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## CHAPTER 10



# Dangerous Women and Dangerous Stories

*Gendered Narration in Kirino Natsuo's  
Grotesque and Real World*

KATHRYN HEMMANN

IN JULY OF 2003, former Japanese prime minister Mori Yoshirō stated that women without children should not receive welfare benefits. “It is truly strange that we have to use tax money to take care of women who don’t even give birth once, who grow old living their lives selfishly and singing the praises of freedom,” Mori explained in a speech addressing Japan’s falling birthrate, which had reached an all-time low of 1.29 children per woman.<sup>1</sup> October of the same year saw the publication of the book *Howl of the Loser Dogs (Makeinu no tōboe)*.<sup>2</sup> Its thirty-seven-year-old author, Sakai Junko, howled the praises of the freedom enjoyed by older unmarried women while attempting to dispel unpleasant stereotypes surrounding women who had left their twenties behind without marrying. Although women who fail to breed may indeed be seen as “loser dogs” by male politicians such as Mori, Sakai argues that the augmented incomes that accompany freer access to the working world have supported a revolution in women’s lives. As a fortunate side effect, women are no longer pushed into undesirable marriages by economic necessity. Sakai’s justifications for the pleasures of the single lifestyle touched a nerve in Japan, and her book quickly sold hundreds of thousands of copies.<sup>3</sup> *Howl of the Loser Dogs* is filled with bitter sarcasm and self-deprecating humor, and its author makes no move to identify her manifesto as a rallying cry for women of the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, Sakai

is able to fashion a rational and reasonable rebuttal against the accusation that “selfish” women are responsible for perceived social ills such as falling birthrates and rising marriage ages.<sup>4</sup>

Anger at phallogocentric discourse and the double standards imposed by a patriarchal society at the turn of the millennium found its way into feminist fiction as well. Kirino Natsuo (b. 1951) puts this sense of political frustration to literary use in her best-selling crime and suspense stories. After graduating with a law degree from Seikei University, Kirino began to write romance novels and won the Sanrio Romance Prize for *The Ways of Love* (*Ai no yukue*) in 1984.<sup>5</sup> By the early 1990s, however, Kirino had turned to crime fiction. Her 1993 debut mystery novel under her current pen name,<sup>6</sup> *Rain Falling on my Face* (*Kao ni furikakaru ame*), won the Edogawa Rampo Award for mystery fiction, but it was her 1997 novel *OUT* that became a breakout success, winning the Mystery Writers of Japan Award and being nominated for the 2004 Edgar Allen Poe Award of the Mystery Writers of America when it appeared in English translation.<sup>7</sup> Her novels have continued to be commercially successful while winning ever more prestigious literary awards, such as the Tanizaki Jun'ichirō Award for her 2008 novel *Tokyo Island* (*Tōkyōjima*) and the Murasaki Shikibu Literary Award for her novel *The Goddess Chronicle* (*Joshinki*), also published in 2008.<sup>8</sup>

This essay focuses on the novels *Grotesque* (*Gurotesuku*) and *Real World* (*Riaru wārudo*), which were both originally published to great acclaim in 2003 before going on to achieve international recognition in translation.<sup>9</sup> Through these stories, Kirino responds to several strands of discourse on women and social responsibility that shaped public policy in Japan at the turn of the century. By allowing women to narrate their own lives in these novels, Kirino explores both the agency and the deception involved in both personal and political storytelling. Even as her female characters claim the right to tell their own stories, their attitudes toward themselves and other women reflect misogynistic social discourse.

The traditions of mystery and detective fiction place great emphasis on first-person narrators, who exercise absolute control over what the reader knows and does not know. These narrators are also able to guide the reader's interpretations of events while influencing the reader's perception of other characters. Describing the role of the narrator in international crime fiction of the twentieth century, Rebecca Copeland writes, “Generally narrating his story from a first-person perspective, the

private eye decides what constitutes truth. He locates it, names it, orders it, and acts on it."<sup>10</sup> Such privileges are typically considered to be masculine, Copeland argues; and, in much of the crime fiction of the twentieth century, the narrator is indeed a man. In *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition*, Priscilla Walton and Manina Jones illuminate an alternate tradition of mystery novels narrated by female detectives, demonstrating that "when women's detective fiction uses the first-person perspective [ . . . ] the gaze and the voice is female."<sup>11</sup> The narrators in Kirino's *Real World* and *Grotesque* are not police officers or private investigators, however, but rather the accomplices and victims of the crimes around which both novels are centered. Kirino thus ascribes narrative agency to people who are typically treated as minor characters in someone else's story. Since the narration these characters offer may be their only way to achieve subjectivity, these women elucidate their justifications for their attitudes and behavior at length. Both the teenage narrators of *Real World* and the adult narrators of *Grotesque* seek to win the reader's sympathy and understanding as they attempt to explain their frustration with the social and economic systems that limit their ability to control their own lives. Even as Kirino gives her characters free rein to rant to their hearts' content, however, she also encourages the reader to be critical of the internalized misogyny expressed by her narrators.

### Real Girls in *Real World*

Kirino's *Real World* has five narrator characters: a male high school senior who kills his mother, and the four female high school students who become involved with him as he flees from home immediately afterwards. These four young women, Toshi, Yuzan, Kirarin, and Terauchi, attend the same school and have been friends for years. They are drawn into the escape attempt of the boy, who attends a different high school, after he steals the bike and cell phone of Toshi, who lives next to him and indirectly witnessed the murder. Each of the novel's eight chapters is narrated by one of these girls or by the boy himself. At the end of the novel, Kirarin is killed in a car accident resulting from the boy's failed plan to hijack a taxi, and Terauchi is driven to commit suicide by the guilt she feels in the wake of the incident. The stress causes Yuzan to run away from home without graduating from high school, and a bitter and dispirited Toshi is left to pick up the pieces.

The male narrator of *Real World*, whom Toshi has unflatteringly dubbed “Worm,” is loosely based on “Sakakibara Seito,” the pen name of a fourteen-year-old junior high school student who killed an eleven-year-old boy in Kobe in 1997.<sup>12</sup> Three days after the murder, Sakakibara impaled his victim’s head on the front gate of the boy’s school along with a letter declaring his hatred of compulsory education and raucously celebrating the pleasure and release he found in killing. Sakakibara then sent a similar letter to the *Kobe shinbun* newspaper, taunting the police and justifying himself with confused statements such as “Maybe if I had been able to be myself since birth, I wouldn’t have had to do things like leave the severed head in front of the junior high school’s main gate.”<sup>13</sup> After being captured by the police, Sakakibara confessed to four other attacks. The victims of these attacks were girls, one of whom was found bludgeoned to death. The violence of these crimes set off a debate in Japan concerning the vulnerability of girls and young women to male predators.<sup>14</sup> In *Real World*, Kirino similarly associates Worm, her Sakakibara stand-in,<sup>15</sup> with four young women, but each of these girls has her own story to tell about Worm. None of them is particularly frightened of him, and they do not consider themselves his victims. If anything, they are in turn amused and disgusted by his self-aggrandizing posturing, and each of them associates with him for her own purposes.

By demonstrating her female characters’ surprising lack of concern regarding Worm’s potential to harm them, Kirino turns the reader’s attention to issues surrounding political notions of female vulnerability. In *Think Global, Fear Local*, David Leheny demonstrates that, although the 1999 Law for Punishing Acts Related to Child Solicitation and Child Pornography and for Protecting Children (*Jidō kaishun jidō poruno kinshi hō*)<sup>16</sup> was passed partly because of foreign criticism of Japanese sex tourism, it was also formulated in response to domestic fears concerning the breakdown of social order represented by the young women engaging in practices associated with “compensated dating” (*enjo kōsai*).<sup>17</sup> It was never entirely clear what these practices, which ranged from phone calls conducted through “telephone club” services to arranged visits to love hotels,<sup>18</sup> specifically entailed; but, as the legal age for sexual consent in Japan is thirteen, it would have been difficult to classify them as strictly illegal.<sup>19</sup> Measures taken to prevent compensated dating, such as increased police presence in youth centers like the Ikebukuro entertainment district of Tokyo, were less concerned with law and order than they

were with protecting notions of childhood innocence associated with school-age girls. As Leheny explains, “Children are seen not just as vulnerable—and therefore in need of protection—because of their size and lack of experience, but also as innocent, and therefore less deserving of the world’s myriad cruelties than adults.”<sup>20</sup> Ideas regarding innocence and the necessity of protection were associated much more with young women than they were with young men, and the legislators who proposed and passed the 1999 law were much less interested in protecting young women (who often became its victims)<sup>21</sup> than they were with protecting their own image of young women as innocent and virginal.

Through its parallels to the Kobe Child Murders (*Kōbe renzoku jidō sasshō jiken*), *Real World* challenges such notions of youth vulnerability. In giving the young male murderer four outspoken female accomplices, Kirino overturns the concept of female innocence, demonstrating that young women are not sweet and pure but instead acutely conscious of social pressures and the disappointments of the adult world. By banding together into homosocial groups and rejecting the adult world, the four female narrators of *Real World* are not retreating into a fantasy of girlishness often associated with cute (*kawaii*) culture,<sup>22</sup> but instead are expressing their frustration and disappointment with the fate that awaits them as adult women, who are typified by the mother whom Worm despised.

Terauchi, the most emotionally astute of the four girls, commits suicide at the end of the novel upon realizing that, as a woman, she will never be able to live without compromising her identity as a rational thinker and critical observer given the social expectations surrounding young women, who experience strong pressure from their peers and employers to be innocent, sweet, and finely attuned to the needs of others.<sup>23</sup> In her suicide note to her friend Toshi, she describes the psychological anxieties arising from conflicting demands on women:

I’m living in the middle of an unfamiliar transformation, I guess you’d call it, something mankind’s never experienced before, with the role of family getting more messed up than anybody imagines, changing day by day, growing more complicated and individualistic, something nobody can really comprehend, and I have to pretend to fill all these roles every day. Otherwise I can’t survive. That totally wears me out. In the reality of everyday

occurrences I've had to submit to people in order not to lose them.<sup>24</sup>

Toshi fully understands Terauchi's despair over the gendered expectations she must pretend to meet in order to be considered normal; not only must she achieve the same measures of individualistic academic success as a male student, but she must also be attractive, approachable, and friendly. If the life of a male student studying for college entrance exams is stressful enough to drive Worm to homicide, then how much more disheartening is the realization that the results of these exams are all but meaningless to young women, who are still expected to become wives and mothers while being systematically denied the same employment opportunities as men.<sup>25</sup> Toshi's anger, Terauchi's suicide, Kirarin's death, and Yuzan's rebellious flight from her family to live on her own in Tokyo are characterized not as consequences of their involvement with Worm, but rather as reactions against the alienation they experience at home, at school, and within society at large. The unhappy endings of these girls' stories may thus be understood as a form of literary attack against cultural double standards that allow no middle ground for young women to negotiate their own identities as they move into adulthood.

### **Working Women and Working Girls in *Grotesque***

In *Grotesque*, Kirino focuses on what happens to high school girls after they graduate and the adult women they become. By allowing her female characters to narrate their own lives instead of acting as the victims or villains in the lives of the men who surround them, Kirino removes these women from the anonymity of statistics and endows them with agency as individuals while simultaneously demonstrating their lack of freedom within a phallogentric economy of desire. Within this social economy, women measure themselves and each other according to their value to men, either by means of their sexual desirability or by means of their adherence to male standards of success that they can ultimately never meet. Because women lose value as they get older, young women are disdainful of older women, and older women attempt to preserve their youth for as long as possible while resenting younger women. This real-world unpleasantness is reflected in the narrative bitterness with which the

lives of the female characters of *Grotesque* are portrayed, and the novel's female narrators unwittingly internalize outward systems of misogyny as self-hatred. Like the teenagers of *Real World*, these narrators perceive high school as a dangerous environment for young women, who struggle to meet an impossible ideal of beauty and desirability whose logical conclusion is either prostitution of the body or prostitution of the soul. As they grow older, women are doomed to become disappointments if not outright failures. In *Grotesque*, Kirino thus reveals the system by which a woman's value is measured to be fundamentally flawed.

The primary narrator of *Grotesque* is an unnamed and unmarried thirty-nine-year-old woman who lives with her elderly grandfather in his government-funded apartment complex in "P Ward" on the east side of Tokyo.<sup>26</sup> She works part time in the ward office in the day-care section of the welfare division, where she investigates wait-listed applicants for the ward's forty-eight licensed day-care facilities, which are all operating at full capacity. Her story is set in motion by the death of her sister Yuriko, a prostitute who was murdered by an illegal immigrant named Zhang Zhe-zhong. Zhang also killed the narrator's former schoolmate Kazue, who, despite having graduated from a prestigious university and being employed at a large corporation, had also been working as a prostitute. The lives of these three women had been connected since high school, and *Grotesque* reveals how all of them have been betrayed by the phallocentric ideologies they unwittingly learned to embrace as teenagers.

*Grotesque* opens with the murder of Kazue, which parallels the TEPCO OL Murder Incident (*Tōden OL satsujin jiken*) of 1997, in which the body of a thirty-nine-year-old female office worker—or "OL"<sup>27</sup>—employed at Tokyo Power was found in an apartment in Shibuya's Maruyamachō love hotel district. Upon further investigation, the office worker, who had graduated from Keio Girls Senior High School (Keiō Gijuku Joshi Kōtō Gakkō), was revealed to have been a freelance street prostitute, and a thirty-year-old Nepalese man, supposedly one of her clients, was charged with her murder.<sup>28</sup> Adrienne Hurley cites Naitō Chizuko's *Empires and Assassinations* (*Teikoku to ansatsu*) as demonstrating how the media was able to create a story from the sparse facts concerning the case in order to entertain readers and viewers. For example, certain convenience store workers in Maruyamachō were familiar with the victim, telling police investigators that she would often buy low-calorie foods and that she was nothing but skin and bones.<sup>29</sup> From

these sorts of second-hand observations came lengthy speculations on the woman's entire life history, and respected political opinion magazines such as *Bungei shunjū* and *Gendai* devoted entire issues to explications of the incident. Many fictionalized versions of the story, such as Sakabe Shūichi's manga *Backdoor Quota (Ura noruma)*, quickly appeared on the shelves of bookstores and video rental stores.<sup>30</sup> Naitō argues that many of these publications, both highbrow and lowbrow, expressed excessive prurient interest in the love life of the victim, who was subjected to male fantasies of both the sexual and sociopolitical variety. Commenters overtly and obliquely suggested that her murder was a logical result of her perceived licentiousness and that her personal failings were a direct consequence of her career ambition.<sup>31</sup>

Kirino challenges this system of male-centered discourse in *Grotesque* by allowing the women involved to tell their own stories. The writer especially succeeds in deglamorizing phallogocentric fantasies of prostitution by showing that, even as prostitution functions as a problematic means of self-expression for Kazue, it ultimately fails the narrator's sister Yuriko, for whom it temporarily served as a means of income and a signifier of prestige. By the end of the novel, the beautiful Yuriko, who dropped out of high school to become a model and hostess, trolls the same street corner of Shibuya that Kazue, the graduate of one of the nation's top universities, does. The two are equally unsuccessful as prostitutes, and they both compare themselves to an old woman they call "the Marlboro Hag," whose territory they have appropriated. The Marlboro Hag does not have a backstory, and she doesn't need one; it is implied that, without a man to support them, all women end up in the same situation: old, ugly, and ignored. Just as they are doomed to fail in a competition with men in the world of work, women are also doomed to lose to other women in the competition for male attention. According to the phallogocentric economies of desire that constrain Kazue and Yuriko, women who cannot remain girls are doomed to failure. In the closing chapters of *Grotesque*, the narrator, who cares for her senescent grandfather and assumes custody of Yuriko's illegitimate son, prides herself on her usefulness as a feminine caregiver, but she continues to rate herself unfavorably against Kazue and Yuriko, blind to the misery caused by patriarchal hierarchies and competition between women.

Instead of living glamorous lives as economically successful "loser dogs" blithely thwarting conservative gender roles, the narrator of

*Grotesque*, as well as Kazue and Yuriko, demonstrates that societal norms of femininity and family are difficult to escape. The narrator's own problematic solution to the paradox of femininity is to remain a girl by remaining a virgin, thus retaining her value, if only at a symbolic level. At the end of the novel, she muses:

Once I graduated from college I took a completely different path from my model-turned-prostitute younger sister. I chose to be inconspicuous. In my situation, inconspicuousness meant living forever as a virgin, a woman who would have no contact with men. . . . A permanent virgin. Do you know what this signifies? It may sound wholesome and pure to you, but that was not actually the case. Kazue articulated it brilliantly in her journals, didn't she: to miss the only chance one has to have power over a man. Sex is the only way a woman has to control the world.<sup>32</sup>

By renouncing her sexual identity as a woman, the narrator sees herself as giving up on competing in a male-dominated world. For her own personal satisfaction, however, she stays in her grandfather's apartment and continues to wear her class ring from her elite private high school, thus maintaining some remnant of her privileged status of "schoolgirl" while abjuring the abject identity of an adult woman. The narrator, Kazue, and Yuriko have internalized misogynistic phallogocentric economies of desire that reward youthful beauty and heterosexual attraction. Since these women have realized that they will never be able to compete on a level playing field with men, they compete with other women for the attention of men, sometimes even within their own families. Since the female characters in *Grotesque* are too competitive with each other to communicate or to form alliances in the way that men do, their ultimate fate is to be either dead, as in the case of Kazue and Yuriko, or severely emotionally disconnected from the world, as in the case of the narrator. Within a male-dominated society, the pleasures of the independent woman are eclipsed by the nagging shame generated by every woman's inevitable failure to live up to unrealistic standards. By illustrating the effect of such impossible expectations on the lives of individual women in uncomfortably sharp detail, Kirino forces her reader to acknowledge their implicit misogyny.

Nevertheless, Kirino's characters are able to exercise a modicum of personal agency in *Grotesque* by telling their own stories. The novel's narrative viewpoint is fractured and more than likely edited not just by the main female narrator but by the secondary narrators as well, thus disallowing the possibility of any one definitive interpretation. Kikuchi Yumi has argued that the entirety of Kirino's novel functions as a conversation between the unnamed narrator and the writers of the documents she presents to the reader, which often flatly contradict the information the narrator has presented as fact. Although the primary narrator "asserts her subjectivity by claiming the authority to interpret the pasts of other people," she is clearly emotionally unbalanced and unreliable.<sup>33</sup> The firsthand accounts the narrator offers the reader, such as journals supposedly written by Kazue and Yuriko, are not any more trustworthy, however, as each narrator has a major stake in explaining and justifying her behavior both to the reader and to herself. Although all of the narrators of *Grotesque* deceive themselves and rely on misogynistic stereotypes to tell their stories, it is their prerogative to narrate their own lives from their own perspectives as individuals instead of as gendered embodiments of phallogocentric anxieties concerning the roles of women in a changing society.

### Telling Their Own Stories

In *Real World* and *Grotesque*, Kirino Natsuo critiques the contradictions inherent in phallogocentric discourses on women in Japan by demonstrating their effects on the women themselves, who find themselves trapped in a cycle of outwardly imposed misogyny and internalized self-hatred that they in turn direct toward other women. By lifting female "characters" from public discourse and transforming them into independent subjects by granting them the ability to narrate their own lives, the author establishes fiction as a serious and effective channel of feminist activism. Kirino's novels have been received well by critics and have reached a large and diverse audience<sup>34</sup> despite the dark tone of her writing and the explosive volatility of the social and political topics she addresses. In a postmodern world dominated by a powerful and inexorable news media, stories have an incredible power to shape not just the lives of individuals but also the trajectories of societies, and Kirino's

brilliant and compelling crime fiction demonstrates the ability of female-centric stories to provide a necessary alternative and counternarrative to mainstream discourses on women and gendered political issues in contemporary Japan.

Certainly, an author does not have the ability to shape legal and political discourses as directly as politicians or bureaucrats do, but many of the social issues currently being debated in Japan, such as the shrinking workforce, low birthrate, and aging population, directly concern women and the choices they make in their lives. By drawing her material from sensationalist news stories and hot topics in political debates, Kirino imbues her novels with the potential to shift public opinion and inspire the critical attitudes necessary to provoke social change. Fiction thus serves as a mirror in which women and men can scrutinize their lives, the limitations imposed on them, the future paths available to them, and the means by which they can shape the world to reflect their own identities and desires. The goals of feminist activism include not only social and political change but also the inseparable matter of cultural change, and rethinking literature by recovering and amplifying women's voices is a critical step in the transformation of the stories societies tell themselves about gender and equality.

## Notes

- 1 Anthony Faiola, "Japanese Women Live, and Like It, On Their Own: Gender Roles Shift As Many Stay Single," *Washington Post*, August 31, 2004, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A47261-2004Aug30.html>.
- 2 Sakai Junko, *Makeinu no tōboe* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2003).
- 3 Tomomi Yamaguchi, "'Loser Dogs' and 'Demon Hags': Single Women in Japan and the Declining Birth Rate," *Social Science Japan Journal* 9, no. 1 (2006): 109.
- 4 Married women with children have also been regarded as selfish by male pundits and policy makers, who view them as enjoying a carefree existence away from the pressures of the working world in a "woman's paradise" (*onna tengoku*). See Margaret Lock, "Centering the Household: The Remaking of Female Maturity in Japan," in *Re-Imaging Japanese Women*, ed. Anne E. Imamura (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 82.
- 5 Kirino Natsuo, *Ai no yukue* (Tokyo: Sanrio, 1984).

- 6 “Kirino Natsuo” is a pen name for Hashioka Mariko. Earlier in her career, the writer also used the pen names Kirino Natsuko for romance fiction and Nobara Noemi for young adult fiction. In addition, she has used the pseudonym Morizono Miruku for her work as a script and scenario writer for a genre of women’s (*josei*) manga referred to as “ladies’ comics” (*redizu komikkusu*, often shortened to *redi komi*), which are often stereotyped as disposable pornography for women in their twenties and thirties but frequently contain strong elements of social criticism.
- 7 Kirino Natsuo, *Kao ni furikakaru ame* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1993); Kirino Natsuo, *Out*, trans. Stephen Snyder (London: Vintage Books, 2006), originally published as *OUT* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1997).
- 8 Kirino Natsuo, *The Goddess Chronicle*, trans. Rebecca Copeland (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2012), originally published as *Joshinki* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 2008); Kirino Natsuo, *Tōkyōjima* (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2008). Detailed information on Kirino’s life and literary career can be found on her website, *Bubblonia* (<http://www.kirino-natsuo.com>). See also J. Madison Davis, “Unimaginable Things: The Feminist Noir of Natsuo Kirino,” *World Literature Today* 84, no. 1 (2010): 10.
- 9 Kirino Natsuo, *Grotesque*, trans. Rebecca Copeland (London: Vintage Books, 2007), originally published as *Gurotesuku* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 2003); Kirino Natsuo, *Real World*, trans. Philip Gabriel (London: Vintage Books, 2008), originally published as *Riaru wārudo* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 2003).
- 10 Rebecca Copeland, “Woman Uncovered: Pornography and Power in the Detective Fiction of Kirino Natsuo,” *Japan Forum* 16, no. 2 (2004): 251.
- 11 Priscilla L. Walton and Manina Jones, *Detective Agency: Women Rewriting the Hard-Boiled Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 14.
- 12 In the original Japanese, the nickname given to Worm by Toshi and her friends is “Mimizu,” which refers specifically to an earthworm. In contrast, the self-chosen pseudonym “Sakakibara Seito” betrays an almost humorous degree of literary affectation and is written with characters suggesting a meaning along the lines of “the sacred drunken demon of the rose.”
- 13 Adrienne Carey Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide and Other Desperate Measures: Narratives of Youth and Violence from Japan and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 164.
- 14 David Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local: Sex, Violence, and Anxiety in Contemporary Japan* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 59–63.
- 15 Like Sakakibara, whose real name has been withheld from the media according to child protection laws, Worm is not given a real name in *Real*

*World*. Moreover, Toshi's unflattering description of Worm is uncannily similar to Sakakibara's photo, which was leaked to the press and is easily accessible through a quick search on the Internet. Kirino references the online discussions of the Kobe Child Murders when Terauchi's younger brother shows her a picture of Worm that he has found on an online message board.

- 16 In the title of this law, the term used to refer to prostitution, *kaishun*, was presumably chosen over the more common term *baishun* in order to emphasize the illegality of buying sex as opposed to selling sex, thus placing the onus of responsibility on the men who engaged the services of prostitutes, not the prostitutes themselves. This emphasis is consistent with the ostensible purpose of the law, which was to protect innocent young women from lecherous older men. There is ample evidence to suggest, however, that the youth surveillance recommended and justified by the law was focused on punishing "financial deviancy" on the part of young women. See Sharon Kinsella, *Schoolgirls, Money, and Rebellion in Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2014).
- 17 "Compensated dating" is not necessarily a euphemism for prostitution. As Leheny, in *Think Global, Fear Local*, and Kinsella, in *Schoolgirls, Money, and Rebellion*, explain, the activities to which the expression refers were never clearly specified, but the general understanding as advanced by both news and entertainment media was that the practice involved young women going on dates (either in public places, such as a coffee shop, or in more private spaces, such as a karaoke room) for pocket money.
- 18 A telephone club (*terekura*) service is a phone number that a patron dials (sometimes from a booth in a small store devoted to the purpose) to be connected with a person (usually female) who may then arrange to meet for a date or for paid sex. Love hotels are hotels in which guests can book rooms by the hour; they are convenient for couples because of the anonymous and frequently automated nature of the check-in process.
- 19 The age of consent is set in Articles 176 and 177 of the Penal Code of Japan. However, most prefectural-level laws raise the age to 16 or 18. The age of majority in Japan is 20, and local laws further regulate sexual behavior involving minors. Based on where the offense occurred, sexual activity with a minor would be treated differently by municipal or district laws. Nevertheless, 13 remains the national standard age of consent.
- 20 Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local*, 54.
- 21 Young women became victims of the law in the sense that they were harassed by police officers (and, in extreme situations, incarcerated), whereas the men who paid for their services were not held accountable.

- In other words, the law resulted in the policing of female rather than male behavior.
- 22 See Brian McVeigh, "Commodifying Affection, Authority and Gender in the Everyday Objects of Japan," *Journal of Material Culture* 1, no. 3 (1996); and John Whittier Treat, "Yoshimoto Banana Writes Home: *Shōjo* Culture and the Nostalgic Subject," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 19, no. 2 (1993).
  - 23 See Alisa Freedman, "Bus Guides Tour National Landscapes, Pop Culture, and Youth Fantasies," in *Modern Girls on the Go: Gender, Mobility, and Labor in Japan*, ed. Alisa Freedman, Laura Miller, and Christine R. Yano (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).
  - 24 Kirino, *Real World*, 183.
  - 25 See Joyce Gelb, *Gender Policies in Japan and the United States: Comparing Women's Movements, Rights, and Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 41–63; and Tachibanaki Toshiaki, *The New Paradox for Japanese Women: Greater Choice, Greater Inequality*, trans. Mary E. Foster (Tokyo: International House of Japan, 2010), 227–264.
  - 26 Amanda Seaman describes the east Tokyo of Miyabe Miyuki's 1992 suspense novel *All She Was Worth* as a "working-class neighborhood circumscribed by the employment and lifestyle of its inhabitants. [It is] not the world of brand-name goods and foreign goods; rather, its inhabitants are focused on the needs and demands of everyday existence." In *Grotesque*, the narrator's description of "P Ward" as being right across the river from Chiba Prefecture suggests that the area is modeled after Edogawa Ward. See Amanda C. Seaman, *Bodies of Evidence: Women, Society, and Detective Fiction in 1990s Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 31.
  - 27 The "OL" of "TEPCO OL Murder Incident" stands for "office lady," or female office worker. Although the designation "OL" previously referred specifically to a quasi-secretarial class of female workers expected to retire after getting married in their mid-twenties, the term has come to be applied to any woman who works in a formal office setting. This shift may be partially a result of the gradual elimination of nonessential staff in large companies in the post-bubble economy of the 1990s, as well as the gains made by women in the workplace in this environment.
  - 28 After multiple hearings, Govinda Mainali was found innocent on the basis of DNA evidence and released from prison in 2012.
  - 29 Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 200; Naitō Chizuko, *Teikoku to ansatsu: Jendā kara miru kindai Nihon media hensei* (Tokyo: Shinyōsha, 2005).
  - 30 Sakabe Shūichi, *Ura noruma*, 3 vols. (Tokyo: Green Arrow Shuppansha, 2008–2009).

- 31 Hurley, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 200.
- 32 Kirino, *Grotesque*, 460.
- 33 Kikuchi Yumi, “Kirino Natsuo *Gurotesuku* ni okeru futatsu no monogatari: ‘Kataru mono’ no yokubō to ‘katarareru mono’ no teikō,” *Kokubun* 114 (2010): 50.
- 34 Davis, “Unimaginable Things,” 10.