

Writing Ethics and Social Justice in the Works of Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto

Shuyi Li

Huazhong University of Science and Technology, Wuhan430000, China

Abstract

Chan Hokei is the leader of the young generation of Hong Kong writers, known as "the first Chinese reasoning". Through intricate storytelling and realistic settings, he portrays the complexity of human nature and the injustices and conflicts in Hong Kong society. His detective novels focus on the challenges individuals face within the social environment and delve into people's struggles with moral and ethical choices. Seicho Matsumoto, the founder of the Japanese social school of deduction, has a simple and heavy writing style. He is good at exposing the roots of modern Japan's illnesses with realistic strokes. His creative concepts deeply influence a group of later generations of deduction novelists. Although Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto lived in different times, regions and cultural conditions, they both paid great attention to social conflicts and the social roots of crime, and their works contain a unique and common writing ethic. Their works inspire readers to consider ethical morals and social justice issues and call for positive societal changes. This paper attempts to interpret this phenomenon and explore how the writing ethic in the works of the two authors is related to social justice, how they promote social justice through their writing and how their writing ethic is influenced by social justice.

Keywords

Chan Hokei, Seicho Matsumoto, writing ethics, social justice, intertextuality.

1. Introduction

What is social justice? It may be interpreted differently at different times. In Ancient Greece, Justice was used as a feminine noun in the name of Themis, the mythical goddess of justice, and usually referred to righteousness set by the gods, or it can be seen as the deification of law. The poet Homer, in the Iliad, describes justice as the basic order that both mortals and gods should observe, and the philosopher Plato, through the Ideal State, associates justice with the morality of the human city-state and attempts to argue for the happiness of the and the misery of the unrighteous. He declared: "soul is immortal and capable of bearing all evils and all goods. We shall always keep to the upper road and practice justice with prudence in every way so that we shall be friends to ourselves and the gods, both while we remain here and when we reap the rewards for it like the victors who go about gathering in the prizes." [1] In this famous assertion, the gods recede, and human obligations begin to take the central place. In ancient Rome, the word justice was also associated with the image of the goddess of justice. The goddess of justice in Roman mythology, Judea, held the scales in her left hand like Themis, and in her right hand, she held a long sword to show her power and strength. At the same time, her eyes, which were covered with a cloth, saw neither temptation nor threat, symbolising absolute selflessness and justice. However, the justice of this period was given more political connotations, as a kind of solid social virtue by the powers that be in Rome, as the statesman Cicero's famous words: "for nothing can be honorable if justice is absent." [2] In the Middle Ages, theologians Augustine and Aquinas introduced God-centred Christian thought into the doctrine of justice and divided the world by the criterion of good and evil, the holy City of God and the unclean Secular City. In

their view, justice in the City of God was the true good that embodied the will of God, while justice in the secular city needed to be supported by earthly laws. During the Renaissance, people's faith in religion has been transitioned to the pursuit of reason, and at the same time, a new understanding of the definition of justice has emerged. From the 16th century to the 19th century, the doctrines of justice were mainly divided into three schools of thought, namely, the contractualist school of Hobbes and Rousseau, who believe that "The social treaty has for its end the preservation of the contracting parties." [3], the utilitarian school of Jeremy Bentham who represents the welfare of the masses as the orientation of justice, and the intuitionist school of Brian Barry who balances the utilitarian principle and the principle of justice. The three schools of thought influenced and complemented each other, and each had a group of staunch supporters. Coming to modern times, John Rawls, as a collector of the theory of justice, came out of nowhere, absorbing the theoretical basis of the above schools and providing implementability for improving the natural social system. Rawls, starting from the original state of man, presumed that there are two principles of justice: one is that freedom is an equal right due to everyone in the society, i.e., the principle of liberty, and the second is that inequality relating to the society and the economy is unavoidable but should be equitable distribution as far as possible in favour of the weaker, i.e. the principle of difference. The first principle is higher than the second, and the purpose of Rawls in proposing these two principles is to allow people to make choices based on rational cognition that is in the interests of both society and the individual to promote the coordination and perfection of the social structure.

The importance of social justice goes without saying, while the relationship between writers' writing ethics and social justice has been rarely mentioned as a cold topic. A very close relationship exists between social justice and writers' writing ethics. For example, we can see Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which makes the readers reflect on racial discrimination through the depiction of a well-known lawyer in the southern part of the United States who defends an innocent black man. Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* shows how the class concept of beauty and ugliness affects an individual's self-esteem and sense of self-worth. George Orwell's *1984*, through a fictional totalitarian regime, warns of the misuse of social power and infringement of individual freedom. These works of imagination explore the battles between order and violence, cultural identity and social inequality, and stimulate the public's attention and discussion on these realities. Writers shape opinions, disseminate information and influence society through words. A good novel can be used as a moral education tool to guide readers to think about what is just and correct behaviour. Alternatively, as an inspiration for action, it encourages readers to participate in social life and inspires them to take positive action to improve societal problems. For example, Mrs Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in 1852. It prompted more people to pay attention to and participate in the political movement against slavery and had a direct impact on the abolition of slavery in the United States. Precisely because the ethics of writers' writing has an inestimable appeal to the realisation of social justice, it also requires writers to bear the most basic responsibility for their works. Writers need to play an essential role in conveying the concepts and values of social justice in their creative work. They must also remain morally vigilant in creative work and cautiously handle sensitive topics to ensure their results benefit society.

Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto are outstanding writers with excellent reputations in the Asian literary world. However, only some scholars have explored the concept of justice in their works, which becomes an opportunity for this paper to be written. Although Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto have different cultural backgrounds and writing styles, they both uphold a serious writing attitude and a profound sense of social responsibility in their writing process. They explore social justice through their respective writing styles, conveying deep insights into human nature and keen insights into social issues. This paper will compare and analyse their

writing ethics and expression of social justice in detail to show their in-depth thinking and active practice in literary creation.

2. The Presentation of Hong Kong in Chan Hokei's Works: An Ethical Exploration in a Complex Social Context

"The following statement may be off-putting to many people, and I think the idea that 'novelists have a special social responsibility' is wrong. No matter what profession we are in, everyone should have a sense of social responsibility. As long as we do our part, it is the best behaviour to support and give back to society." This was Chan Hokei's answer in 2019 when facing a question from a reporter from the New Beijing News about "the novelist's sense of responsibility". His answer was straightforward and to the point, very much in line with people's impression of the "personality" of Hong Kong writers, after which Chan Hokei added: "I would say it is 80% out of concern for social issues, then the remaining 20% is more aptly described as 'out of a sense of duty to humanity' rather than 'out of a sense of duty to the novelist.'"

Chan Hokei does not want to avoid being boxed into the title of the novelist to do something to fulfil people's expectations deliberately. In his opinion, especially today, with the highly developed internet, everyone has the right to have a voice. Then, the obligations of a writer can be lessened as a result. He is not a conventional novelist, which we also notice when we review his archives. Chan Hokei, born in 1975 in Hong Kong, China, graduated from the Department of Computing Science of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1997, worked in a software company, and became a standard programmer. He started writing in 2008 with the short story *The Case of Jack and the Beanstalk*, which was shortlisted for the Mystery Writers of Taiwan award. In 2009, he won the 7th Mystery Writers of Taiwan Award with his short story *The Locked Room of Bluebeard*. In 2011, he won the 2nd Soji Shimada Mystery Award with his first novel, *Duplices Delitto a Hong Kong*. In 2015, Chan Hokei's full-length novel, *The Borrowed*, reached a creative peak in a personal sense. It won the 2015 Taipei International Book Fair Award, the Eslite Bookstore Readership Award and the first Hong Kong Literature Season Recommendation Award. In Japan, it won the Booklog 2018 grand prize for best overseas novel, setting an unprecedented record for a Chinese-language speculative fiction novel in the Japanese publishing industry and selling copyrights in twelve countries, including the United States, Britain, France and Italy, ultimately establishing his title as the "the first Chinese reasoning". Looking back at *The Borrowed*, its success lies not only in the fact that it has broken the barriers between Hong Kong literature and international literature and has become an essential Chinese speculative fiction novel that has established contact with international readers in the new century but also, more importantly, in the fact that its emergence represents a new kind of attempt and exploration in contemporary Hong Kong literature.

After the millennium, the Hong Kong Government made some adjustments to the education system, resulting in the development of literature being affected as well. Such as the Curriculum Development Roadmap promulgated in 2001 and the Basic Education Curriculum Guide promulgated in 2002, which put more emphasis on universal education and vocational training, have led to a sudden drop in the interest of young students in literature and lowered the transmission of literature. Moreover, as Hong Kong society continues to change and move towards modernisation, the lifestyle and values of its citizens have also changed. In 2010, the "Year of the Internet", as Chinese netizens often call it, social media and digital technology have proliferated. People's attention has gradually shifted from traditional literature to other forms of media, such as online videos, social media, and blogs, so some of the traditional themes of literature no longer resonate with the new generation of readers. Hong Kong's literary market, which is already relatively niche, competes fiercely with pop culture, film and television,

making the situation more difficult for writers, who sometimes need to cater to market tastes and move closer to commercialisation, resulting in the independence and creativity of their works being challenged as well. Nowadays, most books circulating in the Hong Kong market are mainly urban novels, coming-of-age novels, comics and Netflix recipes. This group of pragmatic Hong Kong writers are more inclined to write about subjects that are more likely to appeal to the audience or to be touted for sale. However, the adverse effects of the prolonged importation of leisure reading materials into the consumer market for the readers are also noticeable, that is, the shallowness of the cultural market and the continuous decline of the value of literature. This situation will only become more severe after the death of literary greats such as Liu Yichang and Leung Ping-kwan.

The success of the new generation writer Chan Hokei in the international literary arena seems to show people that Hong Kong literature can find another way to rise after its decline, that is, to use the form of popular novels wrapped in the kernel of serious literature, to continue to write the Hong Kong culture in the new era. Though Chan Hokei tries to dispel the part of "writer's responsibility" with light-hearted arguments, the tone of his novels is by no means light-hearted, and some of the themes can even be heavy. Take his masterpiece, *The Borrowed*, as an example. The story starts in 2013, and it uses flashbacks to link up six chapters, which are closely related to the factual background of Hong Kong society, depicting police superintendent Kwan Chun-dok's life of solving crimes as well as the vicissitudes of the city. From the readers' perspective, they will undoubtedly be impressed by Kwan Chun-dok's unconventional protagonist. The first case, *The Truth Between Black and White*, took place in 2013, in which Inspector Lok inherited his master's will and used Kwan Chun-dok's life to lure Wong Kwan-tong, the mastermind behind the case, to take the bait. The second case, *Prisoner's Honour*, took place in 2003, in which Kwan Chun-dok exploited the weakness of human nature in the gaming theory to make the triad boss, Chor Hon-keung, face the law. The third case, *The Longest Day*, took place in 1997 when Kwan Chun-dok used his reasoning to link two seemingly unrelated events, a prison break and a street attack, and finally succeeded in arresting the fugitive. The fourth case, *The Balance of Themis*, took place in 1989, in which Kwan Chun-dok fought a psychological battle with the murderer in the absence of evidence and eventually caused the murderer's psychological defence to be broken down. The fifth case, *Borrowed Place*, takes place in 1977, when Kwan Chun-dok discovers a deeper corruption conspiracy behind a kidnapping case and uses a little trickery to paralyse the suspects and make them let down their guards so that they can be eliminated in one fell swoop. The last case, *Borrowed Time*, is narrated by none other than Wong Kwan-tong, the murderer of the first case, who met Kwan Chun-dok in a bombing case in 1967 when Wong Kwan-tong was still an upright and hot-blooded young man. When the young Kwan Chun-dok hesitated whether to follow his heart or obey the orders of his superiors, Wong Kwan-tong helped him to establish the value of being citizen-centred and set Kwan Chun-dok on his path. After solving the case, Wong Kwan-tong embarks on another path, following his best friend (the victim of the first case) into the corporate world. Little did he realise that 46 years later, he and Kwan Chun-dok would face a duel between black and white, life and death. The author uses this plot to pay homage to the film series *Infernal Affairs: The Buddhist Cycle of Karma*, where choices determine destiny.

A closer look reveals the craftsmanship with which *The Borrowed* is laid out in its timeline, and everywhere, there are signs of bridging the gap with actual events in history. In 1967, under the influence of the Cultural Revolution on the mainland, the 1967 Riots took place in Hong Kong, and several police officers and innocent citizens were killed in the bombings. Against this backdrop, the joint efforts of Kwan Chun-dok and Wong Kwan-tong to solve the case are unfolding in *Borrowed Time*. On 28 October 1977, there was a clash between the police and the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) in Hong Kong. Thousands of police officers and their families took to the streets to demand that the Hong Kong Government be lenient to

the police in respect of corruption, and the Hong Kong Government, for a variety of reasons, eventually acceded to the request by granting amnesties to public officers who were suspected of corruption. The kidnapping in *Borrowed Place* takes place in June 1977, when the ICAC is secretly investigating the accounts of police officers. The kidnapped man is the son of the ICAC's director, and the kidnapping is designed by a group of police officers suspected of corruption. The kidnapping is just a front, and the real purpose of these police officers is to steal the account books in the vault in order to get away with their crimes. 1989 was the year when Hong Kong started to crack down on the pornography industry. As a result, the targets of police officer Tang Ting's shooting in a rented house in *The Balance of Themis* are not only his mistresses but also some marginalised groups of people working in the pornography industry. On 1 July 1997, Hong Kong officially returned to China. In *The Longest Day*, Kwan Chun-dok retires in this year. On the one hand, he has to investigate a case. On the other hand, he is also worried about the unknown challenges brought about by the change of environment after the return of Hong Kong, and the protagonist's hesitant mentality is precisely echoed in the title. In 2003, Hong Kong's entertainment industry was shaken by the deaths of film and television stars such as Leslie Cheung and Anita Mui. The scandal and the "death" of Candy Tong, the famous actress in *Prisoner's Honour*, is also partly a mapping of reality. In 2013, there was a case of patricide in Hong Kong in which Henry Chau Hoi-leung killed his parents because they were unwilling to bear the debt for him. *The Truth Between Black and White* is also a tragic human tragedy in which a son kills his father. It is these real-life events, together with the natural landmarks narrated by Chan Hokei through the mouths of the protagonists, that make up the writer's Hong Kong that is prosperous and lonely, from Sai Kung's Chuk Yeung Road to Repulse Bay, from Mong Kok to Yau Ma Tei, and from Graham Street in Central to Queen Mary's Hospital, and each of these scenes is so vivid in the eyes of readers that they feel as if they could have been in the realm of the real world.

Certainly, Chan Hokei's ambition goes beyond that. Even though archetypes may be behind these cases, the motives and modus operandi are very different. His real aim is to straddle orthodox school and social school of deduction, to show the light and shadow of contemporary Hong Kong, and to tell a unique story about this city. Therefore, we can feel the intense Hong Kong atmosphere in Chan Hokei's series of books. The book's rigorous examination of landforms, sharp criticism of social issues, and the protagonist's efficiency and adaptive acting style are all quite "Hong Kong". *The Borrowed* is a look at the rise and fall of Hong Kong in this era through six cases. *Second Sister* is about the paradox of cyber violence and social truth. *Duplices Delitto* a Hong Kong, uses narrative trickery to explore trauma and acquired environments' effects on the human psyche. In addition, Chan Hokei's new book, *Balloon Man*, utilises an alternative narrative, where the protagonist is not some good guy but an assassin with extraordinary powers. On the one hand, he never shows mercy to his assassination targets, but on the other hand, he does not kill innocent people indiscriminately. He has principles typical of Hong Kong people's character, as seen in him. Since the *Balloon Man* travels between good and evil and does whatever he wants, he has more of an "anti-hero" morality than the traditional protagonist.

Chan Hokei explores the dark side of Hong Kong's neon city in the novel, such as Hong Kong's entertainment industry, which is inextricably linked to the triads, the pornographic industry, the overpriced property market, corruption within the police force, the utilitarian school education system, and the growing indifference of people to each other, which is said to be hitting the sore points of Hong Kong society. Nevertheless, Chan Hokei also believes that the world is not black and white and that human nature is even more complex. He is cautious about human relationships, moral concepts and technological ethics. Therefore, we can see that the hacker N in *Second Sister* does not directly help the heroine to take revenge as in general novels but tells her the truth and then lets her make her own choice. While the heroine suffers from

the torment of reason and emotion, the readers will also follow along to ask and reflect on what the yardstick of justice is and when the end of the wrongdoing is. As a writer who observes reality, Chan Hokei uses fiction to express his thoughts on Hong Kong society and the two sides of human nature.

3. Cultural Reflections of Seicho Matsumoto: Identification of Japanese Social Problems

Seicho Matsumoto, a famous modern Japanese speculative fiction writer, is known as one of the three giants of speculative fiction, together with Agatha Christie and Conan Doyle. Seicho's works are known for his ability to explore human nature, and he is also a literary giant with a deep understanding of social issues. His speculative fiction analyses the problems of Japanese society at all levels, and with a realistic perspective and penetrating insight, he thoroughly outlines the social landscape of post-war Japan. Seicho's works are centred on revealing and criticising social problems. His writing style is unique in its pursuit of realism, favouring a matter-of-fact tone that records and depicts human weaknesses and their impact on society. His works are not thrilling traditional deduction novels but use deduction as a method to explore the truth behind social phenomena.

Writers' creative styles and pursuits are inextricably linked to their life experiences. These experiences shape their thinking and emotional expression and influence their choice of subject matter, perspective, mindset and creative approach. Seicho Matsumoto was born in 1909 in Kokura City, Kitakyushu, Japan, into a poor merchant family. Due to his family's difficult circumstances, he lost the opportunity to go to school at a young age and did not even receive a secondary school diploma. In a Japanese society that valued education, his future looked very bleak. From age 13, he worked as a street vendor and apprentice to make ends meet for his family. Seicho Matsumoto's deep understanding of poverty comes from the experience of tasting the hardships of the world, which breathes vivid life and heaviness into his characters. Through the world's hardships, he felt the simplicity and sincerity of human nature and, at the same time, saw the dark side of society that was unknown to him. Afterwards, he was employed in the Asahi Shimbun's advertising department. In 1943, his work in the advertising department was interrupted when he was sent to Korea as a medic during World War II. Seicho spent most of the war in Korea and resumed work at Asahi Shimbun after the war, and in 1950, he was transferred to the Tokyo office. In the economic depression of the early post-war years, Seicho had to travel between Kansai and Kyushu to support his family of seven, including him and subsidised his household by wholesaling brooms. In his autobiography, Seicho Matsumoto vividly depicts his bumpy journey through the first half of his life and incorporates this experience into his writing. His experiences enriched the meanings of his life and enabled him to transform his true feelings into insights into world affairs in his works, thus forming his unique artistic style.

Seicho Matsumoto's novels can be divided into three periods: the early, middle and late. In the early period, from the 1950s to the 1960s, Matsumoto's creative style had yet to mature fully. The subject matter of his works can be summarised into two main categories: firstly, period fiction, such as Saigō's Currency and Mushukunin-betsuchō, which present dry historical facts in a vivid narrative manner and refract the reality of post-war Japan with a keen sense of the contemporary pulsation; and secondly is the depiction of characters amid adversity, centred on the paths of their lives, showing the toughness of their hearts in the face of tribulations, such as Aru 'Kokura-nikki' den, Chrysanthemum Pillow and Bones of Stone. The middle period, from the 1960s to 1970s, was Seicho Matsumoto's golden age of creation. He gradually developed his unique style of speculative fiction, which was praised as the "Seicho Revolution" in the Japanese literary world. The so-called "Seicho Revolution" was a change in the form of speculative fiction,

in which the motive for the crime and the characterisation of the characters were put in the forefront for the first time. Seicho's literary creations during this period show an original choice of subject matter and a keen grasp of the spirit of the times. He made in-depth explorations in artistic techniques and depth of thought, transcending the scope of his previous writing and demonstrating his style and artistic attainments at a higher level. For example, *Points and Lines*, *Zero Focus*, *Black Sea of Trees*, *Pro Bono*, and *Castle of Sand*, with their distinctive themes, groundbreaking creative thinking and profound social insight, became the focus of public attention. In the later period, from the 1970s to the 1980s, Seicho Matsumoto's creative speed and output declined as he grew older, but his works remained high quality. The themes of his works during this period were much broader, including the history, myths and archaeology. Through in-depth historical research and cultural expeditions, Seicho created a series of novels focusing on historical events and characters, such as *Japanese Ancient History* by Seichō and the *February 26 Incident*. These works demonstrate Seicho Matsumoto's deep insight and understanding of history and culture. In addition, he has also created works that focus on overseas and ecological crises, such as *Straying Map* and *Red Glacial Epoch*, which reflect Seicho Matsumoto's ultimate thinking about the fate of humanity.

Seicho Matsumoto has publicly declared that "Literature is exposure", and with a strong sense of social responsibility, he has made people realise the nature of Japanese society and life in general and made his speculative fiction a "textbook of Japan's national conditions". Seicho Matsumoto attempts to highlight social justice by digging deeper into these motives to arouse readers' attention and thoughts on social issues. The following is an analysis of Seicho Matsumoto's style of deduction novels, taking three of his most prestigious masterpieces, *Castle of Sand*, *Zero Focus*, and *Points and Lines*, as examples.

Castle of Sand focuses on a bizarre murder at a railway station, with an unknown victim and an unknown motive, which gradually comes to light through the investigations of police officer Imanishi. In the process, Seicho Matsumoto skilfully depicts the characters' inner world, showing their fears, desires and struggles. This book demonstrates the author's respect for the truth, humanity, and society. Seicho Matsumoto did not simply depict a murder case but instead realistically showed the complexity of human nature and moral dilemmas. The murderer, Eiryō Waga, chose to tamper with his origins to escape his tragic past and use music to pursue success and recognition. He chose this because of his desire for success and fear of the past. Seicho does not make a simple moral judgement on Waga but shows his inner struggles and contradictions with sympathy and understanding. Waga's father was rejected by society, and even his family abandoned him because he had leprosy. This kind of discrimination and rejection of the sick and the weak was a common phenomenon in Japanese society at that time. To change his fate, Waga had to choose to hide his past, which reflects the injustice and oppression of the society from another side. Seicho adhered to the principle of truthfulness in writing. He did not exaggerate or fabricate facts to cater to the readers' tastes or create a sensational effect. On the contrary, with delicate strokes and rigorous logic, he realistically reproduced the social landscape and the fate of the characters in those times. This pursuit and adherence to truthfulness is precisely the writing ethics of Seicho Matsumoto as a writer.

As for the work *Zero Focus*, Seicho Matsumoto pointed out the theme: Japan's defeat in the war brought endless pain to local women, and these wounds have continued to this day. Furthermore, whenever there is a social upheaval, the wounds that have already been healed will be torn open again. Those Japanese women who were toyed with and hurt by the American army suffered a deep mental shock, and some even committed suicide for this reason. In this novel, the author depicts the psychological blackening of Sachiko Murota, who became a call girl after the war, which takes place in a specific historical context - the particular period of the American military occupation of Japan, when the Japanese government, in an attempt to please the American troops, hired local women at high salaries to provide exceptional services to the

American troops. Sachiko was forced to apply for the job of "companion girl" so that she could pay for the medical treatment of her brother, who was seriously ill. After that, Sachiko moves up the social ladder with her beauty and social skills, but she cannot forget her past and free herself from her nightmares. Seicho cleverly chose the desolate Hokuriku as the main stage. Such a choice of setting is not accidental but is meant to better set off the bleak hearts of the characters and the authentic atmosphere of the Japanese society at that time. The gloomy environment and cold climate perfectly echo the characters' psychological state and the novel's social background. The layers of suspense in the novel are only used as a kind of embellishment to bring out the current situation of men and women in Japan in the early post-war period, as well as the common problems faced by Japanese society under the trauma of history. This writing style reflects Seicho Matsumoto's concern for social justice.

Points and Lines is a work that exposes the dark side of the intersection of power and profit. In the story, wealthy capitalist Tatsuo Yasuda, in order to cover up his illegal collusion with government officials, orchestrates a fake suicide of a witness involved in the case in order to mislead the police investigation. In this plot, Tatsuro Yasuda sacrifices the lives of others, even his lover, Toki, an innocent country girl, to safeguard his interests. However, just as the police are closing in and the truth is about to be revealed, the Yasuda couple commits suicide in fear of the crime. Ultimately, the official involved in the case escapes punishment and is promoted to a higher position. This work has caused a social shock with its straightforward depiction of power and politics. Although there are no bizarre plots and bloody scenes in the story, it has profoundly revealed the chronic problems of this era - corruption and bribery, officials protecting each other, and the weakness and powerlessness of the law in the face of power. In the 1960s, the rise of market capital enabled Japan's economy to recover rapidly from its post-war decline. People's living standards improved, but a series of social problems derived from the rapid expansion of material wealth continued to impact the traditional values of the Japanese people. In this work, Seicho not only exposes the inner corruption of the upper-class society under its glamorous surface but also depicts the persistent endeavours of the police and shows their hardship and running around to uphold social justice. Whether decent or villainous in the Points and Lines, these three-dimensional characters have cryptic social significance and inspire readers to pay attention to and think about the social situation in Japan at that time.

Seicho Matsumoto's works have transcended the realm of speculative fiction and are a profound revelation of the social phenomena of the time. Procedural justice, as an essential principle in the judicial system, defended the justice and fairness of the law. The police officers in Seicho 's works also insist on tracking clues and making interlocking deductions. All the evidence, time and place are shown reasonably, not just to prove someone's offence. In addition, Seicho emphasises the importance of real-life scenarios in reasoning. The emergency trains and the lines between the trains in the book are real. This realism enhances the reader's sense of immersion and ensures the feasibility of the reasoning. This is not only a practice of procedural justice but also a respect for the real world. His deduction novels do not stop at revealing the truth and hunting down criminals but often extend to the social background of the crime while at the same time exploring deeper into the inner world of the characters. When the case connects the culprits with the police officers involved in the case investigation, they embark on a journey together to remember and dig the pain. Seicho's novels dissect a cross-section of a particular era as if using a microscope to examine tiny parts of a reticulated society.

4. The Resonance of Two Writers' Pens: Suspense Mechanisms, Multidimensional Characters and Social Justice

As reality-based speculative fiction writers, Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto both represent an insurmountable peak in the Chinese and Japanese speculative fiction worlds. Their

speculative novels are highly artistic in structure and plot, closely integrated with regional characteristics, and give readers great suspense, fully demonstrating their unique charms as novelists. The works of Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto have also been widely translated into various languages, which has significantly impacted the creation of speculative fiction in the world.

Both Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto demonstrate excellent creative skills regarding suspense mechanisms. Chan Hokei's works often create a tense atmosphere through clever narrative structures and complex character relationships. He is adept at exploiting readers' tacit understanding and inertia when reading, creating a position of information asymmetry against the reader through narration, gradually introducing the reader to a pre-prepared story environment, and then ushering in a massive reversal of the logic of the entire text at the end. For example, his novel *Duplices Delitto a Hong Kong* switches character perspectives back and forth throughout the narration and utilises the traumatic amnesia present to weave together different events and characters as temporal dimensions, producing intricate narrative structure. At the same time, Chan Hokei consciously sets up some misleading information to arouse readers' speculation and judgement, producing a robust contrasting effect when the protagonist's real identity is revealed instead of giving people reading pleasure. Seicho Matsumoto's works often set up intriguing suspense from the very beginning, and he is good at using the techniques of peaks and troughs and surprises to break the readers' expectations and make the story even more confusing. For example, in his novel *Points and Lines*, the book starts with a small question: Why would a seemingly unrelated man and woman be strangely martyred on the beach? As the investigation unfolds, the author gradually reveals the massive conspiracy behind it, leaving the reader with an intense curiosity about what is happening.

In terms of characterisation, Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto have their characteristics. Chan Hokei is known for his grounded white drawing skills and can incorporate complex social phenomena and human issues into his characterisation. His characters are often distinctive and vivid, making readers feel they are right beside them. For example, in his novel *Balloon Man*, the protagonist is an assassin who likes to laugh at himself and has a small quantity of a cold sense of humour. Through the protagonist's perspective, we can feel the community atmosphere of Hong Kong and the smoky atmosphere of the parents. Seicho Matsumoto's works often feature the dark side of Japanese post-war society, with characterisations full of repression and pathos. Seicho is particularly good at depicting people who are oppressed by society and have a changed mentality. For example, in his works, such as *Zero Focus* and *Castle of Sand*, the protagonists are no different from ordinary people. However, because of various social pressures and personal predicaments, they end up on the path of crime. Although both Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto are good at reflecting social phenomena with the faces of all living beings, Chan Hokei focuses more on depicting the life situations of his characters and shows the multi-faceted nature of Hong Kong society with the characters' outward transformation of their identities. In contrast, Seicho Matsumoto focuses more on exposing society's ills with the characters' motives for committing crimes. His characters tend to have a more uncertain and more profound inner portrayal.

In terms of social justice, both Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto share a consistent writing ethic in their works despite the differences in their fictional styles, plot constructions and cultural backgrounds. Chan Hokei was born in the 1970s, when Hong Kong had successfully transformed itself from a manufacturing-led economy to a service-led economy, becoming one of the world's four major financial centres. Areas such as Causeway Bay and Tsim Sha Tsui in Central were booming, with many high-rise buildings. The economic structure of Hong Kong, which used to be dominated by textiles and light industries, gradually shifted to the financial and logistics industries. In the process, many labourers were attracted to the area, making Hong Kong one of the most densely populated areas in the world. At the same time, Hong Kong's

limited land area relative to its economic size and extremely high population density forced the pace of life in Hong Kong to accelerate, resulting in social values that favour efficiency. This kind of pragmatism is also implemented in Chan Hokei's speculative fiction. For example, in his work, *The Borrowed*, the protagonist, Kwan Chun-dok, when dealing with a series of complicated crimes, often weighs up the interests of various parties and eventually makes a decision beneficial to the general public. Chan Hokei's characters do not simply pursue personal morality or uphold the law but try to realise the overall interests of the public as far as possible, reflecting a kind of "Substantive justice". Seicho Matsumoto (1909-1992) focused his work on Japan's post-war period and high economic growth. In the post-war period (1945-1950), the difficulties faced by Japanese society mainly included how to revive the economy from the devastation of the war, dealing with the problem of war criminals, and the atrocities brought about by the presence of American troops. In the period of high economic growth (1950-1980), Japan's economy rose rapidly, but it also raised serious problems of environmental pollution and resource depletion. Social problems such as high work pressure, an ageing population, and the low status of women also began to emerge. Seicho analyses and interprets these social phenomena in a deductive manner, relying on procedural justice. Many of the unsolved cases in his novels rely on the persistent tracking of the police to get closer to the truth, but, on the other hand, procedural justice is also powerless, as in *Points and Lines*, where the judiciary knows who the culprits are, but due to a lack of evidence, can only let them get away with their crimes. Although this kind of ending contradicts the reader's expectation, it can arouse the public's alertness and reflection on a level other than the text.

To sum up, the works of Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto both have a robust critical spirit of reality, and the themes of their novels have also aroused inevitable repercussions in society. Although their writing differs in some aspects, for example, in the suspense mechanism, Chan Hokei pays more attention to the narrative structure. At the same time, Seicho Matsumoto tends to attract readers with the suspense at the beginning. In the characterisation, Chan Hokei pays more attention to depicting the interpersonal and external situations of the characters. In comparison, Seicho Matsumoto pays more attention to portraying the characters' inner conflicts and struggles. Regarding social justice, Chan Hokei prefers efficient "substantive justice", while Seicho Matsumoto follows "procedural justice" and emphasises the characters' social imprint and historical background. However, they both demonstrate the charm and value of literature in their unique ways.

5. Conclusion

Through an in-depth study of the works of Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto, we can gain insight into the vital connection between the ethics of writing and social justice in literary creation. These two writers reveal the complex and multidimensional concept of justice through their works and use it as an essential way to reveal and understand the world. This in-depth insight and writing demonstrates the writers' sense of social responsibility and reminds us of the ethical responsibility that writing itself carries. The study of Chan Hokei and Seicho Matsumoto not only enhances our understanding of the two writers and the times and societies in which they lived but also, more importantly, inspires us to think about social justice and the ethics of writing from a broader perspective. We look forward to more studies in the future that will continue in this vein, deepen our understanding of this theme, and promote the further development of literary creation and social justice.

References

- [1] Plato: *The Republic Of Plato*, (Basic Books, America 1991),p. 303.
- [2] Cicero: *De Officiis*, (Harvard University, England 1913),p. 62-63.

[3] Rousseau: *The Social Contract; and, the Discourses*, (Everyman's Library, England 1993),p. 208.