"Invisible Violence" in Literature of the Dynastic Ages

Shinichi Shigeta

In the Nara and the Heian Periods, the act of cursing was regarded as an extremely violent means by which one can even kill a person. And it was the most fearful form of violence because it could be performed unknown and unseen by the victim. Such "invisible violence" was said to be so frequently done in aristocratic society that it was featured in many contemporary stories. The aim of this paper is to outline the way the dynamics of such invisible violence was depicted in the stories of the Dynastic Ages.

Was Taira-no-Kiyomori the "Evil-Doer"?:
The Law of Rulers and the Logic of the Vanquished

Daisuke Higuchi

In the study of the relation between violence and literature, we must first consider the violence of narrative discourses. For, directly or indirectly, to narrate something often entails violent effects. Even writing history, though apparently based on positive proofs, is not immune from this as Eiji Yoshikawa says, "[Any historical descriptions] are the records left by the rulers to punish the losers in disgraceful fashion." In this paper, I will read several versions of Heike-monogatari and classify them into the two groups; one with the narrative pattern of representing Taira-no-Kiyomori as a great "evil-doer" and the other with alternative patterns. In so doing, I will trace the history of the historical descriptions in which the lost warrior had gone through a variety of readings and re-readings.

When the Writer's Wife Writes:
Shige Mori and a "Textual Harassment" Case

Naomi Fujiki

Here I will treat the problem of "textual harassment" in literature with a case of Shige Mori, a woman writer and Ôgai Mori's wife. Harassment done to her by her husband, both textual and sexual, can be classified into three forms: 1. the distorted representation of his wife in Ôgai's story "Han-nichi"; 2. his biased critical comments on her writings; 3. his censorious checking of her manuscripts. Centered on the second point, the aim of this paper is to show the violence of "textual harassment" which disgraced and killed the career of a woman writer.
Can the King Become an Ordinary Person?: Ryūnosuke Akutagawa’s “Hana”

Mioko Shinozaki

“Hana” is a short story about two conflicting characters in one person. The king is torn between his official persona as a transcendental sovereign and his more human side with earthly desire. In the course of reading, the reader is led to have his or her sympathy with the king as an ordinary person. Probably this kind of literary effects, combined with the publication of “gyosei” poems, the imperial educational edict, and other human activities of the Emperor, helped to prepare the ground for the public acceptance of a humanized emperor in postwar Japan.

On the Margin of Zoku-waga-bungaku-hanseiki:
Kan Eguchi, Georges Sorel, and Ropshin

Takashi Fujii

In Zoku-waga-bungaku-hanseiki, there is a chapter entitled “Aozametaru-uma,” one named after Ropshin’s famous novel. In this chapter, Kan Eguchi wrote about the background of the birth of the “Guillotine Society,” a terrorist group. According to the author, the illegal group was formed under the influence of Georges Sorel’s philosophy of violence as well as in the context of political confusions caused by general strikes and destructive activities of terrorism. Indeed, after the labor movement ended up in a great failure, terrorism started to run riot as if it had been the outpourings of frustrated desire of the working class. The aim of this paper is to examine the extent of Sorel’s influence on the labor movement of the Taishō Period. As the chapter’s title in Eguchi’s book shows, not only Sorel’s philosophy but also Ropshin’s story about the assassination of Prince Sergei is an important key to understand the historical context of political violence in that troublous time.

Yojūro Yasuda’s Keyword: War, Violence, and “Miyarabi-aware”

Shigeo Ōsugi

In this paper, I will decipher the keyword “miyarabi-aware” in “Miyarabi-aware,” the first essay Yojūro Yasuda wrote after the war. Yasuda uses the word to express his own indescribable emotion toward the defeated war. Notwithstanding the author’s intention, however, the word is found to have more than one meaning. It not only refers to his helplessness for such violent procedures by the occupation army as the colonization of Okinawa. It also symbolizes a pessimistic view toward various forms of violence committed all over the world.
Violence as an Expression of Despair: Seichō Matsumoto’s “Kuroji-no-e”

Izumi Satō

In his “Kuroji-no-e” (1958), Seichō Matsumoto explored a chain of reactions triggered by violence. In the story, a black serviceman rapes a Japanese woman near the camp in Kita Kyushu. The victim’s husband seeks vengeance on the black man, but after all he fails because the serviceman was killed in the war before the husband achieves his goal. The author describes the serviceman’s act of violation as an expression of despair, that is, a distorted reaction against greater racial violence in his country. By persistently examining the causality of violence, the author tried to convey the message of anti-discrimination and anti-violence. But his aim seems to be frustrated. For, while he speaks out against racism, he seems rather indifferent to men’s discrimination and violence against women. In this sense, the very act of writing about anti-violence has become that of internalized violence.

Modernity as an Apparatus of Violence: Haruki Murakami’s After Dark

Haruki Katsuhara

After Dark, the latest novel by Haruki Murakami, is characteristic of the narrator’s peculiar viewpoint, which is as omnipresent and voyeuristic as a movie camera. As Jean Baudrillardard might have said, words from the machine-like narrative voice are mere signs “devoid of any symbolic values.” In this age of mechanical reproduction, the non-symbolic narrative voice ironically symbolizes not only the lost aura of artworks but also the more critical conditions of modern society in which we are exposed to numerous forms of violence and losing our human aura.

To Care Is to Die: Norio Mobu’s Kaigo-nyūmon

Miyuki Satō

In Kaigo-nyūmon, Norio Mobu treats the question of home care for the aged. In this paper, I will consider the theme of care and death suggested in the story. Referring to discourses about death in Yukio Mishima’s Hagakure-nyūmon, Shichirō Fukazawa’s Narayama-bushi-kō, and others, I will also think about what it is to fight ultimate violence, that is, death.

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