MIYAMOTO YURIKO: IMAGERY AND THEMATIC DEVELOPMENT FROM MAZUSHIKI HITOBITO NO MURE TO BANSHU HEIYA

by

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ABSTRACT

Miyamoto Yuriko is generally seen as belonging to the proletarian literary movement which reached its height in Japan around 1930. Brought up amid the comforts and intellectual stimulation of a middle class background, Miyamoto actually began her writing career in 1916. She continued to write for thirty-five years until her premature death in 1951. Her personal life, and the novels which were born from it, passed through several stages of development. Her participation in the proletarian literary movement was merely one of these stages.

From the time of her first published novel, Miyamoto Yuriko was concerned with the plight of oppressed people within her own society. As she matured, her attention became focused in turn on women's issues, working class struggles, and, finally, the problems facing the Japanese nation in the early post-war years. Concern for the effect of the social environment on the quality of human life, and the concept of positive action to change that which restricts human potential, were not features of Miyamoto Yuriko's novels which emerged solely through the stimulation of the proletarian literary movement in which she took part during the middle years of her career. They were features which appeared in her earliest published works and which continued to be features years after the demise of the proletarian literary movement. The novels of Miyamoto Yuriko show consistency in their development, rather than a radical departure from the concerns of the years before her overt political commitment.
Through an analysis of imagery and thematic development in four novels from the most representative stages in her career, one hopes that the restrictive label of "proletarian writer" will be reconsidered, and that the scope and accomplishment of Miyamoto Yuriko's novels will be seen in a new light.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One MAZUSHIKI HITOBITO NO MURE</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two NOBUKO</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three KOKKOKU</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four BANSHŪ HEIYA</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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INTRODUCTION

Born on February 13, 1899 as Chujo Yuri 中条ユリ, Miyamoto Yuriko 麻本百合子 was the eldest daughter of Chujo Seiichiro 中条精一郎 and Chujo Yoshie 中条怜江. After graduation from Tokyo Imperial University, her father, Seiichiro, became one of Japan's leading modern architects. Her mother, Yoshie, daughter of the famous moral philosopher, Nishimura Shigeki 西村茂樹, was herself a graduate of the aristocratic Gakushuin school. Although Yuriko was born in Tokyo, the first three years of her life were spent in Hokkaido where her father had been sent by the Department of Education as a part-time instructor in the Civil Engineering Department of Sapporo Agricultural School. It was in Tokyo, however, that she first began her education.

Although the family income was modest during her early childhood, especially during the years that Yuriko's father was in England studying at Cambridge University, Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War and the stimulus it gave to the country's developing industrialization increased the demand for highly-trained architects and the Chujo family gradually attained upper middle class affluence. After graduating from elementary school, Yuriko entered what was later to become the girls' middle school attached to Ochanomizu University. She did well in her studies, particularly in Japanese literature and composition, but even at this early age she was somewhat unhappy with the restrictions imposed on her at this prestigious but conservative institution. Her home environment was relatively liberal. Yuriko's mother was very interested in literature, and as a child Yuriko was exposed to a great number of the Japanese
classics. She also studied piano and had access to the books on European art and literature that her father had brought home with him from Europe. By high school she was regularly missing classes to go to the Ueno Library where she read translations of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Poe, Wilde, Shakespeare, Chekov, Gorky, Turgenev, Romain Rolland and Neitzsche. She also began reading Japanese writers such as Mushanokōji Saneatsu 武者小路実篤, Higuchi Ichiyō 横田一葉, Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, and Nogami Yaeko 野上弥生子. Reading was not the only activity to which she devoted her energies; during this same period she also began to write. Wide-ranging literary discussions and artistic endeavors were encouraged at home, so it is small wonder that, having been nourished in this enlightened atmosphere, she began to feel alienated by an authoritarian school system.

In the spring of 1916, Yuriko entered the English literature department of Japan Women's University (Nihon Joshi Daigaku) 日本女子大学. With the publication of her first novel Mazushiki hitobito no mure 貧しき人々の群 (A Group of Poor People), however, she left school at the age of seventeen after only one term. The opportunity of embarking on a serious writing career, coupled with her sense of unease with the environment at school, probably contributed to this decision. An overnight success, Mazushiki hitobito immediately received the attention of established literary people. She subsequently produced a series of other short novels, but they did not achieve the acclaim of this first work.

Although Miyamoto Yuriko was brought up with few if any material discomforts, the subject of her short novels and of her posthumously published practice pieces is the poverty-stricken lives of the lower classes, landless peasants and vanishing race of Ainu. The material
on which these stories are based was not idealistic fantasy. The scene of Mazushiki hitobito was the Tōhoku farming village in which her paternal grandmother was the landowner, and at which Yuriko had spent her summers as a child. The story of the Ainu, Kaze ni notte kuru koropokkuru 風に乗って来るコロポックル (Koropokkuru Riding the Wind), was the result of several months spent doing research in Hokkaido. The humanistic concerns of these stories can be attributed, in part, to the influence of the shirakabaha 白樺派 (White Birch Group) which came into prominence after 1910 with Mushanokōji Saneatsu at its head, and to an offshoot of this group, seitosha 青髪社 (Blue Stockings), a feminist literary circle in which Nogami Yaeko was active. Yuriko was already familiar with both of these writers' works. She was, however, influenced more by social currents of the times than by the specific influence of any one writer. The shirakaba group came into prominence after the Russo-Japanese War when it broke away from the gloomy realism of the Naturalist school. The humanism and optimistic self-affirmation of the shirakaba writers reflected the positive attitude of the rising bourgeoisie, whose new economic power was a result of Japan's rapid industrial growth during and following the Russo-Japanese War. It was within this humanist current that Yuriko spent the formative years of her childhood and wrote her first published works.

In the fall of 1918, Yuriko accompanied her father to New York. When his work was finished and he had returned to Japan, she stayed behind to study at Columbia University. There she met Araki Shigeru 荒木茂, a scholar of ancient Persian languages fifteen years her senior. The following year they were married. Yuriko returned to Japan shortly thereafter because of her mother's illness, and Araki
followed six months later. The process of this marriage - which lasted five years - and the divorce which followed became the subject of her second major work, *Nobuko* ilder, published in completed form in 1926.

At an early age, Yuriko had decided on writing as a career. Yet she gradually came to believe that the nature of her married life with Araki was incompatible with this aim because of the restrictions this marriage imposed upon her. In terms of literary output, these five married years are generally considered to be one of her most unproductive periods. Instead of writing, she became involved in various social movements, including relief work for the Russian famine of 1922 and the Kanto earthquake in 1923, but she remained as yet politically uncommitted. She also continued her reading of literature and philosophy. Through her association with the writer Nogami Yaeko, Yuriko was introduced to the well-known scholar and translator of Russian literature, Yuasa Yoshiko *youfois* . After her divorce from Araki, the two women began to live together, and continued to do so until Yuriko remarried. *Nobuko* was written during the first part of this period.

1927 marked the tenth anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and to celebrate the event, scholars and artists from around the world were invited to the USSR. Yuasa Yoshiko decided to follow one of her teachers there and Yuriko went with her. Besides a growing interest in the Soviet Union and socialism, Yuriko was also beginning to feel dissatisfied with her own life and work. She took this as an opportunity to explore new directions. Her three-year sojourn in the Soviet Union was to greatly influence her future life and work. She began to make an intensive study of Soviet society, to read not only the new socialist literature, but also the Marxist classics. Impressed with the vitality of Soviet
society as it embarked on its first Five-Year Plan, she was particularly moved by the role that women were encouraged to take in the building of the new world. Equal rights, protection of motherhood and childhood, encouragement for women to join the workforce, and the role of the state in the education of its population were to become topics for her essays on women's issues. During these three years Yuriko and Yoshiko travelled extensively throughout the USSR, and in the spring of 1929 they met the Chujo family in Europe where Yuriko was to spend the next seven months visiting major European centers. The poverty of Europe's working class, the obvious social unrest on the eve of the great stock market crash and the rise of European fascism, were features that hastened Yuriko's acceptance of socialism and her commitment to political action.

Two additional events were to influence her strongly. Shortly before her departure for the Soviet Union, the suicide of the famous writer, Akutagawa Ryunosuke 芥川竜之介, sent waves of unrest throughout Japan's intelligentsia. Just prior to her departure for Europe, Yuriko received news of the suicide of her younger brother with whom she had been very close. In these two deaths Yuriko saw the impasse of modern intellectualism, and its defeat in the face of emerging historical currents. The solution, as she saw it, lay in political action. In a final letter to her, Yuriko's brother had stated, "Feel no hatred towards anything." But in response to this entreaty she wrote in her personal journal (Jihitsu Nempu 自筆年譜),

On the one hand, this unforeseen death—symbolizing to me the bankruptcy of the age—and on the other hand, the new Soviet society ablaze and progressing that I saw day and night, opened my eyes. I discovered a meaning, a shape and a direction which I could link to the struggle I had previously been fighting alone. In political action, I attained a completely different perspective. As an artist, I will never
abandon my uncompromising stand toward the present social system. I will never abandon my ability to hate. 6

She returned to Japan in late 1930 with the aim of participating in the workers' movement that was then at its height.

By 1930, the proletarian literary movement was also reaching its peak, and NAPF (All Japan Federation of Proletarian Arts) 7 had just been organized. The depression following the stock market disaster of 1927 caused a sharp increase in unemployed workers in the urban centres and the spreading bankruptcy of the farming population. The influence of the Russian Revolution stimulated the growth of the peasant-worker movements. The proletarian literary movement itself was also radicalized and further united by the periodic arrest and detention of communists and activists that occurred after 1928 under the Peace Preservation Law. The gradual swing of the proletarian literary movement from a broad united front movement into a highly political organization under the direct control of Moscow and the then-outlawed Japanese Communist Party, was a situation that must have seemed attractive to Yuriko, who had just spent three years absorbing the Marxism of the Soviet Union. 8

After joining NAPF in 1931, Yuriko began to devote herself to writing articles and essays introducing the new Soviet society to Japan. She was elected to the standing committee of NAPF, and became the person responsible for the Women's Bureau of the Writer's League. In October of 1931 NAPF was reorganized and became KOPF (Japan Proletarian Cultural Federation), 9 and Yuriko was elected to the central committee as well as to the women's committee. In addition, she became the editor for the newly-established publication, Hataraku Fujin (Working Women). With all these activities, her literary output remained relatively small. It was also about this time that she officially became a
member of the illegal Communist Party, but this was not known until after the war.

During her work in the movement, Yuriko came to know and in 1932 married, Miyamoto Kenji 宮本頴治, whose name she took, and by which name her works are now known. Yuriko was 33 years old, and her husband, Kenji, was a young and brilliant 24-year-old intellectual recently graduated from the department of economics of Tokyo Imperial University. Kenji, along with Yuriko and Kobayashi Takiji 小林多喜二, were central figures in KOPF. With the Manchurian Incident in the fall of 1931, and the country's growing preparations for war, the government found it necessary to suppress the domestic dissident movements which stood in its way. In March, 1932, another round-up of communists and activists was underway, and life became increasingly difficult for the people in the movement. In April, Yuriko was arrested for the first time and detained for three months for her participation in the proletarian literary movement. Kenji was forced to go underground. Their married life of two months was brought to an abrupt end and was not re-established for another thirteen years. In September, on the eve of the collapse of the proletarian movement, Yuriko was arrested for the second time. Government suppression of the proletarian literary movement reached its height during this period, and the wave of arrests was designed to destroy the influence of the Communist Party which controlled it. In 1933 Kobayashi Takiji was arrested and subsequently murdered by the police. Miyamoto Kenji was sentenced to life imprisonment under the Peace Preservation Law as a member of the illegal Communist Party. He remained in jail for the next twelve years until liberated after the Pacific War ended.
Yuriko was imprisoned for a third time in January, 1933, but was released hours before her mother's death. The threat of imprisonment did not abate in spite of her heart condition and the generally deteriorating state of her health resulting from her incarceration. In September, 1935, Yuriko again spent seven months in prison, during which time her father died. She was indicted for violations of the Peace Preservation Law and brought to trial, but she received only a four-year suspended sentence. The reason for the suspended sentence is not clear, but during the course of her trial, Yuriko was released on bail several times for health reasons, and was once even hospitalized for heart trouble. Perhaps the dangerous state of her health influenced the court's decision to give her a suspended sentence and put her on probation. Yuriko's membership in the Communist Party was never disclosed, by herself or by the small number of people in the movement who actually knew, and so she was able to avoid indefinite internment, unlike her husband, whose membership was public knowledge. To prevent public opposition as the Sino-Japanese war got underway, the Ministry of Home Affairs imposed a censorship on members of the popular front in 1937, and Miyamoto Yuriko was on the list. Subsequently, anyone who voiced opposition to internal policy was labelled a traitor. But, following the announcement of the Pacific War in 1941, freedom of speech was completely suspended, and Yuriko lost the right to publish until the end of the war in 1945. In December of 1941, she was again imprisoned and, during the following summer, the hottest in nearly seventy years, she fell into a coma from extreme heat prostration. Given up for dead, she was sent to her brother's home where she slowly recovered. She temporarily lost her eyesight and it remained impaired for more than a year. Her heart and liver were
seriously damaged by her imprisonment and, until her death in 1951, she never completely regained her health. Under such extremely unfavourable conditions, writing became difficult if not impossible. Between 1932 and 1945 there was a total of less than four years in which she was able to publish.

Despite her travails, Yuriko never stopped writing. Her experiences in prison were recorded in the novels Senkyūhyaku sanjūnen no haru (The Spring of Nineteen Thirty-two) in 1933, and Kokkoku (Moment by Moment), published posthumously. She also completed Koiwai no ikka (The Koiwai Family) in 1934 and Chibusa (Breast) in 1935. One of her greatest areas of activity was essays and articles on literary criticism, culture and society, on writers and their works, and on women’s issues. Although Yuriko’s actual literary output unavoidably declined during these twelve years, it proved to be an intense period of study and experimentation in which she gathered her experiences for the short five-year period after the war until her death. Yuriko did find an outlet for her creative energies in the thousands of pages of letters sent to her imprisoned husband. A selection of these were published in 1949-50 under the title Juninnen no tegami (Twelve Years of Letters), considered by many critics to merit attention as literary works of some value.

Unlike so many other writers who publicly gave up their communist beliefs under pressure, or who retired from the scene in silence, Miyamoto Yuriko never completely succumbed to despair, nor did she abandon her "uncompromising stand toward the present social system." During these years she showed unflagging optimism in the belief that
the storm would eventually pass. Her famous essay, *Fuyu o kosu tsubomi* (The Bud Which Survives Winter), written and published in 1934, is symbolic of her stance until the end of the war. She believed that like all winters, however severe, this one too would pass, spring would come, and the bud which had been storing its energies against the cold would send forth new shoots and blossom again.11

The Pacific War ended in August, 1945, with Japan's unconditional surrender, marking the beginning of the final stage in Miyamoto Yuriko's career. Those, like Miyamoto Kenji, who had been imprisoned under the Peace Preservation Law, were set free and the censorship imposed on writers was lifted. She began writing immediately, and in a burst of energy, *Banshū heiya* (The Banshu Plains) appeared in August, 1946, and *Fuchiso* in September of the same year. She continued to participate actively in social movements. The liberal trend which emerged directly after the war encouraged widespread political involvement. Peace, democratization of Japan, a new constitution and equal rights for women—all these Yuriko had advocated for years. The post-war peace did not diminish her role as an outspoken social critic and promoter of democratic rights.

Yuriko's works were generally ignored before the war, both by mainstream critics, and by critics of the left who considered her novels pre-dating her involvement in NAPF to be petit-bourgeois in nature.12 From 1946 on, however, her unflagging resistance toward the government during the 1930's and 1940's made her an instant heroine. It is not surprising that her first novels *Banshū heiya* and *Fuchiso* received the first post-war Mainichi Cultural Award.
Miyamoto Yuriko's organizational activities included the Women's Democratic Club, the re-established Japanese Communist Party, the New Japanese Literature Society, the Broadcasting Committee, the Union of Writers, the Cultural Publishing Committee, the Japan–Russia Friendship Association and the Department of Education Social Education Committee. Unfortunately, her already broken health could not take the frenzied pace, and in early 1947, her blood pressure high and her eyesight badly deteriorating, she retired from public life to devote herself to writing once again. *Futatsu no niwa* 二つの庭 （The Two Gardens） was completed in January 1947, and *Dōhyō* 道標 （Roadsign）, a novel in four parts that was to be her last, was written between October, 1947 and December, 1950, and completed just one month before her death. During this last stage, she wrote some two thousand pages of articles on culture, society and women's issues. She was a pioneer in the field of women's problems, and her *Watakushitachi no kensetsu* 私たちの建設 （1946） （Our Foundation） is now considered to be her most representative group of articles on the subject in the post-war period. On January 21, 1951, on the eve of her fifty-second birthday, Miyamoto Yuriko died suddenly of cerebro-spinal meningitis.

Miyamoto Yuriko's life is generally divided into five distinct periods. These categories, devised by Honda Shūgo, the prominent Miyamoto scholar, have been widely accepted and used by subsequent critics. Miyamoto herself categorized some of her early works, and the names of these categories are also used. For example, she called her first period the "humanist apprenticeship period,"14 which includes *Mazushiki hitobito* and others written during the two years before her departure for the United States. Honda Shūgo calls the second period
during which she resided in America, married and divorced Araki Shigeru, began living with Yuasa Yoshiko, and completed the writing of Nobuko, "the period in which Yuriko destroys the 'family'," whereas Miyamoto called it her "quagmire period." "Proletarian writer" is the name given to the third period which includes the three years spent in the Soviet Union, her return to Japan, her membership in the Communist Party, and her marriage to Miyamoto Kenji. Most critics see the following twelve years from 1934 to 1945 as another distinct period. Honda Shūgo has named it "the period when Yuriko destroys the 'state'." The post-war years from 1945 to 1951 comprise the fifth and final period, dubbed "Ariše, Singing Voices!" after the title of the first public speech Miyamoto gave following Japan's surrender.

The division made between Mazushiki hitobito and Nobuko is justifiable. Although a closer look at these works reveals a number of similarities, the common areas which do exist indicate a general pattern throughout her career, rather than characteristics peculiar only to her early period. More significant problems of interpretation arise when one tries to assess the following two periods. There can be no denying that her sojourn in the Soviet Union and her participation in the proletarian writers' movement influenced Yuriko, and that the twelve-year period from the dissolution of KOPF until the termination of the war were historically significant years for her. There does not, however, appear to be sufficient literary evidence to warrant the division of her works from 1927 to 1945 into two distinct periods. One critic has suggested that during the "proletarian writer" period when she wrote Ichiren no hipuroretariateki sakuhin — one of the Anti-Proletarian Novels (A Series of Anti-Proletarian Novels) and Kokkoku, Miyamoto Yuriko merely displays an
intellectual understanding of Marxism, and that her writing is sometimes
dogmatic, but that it is not until the fourth period, when she wrote
Koiwai no ikka and Chibusa, that she emerges as a true communist writer. Of the representative novels of these two periods, it is Kokkoku which
is the most artistically successful work, exhibiting a far greater control
over the subject matter than the other pieces. When viewed from the
standpoint of her total artistic development, Kokkoku as a novel more
clearly shows Miyamoto's transition from the early Nobuko period to her
writing after the war.

I feel that the novels written during the war years represent
a minor digression, rather than the main stream in which Miyamoto wrote.
She shows her concern for the problems of the working class in such
novels as Mazushiki hitobito, Kokkoku and Banshu heiya, but the central
color of these novels, as well as that of Nobuko, is not of working
class origins, but rather a middle-class intellectual who aligns herself
with the working class. In her novels of the post-war period, such as
Fuchisō, Futatsu no niwa and Dōhyō, Yuriko is also concerned with the
politicization of a woman intellectual and not with the life of a specific
character from the working class. These novels are fairly autobiographi-
cal, and the model for the central character is undoubtedly Miyamoto her-
self. In the novels of the war period, such as Chibusa and Koiwai no ikka,
however, the main characters are actually members of the working class
who are involved in the left-wing movement of the time, and they are
based on the lives of real people rather than on the life of the author her-
self, but the characteristic Miyamoto vitality is missing. The use of
working class characters and the proletarian movement itself as the sub-
jects for the works of this period indicates the level of control exercised
by the central committee of KOPF and Moscow over the artistic expression of its writers. Once the war had ended, and Miyamoto was once again able to publish freely, at a time when a rigid movement was no longer in existence, she returned to the type of characters that she had written about formerly. The type of character development in these later novels clearly indicates that Miyamoto herself was more at ease with the figure of the middle-class woman based on her own experience. Her depiction of these figures far surpasses her working class characters of the war period.

The reasons for the division of the 1927-45 period have more to do with the way in which the relationship between an author's life and her work are viewed by the literary world at large than with the nature of Miyamoto Yuriko's novels themselves. There is a tendency in Japanese literary criticism in general, and Miyamoto Yuriko research in particular, to place a disproportionate weight on the autobiographical influences in an author's works. When the autobiographical element is particularly strong, as is the case with Miyamoto Yuriko, this tendency becomes even more pronounced. An author's personal life cannot help but influence her work, and this is true again of Miyamoto Yuriko, who was very active in the major social movements of her time and who was in turn not left unchanged by them. The years 1933 and 1934 mark the transition from participation in a legal movement under pressure, to an illegal movement in which participation was punished by censorship, imprisonment or even death. These restrictions, or lack of them, did alter the course of her daily life. As biographical drama, the tribulations which she suffered at the hands of the government are sensational and not without interest, but we are talking about Miyamoto Yuriko, the writer, and not the private
individual. When divisions are made between different groups of writings, at least some of the evidence for doing so should exist within the works themselves, or else they cannot be justified. As pointed out, some critics feel that the works of the 1927-33 period display a merely intellectual understanding of Marxism, and that not until later was Miyamoto able to absorb it adequately enough for it to become her real world view. But no evidence is given for her supposed dogmatism, nor is there any given for the communistic world view that she is supposed to have achieved. Kokkoku, which was written during her so-called dogmatic period, displays an ease with political issues that is lost in some of the war-time novels which post-date it. The war years saw Miyamoto turn away from novels and more to essays on politics, society and literature in general. It is possible that these works show two separate trends, justifying a division between her writings before and after 1934. As the scope of this thesis is limited to her novels rather than her essays, these are questions which will not be dealt with here.

Miyamoto Yuriko herself divided her novels into different groupings, and subsequent critics have not considered it necessary to alter her decision. Judging from the incidence with which she is quoted as an authority on her own novels, one is led to believe that Japanese critics have great faith in the ability of writers to analyze their own creations with the required objectivity. More so than in the West, Japanese writers are also seen as personalities in their own right, and much publicity is given to their comings and goings, so that the personality and the personal life of the author assume as much, if not more, charm and interest as the creative works which have made her famous. Writing is seen as inextricably fused with autobiography, making a more impartial evaluation
of the artistic merits of the literature exceedingly difficult.

Miyamoto Yuriko is generally classified as a proletarian writer; consequently, a considerable amount of importance is attached to her writing during the years 1927-45—the period in which she establishes herself as a writer of this school. Japanese literary groups or ha, as they are known, tend to be exclusive cliques in which membership is determined more by personal allegiance to the group than by actual literary similarities. Miyamoto Yuriko did play an important role in the Japanese proletarian literary movement. But her involvement in it was not due to a radical departure politically or artistically from her earlier non-political period. Her early childhood was influenced by the environment of the so-called Meiji enlightenment in which she grew up, and her formative years saw the beginnings of Taisho democracy: these influences can be seen in her novels. Her movement towards the radical politics of the thirties and forties was a gradual process, and seen within the context of her earlier works, it was a fairly smooth transition. Miyamoto Yuriko neither made a sharp turn toward the proletarian literary movement, nor did she drift away from it once it had fallen apart and disbanded. Her early literary development carried the seeds for future points of contact with this movement, and while her writing was influenced by it, her works show a consistent direction which challenges the label of "proletarian writer" as one which restricts and diminishes the scope of her creative development.

This thesis will attempt to trace the development of Miyamoto Yuriko's writing through four different periods of her life. Mazushiki hitobito has been chosen to represent the first period in this development, as it shows the first, if somewhat unsteady, steps that she took. Analysis of a first novel can be very informative as it reveals the skeleton--the
bones on which the later flesh and muscle are attached. Nobuko will be dealt with as the work representing her second period, as it raises the question of women in society, their special role and the problems they encounter. Women's issues remain central to Miyamoto's novels thereafter, and her awareness of them draws her away from the idealism and vagueness of the previous period, and closer to the question of class issues in the following period. The years 1927 to 1945 will be examined as one period, and Kokkoku will be used to illustrate how the issue of class struggle was assimilated into her existing world view and the influence that it had on her writing. Banshu heiya is the result of years of pent-up emotions and creative energies, and it also indicates the direction which the remaining novels before her death will take. By looking at these representative works from four distinct stages in her career, one hopes that a better understanding of the scope and dimension of this writer's work will be attained.

Miyamoto Yuriko's novels are rarely analyzed from the standpoint of plot, characterization or imagery. Rather, criticism is generally confined to debates concerning the nature of her world view or ideological stance, but usually little evidence from the text is presented to substantiate such arguments. Content cannot be determined by totally abstracting it from the form which gives it expression. Similarly, a discussion of form and technique must eventually move toward a discussion of its meaning and significance. This thesis will attempt to discuss the most characteristic elements which appear in these four novels, then turn to a more general discussion of their significance in terms of Miyamoto Yuriko's literary development and achievement.
Chapter One

MAZUSHIKI HITOBITO NO MURE

Mazushiki hitobito no mure, Miyamoto Yuriko's first published work, appeared in 1916 when the author was seventeen years old. Its success with the literary world of the time was due in part to the age of this unknown author who had, through connections, managed to publish it in Chūō kōron, one of the main established literary magazines of the day. The novel lacks sophistication and depth, but in terms of Miyamoto Yuriko's later literary development, it is an important work which reveals the foundation on which her later achievements are laid.

The material for this short novel was based on the childhood experiences of the author during summer holidays in the Tōhoku region where her grandmother was the landowner in the village. The story reflects Miyamoto's growing awareness of the socio-economic inequalities of the sharecroppers of this village. A young girl, who refers to herself merely as "I" (watakushi 私) throughout the story, goes to her grandmother's village for the summer. As she walks through the village, she comes across a group of children left for the day by their parents while they work in the fields. She watches them, made irritable by hunger, fight over a few meagre potatoes which they cook for their meal. When she tries to say a few kind words to them, she is rebuffed and driven away by a barrage of stones. Humiliated, she begins to look for the reasons for their actions, and decides that she must show them that she is their friend and not their foe. Consequently, she engages in a series of good deeds, giving them what food, clothing and small amounts of money
she is permitted to take from her grandmother's home. But the sharecroppers do not respond favourably. They take advantage of her, and when the crops are being harvested, steal produce from the fields. A group of women from a Christian church in a nearby town organize distribution of alms to the poor of the region, but the small amount of money that they give creates even more problems, as families fight over how it should be spent, and some turn to drink and even alcoholism. During a violent storm, the village idiot, who has become an alcoholic, dies, and another sharecropper, driven to despair over his plight, commits suicide. Faced with this situation, the heroine realizes that something more fundamental than sympathy and good deeds must be done to alleviate the situation. Young and inexperienced, she doesn't know what this should be, but resolves in the final lines of the novel to dedicate her life to finding a means by which their lives can be changed.

There is a pronounced sense of estrangement between the main character and the sharecroppers whose lives she observes. After her encounter with Jinsuke's children she refers to herself as an "impudent intruder," and says that "compared to those who are in touch with real life, how simplistic my feelings are. How bloated with cowardice and luxury." In the course of the novel the heroine becomes increasingly aware of why a rift exists between herself and the masses of the people, but the gap is never bridged. "I can never become one of them. I extend a bamboo pole from a cliff in an attempt to catch someone gone adrift, but I know that I am not trying to save someone with whom I myself am drifting. Despite feeling pity and sympathy, I cannot become one of them." The only thing that changes is the role the heroine feels she must adopt if things are to change: "But what if I was to try and float in the same stream?"
In what way, then, does the heroine observe the life of the lower classes? The most consistent means used to introduce and describe the group of sharecroppers is animal imagery. Through its use, Miyamoto is able to display her understanding of their poverty and the effects that it has on their lives. But at the same time it also intensifies the gap between the sharecroppers and the heroine, and suggests a certain fear or loathing of their bestiality. Animal imagery first appears in the opening paragraph of the novel and is used repeatedly throughout the story. Looking at the house of the sharecropper Jinsuke, the heroine describes it in the following way. "There were few windows, making it very dark, and the inside of the house was so filthy that, rather than calling it a human dwelling, it was more appropriate to call it something's lair." As the protagonist is pursued by the stones of the children, she describes them as "wild beasts." Zenbaka, the village idiot, appears on the scene a little later, reeking of the fish he is carrying. Like the stray dogs he is fond of, he has no fixed home; he is often seen sitting on the grass picking lice from their bodies. The house in which his family lives is "little better than a pig sty which had become a nest for lice and bedbugs the year 'round." Zenbaka's only child is retarded, and his mother's appearance is likened to a baboon. In short, "there was not a soul in Zenbaka's family who had a human quality." Encouraged to drink by the villagers who recently acquired money from the Christian townswomen, Zenbaka eventually becomes an alcoholic and turns to begging for food and liquor, degenerating into a "figure more pitiful than a beast...if he had been born as a cat, he would probably have been much happier." At the end of the story, Zenbaka wanders out into the raging storm. The next day, in the swamp of a neighbouring village, his dead body is found, hugging a dog, as lines of shrimp
weave in and out of his tangled hair.

Not all of the poor villagers are described in such an unflattering way. An exception is Shin-san, whom the heroine admires because of his refusal to become bitter and cruel like his own mother, who does nothing but slander and belittle him before the other villagers. He is really the only sympathetic character in the novel, almost tragic as he meets death by his own hands. However, Shin-san remains an exception to the general way in which the characters are described. Animal imagery reveals the stark and ugly reality that the heroine observes, and it is this reality that stimulates her to question the causes of such human debasement.

In combination with the narrative of the story, animal imagery produces a cause and effect relationship with the environment. This concern with the effect of the environment on the quality of life remains a central issue throughout Miyamoto Yuriko's novels, and although not dealt with in great depth in Mazushiki hitobito, it nevertheless illustrates the budding social consciousness which later becomes one of the characteristic aspects of her writing. The heroine of this novel points a critical finger, not only at the sharecroppers themselves for the type of life they live, but also at social conditions which have caused them, and she begins to understand that it is "because the world is unjust--because rich and poor are on parallel lines that cannot meet... ." Her analysis of the situation goes further than this, however, attempting to affix historical causes to the situation.

"My forbears were settlers of K village. At a distance of more than two hundred and fifty miles from the capital, this hamlet surrounded by mountains, was one of the poorer ones belonging to the villages of the same Fukushima Prefecture."
Early in the Meiji Era, on this frontier which my grandfather devoted half his life to clearing, a village was founded by immigrants from the various provinces. People from both north and south were tempted by the sound of newly-cleared land, and, dreaming of happiness, they left their old homes and came here. However, not only did these miserable folk not achieve success as they had hoped, but they ended up suffering more hardships than before. By that time they were getting old, had lost the courage to move to another place, and had no choice but to end their lives as sharecroppers in the town. Thus, now as in the past, they were as poor as ever.

But this was not all, for recently, when K town, which was only a few miles away, became the junction of the Kanetsu Line, there was considerable change and this village was also greatly influenced. Gradually, an urban sense of competitiveness which had seeped into the hearts of the farmers was fused with the various characteristics that they had displayed since childhood. Everyday life became more hurried and things were left undone.

The situation in the village was definitely not a good one. The disharmony caused by the shift from a long-protected environment to a new one, made everyone feel ill at ease with extreme poverty.

The "urban sense of competitiveness" of which the heroine speaks undoubtedly refers to the inroads industrialization was making on the traditional lifestyle of the farmers. And it is implied that the modern era had intensified, rather than alleviated, the distress of the population. Having known nothing but hunger, Jinsuke's eldest son cheats in the division of potatoes for his younger brothers and a fight ensues. Farmers are forever coming to the grandmother's house asking for money and favours, and their posture of obsequiousness barely hides their scheming and greed. In spite of repeated favours from her, Jinsuke steals produce from the fields, and in order to extract as much money as possible from the philanthropists from the town, the villagers dress up in their filthiest clothes to look all the more miserable. It is clearly socio-economic conditions that have caused this debased behavior, and it is
this which distresses the heroine.

But the protagonist does not see herself as a blameless observer. Her initial response to the behavior of the fighting children is disgust, but when she reflects on her own actions, she realizes that she has been wrong in her attitude and begins to feel that she must show them that she is in fact their sympathizer. For she, too, is the product of a long tradition which has despised the poor. "Of course, I don't believe I had such stupid ideas as to make me consciously behave arrogantly. But it was frightening to think that because of long-standing convention, self-deprecation and humility were viewed as normal."¹¹ None of the good deeds that she embarks on leads to a happy result, but it is not until the women from the town appear that she realizes that her own methods have been wrong. Like the women, the heroine herself has maintained a self-righteous attitude in giving alms to the poor. "When I think about it, didn't the greater part of the things that I had done until now just satisfy my own heart which was longing to be charitable to people? I gave them clothing, money and food, and sympathized with them, but what meaning did this have in terms of their whole life?"¹²

Her solution to these problems is action. This attitude does not just appear in the final pages of the novel, but is rather an important feature of her character throughout. Her desire for action contrasts sharply with the passivity of the sharecroppers, epitomized by the suicide of Shin-san, and their fatalistic acceptance of existing conditions. Miyamoto Yuriko's criticism of the sharecroppers is implicit in their portrayal as passive and irresponsible individuals. They show little interest in the education of their children, and give no encouragement to the young to try and break out of their bondage to the land. The villagers
say that Shin-san's suicide is the result of bad karma from a former life which no one can prevent.

In opposition to this is the figure of the heroine who actively tries to find solutions to problems, revising her tactics after each new defeat. In the foreword to the novel, the author states that "no matter how much I am laughed at or spoken ill of, there is nothing for me to do but advance along my own path as long as I live." Later, seeing that her philanthropy has produced more problems than before, the heroine says, "...I am a person who does not know resignation. To 'abandon' something and quietly relax, and then to eventually forget about it is impossible...I cannot keep calm and say, 'well, that's just the way the world is'..." Again, toward the end of the novel, she repeats that all passive ideas are impossible for me. Whatever troubles I encounter...I have to do something. Rather than wanting to die, I want to push myself forward. And until my mind shrivels up and grows dull, and until there is no reason left for me to live, I want to survive to the best of my ability. Thus, no matter what happens, I cannot throw my life away like the women of long ago.

A striking feature of this work is the optimism which pervades it, in contrast to the depressing reality which is described. None of the sharecroppers exude any optimism whatsoever, but it is present in the musings of the heroine and in the way in which the natural world is described. The sun, called tendō-sama, appears several times throughout the novel and, in combination with the natural world, which is described as lush and plentiful, it evokes a sense of benevolence and well-being. It is to the sun that the heroine addresses her last sentimental outburst, dedicating herself to a life of action in the final lines of the novel. Early in the story, natural imagery is used to
contrast the reality of the life around her with what it could be. "I will quickly fill up that disgusting gutter which lies between them and myself, and produce a beautiful flower garden."\textsuperscript{16} This image of a garden is repeated once more toward the end of the novel when, faced with defeat, the heroine imagines that they are ridiculing her, asking her what has become of her flowers.

It is also in the final lines of the novel that the theme of love emerges. This love theme is not really developed, but it bears mentioning as it becomes an issue in Miyamoto's next major novel, \textit{Nobuko}. After the deaths of Shin-san and Zenbaka, the heroine wonders: "If I had enveloped them in a really big love, had tried to lift them up with compassion, maybe it would not have ended in Shin-san's death. Maybe it would not have ended in Zenbaka turning to drink... . But I never really loved them. I don't know how to love yet!"\textsuperscript{17} These words reflect the idealism of the heroine who believes that through effort, human love and kindness, the world and the nature of human relationships in it can change.

\textit{Mazushiki hitobito} is not the most artistically successful of Miyamoto Yuriko's novels. The ideas and themes which are expressed within it are certainly commendable for an inexperienced author, but there are flaws in its construction. One of these is the absence of any detailed character development. Although the main character's attitude and tactics change throughout the novel, the heroine herself as a person does not really expand or grow. Her budding social consciousness, her optimism and dislike of passivity, are all aspects of her character that are revealed in the opening pages of the novel, and basically they do not change. The sharecroppers themselves, although possessing individual
peculiarities, never develop into well-rounded characters either. Rather, they are types that are kept at a safe distance from the heroine. The author bemoans the existence of the "disgusting gutter" that lies between the lives of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', but throughout the novel, the lack of any human contact, verbal or otherwise, between the heroine and the sharecroppers only serves to intensify the rift and sense of alienation which is already present.

The division of characters into groups of 'them' and 'us' is not an arbitrary action on the part of the author. It is an aspect of how Miyamoto sees humanity, and although the nature and definition of 'them' and 'us' changes throughout the course of her career, this basic division of the world into opposing black and white groupings remains intact. This tendency is particularly noticeable in the stereotyped treatment of the Christian townswomen. Tensions arising from confrontations between contrasting groups can, when skilfully used as it is in some of her later works, produce tremendous vitality and drive. There is vitality in Mazushiki hitobito but it emanates mainly from the positive attitude of the heroine. The other characters lack independence and do not attain full development.

The description of the sharecroppers in terms of animals and bugs constitutes the closest thing approaching imagery in the novel. The central themes of the novel are developed primarily through the musings and verbal statements of the main character rather than through an orchestrated complex of images, revealing lack of experience in handling form and technique. In spite of these weaknesses, Mazushiki hitobito displays a number of important characteristics. The attempt to give rudimentary explanations to existing social conditions indicates a desire
to understand, not just the manifestations of human behavior, but also its causes. The use of characters from the lower stratum of society as material for the novel, and the division of characters into two or more opposing groups or classes, shows an emerging social consciousness even at this early stage. The connection made between positive action and change, and the optimistic belief in humanity's ability to alter its condition, are themes which subsequently reappear in Miyamoto Yuriko's novels.
Chapter Two

NOBUKO

Miyamoto Yuriko published Nobuko in 1926, ten years after the appearance of Mazushiki hitobito. The material for this novel was based on the personal experiences of the author, and it documents the six years during which she met, married and subsequently divorced her first husband, Araki Shigeru.

Nobuko, the heroine of this novel, accompanies her father to New York where the story begins. During her father’s stay in New York, she meets Tsukuda, a student of ancient Persian languages, who has been studying in the United States for fifteen years. During an influenza epidemic that Nobuko and her father succumb to, she and Tsukuda are drawn together. Upon her father’s return to Japan, Nobuko is left behind to study. When the relationship with Tsukuda develops, they decide to marry. Because of her mother’s illness, Nobuko returns to her parents’ home in Tokyo shortly after the marriage, and Tsukuda follows several months later. Her family, especially her mother, is outraged at such an unorthodox marriage to someone of a lower status and, in the months that follow, the family atmosphere is strained with tensions between mother and daughter, and Tsukuda and her family. Finally, the young couple move out on their own. But as the days pass, Nobuko becomes dissatisfied with her marriage and increasingly frustrated by the fact that her literary productivity has come to a standstill. After several years of self-searching and vacillation, Nobuko finally leaves Tsukuda. It is at this point that the novel ends.
**Nobuko** is a novel of sharp conflicts and confrontations, at times bordering on despair, but ultimately hope and the will to action prevail. In contrast to the main character of *Mazushiki hitobito*, who directs her gaze outward to society at large, and to a group of underprivileged people whose plight she feels is unjust, the heroine of *Nobuko* directs her gaze inward to her own personal sphere. And rather than the emancipation of a class of people to whom she does not belong, here she is concerned with her own liberation from people and situations which inhibit the growth she feels she is entitled to.

Animal imagery in *Mazushiki hitobito* was used to illustrate the debasement of the sharecroppers. It is used once again in *Nobuko*, but this time its development throughout the novel shows Nobuko's own emotional deterioration and dehumanization as the victim of an ill-fated marriage. In the final pages of the novel, it is also used to indicate the rebirth of Nobuko's vitality and optimism as she cuts her marital ties.

After Nobuko's arrival in New York, the confines of her hotel room are described as drab and monotonous. She compares her life to that of a vegetable: "She too wanted to discard the neither hot nor cold, vegetable-like existence which had enclosed her until now." In order to achieve this, she marries Tsukuda, incurring the wrath of her family. When he returns to her family home, tensions build between mother and daughter and Nobuko compares herself to a threatened animal: "Human beings possess the same kind of intuitive sense about the atmosphere of the homes in which they live as animals do about the safety or approach of danger to their lairs, which they can smell out instinctively." The couple move out on their own, but Nobuko becomes depressed about the monotony and mediocrity of their daily existence.
She feels lonely and wretched. Tsukuda assures her that she will get used to it, but Nobuko finds the situation loathsome and compares it to the plight of domesticated animals:

"More than anything else, this 'getting used to' something frightened Nobuko. That human beings would, in due time, get used to any environment, like domesticated beasts, was sad and terrifying. Would she too eventually become used to this life? Then, after many years had lapsed, interests and passions would disappear, she would become a being that no longer knew if she resembled or not the person she had once determined to become, and her life would just end."

Nobuko's relationship with Tsukuda deteriorates still further, and she contemplates separation. But she is unable to take the decisive step. One day, as she and the maid are talking, they discuss a sick fish that is bullied by the other healthier ones. Nobuko remembers that a few nights before, she had seen dogs chase and bite another dog that had just been hit by a car. The analogy made between Nobuko (or Tsukuda) and the dogs and fish is not altogether clear, but perhaps it indicates a situation whereby living creatures become so crazed that they engage in behavior rare under normal conditions. Shortly thereafter, Nobuko resolves to leave Tsukuda, but in doing so she has two alternatives: to retreat to her former childhood relationship with her parents where the future is straight and secure, or to make her own way into the future as an independent adult. Nobuko chooses the latter course: "Nobuko believed that she could not return to that which she had struggled so to leave. However scarred it may be, even a snake cannot put on the skin that it discarded the year before."

This is a turning point in the novel, and the animal imagery also reflects the change. Images of wounding, imprisonment and deformation give way to those expressing vitality, movement and joy. The birds
and snake that Nobuko sees during a walk in the park with her friend Motoko illustrate this trend.

It was said that during the earthquake the water fowl at this pond were hunted and eaten, but now it was filled with rippling waves that swayed in the glittering rays of the sun. Two ducks swam energetically on the surface of the water. From time to time, they would rise up spiritedly flapping their wings suddenly, showing their yellow webbed feet, and spraying water everywhere. Through the spray of the water, a small snake could be seen resting idly for a moment. It was an innocent, spirited and beautiful scene.6

The birds in partial flight in this scene eventually become the birds who fly away from their cages in the final sentences of the novel.

Nobuko meets Tsukuda one last time before the final break. In the past, her resolution has always failed her, but now she is steadfast and feels that her decision has been a just one: "A fish cannot live where there is no water. But does anyone say that the fish is therefore to blame?"7 When Tsukuda realizes that Nobuko is determined to leave him, he frees a group of small birds from their cage, saying that they have no need for the birds anymore. The birds are at first surprised by the open door of the cage, but gradually fly into the freedom of the air. However, one of the birds is confused by the open spaces and flies back to its cage, whereupon Tsukuda mutters, "Even the bird has come back...what about you..." but Nobuko has already opened the door to her own cage. "She could no longer tolerate being a domesticated bird."8

The description of scenes and use of natural imagery in Nobuko shows the advances in character development over Mazushiki hitobito. At the same time, it points to Miyamoto Yuriko's growing concern with the nature of environment and its effects upon the individual
psyche and human relationships. This imagery also demonstrates her systematic utilization of a more sophisticated form to express and broaden the scope of thematic elements.

As the relationship between Tsukuda and Nobuko develops, emphasis shifts from the cramped confines of the hotel room to the banks of the Hudson River that the two frequent in their walks. Nobuko's world is given more scope, and the vastness and free-flowing river is symbolic of the new direction in which she is turning. But the surface of the river itself is often "partially hazy" and "blurred a rosy hue," suggesting that Nobuko's understanding of the situation is not as clear as it should be. It is not until the final line of the novel that the haze disappears, and she is able to see "vividly and distinctly... each dark needle of the pines."³

The day Nobuko returns to Tokyo it is raining and the entrance to her home is dark and solemn, foreshadowing the stormy weather ahead in her relationship with her parents. As the situation with her parents deteriorates, another image emerges, sharply contrasting that of the Hudson River, and it indicates a shift in Nobuko's awareness: "Nobuko felt upset by the feeling that she was being hemmed in on both sides by firm and unyielding cliffs that her own strength could neither pull nor push away."¹⁰

Previously, Nobuko and Tsukuda had been fairly united against the opposition and pressures exerted by friends and family. But this image suggests that a rift has been created, and that Nobuko is caught in the middle. The rift is not mended when the two move out on their own. Nobuko complains that there are never any visitors to their home, and she and Tsukuda pass their days with few activities in common. They plant evergreens around their house, which
is sandwiched between other buildings in the crowded alleyway. Nobuko is pleased that the greenery attracts the neighborhood children, but the children irritate Tsukuda who scares them away. Nobuko's hopes, symbolized by the fluidity of the Hudson River, have been darkened by the life of the dark alley in which they live. It has become a dead-end road.

Thus, Nobuko talks to Tsukuda about the possibility of separation, but before a decision is made they go to a hot-spring resort for a holiday. The natural beauty of the scenery impresses Nobuko, and she hopes that amid these more sympathetic surroundings, the sickness afflicting their relationship will be healed. The two hike to a volcanic crater, and the journey is highly symbolic of the course that their relationship has taken until now. Everything appears to go well until they are hit by a violent storm, suggesting the external pressures and problems that they have experienced in their everyday lives. However, it becomes apparent that each one's purpose for going on the hike has been different, and they bicker over how they should cope with the change in the weather. They are literally not able to weather the storm, the pleasant atmosphere sours, the 'journey' is terminated, and the two go on their separate ways.

Because Tsukuda falls ill with tuberculosis, the final break is delayed once more. During his convalescence they visit an old friend of his. The meeting has a decisive influence on Nobuko. Sakabe is a botanist and his explanation about the effect of the environment on the life of plants and animals enlightens Nobuko on the nature of her own situation. Sakabe shows Nobuko pictures of trees in Manchuria whose growth has been stunted and deformed by the seasonal winds that
batter them. He also talks about the effect of the environment on the quality of life.

...certain plants and animals are able to survive, but that depends on natural good conditions. It depends on the location. Just anywhere on the face of the earth does not seem to work. Some plants cannot exist except in zones at certain northern latitudes. Some can't live except in the vicinity of the equator. Of course, placing them artificially in a hot house and using other means does not mean that you can't keep them alive. However, the trouble is that plants living in this manner do not bear fruit... . Human beings, too, can exist without dying in a physiological sense in almost any environment. But if the soil isn't right, they won't propagate.11

There are many suggestions at the beginning of the novel that the relationship between Nobuko and Tsukuda has the potential for future discord. But it is not until the couple take up residence with her parents that a rift begins to appear between them, and it further widens once they begin to live by themselves. The natural imagery traces the deterioration and eventual breakdown of their relationship. Their incompatibility is shown particularly in the three scenes where Tsukuda frightens away the neighborhood children from the trees, when he is adamant about cutting away the last of the roses even before they are finished, and in a later scene when he throws out a bowl of marimo12 that Sakabe has given Nobuko. The birds that he keeps in captivity are also symbolic of the eventual domestication of Nobuko that he desires.

Sakabe's discussion about the relationship between a suitable environment and growth and propagation is the key to understanding the significance of both animal and natural imagery. Like the stunted and deformed Manchurian trees, Nobuko's deterioration into a domesticated beast has also been the result of an unsuitable environment. She speaks of marriage as a 'hybrid' echoing Sakabe's phrase about the 'artificial
hot house' where living things are incapable of bearing fruit. The scenes where they argue over the planting, cutting or throwing away of plants illustrates, too, that their relationship itself is not growing, and that it is becoming stunted and deformed.

What, then, is the artificial environment that is inhibiting the natural growth of these characters? Nobuko's perception of the life around her is generally described in terms of restriction (semasa狭さ) and growth (nobinobi伸ばす), hunger and fulfillment. As the characters of her name suggest, Nobuko's goal in life is to "grow," "progress" or "advance." She states that "she wanted to remove obstacles, to untiringly confront life..." Nobuko first becomes aware of this sense of restriction when she is introduced to a group of Japanese foreign students in New York whose company she finds stultifying. "Somehow Nobuko didn't fit into this narrow life and the uneasy (nobinobi shinai伸ばさない) mood of the room. Even though they were in the midst of a new environment and life style, they saw nothing and heard nothing..." But her family was the obstacle to her personal growth which she had to break away from.

Her chief motivation for accompanying her father to New York was to live the life that she desired. Nobuko was the eldest daughter of the Saza household. There was a tendency for her to be the object of her spirited mother Takeyo's secret ambitions. However, since she was the daughter of a middle-class family, there were restraints which did not permit her to rush headlong into the life that she desired. For the past three years Nobuko was upset by the realization that her life had not yet begun..."

As her relationship with Tsukuda develops, Nobuko feels that marriage will enable her to break away from the control of her family, and that, at the same time, it will provide her with an environment
suitable to her growth as a woman and her development as an artist. Instead of the "oppressiveness, narrowness and mediocrity" of married life that she sees around her, Nobuko desires a freer form of marriage.

In marriage, however, Nobuko is not so easily released from the demands and pressures of her family. Her mother, who harboured hopes of her daughter becoming an established writer and who had wanted her daughter to marry as high as possible on the social ladder, is appalled at Nobuko's choice of a partner. Dialogues between mother and daughter reveal Takeyo's excessive concern—perhaps normal for the times—with Tsukuda's unknown but obviously humble background, and his lack of a secure economic and social position within the social class she feels appropriate to Nobuko's own background. Nobuko begins to realize that even if he did possess a more amiable and open personality, which he does not, he would still be an unacceptable match for her in the eyes of her family and society at large. In her attempt to break away from her family, it was precisely these things which Nobuko had found interesting and attractive about him.

If her family had been the only obstacle standing in the way of her growth and fulfillment, Nobuko's life should have changed once she and Tsukuda moved out on their own. But with each monotonous day, Nobuko begins to realize that marriage itself has begun to impose another set of restrictions on her.

They had a house by themselves, Tsukuda had found work, and for the most part their life had begun according to plan, ...but for Nobuko there was something about this life that she couldn't get used to... Nobuko did not fit into the role of wife. It was difficult, if not impossible, to say in a word why it didn't fit... . But the one thing that she did understand was the narrow scope in which her life revolved,
the heaviness and the painful lack of flexibility. And this was to be their life from now on... . After embarking on a life for which she had had so many hopes, she was unaware that their life had closed in on them like a pasture fence. But before long, Nobuko could feel herself face to face with an overbearing, unshakable husband.

Within the context of this narrow marital relationship, the theme of starvation emerges. At the beginning of the novel, Nobuko states that she wants to become a writer and write at least one good novel before she dies. She proposes marriage to Tsukuda on the condition that she be allowed to continue with her work. She makes Tsukuda promise that they will have no children, for Nobuko feels that they would become an obstacle to her writing. However, she is unable to settle down to work amidst the turbulent emotional atmosphere of her married life, and she finds more and more that "the absence of the necessary artistic atmosphere, like food itself, pained her deeply." As Tsukuda slips easily into the rut of middle-class marriage, losing his desire for change, the theme of starvation appears with more frequency. It is interesting to note that the only occasion on which Nobuko is able to write again is when she is at her grandmother's rural home, far from both Tsukuda and her parents. She speaks of her departure by train in terms of freedom and release from Tokyo's squalor. The "hybrid called marriage" is the artificial environment which is stunting Nobuko's growth, and in which she is unable to bear her artistic fruits. As one of her primary goals was to "remove obstacles" which prevented this, she must therefore take the necessary steps which will free her from her marriage.

Nobuko's tendency toward action rather than passivity appears repeatedly as a theme throughout the novel. Action and non-action are also seen in the contrasting stances of the heroine and the sharecroppers
in *Mazushiki hitobito*, but it is never developed as much as it is in the novel *Nobuko*. In the earlier work, it is only the heroine who shows any desire for positive action, and it remains merely another aspect which intensifies the sense of alienation between the main character and those around her. In *Nobuko*, Tsukuda is an essentially passive character and the conflict which develops between him and Nobuko, who is constantly straining against its stifling effects, delineates the incompatible personalities of these two characters. *Nobuko* deals with the problem in a more complex manner, and because there are a number of other characters in the novel who exhibit these two traits in varying degrees, the sense of total alienation which pervades *Mazushiki hitobito* is not as severe in this novel.

Tsukuda's passivity is revealed in a number of ways. One of the most striking examples is his inability to communicate verbally with anyone around him. Nobuko is aware of this and reflects shortly after she meets him that "Tsukuda was not skilled at making conversation. He was a man who could not initiate topics on his own." Shortly thereafter, Nobuko tries to discuss with him the war that is about to end. She is forthright in her condemnation of it, but Tsukuda's comments in this section amount to little more than a series of blanks. When invited to go to the theatre with friends, Nobuko asks his permission, but he only gives her a noncommittal answer. Their confrontation with Miss Pratt before they marry is another example of his inability or refusal to take a clear stand.

This tendency becomes even more pronounced when Tsukuda and Nobuko move back to Tokyo. There are several scenes where Tsukuda is unwilling to participate in the family gathering at tea time, and he is
referred to as a "foreign element." But the major conflict occurs when Nobuko's parents suggest that he be adopted into their family as a means of assuring a higher status for them. Nobuko refuses to even consider the matter, for it represents to her the conservative concerns of the family system. But instead of refusing the offer as Nobuko had assumed he would, Tsukuda merely hedges with his classic noncommittal reply, revealing his conservatism regarding traditional family values.

Life on their own, however, reveals an even more uncommunicative man. He seldom participates in any conversation and is described as cracking his knuckles as a standard response to Nobuko's entreaties. He is also content with the status quo regarding his work, and Nobuko is appalled by the fact that he is not interested in advancing his research from the level he had achieved in the past. Tsukuda's attitude toward his work appears at that point in the novel where Nobuko herself becomes more and more concerned with the development of her own work as an artist. Her growing desire for artistic advancement contrasts with her husband's contentment with things the way they are. The same contrasting attitudes are apparent regarding their relationship. Tsukuda refuses to admit that there is basically anything wrong, whereas Nobuko demands a radical change in their lives.

Up to this point in the novel, there are only scenes of confrontation arising from the contrasting active and passive characters of Nobuko and Tsukuda. But with the appearance of Sakabe, we are shown another character who attempts to put his ideas into action. Nobuko describes him in the following way: "If he spoke about deformed plants, he invariably reached a conclusion which somehow related this topic to contemporary life in human society. It never ended in a microscopic report."
That is what made his stories vital and attractive." In contrast to Sakabe is the figure of the artist who commits suicide. He is highly respected by Nobuko, and his death is a heavy blow to her, for by committing suicide, he has in effect relinquished his responsibility to act. Nobuko, herself torn by internal struggles and unable to reconcile her new awareness with her present situation, comes to realize that she too will meet a similar impasse in her own life if she fails to take the necessary steps.

In the final section of the novel, Nobuko begins to associate with a woman writer whose attitude is a striking contrast to the artist of the previous chapter whose life ended in suicide. To Nobuko she is a positive role model to follow, and Nobuko is impressed with her untiring efforts to overcome the many problems that she has encountered in order to develop as a writer. Through this association Nobuko meets Motoko, a single woman who makes her living by translating Russian literature, and is strongly attracted by this woman's obvious economic independence and intellectually stimulating lifestyle. Because these relationships appear toward the end of the novel they are not fully developed, but they show for the first time in Miyamoto Yuriko's novels a sense of ease and a shared purpose in life between characters. It is interesting to note that real contact between Nobuko and other characters occurs only with those people who are single, and who therefore stand outside the institution of marriage.

In spite of a number of advances in technical and thematic elements, there are certain areas in which Nobuko bears a close resemblance to Mazushiki hitobito. In the earlier novel, the main character assumes the posture of a benevolent sympathizer toward the group of poor
sharecroppers. She also expresses the belief that love and human goodness will eventually bridge the gap between the members of these two opposing social classes. The heroine meets with defeat throughout the novel, but this basic premise is never really challenged, and in the final lines she reiterates the hope that love will bring them together. This humanistic attitude is also evident in Nobuko, particularly in the first two chapters. Like the heroine of the earlier novel, Nobuko in effect becomes Tsukuda's sympathizer. Her initial attraction to him is not due so much to his personal attributes as it is to his poor background and lower social status. Throughout the novel, Nobuko attributes his darkness, his passivity and lack of self-confidence, to the fact that his fifteen years of study in the United States were years of hardship and privation. She feels sorry for him and is determined to help change his life. The heroine of Mazushiki hitobito felt that love was what was lacking, but felt incapable of giving it at that point in her life. Nobuko also feels that love is what is lacking in Tsukuda's life, but she feels that she is now ready to give it. Before her marriage, Nobuko states that:

"I believe in something. --- I think that love changes people.... In other words, good people who are of a lower social status due to circumstances or whatever can be raised by the proper influence.... I never like rosy-coloured youths who are healthy, light-hearted and sociable. They are uninteresting unless they are people who have experienced hardship.... Right now, Tsukuda's case is one of being in an environment that is dark. But I am hoping that he will get over it, and will eventually acquire a strong and lofty brightness."

But after a few unsuccessful years of marriage, Nobuko begins to realize that love itself does not have the healing powers that she had previously hoped, and becomes aware that within marriage other solutions are
necessary. "Either she would have to be reborn as a different woman, or the common social ideas about sexual life would have to change in certain respects for her to remain married without problems." In coming to this conclusion, Nobuko departs from the philosophical stance of the heroine of Mazushiki hitobito.

The systematic use of imagery to build scenes and to develop characters and thematic elements in Nobuko reveals Miyamoto Yuriko's budding artistic maturity. However, the introspection and the inner dialogues of Mazushiki hitobito are not completely discarded here. At times it tends to develop only Nobuko at the expense of the other characters. The internal debates of the heroine are at times repetitive and make the novel unnecessarily long, and with the often heavy-handed use of imagery, slow down the momentum of the novel. The names of some of the characters reveal a lack of subtlety in the imagery. Nobuko's name is derived from the character nobiru which means to "grow" or to "expand," and within the context of the novel it is significant but unobtrusive. The character used for her mother's name, Takeyo indicates the author's critical attitude toward this woman's supposedly "calculating" behavior. But the name that is the most glaring is that of Tsukuda. This character itself means merely "a cultivated rice field," but when ni is placed after it to make tsukudani, a rather obvious but cruel association is made. Tsukudani is a type of pickle or confection eaten by poorer people with great quantities of rice. It is cooked and boiled down for a long time, is extremely salty, and black and gummy in appearance. The name is a rather bitter attack on Tsukuda's spiritual poverty, the smallness and shrivelled nature of his life and goals, and the darkness of his personality. Tsukudani appears again in Banshū heiya in a scene where the heroine Hiroko, watches the bedraggled
survivors of the war eat their meagre lunches. Its use in Nobuko may not have been totally unconscious.

Nobuko attempts to explain the unhappiness and dissatisfactions of the heroine in terms of social causes, turning specifically to social institutions such as the family and marriage. It is an attempt to universalize the experience of the main character. Nobuko compares her situation with that of her grandmother's maid, Sawako and Motoko. Although a tenuous connection is made between Nobuko and other women, the novel never loses its highly personal nature, stemming from Nobuko's strong sense of self and her desire for self-assertion. Nevertheless, Miyamoto Yuriko's treatment of the story from the perspective of women's issues gives the novel great strength and vitality and a universality not present in Mazushiki hitobito. After Nobuko, the author never loses sight of the special role and distinctiveness of women in Japanese society. Nobuko, however, is not the story of a typical Japanese woman. She comes from a middle-class background with relative economic stability, is educated and highly motivated in terms of career and personal achievement, and is therefore set somewhat apart from the majority of women at the time that it was written. But seen in historical perspective, the issues in this novel, and the means by which they are resolved, reflect an awareness which is definitely ahead of its time. No other woman writer of the mid-1920's has attempted to expose the nature of marriage from the woman's point of view. Nobuko did not actually become popular until the end of the war, twenty years later, but today, after another thirty years, the issues and their treatment remain as fresh and vital as ever.

Within an historical context, Nobuko's desire for action takes on an added significance. The action that she eventually engages
in—divorce—is a radical departure from the idealistic musings of the heroine of *Mazushiki hitobito*. After the Meiji Restoration, marriage and the family gradually came to be seen as natural extensions of the emperor system, which demanded, at the price of self-sacrifice, loyalty and obedience. The significance of these institutions became even greater with the advance of Japan's industrialization and efforts at national unity in preparation for the eventual imperialistic ventures which took place a few years afterwards. Insubordination from members of the state family was not to be tolerated. Miyamoto Yuriko had always felt ill at ease with authoritarian institutions, and had left school because of dissatisfaction with an educational system whose aim for women students was that they become good wives and wise mothers (*ryōsai kenbo*). *Nobuko* is a direct challenge to this subservient role for women and, although at this stage it is non-political in its overt expression, it is highly political in its implications in that it questions one of the ideological foundations on which the modern Japanese state rested. The nature of the Japanese state was something that Miyamoto Yuriko was to become more acutely aware of in novels such as *Kokkoku*, and was to continue to struggle against for the rest of her career.
Chapter Three

KOKKOKU

Kokkoku is a novelette which clearly reveals Miyamoto Yuriko's departure from the humanistic concerns of her earlier two works. For the first time she turns to overtly political issues, using the proletarian movement and the police state as her material. Temporarily setting aside the problems of women in the family system and marriage, Miyamoto directs her attention to the broader issues of the working class which has been deprived of its basic rights. Her earlier two works also deal with social inequalities, but they are viewed from the standpoint of the individual protagonist. In Kokkoku, the situation of the central character is described within the context of a whole class of oppressed people, and the central concern becomes the struggle for physical survival rather than the previous humanistic demands for emotional fulfillment.

The story of Kokkoku is based on the experiences of the author during the spring of 1932 when she was imprisoned for three months without formal charge or trial. Except for the movement from prison cell to interrogation room there is little physical action, but events are dramatized through conversations between the protagonist and other inmates, and her debates with the thought-control police. Three specific features of this work will be discussed: imagery, character development, and the theme of positive action.

The central image of the novel is that of the prison itself, and it is around it that everything else is centered. The prison setting determines the nature of characterization. The world is systematically
divided into three opposing groups of people: prisoners, their jailers and a third group made up of visitors. The prison becomes a symbol of society and the Japanese state, a microcosm in which the nature of human social existence is analyzed.

What is the nature of life within the prison and what are the differences between the three groups of people? The sordid living conditions of the prisoners are emphasized in the opening pages of the novel. Twenty men are crowded into two cells; accommodation for the women is little better. Bad sanitation is illustrated by the way inmates are given their food: "At noon, a servant put the lunches and bowls of plain water down in the hallway near the outside of the matting. The muddy shoes of the prison guards were less than two feet away."² There is no privacy in the cells and little dignity allowed them even in the toilets: "The prison toilet had no door. Around the corner from the sink was a three-foot square concrete room at the end of which a clouded square mirror was hung. This was so that the guards could observe those relieving themselves."³ The inmates are not allowed to sing, nor do they have any freedom of movement, but the guards remove them from their cells at will and have total control over their physical activities. Weeks pass, and because of the lack of bathing facilities the prisoners become infested with lice.

My skin had become conspicuously dirty. Its luster was gone, and white flakes came off when I rubbed my arms. Lice wriggled out. I began to understand the unique way that lice itched. Startled, I'd look at my underclothing and would catch fifteen of them, including baby lice that looked like tiny red spiders. This was the state of things.⁴

The situation of specific characters reveals not only their individual plight, but also the division of all characters into three distinct groups. The first group of prisoners is introduced as "pick-pockets,
shoplifters, people who had jumped restaurant bills, swindlers and extortionists. The women's cell is composed of "a prostitute, an abortionist, three older women and a go-between" in addition to a madwoman. The protagonist, who is also part of this group, refers to these people as "the cornerstone of the world." There are, however, several other characters whose treatment in the prison is described in detail.

Imano, one of the few characters named, is a member of the proletarian movement. After a cold which turns into tonsilitis, he is given no medical treatment. He is interrogated, then beaten. As a result, the infection moves into the inner ear and his condition becomes serious, but the authorities vacillate over what to do. He is finally taken to a hospital where his condition deteriorates due to inept treatment following his operation. In a post-script we are told that his life is saved only after he undergoes another operation at a different hospital.

A young university student who is drunk is brought to the prison during the night. The police interrogate him also, and the sounds of the beating and the student's cries for mercy can be heard from the other cells. Unable to endure it any longer, the student finally vomits on the man who is abusing him.

Later, a young woman who is a striker in the current subway dispute is arrested as she leaves for work one morning. She is told that the police will soon question her, but is instead detained for several days and finally released only when her father comes for her. Near the end of the story she disappears and her father comes to ask the police as to her whereabouts.

Subsequently, another woman worker from the national railways union is brought in. She is arrested at her home during the night and
is badly beaten by the police in the process. A walking stick is forced
down her throat to make her cough up some paper that she has swallowed,
and her mouth and face are cut so badly that she cannot eat.

The protagonist, who refers to herself merely as "myself" (jibun 自分), is apparently a writer involved in the proletarian movement.
She is detained for three months without trial and it is only later in the
story that she learns the reason for her arrest—writing illegal articles
denouncing the state. Through interrogation, the thought-control police
try to glean information about other members of the movement and to find
out her own role within it. In the process her health deteriorates.

It becomes clear at the beginning of Kokkoku that these characters are no ordinary criminals. They have not been arrested for committing petty crimes as was the first group introduced. They are, rather, individuals from the working class, intellectuals involved in the worker's
movement who denounce the present society; or workers participating in
militant strikes to improve their pay and working conditions. They are
political prisoners who pose a threat to the existing power structure, and
as such comprise a homogeneous group who suffer the same inhuman treat-
ment in the prison. Their living conditions show them to be without rights
or power—even their right to life itself is repeatedly threatened.

Those responsible for the ill-treatment of the prisoners are the
guards and thought-control police, who have the power to beat the inmates
and deny them food and medical attention. They ultimately decide who will
be set free. In contrast to the relative powerlessness of the inmates, the
prison authorities possess weapons with which they maintain their control.
At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist is sent to an interrogation
room where she notices several towels used for torture. Later, she is
threatened with a bamboo cane. These suggest later scenes of actual physical abuse. The working conditions of the police are comfortable compared to those of the prisoners. Depending on rank, some of the policemen sport gold braid on their uniforms while others wear cheap pin-striped suits with meticulously creased trousers. Unlike the heroine, who must wear rough straw sandals, the police change into slippers in their work area, sit on attractive cushions, smoke cigarettes and sip tea. Others have gold fillings and use silver cigarette cases. Their sense of hierarchy and concern with outward appearances contrast with the working class characters who do not exhibit marked physical differences. The guards and police who run the prison system are meant to represent the ruling class to whom the workers are opposed and against whose power they struggle.

In addition to these two groups, there is one more which occupies a middle position. This group of characters makes only sporadic appearances, but its role is consistent and suggests another aspect of society represented in the prison. The group is composed of four characters and the first to appear is the protagonist's maid Yasu. She comes to the prison to ask that she be allowed to quit her post to return to her rural home where her father is a wealthy farmer. Her reason is parental pressure because of the recent events involving her mistress, the narrator. The protagonist understands the fear of her maid left alone in the house under police surveillance, but she also feels that, under pressure, "she just didn't have any real perseverance." When Imano's condition becomes critical a doctor is called in. His decision to move the patient is made with hesitation, and the protagonist senses "an attitude of clearly avoiding responsibility." He is obviously trying not to displease the authorities.
The father of the woman involved in the subway dispute comes to the prison to get her. He is a small businessman and has the air of a traditional Japanese. After his daughter's disappearance, he returns to the prison to talk to the police. It becomes evident that he has unwittingly caused his daughter's disappearance by spying on her activities for them.

The mother of the protagonist makes two appearances. She is worried about the state of her daughter's health, and suggests that she give the police the information they are seeking so that she too can be released. The protagonist returns to her cell and reflects that "many middle class families were being destroyed in many ways. And out of this the enemy was able to shrewdly gain the advantage for themselves." During the second visit, her mother is warned that she is being used as a spy by the thought-control police.

These four characters belong to neither of the two groups of people represented in the prison, but they have ties with each. They are portrayed as being weak and easily manipulated by those in power who take advantage of their family ties with the prisoners. It is parental pressure which causes the maid to desert the protagonist in a time of need. It is also the desire to avoid official censure which causes the doctor to downplay the seriousness of Imano's condition, and the heroine's mother becomes a "pawn" of the police to aid in her daughter's surrender. These four characters representing the middle class are not as clearly aligned as the other two groups. Because they are divided, they are easy prey for the group which holds power, and are used to cause divisions among the prisoners.

Many times throughout the novel the protagonist voices her hatred for the family system. The association made between family and
the police, and in a broader sense the state itself, reveals a change of ideological position over the conclusions drawn in Nobuko. In Kokkoku Miyamoto Yuriko comes to believe that the family system is merely a pliable tool that can be used to carry out the ideological designs of the ruling class.

Through the description of living conditions in the prison and the subsequent division of all characters into three groups, Miyamoto makes a statement on the nature of society in general. Using the prison as a setting, she is able to reduce existence to its bare essentials to show society as she perceives it. This society is composed of three distinct and opposing classes: the working class which is denied its right to struggle for a more equitable society, the ruling class which uses its power to prevent any movement from below which would threaten its continued control, and, lastly, the unstable middle class which co-operates with those in power. The aims of these groups are described as being fundamentally opposed, suggesting that the nature of existence is class conflict and class struggle.

Except for the protagonist who narrates the story, no one character emerges as a major hero(ine). The characters' existence, therefore, has meaning only in terms of their relationship to the larger group in which they belong. As a result, individual personality and psychological development in Kokkoku play a very small role. In Nobuko, Miyamoto Yuriko was concerned with the struggles of the individual to achieve emotional and intellectual fulfillment, but the working class characters in Kokkoku are placed in a situation where their collective physical survival is threatened, and where personality and emotional fulfillment have little bearing on their ability to live through another day.
Character development takes another form: instead of emphasis on the individual as in Miyamoto's earlier works, the main concern becomes the study of a broader class character and the important thing determining the nature of existence is allegiance to one's social class.

In *Mazushiki hitobito*, animal imagery was used in character development to show the debasement of the sharecroppers living in an unsympathetic environment. It also intensified the sense of estrangement between the heroine and these people, and suggested an unconscious distrust of them. In *Nobuko* animal imagery detailed the emotional state of the protagonist. As the type of animal imagery became more sympathetic as the heroine developed positive relationships with other characters, there was a partial weakening of the former sense of estrangement. Similar animal imagery does not exist in *Kokkoku*, and its absence indicates a significant change in Miyamoto Yuriko's view of humanity, particularly her view of the working class. Scenes depicting degradation and dehumanization are actually more prevalent in *Kokkoku*, but the fact that they are developed in ways other than animal imagery suggests that the author no longer feels separated from the oppressed classes that she is describing, and that she no longer sees them as bestial. The protagonist is crowded into the same dirty cell as the other inmates and is addressed in the same way as they are. There is antagonism toward the police and middle class characters who are used as their spies, but it is not present in the attitude of the heroine toward her cellmates.

Characters are developed through conversational exchanges, which reveal the characters' class stance, and their collective class character rather than their individual personality. In *Mazushiki hitobito* and *Nobuko* passivity and positive action were used to contrast the
attitude of the characters, and in *Kokkoku* the same theme is developed further. The four middle class characters are described as basically passive. The protagonist’s maid, Yasu, bends under pressure from the police and her family and is described as lacking "perseverence." The doctor who examines Imano is ill at ease. He suspends his professional judgement and complies with the prison authorities in order to avoid jeopardizing his own position. Despite the unfair treatment of his daughter, the father of the striking subway worker lacks the fortitude to demand an explanation from the police. His fear of authority makes him servile. On seeing his attitude, the protagonist laments: "why didn't he confront them head on and ask them directly what they had done with his daughter! Why didn't he hurl himself at them in protest?" Her own mother and sister display a similar attitude, for they are unwilling to incur the displeasure of the authorities who are responsible for her deteriorating health. "It was true that they were worried about me, but because they didn't stand clearly on my side and could not take heart in a decisive way by actively taking advantage of a rare opportunity, it was a hopeless situation." The authorities use the indecision and passivity of these middle class characters to betray the working class, and the protagonist condemns them as traitors.

The guards and thought-control police are not described as being particularly passive, but they are described as being insecure in their position of power. The interrogation officers are nervous--their hands shake, they smoke furiously and swallow stomach pills. Their pains-taking preparations to control the May Day celebrations reveal a fear of the potential power of the working class. All their efforts are concentrated in attempts to smash or contain the growing organization of the
working class. Their self-confidence is derived from their symbols of power: their uniforms, weapons of torture, and military might, represented by the planes that periodically appear in the story. The debates between the protagonist and the thought-control police, however, show that they are also ideologically insecure. During conversations, she repeatedly points out the irrationality of their arguments. When, for example, they deny medical treatment for Imano, she says: "You constantly go on and on about 'family harmony' and 'affection between parent and child'. But you couldn't ignore an inner ear infection before your very eyes. You couldn't murder the head of a family in prison, could you?" 

In another incident, she is criticized for the content of her writing. Shimizu, one of the interrogators, states his case as follows:

"For example, even if that was the truth there are things in life whose real nature should not be shown to people. Don't you think so? For example, the actual relationship between husband and wife is self-evident, but no one performs it publicly now do they? Eh? It's uncomfortable to speak the truth, isn't it? That's what I mean."
"For whom is it uncomfortable?"
"..........." 

At first the protagonist does not understand why she is being interrogated by the police, but she gradually comes to the conclusion that: "In the beginning it was undoubtedly to demonstrate to me the ostensible strength of Japan's developing police network. But the actual result was that I became a witness to their anxiety and frustration." 

The authorities' position of power can only be maintained by successfully forcing the prisoners to give in to their demands, either by verbal pressure or by physical brutality. But throughout Kokkoku most of the inmates stand united against the demands of the authorities, and it is this attitude of steadfastness which becomes one of the most important
aspects of their class character. In spite of his weakened condition, Imano continues to struggle, and his positive attitude is revealed in his will to survive. When the mocking sounds of the 'salvation' army are heard outside the walls of the prison, one of the waitresses displays her contempt by clicking her tongue at them and complaining of the noise. Later, another group of inmates describes how they banded together at another prison to counteract the ill treatment they were subjected to.

Miyamoto Yuriko does not, however, merely exhibit blind faith in the potential of the working class—she is also conscious of their weaknesses. This is revealed in her portrayal of the subway worker. When the protagonist learns of her disappearance from her father's home, she reflects that:

As I listened to the conversation beside me, I didn't think that she would immediately die. Nevertheless, I didn't believe that she would take refuge at the home of friends who were reliable during the strike, and that she would decide to embark on a new life, never to return to her home again. She wasn't that type of woman.16

The attitude of the protagonist harmonizes with the majority of the prisoners and, at the same time, her defiance is even more pronounced. Several times she demands food and medical attention for sick inmates and is successful in obtaining them. Her attitude toward the police and the middle class characters who betray her is one of absolute contempt. Her form of speech shows no traces of respect for authority, and she addresses them in the same way as she does the other characters. Her sense of outrage against society is best revealed in her confrontations with the middle class characters. As the doctor walks out of Imano's cell she stops him by shouting "chotto!" (wait a minute!).17 For a woman of the time to address a man of some standing in such a fashion is unusual, but
considering that she is also a prisoner, her tone of voice shows amazing defiance and contempt for authority. Later, when she discovers that her mother is being used as a spy, she reacts in the following way. "Word by word, I spoke as if strangling the power which was using my mother as a pawn. 'I-have-not-given-any-money!'" 18

Characterization in Kokkoku reveals many changes from Miyamoto Yuriko's earlier works. Opposition and conflict between groups of characters was present in both Mazushiki hitobito and Nobuko, but in these works it was the central character who stood alone against an unjust world. In the first novel, the heroine tried to show her sympathy for the plight of the oppressed sharecroppers, but her description of them in terms of animal imagery and passivity suggested a somewhat critical attitude toward them. Although these attitudes begin to change near the end of Nobuko, they are still present. The oppressed class in Kokkoku, however, is described in a different light. Most of the emphasis is placed on the day-to-day situation of the protagonist, but her individual plight is not shown to be significantly different from the other inmates. It is the first time that one of Miyamoto Yuriko's characters shows a consistent identification with the working class. In contrast to the sharecroppers of Mazushiki hitobito, these characters are also united against society. As a class, their character leans in the direction of positive action and change.

The belief in human goodness can be seen throughout all Miyamoto Yuriko's novels. Even in her earlier works, there is an almost instinctual rejection of obstacles and restrictions. As she becomes more overtly political in her orientation during the period in which Kokkoku was written, these beliefs are transformed into the conviction that human
reason will not tolerate oppression for long, and that those who are vic-
tims of injustice will collectively struggle for change.

The belief in human goodness is also related to the sense of
compassion which exists in her works. In Mazushiki hitobito the heroine
shows compassion for the sharecroppers, and in Nobuko, the same senti-
ment is apparent in Nobuko's attitude toward the deprived background of
her husband. Compassion is revealed in Kokkoku through the protagonist's
demands for food and medical attention for her fellow inmates. The in-
mates themselves show their concern for human dignity when they lie awake
in suspense on the night that Imano's condition reaches its crisis. Yet the
concern for human dignity suggests other changes in Kokkoku. In Miya-
moto Yuriko's understanding of the nature of class conflict lies the aware-
ness that men, as well as women, are society's victims and that social
contradictions cannot be resolved solely on the basis of sex. At the same
time, however, women's special place in society continues to be acknowledged.

As the title suggests, Kokkoku (Moment by Moment) relies on
the use of documentary realism rather than imagery and description to de-
velop its major themes. The prison which gives this work unity, without
which it would lose its effectiveness, is the only metaphor which is de-
veloped. For the rest, the facts are left to speak for themselves. Charac-
ters are rarely named, but where they do appear, the names of real places
and people are used. Imano Dairiki 今野大力 was an actual poet in the
proletarian literary movement, as was Kurahara Korehito 蔵原惟人,
whose name is mentioned briefly. The name Miyamoto also appears in
conversation and is meant to refer to the author's husband Miyamoto
Kenji 宮本顕治. Few present-day readers would be familiar with the
names of these people, and their use indicates the weakness of fictional
elements in this work.

This points to other weaknesses in characterization in Kokkoku. Characters are presented as stereotypes. This in itself does not necessarily constitute a negative element, since many writers use stereotypes to effectively illustrate truths about society. Readily recognizable, stereotypes can eliminate the necessity for bulky descriptive passages and serve as a type of literary shorthand. But successful stereotypes presuppose a homogeneous world view on the part of readers, which all readers of Kokkoku do not necessarily hold. The success of these characters is determined by the readers' understanding and acceptance of Marxist ideology, which divides the world into three opposing classes and which defines the working class as the only true revolutionary class capable of rising up and crushing the bourgeois state which oppresses them. When the reader believes, too, that class struggle is the essence of human existence, the characters in Kokkoku will possess a significance which transcends the restrictions of the novel itself. But when this is not the case, the character's life does not go beyond political rhetoric.

The problem of accepting the political views expressed in Kokkoku suggests yet another significant aspect of this work—who was the novel written for, and what are its aims? Kokkoku was written in 1933 but it was not published until March 1951, just two months after Miyamoto Yuriko's death. It was written during the short period when Miyamoto was actively involved in the proletarian literary movement just prior to KOPF's dissolution in February of the following year. Before we turn to a specific discussion of Kokkoku's position in the literature of the proletarian movement, it is necessary to briefly outline the general policies on art and literature set forth by NAPF and KOPF.
NAPF was established in 1928 in response to the government crackdown against the Communist Party earlier that year, and was an attempt to form a united literary front from the many splintered political factions within the proletarian literary movement. After its formation, strong Marxist-Leninist tendencies, emphasizing the class nature of literature and the need to promote proletarian art for the sake of class struggle, emerged, and these tendencies were subsequently further strengthened with the next round of arrests of Communists in 1929-1930 and the crackdown following the Manchurian Incident in 1931. The illegal Communist Party could no longer openly continue its mass agitation-propaganda work, and as government harassment of activists increased, the need to consolidate the various independent groups in NAPF under strong central control arose, resulting in the formation of KOPF in 1931. Henceforth, cultural circles were organized as auxiliary organs of the Communist Party and their role was to broaden Party influence within the proletariat.

To this end, political ideology was to take precedence over artistic concerns, and the function of the revolutionary writer was to discard the former individualistic perspectives and turn instead to issues which would show the advance of history through the process of class struggle. The literary movement came increasingly under the control of Communist Party policy, which was in turn influenced by Moscow: government repression served merely to intensify this trend. Miyamoto Kenji played a major role in the movement emphasizing politics over art. Yet after his arrest and that of other leading members, Kobayashi Takiji and Miyamoto Yuriko came to represent the orthodox political faction against which the membership began to rebel shortly before the final collapse of the proletarian literary movement.
It is difficult to state for certain the actual extent of Party influence on the type of form and content which exists in Kokkoku. A few tentative conclusions can be drawn. A reading of this novel shows that it was intended for an audience involved in movements described in the story. The author has taken for granted that the reader will already know the personal background of the protagonist, Imano, Kurahara and Miyamoto, etc., in addition to understanding the details of the strikes and broader issues which appear. Thus, the present day reader without the necessary background is forced to fill in the gaps with his or her imagination. The lack of supporting imagery to elucidate issues within the confines of the novel indicate a weakening of artistic technique at this point in Miyamoto Yuriko's career. These elements tend to date the novel, which lacks the universality to make it completely palatable for many readers today.

Background description to the strikes and struggles in Kokkoku does exist, but it is presented through the verbal asides of the protagonist. These asides are sometimes lengthy passages which disrupt the story and slow down the momentum of the narrative. In Mazushiki hitobito and Nobuko, the author attempted to affix historical and social explanations to human behavior. It is this same element which reappears in Kokkoku, although its effect is different. The protagonist, who is clearly identifiable as the author herself, is trying to "educate" the reader. Didacticism in Miyamoto Yuriko's novels is almost always present, but in Kokkoku it reaches an extreme level. The influence of Party policy in the literary movement is obvious, making the didactic element the weakest structural element in the novel.
When analyzed from a purely intellectual perspective, structural shortcomings can indeed be found in *Kokkoku*. There remains, however, much that is good. Despite a didacticism which threatens to alienate the present-day reader, *Kokkoku* is still highly readable because of the way in which Miyamoto Yuriko has used the prison as the main unifying metaphor. The absence of similar techniques in later works of the same period dealing with issues of class struggle is one reason why these works do not come alive. The brutality and indignities suffered within the prison give the theme of class struggle a sense of urgency and credibility not altogether present in her later stories. It is also an appropriate and natural vehicle in which to divide the world into antagonistic classes. Moreover, within a setting where humanity's fundamental nature is stripped to bare essentials in its struggle for survival, stereotypes do not necessarily deteriorate into cardboard figures without depth. They are neither more nor less than humanity exposed.

The subject matter of *Kokkoku* also indicates an attempt by Miyamoto Yuriko to broaden the scope of her literary concerns, and to deal with issues affecting more than the plight of the isolated individual. The tendency to move toward ever more universal subjects can be seen in all the three works dealt with so far. In *Banshū heiya*, which marks the beginning of her final literary phase, the concerns of the previous three periods merge to produce a unique novel combining the humanistic feminist concerns of the *Nobuko* period with the struggles of the working class to rise from the ashes of the state which has collapsed.
Chapter Four

BANSHŪ HEIYA

Banshū heiya was the first novel written by Miyamoto Yuriko after the end of the Pacific War. During the twelve years after 1933, Miyamoto's artistic and personal life was disrupted by periodic arrest, censorship and ill health. It is small wonder that her literary output became sporadic and that she turned instead to writing essays and letters. But with Banshū heiya, creative energies held in check for so long were once again given an outlet for expression.

In spite of her gradual politicization during the 1930's and her movement away from the humanistic concerns expressed in Nobuko, Miyamoto was ultimately not able to reject the validity of that novel's central concern with women's issues. In Banshū heiya, they emerge once again in somewhat altered form. Her return to the feminist concerns of the Nobuko period does not mean that her experiences during the war years had caused her to discard the political and historical perspectives found in Kokkoku. In Banshū heiya the themes of the previous two periods merge, creating a balance and wholeness which did not exist in either of the earlier two works. The strident class stance of Kokkoku is tempered with a greater emphasis on individual characters and women's issues, and the use of imagery to develop thematic elements reflects a greater sensitivity for technical concerns.

Banshū heiya begins with the announcement of Japan's unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945. Hiroko, the heroine, is staying in Fukushima at the home and family of her younger brother, evacuated there during the final bombing of Tokyo. Her husband, Jūkichi,
has been detained as a political prisoner in Abashiri Prison for the past twelve years under the Peace Preservation Law. With the war's end and the possibility of Jūkichi's release, Hiroko decides to go to the town where the prison is to wait for him. In the interval, however, she receives news that Jūkichi's younger brother Naoji 進次 , has disappeared in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, and she decides instead to go to Yamaguchi Prefecture to be with her mother-in-law. In October she learns that the Occupation Forces plan to free political prisoners, and she returns to Tokyo to await her husband's homecoming. The novel ends during this final journey.

Imagery in Banshū heiya generally progresses from darkness to light, silence to sound and paralysis to movement. In the process, the attitudes of the various characters are contrasted and developed. Unlike Kokkoku, where characters are from the outset divided into opposing groups which display fixed attitudes throughout the novel, Banshū heiya shows change and development in its characters. Although some characters do possess positive attributes from the beginning, the overall tendency in the novel is for characters, regardless of background, to start with passive tendencies and then move in the direction of action. Within this general movement there is variation—imagery fluctuates between darkness and light, silence and sound, paralysis and movement until the final pages of the novel when light, sound and movement finally emerge as the dominant mood.

Banshū heiya begins with a scene of stunned silence following the announcement of Japan's unconditional surrender.

At that moment Hiroko was alarmed at the desolation of her surroundings. The air burned in the intense heat of the August noon, and the fields and mountains were enveloped in the endless heat. But in the village there was not a sound. Not even the sound of coughing. Hiroko sensed this with her whole being. From noon until one o'clock on August 15th, an enormous
page of history was turned without a sound as the whole nation held back their hushed voices.  

This absence of sound is later viewed critically by Hiroko when she recalls her brother's attitude toward the war. "For people like me who ultimately do not have the power to do anything, it's better to listen in silence to what they tell us." As the war progressed, this side of Yukio's temperament became stronger. But it is not only Hiroko's brother who has succumbed to silence. The train which takes her to Tokyo en route to her mother-in-law's is packed with people, but they show no interest in their neighbours and no one talks. In contrast, the Ayusawas, with whom she stays, display a rare vitality, and in the evening Hiroko hears the sound of geta and bicycle bells as people make their way to a summer festival. It is stated that it has been a long time since she has heard these once normal city sounds.

The passengers in the next train bound for Hiroshima are considerably more lively and verbal than on the previous trip, but when the train is unable to go further, Hiroko's car falls into silence again. She can hear the sound of Korean voices laughing and talking from the next car, and above this floats a woman's voice singing the song of Ariran. It is a song symbolizing Korean oppression and defeat, but the lines "crossing the hills of Ariran" suggest continued struggle in the face of adversity.

Hiroko notices changes in Tsuyako, the wife of the missing brother. She is sullen and quiet, but her voice has a bitter edge to it when she talks to the maid and her mother-in-law: "Instead of the kind of warmth which would entice the heart of the person being called, her voice rang with a forced hardness." When Hiroko leaves for a few days to enquire about the missing brother's whereabouts,
Tsuyako doesn't even come to say good-bye. Gradually, however, as the days pass and life returns to normal, Tsuyako also changes and softens, so that by the time Jūkichi's release is announced, she is able to congratulate Hiroko on her happiness.

On the return trip to Tokyo, the train passes many villages hit by floods: "Not a sound could be heard. The deserted scene flooded by an expanse of muddy water spoke of the extent of the inhabitant's despair." Throughout Banshū heiya this same sense of despair pervades all the scenes depicting silence where characters have temporarily given in to defeat and are too weary to struggle against it. But each new silence is eventually broken: by the sounds of children at play, by the singing of Koreans, or by individuals themselves as they become able to face the future with brighter hopes. By the end of the novel, the travellers talk unabashedly among themselves, Koreans returning to their homeland whistle and sing, and the grinding noise from the wheels of the horse-drawn carts hitting the ruts in the road create a sense of rhythm and harmony which did not exist in the opening pages of the story.

Images depicting light and darkness are used in a similar way to develop the numerous characters which appear. The opening scene of Banshū heiya is set in the evening, and Yukio and his wife Sae debate whether to turn on the electric lights now that the end of the war has come. Yukio is hesitant and decides that it is safer to keep them off. But, later, when they finally turn them on, "the brightness after so long made the worn corners of the house come alive again... ." Yukio's initial hesitation is later contrasted to the way the Ayusawas decide to brighten their home. Although the following quotation is long, it effectively illustrates the contrasting attitudes of the two separate families, and reflects
Hiroko's critical attitude toward her brother and his wife.

When it became possible to brighten the lights at the house where Hiroko was living with her younger brother, Yukio, the man of the house, slowly brought out only as many white ceramic light shades from the closet as were necessary. She wiped them off, then Yukio took them and replaced the old ones. The blackout shades were half-tossed by the side of the packing boxes in the storage room. And that was it.

The shades in the Ayusawa's living room had not been dealt with in such a fashion. Shades which had been made to obstruct the light were remodelled by husband and wife, and changed to give off light. It was a trivial thing, but Hiroko who had seen every possible thing in her surroundings do nothing but change, either unconsciously or mechanically through external forces, found it refreshing that the Ayusawas, seeing the coming changes, had decided on their own plans and created their own light shades.

There is yet another movement from darkness to light which occurs during Hiroko's journey by train to her mother-in-law's. The dark carriage in which Hiroko sits is contrasted to the brightness and vitality of the next car where Koreans are laughing and singing: "There was an inexpressible feeling for the richness of life in their joyful spirit which filled the darkness."

Her mother-in-law's home is dark and gloomy, but when she leaves at last for Tokyo, Hiroko notes a small bright window in a door that had not been there before, and the light suggests new hope in their lives. During the return journey, the train is forced to stop. It is dark and raining and there is more evidence of flooding. As they leave Himeiji, however, the weather clears and warm autumn sunshine continues until the novel's end. The final scene of the Banshū Plains bathed in sunlight and echoing the cheerful songs and advancing footsteps of the many travellers produces the lasting sense of hope and optimism.

In Kokkoku, characters were from the start divided into three conflicting groups. Although they were described and developed within
the confines of the group in which they were members, their character and attitudes never changed. Those who were passive remained so until the end, and with the exception of the subway worker, the inmates remained firm under pressure and their sense of commitment was never shaken. The characters in _Banshū heiya_, however, are described in a different light. Before and during the war the working class did not rise up en masse to crush the militarist state, and part of the responsibility for the events of the ensuing years lay with their inability to mobilize effective resistance. Miyamoto Yuriko's realization of this can be seen in the characterization in _Banshū heiya_. She becomes aware that weakness and hesitation exist in all human beings—even in the working class on whom she had previously placed all her hopes for the overthrow of the state. Her criticism of their weakness is, however, restrained, for she realizes the price they have paid, and is still able to portray humanity as capable of strength and determination to eventually change that which is bad. Characters in _Banshū heiya_ fluctuate between silence and sound and darkness and light, but they ultimately move in the direction of the future and change, symbolized by light and sound.

Imagery which contrasts the state of paralysis and movement is yet another way in which characters are developed. The Tōhoku village on the day of Japan's surrender is described in the following way. "From noon until evening on the 15th, and even when it gradually became night the paralyzed stillness of the whole village did not change."

Paralysis continues for two or three days, and then by degrees people begin to move. An example of this is the family at whose house Hiroko takes a bath.
When she went on the evening of the 15th the loinclothed figures of Jinsuke (日の出) and his son had sat around the summer hearth where the stumps were burning low, and his wife Otome (おとめ) wore just a skirt after the bath. Their heads had hung down in fatigue. But lately, the appearance of the three of them had changed. Somehow since then they had become alert; they moved with agility, and when night came, father and son would pull their heavy wagon into the dark news of the cedar trees.¹¹

When Hiroko makes her preparations to leave, even her brother and sister-in-law show signs of stirring themselves, but it is the children whose behavior shows the greatest change. During the war, all play had to cease the minute the sirens blew. Now peace had given them whole days of uninterrupted enjoyment.

Hiroko describes the train she rides to Tokyo as a "rout train" because it is filled with demobilized soldiers in retreat, and its passengers are in a state of shock after the events of the past few days. But when she transfers in Tokyo and heads toward Hiroshima, gradual changes occur.

It had only been three days, but this train which had just passed through the capital and was heading along the Tokkaido road was not a rout train. The aftermath of August 15th had reached the second stage and the travellers appeared to be moving. They were not abandoning their homes, making off with anything that could be taken. They were people who had tasks to perform at the journey's end, depending on the new conditions in Japan. That was the feeling.¹²

Nevertheless, when Hiroko arrives at her mother-in-law's, the village still shows signs of inertia and paralysis. No movement of people or vehicles can be seen on the road, and no one comes to greet her at the door.

During the ensuing flood, people begin to move again, but it is during Hiroko's final journey back to Tokyo that the biggest change occurs. Up to this point in the novel movement is only sporadic and, indeed, on the first stretch of the journey, the train moves only in fits and starts.
because of damaged rail lines. Hiroko, with her weak legs and her companion almost blind with glaucoma, limp along through the evening rain toward the next town where a train is waiting. Gradually, "they overcame each succeeding obstacle and headed for Tokyo, getting nearer step by step."¹³

Previously, it was individuals who occasionally showed signs of movement and action, but by the end of Banshū heiya everyone is on the move, advancing on the capital: "The horse-drawn carts creaked along the straight line of the national highway and moved in the direction of their destination... All of Japan was moving like this."¹⁴

An interesting aspect of this set of images is the change in character development from the previous novels. The tendency toward positive action in central characters is well-developed in Miyamoto Yuriko's novels as far back as Mazushiki hitobito, but only the heroine, who is surrounded by a wall of passivity, attempts to change. Nobuko, too, struggles alone against the emotional and intellectual inertia of Tsukuda, although near the end of this work we are shown a few more examples of active people who take responsibility for their lives in the characters of Sakabe, Sawako and Motoko. In Kokkoku the number of active characters increases, but they are restricted to members of the working class. The other two groups of characters are hostile and thwart the workers' attempts at action. In the course of these three novels the number of characters struggling for change increases, but only involves limited groups of people. In Banshū heiya, however, in spite of initial setbacks and periodic confusion, all characters are eventually portrayed in terms of movement. This development shows a gradual broadening of the scope of Miyamoto Yuriko's worldview. By the end of the war, she has come to realize that all people,
regardless of class background, have the potential for change, and that all people bear the responsibility for bringing forth this change.

As in her previous novels, Miyamoto Yuriko attempts to show human behavior in terms of its relationship to the social environment, and *Banshū heiya* marks a high point in this development. For the first time, historical events are used as central issues in the novel, and are an integral part of its internal structure. Characters are portrayed within an historical context, and are forced to react and come to terms with the major events and calamities of the times. In *Nobuko*, events such as the First World War and the Kanto earthquake are mentioned, but they do not have any direct influence on the main characters' lives. They are used instead merely to show the passage of time. *Banshū heiya*, on the other hand, is structured around Hiroko's journeys throughout the country. The trains and roads on which she travels are themselves symbolic. They suggest that it is no temporary phenomenon that we are observing, but life itself, and the inevitable movement of history. Roads symbolize the past and future courses of history. During her travels to her mother-in-law's in the west of Japan, Hiroko observes the nation coming to terms with the path on which they have travelled so far. During her return journey to Tokyo she sees the changes that occur as they advance along another road leading out of the present and into the future.

The Japanese nation watches silently as an "enormous page of history turns." Hiroko describes the unconditional surrender as "the moment that history convulsed." What convulsed was the course or "road" that Japan had chosen until the day of the Potsdam Declaration. The brutality and power of the militarist state is also described in *Kokkoku*, and the protagonist repeatedly tries to expose the basic irrationality of its
ideological premises. In Banshū hēlya an irrational state gone mad has been smashed—ironically, not by a united working class, as the heroine of Kokkoku had hoped, but by Japan's enemies.

As the novel begins on the day of Japan's surrender, the past is revealed through a series of flashbacks by the central character: "For the past fourteen years, Japan's Peace Preservation Law had even imported the Nazi prison system, and one wasn't even allowed to breathe." She describes this period as a "heavy weight." Before her departure from Tokyo she recalls her visits to the prison to see her husband, and the door and walls of the prison building symbolize the extent of police power over their lives.

The heavy revolving door was opened slowly from the inside. The size of the door was several times the height of a human, and when she stood waiting by the small window, Hiroko's body felt powerless and as short as the weeds which grew at the base of the high wall. It was not only the wall's height which was unusual, for unless the revolving door was opened from the inside, even if she fell in a swoon against it, it was such that from the outside Hiroko's strength could not move it an inch.

When Hiroko arrives at her mother-in-law's in Yamaguchi Prefecture, she surveys the changes in the town and recalls how they have been brought about.

From that time, the Japanese war which had brought about the invasion of Manchuria and China, had spread more and more, and life began to change remarkably. Because of controls, business became difficult. The village was situated on a large river with fields strung out here and there between the low mountain peaks and woods, and was divided into upper and lower sections as it was called. Furthermore, it had become a town and was incorporated with Tawara which faced the sea two miles away. It didn't change from village to town by expansion through the previous form of rural development, but the fields and rice paddies had been turned into a town merely for military objectives. Then a new military road had penetrated the five mile stretch between Tokuyama City and the newly-constructed town. The road
was to be used exclusively by military trucks... The bus, truck and Datsun traffic which rushed over the narrow highway day and night shook the loose joists of Jūkichi's poor house from morning until late at night. From the second storey you could see trains full of soldiers waiting for a long time on the train tracks, and women from the town's Women's Committee served the soldiers tea and rice balls. The heart of this new military town was an enormous arsenal which mobilized the young men and women of the neighboring villages. At a set time in the morning and evening, the road before Jūkichi's house became filled with these people riding bicycles from their villages...

In this way the rural economy of the village was destroyed and warped to meet the needs of the new military economy. Jūkichi's home town is not the only place where such changes occur. Throughout the novel Hiroko sees other villages in the same situation, including the village in Fukushima where she first stays. But from the day of Japan's surrender, all but the ruins of these military installations vanish, and like the inhabitants, they are described in terms of silence and paralysis: "Until yesterday, military trucks and motor bikes had dashed along the needlessly wide road. But today, not one passed by. The road was white and dusty, silent and deserted...

The influence of the past on the present is not completely halted with the signing of the peace treaty. Towns like Jūkichi's whose economy has been built in recent years around military needs face total collapse once the war has ended. Industries cease to exist, the youth that was mobilized to work in them go back to their villages, and the towns become known as goke no machi (widows' towns). Since the construction of military roads was done with little thought for the ecological balance of the surrounding terrain, the road in towns like Jūkichi's destroys the natural drainage of the soil causing severe flooding when the autumn rains come. During her stay with her mother-in-law, Hiroko helps them fight
the flood waters; when she makes her final journey to Tokyo she sees other towns which have suffered a similar fate.

One of the most far-reaching effects of the recent past is that it has created roads on which the villages' sons and husbands who went to war will never return. Within these past and present movements of history symbolized by the roads, the characters of Banshū heiya act out their lives. And it is within this context that the contrasting imagery of silence and sound, darkness and light, and paralysis and movement should be viewed.

The cause and effect process of history does not stop with scenes of past and present ruins and destruction, but moves steadily out of these and into the future. This movement begins to appear after the flood and it is described in terms of natural imagery. The first instance occurs when Hiroko views the gutted ruins of the arsenal.

Since the 15th of August, the figures of people who had triumphed in greed in these various boxes had disappeared. Now where Hiroko walked, those with windows were left boarded up, and some buildings still with signs had become empty. Possibly because of the pelting rain of four or five days before, or maybe because they had become like that during the air bombardment, on the sidewalk in front a stand of sycamore trees were uprooted and toppled over for several blocks. The foliage of the fallen sycamores was luxuriant with green leaves even though they were soiled by mud.

The theme of new life budding forth from the scene of destruction is repeated shortly afterwards as Hiroko looks at Nuiko's sister's room: "Around Sawako's desk there was an elegance like a dandelion blooming from a pile of ruins. It was small and innocent, but the perfection of this purity moved one who had just passed desolation as far as the eye could see. It revived one's faith in living things."
Hiroko and the other characters look toward building a new future, but it is on the ruins of the past that this must be accomplished. This historical perspective is clearly stated in another description of Sawako's room. "Today is born from yesterday, tomorrow breaks away from today and then continues on..." Indeed, the final description of the Banshū Plains further develops this theme.

The fall sunshine turned the Banshū mountains, the fields, small hamlets and their trees a golden colour in the breeze. The horse-drawn carts rumbled along the straight line of the national highway in the direction of their destination. The noise from the ruts harmonized strangely with the cheerfulness of the young people, and it blended with the many feelings that were overflowing in Hiroko's heart. Advancing along the national highway in this way was something that would not happen twice in a lifetime. The hedges of the small hamlets they were now passing, the ruins of the large factories rusted red and standing in the distance of the Akashi pine forest... All of Japan was moving on like this. Hiroko felt it keenly.

The movement of history in Banshū heiya shows interesting developments from Miyamoto Yuriko's earlier works. As far back as Mazushiki hitobito there was an attempt to place characters in a social setting to explain the nature of their behavior. This tendency can be seen later in Nobuko and Kokkoku. Although the protagonist of Kokkoku does state that "history inevitably advances,"

"history inevitably advances," we are not shown this process within the novel as clearly and as effectively as it appears in Banshū heiya. Miyamoto Yuriko has not merely stopped at a description of how the past affects the present human condition, but goes on to show how the future is and can be born from the ruins of the present. To express this theme, she does not rely on the blunt verbal statements of the central character, but successfully incorporates this theme into the overall structure of the novel by using both natural imagery and the symbol of the road.
Descriptions of the natural world were also features of her earlier works, but they were not integrated with other thematic elements. In Kokkoku, for example, there are numerous scenes where the protagonist looks at the sky, flowers and trees from the windows of her squalid cell, but they do not go beyond contrast and irony and are not connected to the role of the working class in the historical process. Perhaps the reason for her success in Banshū heiya was the experience Miyamoto gained during the Kokkoku period. She had always been concerned with the relationship between the individual and society but her thoughts on the subject did not really become clarified until she was introduced to and accepted socialism. It took, however, several years of experimentation before she was able to evolve a style capable of adequately expressing her more complex view of humanity and its role in the progress of history.

The theme of love reappears in Banshū heiya and through it the heroine Hiroko is developed. The protagonist's movements parallel those of the other characters and, like Kokkoku, there is no distinction made between her and the people she describes. It is through her relationship with her husband Jūkichi and other women characters that Hiroko's personality and her view of the world emerge, setting her somewhat apart from the other characters and from the stance of the heroine of Nobuko.

Hiroko's relationship with her husband Jūkichi reveals interesting changes over the type of male-female relationships found in Nobuko. In this earlier novel, the heroine saw love as being the prerequisite for a relationship enabling both parties the opportunity for emotional and intellectual growth, but with time she comes to the realization that neither of these are possible within the existing marriage system. Marriage becomes incompatible with her career as a writer. In Banshū heiya, Hiroko
does not see herself as a free individual as Nobuko did, but is very conscious of her role as Jūkichi's wife. It is this consideration which initially prompts her to go to her mother-in-law's after receiving the news of the missing brother. It is also Jūkichi's release from prison that makes her leave Yamaguchi for Tokyo again.

Their relationship is a partnership and she compares it to a ship: "The days and nights were not like the ocean waves that moved aimlessly back and forth, but, like an advancing ship, they saw the movement of history and the passage of time which could not be repeated." The connection she makes between their relationship and history reflects other changes in Miyamoto Yuriko's awareness, for it also implies a type of political partnership. Nobuko felt that only by being alone could she realize her true potential, but Hiroko has moved in another direction. She believes that women alone are not complete, and for her Jūkichi is an inseparable part of her life.

It became obvious to her when she thought back over the past ten years or so. It was impossible for Hiroko to think of her own life during that time without Jūkichi...

For example, seven years ago Hiroko was indicted because of her participation in the proletarian literary movement. She was sentenced to three years imprisonment and a five-year suspended sentence. At that time Hiroko had continued to emphasize the class nature of literature. During the preparations for her trial, Jūkichi read thoroughly the documents related to it, and within the restrictions of letters, he wrote several times criticizing the material according to whether she had heroically defended reason or where she had compromised too much. She learned a lesson from that. For Hiroko, these compromises were minimal, but where Jūkichi was concerned, they were the extreme limit of what could be tolerated in his wife Hiroko.

The type of emotional and intellectual co-operation that Nobuko had been hoping for in her marriage is not the only issue here. Rather, the sharing of ideologies also becomes one of the prerequisites for a lasting
relationship. It is this type of love which has allowed the continuation of Hiroko and Jūkichi's relationship despite twelve years of persecution and war.

As Jūkichi's wife, Hiroko is also concerned for the well-being of his mother and sister-in-law. The role of daughter, wife and daughter-in-law had represented, for the heroine of the earlier novel Nobuko, the petty concerns for social position and security. She had fought to remove these obstacles from her life. Miyamoto Yuriko has not, however, necessarily weakened her stance in Banshū heiya toward the family system that she once abhorred. Through her greater understanding of the common plight of women under the dual restrictions of social class and sex, she is able to feel compassion for all women and for the burdens they have had to bear.

The war has deprived thousands of Japanese women like Hiroko of their husbands and sons. But Hiroko considers herself fortunate because she has known all along where her husband was, whether he was dead or alive, and was even permitted to see him occasionally. She is also eventually reunited with him, whereas many other women had to face the future alone. Hiroko criticizes her sister-in-law's coldness toward her husband's family, and yet at the same time she understands the reasons for her behavior.

"The Japanese are bankrupt."
This short phrase heard from foreigners penetrated her ears and stopped at her heart..
The misfortune of having lost Naoji, who was the center of their lives, had caused even the will to overflow with grief disappear from the lives of these women alone. This is what misfortune is, Hiroko thought. This is how emotions are made bankrupt.

It is not just the physical ruins caused by the war that women have had to contend with, but also with the emotional scars that remain.
Hiroko feels that women have had to bear the greatest burden during the war years in disciplining themselves to ensure the survival of their families. Once the war was over, they had to continue their efforts to raise their children and rebuild the country without the aid of their men who have been maimed and killed. Their discipline and perseverance are what have enabled them to survive these difficult years, but at the same time it has made them hard and, like Tsuyako, lacking in tenderness. "But where was the real bitterness of the war to be found in people's lives?... It was found in the daily silent ruins of the tens of thousands of 'widows' towns' created throughout Japan."29

Hiroko does not exhibit the same kind of antagonism toward the family and marriage that the heroines of the previous novels did. Hiroko does criticize the traditional form of marriage, which creates tensions between mother and daughter-in-law, and a calculating attitude on the part of the bride. She also lashes out at the former militarist state for the physical, economic and emotional destruction it has caused, but she feels love and compassion for the women and individuals who have suffered under these burdens. Therein lies the difference between the heroines of Nobuko and Kokkoku. It is not all social structures per se that Hiroko dislikes, but the irrational ones that crush and distort people. In contrast to the conclusions drawn in Nobuko, she feels that relationships within the family and marriage are both necessary and desirable.

In Banshū heiya, the state does not attain the powerful position that it did in Kokkoku. This suggests a softening of Miyamoto Yuriko's previously strident class stand. Although criticism of the military does exist, the previous black and white divisions between sharply opposed classes found in Kokkoku are not as prominent. Because the former state
had been destroyed, Miyamoto Yuriko may have felt that one of the main causes of class conflict had been eliminated at that point in time. In Kokkoku, the heroine imagines a future where the working class has gained control of the state as they had in the Soviet Union, and it reflects her political idealism at the time. But the fact that the militarist regime has disappeared in Banshū heiya illustrates in concrete terms the belief that social systems are in fact not eternal fixtures, and that society can be changed if people accept the responsibility to do so.

Hiroko is the dominant character in Banshū heiya who controls our understanding of the events in the novel, and it is through her that the presence of the author is felt. The author's identification with the heroines of her novels is most pronounced in Kokkoku. This is related to the element of didacticism discussed in the previous chapter. In Banshū heiya, didacticism does not intrude to the same extent; a balance is established between the realistic portrayal of present society and the optimism which moves the story in the direction of the future. It is not only the heroine, but all the novel's characters who are part of this movement, producing a social and historical scope found only in germinal form in her earlier works. The positive spirit that Hiroko and the other characters show to overcome historical obstacles and to create lasting social change reveals Miyamoto Yuriko's faith in human growth and liberation, and her belief in the ultimate progress of history.
CONCLUSION

Miyamoto Yuriko's novels show both a consistency and development of form and content throughout the more than thirty years of her career. The subject matter of the four novels dealt with in this thesis concerns the plight of oppressed people, but the nature and definition of this changes with each of her literary periods. In *Mazushiki hitobito*, the unhappy lives of rural sharecroppers constituted the central focus of the novel. With *Nobuko*, the emphasis shifts to the personal sphere of the author as she analyzes the situation of women within the restrictions of family and marriage. *Kokkoku* continues with the theme of people in conflict with society, but this time Miyamoto Yuriko looks at the urban proletariat struggling against police repression. The scope of the subject matter in this novel is considerably broader than *Nobuko*, and it reflects a conscious attempt to universalize the individual experience in terms of the whole social and political system. Although social contradictions are described in both *Mazushiki hitobito* and *Nobuko*, the anger of the protagonists is directed against individuals such as the Christian townswomen, Tsukuda and Nobuko's mother. In this respect *Kokkoku* represents an interesting transition period in Miyamoto Yuriko's literary development. Not only does the size of the group of oppressed people increase considerably, but in addition the heroine's anger is primarily directed toward social and political structures rather than individuals who represent them. The heroine's contempt for those who co-operate with her enemies is not altogether absent, however, and is obvious in the author's treatment of the middle class characters. With *Banshū heiya* the above process reaches completion. The people whose plight is described broadens to encompass
the whole Japanese nation. It is not just the working class, but all classes who have suffered because of the destruction brought by war. For the first time, too, there is an absence of overt antagonism toward individuals, even though their stance may be criticized.

From the beginning of her writing career, Miyamoto Yuriko was concerned with the effect of environment on the quality of human life. She looked for the causes of negative behavior in the existing social structure rather than in the individual personality. Even in her first novel, characters are shown in conflict with society, and they are forced to engage in some kind of activity to alter their situation. In Mazushiki hitobito and Nobuko, the heroines only understand the process of change in terms of their own individual actions, and it is not until Kokkoku that the concept of collective struggle through action emerges. In Banshū heiya, collective action also merges with the theme of collective responsibility, reflecting the gradual broadening of the scope of Miyamoto Yuriko's social consciousness and historical perspective.

The heroines of these four novels consistently identify with those characters who reject passivity and who struggle for change. In the first two novels it is primarily the heroine herself who is the active character, suggesting that the optimistic view of humanity that would later become one of Miyamoto Yuriko's dominant features is not yet fully developed. Again, it is Kokkoku which provides the transition between Mazushiki hitobito and Nobuko, and the later Banshū heiya. For the first time the protagonist is not alone in her struggles, but is part of a larger group of characters who fight for change. After the war, Miyamoto was able to view humanity as potentially active, and her belief in its capacity for growth and change is truly amazing when one remembers that this
attitude emerges at the time of Japan's surrender. What made it possible for her to avoid the sense of defeat and nihilism which was widespread after the war was her ability to combine her desire for inner growth with her commitment to political action and participation in social change.

The sense of vitality in Miyamoto Yuriko's novels emanates from the heroine's commitment to action which can be found even in her earlier non-political works. Her novels portray humanity as rejecting obstacles to its growth and advancement, and her characters energetically break the fetters that bind them, whether they be the family, marriage, the state, or destruction and despair. The heroines of her novels refuse to admit defeat in the face of adversity and they possess the unflagging optimism that a better world is possible. Miyamoto Yuriko's works do not just dwell on the negative aspects of present society, but like Banshū heiya they move toward an ideal future. It is within this movement, and the defiant stance of the protagonists against injustice, that the sense of vitality emerges.

The heroine of Mazushiki hitobito believes that love is lacking in the world, and Nobuko, too, believes at first that love can change people. But she eventually realizes that love is not enough, and that the nature of male-female relationships within marriage must be fundamentally changed before happiness can exist. The struggle of the characters in Kokkoku to change the social structure itself can be seen as a natural progression from the desires of the heroine of the previous novel. But love as a theme does not reappear until Banshū heiya, where Miyamoto Yuriko connects love with political commitment in the relationship between Hiroko and Jūkichi, and in a broader sense with the relationship between the heroine and other women characters. It is through the development of the theme of love in Banshū heiya that Miyamoto Yuriko is able to
successfully place her characters within both a personal and an historical perspective.

Of the four novels dealt with in this thesis, Nobuko and Banshu heiya are the most artistically successful works. It is in these two novels that one finds the conscious use of imagery and stylistic devices to develop thematic elements, creating a sense of depth and warmth. These novels appear following periods of experimentation. Mazushiki hitobito was Miyamoto's first published work, and although its themes can be found throughout the novels of the later periods, it is evident that she was not yet in complete command of literary techniques. With Nobuko, the humanist concerns of the Mazushiki hitobito period find fruition, for Miyamoto was able to discover a suitable vehicle to express her ideas. This vehicle took the form of women's issues, a topic in which she was able to analyze both the problems of inner growth and self-expression, and the contradictions which arise when they come into conflict with the goals of the family and marriage system. The issues of the Kokkoku period are a natural development from Nobuko as they allowed more scope for an expose of contradictions on a larger scale. Like Mazushiki hitobito, Kokkoku was written during a highly experimental period. There is also evidence that the control exerted by the Central Committee of KOPF did not allow for the type of creative freedom which perhaps could have produced new and more vital forms of proletarian literature—perhaps a literature capable of addressing itself to truly popular issues. The success of Banshu heiya suggests that Miyamoto Yuriko was ultimately more at ease with novels dealing with contradictions in terms of the personal center. Her post-war novels, without exception, focus on a protagonist who is modelled on the author herself.
Miyamoto Yuriko's novels do not deteriorate into the gloomy self-centered probings of the "I" novel (shi-shōsetsu 私小説). Her sense of social change within history, and her belief in social responsibility and political commitment raise the stature of her characters from isolated individuals to universal modern heroines. Her return to feminist issues in the post-war period reveals the lasting effects of the enlightened humanist environment in which she grew up, even as her belief in the need for a more radical social revolution continues to make its presence felt. By looking at social and political contradictions within the framework of feminist issues, Miyamoto Yuriko was able to create a unique popular literature with a significance which oversteps the boundaries imposed by cultural differences and time.
NOTES
NOTES

Introduction


5 As he stated in his suicide note, Akutagawa's reason for suicide was a vague feeling of unease about the future: feelings aggravated by his own deteriorating emotional state. Yuriko's brother, Hideo was still a student at the time of his death, but it is suggested in Futatsu no niwa that this sensitive and introverted young man was deeply disturbed at the increasing radicalization and polarization of society, and like Akutagawa, was overcome by intense feelings of unease about the future.

6 Miyamoto Yuriko, Jihitsu nempu, as quoted in Nakamura Tomoko, Miyamoto Yuriko, p. 114. This and all subsequent quotations are my own translations.

7 NAPF is abbreviated from the Esperanto translation Nippona Proleta Artista Federacio of Zennihon musansha geijutsu renmei as cited in G. T. Shea, Leftwing, p. 200.

8 Nakamura, Miyamoto, p. 144.

9 KOPF is abbreviated from the Esperanto translation Federacio de Proletaj Kultur-oranizoj Japanaj of Nihon puroretaria bunka renmei as cited in G. T. Shea, Leftwing, p. 205.

10 Notable among these critics are Nakamura Tomoko and Honda Shūgo. See Nakamura, Miyamoto, p. 242, and Honda Shūgo, Senji sengo no senkō-sha tachi (Tokyo: Keisō shobo, 1971).

11 Nakamura, Miyamoto, p. 170.


13 See the first section of Honda's Senji sengo dealing with Miyamoto Yuriko and her works for a discussion of this.
Chapter One

1 Miyamoto Yuriko senshū, I, pp. 3-78.
2 Ibid., pp. 13-14.
3 Ibid., p. 57.
4 Ibid., p. 57.
5 Ibid., p. 6.
6 Ibid., p. 21.
7 Ibid., p. 21.
8 Ibid., p. 62.
10 Ibid., p. 4.
12 Ibid., p. 77.
13 Ibid., p. 6.
14 Ibid., p. 58.
15 Ibid., p. 76.
16 Ibid., p. 14.
17 Ibid., p. 77.

Chapter Two

1 Miyamoto Yuriko senshū, II, pp. 3-303.
2 Ibid., p. 34.
Marimo is a fresh-water plant shaped like a green soft ball. Its rarity and beauty lend themselves to poetic connotations. Nobuko and Sakabe are both sensitive to the beauty of nature and living things, and thus, Tsukuda's actions are especially repugnant.

The following interpretation of Tsukuda's name was kindly suggested by my thesis supervisor, Dr. Kinya Tsuruta of the University of British Columbia, Department of Asian Studies.

Chapter Three

1Miyamoto Yuriko senshū, III, pp. 33-83.
2Ibid., p. 37.
Chapter Four

1Miyamoto Yuriko senshū, IV, pp. 3-136.
2Ibid., p. 10.
3Ibid., p. 11.
4Nym Wales and Kim San, Song of Ariran (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1941). See p. 56 for an English translation of the text of this song. Also "Prologue," pp. 57-61 for a discussion of the significance that this song has held for Koreans for more than three hundred years.
5 _Senshū, IV_, p. 60.
6 Ibid., p. 116.
7 Ibid., p. 16.
8 Ibid., p. 32.
9 Ibid., p. 46.
10 Ibid., p. 11.
11 Ibid., pp. 18-19.
12 Ibid., pp. 39-40.
13 Ibid., p. 120.
14 Ibid., p. 136.
15 Ibid., p. 10.
16 Ibid., p. 10.
17 Ibid., p. 12.
18 Ibid., pp. 34-35.
19 Ibid., p. 56.
20 Ibid., p. 15.
21 Ibid., p. 86.
22 Ibid., pp. 88-89.
23 Ibid., p. 88.
24 Ibid., p. 136.
25 _Senshū, III_, p. 66.
26 _Senshū, IV_, p. 100.
27 Ibid., pp. 123-124.
28 Ibid., p. 54.
29 Ibid., p. 60.
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