

The Insight and Reflection of Kanae Minato's Reasoning Novels on Japanese Social Culture

Guosu Chen^{1, a}

¹School of Chinese Literature and Language, Sichuan University, Chengdu, Sichuan Province, 610207, China

^aCorresponding Author's Email: nenanico@163.com

Abstract

Japanese reasoning novels are developing vigorously, and there are a number of excellent and unique reasoning novelists, and Kanae Minato is one of them. She absorbed the writing methods of Japanese private novels, new mystery school and social school, and became popular with her first novel *Confession*, which formed her unique creative style of confession, and her unique perspective on Japanese social issues aroused great repercussions. This paper discusses this topic in Kanae Minato's reasoning novels through two chapters. The first part discusses the relationship between Japanese individuals and families reflected in Kanae Minato's works. In other words, this chapter studies how the relationship between juvenile delinquency and unbalanced families is reflected in Kanae Minato's works. Then, the second chapter is based on her text, combined with her narrative techniques, and discusses the relationship between individuals and society in Japan.

Keywords

Kanae Minato; Reasoning novels; Juvenile delinquency; Japanese women.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to Kanae Minato

Kanae Minato born in 1973 in Hiroshima, who is a famous new Japanese writer of reasoning novels. Since her debut work *Confession* came out, she has become a hit. Since her debut in 2008, almost every work has been shortlisted and even won important awards in the field of Japanese popular literature.

Kanae Minato has widely read reasoning novels since childhood. She read the series of *Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-cambrioleur* written by Maurice Leblanc when she was a child, and since then, she has developed a strong interest in reasoning novels. As she grew up, she read more works of excellent reasoning novelists in her country, such as Edogawa Rambo, Akagawa Jiro, Higashino Keigo, Shimada Soji and so on. Because of that, Kanae Minato's works have a strong style of social reasoning novels.

Kanae Minato integrates the focus of her characters into the modern Japanese families through her own personal experience and her unique female perspective, and further observes and analyzes the current Japanese society. Her writing pays great attention to the practical problems of Japanese society brought by the times, and focuses on exploring the spiritual world of criminals. The study of Kanae Minato's reasoning novels is conducive to observing contemporary social problems in Japan and reflecting on our reality.

1.2. Literature Review

Japanese reasoning novels have a long history. The traces and tendencies of reasoning novels could be found in Japanese classical literary works as far back as the Nara Period, such as *Kojiki*,

The Tale of Princess Kaguya, the story of Genji[1]. In the 1920s, there were a large number of talents in the field of reasoning novels, and lots of excellent reasoning novels were created. Japan started to hold a place in the world of reasoning novels.

Since it has only been more than ten years since Kanae Minato began her writing career, the domestic research documents on Kanae Minato are limited, mainly focusing on the following aspects:

The first research interest is to study the characters and the social problems reflected behind them of Kanae Minato's reasoning novels, such as GAO Rui's *The Image of Mother in Kanae Minato's Inferential Novels* studies the revenge mother image in *Night's Tightrope*, *Confession*, *Shokuzai*.

The second research interest is to study her writing skills, such as BAO Lina's *Research on Kanae Minato's Detective Novels* studies her unique confession style and suspense setting methods, Yang Di's *The Characteristics of Kanae Minato's Detective Novels—Based on Boukyo* studies the unreliable narrative and the lack of detective perspective in Kanae Minato's *Boukyo*.

The last research interest is to study film and television adaptation works of Kanae Minato. Such as CHEN Zhengwei's *Inheritance, Revolution, and Regeneration—Analysis of Movie Adaptation of Confessions*, YUAN Jiawei's *Narrative skills of The Snow White Murder Case* study the narrative skills of Kanae Minato's film and television adaptation works.

There are few studies on her abroad. In Japan, there are few studies on Kanae Minato. What can be seen mostly are interviews and conversations about her.

2. Individual and Family: Juvenile Delinquency and Unbalanced Family Relations

2.1. Unbalanced Parent-child Relationship

Juvenile delinquency in Japan has a long history and has always been concerned by Japanese society. From the postwar to the mid-1950s, many teenagers became orphans due to the war, so a lot of them committed crimes under the pressure of livelihood. From the mid-1950s to the late 1980s, diversified problems such as theft, school violence, domestic violence and bullying appeared due to the hedonism. Since the late 1980s, the problems of juvenile drug abuse, bullying, violence and sexual deviance are growing, and juvenile delinquency shows a different pattern from the past, which is the proportion of first-time offenders among the arrested juvenile offenders is increasing[2].

A person's values, outlook on life and world views are determined by the growth environment. Family structure environment can be reflected through the behavior of different members of the family. It imperceptibly affects teenagers' behavior consciousness and psychological model in different ways. It can be said that it is the premise and foundation of family education. In family education, the lack or error of parenting education is more likely to lead to the extremes of children's character and the distortion of their values[3]. In Kanae Minato's reasoning novels, many teenagers deviate from the right path, not only because of the social environment, but also because of the impact of parenting education.

For example, in her one of the most well-known work *Confession*, she wrote two typical examples. The book mainly tells about a revenge. A middle school female teacher Mrs Moriguchi Yoshiko who found her four-year-old daughter accidentally drowned in the campus swimming pool, and the police saw the case as an accident, but she didn't believe it and started investigate the truth secretly. Later, Moriguchi found that her lovely daughter was murdered by two students in her class, and they are Watanabe Syuya, Shimura Naoki respectively. But the juvenile protection law would protect the two juvenile offenders and would not punish them.

On the day of graduation, she confessed the truth to the whole class and told her revenge plan. Finally, the two juvenile offenders were punished differently for Moriguchi's revenge.

She uses the method called POV (point of view) to structure Confession, and it means that writing a whole story with different perspective of different characters. In this novel, Kanae Minato uses first perspective of different main characters to write in each chapter, so she describes the psychology of each character in detail and reveals the psychology of the offenders and the victim.

In the first chapter of Confession, Mrs Moriguchi thought that the juvenile law did not protect the children who were really infringed, but became a protection to prevent teenagers from being punished for crimes:

When I was a teenager, a teenager under the age of 16 killed someone, but as long as the family court agreed, he didn't even have to go to the juvenile court. Due to the loopholes in the juvenile law, in the 1990s, vicious crimes committed by children aged 14 or 15 occurred frequently.

The fourth chapter is the confession of Shimura Naoki, and it shows an unbalanced parent-child relationship behind the tragedy. Shimura Naoki was spoiled by his mother, and therefore, he became a very cowardly person and always obeyed others' words. Naoki's mother always praised him for his kindness although his grades were always bad, for this reason, his mother even wrote to the school to suggest teachers not to publish the ranking and praise him more, which made Naoki feel himself inferior and miserable:

Although I am so worthless, I grew up in my mother's praise since I was a child.

Although mother preached me a sermon seriously, if my grades were good, she needn't write such a letter to school. She must be disappointed.

Since then, whenever my mother praised me how kind I am, I just felt so miserable. Miserable, miserable, miserable[4].

Because of Shimura Naoki's cowardly character, he had no friends. Therefore, when Watanabe Syuya made friends with him, he felt happy and was willing to do anything to maintain the friendship, and even committed crimes for his only friend.

On the other hand, another unbalanced parent-child relationship led Watanabe Syuya to crime. Watanabe Syuya born in a single mother family, and his mother was a scientist. In order to pursue the ideal of the career, Watanabe Syuya's mother abandoned him. To get mother's approval, Syuya studied hard, hoping to get his mother's attention. But even if he won a prize, his mother didn't care, which made him upset. Since then, he was determined to crime to arouse his mother's concern.

In single parent families, the mother or the father who is responsible to raise teenagers is under great pressure and often ignores their children in order to support the family, which makes teenager lack love and the sense of security in the process of growing up. Some of them are eager for their parents' love, so they would like to do some rebellious behavior to attract their parents' attention. Some of them may transfer their desire for parental love to others, so they are easy to be incited by bad people. For example, sometimes such kind of news can be seen, girls who lack love are easy to be abducted by bad guys, because the sweet words of others are attractive to them. For family education, parents should fully communicate with their children and give them company. Next, parents should give children tolerance, but not indulgence. Parents should strictly stop the unreasonable requirements of teenagers, and at the same time, explain the interests of unreasonable behaviors, and establish a good habit of teenagers' behavior restraint and self-examination. In the process of teenagers' growth, giving the greatest care and training is the key to teenagers' mental health growth and it is the proper education for them.

3. Individual and Society: Women's Awkward Status

3.1. Women's Awkward Status in Japan

In recent years, the problem of discrimination against women in the workplace has gradually attracted extensive attention from the society. Japanese women have been facing employment difficulties in society, and the proportion of Japanese women in informal employment remains high. From 1989 to 2019, the number of Japanese women in short-term employment and informal employment increased from 5.88 million to 14.75 million, which was more than twice that of Japanese men. It is closely related to the role orientation of women in traditional Japanese culture[5]. In 2021, according to Japanese white paper, the number of female suicides in 2020 was 7026, a significant increase of 15.4% over the previous year, of which the increase in the number of female suicides in the workplace was the most obvious. According to the suicide note, 123 women committed suicide due to workplace interpersonal relationship and 48 women committed suicide due to workplace environment change[6].

Kanae Minato's works are concerned about the circumstances of women. For example, Kanae Minato's novel, *The Murder of Snow White* focuses on contemporary Japanese working women. She writes a murder case to expose the undercurrent hidden in the seemingly peaceful workplace.

Miki Noriko was murdered one day, and her co-worker Jono Miki was suspected of killing her. Kano Risako, who was a colleague of Noriko wanted to find the truth. In the process of Risako's investigation, she interviewed many people, and they were all biased against Jono and regarded her as a suspect because of jealousy, after which, these evidence exposed by medias.

In the text, Kanae Minato uses multimedia means to supplement the details of the case. For example, in the end, the police found that Risako was the true murderer, and web users found her blog on the Internet. It showed another side of Risako, a vicious and jealous woman. Kanae Minato uses these materials to fill various gaps in the narrative process, such as why Risako attacked Noriko, why Jono suddenly resigned and disappeared, etc. The emergence of these materials fills the logical gap, and also increases the suspense and reversal of the work to a certain extent. At the same time, it can be seen from Risako's confession in her blog that Noriko was often suppressed by her predecessor Risako. Noriko relied on her long servicing years in the company and often asked Risako to do redundant work, etc. It is the workplace bullying led Risako to the path of revenge step by step.

Noriko obtains recognition by suppressing others, which I think related to Japanese women's social functions and employment difficulties of Japanese women. On June 28, 2018, the BBC television documentary *Shame of Japan* was broadcast, Ito Shiori, a representative of the Me Too movement in Japan believes that with family responsibilities oppressing women by Japanese society, the enterprises would not like to give important positions to female employees[7]. To survive in the workplace, female employees either obey the unwritten rules and obey their superiors, or squeeze out the living space of other female employees.

In Kanae Minato's novel, *Mother* shows another dilemma of Japanese women, which is that women have low status in Japanese family. This book is also written from the first perspective of mother, Tsurumi and her daughter, Sayaka. Tsurumi was taught by her mother to be a docile wife from an early age, and under the guidance of her mother, instead of attending a formal four-year university, she chose to finish her studies early and get married. Even though Tsurumi was not fully satisfied with her husband, Tadokoro Satoshi, she still followed her mother's wish only because her mother liked Tadokoro's paintings and habits, which remind her mother of Tsurumi's died father. We can see that Tsurumi was bound by traditional ideas deeply, and in her eyes, all she did was to make her mother happy and make her husband's family recognize her, rather than really want to do it from the bottom of her heart.

4. Conclusion

Kanae Minato's reasoning novels continue the writing style of the new social school and grip with social problems accurately. She starts with the details of life, carefully describes the characters' minds and motivations, and shows readers the deepest human nature behind the tragedy. Her delicacy and POV writing method can arouse people's resonance and guide people to resonate with the characters in her books, so as to reflect on their values and behaviors. Her appearance undoubtedly contributes to the reflection on Japanese juvenile delinquency and the status of Japanese women. Therefore, we should draw lessons from Japan, ensure the fairness and justice of the employment environment, and truly safeguard the working rights of employed women. Besides, we should attach importance to juvenile delinquency and family education.

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