

Degeneration of the Japanese Family: A Barthean Analysis of Spatial Arrangements in *The Family Game*

Richiko Ikeda

Abstract

The Family Game (Kazoku Gemu), directed and written by Yoshimitsu Morita in 1983, is a satirical movie, portraying degeneration of a modern Japanese family. The present study analyzes this film and examines how the problem of fragmentation in the modern family is presented in satirical form. More specifically, it examines how the element of satire, which is the difference between "what is" and "what ought to be," is manifested in the use of space in *The Family Game*. Space is used to signify interpersonal relationships. Barthes's (1967, 1972) semiotic analysis of myth and metalanguage helps clarify how the space portrayed in the movie signifies interpersonal relationships.

Fragmentation is endemic to modern society. This problem of fragmentation is also manifested in the modern Japanese family. The phenomena, "fatherlessness," "dominant mother," and "loneliness of the elderly" in the family exemplify this problem (see Ikeda, 1992). Modern industrialized society has deprived the family of the father, the major source of labor outside the home. Consequently the Japanese mother becomes apparent authority in the family. However, the material-oriented modern society has made the mother an "education crazed mom (*kyoiku mama*)"; she believes that the only way to survive in the society is to send her son to a prestigious school and company hoping that he will take care of her after she becomes old. Ironically, the material crazed son the mother creates does not care about the elderly. He perceives the elderly as "useless" and "a bulky garbage."¹

The Family Game (1983), directed and written by Yoshimitsu Morita, portrays the modern fragmented family in Japan. The father comes home late almost every

night; the mother takes care of everything at home and kills time with her idle hobbies; the elder brother goes to a prestigious high school, but is getting tired of being the pride of the family; and the younger brother is approaching a high school entrance exam, but is in danger of failing it. Even though the members of the family are living together and appear to be caring for each other, they are only united by a materialistic interest. The parents are only concerned with their sons' academic success, a concern which manifests their materialistic and fragmented desire. Two sons are being "educated" to survive in the competitive, materialistic society. They are provided with private rooms only to mind their own business. They have no "qualitative" caring relationship and are separated from each other. The only thing which apparently ties this family together is the common concern for the younger brother's entrance examination.

The parents hire a tutor for the younger brother. He is a deviant character and has a peculiar effect on this family. Although the younger brother's grades, thanks to him, improve, the elder brother's grades begin to decline. At the end of this movie, he stands up and stirs up this family. The tutor provides the essential difference which creates the satirical flavor to this film.

The Family Game is a satirical movie. Richie (n.d.) describes the film as a "TV sit-com gone wrong" (p. 28). However, satire is an essential element in all sit-coms that express social commentary. *The Family Game* is a sit-com gone *right*.² Although the family portrayed in this film is a family that we may find in a TV sit-com and is a fictitious family, it appears to be a typical family found in urban areas in Japan. What is portrayed in the fiction often tells us the truth. The father is rarely home, consequently family matters are the responsibility of his wife. She is a "*kyoiku mama*" or education-oriented mother. Their two sons have to go through the "examination hell" in order to survive in modern Japanese society. The director Morita sees this film as "close to real life" (Rayns, 1984, p. 62). He commented on this film in a press-release: "I wanted to keep a strong current of reality running through it" (Rayns, 1984, p. 62). He even refused to use any music in the movie so

that he could present the movie as realistic. Morita intended to make this film accurate; however, the reality that he described in the film is exaggerated. Satire makes us see "what is" more clearly.

The purpose of this exaggeration in satire is to present the difference between "what is" and "what ought to be" (Pollard, 1970). In a definition, satire is constituted by the difference between the former and the latter; this very difference is a signified that exists in relation to the discursive image presented in narrative as a signifier. The present paper analyzes how the problem of fragmentation in the modern Japanese family is presented in satirical form.

Although there are a number of ways to analyze the film, the present study focuses on the space represented on the screen. The way the director Morita uses space signifies interpersonal relationships. The space on the screen is a signifier and the interpersonal relationship is a signified. However, space signifies not only the relationship in the family, but also that in society, the endemic fragmentation mentioned at the beginning. In other words, we can see polysemic meanings of the signifier, space, in the satirical film, *The Family Game*, which will be discussed later.

Theoretical Ground of the Study

As its theoretical base, this study of space in a film applies Barthes's (1967, 1972, 1972) theory of the system. Barthes's theoretical description of the relationship between the signifier and signified can be used to show how the film creates its satire.

Barthes (1972) analyzes the structure of all cultural phenomena as systems of signs. For example, the garment or food system can be studied as a semiotic system, which conveys a set of meanings. This semiotic system is constituted by the relationship between the signifier and signified in the same way as the linguistic sign is constituted by the structural relationship between them. In other words, the "associative total" of signifier and signified constitutes the sign. This is the "tri-dimensional pattern" of the signifier, the signified, and the sign. In Barthes's semiology,

the third term, the sign, is significant: The sign unites signifier and signified. When language or a semiotic system creates connotations (myth), the sign itself becomes a mere signifier in a second order of signification.

The notion of the "tri-dimensionality" of the sign system is related to Barthes's (1977) idea of the polysemic meaning of a sign. In his book *Image, music, text*, Barthes (1977) argues that the same signifiers suggest many possible signifieds at the same time. We are allowed to choose some signifieds and ignore others. This does not mean, however, that the structure of the multiplicity of the meaning of the sign is arbitrary. Our cultural experience allows us to recognize what the signifier signifies. For example, the word "rose" (signifier) identifies a type of a flower (signified). But on another order of meaning, the unified word and flower-concept (the sign "rose"), is also an expression of passion. In the western culture, people are able to apprehend the connotative meaning of the rose.³

Barthes (1972) elucidates the polysemic meaning of signs and "tri-dimensional pattern" of the signifier, signified, and sign by introducing the idea of myth in *Mythologies*. Myth, according to Barthes, is a type of speech that can be conveyed by a discourse. Barthes explains:

Speech of this kind is a message. It is therefore by no means confined to oral speech. It can consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech. (p. 110)

Myth is "a second-order semiological system" (p. 114) in Barthes's semiotic chain of "tri-dimensional pattern" of the signifier, signified, and sign. "That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system," Barthes

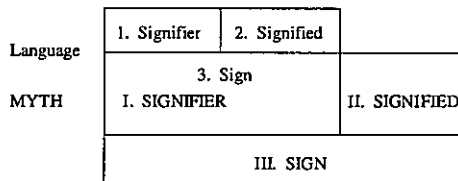


Fig. 1. Semiotic chain of a mythical speech. Source: Barthes, 1972, p. 115.

states, "becomes a mere signifier in the second" (p. 114). Fig. 1 illustrates this semiotic chain of a mythical speech.

The figure indicates that there are two semiotic systems, linguistic and mythical. In Barthes's (1972) example, the image of a Negro-French soldier giving the French salute on the cover of *Paris-Match* simply gives us the meaning of the picture, "a Negro-French soldier giving the French salute." This is the first, linguistic level. The image/signifier-signified/concept, however, becomes a signifier of the second mythical level, signifying Frenchness and militariness. In Barthes's words:

On the cover [of *Paris-Match*], a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me. . . . there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is a presence of the signified through the signifier. (p. 116)⁴

Myth, for Barthes, exists as culturally specific forms of semiotic connotations: Signs become signifiers, and these signifiers signify connotative meanings.⁵ To understand this functioning--or any functioning of signifying systems--Barthes argues that we must also develop a metalanguage.

Barthes presents a metalinguistic level of analysis (the level of *la langue*) in his semiotic study, while he analyzes myth, a type of speech (*parole*), in a semiotic system (*langue*). The signifier and signified on the linguistic level, which constitutes the signifier of myth, becomes the signified in metalanguage. Fig. 2, which is derived from Barthes's (1967) *Element of Semiology* and revised for clarity, illustrates these

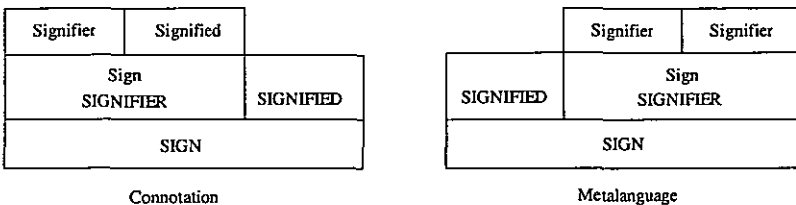


Fig. 2. Semiotic systems of connotation and metalanguage.

two systems.

Comparing the chart of connotation to that of the semiotic chain of a mythical speech (fig. 1), we can see that Barthes equates myth and connotation. To illustrate these two charts, for example, the image/sound "rose" (signifier) signifies a flower (signified), within the sign (the relation of signifier and signified). This sign, however, becomes the signifier for the connotation "passion" (signified) in a connotative or mythological system. It also becomes the signified in a relationship with the signifier "noun" in a grammatical or metalinguistic system. The first linguistic or literary level of sign (signifier and signified) can become either the signifier in connotation or the signified in metalanguage on the second connotative or metalinguistic level, depending on one's analytical purposes. We can also see the binary opposition between the metalanguage used to describe *la langue*, and the actual utterances of myth (*parole*) in these two systems. Myth traffics in signifiers to create or connote new signifieds; metalanguage creates new signifiers for more or less abstract elements constituting meaning.

Barthes's metalinguistic system can explain how satire as a mode of discourse works. Since all literary genres are metalinguistic—generic names are signifiers for classes of discourse (i. e., "poetry," "drama," "fiction," etc.)—satire is a metalinguistic category. Literary discourse (signifier) and literary meaning (signified) together constitute a signifying relationship (sign) which becomes the signified for the generic category (signifier) on a metalinguistic level. In satire the relation of discourse and meaning creates irony. Preminger (1965) argues that irony is "a means of expressing the paradoxical nature of reality" (p. 407). Reality is, however, not always constituted by logical contradiction; reality can be understood through the difference between "what is" and "what ought to be." Therefore, it is more accurate to say that irony is constituted by the difference between "what is" and "what ought to be." The metalinguistic term of "satire" also includes the satirical element of the difference between "what is" and "what ought to be." Pollard (1970) claims that satire is "always acutely conscious of the difference between what things are and what ought to

be" (p. 3). Therefore, both irony and satire include the element of difference; however, satire is a sign on the societal level, while irony is that on the literary/descriptive level. Fig. 3 describes this system of satire.

	Literary signifier: Discourse	Literary signified: The literary meaning of the difference between what is and what ought to be
SOCIAL SIGNIFIER: SATIRE	Literary sign: "Irony" SOCIAL SIGNIFIED: SOCIAL CRITIQUE COMING FROM THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT IS AND WHAT OUGHT TO BE	
SOCIAL SIGN: "SATIRE"		

Fig. 3. Semiotic system of satire.

Since what the metalinguistic signifier, "satire," is signifying is the difference between "what is presented" and "what is not presented" on the level of social (not literary) life, understanding the social context where satire is created is crucial. On this level, "what is presented" is always portrayed explicitly; "what ought to be" is connoted, a form of Barthes's mythology. In other words, the implication of "what ought to be" is a cultural message and what is signified on a metalinguistic level ("what ought to be") is culturally contextualized. The viewer of the text who has a cultural experience can apprehend the meaning on the ideal of "ought to be." Therefore, the tension between "what is" and "what ought to be" gives the audience pleasure in the satirical form of arts.

The relationship between the semiotic system of satire (*langue*) and the mythical connotation (*parole*), therefore, constitutes not only a binary opposition, but also a dialectical discourse, since myth is a cultural message and consequently systematic as well as connotative. In order to apprehend the cultural message one must understand the context in which myth is created.

The present study of space in *The Family Game*, analyzes the relationship between the space and interpersonal relationship portrayed in the film based on the

satire/myth dialectical opposition. It examines how space and interpersonal relationships create a satirical system as well as a mythical message.

The space which is portrayed in *The Family Game* signifies a modern, degenerated family and society. However, it also signifies a traditional family and society, which may be "what ought to be." Before analyzing the central individual set in which Morita uses space to create his satire, the use of space in Japan needs to be explained in order to understand what the traditional and modern use of space signify, respectively.

The Use of Space in Japan

The traditional use of space in Japan is symbolized as a circle or center. In a traditional Japanese house, for example, people sit around the Japanese fireplace (*hibachi*) and spend the cold winter together. The fireplace is usually located in the center of a room. This traditional arrangement of a room renders a strong emotional tie among family members.⁶ Hall (1966) elucidates this point by quoting a Japanese priest's remark:

To really know the Japanese you have to have spent some cold winter evenings snuggled together around the *hibachi*. Everybody sits together. A common quilt covers not only the *hibachi* but everyone's lap as well. In this way the heat is held in. It's when your hands touch and you feel the warmth of their bodies and everyone feels together--that's when you get to know the Japanese. That is the real Japan! (p. 150)

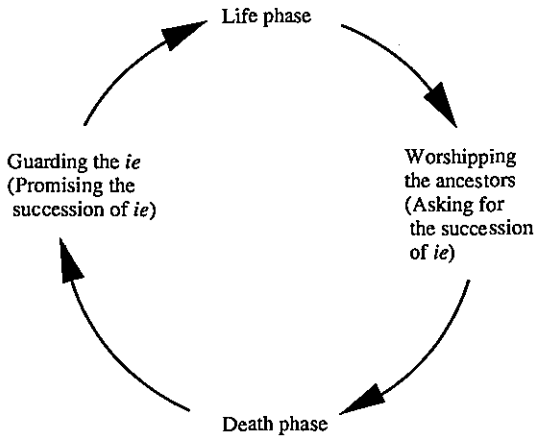
Hall explains that psychologically this arrangement gives positive reinforcement toward the center of a room and negative reinforcement toward the edge.

The strong emotional attachment to the hearth is closely linked to the term, *ie* meaning a house or family. Etymologically, *ie* signifies "hearth (*he*)"--*i*, a prefix, and *he* are combined and pronounced as *ie* (Nakane, 1967). According to this linguistic evidence, the family is a hearth itself. In other words, the cyclical space centered to *hibachi* is metaphorical, and the warmth of the hearth is essential to the family.

Although sitting around the *hibachi* in the center of the room has been the

image of the Japanese family, the term *ie*, which designated the generic term "family," came to mean a traditional family in contrast to *kazoku* in modern Japan. *Kazoku* means a family but signifies the modern family (Ikeda, 1992).

Ie is an ego-less, harmonious collaboration among the living, dead, and unborn members in the traditional movement of time for maintaining a lineage to origin (see Ikeda, 1992). Members of *ie* cannot identify themselves without *ie*; as members of *ie* they work together to preserve the lineage from generation to generation. Preservation of the line is practiced in the cyclical rhythm of one's life and death. This natural movement of time maintains *ie*, which is symbolized as the circle (Fig. 4).



Source: Ikeda, 1992, p. 87.

Fig. 4. The cycle of life and death in *ie*.

In the life phase, the living members of *ie* worship their ancestors every day as well as on such special occasions as *o-higan* or the spring and autumn equinoctial weeks⁷ and *o-bon* or mid-summer Buddhist festival.⁸ They ask their ancestors to help maintain the succession of *ie*. In the death phase, the ancestor helps the living member leave a descendant who can worship the dead members of *ie*.

Kazoku, on the other hand, consists of self-aware individuals. The ego-less, communal bond found in *ie* has disappeared. The members of *kazoku* has come to

realize that *ie*, which used to be the cosmic world of the whole, is only a segment of reality. The individual asserts that he/she is an independent self, which is one reality, as well as a member of a family, which is seen as another reality.

Emergence of ego is correlated with the discovery of the perspective or depth-space, while the unaperspectival or flat space expresses the world of an ego-less unity (Gebser, 1985). Human beings step out of the flat space consisting of two polar elements of complementarity and locate themselves in a transcendental position of duality. Paintings are good examples in which to see the difference between two-dimensional and three-dimensional worlds. Cave paintings, Oriental brush paintings, and pre-Renaissance paintings are two-dimensional; it does not matter where one stands and looks at them. Post-Renaissance paintings, however, include the perspective or depth space and demand one to situate him/herself. Gebser (1985) explains that the three-dimensional depth or perspective "brings it [space] to man's awareness and lends man his own visibility of himself" (p.18). In other words, a self-conscious "I" is required to objectify and qualify space. Space/perspective, Gebser states, "locates and determines the observer as well as the observed" (p. 18). Now the separation of the observer and the observed has occurred after the discovery of the perspective. In semiotic term, the depth-space signifies emergence of ego, which is a characteristic of a modern family.

The Japanese title of *The Family Game* is *Kazoku Gemu*, which signifies the modern family. In this movie the depth-space is depicted in numerous scenes--e.g. a narrow corridor in an apartment complex and at school, a narrow rectangular dining room and study/bed rooms of an apartment, and some others. These spaces signify the individualized relationship in the modern Japanese family. The next section examines the semiotic system of space and interpersonal relationships more closely in a specific set in *The Family Game*.

The Analysis of the Scene in *The Family Game*

The Family Game starts with the scene of a bizarre looking dining table. It is

a bar-counter table; people sit on one side of the table and two small movable tables are attached to the other side. This table makes the viewer wonder what this dining arrangement means. The present analysis focuses on this dining arrangement in relation to some other relevant spaces depicted in the movie.

The dining set with this long rectangular table is the scene of action in the film. Dining in Japanese culture signifies family unity and conveys a warm atmosphere. This is why *ie* and the hearth/*hibachi* are so closely linked linguistically. In this movie, however, it creates the opposite effect: confrontation and fragmentation. In the morning, each member of the family eats breakfast separately and at different times; in the evening, the members of the family sometimes get together and eat dinner. They do not, however, face each other at the dinner table, since the table at which they are sitting is like a bar counter. The attention of each person is not toward the other members of the family, but something else--toward the food that they are eating or simply toward him/herself. Even though the parents care about their sons' future, their concern does not reach directly to their sons in this dining situation. "Self-less" parents who are willing to do anything for their sons' academic success is ironically in vain. Moreover, the parents' apparent "self-less" concern is a materialistic one, which is manifested in the topic at the table. The parents always talk about the study progress of the sons in the family, which annoys their sons and creates a gap between the parents and sons. It seems that the parents sitting on the left of the table confront the sons on the right of it. In other words, the generation gap between parents and children is depicted in this scene. The children, especially the elder son, are more individualistic; they are only taught to care about their academic success. Although they look like a "family," they have lost the fundamental quality of being a "family," which is "qualitative" caring relationships that transcend their individual members. These caring relationships constitute the "family." The members of this family is not a "family" anymore, but they are just playing a game of a "family" as the title of this movie suggests. When a family sits around the *hibachi*, the hearth is the center of the dining arrangement. In the bar-counter table in this

movie, *hibachi* in the center is replaced by a food stand moving from left to right (or vice versa) across the table. The warmth emitting from the hearth, which radiates to the members surrounding it and stays within the circle, does not reach the members sitting in the line; it scatters all over the place in the linear movement.

Linearity is an expression of the modern, perspectival world. For example, time is conceived in the linear, spatial term in modern society. The linear movement of time--past, present, future--dominates: "Time as a quality or an intensity was simply not taken into account and was deemed to be only an accidental and inessential phenomenon" (Gebser, 1985, p. 285).

In many places of this movie, the director Morita uses spatial metaphors to describe modern society. Tall buildings and chimneys rising to the sky--which, as an extension of phallus, collectively is a symbol of a modern, patriarchal society--are presented as a background of the scene as well as a connection between the scene. In the perspectival, modern world, the unity of "the paternal phallic column and the maternal uterine cave" (Gebser, 1985, p. 10) in the premodern, unaperspectival world has become fragmented and separated. The phallic symbol of skyscrapers expresses an individualistic, competitive society, where one's concern is how one can be materially bigger or better. Morita also sets the residence of the family in a highrise apartment complex located in a newly developed area, to which a boat must carry people. It seems that the apartment is in an isolated island, located in a spatial arrangement which signifies a modern, alienated society.

Each son's individual study/bed room and the private space of a car also signify an individualized, fragmented society. Even though it is an extremely small space like a rabbit house,⁹ the apartment has two individual study/bed rooms for the sons. In an individualized, personalized study/bed room of a modern Japanese house, children are encouraged to mind their own business--their study--which consequently make them more individualistic. The parents, on the contrary, do not have any private room; their bedroom is connected to the dining room and does not function as a private bedroom in the day time. It is more or less like a room in the traditional

Japanese house. Traditional Japanese houses do not have individualized, personalized rooms; every room is available for every member of the family depending on the purpose. Therefore, the people living in a traditional Japanese house tend to have less individual activity or life. The parents' bedroom seems to be used for every member of the family during the day time and for themselves at night. However, they also need a private space; they use the space of a car as a private room. Whenever they need to talk about a "private matter," which is always about their sons' study progress, they go to their car. The parents in this movie are not individualistic, but self-less characters; more accurately, they are confused and trapped between premodern (self-less) and modern (material-oriented) mentalities. The private space of a car, which signifies a modern, individualistic consciousness, and the topic they talk about in the car, which signifies a premodern, ego-less consciousness, expresses their confusion.

Morita also uses a high camera angle effectively in order to connote the fragmentation within modern, individualized interpersonal relationships and society. The high camera angle used in a school yard scene, for example, creates three-dimensional space. The space portrayed, a flat school yard with students playing, is two-dimensional; however, the high camera angle sets our eyes above the school yard and gives us an illusion of a depth space. The camera controls and leads us to the world the way only the camera can see it (Berger, 1977, p. 17). The students playing in the yard look like just points. By creating the depth space with a high camera angle, Morita successfully depicts the students as dehumanized, measurable units in the competitive world of modernity.

This scene reminds us of the previous scene where a teacher throws the exams away through the window and the students who received bad grades have to go down to the school yard to get it. The students are dehumanized and measured by the scores that they received. In other words, the quality of the student is reduced to a measurable thing, which is the score of the exam.

The competitive world of modernity is also symbolized in the model of the

roller coaster displayed in the younger son's room, in which balls keep running until they are removed. In order to survive in modern, competitive society, people must keep going like the balls in the model of the roller coaster. However, the goal of this competition might be nothing like the vanishing point of the spiral roller coaster that the younger son draws in his textbook. This picture is indicative, implying that "examination hell"¹⁰ does not lead the Japanese students to anywhere. However, Japanese "self-less" parents force their children to be competitive in this system and the children become "selfish" surviving in this competitive society. The gap between the parents and children becomes bigger and bigger and fragmented.

Along with the spatial connotation that Morita created in various scenes of this movie, the space arranged in the dining set, the major spatial metaphor, signifies the fragmented, modern family relationships. The set, as a signifier, signifies a family gathering, the signified on the first linguistic level, according to Barthes's semiotic chain of myth. However, the relationship between the signifier and signified on the first level, which constitutes the sign, becomes the signifier on the second mythical level and signifies fragmented family relationships and society (Fig. 5).

	Signifier: People are gathering around a bar-counter table	Signified: A family gathering	
Linguistic level	Sign: <i>Kazoku</i>		
	SIGNIFIER: A JAPANESE FAMILY GATHERING AROUND A BAR-COUNTER TABLE	SIGNIFIED: FRAGMENTATION IN A JAPANESE FAMILY AND SOCIETY	
MYTHICAL LEVEL	SIGN: <i>KAZOKU GEMU</i> FRAGMENTATION BECOMES DOMINANT IN A JAPANESE FAMILY AND SOCIETY		

Fig. 5. Semiotic chain of a mythical speech.

The space created on the screen signifies the family gathering and also connotes fragmented family relationships and modern society. This connotation of the space is a mythical message.

To further develop the semiotic analysis of space, it is then necessary to examine how the semiotic system of satire works in *The Family Game*. Although the Westernized audience grasps the implication of "what ought to be" from what is presented in the movie, the element of "what ought to be" is subtly portrayed, which is, in this case, a circle that signifies a harmonious unity of a family and society. For example, a scene where a neighbor woman visits the mother of the family may demonstrate "what ought to be." When the woman feels uncomfortable sitting by the side of her hostess at the table, she moves the chair to the other side of the table. Then, she starts to share her family matters with the mother of the family. The face-to-face position triggers her to initiate this conversation. The contrast of the use of space in this scene with the scenes of the family dining in tandem helps us understand the difference between "what is"--a fragmented relationship which is signified by the side-by-side position at the table--and "what ought to be"--a caring relationship which is signified by the face-to-face position. It is the difference of these that constitutes the signified in the semiotic system of satire.

In this scene, the camera is set behind the neighbor woman and shoots the back of the woman and the face of the mother. This is a violation of traditional camera work. When two people facing each other, special cutting technique is necessary to create a space between the two facing each other (Hasumi, 1991, p. 58). Because of this violation, Morita successfully created the unnaturalness of the conversation between the neighbor woman and the mother and depicted the mother's embarrassment. In this scene, the mother seems to be very uneasy sitting face-to-face, because she is not used to sitting in such a way and carrying a private conversation. In the nuclear family like hers, the communal bond has been lost and neighborliness has become bizarre. She turns away her eyes from the woman and casts an embarrassing look to us. The mother obviously prefers the side-by-side position. The contrast of her favorite position to that of the neighbor woman also emphasizes the satirical element of the difference.

The key character who helps us apprehend "what ought to be" in the satirical

system of this film is a tutor. He is hired by the family to teach the younger brother, who is a ninth grader preparing for a high school entrance exam. The tutor is an example of failure in modern Japanese society--he is a seventh year senior of a third-rate college, which implies that he would never have a chance of riding on a major career track in Japan.

The tutor behaves asocially. He drinks everything with a slurping sound, which is considered uncouth among the young people. The young generation regards any custom introduced from western culture as stylish, such as sipping tea or coffee quietly. This example shows that the tutor acts against the social norm. In other words, he refuses to conform to the dominant social norm. The tutor is, therefore, depicted as an extremely individualistic character in Japanese society.

The tutor violates the interpersonal space of modern Japan. He keeps an intimate distance with the younger brother of the family, which almost gives us an impression that he may be homosexual. However, this is not the case; the film shows his pretty, but bizarre girlfriend. Then, the violation of the interpersonal space may be interpreted as an exaggeration of his ambivalent role of a surrogate father or elder brother. The tutor later establishes a "close" relationship with the younger brother by teaching him not only how to obtain good grades, but also how to fight, although this relationship is still a modern materialized one. The role of father or elder brother cannot be substituted for a tutor who is hired per hour. All he can teach is how to survive in this modern competitive world.

The tutor also affects the elder son of the family, who used to be an excellent student and a pride of the family. After the tutor is hired, the elder son does not study much. He starts to daydream in class and to be interested in a girl who is a different type than him. He even starts to say that he may not go to college or quit high school. He begins to refuse to conform to the majority of other Japanese of his age. He becomes more individualistic which is apparently influenced by the tutor.

The elder son has a telescope, an invention in Renaissance and a symbol of modern technology. One day he comes up to the roof of the apartment with his

telescope and sets it close to the place where the tutor is teaching the younger brother how to fight. He starts to watch stars and ignores the fact that the tutor and his brother are there. It seems that he indulges in his own world and cannot see anything else. He does not even seem to care about his brother's entrance exam, which is in contrast to the "self-less" parents, whose concern is their sons' academic success.

The parents are sacrificing their life to their sons; they are, at the same time, pushing their ideal to the sons. In this sense, they are egoistic. In order to make their ideal true, they offer their sons individual study/bed rooms, where their sons become more and more individualistic. The tutor gets tired of the family of his student, who are only pursuing materialistic interests. He is also sick of himself who, nonetheless, is doing the same thing and even helping the family of his student being degenerated. In other words, the tutor himself comes to embody the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity, although he presents himself as a modern individualistic character throughout the film. He is hired and paid by the hour and with a bonus—he obtains extra money when he can successfully help raise the rank of the younger brother in class. He teaches the younger brother efficiently and completes his task. However, he finally explodes himself: At the celebration dinner for the younger brother who has passed the entrance exam for a first-rate high school, he messes up the expensive dinner on the bar-counter table, knocks all of the family members down, and leaves. During the dinner the topic moves from the success of the younger brother's entrance exam to the elder brother's study progress. However, the elder brother starts to say that he does not want to go to college or even may quit high school. The confrontation between the parents and him becomes obvious. The tutor can no longer stand himself and this family, in which their interest is a materialized one and qualitative interpersonal relationship is lost. This family, consisting of material oriented parents and individualistic children, does not look like a "family" to him, and he himself helped the family to be isolated from each other more and more. After the tutor leaves, the family members sit in a circle and clean up the mess that the tutor made. The circle created in this scene tells us that at last they barely regain the family unity after the

tutor's explosion: On this central set, an arrangement of space connoting *ie*, a traditional family in contrast to *kazoku* or a modern family, is finally presented.

The space portrayed in this scene implies a satirical element of "what ought to be" in relation to the space created by the dining arrangement of this movie. The difference between "what is" (a family is gathering in a line) and "what ought to be" (a family gathers in a circle) constitutes the signified for the literary space of the dining scene in this movie (the ironic level). On the satirical level the relationship between the signifier and signified, which is the sign of "irony," becomes the signified, which is the difference between "what is" (a fragmented family and society) and "what ought to be" (a harmonious unity of a family and society) for the satire of space. Then, the relationship between the signifier and signified on the satirical level creates the sign of "satire." Fig. 6 illustrates this semiotic system of satire.

	Literary signifier: Prople are gathering around a bar- counter table	Literary signified: The literary difference between "a family is gathering in a line" and "a family gathers in a circle"
SOCIAL SIGNIFIER: SATIRE OF SPACE	Leterary sign: "Irony" of space SOCIAL SIGNIFIED: SOCIAL CRITIQUE COMING FROM THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "A FRAGMENTED FAMILY AND SOCIETY" AND "A HARMONIOUS UNITY OF A FAMILY AND SOCIETY"	
SOCIAL SIGN: "SATIRE" OF SPACE		

Fig. 6. Semiotic system of satire of space.

When we compare this chart to that of a mythic chart (fig. 5), we can see that the relationship between the signifier (the image of "people are gathering around bar-counter table") and the signified (the concept of "a family gathering") becomes either the signifier or signified on the second level, as Barthes (1967) demonstrates in *Element of Semiology*.

The present study has focused on the space portrayed in the movie *The Family*

Game and examined what it signifies in myth and satire. The dialectical binary opposition of myth (*parole*) and satire (*langue*) makes us realize how cultural experience is necessary to enjoy a satirical movie. Although the semiotic system of satire is essentially a universal system, we cannot apply it to the analysis of a specific situation without understanding a mythical message. Therefore, we must constantly move back and forth between the mythical and satirical analysis in order to fully make sense out of a satirical movie.

Concluding Remarks

In the ending scene, the noise of a helicopter annoys the mother and makes her wonder what is going on outside at first; however, she decided not to care and falls asleep. She does not care what happens outside her family, which is typical to the mother of the modern, nuclear family in Japan. Even after the explosion of the tutor, the family goes back to the every day life, underneath of which the problem of the family degeneration still exists.

Degeneration of a family has been an issue in journalism and sociological study in 1980s; such newly created phrases as *chichi-oya fuzai* or absence of the father, *kyoiku mama* or education mom, *burendo kazoku* or blend family,¹¹ and *sunatsubu kazoku* or sand particle family¹² express this phenomenon. However, we should not forget that this is one side of the family situation in Japan. There are still rather strong attachments to the idea of a traditional family. For example, the statistics show that the percentage of the three generation residence is still much higher in Japan than that in other industrial countries (see Ikeda, 1992). Although the number of the nuclear household increases, quite a few people still hold a traditional three generation household. This rather strong attachment to the traditional family, in other words, has created the movie *The Family Game*. Otherwise, this movie could not be a satirical, but realistic one.

Notes

- 1 The elderly are often negatively described as *Sodai gomi* or a bulky garbage in Japan. People want to get rid of the elderly, but cannot easily do so in the same way as such bulky garbage as a refrigerator, washer, and furniture is troublesome to discard.
- 2 This movie is based on the novel *The Family Game* written by Yohei Homma. A TV series was also made based on the same novel.
- 3 Since Japan is westernized, Japanese can also apprehend the connotative meaning of the rose as passion.
- 4 Barthes (1972) demonstrates in *Mythologies* "how modern 'mythologies' transform bourgeois values into universals, history into nature" (Brantlinger, 1990, p.96).
- 5 Coward and Ellis (1977) also discuss connotative meanings of signs turn into myths in *Language and Materialism: Developments in Semiology and the Theory of the Subject*.
- 6 Japanese TV dramas include many dining scenes, where family members sit together around the table. Sitting in a circle around the table is a cinematographic form to express a family atmosphere in Japan.
- 7 During these weeks, Buddhist temples hold special services, and people visit the grave to pay respect to their ancestors.
- 8 According to Buddhist belief, the spirits of ancestors visit their families during this festival. Religious services are held to welcome the ancestors of the family; various kinds of foods and flowers are offered to them.
- 9 Since the housing situation in Japan is poor, the Japanese house has been notoriously called "usagi goya (*a rabbit house*)."
- 10 Almost all the Japanese children have to go through the entrance examination for high school and some for college/universities. The competition to get into prestigious schools is high; therefore, the preparation for this is often referred to and called "examination hell."
- 11 This phrase comes from the popular novels called *Burendo kazoku* (blend family) by Shuichi Sae and *Kicchin* (kitchen) by Banana Yoshimoto cited by Nakano (1989). Nakano says that both novels are searching for a new image of a "family." In *Burendo kazoku*, non-kinship members try to establish a "family" relationship; *Kicchin* describes a new "family" relationship between a son and his father who disguises himself.
- 12 It is a degenerated family: A wife and husband live under a divorce-like situation and there

is no communication between parents and children (Nakano, 1989). Nakano describes this family as follows: The father is symptomatically reluctant to go home; all the members in a family feel that they would never come home when leaving the house in the morning, but have no choice except coming back. Everyone seems to live separately, even though he/she is living together. In such a family situation, each family member is like a sand particle.

References

- Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of semiology* (A. Lavers, & C. Smith, Trans.). New York: Hill and Wang. (Original work published 1964).
- Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). New York: The Noonday Press. (Original work published 1957).
- Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, music, text* (S. Heath, Trans.). New York: The Noonday Press. (Original work published 1977).
- Berger, J. (1977). *Ways of seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books.
- Brantlinger, P. (1990). *Crusoe's footprints: Cultural studies in Britain and America*. New York: Routledge.
- Coward, R., & Ellis, J. (1977). *Language and materialism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Gebser, J. (1985). *The ever-present origin* (N. Barstad, & A. Mickunas, Trans.). Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. (Original work published 1949)
- Hall, E. T. (1966). *The hidden dimension*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Hasumi, S. (1990). *Eiga kara no kaiho* [Liberation from the movie]. Tokyo: Kawai Shuppan.
- Ikeda, R. (1992). *Ie to kazoku: A shift in the communication pattern of the Japanese family*. Unpublished master's thesis, The University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.
- Nakane, C. (1967). *Kinship and economic organization in rural Japan*. New York: The Athlone Press.
- Nakano, O. (1989). Shakai gensho [Social phenomena]. *The Innovative Multi-Information Dictionary, Annual Series, 1990*, 1068-1075.
- Pollard, A. (1970). *Satire*. Norfolk: Cox & Wyman.
- Preminger, A., Warnke, F. J., & Hardison, O. B. Jr. (Eds.). (1965). *Princeton encyclopedia of poetry and poetics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rayns, T (Ed.). (1984). *Eiga: 25 years of Japanese cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh International

Film Festival.

Richie, D. (n.d.). Films on the Japanese family: An informal analysis. In C. B. Theodore (Ed.), *The Japanese Family: Japanese society through film* (pp. 21-30). New York: The Japan Society.

Sasaki, S., Okada, Y., & Sasaki, F. (Producers), & Morita, Y. (Director). (1983). *The Family Game* (Film). Nikkatsu / ATG / New Century Producers.

日本における家族の変質 バルトの意味論による映画「家族ゲーム」の空間分析

〈要約〉

池田 理知子

森田芳光監督作品「家族ゲーム」は、変質する現代日本の家族像を描く風刺的な映画である。この論文はどのようにして、この映画が日本の伝統的な「家」制度が崩壊するさまを風刺的に表現しているかを分析するものである。

具体的には、「家族ゲーム」における空間の表現に着目し、それを通して風刺の要素である〈○○であること〉と〈○○であるべきこと〉の間に生まれる差異がいかなる形で明示されるかを考察する。バルトの神話と〈超言語〉の意味論的分析をもとに、この映画の様々な空間が持つ、対人関係のシニフィアンとしての役割を考える。バルトの言う神話とは、言語記号のレベルにおける一つの意味表象の意味作用を意味するものにし、第二次の意味作用を出現させる〈超言語〉の働きである。神話はまた、ある社会の支配的イデオロギーのために作用し、〈超言語〉は意味を構成する抽象的な要素に新しい意味表象を創造する。あらゆる文学的ジャンルは〈超言語〉的であり、風刺もその例外ではない。表現上に生まれる〈○○であること〉と〈○○であるべきこと〉との差異はアイロニーであるが、風刺とはこうした差異の社会的レベルのシーニュなのである。映画に表象される現実とは文化的に規定されるから、観客は作品にみられる現実と〈○○であるべき〉状態との間におこる緊張関係に「面白み」を感じるのである。

日本の伝統的な「家」の概念は対人関係を一つの円環で表象することができる。一方、現代社会の「家族」は、「個人」としての主体性という考えがまだ生まれていない伝統的社会と比較すると、「個」としての自覚をもった主体の集まりといえよう。三次元の空間や視覚的効果は「個人」または「自己」の可視性を意識させるといえるが、「家族ゲーム」でもこうした三次元的な空間の感触を出すためにカメラを高い位置に据えたショットを多用している。また、セットの中心に奇妙に細長いテーブルを食卓として据えている。それは、「円であるべき」表象に反しており、異質な感覚を観客に与える。その「異質性」を理解するには、普遍的な風刺のレベル（ラング）と、日本文化における神話のレベル（パロール）の両側面を分析する必要がある。