
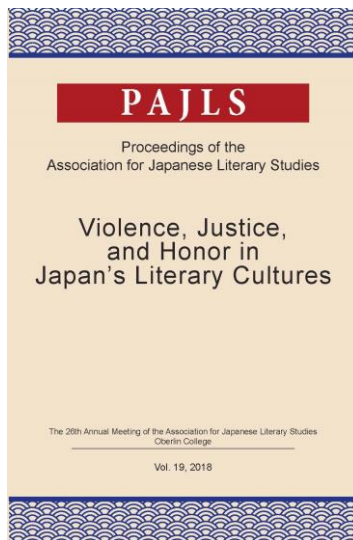


“A Daughter’s Search For ‘Mother’ in *Ai o kou hito*
(A Person Begging for Love)”

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**A DAUGHTER’S SEARCH FOR “MOTHER”
IN *AI O KOU HITO* (A PERSON BEGGING FOR LOVE)**

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INTRODUCTION

Child abuse had long hidden from the public space under the terms “family matters” and “private matters.” The term, *jidō gyakutai* (child abuse), started to be widely acknowledged in Japan in 1990 when newspapers such as *Asahi Shinbun* and *Mainichi Shinbun* serialized articles on parents’ violence toward minors and the work of civil society organizations for abused children (Inoue 2). The vivid portrayal of powerless children being the target of violence at home and in society deeply saddened readers. The Child Abuse Prevention Law was finally created in 2000. Since then, the number of cases reported to the Child Consultation Center has dramatically increased, as if the floodgate was finally opened for those who desperately needed help. We continue to hear on TV about parents’ physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and psychological abuse toward infants and children. Child abuse is one of the most urgent and current social issues today.

In the U.S., child abuse cases were vigorously studied in the late 1960s. The research traditionally focused on “incidence, causes, and prevention and treatment” (Gelles 363). Sociologist Richard Gelles states that “One facet overlooked is that abuse is social deviance, and is the product of social labeling” (362), and urges people to look at the socio-cultural environment which causes violence. In Japan, more than half of the perpetrators of aggression toward children are reported to be mothers (52.4% are mothers, whereas 34.5% are fathers, according to a statistic in 2014) (Iketani 4). It is, however, important to investigate the power relationships within the family and to examine why abusers are more likely to be mothers than fathers. Sociologist Inoue Takeo asserts that mothers’ isolation from local communities is a serious problem (Inoue 2). Studies unveil the tremendous pressure that mothers are shouldering due to the “myth of motherhood,” the traditional idea in which mothers’ love for children is believed to be unconditional and instinctive.

Fiction writers such as Takahashi Takako and Yū Miri wrote about mothers’ violence against their children. A great number of female manga artists have also tackled this topic, especially since the idea of child abuse

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was brought to the public's attention. Child abuse has long been a private, hidden women's issue. Manga, as well as literary works, serve as a means of engaging in women's reality and emotionally helping those who need their situation to be understood and their voices to be heard.

This article will focus on *Ai o kou hito* (A Person Begging for Love), originally published as a novella by Shimoda Harumi in 1992.² This work was later adapted as a film, TV drama, and manga. The film version of *Ai o kou hito* (English title, *Begging for Love*) directed by Hirayama Hideyuki, was released in 1998 and awarded the Japan Academy Prize's best film the following year. Overwhelmingly violent scenes horrified audiences. The lasting impact of this work is evident from the fact that when the TV drama version, *Ai o kou hito*, aired in 2017, it was recommended as an educational drama by the MEXT (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology). The manga version of *Ai o kou hito* was created by a women's mangaka named Sone Fumiko and was serialized in the women's manga magazine *Office You* from 1999–2000 (April–December, 1999 and April, 2000).³

The novel, *Ai o kou hito*, is about a woman around the age of forty named Terue, who was born of a Taiwanese father and a Japanese mother. She is a survivor of severe physical and psychological abuse. The story is told as a flashback; recollecting her 1960s childhood, Terue contemplates the validity of the emotional ties of blood connection. The most salient issues that the work deals with are problems affecting the postwar Japanese family—violence among them. The portrayal of the mother and the daughter in the story reveals how the postwar home, which is believed to be a space of comfort and peace, is, in fact, rife with tension, power struggles, and emotional and physical violence. The father is not exempted as a target of violence; he is mentally abused by his wife. The father's ethnic identity is an important topic explored in the story. The story carefully presents complex issues that Taiwanese people who remained in Japan after the war faced in the postcolonial society. In search for her own

² Shimoda Harumi (1947–2011) was a fiction writer who debuted in 1984 with her *Rikon seisho* (Divorce Bible). She was also known as an essayist; many of her essays dealt with the issues of single motherhood.

³ Sone Fumiko (b. 1958) debuted in 1975 as a shōjo manga artist in *Ribon* magazine. She received a Nihon manga Association prize in 1992 for her *Oya naru mono dangai* (Cliffs That are Parents) which depicted the lives of four sisters who are sold by their impoverished parents and work in the pleasure quarter in the 1920s. Her representative works include *Kodomotachi! Ima soko ni aru bōryoku* (Children! Violence Near You), *Kazoku saisei shinri ryōhō no genba kara* (Reconstruction of Family: Report from a Psychiatric Center).

identity, the heroine Terue travels to Taiwan to learn about her father's story in the latter half of the novel.

While the father's story is carefully traced in this work, the mother's story is neglected. Readers do not learn much about the mother's background or upbringing. The mother is simply presented as a horrific uncanny Mother. Sone Fumiko's manga fills this void; Sone explores the mother-daughter theme intensively and extensively, revealing the mother as a human and a woman.

This article will first look at the original novella, *Ai o kou hito*, discussing faults of the modern family system. Then it will examine how the manga version portrays a mother and a daughter who struggle against each other's uncanny *otherness*.

POSTWAR FAMILY

The idea of *kazoku* (family) notably changed after the war. The *ie* (extended family) system, which had functioned as the core of Japanese culture and society since the Meiji era, came to be viewed as a source of sexual discrimination and was rooted out. The postwar family model emerged with the introduction of the "democratic home" modeled after the ideal of an American family. The image of the Western home—a modern nuclear family in which a husband and a wife have a democratic relationship and children are equally treated as their treasures—came to be promoted through films and magazines.⁴ Japan's high economic growth from the latter half of the 1950s to the early 1970s further stabilized the family image. The separation of labor based on gender became distinct; men worked outside the home as salarymen and women were charged with "supportive tasks, such as domestic labor and childrearing, so that men could devote themselves to the increasing burden of overtime work that fueled the high-growth economy" (Bullock 17).⁵ In addition, the "housewife became the archetypal figure of womanhood" (Mackie 123). Childrearing was designated as a housewife's primary responsibility (Ochiai 8); as a result, the physical and emotional distance between mother and child shrank.⁶ A prototypical image of a gentle and caring mother

⁴ See Sakamoto, "Sengo fujin zasshi no kōzoku shashin o megutte."

⁵ Amy Borovoy also explains that "women's work as housewives came to constitute the backbone of postwar high growth, the pillar upon which all other institutions depended. . . . The state, in conjunction with Japanese business, embarked on a program of active domesticization of women: subsidizing women's stay-at-home work through a system that some have referred to as "housewife welfare" (*shufu hogo seido*) (Borovoy 74).

⁶ Emiko Ochiai states that there is a common sense idea such as "childrearing by a

raising a child under her care and protection was born, and the affectionate and loving mother came to be a synonym of the postwar modern home. *Ai o kou hito* takes place during the era in which middle-class domesticity was being restructured as a “‘cozy’ matricentric space” (Borovoy 75).

The belief that mothers unconditionally love their children is deeply ingrained in Japanese culture and people's minds. Terue's emotional suffering is attributed to this belief. The protagonist Terue was born sometime in the mid-1950s. Terue grew up without receiving the love of a family. When Terue was four, her mother Toyoko left home, having grown tired of poverty and of her physically weak Taiwanese husband. The abandoned Terue was put into an orphanage when her father was hospitalized, after which he soon passed away. When Terue was nine years old, her mother, now with a new man, came to take her to her new home. The main breadwinner, Toyoko worked at a hostess bar. She always wore colorful clothes and heavy makeup. She sometimes came back home late drunk, stripped off her clothes, and engaged in sexual acts with her husband in front of Terue. Terue had been dismayed to find out that her mother was not the type of mother that she had anticipated, but was a sexual woman who did not show any maternal care.

Although the 1950s was the recovery era after the defeat in World War II, a family with a salaryman, a full-time housewife, and children was still a privilege that only those who were financially stable could afford. There were many underprivileged women like Toyoko who could become neither a full-time housewife nor a full-time mother. Poverty created difference among women.

A culturally symbolic scene in the story pivots around the marriage of Crown Prince Akihito and Shōda Michiko on April 10, 1959. More than 15 million people watched the parade live on TV. “The country was coming out of the shadows of defeat in World War II and was working hard to create the image of a new Japan. It was in the beginning of an economic boom, material and electronic products were entering households, and all of this coincided with the prince's marriage” (Chung and Wakatsuki). In the story, Toyoko, who did not own a TV set, went to her neighbor's house to watch the ceremony. Her daughter Terue, however, was left at home. The next day, Terue realizes that she was the only one who did not watch the ceremony at school and felt embarrassed. Unable to join the conversation and to share the excitement with others, she felt left out; Terue could not share the collective cultural sentiment

mother is an unchanging central function of family” (Ochiai 8).

with others. This episode implies her social isolation as well as her cultural marginality.

Sociologist Inoue Teruko points out another culturally significant aspect of this royal wedding; the marriage, which, unusually for the Imperial family, was not arranged, legitimized marriage based on romantic love ideology and, after the birth of their son, the royal family came to be portrayed as a symbol of a new family. Sakamoto Kazue's study reveals that popular women's magazines such as *Josei jishin* (Women's Own) frequently published pictures of Princess Michiko and her children, featuring Michiko as a fashionable housewife, an affectionate mother and an educator of her children. The popular media played an important role in spreading the "loving mother" image. Komashaku Kimi states that the 1960s was a time when a woman's value laid in being a mother (24). Mothers were "expected to channel their sexual impulses into the production and rearing of children, as well as into creating a warm and comfortable home for their husbands" (Bullock 22). Princess Michiko was an embodiment of a modern women's ideal.

Terue's mother, the polar opposite of Princess Michiko, was a negative, bad example. Being sexual and being a mother were never to go together according to the standards that women were held to in that time.⁷ Terue's mother, a working woman, a hostess, needed to perform the role of a sexual woman to support her family, but Terue, an elementary school child, did not understand it. To Terue, her mother was nothing but a disappointing, shameful, and embarrassing mother.

As an adult, Terue's recollection of her mother does not contain sympathy for her struggles. The fact that her mother remarried many times also embarrassed and even angered young Terue, because every time her mother found a new man, Terue was addressed by a new name at school; she was initially Chin Terue, but became Nakajima Terue and Wachi Terue. She felt that her identity had been entirely influenced and controlled by her mother.

In this novel, the notion of "postwar family" in association with nationality is explored and examined from multiple perspectives. After the war, Toyoko, the wife of a Taiwanese husband, was registered as Chinese. Terue's nationality also changed from Chinese to Japanese with her mother's re-marriage. This instability of her identity made Terue feel powerless. The Taiwanese father's changing nationality in the story also

⁷ It was not until the 1970s that "public opinion began to shift toward acceptance of the notion that women might legitimately possess and act upon sexual impulses of their own, outside of the context of marriage" (Bullock, 23).

adds the depth in the story. The tumultuous life of Terue's father—the son of a farmer who came to the *hondo* (mainland Japan) during the colonial era (1895 to 1945) to study—is chronicled in the work. He had ended up working at a military factory to support Japanese military efforts. After the war ended, he remained in Japan. As Kashiwazaki notes, “Koreans and Taiwanese were liberated from Japanese colonial rule. Yet, the question of nationality of those who continued to reside in Japan was not resolved immediately. The Japanese government associated former colonial subjects with social disorder and public security problems” (439). Learning about the life of her father—his financial struggles, his suffering from discrimination, and his unrealized dreams—Terue “could not easily digest the absurdity of a situation in which a citizen of a different country was forced to be Japanese only during the occupation era” (175).⁸ With Japan's formal renunciation of the rights to Taiwan in April 1952, Taiwanese people all came to be registered as citizens of the Republic of China (He 25). Terue had felt “a deep repentance” as well, and “the blood of two countries conflicted within” her (175). Not long after, this Taiwanese man (Terue's future father) married a Japanese woman, Toyoko, who on the pages of the family registry was inscribed as being Chinese as well, because until 1984, Japanese law had a patrilineal system.

Another aspect that Shimoda critiques is the Japanese family registry system called *koseki* (household registration). Despite the new Japanese constitution which protected liberal ideas of individualism, the law relating to family and nationality continued to show traces of the patriarchal family system in the form of *koseki* which clearly records the head of the household. Despite the *ie* system having been abolished after the war, the *koseki* registry still exists as if a remnant of *ie*, the extended family system. Each person's family registry of the pre-war era recorded the previous four generations of the family, indicating the name of the household head and the inheritor of the family property and rights. Though it has been reduced to recording no more than two generations, the *koseki* system still documents family information and regards the family as an essential social unit. The author Shimoda asserts that the fact that the family unit is more valued than the individual remains unchanged in the postwar period. *Koseki* records births, deaths, marriages, divorces, adoptions, even changes of gender. Until 1976, *koseki* was accessible by the public, and companies scrutinized applicants' familial background when hiring people (Jones). The author emphasizes that this is a system which monitors and surveils Japanese citizens, and a system which defines the standard of the

⁸ All translations are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

Japanese family. Her complex family background and the change of her surname had troubled Terue later in her life, when she had tried to get a job after junior high school. Her *koseki* records had clearly indicated that her family did not fit the standard of Japanese family.

UNCANNY MOTHER

Since her childhood, Terue had always felt her own marginality not only at school but also at home. Toyoko adored her son, Terue's half-brother, the product of Toyoko and her second husband who was Japanese. Toyoko was always indifferent to Terue. Toyoko's physical violence toward Terue started one day when Terue had hesitantly asked for pocket money to go to a festival with her friend. Toyoko suddenly became outraged:

A monster like scream exploded near my ears. My neck was grabbed from behind and was dragged on the tatami floor. My head hit the floor hard, and my cheeks were slapped multiple times. My mother with a demonic expression. . . . kicked my body and hit me ceaselessly. (79)

Toyoko's abuse became frequent after that. Terue's stepfather had initially tried to stop Toyoko, but had eventually stopped saying anything. The neighbors heard Terue's screams and saw bruises on her face and body, but pretended they did not see what Terue was going through. Toyoko kept telling others that hitting her daughter was part of her education; "We have to make our children aware that parents have the authority" (108). The fact that the abuser had been Terue's mother had legitimized the violence. *Shitsuke* (discipline), *sekkon* (punishment), and *ai no muchi* (loving smack)—these are commonly used words by mothers who are assigned the responsibility of disciplining their children, but they are in fact expressions used to hide physical violence. Even Terue's teacher was not able to do anything but ignore the abuse. With no place to go, poor Terue had been under her mother's domination, imprisoned in the idea of modern family, a private space. She had never been able to escape from the total control of her mother.

Toyoko's violence continued even after she escaped poverty; she found an older man with a stable job. With this marriage, she quit her job and became a full-time housewife. Her violence toward Terue escalated and went out of control. By this time, Terue had reached puberty and experienced bodily changes. Her mother's abuse had become sexual; she had made Terue take off her clothes and had tied her to a pillar. She had

hit Terue with a bamboo stick until Terue bled and Toyoko herself had been too exhausted to continue.

Blood pumped out from my mouth and nose. Blood splashed everywhere. . . . My mother's anger escalated because the floor was smeared with my blood. The blood of me, the daughter whom she hated so much, was filthy and disgusting to her. (104–5)

Toyoko had tortured her daughter's female body physically, as if to teach her that a woman's body is bad and worthless.

In *Ai o kou hito*, it is hinted that Toyoko's abuse of Terue relates to the trauma of having been raped before her first marriage. A study shows that people with a history of trauma or PTSD sometimes show a tendency to engage in aggressive and violent behavior toward their families ("PTSD"). Toyoko's abuse toward her daughter could also be considered as her abjection of her female gender. Toyoko had already survived various levels of trauma—war and its aftermath—even before experiencing rape. This cultural and social violence had driven her to abuse someone weaker than herself.

Unfortunately, however, Toyoko's story is incomplete in the text, because it is narrated totally from the perspective of her daughter Terue; Terue does not try to learn the actual story of her mother. She is neither interested in learning about Toyoko nor seeing her as a woman with a history. Terue travels to Taiwan to research her father's life story, but she avoids learning about her mother. She persistently and almost masochistically endured her mother's violence without resistance, and "begged for love. . . no matter how much she was beaten" (111). Terue reiterates the questions, "why doesn't my mother love me?" Unable to stop believing that *bosei* (maternal instinct) is inherent in any mother, she endured any unreasonable ill-treatment by Toyoko. Terue saw her as a Mother, a cultural signifier of the modern family; even if she was abjected by the Mother, she persistently sought acceptance by Mother, modern family, and Japanese society.

PERFORMING A MODERN FAMILY

Terue's freedom arrived after she had found a job, left home and became financially independent. Her departure from her mother enabled her to search for a "new family," a space where she belonged. She married a kind man twenty years older than she. This marriage provided her with a family name which no longer changed; she had become Yamaoka Terue, a permanent identity for her. She also became a mother, the last missing

piece in creating a new home. When her baby was born, Terue was elated. She had felt that the child was *her own*. She had confirmed that the connection of blood was something special, and that maternal instinct was real. She states; “I finally became the main character of my life (*jibun no jinsei no shujinkō ni natta*)” (30). To Terue, the idea of “modern family” is like a fairy tale; with marriage and the birth of a child, she can participate in the world. In other words, for her, the story of a modern family cannot be realized without the role of an affectionate mother. Terue celebrates motherhood and glorifies the notion of modern family.

However, the story concludes with the suggestion that Terue might continue the cycle of violence. She imagines that in the future she could forgive her mother and would take care of the bedridden woman. However this fantasy has a dark side:

A dream that I always have is cast behind my eyelids. I am taking care of my mother who now has grey hair. I change my mother’s diaper. Spanking her butt, I scream, “Learn how to love a child before you die.” I don’t let her die until she learns. (296–71)

Terue’s love mixed with animosity and fury toward her mother might open a new chapter of a story called “modern home.” The physically weak mother would be tied to her daughter under the name of “love,” but a “love” which, in fact, has the power to control and confine the mother. Violence is always close at hand in the modern home.⁹ Cultural anthropologist Amy Borovoy warns:

The image of love between mother and child obscures the possibility of an abuse of power on either side. The care of a mother (or protector) is imagined as benevolent and nurturing, and thus the mother’s intentions cannot be questioned or challenged. Conversely, a child’s innocent need for its mother makes it difficult to articulate when the child has crossed the line from innocence to selfishness and exploitation. (80)

The idea of love is entangled with culturally expected images and familial obligation. The power relationship between mother and daughter is easily influenced by age and social factors. In the name of the modern

⁹ Psychiatrist Nobuta Sayoko warns of the danger of failing to see the existence of power structure within the modern family: “The modern family is often considered as a peaceful realm. Yet, it is a realm full of violence and control” (Nobuta 286) .

family, Terue would perform the role of a “loving daughter” for the sake of the aged mother. *Ai o kou hito* reveals the pitfalls of the postwar modern family system. The mother and the daughter are presented as strangers, unintelligible, unrelatable *Others*, despite the fact that they tend to see each other as their closest beings. The attempt to control the *other* involves violence and aggression. An uncanny Mother could be transformed into an uncanny Daughter, when the power dynamism shifts. The violence could create a vicious cycle, passed down through generations.

MOTHER-DAUGHTER DIALOGUE THROUGH MONOLOGUES IN MANGA

Sone Fumiko's manga version pushes the idea of the uncanny Mother further, showing the daughter's confrontation and contestation against it. Before discussing this work, I would like to briefly touch upon the medium—ladies' comic magazine—in which this manga was serialized. *Office You*, in which Sone Fumiko's manga version was published, is categorized as a *redisu komikku* (ladies' comic),” a type of magazine read by and created by adult women. Ladies' comic magazines originally branched out of girls' manga magazines. Unlike girls' manga, which present girls' dreams, ladies' comics explore the everyday reality of women: stories about working women in the corporate world, housewives and their relationships with their mothers in law, wives' love affairs outside marriage, etc. In the 1990s, publishers known for tabloid magazines began to publish ladies' comics and started to publish manga which contain adult images. Because of this, ladies' comics came to be stigmatized for being trashy and promiscuous. However, sociologist Mori Naoko points out that early ladies' comics did not contain gratuitous sexual scenes, and the focus was always on realistic women's issues. Mori further states that critics draw a line between non-pornographic and pornographic comics, calling the former “women's comics,” and the latter “*redikomi*” [shortened form of ladies' comics] (Mori 92). Ladies' comics are, simply put, “relatable” to readers; mirroring readers' realities, or functioning even as catharses for readers' problems. Corresponding to social events, a large number of manga today explore parents' violence toward their children.

Sone Fumiko deals with the issue of child abuse in her diverse works.¹⁰ Sone's manga version of *Ai o kou hito* alters the original story by eradicating the father's Taiwanese identity, making it easy to focus on the

¹⁰ Another important manga artist is Sasaya Nanae. Her *Kōritsuuta me* (Frozen Eyes) is a collection of episodes on abused children and struggling mothers, originally published in ladies' comic magazine *You* from 1994–1995. This work is based on journalist Shiina Atsuko's reportage titled *Oya ni naru hodo muzukashii koto wa nai* (There Is Nothing More Difficult Than Becoming Parents).

relationship between mother and daughter. One interesting technique that she utilizes is the monologue. The monologue is a popular technique that female manga artists conventionally utilize. It is said that manga drawn by women tend to focus upon interiority rather than on action, which is regarded as a characteristic of boys' and men's manga. Sone Fumiko makes full use of this technique and gives the mother, Toyoko, a chance to express herself in her manga work. By allowing both Terue and Toyoko to voice themselves, each side of the story is delivered to the audiences.

The work commences with a scene in which Terue is introduced as the gentle mother of an adolescent daughter, Miyuki, who is unaware of her mother's past. Miyuki always wonders about the scars on her mother's body. As Miyuki gets older, Terue starts to feel that she cannot keep hiding her past from her daughter. Terue's internal conflict is expressed thus: "Until age 18 when I left home, I was repeatedly abused by my mother. Now I am a mother, and I don't know how I should come to terms with my experience. Why did it happen? I don't know!!" (58).

A phone call from her younger brother with whom she has not been in contact for decades gives Terue the courage to face her own past. With the assistance of Miyuki, she traces her deceased father's past: "searching for my father's grave is to look at my mother as a human. My true journey is about to begin" (89). Discovering her father's roots and history by visiting his relatives naturally unveils the profile of her mother Toyoko and the life she had led during the tumultuous postwar era. Terue's search for the Taiwanese father of the original story is converted into her search for her mother. Terue's journey imbues spirit into the cold uncanny mother of her memory, enlivening her as a woman with complex emotion.

Terue's mother Toyoko was born as one of the eight children of a poor family in a rural area. Because of her family's poverty, she was forced to work in her early childhood. When Toyoko was an adolescent, she was almost sold to a house of prostitution due to the family's financial difficulties. Having managed to run away from home, she ended up working as a waitress at a small diner, where she met her future husband, Terue's father. A tragic event changed her life; one day she was dragged to a dark alley and raped by young men. After this incident, Toyoko's father proposed to her and they got married, but rape trauma impaired her emotionally. Poverty and her husband's poor health pushed her to the limit; Toyoko stopped paying attention to her husband and even to their infant child, Terue. Their marriage soon deteriorated.

The fact that her mother abandoned her torments Terue, and she strongly desires to find out the reason why Toyoko made such a cold-hearted decision. Terue sometimes wonders; "Maybe I adhered to the idea

that mothers are supposed to love and raise children. . . . But what if there are mothers who cannot love even their children?" (202). Her mother, Toyoko speaks up in a different scene. She relates to a counselor the misfortunes she endured starting with her first marriage. Mentioning how much Terue looked like her husband, she tries to explain her abusive behavior and the feelings it generated within her:

"When I was hitting my daughter, I could forget about sad reality. Every time I hit her, I felt released...." My young body --- every time I hit the child, my breasts shook, I felt the sweat and my cheeks blushed. Soon I got exhausted and my body and mind were fulfilled. (230)

Toyoko reflects; "My life was buttoned up wrong since the time I was born" (198). She could not love her daughter because she herself was not loved by society. Her daughter was a constant reminder of her past, her miserable life, and her feminine gender. She abjected her past, her body, and herself by hitting her child. To Toyoko, Terue was an uncanny daughter, an abhorrent *Other*.

The monologues of Toyoko and Terue are intertwined, creating an interesting indirect dialogue. While Terue asks why her mother hit her repeatedly and unreasonably, Toyoko answers that she herself does not clearly understand why the target had to be her daughter. Toyoko states that "being hit is painful but hitting creates pain too" (234). It is hinted that Toyoko also suffered emotionally, if not physically, while torturing her daughter. Sone's manga work teaches that child abuse is not just as an issue within a family but is deeply connected to social circumstances.

The last chapter of the manga, depicting a scene invented by Sone which is not in the original novella, is devoted to Toyoko's present day; now senile and over seventy, Toyoko thinks that she is a young woman. Sneaking out of the hospital, barefoot Toyoko in her shabby negligee shocks a bystander. Rescued by her female counselor (who also suffers from the trauma of abuse by her mother), Toyoko tells her that she is on the way to her wedding. With tears in her eyes, she relates to the counselor that she hopes to have a daughter in the future and that she would provide her with unconditional love. The counselor decides to bring Toyoko to Terue's home. The final scene only shows the image of the dirty and wrinkly foot of the mother standing at the entrance of the house. Now that she does not remember that she is a mother who used to abuse her daughter, she is just an aged woman facing another woman who is willing to forgive and welcome her. The story ends with the counselor's

monologue: “The pitch darkness is about to end” (252) suggesting a ray of hope.

CONCLUSION

Manga artist Hagio Moto rightfully states:

Books about child abuse are usually written by specialists of the field. Their books are not written for ordinary people. The manga form softens the heavy theme and makes it accessible to general readers. Physically tortured young boys and girls depicted in manga are visibly poignant and heart wrenching. (n.p.)

Ai o kou hito demonstrates the fact that manga and literary works can be a powerful means of showing readers the unbearable reality of child abuse. More importantly, it plays the role of educating readers about child abuse, making them understand its pattern and the psyche of the parents who commit it. In this article I have attempted to breach the border between the treatment of literature and manga as serious material. Although many manga publications are guilty of depicting violence and abuse in a purely sensationalistic manner, *Ai o kou hito* examines the issue seriously, to the degree that even the purveyor of the violence is given a human dimension. Fiction writer Shimoda Harumi and mangaka Sone Fumiko each successfully depicted child abuse in the form of the medium they chose. Today, child abuse is ubiquitous; it is a modern malady, the cure for which should be seriously pursued. The study of the mechanism of the modern family is the first step.

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