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Pseudo-detective stories: A comparison between Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and Ryunosuke Akutagawa's "In a Grove"

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Abstract. Based on traditional detective stories, Kafka and Akutagawa tempted to create a form of pseudo-detective stories, making them flourish during the 20th century and the early decades of the 21st century. Kafka composes *The Trial* under the absurd sentence of Josef K., to turn Josef K.'s solving the case into self-conviction and conclude that dictatorship and bureaucracy do harms to human life. *The Trial* also gives a thought that people are always sinful and cannot escape the domination of a supreme power. Similarly, Akutagawa also uses the structure of the pseudo-detective story to parodize reason – the basis of modern knowledge – by composing a sentence with a murder in which any character involved, including the victim, who also identifies oneself as a murderer. If Kafka asserts that everyone can be at fault, then Akutagawa thinks everyone can be a killer. The philosophical warnings of these two genius writers help awaken readers, with the serious, humorous and intellectual narrative style of the pseudo-detective story that is highly appealing. Kafka and Akutagawa have inspired generations of writers and readers who enjoy their literature of sin investigation. Pseudo-detective stories have thus become one of the phenomena of distinctive narrative.

Keywords: pseudo-detective story, Franz Kafka, Ryūnosuke Akutagawa, *The Trial*, "In a Grove"

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Introduction

Detective stories were created by Edgar Allan Poe and developed by Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie. In the 20th century, in an attempt to innovate literature, a trend emerged known as "anti-detective story" [1. Vol. 1. P. 154], "Doomed Detective" [2] or "metaphysical detective story" [3; 4. P. 197]; "pseudo-detective story" [5. P. 141]. All of these detective stories display characteristics of postmodernism, so they can generally be called the "postmodern detective story". Following Jacques Derrida's theory of "deconstruction" [6], we consider the term "pseudo-detective story" suitable for this writing style. Authors do not destroy the conventions of detective stories; rather, they renew them by using the

structure of the genre featuring a trial (usually a murder), a victim, a criminal, and a detective. However, the purpose of the story is not to find the criminal. The authors, instead, aim to explore sins inherent in human nature. In many such stories, they confirm victims and murderers can inhabit in anyone unaware of their dark side. In this field, Franz Kafka and Ryūnosuke Akutagawa are masters, even though they lived and wrote in the modern times.

The writers of the traditional detective story believe in "fixed" details, which are used to make a clear detective journey and a "happy ending" when everything is resolved. However, this approach usually bears a risk of the "grand narrative" [7. P. 15]. In contrast, Kafka and Akutagawa place their characters on a journey and under a multipoint of view. They think that the purpose of the journey is never as important as the journey itself. Thus, there are no "happy endings" in a pseudo-detective story. An unending journey is an ultimate criterion of characters' actions. By the end of the story, readers are left unsatisfied and never know who the detective or the criminals are. Through the pseudo-detective narratives, the writers pay more attention to establishing "actions" at each stage of the journey than its end. Therefore, in many cases, readers themselves will become the co-authors to continue the story in their imagination.

Franz Kafka (1883–1924) and Ryunosuke Akutagawa (1892–1927) lived at the same time. They did not affect each other, but they had similar styles of the pseudo-detective story and magical realism (that we can see in *Metamorphosis* (Kafka) and *Kappa* (Akutagawa)). This article attempts to discover the similarities and differences in their pseudo-detective writings.

Franz Kafka's sentence without a murder, a killer or a detective

Tzvetan Todorov divides the detective story into "the story of the crime and the story of the investigation" [8. P.44]. So, there are two stories in a detective story. The story is usually told from the standpoint of the detective who investigates the crime; therefore, the detective story is actually a reconstruction of the initial crime story.

A traditional detective story tends to be very attractive to readers. Its plot is taut and thrilling; its center always includes a mysterious murder. However, detectives do not emphasize strongly on crimes but take them as a clue to develop their "investigation" stories. The process of the investigation leads readers into a mystery of sins to help them realize the truth and know who is guilty and who should be praised. A complete structure of the detective story will include victims, detectives and crimes, and, of course, a resolved ending.

Franz Kafka renovated detective stories. He creates a pseudo-detective story in which readers cannot infer who the victim or the criminal is. His characters are double-faced, representing different persons. Josef K. is this kind of character. One day, on his 30th birthday, two strange men named Willem and Franz appeared and declared to guard Josef K. because Josef K. was a criminal. At first, Josef K. thought it was a joke, but gradually he became aware of the seriousness of the situation, and he later figured out what his crime and his sentence were.

He went to court, met with judges and lawyers, and asked his relatives and other people close to the court to help him. But all he knows is that he is guilty and his sentence has not yet been tried, but if it is, it will only be on parole or postponement, but never acquitted. A year passes, and finally Josef K. dies on his 31st birthday because of a knife of a stranger who calls himself an executioner, and stabs him in his heart.

Josef K. became the puppet of his own case. The absurdity is expressed at the beginning of the story: "Someone must have been telling tales about Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything wrong, he was arrested" [9. P. 5]. The more he investigates the trial, the deeper he falls into the maze of absurdity and ignorance. Some people tell him that his case is very complicated because the guilt sentenced to him is not a conventional guilt. Josef K. gradually became aware of his situation through a dialogue with his uncle Albert: "'First of all, Uncle,' K. said, 'it's not a case that's being tried in the normal court.' 'That's bad,' said his uncle. 'What?' K. said, looking at his uncle. 'I think that's bad,' his uncle repeated" [9. P. 67].

Even when speaking to artist Titorelli, Josef K. reaffirms the bizarre nature of his sentence: it eventually discovers a crime that has never existed before. Through these remarks, Josef K. proves that *he truly understood the nature of non-understanding*. But it is worth noting how Josef K. refuses to give up on that *non-understanding*. Thus, the more he investigates his sentence, the more he falls into the tragic situation of non-understanding. The discourse that innocent people are convicted suddenly becomes strangely sensible once one fails to explain the cause and motive to condemn oneself. Kafka isolates his characters from the real environment, placing them in a place of no moral convention where they can be aware of their true nature in that wild land.

The declaration of a gratuitous sentence and the victim's investigation of that sentence create a unique pseudo-detective atmosphere. Although the work has a gratuitous crime, a court, a conviction, sentencing, and even the death penalty, the content of the sentence is not known. Even Josef K., the victim, is no longer merely a sinner but also a detective who has to investigate his own sentence. The story creates chaos and a reversal of convicted orders that gives a great meaning to readers about the postmodern era where values are reevaluated and constantly deconstructing [6], amidst the irresistible transformation of humankind.

Under the influence of the multivalued view from postmodern philosophy, literature has experienced numerous changes. Novel composition styles appear to be bolder and more daring. Postmodern literature creates unique forms of creativity and innovative ways to perceive the world with profound images. Its purpose is to demonstrate that human creativity knows no bounds. Beauty and the truth in the world are not necessarily immutable. It is important whether the reader chooses to participate in the creative journey.

Kafka consistently strives towards the concept of the absolute. His artistic thinking is also based on that view. He had no illusions of reaching absolute but believed that there was absolute. Therefore, his works are built upon the foundation of the absolute, but at the same time reflect a certain denial and disbelief of the absolute. Kafka once said, "Man cannot live without a permanent

faith in something indestructible in himself. [...] At the same time this indestructible part and his faith in it may remain permanently concealed from him" [10. P. 172]. Kafka's the absolute belief in the absolute – which is something irrevocable – is based on the fact that it exists in anyone, even if one is not fully aware of it.

Reading *The Trial*, readers encounter the "investigative people". They stand out as representatives of humankind in the time of the "death of God", as proclaimed by Nietzsche: "God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?" [11. P. 120], and even part of the time of losing the self – the majestic individual – to dissolve into the crowd of "the sound and the fury" (referencing the title of a novel by William Faulkner), of monstrous pieces of human form, such as in *Metamorphosis* by Kafka, and so on. However, they still do not accept the decline of human life. World War I and the dangers of fascism did not stop their search for a reason and a way to survive. Not to mention what Josef K. seeks, the act of trying to escape itself from that invisible power deserves its recognition in a positive light.

However, these "investigative people" also come from Kafka's view of art. He considers the whole action of outstanding writings in the humanities as being exploited in the form of a detective story. In response to a question posed by Kafka himself, "Who does the writer want to write?", Janouch recorded Kafka's words in the following conversation, "When Kafka saw a crime novel among the books in my briefcase, he said, 'There is no need to be ashamed in reading such things. Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment* is after all only a crime novel. And Shakespeare's *Hamlet*? It is a detective story. At the heart of the action is a mystery, which is gradually brought to light. But is there a greater mystery than the truth? Poetry is always an expedition in search of truth'" [12. P. 166].

Kafka's pseudo-detective fiction, on the one hand, investigates the hidden corners of society and people, and, on the other hand, attempts to get closer to the truth of human existence. Kafka's investigation, whether in *Metamorphosis* or *The Castle*, ultimately answers whether there is truth in the world. Kafka does not answer directly; the reader through his pseudo-detective stories may find the answer on their own. In many cases, however, they will not find the answer.

Even Kafka himself did not give a clear answer. When Kafka was asked, "But what is truth?", he answered, "Truth is what every man needs in order to live, but can obtain or purchase from no one. Each man must reproduce it for himself from within, otherwise he must perish. Life without truth is not possible. Truth is perhaps life itself" [12. P. 166–167].

This answer in fact remains unresolved. It turned out that Kafka was steadfast in his unspoken manner. Postmodernists would prefer this kind of structures because the similarity of the process of finding the truth in a detective story is also the entry process into the unconscious realms to find out our own ego and into the nature of writers' language in reproducing reality. Its purpose is to release individual capacity to the greatest extent. The famous works of pseudo-detective trends – *The Trial* (Franz Kafka) *The Name of the Rose* (Umberto Eco), *City of Glass* (Paul Auster) – are recalled by researchers.

Ryunosuke Akutagawa's sentence with a victim, murders, and a detective

If Kafka's character is a "criminal investigator", then Akutagawa's is a "confessor". Kafka's character plays the role of a "detective", Akutagawa's a "criminal". The similarity between the two writers is that their characters, whether they are victims or criminals, sin and the source of sin still resides there. Humans are hard to avoid.

Todorov calls Kafka's narrative technique the concept of "generalized fantastic" and describes its characteristics as "swallowing up the entire world of the book and the reader along with it" [13. P. 174]. Akutagawa in his art of generalization, especially in "In a Grove", in line with Todorov's idea, creates a kind of a "magical swallow" to any reader when approaching the work. That aggressiveness to readers came from an open ending when the "I" died and three characters admitted the crime. It is one of the most mysterious and virtual endings in literature works of humankind.

Putting "In a Grove" in relations with the fantasy, Susan J. Napier in the *Introduction of The Fantasy in Modern Japanese Literature – The Subversion of Modernity* wrote, "Akutagawa, in particular, is known in both Japan and the West for his imaginative and often surprising fantasies which incorporate both "impossible" situations with an attitude toward the real that is fascinatingly ambivalent. Perhaps the best example of this is Akutagawa's famous short story, "In a Grove" (familiar to many Westerners in Kurosawa's 1953 film version, *Rashōmon*)" [14. P. 14–15].

She explained how the story captivated the readers, "Akutagawa uses a mystery-story format, specifically a trial scene in which victims and perpetrators of a crime are gathered together to ascertain the actual truth of a rape-murder of an aristocratic woman and her husband. Each of the participants left alive gives a startlingly different account of the incident until finally the woman's murdered husband is summoned from the dead" [14. P. 15].

The entire story offers seven points of view on the murder. The seventh viewpoint comes from the victim – the person who was killed. His soul is conjured up by magic, perhaps through mediumship, to recount the cause of his death. Susan J. Napier commented, "In a traditional ghost/mystery story, this introduction of the supernatural would lead to the final unravelling of the mystery. In *In a Grove*, however, Akutagawa's final twist is simply one more turn of the screw: the ghost gives a completely different, but obviously prejudiced version of the events and the final truth is never discovered" [14. P. 15].

Through special narrative, Napier considered Akutagawa as a postmodern writer: "Akutagawa's use of the fantastic as a means to a final awareness of unknowability, rather than an end to a final truth, is almost postmodern in its narrative effect, but the ambiguous nature of truth, reality, and fantasy is an aspect that many Japanese writers work with" [14. P. 15].

Writing almost at the same time with Kafka and sharing a similar sense of imperfection of existence, Akutagawa, though not yet reaching the philosophical generalization like Kafka, leaves his own mark on his domestic audience. Scholars

appraised him as "the father of Japanese short stories" [15]. Donald Keene concluded, "Akutagawa disclaimed any desire to become a god, but he became one anyway" [16. P. 588]. From these achievements, no one can deny Akutagawa's outstanding talent.

With "In a Grove", the world was introduced to a masterful style deeply rooted in Japanese identity. The work, when deeply analyzed, is essentially a Zen koan about what can and cannot be understood. Alternatively, it can be viewed as a re-narration of a Zen koan about the knowable and the unknowable. Despite its brevity, the short story contains core ideas ingrained in the spirit and culture of the Japanese people for generations.

The story of honor, duties and obligations is central to Orientalism, reflecting the long-standing traditions of Confucian values, which have shaped Japanese identity. People need loyalty, honor, duty and responsibility. In this context, when the wife is assaulted by a robber, she burst out to preserve her dignity by forcing one of the two men to die. For her, being shamed in front of two men is unacceptable, far worse than death. The problem here is not about who she loves but about her feminist dignity. The husband, in this case, is recognized as a witness of her virtues. In this case, her husband only shares the same status as the robber even though he is honest and has a higher social rank than that robber. It was common sense for the wife to stand with her husband against the robber and not to beg for the death of a man to preserve her honor. Her words show her authority. The husband has no value over this self-aware virtue.

The wife's words, therefore, represent a true feminist power discourse. After her request, two men rushed into a fight, which is a struggle for honor and beauty. The fight is true, the husband's death is real. But the incident of how the husband died for whose hands was so vague. In the story, three people claim to have killed the husband. First of all it is the wife. This person stated that the reason was because the husband looked at her with "loathing" eyes, so she could not stand it and used a knife to kill him. The second is the robber Tajomaru. He said that he took action just because the woman wanted it and because deeper inside he wanted to live with a beautiful and courageous woman. The last one is the husband Kanazawa Takehiko. He committed suicide because he felt humiliated, hopeless or broken in his belief in their marital relationship.

Three possible thoughts may have appeared in Takehiko's mind: one is that he feels humiliated for being fought over by the robber; two is that he witnesses his wife being raped and cannot help; three, and much worse, is that his wife asked the robber to kill him before she could safely be the robber's wife, which is such an unforgivable insult. Observing from this view, readers would find Akutagawa's story more about moral assertion than the detectiveness in Kafka's story. "In a Grove" bears the shadow of a detective story. There is a murder, a judge, and an investigation with many witnesses involved. In addition to the three characters directly involved in the case – the victim Kanazawa Takehiko, the robber Tajomaru, and the wife Masago – the narrator presents four witnesses, the woodcutter, the priest, the forest guard, and the wife's mother. These four outsiders confirm the murder and the identification of the victim and people

related to him. The victims are a young couple who went into the forest, but only the body of the husband was found, and no one knew where the wife was, even her biological mother. These witnesses just happened to encounter a body that died from a stabbed wound in a bamboo grove. Each witness functions as a narrator and the story is gradually revealed. If the narrative was told from a single "I" or an anonymous narrator perspective from the beginning to the end, the story would surely be straightforward – the cause of death would be uncovered, and the villain would be revealed. Yet, narrating from multiple points of view and mixing up truths and assumptions are optimal ways to increase the story's mystery. This is both a way to create objectivity for the narrative and a method Akutagawa used to "double-characterize" his characters. Except for the witnesses, the three remaining characters are all dual characters and have the same characteristics of seemingly very honest when narrating, but the listeners cannot believe them because they do not own the final truth. In this case, the reader becomes a detective for Akutagawa's story. To create this duality, the narrator interweaves "real" and "unreal" stories.

Events considered "real" may be recorded as follows: There was a husband and a wife going through a forest. There was a robber who loves the beauty of the wife.

The robber planned to tie up the husband and rape the wife.

The husband died, the wife escaped from the robber, no one knew where she went.

These are "real" events since they are confirmed by four witnesses, especially the death of the husband. The death was real and there were three people who admitted being the murderer, but, in the end, no one knew exactly who the killer was. This is the peak of a unique detective parody – more precisely, a parody to the man's innocent belief in "truth": when the man himself declare that he is a murderer then he is the murderer. But if he was not the real killer, then who killed the husband? The question is what made the husband die. When tracing this cause, it is likely that the reader can figure out who the killer is. By this way of creating and solving problems, Akutagawa comes up with a unique way to attract readers to co-creating. Readers will play the role of a witness, or even a "murderer", to interpret the reasonable absurdity about the "real" murderer.

Back to the starting point, the cause of the murder is because the robber loves the beauty of the wife, even after a brief observation. The robber admitted, "she looked like a Bodhisattva" [17. P. 16]. Her beauty is appraised like worship. Therefore, the evil intention to usurp that "female bodhisattva" of the robber is somewhat justified because he is infatuated with her like "a worship". From this perspective, beauty is also dual. Beauty can awaken not only kindness but also sin. The robber, in his words, wanted to possess her body for her appearance, and also wanted to marry her for the soul. This once again creates a confusing ambiguity.

In addition, when the robber lured the husband into a trap, the wife was always wary; she "would wait on horseback" [17. P. 18] while the husband, blinded by greed for imagined treasure buried in the forest, followed the robber without

suspicion. Comparing their behaviors, the husband appears unworthy – foolish and greedy – making it easy for the "clever" robber to carry out his dark conspiracy. The death of the husband comes from his greed. The rape of the wife comes from the robber's sexual desire and the woman's beauty. The philosophy of sin implies that sin comes from greed, beauty, and sexual desire.

Kafka, however, approaches sin differently. For Josef K., sin lies in belief itself. To think of oneself as a sinner is to become one. Similarly, in *"In a Grove"*, even if the wife does not physically kill her husband, she is also a criminal, she is the cause of the "inappropriation", which leads to the death of the husband, even if the husband died of his own hand (suicide, as told by the soul) or of the robber (as in the robber's confession). So, it is not entirely wrong to state that the woman killed her husband. However, when she declares to kill the husband herself, the narrative goes much deeper: people can kill without a knife. This moment reflects a Zen koan – very vague but very humane: the murderer can be anyone and the murder can be of any type, even through acts that do not actually cause death. The philosophy here is that a person will always be a criminal when they let go of their desires and act on intrusive thoughts. Therefore, they will easily execute the murder sentence in a non-physical act of murder.

So, is the robber a real murderer? Similar to the wife, he might not have been the one who inserted the sword into the husband's chest, but he was still the killer. In metaphorical terms, his act of appropriating other people deserves a conviction of murder. He is tricky. He not only seduced the husband, but also realized the murder. The very person who lives outside the law points out the murder behavior of those who never kill. He accuses the judges, who in the name of justice accuse others, "In killing, I use the sword I wear at my side. Am I the only one who kills people? You, you don't use your swords. You kill people with your power, with your money. Sometimes you kill them on the pretext of working for their good. It's true they don't bleed. They are in the best of health, but all the same you've killed them. It's hard to say who is a greater sinner, you or me" [17. P. 17].

The above quote is just a sudden commentary speech of the robber, but it captures the "murderous" nature of the era or life in general. To survive, people need to compete. In a sense, any competition for or not for profit has the risk of damaging the partners. According to the robber's narration, his original purpose was not to kill anyone but to rape a woman, a very instinctive desire in Freud's sense. However, after performing the act, he was moved by the woman and listened to her to fight and kill her husband. The murder was supposed to make way for him to live with the woman. It is because of the desire to beauty (body and soul) that the thief commit murder.

But not only did the robber claim the murder, the wife also insisted on admitting that evil sin. "Worthless as I am, I must have been forsaken even by the most merciful Kwannon. I killed my own husband. I was violated by the robber. Whatever can I do? Whatever can I... I..." [17. P. 23]. The husband did not lose to the other two when he identified himself as a murderer. The ghost's narrative is the last piece of the tragic, murderous puzzle, which is highly "confessed" or "repentant". The ghost got "angry" when the robber flirted and raped his wife,

then "jealous" because of the courtship and "hurt" because his beloved wife agreed to go with the robber. Not stopping there, the pain of the husband was "extreme" when the wife asked the robber to kill her husband because if the husband lived, she could not live with the robber. But instead of following her words, the robber sided with her husband, asking if the husband should kill the wandering wife. Because of the robber's actions, the husband admired him without blaming for anything he did. When the wife fled, the robber pursued her. Left alone in solitude and despair, the husband committed suicide. This is the story told by the ghost.

From the husband's perspective, the wife deserves to die, yet he believes he deserves so more because of loving this unworthy person. The dialogue in the story is laid out continuously on the surface and in the deeper layers. Thanks to the robber, the husband realized the truth about his wife's personality. The robber, as the husband understood, was indignant because of the brazenness of the woman and wanted to eliminate her. Luckily, she escaped. Summarizing the narratives of the three characters, we see that everyone is both a victim and a criminal. The murder of the man was caused by all three people, and everyone was convinced. But even if everyone pleaded guilty, readers and the judge himself could not tell who the true killer was. Therefore, killers, as analyzed, are a "humankind attribute", as listed below:

A foolish man (husband) is a murderer: death for foolishness.

A greedy man (husband, robber) is a murderer: death for greed.

An inferior man (husband) is a murderer: death for weakness.

An honorable person (husband, wife) is a murderer: death for honor.

A self-respecting man (husband, wife, robber) is a murderer: death for self-respect [18. P. 99].

As such, every human "quality" or "attribute" can potentially kill other people. Humans, no matter how many qualities they have, can bear risks to be murderers. This creates a paradoxical, counter-Zen Zen koan – a reflection on the bitter irony of human existence. People die because of greed, love, honor, and countless other reasons, with no escape from these forces. It turns out that the thought that "the killer is not the killer" has shifted to mean a non-murderer who is still considered a killer. So, Zen teaches us that every human behavior, ethically or not, contains the danger of killing and destroying life. People need to be aware of this all the time.

The story unfolds like a dream, instilled by the Freudian spirit that explores the dark unconsciousness and its unparalleled power. In this realm, the human nature is always boiling, waiting to "overthrow" the achievements of the existing civilization. A story with three self-declared murderers of the same murder conveys the deep mysteries of human soul. Akutagawa does not seem to write about a specific murder case but rather about a potential murder that can happen anywhere, in any form, throughout the unpredictable journey of human life. His works, thus, constantly increase their reach among readers [18. P. 100].

Among Akutagawa researchers, Howard Hibbett presents the most thorough analysis and appropriate evaluation of this Japanese writer's work, "What he did was to question the values of his society, dramatize the complexities of human

psychology, and study, with a Zen taste for paradox, the precarious balance of illusion and reality. He developed a variety of techniques - from realism to fantasy, symbolism to surrealism - and used all of them in the search for poetic truth" [17. P. 12].

Haruki Murakami is also greatly influenced by Akutagawa. Since elementary school, Murakami read Akutagawa through selected texts in his textbooks. Right from that moment, Murakami was overwhelmed by Akutagawa's liberal writing and sophisticated use of Japanese language. Murakami stated, "One never tires of reading and re-reading his best works. Akutagawa was a born short-story writer who produced a great many works, some more successful than others" [19].

Donald Keene in *Dawn to the West* wrote about Akutagawa, "No one can read them without recognizing in Akutagawa a quality at once peculiarly modern and peculiarly tragic. In his last works he surrendered the skills that were his birthright and gained with his death a lonely immortality" [16. P. 589]. Despite his appreciation for Akutagawa, Keene insists that the "multiple points of view" technique in "In a Grove" (Keene translated as *Within a Grove*) was affected by the West. "Several viewpoints were inspired by Robert Browning's *The Ring and the Book*. But even if this work influenced the conception of *In a Grove*, Akutagawa's contribution can hardly be disputed" [16. P. 572]. The idea of Europe as the center of literary innovation is not satisfactory to Akutagawa. The technique of multiple narrative perspectives originates in the East, such as *One Thousand and One Nights*. Even the Japanese have this tradition in Noh drama. Moreover, the multiperspective technique is the only means for Akutagawa to convey the Zen identities of the story. It can be said that Zen philosophy is what gives uniqueness to "In a Grove".

Similarities between the two writers

Howard Hibbett in the *Introduction* of *Rashomon and Other Stories* acknowledges Akutagawa's great talent, "Like Picasso, Akutagawa often varied his style [...]. The composure of his style is undisturbed even by vivid accents of the sordid or the bizarre" [17. P. 9–10]. In *Kappa*, when "I" ask the senior of the country of Kappa, "But I tumbled down into this country entirely by chance. And now I would ask you if you would please tell me how I could escape from here", he receives the answer, "The way by which you came" [20. P. 135].

The conversation is exactly the same as that of Josef K. in Franz Kafka's *The Trial* when talking to the priest in the cathedral. When Josef K. asked for the exit because he found himself lost in the church one morning, the priest replied, "The court does not want anything from you. It receives you when you come and dismisses you when you go" [9. P. 160]. The church instantly transformed into a court, and the priest transformed into a "prison chaplain", yet only Josef K. still being Josef K. with an infinite sentence that could not be overturned.

These dialogues show the extreme confusion among people. It is no longer a lost way on a physical path, but a metaphor for being lost in life, since moral values and lifestyle standards are no longer relevant to reality. These writers are always aware of their "marginalized" destiny, unsure of where to go amidst the

besiegement of a terrible and unintended power. This contributed to the explanation why Kafka had a short lifetime. Although his death at the age of 41 was due to illness, somewhere in him still reveals a feeling of alienation and intolerance with the "others" that have become cruel and barbaric from the surroundings.

Akutagawa's situation may be even more tragic. At the end of his life, according to the research by Eriko Arita, Akutagawa suffered from a lot of miseries and pressure from life. It started from the unexpected journalist career, to the unlucky burning of his sister's house in 1927, and then the suicide of his brother-in-law for being suspected of burning the house. Eriko Arita wrote, "It was all too much", because on Sunday, July 24th, 1927, Akutagawa took a fateful sleeping pill and died at the age of 35. Next to his pillow, he placed a Bible and a message explaining the cause of his suicide, "a vague unease about my future" [19]. Among the unpublished works found after his death, there is an earlier work on Jesus, entitled "Sequel to the Man of the West". Akutagawa and Kafka both believe in God's salvation, but at the same time they doubt it. Not only their lives, but also their works contain countless mysteries. It is worth noting that, at first glance, their works seemed to be straightforward, at least linguistically, but behind that clarity it is not easy to follow them at all. The way they brought philosophical thoughts into everyday stories is not simple. Only literature masters can do it.

While Kafka's pseudo-detective story concludes with a murder and Akutagawa's begins with one, both stories discuss the origin and nature of sin. Although the story structures and each writer's interpretation are different, they share the same view that sin ultimately destroys people. In Kafka's work, the character is a "criminal investigator", while in Akutagawa's, the characters are "criminal confessors". Kafka's protagonist acts as the "detective", meanwhile Akutagawa's one as the "criminal". However, the similarity between the two writers is in the characters in their stories: regardless of whether they are victims or criminals, sin and evil still reign in them. These are hard to avoid as humans.

Detective stories are based on "journeys", on a situation of a thrill or a mysterious event which is often related to a case. Therefore, important elements of a detective story are the plots, which contain several mutations, and a wise detective character. When postmodernists produce their works according to the detective, they in fact use "fake plots" or "fake detective characters". They keep *purposes of trace*, which are nature of the detective stories, but they change tracing purposes by adding many topics and many plots. It is to aim at recreating the chaos of life and obscurity without escape when detectives involve in the quest and in most of cases, postmodern detective works set a target of detecting human nature. These postmodern features can all be found in the stories of Kafka and Akutagawa.

Kafka and Akutagawa's stories are a "trap-story"; according to McHalle, "Kafka's texts seem to promise allegorical meaning, soliciting an allegorical interpretation from the reader, yet withholding any indication of specific allegorical content. Everything is potentially allegorical, but nothing is actually an allegory; the trope seems to lack a specific literal level or frame of reference" [21. P. 141].

Conclusion

The pseudo-detective stories are deeply connected to the ideologies of major religions while reflecting postmodernism in nature. If *The Trial* is related to Christianity, "In a Grove" is in the shadow of Buddhism. These works carry the philosophy of the origin of crime, the way people commit crimes, and the warning about the harms of crime. Each writer has his own way of composing, but they create dialogs with the traditional thinking. The dialog [22] makes them different from other writers. In the end, the crime they (or readers) find out, however, depends on each person. They want human beings to remember to live better.

Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction has brought a positive view in life. Writers like Franz Kafka and Ryunosuke Akutagawa composed long before Jacques Derrida's time, but with senses of the genius artists, they deconstructed the traditional detective genre to compose the pseudo-detective story. Their works created many religious, ideological and literary intersignalities [23. P. 239] and dialogues with traditional culture in order to build a more liberal and humane view of life.

Starting with Kafka, the pseudo-detective is a detective story, but the content, the meaning of the story is not focused on that specific trial: the aim is not to find out who the culprit is but to focus on the issue of sin: how it is shaped and how people deal with it [24]. Kafka and Akutagawa are writers who have a neutral viewpoint (neither optimistic nor pessimistic) about life. Rather, they advise people not to be optimistic about the world. Although life does not lack good people, it is still overcast, dark and unreasonable due to greediness and aggression of many people. If the illusion is bright, someone will easily fall into the tragedy of disillusionment. Pseudo-detective writers recommend that we look at life from the darkness, bottom up, not top down, which is similar to the tradition of seeing people as the center of the universe. Best of all, that seemingly negative philosophy has been true for many situations throughout Kafka's time until now. Humankind has never shown a face in order to be able to see every hidden corner, every evil part as they do now. Many people even are proud of their own evil.

The pseudo-detective story also shows people that social evils are not far away, but lie within the very actions of individuals who choose to ignore sin. From this perspective, these writers demonstrate profound reflective insights. They force readers to reflect on themselves in each moment, uncovering hidden flaws and moral shortcomings. This process of self-reflection, over time, can contribute to the improvement of both individuals and society as a whole.

Kafka and Akutagawa can be seen as pioneers of the pseudo-detective genre, crafting a unique and complex narrative style. Deconstructed in identity, a detective story is not as it used to be. Its detectiveness is changed. While the stories cover main characteristics and make it act as if it is a detective story, they diverge in intent. The purpose now is not to solve a crime but to reveal the victim and the murder which always inhabit in anyone.

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