

**“THE CARAMEL FACTORY”**

**BY SATA INEKO**

**BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR**

**TRANSLATION**

**AND DISCUSSION**

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**AN EXTENDED ESSAY**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment  
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**by**

**Y. Flower**

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· THESIS

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Sata Ineko

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I would also like to thank Tim Thorpe for his advice regarding the project as a whole and the typist Mrs Marie Price for her patience and efficiency.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This translation of *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* was prepared using two texts from *Puroretaria Bungaku Taikei* II and *Nihon Bungaku Zenshū* xēvii *Sata Ineko Shū*. The latter was most useful as it contains *furigana* readings for all *kanji* and when discrepancies were discovered between the two texts the version contained therein was adhered to since it is the more recent publication of the two. One would assume that a more recent compiler would have had a wider range of manuscripts at his disposal and more efficient means of checking their authenticity.

In preparing this translation my main aim has been to produce a work which is both comprehensible and, hopefully, enjoyable reading, to a speaker of English not necessarily familiar with Japanese. To this end I have in many cases altered the order of words or re-expressed a given thought in a more acceptable English sentence. Colloquialisms are obviously meaningless if translated literally and so I have replaced these with equivalent English expressions.

Sata Ineko's tendency to intersperse the story with accounts of past occurrences without prefacing them with "She recalled that...." or some similar phrase, may make the story a little difficult to understand fully upon first reading it. In order to clarify the most confusing (to my mind) example of this (which occurs in Chapter One) I have taken the liberty of italicising the experience Hiroko calls to mind, thus setting it apart from the main body of the text.

## THE LIFE OF SATA INEKO

Sata Ineko<sup>1</sup> has been recognised in Japan as an accomplished novelist and essayist for several decades. In recent years she has been awarded a number of coveted literary awards including the Women Writer's Prize and the Noma Literary Award.

Sata has based the majority of her short stories and novels upon her own personal experiences and despite the fact that they are written in the omniscient style, to anyone familiar with the events of Sata's life it is obvious that these works are semi - if not completely auto-biographical.

As Sata's personal feelings and experiences are of such importance in her writing it is essential to have a detailed knowledge of the major events in her life before a complete understanding of her work, and her progress as a writer is possible.

### (i) Childhood and Early Years (1904-1926)

Sata Ineko was born in Yaoya, Nagasaki on June 1 1904, the daughter of two unmarried junior high school students. Her parents Takayanagi Yuki<sup>2</sup> and Tajima Masafumi<sup>3</sup> were aged only thirteen and seventeen at the time of her birth and so the baby Fumiko<sup>4</sup> ( as she was first named ) was raised by her grandmother Taka<sup>5</sup> as the oldest daughter of her father's uncle Tanaka Umetarō<sup>6</sup>.

Her parents were married two years later and she was entered in the family register as their adopted daughter Ine<sup>7</sup> so that she could attend primary school. During Ine's first year at school her mother died of consumption after a long illness.

Sata's early years at school were evidently very happy; she held the position of class monitor and spent long hours in the library avidly reading Western fairy tales and short stories in magazines. This happiness was, however, short-lived for in 1915 Masafumi left his job at Mitsubishi shipyards and moved to Tokyo with Taka, Ineko and her younger brother Masato<sup>8</sup>. In Tokyo they lodged with Masafumi's brother Sata Hidemi<sup>9</sup>, a student at Waseda University.

She was enrolled in Ushijima Primary School but the family's financial situation, strained by Yuki's medical expenses had become desperate as a result of Masafumi's sudden decision to move with no concrete plans for work or the future. After only a month at school Sata was made to leave and sent out to work at the Izumibashi Caramel Factory. Although Sata was only at the factory for just over a month and was aged only eleven at the time this experience obviously had a deep effect upon her as she made it the subject of her first short story *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* (*The Caramel Factory*). In this story she describes the family's poverty after moving to Tokyo and the wretched working conditions in the caramel factory. Her despair and unhappiness at being deprived of the chance to continue her education is clearly revealed<sup>11</sup>.

After leaving the caramel factory Sata worked for a short time at a Chinese noodle shop in Asakusa and was later apprenticed to the Seiryōtei restaurant in Ueno Park. She finished at the Seiryōtei and worked at a knitting factory with her grandmother until 1917 when Masafumi found work at Haruma shipyards in Aioi, Hyōgo province and sent for them.

Later Sata was to write *Suashi no Musume*<sup>12</sup> (*Barefoot Girl*) based on her stay in Aioi. During this period in her life Sata was reading the works of Futabatei Shimei<sup>13</sup>, Kunikida Doppo<sup>14</sup>, Shakespeare and Victor Hugo and composing some *tanka*.

Following her father's second marriage in 1919 Sata returned to Tokyo on her own and worked once more at the Seiryotei. During her time there she came into contact with many Taishō novelists who frequented the restaurant, including Akutagawa Ryūnosuke<sup>15</sup>, Kikuchi Kan<sup>16</sup>, Uno Kōji<sup>17</sup> and Eguchi Kiyoshi<sup>18</sup>. Kikuchi Kan recalled that she seemed to be on good terms with Akutagawa and was given some books by him<sup>19</sup>.

After a time she came to dislike her job there and returned to Aioi but was back in Tokyo within the year and found work as a shop assistant at a Maruzen bookstore, where she was described as a model shop assistant. She read Chikamatsu Monzaemon<sup>20</sup>, Ibsen, Anatole France and wrote some poems



for the magazine *Shi to Jinsei*<sup>21</sup> which was under the chairmanship of the poet Ikuta Shungetsu<sup>22</sup>. He was impressed by her work and gave her a letter of introduction to *Bunshō Kurabu*<sup>23</sup> in which he described her as a new star but due to a lack of self-confidence she never used it.

After the Kantō earthquake devastated Tokyo in 1923 Sata returned home with Taka and Masato but was soon recalled by Maruzen.

The following year her superior at Maruzen introduced her to Kobori Kaizō<sup>24</sup> son of a wealthy family, studying at university and they were soon married. The marriage was not a happy one and within a year Sata was acutely depressed by her husband's behaviour and complicated relationships within the Kobori family. During this unhappy period she attempted suicide twice and after the second incident was taken back to Aioi. She was forced out of her depressed state by her pregnancy with and the birth of her daughter Yōko<sup>25</sup> in 1925. Sata wrote in *Watashi no Tokyo Chizu*<sup>26</sup> (*My Map of Tokyo*):

At that time a life was pulsing in my womb. In the womb of I, who had intended to abandon all feeling, I felt movement. Then I recovered my feelings<sub>27</sub> for the first time and cried, trembling with sadness and unease.

Later in that same year Sata divorced Kobori, returning to Tokyo in 1926 where she found work at the Kōroku cafe.

The first twenty-two years of Sata's life were for the most part not happy ones. The unfortunate circumstances of her birth; her mother's illness and early death and Masafumi's seemingly rash move to Tokyo all served to deprive the young Sata Ineko of her desire to remain at school. Yet despite the rigours and wretched working hours and conditions of the period she never lost her fondness for reading and uneducated as she was she possessed some talent as a poet. It was indeed fortunate that she was able to come into contact with Akutagawa and his friends at the Seiryōtei for they must surely have stimulated her interest in literature.

Her disastrous marriage, although over had a depressing effect which was to remain with her for several years. Some ten years later she wrote the three short stories *Nashira*<sup>28</sup> (*The Pillar*), *Nyūbo no Kanashimi*<sup>29</sup> (*Sadness*

of the Breast) and *Aru Onna no Koseki*<sup>30</sup> ( *A Woman's Family Register*) which deal with her first marriage.

(ii) Meeting the Members of Roba - Sata's Birth as a Writer (1927-32)

The period encompassing the end of the Taishō era and the beginning of Shōwa saw an increase in the number of coterie magazines.

One such magazine was *Roba*<sup>31</sup> (*Donkey*) formed by a group of young intellectuals consisting of Nakano Shigeharu<sup>32</sup>, Kubokawa Tsurujiro,<sup>33</sup> Hori Tatsuo,<sup>34</sup> Miyagi Kikuo<sup>35</sup> and Nishizawa Ryuji<sup>36</sup> under the guidance of the poet Murō Saisei.<sup>37</sup> The group would stop in at the Kōroku regularly on the way to and from meetings at Murō's house. Gradually they befriended the young waitress who was greatly impressed by the first issue of *Roba* and before long she and Kubokawa Tsurujiro were married. Under the influence of her husband and Nakano Sata began to read Lenin and Engels and published several poems in *Roba* under the pen-name Tajima Ineko<sup>38</sup>.

The years 1927-8 were a period of great left-wing conversion among intellectuals, many members of the flourishing coterie magazines either entered the so-called Proletarian Literary Movement or determined to sympathise with it. When the members of *Roba* joined in 1927 Sata was also converted.

The left-wing in the form of Marxism had become a force in Japan as a result of the Russian Revolution and interest in it was so great that one Tokyo bookstore sold 300,000 copies of the first translation of *Das Kapital* almost immediately.<sup>39</sup> Proletarian writers operated within the left wing movement and their work was part of the attempt to liberate the proletariat from oppression.

Hirano Ken defines Proletarian literature as "literature from the proletariat and for the proletariat"<sup>40</sup> but writers to whom that definition would be applied were few and far between in this period. Not only was the vast majority of the proletariat uneducated and unable to write but moreover those members of society who could write well ( namely the intellectuals) had no working class background to draw upon. Nakano Shigeharu recognised in Sata Ineko the ideal Proletarian writer for not only was she interested in literature

and able to write but she had the personal experience which was virtually essential. Sata recalls the encouragement given to her by Nakano and Kubokawa:

The motive for writing suggested to me by Nakano Shigeharu was because I had lived and worked in factories and the like. The fact that I had written poems previously was also a reason, but it was probably because I had a life that I should write about. The literary attitude of Nakano Shigeharu and Kubokawa Tsurujirō regarding trying to make me write was, in other words, to try and dig out something from people who had a worker's experience. That strengthened me.<sup>41</sup>

This encouragement led Sata on to write her first work but she freely admitted the part that her associates in *Roba* played in her birth as a proletarian writer:

The fact that I became involved with Nakano Shigeharu, Kubokawa Tsurujirō, Nishizawa Ryūji, Hori Tatsuo and Miyagi Kikuo was probably due to my being fond of literature since my childhood but if these men had not entered the Proletarian Literary Movement I think I would have continued being a housewife since I, who was involved with these men had had no particular desire to become a writer.<sup>42</sup>

In 1928 Sata's first short story *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* was published in the magazine *Puroretaria Geijutsu*<sup>43</sup> and has been described by Yamada Seizaburō as "one of the most excellent works to have appeared in *Puroretaria Geijutsu*"<sup>44</sup>. Sata had originally intended this piece of work to take the form of an essay but Nakano Shigeharu suggested that she turn it into a short story. According to Kubokawa rewriting it was rather involved:

So that it would somehow be ready for the same issue, and because she was making it into a short story which she had not written before it was very difficult....Late at night she would lean on her small desk and fall asleep. When I woke her up I would sleep again while she thought about it. It was not only because we were tired that we slept but also because it was very difficult. While I read and considered what she had written she decided to sleep and I watched the time and woke her up and presently she managed to get it done.<sup>45</sup>

After the publication of *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* Sata continued to publish articles and poems in *Roba* and various other magazines. In 1927 she had joined *Puroretaria Geijutsu Renmei* (League of Proletarian Art) which later combined with another Proletarian art league (*Zenei Geijutsuka Domei* or League of Avant Garde Artists) to form *Zen Nihon Musansha Geijutsu Renmei* (All Japan Proletarian Art League) better known as *NAPF* - the initials from its Esperanto title.<sup>46</sup>

In 1929 Sata also joined *Nihon Proretaria Sakka Dōmei* (Japan Proletarian Writers' League) which was affiliated to NAPF.

In 1930 Sata's son Kenzo<sup>47</sup> was born and *Kenkyūkai Sowa*<sup>48</sup> (Research Society Episode) was published<sup>49</sup> consolidating her stand as a rising author. It deals with the gradual awakening of class-consciousness in two paper-mill workers. In this year her long-lasting and intimate friendship with the author Miyamoto Yuriko<sup>50</sup> began.

The five linked novels *Kanbu Joko no Namida*<sup>51</sup> (Tears of the Female Factory Workers' Leader), *Kokanbu*<sup>52</sup> (The Small Leaders), *Kitō*<sup>53</sup> (The Prayer), *Nani o Nasubeki ka*<sup>54</sup> (What Must We Do?) and *Kyōfu*<sup>55</sup> (Fear) were published during 1931-3<sup>56</sup>. They centre around a dispute in a Tokyo muslin factory and deal with such problems as the lives of married working women, Christianity and Socialism, and the labour movement.

Sata deepened her commitment to the Movement when she became a committee member of both *Nihon Proretaria Sakka Dōmei Fujin Iinkai* (Women's Committee of the League of Japanese Proletarian Writers) and *Nihon Proretaria Bunka Renmei Fujin Kyōgikai* (Women's Council of the Japanese Proletarian Literary League). She also became an editor of the bulletin *Hataraku Fujin*.

It was during this period of her life that, due to the support and encouragement of her friends in Roba Sata discovered her true vocation and found herself in the left-wing movement. It is obvious from the extent of her involvement in the various Proletarian literary organisations that Sata felt at ease in her work and in the Movement after those previous unsettled years, but the feeling of security was not to last.

### (iii) The Conversion Period and the Pacific War (1933-45)

The Japanese government's mistrust of the Communist party since it's appearance in Japan in the 1920s had resulted in widescale oppression against all left-wing organisations (especially the Communist party) from that period onwards. In *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism* Jon Halliday declares

that "the history of the left throughout the 1930s and up to 1945 is one of incessant repression culminating in the last round of mass arrests on May 3 1933".<sup>56</sup>

Many member of *Nihon Proletaria Bunka Renmei* (Japan Proletarian Cultural Federation)<sup>57</sup> including Nakano Shigeharu, Kubokawa Tsurujirō and Miyamoto Yuriko were arrested and imprisoned while Kobayashi Takiji,<sup>58</sup> Miyamoto Kenji<sup>59</sup> and Nishizawa Ryūji went underground. Despite the constant threat of persecution Sata joined the Japan Communist Party during this same year.

Kubokawa was in jail for almost a year and Sata had to struggle to support her family and send things to her husband using only the money she earned from writing. The hardship was increased with the birth of her second daughter Tatsue<sup>60</sup> in 1932.

The murder in police custody of the famous Proletarian writer Kobayashi Takiji on February 1933 deeply distressed Sata who had been with him only three days before. Undoubtedly her sadness was given added dimension by the fact that she had spoken with Akutagawa four days before he committed suicide in 1927. Sata wrote an essay about Kobayashi's death entitled *Nigatsu Nijūnichi no Koto*<sup>61</sup> (The Incident of February 20) which was published in *Taishū no Tomo*.<sup>62</sup>

Persecution of the literary group continued after Kubokawa's release on bail and in 1934 *Nihon Proletaria Sakka Dōmei* was disbanded. In June Sata's novel *Botan no Aru Ie*<sup>63</sup> (House with a Peony Tree), which deals with the loneliness and despair of the heroine who is suffering from consumption, was published in *Chūōkōron*. The pessimism and unhappiness depicted in the novel are a reflection of the oppressive period in which it was written.

Sata was arrested in May 1935 and detained in Totsuka prison for two months but she continued to write while in custody. During this period friction developed between her and Kubokawa, due in part to the oppressive atmosphere of this turbulent period. This friction formed the background for her well-known novel *Kurenai*<sup>64</sup> (Scarlet). The main reason for the unrest was caused by confusing inconsistencies in their attitudes towards each other as writers and as husband and wife. Sata's work as a writer was equal if not

superior to Kubokawa's which caused him to feel inferior in some respects, whereas in the married sphere of their lives she was expected both by Kubokawa and society to cater meekly and exclusively to the needs of her family and husband. This resulted in some highly frustrating situations, for example when a mutual friend came over to visit, Sata was expected to prepare tea and not join in the conversation and when Kubokawa and the friend go out she had to stay at home. Sata found herself unable to reconcile these discrepancies, especially since her life had been freer while Kubokawa was in jail...

While he was away for two years I truly experienced the freedom of living alone. That was rather sad. Although I loved my husband the contradiction which urged me to live alone is probably lurking in women's lives.<sup>65</sup>

Kubokawa eventually came to feel that Sata was neglecting her wifely duties towards him and he had an affair. The latter part of the novel deals with Sata's feelings towards his involvement with another woman.

Sata dealt with the period 1932-3 in her novel *Haguruma*<sup>66</sup> (*Cogwheel*) and continued the themes in *Kurenai*. This shows something of her amazing recall and ability to organise information for *Haguruma* was actually published twenty-two years after *Kurenai*.

Because of wartime pressures on writers to convert from Communism Sata virtually gave up writing for a few years. She resisted government pressure for a long time but eventually yielded and consented to tour Manchuria in 1940 visiting front line troops. During the next three years she toured China, Sumatra and Singapore with other novelists including Hayashi Fumiko and Ōsaragi Jirō.<sup>67</sup><sup>68</sup>

In 1945 Sata divorced Kubokawa and took their three children to live with her. *Shin Nihon Bungakkai* (*New Japan Literary Society*) was formed in the same year but Sata's name was not added to the list of founders because of her activities during the war for which she was criticised by many of her colleagues.

#### (iv) Post-War Period (1946-60)

Sata worked for the establishment of *Hijin Minshu Kurabu* (*Women's Democratic Cl*

and took the penname Sata Ineko, after her uncle Sata Hidemi, in 1946.

The following *March Hanga*<sup>69</sup> (*Woodblock Print*), the final chapter of a novel later published<sup>70</sup> in 1949 as *Watashi no Tokyo Chizu* (*My Map of Tokyo*), appeared in *Ningen*<sup>71</sup>; other chapters were also published separately. This novel deals with the criticism Sata received for her co-operation with government war efforts and also compares pre-war Tokyo with the devastated post-war city.

Another work which dealt with her involvement in the war was the short story *Kyogi*<sup>72</sup> (*Fallacy*).

In 1947 she was made the Tokyo branch manager of *Shin Nihon Bungakkai* and was expelled from the Communist Party in 1951. The latter was due to her activities in *Fujin Minshu Kurabu* but she was reinstated in 1955 at the decision of the Sixth National Convention.

In 1956 Sata joined with other writers to form a council for the purpose of opposing the arrests and trials of some twenty members of the Railway Workers Union charged with derailing a train at Matsukawa on August 17 1949. The derailment was supposed to be a form of protest against the dismissal of 100,000 National Railway workers and was the third incident of its nature in two months, the others being at Shitayama (July 5) and Mitaka (July 15). The government claimed that Communists were responsible but nowadays it is believed to have been a plot instigated by the CIA<sup>73</sup>. The defendants' acquittal in 1963 was due largely to the efforts of the novelist Hirotsu Kazuo<sup>74</sup> supported by Sata and other writers. Hirotsu published many criticisms of the trial and appeals for justice including *Matsukawa Saiban*<sup>75</sup> (*The Matsukawa Trials*) and *Shinjutsu o Uttaeru*<sup>76</sup> (*I Appeal to Truth*). Upon his death in 1968 Sata wrote *Hirotsu Kazuo Chōji*<sup>77</sup> (*Memorial Address to Hirotsu Kazuo*) and *Hirotsu-san no Matsukawa*<sup>78</sup> (*Mr Hirotsu's Matsukawa*).

The year after the Matsukawa Incident Sata experienced some illness and was hospitalised several times. *Haiiro no Gogo*<sup>79</sup> (*Grey Afternoon*), which follows on thematically from *Kurenai* and deals with the period from the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war in 1937 to the following year, was published serially in *Gunzō*<sup>80</sup> (Oct 1959 - Feb 1960). The rivalry between Sata and Kubokawa is

revealed more clearly than in *Kurenai*; much of the novel concerning Sata's feelings of jealousy and sadness as Kubokawa begins another affair.

(v) Recent Works (1960 -)

In 1961 Sata attended the Conference of Asian and African Writers as the Tokyo representative. She received the Women's Literary Prize in 1963 for her short story collection *Onna no Yado*<sup>81</sup> (*The Woman's Inn*).

The novel *Keiryū*<sup>82</sup> (*Mountain Stream*) was published in *Gunzō* (July-December 1963) and covers the period 1951-5, during which time the Japan Communist Party was criticised by the Cominform<sup>83</sup> for "complacency vis-a-vis the Occupation regime and for being over-committed to peaceful methods".<sup>84</sup> As a result of this criticism some members<sup>85</sup> of the literary group published a declaration opposing the Central Party. *Keiryū's* heroine is bound strongly to the Party and although she is distressed by the discord within it she is still able to regard it as her "home" whereas her son deplores the internal chaos and is unable to regard the Party in the same light as his mother:

"I think of it as my home so nothing can be done about it"....  
"Mother, whenever we discuss it you say you feel it's your home don't you. You're different to me in that respect. I certainly don't think of it as anything like my home. On the contrary I think it's corrupt."  
"We think about it differently don't we"  
"Totally different."<sup>87</sup>

Various incidents from the author's private life are depicted including her son Kenzo's court-martial for infringement of Occupation political measures and her activities in the Women's Organisation.

In 1964 Sata, Noma Hiroshi<sup>88</sup> and others were expelled from the Communist Party for criticising its economic and ideological policies.

*Sōzō*<sup>89</sup> (*Plaster Image*), which continues the story of *Keiryū's* main characters was published in 1966 and does not distinguish between the author's private and public life as *Keiryū* does.

Sata became chairwoman of *Fujin Minshu Kurabu* in 1970 and her novel *Jūei*<sup>90</sup> (*Shade of the Trees*), which was to receive the Noma Literary Award two years later, was published. *Jūei* sensitively depicts the relationship between a



married Japanese artist and his Chinese mistress in Nagasaki. He is unable to progress as an artist and eventually dies of cancer apparently caused by the atomic bomb.

One of Sata's more recent works to be acclaimed is a series of twelve linked stories entitled *Toki ni Tatsu*<sup>91</sup> (*Standing Still in Time*), written in 1976 which received the Kawabata Yasunari prize for that year. Each story recalls a separate period or incident in the author's life and begins with *Sono Ichi*<sup>92</sup> in which the unsophisticated Sata who had just entered the Proletarian Literary Movement has the works of Prosper Mérimée read to her in French at Hori Tatsuo's house. The final story *Sono Jūni*<sup>93</sup> depicts the aging author's refusal to give blood for her grandchild's transfusion although in the past she had willingly given it for her brother.

The chapters between *Sono Ichi* and *Sono Jūni* arranged in chronological order, and two concern incidents which occurred outside this period, namely *Sono San*<sup>94</sup> which deals with her parents and the circumstances of her birth and *Sono Go*<sup>95</sup> depicting her fellow workers at Maruzen. The remaining six chapters are about her friends in the left-wing movement while *Sono Yon*<sup>96</sup> concerns her battle front tours during the war.

By using incidents from her personal experience as the basis for many of her works Sata has documented the most important events in her life. Reading her major autobiographical works reveals the main influences on her life - namely her largely unhappy youth as depicted in *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara*; her involvement with the members of *Roba* and subsequent entry into the Proletarian Literary Movement - perhaps the most important influencing factor in her life and certainly one with a far-reaching effect on her work. This influence can be seen in *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* and many of her early linked works. In the novels *Haguruma*, *Kurenai* and *Haiiro no Gogo* Sata's own personal life as a Proletarian writer and her inner conflicts and emotions are

revealed. Her attitude towards a driving force in her life, the Communist Party is examined in *Keiryū*, while *Toki ni Tatsu* provides an over-all view of many important events in Sata Ineko's life.

## THE CARAMEL FACTORY

### ONE

As always Hiroko<sup>1</sup> began eating breakfast in the space made by rolling up the end of the *futon*<sup>2</sup> on which her younger brother was sleeping. Her small ashen face was swollen as though she was still asleep. Her grandmother was in the kitchen, rice pot in front of her, filling Hiroko's lunchbox in the dim morning light. The dawn chill sank into Hiroko's body although she moved her hands. She could occasionally hear sounds of breakfast being prepared somewhere.

Hiroko took a deep breath and blew vigorously on her rice; presently, when she had finished the bowl-ful she stood up hurriedly.

"Hey, what about your breakfast?"

"I've finished." Hiroko was already taking her tram fare from the drawer in the *hibachi*<sup>3</sup>.

"You haven't finished. Eat one more bowl-ful, you're not late yet, come on."

"But I can't eat quickly," Hiroko said tearfully as she handed the bowl back to her grandmother.

"You say you can't eat quickly, but if you don't eat hot food on cold days like this you'll freeze."

"But when you're late you get into trouble."

Just four or five days before she had first been late and at her factory lateness was not tolerated. The factory gates shut at precisely seven a.m. Hiroko had been made to take that whole day off whether she wanted to or not. This was because it was troublesome for the factory to deduct the time lost from the girls' meagre daily wage.

*That earlier morning, on the tram, she had a feeling she might be late. Well-dressed women could be seen and people who looked like workers had disappeared. She looked around anxiously, trying to discover the time from the atmosphere on the tram. Eventually*

she went as far as the entrance. The conductor, who had taken his watch from his breast-pocket with one hand, turned over a board of discounts that was hanging there. Although the tram had reached the stop before hers, Hiroko felt as though the neighbourhood had changed.

Her red-brick factory stretched out horizontally along the tramline like a tenement building, just in front of the tram stop. Among those doorways was Hiroko's. She stared at them one by one, aware that she must not overlook hers. She felt a pang of fear as though something was pressing on her stomach.

She raced from the tram to her entrance. It was as she had seen from the tram..

She had left home while it was still dark. Her tram fare was copper coins gathered up from among the family.....The metallic iron door in front of her was completely shut. She was late. The factory closed its doors at seven a.m. Hiroko passed by furtively. She grasped her lunchbox with both hands beneath her cape, pressed it firmly to her breast and walked on. She was ready to cry.

Pedestrians had become more numerous. The sun shone. Female students were slowly walking by. The traffic had changed from the early morning kind she was used to, to that of a later time.

Hiroko feared lateness even more than freezing.

Hiroko, who had finished breakfast while being scolded by her grandmother, buried her face in her scarf and walked on feeling as though she was going into battle. Outside, the brightness of the dawn was like a newly-sharpened knife. It was so cold it seemed to crackle. Her wooden clogs slipped many times on the bridge.

The tram with its lights still on was full of smocks and over-alls. All the faces were red against the cold. They had come running, cramming miso soup<sup>4</sup> into their mouths and so it seemed as if the smells of all their

kitchens were here beneath the dim tram lights.

Hiroko squeezed in between the adult's legs. She was a worker like them, a small fragile worker like a blade of grass about to be eaten by a horse.

"What a good girl! How far are you going?" The man who had vacated his seat for her had spoken. "What does your father do?"

"He hasn't got a job." Hiroko was embarrassed to say so.

"Oh he's out of work? It's really tough isn't it." He assumed a friendly expression.

The pitying eyes around Hiroko did not stare at her all at once. They were all moved because she looked like one of their own children.

## TWO

Hiroko's father used to be an office worker in a small town. He wore a striped suit and played billiards at a club. While his wife, who had been ill for three or four years before she died, was still alive he had lost what little real estate they had. When he married his second wife he strangely came to yearn after a middle class lifestyle. His second wife went around teaching the *koto*<sup>5</sup> and *ikebana*<sup>6</sup> to the Company executives' families. At times she accompanied him when he played the *shakuhachi*<sup>7</sup>.

Once, Hiroko's father abandoned his mother and two children and went to live with his wife's parents, but eventually came to feel that, for appearances' sake, he could not allow this to continue. He had to send the children to middle school, his income was probably unable to withstand the expense. He thought that as an office worker he would never be able to rise in society. He had no idea that people like himself could not improve their prospects. He took his family and went to Tokyo. The divorce from his second wife strengthened his decision to go and the illness of his younger brother, studying under financial hardship in Tokyo, hastened the move.

His moving was simply an escape from such things as the neighbourhood and the need to keep up appearances. He had not a single plan or aim. He drank, shouted and took his frustrations out on the family.

His younger brother had been adopted as the heir of another family and had had just enough money for schooling expenses but Hiroko's father, who was in charge of the money, squandered it and so the younger brother was studying under financial hardship. Manual labour, to which he was unaccustomed, ruined his health and he became bed-ridden.

After coming to Tokyo Hiroko's family supported the invalid and their paltry funds soon ran out. At that time her father worked as a labourer in a brewery and then a caterer's odd-job man because those jobs were near by but the work made his shoulders ache and his feet swell so he quit.

Grandmother did piece-work at home but could not support them.

Hiroko was then in her fifth year at school.

"What about Hiroko going and giving one of these a try?" her father said one evening and threw the newspaper down to no one in particular. Hiroko peered at it as she held her rice bowl. She was confused by her father's apparently casual words.

The caramel factory was recruiting female workers. Hiroko lowered her head and forced rice mechanically into her mouth in silence. Everyone was quiet.

"How about it Hiroko?" her father said after a short while and smiled faintly.

"But school...." as she began speaking her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh you poor girl...."

"Be quiet!" Father interrupted Grandmother. Now and then Hiroko's younger brother peered at her secretively with a comforting look. The invalid lay face up in bed with his eyes closed.

The next day Hiroko was left alone while her father and a clerk negotiated in the factory's office.

"She's thirteen, I see." The clerk noted down her name and particulars.

"She's still really a child so it will be rather a nuisance for you."

"Yes, well, here are our regulations." The clerk continued talking, bluntly brushing aside her father's words which threatened to become intimate.

On the way home Father took Hiroko into a noodle shop. He was in a good humour as, with legs crossed, he leaned across the low table and poured sake.<sup>8</sup>

"It's a bit far but, well, you can try commuting. We'll do something about school someday soon."

Actually it was supposed to take about forty minutes to the factory, even by tram but, more importantly, it was not economical to take the tram fare out of her daily wage. Female workers all looked for jobs within walking distance or lived in at a large factory. Hiroko's father, however,

did not consider such things. This factory was rather well-known and so it was the only one he considered. The next day Hiroko set out with a heavy heart.



### THREE

"Mittchan<sup>9</sup>, have you finished three cans yet?"

"No I've only just done two. How about you?"

"Same with me, my hands are numb."

Some, twenty girls stood facing each other at tables lined up in two rows. They wore white coats and talked with heads down while intently moving their fingers. Their bodies trembled mechanically, violently as they strove to maintain the rhythm of their work.

Hiroko; a girl whose eyes streamed; and their overseer's younger sister had a separate table because they were the new intake of workers for the year. In a corner of the room apart from the other girls they wrapped small caramels in pieces of paper in an, as yet, rather unskilled manner.

"They're all fast aren't they," Hiroko said to the girl with streaming eyes next to her.

"But they're old hands at it."

"Yes, so it's only natural," the overseer's younger sister whispered. She was thin and slight. Her mouth was sharp and her face like that of an adult.

The girl next to Hiroko had trachoma and her eyes were always running pathetically. Her body was small and shrivelled.

When one of the older girls began to sing a popular song the others all joined in. Hiroko piled up the few cartons she had finally finished and counted them.

A clerk came in holding two sheets of paper. It was the clerk Hiroko remembered from before.

"Who will it be today I wonder?"

"It's bound to be O-Ume,<sup>10</sup> surely."

"I did more yesterday too."

As they talked the clerk gave one sheet of paper to the overseer to hold and stretched up to paste the other onto the wall. It was a list of the

previous day's ratings. The names of the three best workers and the three worst were posted up each day.

"Just as usual."

"No one can match up to O-Ume."

"You'll have to work harder." The clerk smirked teasingly.

Although Hiroko heard someone read out her name she did not look up. She could hear the apparently relentless overseer, whose hair was done up in the Shimada style, curtly say to her younger sister, "You've got to work harder too."

Hiroko remembered what it had been like at school. Even there her name had always been posted up as one of the best pupils. At school the names of the worst pupils were not put up separately.

Hiroko wanted somehow to quickly become good at the work. While other girls filled five cans she could only manage two-and-a-half. Even on days when she thought she had done more than usual, when the final hour came it was still two-and-a-half. Hiroko was impatient. She just wanted her name removed somehow or other from the list of worst workers.

They continued working furiously. It was a competition. With the list of ratings in mind they all pushed their small bodies as hard as possible.

#### FOUR

The back of their workroom faced the river. All day long no sun shone into the room. The entrance was along a dark passage inside the factory and light only entered from a window by the river.

From the window the ramshackle backs of houses could be seen on the other side of the foul-smelling river along which ships carrying empty barrels; rubbish barges and the like moved sluggishly all day long. Billboards advertising such things as soap and sake had been set up on the soot-stained roofs and the sun shone on them for the whole day. The sunlight was like happiness. The girls could only see the warm-looking colour coming in through the closed glass door. Before sunset a faint redness was reflected diagonally in the dirt of the glass window and soon disappeared. Then the room became completely dark.

At that time the wind blew every day and so the glass door rattled all day long. The wind blew in freely through a hole in a pane of glass. Although they had already asked that it be repaired it was still untouched.

The girls stood working in that room all day.

Until they became used to it their legs were as stiff as sticks; their hearts were heavy with fatigue and at times they felt dizzy. When evening came they were chilled to the bone and on occasions that caused their stomachs to ache. They all wore *haramaki*<sup>]]</sup> around their waists and their fathers' old long johns which they had altered.

## FIVE

Just before noon one of the girls said impatiently, "Isn't it already time for us to warm our lunchboxes up?"

"If we don't put our lunchboxes by the *hibachi* soon they won't get very warm."

"Pass mine over next thanks."

"And mine, it's in the purple *furoshiki*."<sup>12</sup>

Presently the edge of the *hibachi* was covered with aluminium lunchboxes. The lunches, which had been packed at six a.m., had frozen and crumbled. Various complaints typical of the girls were aired around the *hibachi*.

"My mother's going to have another baby. I've had enough of babies because when I go home I'm only made to look after it. Going into service is much better."

"It's New Year but I'm not going to buy anything....how dull."

"I think I'll be daring and go into service too, only my mother and I are working so I must find a job with more money."

"Become a apprentice *geisha*?" another girl asked peering in.

"No, I wouldn't be a *geisha* or anything like that."

"Well, my older sister always wears such lovely *kimono* when she comes home."

"Oh no, I don't want to wear nice *kimono*."

Hiroko and the girl with trachoma stood in the group and listened to the conversation. Hiroko asked her softly, "Don't you want to go to school?"

"My eyes are bad so it's a waste of time."

At three o'clock they had a mid-afternoon snack, the cost of which was deducted from their meagre daily wage. It was always limited to a baked sweet potato which cost one *sen*.<sup>13</sup> After feeling embarrassed on her first day when she did not have the money Hiroko always brought just the right amount.

A different pair of girls went out to buy the potatoes each day. That was the only time they were permitted to go out.

Iverness coats and working jackets fluttered in the wind, on the street where second-hand clothes shops were lined up facing the factory. The girls walking huddled against the cold, with their jacket sleeves rolled up and bare arms thrust beneath their aprons looked somehow deformed.

## SIX

The caramels that the female workers wrapped up were made in another room. They were placed in a box and brought over by male workers.

"Lemon today."

"Oh, I thought so, I've been smelling it for a while."

The flour-covered caramels flowed out noisily onto the table. A sweet lemon smell rose up. Lemon caramels were not made very often because they were not profitable for the factory owner. The fact that the sweets the girls handled were their favourite ones made them happy; just as the lemon caramels would presently appear in shops and delight children.

They were allowed to eat any fragments of caramel. Hiroko and the girl with trachoma gathered them up and ate them.

"Hey, although we can eat some pieces you'll get into trouble if you eat that many." The ill-tempered overseer's younger sister suddenly lowered her head.

Hiroko looked up for the first time and glanced around. The factory owner's wife had come to inspect them.

"Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon," they replied in unison and bowed. Every day the factory owner, or his wife, came round on inspection. At times they came together.

The mistress came silently into the centre of the room and stopped suddenly. She wore layers of Ōshima silk<sup>14</sup> and held her hands behind her back. A cute maid followed behind her. She attended closely to the mistress's personal needs and so was made to keep herself neat. The overseer then gave a polite report. The mistress smacked her lips as she listened. She chuckled, apparently satisfied because the girls were working obediently as usual. However, as if that was not enough a man was employed to search the sleeves, purse and lunchbox of each girl

at the gate as they left for home. They had all stood in the wind waiting for the watchman to come.

"She's so proud isn't she," Hiroko whispered softly to the girl next to her as they watched the mistress disappear through the door.

"Watch out, you'll get into trouble." As her eyes streamed the girl realised that Hiroko still did not understand the situation fully and warned her. Hiroko had thought a lady would at least smile at little girls.

"Isn't O-Sumi<sup>15</sup> lucky, being able to wear such a lovely *kimono*." The overseer's younger sister spoke of the maid jealously. Hiroko; the girl with trachoma and the overseer's younger sister each had their attention attracted towards her when the mistress appeared.

## SEVEN

The sound of feet treading on stepping-boards resounded along the dim basement passage and the small light on the ceiling rocked. The girls went down to the basement, talking noisily. It was time for the mid-afternoon snack. The overseer came to say that they had finished with caramels for the day.

"Are we washing bottles again?"

"I hate doing that, it's so cold."

"Miss, can we please have some hot water today?"

When the work with caramels finished they were always made to wash lotion bottles. Lotion was the factory's original product. The bottles were washed in an area of the basement which had a muddy floor; it was slushy and damp. Their bare feet were cold on the stepping-boards. The sound of a ship moving along the river could be heard through the top window.

"Oh, the water's stone cold, isn't there any hot water?" a girl cried out in despair. Two or three other girls called out in loud high-pitched voices after her, "I can't bear it."

"Let's get some hot water."

The overseer looked concerned. "Just wait and I'll see about getting some hot water." She went to discuss the matter elsewhere.

They all restrained their distress and went on rinsing out the small bottles one at a time. When they took their hands a little out of the water the skin smarted and cracked instantly. Then, they hastily plunged their hands back in again. Hiroko washed bottles in stoney silence, tears trickled from the tip of her nose.



## EIGHT

Hiroko took the tram to the factory for only a month. After that her return tram fare was all used up and she walked home. Before then there had been times when she had to walk in the morning too. At such times her grandmother walked along with her; they walked for nearly two hours and when at last they neared the factory and their destination was in sight the street lights would go out all at once. She got used to walking in those days.

It was past eight p.m. Everyone was at home doing piece-work in the six-mat room<sup>16</sup> which had been closed off. Beneath the light, nice fine wool was being pulled out from the knitted hat on Grandmother's knee as she moved her hands. Fragments of the brown wool fluttered in the light.

In a corner the invalid was lying on his stomach in bed, painting roses, birds and the like on green paper. It was to be an exercise-book cover. Father sat cross-legged at his bed-side, and also copied from the sample to help him. For some time younger brother had been reading a magazine behind Grandmother and his eyes were now red.

Kiroko put out a small table beside the sliding kitchen door. *zōsui*<sup>17</sup> had been boiling on the charcoal stove. From the next house which made clog thongs and was separated from them by a wall, the tapping sound of night-work could be heard as usual, as though they were all in the one house.

Hiroko lifted her face, red from the steam of the *zōsui*, and said, "There's nothing better than eating hot food like this when you come from outside." When Hiroko came home from work she felt she had become a real worker.

"Ha, ha, ha....how cheeky... and how are you getting along nowadays, still two and a half cans?" Hiroko flushed and hung her head at her father's teasing words.

The system of daily wages had recently been stopped at the factory

and wages were now calculated by the number of completed cans. Seven *sen* for each can. The incomes of girls who were used to the work increased, however, most girls had to push themselves even harder to make as much money as their previous daily wage. They had already been working with all their might previously. It was impossible for them to produce just that much more as soon as they were told they would be paid by the number of cans. Their incomes all decreased at once. The wages of girls like Hiroko were reduced by one-third. Also the list of ratings was posted up each day. It became unnecessary for the overseer to say "Well, time to begin." after the lunchbreak. In order to reach the amount they had received as a daily wage, they all struggled like a mouse in an exercise-wheel.

"The employers are so shrewd..." Grandmother sniffed primly and turned the hat she was working on inside out as she spoke, "If this hat goes into holes we'll have to pay them compensation won't we? Take today's yarn for instance, it's no good and soon goes into holes so I'm worried about it and can't get anything done."

"You're talking about your work aren't you Mother, but how are you getting on Hiroko? Do you think you'll improve if you carry on like this?" Father said while lighting a cigarette.

"Yes, I'm working my hardest."

"What if you were to stop working there?"

Father spoke again as though it was a trifling matter. Hiroko looked up with a flash of understanding, "What would I do then?"

"It doesn't matter, something will turn up later."

"This factory is a bit much isn't it, it's so far." The invalid set his paintbrush down and turned over. Father was encouraged by his words and spoke again. "Give it up, give it up..there's no other way. When you take the tram fare out each day there's no change left over is there?"

Her father's words made Hiroko feel weak and inadequate. However

she went to bed that night feeling that, at last after many days, she was free. She recalled such things as the girl with trachoma that she had been friendly with, and being bullied by the overseer's younger sister who said she was uppity to wear a cape, as they waited at the gate to be searched.

Presently Hiroko was taken by a woman from the employment agency for an interview at a small Chinese noodle shop in a downtown area because her father had said, "She's not very strong so please find her an easy position." Hiroko could not even peel potatoes there.

One day a letter came from the teacher in her old home town. It said that if Hiroko could somehow get someone to provide money for school expenses, because not a very large sum would be needed, it would be better if she could at least graduate from primary school.

There was a label to indicate a change of address attached and when the letter was forwarded to her at the noodle shop ( she was already living in by then ) she ripped it open and began to read it but then took it and went into the toilet. She reread it. It was dark and she could not read it clearly. She crouched over the dim toilet, without urinating, and wept.

Kyarameru Kōjo Kara - A Discussion

Sata Ineko's short story *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara*, as mentioned previously, is based upon her experience as a worker at Izumibashi Caramel Factory in 1915.

Organisation: The story consists of eight chapters which are not arranged in strict chronological order. Chapter One opens with the heroine, Hiroko, preparing to leave for work then relates an incident which occurred some days previously and ends with Hiroko's departure from home. Chapter Two consists largely of background information about Hiroko's family, especially her father; reasons for their move to Tokyo and recalls the evening Hiroko's father suggested she go out to work and the subsequent interview with the factory clerk. Chapters Four and Seven consist of details of working conditions while Three and Six give an insight into the factory's management and manner of operation. Chapter Eight tells how Hiroko came to leave her job there and shows something of the family at home.

Method of Depiction: The fact that these chapters do not follow on strictly one from the other gives the impression that Sata outlines Hiroko's predicament in the first chapter and then gradually fills in some background information and details via the others. It is obvious, however, that the background information, characterisation and description are largely incomplete. Sata subtly implies many finer details, requiring the reader to 'read between the lines' in order to achieve a fuller understanding. For example, we know that Hiroko's family is poor but the actual extent of their poverty is revealed through sentences such as: "She looked around anxiously, trying to discover the time from the atmosphere on the tram"<sup>1</sup> - obviously Hiroko has no watch. In Chapter Eight the family is doing piece-work and "From the next house which made clog-thongs and was separated from them by a wall, the tapping sound of night-work could be heard as usual, as though they were all in the one

house."<sup>2</sup> The houses in this area are so poorly-built that the neighbours' activities sound as though they are being carried out in the next room.

Similarly, Sata never actually states that the factory exploits the workers but this too is revealed in numerous ways: firstly the fact that the girls are obviously working very long hours - Hiroko leaves home at dawn and returns home in the evening darkness thus spending all day inside without seeing the sun. Furthermore it is so cold inside the factory that the girls must wear *haramaki*, normally worn by men, and their fathers' old long-johns.

The characters, too, are barely described. Only four of the thirty characters (including the girls at the factory although they are generally referred to collectively) actually have names (Hiroko, O-Ume, Mittchan and O-Sumi) while the rest are referred to either by titles (for example the overseer) or identified by some physical feature (for example the girl with trachoma). Even Hiroko, the main character, is not described physically - all we know of her is that she is a young girl of about thirteen who wears a cape and clogs. While at least one feature of some of the factory girls is mentioned (for example we know that the overseer wears her hair in the Shimada style; that O-Sumi is cute and wears nice clothes); the other members of Hiroko's family are not described at all except for her younger brother who appears with red eyes in Chapter Eight. We do not know whether the characters are tall or short, fat or thin in other words their faces are blank. Viewed in this way *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* may be said to consist of a plot whose background is not revealed in full, with characters described in outline only. It could be the story of many workers living at that time.

This is no doubt the very effect that Sata Ineko, writing within the context of the Proletarian Literary Movement was trying to achieve. If we recall Hirano Ken's definition of Proletarian literature as being "literature from the proletariat and for the proletariat"<sup>3</sup> then literature

for the proletariat means literature relevant to their particular situation, literature they are able to identify with. When every character in a story or novel is described physically and characterised in full they become individual personalities and may be more difficult to identify with. Thus in their work the writers of the Proletarian Literary Movement strove not only to depict the lives of the wage-earning masses as a whole but also to present situations they could comprehend with ease and through which they would, hopefully, come to some awareness of class consciousness and the extent of their oppression.

In the case of *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* this style seems particularly appropriate as the heroine is a young girl working with a large group, obviously it would be impossible for her to discover the names of all her workmates and so she would naturally identify them by certain physical features. Similarly the workers on the tram are described simply by their clothing:

The tram with its lights still on was full of smocks and overalls. Their faces were red from the cold. They had come cramming *miso* soup into their mouths and so it seemed as though the smells of their kitchens were here beneath the dim tram lights.<sup>4</sup>

For the reasons mentioned above Sata does not attempt to characterise the main characters; we know some of Hiroko's feelings and thoughts but not in depth. We know, for instance, that she is scared of being late, that she does not want to leave school and she is impatient to have her name removed from the hateful list but there are other less obvious things that are not mentioned. For example do her feelings towards her father change at all when he makes her leave school? Does she grow to hate him? We are not told.

Sata describes the past of Hiroko's father, to some extent presenting him in more depth than any other character although in a negative fashion. He squandered his family's real estate and the money his brother had set aside for educational expenses. He abandoned his mother and children but returned for 'appearances' sake', then decided to take them to Tokyo although he had "not a single plan or aim."<sup>5</sup> He undertakes two jobs because they are

nearby later giving them up because his feet swell and his shoulders ache. Yet he has no second thoughts about sending his thirteen year old daughter to work at a factory which is two hours away by tram. He is depicted as a shallow, lazy man concerned only with superficial appearances; the factory's distance and the cost of the tram-fare do not deter him:

Hiroko's father, however, did not consider such things. This factory was rather well known and so it was the only one he considered.<sup>6</sup>

In Chapter Eight he at last realises that the factory's distance makes commuting uneconomic but soon finds Hiroko another job at a noodle-shop where she cannot even peel potatoes (presumably she is too young).

It appears that he has realised that it is more economical for her to live-in at the shop and the story ends with young Hiroko separated from her family, probably working long unrewarding hours at her new job.

The predicament of the other workers at the factory is revealed through odd snippets of conversation that Sata includes. In Chapter Five the older girls discuss their home life and their attitudes towards taking an apprenticeship as a *geisha* while eating their lunches around the *hibachi*. Hiroko listens to their conversation but is too young to understand it fully, preferring to talk to her friend the girl with trachoma. Through the use of conversation in this way the situation of the older workers is presented alongside that of the younger Hiroko. Another instance occurs in Chapter One when the men on the tram instantly sympathise when Hiroko says her father is out of work because they could easily be in that situation too and she could be one of their own children.

Themes: The most obvious theme of the story is the exploitation of the workers by the factory, representing the Capitalists. Although Sata Ineko was working at Izumibashi four years after the government passed the Factory Act (1911) in a feeble effort to improve working conditions, employers were given fifteen years to carry out the Act's provisions and so it is unlikely

that conditions would have improved greatly within those four years. The Japanese government's aim of producing a 'wealthy nation and a strong army',<sup>7</sup> through industrialisation was carried out at the expense of the working classes who, with little or no means of legal retaliation were ruthlessly oppressed:

A [key factor in the Meiji government's scheme to acquire capital] was...the oppression and exploitation of the working masses, through very low wages, ideological mystification, the use of violence in recruiting and keeping labour, horrible working conditions in the mines, factories and dormitories....this exploitation was made easier by the desperate conditions of much of the population and the widespread use of female workers<sup>8</sup> who were markedly more oppressed than the male proletariat.

Although the conditions Sata describes in *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* are certainly not the worst that have been documented for this period it is obvious that the factory owners are rich, powerful and in complete control of the workers. The factory gates close at seven a.m. because it is too troublesome for the factory to deduct time lost from the wages of anyone unfortunate enough to be late; the fact that he or she will lose a whole day's wages perhaps because of five minutes is not considered. Every day the list of ratings is posted up to encourage competition and to force the girls to push themselves even harder. To further encourage competition the method of assessing payment is changed from that of a daily rate to a system calculated by the number of cans produced, making it even harder for slower workers like Hiroko to earn money:

The incomes of girls used to the work increased, however most girls had to push themselves even harder to make as much as their previous daily wage. They had already been working with all their might previously. It was impossible for them to produce just that much more as soon as they were told they would be paid by the number of cans. Their incomes all decreased at once.<sup>9</sup> The wages of girls like Hiroko were reduced by one-third.

The factory owners have the upper hand and are able to change the system of payment to their advantage at a moment's notice. The workers lack the protection a union would provide if a similar situation occurred today. The exploitation of piece-workers is revealed through Hiroko's grandmother who does knitting using wool supplied by her employer:



"The employers are so shrewd..."Grandmother sniffed primly and turned the hat she was working on inside out as she spoke, "If this hat goes into holes we'll have to pay them compensation won't we? Take today's yarn for instance, it's no good and soon goes into holes so I'm worried about it and can't get anything done."<sup>10</sup>

By supplying their workers with inferior yarn and deducting money if the garment has any holes the employer is able to reduce his expenses. This results in a vicious circle for Hiroko's grandmother who knits slowly and carefully to prevent the yarn breaking thus producing fewer garments and ultimately getting paid less.

The affluence of the factory owners and their attitude to the workers is shown by the mistress who wears clothes of expensive Ōshima silk and has a maid to attend to her needs. When she comes on an inspection tour she stands arrogantly in the centre of the room smirking because the girls are working away meekly. Naïve Hiroko cannot understand why the mistress does not smile at the young girls or show them some kindness, she is too young to realise the mercenary way in which she regards them. Despite the fact that they are all working well a man is still employed to search their sleeves, lunchboxes and purses as they leave each night. The wretched working conditions at the factory are numerous and naming just a few will illustrate the desperate situation of the workers. The hours are long and the girls' only breaks are for lunch and a mid-afternoon snack. They are confined all day in a cold, sunless room and are permitted to go outside only when their turn to fetch the snack comes around. When work with the caramels is over the girls go down to the damp basement to wash lotion bottles. To economise the factory owners have not laid down a wooden floor in the basement but merely laid stepping boards<sup>11</sup> over the mud. There is no hot water to wash the bottles only ice-cold water which causes the girls' hands to crack.

Another type of exploitation is revealed in Hiroko's relationship with her father as she is in a sense also exploited by him. It is at his suggestion that she leaves school and goes out to work. His empty promise that "We'll do something about school someday soon"<sup>12</sup> comes to nothing.

He uses her earnings and those of his mother to support the family while he makes no effort to find another job. It is interesting to compare Hiroko's relationship with her father with that of Sata and Masafumi. Masafumi was only sixteen when Sata was born and because of the uncommonly small difference in their ages one would assume that they would, in a way, be more like brother and sister than father and daughter. Hiroko's father seems to be autocratic and demanding, and yet lacking in any feelings of parental responsibility. Although we are not told his (the father's) age it is certainly possible that Masafumi, who would have been only twenty-seven in 1915, may have looked on Sata more as a sister and did not object to her shouldering some responsibility for the family's survival. If we ascribe other characteristics of Hiroko's father to Masafumi (although we cannot do so with any certainty), for example his squandering and lack of foresight and planning, it would seem to indicate that he lacked maturity.

Although Hiroko's school is only mentioned four times in the course of the story it seems as though Sata is comparing the two institutions school and factory throughout the story. Hiroko is obviously reluctant to leave school, her distress at her father's suggestion makes this apparent:

"How about it Hiroko?" her father said after a short while and smiled faintly.

"But school....." as she began speaking her eyes filled with tears.<sup>13</sup>

Hiroko not only enjoys school, she is an intelligent and capable pupil as well. Although Sata does not show Hiroko at school or describe her feelings upon leaving it in detail it is clear when we recall Sata's own proficiency at school in Nagasaki and her interest in literature at such a young age that this incident is endowed with all her feelings from that time.

When Hiroko is confronted with the list of ratings for the first time she immediately recalls the situation at school:

Hiroko remembered what it had been like at school. Even there her name had always been posted up as one of the best pupils. At school the names of the worst pupils were not put up separately.<sup>14</sup>

This quote reveals another dimension to Hiroko's feelings towards the factory - not only is she forced to work long hours in wretched conditions but she has been removed from a situation in which she was proficient and thrust into one with which she cannot cope. Her world has been reversed.

The school has the integrity and kindness not to post up the names of the more inept pupils whereas the factory, whose only motive is profit, posts both lists up every day to encourage competition and it soon becomes Hiroko's only aim to some how get her name removed from the list.

While the older girls discuss their home life and the things they desire - a job with more money, nice clothes and so on Hiroko asks the girl with trachoma about her favourite topic - school.

Hiroko and the girl with trachoma stood in the group and listened to the conversation. Hiroko asked her softly, "Don't you want to go to school?"  
"My eyes are bad so it's a waste of time."<sup>15</sup>

This brief exchange touches upon another subject namely the lack of medical care among the workers. Trachoma is only one of many diseases rife among poor people with inadequate diets and can only be cured by a physician. The girl's family are no doubt too poor to afford medical fees and the condition of her eyes will deteriorate until she can no longer work thus placing an extra burden upon her family.

The fact that Hiroko's teacher thought to write to her indicates both the kindness of the teacher compared with the sharp-tongued overseer and the arrogant mistress, and also reinforces the implications that Hiroko was a good pupil. Surely the teacher would not have written to suggest that an inept student try to borrow some money and finish school. But it is this very suggestion that reduces Hiroko to despair and makes her truly aware of her situation; for who would a poverty-stricken factory worker possibly know who could supply enough money for her to go back to school. If that obstacle could be overcome how would her family survive on her

grandmother's meagre earnings?

As the story ends Hiroko sobs with despair as she realises that she can never return to school; that as a worker she is prevented from doing so by a society in which only those with money can progress. Sata does not actually reveal Hiroko's thoughts at this climactic moment, leaving the reader rankling at the injustice and unfairness of the situation.

Thus in *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* several parallel themes may be detected. Firstly the exploitation of the workers by the employers, paralleled on a smaller scale by Hiroko's 'exploitation' by her father. The two institutions school and factory and their various components ( teacher, mistress and overseer ) are compared and contrasted; and underlying these is the simple story of a young girl's life in this oppressive period.

Imagery: Sata Ineko does not employ imagery a great deal in *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* but those images she does use are simple and fresh, giving added depth to the situation she is describing. For example in Chapter One Hiroko is described as " a small fragile worker like a blade of grass about to be eaten by a horse".<sup>16</sup> This gives an atmosphere of utter defencelessness. Hiroko is as unable to protect herself from the cruelties she will experience as a worker, as a blade of grass is to escape a horse.

In Chapter Four which describes the wretched working conditions we are told that no sun enters the girls' workroom but shines all day on the billboards across the river. To the girls this sunlight "was like happiness" - something unobtainable, always just beyond their reach. Admittedly they know some happiness but in their position as workers they will never know true lasting joy and security. They are pleased by small things such as packing lemon caramels which are not produced very often; a child-like happiness resembling that of the children who will be delighted to see lemon caramels in the shops.

A particularly striking image is that used by Sata to describe the

girls who go out to buy the baked potatoes: "The shrunken girls huddled against the cold, walking with their jacket sleeves rolled up and bare arms thrust beneath their aprons looked somehow deformed."<sup>17</sup> One cannot help feeling sympathy for these girls as the vivid mental picture created by this image springs to mind.

Another expressive image occurs in Chapter Eight where Sata describes the girls struggling "like a mouse in an exercise-wheel" to keep their rate of pay at the level it was before the system was changed. This image depicts the amount of effort the girls must exert and lack of return they get like the mouse running frantically in the wheel but never moving forward.

In this, her first work, Sata Ineko has skilfully used her own experience as the basis for a short story in the style of the Proletarian Literary Movement. The effect of the Movement and its objectives upon Sata's mode of expression is considerable and had she not entered the Movement her style of writing would no doubt have been quite different. In *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* Sata reveals not only some of her own childhood but also the plight of the working masses of that period.

To obtain a balanced view of Sata's writing it is necessary to examine briefly a novel from her later period and compare this with *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* to detect changes in themes and style that have occurred.

Kyarameru Kōjō Kara and Kurenai - A Comparison

Both *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* and *Kurenai* are basically autobiographical works depicting a given period in Sata's life. The main characters in *Kurenai*, Akiko<sup>18</sup> and Kōsuke<sup>19</sup> are based directly upon Sata and Kubokawa while Kishiko<sup>20</sup> and Nakazawa<sup>21</sup> are Miyamoto Yuriko and Kenji. More of the characters are named than in *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* but some relatively important ones remain anonymous. For example in Chapter Eight Akiko describes in some detail a letter she received and her reactions to it but the letter's author is not named, we are simply told that "One day she read a letter from a woman friend and was deeply moved."<sup>22</sup>

The background of the novel is undoubtedly given in far more depth than *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* but Sata still leaves many points unclarified. On page 50 she writes that "Once Akiko attended a women's symposium on literature."<sup>23</sup> but no further information on the symposium or the type of women that attended is given. I feel that this tendency stems not so much from a desire to give the work the universal application intended for *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* but from Sata's use of her own experience as a basis for her work. Sata's transference of her own feelings to the heroine seems to result in a certain amount of confusion over detail. It is difficult to be objective when one is writing about one's own life and Sata apparently expects the reader to be familiar with the more important events in her life. For example the vague "symposium on literature" becomes a little clearer if we recall Sata's activities in *Nihon Puroretaria Sakka Dōmei Fujin Iinkai* and *Nihon Puroretaria Bunka Renmei Fujin Kyōgikai* during this period.

This tendency of Sata's to identify closely with the heroine is noted by Furubayashi Takashi in his discussion of *Keiryū*:

I think that there is a problem in the confusion between the relationship of the author and the heroine and if we limit discussion to Sata Ineko's autobiographical-style novels only it is clear that she transfers her feelings extensively to the heroine.<sup>24</sup>

The themes revealed in *Kurenai* are deeply personal and stem from Sata's dilemma concerning her position as a working wife and mother and the conflict between her desire to work and Kubokawa's wish for her to be more conscientious in her wifely role. Sata's exploitation of this theme was very advanced for only now with the advent of the Women's Movement is such a problem receiving wider recognition. Sata, writing some forty years ago in a social climate in which sex roles were rigidly defined and women were for the most part restricted to a maternal role, was far ahead of her time.

The first part of *Kurenai*, in which Sata deals with this problem, is in some respects stylistically inferior to the latter section which concerns her reactions to Kubokawa's affair. When Sata writes about her personal dilemma as a working wife her emotions are not expressed clearly, perhaps because this problem had not been dealt with before and she was unable to objectively describe a matter of such personal magnitude. Jealously, however, while still an intensely personal emotion has always been a common theme in literature and could perhaps be dealt with more logically as it has been explored so many times before.

While *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* is written largely from the heroine's point of view but does not delve deeply into her emotions, *Kurenai* is written totally from Akiko's point of view and reveals her position in depth. The feelings of other characters in the short story are revealed in part through conversation while in *Kurenai* Sata makes few attempts to show Kōsuke's feelings and does not express them very clearly. Both are autobiographical novels but the latter may be said to be more so since it reveals the author's feelings in such depth.

*Kurenai* is not written in such classic Proletarian style as *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* and reveals some of Sata's experiences as a Proletarian writer under oppression and as a working woman rather than as a worker.

It is clear that Sata's style of writing has changed a great deal from the writing of *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* to that of one of her most famous

novels *Kurenai*. It has matured with the author herself and as her experience of life broadened so have the emotions which she depicts in her later works. The simplicity and clarity of her first work, however, make one of her most memorable.

Sata Ineko has written a great many novels and short stories since the publications of *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* and has covered a wide range of subjects and themes. The change and maturation in her style and subject matter reveal her versatility and deep commitment to the literary sphere thus making her indeed worthy of the title of Japan's "most eminent lady of letters."<sup>25</sup>



NOTES p. 1 - 12

1. 佐多稲子
2. 高柳マキ
3. 田島正文
4. 文子
5. タカ
6. 田中梅郎
7. 休
8. 正人
9. 佐田秀実
10. 「キラメル工界から」
11. A translation and discussion of *Kyarameru Kōjō Kara* will be presented later.
12. 「素足の娘」, Shinchōsha, March 1940
13. 二葉亭四迷
14. 国木田独步
15. 芥川龍之介
16. 菊池寛
17. 宇野浩二
18. 江口渕
19. Furubayashi Takashi, 'Puroretaria Bungaku Undō to Joryū Sakka - Sata Ineko no Baai' in *Kokubungaku Kaishaku to Kancho* XXXVII 3, Shibundo, 1972, p.46.
20. 近松門衛門
21. 「詩と人生」
22. 生田春月
23. 「文章倶楽部」
24. 小堀槐二
25. 葉子
26. 「私の東京地図」
27. Hirano Ken et al., *Nihon Bungaku Zenshū XLVII Sata Ineko shū*, Shūeisha, 1971,
28. 「柱」, *Fujin no Tomo* 婦人の友 1935

29. 「<sup>『</sup>乳房の非<sup>』</sup>」 Fujin Kōron <sup>『</sup>婦人公論<sup>』</sup>, 1937
30. 「<sup>『</sup>或る女の戸籍<sup>』</sup>」 Fujin Minshu Shinbun <sup>『</sup>婦人民主新聞<sup>』</sup>, 1946
31. <sup>『</sup>驕馬<sup>』</sup>
32. 中野重治
33. 窪川鶴次郎
34. 堀辰雄
35. 宮木喜久雄
36. 西沢隆二
37. 室生犀星
38. 田島いね子
39. Jon Halliday *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism*, Pantheon, 1975 pp. 73-4
40. Hirano Ken, p.416 my trans.
41. Furubayashi Takashi, p.45 my trans.
42. ibid., p.45 my trans.
43. <sup>『</sup>プロレタリア芸術<sup>』</sup>
44. Yamada Seizaburō, *Puroretaria Bungakushi*, Rironsha, 1973, p.44, my trans.
45. Furubayashi Takashi, pp43-4, my trans.
46. *Nippona Proleta Artista Federacio*
47. 健造
48. 「研究会挿話」
49. Kaizōsha
50. 宮木百合子
51. 「朝部女工の涙」
52. 「小朝部」
53. 「祈禱」
54. 「恐怖」
55. in Kaizō <sup>『</sup>改造<sup>』</sup>, Bungei Shunju <sup>『</sup>文芸春秋<sup>』</sup>, Chuōkōron <sup>『</sup>中央公論<sup>』</sup>
56. p.80
57. This organisation a recognised form of NAPP which was also known as KOPF (*Federacio de Proletaj Kultur Organizej Japanaj*), consisted of twelve daughter organisations made up of writers, cineasts, atheists and others.
58. 小本多喜二

59. 宮本顯治
60. 遠木枝
61. 「二月二十日のこと」
62. 「大衆の友」 1933
63. 「牡丹のある家」
64. 「これはい」, *Fujin Kōron*, 1936
65. Furubayashi Takashi, p.428 my trans.
66. 「南中」 *Akahata* 『アカハタ』, October 1958 - April 1959.
67. 林芙美子
68. 大佛次郎
69. 「片画」
70. Shin Nihon Bungakkai
71. 「人間」
72. 「虚偽」, *Ningen*, 1948
73. Matsunoki Kiyoharu et al., *Nihon Rekishi Shiriizu XX Gendai*, *Sekaibungakusha*, 1972, p.53, my trans
74. 広津和郎
75. 「松川裁判」
76. 「真実を語る」
77. 「広津和郎書辞」
78. 「広津さんの松川」
79. 「灰色の午後」
80. 「群像」
81. 「如宿」, *Gunzō*, 1962
82. 「溪流」
83. A short-lived post-World War Two organisation of major European Communist part  
The criticism was made in January 1950.
84. Halliday, p.237
85. Nakano, Miyamoto Kenji, and Yuriko, Sata and Kubokawa
86. 「わが家」
87. Furubayashi Takashi, p.42, my trans.
88. 野間宏

89. 「塑像」, Gunzō

90. 「樹影」

91. 「時に佇つ」

92. 「その一」

93. 「その十二」

94. 「その三」

95. 「その五」

96. 「その四」

NOTES pp 13-29

1. みろ子

2. Heavy sleeping quilts.

3. A charcoal brazier.

4. Soup made from soy beans.

5. A Japanese musical instrument sometimes likened to a harp.

6. Flower-arranging.

7. A bamboo instrument similar to a clarinet.

8. Wine made from rice.

9. 光ちゃん (*chan* is diminutive suffix, often added to Japanese names, which replaces the last syllable. "Mittchan" is probably a contraction of "Mitsuko")

0. お梅

1. *haramaki* - a wide wrap usually of wool which is wound around the waist for warmth. Not usually worn by women.

2. A wrapping-cloth.

3. One *sen* is one-hundredth of a *yen*.

4. An expensive silk hand-made in Kyūshū.

5. お澄

6. A mat is about one yard by two.

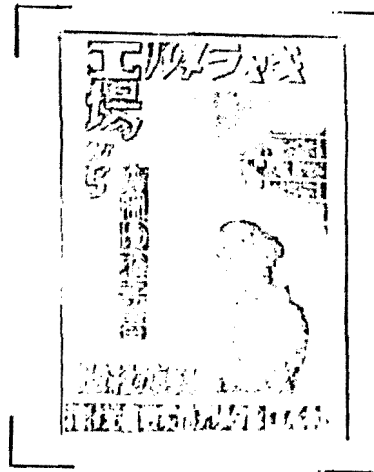
7. A porridge of rice and vegetables.

NOTES pp 30-42

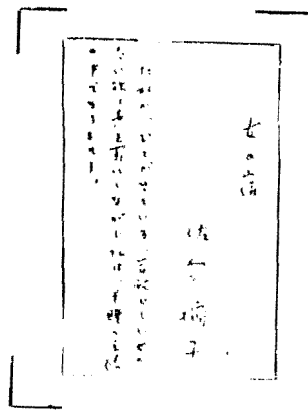
1. *Nihon Bungaku Zenshū* XLVII *Sata Ineko Shū* p. 7 my trans.
2. *ibid.* p.15 my trans.
3. *ibid.* op. cit.
4. *ibid.* p.8 my trans.
5. *ibid.* p.9 my trans.
6. *ibid.* p.10 my trans.
7. Halliday, p.64
8. *ibid.* p.54
9. *Sata Ineko Shū* op.cit. p.15 my trans.
10. *ibid.* p.16 my trans.
11. Wooden boards slatted together to form a lattice framework.
12. *Sata Ineko Shū* op. cit. p.10 my trans.
13. *ibid.* p. 9 my trans.
14. *ibid.* p.11 my trans.
15. *ibid.* p.15 my trans.
16. *ibid.* p. 8 my trans.
17. *ibid.* p.13 my trans.
18. 朋子
19. 広介
20. 岸子
21. 中沢
22. Sata Ineko, *Kurenai*, Shinchōsha, 1976, p.54 my trans.
23. *ibid.* p.50 my trans.
24. Furubayashi Takashi, p.43 my trans.
25. Terry, p.11



Sata Ineko



Cover of the first  
edition of *Kyarameru  
Kōjo Kara*



First page of the  
manuscript of  
*Onna no Yado*



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