

**THE DYNAMICS OF A DUO:
PERCEPTIONS AND REFLECTIONS OF GENDER, NATIONALITY, AND IDENTITY
IN YAMAMURA MISA**

by

Alexandra Richardson

B.A. in East Asian Studies, Denison University, 2012

B.A. in English Literature, Denison University, 2012

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This thesis was presented

by

Alexandra Richardson

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and approved by

Dr. William Crawford, PhD

Dr. Hiroshi Nara, PhD

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Charles Exley, PhD

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Writing throughout the 1970s and 80s, Japanese detective author Yamamura Misa represents an important transitional moment in the renaissance of female detective writers. Her works anticipate progressive ideas of gender and the critical power of detective fiction found in later authors such as Miyabe Miyuki and Kirino Natsuo. Yamamura uses an American protagonist in her *Katherine* series to examine how the rhetoric of *nihonjinron* is consciously applied and unconsciously absorbed both within literature and by those who consume it. By examining how characters use social norms to manipulate one another, Yamamura encourages the reader to consider how nationalistic and sexist ideologies operate unseen in Japanese society, and she offers particular insight into shifting Japanese social norms during an era of increasing globalization and cultural influence. I discuss how Yamamura's depictions of an American girl in Japan encourage readers to justify and perhaps modify their own perceptions of gender and nationality on both sides of the Pacific, and demonstrate that Yamamura represents a generation of female detective authors that have the potential to expand our understanding of the development of Japanese detective fiction as a whole.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 THE EVOLUTION OF PREWAR DETECTIVE FICTION AND WOMEN WRITERS ..	3
1.2 RETURNING THE QUEEN TO HER THRONE.....	8
2.0 CONCIOUS ENGAGEMENT	13
2.1 BEING FOOLED TO FOOL OTHERS	13
2.2 DECEPTION GETS PERSONAL.....	16
2.3 MANIPULATING INTIMACY.....	20
2.4 THE THRESHOLD OF INTENTION	23
3.0 UNCONCIOUS ENACTMENT	26
3.1 PERSPECTIVE AND ISOLATION	26
3.2 PROVIDING TOOLS FOR META ANALYSIS.....	32
4.0 CONCLUSION	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY	42

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nearly twenty years before Japan's "boom" of female mystery writers in the 1990s, Yamamura Misa (山村美紗, 1934-96) began work on a mystery series that would set the stage for the future of detective fiction. The *Katherine* series, marked by the 1975 debut of *Hana no hitsugi* (花の棺 *Flower Coffin*), cemented Yamamura's position at the forefront of Japan's detective fiction writers for the next two decades. Her detective fiction sought to critique the perception and function of gender and nationality in 1970s and 80s Japan, primarily by encouraging readers to apply a critical eye to how social definitions – particularly those drawn from the conservative traditionalism of *nihonjinron* rhetoric which promoted Japanese ethnic essentialism – are consciously and unconsciously enacted and reproduced. The *Katherine* series presents readers with the breakdown of protagonists and their relationships, and forces the reader to examine how the dichotomies created by *nihonjinron* have real-world consequences for Japan and its citizens. The *Katherine* series is less concerned with the rehabilitation of its characters as it is its readers; Yamamura uses an American heroine to interrogate Japanese social norms surrounding gender and nationality by challenging readers to analyze their own behavior, and effectively provides a blueprint of social critique and self-reflection which later Japanese female authors would utilize within their own works. Yet despite all this, Yamamura is all but entirely absent from any English- or even Japanese-language scholarship on mystery fiction. Scholarship is often behind the curve in understanding what drives the success behind popular authors and their works; while contemporary Japanese detective fiction has enjoyed a period of dramatically

increased visibility and dissemination in recent years, English-language scholarship on the subject has particularly rushed to analyze how female authors helped to revolutionize and sustain the mystery genre. Miyabe Miyuki (1960-) is often cited as catalyzing a postwar renaissance of female detective novelists in the 1990s, later to be followed by others well-known figures like Nonami Asa (1960-) and Kirino Natsuo (1951-). Literary scholars, such as Amanda Seaman in her book *Bodies of Evidence: Women, Society, and Detective Fiction in 1990s Japan*, describe these authors as “a new breed of young female detective writers, whose works combine not only the... traditions of detective fiction, but also other literary genres as part of a new sensibility about, and a new sensitivity to, women’s roles within contemporary Japanese society” (12). However, such praise demonstrates a widespread and problematic erasure of the female predecessors like Yamamura who were integral to producing the popular women mystery authors of today.

In this paper, I will examine three of the *Katherine* novels, which were selected to cover the range of Yamamura’s expansive career: *Kieta sōzokunin* (消えた相続人 *The Disappeared Heir*, 1982), *Kyōto sadō iemoto satsujin jiken* (京都茶道家元殺人事件 *Murder of the Kyoto Tea Ceremony Master*, 1987), and *Kōbe satsujin rekuiemu* (神戸殺人レクイエム *Requiem of a Kobe Murder*, 1995). While *Kieta* represents one of the earliest *Katherine* novels, and *Kōbe* was the very last, *Kyōto* was selected in 1983 to receive a prestigious literary award, the Nihon Bungei Taishō (Japan Literary Award), and remains one of Yamamura’s most well-known works (“Nihon bungei taishō”). Through the broad sampling which these three *Katherine* novels provide, I will demonstrate that Yamamura’s complex yet subtle examination of the cyclical behaviors that define gender and nationality represents a transitional moment in the development of contemporary women’s detective fiction in Japan.

1.1 THE EVOLUTION OF PREWAR DETECTIVE FICTION AND WOMEN WRITERS

It would be hypocritical and inaccurate to suggest that Yamamura's approach to social commentary was not influenced by Japan's long and varied relationship with detective fiction. Thus, it is worth examining the historical context of detective fiction in Japan to better appreciate how Yamamura and the *Katherine* series advanced the genre's ability to deconstruct sociopolitical developments in the postwar era. In this section, I shall briefly examine how Japanese mystery fiction became a vehicle for social commentary, particularly regarding nationality and gender, so that we may see how these same elements are further modified within Yamamura's works and catalyzed the reemergence of mainstream female detective authors.

From its earliest beginnings, detective fiction has been used in Japan to negotiate social anxiety towards Western influence and its effects on Japanese national identity. The development of the Japanese detective novel was deeply influenced by Western authors such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), Agatha Christie (1890-1976), and Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49) – whose work inspired the pen name of Japan's most famous detective writer, Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965). Detective fiction made its debut in Japanese newspapers seeking to lure readers by feeding their hunger for Western culture. In their essay "Japan and the Internationalization of the Serial Fiction Market," literary historians Graham Law and Norimasa Morita credit the popularity of newspaper novels (*shinbun shōsetsu*) with both introducing and sustaining "mass-market genres such as tales of mystery, romance, and modern urban life" (110). As publishers came to recognize the value of the mystery market, Japanese writers were able and willing to adopt the methods of Western detective authors within their own original works in an effort to satiate readers' hunger for the unfamiliar scenes and styles of foreign fiction (Law 119).

Of the authors writing during this period, Edogawa Ranpo emerged as one of the most influential for “his unique ability to combine the suspense story of the Edo period with the scientific methods and logical devices of the Western detective story... blending [the] old and new, Japan and the West” (Seaman 4). Ranpo is often portrayed as the face of the *honkaku-ha* variety of Japanese detective fiction, defined by Seaman as “standard detective fiction... [in which] problems come to light [and] can be resolved only within the parameters of the preexisting social structure... [and] the restoration of law and order” (8). The themes of Ranpo’s novels advocated for a return to traditionalism as the panacea for Japan’s social and economic upheaval.

Ranpo’s conservative undertone was a perfect match for a readership that was struggling with a deep uncertainty about Japan’s future; J. Scott Miller notes in his anthology *Historical Dictionary of Modern Japanese Literature and Theater* that detective novels were in particularly high demand during the prewar period of the 1920s, as Japan struggled with the effects of a global economic depression (49). Laura Hein’s essay “The Cultural Career of the Japanese Economy: Development and Cultural Nationalism in Historical Perspective” explains that 1920s Japan “was still characterized by extreme income inequality [and that] most Japanese regarded economic performance as definitive of national identity to an unusual degree, treating the economy as a cultural marker and assuming that culture functioned as an economic engine” (449). There existed a fear among the highest levels of prewar Japanese society that, in attempting to adopt and modify Western institutions to replace longstanding Japanese traditions, they were “creating a deformed hybrid” and sacrificing the very soul of Japanese culture in the process (451). As a genre which, at its core, challenges how we define and then enact right and wrong, it is not surprising that detective fiction would gain traction with readers debating similar questions in the political sphere. Japanese authors such as Ranpo sought to more completely

transform the detective genre while contending with pressures to shed the Western influences believed to be poisoning the country's economy and moral consciousness, and his enduring fame is a testament to his success (49). The Edogawa Prize for Mystery Fiction was established in his name in 1955, and it remains the genre's most prestigious award in Japan (Seaman 6). However, Ranpo was not the only defining influence on early detective fiction, and his conservatism stimulated both male and female authors to adapt detective fiction as a tool for progressive social critique.

The role of detective fiction in exploring sociopolitical discourse during this prewar period created an unexpected but extremely valuable opportunity for women to participate in Japan's national dialogue. Female readers were "some of the most avid, faithful, and frequent readers of the [detective] genre from its first crest of popularity," as noted by scholar Sari Kawana in her essay "The Price of Pulp: Women, Detective Fiction, and the Profession of Writing in Inter-war Japan" (209). Women's influential status as a major consumer base drove publishers to prioritize detective fiction as a genre that "dominated the popular print culture of Japan – especially during the 1920s and 1930s" (207). Perhaps more out of necessity than preference, the publishing industry was nevertheless unique in its willingness to overlook social convention for the sake of satisfying customer demand. Kawana argues that industry editors were willing to diversify their staff with female contributors if it meant profiting from their female readership, and that ultimately "detective fiction was not inherently a 'male' genre from which women were barred but more a neutral space in which craft and creativity were the most valuable currency" (213). This transition from the role of reader to writer, especially in a genre known for its "lack of morality," gave female authors a space in which to explore their own political views while laying a foundation for female readers to question the "overt preachiness and moral

overtones of other genres read by women” (209). Women’s participation in the demand for and production of detective fiction created a subversive precedent which – while temporarily suppressed following the start of the Pacific War in the 1930s – would come to be renewed by Yamamura and her contemporaries in the postwar era.

The magnitude of this contribution leads to the question of why these early female detective authors have been excluded from historical overviews of Japanese literature, resulting in the entrenched assumption that the detective genre was one dominated entirely by men. And why did female authors all but disappear from the genre for so many decades after? Kawana suggests that, since publishers’ desire to benefit from the sales accrued by female authors did not abate, “the reason for this unexpected result must lie elsewhere in the cultural context of the period: namely, the social conditions for literary production” (216). She particularly emphasizes that detective authors of all genders were often at the mercy of their ability to “maintain constant innovation and ingenuity in crafting clever tricks and shocking plots, all under the harrowing demands of strict deadlines and shifting finances” (221). However, female authors’ careers were especially vulnerable. Marriage could serve as a source of financial stability, but it came with its own demands of women’s time and attention (221). There was also a noticeable lack of support systems for female writers within literary circles. Kawana notes that whereas male authors often collaborated with one another, there seemed to be a trend of exclusion amongst female contributors who feared “being replaced by other women writers following in her footsteps” (223). Consequently, the obstacles faced by detective authors were often compounded in the case of women writers to an extent that they were disproportionately driven to leave the profession. Although publishing offered Japanese women detective writers a comparatively progressive venue which fostered their creative and financial independence, the country’s

increasing attention to reinforcing norms related to gender and marriage ultimately rendered it unsustainable as a long-term trend for the majority of women for decades to come.

However, while the (admittedly brief) inclusion of female writers in the prewar era was an important development for detective fiction, it was not until the emergence of Matsumoto Seichō (1909-92) that the detective genre had the flexibility and opportunity to truly diversify. Writing primarily in the 1950s and 60s, Seaman asserts that Matsumoto's postwar novels "led to the development of an entirely new subgenre [of detective fiction], called '*shakai-ha*' (the social school) ... characterized by entertaining puzzles and plot twists, [and] extensive attention to the characters' psychological motives and to social problems" (Seaman 9). While Ranpo tended to espouse traditionalism, and prewar female detective writers were limited by the political atmosphere of the era in their efforts to expand beyond "standard, puzzle-oriented detective fiction [or works that] often featured romantic themes or domestic entanglements," Matsumoto implemented detective fiction as a way to highlight the problems which Japanese society created for its members (Seaman 5). He provided readers with the opportunity to observe their own daily lives with the critical eye of the detective, and "brought social change and injustice into focus as intrinsic elements of the plot, causes for crime rather than simply its context" (Seaman 6-7, 9). However, while Matsumoto was a stunning success as a more political and analytical detective author, we must also consider how the conservatism of the prewar era was gradually losing its grip as Japanese men and women began to once again reconsider the social boundaries which defined their lives. In the next section, I shall discuss how Japan's increasingly flexible views on gender combined with the precedents set by Matsumoto in detective fiction to set the stage for women to return to mystery fiction.

1.2 RETURNING THE QUEEN TO HER THRONE

It is at this point in time, namely the space in between Matsumoto in the 60s and the arrival of Miyabe Miyuki in the 90s, that Yamamura's absence in scholarship is most glaringly obvious. Although Yamamura has not maintained the same level of visibility in Japan's popular culture which she once enjoyed, her career is extremely significant in that she helped to revitalize the presence of female mystery authors in the postwar era. After publishing her first story, *Keijō no shi* (京城の死 The Death of Keijō) in 1970, Yamamura received her first nomination for the Edogawa Ranpo Prize and subsequently became a commercial and critical success. She published more than 150 novels over the course of her 27-year career and accumulated an estate of 746 million yen (about \$6,672,000 today), a large portion of which consisted of copyrights for her works ("Kazei"). Yamamura was also known in selective literary circles; she was nominated a total of four times for the Edogawa Ranpo Prize, and her mystery novels were cited by the city of Kyoto when it awarded her a Lifetime Achievement Award ("Mystery Writers of Japan Awards"). By the time of her death in 1996, she was lauded by readers as the "Queen of Mystery," and her fame has endured through both her written works and television adaptations produced as recently as 2016 ("Yamamura Misa-san"). In 1999, she was featured alongside literary giants like Matsumoto Seichō and Nishimura Kyōtarō (1930-) as one of the top 20 mystery authors by the Japanese literary magazine *Eureka* (Kozukata 202).

Yet despite the extent of her success, Yamamura has largely been ignored by academics. In her examination of female authors in Japanese mystery fiction, Seaman acknowledges that "the 1970s and 1980s were dominated by two female mystery writers, Natsuki Shizuko and Yamamura Misa," but then proceeds to completely dismiss two decades of mystery fiction as a

“period of ferment” which was not alleviated until the 1990s (12). Seaman’s analysis of Yamamura is cursory and disdainful, concluding that her works often revolved around interchangeable heroines in search of love, and “relied on clever plot twists and colorful locales to distinguish [her] books, a style that quickly became threadbare through overuse and overexposure” (12). It is not surprising that a genre writer publishing multiple books per year would be accused of employing hackneyed characters and tropes, and certainly familiar mystery themes of kidnapping, theft, and murder are often reused. However, the (non)treatment of Yamamura is not limited to Seaman, and indicates a failure by literary scholars to consider how Yamamura’s unique approach to unpacking the intricacies of gender and nationality at a moment in history that was critical for the reemergence of female mystery writers. Unlike prewar female detective writers, who were often forced to decide whether they “could earn more money by writing in a female voice (and limiting her audience to female readers) or by sticking to conventional (and commercially reliable) gender-neutral narrative style to make quick money,” the fear of being typecast as “women’s fiction” was largely reduced for amateur writers in the 1970s and 80s (Kawana 214-16). The economic fervor of the 1980s was present in all sectors of Japan’s economy, and the expansion of the print industry created new spaces for women to add their voices and benefit from the country’s economic boom. As a result, “female authors had more opportunities to publish their work due to the simple fact that men were fully occupied with the demands of the red-hot economy” (Seaman 13). Seaman argues that, at a time when more women than ever had careers of their own, there was an “increasing interest in a genre that... has much to say about the effects of work upon women and their relationships” (13). Seaman also notes that “the emphasis on... identity and community, reflect[ed] the particular nature of women’s lives in Japan,” and indicated a return to a role which the genre had filled nearly sixty

years earlier (13). It was in this complex and politicized environment that Yamamura published the *Katherine* series.

It is unfortunate that Yamamura's *Katherine* series has been neglected for so long, because it is ideally situated for understanding how social anxieties about nationality and gender functioned in Japanese society during the 1970s and 80s. The series was extremely popular after its debut in 1975, and Yamamura wrote another 36 novels before concluding in 1995 with *Kōbe satsujin rekuiemu* (神戸殺人レクイエム *Requiem of a Kobe Murder*). Set primarily in Kyoto during the 1970s and 80s, the *Katherine* series demonstrates many of the qualities which Seaman identifies as "a point of departure" for 90s female detective authors; namely the presence of a female detective, the complication of the male gaze, and the relativity of truth as a stable concept (23, 24, 25). Yamamura's plucky heroine, Katherine Turner, is a young, wealthy American woman living in Japan through the benevolence of her father, a former American Vice President. She is blonde, attractive, fluent in Japanese when it suits her, and dating a Japanese man, local Kyoto professor Hamaguchi Ichirō. As a detective, she is stereotypical in that her high society background and connections grant her access to rarified people and locations which are otherwise hidden from the general public. J. Madison Davis argues in his essay "So Who Has Time to Read? Social Class and Crime Writing, Part 1" that such a background is often a prerequisite of detective characters: "the amateur detective who solves the perplexing case is almost invariably a person of the upper middle class, well-educated and well read, with all the manners to go with that position in society," all of which provide the detective with the credentials necessary for accessing the tiers of society which are most exotic to a middle-class readership (10). However, the dynamic between Katherine and Hamaguchi is what sustains the series, fascinating in its complexity as they attempt to navigate the numerous ways in which they

must learn to relate to one another: man to woman, American to Japanese, and colleague to colleague, to mention just the most obvious examples. Each of them brings various strengths and weaknesses to their investigations, and the ways in which they negotiate the challenges of crossing sociocultural divides carries the reader's interest beyond a single case. Although Katherine perceives herself as an American looking in on Japanese society, Yamamura uses her to explore how underlying stereotypes about gender and nationality enact invisible but dire consequences. While a casual reader may be tempted to dismiss the *Katherine* novels as the fun and romantic adventures of Katherine and Hamaguchi working together to solve a case, Yamamura uses the exploratory nature of the detective narrative to question what ideologies facilitate or hinder their investigation, and their relationship.

The couple struggle with specters of nationality and gender that can be linked to *nihonjinron*, a popular social theory that was particularly prominent in the postwar era, and which can still be identified in current Japanese academic and social discourse. In her essay "Rethinking Culture, National Culture, and Japanese Culture," Eika Tai suggests that during the 1960s and 70s, Japanese people "developed an awareness of those [identifying cultural] traits they had already acquired and became conscious of national identity" (14). The assumption that nationality can define an individual's personality and abilities often frustrates Katherine and Hamaguchi's well-meaning efforts to understand one another, and instead leads them to extrapolate based on simplistic stereotypes. *Nihonjinron* does not only speak to ideas about the Japanese; it often juxtaposes itself against Western influences, America in particular, while assuming that all Japanese share a "homogenous culture" that places particular emphasis on the idea that Japanese culture can only be understood by the Japanese (13). Hamaguchi's behavior often suggests that he has internalized the ideals of *nihonjinron*, as he often rationalizes his and

Katherine's behavior according to the dichotomy of being Japanese versus being American. His attempts to dissolve the barrier are generally limited to suggesting that Katherine do her best to act more Japanese. Tai states that *nihonjinron* primarily "helps to perpetuate [the] cultural dominance [of elite men] over other Japanese," and we see these attempts at dominance in Hamaguchi's admonitions to Katherine. Katherine ironically resists social pressures to sacrifice her autonomy by leaning into oversimplified perceptions of Americans as stubborn when it progresses a case, and she uses her femininity to manipulate the men who would seek to control her. Her behavior often gets results in the short-term, but readers become increasingly aware of the invisible consequences for both Katherine and those around her as she inadvertently reinforces the very ideas which she would wish to dismantle. The *Katherine* series is an episodic attempt to examine Japan from both an outsider and insider perspective, by comparing how characters *consciously* challenge the assumptions and stereotypes that surround nationality and gender, with the ways that these same characters *unconsciously* reproduce them to their own detriment. Tai asserts that *nihonjinron* rose to prominence over the course of the 1960s through popular culture; considering this, it makes sense that Yamamura would be able to utilize a similar method to undermine it instead (16). In the following chapters, I will demonstrate how the *Katherine* novels serve to critique the ideas of gender and nationality which predominated Japanese society in the 70s and 80s, and how Yamamura fits into the trends of deconstructive social commentary which later female detective writers would expand upon.

2.0 CONCIOUS ENGAGEMENT

2.1 BEING FOOLED TO FOOL OTHERS

Katherine Turner is the eponymous heroine of the *Katherine* series, and she is an unusual but effective choice for evaluating how nationality and gender function in Japan. She is a young American woman who studied criminal psychology and Japanese at Columbia University, where she met her boyfriend and detective partner Hamaguchi Ichirō. She often travels to Japan to visit with Hamaguchi while pursuing a career as a fashion photographer, and her education and experiences have provided Katherine with a firm grasp on the niceties of Japanese culture, etiquette, and language. These skills are extremely useful in Katherine's hobby of working as an amateur detective, a role which requires a hyperawareness of how Japanese and American cultural norms shape people's perceptions of her, and the ways in which she manipulates them (both professionally and privately) make for an interesting case study.

Katherine's ethnicity places her in a tenuous position; as an attractive, blonde-haired, blue-eyed American woman, there is no question of Katherine being able to "pass" in Japanese society, and her obvious foreignness comes with several disadvantages in her detective work. Her appearance is memorable and draws unwanted attention, while her ability to speak fluent Japanese is often such a shock that it derails the topic of conversation to the extent that people forget to take her seriously. In one of the earliest *Katherine* novels, *Kieta sōzokunin (The Disappeared Heir)*, Katherine learns that one of Hamaguchi's university students, Tanaka

Yoshiko, has been kidnapped and is still missing despite her wealthy family paying the ransom. Katherine volunteers to help the police lure out the kidnappers by using her status as a former Vice President's daughter to host a fake press conference and announce that Yoshiko has received a two-million dollar inheritance from an American actress (*Kieta* 22). In response to this dramatic and exciting news, the very first question she is asked by the assembled media reporters is: "Miss Katherine, you are very skilled with the difficult Japanese language; where did you learn?" (*Kieta* 20). This reaction is not an atypical one, and helps us to frame how Katherine's desire to participate in Japanese society is hindered by entrenched ideas of *nihonjinron*. The belief that Katherine's ability to speak Japanese is shocking and newsworthy stems the assumption that Japanese is itself something that can only be truly mastered by those who are ethnically Japanese. This type of "implicit genetic determinism" creates boundaries that are intended to restrict what aspects of Japanese society are accessible to outsiders like Katherine (Tai 13). However, rather openly challenging the assumptions that people have about foreigners (such as their biological inability to speak Japanese), Katherine instead uses them to lure those around into a false sense of security.

Katherine's use of language is one of her most effective tools in this endeavor; the assumption that Katherine either cannot speak Japanese at all, or at the very least has difficulty doing so, ensures that she is nearly always underestimated. Katherine capitalizes on these expectations to collect insider information, and situations in which being an American or an English-speaker might have been a hindrance are instead utilized far more effectively than if she had been Japanese. When infiltrating a hospital to talk with a suspect during another case, Katherine pretends to be unable to speak Japanese, and the ward nurse decides allow Katherine inside rather than attempt to confirm her identity using Katherine's faux-garbled Japanese (*Kyōto*

98). Katherine then befriends the hospital patient, and the two of them conspire to trick another suspect into arrogantly discussing the details of a crime in Japanese, while Katherine remains in the room and pretends not to understand (*Kyōto* 99). These moments often happen early in the novels when Katherine is collecting information and getting the shape of the mystery, and her repeated and casual use of feigned incompetence demonstrates that she has come to rely on this technique – and thus her foreignness – as essential to her work. Rather than allowing herself to be disempowered by people’s low expectations of her, Katherine instead utilizes them to help further her detective work.

Katherine’s application of language is not merely reactionary; while her strategic use of Japanese garners her an unusual amount of leeway with breaking rules, she also utilizes perceptions of her ignorance to actively subvert those people who attempt to control her. This is most apparent in the detective work she does on the behalf of the police. Following the press conference in *Kieta*, Katherine puts extra pressure on the kidnappers by appearing on a local talk show and pretending to meet with a fake Yoshiko (played by one of Hamaguchi’s other students) (*Kieta* 42). The kidnappers soon contact her to explain that they have the real Yoshiko, and that they will kill her if Katherine gives away the money to the pretender:

[Kidnapper:] “Is it not your obligation [pronounced *gimu*] to ensure that you choose the correct woman?”

[Katherine:] “*Gimu*? [In English:] What is *gimu*?”

“Do you not understand *gimu*?”

“Is it like *giri*? *Giri*, or *ninjō*?”

“[In English:] No, no. [In Japanese:] How would you say it? [In English:] Do you understand 'your duty'?”

“[In English:] Oh, yes! [In Japanese:] Ugh, Japanese is difficult.” (*Kieta* 51)

The kidnapper attempts to pressure Katherine and manipulate her into giving him the money, and he does not seem surprised when Katherine begins to lose her grip on her Japanese. However, Katherine records this exchange and brings it to the police, and they are able to use the mix of Japanese and English words to make a voice identification of the culprit (*Kieta* 46). Readers learn that Katherine’s exaggerated struggle with Japanese was a ploy, and this exchange perfectly demonstrates how the kidnapper’s bias regarding Katherine’s American background overcomes his common sense. Prior to this conversation, the kidnapper had spoken several times with Katherine in fluent Japanese, seen her give a press conference to the Japanese media, and watched her appearance on a Japanese talk show; his own prejudice is as responsible for his arrest as anything else (*Kieta* 20). Katherine’s gambit works because she is extremely conscious of how her nationality shapes the way she is perceived: as a foreigner that would naturally struggle with Japanese.

2.2 DECEPTION GETS PERSONAL

When dealing with people who are familiar with her, Katherine must be more subtle with her machinations, and consequently finds herself engaging even more deeply with the nationalistic and ethnic assumptions of *nihonjinron*. Katherine has a close relationship with Inspector Kariya, a Kyoto detective who often serves as a liaison between her and the police department. With his extreme commitment to the letter of the law, Kariya and Katherine often butt heads over her high-risk, all-or-nothing approach to police work. However, because their

arrangement is informal and does give Kariya any actual authority over Katherine, he instead attempts to control her by using *nihonjinron* to delegitimize her when it suits him. After Kariya inadvertently allows ransom money to be stolen during the *Kieta* kidnapping investigation, Katherine requests that he hold off on arresting the suspect so that she can instead lure him into releasing the hostage (*Kieta* 12, 82). Kariya, however, rejects her request: “I cannot allow the culprit to potentially escape to Brazil, let alone with two million dollars in rubies. That would be a defeat for the police... I absolutely cannot approve it” (*Kieta* 84). While the other detectives defer to Kariya's authority, his insistence that avoiding a police “defeat” take priority over rescuing the hostage infuriates Katherine. She attempts to reason with him by appealing to his sense of pride, arguing that “even if you catch the criminals, if the hostage is killed, would that not mean you lost?” (*Kieta* 61). Unfortunately, Kariya is unmoved by this logic, and declares that “there is also the honor of the police force to consider. I cannot allow a known criminal to go free” (*Kieta* 61). Most important is the reasoning behind his decision to ignore her advice: “If you [Katherine] were Japanese, you would keep in step with the police's way of doing things. Pulling against our forceful methods is a definite sign that you're an American” (*Kieta* 61). This exchange indicates another insidious aspect of *nihonjinron* that Yamamura underscores through Kariya's words, which is that “*nihonjinron* supporters define behavior patterns pertaining to themselves and other elites as symbolically important and as ‘Japanese’ ... [and are] likely to be the culture familiar or ideal to them, while other kinds of cultural practices are considered to be ... less Japanese” (Tai 15, 16). Based on Tai's analysis, Kariya's position of power as a lead detective inclines him to base his definition of Japanese behavior on how closely it adheres to what he wants it to mean. For Kariya, the most Japanese response to his decision would be to

submit to it, and by treating Katherine's disagreement as an expression of her American nationality, he can comfortably ignore the validity of her argument.

When impartial logic fails, Katherine realizes that her best option is to use Kariya's attitude to her advantage. Katherine decides to go behind his back to set up an alternative plan which will prioritize the safety of the hostage, and Kariya is forced to follow along with her because he is afraid that "she would go and meet [the suspect] by herself" (*Kieta* 59). Kariya is caught in the tangle of his own bias; if Katherine cannot help being resistant and stubborn because she is American, then he cannot expect that logic will change her mind anymore that Katherine's logic changed his. Katherine accepts this oversimplification of her motives, because the net result is that he immediately resigns himself to going along with her plan, and they are able to progress with the case as a team.

Katherine's approach to dealing with Kariya's pigeonholing addresses more than momentary obstacles; it also produces long-term results that undermine the ideology of *nihonjinron*. By strategically embracing the racial stereotypes that are applied to Americans, Katherine is gradually able to reform Kariya's black-and-white view of the world and the people in it. By the end of the *Katherine* series, Kariya has come a long way towards acknowledging and even empathizing with the complexities that motivate the criminals he peruses. When he, Katherine, and Hamaguchi finally solve a triple murder in *Kōbe satsujin rekuiemu*, the final novel in the series, Kariya demonstrates a dramatic transformation. Because he pities the culprit, whose son was murdered as a result of greed, Kariya chooses not to reveal his findings to the other detectives and allows the killer to escape Kyoto (*Kōbe* 215). Ultimately Kariya's gesture is a futile one, as the killer is indirectly punished when he kills himself by wrecking his car on the way to Tokyo (*Kōbe* 226). Regardless, it is clear that Katherine's so-called stubborn American

ways, enacted through persuasion and occasional outright trickery, have over the years yielded a change within Kariya to allow for a more nuanced approach to his work as a detective. Because Kariya views Katherine's unyielding determination as an expression of her nationality, he does not bother with attempting to persuade or change her, but instead learns to critically evaluate his own methods, and often ends up deciding to take a different tack as a result of productive self-critique. Most significant is that Kariya's development demonstrates the permeability of identity; where he once scolded Katherine for going against Japanese social norms, Kariya is far more self-aware by the end of the series as he learns to view the world within his own framework, rather than one dictated to him by society.

Katherine's manipulation of Kariya is markedly different from the earlier examples we have seen, because it requires Katherine to not only be aware of how American are perceived, but to actively reinforces the stereotypes within her personal relationships. Her facade of "acting American" is no longer something that she can take on and off as it suits her, but rather becomes intentionally woven into her everyday behavior. This is particularly true in her relationship with Hamaguchi as they struggle to reconcile to what extent gender and nationality should shape their romantic expectations and behavior. A major point of contention between Katherine and Hamaguchi is when (or whether) detective work should supersede their private lives. Her general policy towards Hamaguchi is one of asking forgiveness rather than permission, especially when it comes to a case. When the two get into a fight over the identity of a suspect, Katherine decides that she will continue to investigate by herself, reasoning that "if she were wrong, she would apologize, but otherwise she would enjoy being proven right" (*Kieta* 210). Katherine's enthusiasm is often met with disappointment or even anger from Hamaguchi, especially when she would rather follow up on a lead or theory than spend time with him: "I

can't explain clearly just now, but I have a feeling [my assistance] will by some chance be useful,' [Katherine said]. 'I don't understand, but you should do as you like. You came up with the plan, after all,' Hamaguchi said sarcastically" (*Kieta* 62). Katherine ignores his tone and proceeds with her work, while Hamaguchi's resentment is only deepened by her unwillingness to pander to his hurt feelings. For Katherine, detective work is always a priority, and Hamaguchi's role as her colleague does not give him any leverage to change her mind.

2.3 MANIPULATING INTIMACY

Hamaguchi instead resorts to a type of emotional blackmail to influence Katherine, and applies the rhetoric of *nihonjinron* to their romantic relationship in an effort to create gender-specific obligations that she is supposed to fulfill. When he and Katherine compare notes on what makes for a good wife, Hamaguchi slyly enthuses over the polite deference shown by an attractive university student, and tells Katherine that "despite everything, Japan is still a male-dominated society, you know? Men prefer reserved women" (*Kieta* 212). This is undoubtedly intended to needle Katherine, who is exactly the opposite of a reserved woman. Hamaguchi implies that because he is a Japanese man, he shares this preference, and uses the idea of conservative femininity as a weapon against Katherine to imply that if she wanted to make him truly happy, she would modify her behavior. His tactic exemplifies the sweeping ethnic generalizations which distinguish *nihonjinron* and its use by "intellectuals, bureaucrats, and elite businessmen who produce and consume *Nihonjinron* [to] have more power in spreading ideas than women" (Tai 16). Hamaguchi uses his assumed authority as a Japanese man to dictate to

Katherine what an ideal woman would look like, although not because he wants her to literally become this “type” of woman. The more dramatic exchanges between the two make clear that despite (or perhaps because of) their differences, Hamaguchi and Katherine love each other very much. During a case that involves a lot of discussion of how romance sours into betrayal and murder, the two assure one another of their devotion:

“If you were killed by someone, I think I would search for the culprit with all my might, but if that failed, I would probably kill myself.”

“Really?”

“Really. You’re the only one I love, you know.”

The two spontaneously embraced one another and kissed. (*Kōbe* 69)

However, Hamaguchi’s love for his adventurous American partner does not preclude him from seeking a way to curb her independence when it inconveniences him.

However, the reality of Hamaguchi’s efforts at manipulation are not as effective as he would like, and he instead spends more time trying to convince himself of his own power than actually asserting it over Katherine. After an earthquake decimates parts of Kobe, Katherine decides to volunteer there for a few days, explaining to Hamaguchi that “there are a lot of foreigners [at the shelter] ... and a lot of exchange students as well. They don’t have any relatives in Japan, or any disaster supplies, and they’re struggling because they don’t know the language either. Luckily, I do know a bit, so I’ll be useful” (*Kōbe* 70). As a foreigner herself, it is not surprising that Katherine would identify strongly with foreigners who are struggling due to their lack of Japanese language ability. In this situation and others, it is a point of pride for Katherine that she actively seeks out situations where she can make a difference, even when they may require taking a risk: “If I worried to that extent, I would never do anything. It’s like the

Japanese proverb: if you don't enter the tiger's den, then you won't reap the rewards" (*Kieta* 53). Hamaguchi's response to her plan is lukewarm at best because they would need to cancel their plans for a weekend vacation: "I guess even though the weather today and tomorrow is supposed to be nice, I'll sit at home, all by myself," Hamaguchi said, his tone unusually bitter" (*Kōbe* 11). However, within a few minutes Katherine has convinced him to go to Kobe with her, and Hamaguchi begins the process of rationalizing that everything is going exactly as he planned. After they arrive at the disaster site, Katherine decides that she will need to stay for a few more days, and Hamaguchi makes no objections despite his unhappiness: "Hamaguchi – looking at the situation at the shelter site – was unable to tell her to stop" (*Kōbe* 70-71). By this point, it is clear to both readers and likely Hamaguchi himself that Katherine was never asking for his permission. Still, Hamaguchi lets himself pretend that he is allowing Katherine her autonomy out of sympathy for the earthquake victims, rather than facing the reality that it was never in his hands to begin with.

Beyond the ways that Hamaguchi attempts to manipulate ideas about gender in Japan, it is even more interesting to consider how Katherine consciously turns these ideas against him. As with her professional relationship with Kariya, Katherine unapologetically appropriates the rhetoric of *nihonjinron* to suit her own ends in her personal life. Language and nationality are again key aspects of Katherine's approach when confronted with Hamaguchi's inflexible application of gender norms, and she uses them to redirect his outbursts of bossiness or jealousy without surrendering any of her own autonomy. In the earlier novels of the series, Katherine and Hamaguchi's relationship is not necessarily official, but they are both very aware of the potential between them. Thus, when a conversation about their vacation plans is interrupted by a phone call, Hamaguchi is immediately suspicious that it might be an American boy that

Katherine had met last week and worries that they might set up another meeting (*Kyōto* 7-8). He expresses his jealousy by sulking in silence until Katherine notices his displeasure and attempts to appease him by reassuring him in English that “I only love you, [Hamaguchi]!” (*Kyōto* 8). Here Katherine’s intention to use language as a tool for manipulation and obfuscation becomes clear. By speaking in English, Katherine erases a distinction which Yamamura highlights by translating her “love” using the verb *aishiteru*, rather than the more sedate but sincere *suki*. The difference is significant because Katherine is inviting Hamaguchi to misinterpret her meaning. By speaking in English, which could be taken for one or the other, she encourages Hamaguchi to make his own convenient assumptions without making any actual concessions to his jealousy. Because Katherine also occasionally enjoys using English to joke around with Hamaguchi, such as calling him “Mister Hamaguchi” as a pet name, Hamaguchi is satisfied with this expression of seeming affection (*Kieta* 8). Katherine gives Hamaguchi the impression that his jealousy is unnecessary and neatly heads off a request that she prove her commitment, leaving her free to do what she wants and pretend ignorance in the future. Her American girl persona is very much a part of their romantic relationship, and Katherine utilizes it ruthlessly.

2.4 THE THRESHOLD OF INTENTION

The relationships between Katherine and Hamaguchi, and Katherine and Kariya, require a constant clamor for power over one another. Hamaguchi and Kariya attempt to provide themselves with authority and influence over Katherine by applying *nihonjinron* rhetoric to ideas of gender and nationality. Katherine is able to gain a certain amount of autonomy for herself by

consciously leaning into the black-and-white idea of how Americans and Japanese have inherently different traits that cannot be modified, so that her behavior and choices cannot be challenged. Katherine selectively encourages *nihonjinron* ideas because they prevent anyone from holding her to any standard which she does not choose for herself. She will even take the initiative of applying similar myths, like the idea that “although Japanese people are logical, they allow logic to overrule their emotions,” knowing that Hamaguchi takes particular pride in this supposedly Japanese quality and turning it against him when he does not agree with her gut instinct about a suspect (*Kieta* 211). It is certainly more convenient for Katherine if, rather than asking why she chooses to behave a certain way, Hamaguchi and Kariya instead learn to adapt to the perception that Katherine is incapable of behaving any differently.

Although Katherine is often impeded in her work and personal life by her nationality and gender, her conscious choice to wield them as weapons to her advantage provides readers with a heightened awareness of how deeply ideas of *nihonjinron* have taken root in Japanese society. The many interactions analyzed above demonstrate the strength of these social norms, as Katherine’s manipulations would not be nearly as effective if Kariya and Hamaguchi were inclined to question how she is so often able to have her way. However, by continuing to interpret her actions through the lense of *nihonjinron*, where her status “as an American girl [means that] Katherine makes plans and then carries them out, one after the other,” Hamaguchi and Kariya are able to maintain their familiar worldview only by accepting that Katherine is willing and able to take advantage of it (*Kieta* 46). Conversely, the interactions between the Katherine, Hamaguchi, and Kariya also give readers with the opportunity to appreciate the futility of Katherine's struggle; because she relies so completely on these entrenched ideas of

Americans and women to achieve her goals, she cannot risk challenging them directly. But that does not mean that the reader must be resigned to the same fate.

3.0 UNCONCIOUS ENACTMENT

3.1 PERSPECTIVE AND ISOLATION

While Katherine and Hamaguchi must struggle with the repercussions of how they consciously implement *nihonjinron* in their professional and personal lives, we must also consider how Yamamura positions the reader to question the ways in which *nihonjinron* functions outside of the *Katherine* novels, in their own lives. In this chapter, I will discuss how Katherine and Hamaguchi operate as a detective duo, paying particular attention to the ways in which their joint analyses of suspects and victims reveal an unconscious and disturbing assimilation of the very ideologies which are most harmful to their work and relationships. By understanding how Yamamura reveals the tragic flaws of her characters' ignorance, we shall see that the *Katherine* series serves as an opportunity for readers to reevaluate and critique the harmful and divisive norms of *nihonjinron* in Japanese society, as well as the ways in which they are unintentionally reproduced.

For Yamamura, the professional relationship between Katherine and Hamaguchi is primarily used as an excuse to show readers the inner workings and assumptions that guide the detectives' logic; as such, the two are seldom away from one another for more than a few days, and never engage in any sleuthing until they are reunited. When Katherine travels alone to Kobe for several days in *Kōbe satsujin rekuiemu*, Hamaguchi makes a half-hearted effort to collect more information for their case. In a moment of inspiration, he poses as a potential tenant in

order to scout out the apartment building of a murder victim and manages to obtain a floorplan of the victim's unit by touring the one beneath it (*Kōbe* 71). But while he is successful at gathering information, he decides to wait until Katherine returns to tell her about it because "it will be fun to think over together," despite the fact that Katherine is so eager to discuss the case that Hamaguchi "receive[s] a call from Katherine every night" that she is away (*Kōbe* 77). Without Katherine's presence, Hamaguchi is unable to focus on anything else, and it is not until she is back in Kyoto that they finally follow up on the floorplan clue, and subsequently get a break in the case.

Just as physical separation prevents Katherine and Hamaguchi from actively debating with one another, Yamamura excuses the inaction of her detectives by tying their productivity to the emotional support which they draw from the security of their romantic relationship. Conversely, conflict within the relationship destabilizes Hamaguchi and Katherine's professional dynamic. Because the process of solving a mystery as a team necessitates a certain amount of debate and dissent, arguments that become personal will drastically decrease the efficacy of their detective work, with the gap between them only widening as a result. In working to solve a kidnapping case where one of the culprits appears to have murdered his partner and then killed himself, Katherine argues that there must have been a third "Suspect X" involved, despite being unable to find concrete proof of his existence. She encounters skepticism from all sides, particularly from Inspector Kariya, who quips that "amateurs" like Katherine "seem interesting at first glance but have no credibility" (*Kieta* 195). However, it is Hamaguchi's disbelief which affects her most. When he casually dismisses her theory as the result of stubbornness stemming from having O-type blood, Katherine abruptly closes off, refusing his offer of a romantic evening out and remaining in her hotel room for several days without contacting him (*Kieta* 209-10).

Despite the fact that Katherine's theory is extremely time sensitive, as the suspect is leaving for Hawaii very soon, the deterioration of her relationship with Hamaguchi brings the case to a standstill.

Ultimately, however, the reconciliation of their relationship is also the reason that Katherine and Hamaguchi are able to solve the mystery of Suspect X. Following this period of silence, Katherine tentatively invites Hamaguchi out to lunch, and over their meal Hamaguchi does his best to lift Katherine's depressed spirits by listening to the logic of her theories without dismissing them out of hand. Explaining that "a Katherine that isn't smiling doesn't seem like Katherine at all," Hamaguchi chooses to prioritize their relationship over his own opinions on the case and consequently reinvigorates the investigation (*Kieta* 213). As the two begin to rehash the case and Hamaguchi listens to Katherine's explanation about the missing Suspect X, he is ultimately convinced by her logic. The return of their familiar dynamic leads Katherine to have a revelation which she attributes to Hamaguchi's influence: "Thank you, Ichirō... there was one thing which I couldn't explain [about Suspect X], but thanks to you, I've found an explanation" (*Kieta* 215). The personal relationship between the two is the fulcrum upon which the investigative process turns, since it relies on their ability to work as a synchronized unit.

In order to highlight the aspects of dysfunction between Katherine and Hamaguchi's codependence, I will briefly compare them with another pair of amateur, romantically entangled sleuths. There are many parallels to be drawn between Yamamura's protagonists and Hiraiwa Yumie's (1932-) 1987 short story "Roman Honeymoon," which depicts a husband and wife who solve an overseas murder. "Roman Honeymoon" was published the same year as Yamamura's *Kyoto sadō* novel, but its protagonists Ikenaga Sei'ichirō and Ikenaga Kanako have an unusual dynamic that in many ways challenges the conservative traditionalism of *nihonjinron*. Kanako

works as a travel guide on European tours, while Ikenaga works from home writing travel essays based on his wife's experiences; the author even goes so far as to describe Sei'ichirō as "domestic" due to his disinclination to leave the house and willingness to clean and cook (Hiraiwa 275). The traditional, strong-arming masculinity which Hamaguchi attempts to employ with Katherine is completely absent, not because Sei'ichirō has a better method, but because it is completely unnecessary. When one of Kanako's previous clients is murdered, she and Sei'ichirō begin an investigation with a completely approach to teamwork than Katherine and Hamaguchi. They are nearly always apart, with Sei'ichirō serving as a type of armchair detective who primarily considers the information which Kanako delivers to him. When they do go out together, Sei'ichirō lets his wife take the lead, and his behavior never suggests that he is threatened by his wife's independence. Instead he makes a clear effort to support her autonomy when they encounter skepticism from others:

After Kanako burned incense for [the victim], is widow, taken aback, asked,

"There are women tour guides, too, then?"

"At our company there are three women tour conductors."

"I've never had one on a tour." She was also said to travel abroad once a year without her husband.

"That must be because there are so many more men who are tour conductors..."

"Women are so helpless when things get tough, aren't they?"

Sei'ichirō, who had remained silent, replied calmly.

"As a matter of fact, modern women are more steady and reliable than men."

(Hiraiwa 287)

This interaction is a stark contrast to what we have observed from Hamaguchi's response to Katherine's independence, and provides a clear counterpoint to how he could participate productively in their relationship. Additionally, we see how much of Katherine and Hamaguchi's supposed teamwork is primarily derived from an unwillingness to allow the other to escape the stranglehold of their relationship and its trappings.

The result is that readers can only interact with the mystery through the unit of Katherine-and-Hamaguchi, and as the so-called facts regarding suspects and their motives are filtered through the emotional lense of the protagonists, readers ultimately discover more about Katherine and Hamaguchi than anyone else. As Katherine and Hamaguchi work together to separate and understand the tangled relationships of a case, they find that their assumptions about nationality and gender which so rigidly shape their own relationship are not as stable as they would like to assume. The complex web of affairs and betrayals in *Kōbe satsujin rekiemu* draws a particularly strong reaction from the two detectives. They begin their investigation by researching the past relationships of the victim, Shimokuwata Reiichirō, which include two dead wives (who were both the daughters of his boss), two ex-girlfriends (one of whom is murdered soon after), and one mourning fiancé. With a variety of suspects to choose from, Katherine and Hamaguchi have diverging opinions on what qualities make some more likely than others. Upon closer examination, we can see that both are attempting to apply similarly problematic views about gender in Japan. Hamaguchi argues on the behalf of one of the ex-girlfriends, a university student that works part-time at Shimokuwata's work. He defends her with the claim that because "she is young, with a pure, dedicated love... [and the victim] was probably her first lover, she would not be able to kill him without thinking about it afterwards" (*Kōbe* 55). He instead lays the

blame squarely at the feet of the other ex-girlfriend, a 37-year-old doctor, for the sole reason that she has been single for so long that “it would be her last chance to get married... [and] if she wanted to have a child, that age is the cut-off...[so] she probably viewed the married life with rose-colored glasses” (*Kōbe* 55). While Hamaguchi does not go so far as to say that the doctor was correct to feel that way, his quick and sexist summation reveals a shallow understanding of the diverse motives which could drive a woman to kill someone, while simultaneously romanticizing and infantilizing the university student's interest in the victim. Being a woman herself – and one that has managed to date the same man for nearly forty novels without murdering him over not marrying her yet – Katherine is not convinced by this analysis. She instead argues that Shimokuwata, being a confirmed playboy, more likely provoked resentment by causing an ugly breakup (*Kōbe* 55). She attributes this theory to the apparently irrefutable fact that “men have many faces” and are prone to dishonesty (*Kōbe* 112).

In this debate we see echoed the same dynamic which Katherine and Hamaguchi struggle to balance within their own relationship; however, there is an important distinction that must be observed. Whereas the previous interactions we have examined demonstrate how Katherine and Hamaguchi consciously attempt to use *nihonjinron* to manipulate someone for an end result, in this case there is not attempt at manipulation. Instead, both detectives consider their interpretations to be completely valid, and as readers we realize that Hamaguchi and Katherine are not nearly as self-aware as they might like to believe. Hamaguchi's tendency to view women and their love as “pure and whole” suggests that, while he clearly loves Katherine and her outgoing affection, he still idealizes the conservative domesticity promoted by *nihonjinron* rhetoric (*Kōbe* 55). Meanwhile, Katherine's suggestion that men are more interested in women's willingness to subvert their independence for the sake of love indicates that although

she is often successful in complicating gendered assumptions and turning this to her advantage, Katherine does not see the hypocrisy in broadly applying these stereotypes to other people. Through their detective work, Katherine and Hamaguchi attempt to project their own assumptions onto the lives of those around them.

3.2 PROVIDING TOOLS FOR META ANALYSIS

At this point, it is helpful to have a framework to better articulate how Yamamura's depiction of Katherine and Hamaguchi as a detective pair is used to provoke the reader into self-assessment. Margaret E. Tankard and Elizabeth Levy Paluck's essay "Norm Perception as a Vehicle for Social Change" offers an extremely applicable explanation of how individuals learn to define what "normal" means, and I will be applying their scholarship to the dynamic between Katherine and Hamaguchi, and Yamamura and the reader. In order to better clarify the difference in the behavior examined in Chapter 2, I offer Tankard and Paluck's differentiation between "attitude" and "norm" change:

Attitude change campaigns attempt to change how *you* feel about a behavior... as opposed to norm change campaigns that attempt to change your perception of *others'* feelings or behaviors... individuals' normative perceptions can be more malleable than their attitudes. An individual's attitudes may have developed over a long time and may be closely linked to personal experience or to other well-developed beliefs... Norm change interventions can make use of the fact that

individuals perceive norms using certain types of input from their environment; in particular, other individuals' public behavior... (183)

In the case of the *Katherine* series, conflict caused by *nihonjinron* ultimately stems from an undesirable syncretization of attitudes and norms about gender and nationality. Katherine and Hamaguchi are not nearly as diametrically opposed to one another as their public behavior would suggest; as seen in the previous chapter, Hamaguchi does not actually wish Katherine acted like a traditional Japanese woman, and Katherine is not actually the blindly stubborn American that she appears to be. Yet they are both so busy trying to playact whatever *norms* will most benefit them in the short-term, that they begin to internalize harmful *attitude* changes that are directly in line with *nihonjinron* rhetoric.

In the case of identifying Shimokuwata's murderer, both Katherine and Hamaguchi's theories are hilariously incorrect, and their efforts to critique the motivations of their suspects are more useful in revealing to readers how the pair inadvertently become active participants in reproducing the social norms which catalyze conflict within their own relationship. Inspector Kariya reports that the police interviewed the university student and found that she not only had another boyfriend from school, but that she was "weighing between the two of them [since] Shimokuwata was rich" and later attempted to use her unintentional pregnancy to demand a share of Shimokuwata's wealth after he died (*Kōbe* 60, 62). Readers eventually discover that neither Katherine or Hamaguchi were anywhere close to identifying the true culprit or their motives. The actual killer was motivated by a crime that occurred nearly ten years earlier, when Shimokuwata stole a payment of ransom money and got a child hostage killed – and his father later stumbled across Shimokuwata by chance and took his revenge (*Kōbe* 220). Through this process of dissecting and evaluating the motivations of others, Yamamura demonstrates that

Katherine and Hamaguchi are basing their arguments entirely on how they imagine gender to function in reality, rather than on the actual evidence of the case, and thus unintentionally give new life to these stereotypes. As Katherine and Hamaguchi gradually piece together the fractured relationships between secondary characters in various *Katherine* novels, readers are given more insight into how these two detectives perceive their own dynamic, as well as the ways in which Katherine and Hamaguchi refuse to honestly evaluate their own psychological baggage.

Even worse, because Kariya and the other detectives who work the cases with Katherine and Hamaguchi take their cues from the pair, we can see this harmful ideology being replicated. When analyzing the background of two suspected kidnappers in another case, Kariya uses highly gendered explanations of their motive to rationalize their crimes. The male suspect is described with far more lenience than the female; Kariya explains that although the man never managed much of a career after college, he was “enormously intelligent” nevertheless (*Kieta* 139). The female suspect, however, is demonized as being “indecisive” for daring to quit her secretary job in order to study fashion in Paris and later found an extremely successful exports company (*Kieta* 139-40). Kariya goes on to scathingly criticize every small fault he can find, such as buying a motorcycle and thus acting “like a gangster” (*Kieta* 140). The sexist logic behind Hamaguchi and Katherine’s analysis is seen to “[form] a cyclical pattern in which norms are reproduced over time” (Tankard and Paluck 184). As secondary characters that mainly function as sounding boards to reflect the ideas of the detective protagonists, this attitude from Kariya and his detectives demonstrates not only how Katherine and Hamaguchi are enabling the cyclical reinforcement of gendered stereotypes, but also how they are also ensuring that they are repeated on a broader and more institutionalized scale.

Such interactions provide readers with a blueprint that we see repeated with ideas of nationality, with far more disastrous and revealing consequences. The final confrontation scene in *Kieta sōzokunin* is significant because it is a rare but dramatic attempt by Katherine to openly challenge the stereotypes which she has allowed to so completely shape her identity. The case opens with the kidnapping of one of Hamaguchi's university students, Tanaka Yoshiko, and Hamaguchi's familiarity with the victim's family becomes a point of contention between him and Katherine when she suggests that the Tanakas might be involved. Hamaguchi protests at the very idea of it: "I know her family because Tanaka Yoshiko is my student, but they're a well-known family that has existed for a thousand years. Her parents are also extremely well-regarded, with a strong sense of self-respect. They're not people who get involved in fake kidnappings" (*Kieta* 200). Hamaguchi's claim is purportedly based on his familiarity with the family, yet Katherine's probing questions quickly demonstrate that the foundation of his opinion is not based on any firm evidence. His contact with Yoshiko was entirely limited to classroom interactions that did not grant much insight into her character. When Katherine asks him what kind of person Yoshiko is, based on his experience as her professor, Hamaguchi's only real conclusion is that she's difficult to know:

"Well, that's a tough question. She's definitely smart – she was usually in the top five of the class. She's a sharp, sensitive girl."

"What about her character? Were there things that annoyed other people?"

"No, the opposite, in fact. She was talented, but had an old-world personality: strong-willed, but reserved." (*Kieta* 204)

There is a similar clinical distance between Hamaguchi and Yoshiko's parents, Sōichirō and Asae, primarily because they had never met until the day of the case. Hamaguchi was only aware

of the family because of their longstanding lineage, and because Sōichirō was in the newspaper for attempting suicide when he was forced to mortgage their family estate to cover debts (*Kieta* 210). While this is intensely personal information to have about someone, it is no more than what the entire city of Kyoto knows about the Tanakas.

At its core, Hamaguchi's assurance of the Tanakas' innocence is based on his absolute confidence that such an old, well-established family would never sink to the level of crime, and it is left to Katherine to dissect the nationalistic assumptions that Hamaguchi is allowing to derail the investigation. It is not that Tanaka Sōichirō is a particularly admirable person – in fact, Hamaguchi even admits that the man “doesn't have a head for finance” and has incurred heavy debts as a result – but rather that he is the head of an honorable Japanese family that excludes him from suspicion (*Kieta* 210). Hamaguchi refuses to consider the Tanakas as suspects because he is conflating social status with individual worth. Hamaguchi attributes his reasoning to the Japanese obsession with “saving face,” and Katherine virulently contradicts this logic, stating that “even in America there are a lot of people from old, well-known families that take on enormous debt in order to maintain their honor” (*Kieta* 199). Katherine's suggestion that “honor and fame sometimes work in reverse” and might themselves be a motive to commit crime depending on the individual person and not their nationality, is one that Hamaguchi cannot accept, and it is not until Katherine literally presents the evidence by uncovering stacks of stolen money from behind the Tanakas' suspiciously new television that Hamaguchi finally acknowledges her point (*Kieta* 200, 229-30).

As Katherine lays out the evidence condemning the Tanaka family, Hamaguchi's idealized image of an honorable family lineage is clearly shattered, as is demonstrated in his final interaction with Sōichirō's wife, Tanaka Asae. When her character is first introduced at the

beginning of the novel, Asae is described as “extremely polite... [and] traditional Kyoto wife” whose good manners impress both Katherine and Hamaguchi to an extent that Katherine becomes suspicious that such a polite person would leave their meeting so quickly, leading to their involvement with the kidnapping case (*Kieta* 8). However, in the last exchange of the book, Hamaguchi looks on Asae with new eyes: “Hamaguchi stared in surprise at a woman who, until now, seemed like nothing but a graceful Kyoto lady” (*Kieta* 230). She still has all the marks of an old-school Kyoto matriarch from a distinguished family, but these qualities have been revealed to be insufficient proof of morality. Hamaguchi's internal desire to see his belief in naturally-occurring Japanese honor is harshly rebuked by reality.

Katherine's efforts to disprove Hamaguchi's belief that nationality can so completely and disastrously dictate one's behavior come to an ironic end when her methodology ultimately reinforces these stereotypes while simultaneously punishing everyone involved. While still investigating the Tanakas' involvement in the kidnapping, Katherine recognizes that her stubbornness is driving a wedge between herself and Hamaguchi, and jokes to herself that “it would be better for US-Japan relations” if she were to drop the subject, but ultimately decides to continue despite Hamaguchi's scathing analysis that “as an American, she has no patience for gray solutions” (*Kieta* 211). Although Katherine's inability to leave the case “in the gray” stems from her determination to prove that the Tanakas are guilty despite being Japanese, her blind fervor leads her to act exactly as Hamaguchi claims Americans cannot help acting, and the result is painful for everyone involved. When Katherine unexpectedly and publicly confronts the Tanaka family with Hamaguchi and the police at her side, Sōichirō goes into the next room and shoots himself with a hunting rifle while the rest of his family are arrested (*Kieta* 228). Katherine

is deeply affected by these events, and her feelings of doubt are exacerbated by Hamaguchi's own uncertainty as they leave the Tanakas' house:

Katherine looked at Hamaguchi, her face pale.

“Do you think I made a mistake? Would it have been better to leave things in the gray, like you said? Because everyone was happy?”

Katherine's question was too difficult to answer. Hamaguchi remained silent.

“Answer me! Ichirō!” Katherine repeated.

Her face looked like that of a defeated athlete.

“I don't know either, but I do know one thing for sure. And that's that either way, the Tanaka family was destined to die out.” (*Kieta* 230)

The novel ends with this unforgiving exchange, and Yamamura leaves readers to consider why Katherine's long-awaited efforts to disprove the stereotypes which have encroached on her relationship with Hamaguchi only end in tragedy.

Katherine's inability to recognize the duality of her actions is ultimately what stymies her efforts to break free from the stereotypes surrounding nationality and gender. Although she is able to look at the behavior of others, such as the Tanakas and Hamaguchi, and see clearly how they are allowing themselves to be led along by their own biased worldviews, Katherine never manages to follow this realization to any level of self-awareness. In the same way that Hamaguchi continues to pursue a rocky relationship with Katherine despite his secret wish that she were a very different person, Katherine fails to acknowledge how much of her supposed rebellion against societal stereotypes have instead trapped her into fulfilling them.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The overlap between nationality and gender is omnipresent in the *Katherine* novels, and Yamamura provides a surprisingly complex portrait of the difficulties of uprooting deeply held ideas on identity when standing in the midst of them. Katherine and Hamaguchi both struggle individually to consciously re-purpose these stereotypes in order to escape being confined by them, and yet this approach only entraps them into reenacting them.

The *Katherine* series presents readers with a dual-perspective into how gender and nationality function, one which the characters are hyper-aware of, the other to which they are completely oblivious. Just as Katherine and Hamaguchi serve as “social referents” for Kariya and other detectives, in that they “are particularly influential over others’ perceptions of norms,” the *Katherine* series can be interpreted as serving the same purpose for Yamamura’s readers (Tankard and Paluck 187). The contrast between the two provides readers with a blueprint to apply to their own lives; in the same way that they are watching Katherine and Hamaguchi struggle unknowingly under the weight of societal pressures and perceptions, where can these invisible forces be found within our own lives? It is impossible to read a *Katherine* novel without asking this question, because the characters and their relationships are so completely consumed by their inability to find an answer. Katherine and Hamaguchi, Inspector Kariya and his detectives, Japanese society, the reader themselves; these all become battlegrounds and opportunities for change. The *Katherine* series operates as what Tankard and Paluck might describe as an “intervention” for readers; by demonstrating how *nihonjinron* ideas of nationality

and gender to lead to the deterioration of both personal relationships and positive social norms, Yamamura's works attempt to use "fictional characters [to] inform audience members' ideas about the kinds of behavior that are typical or desirable in their actual communities" (187). The unhappy and traumatic end of novels like *Kieta*, *Kyōto*, and *Kōbe* serve as a clear warning to Yamamura's readers face similar threats within their own lives.

This paper has only examined the *Katherine* series in its most limited form, with three books selected from nearly forty, and written over two decades. There is undoubtedly more to be explored, appreciated, and perhaps pitied in the other *Katherine* novels, but each one provides insight into how the complexities of gender and nationality are formed, reproduced, and challenged on a daily basis in individual lives, and how this microcosm is ultimately what defines society as a whole. Further analysis of Yamamura's works will require that her novels and career be placed into greater context with the postwar era, and the *Katherine* series alone offers many opportunities to do so. What elements of these novels were so fascinating to the reading public in the 1970s, and why has that interest lingered into the 21st Century? Similarly, what other social institutions are featured, such as class and wealth factor into Katherine and Hamaguchi's relationship and detective work, and Inspector Kariya's repeated appearances speak to the dynamics of law and order? Yamamura's other detective series may also offer further insight into her neglected generation of female detective writers. The long-lasting success of Yamamura demands that a concentrated effort be made to better connect her works with the techniques and transformations of those who wrote before and after her lifetime.

Ultimately, Yamamura uses the *Katherine* series to force readers to grapple with problematic ideas of gender and nationality for the sake of challenging the hold of *nihonjinron* on Japanese society in the 1970s and 80s. During the height of Yamamura's career, the growing

influence of globalization on Japanese pop culture served to stimulate a fear of foreign influence that closely mirrored the panic of the 1930s (Hein 452). Although it would be a stretch to suggest that Yamamura single-handed helped to stem the tide of conservatism during this era, her popularity suggests novels like the *Katherine* series found a niche within the national consciousness that only grew in influence over time. Katherine Turner is still a far cry from the hardboiled detective women that writers like Miyabe and her contemporaries would popularize in the 1990s, but she is undoubtedly a close relative (Seaman 23). Yamamura was not nearly as straightforward in her social criticism as would become common in later decades, but she undoubtedly steered detective fiction towards expanding its role in promoting social reflection in individual readers and Japanese society as a whole.

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