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**A comparative examination of the hyperbole in *Men without women* by
Murakami and *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* by Mishima**

Abstract

The purpose of this essay is a comparative study of hyperbole in *Men without women* by Haruki Murakami and *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* by Yukio Mishima. Both authors have significant positions in the history of Japanese literature with readership overseas. The rhetoric of hyperbole seems to be significant for both Murakami and Mishima since there are many examples of hyperbole in their works. Murakami's *Men without women* is a lamenting short narrative for the loved one while Mishima's *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* is an entertaining social satire. Regardless of the different genre, hyperbole is used in a similar manner by both Murakami and Mishima. Murakami uses hyperbole mainly to create a great storyline and enjoyable reading experience. Mishima utilizes hyperbole mainly to be entertaining in writing social satire for the popular magazine. Although there is difference in the genre of the works selected for this comparative study, the style of hyperbole is surprisingly similar in the way both Murakami and Mishima frequently use overdone hyperbole and make good use of its effect to making the writing better and more believable. It should be able to conclude both Murakami's and Mishima's craft of hyperbole is similar to each other while these particular works attain different effects according to their purpose of writings.

Analysis

The purpose of this essay is a comparative study of hyperbole in *Men without women* by Haruki Murakami and *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* by Yukio Mishima. Both authors have significant positions in the history of Japanese literature. Haruki Murakami is one of the most prominent Japanese authors ever since he debuted. Over the course of his career, he has gain his audience among not only Japanese literature fans, but also a significant number of general public from all over the world. *Men without women* is one of the short stories in his short fiction anthology of the same title published in 2014. Yukio Mishima is one of the most respected Japanese authors as well as the significant opinion leader in the post-time Japan with readership overseas. *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* is a series of social satire published weekly on Shukan Myojo, a weekly entertainment managize, in 1958 and 1959, which was published as a book in 1959. This book was enthusiastically welcomed by the young activists around the time. The hyperbole seems to be significant for both Murakami and Mishima since there are many examples of hyperbole in their works. Murakami's *Men without women* is a lamenting short narrative for the loved one while Mishima's *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* is an entertaining social satire. One is a very sad and reflective story while the other is entertaining and funny satire. The hyperbole in their writing seems to be utilized differently in each writing. In this paper, I would like to compare how the two prominent authors make use of hyperbole in the two works to reveal their effects.

Hyperbole is defined as exaggeration for the sake of emphasis in a figure of speech not meant literally by The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms. People find hyperbole entertaining because the extension of description surpasses the expectation from the reader who shares the norm of a society. As well as entertaining, hyperbole creates vivid, sometimes bizarre, and

effective mental images so that people will remember what the storyteller tries to convey in conversation or writings. People tend to remember something when they had a strong impression of it. The strong impression tends to be driven by the clear stimulus of the senses, such as seeing a vivid vision in mind or smelling a scent of perfume. Hyperbole tends to create more memorable impression because it's unusual and often humorous and uplifting. For example, it is easier to remember your friend's story if he mentions that he met such a nice man that he even offered to buy him all the available menu in Starbucks today than merely if he mentions that he met a very nice man today. In general, the authors tends to use hyperbole whenever they like to emphasis on something or likes to make the writing entertaining for readers.

I like to start with the Murakami's short story. The hyperbole used by Murakami has three characteristics; use within the metaphor, use in significant scenes for the storyline, and use to make writing humorous. Murakami, first of all, uses hyperbole almost always with metaphor, at least in this short story. He is known for well-crafted usage of metaphor in his writings, so there are many examples of metaphor in his writing. As for hyperbole, he uses it within metaphors in *Men without women* all the scene he seeks to create strong impression such as the important section of stories. We don't have any trouble to find examples of the metaphor in *Men without women*. For an example, the narrator says "I myself don't know what I am trying to say here. I might be trying to write the essence which is not the fact. But, to write the essence which is not the fact is like to have an appointment on the back of the moon. It is pitch dark without any signs and it is awfully vast." Combined with metaphor, all the scene create a significant impression for the readers.

Secondly, in this short story, Murakami uses hyperbole in the sections which are significant to the storyline. The hyperbole can be seen especially when the narrator describes

Emmu's powerful impact on the narrator's life. The story is primarily a monologue by the narrator and Emmu plays a major role in the narrative. Almost all the stories of the narrator are made up of memories about her and lamenting for her death. When describing the heroine, Murakami uses exaggerated expression through the glass of the narrator's memory. In this short story, the description of Emmu is entirely based on the memory, or the imagination, of the narrator. Normally, novels describe how attractive a heroine is by showing more details such as her atmosphere or gestures, but here Murakami only presents the narrator's emotions that we can sympathize in a rather detached manner by providing the detail of the narrator's memory about her. There is no scene of real-time interaction between the narrator and Emmu. When the narrator met her theoretically at the age of fourteen, the narrator tells that Emmu was so wonderful that she extinguish all the wind from all the directions. Before this hyperbole, the metaphor of "west wind" is brought up to express what it is like for a fourteen year old boy to come across girls and a brief stroke by the west wind always gave him the erection. But, all the wind is blown away by Emmu's presence. Here we can see the narrator admire her as if he almost worships Emmu like Venus or some kind of goddess because no human can extinguish winds. Another example is to show how important the "elevator music" was to Emmu. Before going into the memory of their conversation about elevator music, the narrator says "In any case, she had almost ten thousand tapes of elevator music. And, she had the massive knowledge of sinless music from all over the world. It was as if she could open the museum of elevator music." This is clearly exaggeration since there is no way to store that much of tapes in a normal house. The narrator listens to rock or blues when he is alone. Since Emmu played elevator music, the music is significant to the narrator because it is associated with his memory with Emmu. Emmu listens to elevator music to feel as if she is in heaven without any worldly struggle. This trait of

her doesn't necessarily sound attractive to most of us. However, from the narrator's perspective, the description about Emmu is interpreted in the biased admiring manner. Amplified by hyperbole, Murakami conveys the narrator's strong attachment to Emmu. She is surely indispensable for the narrator. Everything in the short story is told in the narrative that is impossible to distinguish between imagination and the fact but the narrator, who has lost the 14-year-old first love woman, utilized the imagination so much that Emmu is treated as a wonderful goddess and every memory about her are exaggerated beautifully and dramatically.

Furthermore, Murakami utilizes hyperbole to magnify the narrator's sadness and feeling of loss after Emmu's death. Although some level of the feeling of loss is shared among us, it is usually too subtle and personal to communicate the emotion in detail to others. In our daily life, it's common for the speaker explain his or her sad experience while the listener is sympathizing with a different kind of their own experience in mind. Murakami's metaphor is an effective tool for expressing human emotions, and exaggerated expressions are heavily used to make it more vivid with unique mental images. One example is where the narrator says "the part of him as a fourteen year old boy is locked into the sturdy safe and thrown into the bottom of the ocean. Probably the safe will not be opened for a billion years from now. Coelacanth oversees it in silence." This description shows the image of the narrator's tremendously disappointed feeling. This kind of hyperbole is prevalent in this lamenting story. Another example is in the search for lost Emmu the narrator goes to Bombay, Cape town, Reykjavik, and Bahama. I go all the way to all the cities that have harbours. Though this is not his actual action, the reader understands how desperate he likes to see Emmu. By hyperbole, images are thrown into our head. It has an effect that reader can sympathize with the narrator's sorrow and feeling of loss. All the sorrowful narrative about Emmu is significant for the storyline considering it sets the tone of the story

regarding why he matters so much for the narrator. Thus, in *Men without women*, hyperbole is placed in all the important portion of the story where Murakami likes to emphasise.

Finally, Murakami also uses hyperbole to make the story entertaining. In some example, Murakami seems to deliberately enjoy going beyond the norm of hyperbole which is almost risking to overdo it. For example, the narrator writes that “But of course the time that I lose her again came. Because all the sailors from all over the world are tailing her. There is no way to protect her by myself. Anybody need to take the eyes off of something. I had to sleep and also need to go to the bathroom. I need to clean the bathtub. I chop onions and pick green beans’ calyx. I need to check the air pressure in my tires. This is how we get separated.” The detail following or explaining the hyperbole about the sailors are almost overdone with insignificant details about his daily life to explain why he couldn’t protect Emmu. This makes reading entertaining to deviate from the main story to feel more close to the narrator finding something in common about daily life. Another example is when the narrator says that “There is a deep trench between the second loneliest man in the world and the loneliest man in the world. Probably. Not only is it deep, but also is it awfully wide. It is as wide as many birds can't fly all the way from one edge to the other and falls on the way exhausted. The corpses of dead birds have piled up to make a high mountain on the bottom.” This is clearly hyperbole since there is no trench in the world that wide and deep birds die on the way to cross it. But this almost bizarre image makes reading entertaining while conveying the unknown and unbelievable sadness of Emmu’s husband in the narrator’s imagination. The list of example goes on. The narrator wonder why Emmu’s husband called him to let him know Emmu’s suicide. And his mind wanders to think “She might have told the husband that the shape of my penis is beautiful. She used to observe my penis on the bed in the early afternoon. As if she was appreciating the legendary jewellery which

was the part of Indian crown while putting it on her palm.” This example is entertaining because we all know human mind often wander around creatively, or rather at random. Another example is about the half of Emmu’s eraser she gave to the narrator. About the eraser, he describes as “... needless to say, the husband envies me after hearing that. Even if Emmu had intercourse with the two busloads of the sailors, he should be jealous of the half of her eraser more severely than that.” About Emmu’s giving to the narrator when they are both fourteen years old, “splitting her new eraser in half to share it with such a boy will cause terrible event. It is like bring forth a dozen of old-school barns to a huge tornado.” This creates the surreal mental image in our mind making reading funny, but the image shows how significant Emmu’s eraser was for the narrator and Emmu’s husband.

Now, I like to proceed to analyze hyperbole in the Mishima’s *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza*. Since it is a social satire, the genre and style of writing are fairly different from Murakami’s *Men without women*. Mishima never wrote anything without paying attention to the expected style of writing. Social satire requires sometimes grotesque descriptions of society to make it primarily funny, and to make it critical on the society and somewhat agreeable for readers at the same time. Being a homosexual and right-wing nationalist, Mishima viewed the society from the perspective of an outsider. *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* might have been one of the best places for him to show his honest thoughts and impression about Japanese society as an outsider since he can make it as if he is joking when he means it from the bottom of his heart. In this series, the hyperbole used by Mishima takes three forms; intentionally overdone hyperbole, the gap in logic, supporting effect for argument.

The first one is intentional overdoing to the extent there is no way such people exist in the society. Hyperbole by its definition is already beyond the norm of daily description about

something. However, the extent of some exaggerated description about events in *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* is too extreme to exist in real life. For example, in *Dekirudake unuboreyo*, a famous actress makes a speech to show how humble she is saying, “The reason such a worthless person like myself to stay as a star is that I owe everything to you all. Really, every night I join my palms together in my heart and I have never gone to sleep with my foot directed at you all. (Who said, “I like you to sleep with your foot directed me”?) I appreciate you all so much. I appreciate you.” This kind of speech never happens in the real world and it is the overdone humility which makes this example funny. Another example of overdoing is an office worker who forgot the favour by the man who saved his life in *Hito no on wa wasureru beshi*. The office worker forgets what his benefactor had done and he says, “But, damn it, if I died in the mountain then, I could die with full of passion and ideal. But now I am a pitiful office worker without any hope of my life and I'm struggling to live day by day. If it died then, what a romantic life I would've had! Dang, forget such a favour!" Even if a man forgets the favour he received, this is by far extreme and none in our society would feel this way if his life is saved by someone. Murakami's hyperbole has similar aspects especially in the example of barns in front of a massive tornado and of the high mountain of dead birds. Overdone hyperbole is the trait of Mishima's writing as well as Murakami's.

The second form of hyperbole in Mishima's writing is the gap in logic. In this form, Mishima uses hyperbole in the way that the comment or narrative about something doesn't follow our logical conclusion when the same event happens in front of us. In *Suupu ha oto wo tatete suubeshi*, Mishima writes that the two people he respects the most make the slurping sound when they eat soup. He goes on saying, “Slurping soup making a sound doesn't prevent them from being among the most brainy people in Japan. [...] By observing them both, I sometimes

wonder that I become as smart as they are if I can slurp soup making a sound that loudly irrespectively of the occasion.” Because it is clear that there is no connection between loud slurping sound and becoming smart, it is not the logical conclusion from us. The same essay has another example of a medieval art scholar using his knife to put the steak into his mouth. Mishima mentions this as “This behaviour makes others worry if he will cut his lip. Others can enjoy thrilling moments to their heart content, so I think this is a noble act.” This is clearly illogical and the way he writes shows Mishima himself enjoying making up this joke. The gap in logic is one of the techniques he intentionally utilizing in this satire.

The third form of Mishima’s hyperbole is supporting his argument to make it believable. One example we can see is when he encourages an office worker to have conceit for his own mental wellness. Probably to make it more vivid and easy to visualize, he encourages a man to have the conceit to the extent in his mind he says, “Dude what the heck, he just needs to brew a drink with the dirt in my fingernail and drink it!” To brew a drink with the dirt in someone’s fingernail is the cliché Japanese uses to encourage others to follow the example of a respectable person besides the speaker. To tell others to follow his own good example is not humble, so it is the opposite of Japanese society respects. However, he argues it is good for a man’s mental health even though he is conscious of this example’s radicalness. In the same essay, we can see another example of women's conceit about her appearance. For the same reason of mental wellness, Mishima encourages women to have the conceit to the degree they say, “How pretty the shape of my nose is! I heard that, in the United States, they get plastic surgery to scrape their nose because they are too big.” This is the same kind of example making his radical argument somehow agreeable for readers. In the case of Murakami, it is not arguing because of the nature

of a short story, it is certain that Murakami is using a similar hyperbole to strengthen the strength of emotions of the narrator about Emmu to set the overall tone of the story.

In conclusion, regardless of the different genre, hyperbole is used in a similar manner by both Murakami and Mishima. Murakami uses hyperbole mainly to create a great storyline and enjoyable reading experience. Mishima utilizes hyperbole mainly to be entertaining in writing social satire for the popular magazine. Although there is difference in the genre of the works selected for this comparative study, the style of hyperbole is surprisingly similar in the way both Murakami and Mishima frequently use overdone hyperbole and make good use of its effect to making the writing better and more believable. However, the overall impression of their effects is significantly different even though the use of hyperbole is plenty in their works. The main purposes of writing are different. *Men without women* are supposed to be an enjoyable reading while *Fudotoku Kyoiku Koza* is supposed to be critical and funny to appeal to the mass. From this comparative analysis, it should be able to conclude both Murakami's and Mishima's craft of hyperbole is similar to each other while these particular works attain different effects according to their purpose of writings.

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