

# Spatiality of Higashino Keigo's Hometown Memory and Fictional Narration

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**Abstract:** Long Diyong pointed out in the book "Spatial Narratives": due to memory is one of the most basic psychological activities of writers in creation and has spatial characteristics, this kind of memory is used to select and organize when creating events, and narrative fictional works written, will inevitably have certain spatial characteristics. The spatiality of memory has an impact on fictional narratives, not only at the content or theme level, but also at the structure or form level. As the starting point of the writer's memory, his hometown has a profound influence on the writer's literary creation. This article aims to start with Osaka, the hometown of the writer's childhood memories, and to explore how Osaka, as a spatial representation, can be recalled and reconstructed in the content, form and theme of its fictional narrative text.

## 1. Introduction

Higashino Keigo is a popular contemporary Japanese mystery novelist. With "After School", "Secrets" and "Devotion of Suspect X", he won the rare name of "Triple Crown" in the history of Japanese mystery and became synonymous with Japanese mystery. Since 2008, Chinese scholars have paid attention to Higashino Keigo, and the number of journals and papers studying Higashino Keigo's literary creation has soared. Judging from the existing research results, Chinese research on Higashino Keigo mainly focuses on the character image, artistic characteristics, film and television adaptations, and aesthetics of reception in the works. There is no spatial feature of Higashino Keigo's creative psychology to his literary creation and no research on the influence of fictional narratives. Therefore, this article intends to explore how the memory of hometown can be recalled and reconstructed in his literary works from the geographical space of Osaka and the representation of Osaka dialect.

## 2. Osaka: the Original Scenery in Higashino Keigo's Literary Creation

Higashino Keigo was born in Ikuno, Osaka, Japan in 1958. He entered Osaka Municipal Koji Elementary School in 1964, studied at Osaka Municipal Higashino Junior High School in 1970, entered Osaka Hannan High School in 1973, entered Osaka Prefectural University College of Engineering in 1977, and worked for Denso Corporation in 1981. Higashino Keigo has studied and lived in Osaka for 23 years. In his essays, I see his feelings for his hometown everywhere. "Ikuno district that loves growing up", "If you can really become a writer, you have to go back to Osaka where you grew up." Higashino Keigo said: I wrote all the happy parts of my hometown Osaka as "My Dangling Youth", and the dark parts as "Into the White Night". This shows that Higashino Keigo's preference and dedication to his hometown.

In the book "Original Scenery in Literature", Okuno proposed the concept of "original scenery". He believes that this is "the space inherent to the writer and formed by himself" and "this kind of original scenery that is also the literary matrix." The writer was formed in childhood and adolescence. From birth to seven or eight years old, it is formed unintentionally according to the environment of parents' homes, playgrounds, and relatives and friends, and is fixed in deep consciousness. Years later, when I think back with incredible nostalgia, I will gradually understand the meaning of those landscapes or images when I was young. In other words, it is like the hometown of the soul, the original scenery equivalent to the mythical age of human history. In this

regard, the architectural theorist Yoshinobu Awara commented: the "original scenery" in the minds of these writers is not the natural climate or scenery seen by tourists, but the emotional scenery, which is often expressed as the starting point of literature among the works.

Indeed, in the narrative works of many writers, the traces of the hometown can be found, and the hometown has become the background color of the writer's literary creation. This is particularly prominent in Higashino Keigo's novel creation. In many of his novels, the shadow of his hometown of Osaka can be found. Higashino Keigo once said in his collection of essays "Probably the Last Greeting": the park described at the beginning of "Into the White Night Walk" published in 1999 was the first park where he left home and lost his way when he was four years old (Asashiro Park), and the site of the novel case was also selected in the abandoned building next to this park. The ventilation duct inside became a "time tunnel" to reveal the truth of the incident. These childhood memories were all recalled by him and integrated into literary creation in an artistic form.

In 1973, Higashino Keigo entered Osaka Prefecture's Risaka Men's High School. He once recalled: "the academic level of this high school is not very high..., the school wears casual clothes, and I am not afraid of being blocked for tutoring outside the school. I hang out in the city almost every day. It was an era when there was no money but a lot of things to want...". This is also vividly expressed in his novel "Into the White Night". In the third chapter, it is stated that "Yuhiko Sonomura's Jiwenkan High School does not have school uniforms... wear casual clothes, even if you wander in the downtown area after school, you don't have to worry about getting into trouble." Yuhiko Sonamura is a high school who is idle. Students, always wear casual clothes to hang around in the downtown after school, or go straight to the electric playground. Due to money constraints, when he was holding a jacket in the store, he was found by the clerk and had to pay 23,000 yuan. This made him not only lost all his property, but also borrowed 8,000 yuan from a friend before paying it off. It can be said that from the character image of Tomohiko Sonamura created by Higashino Keigo, we can find the shadow of his life at Hannan High School in Osaka Prefecture.

Not only that, the life of Osaka Prefecture University has also been fictionalized and artistic by Higashino Keigo. He wrote in "The City of My Heart: Around Osaka Prefectural University" in "Second Book Literary Spring and Autumn", October 1995, issue 213: "the town described in "University Town Murder Case" is a virtual city. In fact, there is a template. The urban area next to the university I went to is the prototype of this town." He also mentioned that this is "a city built in the heart" and emphasized that "conform to all the virtual towns described in the novel". When talking about the reasons, he pointed out: when I plan to write a mystery novel with a certain town as the stage. At that time, I remembered this place without rejection, probably because it was full of too many memories. It can be seen that the 23-year experience of studying and living in Osaka has been deeply imprinted in the memory of Higashino Keigo and has been revealed through his literary creations.

When a writer is creating a novel, his creative material is not fabricated out of thin air, it must be derived from actual life and must be connected with memory. The memories of childhood have been continuously precipitated and beautified by imagination, so that these memories have changed from "primitive events" to "conscious events", and then into fictional events. Obviously, the artisticization of these fictitious events is the performance of Higashino Keigo's hometown being constantly recalled, and hometown memory has become the background color of Higashino Keigo's literary creation, which is also called the "original landscape".

### **3. Osaka Dialect: the Spirit of Osaka**

Hu Shi said in "The Preface of "The Biography of Sea Flowers": "the literature of dialects is precious, precisely because dialects can best express human theology. Linguist Liu Bannong once said that dialects are a kind of "regional spirit". Dialects not only carry individual emotions, but are also closely related to regional culture. Higashino Keigo grew up in Osaka, and the regional culture of Osaka has been deeply carved into his bones. Therefore, he inevitably uses Osaka when writing. Dialects, to be more precise, use Osaka dialects for artistic creation unconsciously.

In his article "Higashino Keigo and Osaka", Japanese scholar Zhuki Horie explored the different contexts of the Osaka dialect "aho" (アホ), taking "Surf Boys" and "When We Were all Fools" as examples. Different meanings expressed, and pointed out that the meaning of the word "aho" (アホ) used in Higashino Keigo's novels is more than that included in the Mandarin dictionary. (「アホ」なる言葉の東野の使い方が國語典典では覺説できないほどの續い意味を持っていることが分かる) The meaning of "aho" has the meaning of "aho": loving reproach, unreasonable rhetorical question, dumbfounded expression, nostalgic tone, cleverness, etc.

Higashino Keigo's multi-angle and multi-meaning creation of the word "aho" (アホ) not only originated from his love of Osaka dialect, but also related to his humor as a native of Osaka. Japanese writer Junichiro Tanizaki wrote in his essay "Osaka and Osaka People in My Eyes", "Osaka people are metropolitan people after all. Both men and women have clever and witty nerves, and they are not inferior to Tokyo people at all. It is because of the deep inside. With the gene of deceit and foolishness, Tokyo people will find it funny even if they speak in a serious manner. In addition to the funny nerve of the language itself, the funny nerve of Osaka people themselves are also very developed." Indeed, when people in Japan mention Osaka people, their first reaction is that Osaka people are very humorous and have a sense of expectation for the humor of Osaka people. Some people think that the humor of Osaka people comes from the love of Rakugo.

Higashino Keigo once talked about the influence of "Rakugo" on him in the essay of "To Tachikawa Shinosuke Recital". He said that there are two reasons why I write funny novels (three collections of funny novels, "Weird Laugh Novels", "Poisonous Laugh Novels", and "Black Laugh Novels"): one is that I like it very much (funny); the other is the art of presenting rakugo in words is a kind of religious doctrine for me. "Rakuyu" originated in the Edo period. It is a traditional Japanese folk art form that is mainly funny. It is said that because of the burden of shaking (falling) before the end of the story, it is the most exciting feature and will attract people". There are mainly two schools of Edo "Rakugo" (Kanto) and "Rakugo" (Kansai) at the top, which are still loved by the general public, especially the people of Osaka. "Rakugo" in Edo attracts audiences with its local customs. The burden of "Rakugo" above is filled with funny stories that make people laugh. Therefore, there are many Rakugo teachers who come to practice in Osaka. Osaka is also known as the "sacred place of funny". Obviously, Higashino Keigo, who grew up in the "Holy Land of Funny", not only knows the humor of "Rakugo" well, but also incorporates it into the Osaka dialect, making his fictional works present a humorous human touch.

#### 4. Osaka Space and Space Osaka

The geographical space of Osaka is the most familiar narrative content. While continuously being artistic, Higashino Keigo also actively tried to get rid of Osaka's influence on his literary creation. In 1986, Higashino Keigo quit his job in Denso and came to Tokyo to become a full-time writer. He wanted his work to become "national area" works, not just "Osaka style" works. As he wrote in his essay "The Original Purpose" published in the "Asahi Shimbun" on September 30, 1999: "I moved to Tokyo to write a novel with Tokyo as the stage. This is my long-standing idea, a little exaggeration. It's okay to call it faith. However, I recently published a novel with Osaka as the stage in the first half of the novel. Therefore, the characters who inevitably appear on the scene have to say the Osaka accent... It is set more than 20 years ago, for the development of the plot, the street's description must be extremely detailed and capable." This novel is "Into the White Night ". Because the land that Higashino Keigo knows is only Osaka, and the fictional thing is more than 20 years ago, in order to make the fictional work more realistic, he had to change the novel, and the stage is set to Osaka.

Although in addition to "Into the White Night ", "Surf Boy Detectives", "Imaginary Night" and other novels based in Osaka, Higashino Keigo also has many works set in Hokkaido, Tokyo and other places, such as "Birdman Project" and "Kirin Wings", "New Participants", etc., but his creations still cannot escape the framework of the urban space of Osaka. Higashino Keigo mentioned in the prose of "Forever Residence": "most people will always be limited by the image of

their growth environment. The home I was born in is located in the old city of Osaka, densely packed with small land. Shops and urban workshops, there is no greenery and no soil, but for me, it is a comfortable place." This point is also verified in his novel, because he has lived in the city for a long time, he only remembers the reinforced concrete in the city, but lacks the nature of birds and flowers. The themes we often see in his works usually reflect the marginalization of people, campus bullying, juvenile delinquency, etc., the alienation of people and the ugliness of human nature brought about by the urban space in the development of capitalism.

## **5. Conclusion**

In summary, Osaka, as the literary origin of Higashino Keigo, has a profound influence on Higashino Keigo's literary creation. When Higashino Keigo was making artistic creations, his hometown of Osaka kept reappearing in his memory. When it was put into imagination, Osaka was constantly recalled in Higashino Keigo's artistic creations, and even reconstructed into the framework of the spatial structure of his novels, thus limiting the text content, form and theme of its narrative. Lao Tzu talked about the relationship between the availability and use of utensils: the real reality of a room is the space enclosed by the roof and the walls, not the roof and the walls themselves. Osaka is like the roof and wall of a building. In Higashino Keigo's literary works, it not only exists as a geographical space, but as a spatial frame above the narrative text. Space Osaka becomes the base color of his literary creation.

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