

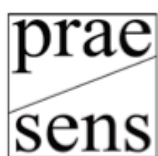
Shadows Under a Rising Sun: Utopia and Its Dark Side in Kirino Natsuo's *Poritikon*

Adam Gregus

Abstract

Kirino Natsuo, arguably one of the most popular contemporary Japanese authors in Western markets (a number of her novels having been translated into English, German, French, Italian, Dutch or Spanish, among other languages) who is often being recognised as a mystery writer, only enjoys limited acknowledgment for the thematic breadth and genre diversity of her work. Such description is not only inaccurate (Kirino published her last true mystery novel in 2002), but also manifests itself in the limited and underdeveloped treatment of her work in Western academic writing. This paper deals with Kirino Natsuo's 2011 novel Poritikon (Politikon) and its analysis within the greater context of Kirino's work. A focus is put upon introducing the novel as utopian fiction with the aim to illustrate ways in which Kirino Natsuo utilises utopian genre patterns as well as how her utopia works to provide a commentary on contemporary Japan. The utopian theme present in Poritikon makes the novel a rather untypical entry in Kirino's oeuvre (although not a unique one, since her novels Tōkyō-jima [Tokyo Island, 2008¹] and Yasashii otona [Gentle Adults, 2010] also work with elements of utopian/dystopian fiction) as well as within the Japanese literary scene in general, and provides an interesting argument for Kirino Natsuo as more than 'just' a mystery writer.

Keywords: Utopia, Dystopia, Kirino Natsuo, Japanese Literature, Atarashiki mura



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1 Dates given refer to the first publication in book form.