

## Kirino Natsuo: Fantasy, Irony and Actuality

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### Abstract

*This paper discusses the works of Kirino Natsuo, a contemporary Japanese novelist whose work is known internationally, second in popularity overseas only to Haruki Murakami. My theme is how Kirino describes feminine actuality in a way not attempted before. I assert that the Japanese novelist achieves a new clarity describing actuality in her novels such as *Out*, *Grotesque*, *Tokyo-Jima*, and *Joshinki*. To describe this clarity I use the theory of modernity, actuality, and woman developed by Alice Jardine in *Gynesis* as well as ideas about the function of fantasy and myth in Nancy Walker's *Feminist Alternatives*. I describe how Kirino takes bear towards the patriarchal society they live in, and gives these matters an ironic treatment that results in the appearance of an unadorned actuality. I suggest Kirino has a gift for showing how women tend to be trapped and then inhabit their own fantasy, avoiding the reality of their situation. Through these techniques Kirino destroys readers' traditional preconceptions of women as well as stereotypical images of them.*

**Key Words:** actuality, fantasy, irony, Japanese literature, patriarchal society

### Introduction

Shirley Geok-lin Lim shows her consciousness of being an Asian feminist theorist when she writes, at the beginning of her seminal essay, "Semiotics, Experience, and the Material Self: An Inquiry into the Subject of the Contemporary Asian Woman Writer," (1998) "Nor do I offer this yet – to – be – shaped - because yet - to - be - written "self" as representative, type, or allegorical figure; it is the concrete particular, the specific facticity, the materiality, "earth," through only which any abstraction can take color, size and shape" (441)

Lim gives us a hint about how to approach the writing of Asian women who fashion their wares from the material, who make no attempt to disguise the actual, but rather use the actual as a weapon to destroy socially fabricated ideals that imprison women. In this paper I would like to examine several novels by one such champion of the material and actual, the Japanese writer Kirino Natsuo. Kirino's novels in translation are now second in popularity only to Murakami Haruki's. I hope that my paper sheds some light on the thirst for actuality that drives sales of her books.

Kirino Natsuo is well known for *Out* (1997), which drew a sensational attention as her writing shows a new image of the reality of the present Japanese women who have stopped being slaves of men. Her characteristic feature is that she focuses on the evil side of the stream of conscious or grudge, which had not been described clearly before. Kirino describes the women's sexuality and desire honestly, women from girls to old women. In *Riaru Warudo* (2003) (Real World), she reveals the sexuality of high school students describing how high school students have sexual relationships without being in love, just driven from desire. In *Gyokuran* (2001) (Magnolia Heptapeta) Kirino writes about a woman who doesn't choose marriage as her life goal like most other women.

She describes how and why the woman protagonist doesn't choose to marry the promising doctor with whom she is in love, and goes to China instead, being drawn by some unknown desire. The protagonist Yuko ends up as a prostitute at the end of the story. Kirino's characters tend to choose prostitution as a means to protest against being slaves of men. Kirino seems to believe it is almost the only way for ordinary women in the patriarchal society. It is her irony as she considers that being a wife means an extreme case of slavery, which is opposite of the common sense of the society.

### Method

This paper uses library research as the method to find many sources relate to the analysis. On the other hand, descriptive qualitative is a method as the focus analysis, because descriptive means involves collection or technique used to specify delineate or in another meaning, qualitative analysis, that it is an emphasize on process and meaning that are not rigorously examined or measured, in terms quality, amount, intensity or frequency. Qualitative research stresses on the social constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape such iniquity. Such researcher emphasizes the value of laden nature of inquiry. They had seen answers to question that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (Norman, 1994:4)

To get an integrated analysis, this paper use two main data resources: primary data source and the secondary data resources. The primary data resource is the novel of K. Kirino Natsuo. She is a contemporary Japanese novelist. Meanwhile, the data that are taken from data sources are some quotations, they are dialogues and narration.

The secondary data resources are collected from outside of novel or the information such as the biography of the author, critical essay, and others.

### Discussion

In *Tamamoe* (2005) (*Budding of Spirit*) Kirino shows the sexuality of the elderly. Though she is even good at describing men's sexuality, she is best at describing the sexuality and desire of middle-aged women who have experienced despair in their married lives, and their grudge against the men and society. She reveals sexual desire in its extremity, and shows us the actuality of the hidden drive of society, or the sexual desire. Those protagonists do something extraordinary instead of becoming insane and going to the mental hospital or committing suicide. In *Out* (1997), Masako even begins the business of helping to chop the dead body murdered by her customers.

In *Tokyo-Jima* (2008) (*Tokyo Island*) Kiyoko devours her sex life with young men and even shows that scene to her husband in the deserted island though she used to be an obedient wife before she drifted to a primitive life. When she finds she is pregnant she is not sure who the father of the baby is, nor does she feel any affection for the baby. She realizes that the affection for one's own baby comes from civilization.

Kiyoko even tries to take advantage of her baby as a means to survive and even to regain power in the island. Kirino destroys not only the myth of femininity but also that of motherhood. This anti-hero woman who is wild and strong is the new image of actuality. Kirino destroys the feminine image of the fragile pure hearted woman from its inception, and shows us the actuality of the equality of evil between the genders.

By showing us this actuality Kirino destroys not only the fragile and pure image of the women but also the myth of motherhood. The mothers in the novels by Kirino don't consider motherhood their priority but rather choose their desires. The daughters feel abandoned by their mothers and rarely feel affection. Those mothers are also sacrifices of unhappy marriage. Masako in *Out* (1997) is a woman in despair who finally abandons her husband and son. The mother in *Meta-bola* (2007) abandons her grown-up children after being abused by her husband for many years.

In *Gurotesuku* (2003) (*Grotesque*, 2007) Yuriko, who was born of a Swiss father and Japanese mother talks about her mother. Yuriko was born too beautiful resembling none of her parents or relatives. She felt abandoned as her mother herself was in a crippled state, having no autonomy and unable to show enough affection toward her children. Yuriko seeks for the purpose of her existence and finds she is needed only by men who just desire her. Yuriko's mother is not an especially helpless person in a society where women are denied their own subjectivities.

My mother hated me. Giving birth to a child who looked so unlike herself threw my mother into a tailspin from which she never recovered. ....If my mother had abandoned anyone, it was me. I didn't look like anyone in the family. I'd been left to my own devices. ... The only people who paid me any attention were the men who desired me. As a child I first became aware that my existence had a purpose when I realized men lusted after me. And that's why I will lust forever after men. ... And it is me who gives me the proof I need now to feel I'm alive. (*Grotesque*, 117)

It is not, however, correct to say that women change their characters according to their circumstances. Kirino just demystifies the real women more honestly than any other women writer has ever done. She focuses on the ugliness of women's hearts, destroying and denying the illusion of beauty and care which men had wanted to admire. Kirino's writing stands as an ironic affront to former writers who liked to describe the ideal women whose minds are 'feminine,' or innocent, pure and fragile. Alice Jardine points to the root of this masculine need for "the angel of the house":

"Does not the encounter with this enigmatic figure of femininity menace every subject? Isn't it this figure which is at the root of the ruin of representation?" (*L'ombre*, p.66) That is, woman can incarnate this femininity, but only as "an effect of unconscious representation", for, according to Montrelay, it is the male poets, not women, who have provided us with an access to that imaginary – through writing. (*Gynesis*, 171).

Especially in *Gurotesuku* Kirino reveals women's anger towards patriarchal society. The story is told in the first person of the three characters, one of whom is the main narrator who tells the life of her sister Yuriko, her friend Kazue and herself. Kazue is a sober high school student who tends to be a victim of bullying because of her eagerness to be loved by others. She graduates from a prestigious university and gets a job in the first-rate firm everybody envies, and she believes she is satisfied with herself. Though she works hard, she can't get promoted as she expects and realizes that she is not fulfilled at all. She decides to have two different faces during daytime and nighttime. At night she works as a prostitute believing that it leads her to be proud of herself being attractive as a

woman as well. Gradually, however, she collapses into just a grotesque monster who doesn't face her actuality, but is just living in her own fantasy. She ends up being killed by a homicidal maniac customer. She is a typical victim of patriarchal society which forces the women to obtain two contrasting elements to be clever and obedient.

The women are expected to behave cleverly while pretending to be good and obedient. Kazue is too obedient and innocent so as to believe what others tell her. She believes her parents who tell her to study hard, or her only friend who tells her to be thinner so as to be more beautiful. She wants to depend on others to keep her confidence, having no subjectivity. Though she aims to live strongly and passionately in her own way, she fails because she misjudges herself. But what else can she do, Kirino asks us. Kazue is murdered, but it is almost suicidal after falling in despair and finding nowhere to go after finding that no one loves her. Kirino shows us extreme cases in which patriarchal society causes the tragedy of obedient women ironically. She shows us the actuality of women's states of being slaves no matter what positions they have in patriarchal society.

Yuriko, on the contrary, confesses that she is a natural-born whore who is beautiful and nymphomaniac. Kazue, however, realizes that Yuriko has never loved any man when Yuriko is murdered. She knows Yuriko's murder case is suicidal, and that it will happen to her sooner or later. Yuriko's sister confesses that she knows Yuriko is very clever though she pretends to be the opposite. Kazue accuses the society which deprives her of what men easily can get.

Kirino asks us what the actual 'femininity' is by showing the cases of two contrasting women. Yuriko gives her prostitute fellow Kazue some advice, saying that she should abolish foolish imaginings about men. Yuriko tells her that old prostitutes are avoided by men because they reveal men's emptiness.

Yuriko symbolizes the contradiction of living purely as a subject of desire for men. She wonders if she is a nymphomaniac as she cannot refuse men's desire, while she needs some meaning for her existence. If she is faced with men's desire, she cannot refuse them.

She confesses she became a prostitute to pursue the meaning of her life. Prostitution is the only means of self-expression or subjectivity for her. Yuriko analyzes her personality as a typical Japanese who accepts others as they are, and recognizes her existence in the reflection of the others' eyes. Yuriko thinks, "I didn't want to be anyone's possession. In the first place, my desire was not some paltry affair that could easily be protected by some man." (116) Yuriko tries to be a free woman who refuses to be possessed by one man by becoming a prostitute who serves a lot of men instead.

Being Japanese and watching her mother, Yuriko understands how Japanese don't have their subjectivities. Japanese women tend to unite their identities with their husbands and sons, and use the word 'Uchi' to express themselves, but it means the whole family as well. Japanese men tend to depend on their identities determined by the company or facilities they belong. Kirino ironically describes how women have lost their autonomy unconsciously. It is, however, too deeply rooted in the Japanese mind, so many of them never realize how melted their subjectivities are into the group, which makes it difficult to act or say what they want, and causes them to lose the sense of freedom.

Yuriko, who is not allowed to live as she really is, sadly says in her mind she is free just in her mind. Yuriko realizes that nobody cares about her subjectivity because she is just a toy for a man. Practically she has no choice but to stay with a man who wants her as his toy. She begins to train to erase her subjectivity while she is with others, knowing it makes them underestimate her existence even more.

Kazue shows her identity card of the firm she works to her prostitution customers. Most of the men who look her card seem impressed with the fact that a worker in a first-rate firm works as a prostitute. She feels relieved to be recognized for her special existence. At the same time, though, she is more satisfied if she sees a man smile as if he were superior to woman. The man who sees her identity card says, however, the reason why he smiles is that he thinks she shows it in order to make herself more valuable, but in fact she lowers herself in value. She can't understand what he means as Kazue lives only in her fantasy. This tendency gets worse and she gets too thin believing she is getting more beautiful.

Yuriko and Kazue are not special cases, but they express the typical 'good' Japanese girls' condition of having no autonomy, never denying others. Their acquired obedience is the extreme case of what Japanese women are taught as a virtue. It is ironical that if women really obey what society forces them to do, the only way to live is to be a prostitute. Yuriko is clever enough to realize it is because she throws away her subjectivity that no one cares for her. It is, however, the only choice to survive for someone who is a half foreigner, too beautiful to live an ordinary life, and has no family to depend on.

Kazue notices that Yuriko hates men even if she is a so-called nymphomaniac. Kazue and Yuriko live completely opposite lives until they both become prostitutes and are murdered by the same man. Both of them seem to commit suicide by choosing the most disgraceful but most attractive job to despise men. Both of them find

prostitution to be the only means for them to feel they are alive. Yuriko argues that prostitution is the only means to live as a free woman in patriarchal society.

I suspect there are lots of women who want to become prostitutes. Some see themselves as valued commodities and figure they ought to sell while the price is high. Others feel that sex has no intrinsic meaning in and of itself except for allowing individuals to feel the reality of their own bodies. A few women despise their existence and the insignificance of their meager lives and want to affirm themselves by controlling sex much as a man would. Then there are those who engage in violent, self-destructive behavior. And finally we have those who want to offer comfort. I suppose there are any number of women who find the meaning of their existence in similar ways. But I was different. I craved being desired by a man. I loved sex. I loved sex so much I wanted to screw as many men as I could. All I wanted were one-night stands. I had no interest in lasting relationships. (143)

Yuriko says that prostitution is 'a job in which the finer points are as good as grasping emptiness.' (125) She determines that men are empty. She says, 'I can't live without men, yet men are my greatest enemies. I've been ruined by men. I'm a woman who has destroyed her female self.' (125) Yuriko reveals the actuality of the mechanism of patriarchal society which ruins women's subjectivity by the proof of her own destiny. For Yuriko and Kazue prostitution is the means of revenge towards the society that betrays them. They become suicide bombers in patriarchal society.

Finally both of them become monsters no one wants to approach. Their grotesque monster appearances they acquire in later life are their shells to protect them. Their souls are too pure and can be easily hurt by the malicious intention of others. They are destined to destroy themselves through the process of avenging themselves against society. They die the same sacred meaningful death as the heroine of *Clarissa*.

In *Gurotesuku* the story is written in three 'first persons'. Kirino shows us how people's perspectives toward others are different from those people themselves. She makes each individual reflect upon herself and analyze her own behavior. Kirino creates three parallel perspectives for the readers to judge all the doings of the three characters fairly.

The frequent use of a multiple narrative perspective by contemporary women novelists is closely related to the sense of divided self that affects contemporary women so directly, as they deal with the simultaneous demands of home and career, family and employment, past and future, myth and reality. Such division is at best disorienting, and at worst calls into question the reality of the self. (*Feminist Alternatives*, 113)

*Tokyo-Jima* is a fantasy, where several people are thrown ashore on an inhabited island which is later named after Tokyo as they miss Japan. The only woman among them is a middle aged woman Kiyoko, who seems to be the only person enjoying an island life and even gets fatter as she is worshipped as the only woman and the men try to occupy her. She enjoys her sex life voraciously and tries to survive with robust greed.

When some Chinese men also drift to the island and begin to live on the different shore of the same island, she even tries to escape from the island with them leaving her fellow Japanese, only to fail. Even in the disparate situation where she is humiliated because of her betrayal, she survives by using her weapon as a woman: when she realizes she is pregnant by the Chinese guy on the way to escape, she insists the baby belongs to her current Japanese husband. (The rule is that her husband rotates every year according to a lottery.)

There is no misery surrounding her survival as her toughness as a woman exceeds her unfair behavior. She is an anti-hero woman. She does anything to survive: first tries to enjoy the primitive life by being the only woman as a privilege, and then when she feels danger she takes advantage of her pregnancy as a means to survive as a sacred mother. Some of Kirino's women protagonists are rather like villains who use the role of men.

Readers tend to sympathize with those villain protagonists as their evil is a necessity for their survival. Readers don't believe that women's pureness and sincerity will work anymore. Kirino's women characters don't struggle in society as weak women, but fight with weapons of being women. Her characters are also honest about their sexual desires or their choices, which used to be men's privilege. Kiyoko feels captured by her sexual desire for her 'second young husband', but she never throws away her freedom to choose what she wants. She realizes that motherhood is civilization itself as she feels no affection for her unborn baby when she is away from the civilized world.

Humm (1992) touches on this social construction of femininity and motherhood when she invokes Adrienne Rich's words to the effect that "the repossession by woman of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the seizing of the means of production by workers. ... We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body." As if fulfilling Rich's words, Kiyoko repossesses her own body through her release from civilization.

Like many of Kirino's novels, *Tokyo-Jima* is also written in multiple perspectives. Kiyoko, the main protagonist who used to be an ordinary obedient housewife, reveals her true character after drifting to an isolated

island. She does everything to survive in the primitive world in contrast to her husband who grows disheartened and dies of food poisoning a couple of years after they arrive on the isolated island. While the other men seem miserable in many different ways, Kiyoko rather enjoys herself feeling like a queen as the only woman on the island, and enjoys her sex life with young husbands chosen in a lottery of rotation. When she finds the Chinese group trying to escape by the handmade boat, she never hesitates to deceive her fellow Japanese men including her present husband. Fantasy should be the escape from the dire actuality.

Kiyoko fancifulizes about her image of being an attractive woman in the isolated island, but usually faces actuality of the situation bravely. She feels bitter feelings against her original husband who holds his head high in civilization, but loses his confidence in the primitive world, never trying to face actuality. The men's world is described ironically as they either bury themselves in the group or try to depend on others, especially someone authoritative. In the trapped situation the men's fantasy worlds may be different from those of the women.

Kirino seems to use the method of multiple narrative perspectives as a means of giving the readers fair images. In *Tokyo-Jima* besides the main protagonist Kiyoko, Watanabe, a man who is hated by everyone, plays an important role as a narrator. This is fair for male readers as well and gives the novel multiple perspectives. Kirino doesn't stick to women's claims but tries to let both sides defend themselves. That method is very effective in letting the readers judge the actuality by themselves. What Kirino writes is just everybody's actuality which can be different accordingly.

In *Riaru Warudo* the story is written in the first person of five high school students, four of whom are girls being friends each other and one a boy who kills his mother. When these four girls are involved in the boy's murder, they reveal their unfulfilled selves and are led into the disaster by themselves. Four girls turn out to have pretended to be good friends while each embraces her hidden feeling. They just share the same fantasy in which they are innocent high school students. It is ironical that the character Mimizu or Earthworm, which is a nickname the girls gave him for his ugliness, pulls the trigger to reveal the actuality of the girls.

Kazue in *Gurotesuku* lives in her fantasy where she believes she is popular among men though she is actually the opposite in the real life. She has two faces as a clever, highly-educated skillful business person during the daytime, while she pursues her 'real self' as a prostitute who fulfills her desires to be loved by men. She foolishly believes her evil friend's idea in persuading her to be thinner if she wants to be popular among men. She gradually brings destruction on herself and is killed by a stranger. Kazue asks her friend's sister Yuriko who is also a prostitute why only women cannot live well. Yuriko answers that it is because women cannot have fantasies, which means that men themselves live in a fantasy where women are their slaves.

It is ironical that Kazue lives in her fantasy world, which actually destroys her. Though both Kazue and Yuriko are killed by the same man, it is a kind of suicide which no one can stop. Kirino describes the tragedy of the women who are trapped in the fantasy of being loved, and get lost in their way and go to the opposite way. A common anger and sadness are seen in the women who seek love directly and cannot get it. They feel anger when they cannot get what they want in the same way as men. Kazue just pursues being admired as a smart lady, well educated, but ends up being a grotesque monster or an ugly prostitute.

By showing the extreme cases Kirino shows the conflict of the fantasy and actuality ironically. The story is mainly told by Yuriko's sister who is full of jealousy and envious of her beautiful sister, but never fancies, just living in the severe actuality. That contrast shows the problem of the social situations for women who are forced to live with a contradictory sense of values in the present patriarchal world. Alice Jardine makes the following argument:

What then would be woman's place in the world? If women "incarnate" woman as the problem of identity, the discontinuity of the social contract, the symptom of Man, then "why not count on them to assume the irreducible difference that resists unification, since woman is there, and the sexual difference is there as well, and since woman alone can be the figure of division?" Lemoine-Luccioni would have us believe that only by stopping the struggle for autonomy and assuming our difference can women protect Man from the ultimate apocalypse. Saving the world would seem to be up to women... (*Gynesis*, p.171).

Kazue in *Gurotesuku* is a typical example who shows women's struggles for autonomy. The problem is that the society she belongs to is not fit for her simple innocent mind. She could live easier if she were a man studying hard in school and university, and getting a job in a prestigious company. She could be simply promoted if she worked hard and performed well, but because she is a woman, she is evaluated unfairly low. Society is cruel to her kind of clumsy women, and instead of rewarding them, it retaliates against them for their struggles for autonomy.

Kiyoko in *Tokyo-Jima* enjoys her paradise being chased by the young men as the only woman on the island. She lives in the fantasy that she is an attractive woman even to the young men, while in reality she is an ordinary middle aged fat woman who happens to be the only woman and the oldest among the survivors.

The multiple narrative perspectives show Kiyoko's actuality more clearly. She deceives other Japanese survivors trying to save herself by leaving the island with the Chinese group. When their attempt of escaping fails and she has no choice but to return to her original people on the island, the attitudes of the Japanese men change. They stop admiring her as the only woman, and decide instead to make same-sex couples, and despise her.

Kiyoko realizes she is in danger and pregnant, and decides to deceive them again saying her baby's father is her third Japanese husband who pretends to have lost his memory. Kiyoko finds that her helpless husband changes his character completely when she returns. He suddenly decides to control society on the island as governor. Kirino describes the change of the characters ironically. Her characters change their personalities easily according to the change of the circumstances. They reveal their actuality in the way multiple narratives do.

Contemporary women's narratives reveal a deep awareness of the "self" as fluid rather than fixed, and this awareness leads in turn to the revision of narrative as a revision of self: a socially created identity becomes replaced by or juxtaposed to an alternative identity that views the socially created self ironically. The emphasis on fluidity – on "becoming" rather than "being" – both mirrors the social and ideological upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s and contributes to a feminist critique of social constructions of female identity. (*Feminist Alternatives*, 75-76)

In *Joshinki* (2008) (The History of Goddess) Kirino attempts to rewrite the legendary origins of Japan. The whole story is based on the myth, *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) according to which the Goddess Izanami is betrayed by her husband Izanagi and is confined to the land of the dead. In Kirino's novel a new episode is added in which a daughter of a shrine maiden named Namima is murdered by her husband and meets Izanami in the world of the dead. Namima takes revenge against her husband Mahito, who betrays her for the sake of his own family and later marries Namima's sister to fulfill his original desire. Kirino is good at describing the disconsolate grudge held by not only women but all humans, the feeling anyone conceals in the depth of one's mind.

Once it is revealed, it never ceases to lead to a tragic result. This novel is full of irony; for example, Izanagi, who becomes an immortal being after he deceives his goddess wife finally returns to his former wife to ask for forgiveness, only to fail and die as a mortal human. The dead daughter of a shrine, Namima succeeds in murdering her deceived husband, Mahito by means of becoming a wasp after her death, only to find that he doesn't remember what he has done or even who she is. The myth is the typical fantasy itself and the most creative work of human imagination. Kirino revives the ancient myth with the theme of grudge in her ironical way. By showing the actuality in the myth, Kirino tries to revive long-hidden women's voices.

Kirino realizes that in the original myth, god and goddess are quite equal in their position named Izanagi and Izanami, whose fates are divided when Izanami dies and is put into the underground world for the dead. Izanagi misses his wife and even tries to revive his wife. He goes down to the underground, and visits her residence for the dead. Izanami asks her husband not to see her while she asks her companions in the dark world if she can leave the underground country. Izanagi, however, can't wait long enough and takes a glance at his wife's figure which has been changed into the frightening and nauseous one, and runs away. Getting mad, Izanami curses him saying she will kill a thousand of his people a day.

Izanagi answers he will bear 1500 babies a day. This dramatic scene where the woman asks her husband not to look at her while she was doing something secret is the cliché of the ancient stories like *Tsuru-no-Ongaeshi*. The men who are asked not to look will take a glance at the actual figure of their wives. Such stories are common all over the world like in *Blue Beard*, though in Japan it is women who ask their spouses not to look at their actual figures.

Kirino not only revives the god and goddess couple Izanagi and Izanami, but creates the tragedy of the ordinary woman who should have existed in those days. Here Kirino describes the lesbian love between Izanami and Namima who share the grudges toward their husbands. Namima, who Kirino may have created named after the part of Izanami, has actuality of women's tendency to be deceived and betrayed. Kirino makes Mamima take her revenge by being reborn as a bee. Though Kirino creates heroines like Masako in *Out* or Kiyoko in *Tokyo-Jima*, she also looks through men's minds in the weak side.

Mahito, who deceives Namima, is also a victim of discrimination and makes a long-vision plan, deceiving Namima and throws her away after she gives birth to a baby girl. Then he disguises that baby as if his own mother gave birth. Mahito also tries to take revenge for his cruel treatment by the conventional law and changes the fate of his family. Kirino doesn't hesitate to describe cowardly, mean men's behavior with a little mercy. Watanabe in *Tokyo-Jima* is a nauseously weird man. Kirino's reality-show which describes the actuality of human ugliness attracts us who tend to live in our own fantasy, knowing we have to face our actuality. Kirino doesn't show us the hope at the end and leaves us unsolved questions which we have to solve by ourselves.

### Conclusion

After being shown the dire actuality, we still have to live on. Kirino leaves us a number of hints for solutions as her characters still keep on their imperfect lives in our minds. Kirino seems to tell us that living the imperfect life of the imperfect person is also something, and that it constitutes actuality.

Kirino says in an interview she is glad to be a woman, as women are not part of the mainstream. Though Kirino can be called a feminist writer for her perspective and denunciation of ill-treated women, she is enjoying the weak side of her femininity as well. This contradictory sense of values is common in the writing of Angela Carter and Tawada Yoko as well.

Kirino's novels are based on actuality, or the real dreadful nature of a human beings. She finds some people do feel their suffering their pleasure. Kirino seems to ask us then why we feel pity for others. She must have had strong compassion on the people who suffer from the evil intention or unreasonable society, and decided to avenge herself. The revealing of the actuality, however, gives us the courage to face ourselves instead of holding hostile feelings toward the others. Her sincere description of women's desire and sexuality cultivates a new possibility for feminist literature.

Although Kirino contributes to the waking of women's consciousness in Japan, she is a socialist in tackling the latest problems like suicide, homosexuality or 'Haken' (unfairly treated temporary workers). Her multiple narrator protagonists are not limited to women, but in many cases extend to men and sometimes Chinese or Brazilians living in the Japanese society. She shows us the darkness of human minds living in the present uncertain era, but her tendency to pay attention to those who have been ignored by society calls up the work of Doris Lessin.

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