



Article

# “Readers” and “Writers” in Japanese Detective Fiction, 1920s–30s: Tracing Shifts from Edogawa Rampo’s “Beast in the Shadows” to *The Demon of the Lonely Isle*

Shoko Komatsu <sup>1,\*</sup> and Eric Siercks <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Japanese Culture, Kinjo Gakuin University, Nagoya 463-8521, Aichi, Japan

<sup>2</sup> The Waseda International House of Literature, Waseda University, Shinjuku, Tokyo 169-8050, Japan

\* Correspondence: komatsu@kinjo-u.ac.jp

**Abstract:** This paper explores the shifting position of “readers” and “writers” within serialized works by Japanese detective fiction author Edogawa Rampo. The essay focuses on two works published at the end of the 1920s and early 1930s: the novella “Beast in the Shadows” and Edogawa’s first long-form serialized novel, *The Demon of the Lonely Isle*. By examining the kinds of magazines in which Edogawa published, as well as the expected readership of those magazines, we discover several important stylistic shifts in Edogawa’s writing as he transitions from being a genre fiction short story writer to an author of popular novels. In Edogawa’s short detective fiction for niche magazines, the position of the reader and writer overlap, mirroring the way readers of detective fiction magazines often became writers themselves. Edogawa parodies his simultaneous position as dedicated reader and writer of detective novels. Moving to popular magazines and long-form fiction causes those self-parodies to shift into the background. Edogawa severs the correlative or dual position of writer/reader in favor of a detached “author” and consuming “reader”. This paper explores the genesis of this change in relation to the development of magazine media in modern Japan.

**Keywords:** Japanese literature; Edogawa Rampo; detective fiction; mystery novels; media; magazines; readership; self-parody; gender; LGBT literature



**Citation:** Komatsu, Shoko and Eric Siercks. 2023. “Readers” and “Writers” in Japanese Detective Fiction, 1920s–30s: Tracing Shifts from Edogawa Rampo’s “Beast in the Shadows” to *The Demon of the Lonely Isle*. *Humanities* 12: 12. <https://doi.org/10.3390/h12010012>

Received: 13 October 2022

Revised: 5 January 2023

Accepted: 15 January 2023

Published: 18 January 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Since 1841—when Edgar Allan Poe inaugurated the detective novel genre with the short story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue”—literary scholars have been engaged in a lively debate regarding the degree to which detective fiction possesses unique characteristics in comparison to other novelistic genres. Formative examples from the field include Howard Haycraft’s (1905–1991) *Murder for Pleasure: The Life and Times of the Detective Story* (1941) and Jacques Dubois’ (1933–) *Le Roman policier ou la Modernité* (1992). More recently, Taniguchi Motoi’s (1964–) *An Introduction to Alternative Modes in Detective Fiction: Fantastical Legacies* (2013) addressed “abnormal” detective novels that blend aspects from other genres such as science fiction, horror, or surrealism. Looking back on earlier stages of this debate in Japan, Taniguchi summarizes the central question that dominated discussions between detective fiction writers and literary critics from the 1930s to the 1940s: Can detective novels be considered “pure literature” (*junbungaku*)? Scholars of detective fiction hold varying views on the genre’s literary characteristics, but the most frequently debated aspects have included whether detective fiction emphasizes the solving of the mystery itself or the depiction of human characters, or whether the genre in fact possesses identifiable, conventional plots, among other topics. Of course, these outmoded genre-centered debates appear fruitless in our contemporary literary zeitgeist, where the barriers between genres have dissolved and the distinction between high and low culture appears nonsensical. In addition, yet detective fiction seems to possess at least one unique characteristic: the

existence of a shared community that has been co-constructed by both writers and readers. In fact, we might go so far as to say that it is precisely this community structure that forms the “genre” of detective fiction.

This essay analyzes two works by Edogawa Rampo (1894–1965): the 1928 serialized novella “Beast in the Shadows”, and the 1929–1930 serialized novel *The Demon of the Lonely Isle*. Both works had an enormous impact on the detective fiction genre in Japan between the 1920s and 1930s. By examining these texts, I intend to reveal the actual circumstances present within the community of writers and readers in the detective fiction genre. Edogawa’s fiction allows us to see three characteristics of detective fiction emerge during this period: First, writers of detective fiction tended to recognize and engage with their most dedicated readers. Edogawa, himself a dedicated reader of detective fiction, inserts “readership” as a plot device within a murder mystery. The main characters who appear in “Beast in the Shadows” are depicted as readers of detective fiction—in fact, this point drives the story towards its resolution. Second, the image of the “writer” and the “reader” tend to blur in early magazines specializing in detective fiction. “Readers” of these works often later become “writers” of detective fiction. This creates an undeniable pressure for authors to acknowledge the reader within the content and plot of these texts. Edogawa utilizes this characteristic to engage in self-parody, creating main characters who mirror critiques he has faced. Finally, modern magazines and print media transitioned away from specialized detective fiction magazines, moving instead towards popular entertainment magazines. Edogawa joins this transition, aiming to create a new form of detective fiction through long-form serialized novels in popular magazine media. In so doing, however, he also severed the correlative or dual positionality between the “writer” and “reader” that had already been established within the genre. This guaranteed the “writer” of long-form popular fiction a position that was detached from the “reader”.

## 2. The “Readers” Present in Edogawa’s “Beast in the Shadows”

Edogawa Rampo’s serialized novella “Beast in the Shadows” was published from August to October 1928 in the detective fiction specialty magazine *New Youth* (*Shin seinen*) by the publisher Hakubunkan. Just before the story began serialization, Edogawa had been in a creative slump and had taken a break from writing. The editor of *New Youth* at the time, the mystery writer Yokomizo Seishi (1902–1981), had encouraged Edogawa to supply a contribution to the magazine. Although a young editor at the time, Yokomizo would go on to become an established detective novelist himself, becoming especially famous for postwar works following the detective Kindaichi Kōsuke. Edogawa responded to Yokomizo’s request by taking up his pen after a long break and writing “Beast”. When describing the work in the July 1929 essay “Tales from Behind the Curtain” (*Gakuya banashi*), Edogawa castigated himself, calling it “an exceedingly trivial fairy tale” (Edogawa 1961)—yet the work was well-received by readers and the issues of *New Youth* containing the story went into reprints. The August 1928 issue was eventually republished three times (Yokomizo 1928; Edogawa 1961).

“Beast in the Shadows” follows four main characters. Samukawa, an author of detective fiction, acts as both the central character and first-person narrator of the story. As narrator, he portrays the story as true events that he intends to eventually turn into a mystery novel. He recounts meeting a woman, Oyamada Shizuko, at the Imperial Museum in Ueno—now the Tokyo National Museum. The two begin corresponding through letters until Shizuko reveals that she and her husband, wealthy businessman Oyamada Rokurō, are being threatened by one of Samukawa’s literary rivals, the detective fiction writer Ōe Shundeī. Shizuko tells Samukawa that Ōe Shundeī is in fact the pen name of her spurned lover Hirata Ichirō.

Shizuko’s husband is found murdered in the Sumida River, and not long thereafter, Samukawa and Shizuko fall into a torrid love affair. All the while, Samukawa traces the glut of evidence pointing to Ōe Shundeī’s guilt. It is only at the end of the story, when an important clue is revealed, that Samukawa realizes that the evidence presented to him is

entirely too contrived. Every precise twist and turn can be found in the murder stories of Ōe Shundei. Shizuko, he surmises, has constructed the entire scenario. She is in fact both the murderer *and* author Ōe Shundei. The story ends with Shizuko's supposed suicide, though Samukawa continues to wonder if perhaps he has been outsmarted by Ōe/Hirata.

Edogawa littered "Beast in the Shadows" with self-parodies. "Edogawa Rampo" was in fact the pen name of writer Hirai Tarō. Edogawa exploited this fact by implanting parts of his true and literary names into the characters of "Beast" as a kind of anagram. These characters take on a self-parody of certain images of Edogawa that had developed in contemporary media. The work builds up the concept of readers being "in on the joke", setting an author speculating on his own "self-destruction" front and center within the novella's plot. If executed clumsily, this move certainly carried the risk of giving readers the impression that Edogawa was simply mocking them. Why was it, then, that readers embraced Edogawa's self-parody? Why was it that this work was held in such high regard? Certain aspects of the text answer these questions when viewed through the lens of self-parody.

First, the names of the main characters form a composite of Edogawa Rampo. The "kawa" of Samukawa's name draws from the "gawa" of Edogawa. Oyamada Shizuko acts as the driving force of the narrative—a name with the same number of characters as Edogawa Rampo. The "e" character in Ōe, Samukawa's literary rival with a penchant for the disturbing and bizarre, uses the same character found at the beginning of Edogawa. As we discover, "Ōe Shundei" is the pen name of one Hirata Ichirō. This name begins and ends with the same characters as Edogawa's true name, Hirai Tarō. Shizuko's husband, Oyamada Rokurō, shares the "rō" character of Edogawa's first name, Tarō. That is to say, all four of these characters contain some fragmented remainder of the author's names Edogawa Rampo/Hirai Tarō, just as they also contain some aspect of the author's fragmented sense of self. Conventionally, this device has been interpreted as Edogawa's integration of his self-parody techniques. Hamada Yūsuke (Hamada 1988), Suzuki Sadami (Suzuki 1994), and Igawa Osamu (Igawa 2016), among others, have offered such an interpretation. This paper, however, intends to expand on this somewhat narrow interpretation and demonstrate how all four of these characters also share another important trait with Edogawa/Hirai: they are all "readers".

Samukawa abhors the literary style of his rival, Ōe Shundei, calling it "dark, disturbed, disagreeable". Yet, Samukawa finds he cannot help himself from reading Ōe's works, precisely because they are antithetical to his own writing. Samukawa is agonized by his own envy. He explains,

While I disparaged his works, I could not help but notice in them a certain eeriness. He had a passion that burned like an unquenchable ghostly flame and this unfathomable appeal captured his readers.

...

If truth be told, I felt unspeakable jealousy each time one of his works received acclaim. I even harbored a childish perception of him as my enemy. Oh, that I could beat him! The desire rankled endlessly within my soul. (Edogawa 2006, p. 195)

Edogawa depicts Samukawa here by way of ironic paradox. While Samukawa denigrates Ōe's works, he is also able to identify their "unfathomable appeal". Samukawa is, in fact, a particularly good reader of Ōe's fiction. His comprehensive familiarity with Ōe's oeuvre allows him to immediately recognize striking parallels within the stories and scenes of Ōe's fiction and the mysterious events that unfold within the Oyamada family. Samukawa states:

I'm sure his readers will recall the strange ghastriness pervading his novels. They will remember the uncommon suspicions, secrecy, and cruelty that consistently filled the pages of his works. We can catch a glimpse of this in the following weird lines from one of his novels ... (Edogawa 2006, p. 196)

The passage that follows this quotation is interesting not for the contents of the citation, but its length. Samukawa cites a full seven sentences, 240 characters in total. This certainly stands as evidence that he is a dedicated reader of Ōe's fiction. Even Samukawa's critiques amount to a confession of avid fandom. When Samukawa refers to "Ōe's readers" at the beginning of this passage, he is referring to no one other than himself.

Let's next consider the character Oyamada Shizuko. After the murder of Oyamada Rokurō, Samukawa and Shizuko fall into a passionate and sado-masochistic love affair. Samukawa later deduces that their initial meeting at the Imperial Museum was not in fact coincidental at all, but rather of Shizuko's own design. At the time, however, his heart was aflutter at the discovery that Shizuko was a reader of his novels.

I learned that she was a partner in Roku-Roku Trading Company, that her name was Oyamada Shizuko, and that she was the wife of the entrepreneur Oyamada Rokurō. Fortunately, she was a reader of detective fiction and in particular an admirer of my works (I shall never forget how happy I was when I heard this), which meant that ours was the relationship of an author and a fan. As such, we could become better acquainted without a trace of unseemliness and I was spared an unwanted permanent parting of the ways. Following this, we began to exchange letters occasionally. (Edogawa 2006, p. 181)

The Samukawa/Shizuko connection, therefore, is one guided from the very beginning through the writer/reader relationship. This undercuts Edogawa's own self-mocking description of the text as "an exceedingly trivial fairy tale"—the text gives off a curious sense of reality. I use the term "curious" here because this narrative structure highlights the meta-textual elements of the work.

Edogawa Rampo published "Beast in the Shadows" in the monthly magazine *New Youth*. This magazine included a section dedicated to publishing reader's letters, where fans of detective fiction could voice their opinions regarding recently published serialized novels. The most passionate readers of detective fiction—of which there were many—regularly looked forward to the latest issue of *New Youth* published each month. Many were simultaneously readers and amateur literary critics. The field of detective fiction was still a recent development at this time and largely centered on *New Youth*. Naturally, the opinions of the genre's most passionate fans had an immense impact on detective fiction's development. Incidentally, Edogawa Rampo himself was one such avid reader and subscriber to *New Youth*.

*Ruthless (Muzan)*, published in 1889 by Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862–1920), is often thought of as the first detective novel in Japan. Kuroiwa was a journalist, novelist, and translator who is best known as the founder of the late 19th century newspaper *Yorozu Chōhō*. He used this paper to serialize his original translations of foreign popular fiction, and eventually became a famous author in his own right. Despite earlier attempts to codify detective fiction into a defined genre, the detective fiction writers of the 1920s were aware that this project was left incomplete. Young readers had grown bored of establishment literary fiction being published at the time. They not only turned to detective fiction, but helped usher in and support the gifted authors who would go on to develop the genre over the course of the early 20th century.

Given these circumstances, it seems fair to say that the distinction between writers and readers in the literary world of 1920s Japanese detective fiction was exceedingly vague. Yesterday's readers became tomorrow's authors. Oyamada Shizuko of "Beast in the Shadows" can be thought of as the very embodiment of this normalized transition between reader and writer—doubly so if we take Samukawa's deduction at face value and recognize that Shizuko and Ōe Shundei are in fact one and the same. At first, Shizuko was a lover of detective fiction and a fan of Samukawa's novels, but she eventually developed the realization that she, too, could write fiction. Shizuko—who was herself an excellent reader—made her magazine debut and transformed into Ōe, the popular detective novelist whose literary style even rivalled that of Samukawa.

Following this transformation, Shizuko set her sights on wrapping Samukawa around her little finger as a reader of Ōe Shundei's texts. Knowing how Samukawa reads and interprets her novels, she began to guide his deductive thinking in the direction she chose. The former author/reader positionality reverses, and the one-time reader is now a novelist with full awareness of how to write in such a way to lead readers on. More so than other genres, detective fiction requires the author to have the skill to mislead the reader; it is the basis for the novel's appeal. Then, again, the minimal division between writer/reader in the detective fiction genre is also a double-edged sword. The author feels a constant, crushing pressure to outwit their most astute readers—the very same talented readers who are concealing their own ability to transform into the writers of tomorrow. By the end of the story, Samukawa has recognized this blurred relationship. While explaining to Shizuko how he discovered her plot, he says of "Ōe Shundei":

"He's an awful creature. He grasped my way of thinking exactly and set up the evidence accordingly. Why, an ordinary sleuth would have been no good. It had to be a novelist like me with a penchant for deduction because no one else would have had such a roundabout and bizarre imagination". (Edogawa 2006, p. 263)

This is how Samukawa explains to Shizuko, his dedicated reader, how he initially fell for the Ōe Shundei trap. The passage drips with self-degradation. Samukawa uses the terms "detective", "novelist", and "reader" to describe his own faults, but we can just as easily replace them with actual writers and readers of the detective fiction genre. This analysis allows us to see a mutual interchangeability of these terms as meta-references to the contemporary conditions of the genre.

We can find similar meta-references surrounding Oyamada Rokurō—the sole "victim" of the story. Before Samukawa was able to deduce Shizuko's role as author, he suspects that Rokurō is the "true" Ōe Shundei. He pens a letter to the detective assigned to the case, Itosaki, and explains his discovery of incriminating evidence locked in Rokurō's private study:

The second document was "Games in the Attic", the collection of short stories written by Ōe Shundei. I was very surprised to find such a volume in the study of an entrepreneur such as Oyamada Rokurō. In fact, I could not believe my eyes until his wife Shizuko told me that he had been quite a fan of fiction. (Edogawa 2006, p. 238)

Samukawa is shocked to find a lineup of popular literature in the study of such an accomplished businessman—the implication of course being that an established entrepreneur of the time would not be expected to be a "reader" of fiction, particularly if that person were not part of the intellectual class. Yet "Beast in the Shadows" was published in 1928, two years after the "enpon boom" (literally, the "one-yen book boom") swept Japan. This boom was inaugurated when the major publisher Kaizō-sha released the 37-volume series *Complete Works of Contemporary Japanese Literature* (*Gendai Nihon bungaku zenshū*) at a shockingly low price that most common people could afford. This phenomenon transformed literary texts from luxury items into easily accessible consumer goods for the masses (Mack 2010). People of all classes began to purchase texts to display on their bookshelves, regardless of whether they intended to read them. Print books—the image of educated texts—became one aspect of interior design. We might say that this marks the transition from texts as "literature" to "books" as objects, an indication that consumer economics had come to dominate the literary market. This transformation of the literary market had an enormous impact on both authors and media. They had come face-to-face with the realization that the state of literature would be viewed through a value axis as defined by the consumer economy, that there would be "authors who sell", and those who do not.

The reality of this transformation within the literary market forms the background for one of the main narratives within "Beast in the Shadows". The text subtly suggests to readers that one origin for Samukawa's jealousy of Ōe Shundei is his recognition that Ōe's works were attracting more readers, or rather that Ōe was an "author who sold".

Samukawa's constant resentment is further enforced when he searches Oyamada Rokurō's study only to discover that Rokurō too was one of Ōe's dedicated readers. Perhaps if Samukawa had only discovered the common *enpon* collections decorating the office, he may not have reacted in such a way, but he found instead a well-worn copy of Ōe's personal short story collection. This businessman, who himself had been so economically successful, had chosen Samukawa's literary rival as his personal favorite. The evidence of consumer economics was right there before his eyes. In this moment Samukawa could feel the new rules of the literary marketplace: authors selected by readers. Wouldn't he have seen his own pitiful place as the clear loser in this system? Contemporaneous readers of this story would have recognized the transformation of the literary marketplace and understood the text's narrative in this context.

A narrative wherein Samukawa must experience his own embarrassing literary defeat mirrors Edogawa's personal experience at the time: a discrepancy between his creative self-consciousness and the conditions of print media. "Beast in the Shadows" likely verbalized an overdetermined plot to lead the reader's attention beyond the text, a deliberate strategy to guide them towards the actual conditions surrounding Edogawa at that time.

### 3. Authors Who Sell, and Those Who Don't: Media and Creative Self-Consciousness

In February 1927, after Edogawa Rampo completed publication of his serialized novella "The Dwarf" (*Issun bōshi*) in the Tokyo and Osaka editions of the *Asahi Shimbun*, he declared that he had entered a literary slump and that he would take a break from writing. With that, he set out travelling. More than a year later, in July 1928, he returned to the literary scene and prepared "Beast in the Shadows" for publication. Edogawa described this period in a 1929 essay:

To tell the truth, it was *New Youth* that did me in. As [*New Youth's* editor] Yokomizo has emphasized, the monster we call modernism has driven old-fashioned detective novels into a disgraceful position. If you don't write in the pompous French style like Émile Gaboriau's *Monsieur Lecoq*, or Pierre Henri Cami, or even P.G. Wodehouse, you will never see your name on the pages of *New Youth*. The modern is bright. It despises the gloom of the old-fashioned Russian style. The modern is not desperate. And as such, it despises any decadent thought. It is high time for someone like me, a desperate and insecure fool, a ghost of the past, to move on . . . That's what I was thinking. That's why I lost the desire to write. (Edogawa 1961)

It may be somewhat risky to take Edogawa's recollection here at face value, however. Edogawa had actively decided to distance himself from *New Youth* due to the magazine's relatively narrow marketing appeal as an urban men's magazine. Instead, he had intended to transition to a print media that had wider appeal—the popular entertainment magazines being published by Kōdansha, for example, which cast a wide commercial net across the entire country. Perhaps Edogawa was cleverly concealing these intentions when he made this statement.

Even if this might be the case, Edogawa's recollection here certainly holds some element of truth. It is true that Edogawa felt that he had reached the limits of the kinds of literary tricks that detective fiction demanded and lost some confidence in his own abilities. However, this creative struggle was not one that Edogawa faced alone. From the mid-1920s on, many detective fiction authors shared this misgiving. The fiction author and literary critic Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke (1892–1931) wrote around this time that Japanese detective fiction had "found itself in a dead end" (Hirabayashi 1926). This literary world, which had built its core around *New Youth* and its dedicated readership, discovered that ever increasing complexity in literary tricks was a double-edged sword. Writers faced their harshest criticism based on the ingenuity of these tricks, or the logical development through which the mysteries were resolved. This often led to a withering of writers' creative self-consciousness. This is one case where the ambiguous divide between the writer and reader created negative consequences.

As Matsuda Shōhei has recently argued, the writers and editors active in detective fiction at this time were becoming more aware of the broader field of popular literature and their relation to it (Matsuda 2020). Yokomizo Seishi fits squarely within this trend. He took the editorial helm of *New Youth* in 1925 with the aim of breaking past the “dead end” that Hirabayashi had indicated. He began to remake the pages of a magazine that was staunchly dedicated to core fans—those who were obsessive readers of detective fiction. Yokomizo began veering off in new editorial directions, featuring columns and essays built on humor, wit, or nonsense. Around this time, *New Youth* developed its image as an urban men’s magazine, one with a refined and stylish following. As such, it succeeded in attracting a new readership that differed from the fans of detective fiction that purchased *New Youth* up to that time. Edogawa’s recollection in the previous quotation can also express the gap he saw growing between his own literary style and the editorial direction of *New Youth*. Perhaps he was describing the inevitable situation in which both parties would part ways. Yet, it was Yokomizo as new editor-in-chief who invited Edogawa to supply new works to the magazine, and when Edogawa responded by publishing “Beast in the Shadows”, it was Yokomizo who heaped unceasing praise on the story in the pages of *New Youth*. The magazine certainly did not ostracize Edogawa. Yokomizo even went so far as to write:

As for reprinting this issue, I would like to give particular attention to Edogawa’s “Beast in the Shadows”. This is his first published work of the year, and the original manuscript ran to about 150 pages. And yet this story also reminds us of some of Edogawa’s earlier works. What I mean to say is that it is a genuine detective novel . . . I can’t think of any recent work that compares to the grandeur of this story. It seems likely that this work will return the detective novel to the energy it once had in its earlier years. (Yokomizo 1928)

What are we to make of this contradiction?

Edogawa provides one possible answer in a July 1925 correspondence with medical doctor and writer Kosakai Fuboku (1890–1929):

I have already written to you about this issue since our earlier roundtable talk, but I do believe that if the detective novel is to gain traction, the most pressing issue is to write better stories. The works published to date have all been sincerely lacking. In order to spice things up a bit, perhaps we might try to shift our writing to be more in line with the style of Lupin novels. This proposal may seem out of character, but I have been thinking recently about giving some similar kind of story a shot.

I have been sitting on a request from the *Sunday Mainichi* for quite some time now for a Lupin-esque long-form serial, but I have simply not yet found the proper character for the work and have set the project aside. But I also believe that if I do not write some kind of creative detective novel in that vein then we will not see the popularization of the genre. So, I’ve decided to try my hand at writing something like that. (Hamada 2004)

We can surmise from Edogawa’s personal correspondence that even by 1925 he had some strategy in mind to transition from being primarily an author of short stories to being one of long-form works. The “Lupin-esque” style that Edogawa refers to in his letter is obviously a reference to the Arsène Lupin mystery novel series by Maurice Leblanc. Popular French novels had been widely available in Japanese translation since the 1880s. Leblanc began publishing Lupin stories in 1905 and the first translation appeared in Japan in 1911. In fact, the “Lupin” character probably attained a greater popularity in Japan than in its native France. At the dawn of Japan’s importation of foreign popular literature—roughly coinciding with the beginning of the Meiji period and Japan’s modernization project—French literary imports made up a significant percentage of translated texts. Looking at detective fiction in particular, Kuroiwa Ruikō had adapted long-form French fiction such as Alexander Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844) and Victor Hugo’s *Le Misérables* (1862) into Japanese between 1901 and 1903. His translations and newspapers reached a large

general audience and exerted a tremendous influence on genre fiction. These translated texts were not faithful reproductions of the French originals. Rather, they adapted aspects of the story and allowed readers to experience intricate puzzles and the adventurous thrill of characters discovering the appropriate solution. Kuroiwa's adaptations made considerable changes to the original text in order to foreground narrative. These bold translations taught readers of the time to seek pleasure in puzzles and their satisfying resolutions. It is no surprise, therefore, that many of Kuroiwa's most dedicated readers would go on to become early fans of detective fiction.

Edogawa's mother was one such dedicated reader of Kuroiwa's works and translations, and this early influence led Edogawa to become a fan as well. He watched in real time as the popular appeal of long-form novels packed with suspense and melodrama steadily grew. Edogawa certainly understood the draw of long, suspenseful novels. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that he turned to the most popular of the long Lupin novels—*The Hollow Needle* (*L'Aiguille creuse*, 1909) and *The Teeth of the Tiger* (*Les dents du tigre*, 1914), for example—when he decided to expand the readership of Japanese detective fiction.

Given these circumstances, the fact that Edogawa cites Leblanc's Lupin characters specifically only adds to the contradiction of his 1929 recollection regarding his relationship with *New Youth*. Part of his cited incompatibility with the magazine came from the editorial turn towards modernized fiction. Yokomizo led an effort as *New Youth*'s editor-in-chief to impart an urban taste that lauded the modern city. Foreign series like Leblanc's Lupin—and Japanese stories inspired by such works—found a welcome home within the pages of urban men's magazines at the time. Edogawa himself moved towards the popular magazines of publisher Kōdansha after he decided to make his break with *New Youth*—ostensibly citing published works that drew too strongly from the modern French style. How do we resolve what is clearly a growing contradiction within Edogawa's words and actions?

The key rests in the textual structure of Edogawa's short-form and long-form fiction. Edogawa's discontent regarding *New Youth*'s modernization and the influence of French fiction—including Leblanc's Lupin series—refers to short fiction, not long-form serialized novels. *New Youth* serialized Japanese translations of the Lupin series, but focused on abridged translations of longer works or short stories. These were translated by Hoshino Tatsuo (1892–1968) beginning in 1920 and stretched through the decade. The selections and short stories translated from the Lupin series tended to follow a young and dashing Lupin as he romped and burgled his way through lavish Paris—they were urban action stories. These differ significantly from the long-form Lupin novels, which carry with them the same exciting urban flavor, but also introduce an element of the mysterious and fantastical. Leblanc's 1909 novel *The Hollow Needle*, for example, refers to a legend about the strange rock formation "The Needle of Étretat" on the Normandy coast. The 1910 novel *813* involves a strange, unseen serial killer dressed in black. 1914's *The Teeth of the Tiger* has a grotesque combination of a beautiful young woman with beast-like fangs, and the plot to the 1919 novel *The Island of Thirty Coffins* (*L'île aux trente cercueils*) revolves around druids performing human sacrifices.

The suspense-filled stories that Edogawa refers to in his letter to Kosakai—what he refers to as the future of Japanese detective fiction—are not in the vein of Leblanc's short stories, but the eerie mood that fills the pages of his long-form Lupin novels. This is precisely why Edogawa shifts the textual structure of his own fiction when he moves from short fiction—such as "Beast in the Shadows", which was published in *New Youth*—to longer novels that were serialized in popular entertainment magazines. At the time, Kōdansha's magazines *Kōdan Club* (*Kōdan kurabu*, 1911–1962) and *King* (*Kingu*, 1924–1957) were representative of the popular entertainment magazine boom. These magazines, and others like them, targeted a wider readership that included both intellectual classes and the working classes. They published entertainment novels that appealed to a general reader base and had a distribution market that extended into the rural areas of Japan.

"Beast in the Shadows" had not always been destined for *New Youth*. Edogawa had originally planned to release the novella as an invited work in the popular magazine

*Reconstruction (Kaizō)*. Unfortunately, that magazine decided that the work was too long to be published in a single issue. This point drives home how intently Japanese magazines focused on short fiction at this time. These unavoidable circumstances led “Beast” to be broken up into pieces and serialized in the pages of *New Youth*. At the end of the second volume, Edogawa added a note from the author that read:

This is a short work that probably does not work quite as well separated into multiple volumes, but editorial issues have necessitated cuts. Here I would like to caution the clever readers who believe they may have already solved the puzzle after reading this month’s entry: You are probably wrong. The narrator of the story has fallen for the same red herring that you are thinking of at this moment. (Edogawa 1928)

Here, Edogawa calls this a “short” work, but based on its length it should likely be called a “medium” work (*chūhen*), often translated as “novella” in English. The publishing origin of “Beast” clearly indicates that Edogawa was already focused on discovering a way to transition from true short fiction to longer detective novels. It was around this time when the editorial department of one of Japan’s major entertainment magazines contacted Edogawa about the possibility of publishing an original long-form work. He jumped at the opportunity.

Edogawa’s first long novel to be serialized in a popular entertainment magazine was *The Demon of the Lonely Isle*. Perhaps surprisingly, this work was published not in one of Kōdansha’s national magazines, but in the magazine *Asahi* which was published by the same company that produced *New Youth*, Hakubunkan. Edogawa had been invited to publish a longer work in *Asahi* by the magazine’s editor-in-chief, Morishita Uson (1890–1965). The novel was serialized between January 1929 and May 1930. Morishita had previously acted as editor-in-chief of *New Youth* and was instrumental in Edogawa’s literary debut. Edogawa must have felt relieved to work with his long-time editor as he made his first attempt at publishing a long, serialized work in a popular magazine.

In his 1925 letter to Kosakai, which predated the publication of both “Beast” and *The Demon*, Edogawa described his forthcoming projects as somewhat “unusual” for his writing. We might interpret this as a confession of his own apprehension in moving from writing purely short fiction to focusing on longer works. Moreover, Edogawa likely doubted whether his most avid readers, who were accustomed to reading short fiction, would follow his transition to medium- and long-form works. If it turned out that his established readership in *New Youth* abandoned him after his move to long fiction, he naturally would have needed to discover a new fanbase to make up for the fans he lost. However, what kind of readers would be excited to pick up a longer detective novel? As Edogawa turned this problem over in his head, perhaps he came to see Kuroiwa Ruikō’s detective fiction adaptations as one possible model. These long-form works, which had once dominated the reading public from the pages of *Yorozu Chōhō*, had captured the essence of suspenseful dramaturgy present within French popular literature.

Edogawa was familiar with Kuroiwa’s development as a writer. Kuroiwa had begun his career as a writer for the major Tokyo-based newspaper, *Miyako Shimbun*. After some disagreements with the company, he left to form his own paper and began publishing *Yorozu Chōhō* in 1892. Kuroiwa attracted readers by catering to political gossip, crossword puzzles and quizzes with prizes. He had begun to serialize his long fiction translations and adaptations with the intention of developing a larger subscription base. We might say that Kuroiwa’s motivation in his creative endeavors was founded on the desire to become an “author who sells”—meaning to drive the subscription base of his newspaper. Kuroiwa wrote, “I have often taken to translating detective tales. Not for the sake of literature, but for the sake of the paper” (Kuroiwa 1893). Although an exemplary literary translator and adaptor, Kuroiwa was first and foremost a journalist intent on developing the new media field known as the newspaper. This journalistic motivation can easily fall into conflict with a modern creative self-consciousness that aims for some sense of artistic independence in literature. The modern creative self-consciousness tends to dismiss the “author who

sells" in favor of the "author who doesn't". It often carries with it a conscious elitism or messiah complex, and certainly a tendency to look down upon the popular readership who enthusiastically reads suspense stories. In his time, Kuroiwa openly admitted his commercial motivations, but when Edogawa released his first serialized novel in 1929, *The Demon of the Lonely Isle*, he was not yet prepared to do the same.

Edogawa was unable to disentangle himself from his modern creative self-consciousness, so he likely felt a need to provide a self-justification for his shifting style. In 1953, Edogawa looked back on this moment in 1929 and described his feelings in the essay, "To Live is to Compromise". He writes:

If you are an amateur writer, it makes no sense to continue writing the same thing over and over. But once you become a professional, writing becomes your vocation. There is no choice but to write the same thing time and time again. But to be perfectly honest, I could not escape from that selfish, amateurish way of thinking that to do such a thing was totally pointless.

Unfortunately, in this world of private property and liberal economics, to go without money is to become a slave . . . So no matter how off-putting I found this impure way of thinking, writing novels was the most effective—the easiest—way to make money (even though I never thought I was any good at it). (Edogawa 1953)

This says everything about Edogawa's self-deprecating view of "selling" his own literature as long-form serialized works for the mass market entertainment magazines. Even in this moment of self-torment, Edogawa held on to a bit of pride in his own creative self-consciousness.

Of course, we should recognize that Edogawa's self-deprecation must be discounted to some degree. It carries with it a strong sense of retroactive self-justification for his creative decisions. When Edogawa penned this recollection in 1953, the field of Japanese detective fiction had entered an environment where Japanese works were being read simultaneously alongside information regarding contemporary mystery fiction overseas. The magazine *Jewels* (*Hōseki*), where Edogawa published the essay cited in the previous paragraph, had begun publishing in 1946. This magazine went on to play a central role in the development of Japanese detective fiction in the postwar era. Many of the articles published in *Jewels* described contemporary mystery fiction trends overseas. The Tokyo-based publisher Ondorisha would publish an 18-volume collection of translated mystery and detective novels between 1950 and 1951. The Japanese edition of the American mystery magazine *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine* (*EQMM*) released its inaugural issue in 1956.

Detective fiction readers had grown accustomed to reading works through the lens of foreign literary puzzles and the logical structures that granted their resolutions. These readers were judging the level of contemporary Japanese detective fiction by way of contemporary mystery fiction from outside Japan. Edogawa himself had turned towards writing criticism over original fiction texts in the postwar period. He actively worked to introduce foreign detective novels and foreign authors to Japanese readers and had taken on a leadership role in public opinion regarding contemporary literary trends, publishing the 1957 book *Foreign Detective Fiction: Authors and Works*. It seems that he had found himself in a position in the postwar period where he felt it necessary to explain why he held his own previous works in such low regard, especially when he compared his former long-form serialized novels for popular entertainment magazines to the contemporaneous standards of 1950s global mystery writing.

We might be best served by setting aside Edogawa's postwar positions for the moment and turning to focus on his 1929 novel *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* and its place in Japanese detective fiction at that time. If we read the text within its 1929 context, we find that it is not a simple text that can be summarized simply through the author's creative output and the literary marketplace. *The Demon* contains Edogawa's will to actively develop genre fiction by making the transition from being a short story writer to an author of long novels. It is also a text that vividly reveals Edogawa's attitude toward his inner conflict, one

that shows us how he planned to overcome his modern creative self-consciousness—his conscious elitism.

#### 4. The Deconstruction of Self-Parody: From “Reader” to Independent “Writer”

Like “Beast in the Shadows”, *The Demon* also utilizes a first-person narrator, Minoura, who describes the circumstances of a grisly murder. In this text, however, the victim is the narrator’s fiancé, Hatsuyo, who is found stabbed in the heart in a staged robbery in her home. Minoura works with the private detective Miyamagi to try to solve the mystery, but he too is murdered. Minoura suspects the murderer is his former friend from childhood, Moroto Michio. Moroto had been deeply in love with Minoura and sent love letters to Hatsuyo before her murder in an effort to break up their engagement. Although the prime suspect, Moroto reveals that he himself is investigating these murders and has discovered a suspect—a child controlled by some otherworldly force. Moroto lures the child/suspect to his home, but the child is immediately shot and killed after the meeting.

Eventually, Moroto confesses to a disturbed and abuse-laden childhood on a mysterious island off the Kii coast—the same island where Hatsuyo had previously lived. His father had ordered him to marry Hatsuyo in order to secure her family fortune—a secret treasure that has been hidden on the island. Moroto and Minoura decide to return to the island and confront the titular “Demon”, Moroto’s father. The two face struggles, captures, and murders—and along the way Minoura falls in love with the young “conjoined” twin Hide-chan who had been locked up on the property. After trapping Moroto’s parents in the family storehouse, Moroto and Minoura begin their search for Hatsuyo’s secret treasure. They become trapped in an underground labyrinth and Moroto makes his final confession: His demon father had been “manufacturing” disfigured children on the island. His ultimate plan was to disfigure every human in Japan to create a nation of “freaks”. After an ambivalently portrayed “love” scene in the dark of the cave, the two men are saved in miraculous fashion. Minoura discovers that his surgically “joined” love, Hide, is in fact the younger sister of his murdered fiancé, Hatsuyo. The story concludes with Minoura’s marriage to a “de-joined” Hide and Moroto’s sudden death due to illness.

Unlike “Beast in the Shadows”, which uses a diegetic time that is roughly simultaneous between event and narration, *The Demon* presents a narrative emerging from the past—roughly five years prior to the narrative’s contemporary moment. Minoura is not yet thirty years old yet has a head of hair gone completely white. When asked to explain his rough looks—and the deep scar that can be seen across one of his wife’s hips—he finds himself compelled to write out his harrowing experiences. Thus, *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* takes the form of a memoir. The opening chapter includes Minoura’s explanation:

I have no knowledge of writing. I enjoy novels and read my fair share of them, but ever since my first year of composition training at the trade school, the only writing I have done is for business letters. Then again, if you read the novels coming out today it seems all you have to do is pour out whatever you happen to be thinking. Maybe I can just copy that style. It should be easier for me to write that way since I’m describing what actually happened to me. I’m not making anything up.

That was how I underestimated my task. I sat down to begin writing and soon realized that it was not so simple. Contrary to my initial expectations, it is precisely because my story is based on actual events that makes it exceptionally difficult to write. Being so unaccustomed to writing I was unable to command the words. Rather, they commanded me and I found myself scribbling down all manner of nonsense, unable to write what is truly needed. The facts I tried so hard to express became even more fictional than the dull novels of this world. I suddenly realized the immense difficulty of trying to write the truth as such. (Edogawa 1929–1930)

Edogawa utilizes Minoura's narratorial voice and begins his deft self-parody from the very opening. He was an author who would disparage his own works as "childish" or "embarrassing" at every opportunity. In *The Demon*, however, Edogawa twists self-deprecation to his advantage. When Minoura-as-narrator declares his lack of "knowledge" in writing, we might imagine that Edogawa is taking the initiative to counter readers' criticism of the mannerisms present in his works. When Edogawa writes, "I underestimated my task. I sat down to begin writing and soon realized that it was not so simple", it is as if he is apologizing in advance for his inability to construct a novel—grabbing the reader's interest at the beginning only for the story to fizzle out or be left half-baked.

Beyond simple self-parody, this stance also offers an ironic parody of the novels being produced by the literary establishment at that time. Minoura miscalculates his own writing ability in comparison to "novels coming out today", which need no more structure than "whatever you happen to be thinking". This is almost certainly a jab at the literature of the Naturalist School, which had devolved into self-centered memoirs. Edogawa wrote:

I've read Tayama Katai's *Futon* and other works from the Japanese Naturalist School of literature. Still, I can't find anything appealing in these works. I found them to be no more than excessively sexualized novels. I have no interest in what appears to be a simple diary of one's sexual life. (Edogawa 1961)

This ridicule of establishment literature gives us a glimpse of Edogawa's personal stake as a writer of detective fiction. He is quietly praising those genre works that are "written backwards from the conclusion" in an intellectually and logically constructed manner.

Even still, Minoura continues to lament his inability to write, condemning his story to be even more boring than the personal scribbles of establishment literature. Through Minoura, Edogawa contends that expressing some truth in writing only makes those facts "even more fictional". This is likely a self-deprecating response to the criticism that "Beast in the Shadows" had faced. His work had been well received by readers, but faced a steady attack from all angles of the intellectual world. Critics argued that the narrative structure was lacking in realism. Some examples include:

Regardless of how maniacally bizarre Shizuko was, it is entirely unbelievable that she would go out of her way to set so many traps for the narrator that just so happen to form the germs of the story ... In the end it is no more than a detective fiction puppet crafted by Edogawa. It is lacking all human consequence. (Kawaguchi 1928)

Or:

The whole story builds castles out of clouds and abandons all grounded footing. If nothing else, its feeble foundation simply cannot support the kind of elaborate story that rests upon it. (Inoue 1934)

As I discussed earlier in this essay, if we also view "Beast in the Shadows" as a text that parodies Edogawa's own position as both "writer" and "reader" within the literary establishment of his moment, we can easily understand why he might be disgruntled by critiques that target a lack of "reality" in the story. Perhaps Edogawa internalized this dissatisfaction—both with the critiques he received and with the text itself—and set out to write *The Demon* using a perfectly contrary method. Unlike the master detective fiction author Samukawa from "Beast", Minoura exists as a narrator wholly lacking in literary ability. Edogawa wards off critiques by his most adroit readers, foregrounding a true story that becomes "fiction" through the strange kingdom that exists on the titular Lonely Isle. In this way, we discover a strategy to push his textual self-parodies into the background. This is not to say that pushing the aspect of self-parody "into the background" means to reduce the degree of that parody. Rather, Edogawa tries to deliver his self-parody to the reader in a manner that doesn't appear to be self-parody. We can draw this inference from the way that Edogawa depicts same-sex love between the narrator Minoura and Moroto Michio, the story's initial suspect and former admirer of Minoura. Edogawa drew from his

personal experiences with same-sex love to depict the relationship between these two men, experiences that he wrote about in various media outlets before publishing *The Demon*.

Today, *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* is well-regarded as an early work depicting same-sex love in a direct manner within Japan's modern literary culture. The period around *The Demon*'s publication, roughly the 1920s to the 1930s, saw a significant number of works published that dealt with same-sex love. Many of these texts focused on research regarding the history and medical science (or what was considered medical science at the time, in any case) surrounding male-male love. Other examples would be the kinds of serialized essays of the "vulgar" or "bizarre" that could be found in the pages of magazines such as *Age of True Tales (Jitsuwa jidai)* or *Crime and Opinion (Hanzai kōron)*. Western Christian ethical concerns had been imported into modern Japan alongside rationalism, creating conditions whereby same-sex love was viewed as pathological evidence of perversion or abnormal psychology. Examples of this pathologization abound, but allow me to cite one example from the popular general interest women's magazine *Women's Pictorial (Fujin gahō)* written by the psychologist Kure Shūzō (1865–1932) in 1920: "What kind of person is afflicted by homosexuality? Or rather, what kind of person experiences such a deformity in their passions and intentions? To put it simply, these are people with underdeveloped psychological characteristics, people who suffer from a psychological abnormality. They are psychopaths" (Kure 1920). Kure's view of same-sex love as a psychological abnormality was typical of the time.

In the latter half of the 1920s, when the so-called "erotic, grotesque, nonsense" (*eroguro nansensu*) fad swept through urban Japan, the "grotesque" often came to be associated with male-male love. Edogawa serialized *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* in *Asahi*, a major entertainment magazine, amid this frenzy. The work is unique in that it clearly portrays a gay character, Moroto, as the main "detective" in the story. This was no "bizarre" exposé—it was a serious detective novel. Wouldn't Edogawa have felt some apprehension about his readers' possible reactions to making such a central character openly gay, especially when considering that he was serializing his work in a more popular entertainment magazine with a more conservative bent than a niche genre magazine like *New Youth*?

Edogawa would later recall that he conceived of the story for *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* after reading *The Complete Works of Mori Ōgai* on the recommendation of painter Iwata Jun'ichi (1900–1945), an avid collector of works on male-male love (*nanshoku*) (Edogawa 1932). Ōgai's novels *Vita Sexualis (Ita sekusuarisu, 1909)* and *Youth (Seinen, 1910)* had also depicted same-sex love. Both *Vita Sexualis* and *The Demon* are written in the style of a memoir, and *Youth* seems to have inspired same-sex love scenes between Minoura and Moroto in *The Demon*. Having said that, the allusions to same-sex love in Mori Ōgai's texts likely fall under the category of "educational" discussions of sex. They are fundamentally *Bildungsroman*. Readers gaze upon the sexual escapades of youth as they watch the characters mature. *The Demon*, by contrast, is not a *Bildungsroman*. Though it could be read as tracing the sexual experiences of Minoura over time, from his boyhood male-male experiences to heteronormative married life. Moroto, by contrast, is unchanging in his sexual preference throughout. It is in fact Moroto's identity as a gay man that supports the structure of the text, marking it as a somewhat unorthodox love story for its time.

Edogawa structured *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* after the works of Kuroiwa Ruikō and the novels from the Lupin series. He knew these writers had already released successful long-form novels for a popular audience. He therefore built an adventure/mystery that combined a serial killer with a treasure hunt. At the same time, however, he also clearly intended to include some aspects of romantic novels—namely, melodrama. There is no denying that he saw this as one aspect of creating a long-running serialized text for popular publishing. The problem at the time, however, was that he had chosen to create his melodramatic love story through same-sex love. As we can see from the discriminatory view held by Kure in the example above, Edogawa was making a high-stakes wager considering the social conditions of his era.

Edogawa's strategy behind this gamble can be glimpsed through his transition from short story writer to long-form fiction author—and his personal history. Edogawa himself experienced same-sex love in his youth. He recalled his experiences just before writing *The Demon*, publishing the essay "Rampo Confidential" (*Rampo uchiake banashi*) in the magazine *Popular Literary Arts* (*Taishū bungei*). He recalled being a middle school student in Nagoya and experiencing "Platonic love" with a number of classmates. After introducing this experience, he concludes his essay by writing:

The love I felt at that time, when I was still too young to discern between sexual matters, seemed to pour out of me without regard for gender or sex. How else would I make sense of the period that followed, when I experienced no romantic feelings at all, if I did not take this interpretation of my youth? Of course, this is not to say that I feel no attraction to the opposite sex whatsoever; I have experienced something that could appear to be love any number of times. Yet I also feel all of those experiences have been a sham in some way. Perhaps it was because they were built on sexual relations, or some sense of impropriety, but they never felt as if they were true love. (Edogawa 1926)

It may appear strange that Edogawa published this recollection in print considering that Edogawa married in 1919. He also published the essay "Love and God" in the magazine *Women* (*Josei*) in 1926, which described his first love with the opposite sex in his elementary school days. Reading both texts together, Edogawa maintains the appearance of a boy confessing his sexual experiences as he enters puberty.

If we compare the literary style of these two essays, however, we discover that the first is significantly longer and more detailed in its contents. In writing, Edogawa clearly found his early same-sex experiences more meaningful than his experiences with the opposite sex. When it came time for Edogawa to write his first long serialized novel, he would need to maintain his creative motivation over a long period—more than a year. It seems only natural that he would build his novel from a theme that he found most inspiring. He could have likely found that motivation in the same-sex love experiences of his youth, experiences which would also inform the melodramatic love story aspect of the work. Alternatively, he could return to the self-parody strategy he had successfully deployed in "Beast in the Shadows". This decision likely lingered in Edogawa's mind. Even though a same-sex love motif was risky at the time, Edogawa likely came to a creative decision that he could not turn his back on the motivation that would allow him to transform from short story writer to long fiction author.

On this point, Edogawa perhaps found some relief in the fact that *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* would be serialized in *Asahi*, a popular entertainment magazine. This was not the kind of magazine that specialized in detective fiction like *New Youth*, so Edogawa did not have to worry about the fanatic readers of the genre—"readers" that were barely distinct from "writers". Instead, *Asahi* found a wider, general audience that did not require special consideration. These readers would have likely seen the same-sex relationship between Minoura and Moroto as pure fiction, rather than as one aspect of Edogawa that had seeped into the text. Yet Edogawa was meticulous in his efforts to design and describe his narrator, Minoura. Neither Minoura nor Moroto ever engage in cross-dressing, one common aspect of the "exposé" works popular at the time, and Moroto is regularly described as a "deviant" through Minoura's first-person narration. Even as Minoura claims that he cannot make sense of Moroto's affection and rejects his advances, he still delights in expecting them. A significant factor in this representation is that Moroto is presented as a brilliant and gallant doctor, rather than as more transgressive in appearance. Minoura's description reads:

Both physically and mentally, Moroto was the most majestic boy I knew. Although I felt absolutely no untoward affection for him, I could not help but at least feel a burst of confidence in my outward appearances when I discovered that I had been the object of his picky desires. (Edogawa 1929–1930)

This method of description holds true for both main characters. Minoura is described as good-looking, but somewhat small, an ordinary salaryman working for a trading firm in the stereotypical financial center of Tokyo, Marunouchi. Many of the sensational articles on same-sex love that were appearing in 1920s and 30s media focused on gay men who engaged in cross-dressing. They suggested how otherwise “ordinary” men could lead deviant lives. To give just a few examples: On 29 July 1925 *Yomiuri Shimbun* published “Male Geisha in Women’s Clothes”, which introduced the titular cross-dressing geisha (including pictures) from Ibaraki Prefecture’s Ōarai Town and quoted them as saying, “I have strange sexual desires. If I drink, I have to get with men”; On 26 March 1931 *Asahi Shimbun* published “Fishing for Men at the Imperial Theatre”, which purported to be a true tale from a cross-dressing man; and on 19 March 1933 *Asahi* also published “Man in Women’s Clothing Appears in Ginza”, which called the subject of the article “perverted by nature” and described a sting operation in which a detective apprehended them in women’s clothing trying to seduce men in the neighborhood. This degree of attention paid to gender queer men was likely a way of discriminating against people who did not appear heteronormative at the time.

In fact, cross-dressing was an offense punishable by law under an amendment made to the Customs Regulations (*ishiki kaitō jōrei*) in 1873. These regulations were intended to punish “uncivilized” cultural practices. The text of the ordinance read: “This applies to men wearing women’s dress or make-up, women wearing men’s dress or make-up, others who change their appearance through strange ornamentation, and the like, including actors of the Kabuki stage”. When the Customs Regulations were succeeded by the 1880 Police Regulations (*ikeizai*), cross-dressing was removed from the list of punishable offenses. Even still, once the practice had been made subject to enforcement it quickly became (and remained) an object of media attention and a method of discriminating against gay and gender queer individuals. This oppressive atmosphere led to the depiction of men who engaged in cross-dressing as “perverted” characters in literary texts. Even Edogawa himself used such a motif in his 1925 story, “The Stalker in the Attic”.

It is here that *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* differs in its depiction of same-sex love: none of the non-heteronormative characters engage in cross-dressing. Of course, cross-dressing is not required to depict same-sex love, but this choice gives the text an inclination towards grasping its characters from their internality, rather than external appearance. *The Demon* leads the reader away from a simple, discriminatory reading of the Moroto character. In the novel’s final scene, when Minoura and Moroto are trapped in the island’s underground labyrinth, Minoura breaks down from the stress of the situation. Moroto, by contrast, demonstrates a spectacular mental fortitude. Minoura praises him as “a much stronger man than me”. This method of depicting the two main characters as comparatively mentally “strong” or “weak” likely finds inspiration from the male-male love tales that were popular in the Edo Period—works that both Edogawa and Iwata Junichi studied. These works depicted what is sometimes called a “Satsuma” style love affair, where an older man (*nenja*) would take on a younger lover (*wakashu*). Books that depicted these kinds of romances were extremely popular among the mass readership of the Edo Period, and equating male–male love with the “Satsuma” style was not at all unusual for the era. Edogawa had begun to amass just such books for his personal collection around 1927 and 1928. He happened to begin writing *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* just as he started collecting these male-male love stories. Perhaps Edogawa had some premonition that the same-sex love relationship between Minoura and Moroto would have been more easily accepted by readers if the two did not present as genderqueer, a representation that was built upon popular sensibilities that had existed since the Edo Period.

As we saw from Kure Shūzō’s diagnosis of homosexuality above, however, the 1920s was an era when psychoanalysis had begun to spread in Japan and pathologized same-sex love as some perversion of “normal” psychology. Popular magazines of this period reflect this diagnosis as if it were common sense. This is possibly why Edogawa borrowed the words of his narrator, Minoura, to declare Moroto a “deviant”. By making the narrator

ambivalent to Moroto's sexual advances, readers may have been less inclined to reject the same-sex melodrama depicted in *The Demon*. That is, while the aspects of Minoura's attraction to Moroto reflect an aspect of Edogawa as author, Minoura also declares that behavior "deviant" in a direct reflection of the psychoanalytically derived common sense that would have been common in the mass readership that *Asahi* was targeting. Although the mechanism differs from the depiction of Samukawa in "Beast in the Shadows", we find that the Minoura character also holds dual functions in relation to the concepts of "writer" and "reader".

It is worth emphasizing here that Minoura's dual writer/reader function differs from the similar, metafictional function found in Edogawa's short fiction. Instead, Minoura's function gives some indication that Edogawa did not expect the readership of popular entertainment magazines to recognize a direct correlation between a "reader" and "writer". Once Edogawa prepared a "narrator" for *The Demon of the Lonely Isle* who could act as the proxy for common sense of the new mass readership he had found, we might say that he was demonstrating a new command of writing strategies adapted for long-form fiction published in popular entertainment magazines.

So where does this leave Moroto? It seems as if Moroto's tragic death due to illness was shoehorned into the very end of the story—which should have by all rights been portrayed as a perfect happy ending. Perhaps Edogawa felt leaving Moroto alive would have risked disturbing the ambivalent nature of Minoura's character, exposing Edogawa's creative self-consciousness as an author that stood contrary to the interpretive logic of the popular reader. By the time we reach the epilogue of the novel, Edogawa has ensured that Minoura transitions away from any queer ambivalence and towards a marriage with a member of the opposite sex—an equation wherein heteronormative correlates with common sense. Leaving Moroto alive would have allowed the self-parody that Edogawa had carefully concealed in the background to waltz into the foreground. In the end, perhaps Moroto had to die. In depicting Moroto's death, the correlation between "writer" and "reader" external to the text itself is severed entirely. What remains is Edogawa's mastery of writing long fiction that safely incorporates techniques of self-parody.

## 5. Conclusions

This essay has traced an important development in Edogawa's fiction as he transitions from short fiction to long-form serialized novels—a transition that also mirrors his movement from publishing mostly in niche detective fiction magazines to popular entertainment magazines. Whereas Edogawa's earlier texts demonstrate a sustained concern for the relationship between diegetic "readers" and "writers" of detective fiction, Edogawa's attempt to inaugurate a new era of detective fiction in Japan through long-form novels severs this metafictional equivalency. We are left with a significant transition within the development of Edogawa's works—a transition that would go on to influence Japanese modern print media and the detective fiction genre: the metafictionally present "Edogawa" as author fades into the background and a clear and distinct "narrator" emerges to take the lead in the story. As a result, Edogawa's previously effective strategies for self-parody within his texts are muted. In their place, we see a clear severing between the detective fiction author and the detective fiction novel.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization: S.K.; writing—original draft preparation: S.K.; writing—translation: E.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Acknowledgments:** The author thanks Eric Siercks for translating the manuscript from Japanese to English.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## References

- Edogawa, Rampo. 1926. "Rampo Confidential" (*Rampo uchiake banashi*). *Popular Literary Arts (Taishū bungai)*, September 1.
- Edogawa, Rampo. 1928. *Beast in the Shadows (Injū)*. *New Youth (Shin Seinen)*, September 1.
- Edogawa, Rampo. 1929–1930. *The Demon of the Lonely Isle (Kotō no oni)*. *Asahi*, January 1929–May 1930.
- Edogawa, Rampo. 1932. *Ten Years of Detective Fiction (Tantei shōsetsu jūnen)*. In *The Complete Works of Edogawa Rampo, Volume 13 (Edogawa Rampo zenshū: Dai jūsan kan)*. Tokyo: Heibonsha.
- Edogawa, Rampo. 1953. *To Live Is to Compromise: 1929, 4th Year of the Shōwa Era (Ikiru to ha dakyo suru koto: Shōwa yonnen)*. *Jewels (Hōseki)*, April 1.
- Edogawa, Rampo. 1961. *Forty Years of Detective Fiction (Tantei shōsetsu yonjū nen)*. Tokyo: Tōgensha.
- Edogawa, Rampo. 2006. *The Black Lizard and Beast in the Shadows*. Translated by Ian Hughes. Fukuoka: Kurodahan Press.
- Hamada, Yūsuke. 1988. On "Beast in the Shadows" ("Injū" ron). *Japanese Language and Literature (Kokugo to kokubungaku)*, September 1.
- Hamada, Yūsuke, ed. 2004. *Dreams of What the Master Would Not Discuss: Collected Correspondence Between Edogawa Rampo and Kosakai Fuboku (Shifugo no yume: Edogawa Rampo Kosakai Fuboku ōfuku shokan shū)*. Tokyo: Kōseisha.
- Hirabayashi, Hatsunosuke. 1926. *The Many Tendencies of the Detective Fiction Literary Establishment (Tantei shōsetsu dan no shokeikō)*. *New Youth (Shin seinen)*, February 1.
- Igawa, Osamu. 2016. Reversals of the "Detective Fiction Writer" and "Reader": Edogawa Rampo's "Beast in the Shadows" and Journalism (*Teni suru "tantei shōsetsuka" to "dokusha": Edogawa Rampo "Injū" to janarizumu*). *Japanese Modern Literature (Nihon kindai bungaku)*, November 1.
- Inoue, Yoshio. 1934. *A Study of Detective Fiction Masterpieces (Kessaku tantei shōsetsu ginmi)*. *Profile (Purofuiru)*, August 1.
- Kawaguchi, Matsutarō. 1928. *Microphone (Maikurofon)*. *New Youth (Shin seinen)*, November 1.
- Kure, Shūzō. 1920. *Homosexuality (Dōsei no ai)*. *Women's Pictorial (Fujin gahō)*, October 1.
- Kuroiwa, Ruikō. 1893. On Detective Tales (*Tanteidan ni tsuite*). *Yorozō Chōhō*, May 11.
- Mack, Edward. 2010. *Manufacturing Modern Japanese Literature: Publishing, Prizes, and the Ascription of Literary Value*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Matsuda, Shōhei. 2020. For Reading by the "Masses": The Formation of Popular Literary Discourses and the Detective Fiction Genre in and around 1926 (*"Taishū" ni yomareru tame ni: 1926nen shūhen ni okeru taishū bungaku gensetsu no keisei to tantei shōsetsu janru wo megutte*). *Research on Shōwa Literature (Shōwa bungaku kankyū)*, September 1.
- Suzuki, Sadami. 1994. On "Beast in the Shadows" ("Injū" ron). *Japanese Literature: Interpretation and Appreciation (Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō)*, December 1.
- Yokomizo, Seishi. 1928. *From the Editor's Room (Henshūkyoku yori)*. *New Youth (Shin seinen)*, September 1.

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.