, in order to enter heaven, we have to bend low and enter through the narrow gate. In order to enter through the narrow gate, we have to forsake all our belongings: our status, our properties, our pride, and things like our beauty and our knowledge... those baggage are of no use in heaven, actually they are obstacles that prevent us from entering heaven. (H2:79)

Tengoku ni hito ga hairu tame ni wa, semai mon kara haira ne ba nara nu to ukagaimashita. Semai mon kara hairu tame ni wa, subete no mochimono o sute ne ba narimase nu. Mibun to iu mochimono mo, zaisan to iu mochimono mo, gōman to iu mochimono mo, bikei ya gakumon to iu mochimono nado... sore ra no ni wa, tengoku de wa nan no yaku ni mo tachimase nu. Iie, sore bakari ka, kaette jama ni naru nimotsu da sō de gozarimasu. (H2:79)

Upon hearing about the sermon, Rikyū hits upon the idea of making a “crawling-in” entrance for the new tearoom ordered by Hideyoshi: “You deserve all the credit, O-Riki. No matter who enters the tearoom, whether a feudal lord or the ruler of the land, he has to bow down in like manner. It is the same mindset as entering the Christian paradise. First and foremost, one sits in front of the tearoom and prepares one’s heart. And every one enters by edging forward on his knees, the way you did just now. A true tea ceremony cannot be accomplished in the absence of this spirit” (S2:82).
As Kumakura Isao indicates, the concept of nijiriguchi may also have been suggested by the so-called nezumikido (mouse wicket), the exceedingly small entranceway to Nô theaters, which separated the dramatic world of Nô from everyday experiences. In a similar fashion, the nijiriguchi separated the “extraordinary” from the “ordinary” – by crawling into the tea room through the nijiriguchi, people entered an entirely different space, a spiritual world of wa (harmony), kei (respect), sei (purity) and jaku (tranquillity) that aims at enlightenment and the realization of the ultimate reality of nothingness (mu).

Miura turns that spiritual world into a Christian paradise which can only be entered through the narrow gate with a humble heart. Interestingly, Miura is not the only person who sees the tearoom as a microcosm of the Christian paradise. Speaking of the ideal tea ceremony, Takahashi Toshio, a pastor and certified teacher of the Omotesenke School, compares the heart of the host (teishu) to the heart of Christ: “My father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am“ (John 14:2-3). Christians believe that Jesus prepared a place for all in Heaven; the ideal host, too, prepares the tearoom before his guests arrive, often with painstaking effort and much sacrifice unknown to the guests. That, in Takahashi’s view, is the spirit of wabi-cha.

Unlike Takahashi, Miura focuses not only on the host (teishu), but all participants in a tea ceremony and the prerequisite for them to enter the spiritual world of the tearoom (chashitsu) as invited guests to the Christian paradise. By making connection between the nijiriguchi and the narrow gate (semai mon), Miura is making intertextual references to Matthew 7:13-14:
Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

*Semai mon o tōte hairinasai. Hirobi ni itaru michi wa hirokute ōkiku, sore o tōte haitte iku mono wa ōi kara desu. Ippō, inochi ni itaru mon wa semaku, sono michi wa sebamerarete ori, sore o miidasu mono wa sukunai no desu.* (Matai 7:13-14)

The Bible also says in Matthew 18:4: “Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” The low entrance of *nijiriguchi* literally forces all guests to their knees, for the tearoom can only be entered in humility. Similarly, it is not by power, or wealth, or knowledge that one enters the Christian Heaven; the only requirement is a humble heart and innocent faith of a little child.

In her novel, Miura drives home this message by having O-Riki remind Rikyū that he has to forsake his own *pride* if he is to enter the kingdom of heaven. In an early episode, Miura compares Rikyū (Sōeki) to a celebrated sword (*meitō*) and depicts his pride and combativeness in these terms:

*Chanoyu* was founded on the principles of *wa* (harmony), *kei* (respect), *sei* (purity), *jaku* (tranquility). It was supposed to be a *religious* pursuit. Sōeki’s religion was Zen. He was aware that the essence of Zen was to *yield* and to return to *nothingness*. And yet, upon seeing him perform the tea ceremony, Nobunaga was stricken with fear as if he had been slashed by a celebrated sword. “Tea ceremony shouldn’t be like that.“ Sōeki thought to himself. “*Chanoyu* is supposed to ease one’s heart. It is nothing more than the simple act of drinking a bowl of tea. And yet, my tea has a determination to kill. There is something that puts people in fear. I need to be ashamed of myself.“ (S1:193)

The reader probably remembers Rikyū’s powerful proclamation during an imaginary conversation with his disciple, Yamanoue Sōji, in Miura’s novel: “I will rule the land as a tea master... In the world of *chanoyu*, I can keep all warriors under my control“ (S2:74) – and he does, for in a reliable historical record, we find the following
description of Rikyū’s influence: “As I observe things here, I realize that no one can say a word to the Lord Kampaku (Hideyoshi) without first going through Rikyū.” These were the words of Ōtomo Sōrin (1530-1587), speaking in 1586 of the unrivaled power of Rikyū at the time, culturally as the premier tea master in the land, and politically as Hideyoshi’s trusted confidant. A local daimyo from Kyushu, Ōtomo traveled to Osaka Castle to seek an audience with Hideyoshi, and was assured by his younger brother, Hidenaga: “Since I am here, you have nothing to worry about. Rikyū will take care of all personal matters and I will handle the official business.”276

Rikyū was generally thought to have started the practice of placing a katanakake (hanging rack for holding the swords of warriors) at the outside entrance of a tearoom. In Sen no Rikyū, Miura uses it to signify the conflict between Rikyū, the merchant-tea practitioner, and the warrior class. Rikyū argues that, in an art that emphasizes harmony and respect, there is no place for the sword. As the premier tea master in the land, Rikyū is determined to banish it from the tearoom:

“O-Riki, the world of tea, as you must have heard in today’s sermon, has to be the world of paradise [paraiso]. It has to be the world of the Pure Land [Gokuraku Jōdo]. In order to elevate the art of chanoyu to that realm, I am willing to stake my life on taking away from warriors their pair of swords.”

Rikyū’s words were full of determination and intensity, as if he were challenging someone to a duel. As a Sakai merchant, Rikyū had long disliked the warrior class. It had been a burning aversion since boyhood. And even now, in the heart of Rikyū, the premier tea master who dominated the world of chanoyu, the same thought continued to burn with violent flames. (S2:84)

Although Rikyū’s intention seems well justified, O-Riki reminds her husband that there is an invisible pair of swords that also need to be disarmed: unless Rikyū forsakes his own pride and ego, he himself will not be able to pass through the nijiriguchi:
“A true tea master is one who has entered the state of non-attachment (mushin). Hegemon or warriors, he no longer cares in the slightest, and would embrace them with a broadminded spirit."

“Well said, O-Riki! Your words struck home.” Rikyū said in laughter.

“I realize that there are a lot of things I have to give up when I enter the nijiriguchi.”

“Yes, indeed. Even if you were able to take away the visible swords from a warrior, no one else can take away the invisible sword that you carry on your side.” (S2:85-86)

Inside the tearoom, there is true equality: Nobunaga and Rikyū drank from the same bowl despite their difference in status, and samurai had to put down their swords before entering the tea room; there is no distinction of rank or status – for the guests are all equally dear and important to the host. One might argue, however, that equality is as much a Zen concept as it is a Christian one. Quoting from the opening passage in Nampōroku, Sen Sōshitsu explains in his book Cha no seishin (The Spirit of the Tea Ceremony, 1969) that Rikyū sees the tea garden (roji) as a path of escape from the Burning House depicted in a famous parable in the Lotus Sutra. Approaching the tea hut from the garden path, participants in a tea ceremony wash their hands as a gesture of purification. As one stands there in front of the tea hut, distinction of high and low becomes unnecessary – since power, status and fame are no more than dust of the fleeting world; they all need to be brushed off before one enters the pure world of tea.277 As Theodore M. Ludwig points out, the aesthetic ideal of wabi is best understood in chanoyu as “the negation of luxury, extravagance, and power,” favoring instead “aesthetic forms of simplicity, frugality, poverty and the common.”278 No wonder Rikyū chose the following poem by Fujiwara no Ietaka (1158-1237), as recorded in the beginning section of Nampōroku, to illustrate the essence of wabicha:
Elsewhere, in the last (Metsugo) volume of Nampōroku, we find this poem attributed to Rikyū:

Channel to wa 茶の湯とは Chanoyu
Tada yu o wakashi ただ湯をわかし is simply this:
Cha o tatete 茶をたてて Boil water, prepare tea
Nomu bakari naru 飲むばかりなる and drink –
Mono to shiru beshi ものとしるべし that is all.280

"Whereas Rikyū saw the art of chanoyu as a religious pursuit, Hideyoshi whom he served used it as a political means to showcase and strengthen his power. Hideyoshi’s golden tearoom displayed a lavishness and grandiosity that totally contradicted the ideals of wabicha. What a contrast with the subdued, monochromatic beauty of Rikyū’s two-mat tearoom (Taian) at Myōkian, completed only three years earlier in 1582. Unlike Hideyoshi, who adored the colorful cherry blossoms (hana), Rikyū preferred the spring patches of green amid the snow at a mountain village (yamazato no yukima no kusa).

Imagine how Rikyū must have felt, as the leading practitioner of wabicha, someone who aspired to the ideals of poverty, simplicity, the cold and the withered, when he was ordered by Hideyoshi (as most scholars now believe to be the case) to design his golden tearoom. Rikyū’s presumed dilemma and agony are perfectly captured by Miura in her novel:

“You’ll do it for me?”
“Certainly, my Lord.”
“Great! I’m counting on you.”
Hideyoshi’s merry laughter reverberated throughout the room. Rikyū took a sideways glance at his disciple, Yamanoue Sōji, who was quietly staring at the white camellia arranged in the alcove behind Hideyoshi. There was an absentminded look in his eyes, but no sarcastic smile that Sōeki had feared so much. Sōeki felt as if he was being laughed at by Sōji.

(Forgive me, Sōji!)
“Devising a golden tearoom is also one of my endeavors as a tea master." Sōeki tried to convince himself.
“The whole country will be amazed when it is completed.”
The golden tea room was to be a symbol of Hideyoshi’s wealth and power.
“Yes, my Lord, from top to bottom, it would cause a huge commotion.”
The thought of being called “the one who built the golden tearoom” was more than he could bear. It was gratifying to figure out ways and means, but it would be unbearable to be seen as someone who would fall so low as to build a golden tea room in order to curry favor with the powerful.
Even before being accused as such, he was now undoubtedly kowtowing to this man before him, catering to his wishes with no pride. Sōeki found his heart overflowing with mixed emotions. (S2:107-8)

It makes sense that Miura portrays Rikyū as fearful of Sōji’s rebuke. After all, the historical text Chōandō ki (The Record of Chōandō, 1640) by Kubo Toshio (1571-1640) speaks of Sōji as a “blunt-spoken man with unattractive looks, constantly upsetting people with critical, disparaging comments.” Miura further characterizes Sōji as a “fastidious lover of cleanliness” and an “obstinate defender of his art” (S1:197). An “interesting man with a clean heart” (S1:181) in the eyes of his teacher, Rikyū, Sōji speaks his mind frankly (to the point of offending Hideyoshi so badly that he cruelly executed Sōji on 1590:4:11 after mutilating his nose and ears). “When it comes to chanoyu, Sōji always maintains his purity” (S2:90) and “makes no compromise – not even to Hideyoshi” (S2:86). Through his own action, Sōji reminds Rikyū that “a tea master finds his true worth when he is able to live freely by his principles” (S1:198), unrestricted by authority and other man-made obstacles. And it is also Sōji who reminds his teacher that “it is not the objective of chanoyu to subdue the warriors and
keep them under one’s control” (S2:75), as Rikyū seems to be aspiring to do. Rikyū knows full well that had it been Sōji, he would have flatly rejected Hideyoshi’s offer of the position of tea master. “Hideyoshi is not a man who understands the heart of chanoyu,” Sōji has insisted, whereupon Rikyū responds with a statement of envy: “I envy you, Sōji. I want to live the way you do. I want to enjoy chanoyu quietly to my heart’s content” (S2:73) – a heartfelt statement from a tea master who is constantly trying to fulfill his duties to the despotic Hideyoshi while maintaining his integrity and independence.

It would be wrong, however, to see Rikyū as being totally submissive to Hideyoshi. As a matter of fact, Nakanishi Susumu, a respected scholar of Japanese literature and culture, rightly sees the contrary. Calling Rikyū a “commoner who stuck to his ideal of wabicha” (wabicha o tsuranuita shomin), Nakanishi characterizes his posture as “boldly forcing Hideyoshi to make compromises, rather than blindly yielding to his wishes, thereby making him realize the true beauty of wabicha.” That was exactly what Rikyū did in real life, as he does later in Miura’s novel. True, he built the golden tea room for Hideyoshi; but it was a small three-mat “sōan” (grass-thatched hut) built in the spirit of the ten-foot-square hut of the medieval Buddhist recluse poet, Kamo no Chōmei (1155-1216). It was also a portable tearoom – ready to be dismantled and re-assembled – which Hideyoshi transported from his castle to the imperial palace to serve tea to the emperor on 1586:1:16. Hideyoshi was impressed by its ingenuity; but was it not meant by Rikyū to be a symbol of the transitoriness and evanescence (mujō) of human life, which comes and goes like Hideyoshi’s golden tearoom? I certainly think so. In 1587, one year after the extravaganza at the imperial palace, Rikyū built a one-and-a-half-mat tearoom at the Jurakudai (within the compound of Hideyoshi’s lavish “palace” in Kyoto), literally reducing the size of a chashitsu to its smallest possible limit.
In real life, Sōji had more words of compliment than criticism for his teacher. This is what he has to say in *Yamanoue Sōji ki* in praise of Rikyū regarding his unprecedented move: “For the first time, in the capital, Rikyū built a one-and-a-half-mat tearoom. It was unusual at the time, but useless for the ordinary person. It is interesting to see Sōeki freely transforming mountains into valleys, changing west to east, and breaking the rules of *chanoyu* – and he can do it only because he is a true master (*meijin*). It would not be the same if the ordinary person were to imitate him – indeed there would be no *chanoyu*.”

I see the building of the one-and-a-half-mat tearoom at Jurakudai, right in the heart of Hideyoshi’s lavish mansion, as a direct challenge, on the part of Rikyū, to Hideyoshi’s aesthetic assumptions. Recalling the “hana o nomi” poem that Rikyū used as an illustration of the essence of *wabi-cha*, we see a Rikyū who boldly asserted his artistic freedom, in the manner of the “spring patches of green,” which sprout through the snow at the mountain village. The motif “yukima no kusa,” then, takes on a new significance, symbolizing life, vitality and, most importantly, freedom within the constraint of snow (Hideyoshi’s dominance).

In a language that closely echoed what Zeami had written in one of his most important treatises, *Fūshikaden*, Rikyū explained to his disciple Yamanoue Sōji how one should go about practicing *chanoyu*, giving age-specific benchmarks as follows: “From fifteen to thirty, you should imitate your teacher, doing everything as instructed; from thirty to forty, you may begin to show your individuality… however, self-assertion should be limited to five times out of ten; From forty to fifty, it is time to part ways with your master, going east if he is to head west – find your own unique style and establish your fame as a tea master. In other words, revitalize the art of *chanoyu* with your creativity. From fifty to sixty, change course completely, return once again to your teacher (*meijin*), and model yourself after his conduct and movements.” Practitioners
of various art forms in Japan often mimic their teacher’s style at the beginning, and Rikyū was no exception. As Kaku Kōzō observes, Rikyū’s evolution as a tea master began with a mimetic stage, which then proceeded to successive stages of formation, establishment, completion and maturity of his own style. Until sixty-one, he copied the style of his teacher, Takeno Jōō, who preferred the four-and-a-half-mat tearoom. Thereafter, Rikyū deviated from his teacher’s Way and established his own style of *wabi-cha*. Not only did he break with Hideyoshi, opting for the subdued as opposed to glittering gold, he also broke from his teacher Jōō, as well from tradition. As we have seen, his one-and-a-half-mat tearoom was most unconventional, as was his use of *Raku* tea bowls – designed by Rikyū and made by the master potter Chōjirō (?-1589). Rikyū shunned the use of famed Chinese utensils (*karamono*), preferring instead the quiet simplicity of the *Raku* wares. One can also add the novel ideas of the *nijiriguchi*, the *katanakake* and the practice of *suicha* to Rikyū’s long list of creative innovations. At age sixty-one, Rikyū established his own style of *wabi-cha*, which he perfected at age seventy. As Yamanoue Sōji said, Rikyū “freely transformed mountains into valleys, changing west to east, and breaking the rules of *chanoyu*.” Rikyū’s pursuit of perfection was a life-long process that resulted in his *maturity as an artist* over several decades. Similarly, in her novel, Miura traces the life journey of Rikyū’s spiritual awakening, which results in his *maturity as a person*. I see that as a long process which involves a mimetic stage as well – that of modeling oneself after Christ. As is true in all life journeys, Rikyū inevitably has to undergo moments of trials, hardships and pain, which he needs to transcend by maintaining equanimity. Of particular importance are two tragic episodes which affected Rikyū greatly: the death of his daughter O-Gin, and the death of his favorite disciple Yamanoue Sōji.

We learn from historical records that Rikyū had at least three (perhaps four according to some accounts) daughters with his first wife: (1) the eldest daughter by the
name Ginko (?) who became the wife of Ishibashi Ryōshitsu (Sen no Jōji in some accounts); (2) a second daughter (believed to be the one who rejected Hideyoshi) who became the wife of the Sakai tea master Mozuya Sōan; (3) a third daughter who married Sen no Jōji (Ishibashi Ryōshitsu in some accounts) and was believed to be a Christian (some argue that she was the object of Hideyoshi’s affection, although most scholars think that it was most likely the second daughter); and possibly (4) a fourth daughter (O-Gin?) who married Enjōbō Sōen.288 Records of these women were fragmentary and the only things we can say with confidence are: (a) One of Rikyū’s daughters (most likely the second daughter) rejected Hideyoshi’s advances – a direct cause of Rikyū’s seppuku according to the Nampōroku; (b) one of them (we do not know who for sure) committed suicide (for unknown reason); (c) one of them (most likely the third) was believed to be a Christian; and finally (d) Rikyū had a daughter by the name O-Gin (the eldest or the youngest daughter). The unknown gives Miura the creative space to emphasize what she considers important as a Christian novelist. Combining identities and using all of the above as fictional ingredients, Miura breathes life into her character, giving her the name O-Gin, and creating a portrait of her as a beloved daughter of Sen no Rikyū, a strong-willed woman of the Christian faith, who boldly rejects Hideyoshi and pays the ultimate price of suicide as a result of her defiance.

Miura’s story is not totally fictitious, of course. According to Kuwata Tadachika, a renowned Rikyū scholar, the earliest appearance of a full account of the intriguing story of Rikyū’s daughter can be found in Toichi Nuidononosuke monogatari (Anecdotes according to Toichi Nuidononosuke, 1653), which appeared as an appendix to the historical text Sen no Rikyū yuishogaki (A History of Sen no Rikyū, 1653).289 A written account of the anecdotes that Toichi, a retainer from the Kii province, heard directly from the eldest son of Furuta Oribe, one of Rikyū’s seven high disciples, the Edo-period text is more trusted by scholars as a relatively reliable historical document, compared to
other sources of the same period. According to Toichi’s account, Hideyoshi caught a
glimpse of O-Gin during a falconry excursion at Higashiyama. She was apparently on
her way home from flower viewing, and was accompanied by three young children and
about ten maids and menservants, who were following her with a palanquin. She
seemed to be a little over thirty years of age and was in her bloom. Although Hideyoshi
asked her to enter his service at the Jurakudai palace, she declined saying that it would
be difficult because of her children. Hideyoshi then sent Maeda Gen’i to persuade
Rikyū, but he also rejected Hideyoshi’s offer three times in a row, thinking that his
hard‐earned reputation would be tarnished if people saw him as pandering to his lord
to secure special favor. Although Hideyoshi hated Rikyū for his arrogance, he put the
matter aside for fear of criticism, until he heard of the wooden statue installed at the
Daitoku‐ji gate, which gave him an excuse to punish Rikyū.290

Similar accounts attributing Rikyū’s punishment to his rejection of Hideyoshi’s
demand for his daughter can be found in at least ten Edo‐period texts, among them:
*Buhenbanashi kikigaki* (Anecdotes about the Life of Samurai, 1680), *Chanoyu hishō* (Secret
Texts of Chanoyu, 1738), *Chasō kanwa* (Stories from Tearoom Window, 1804), and
*Hokusō sadan* (Light Chat from a Northern Window, 1829) – although the incident had
not once been cited as a cause for Rikyū’s ritual suicide in earlier records, specifically,
historical texts written within two years immediately prior to and after Rikyū’s *seppuku*.
Why this sudden burst of interest in the Edo period?

In a detailed and intellectually stimulating analysis of the historical circumstances
leading to Rikyū’s ritual suicide, Fukui Sachio examined twenty‐four historical texts
written in the Azuchi‐Momoyama and Edo periods. According to Fukui, only two
official charges had been given in historical records before 1593: (1) the wooden statue
incident; and (2) the false accusation that Rikyū profited from dishonest appraisals of
tea utensils. In 1593, two years after Rikyū’s death, one of his disciples, Nambo Sōkei,
came out to refute the established view by offering in the *Nampōroku* (1593) a competing theory of what “really” happened: Rikyū rejected Hideyoshi’s advance at his daughter and was punished as a result – the wooden statue being used as an excuse for the punishment. Fukui sees Sōkei’s effort as an attempt to vindicate Rikyū of what he considered to be false charges against him, and to re-establish his teacher as a true tea master. I find Fukui’s arguments convincing when he contends that Sōkei’s theory gained increased prominence during the Edo period, while the “official” charges lost validity and fell by the wayside, because people were either more inclined to “record the truth” now that the Toyotomi clan had lost their influence, or eager to justify the action of Rikyū, the revered ancestor of the Sen family (interestingly, Fukui points out that half of the historical records from the Edo period citing the wooden statue incident now called it a *false charge*, while all but one of the historical records from the same period citing the “dishonest appraisal” accusation now called it *slander*, giving increasing credibility to Sōkei’s and other alternative theories).291

As Sōkei rewrote history to justify Rikyū’s final act of ritual suicide, Miura, too, writing as a Christian novelist, rewrites history by portraying Rikyū’s daughter (O-Gin is her name in Miura’s novel) as a pure woman of strong Christian faith, who is resolutely prepared to defy Hideyoshi, in the manner of Hosokawa Garasha, to maintain her chastity. When Ishida Mitsunari sends a palanquin to get O-Gin, O-Gin assures her parents that she would come back intact as a Christian. By the time she comes home three days later in the same palanquin, she has already breathed her last (S2:186).

One month later, Rikyū is summoned to appear before Hideyoshi – their first meeting since O-Gin’s death. In response to Hideyoshi, who feigns innocence, Rikyū puts on his own act, playing the subservient role of a loyal retainer. The dramatic
tension between Rikyū’s true feelings (honne) and what he says for appearances’ sake (tatemae) is perfectly captured in the following passage:

When Rikyū entered the room, he found Hideyoshi leaning on an armrest, busy fanning him with a sensu. “I’m so glad to see you. I haven’t seen you for a while and I heard you were in poor health.” Apparently in a cheerful mood, Hideyoshi tried to strike a conversation. But deep down, Rikyū felt offended. (Aftersubjecting O-Gin to that terrible fate...) That was his true thought. Nevertheless, Rikyū bowed his head, saying: “I am most humbly pleased that you are in good health.” At that very moment, the face of his disciple Yamanoue Sōji, whose whereabouts were unknown, appeared before his eyes. It was a mocking face that ridiculed him. Rikyū looked at Hideyoshi, thinking that his disciple Sōji would never lower his head on such an occasion. (S2:190)

The reader will recall that Rikyū felt as if Sōji were ridiculing him when he accepted the task of building a golden tearoom for Hideyoshi in his disciple’s presence. When Rikyū prostrates himself before Hideyoshi, despite what happened to his daughter, he sees Sōji’s mocking face “re-appearing” before his eyes. In both cases, the impact of Sōji’s “rebuke” is all the more intense precisely because it occurs in Rikyū’s mind and imagination. What Rikyū sees as Sōji’s ridicule signifies, in my opinion, a mental state of self-condemnation and shame on the part of Rikyū.

It is interesting to compare Miura’s novel with Hideyoshi to Rikyū (Hideyoshi and Rikyū, 1964), an earlier work of historical fiction written by the woman writer Nogami Yaeko (1885-1985). Unlike Miura, Nogami does not draw on the anecdote of O-Gin’s suicide and she de-emphasizes Rikyū’s second wife, O-Riki, reducing her to a minor role, and focusing instead on the relationship between Rikyū and his youngest son Kisaburō, a fictional character created by Nogami. Portrayed by Nogami as a rebellious son, Kisaburō appears in Hideyoshi to Rikyū as a young man desperately searching for his own identity; he has no intention of following in the footsteps of his father to become a tea practitioner. Indeed, he strongly dislikes being associated with the name
of his father. Having grown up under the shadow of Rikyū’s fame and brilliance, Kisaburō finds it difficult to establish his own individuality. Whereas the power of Miura’s novel lies in its ability to engage Rikyū (and the readers) in a relentless process of self-critique and self-transformation, Nogami examines the life of Rikyū through the eyes of Kisaburō, who observes, questions, and criticizes the character of his father, before ultimately identifying with him and admiring his integrity. Following is an early example of Kisaburō’s critique of Rikyū:

Kisaburō wondered why Rikyū had become such an awful, abominable father, as if he was transformed into an entirely different person. He had no way of knowing how he had changed since becoming the tea master for Nobunaga and Hideyoshi. However, as an ordinary tea practitioner, had Rikyū upheld chanoyu as the only way of life, he would not have allowed himself to be caught up in politics, power struggles, and the net of antagonism and smoldering strife. Kisaburō’s young sensitive ears did not miss a single bit of gossip that would potentially tarnish his father’s reputation as the premier tea master in the land – that he was an unfathomable man, a man who lived under the umbrella of Kampaku Hideyoshi’s power and influence, a man who resorted to bribery, a man who rejoiced at the sight of money... The more Kisaburō pondered over these rumors, the more difficult it became for him to unveil the true character of his father.292

In Miura’s novel, the most dramatic criticism of Rikyū comes from his disciple Yamanoue Sōji, not when he was alive, but after his death. Historically, as a tea master, Sōji had been in the service of Hideyoshi. Having incurred Hideyoshi’s wrath on multiple occasions by making unreserved comments, Sōji had to flee for his life, first to Mt. Kōya, and later to Odawara, where he served the Hōjō clan. During the Siege of Odawara Castle in 1590, Sōji risked his life to go see his teacher, Rikyū, knowing that he had accompanied Hideyoshi to Odawara in an effort to defeat the Hōjō forces and unify the country. As a consequence, Sōji was murdered on 1590:4:11 by Hideyoshi, who cruelly mutilated his nose and ears. Following is an imaginary exchange in Miura’s
novel between Rikyū and Hideyoshi that occurs at the conclusion of a tea gathering hosted by Hideyoshi the following day:

“Rikyū, are you mad at me about Sōji’s death?”
“About Sōji? What reason do I have to be mad at you?”
“Wasn’t he your favorite disciple?”
“He was, without any doubt. But the fact that a magnanimous person like you had to execute him by cutting off his nose and ears was a clear evidence that he must have done something really rude. As his teacher, I have to apologize to you on his behalf.”
Rikyū prostrated himself... and yet, he felt as if Sōji had pulled his head up sharply to prevent it from hanging low in deference to Hideyoshi. (S2:206)

As in the case of O-Gin’s death, Rikyū remains obsequious and servile to Hideyoshi, incapable of uttering a single word of complaint in reference to the hegemon’s unjust treatment of his daughter and dearest disciple. Three times in his mind and imagination, Rikyū sees himself “reprimanded” by Sōji. On the first occasion, Sōji is physically present, and although he does not say a single word criticizing Rikyū’s undertaking of the golden tearoom, Rikyū feels as if he were being ridiculed by his disciple. On the second occasion, Sōji’s whereabouts are unknown (due to Hideyoshi’s banishment), but his mocking face appears vividly before Rikyū’s eyes when he prostrates himself before Hideyoshi after O-Gin’s death. On the final occasion, Sōji himself is dead, but his powerful hands pull his teacher’s head up sharply to prevent it from hanging low in deference to Hideyoshi. It seems that the more distant Sōji becomes, the greater the impact of his “presence.”

Rikyū’s “honeymoon” years with Hideyoshi ended around 1585. Deeply affected by the death of his favorite disciple Yamanoue Sōji on 1590:4:11, Rikyū saw his relationship with Hideyoshi taking an abrupt turn for the worse, especially since their return from the Odawara campaign. In her novel, Miura sees their antagonism not so
much as a result of Rikyū’s personal grievances against Hideyoshi, but as a more fundamental aesthetic battle between the two, which hinges on Rikyū’s insistence on the use of the black tea bowl as an act of defiance against the powerful Hideyoshi. Consciously drawing on the *Rikyū hyakkai ki*, a record of close to one hundred tea gatherings reportedly hosted by Rikyū between 1590:8:17 and 1591:intercalary1:24, Miura re-enacts the final days of Rikyū’s life, drawing the reader’s attention to the six-month period beginning with his return from Odawara and leading up to the climactic moment of his ritual suicide on 1591:2:28. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that the final chapters of *Sen no Rikyū* are driven by a predominant focus on these tea gatherings, and the significance of Rikyū’s use of the black Raku tea bowl. In the essay entitled “*Rikyū hyakkai ki* ni omou” (My thoughts on *Rikyū hyakkai ki*), Miura explains how she found inspiration in the historical text for her creative writing:

I had heard several times that Hideyoshi strongly disliked the use of the black tea bowl and I had speculated on the reason. As I read the historical text *Rikyū hyakkai ki*, I realized one thing: the fact that Rikyū frequently used the black tea bowl towards the end of his life, dauntlessly doing so even at a tea gathering with Hideyoshi. This fact aroused my interest – for I had the feeling that Rikyū’s ritual suicide was not unrelated to the number of times he used the black tea bowl. I considered it a sign of Rikyū’s resistance to Hideyoshi’s power and the *Rikyū hyakkai ki* a record of the ever-increasing tension between the two.

*Rikyū hyakkai ki* is arguably the single most important source of intertextual reference used by Miura in her writing of *Sen no Rikyū*. The record of the tea gatherings, in and of themselves, are not particularly interesting, for the only information listed is the date of the gatherings, their participants, the kind of tea bowl, kettle and utensils used, and the menu for the occasions. There was no mention, for instance, of how people conducted themselves on each occasion, or how they reacted after the tea gatherings. This is where Miura comes in as a historical novelist, as well as
a psychologist who offers penetrating insight into the minds of Rikyū and his guests. In so doing, Miura reconfigures the image of Sen no Rikyū, not as a flawless sage but as a human being, who shows a full range of emotions – anger, hatred, impulsive vengeance and pride – and shows how he ultimately breaks free from such destructive emotions and matures over time into a forgiving man of gentle humility.

Yajima Kyūemon was the invited guest to the first tea gathering recorded in Rikyū hyakkai ki (dated 1587:8:17 in some texts, but most scholars now believe the correct date to be 1590:8:17). Mōri Terumoto participated in the next gathering held on the morning of 1590:8:18. Another tea gathering was held on the afternoon of 1590:8:18. In all three gatherings, Rikyū used the black tea bowl. Miura finds it intriguing that Rikyū hyakkai ki started abruptly with the date 1590:8:17 (with no explicit explanation of why this date was chosen) and sees the appearance of the black tea bowl in the earliest records as a significant event marking the beginning of Rikyū’s final battle with Hideyoshi. In her novel, the reader sees a combative Rikyū, still mourning the loss of his daughter and his disciple Yamanoue Sōji, and determined this time to defy Hideyoshi, at least in the cultural realm of chanoyu:

As he gazes at the black tea bowl, Rikyū sees the illusion of flickering flames inside. Just the light of the wavering lamp. And yet, Rikyū feels as if his anger has turned into black flames of fury.
(All right! I will prepare tea in the black tea bowl tomorrow, and next time too, and the time after next... And not only when Hideyoshi is away; I will definitely show him I can use it in his presence as well. When it comes to chanoyu, I am the teacher!) (S2:210)

As the narrator notes, in the world of chanoyu, Rikyū is the absolute authority (S2:203). Rikyū knows the beauty of tea prepared in the black tea bowl, although Hideyoshi hates it and calls it “inauspicious” (S2:209). However, Rikyū also realizes that, in his present frame of mind, it is not because of its beauty that he wants to use the black tea
bowl; rather his decision was driven by his rage and resentment towards Hideyoshi. As a tea master, Rikyū knows that he should not hold any tea gatherings with such a heart (S2:219), and according to Rikyū hyakkai ki, he did not – there was an unexplained gap of almost one whole month between the third recorded tea gathering (1590:8:18) and the fourth (1590:9:13).²⁹⁵ In the fictional world of Sen no Rikyū, Miura skillfully uses her imagination to turn this period of inactivity into a period of self-remonstrance, on the part of Rikyū, which prepares him for a spiritual revival and a full resurgence ultimately as a true tea master. Rikyū’s process of self-awakening starts with his visit to the Daitokuji (the head temple of the Daitokuji school of Rinzai, a sect of Japanese Zen Buddhism), where he has a “counseling” session with his Zen teacher, Abbot Kokei. By having Rikyū to see Kokei on the evening of 1590:8:18, right after the third recorded tea gathering, which was held in the afternoon of the same day according to Rikyū hyakkai ki, Miura highlights the urgency and seriousness of Rikyū’s visit. The following is one of the most beautifully written passages in the entire novel:

What on earth is the purpose of my being a decades-long devotee of Zen?
On the evening of the eighteenth day of the eighth month, Rikyū visited Kokei at Daitoku-ji... Keeping his eyes riveted on the Abbot, Rikyū said in a sobbing voice: “It was painful. It really was.”
“I know your pain. That’s why I was fearful of seeing you. First, it was O-gin, and now Yamanoue Sōji...”
“Abbot, you know how long I have been practicing Zen, but no matter how hard I try, I cannot control the hatred in me.”
“That’s right. As long as we are living, we are just mortal beings in bondage to our earthly passions.”
“How true! I had always thought that chanoyu was the same as religion and that the Way of Tea taught us to respect the guest and ignore his wrongs; And yet, I used the black tea bowl that Hideyoshi hates three times in a row...”
“In the world of tea, you are the best. If you find the black tea bowl the most appropriate, and a disciple won’t follow, he is not your true disciple. When it
comes to chanoyu, even Hideyoshi is your disciple. As long as he is a disciple, he should follow your Way. There is no need for you to accommodate his taste."

"...It is embarrassing to say this: I hold myself dear – if I upset Hideyoshi into a bad mood, my head will be no more. I’m still an unenlightened being." Rikyū heaved a deep sigh. For some time, the two remained silent while a sense of tranquility filled the temple grounds. Presently, Kokei spoke again.

"Isn’t it good enough to realize that? Say ‘I’m pained’ when you are in pain, ‘I’m happy’ when you are in joy and ‘I’m hungry’ when you have an empty stomach – isn’t it good enough? At least I have recently started to think that way."

"Is that really good enough? To say ‘I hate him’ when I am hateful of Hideyoshi? Is that the right way?"

Suddenly, the thought of O-Riki came to his mind. Rikyū had the feeling that, as a Christian, she would say something different. (S2:213-6)

Unfortunately, Rikyū finds no clues in his dialogues with Kokei – for Zen Buddhism offers no specific solution to his problem of hatred except calling it “a defilement of the mind,” which supposedly can be purified through meditative practices that Rikyū has long attempted without success. Seemingly dissatisfied, Rikyū turns to O-Riki for spiritual guidance. In a flashback, Rikyū recalls with O-Riki the “morning glory tea gathering” he had with Hideyoshi during the summer of the previous year (1589), shortly after O-Gin’s death. Here, we see Miura drawing on a famous anecdote from the Edo-period text Chasō kanwa. To demonstrate how Miura incorporates the anecdote into her own narrative, I will first give a synopsis of the story as recounted in Chasō kanwa:

One year, Rikyū planted morning glories in his garden. Lord Hideyoshi heard of their brilliant blooming in season, and wanted to see them the next morning. When the lord arrived there, however, not a single morning-glory flower was to be seen in the garden. The lord looked quite displeased. When he entered the tearoom, he found only one morning glory, the most beautiful flower, arranged in the alcove. It looked utterly fresh and glorious. The lord and his attendants felt quite refreshed, as if they had just awakened, and admired it very much. This is commonly known as Rikyū’s tea ceremony with a morning glory. It is not certain whether this is a true story or not. 296
Rikyū’s “morning-glory tea gathering” (asagao no chakai) with Hideyoshi truly epitomizes the ideal of wabi-cha: the beauty of simplicity that is achieved by paring things down to the bare minimum. Rikyū’s aim is to have the beauty and essence of the whole garden transferred into one single flower. As Horst Hammitzsch rightly observes, a tea master sees the flower “as a fellow-being in its own right.” It “brings the time of year into the tearoom” and “must therefore embody the environment in which [it lives].” Metaphysically, a single morning glory in the alcove represents not only the whole garden, but the whole universe, with which the tea master seeks harmony. Okakura Kakuzō (1862-1913), author of the famous essay The Book of Tea (1906), was not the only person who noticed how tea masters regard flowers with religious veneration. Commenting on the asagao no chakai, Herbert E. Plutschow essentially says the same thing about the religious significance of placing a single morning glory in the alcove: “[The story indicates] Rikyū’s heightened sensitivity to beauty’s deeper meaning, a beauty conducive to Zen enlightenment... Rikyū was following the Zen principle that all is one, one is none, and none is all. Rikyū may have tried to suggest that the beauty of wabi is ultimately the beauty of non-being.”

Miura, too, sees the religious significance of a single morning glory in Rikyū’s tearoom, although not so much according to the principles of Zen, but in a Christian sense. Following is Miura’s rendition of the famous episode, delivered in a lyrical manner and with an unexpected twist at the end:

When Hideyoshi visited Rikyū the next morning, he was shocked to find that there was not a single flower in the garden. Rikyū led him into a tearoom. There, a single morning glory was in magnificent bloom.

“Fabulous! As we would expect from Rikyū. I have heard that the morning glory is a flower of the nobility. For the first time, I understand why." Rikyū lowered his head in front of Hideyoshi, who marveled at the flower’s beauty.

“I am very much obliged to you.” Rikyū’s shoulder trembled slightly –
for it was O-Gin who sowed the seed for this morning glory. Rikyū had no other way but to show Hideyoshi in this manner the morning glory that his daughter had planted. He wanted him to understand the value and importance of life, as represented by a single morning glory.300 (S2:228)

As a poet-turned-novelist, Miura is very good at using episodes like this to sharpen the readers’ sensibilities and to force them to ponder significant issues of life. Using her imagination and drawing on the original anecdote from Chasō kanwa, Miura ties it to O-Gin’s death, heightening the emotional impact by presenting the single morning glory in the alcove as the one planted by Rikyū’s daughter, and using it as a metaphorical representation of the value of life. The pathos of Rikyū’s elegiac response to his daughter’s death is further intensified by the conversation that ensues between Rikyū and his wife: “O-Riki, you are the only one who knows all the unspeakable feelings of mine that are embedded in that single morning glory; only you understand my grief and hatred as a father” (S2:228).

Miura seems to have altered the chronology when it comes to O-Gin’s suicide. According to Nampōroku, Rikyū’s daughter took her own life on 1591:1:18,301 a little over two months before Rikyū’s seppuku on 1591:2:28. By dating the death of Rikyū’s daughter so close to Rikyū’s own ritual suicide, the author of Nampōroku might have intended to establish an irrefutable link between the two events. In contrast, apparently for artistic reasons, Miura redates O-Gin’s suicide to 1589:5, followed by Rikyū’s morning glory tea gathering with Hideyoshi that summer. The seed of the morning glory is best sown around the fifth month (when O-Gin dies in Miura’s novel) and flowering usually occurs sixty to seventy days later during the summer (when Rikyū has the asagao no chakai with Hideyoshi in the novel). 1591:1:18, when the frost is still around, would be too cold for seed sowing. Given that Rikyū died on 1591:2:28, before the summer months, it would have been chronologically impossible for him to mourn the
death of his daughter the way he does in the heart-wrenching morning glory episode in Miura’s novel.

By setting back O-Gin’s suicide two years in time, and drawing on the famous morning glory anecdote from Chasō kanwa, Miura delivers a lyrical portrayal of how Rikyū must have felt as a father mourning the loss of his daughter. Furthermore, Miura builds up dramatic tension by having two tragic events (O-Gin’s suicide in 1589:5 and Yamanoue Sōji’s death on 1590:4:11) take place before the first recorded use (1590:8:17) of the black tea bowl in Rikyū Hyakkai Ki. Following is a timeline of major events as recounted in Miura’s novel:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1589:5</td>
<td>* O-Gin’s apparent suicide (in Miura’s novel) * morning glory tea gathering with Hideyoshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1589 (summer)</td>
<td>Yamanoue Sōji cruelly murdered by Hideyoshi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1590:4:11</td>
<td>first tea gathering recorded in Rikyū hyakkai ki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1590:8:17</td>
<td>first recorded use of the black tea bowl by Rikyū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1590:8:18~1590:9:13</td>
<td>period of inactivity according to Rikyū hyakkai ki * Period of self-remonstrance on the part of Rikyū in Miura’s novel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1590:10</td>
<td>* Rikyū meets with his Zen teacher Kokei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1590:8:18</td>
<td>* Rikyū turns to O-Riki for spiritual guidance recalls the morning glory tea gathering that he had with Hideyoshi the previous summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1591:1:18</td>
<td><strong>Rikyū’s daughter committed suicide</strong> (according to Nampōroku)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1591:2:28</td>
<td>Rikyū committed seppuku</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* fictional accounts that appear in Miura’s novel

The black tea bowl is a symbol of Rikyū’s direct confrontation with Hideyoshi. As Rikyū confesses to his wife, he is using it out of vengeance and he wonders if O-Riki, too, would do the same as a Christian if she were in his position. Very much to O-Riki’s
surprise and delight, Rikyū asks her to show him the Christian text *Contemptus Mundi*, which challenges the faithful to model themselves after Christ, and to live in contempt of the world and all its vanities – wealth, fame and power included. It is therein that he finds some enlightening instructions: “It will do you no harm if you account yourself as worst of all; but it will very much harm you to think that you are better than everyone else. Peace dwells in a humble heart, while in the heart of the proud man there is envy and resentment” (S2: 231). Upon introspection, Rikyū realizes that he has become increasingly exasperated with Hideyoshi for not respecting him as a tea master, and while serving Hideyoshi in the political arena, he attempts to keep Hideyoshi under his foot in the world of *chanoyu* – that is not the true spirit of the tea ceremony (S2:232-3).

Miura characterizes the tea gathering that Rikyū had with Hideyoshi on 1590:11:2 as one that was conducted with serenity and composure (*kokoro shizuka na chakai de atta*). Thanks to the influence of *Contemptus Mundi*, Rikyū’s art of *chanoyu* seems to have attained a higher spiritual level, and that is readily noticeable among Rikyū’s circle of acquaintances including his disciple Takayama Ukon.

As we recall, Ukon was a Christian daimyo of the Sengoku Period who defied Hideyoshi’s order to renounce his faith, choosing instead to forfeit his land and title. Miura was deeply impressed by Ukon’s integrity and portrayed him as one of the major characters in *Hosokawa Garasha fujin*. In *Sen no Rikyū*, Ukon reappears as a spiritual giant, who, together with O-Riki and Yamanoue Sōji, deeply influences Rikyū’s way of thinking. He is truly an inspiration to Rikyū, who calls his disciple “a righteous man with a pure heart.” As a worthy member of “Rikyū’s Seven Sages,” Ukon demonstrates thoughtfulness and single-mindedness in his tea. He has served Hideyoshi faithfully as a top-ranking commander. Yet, he chooses to give up everything – power, wealth and fame – in order to uphold his faith. He is a man of unyielding principles, and in front of him, Rikyū feels as if he has been “put in touch with the essence of the Christian faith”
At age sixty-six, Rikyū is forced to re-examine his way of life (ikikata). He realizes that all men should live like Ukon, although he himself finds it very difficult to attain that level. In a late episode, Rikyū confesses his own lack of spiritual readiness in front of his disciple:

“I am a worldly man. Unlike you, Ukon, I am not ready to give up everything to call my naked body my only property.”
“In the final analysis, men are all born naked without a name. We find the greatest peace knowing that we will also die naked without a name.”
“I want to be like that, too. But honestly, I am not at that level yet. I do not want to die nameless, and I cannot bear the thought of losing my fame or fortune.” Rikyū gave a lonely-looking smile. (S2:234)

Rikyū envies Ukon for his ability to live “as if his naked body were his only property” (hadaka ikkan). The vivid image of hadaka ikkan mirrors what Jesus said in Luke 9:58: “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head,” and resonates with the Zen principle of mu-ichi-motsu (literally “without a single possession”), which is inextricably linked to the aesthetics of wabi-cha. Unlike shoin-style tea, the predecessor of wabi-cha, which was characterized by lavish decor and the use of treasured Chinese art objects, a typical tearoom during Rikyū’s time was one of minimal size with no furniture and very little decoration except perhaps a single flower and a hanging scroll in the alcove. There were no unnecessary objects in the chashitsu which would become a barrier between the host and his guests and prevent them from entering into a heart-to-heart communication. The empty tearoom represented a spiritual realm of “nothingness” (mu), an infinite space with no boundary or limitation. That is the essence of the famous Zen expression mu ichi motsu chū mu jin zō (無一物中無尽蔵): “Nothingness – an inexhaustible treasury.”

Interestingly, as if to echo Miura’s portrayal of Takayama Ukon in her novel, Takahashi Toshio gives a fresh interpretation of mu-ichi-motsu as an aesthetic ideal for
the tea ceremony from a Christian perspective. Takahashi sees the whole life of Jesus Christ as one of *mu-ichi-motsu*. According to the biblical account in John 19:23-24, when Jesus was crucified, the Roman soldiers divided his clothes among them and cast lots for his last garment. In the Christian belief, Jesus demonstrated on the cross a kind of love that is sacrificial and totally unreserved. “A love that gives up everything” – even one’s precious life – that, in Takahashi’s view, epitomizes the true spirit of *chanoyu*. As Takahashi rightly observes, “the beauty of *wabi-cha* lies in its simplicity and the spiritual freedom to discard everything one normally boasts of or takes pride in, including material possessions, wealth, power and the like... Modeling oneself after Christ and pursuing the Way of *mu-ichi-motsu* as exemplified by Him – that is the essence of *wabi-cha*.“

At the conclusion of their tea gathering, Ukon suggests to his teacher, Rikyū, that he try using the black tea bowl in a future tea gathering with Hideyoshi – not with any ulterior motive, but with a purity of mind. That is exactly what he does on 1591:1:13. According to *Rikyū hyakkai ki*, as Haga Kōshirō observes, this was the only occasion on which Rikyū used the black tea bowl in front of Hideyoshi (a total of six tea gatherings featuring Hideyoshi as the guest of honor were mentioned in *Rikyū hyakkai ki*). The changes in both Rikyū and Hideyoshi are striking:

[As Rikyū prepared tea for Hideyoshi,] his mind was no longer occupied by thoughts of Yamanoue Sōji’s and Ogin’s deaths. Also gone was Rikyū’s preoccupation with Hideyoshi’s rank and with himself as the premier tea master. He could only hear the quiet sound of boiling water. In this small two-mat tea room, one could feel the serene, balmy air of the new year. “Rikyū, the flavor of the tea was excellent.” Hideyoshi issued a hearty compliment. Amazingly, there was no expression, facial or verbal, indicating Hideyoshi’s disapproval of the use of the black tea bowl... Sharing a common concern for Hidenaga’s illness, the host and the guest became united in their hearts. The atmosphere was more than congenial; it was a nice tea gathering in
which participants held communion with each other. The black tea bowl presented no barrier between Hideyoshi and Rikyū. “This is it! This is what a true tea gathering ought to be.” Rikyū exclaimed in his heart. (S2:236-37)

Simply put, it was an ideal tea ceremony. Rikyū realizes that, as hatred and pride vanish from his heart, Hideyoshi responds accordingly, and that it was foolish of him to be so particular about the black tea bowl. Whether it be a tea gathering with Hideyoshi or someone else, he should have used the utensil with a pure, simple mind. He has hitherto been unable to do so because he has looked down upon Hideyoshi, despising him as someone who does not know what constitutes true beauty (S2:238).

We are told in Miura’s novel that on 1591:1:22, nine days after Rikyū’s tea gathering with Hideyoshi, Hidenaga (Hideyoshi’s younger brother) died. Three days later, Rikyū invites Ukon again to a morning tea gathering, during which he reports to Ukon that his chakai with Hideyoshi was well received despite the fact that he used the black tea bowl. Ukon simply replies, saying: “Only you, Rikyū, could have done it!” A short exchange, according to the narrator, but the two are in perfect sympathy with each other (S2:239). On the next day, Rikyū has a second chakai with Hideyoshi in the afternoon. Their mindset and emotions at the meeting are delineated in a subtle manner and with a delicate touch:

The next day, Rikyū had a tea gathering in the afternoon with Hideyoshi. Showing consideration for Hideyoshi, who had just lost his younger brother, Hidenaga, Rikyū intentionally avoided the black tea bowl. In addition, he prepared food that Hideyoshi liked, such as swan soup and tofu cooked with kudzu starch... “Rikyū, I will consult you even more frequently from now on.” Rikyū was deeply moved by Hideyoshi’s words; he could tell how much Hideyoshi was affected by his brother’s death, even though he had no fear in this world. As the saying went, “Hidenaga handles the official business and Rikyū takes care of all personal matters,” they were the twin pillars who had supported Hideyoshi from the left and the right. That Hidenaga had died.
“With all due respect, allow me to say this – I will humbly serve you, putting my own life on the line.” Rikyū prostrated himself from his heart. There was not the slightest falsehood in that pledge of allegiance. (S2:240)

We see compassion, sympathy, humility, sincerity and purity in Rikyū’s tea, which is totally devoid of pretensions and falsehood. As a mark of sensitivity towards Hideyoshi, who has just lost his beloved brother, Rikyū refrains this time from using the black tea bowl and prepares food to Hideyoshi’s liking – this is not the author’s imagination, but the actual utensil and menu used on that occasion as documented in Rikyū hyakkai ki. Furthermore, to show how much Hideyoshi suffers from a tremendous sense of loss, Miura quotes Hidenaga’s own words as recorded historically by Ōtomo Sōrin in another text: “Rikyū will take care of all personal matters and I will handle the official business.” When Miura draws on historical materials, she uses them precisely and with meticulous attention to details. The two chakai with Ukon and the two with Hideyoshi were actual tea gatherings recorded in Rikyū hyakkai ki, and Miura gives a faithful account of the occasions, including accurately recorded date and time, name of participants, tea utensils used, and in the case of the last tea gathering with Hideyoshi, even its menu items. By doing so, she creates a sense of authenticity, for readers who are familiar with Rikyū hyakkai ki while at the same time probing the one area (perhaps the most interesting one) not mentioned in these records – that is, the attitude, reaction and emotional responses of the participants in these tea gatherings. As a novelist, Miura nicely fills in the details and portrays her characters (Rikyū, Hideyoshi and Ukon) with subtlety and intricacy. As we read Miura’s accounts of these tea gatherings, one after another, we see a progression on the part of Rikyū in terms of maturity as a tea master and spiritual growth as a person.

Until now, Rikyū has been unable to respect Hideyoshi and bow down before him. When it comes to aesthetic judgment, Hideyoshi is nowhere near a professional; he
would make remarks that cause people to consider him unworthy of fine utensils. On such occasions, Rikyū could not help feeling contempt for Hideyoshi. In Rikyū’s eyes, a man like Hideyoshi with no sense of judgment was an inferior human being. Therefore, Rikyū found it impossible to truly respect Hideyoshi (S2:87-8). We are told that Rikyū now prostrates himself from his heart, and that there is not the slightest falsehood in his pledge of allegiance towards Hideyoshi – a positive change that Miura attributes to the influence of Contemptus Mundi.

In a world of treachery and distrust, where betrayals and political plots had become the norm among competing warlords, who used chanoyu as a tool for forming alliances and subduing foes, Rikyū insisted on upholding the tearoom as a sacred place of mutual trust, respect, harmony and purity. His tea gathering with Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) on 1591: intercalary 1:24 is a fine example for aspiring tea practitioners:

Inwardly, Rikyū thought to himself: “Today’s meeting [with Ieyasu] might very well be my last tea gathering...“ Indeed, Rikyū extended no more invitations beyond this date. Such being the case, he wanted to make this special occasion a gratifying experience for both. Until today, ever since he was fourteen or fifteen, Rikyū had been the host, as well as the guest, of numerous tea gatherings. He had come to realize that the art of chanoyu was founded on the principle of ichigo ichie (one life, one meeting) – the importance of treating each guest with scrupulous care and thorough attention to details, since every single moment could be the last... He wanted to receive Ieyasu with a pure heart, free from worldly rumors and earthly thoughts. Having received a bowl of tea from Rikyū, Ieyasu held it in both hands and said: “Let’s drink away all the uproars in this world!” He wore a smile on his lips, but had a serious look on his face, as if apprehensive about being poisoned. Considering what it must be like to be in Ieyasu’s position, Rikyū replied quietly with the words: “I, Rikyū, am a practitioner of tea, and this is a sacred tea room...” Ieyasu nodded approval and drank his tea.

“A fine tea, indeed!“ With an expression of relief on his face, Ieyasu returned the tea bowl to Rikyū. (S2:268-9)
Rikyū conducted this tea gathering with Ieyasu with the mindset of *ichigo ichie*, the idea that one should treasure every encounter as unique because it would never recur. Although the Japanese phrase *ichigo ichie* was coined much later by Ii Naosuke (1815-1860), the concept made an early appearance in *Yamanoue Sōji ki*: “Even in the case of an ordinary tea gathering, from the moment you enter the garden path to your departure from the tea house, treat your host with respect and reverence, as if this were to be a once-in-a-lifetime encounter” (*tsune no chanoyu nari roji e hairu yori izuru ichigo ni ichido no kai no yō ni teishu o uyamiosorubeshi*). Miura’s portrayal of Rikyū’s tea gathering with Ieyasu as an experience of “one life, one meeting” is most appropriate indeed, for this was the last tea gathering recorded in *Rikyū hyakkai ki*. Rikyū puts his heart and soul into making this last tea gathering a memorable experience for both Ieyasu and himself, and he does so by receiving Ieyasu with a pure heart, putting him at ease, and fostering a bond of harmony, mutual trust and respect. Like his tea gatherings with Hideyoshi on 1591:1:13 and 1591:1:26, this final *chakai* exemplifies what a true tea gathering should be.

In *Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi*, with only a few exceptions, historical details pertaining to characters and events are generally well researched and presented as they appeared in available records. Drawing on *Rikyū hyakkai ki*, Miura highlighted the fact that the black tea bowl was used seven times in a row between 1591:1:26, when Rikyū had the last tea gathering with Hideyoshi and 1591:1:24, when Rikyū hosted Ieyasu. On 1591:2:13, Rikyū was ordered into house confinement in his home city of Sakai. Miura interpreted the event as a result of a conspiracy on the part of Ishida Mitsunari and Maeda Gen’i, who brought false charges against Rikyū. Relying on another source, *Sen no Rikyū yuishogaki*, Miura recounts the anecdote of how Rikyū composes the following *kyōka* and gives it to his daughter O-Kame, on the occasion of his departure from Kyoto to Sakai: “That fellow Rikyū – What great fortune to think he
is destined to be another Michizane.⁴³¹ On 1591:2:25, in an unprecedented move, Hideyoshi had the wooden statue of Rikyū removed from the Daitoku-ji and crucified on the Ichijō Modoribashi Bridge. On the same day, Rikyū was summoned back to Kyoto. Three days later, on 1591:2:28, he was ordered to commit seppuku. The weather on the day of Rikyū’s seppuku is described in Miura’s novel as stormy, with pouring rain, violent thunder and falling hail, a description collaborated by at least two different historical records – Tokiyoshi Ki ³¹ and Kitano Shake Nikki.³¹² Violent thunder, of course, recalls the vengeful spirit of Sugawara Michizane (845-903), the famous Heian scholar and courtier, which was believed to have caused rainstorms, floods, and even thunderbolt striking the imperial palace in Kyoto, after his exile to and subsequent death in Daizaifu, Kyūshū. There is certainly a close parallel between Rikyū and Michizane – both died a tragic death as a result of slandering and false charges. The supernatural weather phenomena in both cases are intriguing indeed. One might even interpret Rikyū’s kyōka as Rikyū jokingly referring to himself as another Michizane, who is to become a guardian deity of chanoyu (Michizane was posthumously deified as a Shinto god of scholarship). Is Rikyū, too, destined to become a vengeful spirit, just like Michizane? For a while, it does seem to be the case – for this is how Rikyū airs his grievances to his wife, O-Riki, the very morning of his seppuku, upon hearing the decree of punishment from an official:

Rikyū recalled the Kitano Grand Tea Gathering. With the intention of turning chanoyu into a festivity, Hideyoshi had ordered more than 1500 tea stalls installed on the grounds – Rikyū transformed all of them into small parlors of no more than four-and-a-half mats in size. The same thing happened in the case of the golden tearoom. Hideyoshi had wanted a huge tearoom adorned all over with gold – Rikyū built him a small portable one instead. Asserting his authority, Hideyoshi constantly tried to distort the art of Rikyū’s wabi-cha. In the end, Hideyoshi demonstrated himself as a man who did not understand the Way of the tea ceremony. At the order of that man, Rikyū’s life was about to be cut short.
Suddenly, the flames of fury which had temporarily subsided erupted again in full force. The greatest regret would not be the loss of his life; rather, the demise of the Way of the tea ceremony – an art which he had managed to establish over several decades. “The bastard! I’m not going to let Hideyoshi destroy my chanoyu!”

As Rikyū’s life partner, O-Riki understands full well the frustration of her husband, and she is determined not to let him die in such a frame of mind (S2:298). As Rikyū faces his final moment, O-Riki reminds her husband that humans are as powerless as an infant and suggests that Rikyū cling to and rest in the bosom of God, in the manner of an infant who finds the greatest peace nestling in its mother’s breast (S2:289). We are not told by the narrator whether Rikyū ultimately accepts the Christian faith, but his final moment certainly points in that direction. As Rikyū prepares tea one last time for the three officials designated to witness (and most likely assist) his seppuku, we see no signs of vengeance (or even grievance) in his facial expressions; rather, we see a calm, spiritual man, totally at peace despite all the false charges against him, who is capable of serving tea to his “foes” with a humble heart. Rikyū’s final tea gathering with the three witnessing officials can be compared to the Last Supper (John 13:1-7), during which Jesus took off his outer clothing, and with a towel wrapped around his waist, washed the feet of each of his disciples, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. By his action, Jesus demonstrated to his disciples what it meant to be a true leader: to become a humble servant. Just as Jesus washed Judas’s feet, knowing that Judas was about to hand him to the Romans, Rikyū, too, serves tea with great humility to the three officials who are about to carry out the order for his death, thereby demonstrating what it means to be a true tea master:

Rikyū informed the witnessing officials that he wanted to hold a tea gathering one last time. Before long, he started to prepare tea in the “Hachibiraki” tea bowl. The stormy weather outside made the sound of boiling water in the “Amida Hall“
kettle inaudible. Yet, Rikyū retained his usual composure and put his heart into every single motion. As a tea master, Rikyū wanted to carve an indelible impression of his final tea gathering into the minds of the officials. They were the ones who looked pale, not Rikyū. The hand that set the tea whisk in motion now was the same hand that had prepared tea for Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and a large number of disciples on numerous occasions. The three officials anxiously watched its motion with breathless attention. It was amazing how calmly Rikyū faced death with a perfect serenity of mind. Above anyone else, his disciple Sasabe Shigemasa found that attitude deeply moving. To the three officials who were now drinking tea, Rikyū expressed his gratitude, speaking with a voice that was perfectly composed: “It must have been difficult for you to come in this terrible weather.” The three officials could find no appropriate words of reply. Rikyū’s final tea gathering came to an end. (S2:299)

The image of Rikyū, as he faces his last moment, is one of humility and modesty. Gone are his pride and conceited ego – his “invisible swords” – that, in O-Riki’s view, have prevented Rikyū from entering the Christian paradise, or the chashitsu in a spiritual sense. Rikyū has truly become a great tea master, one who is capable of showing concern and sympathy to the officials (for coming all the way to witness his seppuku in the midst of a thunderstorm), while his own life is in danger. Miura’s portrayal of Rikyū’s final appearance as a tea master seems to have been inspired by two earlier (but briefer) accounts from the early Edo period: the first one in Sen no Rikyū yuishogaki which was authored by Rikyū’s great-grandson Kōshin Sōsa (1613-1672) and the second in the appendix to Chadō yōroku (1691) which Yamada Sōhen (1627-1708) presented as an oral transmission from Rikyū. As Fukui Sachio convincingly argues, given that the authors of these texts were respectively a descendent of Rikyū (Sōsa was his great-grandson) and someone who claimed to belong to a legitimate line of disciples (Sōhen reportedly studied under Rikyū’s grandson, Sen no Sōtan), it is understandable that they both eagerly projected an image of Rikyū as being an honorable man who calmly made tea for the officials before committing seppuku with
quiet acquiescence (*isagiyoi seppuku*). Miura, too, portrays Rikyū’s ritual suicide as an *isagiyoi seppuku*, except that writing as a Christian novelist, she also projects the image of Rikyū as a spiritual man of great humility. In contrast, Rikyū as depicted by Nogami Yaeko in her novel *Hideyoshi to Rikyū* remains a self-confident individual, even in death, with tremendous pride in himself:

Rikyū supposedly made all these things for Hideyoshi, but they undoubtedly belonged to Rikyū. Everything in the tearoom, even the small paper sliding door, was Rikyū’s creation, something that only Rikyū could have created. Hideyoshi must have realized that even now Rikyū was living there, perhaps even more than when he had been alive. The pale tranquility of Rikyū’s dead face, so full of solemnity, spoke of his self-confidence and pride in that respect.

Absent in Nogami’s novel is a spiritual element that we see in Miura’s depiction of Rikyū’s final moment:

“All of you, witness the final moment of Rikyū the tea master!”
So saying, Rikyū pulled open his clothes and exposed his white abdomen, which hardly looked like that of a seventy-year-old man. In a ceremonious fashion, he plunged a short blade into his abdomen and drew it all the way across from left to right.

“*I, Rikyū, will hereby purify the Way of the Tea Ceremony with my blood!*“
(S2:300)

Commenting on the anecdote of Rikyū’s morning-glory tea gathering with Hideyoshi and speaking of the religious significance of the Flower Sacrifice, Okakura Kakuzō writes in *The Book of Tea*:

Perhaps the flowers appreciated the full significance of it. They are not cowards, like men. Some flowers glory in death – certainly the Japanese cherry blossoms do, as they freely surrender themselves to the winds... For a moment, they hover like bejewelled clouds and dance above the crystal streams; then, as they sail away on the laughing waters, they seem to say: ‘Farewell, O Spring! We are on to Eternity.’
In a similar fashion, Jesus and Rikyū freely surrender themselves: the former died willingly on the cross, according to the Christian belief, and with his blood, cleansed men from all sin; the latter in a tea room, purifying the art of chanoyu with his blood, and symbolically cleansing himself of all sins (pride, hatred, vengeance...) as well. By doing so, Rikyū wins the final battle, not only against Hideyoshi, but with himself: In the end, Rikyū manages to cleanse the art of chanoyu and ultimately gain artistic freedom from Hideyoshi’s dominance; but more importantly, he also attains spiritual freedom from the bondage of sins, which gives him the ability to freely “transform mountains into valleys” in a spiritual sense, turning a bitter relationship of hatred into a harmonious one of respect and compassion, as we have seen in Rikyū’s final tea gathering with Hideyoshi. Like the cherry blossoms that give themselves freely to the wind, Rikyū is well on his way to Eternity.

Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi is a major work of historical fiction that examines the life and art of Sen no Rikyū from a uniquely Christian perspective. Using historical facts as a point of departure, and in her own inimitable style, Miura draws on multiple sources to create a fascinating synthesis of fact and fiction, blending objective truth with the writer’s poetic imagination. A full appreciation of Miura’s historical novel is not possible unless we locate her narrative within a wider web of intertextual relations which comprises the following: (1) treatises on the art of chanoyu (Yamanoue Sōji ki and Nampōroku); (2) historical texts (Sen no Rikyū yuishogaki, Chadō shiso densho...); (3) diaries kept by contemporaries (Kitano Shakke nikki and Tokiyoshi ki); (4) collections of anecdotes about prominent figures in the history of the tea ceremony (Chasō kanwa, Toichi Nuidononosuke monogatari); (5) other intertextual references to religious texts, Nō plays and classical poetry (Wu-men kuan, Contemptus Mundi, Sekidera Komachi, Teika’s and Ietaka’s poems); and (6) commentaries and studies by Rikyū scholars. Most important of all, Miura uses the records in Rikyū hyakkai ki (especially the use of the black tea
bowl) as a springboard for her imagination to re-enact the final days of Sen no Rikyū leading up to his ritual suicide.

As a Christian novelist, Miura reformulates the aesthetic ideal of *wa* (harmony), *kei* (respect), *sei* (purity), *jaku* (tranquillity) by adding to the established Zen interpretation a new Christian dimension.

*Wa*, as Horst Hammitzsch points out, refers to “one’s harmonious relationship to all things. This harmony reveals itself in one’s personal behavior, in one’s relationships to one’s whole environment and in one’s self-adjustment to it.”318 *Wa* epitomizes the essence of *chanoyu*, which “takes its origin from the spirit of harmonious union between heaven and earth, and thus becomes a vehicle of peace, a means of preserving order in the world.”319

The Japanese character *wa* 和 can also be read *yawaragi* or *nagoyaka*, which denotes “gentleness of spirit.” In *The Essentials of Zen Buddhism*, Daisetz Suzuki notes that men in general are “too egotistic, too full of hard, resisting spirit. [They] are individualistic, unable to accept things as they are.”320 The practice of Zen involves annihilation of the ego: “when there is no self, the heart is soft and offers no resistance to outside influences.”321 Suzuki sees this “selflessness” and “soft-heartedness” as prerequisites for true harmony.

In his book *Cha no seishin* (The Spirit of Tea, 1969), Sen Sōshitsu speaks of the two structural components of the tea ceremony: the first being the physical conditions, namely, the tea garden, tearoom, and tea utensils; and the second being the human relationship, which aims at having the host and his guests come together in a bond of harmony and spiritual communion.322 It is the human relations component that Miura focuses on in her novel. Writing as a Christian novelist, Miura sees *wa* not only as a harmonious relationship with one’s fellow men, but also as a spiritual communion with God, a reconciliation (*wa*kai) with men made possible by reconciliation to God through
Jesus Christ: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19) Interpreted in this light, Rikyū hyakkai ki becomes a record of Rikyū’s spiritual rebirth, his transformation from a man of hatred to a man of peace and forgiveness. With the help of Contemptus Mundi, which plays an important role in guiding Rikyū through the process of spiritual progress, Rikyū finally succeeds in reconciling himself to Hideyoshi, forgiving him from his heart for causing the deaths of his daughter and favorite disciple, and thus accomplishing a true tea gathering of harmony and respect, both in form and in spirit.

The concept of kei, as Horst Hammitzsch notes, “comprises deference, respect for other people and at the same time self-control in so far as the ego is concerned; it also includes reverence for all living things” (and I would add respect for tea utensils and bowls as well). In Yamanoue Sōji ki, Rikyū was quoted as giving this advice to the host: “Respect your guests from the bottom of your heart; not only those who excel in the art, but also ordinary guests who participate in a casual tea gathering – think of them in your heart as being a master (meijin).” True respect comes from humility, as demonstrated by Christ who, despite his exalted status as the Son of God, bent down to wash his disciples’ feet; and he did it to all including Judas who was to betray Him and put Him in harm’s way. Thanks to the positive influence of the Christian text Contemptus Mundi, Rikyū finds himself transformed from a self-important, egocentric figure who despises Hideyoshi as culturally inferior, to a humble man who can truly respect and serve his lord with all his heart. As Rikyū prepares tea one last time for the three witnessing officials, we see not a man of pride (as portrayed in Nogami Yaeko’s novel), nor a man of vengeance (as was the historical image of Sugawara Michizane);
we see a man of gentle spirit who, like Jesus Christ, treats those who are about to put him in harm’s way with respect and humility, treasuring their final encounter as a once-in-a-lifetime experience. That, in Miura’s view, is the ultimate form of *kei*.

Zen, as does the art of *chanoyu*, stresses inner purity. In *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, we find “Ten Resolutions for Tea Practitioners” (*Chanoyu-sha kakugo jittai*) attributed to Murata Jukō – one of them reads: “Love cleanliness from your heart.” Zen, as does the art of *chanoyu*, stresses inner purity. In *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, we find “Ten Resolutions for Tea Practitioners” (*Chanoyu-sha kakugo jittai*) attributed to Murata Jukō – one of them reads: “Love cleanliness from your heart.”

Sei (purity), as Hammitzsch explains, “is an outer and inner cleanliness which must... be understood in the moral-ethical-religious sense of the term... It is a readiness for the ultimate experience, to which the heart must surrender itself in all purity – free of all emotions.” Commenting on the meaning of sei, Suzuki quotes a tea master Nakano Kazuma in *Hagakure* (1716): “The spirit of *chanoyu* is to cleanse the six senses from contamination. By seeing the *kakemono* in the *tokonoma* (alcove) and the flower in the vase, one’s sense of smell is cleansed; by listening to the boiling of water in the iron kettle and to the dripping of water from the bamboo pipe, one’s ears are cleansed; by tasting tea one’s mouth is cleansed; and by handling the tea utensils one’s sense of touch is cleansed. When thus all the sense organs are cleansed, the mind itself is cleansed of defilements.”

Miura, too, sees *chanoyu* as a religious pursuit of spiritual cleansing, although not so much of the dust and defilements in our mind, as of the sins in our heart. In order to enter the tearoom, a Christian *paraiso* in Miura’s view, Rikyū must first put down his invisible sword – that is, his pride. Moreover, he needs to be cleansed of the sins of wrath, hatred, lust, pride and vanity, for the “pure in heart” are the ones who get to see God (Matthew 5:8). When Rikyū proclaims at the climactic scene: “I, Sen no Rikyū, will hereby purify the Way of the Tea Ceremony with my blood,” readers familiar with Christianity are reminded of the linkage between blood and cleansing found in 1 John 1:7: “the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”
The concept of *jaku*, as Horst Hammitzsch explains, “stands in close association with *satori*, enlightenment. Worldly desires are extinguished, to be replaced by self-absorption into the nothingness [*mu*].” The concept of *jaku* “also embraces that of emptiness, *kū*, which is simultaneously that of silence [*seijaku*].” *Jaku* denotes a special “tranquillity bound up with peace of heart,” which is attained by one’s return to nothingness. As Daisetz T. Suzuki puts it: “Zen... is to cast off all one thinks he possesses, even life, and to get back to the ultimate state of being, the “Original Abode.” We see a perfect scene of tranquility during the very last tea gathering hosted by Sen no Rikyū, a spiritual man totally at peace with himself and with the environment, although confronted with imminent death. Miura is not saying that Rikyū became a Christian believer; rather she applies her own Christian perspective and attributes that peace and tranquillity to the realization that one’s life is in perfect order and harmony when entrusted to God’s hands, and to Rikyū’s return, not so much in the spirit of Zen to the ultimate reality of nothingness, but to Creator God, the embrace of the Heavenly Father in the manner of an innocent child.

By the time of the Genroku Period (1688-1704), Sen no Rikyū seemed to have been elevated posthumously to the status of *chasei* (Sage of Tea). As Paul H. Varley observes, this was the result of a Rikyū revival, highlighted and fueled by Tachibana Jitsuzan’s “discovery” of *Nampōroku*, which coincided with the hundredth anniversary of Rikyū’s death. Interestingly, a statement therein attributed to Rikyū further awarded him the prestige of becoming the “guardian deity” of the way of tea (*chadō no mamorigami*): “Within ten years, the true way of tea will be abandoned. Yet, even at that time, we can expect *chanoyu* to flourish in the world... A person will appear in a later age who understands this way of tea... and even if a hundred years have elapsed, my bones will be reinvigorated, my spirit will be filled with joy, and I will surely become the patron deity of *chadō* (the way of tea).”
Despite her respect for Rikyū as a great tea master, Miura does not see him as a holy man (seijin); rather, she understands the term chasei as being synonymous with the word oni – as in the Japanese expressions shigoto no oni (a work fiend) or bungaku no oni (demon of literature) – which refers to someone who is wholeheartedly devoted to a vocation and is singlemindedly pursuing its perfection. In that respect, Miura finds Rikyū a truly admirable person. As we have seen in Sen no Rikyū and Hosokawa Garasha fujin, Miura’s interest in writing historical novels lies in examining (perhaps re-examining is a better word here) historical figures as real human beings (as opposed to saints or demigods), shedding light on their weaknesses and struggles as such, and showing how they eventually emerge victorious. In an essay written concurrently with the serialization of Sen no Rikyū, when she was depicting the final phase of Rikyū’s life, Miura states her own view of Sen no Rikyū:

Seeing a person as a human being is indeed the right way to examine a person’s life. In addition, the respect that comes out of it would be true respect. Deifying a person and glorifying him by no means give us a correct view of that person – for all men are bound to make mistakes in life; no one can live on without clinging to God or relying on the Buddha. *A person might be haughty at times, avaricious on another occasion, or even seized by carnal desire; yet, when he looks at himself with humility, he will see the right Way to proceed. That is the path to religion.* I have no idea how, and in what frame of mind, tea should be made. But I know at the very least that doing so from a position of power (tatete yaru) is not the right way. Is it not the right posture to serve tea with a humble heart (tatesasete itadaku)? 331

Miura sees Rikyū’s seppuku as an inevitable outcome of the fundamental conflict between the hegemon Hideyoshi, who prepared tea from a position of power (tatete yaru), and Rikyū the Sage of Tea (chasei) who did so with humility, as if to say “allow me to serve you a bowl of tea” (tatesasete itadaku). Unlike the author of Nampōroku, Miura never deifies Rikyū. Nor does she overly glorify his actions; rather, Miura sees
Rikyū as a real human being with flaws and weaknesses, who nonetheless tries hard to strive for perfection. Sen no Rikyū is a beautifully written record of Rikyū’s life journey of spiritual growth and maturation, not only as a tea master, but also as a person, and how he came close, as he faced his final moments, to finding the right path to salvation. Miura seems to suggest that the right path for Rikyū hinges on having a humble heart, which enables Rikyū to pass through the narrow gate – the spiritual nijiriguchi. Seen from a Christian perspective, the final act of Rikyū’s ritual suicide takes on a new spiritual significance: the Christian reader finally understands why the shedding of blood is necessary. Not only does it purify chanoyu from the influences of Hideyoshi who constantly defiled and distorted the art with his misguided principles, but it also cleanses Rikyū of his own sins of pride, power and hatred.

As we have seen, Miura portrays the political clash between Hideyoshi and Rikyū as a clash of artistic and cultural values embodied by Hideyoshi’s ōgon no chashitsu (golden tearoom) – a symbol of the apex of worldly power – on the one hand, and by Rikyū’s spiritual world of wabi-sabi, on the other hand. Although tea ceremony is thought to have been rooted in the practice of Zen Buddhism, many have suggested the possibility of a Christian connection – some even claim that Rikyū himself may have been a Christian and that Hideyoshi ordered Rikyū to commit seppuku because of his Christian faith. Although I find these speculations intriguing, my primary concern has been to examine the relationship between Christianity and the aesthetics of chanoyu as conceived by the Christian writer Miura Ayako. I would argue that, although these theories are no more than wild speculations unsubstantiated by solid evidence, it is precisely this kind of “mystery” surrounding the life of the great tea master Sen no Rikyū that allows Miura to use her artistic imagination, the art of fabrication, to fill in the gap and provide details for readers who are eager to learn the “truth.” In my view, Miura’s unique contribution as a historical novelist lies in her ability to apply her
literary skill to reconstructing the life of Sen no Rikyū from a Christian perspective, casting his pursuit of the art of chanoyu as a spiritual journey which culminated in the ultimate, voluntary act of ritual suicide.

Rikyū’s final act, then, can be seen not as a defeat, but as a positive act, on the part of the great tea master, to save the art of chanoyu from descent into a state of spiritual decay. Literally by his blood, Rikyū cleanses the art of chanoyu from the impurities and sin of worldly power struggles epitomized by Hideyoshi’s ōgon no chashitsu. Similarly, Hosokawa Garasha’s death, as portrayed by Miura, can be seen as a courageous act, not only to uphold the samurai code of honor, but also to redeem herself from the sin of being born the daughter of the traitor, Akechi Mitsuhide. The fact that Miura herself, in the afterword to Hosokawa Garasha fujin, compares the novel to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter points to a moral dimension that emphasizes the recurring theme of “sin and redemption,” a theme that imparts intellectual depth and intensity which makes Miura’s historical novels so powerful.

No analysis of Miura’s novels would be complete without an examination of her representative works from the 1980s and 1990s in the vein of pacifist, anti-war literature. In the next chapter, I will examine three of her later works – Aoi tōge (1982), Haha (1992) and Jūkō (1994), which question, from a variety of perspectives, the brutality, stupidity and vanity of war and what it does to humanity.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

No analysis of Miura Ayako’s novels would be complete without an examination of her representative works from the 1980s and 1990s in the vein of pacifist, anti-war literature. In the three novels *Aoi toge* (Blue Thorns, 1982), *Haha* (Mother, 1992) and *Jūkō* (Gunpoint, 1994), Miura questions the brutality, stupidity and vanity of war and what war does to humanity from a variety of perspectives. *Haha*, an outcry against oppression by the state authority, is narrated from the point of view of the mother of Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933), the best known writer of proletarian literature, who was tortured to death by the *Tokkō* (Special Higher) Police on February 20, 1933. On the other hand, the story in *Aoi toge*, a novel set in the post-war years, is told from the viewpoint of a fictional character, Professor Kunikoshi, a historian, university professor and former proponent of Japan’s expansionist policy, who recognizes the horror and futility of war as he reflects on his war-time experiences. In this work, Miura sets up a sharp contrast between the generation of the après-guerre, as represented by Kunikoshi’s daughter-in-law, Yukiko, who has no awareness of the harsh reality of war, and the so-called *senchūha*, the generation of people like Kunikoshi who wasted their youth in support of the state’s meaningless war effort – a contrast that makes the latter’s post-war disorientation all the more poignant.

In *Aoi Toge*, Miura boldly tackles such controversial issues as the divinity of the Japanese emperor, Japan’s war responsibility, recent calls for rearmament, and the heated debate surrounding the Yasukuni Shrine. Having grown up in a time when Japanese citizens were indoctrinated to believe in the divinity of their emperor, Miura
found it shocking when Emperor Hirohito renounced his claims to divinity after Japan’s defeat in the Second World War. The following dialogue in *Aoi Toge* between Kunikoshi and his daughter-in-law, Yukiko, captures nicely the changing attitudes toward the emperor ideology in the post-war era:

“Yuki-chan, you know what, young people at that time all looked forward to dying for the emperor. To die for the emperor was what made life worth living.”

“Dying for the emperor?” Being a young woman born five years after the end of the war, Yukiko thought it was a joke.

“That’s right, Yuki-chan… When I was young, the whole world centered around the divine emperor, who ruled over his subjects as the direct descendant of the Sun Goddess.”

“… Isn’t the emperor a normal human being born of a human being?”

“He is, from the outset, and he laughs, gets angry, and craves for food and sex, just like all of us…”

“So why did people of your generation believe in his divinity even though we find it nonsensical?”

“Well…how should I put it? Needless to say, people were foolish, but as long as one remained a Japanese national, absolute obedience to the emperor was expected, for the constitution declared the emperor to be ‘sacred and inviolable.’“(AT: 116-17)

In addition to Professor Kunikoshi, Miura creates two other characters – an activist by the name of Isoda Kyūichi, who was imprisoned during the war as a thought criminal, and a female victim of the Hiroshima bombing called Sumiyoshi Toshiko – the three of them participating together as guest speakers at a public lecture held on August 6 to commemorate the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The first speaker, Isoda, begins by denouncing war and the frightening power of the state to subdue and silence its citizens:

War is a terrifying form of state power that violates human rights, dehumanizes its citizens, and tramples on the voices of the people. War breaks out precisely because state authority possesses military power. Prior to attacking enemy forces
with military power, the state first silences its own people with military might. This was the leading assault. Having sealed the lips of its citizens, the whole nation plunged into war. I want you to remember this: “War does not occur by itself; it is caused [by those who are in power]. (AT: 164)

Having asserted that war is caused by those who are in power, Isoda warns against the danger of a resurgence of militarism in Japan:

In order to initiate war, [the militaristic state] ruthlessly hauled away those who were deemed uncooperative – not only socialists, but also educators, men of letters, religious leaders and artists. It was during that time that Kobayashi Takiji [the proletarian writer] was tortured to death by the police... Nothing is more horrifying than seeing one’s freedom of thought and beliefs taken away. If Japan had been victorious, we would still have been living under the rule of the old constitution...and the organizers of tonight’s seminar and everyone who is in attendance would have had to prepare for arrest and torture [by the Special Higher Police]. I am fearful that Japan might one day return to its old path, and if [young people like] you are not aware of the problem, we are in trouble. Military expansion is a prelude to tyrannical rule. Under an oppressive regime, the first thing we will lose is the freedom of thought and the freedom of assembly. At the present moment in Japan, there have been calls to revive the draft. Before long, people will once again try to justify war under the nationalistic banner. And yet, there is no such thing as a righteous war or a holy war. As I said before, war does not occur by itself, it is caused by [those who are in power]. (AT: 167-68)

The next speaker, Sumiyoshi, follows with a passionate speech of her own, in which she cries out against the Hiroshima atomic bombing and questions the purpose of war:

Why? Why did the residents of Hiroshima have to bear this unbearable pain? Living people were burned to death in the raging fireball – some died with their eyeballs popped out; others survived but lived in fear of illnesses caused by atomic-bomb radiation, while being tortured by a horrible sense of guilt for abandoning their own blood relatives. Why do we alone have to bear this pain? Why do we have to live our life – a life with no second chance – in this terrible manner? … The moment our prospective marriage partners hear that we are “victims of the atomic bomb” [hibakusha], they hesitate and decide not to marry
us; if we are worn out from fatigue, we are accused for being lazy… We are not bad people. Those who caused the war were to blame – Americans who dropped the atomic bombs, and Japanese who started the whole thing with its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Why on earth did we have to go to war? For whom were we fighting? (AT:173)

Unlike Isoda and Sumiyoshi who are portrayed as “victims” in Miura’s novel, the final speaker, Kunikoshi, appears on stage as a “victimizer,” – a former naval officer who was actively involved in Japan’s military campaign, thinking that he was serving the emperor with honor in a “just” war. There is no verbatim report of Kunikoshi’s speech in the novel. Instead, Miura has Kunikoshi answer four pointed questions posed by the audience following the conclusion of his speech, and that is what makes this section interesting. In the first question, Kunikoshi is asked what made him give up his studies to join the war effort and why there was no opposition on the part of the students to Japan’s policy of imperial expansion. Reflecting on his experiences during the war, Kunikoshi describes how an emperor-based ideology and fervent nationalism promoted by a militaristic school curriculum drove the whole nation to war:

From a modern perspective, one might wonder why I abandoned my studies and chose a path that inevitably put my youthful life in harm’s way. Why was there no strong opposition or even skepticism, even for a moment, on the part of the students against the war? Was there not even a scrap of critical spirit in them?...The fact is: the magic spell of war drives people into sheer madness (shōki no sata to wa omoenu tokoro ni ningen o oikonde iku)...Misguided education is a scary thing indeed. I became an elementary school student in 1931 – when the Manchurian Incident broke out. During the war, all textbooks were compiled in conformity to a nationalistic curriculum that was centered around the emperor...We were taught that dying for the emperor is the purpose and meaning of life. You might find it hard to believe, but such an ideology was hammered into our heads at an early age. In today’s language, we call it “brainwashing”...Anyway, one of the most horrible outcomes of that war was
the fact that people were subject to thought control. If anyone dared to express “non-conforming” thoughts, he would immediately be branded as a “non-citizen” and thrown into prison…Under such a strong militaristic regime, there was no freedom of speech whatsoever. (AT:177-78)

Kunikoshi’s words echo Miura’s own real-life experiences during the war, the memories of which are still vividly carved in her heart thirty years after its end. In her autobiographical novel *Ishikoro no uta*, Miura describes the horror of war-time thought control in these terms:

Following the outbreak of war, with victory as its sole aim, the state coerced its citizens and forcibly dragged them along, not only by threatening and coaxing them into compliance by the use of *Tokkō* and the military police, but also by skillfully and thoroughly brainwashing them to the extent that they came forward on their own accord to sacrifice their lives. In the end, the whole nation ended up glorifying their action and affirming [the righteousness of] war, without even a trace of doubt in the mind of its citizens. People who did not live through that generation might find it absurd, but the fact that people lost their senses illustrates the horror of war-time thought control.¹

The next question posed by the audience to Kunikoshi in *Aoi toge* has to do with the controversial issue of the Yasukuni Shrine.² Since the 1980s, when Miura’s novel was written, there has been intense debate in Japan and abroad as to whether it is appropriate for top-level Japanese government officials to visit the highly symbolic shrine in central Tokyo that commemorates the spirits of about 2.5 million people who died for the emperor in various wars since the Meiji Restoration. Among those who were enshrined there, 1,068 were convicted of war crimes, and fourteen among them were Class A war criminals, including Tōjō Hideki (1884-1948), a general of the Imperial Japanese Army and former prime minister of Japan who was directly responsible for the attack on Pearl Harbor. Some denounce official visits by a sitting prime minister and his cabinet members to the war-linked shrine as a revisionist act of
war criminal worship; others contend that such a visit is a culturally appropriate
gesture to pay homage to the war dead and to renew the nation’s pledge for peace.3

During the Second World War, young kamikaze pilots sent on a suicide mission and
others in the military often looked forward to being enshrined at the Yasukuni Shrine
after dying an honorable death for the emperor. In Aoi Toge, Miura imagines the mind
of such a young man and gives voice to the war dead by making intertextual reference
to Kike wadatsumi no koe (Listen to the Voices from the Sea)4 – a collection of letters,
diaries and poems written in real life by Japanese student soldiers from 1938 to 1947
that bring back to life “the voices of those very finest of young men, whose eyes were
shielded from the sight of the truth, who were abused, tyrannized, and killed.”5 In
Miura’s novel, Kunikoshi holds up a copy of Kike wadatsumi no koe and quotes a letter
dated February 1, 1941, by a student soldier named Fukunaka Gorō (1916-1945) as he
explains his view on the controversial issue of the Yasukuni Shrine:

One year of military life will suck the humanity out of anyone and everyone. The
second-year soldiers treat us draftees like slaves – no, more as though we were
machines – and their sole aim in life seems to consist in subjecting us to various
forms of pain and abuse…every night the groaning sounds of leather footwear
can be heard. One of the draftees was cut so badly with a sword-sheath that he
had to take four stitches and be hospitalized as well…When I wrote to my
mother, also from the toilet the previous Sunday, I could not stop my tears from
falling…If a second-year soldier ever finds out that I wrote this kind of a letter, I
will probably be killed. (AT:179-80)6

Fukunaka was a promising young man who was attending the prestigious
Waseda University at the time of war. His studies were cut short, however, when he
was conscripted and entered the barracks on January 10, 1941. Four years later, he was
killed in action on the Solomon Islands on February 10, 1945, at age twenty-eight.
There was a deep sense of despair in Fukunaka’s letter. More than the brutality of
constant beatings, it was perhaps the disillusionment of serving in the imperial army that made life unbearable for these student soldiers.

The editors of the 1995 edition of *Kike wadatsumi no koe* wrote in the postscript: “It was not a war which they had either begun or even consented to; those students were quite literally rounded up to take part in that war of aggression. Even while they were staring death directly in the face, they still maintained their love, indeed their passion, for studying and searching for the truth and intellectual values. They left the later generations their keen hopes for peace and liberty… The supreme irony is that these fallen soldiers are enshrined in Yasukuni Shrine as ‘military gods’ and ‘the souls of the fallen heroes,’ and they are being used to shore up ‘Yasukuni worship’ – a stout pillar supporting the Tennō (Emperor) system.” The editors’ view is echoed by Kunikoshi in *Aoi Toge*:

This was the letter that Fukunaka Gorō wrote secretly to his friend in a toilet [while serving in the imperial army as a student soldier.] He was told that he would be apotheosized upon dying [for the emperor], and yet when he was living, he was treated like a slave, no better than cattle and horses. Day after day, he was beaten, threatened, and kicked. This is how he was forced to live when he was alive. Young men like Fukunaka joined the army upon being told that they would be enshrined as at the Yasukuni Shrine. Now in their graves, are they not feeling deceived? I can almost hear the pathetic voices of these young men crying out, “Stop deifying us. We have enough already!” (AT:180)

In *Aoi Toge*, Miura skillfully weaves Fukunaka’s heart-wrenching letter into her narrative, and further heightens the sense of pathos and futility surrounding his death by having Kunikoshi portray him as a young man who was used as a tool for the advancement of militaristic ideology and ultimately sacrificed for a war in vain. The above passage portrays the tormented spirits of young men like Fukunaka, who were driven to the utmost limits of sanity in the name of a “sacred” war. Reflecting the
pacifist stance of Miura the Christian writer, Kunikoshi refutes the notion of “holy war” altogether when he is asked by the audience if war can ever be justified:

During the Second World War, Japanese citizens were thoroughly indoctrinated by their government into believing that Japan was fighting a holy war. But what is a holy war? I agree with Mr. Isoda that the notion of holy war is a fallacy. I am not a Christian, but I believe that a human being has no right to kill another human being and that the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” represents the eternal truth. (AT:181)

In response to the final question from the audience, Kunikoshi goes on to refute the fallacy of rearmament as a means to protect the nation. In his view, the military build-up does not make Japan safer; it brings Japan dangerously closer to another war. Kunikoshi argues that, as the only nation that has experienced the horror of nuclear weapons, Japan has a moral responsibility to help other nations eradicate them from the earth:

I am a former naval officer. At the time of World War Two, Japan was proud of its military might before the whole world. But what on earth were we protected from by that military power? Yes, we were fully armed, but because of that, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I am sure that would not have have happened if Japan had been a little weaker. Tell me, what did Japan’s strong army protect us from? By the end of the war, Tokyo and Osaka had been flattened and reduced to ruins. New-born babies and aged parents alike were burnt to death together with their houses. We can no longer live under the illusion that we can be protected by the military. Rather, as the only nation that faced the tragedy of the first-ever use of atomic bombs on the human race, should we not commit ourselves and appeal to the world as Japanese for an eradication of nuclear weapons from Earth, and for disarmament to the greatest possible extent? (AT:182-83)

Ten years after the publication of Aoi toge, Miura wrote Haha (Mother, 1992) at the age of seventy, when her health was steadily in decline. It had been ten years since Mitsuyo had first suggested to her that she write about Seki, the mother of the
proletarian writer Kobayashi Takiji (1903-1933), who was brutally tortured to death at the Tsukiji Police Station on February 20, 1933, for his association with the Communist movement and on the charges of harboring dangerous thoughts. In Miura’s novel, Seki indicts the atrocities of the police who subjected her innocent son to cruel torture that ultimately resulted in his death and exposes the horror of living in an ultra-nationalistic state where all freedom of expression is lost: “I never thought that the consequence of writing a novel could be that frightening (shōsetsu o kaku koto ga anna ni okkanai koto da to wa omottemo minakatta). Who could have imagined that Takiji would get hauled in by the police and tortured to death just for writing novels. If I had known how frightening it could be to write a novel, I would have prostrated myself on the floor and begged him to stop” (HA:84).

Reminiscing on how the novel was conceptualized, Miura Mitsuyo quotes his wife as saying: “I don’t know much about Communist ideology; but as long as I’m writing about Kobayashi’s mother, I have to portray the life and thoughts of Kobayashi as well. It is quite difficult for me because I don’t have time to learn about Communism. To begin with, physically, I don’t have the stamina [to see the project through].” Despite her concern, Miura poured all her energy into completing the 224-page novel – short by Miura’s standard, but highly evocative and deeply touching as a fictional account of Seki’s life – paying close attention to biographical details and vividly portraying her character by the use of the Akita dialect. Narrated in the form of a memoir and written in a conversational style, Haha follows the life of Kobayashi Takiji’s mother from the time when she was four or five, until she was eighty-eight. The novel evoked a massive response after it was published and has been hailed by many to be one of the greatest works by Miura.9

It might seem odd that Miura, a Christian novelist, should write a novel on the life of the proletarian writer Kobayashi Takiji (as seen through the eyes of her mother).
After all, Miura was not enthusiastic about the ideology of Communism, which, in Marx’s view, equates religion with “opium of the masses.” Nevertheless, Miura seemed to find the character and integrity of Kobayashi appealing as a human being. In Haha, she portrays Kobayashi – based upon thorough biographical research on his life\(^{10}\) – as an “[honest] person with no hidden motives” (omote mo ura mo nai hito) (HA:215), a “gentle young man with a beautiful nature” (kokorone no yasashii ko) (HA:55), a kind, loving person who shows deep thoughtfulness towards his parents and siblings (HA:56), and a novelist with a sense of mission who “envisions a society with no poverty” (binbōnin no inai yo no naka ba tsukuritai) (HA:86). The portrayal of Kobayashi as an almost flawless character in Miura’s novel heightens the sense of pathos when he is betrayed [as he was in real life] by a “comrade” he trusts, who turns out to be an undercover spy for the police. In the end, Kobayashi is trapped and delivered to the police by this “comrade,” just as Jesus was betrayed by Judas and delivered to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea.

In the postscript to Haha, Miura explains: “Over the course of my research, my heart was moved to see how the Kobayashi family was filled with cheerfulness and kindness, despite challenges of extreme poverty. Moreover, my heart was stirred by the fact that the tragedy of Kobayashi Takiji’s death and that of Jesus Christ’s were bound by a common sadness. I would imagine that, if Takiji’s mother were to see the picture Pieta depicting the dead body of Christ after deposition from the cross, she would undoubtedly feel great empathy” (HA:225-26). In one of the most touching scenes in Haha, Miura juxtaposes the visual image of the Pieta, which delineates the pain of the grief-stricken mother of Jesus while holding her son’s dead body after crucifixion, with the aural image of Seki’s voice speaking of her own sorrow and utter devastation over the loss of her beloved son, Takiji. The parallel is striking and the contrast between a forgiving Jesus and an unforgiving Seki even more so:
I saw a picture in which the Virgin Mary, with a grief-stricken look in her face, holds the dead body of her son Jesus Christ after the deposition — a blood-stained body covered all over with bruises and deeply marked with the blows of the scourges… And I recalled with sadness the day when the police returned Takiji’s dead body to me. My son, Takiji, was a human being; but Jesus was the Son of God. It is hard to imagine how difficult it must have been for God to give his only beloved son and allow him to be crucified, so that men would be saved. I was struck by what Jesus said on the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” [Luke 23:34] – for neither Takiji nor I could say “forgive [the police for their brutality]” and I kept asking God to pass a just settlement. I remembered how Reverend Kondō took my hand and said, “Rest assured that God is righteous and there is a time coming when His final judgment will be revealed.” At that moment, I had the feeling that I had come to know who God was. (HA:208)

In *Hyōten*, the heroine Yōko seeks “an authority who would tell her in no uncertain terms that ‘she is forgiven!’ (hakiri yurusu to itte kureru ken’i aru mono); in *Haha*, Miura portrays Kobayashi Takiji’s mother as seeking the final arbiter who would beyond all doubts deliver the righteous judgment (*tadashiku shirokuro o tsukete kudasaru kata*) on the brutal murder of her son.

Among the belongings of the late Kobayashi Seki, who passed away at age eighty-eight, was a poem clumsily written in *hiragana* (a duplicate copy of which is now on regular display at the Municipal Otaru Literature Museum in Hokkaido),11 to which Miura makes reference in the closing scene of *Haha*:

You want to know what that paper is? I can’t bear to show it. This is my grievance.
My heart sinks whenever February comes around, even now, thirty years after Takiji’s death. I’m still a woman of little faith. It’s so embarrassing. I was trying to express how I felt in a poem. I wrote that long ago. All right! I’ll show it to you…
To tell you the truth, I had originally intended to show it only to Jesus, since nothing can be done if I show it to other people. But I think Jesus would understand how I feel…
Oh! February is here again.
I really hate this second month.
I want to weep out loud, but I can’t no matter where I go.
Ah! the radio offers some help.
Ah! Tears fall and my eyeglasses get cloudy. (HA:222-23)

あーまたこの二月の月かきた
ほんとうにこの二月とゆ月か
いやな月こいをいぱいに
なきたいどこいいでもなかれ
ないあーてもラチオて
しかすたしかる
あーなみたかてる
めかねかくもる

This poem, I showed it only to Reverend Kondō. When I did that, he simply stared at the ocean in silence, for as long as five to ten minutes... his mouth trembling with emotion. And then, he brought a huge bible and tried to suppress a sob: “Seki, this is what the Bible says: ‘Jesus weeps.’”
Since then, I always recall the words “Jesus weeps.” Jesus weeps for all of us. He weeps for me. It was a terrible poem, but when I realized that Jesus wept for me, I can’t bear to rip it to pieces. (HA:222-24)

Seki’s testimony expresses the deep sorrow of a loving mother – a sorrow that has not healed thirty years after Takiji’s death. There is hope, however, for Seki’s gradual recovery, for the novel ends with a beautiful scene. After 224 pages, Seki’s account of her life finally draws to a close. “Oh, I just realize that I have talked too much. Thank you so much for listening. I am truly grateful. Look at the sunset and its reflection on the ocean. The color of the evening glow is so beautiful” (HA:224).

Like Kobayashi Takiji, his mother, Seki, and Professor Kunikoshi, the fictional hero in Aoi toge, Miura belonged to the senchūha generation. In Miura’s case, she fell into self-doubt and nihilism in the immediate post-war years, when she realized that what she had taught during the war years as an elementary school teacher was nothing more than propaganda for the militaristic state. Her own experience as an
educator translates into that of Kitamori Ryūta, the hero of Jūkō (The Gunpoint, 1994), Miura Ayako’s last novel. Intended to be a critical commentary on the history of the Shōwa era, Jūkō symbolically opens with the state funeral of Emperor Taishō (1879-1926) and closes with that of Emperor Shōwa (1901-1989). The novel was based on the Hokkaidō Tsuzurikata Kyōiku Renmei jiken, a notorious historical incident in which some sixty public school teachers in Hokkaidō (and more than three hundred nationwide) were purged as “communists” and arrested under the Peace Preservation Law in 1940 for merely conducting composition classes aimed at encouraging free expression of thought on the part of students. The main story line follows the life of Ryūta, from his arrest and imprisonment as a teacher, to his being drafted into the Imperial Army for its campaign in Manchuria, to his eventual return to the homeland after the war, whereupon he becomes determined to once again become a real educator.

As Miura points out in the postscript to her autobiographical novel, Ishikoro no Uta (1974), “historical current is by no means a natural phenomenon. It is forcibly created by people who are in power, and in the process, engulfing all citizens. It is for this reason that many innocent lives were lost, and many destinies changed.”12 Ryūta’s destiny is forever changed, as was Kobayashi Takiji’s in real life. Jūkō is arguably one of the most powerful novels ever written by Miura Ayako, for it includes a sociopolitical dimension hitherto absent in her earlier works and deals with a subject matter that few writers dare to write about. Knowing full well the danger of touching upon the taboo subject of the divinity of the emperor, Miura daringly challenges the political system of kokutai (national polity) and the assumptions that upheld militaristic sentiments in the 1930s, indicts war atrocities and violence against women, and questions the oppressive authority of the state which literally held its citizens at gunpoint (hence the title Jūkō) for the faintest voice of dissent.
The 1930s witnessed a decade of censorship, during which literary discourse was controlled by those in power and dissenting voices not in line with the principles of the national polity were ruthlessly suppressed – as in the case of the death of Kobayashi Takiji. In an essay entitled “Chō-kōkkashugi no ronri to shinri,” originally published in May 1946 and translated by Ivan Morris as “Theory and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism,” Maruyama Masao argues that the slogans ‘art for the nation’ (kokka no tame no geijutsu) and ‘scholarship for the nation’ (kokka no tame no gakumon) were not simply demands that art and scholarship be of practical value to the country. The essential point was that the final decision about the content of Japanese art, scholarship, and so forth, the definition of what was actually for the good of the country, was handed down by officials whose duty was to give loyal service ‘to His Majesty the Emperor and the Imperial Government.’

The later novels of Miura Ayako, as discourses on the “prohibited,” challenge the assumptions behind the emperor system and give a platform to the subjugated voices of those oppressed by the nationalistic state, and it is in these later novels that we see Miura at her best.

As we have seen, Miura took a variety of approaches in her writings, producing a wide range of multi-faceted works with a Christian theme (Hyōten, Hitsujigaoka and Shiokari Tōge), a historical focus (Hosokawa Garasha fujin and Sen no Rikyū to sono tsumatachi), or a sociopolitical dimension (Aoi toge, Haha and Jūkō). Over the years, Miura has been consistent and never deviated from the central theme that defines and unifies all her novels, namely – sin and redemption. As far as her fictional writings are concerned, Miura’s career begins with the novel Hyōten, which raises the issue of original sin, and ends with the novel Jūkō, which critically examines the sin of her own nation. Miura sees the 1930s as “a historical period in which people were led to believe that crimes committed were no crime at all (tsumi o tsumi de nai to omowaseru …jidai).” As a Christian writer, Miura felt a strong sense of responsibility to write
about the war, to bring this dark page of Japanese history to the light of critical inquiry and to give a legitimate voice to the oppressed and the subjugated, who had been denied their freedom of expression during the war years. The later novels of Miura have a sociopolitical dimension that offers the readers a vivid picture of the modernization of a nation called Japan, a seriousness in terms of social commitment and responsibility for Japan’s past, and in that sense they come close to the ideals of pure literature as conceptualized by the Nobel Laureate Ōe Kenzaburō in the 1980s.

Just as Aoi toge, Haha and Jūkō re-examine the meaning of war and give a platform to the subjugated human voices of the Shōwa era, I have re-examined the major works of Miura Ayako in the hopes of enriching scholarly understanding of the important contributions made by this under-rated writer. In Miura’s view, literature has a social, pragmatic function: it portrays life for the purpose of finding a proper way to live. Her fictional characters are by no means perfect, but they are believable figures living in a real world – they all love, hate, sin, wander, struggle and suffer; some of them repent, forgive or even sacrifice. As a story teller, Miura never fails to entertain, offering her readers vivid glances into human society and the variegated ways of living (ikikata) of its inhabitants.

Miura’s characters are no less egoistic than the characters we see in Sōseki’s novels, and they find themselves in situations no less desperate than what the Dazai hero encounters. The novels of Miura Ayako, Natsume Sōseki and Dazai Osamu are powerful works of literature because they deal with the spiritual struggles of the protagonists. In Kokoro, Sōseki’s best known novel, Sensei laments that “loneliness is the price we have to pay for being born in this modern age, so full of freedom, independence, and our own egotistical selves.”15 In Kōjin, another one of Soseki’s later novels, the character H, reporting on the mental state of his old friend Ichirō, writes in a long letter to Ichiro’s brother that “death, madness and religion are the only three
courses left open to him." Indeed, Sōseki’s characters, tormented by the sin of egoism and unable to find salvation on their own power, ultimately choose one of the three courses: Sensei in Kokoro commits suicide to atone for the sin of betraying his best friend; Sōsuke in Mon seeks spiritual peace in a Zen temple but finds himself unable to pass through the gate to salvation; as for Ichirō in Köjin, he cannot possibly enter religion, nor can he take his life, being too much attached to it, that leaves him only one way out – madness. Valdo H. Viglielmo correctly views the later novels of Natsume Sōseki as a spiritual journey from darkness (an) to light (mei), and sees Ichirō, Sensei, Kenzō and Tsuda as spiritual descendants of Sōsuke, who, like Sōsuke, are unable to penetrate the gate to salvation. The fact that Sōseki died before completing his last novel Meian makes it open to doubt as to whether Tsuda, the protagonist of the novel, succeeds or not, but up to the point where the novel is discontinued, Tsuda has, in Viglielmo’s opinion, definitely not found salvation.16

Dazai’s heroes are equally hopeless – although the female characters in Dazai’s novels show resilience and an ability to overcome despair and live on, Dazai’s heroes are weak and they tend to choose death over life. As a writer, Dazai sympathizes with the weak, but he offers no hope or solution to man’s plight. Sōseki’s great intellect and reasoning power and Dazai’s sensibility are of little help when it comes to leading people to salvation. Miura the Christian writer argues that the greatest sin of all is to deny God – as long as one rejects an authority outside the self, as long as one follows the footsteps of Ichirō who declares that “God is the self,” that “he is the absolute” (kami wa jiko da, boku wa zettai da), one must stand forever outside the gate, together with Sōsuke who also fails to achieve salvation.

In contrast to the works of Sōseki and Dazai, Miura’s novels are best characterized as literature of love, hope and redemption. Like Sōsuke, Ichirō, Sensei, Naoji and many other characters in Sōseki’s and Dazai’s novels, Miura’s characters
struggle spiritually, but there is always a ray of hope at the end of the tunnel pointing to the path of salvation. As Miura made it clear that she intended to be an “evangelical writer” (fukuin no dendō sakka), the literary establishment (bundan) never gave her serious attention, nor would it give her critical acclaim. For Miura, it was acceptable because she wrote not for literary fame, but to reach out to her readers. She would gladly accept the “popular” label if it allows her to comfort and to touch the heart of as many people as possible through her works – a unique function of literature that distinguishes Miura’s writings from the works of other writers.

In his commentary on Hyōten, published in the paperback edition of the novel, Harada Yōichi writes: “The weight of the novel’s theme leaves a deep impression also upon the readers of junbungaku, who feel dissatisfied with the weak flavor of contemporary literature” (Hyōten no motsu teema no omosawa gendai bungaku no aji no ususa ni mitasarenu omoi o motte iru junbungaku no dokusha ni mo fukai kanmei o ataeta no de aru). Harada’s statement applies to other works by Miura as well. Her novels – at once intriguing, intellectual, and thought-provoking – appeal both to readers of taishū bungaku who want to read interesting stories, and to readers of junbungaku who want something deeper and more sophisticated than mere entertainment.

Also commenting on Hyōten, Kuroko Kazuo poses this question in his book Miura Ayako ron: “Readers of taishū bungaku or junbungaku, even if they know that the author of Hyōten is a Christian, when they are reading the novel, or when they are finished reading it, how many would be aware of its Christian theme of ‘original sin?’” (taishū bungaku no dokusha ni shiro, junbungaku no dokusha ni shiro, Hyōten no sakusha ga Kurisuchan de aru to iu koto wa shitte ita to shitemo, sakuhin o yonde iru toki ni, aruiwa yomiowatta toki ni, kono shōsetsu no teema ga Kurisuto-kyō de iu tokoro no genzai de aru to, hatashite nannin no hito ga ninshiki shita ka). Kuroko argues that the appeal of Hyōten lies elsewhere: “What is the attraction of the novel Hyōten that captivates so
many readers who are not particularly aware of the Christian theme of ‘original sin’? Above all, it is the preciseness of plot construction (=structure of the novel).” (Kirisuto-kyōgaku ni okeru ‘genzai’ o kono sakuhin kara kakubetsu ishiki shinakatta ōku no hitobito o toriko ni shita Hyōten no shōsetsu to shite no miryoku to wa nani ka to ieba, mazu daiichi ni agerareru no wa sono ‘sujitate’ = shōsetsu no kōsei no tashikasa darō). Despite early critical reviews that variously labelled Miura’s novels as gokyō bungaku or taishū bungaku, Miura survived and thrived against all odds as a Christian novelist in Japan. Miura’s success lies in her amazing talent of storytelling which enables her to write Christian novels without giving the impression as such. Indeed, as Kuroko observes, her Japanese readers might not even be aware of the Christian themes – as they ponder the meaning of life and death, war and peace, love and forgiveness, sin and redemption.

In the Bungei jihyō column of the Asahi Shinbun (November 26, 1965), Etō Jun affirms the literary worth of Hyōten, calling it a challenge to the literary establishment (bundan e no chōsen):

It is rare to see a woman writer with such an other-centered viewpoint…It is also refreshing that Hyōten offers a perspective that rejects the jaundiced view of the world…I cannot predict lightly as to what kind of works Miura will produce hereafter, or whether she will mature into a full-fledged writer as the female counterpart of Yamamoto Yūzō (1887-1974)…but the fact is, having read a lot of bundan novels last year after a long time, I felt a kind of challenge in this work.

Kore hodo jiko-chūshin-teki de nai shiten o sonoeta joryū sakka wa mare de aru… Hyōten ga higami o hitei suru shiten o teikyō shite iru no mo sawayaka na tokoro de aru… Watashi wa sakusha Miura-shi ga kongo dono yō na sakuhin o kaku ka, tatoeba joryū no Yamamoto Yūzō-shi to itta sakka ni seichō suru ka dō ka o karugaru ni yoken suru koto wa dekinai…shikashi, kako ichi-nen hisashiburi de bundan shōsetsu o tadoku shite mite, watashi ga kono sakuhin ni hitotsu no chōsen o kanjita no wa jijitsu de aru.
Etō accuses contemporary writers of *bundan* novels, in Kuroko’s opinion, for failing to demonstrate “a truthful way of life that the readers seek” (*dokusha ga motomerubeki jinsei no shinjitsu na ikikata*) and sees in Miura’s work “a sense of mission and a [unique] Christian perspective” (*isshu no shimeikan to Kirisuto-kyō-teki shiten*) that challenges the notion of established literature. As for Etō’s statement that “Hyōten offers a perspective that rejects the jaundiced view of the world” (*Hyōten ga higami o hitei suru shiten o teikyō shite iru*), Kuroko rephrases and interprets it as “offering a viewpoint that deepens our self-awareness of sin” (*tsumi no jikaku o fukameru shiten o teikyō shite iru*).²¹

I see Miura’s works as challenging the established notion of pure literature by putting in doubt and deconstructing the distinction between *junbungaku* and *taishū bungaku*. On the one hand, Miura represents *taishū* in the sense that she adopted and assimilated strategies commonly used by writers of mass literature – creative fiction-writing using the popular genres of *jidai shōsetsu, tantei shōsetsu, katei shōsetsu, and ren’ai shōsetsu*; use of plain language and conversation; emphasis on storytelling and plot development; dramatization to heighten the readers’ interest; reliance on coincidence and sentimentality; serialization in newspapers and women’s magazines; partnership with the mass media (such as television and the film industry)...just to name a few. On the other hand, Miura’s works approach the ideals of *junbungaku* in terms of its seriousness, profundity, intellectual depth, artistic quality and social commitment (by Ōe Kenzaburō’s standard). In the final analysis, Miura’s novels are neither *junbungaku* nor *taishū bungaku* the way they are traditionally defined: she wrote novels that defy a clear-cut categorization one way or another – novels that combine the seriousness of *junbungaku* and the structural cohesion of *taishū bungaku*, very much in the manner of Yokomitsu Riichi as he envisioned the “pure novel” in *Junsui Shōsetsu-ron*. 
Producing widely successful "popular" novels on Christian themes as a woman writer working from the off-center location of Hokkaidō poses the greatest challenge to the literary establishment, because it calls into question the basic assumptions underpinning the raison d’être of the bundan. As we have seen, Miura’s works had largely been dismissed as taishū and relegated to the periphery. Until recently, her literature had not been considered a subject worthy of serious criticism and scholarship. Unlike Hayashi Fumiko who changed the venue of publication for her immensely popular novel Hōrōki, from the women’s magazine Nyōnin geijutsu to the more mainstream literary journal Kaizō, in a calculated move to gain acceptance by the bundan, Miura gladly took the “taishū” label and continued to publish in newspapers, women’s magazines and other popular venues in order to reach out to the mass readers.

Despite facing challenges throughout her literary career, Miura never lost sight of her mission as a writer, nor did she compromise as to what and how to write. Miura’s attitude toward writing reminds us of another popular writer, Murakami Haruki, who satirizes the literary establishment in a hilariously written short story, “Tongari-yaki no seisui” (The Rise and Fall of Sharpie Cakes, 1983). The narrator of the story enters a competition for a ten-million-yen prize. To win the contest, he must invent, within a month, a new kind of confection based on the original Sharpies Cakes and gain the approval of an unusually critical panel of judges made up of “Their Holiness the Sharpie Crows,” who eat only genuine Sharpies and spit out all imitations. At the informational meeting, the narrator is told that “Sharpies are a confection with a long tradition behind it.”22 and he is given a “dubious ‘factual’ account about how somebody-or-other way back in the eighth century whipped together some ingredients to make the very first Sharpie.”23 One month later, the fateful day comes when the narrator receives a call from the board of directors asking
him to come in to witness the final test. He is told that the younger members of the staff love his new Sharpies, but the older employees complain that what he has made is not a real Sharpie Cake. To settle the debate, the board of directors has decided to feed the cakes to “Their Holiness the Sharpie Crows.” The hilariously cruel final judgment scene is vividly portrayed by the masterful Murakami:

The director vigorously scattered my “New Sharpies” on the floor. Again the crows pounced, and then all hell broke loose. Some of the birds ate my Sharpies with gusto, but others spit them out and screamed. “Sharpies! Sharpies!” And still others, unable to reach the cakes, went into a frenzy and started pecking at the throats of the birds that were eating. Blood flew everywhere. One crow pounced on a cake that another had spit out, but yet another gigantic crow latched on this one and, with a cry of “Sharpies!” ripped the first one’s stomach open. From then on, it was a total free-for-all, blood calling forth more blood, rage leading to rage. This was happening over some ridiculous sweets, but to the birds the cakes were everything. Whether a cake was Sharpie or a non-Sharpie was a matter of life and death to them.

Disgusted by what he saw, the narrator walks away from his prize and leaves the building, determined to make only the kind of food he wants to eat from now on:

I exited the room by myself, took the elevator down, and left the Sharpie Cakes building. I hated to lose the two million yen in prize money, but I was not going to live the rest of my long life connected with these damned crows. From now on, I would make and eat the food that I wanted to eat. The damned Sharpie Crows could peck each other to death for all I cared.

As Murakami explains in his introduction, “The Rise and Fall of Sharpie Cakes” is a fable that “reveals [Murakami’s] impressions of the literary world at the time of [his debut]. At the time, [Murakami] couldn’t fit in well with the Japanese literary establishment, a situation that continues [in Murakami’s view] to the present day.” Apparently, the Sharpie Cake Company signifies the bundan, and the narrator Murakami himself whose popular works are widely read by younger readers. When
the managing director of the company explains that the taste of the Sharpies is too old-fashioned and new ideas from young people are needed because sales are dropping, one recalls the plight of *junbungaku* in the post-modern era. Finally, the Sharpie Crows signify members of the literary establishment, who are tenaciously holding on to the authority of deciding whether a literary work is or is not *junbungaku*. For them, retaining that power as the final arbiter is the *raison d’être* of the *bundan* – having the final word on whether someone’s work is pure or non-pure is “a matter of life and death for them,” just as whether a cake is a Sharpie or a non-Sharpie is “a matter of life and death” for “Their Holiness the Sharpie Crows.”

Pure Sharpies, Mass-produced Sharpies, Imitation Sharpies… To Miura Ayako and Murakami Haruki, it does not matter whether the “cakes” they make are considered real or genuine Sharpies. They have made all the “cakes” that they want to make, and in their own way, each poses a great challenge to the establishment (*bundan e no chōsen*). In Miura’s case, as Harada observes, her novels have a unique flavor and universal appeal that captivate readers of *taishū bungaku*, who prefer something plain and simple, as well as those of *junbungaku*, who prefer something more sophisticated. Miura’s novels might not be considered “pure” by the establishment, but they are good works of literature nonetheless in the eyes of readers all over the world.

Miura’s novels are not just entertaining; they are rich in intellectual content. Readers do not necessarily agree with Miura’s theological standpoint (in the case of non-Christian Japanese readers, they may not even be aware of it because of Miura’s emphasis on storytelling, as opposed to moralizing), but they find their understanding of important issues deepened by her works. During the latter half of her career, Miura produced some of her best novels in terms of artistic seriousness and social relevance. Her anti-war novels – *Aoi Tōge* (Blue Thorns, 1982), *Haha* (Mother, 1992) and *Jūkō* (Gunpoint, 1994) – are poignantly written with a serious intent that reminds readers of
the works of Ōe Kenzaburō, who was arguably the last standing defender of pure literature among post-war writers.

In an essay entitled “Bungei sakuhin no naiyō-teki kachi” (The Content Value of Literary Works), published in the July 1922 issue of Shinchō, Kikuchi Kan asks why he is occasionally moved by certain works that he thinks are poorly written by some unknown authors, whereas he is not moved by those skillfully written by established writers of the bundan.28 Kikuchi concludes that there exists in literary works value other than “artistic value” (geijutsu-teki kachi) – something that he calls “content value” (naiyō-teki kachi) which refers to the power of a work to move its readers (kandō saseru chikara).

As an example, Kikuchi cites the autobiographical novel Shisen o koete (Before the Dawn, 1920)29 by the Christian evangelist and social activist Kagawa Toyohiko (1888-1960). The story of a young Christian man who moves into the Shinkawa slums, east of Kobe, to help those afflicted by poverty, Shisen o koete is, in Kikuchi’s opinion, clumsily written; yet it evokes an emotional response of concern over social injustice not found in the artistically superior works of junbungaku.30 As Edward Mack rightly observes, Kikuchi “[attempts] to include social relevance among the criteria used to judge literary value.”31

Kikuchi elaborates further, saying that by “content value,” he means “moral value” (dōtoku-teki kachi), “intellectual value” (shisō-teki kachi) and “life value” (seikatsu-teki kachi). Kikuchi sees the value of painting, sculpture and the like as mostly aesthetic, whereas writers find themselves in a privileged position because literature touches upon many themes and issues encountered in real life and therefore has “life value” in addition to “aesthetic value.”32 Kikuchi asserts that artistic expression (geijutsu-teki hyōgen) alone is not sufficient to create a work of literary art – subject matter and theme are equally important. In Kikuchi’s view, there exists “life value” and “moral value” in all the themes, topics, thoughts and incidents that inspire artistic activities.33 Continuing on in his essay, Kikuchi writes: “In my opinion, an ideal work of literature is one that
has both content value and artistic value… Ibsen and Tolstoy are able to move the heart of a whole generation because one sees the power of thoughts (shisō no chikara) in their drama or novels.” In the end, Kikuchi concludes with the famous dictum: “Life first; art second” (seikatsu daiichi, geijutsu daini).34

A large part of what Kikuchi calls artistic expression stems from the feeling of the artist, how he sees and perceives things and the way in which he moves people’s hearts (geijutsuka ga ika ni kanji, ika ni mi, ika ni kokoro o ugokasu ka – sore wa geijutsu-teki hyōgen no daibubun de aru).35 Using Kikuchi’s literary criteria, we might argue that Miura produced works that are truly artistic: she was able to portray the emotional world of her characters like a poet, expressing how they feel (or must have felt in the case of historical characters) under various circumstances, perceiving things with sensitivity, viewing human relationships with insight and sharp precision, and writing stories that touch the reader’s heart. Like Kagawa Toyohiko whom Kikuchi mentions in his essay, Miura may be an “amateur” writer, but there is a special power in her language that moves her readers. Miura’s novels have both artistic value as well as moral, intellectual and life values – artistically valuable because they appeal to our sense of beauty; morally valuable because they elevate us spiritually and point toward the possibility of creating a better society and becoming a morally responsible person; intellectually valuable because they stimulate our thoughts and reveal truths about humanity and life in general. Most significantly, Miura’s novels shake her readers and awaken them to new discoveries about what it means to be human. Franz Kafka once wrote: “If the book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull, why then do we read it?... What we must have are those books which come upon us like ill-fortune, and distress us deeply, like the death of one we love better than ourselves…A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us.”36 In the same manner, Miura’s novels break open the frozen heart inside us like an ice-axe (it is no coincidence that
Miura entitled her debut novel *Hyōten*, referring to the “freezing point” of the human heart), forcing us to take an introspective look at ourselves, and as a nation at the harsh reality of Japan’s imperial past. Miura’s novels “wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull.” They also “distress us deeply,” because we are forced to come to terms with the egoistic nature and the inner ugliness of man – and herein lies the power of her novels.
Notes

INTRODUCTION


4. Ibid., p.237.


7. Ibid., pp.52-53.


**CHAPTER ONE**


6. Ibid., p.312.


9. Ibid., p.365.


16. Ibid., p.218.


18. Ibid., p.89.

19. Ozaki Hotsuki, for instance, called him taishū bungei no umi no oya (birth parent of mass literature) and cites his leadership role in forming the Nijūichinichi-kai, an association of
leading journalists and popular writers who took special interest in the promotion of mass literature. *Taishū bungaku*, p.29.


38. Ibid., p.244.

39. Seidensticker, p.175.


42. Seidensticker, p.176.


44. Seidensticker, pp.175-76.


47. Ibid., p.62.


49. Fowler, p.47.


51. Ibid., p.111.


58. Powell, p.29.


66. Going further back in time, *taishū bungaku* can also be traced back to the *otogi-zōshi* – popular literature, mostly short stories from the Medieval Period (1300-1600) for the explicit purpose of entertainment and moral edification.


68. Two stenographers, Wakabayashi Kanzō and Sakai Shōzō, transcribed Enchō’s famous ghost story and had it published in thirteen serialized faciles between July and December 1884. For an excellent discussion of the revolutionary impact of *sokkibon* on the development of

69. Inoue and Komori, eds., v.3, p.130.


87. Ibid., pp.154-55.


89. Ibid., p.496.


96. Ibid., p.71.

97. Ibid., p.74.


102. Ibid., p.137.


105. The selection committee met between June 14 and August 10, 1935. See Mack, p.281.


110. Strecher, p.360.


112. Strecher, p.359.


120. Seidensticker, p.183.

122. Ibid., pp.502-3.

123. Strecher, p.365.


125. Ibid., p.486.

126. Ibid., p.487.

127. Seaman, p.11.

128. Ibid., p.11. Also refer to Strecher, pp.368-74.

129. Seaman, p.11.

130. Strecher, p.369.


132. Ibid., p.363.

133. Ibid., p.366.

134. Ibid., p.362.

135. Ibid., p.363.

136. Ibid., p.363.

137. Ōe Kenzaburō, “Japan, the Ambiguous and Myself,” (December 7, 1994). Ōe’s Nobel Prize in Literature acceptance speech can be accessed online at the following address: http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1994/oe-lecture.html


142. Ibid., p.387.

143. Ibid., pp.385-86.

144. “An Interview with Kenzaburō Ōe,” p.139.

145. Ibid., p.140.

146. Ibid., p.137 and p.140.


150. Seidensticker, p.185.

151. Ibid., p.181.

152. Ibid., p.186.

153. Ibid., p.177.


155. Keene, Dawn to the West (Fiction), p.773.


160. Ibid., pp.558-59.
161. Ueda, Modern Japanese Writers and the Nature of Literature, p.73.

162. Ibid., p.81.


165. Joan Ericson cites Nakamura Mitsuo’s 1953 remark that writers such as Miyamoto Yuriko “are closer to men or [...] give the reader the feeling of outdoing men, rather than being women.” In Nakamura’s opinion, Miyamoto Yuriko had a certain degree of masculinity, which allowed her to separate herself from the weakness of her sex. Joan Ericson, “The Origins of the Concept of Women’s Literature” in Paul Gordon Schalow and Janet A. Walker, eds., The Woman’s Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women’s Writing (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p.96.

166. Ericson, pp.91-92.


169. Ibid., p.405.

170. Ibid., p.405.

171. Ericson, pp.92-93.


173. Ibid., pp.20-21.

174. Ibid., p.21.


178. Ibid., p.124.

179. Ibid., p.125.

180. Ibid., pp.128-29.

181. Ibid., pp.131-32.

182. Ibid., pp.132-34.

183. *Nyonin Geijutsu*, the most influential feminist journal since *Seitō* (1911), was started by Hasegawa Shigure, a well-known woman playwright of Kabuki. Explicitly run by women and written for women readers, the journal ran from July 1928 to June 1932, with a total of forty-eight issues. Published with the intention of unearthing and nurturing new women writers, *Nyonin geijutsu* helped launch the career of Hayashi Fumiko and Enchi Fumiko, and many other talented women writers. For a detailed discussion of the journal, see Joan Ericson, *Be a Woman: Hayashi Fumiko and Modern Japanese Women’s Literature* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), p.44.

184. *Fujin kōron* (Ladies’ review) was launched in 1916. From the outset, *Fujin kōron* projected itself as a “serious” journal for educated middle class-women – running numerous debates on various aspects of women’s rights. A typical issue of *Fujin kōron* contains dozens of short articles on a diverse array of subjects – current events, movie reviews, movie stars’ biographies and selections of serialized novels. In contrast, *Shufu no tomo* (Housewives’ friend), founded in 1917 with the expressed goal of helping the average housewife, was a purely popular magazine, with none of the intellectual pretenses of *Fujin kōron*. A typical issue includes practical advice for women about children’s education, beauty, fashion, cooking, medical treatment, etc. along with serialization of popular novels. Ericson, *Be a Woman: Hayashi Fumiko and Modern Japanese Women’s Literature*, p.45.


186. Igarashi, p.134.

187. Ōoka Shōhei, “Putatabi taishū bungaku ni tsuite” *Jōshikiteki bungakuron* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2010), pp.164-65. Kawakami Tetsutarō, Hirano Ken and Eto Jun were the three literary critics who participated in the round-table discussion titled “Bungei jihyō to iu mono” (What is called *bungei jihyō*), a full text of which was published in the July 1961 volume of *Gunzō*.


189. Kubota, p.38.

190. Ibid., p.38.
191. Ibid., p.38.

192. Ibid., p.39.

193. Ibid., p.172.

194. Takano, p.17.

195. Ibid., p.17.

196. Ibid., p.17.

197. Ibid., p.153.


200. Ibid., p.179.


204. Fowler, p.129.


206. Ibid., p.89.


CHAPTER TWO


31. Ibid., p.120.


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46. Michi ariki, p.136. The Wind is Howling, p.70.
47. Michi ariki, p.136. The Wind is Howling, p.70.
48. Michi ariki, p.142. The Wind is Howling, p.73.
49. Michi ariki, p.142. The Wind is Howling, p.73.
54. Michi ariki, p.216. The Wind is Howling, p.110. Italics are my own for emphasis.
57. Michi ariki, p.256. The Wind is Howling, p.131.
64. Michi ariki, p.277. The Wind is Howling, p.142.


73. Miura, *Kono tsuchi no utsuwa o mo*, pp.227-29.

74. Now called TV Asahi Corporation.

75. Mainichi Broadcasting System, based in Osaka.

76. Miura Ayako, “*Watashi no naka no tanka,*” in *Ai to shinō ni ikiru*, p.89.


81. Miura, “*Hyōten* kara *Haha* made,” in *Chiisa na ippo kara*, p.133.


85. King James version.

86. Miura Ayako, “*Kono goro omou koto,*” in *Nokosareta kotoba*, p.117.


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CHAPTER THREE

1. In the Gospel according to Mark, Jesus heals a paralyzed man in Capernaum, saying to him: “Son, your sins are forgiven.” (Mark 2:5). Biblical scholars often point to this statement as an indication that Jesus is the Son of God and therefore has the authority on earth to forgive all sins.


6. Hōritsu to iu mono wa ningen no tsukutta mono deshō. Ningen ga tsukutta mono de aru kagiri, kanzen to wa ienai.


8. Man’s failure and his inability to meet the high standard of God is the essence of what the Bible calls sin: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23). Since all men are sinful by nature, the fallen nature inherited from Adam and Eve, “there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins.” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). According to the Bible, the result of sin is death and eternal separation from God: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23).


   Translated by Hiromu Shimizu and John Terry in *Freezing Point*, p.40.

13. *Hyōten (v.1)*, p.56. Translation is mine unless otherwise stated.


15. *Hyōten (v.2)*, p.249.

16. *Hyōten (v.1)*, p.23


21. Translated by Shimizu and Terry in *Freezing Point*, p.10.


30. Ibid., pp.420-421.

31. Ibid., p.71.


33. Gabriel, p.28.

34. Translated by Shimizu and Terry in *Freezing Point*, p.416.


39. Translated by Shimizu and Terry in *Freezing Point*, pp.436-7. Italics are my own for emphasis.


41. Ibid., p.118.

42. Translated by Shimizu and Terry in *Freezing Point*, p.340.

43. Miura Ayako, *Michi ariki*, p.120. Translated by Griffiths in *The Wind is Howling*, p.108.


45. Translated by Shimizu and Terry in *Freezing Point*, p.376.


HITSUJIGAOKA


53. *Hitsuji gaoka*, p.35.


58. The original “love letter” in Ishizaka’s novel is actually a fake “love note” addressed to the heroine Terasawa Shinko out of mischief. It reads: “Oh my beloved Shinko. Miss you… I miss you!” (恋しい、恋しい。私の恋人新子様。) Miura Ayako might have been inspired by Ishizaka’s “youth novel” which also deals with romance in a high school setting. Intertextual reference to the fake “love letter” (changing the original wording to 淋しい、さびしい、サビシイ) implies that Ryōichi’s “love note” is equally full of falsehoods and deceit.


61. Mizutani Akio, in his commentary (*kaisetsu* 解説) on the novel, points out that, like *Hitsuji gaoka*, Hōraichō (蓬莱町) is an actual place name in Hakodate, Hokkaidō. According to Mizutani, it is located near Aoyagichō, where the renowned poet, Ishikawa Takuboku, stayed briefly from May to September 1907. (*Hitsuji gaoka*, p.103) The following poem, composed by Ishikawa Takuboku during his stay in Hakodate, resonates with the overall mood of sadness and solitude that pervades Miura’s novel:

函館の青柳町こそかなしけれ友の恋歌矢ぐるまの花

*How fondly I recall*  
*Aoyagichō in Hakodate*  
*Where I spent my days composing*  
*Love poems with my friends*
The cornflower in bloom  
(published in the November 1910 issue of Subaru)


64. *Hitsujigaoka*, p.21. *Pan pan* girls (*pan pan gaaru*) is a derogatory term referring to street prostitutes who mostly served soldiers of the allied forces stationed in Japan during the occupation of 1945-52. Created on August 28, 1945 by the Japanese Home Ministry and a civilian organization through joint capital investment, the Recreation and Amusement Association (RAA) recruited mostly Japanese women who would provide sexual services to American GIs, ostensibly to protect women from rape and to preserve the purity of the Japanese race. When “public” prostitution was terminated in January 1946, many of the women formerly employed by the RAA became street prostitutes. The image of such *pan pan* girls, wearing heavy make-up and high heels, and walking arms in arms with American GIs, has become a symbol of the US Occupation of Japan.


70. *Hitsujigaoka*, p.183.

71. *Ibid.*, p.188.


74. I am borrowing this phrase from Max Picard to refer to a person who “lives in this world of the momentary, one [who] has no time to live with one’s fellow man and really to know him.” According to Picard, the man of the instant “lacks an inner continuity wherein the meeting with a fellow man could be preserved…The life of an individual is easily pushed into the void, is easily annihilated because everything merely appears and is gone again.” See Picard, *Hitler in Our Selves*, p.49.
75. Picard, p.49.

76. Ibid., p.268.


78. Ibid., p.25.


80. Hitsujigaoka, p.325. Italics are my own emphasis.

81. Silence, p.190.

82. Hitsujigaoka, p.252 and pp.270-271. Italics are my own emphasis.

83. Ibid., p.325. Italics are my own emphasis.


85. Hitsujigaoka, p.326.

86. Ibid., p.323.

87. Ibid., p.333.


89. Ibid., p.341.


93. Ibid., p.339.


**SHIOKARI TÖGE**


105. In the year 1614, an edict banning Christianity was issued by Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616). As a result, churches were destroyed, foreign missionaries were expelled, and Japanese converts were tortured and killed. To avoid persecution, Japanese Christians went underground and continued to worship Christ as *Kakure Kirishitan* (Hidden Christians). Persecution of Christians intensified after the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-38) and continued for two and a half centuries. It was not until the year 1873 (four years before the fictional character Nagano Nobuo was born) that the Meiji government finally revoked the ban on Christianity, thereby putting an end to persecution of Christians.

106. Translated by Fearnehough in *Shiokari Pass*, p.39.


109. Miura Ayako, *Shiokari Tōge*, p.37. Translated by Fearnehough in *Shiokari Pass*, p.36. Italics are my own emphasis. It is interesting to compare Tose’s bigoted views with Fukuzawa Yukichi’s pragmatism. Whereas Tose complains that Yaso is a foreign god that would only destroy Japan, Fukuzawa argues that, in order to save Japan from foreign aggression, his country
needs to embrace, at least on the surface, Christianity – an “enlightened” religion that helped put Japan on equal footing with Western powers. Fukuzawa Yukichi, “Shūkyō mo mata seiyōfu ni shitagawaru o ezu,” (June 7, 1884) in Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū, v.9 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1960), pp.529-536.

110. Translated by Fearnehough in Shiokari Pass, pp.43-44.

111. Ibid., p.45.

112. Ibid., pp.56-57.

113. Ibid., p.56.

114. Ibid., p.62.

115. Ibid., p.127.

116. Ibid., p.147.

117. Ibid., p.142.

118. Ibid., p.89.

119. Ibid., p.107.

120. Ibid., pp.101-102. Italics are my own for emphasis.

121. Ibid., p.146.

122. Ibid., p.116.

123. Ibid., p.116.

124. Ibid., p.117.

125. Ibid., p.107.

126. Ibid., p.150.

127. Ibid., p.144.


129. Ibid., p.157.
130. Ibid., pp.158-159.

131. Ibid., p.159.

132. Ibid., p.160.

133. Ibid., p.168. Italics are my own emphasis.

134. Ibid., p.160.


139. Ibid., p.157.

140. Ibid., pp.160-161.

141. Ibid., p.162. Italics are my own for emphasis.

142. Ibid., p.162.

143. Ibid., pp.162-163.

144. Ibid., p.138.

145. Ibid., p.138.

146. Nakamura Kichizō (1877-1941) was best known as a playwright and researcher of theatrical art. As a novelist, Nakamura used the pen name Shun’u and published the novel Ichijiku (The Fig Tree) in 1902, which won him the top prize of Osaka Mainichi Shimbun’s literary award. In Miura’s novel, Nakamura is introduced as a Christian novelist who happens to be a close friend of Nobuo’s cousin, Takashi. His novel Ichijiku, which tells the story of a Christian minister who grapples with his own sin of infidelity, plays an important role in Nobuo’s spiritual awakening.

147. Translated by Fearnehough in Shiokari Pass, p.120.
148. Ibid., p.127.
149. Ibid., pp.120-121.
150. Ibid., p.121.
151. Ibid., p.123.
152. Ibid., p.122.
155. Translated by Fearnehough in Shiokari Pass, p.147.
156. Translated by Fearnehough in Shiokari Pass, p.197. Italics are my own for emphasis.
157. Ibid., p.199.
158. Ibid., p.196.
159. Ibid., p.203.
160. Ibid., p.217. Italics are my own for emphasis.
161. Ibid., pp.222-223.
162. Ibid., p.239.
163. Ibid., p.241.
164. Ibid., p.238.
165. Ibid., pp.250-251.
166. Translated by Fearnehough in Shiokari Pass, p.226.
167. Ibid., p.226.
168. Ibid., p.227.
169. Ibid., p.227.


**CHAPTER FOUR**

1. Both Hosokawa Garasha and Rikyū could easily have been included in *The Nobility of Failure* – Ivan Morris’s seminal study of tragic heroes in the history of Japan.


12. Emphasis is mine.


15. White, *The Content of the Form*, p.50.

16. Ōoka Shōhei, “Rekishi sono mama to rekishi-banare,” *Rekishi shōsetsu ron*, p.43. Ōoka’s essay was originally published in the July 1964 issue of the literary magazine *Bungakukai*.

17. Ōoka Shōhei, “Rekishi shōsetsu no mondai,” p.120.


22. A celebrated Italian poet, playwright, novelist and literary critic, Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873) was known as one of the most important exponents of historical drama at the time in Western Europe. Best remembered as the author of the great Italian historical novel, *I Promessi sposi* (Betrothed, 1827), Manzoni was also credited for the introduction of spoken Italian as a medium of literary expression. His literary criticism on the historical novel was explicitly quoted by Lukács.


25. Ōgai’s essay was published in January 1915, less than a month after the appearance of his historical novel Sanshō dayū (Sanshō the Bailiff). Mori Ōgai zenshū (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1960), vol. 7, p.105.

26. Ōoka’s essay, originally published in the January 1961 issue of the jinbungaku literary magazine, Gunzō, sparked the so-called “Aoki ōkami ronsō” (Aoki ōkami debate) with the historical novelist Inoue Yasushi. In the controversial essay, Ōoka indicted Inoue for what he considered to be an unacceptable distortion of historical record – The Secret History of the Mongols (Yuanchao mishi in Chinese; Genchō hishi in Japanese) – in Inoue’s historical novel Aoki ōkami (Pale Wolf, 1959), a fictional account of the life of Genghis Khan (1162-1227), the great conqueror and legendary founder of the Mongol Empire. While stressing the importance of fidelity to historical records, Ōoka fails to realize that The Secret History of the Mongols is not so much a factual historical account as it is a collection of folklore and epic poems that resembles historical fiction – a major point raised by Inoue in his rebuttal entitled “Jisaku Aoki ōkami ni tsuite” (On my novel Aoki ōkami, February 1961 issue of Gunzō). Inoue argued further that since writing historical fiction is not the same as writing history, he saw nothing wrong in departing from history. In Inoue’s view, there is no right way to write a historical novel – it is up to the author to decide how to go about doing that. See Ōoka Shōhei, Jōshikiteki bungakuron (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2010), pp.11-29 and pp.48-79.


30. Ibid., p.107.


33. Keene, Dawn to the West, p.559.

34. Ibid., p.560.


36. Akutagawa Ryūnosuke zenshū v.8, p.122.


41. In “The Art of Poetry (Ars Poetica),” Horace (65 BC-8 BC) describes the twin goals of poetry as being to *instruct* and *delight*: “The aim of the poet is to inform or delight, or to combine together, in what he says, both pleasure and applicability to life. In instructing, be brief in what you say in order that your readers may grasp it quickly and retain it faithfully. Superfluous words simply spell out when the mind is already full. Fiction invented in order to please should remain close to reality… He who combines the useful and the pleasing wins out by both instructing and delighting the reader.” See Horace, “The Art of Poetry (Ars Poetica),” in *Criticism: The Major Texts*, Walter Jackson Bate, ed. (New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1970), p.56.


**HOSOKAWA GARASHA FUJIN**

47. Lukac, p.42.


60. *Lady Gracia: A Samurai Wife’s Love, Strife and Faith*, p.239.


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In 1878, *Daijōkan* officials of the Meiji government translated Jean Crasset’s *Histoire de l’église du Japon* (Paris, 1689) into Japanese as *Nihon Seikyōshi* (The History of Christianity in Japan). Considered to be the earliest complete history of Christianity in Japan, Classet’s work offers a valuable look at the political world and evangelical activities by Christian missionaries during the Sengoku Period as seen through the eyes of Europeans.


87. Ibid., p.84.


91. Ibid., p.176.

92. Ibid., p.118.

93. Ibid., p.120.


96. Ibid., pp.179-80.


100. Ibid., p.201.

101. Ibid., p.201.


104. Ibid., p.255.

105. Ibid., p.252.


108. Ibid., p.286.

109. Ibid., p.287.


112. One of the most famous poems by Ariwara no Narihira (Kokinshū 747): Tsuki ya aranu / haru ya mukashi no / haru naranu / wa ga mi wa hitotsu / moto no mi ni shite. (“Is that not the moon? And is the spring not the spring of a year ago? This body of mine alone remains as it was before.”) English translation by Donald Keene in Seeds in the Heart (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), p.226.


114. Ibid., p.289.

115. Ibid., p.290.


118. Ibid., p.309.

119. Ibid., p.309.


121. Miura Mitsuyo, Miura Ayako sōsaku hiwa, p.95.


123. Ibid., p.326.

124. Ibid., p.330.

125. Ibid., p.330.


143. Fróis, *Nihon shi (Historia de Japan)* v.5, p.221.


149. Lukacs, The Historical Novel, p.42.


151. Lady Gracia: A Samurai Wife’s Love, Strife and Faith, p.342. In a letter dated 1587, Antonio Prenestino, a Christian missionary, wrote in his letter that Garasha gave birth to a child, but the boy (Okiaki) was so weak that he was on the verge of death. Garasha had him baptized and the boy fully recovered, giving great joy to Tadaoki. See Hermann Heuvers, Hosokawa Garasha fujin, p.138.

152. Heuvers, Hosokawa Garasha fujin, p.150.

153. The Imitation of Christ (De Imitatione Christi) is a handbook for spiritual life composed in Latin by Thomas à Kempis (c.1380-1471). It has become a religious classic and is considered by many to be the second most widely read Christian devotional book after the Bible. Contemptus Mundi (“Contempt of the World”) is the title of the Japanese translation of Kempis’ work. During Garasha’s time, there was no Japanese translation of the Bible. Garasha reportedly learned Latin and Portuguese on her own in order to read the Bible. In Miura’s novel, the narrator quotes Luís Fróis’ report which includes a laudatory remark by a Jesuit brother on Garasha’s intellectual gift: “I had never before met a woman in Japan who had such an ability to comprehend or had such a deep knowledge of religion as she.” A full text of Fróis’ report [dated 1588/2/20] can be read in Heuvers, Hosokawa Garasha fujin, pp.139-47.


155. Ibid., p.340.

156. Ibid., p.354. Italics are my own.

157. Ibid., p.354.


162. A full text of the document is included in Hosokawa Morisada, ed. Menkō shūroku v.2, pp.228-31.


166. Ibid., p.422.

167. Ibid., p.418.

168. Ibid., pp.421-22.


171. Ibid., p.434.

172. Ibid., p.426.

173. Ibid., p.431.

174. Ibid., p.437. Italics are my own.

175. Ibid., p.445.


179. Ibid., p.233.

180. The term san cong 三從 or “three obediences” first appeared in the Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial (Yi-li 儀禮), a classic Confucian text which, together with the Rites of Zhou (Zhou-li 周禮) and the Book of Rites (Li-ji 禮記), formed the three classical works in Chinese that deal


184. Ibid., p.430.

185. Ibid., p.430.

186. Ibid., p.435.


190. Ibid., p.143.


192. Ibid., p.321.

193. Ibid., p.320.

194. Ibid., p.320.

195. Ibid., p.322.

196. Ibid., p.322.

197. Ibid., p.323.

198. Ibid., p.323.

199. Ibid., p.324.
200. Ibid., p.326.

201. Ibid., p.327.

202. Ibid., p.328.

203. Ibid., p.329.


208. Ibid., p.420.

209. Ibid., p.421.

210. Ibid., pp.401-02.


215. Ibid., p.431.


218. The fact that Garasha refuses to renounce her faith despite her husband’s persecution indicates that her submission to Tadaoki is out of reverence for Christ, and not blind obedience.


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**SEN NO RIKYŪ TO SONO TSUMATACHI**


224. In another essay entitled “Sen no Rikyū o kakinagara” (As I wrote the novel *Sen no Rikyū*, 1980), Miura specifically mentions the padre’s handling of the ceremonial cloth and the way in which celebrants drank from the same cup as two examples of how closely the Holy Communion resembled the tea ceremony in terms of rites and etiquettes. Miura Ayako, *Watashi ni totte kaku to iu koto*, p.66.


227. *Yamanoue Sōji ki* (The Record of Yamanoue Sōji, 1588) is a canonical text of chanoyu indispensable for understanding the essence of the tea ceremony as practiced by Murata Jukō (1423-1502), Takeno Jōō (1502-1555) and Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591). Written by Rikyū’s top disciple, Yamanoue Sōji (1544-1590), and for the author’s own students as a book of secret transmission, *Yamanoue Sōji ki* is undoubtedly the most valuable and reliable resource on the aesthetic and historical development of chanoyu. *Yamanoue Sōji ki* begins with a brief account of the origin and history of the tea ceremony. The main text includes expert opinions on famed utensils, passed down as secret teachings from Jukō (whom Sōji exalted as the undisputed tea ancestor) to Jōō, Rikyū and finally Sōji himself. Particularly valuable is a manual of instructions in a section entitled “chanoyu-sha kakugo jittai,” which provides an explanation of the ten essential rules for tea practitioners as originally conceived by Jukō, followed by additional commentaries presumably added by either Jōō or Rikyū. Echoing Zeami’s statements in his secret treatise *Fūshikaden*, *Yamanoue Sōji ki* gives age-specific benchmarks for those who aspire to become a tea master and shows how deeply the art of Nō drama had influenced the art of chanoyu. *Yamanoue Sōji ki* includes interesting diagrams illustrating the layout of various types of tearooms, including the four-and-a-half-mat tearoom favored by Jōō and the one-and-a-half-mat tearoom favored by Rikyū. It offers valuable insight into the later years of Rikyū, presenting him as a mature artist, a true tea master (*meijin*) “freely transforming mountains into valleys, changing west to east, and breaking the rules of chanoyu.” For a detailed discussion of this classic text, read Kuwata Tadachika’s commentary in Sen Sōshitsu, ed., *Chadō koten zenshū*, vol.6 (Kyoto: Tankōsha, 1977), pp.117-29.


231. *Nampōroku* (Southern Record) was a purported book of secret teachings by the great tea master Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591), said to have been recorded by Nambō Sōkei, a priest of Nanshūji Temple in Sakai and a historically obscure “top disciple” of Rikyū. A collection of rules, anecdotes and random jottings, *Nampōroku* was a compendium of Rikyū’s thoughts and aesthetic tastes which included many passages of inquiries by the author, followed by Rikyū’s own replies. Tachibana Jitsuzan (1655-1708), a tea practitioner and the chief vassal of Kuroda Clan in Northern Kyushu, claimed to have “discovered” the secret text almost precisely one hundred years after Rikyū’s death. Jitsuzan’s “discovery” of *Nampōroku* sent a shock wave through the world of chanoyu and sparked a revival of interest in Rikyū and his art during the Genroku Period (1688-1704). Although *Nampōroku* had long been revered as a direct record of Rikyū’s teachings and was instrumental in the formulation of the concept of wabi-cha, its historicity is called into question in recent studies. Researchers now believe that *Nampōroku* was most likely a forgery by Jitsuzan, who was believed to have compiled the text by combining materials dating from the time of Rikyū that he collected in Hakata and Sakai with his own invention. As Paul H. Varley points out, the underlying theme of *Nampōroku* is the “spirituality” of Rikyū’s chanoyu, which derived from Buddhism, and particularly from Zen. For an in-depth study of *Nampōroku*, refer to Paul H. Varley, “Purity and Purification in the *Nampōroku,*” in *Chanoyu Quarterly* (Kyoto: Urasenke Foundation, 1986), pp.7-20.


236. Kumakura, *Sen no Rikyū: Wabi-cha no bi to kokoro*, p.49. See also *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, p.97.


244. Köshin Sōsa, Köshin gegaki, in Sen Sōshitsu, ed., Chadō koten zenshū, vol.3 (Tokyo: Tankōsha, 1977), p.71. An important text of the early Edo period, Köshin gegaki (The Summer Writings of Köshin Sōsa, 1662-63) was a memorandum that Sōsa kept for his son, Zuiryūsai Sōsa, based on what he had learned from his father, Sen no Sōtan (Rikyū’s grandson), about the life and art of Rikyū. It was written over a period of several months from 1662 to 1663 while he was residing in Edo. Unlike the equally important text Sen no Rikyū yuishogaki (The History of Sen no Rikyū, 1653), also authored by Sōsa, which focuses on the the life and biographical details of Rikyū, Köshin gegaki focuses more on the acts of chanoyu.

245. Kaku, Sen no Rikyū sono sei to shi, pp.92-93.


250. Ibid., p.94.

251. Wu-men kuan (Mumokan in Japanese) is a collection of 48 kōans or cases (stories, dialogues, statements or verses used in Zen practice to test a student’s spiritual understanding) compiled in the early thirteenth century by the Chinese Zen master Wu-men Hui-k’ai (1183-1260) of
the Lin-chi (Rinzai) School. Each case ends with a brief commentary and verse by Wu-men. Wu-men kuan had become a classic Zen text and a central work in the Rinzai School.


257. Ibid., p.232.

258. Ibid., p.228.

259. Ibid., p.233.

260. Ibid., p.231.

261. Ibid., p.233.

262. This is the name by which Rikyū was known for most of his life before he was given the Zen name Rikyū.


267. The purification rituals performed at the tea ceremony and the practice of drinking from the same bowl bear a close resemblance to the ceremonial rites of the Holy Communion, a description of which can be found in Article 201 of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal: “If communion is received directly from the chalice, the celebrant takes the chalice and says quietly: May the blood of Christ bring me to everlasting life. He drinks a little and hands the chalice to the deacon or a concelebrant. Then he gives communion to the faithful or returns to the chair. The concelebrants approach the altar one by one or in pairs if two chalices are
used. They drink the blood of Christ and return to their seats. The deacon or the concelebrant wipes the chalice with a purificator after each one communicates. Alternatively, the concelebrant stands at the middle of the altar and drinks the blood of Christ as usual, but the concelebrants remain at their places. In this case, they drink the chalice either offered them by the deacon or one of the concelebrants or handed from one to the other. The chalice should always be wiped, either by the one who drinks from it or by the one who is presenting it. After communicating, the concelebrants return to their seats.” Catholic Church, *The Roman Missal: Revised by decree of the Second Vatican Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI* (London: Collins, 1974), p.54.


269. *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, p.93.

270. The first biography of Sen no Rikyū authored by someone other than Rikyū’s descendants appeared in *Chadō shiso densho* (Biographies of the Four Tea Ancestors, 1652). Compiled by the Nara lacquerware craftsman Matsuya Hisashige (1566-1652) and based on an earlier text *Matsuya kaiki* (1534-1650), which had continued to be written over three generations since the time of Hisashige’s grandfather, *Chadō shiso densho* depicts the lives of four tea masters – Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591), Furuta Oribe (1544-1615), Hosokawa Tadaoki (1563-1646) and Kobori Enshū (1579-1647).


275. New King James version.


279. *Nampōroku*, p.16.

281. *Chōandō ki* (Record of Chōandō, 1640) was a collection of jottings by Kubo Gondoji Toshiyo (1571-1640), a Shinto priest of the Kasuga Shrine in Nara. It included interesting anecdotes featuring Yamanoue Sōji not seen in other texts.


286. *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, p.95.


289. *Sen no Rikyū yuishogaki* (The History of Sen no Rikyū, 1653) was one of the earliest biographies of Sen no Rikyū written by his descendants. It was authored by Kōshin Sōsa (1613-1671), great-grandson of Rikyū and the founder of the Omotosenke School, when he was taken into service by the Kii (Kishū) House of the Tokugawa clan. Written in 1653, *Sen no Rikyū yuishogaki* was Sōsa’s response to inquiries by retainers of the Tokugawa House regarding the circumstances leading up to Rikyū’s ritual suicide. Gregory P.A. Levine sees the *Yuishogaki* as an *ur*-text for latter narratives of Rikyū’s life. It provides explanation for Rikyū’s punishment and a detailed account of the scene of his execution and the aftermath of his death not found in contemporary resources. For a more detailed analysis of the *Yuishogaki*, refer to Gregory P.A. Levine, *Daitokuji: The Visual Cultures of a Zen Monastery* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), pp.116-17.


293. **Rikyū hyakkai ki** recorded close to one hundred tea gatherings (ninety-three, ninety-five or ninety-seven depending on the text) believed to have been hosted by Sen no Rikyū, from the first tea gathering with Yajima Kyūemon on 1590:8:17 to the last with Tokugawa Ieyasu on 1591: intercalary 1:24. The first tea gathering with Yajima was intriguing for two reasons: (1) Although dated 8:17, no year was given; (2) scholars have been wondering why this particular tea gathering with a relatively obscure figure was chosen to begin the record. Highlighting records of tea gatherings held during the intercalary first month of the year 1591, Shigemori Mirei calculated the dates backward and concluded that the correct date for the first tea gathering must have been 1590:8:17, and not 1587:8:17 as previously believed. In her novel, Miura draws on the *Rikyū hyakkai ki* and uses the accounts of various tea gatherings recorded therein to retrace the footsteps of Sen no Rikyū as a tea practitioner, and to re-enact his final days which culminated in the dramatic act of ritual suicide on 1591:2:28.


300. Italics are my own for emphasis.

301. **Nampōroku**, p.309.


303. The Zen expression *mu ichi motsu chū mu jin zō* alludes to a well known *gatha* by Su Shi (1037-1101), which ends with the stanzas: “Nothingness – an inexhaustible treasury with flowers, the moon and a tower.” 無一物中無盡藏 有花有月有樓台 Better known by his pseudonym, Su Dong-po, Su Shi was a celebrated Chinese Zen poet and calligrapher of the Song Dynasty (960-1279). In his Buddhist poem, Su Shi praises the white silk cloth (素絹 sù wán), which, despite its plainness, represents the pure essence of beauty and embodiment of all colors. Su Shi’s poem reads:
素紙不畫意高哉  The white silk cloth, without decoration, represents the highest form of beauty.

倘著丹青堕二來  If one were to add the dual colors of red and blue, it would destroy its pure essence.

無一物中無盡藏  Nothingness – an inexhaustible treasury

有花有月有樓臺  with flowers, the moon and a tower.


308. Ii Naosuke (1815-1860), an accomplished practitioner of the tea ceremony on top of being the tairō (“great elder”) of the Tokugawa Shogunate, coined the expression *ichigo ichie*, based on earlier writings by his predecessors, most notably the passage that I quote from *Yamanoue Sōji ki*. In his book of tea *Chanoyu ichieshū*, Ii Naosuke explains the meaning of *ichigo ichie* in these terms: “Tea gatherings are conducted with the mindset of *ichigo ichie* (one life, one meeting). Even if the host is to have several tea gatherings with the same guest, if he receives the guest with the mentality that the same tea gathering would never recur, each occasion would truly become a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Accordingly, the host would treat the guest with utmost sincerity, exercising thoughtfulness in all things to make sure that there is not the slightest bit of carelessness. Knowing full well that it is impossible to reproduce the same event, the guest, too, appreciates the effort of his host, and is impressed by every single detail placed into the unique design of each gathering. Relating to each other with genuine sincerity – this is the meaning of *ichigo ichie*.” Ii Naosuke, *Chanoyu ichieshū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2010), p.9.

309. *Yamanoue Sōji ki*, p.93.


314. *Chadō yōroku* (A Digest of Tea Ceremony, 1691) was authored by Yamada Sōhen (1627-1708), one of the top four disciples who studied under Rikyū’s grandson Sen no Sōtan (1578-1658)
and founder of the Sōhen School of Tea in Edo. It was dated 1691, the year after the publication of Sōhen’s earlier work Chadō bennōshō (An Initiatory Text of Tea Ceremony, 1690), which coincided with the hundredth anniversary of Rikyū’s death. According to Eric C. Rath, Sōhen presented his Chadō yōroku as on oral transmission from Rikyū. Eric C. Rath, The Ethos of Noh: Actors and Their Art (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p.169.

315. Fukui, p.15.


318. Hammitzsch, Zen in the Art of the Tea Ceremony, p.69.

319. Ibid., p.66.


321. Ibid., p.465.

322. Sen Sōshitsu, p.72.

323. Hammitzsch, p.69.

324. Yamanoue Sōji ki, pp.93-94.


326. Hammitzsch, p.70.


328. Hammitzsch, pp.70-71.


2. Yasukuni Shrine, located in the capital city of Tokyo, is a Shintō Shrine dedicated to the souls of more than two million war dead who served and died for the Japanese emperor in various wars between 1867 and 1951. Among those who were enshrined, 1,068 were convicted of war crimes. On October 17, 1978, fourteen Class A war criminals, including Tōjō Hideki (1884-1948), were enshrined as “martyrs of Shōwa.” Details of the enshrinement was made public in 1979, but it was the visit by Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro (1918-) to the Yasukuni Shrine on August 15, 1985 that sparked fierce criticism from the People’s Republic of China. Subsequent visits to the Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese Prime Ministers – most notably Koizumi Jun’ichirō (1942-) and Abe Shinzō (1954-) – and Diet Cabinet members have been a cause of protest in Japan and neighboring countries (China, North Korea, South Korea and Taiwan) since 1985.

3. The most recent visit by a sitting Japanese Prime Minister to the Yasukuni Shrine was by Abe Shinzō on December 26, 2013, the first anniversary of his second term as Prime Minister. In an official statement, Abe commented on his visit: “Today, I paid a visit to Yasukuni Shrine and expressed my sincere condolences, paid my respects and prayed for the souls of all those who had fought for the country and made ultimate sacrifices... Japan must never wage a war again. This is my conviction based on the severe remorse for the past. I have renewed my determination before the souls of the war dead to firmly uphold the pledge never to wage a war again...Regrettably, it is a reality that the visit to Yasukuni Shrine has become a political and diplomatic issue. Some people criticize the visit to Yasukuni as paying homage to war criminals, but the purpose of my visit today, on the anniversary of my administration’s taking office, is to report before the souls of the war dead how my administration has worked for one year and to renew the pledge that Japan must never wage a war again.” For a full text of the Prime Minister’s speech, published by the Cabinet Secretariat, refer to: http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201312/1202986_7801.html.

4. *Kike wadatsumi no koe* is a collection of letters, diaries and poems written by Japanese student soldiers during the Second World War. It was compiled by Nihon Senbotsu Gakusei Kinen-kai (Japan Memorial Society for the Students Killed in the War) and first published in 1949 for the stated goal of the promotion of peace so as to never repeat the tragedy of war. Many of these soldiers were young students attending elite universities. The book divides posthumous manuscripts of the fallen soldiers into three parts: (1) During the War Between Japan and China, (2) The Period of the Asian-Pacific War, and (3) Losing the War. The earliest entry was dated 1938 and the latest 1947. See Nihon Senbotsu Gakusei Kinen-Kai ed., *Kike Wadatsumi no koe* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten,1982). For an excellent English translation of the work, refer to *Listen to the Voices from the Sea: Writings of the Fallen Japanese Students*, trans. Midori Yamanouchi and Joseph L. Quinn (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2000).
5. These are the editors’ words in the postscript to the first (1949) edition of Kike Wadatsumi no koe. English translation in Listen to the Voices from the Sea, p.310.


7. Ibid., p.321.


10. A survey of the bibliography section of Haha reveals that Miura had apparently consulted at least twenty books on the life and works of Kobayashi Takiji while working on the novel. As we have seen in Hosokawa Garasha fujin (1975) and Sen no Rikyū to sono tsunatachi (1980), Miura had always insisted on the factual accuracy of her biographical research and at the age of seventy, she still displayed an amazing zest and quality of research no less vigorous than that demonstrated in her early works of historical fiction.


18. Ibid., p.19.

19. Ibid., p.20.


23. Ibid., p.205.

24. Ibid., p.206.

25. Ibid., p.208.

26. Ibid., p.208.

27. Ibid., Introduction, p.x.


32. Kikuchi, p.51.

33. Ibid., p.65.

34. Ibid., p.52.

35. Ibid., p.64.

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