

Representation of the Female Body in Maki Miyako's Women's Manga

Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase

Vassar College

Maki Miyako (born in 1935) is an important shōjo mangaka who helped develop Japanese shōjo manga in the 1960s; the adorable shōjo characters depicted in her work greatly fascinated young girl audiences of the time. Maki is also known as a pioneer of women's manga. These works, created for mature audiences, depicted women's bodies, sexuality, and sensuality, utilizing the style coined *gekiga* by manga artist Tatsumi Yoshihiro. This presentation will discuss Maki Miyako as a women's manga artist and the richness of her work from cultural, gender, and artistic standpoints.

Gekiga emerged around 1960. The term *gekiga* is often translated into English as "dramatic pictures," but its definition is elusive; the subject matter that *gekiga* manga deal with ranges from societal issues to pornographic entertainment. Manga critic Takeuchi Miho¹ attempts to define *gekiga* from a stylistic point of view, explaining that *gekiga* drawings generally have the following characteristics (PPT 2), 1) The line of drawing is like that drawn by a calligraphy brush; it gets narrow as it goes to the end, 2) There are shadows which are expressed through slashes, 3) Onomatopoeic textual effects are depicted in a thick and rough manner to emphasize dramatic action, etc. Manga critic CJ Suzuki looks at *gekiga* from a historical viewpoint, asserting that the original intended readers were young adults. He states: "Responding to the maturity of the comics readers who were no longer satisfied with comical depictions, gags, and benign narratives [of the previous era], *gekiga* broke away from child-

¹ See Takeuchi, "Sen kara toraenaosu 'gekiga.'"

oriented entertainment and strove toward more refined narratives and deeper themes for adolescents"²

In the mid-1960s, there was a publication rash of *gekiga* manga magazines (PPT 3): *Comic Magazine* (founded in 1966), *Weekly Manga Action* (founded in 1967), *Young Comic* (founded in 1967), *Big Comic* (founded in 1968), *Play Comic* (founded in 1968), etc. The creators who contributed to these magazines were dominantly men. In short, *gekiga* started as a manga genre for men and by men. Maki Miyako was one of a few women artists (if not the only female artist) who published her work in *gekiga* magazines.

Maki's *gekiga* manga can be characterized by the themes of "sexual love" and "passionate love", which distinguishes her from male *gekiga* artists. The motifs and symbols that she employs in her work recalls literary pieces by such authors as Tamura Toshiko.³

Today's presentation will select some of Maki's *gekiga* manga and examine the sources of Maki's artistic expression.

Maki Miyako:

Maki Miyako was born in 1935 (PPT 4). After graduating from high school, she worked at a bank for a short time. Her father owned a wholesale book shop. As his business grew, he needed more help. Miyako quit the bank and started working at her father's shop, where she came to familiarize herself with manga. She also realized that manga is an excellent means of self-expression.⁴ At the age 22, Maki Miyako made a debut as a shōjo manga artist.

² Suzuki, "Tatsumi Yoshihiro's gekiga and the global sixties," 54.

³ She produced manga rendition of classic literature, including *Genji Monogatari* (The Tale of Genji) and *Kōshoku Gonin Onna* (Five Women Who Loved Love, 1686) by Ihara Saikaku.

⁴ Maki, "Shojo manga kara ladies comic e," *Teinen Jidai* (November, 2014).

Shōjo manga was still a nascent field in the mid-1950s. In the beginning, shōjo manga were mostly created by men (PPT 5); the artists included Matsumoto Akira (today known as Matsumoto Reiji, and future husband of Maki Miyako), Chiba Tetsuya, Ishinomori Shōtarō, etc. Without understanding what little girls like to see in manga, these male mangaka created stories modeled after popular tear-jerking girls' stories from before the war. The typical shōjo manga plot revolved around a daughter who, separated from her beloved mother due to a sad circumstance, goes through various emotional hardships. The heroine overcomes her obstacles and is eventually reunited with her mother. In the world of shōjo manga, a mother is presented as a reward for a heroine for being good. At the wake of the devastation of the war, the fact that a family could live together under the same roof meant the absolute form of happiness. Maki also created a series of mother-daughter stories (PPT 6). Maki's shōjo manga, just like conventional shōjo manga of the time, were drawn with soft and circular lines. Shōjo characters are cute and adorable, and they always possessed big shiny eyes. (it is well known that a popular doll, Lica-chan, was modeled after one of Maki's shōjo characters).

However, Maki gradually came to feel dissatisfied with the fictitious world of shōjo. She came to search for a venue where she could express herself as a woman and desired to create work that women of her age could enjoy. In the late 1960s, Maki started to shift her intended readers from little girls to mature women.

At that time there were no comic magazines targeted at adult women. Today, manga magazines are diverse, and there is a type of magazine called ladies comic magazines. Ladies comics deal with issues that married women and working women commonly have – relationships with mothers-in-law, child-rearing, troubles at the office, extra marital affairs, etc. Ladies comics

are also known for containing sexually graphic scenes. It was not until the early 1980s when women could openly write about sex, marital issues, and familial realities in manga.⁵

When Maki started drawing women's manga, there were no venues except for male *gekiga* manga magazines. She published her work in such magazines as *Big Comic*, *Young Comic*, *Weekly Manga Action*, *Playboy*, etc. Looking back, Maki explains how difficult it was for a woman to step into the male professional sphere and the male-dominated art world. She states: "It was a natural course for me to change what I wanted to draw. . . . I just wanted to swim over to the other side of the river and jumped into it without thinking about the consequence. The width of the river was wider than I expected, and the current was rapid. Time to time, I thought I would be drowned."⁶

From Shōjo Manga to Gekiga:

Maki's *gekiga* manga were nothing like her shōjo manga. Heroines were sensual women. Her work dealing with heterosexual love relationships always broke sexual taboos and challenged gender stereotypes and conventions.

Her "Tsuya-bokuro (Beauty Mole)"⁷ is a short story staged in the Edo period (PPT 7).⁸ This is a symbolic work, representing Maki's departure from the world of shōjo manga and her entry into the adult world. A young woman named Ochika is the heroine of the story. Ochika's father is a *surishi* (a printer of *ukiyo*e wood block prints). After the death of her father, Ochika decides to follow in his steps. Instead of a printer, however, she desires to become an *ukiyo*e

⁵ See Mori, *Onna wa poruno o yomu*, Chapter 2.

⁶ Maki, *Satsukiyami*, 217.

⁷ Maki, "Nure bokuro," *Himee no onna*, Vol. 1.

⁸ Maki's *gekiga* works are understudied, and the original publication years are difficult to identify. This story was probably written in the 1970s.

artist, specializing in "abuna-e" (erotic *ukiyoe* or *shunga*). *Ukiyoe* artists can inscribe their names in the pictures. Ochika wishes her name to be recognized, not because of ambition, but because of her absent family; through her *ukiyoe*, she wants to look for her twin sister and mother from whom she was separated when she was a child. Both her mother and her sister have three moles on their inner thighs. Ochika thinks that, if she draws many *ukiyoe* with women with three moles on their thighs, her pictures will draw people's attention, and eventually, her mother and sister will receive her picture as a message from her.

One day, Ochika visits a shop in order to sell her work. But the owner gives her the cold shoulder because she is a woman. *Ukiyoe-shi* is a male-dominated occupation. It is evident that Maki makes a connection between the world of *ukiyoe* and that of *gekiga*; women artists are scorned, belittled, and excluded from the male professional sphere.

An *ukiyoe* artist named Eisen feels sympathy for Ochika and tries to help her (PPT 8). This man is a historical figure, Keisai Eisen (1791-1848), who was a student of Katsushika Hokusai and known for drawing illustrations for Takizawa Bakin's *Nansō Satomi Hakkenden* (Satomi and the Eight Dogs). He produced a significant number of erotic artworks that featured beautiful courtesans. Despite his artistic talent and popularity, however, he was labeled as a *shunga* (erotic print) artist and marginalized in the artists' community. He never received the decent appraisal as an *ukiyoe* artist that he deserved throughout his life.

In Maki's manga, Eisen is depicted as an outlaw. But he is a good man; he supports Ochika's courageous decision to become an *abunae* artist. He tells her to "sketch what you feel and what you see the way it is." Eisen even takes sexually inexperienced Ochika to a brothel to show her actual intercourse between a man and a woman. There, Ochika witnesses a courtesan who has three moles on her thigh (PPT 9). Ochika immediately realizes that it is her twin sister

for whom she has been searching. Ochika, nevertheless, starts frantically to depict the lovemaking scene. Her twin sister can be interpreted as Ochika's double. Ochika gazes at and draws her twin sister's womanly body, the act of which represents Ochika's objective examination of herself, her own woman's body. This scene is symbolically interpreted as Ochika's self-expression, a woman's expression (PPT 10).

Ochika and her sister are finally reunited. Eisen tells them that their mother now lives in Osaka. The sisters embark on a journey to Osaka together to search for their missing mother, the symbol of ultimate happiness. Although the story takes place in the Edo period, it clearly follows the pattern of the popular mother-daughter plot.

Toward the end of the story, Ochika's twin sister falls in love with Ochika's childhood male friend. She obtains happiness as a conventional woman. Ochika, on the other hand, makes up her mind to pursue a career as an *abunae* artist; her self-determined eyes are calm and sharp. Ochika is the author Maki Miyako herself; through Ochika, Maki expresses her devotion to art and her determination to establish her career in the male-dominated world of *gekiga*. This story signifies Maki's departure from the shojo world and also the commencement of her new career as a *gekiga* artist.

Examination of Symbols and Motifs:

Female *gekiga* artist Maki Miyako cultivated women's own sensual expressions that are different from those depicted by men. She seems to have received artistic inspiration from Japanese women's literary writings.

Let's look at a short piece titled "Mizumogusa" (Algae Grass) (PPT 11).⁹ The story starts with a scene in which a young woman realizes that her period is late (PPT 12). She simultaneously finds out that a red goldfish that she has been raising with great care is now dead. Her boyfriend with whom she lives with picks it up and roughly throws it into a trash can. The woman sadly states: "This fish was me..." (PPT 13). Interestingly, she says, "this was me" instead of "this was mine." Obviously, she sees herself in the goldfish; just like the tiny vulnerable fish, she senses that she will be casually dumped by him if he finds out about her pregnancy.

The motif of a red goldfish recalls woman writer Tamura Toshiko's "Ikichi" (Life Blood, published in 1911). In Tamura's work, a goldfish is presented as a symbol of a young virgin woman. The story follows the internal mind of the young heroine who has just spent the night with a man. Her fear, anger, and confusion over the loss of her virginity are symbolically expressed through her action of stabbing the eye of a red goldfish. Blood, smell, and fish slick all have female physical connotations.

In Maki's manga, when the young woman tells the man that she has been missing periods, he tells her that he would like to enjoy freedom, rather than settling down. He then forcefully has sex with her. During the intercourse, the sound of railroad crossing echoes in the room. The annoying sound of a crossing is effectively utilized to show the heroine's uneasy state of mind.

One day, the heroine witnesses a woman who kills herself by jumping in front of a train. Her blood smeared shoe drops in front of the heroine (PPT 14). This work utilizes senses effectively; redfish, red blood, and a sound of a rail crossing, etc. represent the heroine's delicate emotions and complex psyche.

⁹ Maki, "Mizumogusa," *Seiza no onna*, Vol. 1.

"Hana Shigure"¹⁰ (Floral Rain) is another short piece that focuses the senses (PPT 15). This work deals with a single woman who is having a love affair with a married man. The woman is content with the relationship at the beginning. The feeling of comfort is expressed by the image of slimy water surrounding the couple (PPT 16); the water, regarded as amniotic fluid, represents femininity. The image shows the erotic nature of their relationship – they immerse themselves in physical pleasure.

However, the heroine develops a desire to possess him. One day, when she is preparing an oyster dish, the lover's favorite food, she finds out that he just had oyster cooked by his wife at home. (The motif of an oyster recalls Kōno Taeko's "Hone no niku" [Bone Flesh]). The heroine is deeply disappointed, saddened, and becomes furious. Her jealous feeling becomes unbearable, and she screams in her mind: "Go home! I don't want to see your face anymore! This is my castle. Why don't you go back to your warm nest!" Then she stabs the meat of an oyster with a sharp knife (PPT 17). Her monologue continues: "I was alone that night [after my lover left]. Surrounded by sweet oyster smell, I kept stabbing the meat of an oyster. The white meat looked like my body. It was also like your body. It splashed and crushed, and yellow liquid came out. I got dirty and felt like vomiting." Regarding the oyster as a symbol associated with women is probably simplistic; the oyster represents abominable physicality. Yellow guts, smell, and white meat, which pleased her have now changed into something that disgusts her. The act of stabbing indicates her fury against her lover, as well as herself. Through the senses, Maki expresses a woman's body, sexuality, and tormented interiority and self-remorse.

Conclusion:

¹⁰ Maki, "Hana shigure," *Shōjo manga daizenshū*.

Maki's *gekiga* manga employ stream of consciousness, monologue, camera eyes, sensual descriptions, and symbols, techniques which are in tandem with literary writings (PPT 18). Maki's women's manga are about the physical and emotional struggles between men and women. A woman's body is the very site of struggles – a woman is sexually victimized, impregnated, and abandoned. Maki's woman characters are often physically and emotionally exploited by men. However, many of them eventually abandon their men and reclaim their agency (PPT 19). They always claim ownership of their bodies at the end. Maki Miyako explores women's sensuality in the form of manga. Dealing with mature subjects, she pushes manga culture forward; she helped develop, diversify, and mature manga culture.

Works Cited:

- Gravett, Paul. *Manga: Sixty Years of Japanese Comics*. New York: Harper Design International, 2004.
- Maki Miyako. "Nure bokuro," *Himee no onna*, Vol. 1. Kōbun Sha. 115-172.
- Maki Miyako. "Shōjo manga kara ladies comic e," *Teinen Jidai* (November, 2014). Retrieved from: <http://www.teinenjidai.com/saitama/h26/11/index.html>
- Maki Miyako. *Satsukiyami*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1976.
- Maki Miyako. "Hana shigure," (originally, Futaba sha, 1972), *Shōjo manga daizenshū*. Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1899. 650-675.
- Maki Miyako. "Mizumogusa," *Seiza no onna*, Vol. 1. Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1977. 5-34.
- Maki Miyako. *Yuki no Shita*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, 1979.
- Mori Naoko. *Onna wa poruno o yomu*. Tokyo: Seikyū Sha, 2010.

Suzuki, Shige (CJ). "Tatsumi Yoshihiro's Gekiga and the Global Sixties: Aspiring for an Alternative." *Manga's Cultural Crossroads*, edited by Jaqueline Berndt and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer. New York: Routledge, 2013. 50-64.

Takeuchi Miho. "Sen kara toraenaosu 'gekiga: Saitō Takao o tyūshin ni.'" *Nikkan manga kenkyū* (2013). 175-199.

Tamura Toshiko. "Ikichi." *Tamura Toshiko sakuhin shū*, Vol.1. Tokyo: Origin Shuppan Senta, 1987. 187-199.

ManyToon.club is a place for fans of Webtoon Raw Hentai, Manhwa 18 Raw, Manga Hentai Raw , Mature hentai Raw, Mature Webtoon Raw. You can read thousands of high-quality Free Korean Webtoon Manhwa Raw Online. We want you to know that ManyToon.club was born for you. If you are a lover of Korean Webtoon Manhwa Raw and you want to read all kinds of adult comics online manhwa, manga, manhwa. This is a paradise for you. Jung Hoon is a freelance novelist enjoying his first year of marriage. Despite the wife's dedication, their marital relationship is always unsatisfactory. Then one day, I was separated and accidentally encountered a girl next door of a sensual body and filled with her all over Jung Hoon's head. study representations of female bodies. All human females in the games were captured via screenshot and body parts measured. These measurements were then compared to actual anthropometric data drawn from a representative sample of 3,000 American women. The results show that female video game characters at low already as low as they could reasonably be. Studies of the female body in electronic media have yielded similar results. Fouts and Burggraf (1999) content a nationally representative sample of adult women living in the U.S. (see below). Training and Reliability. Two trained undergraduate students measured the aforementioned body proportions of the 134 characters in the sample. Coding rates were assessed at regular intervals.