

The Poetic Imagination of *Shōjo Manga*: Ray Bradbury through Moto Hagio's Eyes

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Abstract

Ray Bradbury (1920-2012) is an American writer best known for works of science fiction and fantasy such as *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), many of which have been adapted for TV, films, plays, and comics. This paper examines adaptations of Bradbury's works by Moto Hagio (1949-), one of Japan's most important artists in *shōjo manga* (girls' comics). Hagio's adaptations of eight Bradbury short stories in 1977 and 1978 reveal distinctive features of Japanese *shōjo manga*. The first stories she chose to adapt ("The Fog Horn" and "The Lake") indicate her appreciation of the poetic quality in Bradbury's writing, which she amplified. Her adaptations artfully depict characters' emotions and feelings through a then-innovative panel layout and multilayered narration developed by Hagio and her peers. These techniques for depicting inner feelings became distinctive features of *shōjo manga* in the 1970s. Hagio's works show not only the elaborate techniques of *shōjo manga* to depict psychological states but also how dark fantasies and science fictions harmonize with a genre for girls: the story always takes the girls' side. Sometimes transforming the original, Hagio gives her female readers a girl protagonist energetically engaged in a plot. Moreover, Hagio's adaptations address the problems that Japanese girls faced at that time. Although *shōjo manga* always has addressed issues familiar to girls, the genre and its techniques have evolved to deal with earnest themes in Japanese culture and society.

Keywords: Ray Bradbury; *shōjo manga*; Moto Hagio; Fantasy; Inner feelings

キーワード：レイ・ブラッドベリ；少女マンガ；萩尾望都；ファンタジー；内面描写

1. Introduction

Ray Bradbury (1920-2012) is an American writer best known for science fictions and fantasies such as *The Martian Chronicles* (1950) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953). Many of his works have been adapted to TV, films, plays, and comics.

This paper examines adaptations of Bradbury's works in 1977 and 1978 by Moto Hagio (1949-), one of the most important artists in Japanese *shōjo manga* (girls comics). She was a longstanding fan of science fiction, and Bradbury is among her favorite writers:

I opened the first page and that was my downfall. I was intoxicated, turned the pages until the dawn, and ran to buy *R is for Rocket* the next day.

Thus I went crazy over Ray Bradbury. I read *Something Wicked This Way Comes*, and short stories carried in *Sci-Fi Magazine*. When *S is for Space* was out, I wanted to buy all the copies in the stores (Hagio 2012:236).

Hagio adapted eight short stories: “R is for Rocket” (1943), “The Screaming Woman”(1951), “The Fog Horn” (1951), “The Lake” (1944), “Come into My Cellar” (1962), “Homecoming” (1946), “Jack-in-the-Box”(1947), and “The Rocket Man” (1951). These adaptations were first serialized in a weekly Manga magazine for girls, then published as a Bradbury’s anthology, under the title of *U ha Uchūsen no U (R is for Rocket)*.

Although a cliché, “Interiority is the terrain of the telling mode; Exteriority is best handled by showing and especially by Interactive modes” (Hutcheon 2013:56), Hagio’s adaptations reveal the genre’s aptness for describing “interiority,” which is one of the distinctive features of *shōjo manga*. To start the serialization of Bradbury’s eight stories, Hagio chose “The Fog Horn” and “The Lake.” Her choices indicate her devotion to the poetic quality of Bradbury’s writing, which she amplified in her adaptations.

II. Focus on emotions and feelings: *The Fog Horn*

“The Fog Horn” appeared as “The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms” in *Saturday Evening Post* on June 23, 1951. As its title indicates, the story is about a “beast,” a prehistoric reptile that rises from the ocean when it hears a fog horn. Johnny, the narrator, and McDunn, the lighthouse keeper, witness the monster emerge from the water seeking another of its kind and survive its attack, which destroys the lighthouse. This story was adapted to a film, *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, regarded as the vanguard of the 1950s vogue in giant prehistoric creature films, including the *Godzilla* series from Japan. According to Nichols, “reputed to have cost \$200,000 and to have generated \$5million in revenues, it was undoubtedly one of the most successful science fiction films of its time” (Nichols 2006). It is also the first movie to feature animator Ray Harryhausen’s solo work. Although Bradbury is identified as the author, the movie shares little with his story, as its plot primarily involves the monster attacking cities and people.

This plot, a mysterious encounter with a prehistoric reptile, has always attracted readers. Before examining Hagio’s work, let us refer to Wayne Barlowe’s (1958-) graphic novel of 1993. A science fiction and fantasy painter, Barlowe has painted over 300 book and magazine covers and illustrations for major book publishers as well as *Life*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. He is known for his realistic images of dinosaurs and extraterrestrials. He took charge of the creature and character designs for numerous films and games, including the *Hellboy* series, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, and *Avatar*.

Abbreviated to eight pages, Barlowe’s “Fog Horn” appeared in *Ray Bradbury Comics 3*, in June 1993.

The cover features the lighthouse reflected in the monster's eye (Fig.1 (Bradbury 2003:151)). As Figure 1 reveals, the style is realistic. The main theme is the encounter with a monster/dinosaur, since the volume in which it was carried declared itself "All-Dinosaur Issue!" Bradbury's comment on this version focuses on this aspect:

Have you ever known anyone who wanted to be a dinosaur, waking up one morning all smiling teeth and grasping claw? I don't recall anyone ever in my life who, if given the prehistoric wish, wouldn't have loved to find themselves at dawn, dressed up in samurai armor, which many dinosaurs seemed to wear, and ready to breakfast on beasts or humans, whichever was handy.... (Bradbury 2003:150)

However, Hagio's point was completely different. What she emphasized was Bradbury's literary craft of this story, as Charles Piddok states: "In 'The Foghorn', Ray is able to use the power of language to make readers empathize with the lonely creature and its torment. No wonder critics loved the story and readers have read it over and over again for years" (Piddock 2009:60). Hagio places the lighthouse keeper McDunn on her title page instead of the monster (Fig.2 (Hagio1997:57)). She picks up on the theory about the foghorn, told by McDunn, which was deleted from Barlowe's version.

"One day many years ago a man walked along and stood in the sound of the ocean on a cold sunless shore and said 'We need a voice to call across the water, to warn ships; I'll make one. I'll make a voice that is like an empty bed beside you all night long, and like an empty house when you open the door, and like the trees in autumn with no leaves. A sound like the birds flying south, crying, and a sound like November wind and the sea on the hard, cold shore. I'll make a sound that's so alone that no one can miss it, that whoever hears it will weep in their souls, and to all who hear it in the distant towns. I'll make me a sound and an apparatus and they'll call it a Fog Horn and whoever hears it will know the sadness of eternity and the briefness of life.'" (Bradbury 1990:7)

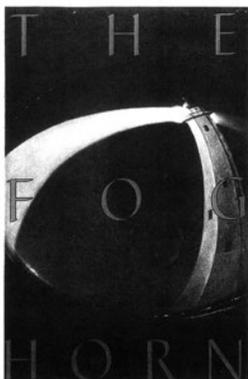


Fig. 1 Title page of Barlowe's "Fog Horn".



Fig. 2 Title page of Hagio's version.

According to Eller, director John Huston read “The Fog Horn” and “smelled the ghost of Melville,” and Bradbury did “always regard [this passage] as one of his best pensées, or prose poems” (Eller 2014: 10). To adapt this part, Hagio pours all her energies into the images in her imagination.

She depicts the “voice” using the then-innovative page layout cultivated by herself and peers. The left page of Figure 3 (Hagio 1997:64-65) and the right page of Figure 4 (Hagio 1997:66) show that she changes the size of the panels, even though panel layout was fixed in traditional Japanese *manga*.¹ This technique renders the passage more poetic and emotional for its series of rich images. It also invites readers’ attentions to the last sentence, arranged in the top panel of the left page: “...whoever hears it will know the sadness of eternity and the briefness of life.”



Fig. 3 McDunn’s theory (1).



Fig. 4 McDunn’s theory (2).

A focus on the emotional side of the story pervades the work. Although the monster’s appearance is not especially impressive, what Hagio emphasizes is McDunn’s interpretation of feelings.

“That’s life for you,” said McDunn. “Someone always waiting for someone who never comes home. Always someone loving some thing more than that thing loves them. And after a while you want to destroy whatever that thing is, so it can hurt you no more.” (Bradbury 1990:10)

McDunn’s remarks are located just before he switches off the foghorn. Barlowe’s version emphasizes the monster and omits McDunn’s words, but Hagio draws the monster hazily and devotes the largest panel to them (Fig.5 (Hagio 1997:77)). This inclination of Hagio reappears in the last part of the story, also omitted from Barlowe’s version:

1 Yomota Inuhiko points out that this “erratic disassembling of the panel layout” was invented by “the New Wave of shōjo manga.” (Yomota 1999:55) In 2000, Ragawa Marimo and Fujimoto Hitomi called the fixed panel layout as “shōnen(boy’s) manga-ish.” (Fujimoto 2000:73)

“It’s gone away,” said McDunn. “It’s gone back to the Deeps. It’s learned you can’t love anything too much in this world. It’s gone into the deepest Deeps to wait another million years. Ah, the poor thing! Waiting out there, and waiting out there, while man comes and goes on this pitiful little planet. Waiting and waiting.” (Bradbury 1990:12)

The following passages in the original text turn to the drawing (Fig.6 (Hagio 1997:87-88)). The final line—“I sat there wishing there was something I could say”—is depicted by Johnny’s expression, the sound of the foghorn, and the car offset in a desolate field. However, she adds a word to her last line: a *Waiting and waiting, forever*. The addition of “forever” echoes with “the sadness of eternity and the briefness of life.” The focus of Hagio’s adaptation is not the monster, but love, life and loneliness.

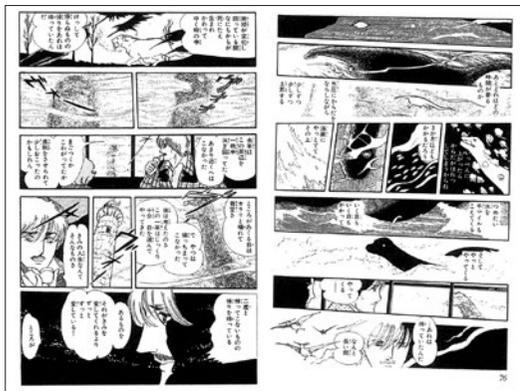


Fig. 5 “That’s life for you”.

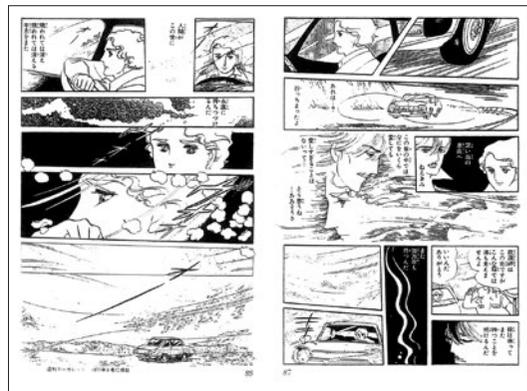


Fig. 6 Hagio’s last page: *Waiting and waiting, forever*.

III. Depiction of inner feelings: *The Lake*

“The Lake” (1943) is among Bradbury’s earliest works, and he regarded it as his first story of literary value (Bradbury and Aggelis 2004: p.xvi (introduction)). He recalled this story later:

The long hot summers of childhood surround me in photos taken along the shores of Lake Michigan. Looking at them many years ago, I remembered when I built impossible cities out of sand and discovered that the lake could be a sorrow as well as a joy. When I finished writing this story at age 22 I was in tears, and knew that at last I had become a writer.²

The protagonist of “The Lake” is twelve-year-old Harold. The day before his family moves to the West Coast, he visits the lake and remembers his drowned girlfriend, Tally, whose body was never found.

² From the DVD *The Ray Bradbury Theater* Season 3, Episode 3 (1989).

He calls to her, and builds half of a sand castle, saying “Tally, if you hear me, come in and build the rest.”

I called her name. A dozen times I called it.

“Tally! Tally! Oh Tally!”

You really expect answers to your calling when you are young. You feel that whatever you may think can be real. And some times maybe that is not so wrong.

I thought of Tally, swimming out into the water last May, with her pigtails trailing, blond. She went laughing, and the sun was on her small twelve-year-old shoulders. I thought of the water settling quiet, of the life guard leaping into it, of Tally’s mother screaming, and of how Tally never came out. . . . (Bradbury 1996:121)

While adapting this passage, Hagio uses polyphonic narration with multilayered words (Fig.7 (Hagio 1997:94-95)). Harold’s utterances appear inside balloons: “Tally! Tally! Oh, Tally! Tally, come back, Tally come back!” She again adds a word to the original: “Lake, Lake, bring back Tally to me!”

Harold’s internal monologue is placed in panels without balloons. The panel layout is again irregular, and images of Tally, playing and swimming with Harold, appear repeatedly in big panels. We should note the pictorial flashback of the drowning: Tally’s mother screaming, the scene is depicted with a black background.

As Natsume points out, the “techniques to depict psychological states—showing flashbacks, imaginary scenes, dreams, bits of subconscious—can be taken as a challenge on part of some girls’ manga to pursue more ‘literary’ themes (Natsume 2003:5)” in the 1970s. Hagio’s adaptation employing innovative layouts, narrative license, and polyphony, as in “The Fog Horn,” is representative of that pursuit. The facing pages of Figure 7 distinguish the utterance, the inner voice, and the flashback. These techniques to depict characters’ inner feelings have become the chief distinction of *shōjo manga*.

The latter part of the story concerns grown-up Harold, who returns to the lake with his new wife, Margaret. At the lakeshore, he comes across the discovery of a small body:

I stared at the gray sack in his arms. “Open it,” I said. I don’t know why I said it. The wind was louder.

He fumbled with the sack.

“Hurry, man, open it!” I cried.

“I better not do that,” he said. Then perhaps he saw the way my face must have looked. “She was such a *little* girl—”

He opened it only part way. That was enough.

The beach was deserted. There was only the sky and the wind and the water and the autumn coming on lonely. I looked down at her there.

I said something over and over. A name. The life guard looked at me. “Where did you find her?” I asked.

“Down the beach, that way, in the shallow water. It’s a long, long time for her, isn’t it?”

I shook my head.

“Yes, it is. Oh God, yes it is.” (Bradbury 1996:125)

In her adaptation, Hagio repeats Harold’s memory of Tally and of the scene: “Tally! Come back, Tally!”(Fig.8 (Hagio 1997:104-105)). With her lively images and Harold’s monologue, readers are returned to the past with him.

This scene follows the ending of the story:

I thought: people grow. I have grown. But she has not changed. She is still small. She is still young. Death does not permit growth or change. She still has golden hair. She will be forever young and I will love her forever, oh God, I will love her forever. (Bradbury 1996:125-126)

Then Harold finds a half-built sand castle with small footprints leading from the lake and returning to it.

Then— I knew.

“I’ll help you finish it,” I said.

I did. I built the rest of it up very slowly, then I arose and turned away and walked off, so as not to watch it crumble in the waves, as all things crumble.

I walked back up the beach to where a strange woman named Margaret was waiting for me, smiling.... (Bradbury 1996:126)

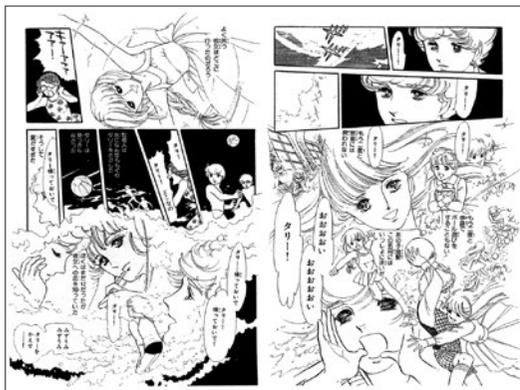


Fig. 7 Multilayered words.



Fig. 8 Repetition of the memory.

Hagio's adaptation emphasizes Harold's feelings and his love for Tally. She rearranges the episodes, and in her version, Harold first finds the half-built sand castle (Fig.9 (Hagio 1997:106-107)). Then he confirms his love for Tally ("She will be forever young and I will love her forever, oh God, I will love her forever."), completing the unfinished sand castle.

The ending is more horrifying than the original. Harold repeats his love for Tally ("I will love her forever.") in the image of Tally at the lakeside, and his glance at Margaret is cold (Fig.10 (Hagio 1997:108)). The artist adds a sentence after the last line: "A woman I have never seen before...." Hagio's version throws Harold, who is caught in the past, into relief. The black and white wave of the lake serves as an enclosure that locks him in the past memory. Here again, the manga technique to picture emotions and feelings is effective and impressive.³



Fig. 9 Rearrangement of the episodes.



Fig. 10 Hagio's ending.

IV. *Shōjo manga* as girl's mouthpiece

Hagio's works show not only the elaborate techniques of *shōjo manga* to depict psychological states but also how dark fantasies and science fictions harmonize with a genre for girls. The comparison of Hagio's adaptation of "Come into My Cellar" (1962) with the Dave Gibbons' (1949-) graphic novel version (1992) clarifies another characteristic of *shōjo manga*: the story always takes the girl's side.

"Come into My Cellar" is a story about Hugh, a happy father. His son Tom is delighted to receive a special delivery package, an order of mushroom seeds, which has been fascinating all the children in the neighborhood. Hugh's friend Roger becomes suspicious, believing the mushroom is a part of an invasion

³ This ending was modified in its TV episode of The Ray Bradbury Theater broadcast in 1989. In the TV version, Douglas (Harold) leaves the beach and goes back to his wife, after he completed the sand castle.

from outer space. After Roger mysteriously goes missing, Hugh finds mushrooms in his refrigerator and knows that Tom has eaten them. In the last scene, Hugh descends to the cellar where Tom grows the mushrooms and waits for him, talking to himself: “Should say goodbye to Cynthia. But why think that? Why think that at all? There’s no reason. None. (Bradbury 1966:144)”

Whereas Gibbons’ version (Fig.11 (Bradbury 2003:102)) is faithful to the original, the protagonist is a girl in Hagio’s adaptation (Fig.12 (Hagio 1997:111)). Manny takes the part of Hugh, and Tom turns out to be Manny’s younger twin brother. Roger is Manny’s boyfriend. With this modification, Hagio gives her female readers a girl protagonist energetically engaged in a plot and a chain of reasoning. Little wonder that Hagio chose “the Screaming Woman,” a story in which a girl solves the mystery of a screaming woman underground.

To conclude this analysis, I take up “Jack-in-the-Box” (1947). It is originally about a boy, Edwin, whose mother keeps him indoors in isolation. She tells him he will die if he goes outside and convinces him that their vast, secluded mansion is the entire universe. After his mother’s sudden death, Edwin leaves the house. Although afraid of dying, he is entranced by everything he sees and runs down the street shouting, “I’m dead, I’m dead, I’m glad I’m dead, I’m dead, I’m dead, I’m glad I’m dead, I’m dead, I’m dead, it’s *good* to be dead! (Bradbury 1996: 213)”

As in “Come into My Cellar,” Hagio transforms Edwin into a girl, Donna (Fig.13 (Hagio 1997:172-173)). But this instance could be controversial, for it might be interpreted as a recrimination against the controlling mother. The story opens with the mother’s scolding turning into a yell: “Why don’t you do as I say? Finish your dish quickly!” This is different from the original, where the mother “began to talk, slowly and with great caution, then more rapidly, and then angrily, and then almost spitting at him (Bradbury 1996:193)” after they ate silently. The mother in Hagio’s version represents authority and enforces rules upon Donna. The free-spirited girl is weighed down by such control.



Fig. 11 Dave Gibbons (1992).



Fig. 12 Moto Hagio (1978)

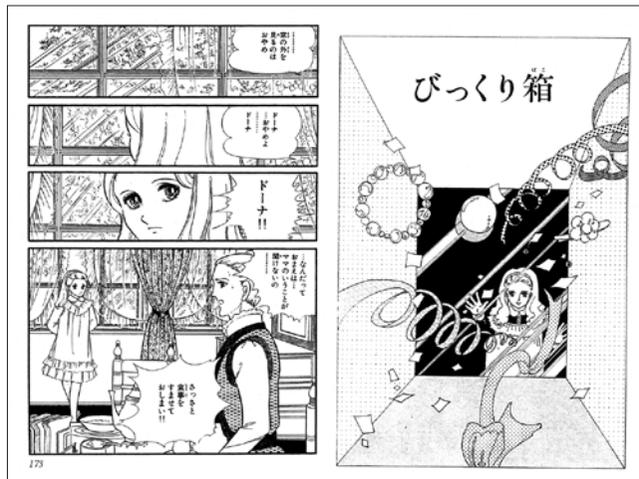


Fig. 13 Donna in “Jack-in-the-Box”.

Shōjo manga in the 1970s often described mother-daughter conflicts during puberty⁴. It was not merely a specific conflict that involved a parent’s desire to control and a child’s struggle for emotional distance. Japanese daughters at that time couldn’t always view their mothers’ lives in a positive light. Eighty years have passed since Alice Mabel Bacon wrote “From the earliest youth until she reaches maturity, she (Japanese maiden) is constantly taught that obedience and loyalty are the supreme virtues” (Bacon 1891:84). Nonetheless, many girls felt unfairly treated by their mothers, especially compared with their brothers. The pressure to marry and the social expectations of obedience to males (fathers, husbands) still existed, and housewives seemed to support these traditional values.

In this context, mistrust of the mother, the fear or loathing of maturation, and abhorrence toward the controlling mother became important themes of *shōjo manga*. As Linda Hutcheon points out, “the context of reception [...] is just as important as the context of creation when it comes to adapting, (Hutcheon 2013:149)” and Hagio became a standard-bearer by depicting these issues. Donna’s running down the street in “Jack-in-the-Box” could represent the desire to escape male-dominated Japanese society and disavowal of the mother who supports it. We hear the cries of all girls when Donna shouts, “I’m dead, I’m dead, I’m glad I’m dead!” Donna gives voice to repressed girls, and the story brings them a catharsis.⁵

4 This issue was taken up in the feature articles of *Eureka* 559 (December 2008), which included a colloquy of Hagio Moto with a psychiatrist, Saitō Tamaki. Fujimo Yukari also argues this mother-daughter conflict in *shōjo manga*. (Fujimoto 2008)

5 Hagio’s ending of “The Lake” could be similarly interpreted. The contrast between the girl (Tally) and the woman (Margaret) in the last page and the Harold’s choice may be related to this fear or hatred for maturation.

V. Conclusion

Moto Hagio's adaptation of Bradbury's works highlights several distinctive features of Japanese *shōjo manga*,

- The centering of emotions and feelings, such as love, loneliness, and life.
- The importance of poetic imagery.
- Catering to female readers by depicting them as protagonists.

Shōjo manga's forte has always been to present issues that girls relate to, and Hagio's adaptations reveal problems that Japanese girls faced in the 1970s. *Shōjo manga* evolved to convey earnest messages in genre that mirrors Japanese culture and society.

Hagio's adaptation of other short stories is suggestive as well, and it will be worthwhile for later scholarship to deal with vampires ("Homecoming") and outer space ("R is for Rocket" and "The Rocket Man"). It would not be excessive to say Hagio's interpretations of Bradbury presaged her own 1970s masterpieces, including *The Poe Clan* (1972-1976) and *They Were Eleven* (1975), as a pioneer in *shōjo manga*.

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