

Chapter 4 On a Long Journey

The Returnee

Midori returned to Tottori in September, 1932 (Showa 7). She was 36 years old.

It is said that she was taken home against her will by her oldest brother, Atsuro. As the head of a patriarchal family, Atsuro must have thought he could no longer leave his younger sister alone in Tokyo, suffering from hallucinations. He also must have quickly realized that he could not count on Takahashi Takeo, presumed to be Midori's boyfriend, a penniless, and younger, aspiring writer. This older brother, a naval officer, put an end to his younger sister's life as a writer rather than becoming her social and economic guardian or a spiritual support as she tried to gain independence.

With the publication of *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* the previous year, Midori's genius was flourishing, she had reached what should be called her literary peak, and she was on the verge of tackling an *avant garde* literature that would open up a new realm. At that very moment, Midori's oldest brother came to Tokyo in the conventional role of head of the family and destroyed all that Midori had been trying to accomplish without even realizing the irremediable damage his actions would cause.

Did the oldest brother fulfill his duties as family head by taking Midori back to Tottori? In the end, he did not succeed in marrying Midori off and making a stable family member of her, and she became a spiritual burden to the family as a younger sister troubled with hallucinations. Their mother was old and powerless, and there was no place for Midori in her natal home. Midori must have volunteered to become a normal sister rather than an "odd" one by taking on the care of her mother and her young nephews and nieces so that she would not be a burden on the family.

It seems that Midori's older brothers, in particular the third brother Shiro, dearly loved and even relied on this unique and unusual, "odd" younger sister. But they could not secure a place for her within their homosocial society, nor could they provide the spiritual support Midori needed to become an independent writer, and it appears that the social shame of having a 36 year-old sister return to Tottori from Tokyo suffering a

nervous breakdown, unmarried and without feminine charm or sex appeal, was stronger, especially for the oldest brother. Not only her young nephews and nieces, but all members of her family seem to have been unaware of Midori's superior talent, her literary activity in Tokyo, and her works. We can guess that her family was not proud of her as a writer and did not want the details of her life in Tokyo known to the world, let alone her mental illness.

Still, why didn't Midori try to go back to Tokyo or write novels again? The mystery remains unsolved, but perhaps she was influenced by the fact that her oldest brother Atsuro grew seriously ill with tuberculosis that same year and died in November.

Atsuro became ill in Hiroshima and died under Midori's care. Eight years earlier, her second brother Tetsuro had also died under Midori's care after contracting a disease of the brain. Her third brother Shiro, with whom Midori was closest, went to Seoul as an agricultural engineer for the Governor-General of Korea and then remained there as an employee of a local fertilizer company until Japan's surrender. As a result, Midori could not rely on any of her older brothers and had to assume everyday responsibilities for her mother and her younger sisters' families. In particular, her youngest sister Shinobu, who also lived for a long time in Seoul and returned to Tottori upon surrender, left behind three children when she died in 1956, and Midori had to raise them as a surrogate mother.

Midori's mother Masa passed away in 1940 (Showa 15) when Midori was 44 years old. As their home had been destroyed in the Great Tottori earthquake of 1943, when Shiro, now an executive of the fertilizer company, and his family and Shinobu and her family returned from Korea after the 1945 surrender, they all had to live together in barracks built after the Great Earthquake.

The burdens and difficulties of living after their defeat in war fell heavily on Midori's shoulders. It is said that Midori made dust-cloths out of old clothes and then took the train to the neighboring towns and cities of Hyogo Prefecture in order to sell them in the streets. Such peddling must have been torture to Midori, who was bad at meeting people and didn't like to go out, preferring to spend a week or even two holed up in her room gazing at her inner world.

Midori herself gives no explanation or excuse for her forcible return

home by her oldest brother. We have only one source of information, and it is one-sided. It is the testimony of Takahashi Takeo, whom Midori is said to have considered marrying at one time. Takahashi was an aspiring writer, almost ten years younger than Midori.

In February of the year she would return to Tottori, Midori published her novel *Walking* in the coterie magazine *Bungaku Quarterly* (Literature Quarterly) and thereby came to know Takahashi and his literary friends, previously mere acquaintances. That summer, Midori became mentally unstable due to her drug addiction and sent a postcard to Takahashi Takeo seeking his help and asking him to come immediately. Takahashi seems to have been a little perplexed by Midori's confession of love, but decided to live with her and take care of her in her illness for the sake of her mental stability. Takahashi told Midori he wouldn't mind marrying her, but when she hesitated, he suggested that they just quietly live together and write novels.

Takahashi probably respected Midori's talent and her work, but he does not say that he felt romantic love for Midori. Seeing how severely unhinged Midori had become, Takahashi must have thought he would take her in for a time until she calmed down. His words were surely a comfort and joy to Midori. Takahashi said that after one relaxing night spent with him telling stories of her childhood, she announced in the morning that she felt as though she had returned to her girlhood and sang a song in a beautiful voice. It seemed as though this would be the beginning of a life of playing house together, but immediately thereafter her hallucinations returned and worsened, and she showed symptoms of schizophrenia.

Worried and at a loss over what to do for Midori, who was terrified even by the sight of friends and acquaintances and could no longer manage everyday life, Takahashi contacted Midori's oldest brother Atsuro, who hurried to Tokyo and took Midori back to Tottori. Atsuro could not bring himself to entrust the young Takahashi with the care of his younger sister, who had damaged her nerves through drug addiction and was suffering from hallucinations and schizophrenia. Furthermore, he must have considered the damage to his social image as older brother and guardian.

Takahashi writes that as her train departed, Midori, who had accompanied her brother obediently to Tokyo Station, leaned out of the train window and hurled these words toward him as he stood on the platform: "a

passion burning like flame, a mass of feverish passion.”

The young Takahashi could neither become her protector nor the spiritual support for her talent. He was yet another “incompetent” and “impotent” man.

The Gender of “Aunt”

Midori was not only returned to her family. She was obliged to live the gender role of “aunt” within a patriarchal family. The gender of “aunt” was prescribed by her duties within the family of her older brother, who had succeeded to patriarch following her father’s death, as a single younger sister and daughter, such as caring for her mother and helping her older brother’s wife, and later as a literal aunt caring for the children of her older brother and her younger sisters.

It has never been said whether or not Midori took on this role happily, but fulfilling her duties was the only way Midori could remain within the family. Midori fulfilled the role of substitute mother, which included looking after her sick older brothers, worrying about her younger sister’s marriage and her relationship with her husband, and even the education and everyday needs of their children. It is said that Midori loved them more than anybody else. This is as much as we know about Midori’s life in the gender role of aunt.

Midori’s nieces and nephews couldn’t believe it when they heard that their “boyish, super funny aunt” was a highly evaluated author with avid fans. In fact, it is hard to catch even a slight glimpse of the sensitive poet who wandered her internal world like the wind while sitting in her room on the second floor of the rented house, or the talented author who created a world of modernist, avant-garde works of mixed comedy and horror, rich in pathos and humor in picture of the 55 year-old Midori holding her younger sister Kaori’s grandchildren amongst the few pictures of Midori.

Where did that “girl” go? As winter approached, did “Miss Cricket” wither away and disappear, never to revive in the spring? Was the disappearance of “Miss Cricket” the end of Midori as a writer, and the severance of her connection to literature?

It is said that in her final years, as she approached her death, Midori

heard that her works were being reevaluated and murmured on her deathbed, “how cruel, to die like this.” Though some say that these words express her regret at having left literature and her lingering desire to return to the stage as an author whose turn has finally come, others argue that such an explanation would mean Midori considered herself an unlucky person and makes light of her long years as an ordinary person.

I myself think that both understandings are correct. I prefer to hold on to the fantasy of Midori’s girl, even now continuing her long, aimless journey, wandering in the “realm of the seventh sense.” However, the girl in remission from schizophrenia would never talk about her journey to other people. In fact, even after *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*, the girl never did write any poems about “the realm of the seventh sense.” Except for the simple poetic phrase, “longing for one far away.”

The residents of Midori’s literary space, those who had a glimpse of “the realm of the seventh sense” are all still on their long journey, having left the dilapidated, one-storied wooden house. The record of the girl’s travel was written in the recesses of Midori’s consciousness, and I am certain that a new text was born within those notes in that space of consciousness that no one could see. I enjoy the fantasy that the two alternate selves of Midori—the Midori who completely discontinued writing fragments and notes and the entire stream of her consciousness in her manuscripts and lived a “surface” life amid the reality of her family, and the “shadow Midori” who continued to wander, floating in the mists of “the realm of the seventh sense” as a schizophrenic patient in remission, only expressed through the silence of her surface life, who very occasionally crossed the skin and was projected on the screen—are both true images of Midori. Because Midori’s own life was always bound by this duality, by division and fusion.

The Resurrection of *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*

Midori lived within her family as “aunt” in Tottori from 1933 until 1971 without writing any works of literature. These years encompassed the postwar age of democracy in Japan, beginning in 1945. It could also be called the age of women writers.

Hayashi Fumiko was the golden child of this age, portraying a free lifestyle for women, while Hirabayashi Taiko produced unique texts of women's literature, drawing fully on the sensibility of anarchism and recklessly breaking down conventional norms in an attempt to open the way for her own style and sexuality. Despite their tortuous wartime experiences, Miyamoto Yuriko and Sata Ineko turned their prewar proletarian literary practice into one core of modern women's literature through their creative activities in the age of postwar democracy. Enchi Fumiko further developed the range of expressive practice in new women's literature, resuscitating the female desires suppressed by gender culture and hidden in the background of classical texts within works that are retellings of classical *monogatari*, bringing them to life as tales of female subjectivity.

In the latter half of the 1950s, women writers of the postwar generation such as Kono Taeko, Oba Minako, and Tomioka Taeko came to the fore and continued to dig further into the depths of gender culture. The 25 years of the postwar leading up to 1971, the year of Ozaki Midori's death (one quarter of the 20th century), were the age when a modern women's literature that deconstructed the norms of gendered society and aimed for something beyond through the exploration of the subconscious and female sexual fantasy, the family, and a "misty psychic realm" that Midori had bravely entered alone. It is therefore extremely regrettable that we do not find Midori's name there. But this is not to say that Midori is absent from that literary space, because it is a space that was pioneered by Midori.

It is Hayashi Fumiko who wrote about Midori with the most intimate and loving affection. Three or four years after Midori suddenly disappeared, Fumiko wrote an essay ("Memories of Ozaki Midori") in which she fondly recalls the days she spent with Midori while she herself was still unknown, learning many things. Fumiko added that she values Midori's works highly and would have liked to recommend her for the Akutagawa Prize, if she were still alive. It seems that even Fumiko thought that Midori had already died.

Matsushita Fumiko visited Midori in Tottori in 1948. Midori admitted to her close friend that she would like to write again. Perhaps the reason why Fumiko did not try to assist Midori's comeback with the help of writers and editors in the capital, was because Fumiko had distanced herself from that world. Or maybe, seeing the way Midori was living now,

Fumiko sensed that Midori had no true intention of working again as a writer. Just as before, Midori had no guardians or supporters, and spent the rest of her days walking in silence as an aunt with no relationship to literature.

Ozaki Midori thus lived without connection to postwar literary trends, unseen and forgotten, out of all contact with her former literary friends. And then unexpectedly, in the 1960s, Midori and her works were remembered and a movement for reevaluation began.

It all started with Hanada Kiyoteru's 1960 article which discussed Midori's *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*. In a commentary to *Rising Literature Collections: The Works of Abe Kobo*, Hanada mentioned Ozaki Midori's *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* as a work that had made a great impact on him when he read it in his late teens. After Hanada's article, Ozaki Midori's name became known by a small number of readers within the agitated literary and ideological currents of the 1960s. As mentioned above, this led to the inclusion of *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* in the Hanada Kiyoteru and Hirano Ken edited *Discovery of Modern Literature 6: Black Humor*, which made it possible for us to actually read Midori's work. Midori's novel, which Hanada Kiyoteru describes as overflowing with "unnaturally bright sunlight" had been rediscovered 37 years after her disappearance. Midori was 73 years old, and it was just one year before her death.

It is said that Midori was happy with the revival of *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*, and that when there was talk of adapting it to film she looked forward to it, saying to her niece, "it would be nice if we made some money." At that time, she was tired of sharing a room in an old age home in the city and spoke of wanting to rent a house and live with her niece. However, as always, no money actually came in, and her hopes ended unrealized. As Midori joked in a letter to her nephew, the "aunt's" novels, such as *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*, "are called masterpieces, but they don't make any money." Midori probably did not expect to earn a lot of money and maybe she didn't really care much. Midori's black humor remained healthy even just before her death.

Perhaps the fact that Midori said, "how cruel, to die like this" on her deathbed with tears in her eyes was because hearing that her works were finally being recognized made her regret her approaching death. And

perhaps this regret overlapped with her former regrets for having cut her career in literature short just as independence as a writer came into view. However, I think that Midori's regret was due to the fact that her wanderings in the "realm of the seventh sense," where her alternate self secretly continued to walk, would come to an end with her death.

Because in any case, it is doubtless that for close to 40 years, Midori had lived with her own "doppelganger," gallantly bearing her schizophrenia. Midori must have felt it was "cruel" that she must lose both of those true selves, equally important to her, in death. She must have had great regret for the fact that although she would have loved to continue to wander more and more through the "realm of the seventh sense" she must end her long journey in death before she reached her destination and without having written the poetry of *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*.

Was Midori's schizophrenia schism between her conflicting desires for a life as an expressive individual in the modern world and the sincere, everyday life as a woman within a family, between her desire to continue wandering in the "realm of the seventh sense" and to find a temporary resting place within the conventional world of family relationships? In Tokyo, Midori concentrated on literary creation rather than life, but in Tottori, she chose to put her wandering in "the realm of the seventh sense" in the "background" or "shadows" and live an everyday life on the "surface," something she had not been able to do in Tokyo. Midori herself pushed her shadow side into a realm of silence, where it continued dwell. Can anyone say that her protagonist did not exist just because we couldn't see her?

I believe that Midori lived in Tottori, maintaining this schism between her two conflicting desires to live and to write until her death. And although she tamed them with drugs and humor, I think the hallucinations and the ringing in her ears persisted and she continued to live with the anxiety and expectation that at any moment, her shadow side could pierce through her skin, pass through the screen, and rise up onto her surface life.

A Forerunner of Women's Modernist Literature

Midori's shadow definitely lived on silent and unseen in postwar

Japanese society. The Midori revival at the end of the 1960s was neither simply a scooping up of overlooked work by literary historians nor the rescue of an unlucky author out of sympathy and pity. It was a movement to correctly evaluate the essence of Midori's literature and to emphasize its prescient, *avant-garde* nature.

Hanada Kiyoteru, who led *avant-garde* criticism, including film criticism, within the postwar literary movement, read *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* as early as the beginning of 1930s when it was published, and his young eyes accurately perceived the avant-gardism of Midori's sensitivity and power of imagination, and the ability of her viewpoint to deconstruct conventional values and aesthetics. Hanada's positive evaluation of Midori brought her existence to our attention, and thereafter Ozaki Midori, who had a nervous breakdown and disappeared because she so keenly conscious of her incompatibility with gender culture, was recognized as a forerunner, or scout, of modern women's literature and positioned as the starting point of the modern/contemporary expressive practice of women by those female writers and critics who eventually turned their eyes to gender.

The history of modern women's literature is in fact a trajectory of struggle by women writers, who reject the projection of the self onto "woman" as she has always been written—as an object rather than a subject in the text of culture—and aim instead to express woman that is self, not as an object that they themselves write, but as a writing subject, the self that is woman.

However, women writers run into the problem of how to place oneself, who is a woman, as the origin of expression, or in other words, how to become a subject that expresses herself as a woman. What is a woman, and what is the relationship between being a woman and the self? There are women writers who feel a strong incompatibility with "that which is woman," constructed and ceaselessly reproduced in a thick pile of texts that have accumulated throughout history, and rebel against it by rejecting and ignoring a gendered viewpoint, saying they do not write as a woman. For women writers, gender is an issue of equal importance with the self. It is not easy to construct a subjectivity if you ignore gender—in other words if you think of yourself and write for the other, ignoring the fact that you are a woman. Woman is fixed within the patriarchal family and has been

defined by institutionalized roles and norms. Moreover, as women have been symbolically represented as the “child bearing sex,” the liberation of women meant facing the issue of how to liberate oneself from the emotional and physical bonds that bind her through the internalization of “child bearing sex” = “maternal.”

Writers such as Higuchi Ichiyo, Okamoto Kanoko, and Enchi Fumiko developed a unique field of representation in which they deconstructed and critiqued gender culture through the excavation of the deep layers of the female psyche, writing the sexual body, the desires, and the inner self of women, as women, or a strategy, so to speak, of turning “woman” into subject. In contrast, there are also writers like Miyamoto Yuriko and Sata Ineko who aimed to create a subjective independence for women by criticizing gender culture through themes of the sexual, social, and cultural oppression of women. For both, “woman” and the self that is woman are problematic issues, both in terms of self-consciousness and expressive practice, that always lead to a dead end. Midori faced these difficult issues by trying to write through the subjectivity of “girl.”

The “girl,” free from the normative designation of “woman=childbearing sex” because she does not yet have a mature body and for whom the process of being constructed as “childbearing sex=woman” has not yet been completed, is a subject who is incompatible with the entirety of gendered society and has a hatred and fear of the family and the sexual other. Not yet educated and won over by the group-think of adult homosocial society, the girl has a free, though incomplete, sensitivity and imagination. Though she is ambivalent and unreliable, unstable and irrational, she can be considered a subject with the potential to construct a free realm within gender culture. Midori’s girl was an “odd girl” and even “abnormal.” Under the guise of “abnormal,” Midori crossed over the normalized border between the male and female gender, nullifying both, and arrived at the subjectivity of a girl, free from binary gender and sexuality.

Of course, the subjectivity of “girl” cannot be the end-all in the attempt to create a female writing subjectivity. She is only one among a variety of forms of female subjectivity that shake conventional, normative female roles, such as the non-child-bearing woman, the deviant woman, the woman with excessive sexuality, the New Woman, the *femme fatale*, the prostitute, and the mountain witch (*yamamba*), who have all strayed from

their local community (*sato*). However, because the sexuality of the girl, as one who has not yet internalized norms, is obscure, neutral and intermediate, she is a dangerous existence that breaks the social taboos of homosexuality, “perversion” and incest. She is cruel enough to express her hatred and rejection of others without hesitation, and as one who embodies free thought and imaginative power that transcends reality, she was a fresh, eye-opening discovery for the women writers who were seeking a free subjectivity unbound by gender culture.

There are distinct traces of Ozaki Midori’s girl in modern and contemporary women’s literature; this girl, as a subversive and dangerous “female subjectivity,” is seen in the postwar works of Mori Mari and Yagawa Sumiko, and thereafter in the works of the younger generation including Ryu Miri and Tawada Yoko that break down the structure of gender culture, including that internalized within us.

And this is not all. The viewpoint of “girl,” pregnant with a challenge to gender culture, had a major impact on men’s literature and male subjectivity. The main theme of men’s modern and contemporary literature was a struggle with women as the Other, as men thought of women only as domestic figures in the norms and roles of mother, wife, and daughter, while women outside of those norms (such as prostitutes) were considered a sexual safety valve complimentary to patriarchal society. However, the theme of the girl was brought to their attention by women writers.

In addition to their struggles with the self-consciousness of wife, non-wife, and prostitute, women’s expressive practice caused the fantasies of the mother and of the girl, which slipped in and out of sight of the male subconscious, to rise to the surface. The girl plants an incestuous dream in men, she is an Other that seduces with the smell of sin, their deepest, repressed desire, and the self-consciousness of the Other. In Poe’s girls and Freud’s Dora, and in the worlds of Takehisa Yumeji, Naka Kansuke, and Kawabata Yasunari, the fantasy of the girl, made taboo and suppressed by the patriarchal family, is clearly visible. For Midori, the subjectivity that is “girl” was an attempt to create a subjectivity that would transcend her incompatibility with gender culture, and that incompatibility itself formed Midori’s sensibility and modernist expressive practice. But for men, the girl was a trigger for dangerous and destructive male and female fantasies that challenged gender culture.

It could be said that Ozaki Midori's modernism left behind indelible traces through the creation of such a girl as subject. She is a dangerous existence who brings to the surface taboo desires for incest and young girls in men, and also gives adult women a glimpse of a path that transcends the boundaries of gender, by avoiding mature, childbearing sexuality through a rejection of heterosexuality in favor of love between young girls. Seduction by such a subjectivity, so dangerous to gender culture, led the way in the development of a path that transcends and deconstructs gender culture not only in women's expressive practice, but as the core of the modernist arts that excavated the deep layers of the psyche.

The subjectivity of girl was an attempt at subject formation that other women writers of Midori's era were already tackling. Yoshiya Nobuko's expressive practice was the attempt to create the subjectivity of girl in the genre of girls' novels (*shojo shosetsu*) with its limited number of readers. This endeavor was clearly handed down to today's world of girls' comics (*shojo manga*) and survives as a highly influential subgenre. The fantasy of the girl, a representation of the subconscious female desire to reject maturity dredged up by a modernist sensibility, has become a subgenre that attracts readers. The girl has survived as a stable subjectivity within the underground, or alternative, literary world of *shojo manga*.

However, Midori's girl is different. *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* is neither fairy tale, girls' novel, nor horror novel. Though it crosses over into all those genre, it is a sharp and beautiful text of modern literature that opens up a world of hybrid and confused sensitivity and imaginative power. That genre-bending, transcendental, jumbled and fused sensitivity and imaginative power itself is what made possible the representation of the structure of gender culture and the deep layers of the psyche that transcend it—an external world filled with bright light, a moss-filled forest behind the mist. In between her cycle of drug addiction and silence, she dramatized that world and offered it to us as an eternally visible image in a text of modern literature.

The End

A man who falls in love with a girl who loves only after her object has left must always be disappointed. In order to delve into the inner world of the “odd girl”—unshapely, unfriendly, awkward, with no feminine grace and kindness, yet endowed with unusually delicate sensitivity—the man must have the courage to deviate from the norms and roles of masculinity in gender culture. Though kind-hearted Takahashi Takeo, who tried to help Midori with her mental illness, understood her, he lacked such courage.

I don't think that the last years of Midori's life were unhappy. Although I won't contradict this view, which is seen for example in the film *In Search of a Lost Writer: Ozaki Midori*, I believe that the world of *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* remained unfinished to her and spread out within her mind as she felt the “cruelty” of her death. Though she longed to wander there—even felt she must wander there—and though she thought she might yet have a chance to wander there, death was snatching her away. I think it was that sort of regret. For Midori, who nurtured a world of shadow and silence, separation from *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense* must have been as difficult as parting from her beloved nieces and nephews.

The elder home where Midori briefly lived had been demolished when I visited Tottori. However, the hospital in which Midori died was still there as before, facing the street near the station. Stopping in, I found it was a typical small hospital with an emergency entrance for ambulances, as you might see anywhere. For some reason I was reassured to see the place where Midori spent her last moments.

It seems that the scenery of the places where Midori started and ended her life that I visited in Tottori and the images of Midori that I saw in her photos continue to live on in our hearts as traces of Midori, even though they are far from the girl in the world of *Wanderings in the Realm of the Seventh Sense*. After Midori came back to Tottori, her alter-ego continued on a long, silent journey as her “shadow,” and after many years transformed into a “surface” existence in the eyes of the writers, critics, and readers of Midori's works. And now, the actual image of Midori who lived a long “surface” life as “Aunt” within her family—in other words, her “surface” alter-ego—is becoming a “shadow” alter ego, disappearing from my sight. The only thing left for us to see is the world of shadow, the text of

wandering.

The traces of the “surface” life that Midori lived but did not write, are fading away even in Tottori. Maybe even if we seek out the shape of Midori’s life in her later years, we will only chase along with Midori’s girl, and come out, not in Tottori or Kamiochiai, but on a field drenched in bright light beyond a forest of moss. And then we will “walk with the wind,” side by side with Midori.