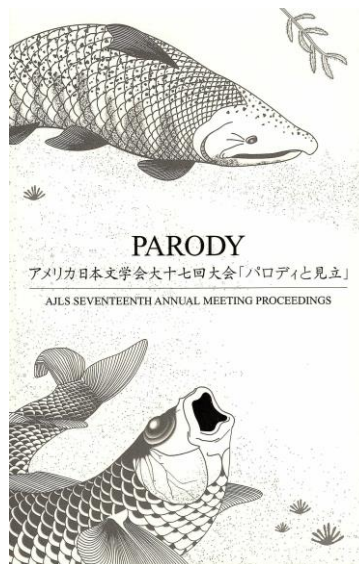


“Parody at Work: Heathcliff’s Double in Mizumura Minae’s *Honkakuteki shōsetsu*”

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**PARODY AT WORK: HEATHCLIFF'S DOUBLE IN MIZUMURA
MINAE'S *HONKAKU SHŌSETSU***

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In the summer of 2004 Tsushima Yūko spoke briefly about her own writing and her interest in Emily Brontë's 1847 classic, *Wuthering Heights*. When asked in this context about Mizumura Minae's *Honkaku shōsetsu* (Authentic Novel, 2002), Tsushima replied, "Oh, that is a parody."¹ Tsushima's reaction should come as no surprise given that Mizumura has written an eight hundred and fifty page version of *Wuthering Heights*, transplanting the tale of the doomed lovers to Karuizawa and the declining fortunes of Japan's aristocracy in the aftermath of World War II; she has attached a long *shishōsetsu*-style preface to introduce the story; and she has given the work the provocative title, *Honkaku shōsetsu*, or "Authentic Novel." We might also find a clue to Tsushima's reaction in the fact that she herself has been viewed as a writer of *shishōsetsu*, the semi-autobiographical form that explores the interface between self and world. In the preface of *Honkaku shōsetsu*, "The Long, Long Story Before the Authentic Novel Begins," a character named Mizumura Minae, a novelist in residence at Stanford University, has this to say about the ubiquitous nature of the *shishōsetsu*: "Now and into the future, we writers must fight the greatest temptation that we face—to market our own misfortune."²

Regardless of motive, Tsushima's comment on parody is instructive. But if we are to use the term "parody," we must identify the target of parody—the object upon which it operates. In the following pages, I will argue that Mizumura does not engage so much with Brontë directly but rather with the ways in which Brontë's novel has been domesticated and highly romanticized since it was first translated into Japanese in 1932 by Yamato Yasuo. I will also argue that Mizumura's parodic method consists of bringing peripheral characters to center stage and revealing their agency in the plot. We will focus on Katō Yūsuke, a young editor who "plays the part of" Lockwood, the lodger at Thrushcross Grange; and Tsuchiya Fumiko, the counterpart to Nelly, the maid who serves as go-between to Heathcliff and Catherine in the original. Finally, we will explore not only how Mizumura employs parody but her reasons for

¹ Conversation with Tsushima Yūko, Shingū, Japan, 2004.

² Mizumura 2002, vol. 1, p. 174.

doing so. In *Honkaku shōsetsu*, Mizumura issues a call to Japanese writers to turn their backs on the narrow parameters of the *shishōsetsu* in favor of what she calls truly fictive fictions (虚構らしい虚構).³ In “fictive fictions,” Mizumura believes, one can better engage with broader issues, in this case, the radical historical changes that mark the postwar period in Japan. Ironically, Mizumura advocates a new direction for Japanese literature in a fast-paced and suspenseful retelling of a nineteenth-century British classic.

In many regards, *Honkaku shōsetsu* faithfully recreates the first half of Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*. In a 2002 interview, Mizumura stated that she fully intended to adhere closely to the story of Heathcliff and Catherine, deeming *Wuthering Heights*, “a singular novel.”⁴ In the larger plot points, Mizumura has stayed close to her “singular” original. Like Heathcliff, Azuma Tarō is a lower-class orphan who arrives at the relatively prosperous Utagawa household in poor physical condition at the end of World War II. Showing generosity, Granny Utagawa takes Tarō on as a ward and gradually he comes to depend on and love Yōko, the youngest daughter of the family. Once she is grown, however, Yōko rejects Tarō for an aristocratic suitor, Masayuki, and, in despair, Tarō departs for the United States to make his fortune in hopes of winning back his love. But when Tarō returns, having made his fortune, Yōko refuses to marry him, and she dies an early death under the duress of loving two men. Although Mizumura adheres closely to Brontë’s plot in many regards, she ends her novel with a surprise twist that throws her readers off balance and sends them scrambling through eight hundred and fifty pages in search of what should have been obvious clues. It is only at the end of the book that the parodic operation of the whole comes into view.

THE LONG, LONG STORY BEFORE THE AUTHENTIC NOVEL BEGINS

Honkaku shōsetsu opens with a one hundred and sixty-page *shishōsetsu*-style preface that could easily stand alone, “The Long, Long Story Before the Authentic Novel Begins.” Mizumura claims that she structured the book this way because she wanted to prevent *shishōsetsu*-like readings of the Heathcliff and Catherine story.⁵ The preface is clearly meant to function as a *shishōsetsu* while the main story is not; it tells the story of a woman named Mizumura Minae in the first person,

³ Naitō 2002, p. 58.

⁴ Naitō 2002, p. 60.

⁵ Naitō 2002, pp. 59–60.

beginning with her childhood in Long Island and continuing on to her time spent as a writer-in-residence thirty-five years later at Stanford University in California. At the same time, the preface gives Mizumura time to prepare her reader for what is to come and to explain her title, *Honkaku shōsetsu*. The term refers to the efforts of early modern writers to create novels based on Western models, particularly detective stories, and at the same time to defend their status as “authentic” in the face of *shishōsetsu* orthodoxy.⁶ In her use of this title, Mizumura turns a steely eye on the conditions that gave rise to modern Japanese literature: on the one hand, a sense of inferiority to the tradition of nineteenth-century European realism; and on the other, the resulting retreat into the notion that a properly indigenous Japanese literature lies in the exploration of the self. Clearly Mizumura brings up literary history because she believes that Japanese writers still struggle with its legacy today. In the preface itself, Mizumura explores the dominance of the *shishōsetsu* as a vehicle of “truth” and asks whether writing may take different forms: “In the history of modern Japanese literature, wasn’t it necessary to feel the pulse of a “genealogy of the tale” (*monogatari no keifu*) apart from the “I” of the novelist and from the notion that *shōsetsu* bear the truth within them?” (Vol. 1, pp. 175–176) Ironically, to make a case for the vibrant *monogatari*, Mizumura searches for a literary “home” in a mountain of translated words and texts. By necessity, this exercise is parodic and transgressive; she must inhabit the original; take it to pieces; and then reassemble it in order to write her own “authentic” novel in Japanese.

LONG ISLAND, NEW YORK, C. 1964

In “The Long, Long Story,” we meet the Mizumura Minae character during her childhood in the United States. The daughter of a Japanese businessman and his wife, who have been posted to Long Island to work for a Japanese company in the United States, the sixteen-year-old Minae struggles with growing up in two languages. Minae attends an American high school but keeps to herself and spends her spare time reading Japanese literature in paperback editions. Into the young Minae’s life comes the mysterious Azuma Tarō, a man who works as a chauffeur for a wealthy American and later comes to work as a technician in her father’s camera factory. An autodidact with seemingly no other interests than self-advancement, Tarō devotes his entire being to work. Eventually, through his prodigious abilities, Tarō founds a medical equipment

⁶ For an informative discussion of the term in relation to detective fiction, see Seaman 2004, pp. 6–11.

company with a partner and his success in this area allows him to become a wealthy venture capitalist. Mizumura employs a typical immigrant's rags-to-riches story in a parallel development to Heathcliff's exile to the vast territories of the British colonies. Mizumura's substitute of the United States for the British colonies serves as its own sly joke; rather than stand at the center of the world, America becomes the blank slate for the would-be capitalist. A land without limitations, America is the place where Tarō can amass millions so that he can eventually return to Japan and Yōko, the locus of love and meaning.

In spite of having left his working class origins in Japan behind, Tarō suffers from class snobbery even in Long Island. Minae's mother finds him "gloomy" (Vol. 1, p. 18); his co-workers find him reserved and "strange," (Vol. 1, p. 49); and one company employee wonders if he is even Japanese (Vol. 1, p. 51). Tarō's central role in the novel is first revealed during a Christmas party at the young Minae's parents' house in approximately 1964 when Azuma is twenty and Minae is sixteen. Although Tarō has been invited as a guest to the Mizumura's Christmas party, Minae's mother asks him to change a light bulb in her daughter's room. Feeling intensely embarrassed because her mother treats Tarō like a servant, the sixteen-year-old Minae nevertheless leads Tarō upstairs. After changing the bulb, Tarō is inexplicably drawn to a row of white books decorated with pink flowers on Minae's bookshelf, a *shōjo bungaku zenshū* or series of translated Western classics for girls. To her amazement, Tarō tells her "I read these books when I was young." (Vol. 1, p. 57) He reaches out to touch the books, but recoils when his fingers touch the dusty covers. Minae hands him a tissue and urges him to go ahead. Standing there watching Tarō peruse the books, his "long fingers turning the pages," Minae conjures up memories of the illustrations from the books that she read as a child. She thinks to herself, "Azuma Tarō was lost in the clouds, but for me, it felt as if this stranger and I were sharing time together in a world that no one could see." (Vol. 1, p. 58) Most compelling about this scene is the desiring viewpoint of the sixteen-year-old Minae, staring at a man who is a class beneath her and who inspires strong feelings of curiosity, if not romance. Later, when Minae's sister announces in English that Tarō is "sexy," we suspect that an intricate game has begun, particularly for Mizumura's female readership. It is as if the writer had summoned up a character from the girls' collection and brought him to life in this world. If Mizumura practices parody, it is to illuminate the all-consuming nature of the literary text, the ways in which it can take its naïve young readers

hostage. Like the young Minae, we are momentarily transfixed, even haunted, by the sight of Azuma fingering the pages of the white books, and by our questions about his mysterious past.

THE AUTHENTIC NOVEL: OIWAKE (NEAR KARUIZAWA), 1995

The motif of being haunted repeats itself throughout the book, but perhaps it is nowhere more obvious than in the first long chapter of the main part of the novel, a retelling of the ghost scene at the beginning of *Wuthering Heights* entitled, “Mukaebi” (The Welcoming Flame). This chapter marks the first example of Mizumura bringing a peripheral character to center stage. We have left behind Long Island of the 1960s for a village named Oiwake near Karuizawa in the year 1995. Katō Yūsuke, a young literary editor, is staying with a friend in a villa near Karuizawa. One evening, riding on a bicycle he becomes disoriented and he takes a lonely stretch of road trying to find his way. Descending in the darkness, something white fluttering nearby distracts him and he loses his balance, crashing his bicycle into a large hedge. A middle-aged woman comes out to help him and offers him shelter. Although Yūsuke does not know it at the time, she is Fumiko, the long-time servant of the Saegusa family, who acts as the counterpart to Nelly, the narrator and go-between of Brontë’s tale. Entering the house Yūsuke is stunned to see that all the furnishings date back to the 1950s and 1960s and that the house itself looks “as if it has been discarded by the world.” (Vol. 1, p. 182) Yūsuke next meets the grown Azuma Tarō, who has returned from the United States a wealthy man. This meeting makes an indelible impression on the young Tokyo editor:

Feeling someone there, Yūsuke turned around to see a man standing in the hallway and staring in his direction. Yūsuke gave a start. How long had he been standing there, this man with the fierce look that reminded him of an animal? Somehow, the man seemed completely out of place in the house that was decaying all around him. And it wasn’t just the house. He seemed completely out of place in the world, too.

“Ah, Tarō,” said the woman poking her head out of the living room. She approached the man and gave him a short explanation of Yūsuke’s presence. The man’s eyes glittered in Yūsuke’s direction. Again, Yūsuke noted the fierceness of his expression. There was nothing extraneous about the man. It occurred to Yūsuke that the flesh beneath the man’s clothes

would be fierce, too. In a show of will, that fierce face and body were sucking all the air out of the room. Yūsuke bobbed his head in greeting . . . (Vol. 1, pp. 186–187)

Later, after Tarō has disappeared into a back room, Yūsuke realizes that his own heart is pounding rapidly. When Fumiko offers Yūsuke shelter for the night, he feels powerless to resist his curiosity to know and see more. Here we may well contrast Yūsuke with his counterpart in Brontë's novel, *Lockwood*. In *Wuthering Heights*, the traveler Lockwood loses his way on the moors in a snowstorm and requests shelter at the Heights for a night. Once inside, the servant leads him to an unused bedroom where Lockwood dozes off, reading variants of what the young Catherine had imagined her future name might be in words scratched on a painted ledge: Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Linton, or Catherine Heathcliff. He awakes to the sound of branches knocking at the window, and when he opens the window, is terrified to feel the grip of an icy hand and to see a child's face at the window imploring, "Let me in, let me in." In terror Lockwood pulls his hand away and when the ghost won't release him, he rubs the tiny wrist against the broken glass drawing blood. Finally, his cries bring Heathcliff who rushes into the room upbraiding his guest and driving him out of the room while he calls to the ghost of Catherine through the window.

In Mizumura's retelling of the scene, Fumiko takes Yūsuke out to an unused shed where she had earlier laid out a sleeping bag (oddly she seems to have made preparations before the bicycle accident had occurred). In this shed, the ghost of the dead Yōko (Catherine) appears, terrifying Yūsuke while he tries to sleep:

The summer night earth exuded a heavy, overly warm smell. Yūsuke suddenly noticed that a bunch of moths, drawn by the light, were lightly clinging to the windowpane, their wings giving off a white powder. The moths seemed to be threatening or begging to come in, and though he knew he was probably being oversensitive, Yūsuke started to feel as if he couldn't breathe. The powdery white wings held stubbornly on.

Yūsuke turned off the bare light bulb and lay down in the sleeping bag with the awful smell of mothballs stinging his nostrils, making the loft creak noisily as he did so. The tension in his arms and legs did not recede and his thoughts would not slow down. He couldn't banish the man's forceful features from

his mind, and he felt a strange ache in his chest that surprised him. With all his might, he pushed the image of the man's face to the corner of his mind, and, shutting his eyes, he tried to go back over everything he had seen that day. There was the grass growing on the ruins of Tenshukaku at Kaikoen, baking under the noonday sun. There was the dark green gulch spied from a small bridge, and the view from the highway of the wide foothills of Mt. Asama. When the sun set and he returned to Oiwake, he saw a rustic graveyard lying at the foot of the mountain. The graveyard had large ostentatious black headstones and lonely tombstones made from little piles of stones. Someone had placed flowers on one of these lonely graves. . . . Exacerbating his overly stimulated nerves, the wound that hadn't bothered Yūsuke when he was awake now began to ache, and when he dozed off, he began to toss and turn. Whereupon the man's image again appeared on his closed eyelids. . . .(Vol. 1, pp. 215–216)

Soon after, Yūsuke awakes to see a young girl wearing a *yukata* decorated with a red carp pattern, her hair rising up in a frizzy lion's mane, standing in the shed and glaring up at him. The ghost grips a fan tightly in one hand, and with a bloodcurdling scream, she runs out of the shed, her sleeves fluttering in the moonlight.

The question about this scene is: who is doing the haunting and to whom? In *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine's ghost is drawn to her old chamber by Lockwood's light and by his reading through her private notes. But the ghost in Mizumura's novel is drawn first and foremost by the fact that Yūsuke's mind is filled with images of Azuma Tarō. In order to forget Tarō, Yūsuke tries to summon up all the places that he had visited that day, but the moment that he starts to doze, Tarō's face reappears on his closed eyelids. Given this fact, we can understand why the ghost becomes so angry, grasping the fan and letting out a bloodcurdling scream. Rather than find the man she loves, the ghost discovers the man who loves the man she loves. Unlike the ghost of Catherine, a truly pitiful creature begging to come in, this ghost turns on her heels in disgust and disappears quickly into the night.

The parodic element here is not simply Yūsuke's same-sex fascination with the Heathcliff character. Rather, it is Mizumura placing an intermediary into the scene. In *Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood never plays a central role in the action: after he sees the ghost of Catherine, he recedes even further into the background as rapt listener to the servant

Nelly's tale. In contrast, Yūsuke is so impressed by Azuma Tarō that he creates more opportunities to visit Fumiko in hopes of learning more about him. Later, Yūsuke even travels to California in response to rumors that Tarō has gone there. In "The Long, Long Story Before the Authentic Novel Begins," Yūsuke appears at the door of the now grown Mizumura Minae, a Japanese novelist, and he seems desperate to tell her the story of Azuma Tarō. In this regard, Yūsuke plays the part of one of the early translators or adaptors of *Wuthering Heights*. Lying in the shed with the image of Heathcliff burned on his eyelids, Yūsuke is reminiscent of those modern Brontë readers who felt themselves transported by the power of this gothic story. Yūsuke even gives Minae a "performance" of his story on a rainy night in Palo Alto, as if he were Ueda Akinari come back to life in contemporary America. Before we move into the story of Yōko and Tarō, however, we will briefly consider the other "intermediaries" who came before Yūsuke, the Japanese translators or adaptors of *Wuthering Heights* in Japan who began their work in 1932.

PORTRAITS OF HEATHCLIFF, 1932–2002

To explore the history of *Wuthering Heights* in Japan, we must not forget that the figure of Yūsuke has always been in the room. To put it mildly, Japanese readers have had a special relationship with *Wuthering Heights*. Between 1932 and 2003, approximately seventeen different translators have published versions of *Wuthering Heights*. A few of these translations have been published in multiple editions, reaching the status of classics. Compare this to *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, which has been translated by six different translators and two pairs of co-translators between 1927 and 2002.⁷ In a relatively new translation of *Wuthering Heights* by Kōnosu Yukiko, the translator, reveals the ubiquitous presence of Brontë's novel when she writes in an essay on the translation, "Every generation deserves its own version of *Wuthering Heights*."⁸ Kōnosu produces a translation of the novel that catches the nuances of speech of the original and indeed serves her generation well. *Wuthering Heights* has also made inroads into Japanese popular culture, too, in the form of Takarazuka shows, television versions, and stage plays. In general, the earlier Japanese versions of *Wuthering Heights* offer a portrayal of Heathcliff that is softer and more romanticized than the original. For example, the 1942 translation by Miyake Ikusaburō softens

⁷ To count translations, I used Honyaku bungaku mokuroku 1984 and Honyaku shōsetsu zenjōhō 1999.

⁸ Kōnosu 2003, p. 329.

the jagged edges of Brontë's original on the level of specific lines, even specific words when it comes to Heathcliff. Some words are small mistakes corrected later by editors. Others are willful misreadings, clustered around Heathcliff and attending the birth of a new work into Japanese. A few examples stand out in passages that describe the days before Catherine dies. Here, for example, from Brontë's original is an abbreviated portion of the dialogue from the lovers' last meeting. Heathcliff speaks:

“Are you possessed with a devil,” he pursued savagely, “to talk in that manner to me when you are dying? Do you reflect that all those words will be branded in my memory, and eating deeper eternally, after you have left me? You know you lie to say that I have killed you, and, Catherine, you know that I could as soon forget you, as my existence! Is it not sufficient for your infernal selfishness, that while you are at peace I shall writhe in the torments of hell?”

“You teach me now how cruel you've been – cruel and false. *Why* did you despise me? *Why* did you betray your own heart, Cathy? I have not one word of comfort – you deserve this. You have killed yourself. Yes, you may kiss me, and cry; and wring out my kisses and tears. They'll blight you – they'll damn you. You loved me – then what *right* had you to leave me? What right – answer me – for the poor fancy you felt for Linton? Because misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it. I have not broken your heart – *you* have broken it; and in breaking it, you have broken mine. So much the worse for me, that I am strong. Do I want to live? What kind of living will it be when you – oh God! would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?”

“Let me alone. Let me alone,” sobbed Catherine. “If I've done wrong, I'm dying for it. It is enough! You left me too; but I won't upbraid you! I forgive you! Forgive me!”

They were silent – their faces hid against each other, and washed by each other's tears. At least, I suppose the weeping

was on both sides; as it seemed Heathcliff *could* weep on a great occasion like this.⁹

When Miyake translates this passage into Japanese, he paints a clear portrait of Catherine who is racked with grief and anger in the presence of her lover. However, when he turns to the character of Heathcliff in Japanese, an obvious act of interpretation emerges. When Heathcliff speaks, the translator seems reluctant to translate his words verbatim with quite the same level of venom. In English, for example, Heathcliff accuses Catherine of “infernal selfishness” while Miyake’s Heathcliff prevaricates, replacing the sting of “infernal” with “even one as selfish as you”; [僕が生き残って地獄のような苦しみに身を悶えていると思えば、いくら身勝手なあんたでも、満足してよさそうなもんじゃないか?] [“If you consider that I will be left on this earth, writhing in agony, even one as selfish as you will be satisfied, won’t you?”]¹⁰ Moreover, in the original Heathcliff states, “you know that I could as soon forget you as my existence!” But Miyake puts this statement into Japanese: [僕が死んでもあんたを忘れないってことも知てるじゃないか!][“Even if I were to die, you know that I couldn’t forget you!”]¹¹ Miyake beautifies Heathcliff’s statement and embroiders slightly. Heathcliff does not tell Catherine that he will remember her even if he dies; he declares that he cannot forget her because they are one and the same being. In the first instance Miyake softens Heathcliff’s blistering charge and in the second, he chooses a more romantic conceit—the notion of a love that survives even death itself.

Reading Miyake’s translation next to Brontë’s novel, it becomes obvious that Heathcliff is not the same character in Japanese. Another striking example is Kōno Taeko’s 1970 theatrical adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, which was criticized in the press for its sentimental portrayal of Heathcliff.¹² Like Miyake, Kōno seemed reluctant to translate Heathcliff’s most blistering statements. Here is one speech from Kōno’s version of the death scene, translated back into English:

Heathcliff: Oh, oh, Catherine. I want to comfort you. But why did you betray your own heart and marry Edgar Linton? You went and killed yourself. That’s how it was, but now kiss me. Are you crying? Then cry. (He wipes his tears with the

⁹ Brontë 1995, pp. 161–163.

¹⁰ Miyake 1942, p. 176.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Hinoshita 1970, p. 48

palm of his hand) Catherine, let your kisses and your tears mingle with mine. You loved me. In spite of that, by what right did you leave me? Tell me. We were so tightly bound that not even bad luck, depravity, or death could separate us. Nothing that the gods or demons could put in our way. But you forced us apart with your own hands. I didn't break your heart. You did. And then you broke my heart, too.¹³

Kōno's rendering of the death scene approaches the overblown staging of the soap opera with Heathcliff showing his sensitive nature through his tears. Rather than upbraid Catherine stating, "I know how cruel and false you've been," Heathcliff skips to the question, "Why did you betray yourself and marry Linton?" Kōno omits entirely Heathcliff's harsh prophecy that Catherine may kiss him but that her kisses will blight and damn her. Instead Heathcliff implores, "Kiss me. Are you crying? Cry." Then he wipes his own tears away. Compare this to the original novel in which Nelly sardonically expresses surprise that Heathcliff "*could* weep on a great occasion like this." Finally, Kōno skips Heathcliff's famous line, "would *you* like to live with your soul in the grave?" Instead Heathcliff stresses his forgiveness, saying, "I forgive everything you did to me and I will love you forever. But I can't forgive your murderer!"¹⁴ At this point Edgar Linton opens the door and peeks into the room. By her stage directions, does Kōno mean to indicate that the husband Edgar is truly the one to blame?

Mizumura follows in the footsteps of earlier versions of Heathcliff, but she goes one step beyond her predecessors, creating a Heathcliff who is strikingly beautiful, sensitive, and loyal to the woman he loves. Through her descriptions of Azuma Tarō, Mizumura lulls her reader into safety, thus making the final twist at the end even more effective. Parody is born out of what seems to be reverent adoration of an original. In order to explore this dynamic, we must turn to the story of Tarō and Yōko's childhood, which is narrated by Fumiko. Mizumura's method is to manipulate the various characters' desire for the beautiful Azuma Tarō, or to set up love triangles within love triangles.

TOKYO AND KARUIZAWA, 1956–1993

The story of Tarō and Yōko begins eleven years after the end of World War II. Azuma Tarō appears with his uncle and cousins at the

¹³ Kōno 1995, p. 320.

¹⁴ Kōno 1995, vol. 10, p. 322.

Utagawa house and the family moves into a small house built for servants in the back garden. Tarō's father was an ethnic Chinese bandit who raped his mother out of revenge against the Japanese. When Tarō's mother died, her brother adopted him and brought him back to Japan. But once in Japan, Tarō is abused and neglected by his adopted family, particularly by his aunt. Utagawa Yōko, on the other hand, is the strange, neglected daughter of Natsue, the middle daughter of the Saegusa family, who married an ambitious doctor but prefers to spend her time with her sisters in their old family home. (The Saegusas have dwindling financial resources but high social aspirations.) In the absence of their mothers, Tarō and Yōko grow up together, creating their own world apart. They are taken care of by an unlikely set of companions: the maid Fumiko and Granny Utagawa, Yōko's grandmother who herself is not accepted by the snobbish Saegusa family because she is a former geisha and a second wife. In spite of their love for each other during childhood, Yōko rejects Tarō in the end in order to "marry up"—to Masayuki, the son of the family that has long patronized hers, the Shigemitsu family, and who owns the villa next door in Karuizawa.

In spite of his bitter disappointment, Tarō, unlike the original Heathcliff, is not motivated by revenge. Rather, Mizumura exaggerates his romantic qualities to such a degree that many women in the book fall in love with him. Even Yōko's disagreeable aunts entertain strong feelings towards Tarō, which suggest resentment over his rejection of their patronage. In an even stranger twist, once Tarō returns from America with his fortune, Tarō and Masayuki, Yōko's husband, engage in a pact to share Yōko. Yōko moves back and forth between them, and Tarō even hires Yōko's husband to work for him renovating a mansion in Long Island. When Yōko is dying in the hospital, Tarō and Masayuki take turns tending to her. Finally, after both Yōko and Masayuki have died, Mizumura reveals her final plot twist, giving her readers the surprise that turns our expectations upside down.

We learn that Fumiko, our main narrator, has been secretly in love with Tarō for many years. More to the point, Fumiko and Tarō had a passionate sexual relationship for six months when Tarō was nineteen and Fumiko was twenty-nine. Further, Fumiko admits that she is responsible for Yōko's early death. Near the end of the novel, Masayuki, Yōko's husband, has finally offered her a divorce. Shaken by her need to choose between the two men, Yōko retreats to the old family villa in Karuizawa where she hides in her old attic room. Tarō promptly sends Fumiko to look for Yōko. Here, in the climax to the novel, Mizumura reveals her twist:

With all the renovations, the villa looked much bigger and I gave a cursory look around, starting on the first floor. At last, I started up the stairs to the attic room, but I stopped halfway up when I saw that the three doors facing the hallway were closed. I retraced my steps back down. If that had been all, I wouldn't have any reason to blame myself now. But just at the moment I was leaving, I had a strange feeling or I thought I did. It could be that I've revised my memories after the fact, but I had the feeling that the three closed doors were trying to tell me something. Or rather, even though I still haven't properly understood it, I thought I heard the voice of Yōko as a child talking to herself the way she did when she got upset. Even though the house was completely silent, I had this momentary auditory hallucination. I remember descending the stairs without making a sound, step by step, with the sole thought of blocking off that sound. I also remember fighting my own impulse to go back and check the villa again during the long silent car ride back to Tokyo with Masayuki. (Vol. 2, p. 319)

Because of Fumiko, Yōko's "rescue" is put off by days and she succumbs to pneumonia and dies. Mizumura takes what is suggested in Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (Nelly's disapproval) and makes it into a major plot device. This development also turns the story on its head. Once we learn the fact of Fumiko's passion, our reading of *Honkaku shōsetsu* shifts dramatically. We go back over the eight hundred and fifty pages, finding many hints that temper the romance of the initial reading. When the lovers are reunited for the first time after Tarō returns to Japan at Oiwake, for example, Fumiko is forced to be present. She listens to Yōko ask Tarō repeatedly if he had ever had another lover and each time Tarō responds, "No." We begin to understand why Fumiko wants Yōko out of the way. To make matters worse, Fumiko happens to be present in the hospital just before Yōko's death. She overhears Yōko telling Tarō that he may commit suicide in future, but it must be a method that befits his "good life." Tarō asks incredulously:

"This was a good life?"

"Yes, it was, wasn't it?" Grasping Tarō's hand over the sheets, Yōko gently moved it back and forth as if to comfort him. She didn't seem to have the strength for more. Then with a

faint smile on her parched lips, she gazed at Tarō, “It was the best. Nothing could have been better.”

At these words, Tarō roughly shook off Yōko’s hand. “Nothing better than this? That’s nonsense!” he shouted forcefully, and then lowering his voice till it was nearly inaudible, he breathed, “Yōko, you wouldn’t marry me. You said you didn’t want me. You said you’d die of shame if you married me.”

After a brief silence, Yōko asked flatly, “Tarō, you’re still mad at me, aren’t you?” (Vol. 2, p. 344)

Seen through Fumiko’s eyes, the scene drips with irony. Tarō had rejected Fumiko, a woman of his own class, for his fruitless pursuit of Yōko, a woman who does not comprehend his misery and who would rather die than live with him in a mansion on Long Island. In contrast, compare this dream of unfulfilled love to the brief physical affair between Tarō and Fumiko, which is reported to Yūsuke by one of the Saegusa sisters. As a neighbor in the apartment building had reported to her at the time,

They do it every night. They’ve only been here two months but it’s every night. They put on a show, right through the night. Today it was the same, on Sundays, they start before breakfast. I can hear that woman’s voice like she was in the same room. (Vol. 2, p. 385)

The revelation about Fumiko comes as a shock to readers familiar with the non-sexual world of Catherine and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*. There is something transgressive about Heathcliff having sex with Nelly. As Atsuko Sakaki suggested during discussion at the AJLS conference, perhaps one reacts this way because works read during adolescence seem sacrosanct, and Mizumura violates the illusion of innocence. Again, the parodic element comes into play because we do not expect the beautiful Tarō (or Fumiko) to act this way. Further, the betrayal of innocence falls squarely on Nelly’s shoulders. In her role as narrator, we trust her to “stay in her place,” but Mizumura has made her into a dynamic and self-interested figure in the narrative who encroaches up and even smashes

the shimmery world of Yōko and Tarō. In the 2002 interview, Mizumura mentions this development and admits that she has put the secondary character forward:

From the time I was a child, I was always so concerned about Nelly. Indirectly, Nelly is a murderer. Catherine, who is locked in her bedroom, expects Edgar to worry about her and come to apologize. But Nelly doesn't tell Edgar this, so Edgar never asks for Catherine's forgiveness. Catherine goes completely mad and dies. Indirectly, Nelly is a murderer. . . Even if a maid was a beautiful girl, she couldn't play the role of heroine in nineteenth-century England. She's nothing more than the servant as in Sōseki's works. But in postwar Japan, you can make a maid like Fumiko take the lead.¹⁵

To underscore her point, *Honkaku shōsetsu* ends with Nelly holding the deed to the two family properties in Karuizawa, a final gift from Azuma Tarō. In literal terms, the servants have taken over the manor.

Why does Mizumura make these steps? On the most obvious level, Fumiko represents a different Japan from the elegant and Westernized Japan of the Saegusa family. Born in a rural area, Fumiko comes from farming stock. She recognizes (and records) the hypocrisy and snobbery of the Saegusa sisters who criticize tourists in Karuizawa because "they all look like farmers" (Vol. 1, p. 287) and who themselves come from a class where the women look like illustrations in a girl's novel (Vol. 1, p. 374). Tarō, on the other hand, cannot recognize the truth of his situation. In spite of his newly made American wealth, Yōko will not give up her class privilege to marry him. Even his purchase of a mansion by the sea in Long Island falls short because he cannot replicate his past with Yōko, particularly in the wilds of North America. Poor Tarō remains blind, clinging to a world of villas in Karuizawa, British teas, and aristocratic turns of speech whose existence is predicated on a rejection of people like him. A victim of his own romantic illusions, Tarō is a doomed man from the moment that he stands in the young Minae's room, fingering the dusty white books.

Unlike Tarō, Fumiko survives because she remains rooted in the myriad forms of "low" culture: to the street festivals of Tokyo, to the speech of her old grandmother in the country, and to the values of thrift and hard work that allow her to make a living outside the institution of

¹⁵ Naito 2002, pp. 61–62.

marriage. In Oiwake, Fumiko not only surrounds herself with objects of the Shōwa period (the old furniture, an electric lamp, an old rice cooker, etc.) but she embodies the hardiness of things that survive the passage of time. In fact, it is Fumiko's thriftiness that sets Yūsuke's meeting with the ghost in motion. When Yūsuke arrives at the villa after his bicycle accident, he sees Fumiko in a typical pose of Shōwa-era frugality: she is undoing and remaking an old *yukata* that she found in the back of a closet. But we soon learn that the *yukata* is one that Yōko had once worn to a summer festival. It is as if Fumiko summons the ghost with her needle—through her facility with the actual physical objects that made up life in the villa, c. 1965.

Fumiko's power also derives from her ability to control the story itself. At first it seems that Tarō is the target of Fumiko's mischief. But her actual target is Yūsuke, the young editor, and she wills him to arrive at the villa because she is ready to tell her story to the world and he would make the perfect medium. [Yūsuke describes feeling "tricked by a fox" after his bicycle accident. (Vol 1, p. 189)] Not only does Fumiko "seduce" Yūsuke with her story of Tarō and Yōko, she draws him into her world, introducing him to the Saegusa sisters at Karuizawa. Driven to distraction by the stories of Tarō, Yūsuke in turn seeks out the novelist Mizumura, the grown writer, and during an all-night session of literary, not physical, passion, he imparts the story to her. Fumiko further provides Yūsuke with a written account of her experiences so that he will not make mistakes. The Saegusas and Utagawas do not have a chance to tell their own version of events in the face of Fumiko's determined machinations.

Finally, Fumiko's (and Yūsuke's) story is a stroke of luck for Mizumura, the writer in the frame narrative who has been trying to write about her early life in Japan without success. After hearing Yūsuke's story, Mizumura feels as if "a miracle had occurred." The story arrives like a gift from the gods, a sign that she was meant to be a writer (Vol. 1, p. 165). Through Azuma's story, Minae realizes that she will be able to access the "time" that she had secreted away in a treasure box, a time in which she can remember herself and her old grandmother living in a Japan that was rising from the ashes of World War II towards a new prosperity, or in other words, the story of her own childhood in Japan before coming to America. It is as if through a domesticated version of *Wuthering Heights*, Mizumura can go back to the beginning and link the two disparate parts of herself, the two distinct languages that constitute her, English and Japanese. In this "discovery," Mizumura also suggests a solution to Japanese writers, to return to the fork of the road and perhaps

choose a different path—to move towards fictionality, not simply as an escape from the self but as a means to access truths that lie hidden within the bedrock of others' lived experiences.

Because of Yūsuke's story, the novelist Mizumura finally discovers how her own box of childhood memories connects her to the communal memory of postwar Japan (symbolized by the triangular nexus of Fumiko, Tarō, and Yōko), and she breaks out of her writer's block. All the desire stirred up by Azuma Tarō is now released in storytelling. But Fumiko's ascendancy reveals a stinging moral hidden within this story of lost love: be careful of what you wish for, whom you dream about, what you die for. It is no accident that the middle-aged and countrified Fumiko inherits everything. Through their fidelity to their roles as characters in a work of pre-war translated fiction, Tarō and Yōko are bound to fail. Paradoxically, Mizumura has used a much-loved nineteenth-century British novel to repudiate, to exhaust, to even mock the act of adoration of the "original." In her sustained act of retelling, Mizumura causes *Wuthering Heights* to wobble and collapse in on itself like an exhausted star. In its place, Mizumura returns agency to a woman who knows the language of the countryside; who lives in her body, not in her dreams; and who clearly remembers the upheavals of Japan's postwar rise. In retrospect, it seems natural for Tsushima to describe Mizumura's work as a parody. Can we believe in Fumiko's fortitude? Nevertheless, after Mizumura's singular experiment, it will be hard to return to a state of innocence, and it will be harder than ever before for the writer to market her own misfortune as literature.

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