LITERARY LESBIAN LIBERATION: TWO CASE STUDIES INTERROGATING HOW QUEERNESS HAS MANIFESTED IN JAPANESE VALUE CONSTRUCTION THROUGH HISTORY

LITERARY LESBIAN LIBERATION: TWO CASE STUDIES INTERROGATING HOW QUEERNESS HAS MANIFESTED IN JAPANESE VALUE CONSTRUCTION THROUGH HISTORY

By

ALEXANDRA LOOP, B.A. (dist.)

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree

Master of Arts

MASTER OF ARTS (2020)
(Religious Studies)
McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Literary Lesbian Liberation: Two Case Studies Interrogating How Queerness has Manifested in Japanese Value Construction Through History
AUTHOR: Alexandra Margaret Loop B.A (dist.)
(Wilfrid Laurier University)
SUPERVISOR: Dr. Mark Rowe
NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 122

ABSTRACT

The history of Japanese women who love women is often either ignored by or inaccessible to English speakers. To address this lacuna, I will lay out two case studies of women whose Queerness is potentially useful as models of Queer Japanese womanhood. I examine the narratives surrounding two women, Murasaki Shikibu (c. 973 or 978 – c. 1014 or 1031), the author the Tale of Genji, and Otake Kōkichi (1893-1966), an author, artist, and first wave feminist activist, in order to see how narratives surrounding their Queerness, known or posited, affect or are affected by cultural and religious narratives of identity and sexual values. The only major reading of Murasaki Shikibu as a woman who loved women is that of literary scholar and lesbian feminist Komashaku Kimi in Murasaki Shikibu's Message (*Murasaki Shikibu no Messeji),* written in 1991. Her argument is that the interest in women's bodies Murasaki shows in her diary and Poetic Memoirs was a kind of same-sex desire and that that desire was integral to her message in the Tale of Genji. This argument has never been given significant scholarly attention. As such, I examine this argument and present it in English. Otake Kōkichi, born Otake Kazue, is one of a handful of Queer women from the early 20th century who are regularly discussed in academic literature on Japanese feminist history, but most narratives surrounding her tend to center on a same-sex relationship she had in her youth and ignore the radical nature of her life after marriage. I will present aspects of her life that worked with and resisted various religions and systems of value creation that were competing for influence in twentieth-century Japan. The narratives surrounding Otake and Murasaki as Queer people center the radical nature of their work and lives. Both are discussed as having a kind of embodied politics that resists dominant images of womanhood and sexuality in favour of more liberatory constructions of value and identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my family, both biological and found.

I could not have gotten this far without the consistent support of people who have accepted me in all my experimentation, rage, and fluctuating identities. To my parents who made sure I could always prioritize my education: thank you. For a Queer woman to be born into a family as supportive as this one is a rare blessing. To my loving girlfriend, the rock grounding me and the wind keeping me aloft: you are a never-ending fount of insight and encouragement. I thank whatever god set me on that narrow path on which we met every day.

I would like to thank Dr. Mark Rowe for being a reliable guide through this process even as the world turned upside down and for the care he took to nurture my voice as he did so. I was put through my paces these last two years by everyone in the Asian Religions field and I am better for it, so I thank you all.

To the people who fought and keep fighting to make sure this world is one where we can love freely and where this kind of storytelling is possible: It breaks my heart to know that there are so many stories of love and loss and determination that no one will ever get to hear. Nevertheless, I am grateful beyond words to the women and men and the myriad others who opened the door for me and I pray that my work will help hold the door open for those who come after me.

Reader, if you are any flavour of Queer, remember that you are not alone. You have history, legacy, and value. It just needs to be uncovered.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Content Warning:

> This thesis includes the use of the word "Queer" as a reclaimed term, discussion of violent homophobia, Queer erasure, Bisexual erasure, racism, sexism, linguistic colonialism, sexual harassment, institutionalized erasure of Queer Identities and Queer history, fictional depictions of suicide, communist ideology, fascism, government suppression of dissent, suicide, and cultural narratives that glorify suicide in specific contexts. If that is potentially harmful to you please take care while reading.

When I was starting to look for examples of Queer Japanese women to study for this thesis, I did a little experiment. I picked up a book of Queer biographies and just paged through it, looking to see how many people fit the demographic I was looking for. I found none. Of the hundreds of page-long biographies I found only four from East Asia, and all of them were male. This is only one anecdote, but it illustrates a larger problem of diversity in mainstream Queer representation. Queer intersectionality is something that needs to be constantly improved upon. To that end, this paper will do the work of presenting narratives surrounding two Queer Japanese women from very different times and contexts. The first, Murasaki Shikibu (c. 973 or 978 – c. 1014 or 1031) is a well-known figure in world literature because she wrote the *Tale of Genji*, a work widely lauded as the world's first novel. She is also one of the only premodern Japanese women who have been examined as potentially Queer individuals. The second woman is less well known, but she is an influential figure in the first-wave Japanese feminist movement. She was born Otake Kazue (1893-1966) and, on marriage, changed her name to Tomimoto Kazue, but she is best known by her pen name, Otake Kōkichi［尾竹紅吉］. Otake's politics were always radical. She openly discussed her love of women, went out of her way to advocate for sex

workers, and later in her life focused on education as a way of fighting the value-shaping power of the Imperial Japanese government.

This thesis explores the narratives surrounding two women in two very different contexts in order to discuss not only them but the worlds they lived in and the ways in which their lives have been framed. I will be demonstrating their value in the study of Japanese Queer history through the ways they both sought liberation from the institutions that sanctified heterosexuality through competing systems of values. In Murasaki Shikibu's case, she seeks this through entering increasingly homosocial spaces, ultimately joining a convent. In Otake Kōkichi's case, she does this by rejecting the organized religious communities that were competing to shape womanhood in the Meiji (1868-1912), Taishō (1912-1926) and early-Shōwa (1926-1989) periods, ultimately finding a system of meaning making that was useful to her in the pseudo-religion of Marxism.

This thesis will explore two central questions: 1) How have these two Queer Japanese women interacted with the systems of meaning making during their lives? 2) How are Queer women's experiences curated in academic discourse?

1.2 Existing Literature

The preservation of Queer women's history is affected by the dual oppressions of Queer erasure and the erasure of women from history. Before the current time in which intersectionality has us talking about ourselves as full people, Queer women were often neglected by both women's rights movements and gay rights advocates. That is not to say that there is not material which can, and should, be examined in a Queer light.

The history of Japanese gay men has been well recorded in English with notable discussions in monographs like *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (1998) by Bernard Faure, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (2007) by Gregory M. Pflugfelder and *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan* (1997) by Gary Leupp. These monographs all dedicate only a few pages to Japanese gay women. This is likely because information on pre-modern Japanese women who loved women is so much less accessible than, for example, the *chigo monogatari* or *The Great Mirror of Male Love* (1687) by Ihara Saikaku.[1][2]

Discussions of Japanese Queer women's history tend to begin with the Meiji Restoration and the introduction of European Sexology. Notable examples include *Becoming Modern Women: Love and Female Identity in Prewar Japanese Literature and Culture* (2010) by Suzuki Michiko, a pair of chapters published in an edited volume *Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in a Globalizing Asia*: "Performing Gender along the Lesbian Continuum: The Politics of Sexual Identity in the Seitō Society" by Peichen Wu and "Silence, Sin, and the System: Women's Same Sex Practices in Japan." In "Silence Sin and the System", there is a brief line recognizing how Murasaki Shikibu has been read as Queer, but it is in reference to the historical fiction novel *The Tale of Murasaki* by Liza Dalby rather than to scholarship on premodern Japanese lesbianism. Another similar one-line reference to the study of pre-modern Japanese lesbianism exists in Watanabe Mieko's contextualizing summary of Japanese

[1] The *Nanshoku Ōkagami* (*The Great Mirror of Male Love*) is a collection of short stories of romantic and sexual relationships between warriors, monks, and *kabuki* actors.

[2] The *chigo monogatari* (stories of acolytes) are a set of ten "companion stories" that focused on sexual relationships between temple acolytes or other young men hosted in a noble household who had sexual relationships with older monks or nobles (Atkins 2008, 951). The compilation of these stories as a genre is a product of modern research and it is unknown if these stories were meant to be read as a MLM genre or if they were simply companion stories that happened to feature MLM. However, stories about *chigo* exist in other, often pornographic media, such as a picture scroll known as the *Chigo no Sōshi* (Atkins 2008, 950–951).

lesbianism that introduces the anthology, *Sparkling Rain: And Other Fiction from Japan of Women Who Love Women*. In this one line, Watanabe notes the existence of Komashaku Kimi's analysis of Murasaki Shikibu's theme of female-female desire but does not note any other significant inquiry into the history of Japanese lesbianism.

Komashaku Kimi's *Murasaki Shikibu no Messeji* (*Murasaki Shikibu's* Message) is important, not only because it is one of the only monograph-long inquiries into pre-modern lesbianism, but because it was written by an out Lesbian literary scholar and has been largely ignored in non-lesbian or non-LGBTQ-allied scholarship. As such, chapter one of this thesis will examine this text in more depth.

In the study of Japanese lesbian history, the women of the Bluestocking society (*Seitōsha*), specifically Hiratsuka Raichō, Tamura Toshiko, Naganuma (Takanuma) Chieko, and Otake Kōkichi have an outsized influence (Suzuki 2010, 5–33; Wu 2007; Sawabe 2011). However, the less famous women in this society are subsumed into the story of their more famous partners. This is also the case when it comes to the author Miyamoto Yuriko and the Russian-to-Japanese translator Yuasa Yoshiko, as well as author Yoshiya Nobuko and her assistant Monma Chiyo.

Of the major first-wave Japanese feminist women who love women the person whose story I will be engaging with is Otake Kōkichi. Much of the research surrounding her has focused on her affair with the first editor of the feminist magazine *Bluestocking*, Hiratsuka Raichō. Information on Otake is available in a chapter by Rebecca L. Copeland explicitly about Hiratsuka in *Japanese Women Writers: a biocritical sourcebook,* in Jan Bardsley's *The Bluestockings of Japan: New Woman Essays and Fiction from Seito 1911-16* and, as mentioned before Peichen Wu's "Performing Gender along the Lesbian continuum" and Suzuki Michiko's

Becoming Modern Women. One of the main primary sources for my study is Hiratsuka Raichō's posthumously published memoir *In The Beginning Woman was the Sun.*[3] All of the above-mentioned documents focus on Hiratsuka Raichō and discuss Otake Kōkichi only inasmuch as she is relevant to Hiratsuka Raichō's story. There are two tellings of their relationship that center Otake. The first is one chapter of *Love Upon the Chopping Board* by Izumo Marou and Claire Maree that provides a short summary of Otake's relationship with Hiratsuka and contextualizes it by considering the political implications of Hiratsuka's later straightwashing of their relationship. The most in-depth secondary source is *Seitō no Onna: Otake Kōkichi den* (*Woman of Bluestocking: A Biography of Otake Kōkichi*) by Watanabe Sumiko, which offers the most comprehensive telling of Otake's life story to date. This biography explores the whole life of Otake Kōkichi, importantly it goes past the end of her tenure at *Bluestocking* to discuss the way she lived her life after the point at which most depictions of her stop.

My research fills a gap in English language literature on Queer Japanese women's history. I will be giving academic attention to one of a very few readings of pre-modern Japanese women's history that investigates Queerness. I lay out an argument for Otake Kōkichi as a good role model for Queer, and especially Bisexual women who need to be able to see stories about Queer women's lives as a whole, not just those parts of them that support female-female eroticism.[4] In both of these cases, I discuss the ways these women fought against institutions that restricted them and tried to fit them into narrow models of femininity that fit with the values constructed to maintain cultural, hierarchical, and religious power.

[3] There are two documents by Hiratsuka Raichō titled "In the Beginning Woman Was the Sun". One of them is an autobiography published posthumously, and one is the first essay published in Bluestocking back in 1911. For the sake of clarity, I will be differentiating the two by referring to the essay by its Japanese title, *Genshi, Josei wa Taiyō de Atta*, and the autobiography by its translated title, In the Beginning Woman was the Sun.

[4] "Bisexual" in this case referring to attraction to genders like one's own, and genders unlike one's own. "Bisexual" is used here as an umbrella term under which pansexuality, attraction regardless of gender, is included.

Any storytelling in the study of Queer history increases the reach of Queer narratives and reaffirms the reality of Queerness. It is an endeavour with inherent value for people within the Queer community because it proves, or begins the process of proving, that there is a tradition of people embodying Queerness and a legacy that can be tapped into.

1.3 Epistemological questions

Why would Queer women latch onto Murasaki as a potential historical predecessor? Komashaku lays out how she came to be interested in Murasaki as a potential Queer person, and how she got others interested enough that she was able to write *Murasaki Shikibu no Messeji*. She says her first exposure to Murasaki was an intimate, emotional connection through her mother sharing her love of the *Hyakunin Isshu* (*One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each*) (Komashaku 1991, 11). Because the *Hyakunin Isshu* is fundamentally an anthology of poetry taken out of context it was easy for the young Komashaku to assume that the poem of Murasaki's preserved in it was a love poem sent to a man (Komashaku 1991, 12). It was the shock of realizing that the poem chosen from Murasaki's poetry was, in fact, a poem exchanged between two women that drew Komashaku's attention. It is because of this introduction that she came to the conclusion that Murasaki's message was meant for women (Komashaku 1991, 12).

Joshua Mostow, in his introduction to *Pictures of the Heart: the Hyakunin Isshu in Word and Image*, analyzes Komashaku's Queer reading of Murasaki as a product of the time in which it was written. This is not a negative value judgement, but rather a recognition that this book could have only come to be in a time and place when Queer people are able to freely speak about their experiences (Mostow 1996, 5). He also notes a "stony silence" by Japanese scholars of classical literature, and suspects that many scholars considered it anachronistic to analyze a

classical text with modern concerns and discourse in mind (Mostow 1996, 5). These two paradigms through which scholars can see the past are necessarily in tension when it comes to the history of a person like Murasaki, whose work has historically been analysed by men, for men, leading to a dearth of surviving historical interpretations that focus on the realities of women's lives.

He argues that the different interpretations represent the relative "blindness and insight" of the people doing the analysis (Mostow 1996, 6). The assumption of readers that heterosexuality is the default through history creates an artificial history of heterosexual homogeneity. The fragile facade of a heteronormative past can only be maintained through ignoring evidence that same-sex relationships have always been a part of the world. For example, it is not unrealistic to think that Murasaki would have had access to information about female same-sex eroticism due to "increasing evidence that female same-sex erotic relationships were hardly unknown at the Kamo Shrine in the Heian period" (Mostow 1996, 7).

The prestige of Murasaki adds to the impulse of historians to Straight-read her life. The association of homosexuality with inferiority makes it into an accusation that many readers want to defend influential people against. It is better in this paradigm for people who never married or were briefly married to be miserable and straight rather than happy and Queer. This is true of figures who have left behind homoerotically charged letters but also for archaeological finds. The purported heterosexuality of history is something Queer people are constantly fighting.

Within the Queer community this dynamic is common knowledge and regularly sparks collective humour and rage. A recent example of this is when it came to light that the "Lovers of Modena", a pair of skeletons from fourth-to-sixth century Italy were discovered to have both

been men (by "men" I mean assigned male at birth as it is impossible to tell gender from skeletal remains). The lead written for the Guardian's article on this "Researchers believe pair might have been siblings, cousins or soldiers who died together" was thoroughly pilloried in Queer circles (Tondo 12 Sept 2019). A few examples of this pillorying were compiled in *The Mary Sue*'s article on the subject: "Things We Saw Today: Historians Can't Comprehend that the "Lovers of Modena" Might Have Been Gay" (Mason, 14 Sept 2019). In this case, the Straight reading, that this was the only platonic example of this form of burial found so far but a mystery, is much more complicated than the Gay reading, that the pair were quietly buried by their Queer friends in a way that respected their relationship. This is an example of how "the blindness to lesbian interpretations of texts has also entailed denial — an explaining away of the simplest interpretation in favour of a more complicated, but heterosexually normative, reading" (Mostow 1996, 6).

1.4 Queer recovery history

This thesis relies heavily on the theoretical framework of Queer recovery history. For the purposes of this discussion I will be using Patricia Skinner's definition of recovery history in which it is "largely a documenting exercise" with the aim of "[rescuing] subjects from obscurity" (Skinner 2018, 25). Though the subjects I am discussing are known, interpretations of them as full individuals are often inaccessible, obscuring inquiry into what might be an important part of the subject as a whole person. Queer people, both open and closeted, engage in Queer recovery as part of their own lives, identity creation, and maintenance of social capital. Queer recovery history gives Queer people supporting evidence to combat assumptions that 1) Queerness is a

new, largely white, phenomenon; and 2) That there is something wrong or "unproductive" about Queer people just because Cisgender Gay couples cannot conceive naturally.[5] If Queer people have always been contributing members of Japanese society then that creates an environment in which it is impossible to reduce them to a stereotype, a result of colonial influence, or dismiss them as a dangerous influence.

Queer history faces a particular difficulty compared to those hoping to seek out the history of an ethnic group, or generally accepted gender differences, since, as Skinner points out, "Unlike women's history before it, the subjects of gay history had to be actively sought out, since in hostile societies they become invisible and are unable to establish a group identity in the same way" (Skinner 2018, 59). Skinner's analysis is largely based on the West, but it is also true that hostility to homosexuality does not need to be obvious, in acts of violence or explicit acts of oppression like illegality or brutality. The erasure of a minority group from cultural discourse is a form of oppression that reinforces existing hegemonies and keeps individuals in these groups from being able to fully express their needs, or find each other. In lesbian lives this often occurs through the narrative trivialization of women's love into women's friendship.

Queer recovery history serves an important role in the lives of Queer people, in that it gives a level of validation, both societal and personal, to their very existence. As such, Queer people engage in a form of it every day. Queer women see themselves or their experiences, especially the experiences that they have to explain or defend in their daily lives in women they admire and "read" said women as Queer.

[5] This is a common enough assumption that it found its way onto the floor of Japanese Parliament as recently as July 2018 when Sugita Mio, a lower house member in the LDP, wrote a magazine article openly questioning whether gay couples should be entitled to the same welfare benefits as heterosexual Japanese people due to their lack of ability to procreate. Though she is not a particularly high-ranking member of parliament her status as such gives her words a level of authority which could encourage others to express similar views despite said views being denounced as hate speech by others in parliament.

1.5 Japanese Civic Religion

One of the major barriers to acceptance of Queer women in Japan was that Queerness in women conflicted with constructions of Japanese identity and "Japaneseness" that supported the Japanese state. As a part of the "cultural revolution" that was the Meiji Restoration (1868) there was a systematic endeavour to create a standardized Japanese state religion based in Shinto (Grapard 1984, 245). Connecting the state and religion allowed the government to speak with spiritual authority and to reinforce that authority with the power of the government (Grapard 1984, 245). Relevant to this discussion was the Meiji era construction of "good wives, wise mothers" (*ryōsai kenbo*). This state-sanctioned model of femininity prioritized and imposed women's heterosexual gender roles over things like women's education, love, and self-determination. The echoes of these traditional gender roles and the pro-natalist concepts they promoted using the veneer of sacred can be seen in the way that the Japanese government, as recently as 2019, has blamed Japan's economic woes on women not having enough babies, rather than allowing easier immigration or passing labour reforms that would protect women from having to choose between marriage and their career and make it easier for dual income households to actually contemplate having children (Ives 5/02/2019). I am choosing to use the term "Japanese Civic Religion" as an umbrella term rather than *kokka Shintō* (State Shinto) because many of the structures and values of the Imperial Japanese state relied upon did not go away after the end of the Second World War (1939–1945), they just became implicit.

1.6 Construction of Japanese Lesbianism

The construction of dangerous lesbianism developed during the Meiji, Taishō, and early Shōwa periods (Wu 2007, 79). This construction of the dangerous lesbian and the bisexual who has been led astray came out of the field of sexology and were compounded by the public statements of WLW who could not take the potentially fatal risk of being seen as sexually active lesbians by society.[6] Notably, this includes the idea most famously expressed in Yoshiya Nobuko's novels, that not crossing the line into sexuality allows for same sex love to be not only tolerated, but necessary, as long as the relationship is between homoromantic asexual young women (Suzuki 2010, 34–35).

These Meiji era constructions of lesbianism come out of a specific context in which WLW were in direct conflict with Japanese Civic Religion, and the expectations placed upon them by the philosophy of "Good Wives, Wise Mothers" (Robertson 1999, 10). Women who love women, in a time when gay marriage and gay adoption are illegal, cannot be seen as wives or mothers by society, no matter what their relationships to their found family may be.[7] As such, every action that would be seen as romantic or pure in a heterosexual relationship was seen as violent, coercive, ludicrous, and ultimately the result of mental illness in WLW relationships (Robertson 1999, 21–22).

[6] Women who love women (WLW) is a common umbrella term to encompass all women, Cisgender and Transgender, who love other women, Cisgender and Transgender. It is a term meant to be inclusive of a number of female experiences many of which may not include explicitly identifying with a Queer label.

[7] Found family is a particularly important concept in the Queer community. In short it is the idea that relationships between friends and community members can and should be as strong or stronger than the relationships between blood relatives and can fill the gaps left by unsupportive and abusive families. Because the Queer community is, for the most part, not connected by any overarching similarity other than Queerness itself, these small groups of close, often intergenerational friends need to be sought out by the individual, hence the characterization of them as "found".

1.7 The construction of sexuality

In any discussion of sexuality it is important to recognize that sexual identities are always fluid and influenced by the time and place in which they exist. Michel Foucault argues that the Western model of sexuality was constructed through the medicalization of homosexuality in the Victorian period. With the construction of homosexuality as a distinct, stigmatized "other" against which to define themselves, heterosexual or Straight identity was then constructed as the "normal" way to be.

Foucault's theory undergirds almost all studies of Queerness, but it can be overgeneralized. To imply that it is universally applicable is a misuse. It is only one construction of homosexuality that was constructed in Victorian Europe and exported to the rest of the world. There are, of course, a number of other known constructions of what would now be considered forms of homosexuality or transgender experience all around the world and throughout history. These distinct Queer experiences are not ones where pre-modern people could have claimed the exact same identities as the current-day Queer people who claim said historical figures as part of their own imagined community. To conflate the specific identities of these figures with the experience of attraction is to risk disenfranchising Queer people from their historical legacy.[8]

Adding to the complexity of discussing female homosexuality is the fact that sex and desire are also things that need to be constantly constructed and they are not often constructed in a way that validates sex that does not involve at least one man. Whether sex can be non-penetrative or use an object rather than a body part is integral to the way female-female intimacy

[8] It should also be noted that by the same argument that says Queerness needs to be understood according to its constructions, so too does Straightness. The act of seeing Straightness in historical figures is also something that must be interrogated fully before being posited. It cannot be assumed as a default.

is discussed and recorded (Walthall 2009, 9). Women have been having sex with women forever, it is the historical context allowing for the safe expression of that reality, the social construction of what is considered sex between two people, and the terminology used to discuss same-sex relationships that are socially constructed.

1.8 Homophobia as a social construction

Just like sexuality, homophobia is ultimately socially constructed and disagreements on the local history of that construction inform the way that we must understand the importance of these figures to the history of Queer women. Unlike Komashaku Kimi, who treats Yoshiya Nobuko's idea of "not crossing the line" between romantic and sexual homoeroticism as a point in a linear-progression narrative between premodern and modern sexual freedoms, both Izumo and Watanabe treat homophobia as a modern import into Japanese life, though they disagree on when it was imported. Izumo argues that the excessive heteronormativity that was brought in with US occupation in the wake of World War II made the open expression of romantic crushes between girls less common (Izumo and Maree 2000, 85). Watanabe, on the other hand, sees the situation in the early 20th Century as one in which men were able to publicly express homosexuality, while women's homosexuality was seen as "filthy, abnormal sexual desire" due to the Meiji government's construction of masculinity and femininity as requiring men to be "warriors of the country" and women to be a "Good Wife and Wise Mother" (Watanabe 2001, 289). Being a warrior does not require heterosexuality, but at the time, ideas of what it meant to be a wife and a mother did. As such, lesbianism interfered with the aims of the state and constituted enough of a political disruption that women who loved women were denied, or explained away by society, as indeed they still are.

1.9 Methodology

This thesis started out as something very different from what it ended up becoming. In the beginning my aim was to find examples of Japanese and *nikkei* women who love women (WLW) through history who showed a variety of ways of interacting with religion and to write brief chapters on them looking into them as potential spiritual role models.[9] I was going to conduct interviews and center the experiences of Japanese-Canadian WLW in my discussions of these figures.

Unfortunately, my plans were foiled by two unforeseen complications. The first, was that the community I was looking for is incredibly niche and I do not yet have the kind of network that would enable me to conduct this research adequately. As a result of this first complication I was only able to find one person willing to answer my survey before the world turned upside down in 2020. The second complication was, of course, the inescapable reality of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic made the methods I had been using to find potential participants impossible as I had relied on advertising in places where the target demographic of my research might congregate.

Arguably, I should have foreseen the first complication. I did to a certain extent and had been working on researching a few different figures that I thought would make for good Queer role models if my fieldwork did not pan out. The list of figures I wanted to study narrowed down to two as the complexity of presenting them became fully clear to me. I still believe my original project has value and that should be done some day but I recognize that it is not work that I am capable of at this point in my career, and especially not in the midst of a global pandemic.

[9] People of Japanese descent born outside of Japan.

With my focus narrowed down to two figures, Murasaki Shikibu and Otake Kōkichi, I still wanted to focus on their religious experiences, my research found that for both of them their relationships with religion were mostly interactions with institutional structures that maintained power through the sacralised gender roles of what it meant to be a woman and a wife in their respective time periods.

Chapter one will examine Komashaku Kimi's often ignored Queer reading of Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji*, *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*, and *The Poetic Memoirs of Lady Murasaki*. Komashaku's reading posits that the affection and attention Murasaki shows women in her diary and poetic memoirs constitutes a form of same-sex desire that is then a motivating force in the story she tells in the *Tale of Genji*. Komashaku's reading has not been subjected to significant scholarly analysis, so I will examine her reading critically, identifying some of the details Komashaku alludes to but does not systematically lay out.

Chapter two will examine first-wave Japanese feminist, author, painter, and Marxist activist, Otake Kōkichi, focusing on the way she navigated an institutional and personal landscape in which there was an ongoing cultural struggle between institutions promoting different models of femininity. These models ranged from the state-mandated civic religious model of being a "good wife" and a "wise mother," to the Christian ideal of the "virgin," to the Marxist construction of the female revolutionary. Otake's work after *Bluestocking*, in the Shōwa era, was heavily inflected by her deeply held sense that women's rights were inextricably tied to the struggle against issues of class and caste inequality that were reinforced by Japanese civic religion during the early Shōwa era.

In a short follow-up chapter I will lay out an argument for why Otake Kōkichi's life should more often be discussed independently of Hiratsuka Raichō because of the alienating nature of Hiratsuka's politics and the way she treated Otake.

In my final chapter I will lay out contextualizing information about three other examples where potential pre-modern WLW content has been found and briefly discussed but that I believe deserve more scholarly attention.

CHAPTER ONE: MURASAKI SHIKIBU

Reading Murasaki Shikibu and the *Tale of Genji* as non-heterosexual[10]

2.1 Introduction

Murasaki Shikibu (c. 973 or 978 – c. 1014 or 1031), the author of the *Tale of Genji* (c. 1010) is known as many things: a literary great, the author of the world's first novel, and someone with sharp insight into the lives and suffering of women. However, there is another role that she has played in the worldview of one openly lesbian feminist and literary scholar, Komashaku Kimi (1925-2007), that I think has not been given sufficient attention in English language scholarship; that of a Queer historical figure. In this chapter I will present Komashaku's Queer reading of Murasaki Shikibu's diary, *poetic memoirs*, and The *Tale of Genji* in her monograph, *Murasaki Shikibu no Messeji*, (*Murasaki Shikibu's Message*).

Published in 1991, *Murasaki Shikibu no Messeji* presents two main interconnected ideas for looking at The Tale of Genji in a new light. The first idea is explored in her first chapter, "Murasaki Shikibu to iu hito" ("the person named Murasaki Shikibu"). In Komashaku's reading of the *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* (*The Diary of Lady Murasaki*) and the *Murasaki Shikibu shū* (*The Poetic Memoirs of Lady Murasaki*), Murasaki Shikibu shows indifference towards men and deep love toward women (Komashaku 1991, 224). This prioritization of women led Komashaku to read the interactions Murasaki valued enough to record in a romantic, rather than a friendly tone.

[10] Non-heterosexual indicates that something is challenging heteronormativity without necessarily being homosexual. For pre-modern women, non-heterosexuality is a source of power in that it comes with freedom from the cycle of repeated pregnancies and allows these women the time and energy to advocate for themselves (Skinner 2018, 102).

The second idea constitutes the bulk of the second and third chapters, "*Genji Monogatari no shujinkō*" ("the protagonists of the *Tale of Genji*") and "*Uji jūjō no hitsuzensei*" ("The necessity of the ten Uji chapters"). Komashaku argues that the *Tale of Genji* is a deeply Buddhist story that introduces different women who believe themselves to be happy in different heterosexual contexts only for those illusions of happiness to be shattered again and again until finally a truly happy ending is found through the celibacy of the convent (Komashaku 1991, 54-57). The *Poetic Memoirs*, like The *Tale of Genji* begin with heterosexual attachment, however fraught, but end with the longing for female companionship.

Komashaku interprets Murasaki Shikibu's work as an inherently liberatory criticism of heterosexual marriage that could not have happened if Murasaki were really interested in getting remarried or attracting male attention (Komashaku 1991, 224). This perceived lack of interest in men combined with the attention Murasaki shows to women's bodies led Komashaku to read Murasaki as a woman who loved women.[11]

This chapter will focus on laying out the general argument in Komashaku's Queer reading of the Lady Murasaki's Diary, *Poetic Memoirs*, and the *Tale of Genji*. First, I will examine Komashaku's argument that Murasaki displays a greater interest in the bodies of women than in the bodies of men in her personal writing. Second, I will lay out the most important female-female relationship Murasaki records in her diary and *Poetic Memoirs* according to Komashaku's summaries. Third, I will explain how this theory about Murasaki's sexuality fits with the fact that she wrote an incredibly long heterosexual romance novel that centers on a man. Fourth, I will talk about the interconnection of Murasaki's own decision to

[11] Because Murasaki Shikibu's relationship with Buddhism has been thoroughly interrogated by Genji scholars, this paper will engage with that aspect of the text only where it intersects with Komashaku's reading of Murasaki as Queer.

enter a convent and the way she depicts the decision in the last ten chapters of the *Tale of Genji*. Finally I will provide a brief analysis of the way Komashaku's reading has been curated in the only chapter of this book to be translated into English.

2.2 A Note on Terminology

With the understanding that all readings are inflected by certain assumptions regarding gender and sexuality, I will be discussing the way Murasaki's work can be read using the dichotomy of Queer reading/Straight reading. By the term "Queer reading," I mean to take the broadest possible definition of Queer theory, meaning that I will read evidence in a way that does not dismiss the historical reality of Queer people. I will be making use of this framework to avoid the common analytic pitfall of heterosexuality and cisgender experience being assumed as a default state of being. Where I am supporting or critiquing Komashaku's analysis, I will be doing so with this framework in mind.

When I refer to a historical figure like Murasaki as potentially Queer it is important to note that I am not referring to identities as we would currently understand them. I am working across both language and time periods that make statements about a specific construction of sexuality untenable. What I am referring to is evidence of the phenomenon of same-sex love. The phenomenon of same-sex love exists everywhere, even if the constructions used to make sense of it vary across time and place. Komashaku uses the phrase "Shikibu was feeling love for her same sex" (Komashaku 1991, 42). Making a distinction between identity and experience without focusing overmuch on identity is necessary to create an accurate reading of Queer history that is useful for current day Queer people.

The most useful heuristic for my own critical analysis of Komashaku's work is one laid out in *The Epistemology of the Closet* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. She noted that in Western literary contexts where authors have been unable to write openly about homosexuality, expressions of homosexual longing have been displaced onto the more acceptable feeling of desire for approval from members of one's own sex (Sedgwick 1990, 94). Another important concept I am taking from this work is that in analysis there is, and always should be, a question to be interrogated about where the place of homosexual and homosocial desires are in society, whether they are segregated away from other desires in a minoritizing way, or whether they are a part of all human beings' experiences in a universalizing way (Sedgwick 1990, 91). As with all things, the truth is probably somewhere in the middle so this heuristic requires that we look for the balance of desire in this writing.

2.3 The presence and absence of eroticism in a heuristic of importance

"After reading [Murasaki's] poetry and diary, I became convinced that Murasaki was a Queer person. She shows that she has feelings for the bodies of women" Komashaku wrote, explaining her identification with Murasaki (Komashaku 1991, 42). These "feelings for the bodies of women" do not allow us to say that Murasaki was necessarily Gay in the current sense of self-identification, but they are something in which Modern day Queer readers like Komashaku can see their own experiences. Komashaku argues that she was not the first person to come to this conclusion and that Genji scholar Shimizu Yoshiko argued for a non-heterosexual reading of Murasaki's relationship with her husband (Komashaku 1991, 24).[12] Shimizu notes the lack of genuine mourning poetry among the surviving poetry referencing the death of Murasaki's

[12] I am accessing Shimizu's arguments via Komashaku's work.

husband, Nobutaka (Komashaku 1991, 24). While the absence of feelings for men's bodies is not necessary for a woman to be Queer, the combination of interest in one's own sex and disinterest in another can easily be read as evidence of lesbianism in particular rather than existing under the umbrella of WLW, which can include bisexual and pansexual women with even a strong lean towards men. In this section, I will lay out Komashaku's comparison of Murasaki's recorded relationship with her husband, Nobutaka, and the way she speaks about the bodies and beauty of other women.

In Shimizu and Komashaku's analyses, Murasaki's calm tone when she is sending poetry consoling the people close to Nobutaka indicates that her mourning was not personal in a way. Komashaku argues that "he seems to be the only man in Shikibu's life but she does not seem to care much for him" (Komashaku 1991, 23-24). Apart from the poems she was obligated to write as a part of her husband's funerary rites and memorials, she records no personal poems on the subject and even the poetry she exchanges with family members do not seem to hold the kind of emotion that her poetry about the women in her life holds (Komashaku 1991, 23).

The argument that Murasaki may have experienced same-sex love cannot rest simply on a lack of passion shown towards her husband, there must also be evidence that she loved women. To this end, Komashaku points out that Murasaki spends a significant portion of her diary describing her feelings towards women, particularly towards women's bodies, and records the poetry she gives and receives from women. Treating the recording of Murasaki's life, through anecdotes and poetry, as an intentional creative act is central to Komashaku's analysis of Murasaki's choices in curating the record of her own experience (Komashaku 1991, 25). Essentially, someone as intelligent as Murasaki would have put thought into a process as laborious as writing each page.

For Komashaku and Shimizu there is no such thing as uncritical documentation in Murasaki's writing since "it is not the poetry itself that Shikibu tried to leave in the *Poetic Memoirs*, but the image of the people who built Shikibu's past together" (Shimizu Yoshiko quoted in Komashaku 1991, 25). Komashaku points out that there are times when Murasaki specifically defines the relationship between her and the person she is writing to as sisterly and argues that the distinction suggests that Murasaki was aware of the fact that her poems could be read as love poems between men and women if she did not indicate their genders (Komashaku 1991, 24). In Komashaku's view, Murasaki shows signs that she knew her diary and *Poetic Memoirs* would be read through a lens that prioritized love stories between men and women and formed her narrative to avoid such mistakes.

Indeed, when taken out of context, Komashaku did think the poems to be heterosexual love poems (Komashaku 1991, 12). However, on finding out that the recipient was a woman, the romance she had seen when she read it as heterosexual did not disappear. For Komashaku to refer to Murasaki and her friend's relationship as sisterly does not necessarily mean she is negating eroticism (Komashaku 1991, 15). Modern lesbian couples in Japan have referred to each other with many words that signify a kind of familial relationship such as "older sister", "younger sister", and "older brother"[13] (Robertson 1999, 9). She argues that to ignore eroticism and romance because it is between two women results from an "illusion of marriage".

I agree with Komashaku's epistemological framework because *The Poetic Memoirs of Lady Murasaki* and *The Diary of Lady Murasaki* together are not exhaustive compared to the length of The *Tale of Genji*. For an example of the difference in length: *The Diary of Lady*

[13] *Oneesama*, *imouto*, and *aniki* respectively.

Murasaki, in the Penguin Classics translation, is 66 pages long, meanwhile the Penguin Classics translation of The *Tale of Genji* with denser formatting is 1120 pages long.

With this large a variation in length, it is unlikely that the shorter document would have been written to contain much, if any, material deemed unnecessary to the author. In addition, throughout the Diary and *Poetic Memoirs*, Murasaki indicates that some time has passed between the events happening and her recording of them. This time is indicated in lapses of memory about the dates of certain events, statements about how her own recollection of the event strikes her as unusual, and in framing that indicates that the recording of a poem was motivated by her act of going through her own collection of exchanged poems. This temporal distance means that only those poems she kept and the interactions that stuck in her memory could be recorded. Everyday or unimportant interactions were unlikely to have been recorded in such a process.

Reading Murasaki's recorded interactions using Komashaku's heuristic of importance and in a Queer theory context, on the other hand, allows for homoeroticism to be read out of seemingly small moments. As an example, I would like to examine one of Murasaki's small but vividly described moments between her and another court lady, Lady Saishō, look at the way Komashaku interprets that interaction, and then compare it to an interaction with a man from the same section of her diary. The passage reads:

> Returning to my room, I looked in at Lady Saishō's door, only to find her asleep. She lay with her head pillowed on a writing box, her face all but hidden by a series of robes — dark red lined with green, purple lined with dark red — over which she had thrown a deep crimson gown of unusually glossy silk. The shape of her forehead was enchanting and so delicate. She looked just like one of those princesses you find depicted in illustrations. I pulled back the sleeve that covered her face.
>
> 'You remind me of a fairytale princess!' I said.
>
> She looked up with a start.
>
> 'You are dreadful!' she said, propping herself up. 'Waking people up like that without a thought!'

> I remember being struck by the attractive way her face suddenly flushed. So it is that someone normally very beautiful can look even more beautiful than ever on occasion (Murasaki 2005, 6 –7).

At a glance, we can see that in this passage there is a great deal of effort spent painting an image of Lady Saishō as beautiful, detailing the position of her body, and recording the interaction in as natural a way as possible. The beauty of a flustered Lady Saishō is the detail that made this encounter stick in Murasaki's memory and made her want to record it for posterity. It is presented without any turns of phrase that would suggest discontent on Murasaki's part.

Komashaku's explanation of the scene focuses on the opulent scene that Murasaki paints with her words. The fact that she spends so much time and thought on the details of Lady Saishō's robes and looks indicates an interest in women's bodies and beauty. She takes the fact that Lady Saishō flushed as an indication that she wasn't truly angry at Murasaki, just flustered. That embarrassment is a part of what Murasaki finds beautiful about her (Komashaku 1991, 43-44). "It seems that the composure granted to her by age led Shikibu to think that the young and beautiful Lady Saishō was lovable" (Komashaku 1991, 44).

It is notable that this description is part of her explanation of how Komashaku is conceiving of pre-modern female homosexuality. In her view, Murasaki's interest in women's bodies and her prioritization of her relationships with women constitutes an early example of the Meiji era construction of "not crossing the line" between "safe, wholesome" female homoromantic behaviour and "dangerous, disordered" female homosexual behaviour (Komashaku 1991, 43). It is tempting to read what we know into the past according to a narrative of progress, but the truth is that not enough is yet known about pre-modern WLW relationships to know if this framing is accurate or not.

Komashaku's analysis relieves Murasaki of any implication that she was acting as a peeping-tom by denying the intentionality of this encounter. To Komashaku, the important parts of this encounter are that it was recorded so lovingly and that the reaction appears to be one of embarrassment rather than anger. This is an example of what Komashaku calls Murasaki's "feelings for women's bodies" (Komashaku 1991, 42). The act of recording indicates a value placed on this encounter. Since diaries were not private documents at the time, this value includes the idea that these vivid memories needed to be shared with her friends from her hometown, (Murasaki 2005, xlix). In Komashaku's view, with her daughter, or with the young empress Shōshi as was suggested by Shimizu (Komashaku 1991, 36; Fischer 1991, 91).

Murasaki describes women as if she is trying to preserve them in amber, but her brief descriptions of men are usually accompanied by an anecdote talking about how she and other women were made uncomfortable or angry by them. In order to provide contrast with her descriptions of women, I will present an encounter with a man that Komashaku does not examine to see if there is a marked difference. Murasaki writes the following about Fujiwara no Michinaga's son, Yorimichi:

> One quiet evening as Lady Saishō and I are talking together, His Excellency's eldest son pulls up the bottom of the blind and seats himself down. He is very grown-up for his age and looks most elegant. The earnestness with which he talks of love — 'ah women! Such difficult creatures at times!' — it gives the lie to those who dismiss him as a callow youth; *I find him rather unsettling*. We are still talking in generalities when suddenly he is off, murmuring something about there being 'too many maiden-flowers in the field'; I remember thinking how like the hero of a romance he seemed.
> How is it that a little incident like this suddenly comes back to one, whereas something that moved one deeply at the time can be simply forgotten with the passage of years? (Murasaki 2005, 5 Emphasis mine)

Physically, Yorimichi is described only in the vaguest terms. He is "grown up for his age" and "elegant," but these statements show only the barest interest when compared to her description of Lady Saishō's bundled robes, her forehead, and her flushes. We are left with no mental image of this man. Murasaki compares both Saishō and Yorimichi to figures in romantic stories but where she says Saishō's princess-like appearance is something wonderful, Yorimichi's similarity to the hero of a romance is unsettling and cause for her to record, in a potentially backhanded compliment, that he was referred to as a "callow youth." Murasaki's own lack of interest in a person she compares to a hero from a romance lends credence to Komashaku's argument that Murasaki's own romantic hero, Genji, is not meant to be an ideal. The "hero of a romance" depicted here is someone who intrudes on women's space, complains about women being difficult, and then leaves, making the women, who had been minding their own business, wonder why the encounter happened at all. Both anecdotes are ones that stuck with Murasaki but her interaction with a woman is the one she writes of with joy.

Murasaki often records interactions with other women that could easily be read as romantic. For example, there is an interaction in which Lady Murasaki sends a poem to Lady Dainagon reading: "How I long for those waters on which we lay; A longing keener than the frost on a duck's wing." She replied "Awakening to find no friend to brush away the frost; The mandarin duck longs for her mate in the night" (Murasaki 2005, 34-35). Komashaku does not directly refer to this exchange, but she does list Lady Dainagon, alongside Lady Saishō (whose body Murasaki so lovingly described in the encounter described above, and Lady Koshōshō as the three women with whom she seemed to be on the best terms with (Komashaku 1991, 27). Lady Koshōshō, as the person closest to Murasaki in her diary and *Poetic Memoirs*, will be discussed at greater length in her own section.

2.4 Koshōshō

If there is one woman in the *Diary of Lady Murasaki* and her *Poetic Memoirs* who serves as the main object of Murasaki's affections, it is Lady Koshōshō. Their relationship deserves special attention. As such, this section will break down the details that made Komashaku read the two of them as having a love relationship. In Komashaku's reading, Koshōshō is someone for whom Murasaki "lovingly yearns" and that she was the anonymous partner in writing the diary and her letters (Komashaku 1991, 44). Descriptions of Lady Koshōshō and letters from her that Murasaki chose to preserve paint a very flattering and personal image of someone dear to Murasaki. She is one of the few women at court who Murasaki had known from her hometown during the time during which she was writing the *Tale of Genji*. Komashaku draws a connection between the Lady Koshōshō and the character of Fujitsubo, Genji's mother in Murasaki's narrative, as she is kind but deeply unhappy at court (Komashaku 1991, 44).

> Lady Koshōshō was elegant, beautiful, frail, and obedient. She was the kind of person who would die before being malicious. The Paulonia Jar chapter of the *Tale of Genji* reminds me of this woman. Since her father died she was incredibly unhappy and sighed about leaving the world. (Komashaku 1991, 44)

According to Komashaku's reading, Murasaki Shikibu seems to have loved and wanted to protect Lady Koshōshō from harm (Komashaku 1991, 45). For Komashaku, Murasaki's feelings of love and protection for the women in her life, especially the most personally important person represented in her diary and *Poetic Memoirs*, are the motivating factors visible behind the writing of *The Tale of Genji* (Komashaku 1991, 224). That said, the relationship between Murasaki and Koshōshō is treated as somewhat self-evident in Komashaku's analysis and so here I will set forth some examples of the kind of interactions that Komashaku summarizes as

"lovingly yearning", "understanding her pain", and having a "close relationship" (Komashaku 1991,44–45).

2.4.1 Lovingly Yearning

The poetry Murasaki exchanged with Lady Koshōshō demonstrates how "Shikibu lovingly yearns for" her (Komashaku 1991, 44). The yearning is shown in conventional images that are hard to explain away such as when Koshōshō sent the following poem:

> *The skies at which I gaze and gaze are overcast;*
> *How is it that they too rain down tears of longing?*

Murasaki's reply reads:

> *It is the season for such rainy skies;*
> *Clouds may break*
> *but these watching sleeves will never dry"*
> (Murasaki 2005, 23).

The image of wet sleeves is used in the exchanged poetry she writes in *The Tale of Genji*, thirty-nine times, and in every case it is used to refer to a lover or a deceased family member (Murasaki 2003, 52, 90, 91, 127, 143, 172, 178, 179, 182, 198, 202, 241, 243, 246, 277, 308, 396, 427, 541, 566, 652, 659, 724, 725, 752, 776, 860, 892, 923, 1003, 1020, 1030, 1093, 1095). Murasaki uses the image of wet sleeves so often and with so much consistency in the *Tale of Genji* that I think it demonstrates a firm idea of what Murasaki saw as the appropriate use of this image. I believe her use of the image in her personal writings and her use in the *Tale of Genji* are more likely to have had the same intended readings than they are to have differed. Lady Koshōshō is not dead at any time when poetry is being exchanged with her and we have no evidence of Murasaki using this image platonically when referring to living people. As such, I believe the use of this image

indicates an emotional relationship on par with what we would assume had the recipient been male.

2.4.3. Understanding her Pain

> Lady Koshōshō is so indefinably elegant and graceful she reminds one of a weeping willow in the spring. She has a lovely figure and charming manner, but is by nature far too retiring, diffident to the point of being incapable of making up her mind about anything, so naïve that it makes one want to weep. Whenever someone unscrupulous tries to take advantage of her or spreads rumours, she immediately takes it all to heart. She is so vulnerable and so easily dismayed that you would think she were on the point of expiring. I do worry about her.
> (Murasaki 2005, 48)

This description of Koshōshō as naive and in need of protection inspired Komashaku to posit that perhaps the first woman written about in The Tale of Genji, Kiritsubo, was based on her (Komashaku 1991, 44). In The *Tale of Genji*, Kiritsubo is the mother of the title character. She is kind and beautiful but catching the emperor's eye leads to her being bullied to death by the other court women who are jealous of her favoured position. In Komashaku's reading of the Kiritsubo chapter, it is the Emperor's lack of attention to Kiritsubo's pain that is the ultimate cause of her death (Komashaku 1991, 61). The character trait of being easily bullied is one that Koshōshō shares with Kiritsubo. Koshōshō is someone Murasaki knew from before coming to court, so she is someone Murasaki potentially knew before writing the *Tale of Genji*. Komashaku's suggestion that the two are connected relies on these feelings of vulnerability and worry visible in this section.

Here, I would like to extend a few more observations of my own about Murasaki's description of Koshōshō. In the descriptions of seventeen named women, only one, Lady Koshōshō, is described using a poetic metaphor (Murasaki 2005, 47-54). With most of the other women she describes their bodies and beauty in detail, waves them aside as generically pretty, or

provides criticism of her colleagues, attitudes or actions. However, instead of this she sets Koshōshō apart from the others by describing her as "like a weeping willow in spring" (Murasaki 2005, 48). In this way the relationship between Murasaki and Koshōshō is subtly set apart in the narrative.

It is also notable that she cohabitated with Lady Koshōshō, having removed the barrier between their rooms, and was therefore the person with the most access to information about Koshōshō's love life, yet she places Koshōshō in a group of court women whom she describes in this way:

> All these ladies-in-waiting must have been approached by senior courtiers at one time or another. If anyone is careless there is no hiding the fact, but somehow, by taking precautions even in private, they do seem to have managed to keep their affairs secret (Murasaki 2005, 48-49)

If this statement is taken with Murasaki's assertion that she and Koshōshō were too close to keep secrets about affairs, then it would seem unlikely that Koshōshō had any kind of heterosexual affair during the time she and Murasaki were at court, living together.

The concern Murasaki felt for Koshōshō's sufferings is on full display in the diary during an interaction that takes place just as the women are trying to escape from the drunken revelry of the New Years celebration. She writes:

> As [four uninvited and unwelcome male guests who came to Murasaki and Koshōshō's quarters] hurried away on their respective paths, I wondered what kind of women were waiting for them at home. Not that I was thinking so much of myself as of Lady Koshōshō: she was elegant and attractive by any standards, and yet here she was brooding over the melancholies of life. Fate seems to have treated her most unfairly since her father retired. (Murasaki 2005, 36)

In this section, Lady Murasaki shows that she cares deeply for Lady Koshōshō, and she muses somewhat over the potential that Lady Koshōshō would be happier married than staying at court (Murasaki 1982, 97). Murasaki shows concern about whether Koshōshō would be happier in a heterosexual relationship than at court. In Komashaku's reading, The *Tale of Genji* can, and

should, be read as refuting the idea that women can rely on men for their happiness (Komashaku 1991, 220). Murasaki's wavering on the question of whether Koshōshō would be happier married indicates deeply personal wrestling with this very problem throughout her life.

2.4.3 Having a Close Relationship

One of the exchanges that says the most about the relationship between Koshōshō and Murasaki is one between Murasaki and Fujiwara no Michinaga (966–1028) in which Murasaki defends her relationship with Lady Koshōshō. Lady Koshōshō and Lady Murasaki shared a room in the palace, or, more accurately, their rooms were side by side and they had replaced a wall with a curtain. Murasaki includes an anecdote indicating that this was seen as strange and laughable by Michinaga, who asked Murasaki "What if one of you took the opportunity of the other's absence to invite a new acquaintance?" (Murasaki 1982, 149). Komashaku interprets this question to mean that he is asking her "what would happen between them at such a time when an unknown man were to come to have sex with one of them." (Komashaku 1991, 45). Murasaki records her own anger at the interjection by saying that she and Lady Koshōshō were too close for them to ever do such a thing (Murasaki 1982, 149). In this way she is asserting the primacy of her relationship with Koshōshō specifically over the potential of a heterosexual sexual encounter.

Komashaku does not go into much detail about this anecdote except to illustrate the closeness of the two women, but I believe it supports her claims about Murasaki's "feelings for the bodies of women." The fact that she co-habitated with Koshōshō is the context that allowed for a number of the anecdotes that she deemed important enough to record. Small details like dawdling while dressing each other only to be embarrassed when they had to rush out for a

ceremony or huddling together around a brazier paints a vivid image of treasured female-female intimacy within the context of court (Murasaki 2005, 23, 36).

Komashaku spends a considerable amount of her time laying out evidence that the men around Murasaki were engaging in sexual harassment rather than courting them (Komashaku 1991, 29). Michinaga's "teasing" about her intimate emotional relationship with Koshōshō, as Komashaku chose to characterize it, is one of a number of interactions that indicate a lack of respect for Murasaki's privacy. However, it is the certainty with which Murasaki defended the trust she and Koshōshō shared that is most telling of the closeness of the two.

Lady Koshōshō is the other party in a comparatively extended exchange from the *Poetic Memoirs* that is loaded with emotion. Parts of this exchange are represented in both the *Poetic Memoirs* and *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*, but they have different contextual information. The entry in the *Poetic Memoirs* is longer in that it is a run of four poems centering on the same image, suggesting that they were with the same person. The unifying image is that of a "water rail." The "water rail" (*kuina*), is a bird with a call that resembles knocking on wood (Bowring 2005, 61 n82). As a result it became a symbol of lovers meeting in the night or, as can be inferred from Murasaki's statement of fear in the following poems, someone knocking at a door hoping for a sexual encounter. The section unique to the *Poetic Memoirs* reads:

It was in the Palace on a moonlit night on the seventh or eighth of the month. There came the tapping of a water rail. Lady Koshōshō wrote:

> The door of heaven is never barred against the passage of the moon;
> So in what quarter taps the water rail?
> I replied:
> In the moonlight that makes me hesitate to bar the door
> Where is it that the water rail taps so insistently? (Murasaki 1982, 240)

In this excerpt Koshōshō is explicitly stated to be the person Murasaki is writing to and they appear to be discussing Murasaki being harassed. Murasaki does not want to bar her door because she values being able to sit in the moonlight and exchange poetry with Koshōshō enough that she is willing to ignore the unwanted suitor.

Her decision to not bar the door does cause something of a crisis for Murasaki. There is a night where someone knocks on the door of the room she is sleeping in. The framing sentence in the *Poetic Memoirs* is neutral, but in the diary the threat of sexual violence is foregrounded. The second interaction reads:

> One night as I lay asleep in a room in the corridor, there came the sound of someone tapping at the door. I was so frightened that I kept quiet for the rest of the night. Early next morning I received:
>
> Crying crying all night long
> More constant than the water rail
> In vain did I tap at your door.
>
> To which I replied:
>
> The water rail was indeed insistent;
> But had I opened up, come dawn,
> I may well have had bitter regrets.
>
> (Murasaki 2005, 61)

Komashaku's analysis of Murasaki relies on believing Murasaki when she speaks of fear and the mistreatment of women. Using this heuristic it is unlikely that the "someone" she is writing to is the suitor, since indicating that she would intentionally ignore his knocking would endanger her in the future. It is much more forthright about her worries than the poetry she uses to brush aside men's advances, suggesting that she is talking to a woman. Also, the seamless continuation of the "water rail" image suggests that Koshōshō remains the person she is talking to in this exchange. As such this would likely stand out to Komashaku as an example of a woman prioritizing and trusting women leading to same-sex relationships becoming sites of strong emotion and validation or rejection.

Koshōshō's death is the last thing memorialized in Murasaki's *Poetic Memoirs*. Of course, it is impossible to know if there was more to the *Poetic Memoires* originally that have been lost, but there is a kind of morose finality to the ending. She reports that she was looking through papers she had kept for years and came across a letter by Koshōshō that moved her enough to make her want to share the memory with someone who had known Koshōshō in life. The passage reads:

> I found among other papers, a very frank letter that Lady Koshōshō had once written to me. I sent it to Kaga no Shonagon along with:
>
> I give no thought to my own frail life and yet to feel
> the mortality of others is indeed a sadness.
>
> Who will read it? Who will live forever in this world?
> A letter left behind in her undying memory.
>
> And [Kaga no Shonagon] replied:
> For how long should we long for those already gone?
> Today's grief is our own tomorrow.
> (Murasaki 1982, 255)

This prolonged grieving for Koshōshō stands in sharp contrast to the impersonal way she talked about her husband's death. The pain of mortality in Murasaki's own poetry did not reach its peak in the death of her husband, but by the loss of her lifelong friend and confidant, with whom she had cohabitated, and for whose honour she would talk back to powerful men.

2.5 Genji is not a hero

How could a Queer woman write one of literature's most iconic romantic heroes? According to Komashaku, Murasaki designed Genji to be an antagonist to the many women protagonists of her story. In this section I will be looking at the reasons why Genji gets assumed to be a hero in the story, how the masculine control of academic analysis has influenced this

assumption, and why Komashaku's argument that the women are the point of the Tale of Genji fits with what we know of Murasaki's life. The *Tale of Genji*, if read with the understanding that the women are the protagonists, is a story that centers on the repeated creation of an illusion of heterosexual marital bliss, and then the destruction of that illusion to reveal the underlying suffering of the women involved. The characters of Genji and Kaoru act as a criticism of masculinity in this reading. The fact that Genji is praised by other minor male characters and desired by many female characters is a feature of this interpretation, not a weakness. The systems that allow privileged people to not face consequences for their mistreatment of marginalized people has always been apparent to the marginalized.

The perception of Genji as Murasaki's ideal man is more a result of who has platforms and what readings are seen as valid than it is anything in the text. As Komashaku points out, the male characters in the *Tale of Genji* might praise Genji but, as the narrator, Murasaki never does (Komashaku 1991, 70). Her original audience was comprised mainly of other women and yet her own writing attests to the ways that those women were shut out of certain forms of education that would have let their opinions on literature be taken seriously (Komashaku 1991, 68). For example, in her diary she details how her own ability to read Chinese and Sino-Japanese script was scorned by other women since it was assumed that to be a woman with masculine-coded knowledge implied disdain for those who did not (Murasaki 2005, 57). She writes about receiving an education in the Chinese classics through listening in on her brother's lessons and quickly learning that she had to pretend to be mostly illiterate in order to maintain a good reputation (Murasaki 2005, 58). In this anecdote we can see how the policing of women's education moved from men intentionally not including women in learning, through women policing their own expression of knowledge, to eventually being reinforced by other women. A

context where women were discouraged from showing their ability to understand and analyse content was an inbuilt barrier to women's participation in how the text was received, so it is to be expected that the vast majority of pre-modern Genji commentaries were written by men for men (Kern 2014, 15-16).

For the purposes of this explanation, it is important to note that the opinions of these male, pre-modern analysts are as far as possible from the one Komashaku is advancing. Buddhist writers placed the *Tale of Genji* as the lowest form of literature underneath religious works, histories, and other works that, due to being written in Chinese, were coded masculine and were less accessible to women in Murasaki's time (Kern 2014, 13). This Buddhist disdain is not limited to pure analysis. The *Ima Monogatari*, for example, includes a story about a person who dreamt that Murasaki was suffering in one of the Buddhist hells for writing the *Tale of Genji* and "confusing people's hearts" with lies (Kern 2014, 12).

In contrast, Komashaku's woman-centered analysis treats Murasaki's fiction as a form of Buddhism's expedient means, showing the "misfortune of happy women" by building image after image of apparently happily married young women only to expose this happiness as illusory (Komashaku 1991, 55). "Expedient means" is a concept that can be summarized in the idea that Buddhist truths are adapted to fit the needs and ability of the listener. Perhaps, the most famous parable explaining expedient means is the parable of the burning house from the Lotus Sutra in which a man lies about offering enticing gifts to his children to get them to run out of a burning house. There is no reason why fiction cannot be a form of expedient means. Komashaku's reading, posits romance as the bait and the revelation of suffering as the truth. The *Tale of Genji* maps Buddhism's universal truth of suffering onto the beautiful world of court life.

As an example of the excerpts that cause one to doubt the idea that Genji is supposed to be a hero, I will present a moment of narration about Genji's youth from between a scene in which he is rejected by Utsusemi, "the Lady of the Cicada shell," a high class, married woman, and one in which he sexually assaults of Yugao, a much lower class and more vulnerable woman within the same house. In Genji's raucous youth, he is depicted as having a clear disrespect towards women. Here is an example of Murasaki's indictment of his character.

> Genji's astonishing rejection by the lady of the cicada shell had led him to think her hardly human, but if only she had given him a better hearing he might have contented himself with that one unfortunate misdeed, whereas under the circumstances he dwelled incessantly and with keen irritation on his dislike for giving up in defeat (Murasaki 2003, 59).

Far from being a romantic ideal, Murasaki depicts Genji as someone who has no respect for women as people. In the above-quoted section, Genji is a man for whom Utsusemi, a woman who will not sleep with him, is such a threat to his masculinity that he decides to rape Yugao, a much more timid woman, and causes her death (Komashaku 1991, 80, 85). Utsusemi and Yugao can be read as showing that whether or not a woman maintains "chastity", Genji will not respect them. Komashaku suggests that Utsusemi might have been a semi-autobiographical depiction of the sexual harassment she experienced at court (Komashaku 1991, 83). The main perpetrator of this harassment, as depicted in Murasaki's diary and *Poetic Memoirs,* was Michinaga.

Museum curator and art historian, Felice Fischer states that "the chief quality that defined Genji as a hero to Heian readers was that he never abandons a woman he has loved" (Fischer 1991, 123). However, if that is the standard by which men are judged to be heroic, then the bar straight men have to clear is truly underground. Komashaku and Fischer published in the same year, meaning there is little chance that they saw each other's work before publishing their arguments. As I am presenting Komashaku's argument, I will suggest an interpretation of

Fischer's characterization that fits with Komashaku's interpretation of Genji. Abandonment, by Fischer's analysis, would not have needed to be exposed as a cause of women's suffering by the audience. The cases of abandonment Murasaki presents in the *Tale of Genji* are not structured according to the pattern of building up an illusion of a happy woman and then tearing it down. For example, Genji's main wife, a child Genji adopted in order to raise her into his ideal wife, Young Murasaki, was abandoned by her father at the beginning of her story, but the abandonment is just the beginning of her story. Being abandoned by her father sets up Genji as her saviour, in turn building a different illusion of the happy woman. Fischer's reading of Genji's heroic steadfastness holds Genji to a much lower standard than Murasaki holds her own husband in the *Poetic Memoirs*. When talking about Murasaki's depiction of Nobutaka, Komashaku paints an image of a proud, intelligent woman in a marriage that required her to assert herself so that she could have a relationship with dignity (Komashaku 1991, 21). Notably, she points out that there is an interaction recorded where Murasaki's anger at Nobutaka showing his friends her letters leads to her not being able to trust him with her innermost thoughts anymore. If Murasaki thought that simply "not abandoning one's lovers" was heroic, then her own husband, who was with her until his death, would have also been exceptional. Yet she records her anger, showing what values she held when it came to relationships in doing so.

2.6 Convents as non-heterosexual spaces

The Lady Murasaki spent the last years of her life in a convent, out of the public eye. This is the time in her life when she is believed to have finished the *Tale of Genji* by writing the *Uji jūjō*, the ten chapters set in Uji province. The *Uji jūjō* follows the tragedy of Genji's fading

away and presents the story of a woman named Ukifune who eventually finds peace through swearing off court life and becoming a nun. Komashaku suggests that this set was written in response to men interpreting the *Tale of Genji*, not as a tragedy, but as a handbook for romance (Komashaku 1991, 157). To Komashaku, the *Uji jūjō* is a more open restatement of the suffering detailed in the rest of the book, with the addition of a way out of suffering through the non-heterosexual path of Buddhism. In this section I will be comparing Murasaki's decision to become a nun to her description of Ukifune's similar decision in the *Uji jūjō*.

Murasaki's own decision to enter the convent is expressed in a section of her diary dedicated to letters. She is writing to someone she cares about and trusts with her inner thoughts about the beauty of the women at court and her rivalry with a woman who works at the Kamo shrine. Komashaku believes that the letter, full of discussion of women's bodies and beauty, implies that the recipient would also have the same interest in the bodies of women that Murasaki demonstrates and speculates that they show longing for emotional intimacy with each other (Komashaku 1991, 45). It is true that Murasaki has more that she wishes to say but restrains herself at least partially out of a fear of what would happen if anyone were to read it.

> Why should I hesitate to say what I want to? Whatever others might say, I intend to immerse myself in reading sūtras for Amida Buddha. Since I have lost what little attachment I ever had for the pains that life has to offer, you might expect me to become a nun without delay. But even supposing I were to commit myself and turn my back on the world, I am certain there would be moments of irresolution before Amida came for me riding on his clouds. And thus I hesitate. I know the time is opportune. If I get much older my eyesight will surely weaken, I shall be unable to read sūtras, and my spirits will fail. It may seem that I am merely going through the motions of being a true believer, but I assure you that now I think of little else. But then someone with as much to atone for as myself may not qualify for salvation; there are so many things that serve to remind one of the transgressions of a former existence. Everything conspires to make me unhappy.
> I want to reveal all to you, the good and the bad, worldly matters and private sorrows, things that I cannot really go on discussing in this letter. But, even though one may be thinking about and describing someone objectionable, should one really go on like this, I wonder? But you must find life irksome at times. I know I do, as

> you can see. Write to me with your own thoughts – no matter if you have less to say than all my useless prattle, I would love to hear from you. Mind you, if this letter ever got into the wrong hands it would be disaster — there are ears everywhere. (Murasaki 2005, 58–59)

In this section, Murasaki is concerned that people will not believe that she is sincere in her desire to join the convent. She still lives at court at this time, but she wants to renounce that world. Specifically, she wants to renounce it while her eyes are still strong enough to read scripture. Her skill at interpreting Chinese texts in particular would then become an advantage, rather than something she needed to hide.

That Murasaki wants to "reveal all to you, the good and the bad, worldly matters and private sorrows" shows a great deal more longing and openness than Murasaki ever shows in the exchanges with her husband that she recorded. When Komashaku interprets this emotional intimacy as homosexuality, it should be thought of as a kind of romantic friendship. WLW relationships do not need to be sexual in nature to be considered as such. As an example of how little issue such distinctions cause, Komashaku points out that non-sexual lesbianism is common in lesbian literature of the Meiji period (Komashaku 1991, 42). I would add to this that asexual-homoromantic women, women who experience romantic attraction to their own gender but not sexual attraction, are easily included on the spectrum of lesbian experiences.

Murasaki's thoughts on her own chances of Buddhist salvation indicate a pessimism about her spirituality. Though she indicates a faith in Amida, the buddha at the center of the Pure Land sect, she does not appear to have internalized the Pure Land sect's teachings about the ability of Amida to save anyone who calls out for salvation with conviction. In particular, she says that she hesitates to join the convent because "someone with as much to atone for as myself may not qualify for salvation; there are so many things that serve to remind one of the transgressions of a former existence" (Murasaki 2005, 59). Bowring suggests in footnote 78 that Murasaki was

referring to her gender and the fact that it was a common belief in Buddhism that a woman must be reborn as a man before she could attain enlightenment, though he acknowledges that there were some texts, like the *Lotus Sutra* that could have been interpreted as saying that it was possible for women to achieve enlightenment (Murasaki 2005, 59). It is also possible that she was referring to the way her body was breaking down in her late thirties due to lead poisoning common to Heian court women who wore thick, white, lead-based make up, as Komashaku suggests Murasaki might have (Komashaku 1991, 41). It is a common belief in Buddhism that unexplained illnesses are the karmic results of negative actions committed in previous lives (Ghose 2007, 282). The sufferings she experienced were directly connected to her reality as a woman in a patriarchal world where she was going blind due to beauty standards that were quite literally toxic.

The non-heterosexuality Komashaku sees in Murasaki's diary connects with the non-heterosexuality inherent in the singledom of the convent in the *Uji jūjō*. Komashaku's reading of the *Uji jūjō* compares two women whose desire to not marry ended in them becoming nuns. One is a princess in the care of Kaoru, the somewhat more virtuous male character who replaces Genji. She is allowed to choose her own path, but even that is only because Kaoru listens to her desire to become a nun (Komashaku 1991, 168). The princess argues that it is better to be single than to be married, and Kaoru gives her permission to not marry (Komashaku 1991, 166-168). This negotiation shows that even in avoiding marriage, the non-radical options women had required the consent of men in a way that men's actions have never required the consent of women.

In this reading, the convent is a place where women congregate due to the desire to not have to marry men and to be around women who are dear to them more so than for spiritual

progress. This is as valid a reason for ordination as any and it does fulfil several of the functions of religious activity: community creation, the construction of spiritually sanctioned identities and relationships, and providing an alternative path for women. The third function is particularly complex since providing an alternative to heterosexual marriage that requires celibacy still reinforces male control over women's sexuality. The man in this case just happens to be symbolic. Still, if a woman could think that she had a choice she might not consider other, more radical options. Because of the existence of this path there is something women can do in order to live outside of the system no matter how limited that option is or how much their choice to do so is gatekept by men in power. It is this non-heterosexual path that Murasaki elevates with *The Tale of Genji*.

The contrast to this woman is Ukifune, who simply does not wish to marry. Her desire to not marry and avoid relying on men is treated as the correct one narratively (Komashaku 1991, 193). Yet Kaoru does not allow her the same freedom he allowed the princess, and instead takes advantage of her obedience to embrace her against her will (Komashaku 1991, 198–199). In this story, Ukifune is truly seen as a victim, much like Yugao in Genji's part of the story, because she does not desire Kaoru or any man and chooses death rather than having to rely on men (Komashaku 1991, 204, 206). Just like in all the other stories of women who die in *The Tale of Genji*, "The world of men continues to spin" and the men involved in her death do not fully understand the harm they have done (Komashaku 1991, 207).

Ukifune's attempt to die fails and she is able to witness the fallout and decide her fate from then on. She is taken in by a group of monks who think her a fox at first (Komashaku 1991, 209). Ukifune is given respect by the monks once they realize that she is not a fox and they help her remember her identity. She decides to become a nun and that choice gives her the autonomy

necessary to refuse to see Kaoru when he finds out that she is alive. In the end she was able to interrogate her feelings about who she actually missed and found that the people she missed were not the men at court, but her mother and nursemaid. To Komashaku, this is evidence that Murasaki was putting forth the argument that heterosexual attraction was based in the unfree nature of women's lives at the time (Komashaku 1991, 209, 211–212, 216). In this analysis, the *Uji jūjō* is the encapsulation of the dark message of the entire *Tale of Genji*, that "for a woman, a man is like heaven [...] in that a woman's inescapable fate from birth is to marry a man, as if by a heavenly mandate", that no matter how good a man is the structural discrimination around them will cause the woman suffering, and that the only way out of suffering is to leave heterosexual contexts (Komashaku 1991, 219, 220).

2.7 The Politics of Translation

What work exists, and what kind of work is deemed important enough to translate are two different things and both are dependent on different kinds of power. It is the aim of this section to examine the curation of Komashaku's argument in translation, and the way that the heterosexually acceptable portion of Komashaku's argument was taken out of context when translated, misrepresenting her reading. Within Komashaku's *Murasaki Shikibu no Messeji*, only one part of a chapter has been published in English. This chapter, originally titled "Murasaki no Ue: Identity Sōshitsu no Higeki" (Lady Murasaki: the tragedy of a lost identity) but published in English as "A Feminist Reinterpretation of 'The Tale of Genji': Genji and Murasaki", covers a part of Komashaku's argument that Genji is not the protagonist of *The Tale of Genji*. The real protagonists, Komashaku argues, are the women around Genji who all suffer in different ways from the fickleness of men (Komashaku 1993, 28). While this is an important point to make

when it comes to feminist literary analysis of Japanese women writers, it leaves out an important part of Komashaku's Queer analysis. Komashaku intended all of her analysis to be read with the understanding that Murasaki was able to focus on the sufferings caused by heteronormative society due to her outsider positioning as a Queer woman (Komashaku 1991, 224). To take an apparently heterosexually normative argument out of context when presenting it to the English speaking world misrepresents Komashaku's argument.

The chapters containing Komashaku's arguments about the nature of Murasaki's work in the *Tale of Genji* do not explicitly tie themselves back to the earlier interpretation of Murasaki as a Queer person until the conclusion. The lack of explicit Queer arguments in these chapters makes these chapters more heterosexually acceptable than her discussion of Murasaki herself. Her decision not to interweave her arguments made it possible for her argument about Murasaki's Queerness to be excluded in translations. The only chapter of this book to be translated into English was a fragment of one of these less radical chapters. However, it is important to note that Komashaku's underlying message is that the detached view of heterosexual life Komashaku sees in The *Tale of Genji* would not have been possible with an author who had any investment in marriage or heterosexual love (Komashaku 1991, 224). Komashaku is blunt when it comes to discussing compulsory heterosexuality. She goes so far as to say that "since the consensual connection between men and women is in itself a form of rape, society does not blame the rapist if a man happens to rape" (Komashaku 1991, 80). This sounds extreme but it is part of a rhetorical exaggeration meant to hammer home the point that the power dynamics that exist when women have no power to live without marriage makes all marriages a site of coercion.

2.8 Conclusion

Viewed not as an early romance novel, but as a highly popular example of protest art, *The Tale of Genji* places Murasaki Shikibu in a lineage of women fighting for each other. This lineage is one that has power, as evidenced by the very fact that Komashaku felt the need to explore the possibility. Komashaku, and indeed anyone doing this kind of historical search, including myself, creates a kind of imagined community stretching back through time, allowing ourselves to see that rebellion against discrimination is something with deep roots. Constructing a local history of women rejecting patriarchal norms is a particularly important way to fight the fiction that all historical women were content with playing the roles pushed upon them by the patriarchy. Dispensing with this image is integral to fighting the false image of women's ambition as a modern phenomenon.[14] Komashaku states what happens when rebellion is ignored or silenced; discrimination without visible retaliation looks like love and consent, even when it is not based in either.

> Gender discrimination, like all forms of discrimination, does not show up unless the person who is discriminated against rebels. As long as it blends into the discriminatory system and adapts it appears to be "harmony" and "love". However when they resist and rebel the image of discrimination is revealed in how [marginalized people] are treated. (Komashaku 1991, 217)

When speaking about the progress made towards gay rights by the early 1990s in light of her own reading of Murasaki as Queer, Komashaku wrote "If Murasaki were able to come out from under the grave she would doubt her own eyes. She would no doubt be grateful" (Komashaku 1991, 42). Women's ability to advocate for themselves in the modern world, to live

[14] Komashaku recounts that as she was working on doing this Feminist interpretation of Murasaki people told her that what she was doing was "disrespectful" to Murasaki (Komashaku 1991, 224).

non-heterosexual and openly Queer lives outside of the convent, and to stand against sexual harrassment are all aspects of the modern world that Komashaku argues would be seen by Murasaki as astounding progress. Komashaku died in 2007, nine years before the global Me Too movement would take off and thirteen years before the first legally binding gay marriages in Modern East Asia (Yang, 2019). As technology makes the voices of all marginalized people more and more difficult to silence, systems of power that have been known to those hurt by them for millennia have started to crumble in the light of open scrutiny. Both Murasaki and Komashaku would likely be amazed to see what the persistence of women willing to speak about the horrific treatment of women can lead to and where it will lead to in the future.

CHAPTER TWO: OTAKE KŌKICHI – TOMIMOTO KAZUE

Liberation Above All

> *Sincerity is a force of prayer. It is the power of will. It is the power of Zen meditation, and the power of the way of the gods.*
> Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi, Josei wa Taiyō de atta*

3.1 Introduction

Picture a woman. She is tall, thin from a battle with tuberculosis, wearing a men's *yukata*, and playing a drum in the procession for a festival. Her shoulders are raised in anxiety at the thought of the eyes watching her and knowing that both her clothing and her role playing a drum mark her as dangerously rebellious in early twentieth-century Tokyo, but she continues nonetheless. This is the image with which Itō Noe (1895–1923) introduces her friend, Otake Kōkichi, as she recounts the time they knew each other through the *Seitōsha*, the Bluestocking Society (Itō 1970, 11).

Otake Kōkichi (1893-1966) was the name under which Otake Kazue (later known by her married name Tomimoto Kazue) published during her tenure at *Bluestocking*. Otake's work highlighted issues that, though unpopular in her time, make her a promising model for intersectional feminists. She openly wrote about her love for women, was gender-nonconforming, and she attempted to make use of her relative privilege to advocate for sex workers to be included in Taisho-era (1912–1926) feminist discourse. *Bluestocking* "was the first journal to openly defy existing social expectations about women [...] and to discuss controversial issues such as abortion and [sex work]" and Otake was the person pushing the Bluestocking society to break this kind of new ground (Kano 2016, 15).

Otake is more well known in Japan as the scandal-ridden girlfriend of Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971), an editor of the feminist magazine, *Bluestocking*. Otake and Hiratsuka, Yoshiya

Nobuko and Monma Chiyo, and Miyamoto Yuriko and Yuasa Yoshiko are couples that are often discussed together as three of the most famous lesbian relationships of early 20th-century Japan (Izumo and Maree 2000, 78-90; Wu 2007; Suzuki 2010). However, Otake's story does not end with her love affair with Hiratsuka Raichō. Through the rest of her life she served as a mentor and facilitator for other women within the women's liberation and the labour rights movements. Otake's writings are not easy to find. There is no "Collected Works of Otake Kazue" because she has not been valued in the way her comparable contemporaries were. There is only one full length biography of her in Japanese, *Seitō no Onna: Otake Kokichi den* (*Woman of Bluestocking: a biography of Otake Kokichi*) by Watanabe Sumiko.

Otake's life was touched by the various religious forces in Japan during the late Meiji (1868–1912) Taishō (1912–26) and Shōwa (1926–89) periods. She was educated as a Christian, dated a Buddhist who claimed to have achieved the first level of enlightenment, married an Emperor worshipper, defied the doctrine of "Good Wives, Wise Mothers" wherever she could, and was arrested as a Marxist. In the end, she made use of these traditions only where they were liberatory and rejected them where she thought they were oppressive (Watanabe 2001, 261; Itō 1970, 85). It is this kind of complicated, simultaneously personal and political relationship to religious experiences and organizations that I would like to present as an example for Queer people. In this chapter I will examine Otake as a potential role model for Japanese feminist women who love women. I will discuss the ways in which her life, embodied politics, and left-wing activist career involved a conscious navigation and rejection of Christian and state-defined values of femininity and heterosexuality make her an appealing historical figure for intersectional feminists. I rely heavily on Watanabe's biography for information on much of Otake's life after leaving the Bluestocking society. There are several characterizations of her

early career, notably the 1916 memoir of Itō Noe, *Zatsuon* (*Noises*) and the posthumously published memoir of Hiratsuka Raichō, *In the Beginning, Woman was the Sun*.[15]

Religious participation or resistance can be explicit or implicit when it comes to participating in or trying to change the unspoken, civic religions of one's nation. Throughout her life, Otake Kōkichi does both. Take the moment with which I opened this chapter as an example. Her participation in that procession was her way of calling out sexist limitations on women's participation in society. Women were not supposed to play that kind of drum, called a *taiko*, especially in religious contexts due to the ways in which female participation in masculine activities challenged the constructions of masculinity and femininity that most power-structures in Japan relied upon (Konagaya 2007, 81). By participating in this way she was actively protesting the segregation of women's and men's cultural and religious practices. By dressing in a men's *yukata* she was acting in defiance of the model of modernization that had been promoted by the Imperial Japanese government all through the Meiji period in which the burden of maintaining "Japaneseness" was placed on women and especially women's manner of dress (Goldstein-Gidoni 1999, 355).[16] In both of these acts she was asserting her Queerness through embodiment and praxis.

I lead with this vignette because of how incredibly humanizing it is to imagine the tension in her shoulders, her self-consciousness about her height, the soprano tone of her voice keeping her from any chance of passing as a boy as she moves with the crowd past the eyes of

[15] Hiratsuka Raichō wrote two documents called "In the Beginning, Woman was the Sun," so to avoid confusion I will be referring to the 1911 feminist manifesto by the Japanese *Genshi, Josei wa taiyō de Atta* and the autobiography by the English translation.

[16] Modernization in this case refers to the Imperial Japanese government's attempt at intentionally constructing a westernized state on their own terms. Because this was an intentional act it was also largely an attempt at constructing a false image of Japan as a culturally homogenous nation through the assignation of women as the carriers of culture and controlling their behaviours to support the structures of power that this homogeneity creates.

people who have been told by the press for years that she was a dangerous person who could turn their daughters lesbian and destroy the institution of the family. The second thoughts that must have been going through her head in that moment are ones that I think most openly Queer people have had; the constant mental arithmetic of whether living as one's whole self is worth the threat of violence and ridicule that accompanies that life.[17]

I would like to present Otake Kōkichi as someone women who love women can connect with, not only as an inspiring person, but as a real one, who lived and can be connected with on an emotional level. Marginalized people are often recorded in history by their achievements. Doing so suggests that their existence is justified by what they did for those in power and not by their value as humans. This phenomenon has a tendency to erase people like Otake Kōkichi who did not leave behind a poem or painting deemed a masterpiece by society, but who showed herself to be kind, undaunted, and dedicated to enacting change. Two long periods of silence in Otake's career as an artist contribute to the whitewashing of her post *Bluestocking* career. When she first became a mother, the unequal division of household labour forced her to postpone her ambitions and during the Second Sino-Japanese war (1937-1945) she refused to publish in magazines that supported the war effort (Watanabe 2001, 257, 260).

Otake Kōkichi embodied her politics in her resistance to Imperial Japan's state religion, replacing the state-defined strictures of being a good wife and a wise mother with her own definitions. Exploring her own sexuality, learning for herself how to educate her daughters in a revolutionary way, and becoming someone whose company notable WLW sought out as an artistic mentor were all things that she approached with the same kind of rebellious earnestness

[17] I will at times write from experience. This is not to offer my experience as evidence for my historical analysis, but rather to provide an empathetic reading that takes the potential value of this example to current-day Queer women into account and to identify incidents of harmful homophobia in contexts that did not support Queer people in putting words around the experience and expressing them publicly.

that she had in her young adulthood. Earnestness that, to the women of the early Japanese feminist movement, was a "force of prayer" that could wake up the women of Japan (Hiratsuka 1911).

In this chapter I will lay out the ways Otake's life and work navigated a time of intense religious, philosophical, and national change in as moral a way as she could and make the case for her as a positive model of Japanese Queer feminist history. First, I will explain the sexological, educational, and national context Otake's early career and reputation as a lesbian had to contend with. Second, I will lay out the two "incidents" that propelled her into the public eye as a "dangerous" lesbian feminist and the reasons why they were meaningful enough that they became sites of national scandal. Third, I will discuss Otake's break with the Bluestocking society and her struggle with depression. Fourth, I will discuss her career later in life as an author of children's literature and her decision to establish a school so her daughters and the children in her town would be taught a curriculum that avoided the state policy of teaching young women to be "good wives" and "wise mothers". Finally, I will explore the ways her relationships with different members of her family involved navigating an incredibly diverse set of religious and philosophical contexts, including Buddhism, Christianity, Emperor Worship, and feminist Marxism.

3.2 Sexology, the construction of lesbianism and the Bluestocking Society

Otake Kōkichi lived at a time when European sexology was being introduced to Japan and, importantly, to the burgeoning Japanese feminist movement. As such, it is vital to an understanding of Otake's life and relationships that we begin with an understanding of how

lesbianism was constructed in the Japanese feminist movement and in Japan more broadly. Pathologized lesbianism always needs to have a "cause" and in Japan, as in much of the West, that cause was female education (Rupp 2009, 171; Wu 2007, 75). Women's power, knowledge of the world, ability to envision other possibilities, and deep relationships with each other were all threats to a patriarchal order that relied on women's labour being controlled and kept in the sphere of childrearing (Wu 2007, 81; Kano 2016, 11). Anything that could allow women to live outside male control, thereby allowing them to escape compulsory heterosexuality and compulsory parenting were, and still are, perceived as a threat to the Japanese State (Wu 2007, 81). [18] As such, the institutions of women's power, like *Bluestocking* and The Japanese Women's University, were smeared as places where lesbianism "spread" (Suzuki 2010, 28; Robertson 1999, 10).[19]

Lesbianism was constructed as a physically dangerous phenomenon in the Japanese context, something that could cause girls to commit suicide (Robertson 1999, 25–26; Wu 2007, 79–80). [20] In a society that saw the control of women's sexuality by men to be the defining value

[18] The economic woes of Japan continue to be blamed on marginalized people and women including by members of the Liberal Democratic Party. In 2018, lawmaker, Sugita Mio suggested that Queer couples were "unproductive", in that they do not produce children, and therefore undeserving of federal support (Osaki 2018). In an article she called upon the pathologized ideas of homosexuality developed during the Meiji period to argue that the normalization of Queer relationships would make more people "unhappy" and lacking in "common sense" because they would continue Queer relationships after growing up. Ultimately, she argued that Queer relationships would cause Japanese society to collapse. Sugita is an outlier but a similar pro-natalist policy was expressed by Japan's deputy Prime Minister, Aso Taro. He said that Japan's greying population was not the reason for Japan's inability to keep up with social-security costs, putting the blame, instead on "those who didn't give birth" (Jozuka and Ogura 2019).

[19] Christian organizations, such as the Japan Women's College and the Japanese Women's Christian Temperance Union, were associated with modernity. This new Christian way to live involved a change to the structures of family life that that the Japanese government depended on but not so much so that it would be destroyed by the state. In a context where the main world powers were America and Europe, suppressing Christian activism would stoke international tension. The religious backing for the Tokyo Women's school was Christian, and it was quite normal for young intellectuals, for example Yosano Akiko, and Yoshiya Nobuko, to read the bible and use imagery from it in their work.

[20] The connection of Queer identity and incidence of depression and suicidal ideation is a matter, not of causation, but of correlation. Queer identities do not cause depression and suicidal ideation. It is the barriers in the way of Queer people's full participation in society and the persistent verbal, spiritual, and often physical abuse that is

of a woman's life, the claim that groups fighting patriarchy were somehow damaging to women gained more rhetorical footing in a context where non-heteronormativity was conceived of as pathological. The medicalization and pathologization of homosexuality made use of existing stigmas against the ill and people with disabilities to encourage both policing of one's own sexuality and that of others, leading to lesbians being made pariahs, lest their lesbianism spread (Suzuki 2010, 25). The young, outspoken, masculine Otake Kōkichi appeared at the time to be a perfect bogeyman for social conservatives to demonize and make the face of the kind of dangerous, pathological, modern femininity coming out of the women's colleges (Watanabe 2001, 38; Wu 2007, 81).

At the same time, the women of the feminist movement were actively using and translating European sexology in order to try and weaken local understandings of what femininity entailed (Suzuki 2010, 26). Influential lesbian writers like Yoshiya Nobuko (1896-1973) studied sexology with Christian feminist activists and constructed a wholesome vision of same-sex love with a decidedly Christian-values system supporting it. She depicted that love in novels and early manga (Suzuki 2010, 31-33). Yoshiya Nobuko's highly influential construction of homoromanticism as a necessary part of growing as a woman comes with the caveat of "not crossing the line" between acceptable romantic feelings, and dangerous sexual acts (Suzuki 2010, 33). Yoshiya, herself a lesbian in a lifelong partnership, provided cover for herself and other feminine Queer women by doing this. In this construction, as long as a woman was not caught in a sexual relationship, then she was not doing anything objectionable. The use of

aimed at Queer people that causes psychological complications. The Meiji era image of lesbianism as a threat is mirrored in the wrong and dangerous twenty-first century transphobic talking point that "allowing one's children to express Transgender identities puts them in danger."

Christian-influenced sexology either as a weapon to wield against lesbians or a tool to lift them up was largely a matter of who was interpreting it, and for what purpose.

Yoshiya's construction of homosexuality only really accommodates young feminine women with other young feminine women. In Imperial Japan, the dual constructions of lesbianism as a healthy or even necessary, but ultimately self-contained, phase of growth when between feminine women, but a mortal danger when at least one member is gender non-conforming were formed in the psychiatric and popular discourse of the time because of prominent lesbian love suicides (Suzuki 2010, 37; Robertson 1999, 20; Wu 2007, 79). Since this topic deserves a delicacy that I cannot give it here, I will discuss it in a later section.

Access to Western feminist and sexological material was important to Japanese feminists. One of the most widely discussed examples of this, from the time when Otake was in the public eye, was a moment of widespread feminist interest in *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen. The idea of prioritizing women's self-actualization over their roles as mothers and wives was treated as an existential threat by social-conservatives, and provided ample fodder for beginning a series of attacks on the Feminist writers who were examining it as progressive content. When Otake decided on her own to interview the actors bringing the play to Japanese audiences she came away with the, at-the-time unusual, opinion that marriage should be between two people who had their own ideals rather than requiring a woman to accept the beliefs of her husband and father (Watanabe 2001, 29). She argued in her article detailing her interview with the actors that women, like Ibsen's character Nora, should begin their self-exploration with a questioning of the apparent givens of sexuality (Watanabe 2001, 29). Otake Kōkichi's gender presentation fit the

image of "dandyism" that the press associated with the threat of Noraism, and, in fact, the "New Women" in general (Watanabe 2001, 46).[21]

The threat of Noraism, love ideology, and the undermining of traditional gender roles it represented was not entirely hypothetical. In China in 1919, a revolutionary by the name of Lu Xun, who would eventually become a Marxist, argued that "The Chinese go on and on about filial piety [...] blotting out 'love'—but love is the natural bond, not any feeling of indebtedness or thought of barter and profit" (Pan 2015, 123). In revolutionary literature of the time, in East Asian Marxist circles, just as in feminist and Christian circles, discussions of what it means to love as a genuine person were at the center of what it meant to seek social progress (Kano 2016, 38; Suzuki 2010, 13; Pan 2015, 122).

Women's power to choose their own relationships, to educate themselves, and know themselves were all things that the Bluestocking society advocated. Because of that advocacy, the Bluestocking society was the center of a media circus accusing them of fostering Lesbianism, Noraism, acceptance of divorce and of being "sexual degenerates" (Rupp 2009, 171, (Wu 2007, 75). Such accusations were merely a form of fearmongering and continued no matter how the women of the Bluestocking society explained themselves. Furthermore, the allegations continued no matter whether the society was writing about topics connected to them or not and even after Otake was expelled for her scandalous reputation. Because of the inevitability of such criticism, Itō Noe, the second editor of *Bluestocking*, argued that "at this time, and in this world there is no meaning in correcting errors of expression, only in adding to the strength of our will" (Itō 1970, 8). Despite the fact that what few stories were published in *Bluestocking* about same-sex love

[21] Named after Henrik Ibsen's character, Nora, from *A Doll's House*, Noraism is alleged by its opponents to be a form of radical feminism advising women to leave their husbands and families in favour of educating themselves.

"express anxiety about the difference between innocent friendships and abnormal relationships," the journal was attacked as a lesbian organization and a "meetinghouse for ambitious women" (Suzuki 2010, 29; Itō 1970, 8).

3.2.1 The Construction of Queer Sexuality Within Hiratsuka and Otake's Relationship

Even if society did not support masculine women, the women themselves were more than able to find modes of understanding their own sexualities within Japanese culture. In particular Hiratsuka Raichō and Otake Kōkichi made use of the linguistic conventions of *nanshoku* in order to conceive of their relationship as one that was not "pathological" (Rupp 2009, 171; Wu 2007, 92).[22] Hiratsuka referred to Otake as *shōnen*, meaning boy, which has been read as a reference to Otake filling the role of the less powerful man in a *nanshoku* relationship (Rupp 2009, 171). Otake was younger, used a masculine pen name, and wore men's kimono. She was in a relationship with Hiratsuka, a person in a position of authority at *Bluestocking*. Their relative statuses, ages, and means of gender expression could be perceived together as indicating that she was in the "passive role" in a *nanshoku*-based relationship.

Otake did not mince words when it came to her romantic feelings toward Hiratsuka. She wrote things like "Whether I am enslaved or have to sacrifice, if only the embraces and kisses do not disappear, I will be happy." In her poem, *Returning From Asakusa (To Raichō)*, she explicitly talks about how "My woman's run away" and details the sadness and dislocation of being unable to tell people about the pains of her love (Watanabe 2001, 46; Otake 2008, 41).

[22] *Nanshoku* refers to a form of pre-modern, socially acceptable, male-male homosexuality that was most notable among priests in monasteries, the samurai class, and the nobility. Unlike modern conceptions of homosexuality, *nanshoku*, at least publicly, constructed relationships around the unequal power dynamics between lovers relationship based on chain of command.

In her letters, Hiratsuka indicates that she thought often of same-sex love. However, her letters also refer to Otake's homosexuality as "strange" (Watanabe 2001, 56). Based on the neutral term she uses for homosexuality in her letters, any perceived "strangeness" in Otake's sexuality was not yet as "strange" as it was after their relationship soured and Hiratsuka referred to Otake as a "congenital sexual invert" in a published volume (Suzuki 2010, 31). After Otake was diagnosed with tuberculosis, fearing that it might be fatal, Hiratsuka went to Chigasaki to see her and make things right (Watanabe 2001, 57). In Otake's recounting of that visit she says "I've been longing for you forever, in love with you, and just wanting to receive that great love from you. Then I will have lived" (Watanabe 2001, 57). That night she slept in Hiratsuka's arms before going to a sanitarium in Chigasaki (Watanabe 2001, 58).

During Otake's stay in Chigasaki, several of her friends, including Hiratsuka and a male friend, Okumura Hiroshi, came to visit her. Hiratsuka's attention was immediately caught by Okumura, who was soft spoken and delicate. That first night that they knew each other Hiratsuka ran off without telling Otake where she was going to be with Okumura in the house he was staying in. Hiratsuka later claimed that this behaviour was out of concern that he would be afraid of being alone during a thunderstorm (Hiratsuka 2005, 185). Otake, however, felt betrayed by them both since there had never been an official end to her relationship with Hiratsuka (Itō 1970, 50).

Still for many, Hiratsuka and Otake are "The realization of Lesbian Feminism" (Watanabe 2001, 55). This claim is certainly true in the work of Izumo Marou, herself a famous Lesbian feminist and the founder of a Queer journal, the *Mainichi Daiku*, who wrote in 2000 about her pilgrimage to places associated with Japanese WLW role models of hers (Izumo and

Maree 2000, 84-87; Welker 2018, 57).[23] She writes about how it was the very fame of Hiratsuka and Otake's love affair that made Hiratsuka deny it in her autobiographical writings, but does not doubt that they were lovers (Izumo and Maree 2000, 84). She talks about Otake as a pioneering feminist who was underappreciated in her life (Izumo and Maree 2000, 86). Izumo argued that Raichō's denials deny Otake the political context that anchors Otake's activism in her experiences (Izumo and Maree 2000, 87).

3.3 The Incidents

Otake had a sharp instinct for what kinds of activism would cause the most trouble with conservative voices in Japan. The things she advocated for were important, but not causes that her feminist colleagues always agreed with. The two most controversial events from her career at *Bluestocking*, the five-coloured *sake* incident, and the Yoshiwara incident, can function as case studies, showing the way she worked and the response her work received. Both incidents involve Otake entering male-coded spaces, the bar and the red-light district respectively. The public outcry against these actions, pillorying her and the feminist movement more generally, with some people throwing stones at Hiratsuka's house, eventually led to Otake being expelled from the organization (Bardsley 2012, 1). The very fact of that backlash, however, proves the stakes of her activism. That women were excluded from publicly consuming alcohol was a significant barrier to equal participation in society in a country with a drinking culture as strong as Japan's. Her trip to Yoshiwara, an entertainment district, to speak with *geisha* about what issues they needed the feminist movement to address was an act of cross-class solidarity that threatened the ability of men to keep wives and mistresses safely in separate realms and so was aggressively

[23] The *Mainichi Daiku* is literally translated as "The Daily Dyke" but to my knowledge it has not been translated officially.

denounced.[24] These incidents, though they came at great personal and professional cost to Otake, are recognized as being some of the most prominent examples of how *Bluestocking*, as a feminist publication, broke from its precursors.

3.3.1 The Five-Coloured Sake Incident

In *In The Beginning: Woman was the Sun*, Hiratsuka Raichō characterizes Otake Kōkichi as being overly fixated on drinking in her early accounts of their parties and meetings (Hiratsuka 2005, 176). For the members of the Bluestocking Society, and especially for Otake, drinking was a political act. It was seen as masculine entertainment and participating in it was a form of performative equality. Otake introduced a column with a description of the women's drinking parties.

> Before writing this column, I should mention that on the night of the meeting, the members partook liberally of sake, beer, and wine. Sad to say, we're much too honest, timid, and green behind the ears, and lack the courage to conceal the names of what we drank. Well, I'll just go ahead and say we drank yellow wine, pink wine, glittery blue wine. We've never been less than true to ourselves. We're not the kind of women people label as the New Women. . . . We're quite happy to tell the public how we live and that we do our work with the utmost seriousness and honesty.
> Thirteen members attended the meeting, and all the people there were the type who'd get drunk on tap water, cider, lemonade, or tangerine juice. [...] It goes without saying that we raised a toast to ourselves in the hopes of future blessings and success in our endeavors.
> (Otake Kōkichi 1912, quoted in Hiratsuka 2005, 176)

[24] I will be using the term *geisha* throughout. There is some debate about the degree to which the occupations of *geisha* and *oiran* (courtesan) overlap. Because the woman the Bluestocking society hired is described as a *geisha* and because, regardless of if *geisha* do sex work, their work is sexualized, I will be treating the *geisha* as a form of sex work.

Otake shows no shame about drinking here, in fact she describes it as an act of honest self-expression. She both embodies her politics and sets out this small piece of everyday rebellion in public for her readers to see.

Such an anecdote might be understood as just that, anecdotal, but it is far from the only episode showing that the women of the Bluestocking Society drank despite the negative attention it attracted to them. Itō Noe describes three drinking parties that took place after Otake had been forced to stop writing original pieces for the magazine.

At the first party, Hiratsuka was present and seated next to Otake, making Otake visibly uncomfortable, resorting to self-deprecating humour to handle it (Itō 1970, 19). When Otake tried to escape the situation, her discomfort was mocked and she was made to feel that if she left she would be seen as overreacting (Itō 1970, 19). Itō comments on the pair saying that they had been "obnoxious" "even in the world of gay romance" and that there seemed to be "no one who wouldn't love [Otake]" (Itō 1970, 16).

The women present at the second party celebrated their ability to act in a socially liberated way and used these actions to draw rhetorical distinctions between the behaviour of the women present, "normal" women, and Hiratsuka (Itō 1970, 39). Hiratsuka's ability to drink more than them was presented by the women as a part of the calculus to determine who was a free woman and who was not. One of the women present exclaimed, "Isn't it just impossible to imitate normal women after behaving freely? Surely Hiratsuka must have something better than us" (Itō 1970, 42). No one contradicted her. The Bluestocking society and Hiratsuka always had something of a double standard when it came to scandalous behaviour. No matter how liberated the other members of the society acted, or what they published in *Bluestocking* as part of the journal's ideal of fostering women's free expression, they were liable for any trouble their words

and actions caused. Hiratsuka, however, was able to do as she wished without the threat of expulsion from the society (Hiratsuka 2005, 186). In the anecdote above, the "liberated behaviour" of Hiratsuka is held up as evidence that she was different from other women rather than simply in a situation in which her actions were supported by her peers.[25] Their actions, liberation, and status within the society were all at least partially tied to being able to reproduce masculine drinking culture, as long as it did not cause trouble.

The third drinking party was hosted by Otake's uncle. Otake, Itō, and their friends were invited to join in since they happened to be spending time with Otake at her house. At this drinking party they discussed gender non-conformity, love, and love suicides, all controversial (Itō 1970, 56-69). Unlike the more traditional gender segregated set up where women pour drinks for men, this scene presents a way alcohol provided a context for women to be able to talk with progressive men as equals. Being able to be in the room during progressive discussions allowed for the possibility of actual male feminist allyship in the performative creation of gender equality. Opponents of gender equality might call them girls playing at being men, but it was a strategy that cannot be overlooked.

The third drinking party Itō describes deserves closer scrutiny for what it says about gender within the Bluestocking society and the early Japanese feminist movement. The women of the Bluestocking society, no matter how accepting they may or may not have been when it came to Otake's gender nonconformity, were by no means educated when it came to the plight suffered by transgender people in Japan at the time (Itō 1970, 59-60). There is an account in *Zatsuon*, Itō Noe's memoir focusing on Otake Kōkichi as she knew her, involving the reaction of several Bluestocking women, including Itō herself, to a person who was either a transgender

[25] This feeling of being above other women becomes particularly troubling, given Hiratsuka's political beliefs surrounding eugenics and poverty. I will discuss that particular issue in the next chapter.

woman, or a drag queen.[26] The account is unflattering to the person in question, who is a guest of Otake's uncle. Itō does not record Otake's reaction to this person, but Itō's own reaction is one of disgust at this person's body not matching their gender presentation. She shows disdain for them in every detail, from their clothes to the way they are sitting and the tone of their voice.

The conversation Itō uses to contextualize this encounter argues that there have been men trying to publish in *Bluestocking* under women's names (Itō 1970, 58). I do not doubt that there were Cisgender men pretending to be women in order to derail or mock the feminist movement. However, the women of the Bluestocking society are here treating people who are assigned-male-at-birth and perform gender variance as being based in a desire to mock cisgender women; despite the fact that the actual behaviour they record in this person they spoke to face to face is unobtrusive, they place them into the same category as men who pretend to be women maliciously. All Itō records this individual doing is sitting in a feminine posture and speaking about banal things in an artificially high sweet voice (Itō 1970, 60). We will never know how many Trans women and feminine gay men would have participated in the movement if they were not excluded in this way. We will never hear their voices or benefit from the insight that comes from having lived openly in that time because of this kind of gatekeeping.[27]

Itō Noe's expression of gatekeeping beliefs and activities would make it very difficult for Trans Lesbians to identify with her, no matter how many of Itō's comments seem to fall into the

[26] I will be using the singular they to refer to this person because I am uncertain about whether this person was a Cisgender man playing with gender expression, or a Trans woman expressing her true gender.

[27] Though I, as a Cisgender person, am unqualified to make any definitive statements about whether a specific statement or event is or is not transphobic, this is certainly an account that, if unaddressed, could serve to further alienate current-day Trans lesbian feminists from feminist history. I believe this account to be transphobic, but I would yield to the analysis of a Transgender scholar. Lesbian history cannot be conceived of as merely the history of Cisgender lesbians, especially in a context like Japan, where the LGBTQ community remains incredibly segregated due to everyday gatekeeping of this sort. There are even lesbian bars in the gay district of Shinjuku, Nichome that explicitly state that their policy is not to allow Trans women to enter the premises (Rickert 12/06/2019). Cisgender lesbians need to be aware of and understand the way that their community has often been built at the expense of Trans women.

"lesbian continuum" (Wu 2007, 77–78). On the other hand, the fact that Otake Kōkichi was introduced to gender non-conforming people in a positive environment due to her uncle's contacts in the red light district, and was supported in her own gender non-conformity, is a somewhat hopeful message. If people like the Otakes could overcome the cisnormativity and even turn the disapproval of society into a reason to thrive as openly gender nonconforming in 1916, then no societal norms can truly keep progress from being made towards Queer rights.

To do justice to the first of Otake Kōkichi's major public scandals, the five-coloured sake incident, it must be seen within a context where alcohol was a sign of freedom and masculine gender expression. While Otake was working on gathering subscriptions for the paper, she went to a bistro, where she was shown a colourful layered cocktail (Copeland 1994, 134). It caught her imagination and she wrote a story in which Hiratsuka Raichō and a young man, generally believed to represent Otake herself, were drinking the cocktail (Copeland 1994, 134). A story detailing something that now does not seem at all problematic, or even transgressive, got Hiratsuka pilloried as an "irresponsible, licentious 'new woman'" in the press (Copeland 1994, 134).

All through her life, Otake believed in the power of books, and of education, to liberate people. As a child she read books for new ways of seeing how the world could be, and in her adulthood she wrote books for children because she believed that showing children that the world does not have to be the way it is could help build a better Japan out of the ruins of the war (Watanabe 2001, 15, 300). In her adulthood, she wrote in feminist journals like *Women's Art* about her intent in her short fiction. She took the task of writing about the world and its potential very seriously as a progressive act. To say that it was a mistake to write about this *sake* because

of its bright colours would be to deny the value of Otake's work, the thought behind it, and just how radical her witty unashamed writing could be (Watanabe 2001, 48; Hiratsuka 2005, 179).

While it is certainly possible that Otake was writing a fantasy, to reduce it to an impulse makes it seem as though it was Otake's indiscretion that painted the Bluestocking society in a socially-unacceptable light. I do not believe this to be true. Itō Noe depicts the women of the Bluestocking society getting black-out drunk at a party without shame (Itō 1970, 38–43). Otake is depicted as turning to alcohol to handle the blasé way Hiratsuka talks about having an affair with a man her fellow member of the Bluestocking society, Katsu, wanted to marry (Itō 1970, 38). The Bluestocking society would have attracted alcohol-based controversy whether they had tried to keep their reputation socially acceptable or not. It does not matter whether the five-coloured sake Incident was the product of an actual event or merely a flight of fancy.

3.3.2 The Yoshiwara Incident

In the wake of criticism stemming from the five-coloured sake incident, the women of the Bluestocking society were caught up in another scandal, this time due to Otake's organization of a trip to the entertainment district in Yoshiwara. Otake Kōkichi's uncle had a lot of connections within Yoshiwara, since woodcut printmaking as a profession had been associated with entertainment districts since the Tokugawa Period (Copeland 1994, 134; Seigle 1993, 152). He had brought Otake to Yoshiwara a number of times where she enjoyed talking with *oiran* (courtesans) (Copeland 1994, 135). One time she decided to invite some of the women from the Bluestocking society along (Copeland 1994, 134–135).

The group of women went to Yoshiwara and hired a *geisha* to entertain them for a night. They wanted to talk to her and hear what the women working there felt. The other two women

involved in the incident, Hiratsuka and Nakano Hatsuko, did not have much interest in building a friendship with the *geisha*, Eizan (Bardsley 2012, 10). Otake, on the other hand, used the excursion as a first step in her goal of including the needs of *geisha* in her writing. She started up a correspondence with Eizan that led to her publishing "A Gathering of Geisha" (January 1913) in the *Chūō Kōron* (*Central Review*) magazine. To Otake's credit, her resulting article on sex work resembles the self-expressive writing of *geisha* from the 1910s in their calls for respect as human beings whether they are sex workers or not (Bardsley 2012, 6)

Otake, unashamed of the excursion, told "friends" of hers at the newspaper about it, but they spun it into a scandal (Copeland 1994, 135). The press argued that the "new women" "in trying to assume an equal footing with men, went so far as to attempt the male pastime of disporting themselves with courtesans" (Copeland 1994, 135). The public, reading this, became enraged. Some so much so that Hiratsuka's house was stoned (Copeland 1994, 135). The women of the Bluestocking society soon became hated by society as dissidents, imposing a European and US mindset on Japan (Watanabe 2001, 50–51). From within the Bluestocking society, members argued that Otake and Hiratsuka had been exploiting the *geisha* and called for Otake to be expelled from the society (Copeland 1994, 135).

The public outcry against Otake as the embodiment of the New Women started to hurt Otake's aunt and uncle's reputation as Christians. Otake thus decided to step aside from being one of the members actively creating material for the journal and do less controversial work like translating existing feminist theory and making woodcuts for the journal's covers (Itō 1970, 18).

Otake was not completely alone in her activism on behalf of sex workers. Itō, for example, brought a Marxist-feminist approach to a national debate over sex work in 1915 while she was editing *Bluestocking* (Kano 2016, 41). In these debates, the Japanese Women's Christian

Temperance Union had been calling for an end to licenced sex work and Itō Noe argued that it was paternalist of these Christian women to think that sex workers needed to be saved by bored middle, and upper class, Christian women. She also argued that criminalization of sex work would make life even more difficult for these women (Kano 2016, 42). Much like Otake had argued for in "A Gathering of Geisha", Itō thought there was nothing immoral about sex work and argued that the societal and material conditions sex workers faced needed improvement (Kano 2016, 43). It is notable that support for Otake's work supporting sex workers came from her Marxist colleague, since Marxism was the political philosophy Otake returned to in her later career. That she was willing to accept such intense backlash against her work and continued to prioritize class solidarity suggests that the Yoshiwara incident was a part of a longstanding belief in the necessity for feminism to include women from more vulnerable social classes.

3.3.3 "A Gathering of Geisha" and Otake's departure from Bluestocking

Otake wrote "A Gathering of Geisha" in the literary magazine, the *Chūō Kōron*. The article resulted from the Yoshiwara incident and set forth quite simple arguments about the kinds of oppression faced by sex workers and those in sexualized jobs that feminism continues to struggle with in Japan today (Watanabe 2001, 87). She argued that *geisha* should be seen as human and that the fact that they are not should be strange to women whether they are sex workers or not (Watanabe 2001, 87-88). She makes the point that the women of Yoshiwara are the same as all women, including herself as a feminist, and deserve the same respect as her (Watanabe 2001, 88).

Some time after publishing "A Gathering of Geisha", Otake came to believe that the Yoshiwara incident and the five-coloured sake incident were "mischief", and wrote letters to

reporters, defending their conduct (Watanabe 2001, 69, 80). The relationship between Otake and the press has led to some researchers arguing that if it were not for Otake, *Bluestocking* would not have been vilified (Watanabe 2001, 81). That said, Otake's nominal departure did not stop the media from criticizing *Bluestocking* and the Bluestocking society. Women who were afraid that their association with the paper would tarnish their reputation cancelled their subscriptions, but still other women sent messages of support, telling them that they needed to not lose. Many of the women in Japan at the time who were following the scandal wanted the Bluestocking society to win this battle (Watanabe 2001, 83). The fact that, during her tenure at *Bluestocking*, Otake did not care about her reputation is one of the main reasons people continue to talk about her and the progress the Bluestocking society caused (Watanabe 2001, 58). No feminist movement is seen as moderate in its own time. Women using their voice publicly in the 1910s was always going to be a fight against people who would rather silence them. Their most reasonable ideas were always going to be twisted monstrously by proponents of the social systems that demanded women's compliance.[28] What Otake did was live a free life without shame for a few years and talk about it, make jokes about criticism, and give people an idea of what life would be like if women could be treated as humans, whether they were drinking in a trendy cafe or entertaining men in Yoshiwara.

3.4 Suicide and Self Harm

[28] During the authoritarian Meiji era and the early Shōwa era, all forms of protest were suppressed in the service of modernization, with varying degrees of success (Sasamoto-Collins 2013, 7, 128). In particular, Communist organizing was suppressed with lethal force by the government, as in the case of Itō Noe, who was murdered for her, and her husband's socialist organizing (Newsome 2016, 44). *Bluestocking* was never faced with physical threats, but they were subjected to censorship and public ridicule.

The period following the Yoshiwara incident was characterized by the stress of being demonized by the press, told that she was hurting the woman she loved with her activism, and the potential that her work was hurting the sex workers whose voices she had wanted to uplift. Such a high level of stress was a lot for Otake to handle, especially while she was unknowingly fighting a case of tuberculosis. These factors were enough to drive Otake to self-harm and to have suicidal thoughts. After surviving this trauma, she was brought to a Christian-run sanatorium in Chigasaki to recover. During this time her relationship with Hiratsuka fully fell apart when Hiratsuka met Okumura Hiroshi, one of Otake's friends from the art community during a visit ostensibly to support Otake emotionally while she was healing (Itō 1970, 43-53).

Oppression has terrible effects on the mental health of oppressed people and too many Queer lives are lost as a result. That said, the construction of self harm and suicide in Imperial Japan necessitates discussion here. First, I will discuss the romanticization of love suicide in Imperial Japan. Second, I will explore the way lesbian love suicides were pathologized in the popular imagination, despite them being gestures of symbolic defiance — something that should have been understood by Japanese society at the time. Finally, I will discuss the difficulty this aspect of her life caused Otake.

Shinjū, now commonly understood as "love suicide," has been in the Japanese cultural-consciousness since the seventeenth century (Robertson 1999, 14). The violent context of *shinjū* started out, not as suicide, but as self-harm meant to show love and devotion (Robertson 1999, 14). By the Meiji restoration, *shinjū* had come to mean "love suicides." By the Meiji-era, the poetic association of devotion attached itself to love suicides but only for heterosexual couples (Robertson 1999, 6-7). Heterosexual couples attempting, or going through with love suicide were seen as rebelling against the systems that were keeping them from being together, usually due to

their differing social classes (Robertson 1999, 26–27). The goal of the act was to reincarnate together.

That is not to say that the reasons for heterosexual love suicides were always pure or noble. In the same way Mishima Yukio (1925-1970), a Gay, fascist author who wrote to support the Second Sino-Japanese war, used *seppuku* as a form of suicide that would be seen as comprehensible and valorous, Dazai Osamu (1909-1948), a Showa-era author best known outside of Japan for his novel *No Longer Human*, used love suicide to end his own life in a way that was socially constructed as understandable. Dazai even went so far as to convince three women to attempt it with him over the course of his four attempts (Thacker 2016).

Where heterosexual lovers' suicides were part of a known cultural narrative in the early twentieth century, lesbian lovers' suicides were denigrated, pathologized, and mocked. Lesbianism came to the public's attention in the 1910s through two cases of love suicide, entangling the ideas of suicide and lesbianism in the popular consciousness (Wu 2007, 79). They were immediately disconnected from the symbolic language the women had been using and placed into a framework of "revolting lesbianism" (Wu 2007, 80). As discussed above, Lesbianism was seen as a sickness that posed a threat to young "normal" women's lives and the only way they saw to mitigate this perceived threat was to prevent gender non-conforming women from interacting with or having a platform that could reach so-called "normal" women who live according to the societally expected construction of femininity. This generalization and fear mongering painted the New Women, alumni of the Japanese Women's College and lesbians together as "problematic and 'masculine'" women (Wu 2007, 75–81) .

It is in this context, that Otake attempted to take her own life. Otake and Hiratsuka existed in both narratives: suicide as a reaction to mental illness and suicide as the most intense

declaration of love available to two people who were unable to legally marry. This is readily apparent in both the writings of Hiratsuka herself and in Itō's account. In *In the Beginning Woman was the Sun* Hiratsuka recounts her reaction to seeing the evidence of Otake's brush with death.

> Driven by some strange compulsion that was either guilt or remorse, Kōkichi slashed her left arm with a knife. When I undid the bandages and saw the gaping wound, I felt as if I had been presented with living proof of the desperate love she bore for me. (Hiratsuka 2005, 182)

In this statement we can see that even decades later the romanticism of this act stuck with Hiratsuka. That romance did not stick with Otake. She told Itō that she was mortified at the memory because "I really wanted to die. I intended to die. Do you think that it's deceptive to have such an idea about this? I'm not lying" (Itō 1970, 51). Itō Noe gives the impression that Otake was made particularly ashamed of her decision due to the way Hiratsuka treated Otake's depression as a minor thing and an overreaction. She notes that a third party named Yasumochi thought that Hiratsuka was publicly making fun of Otake's depression during her time at Chigasaki, despite knowing about her brush with death (Itō 1970, 53).

It is at this point, where Otake had lost her relationship with Hiratsuka and married a man, that most accessible English-language accounts of her end. However, her mark on history is not entirely reliant on Hiratsuka. Later in this chapter, I will go into more detail about the way her marriage to Tomimoto Kenkichi was anything but yielding to the pressures of tradition, how her art career was not abandoned, and how she did not stop her masculine presentation.

3.5 Education as a source of values

Throughout Otake's life she believed that the way to achieve progress in society was through education. Here I would like to set the stage for my discussion of the individual factors of her own education, her creation of a small school as an act of resistance against the Imperial Japanese government, and the way her fiction writing fits into a greater liberatory context.

Her approach and intent in education was fundamentally different to that of the Imperial Japanese government. The Imperial Japanese government was primarily interested in making sure that men would be good warriors for the state while women would be wives and mothers who would uphold the system. As such, the government curated their educational programs to ensure that result (Watanabe 2001, 289). Otake, on the other hand, took a view that, though education could form values, those values should come about naturally through being exposed to as many perspectives as possible, especially those of the marginalized. By hearing about the way other people lived, or fantasies about how the world could be, people would learn how to imagine better worlds and grow compassionate towards other people (Watanabe 2001, 300). It was through this process that Otake thought progress would be made and so her attempt to instill a love of learning in her daughters was a part of her activism (Watanabe 2001, 200).

During Otake's childhood she was angry at her father for expecting her to take over his art career without letting her choose what she wanted to do with her own life (Watanabe 2001, 15). She spent any time she had to herself reading in the library in secret, since her family was seen as too well off for her to spend her time reading books. Even though she prided herself on being honest, regardless of the consequences, lying to read novels in the library rather than practice painting was her first major rebellion (Watanabe 2001, 15).[29] In one of many personal

[29] I will discuss the more formal aspects of her education by her family in the next section.

essays that she wrote over the years, she credits these books as being the seeds from which she started imagining how things could be different (Watanabe 2001, 15-16).

As she grew up, she decided to leave Osaka and go to be educated in Tokyo to become a "fully fledged person" by attending college (Watanabe 2001, 16). Otake was educated at a time when women's education was being repressed out of an openly expressed fear that Feminism would destroy the family system (Watanabe 2001, 18-19). Her school of choice was not allowing women to enroll at the time so she went to art school in Suginami-ku (Watanabe 2001, 17). It was during this time that she was exposed to feminist material through her aunt and she joined forces with women who went to the Japan Women's College (now Ochanomizu University).

She did become a painter and great things were expected of her, but her art exhibitions were rare compared to her work as a feminist or as a writer (Watanabe 2001, 35). The expectation that she should focus on painting, held by everyone from her father to Hiratsuka Raichō herself, followed Otake for her whole life. This expectation was held so firmly that Hiratsuka publicly lamented after Otake's death the tragedy she saw in Otake's eye for art never manifesting in any one masterpiece (Watanabe 2001, 331). This belief allowed Hiratsuka to rationalize the "good" she saw in letting Otake be driven from the Bluestocking society since without it, Otake would have the chance to pursue what Hiratsuka saw as Otake's "true calling" (Hiratsuka 2005, 195). Hiratsuka spent the rest of her life believing that being part of *Bluestocking* had somehow stolen Otake's chance at being a great painter (Watanabe 2001, 330). However, Otake's writing and her manner of living allowed her to participate in the progress she wanted to advocate for.

When it came to Otake's self-education, she listed Mengzi, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Buddha, DaVinci and Rousseau as people she respected and from whom she took "power,

comfort, hope and courage" (Watanabe 2001, 182). In particular, she wrote that she relied on the writing of philosophers like Dostoyevsky and Schopenhauer "to save [her] from the depravity of the soul" (Watanabe 2001, 102). In particular, I think it notable that none of the role-models she references are female. The only figure who seems to fill the role of female philosophical support in her life was Hiratsuka.

In Otake's post-*Bluestocking* career she continued to write short fiction that grappled with issues of poverty, religion, class, and caste. In one story, for example, she wrote about a poor mother having to choose between her children's education and donations to a temple. She indicates that the mother's choice to prioritize her children was correct by describing the harmony the woman sees in nature after leaving the temple (Watanabe 2001, 241). She also wrote sympathetic stories with *burakumin* protagonists (Watanabe 2001, 184-185). *Burakumin* (also known as Japan's untouchables) are a historically marginalized group comprised of the descendants of various underprivileged people; notably tanners, butchers, beggars, who were then pushed into the "hamlets" [*buraku*] (Encyclopedia Britannica, Burakumin). The first-person narrator of the aforementioned story ponders how peaceful the world would be if everyone "loved their neighbour as themselves," putting the treatment of *burakumin* in contrast to Christian ethics (Watanabe 2001, 186).

3.6 Family, the State, and Religion

Otake "Kōkichi" Kazue lived her whole life in defiance of Imperial Japan's civic religious doctrine dictating the role of women, "Good Wives, Wise Mothers". "Good Wives, Wise Mothers" was inextricable from the experience of womanhood in Imperial Japan. In this

section I will examine the religious experiences of those around Otake in her home life, both in her childhood and after she got married, to show the way her religious environment encouraged her to see the religions around her as mutable, and to seek out other pseudo-religions like Marxism that helped her negotiate that system..

3.6.1 The Otake Family – Otake's Early Education in a Time of Transition

Otake was raised in a time when class structure in Japan was being rearranged. Her mother came from a family that, up until the Meiji Restoration (1868), had had the institutional power of a samurai family and, even after the abolishment of the feudal system, had pushed Otake's mother to maintain a privileged status through highly restrictive expectations of behaviour (Watanabe 2001, 146). Otake's father was from a family of artists. Otake's mother, who hated the values she had been raised with, had the greatest influence on the development of Otake's moral code. However, it was Otake's father's need for an heir to take over his work that led to the family supporting her female masculinity (Watanabe 2001, 146, 147; Izumo 2000, 85).

Otake's mother did try to teach her feminine arts, even if she allowed her to learn the masculine-coded trade of woodcut printing at the insistence of her father. She taught Otake all sorts of traditional arts, including tea, *shamisen*[30], *koto*[31], and dance. Her mother, in particular, placed importance on education (Watanabe 2001, 147). Her father taught her painting and woodcut printmaking (Watanabe 2001, 147).

[30] A long-necked Japanese lute
[31] A Japanese zither

Otake credits her mother with teaching her not to be satisfied with personal success and to extend her concern to those around her. She traces her own brash and honest personality to her mother's dislike of flattery and her teaching that "nothing in the world was as bad as a lie" (Watanabe 2001, 146-147). This is the combination of values that got her in trouble at *Bluestocking*. Her unwillingness to let herself be satisfied with her own interests led to her attempt to expand *Bluestocking*'s areas of concern from those of middle class, educated women to include people from other classes. Her dislike of lying led to her openly discussing her work with reporters who twisted her words.

Throughout Otake's life, the importance of honesty was impressed on her by her mother. Her resulting belief that "nothing was as bad as a lie" became a defining characteristic of Otake's activism, leading to her earnest refusal to lie for the sake of reputation. But there was one thing she lied to her parents about. As a child from a well-off family she was not supposed to read novels. So she would lie about having a toothache or another ailment to get out of lessons and go to read in the library, or she would sneak them home and read in her closet. These novels presented her with ideas of another kind of life, where instead of being disciplined and obedient, she could defend the weak and punish the bad (Watanabe 2001, 147). She characterizes the result of her education and her own rebellion by writing "these were not the teachings of my mother, but rather of the time in which she was raised, so I just think that in the time in which I was raised, the deep-rooted, old power of the people who lived in that era was pulling back a little too late." (Otake, quoted in Watanabe 2001, 154).

When Otake was married and experiencing a sudden loss of autonomy caused by living with her husband's family, it was the thought of her mother's disappointment that kept her from acting decisively early into her marriage. She records that her mother "was quite annoyed with

the new women" and wondering "how much my mother would mourn" if she ran away to Tokyo to regain her old lifestyle and career (Watanabe 2001, 153). Her mother's opinions caused Otake a significant amount of mental anguish in her post-*Bluestocking* years. As she was learning how to be a wife and a mother, in a way that was authentic to herself, Otake "lost power while fighting the contradictions in my thoughts" due to her mother's more traditional gendered values (Watanabe 2001, 153).

The family's relationship to more conventionally religious traditions was shaped by living in a time when the religions of Japan were going through dramatic changes. Otake's mother was a devotee of Sōtō Zen Buddhism and her father was from a Jōdo Shinshū family until he converted to the Sōtō sect eight years after Otake had already moved away (Watanabe 2001, 145). As the eldest daughter, it was her and her mother who were in charge of preparing and offering rice to the Buddha, as well as chanting sutras as part of their household's rituals for her brother's death anniversary each year (Watanabe 2001, 144).[32] Her mother's piety, and her family's ornate altar did nothing to make her particularly reliant on an established religious tradition for issues not related to death or celebration (Watanabe 2001, 144).

Otake also wrote about her father telling her stories about how when he was growing up in the Early Meiji period, he saw Jizō statues thrown away at the side of the road where government officials used them to take off their shoes (Watanabe 2001, 145).[33] Otake could not remember her father as being a particularly devout person when she was young (Watanabe 2001,

[32] Her rituals also involved chanting the *Nembutsu*, the main mantra of Pure Land Buddhism, consisting of calling out for the help of the Buddha Amida (Amitābha), and *Shoshinge*, a longer Pure Land chant that summarizes Pure Land doctrines.

[33] During the Meiji period, the Imperial Japanese government engaged in actions that played upon existing concepts of Buddhism as a corrupt and foreign institution to incite a campaign of iconoclasm (*haibutsu kishaku*) enacted by Shintoists. Because the Imperial government drew power from the construction of Shinto as a religion distinct from Buddhism, this suppression reinforced the new political order (Ketelaar 1990, 9-11)

145). She could not remember her father chanting sutras, but could remember him eating on days when he was supposed to fast (Watanabe 2001, 145). Like many people who are casually religious, though, he did not neglect memorial services (Watanabe 2001, 145-146).

Otake's grandmother on her father's side, who was a devout follower of the Jōdo Shinshū sect, told Otake about her own pilgrimage and all sorts of folktales (Watanabe 2001, 145). Otake reacted to a lot of these stories with dissatisfaction, crying about sad endings and the injustices she perceived in the tales (Watanabe 2001, 145).

After Otake left for Tokyo, and her mother died, her father was baptized as a Methodist and took the name Francisco Otake, at least partly because of the support of a Reverend M who reached out to him (Watanabe 2001, 146). Otake says of his belief after his death that her father wrote that "the power of teachings created by God is infinite" in his diary at the time of his baptism and that "surely dad must have believed that and he must have died as a Christian" (Watanabe 2001, 146).

Otake's aunt and uncle, with whom she lived in Tokyo, were proud Christians in a somewhat conventionally Japanese way that did not exclude partaking in other Japanese religious customs (Itō 1970, 18). For example, Otake's uncle Chikuha collected *hyōtan* (calabashes) as art and good luck charms (Watanabe 2001, 144). When he was deciding whether to let Otake stay with him or not, he asked her to stand still with her eyes closed and tell him what she imagined after a while. She said she imagined the Buddha bathing in the middle of a river, and this satisfied her uncle enough that he let her live with him (Watanabe 2001, 20). Perhaps surprisingly, even though he was a Christian, Otake Chikuha was particularly encouraging of Otake Kōkichi's female masculinity. Itō Noe records him saying at a drinking party to which he had invited someone else who was either transgender or crossdressed, that he

liked being seen with Otake, particularly because of the offense other men took on seeing her (Itō 1970, 58).

3.6.2 Kenkichi - Emperor Worship, Rebellious Silence, and Ideological Infidelity

Ultimately, within a few years of leaving Bluestocking, she got married. This is where most of the accounts that are interested in her Queerness end, but Otake did not fade into heterosexual obscurity with her marriage. It is worth pointing out that sexual orientations do not change due to monogamy. We cannot know Otake's sexual orientation beyond the fact that she was a woman who loved women. The societal pressure to live an outwardly heterosexual life creates an unequal situation where observers cannot really assume attraction based on heterosexual interactions, but homosexual interactions are met with enough resistance that observers can infer attraction to an extent. If Otake was bisexual, then a monogamous relationship with a man does not make her heterosexual and her love of Hiratsuka would not have made her a lesbian. If she was lesbian and married Kenkichi out of compulsory heterosexuality, her marriage would still be experienced as a lesbian. Her marriage, and its eventual dissolution were Queer experiences as much as her love affair with Hiratsuka was.

She married Tomimoto Kenkichi, a potter from an old Nara family. It was a love marriage, opposed by Kenkichi's parents due to Otake's reputation as a "new woman"; an opinion that could not have been helped by the rebellious nature of love marriage at the time (Watanabe 2001, 133, 176).[34] The pair started out their relationship with promises of an equal relationship based in the modern feminist sentiments that Kenkichi had picked up while studying

[34] At the time, arranged marriages were the norm and the popularization of love marriages was a slow cultural shift over the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa eras that came about due to the feminist movement's embrace of Christian romantic ethics (Suzuki 2010, 4, 9, 13).

in Europe's art circles (Watanabe 2001, 151). Otake and Kenkichi both had their separate careers for a time, and Otake's eye for aesthetics made her the best and harshest critic of his work (Watanabe 2001, 158).

Married life in a family that prided itself on being traditional was stifling for Otake. They moved to the small town of Anzenmura in Nara prefecture, where she was expected to care for a mother-in-law who would never approve of her (Watanabe 2001, 152). Without the support of her own mother in finding a non-traditional model of being a wife and mother Otake came to feel trapped in the proudly traditional Tomimoto family home (Watanabe 2001, 151, 153).

Caught between the expectations of his parents and promises of equality made to Otake, Kenkichi compromised on both fronts (Watanabe 2001, 154, 157). In 1925, Otake moved away from Anzenmura back to Tokyo with her daughter (Watanabe 2001, 225). Watanabe speculates that the move was probably due to an affair Kenkichi was having at that time (Watanabe 2001, 210). As emotionally difficult as the experience of being cheated on must have been, the move freed her from having to take care of her mother-in-law. The experience also showcased the injustice of heterosexual marriage in a system that took men's affairs as a given (Watanabe 2001, 230). For example, she had tried to call out the men in Anzenmura for the double standards by which they were allowed to drink and have affairs while they denied women the same kinds of activities, but was confronted with a feeling that suffering in marriage was simply a part of life rather than a problem to be solved (Watanabe 2001, 153, 230). Otake and Kenkichi lived apart because Otake, who had been raised to believe nothing in the world was as bad as a lie, could not stand being lied to by her husband.

Tomimoto Kenkichi was a product of his time who internalized the sexist messages pervasive in the society around him. The facade of "Modern" Western values that had drawn

Otake to him were not nearly as progressive as Otake's own (Watanabe 2001, 165). This made it easy for him to expect Otake to sacrifice her own ambition for his sake (Watanabe 2001, 135). For Otake, a system like "Good Wives, Wise Mothers", by demanding that a wife must follow her husband to be "good", placed husbands as the immediate enemy, denying women the freedom to be self-actualized people (Watanabe 2001, 134, 157, 165). Though she writes that she loved him and that he was unusually loving for a husband in that time, the society around them was toxic to marriage as a context for love (Watanabe 2001, 170).

Otake spent years living separated from Kenkichi, during which she raised Akira and Sue on her own while earning money writing fairytales for a magazine called *Funa* (Watanabe 2001, 226). As I have discussed earlier, there was no real distinction for her between writing literature or writing feminist social criticism, so these years were not spent fruitlessly. Exposing children to progressive ideas was an intrinsic part of how she conceived of her role in women's liberation. She started spending more time with Naganuma Chieko, another prominent WLW who married a man after leaving *Bluestocking*, reconnecting herself to a network of progressive Tokyo women (Watanabe 2001, 232, 237).

Her colleagues at *Women's Art*, a publication she started publishing in during this time, began calling her Kōkichi again (Watanabe 2001, 238). Using her masculine pen name can be read as a distinct rhetorical choice to reclaim her early activism as a part of her going forward. It was also a statement of Otake's independence from her husband. She had always refused to accept being referred to as "Mrs Tomimoto Kenkichi", but "Otake Kōkichi" had a level of independence from him that she did not have as "Tomimoto Kazue". She knew that Kenkichi felt ashamed of her female masculinity, since he had always tried to make her wear feminine *kimono* when they lived together, but the name Kōkichi was publicly associated with her love of women

as well as her female masculinity, which was a much more sensitive subject for Kenkichi (Watanabe 2001, 239).

Kenkichi eventually did rejoin his family in Tokyo, but during the 1920s his and Otake's politics had grown even farther apart. He had grown more conservative during their time apart, and as the Showa era began and Nationalism started to replace the democracy that characterized the Taisho period, he grew into a person who venerated the Emperor and the Japanese state. Otake, on the other hand was becoming a more staunch advocate for her own interpretation of Marxist-feminism (Watanabe 2001, 243, 252).

Otake's rejection of her husband's Nationalist politics is thoroughly in line with her family's values. The Otake family had never produced a soldier or a bureaucrat who could have been complicit in Japan's militarism. According to Watanabe Sumiko, who got the opportunity to talk with a number of members of the Otake family in 1988 while writing her biography of Otake Kazue, they were very proud of their family not supporting Japan's military history (Watanabe 2001, 146).

As an example of her Marxism, Otake argued that the solitude of women's work was a barrier to women's power, and advocated that housework should become a social activity to lighten the load and give women an opportunity to discuss issues while their hands are busy (Watanabe 2001, 247). She not only advocated these theories, but lived them. The most dramatic example of her ethic of using traditionally women's work as a site of labour and community organization was when Hiratsuka Raichō's daughter, Akemi, grew sick with cephalitis. Otake was the one who got her admitted to the Red Cross fast enough to save her and rallied Hiratsuka's friends to divide up jobs so that Hiratsuka could focus on caring for Akemi (Watanabe 2001, 244-245). Hers was a kind of deeply personal politics based in the love and

affection of women for other women, and her ability to mobilize both friends and those in Marxist circles was the source of her strength (Watanabe 2001, 244).

Otake never stopped wearing men's kimono throughout her life, to the growing consternation of her husband. As he started to gain more prestige he felt that her lack of conventionality damaged his reputation, especially during the war era when women were expected to wear women's kimono as a sign of nationalism (Watanabe 2001, 239, 264; Goldstein-Gidoni 1999, 355). Unlike Hiratsuka Raichō and Yosano Akiko, she never contributed to the war effort, and this led to a diminishing in her reputation (Watanabe 2001, 257). When the more Marxist leaning publication *Women's Art* ended and was replaced by *Kiku*, a more heavily censored publication, Otake stopped publishing (Watanabe 2001, 261). During the war, Otake stopped writing on principle, but she supported other progressive women by running a salon free of the oppressive atmosphere of the war out of a workshop attached to their house in Tokyo (Watanabe 2001, 232, 260, 264). Visitors to this progressive safe space Otake created included a who's-who of notable Queer women artists and writers, including Yuasa Yoshiko, Tamura (Satō) Toshiko, Naganuma (Takamura) Chieko, and Hiratsuka Raichō (Watanabe 2001, 262, 265).

Watanabe Sumiko refers to Kenkichi as an "emperor worshipper" who would tip his hat as he passed the Imperial palace (Watanabe 2001, 252). While such beliefs may have been a matter of survival in that time, it is notable that it caused ideological friction between Otake and Kenkichi after Otake and their eldest daughter, Akira, were arrested for socialist labour organizing during one of the government's numerous crackdowns (Watanabe 2001, 251). From the beginning, Otake's approaches to certain issues were more in line with the Marxist branch of the Japanese feminist movement. Notable names include, Miyamoto Yuriko and Yuasa Yoshiko another Marxist, feminist, Lesbian pair and Otake's old friend from *Bluestocking*, Itō Noe.

Marxist organizing marked one as an enemy of the state (Watanabe 2001, 251). To organize protests meant that protestors were putting their lives on the line. For example, Itō Noe, Otake's old friend from *Bluestocking*, was killed by the state for her role in encouraging civil disobedience. Only five years after the murder of Itō Noe, Otake was also arrested. Otake and Akira survived. Their recovery from this might have had something to do with the fact that Kenkichi was well known to be an imperialist, but to Kenkichi, having his name "sullied" by the public spectacle of his wife and daughter holding different opinions to him was a betrayal similar to infidelity (Watanabe 2001, 252). This despite the fact that he had, in fact, cheated on Otake in the conventional sense (Watanabe 2001, 253).

Ultimately Kenkichi and Otake's relationship ended soon after the end of the war because Kenkichi grew to hate Otake's love of women, explicitly stating that he had divorced her because "that person was a lesbian" (Watanabe 2001, 267, 270).[35] Based in definitions that categorize lesbianism based on gender expression, her clothing, combined with her feminist ire at being referred to as "Tomimoto Kenkichi's wife", her refusal to call Kenkichi "husband" due to the hierarchy in the term, and her desire to be seen as an equal member of the relationship could have contributed to the perception of her Queerness, female masculinity, and feminism as self-evident cause for divorce (Watanabe 2001, 196, 235, 308). That it took Kenkichi twenty years to find out about his wife's Queerness is untenable. Her sexuality had been a scandal long before they married. He would have had to have not read any of her writing from her time at *Bluestocking* and avoid hearing about her reputation from either the presses or his own family

[35] The phrase in question reads "あの人はレズビアンだった" with the English loanword, *rezubian*, used as the term referring to Otake's love of women. As such, in this case, it is lesbianism being attributed to her rather than a more nebulous love of women.

who knew and disapproved of her from the start. It is likely that her being a lesbian was a convenient focus for his ire.

Otake, who as a child had dreamed of adventures, and in her youth had been the embodiment of the threat Feminism posed to the Japanese state, found that the pressure to be a good wife and a wise mother had deprived her of the opportunity to be the "protagonist of her own life" (Watanabe 2001, 157). She adapted to her circumstances and lived a married life that did not require her to compromise on her firmly held beliefs to accommodate her husband's tendency to be influenced by the society around him. As I will explore in the next section, she raised her children by defining what a "good mother" was for herself. Far from being the "abandoned wife" that she is often depicted as, she writes in the preface to one of her books of fairy tales that she is happy to be standing alone in the wake of Japan's defeat in the war and the hope that it brought to Japanese feminists (Watanabe 2001, 319, 321).

3.6.3 Akira - Passing on a revolutionary spirit

The birth of Otake's eldest daughter, Tomimoto Akira, was a catalyst for another wave of Otake's self exploration, and her explicit rejection of "Good Wives, Wise Mothers". Otake named her Akira (陽) using the same character for light that is used in *taiyō* (太陽) the word for the sun used in the famous opening lines of *Genshi, Josei wa Taiyō de Atta*, "In the beginning, woman was the sun. An authentic person. Today she is the moon. Living through others. Reflecting the brilliance of others." (Watanabe 2001, 110).[36] Naming Akira after the sun is

[36] The reference to Amaterasu, Shinto goddess of the sun, and the belief in an original Japanese matriarchy posits feminism firmly within the Japanese tradition, as an original, pure, way-of-being to which women should return. In doing so, the manifesto creates a kind of Japanese feminist spirituality and an understanding of the Shinto pantheon that can be tapped into by women who were, at the time, expected to be docile and feminine lest female masculinity feminize men (Robertson 1999, 10).

believed to be based in Otake's hope that Akira would be able to embody that "great and powerful courage" that Otake saw in the sun (Watanabe 2001, 110). She wanted to make sure her daughters had the chance to live as genuine people, like *Bluestocking* advocated for every woman to have (Watanabe 2001, 183).

With a new child came a rearrangement of responsibilities and the beginning of the end of Tomimoto Kenkichi's Modern sensibilities. Like many new mothers, she found out only after a child was born that even progressive husbands often find it difficult to fight the urge to not do what is traditionally considered "women's work" (Watanabe 2001, 154). In this context, where she, as a woman, was required to sublimate her own life into that of her children, Otake reported that Akira came to her, frightened by a dream in which she ate her mother (Watanabe 2001, 182). She says that because of this she decided to live for Akira, but in the end failed because she "couldn't abandon [her] 'I' even if it was small" (Watanabe 2001, 183).

Instead of sublimating her own "I" into her daughter, she decided to pour her effort into educating her daughters, both Akira and Sue, outside of the education system that trained women to be wives and mothers (Watanabe 2001, 260). She took the view that she and her daughter were ultimately equals. In her parenting and education style she treated the parent-child relationship as a relationship of trust between two people who were equals (Watanabe 2001, 270, 275).

At the time, Otake's writing, which often foregrounded the love and friendship she had with her children, was discussed as a model for how feminist women could live freely (Watanabe 2001, 205). Since women were expected to raise children who fit a mold defined by the needs of the state, rather than the happiness of the child or mother, promoting simple expressions of love

as a value by which to determine the wisdom of these mothers was an act that ever so slightly undermined the structures Imperial Japan depended upon (Watanabe 2001, 204).

As Akira and Sue grew more independent, Otake had the opportunity to get involved in feminism and politics again. This time she approached Feminism from the point of view of a mother (Watanabe 2001, 249). When she was writing for the journal *Women's Art* there were plenty of women writing essays giving explicit calls for action, and though she explicitly spoke her mind in panels recorded and published in *Women's Art*, in her fiction Otake hid the political messages she was championing behind beautiful descriptions of nature and everyday life (Watanabe 2001, 241). She talked about the necessity of raising the next generation to be independent, and to have understanding for people in poverty or experiencing systemic oppression who might have to choose between things like religious piety and educating their children (Watanabe 2001, 281).

She advocated that women should go through an "awakening as mothers", that entailed cultivating class-consciousness and questioning the state's definition of what a "wise mother" should do (Watanabe 2001, 249). This kind of "awakening" drew on Marxist ideology as there was a trend towards Marxism and away from Anarchism in feminist circles as they tried to find a place of strength which could be an alternative to Imperialism in the years leading up to the Second Sino-Japanese war (Watanabe 2001, 249). More to the point, she argued that the spiritual basis of progressive movements should be treating mothers well in order to "open the way for everyone" (Watanabe 2001, 288).

One of Otake's main grievances with *Women's Art* was that people were too philosophical and not class-conscious enough (Watanabe 2001, 243). Her fiction and organizing endeavoured to fill that gap, whenever she had the opportunity to advocate for greater freedoms

for women more vulnerable than her, she took it. Through Otake's work and arrest it was her teenage daughter, Akira, who was working with her and shared her conviction (Watanabe 2001, 251-252). The child she had named after the sun's power was the child who most shared her revolutionary spirit.

3.7 Conclusion

Otake Kokichi's life was spent in search of an end to the oppressions that constricted the possibilities for the women of her time. Her story is not a linear progression, nor was she consistently in the spotlight, but every part of her life demonstrates how a woman can live feminist values regardless of the path her life takes.

Her early work, writing and painting for Bluestocking as well as her bravery in living an openly Queer life despite the scandals that she endured for her crossdressing and earnestness sets her apart from many of her contemporaries as a model for young Queer women. She had to contend with the forces of homophobia and transphobia both within the feminist movement that used anti-lesbian sexological discourse as a support structure and in a popular press that demonized her. Still, she unabashedly caused trouble for the sake of more vulnerable women at heart at a time when feminism was ignoring them in favour of middle-class issues.

Her story usually stops being told at the point where the pressure of her personal and political life became overwhelming and she got married. But, her work did not stop there, it merely changed. She continued to reject the Japanese civic religious concept of "Good Wife, Wise Mother" and sought to raise and educate her daughters in a way that would protect them from internalizing the sexist and heterosexist messages promoted by the government. Publicly

rejecting the Imperial government's worldview widened a rift between her and her husband, who venerated the empire and the emperor.

When an unfree press meant that Otake had no choice but to support a government that was doing unconscionable things if she wanted to publish, she accepted the consequences of a boycott and supported the creative, activist, and Queer women of Tokyo in her home that she had turned into a salon. In the end she might have been "standing alone" in that she had been divorced, but she was standing with a feminist community that was stronger for her presence and hopeful for a brighter future for everyone.

CHAPTER THREE: HIRATSUKA RAICHŌ

An Unwilling Queer Icon

When studying Otake Kōkichi I was struck by a set of concerns surrounding the way she is commonly portrayed as a character in the story of Hiratsuka Raichō. Otake Kōkichi's place as a figure in WLW history is established, but the way she is presented in media distorts and limits the full impact of her example. What does it mean to present a historical figure as an example of positive representation? What is the relationship between power and the narrative of importance in Japanese feminist history? How does power affect representation when a culture has a period of history in which obtaining power meant participating in morally reprehensible historical events such as Imperialism? In this chapter I will be discussing the ways in which Otake Kōkichi's story has been subordinated to the story of Hiratsuka Raichō despite the fact that Hiratsuka Raichō supported the Second Sino-Japanese war, advocated state-controlled eugenics, and openly expressed homophobic and transphobic ideals that would be discouraging to anyone looking for WLW role-models in Japanese history. It is unreasonable to expect Queer people to identify with someone who worked against their interests and the interests of their loved ones. In this chapter, I will lay out a few things that Queer people learning about early Japanese Queer feminism should know in order to make informed decisions about how to use her work. In particular, I take issue with her actions toward Kōkichi, such as publicly referring to her a "congenital sexual invert", and her politics on matters concerning support for women in more marginalized classes, eugenics through government mandated abortions, gender variance, and homosexuality.

4.1 Treatment of Kōkichi and Hiratsuka's history of homophobia and transphobia

For the women of the Bluestocking Society, the personal was always political. These women advocated for their own rights by living in ways that rebelled against society's expectations of what women should do and how they should act. As such, trying to separate the political and historical figure of Hiratsuka Raichō is a futile effort that ignores the methodology of her movement. Unfortunately for Hiratsuka, her personal actions towards Otake have not aged well and make the characterization of her as a Queer role model untenable. To read about Hiratsuka as a Queer person is to endure enough microaggressions that it would often feel safer to give up on her.

Following the end of their relationship, Hiratsuka distanced herself from everything that could have indicated her support for Otake's work and politics. Their relationship had been a public affair, with their feelings for each other quite openly represented in *Bluestocking* (Suzuki 2010, 30). After Otake and Hiratsuka's relationship ended, *Bluestocking* only depicted homosexuality negatively (Suzuki 2010, 30). After the relationship ended Hiratsuka did write about her relationship with Otake in a serialized essay called *Ichinenkan* (*One Year*) (1913 *Seito* 3 no. 2; *Seito* 3 no. 3; *Seito* 3 no. 12). In *One Year* she used *Bluestocking* as a platform from which to laugh at Otake's sexual experience and to make it seem strange, sick, and one sided (Suzuki 2010, 27). The fact of Otake's gender non-conformity in her chosen name, her dress, the ways in which she rebelled against the strictures imposed on her as a woman, and her blunt speech made her an easy target for anyone intending to claim that she was the kind of dangerous lesbian that was made an object of fear in sexological discourse of the time (Itō 1970, 11). Hiratsuka continuously positioned herself and Otake in opposition to each other, with Hiratsuka's affections being merely doting in order to reaffirm her own "normality" (Suzuki 2010, 31).

Hiratsuka Raichō played into existing understandings of what it meant to be lesbian when she was distancing herself from Otake and trying to rehabilitate her image. During the time immediately following her breakup with Otake, she translated Havelock Ellis' chapter called "Sexual Inversion in Women" from *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. In an introduction explaining why she took an interest in the topic, she characterizes Otake like this:

> Although one often hears of this thing called same-sex love being practiced in places like dormitories in girls' schools, I personally had never seen or experienced it, and thus felt half-doubtful that such a thing existed at all. It was difficult for me to find any interest in this phenomenon. However, a woman I met in my recent past — a woman who may be considered a congenital sexual invert [*sententeki no seiteki tentōsha*] — this woman made me very interested in this phenomenon. I spent about a year as the object of this woman's love.
> (Hiratsuka 1913 quoted in Suzuki 2010, 31)

Hiratsuka argues that apart from Otake she had no interest or contact with other WLW despite the fact that she was in close contact with notable lesbian couples through the Bluestocking Society. Not only was she working with Otake Kōkichi, Tamura Toshiko, and Naganuma Chieko, but she was also in contact with Yosano Akiko. The idea that she had never seen homosexuality is untenable, but she continuously tried to distance herself rather than standing with Queer women.

The tool she uses to distance herself here is the concept of "abnormal sexuality"; an idea that originated in European sexological discourse (Suzuki 2010, 30). The "abnormal sexuality" being discussed was largely based on gender presentation. Feminine-presenting women in relationships with *ome*, or "butch women," were assumed to be controlled by the masculine-presenting woman, to the point that newspaper articles about attempted lover's suicides expressed "incredulous wonder that the non-masculine (and therefore "normal") woman seems to have been 'truly in love'" (Suzuki 2010, 25).

Otake's manner of dress, her use of a masculine pen name, and her public participation in masculine activities placed her in this category. It would have been easier for Hiratsuka to claim innocence when it came to her own reputation as a bisexual by placing blame on Otake than it would have been to stand with stigmatized women. Hiratsuka's distancing of herself from "undesirable" identities is a pattern in her behaviour that we see again and again in the policies she adopted and the people she showed interest in helping. Whether it be in the case of sex workers, like Eizan, or impoverished women as a whole, as in her policies on eugenics, this pattern shows a lack of inter-class female solidarity. It should be noted that Otake and Hiratsuka became friends again later in their lives so it is likely that Otake either forgave or decided to overlook the characterization of her as a "congenital sexual invert." Nevertheless, that characterization remains a microaggression.

Hiratsuka Raichō's public statements over the years indicate that she never stopped trying to distance herself from the idea of sexual variance. Kobayashi Ichizō, the founder of the Takarazuka Revue, singled Hiratsuka out as a figure who was particularly against the kind of gender play that was inherently a part of performances by the Revue's all female cast of actors (Robertson 1998, 72). Despite the fact that the Takarazuka Revue's *otokoyaku* (actors who were assigned female at birth and play male roles) are noted for their masses of adoring female fans, Kobayashi claims Hiratsuka said that "we women view [*the otokoyaku*] as a disfigured and deformed person" and characterized the revue as "girls who know nothing about males expressing earnestly emotions such as passion and love" (Kobayashi 1961, quoted in Robertson 1998, 72).[37] We only have Kobayashi's word to go on when it comes to this particular anecdote, but it is in line with Hiratsuka's statements on gender expression and sexuality throughout her

[37] I use the term "assigned female at birth" (AFAB) rather than "female" because it is impossible to know that all the people who have worked as *otokoyaku* are female.

life, from the previously discussed introduction to her translation, all the way to her posthumously published memoir.

Otake died in 1966, four years before Hiratsuka. Hiratsuka used those years to write an autobiography, effectively getting the last word by publicly characterizing Otake when she was no longer alive to contradict her. *In the Beginning Woman was the Sun* tells the story of Hiratsuka's tenure at *Bluestocking* and, as part of that, characterizes herself as the innocent object of an aggressive lesbian's affections. In her accounting of the relationship she did nothing to make Otake think that she was interested except being too kind to her, but throughout the account she speaks in a patronizing manner as if she always knew what was best for Otake better than Otake herself.

Hiratsuka emphasized the idea that Otake was neither attracted to, nor attractive to men throughout her account in a way that played into narratives pathologizing lesbianism. This despite the fact that Otake had been married for a large portion of her life. For example, she says that instead of being attracted to her male friends, Otake:

> Directed all her feelings toward me, charging full tilt as it were. Though we saw each other every day, she also sent a stream of letters, all written with a brush in her distinctive handwriting on rolls of stationary. I answered her once in a while — about one in ten — but she kept on writing, so I did my best to discourage her from getting any closer (Hiratsuka 2005, 176)

For Hiratsuka to suggest that she was consistently discouraging Otake from getting attached to her is not corroborated in Itō Noe's nearly contemporaneous account, or in the way Otake wrote about the relationship at the time. Itō characterizes the two's relationship by saying that "even in the world of gay romance, those two approached the point of being obnoxious" and "there did not seem to be anyone who would not love [Otake]" (Itō 1970, 16). She also describes Otake as consistent in the way she spoke about the end of this relationship. Saying that "two people's

precious love developed a crack" and that she was "dying because of this crack in my precious precious love" (Itō 1970, 16, 51). Itō records that Otake confided in her fellow members of the Bluestocking Society, including Ito herself and a woman named Yasumochi. Yasumochi, in particular, is noted for voicing the opinion that Hiratsuka's lighthearted jokes at Otake's expense on the subjects of Otake's depression and awkward movements constituted cruelty (Itō 1970, 52). Itō's account has the virtues of being both close to the time of the events and being by an author who explicitly stated that she had no interest in being socially acceptable (Itō 1970, 8).

When it comes to characterizing Otake's experience staying in Chigasaki, Hiratsuka uses the fact that she stayed in a house with a man living in it as an opportunity to reinforce the idea that there was something about Otake's gender presentation that was wrong or deficient.

> One might have expected her to have had some scruples about living under the same roof with Chōkō, who was still young, but no one, not even his wife, seems to have thought twice, since nothing about Kōkichi suggested a nubile young woman. (Hiratsuka 2005, 205)

This statement does a number of things: it expresses an assumed proper way for a woman to interact with a man, indicates that Otake does not follow said proper means of behaviour, and it posits that the reason why she was able to do so without causing scandal was because she was somehow not properly a woman. It also indicates a level of hypocrisy since Hiratsuka expects that her readers would also believe that when she ran into the night to go comfort Okumura without telling Otake, who was hosting her, that her own actions that night were non-sexual (Hiratsuka 2005, 185; Itō 1970, 47). She characterizes Otake as unreasonable for having "jumped to conclusions" when Hiratsuka came back to the house where Otake had been hosting her. Hiratsuka portrays Otake's feelings of betrayal as jealous anger saying that Otake "[hinted] that Okumura and I had had sexual relations." The hypocrisy in this narrative is in the fact that Hiratsuka had just finished saying that anyone might have expected Otake to have policed her

behaviour based on the understanding that others would assume sexual impropriety from her staying with a man (Hiratsuka 2005, 185).

Hiratsuka's repeated attempts at distancing herself from the very concept of homosexuality rely heavily on spinning her own behaviour as socially acceptable, non-sexual behaviour and Otake's as disordered. It is important to note that no one ever claimed Hiratsuka was a lesbian. The press branded her a bisexual, a term that at the time meant attraction to cisgender men and cisgender women. Her narrative spin goes so far as to play into the biphobic trope of the bisexual who must choose.

> There is no denying that Kōkichi was infatuated with me at the time. A third party who called this homosexual love may well have been correct. On my part it is true that I was very fond of Kōkichi — she had practically thrown herself at me — but my affection had no sexual dimension. I was attracted by her emotional openness, her freshness, her finely honed sensibility. Something about her stirred my sense of play. Kōkichi meant a great deal to me, but my deepening feelings for Okumura surely prove that my feelings for her were not homosexual (Hiratsuka 2005, 186).

While it is of course possible that a woman could realize she is straight after dating a woman, that is not what Hiratsuka is saying in this quotation. She is using the fact of her attraction to men as evidence that she was never romantically involved with Otake. The logic of that idea ignores the existence of bisexuality and divides sexuality into a binary. According to this trope, eventual monogamy determines whether previous relationships were real or not. This idea is often wielded against bi people both within and outside of the community, in order to delegitimize their Queerness. Loving and marrying a man says nothing about Hiratsuka's potential bisexuality but her use of it does reinforce biphobia and to hear that from the mouth of someone who is still held up as one of the most prominent examples of Japan's WLW history is potentially dispiriting to Queer people looking to find themselves in history.

One aspect of Hiratsuka's characterization is correlated in Itō's account. Otake did send a letter of intimidation to Okumura in the immediate aftermath of being abandoned. Itō does not say what was contained in it, but Hiratsuka says it read "'I promise you. I'll get my revenge' 'I'm in love with Raichō'" (Itō 1970, 52; Hiratsuka 2005, 186). Recording this problematic thing that Otake did is, of course, her right, but it should be noted that in *In the Beginning Woman was the Sun* she does not go on to explain the circumstances that caused her and Otake to become friends again later in their lives. She leaves her depiction of Otake at this place where Otake has spiralled out of control, again playing into the narrative that lesbianism is dangerous and pathological.

Hiratsuka's account of Otake resigning from *Bluestocking* in the wake of the Yoshiwara incident strikes an incredibly patronizing tone. There is the explicit statement that Hiratsuka thinks herself better able to say what is best for Otake better than Otake can herself.The implicit argument is that Hiratsuka herself should be seen as a guiding force without whom Otake would have been lost. She says of Otake's offer to resign from the paper that "for better or for worse, [Otake] was a free spirit, restless, irrepressible, and brimming with the vitality of youth. With her keen eyes, she gazed out upon the world around her, but despite this she was shy and innocent. How could I rebuke her for a minor indiscretion?" (Hiratsuka 2005, 182). Despite her stated unwillingness to punish Otake she recounts that she, Hiratsuka, "had come to think she should leave for the good of the society. [Also,] had become even more strongly convinced that [Otake] should go back to painting, which was her true calling" (Hiratsuka 2005, 195). Thus Hiratsuka was essentially saying that Otake's reasons for leaving were not adequate and that Hiratsuka was the only one who knew best what Otake's calling was. It is true that Otake went back to painting after leaving *Bluestocking* but that phase did not last long. She went back to writing soon after.

Even when she did start to get recognition for her painting, Itō records that Hiratsuka looked at the work and reception with disdain, saying that "it's not as good as I thought. People are all fluffy and a little weak." (Itō 1970, 103).

Current-day Queer Japanese women, like activist Izumo Marou have not believed Hiratsuka's denial. Izumo Marou characterizes Hiratsuka's actions here as "whitewashing of homosexuality" that has "pressured most scholars to ignore their same-sex love" and has led to "mainstream Japanese feminism [continuing] to ignore the political aspects of Kōkichi's existence, dismissing the love relations of her and other such women as merely childish pastimes" (Izumo and Maree 2000, 87).

4.2 Politics

I would like to take as a relatively minor example of the kind of consideration modern viewers of Otake and Hiratsuka's story must reconcile, the differing approaches to class and advocacy made visible in the two women's reaction to meeting Eizan, the *geisha* they hired during the Yoshiwara incident. Hiratsuka did write about the experience but only spoke about the fact that Eizan did not seem to trust them because of the possibility that they might have been interested in twisting her words to support an agenda of criminalizing what was, at the time, legal sex work. Otake reacted to that distrust by following up with letters and developing enough of a relationship with Eizan that she could eventually become trusted to voice Eizan's concerns publicly (Bardsley 2012, 11). Hiratsuka, however, was noticeably apathetic to the point that even decades later she blamed Otake for the societal outrage that centered around the Yoshiwara incident (Hiratsuka 2005, 182).

> Despite her visceral aversion to the ways that the Meiji gender system impinged on her own life, Raichō shows startlingly little empathy for Eizan nor is she even moved to comment on the precarious quality of women's socio-economic status. As Hiroko Tomida observes, the experience did not push Raichō to expand her fight against gender constraints to women outside her own class at this point. (Bardsley 2007, 10)

It is not uncommon for prominent first-wave feminists to have only cared about issues that impeded their own, largely middle class, ambitions. So the fact that Hiratsuka does not show interest in understanding the context of Eizan's life — as someone with the same education as her but who was in a drastically different class — is not surprising, but it also is not a model of feminism that is looked upon particularly favourably in the present day.

Perhaps the most ethically egregious position Hiratsuka advocated for was state-controlled eugenics through forced sterilization. In Hiratsuka's view, the goal of society was to raise quality of life for the entire population (Kano 2016, 80). In the pursuit of this goal, Hiratsuka argued that government intervention in a sterilization program would benefit women (Kano 2016, 81). She saw the root of inequality and hunger in society as the result of the "promiscuous behaviour of the poor" and thought that they had to be constrained from having too many children in order to benefit society as a whole (Kano 2016, 81). Notably, she excused herself from this category, even though her own pregnancy happened when she and Okumura were desperately poor. She thought that she was better qualified to be a parent than other women because her children would "still be superior and happier, compared to many children in Japan today who are born from utterly unaware, ignorant, inferior women — and are raised by such irresponsible mothers" (Hiratsuka quoted in Kano 2016, 80–81). There is of course an ableist dimension to this opinion as well, in that she "deplores the fact that people suffering from alcoholism, tuberculosis, leprosy, syphilis, and mental illness are bearing children who are physically and mentally unhealthy" and called on the Imperial Japanese state to intervene in the

sexual lives of those she deems unfit to reproduce (Kano 2016, 81). Arguments supporting eugenics, especially state-controlled eugenics based on blaming the poor for their poverty, are not morally defensible. The fact that Hiratsuka was able to make blatantly classist arguments despite being in poverty herself indicates that, for her, feminism was a position that elevated her above other women rather than as a movement that gave her the responsibility inherent in having a platform. Though it is common to excuse some morally inexcusable opinions as a result of being products of the time, the contrast between Otake's class consciousness and Hiratsuka's feelings about a fascist government interfering with women's bodily autonomy shows that there are figures who do not require Queer people to compromise on important issues.

Hiratsuka Raichō's impact on first-wave feminism is undeniable, but much like with other feminist historical figures, wholehearted support for her has the potential to indicate a willingness to overlook deeply troubling beliefs about certain marginalized groups. In Hiratsuka's case, some of these beliefs and acts consisted of contributing to anti-lesbian discourse in order to wash her hands of the social stigma that her relationship with Otake caused in her life, allegedly expressing transphobic opinions about female masculinity, her deep indifference to the needs of women of other classes, and the belief that women in lower social classes should have their fertility controlled by the Imperial Japanese State. Hiratsuka Raichō's last wishes, as put forward in her last memoir, seem to have been that she should not be seen as a Queer person. I merely suggest that the Queer community has more than enough reason to honour those wishes.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The two case studies I have looked at in this thesis only scratch the surface of research that can and should be done to make WLW history more fully understood and accessible. Throughout this process I have been looking at the material I found using a lens that focuses on the potential of these figures when it comes to the creation of imagined community for current-day WLW of Japanese descent. My lens has been one that privileges activism. Readers may question the Queer reading of Murasaki Shikibu's life and work and they may feel that there are more influential figures to focus on than someone like Otake Kōkichi. But the act of researching these figures and finding contextualizing information brings up other avenues of interrogation. As such, in this chapter I will lay out a few of the future directions my research has turned up.

In the process of researching Lady Murasaki I came across short discussions of three more understudied pre-modern historical documents depicting female-female intimacy. The first, *The Princess in Search of Herself* (*Waga Mi ni Tadoru Himegimi*), is a novel from the Kamakura period (1185–1333). This book depicts, as a side plot, a group of four women in a sexual and romantic relationship, specifically a v-shaped polyamorous relationship centering on the figure of the former high priestess. The second document is a Kamakura-era set of eight picture scrolls called the *Tengu Zōshi* that criticizes the actions of the major Buddhist mountain sects by comparing the monks of those sects to *tengu*, a kind of Buddhist demon notable for its arrogance. In the seventh scroll, referred to in academia as the Miidera-A scroll, there is a small detail showing two nuns walking together; a detail that historian Kuroda Hideo reads as a criticism of lesbianism in the convents (Kuroda 1986, 18-23). The third text is a Tokugawa period (1603–1867) sexual health manual called *Hiji Sahō* (*Secret Techniques*). In *Secret Techniques* there is a

section that proposes to teach women who live and work in contexts that deny them the opportunity to marry how to satisfy themselves through masturbation. The author of *Secret Techniques* categorizes female-female sexual contact as a form of advanced masturbation.

Historical Avenues of Investigation

5.1 *The Princess in Search of Herself*

If you know where to look, you can find surviving pre-modern and Early Modern stories that involve lesbians or provide hints as to the ways Queer women were living their lives under the radar. Naturally they are few and far between but given the societal pressures which work to prevent the creation and preservation of Queer women's stories, the existence of any discrete, undeniably lesbian stories with authors who are theorized to be female is a remarkable thing.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, my research into this book has been limited to what research is accessible to an English-speaking audience. As such, the major source I have found is a short discussion by Donald Keene detailing the subplot revolving around the former high priestess. It is worthwhile to note that Keene was an openly Gay man, however, the worldwide Queer community was extremely segregated in the 1980s and the Japanese Queer community continues to be segregated along lines of identity today. If Gay men, Trans men, Gay women, and Trans women rarely interact there is no one around to draw attention to where internalized misogyny, transphobia, and trauma influence their opinions about other members of the community. As such, Queer people cannot be assumed to have unlearned the biases that society promotes as part of other layers of identity against other members of the Queer community. This is an ongoing problem within the Queer community and so I will be making no excuses for examples of anti-lesbian bias within Keene's work. The most blatant example of this

anti-lesbian bias within Keene's article is the uncritical and consistent use of the word "wayward" to describe the former high priestess' love of women.

Though the author of *The Princess in Search of Herself* is generally understood to be a woman, her identity is unknown (Keene 1989, 17). Having a story about lesbians written for the female gaze with a happy ending is incredibly rare, especially in premodern literature. As such *The Princess in Search of Herself* deserves more accessible, critical, Queer, scholastic attention than it currently receives.

According to Keene's summary, it goes that the former High Priestess, the half-sister of the Empress, has to return to the capital due to a bureaucratic reassignment of positions typical of a time when the regent was changing. Neither her father nor her aunt wants to take her in. However, her aunt reluctantly lets the former High Priestess live in the house that had belonged to the priestess' mother (Keene 1989, 18). The former High Priestess' homosexuality is exposed in the story through a heterosexual man's failed attempt at seducing her that resulted in him spying on her and another woman embracing and being so confused that he leaves. It then details a love rivalry between a woman named Chūjō and another named Kozaishō over the former High Priestess' affections. Chūjō becomes so jealous of her lover's new lover that she lashes out at the former High Priestess with a hex; summoning a *mononoke* to torment her.[38] Various attempts at getting rid of the *mononoke* fail, notably Kozaishō's attempt to protect the priestess by stepping aside fails because the women's sense of self-interest is weaker than their desire. The priestess' brother also gives up on helping her after seeing her with Kozaishō (Keene 1989, 19). Ultimately, a fourth woman, Shindayū, in an attempt to save the former High Priestess and gain her favour, prays for divine help in finding the source of her lady's affliction. On receiving the

[38] *Mononoke,* literally "the mystery/spirit of things", is a kind of malevolent spiritual creature in Japanese folklore. These creatures are formed or summoned by intense emotion, often grudges or trauma.

help she asked for in the form of a dream, she fetches a medium who destroys the doll used to place the hex, and thus saves the priestess. Shindayū is chosen by the priestess as her constant companion as a reward and all four of the women — with the exception of Chūjō, who eventually falls ill and dies — live happily together with increasing wealth and status (Keene 1989, 20).

Keene notes that the author tells us why she wrote this story "to show how not only their own natures but also the forces of circumstances determined their fates. If Chūjō had not revealed her jealousy by slamming the *shōji*, she might have been able to go on living happily with the High Priestess" (Keene 1989, 20). Despite the author's explanation, Keene does not critically examine how the women's fates are determined by their natures and circumstances. Instead he makes a few offhand comments about the story, that:

> There could hardly be a more unexpected conclusion to the account of the doings in the former High Priestess's house; it strains the imagination to think of the people involved living happily ever after (Keene 1989, 20)

and

> Everything in this section of *Waga Mi ni Tadoru Himegimi* is so described that we are likely to find the events not only decadent but ugly. Much as the empress is praised, we might admire her more if she chastised rather than rewarded her wayward half-sister. The whole of the work is not in this vein, it is true, but the story of the former High Priestess of Ise reveals how far the *monogatari* had wandered from the path of the *Genji Monogatari* (Keene 1989, 21).

Keene's comments rest more on anti-lesbian assumptions than it does on the evidence presented in the text. First is the fact that he is using a story about lesbian harem drama to show how much more "decadent" the genre had become since the *Tale of Genji* had been written. Second, he uncritically uses the word "wayward" without indicating whether an equivalent term was used in the text or unpacking the sexist subtext of the term. Third, he does not give any real textual evidence for why he thinks the audience should see the Empress' support of her sister as a lapse

in her characterization as an ideal ruler. Finally, why it is that he believes we would not expect the women in this story to have a happy ending when there is no evidence in his summary that suggests anyone but Chūjō is karmically punished?

Decadence

For an article about the ways the tale genre had changed and become more decadent since the *Tale of Genji*, Keene gives very little evidence beyond plotlines of this decadence. He tells us that the descriptions of these events are ugly but provides no quotes. The only evidence we are given is a summary of a story that, if one replaced the former High Priestess with a man, would be a typical harem drama plotline. Chūjō's jealousy leading to a *mononoke* tormenting a person she believes wronged her is not materially different from the plotline in *The Tale of Genji*, where the Rokujō Lady's jealousy causes a *mononoke* to torment Genji's first wife, the Lady Aoi. The former High Priestess being quite willing to take any number of lovers is something that, were she a man, would be a matter of course for a story set in the Heian period or before. Since Keene compares this text to the *Tale of Genji* we should note that Genji has significantly more sexual relationships than the former High Priestess.

Waywardness

The connection of lesbianism to the concept of persistent disobedience is one that needs to be interrogated whenever it is present. Inherent in the idea is an assumption that women are straying from a proper path or disobeying their parents if they are not monogamous and heterosexual. It is not clear who the former High Priestess is disobeying in this context. Her mother is dead, her father has been so estranged from her life that he sees her as a stranger, her sister does not reproach her, and society does not punish her. The only people who Keene

mentions having a problem with her behaviour are her aunt and her brother. There is not sufficient evidence presented that her behaviour is considered generally reprehensible without leaning on an assumption that one's audience will believe that lesbianism is inherently a sign that someone is "straying".

Praise

Keene's analysis acknowledges that the figure of the Empress is a sign that this story is not quite set in the world as anyone in the Kamakura or Heian periods would have known it. The Empress is an ideal ruler and depicted as "learned in the classics of both Japan and China, artistic, compassionate, and always fair in her governing of the nation" (Keene 1989, 18). To posit a specific decision as an ideal figure's character flaw in the minds of the author and original intended audience is something that cannot be done without providing at least some evidence. As such, Keene's comment that "much as the Empress is praised, we might admire her more if she chastised rather than rewarded her wayward half-sister" is hypothetical and rests mostly on the idea that readers will automatically read the figure of the Former High Priestess as sinful for being highly sexual and lesbian (Keene 1989, 21).

Happy Endings

There is a reason why Queer characters in Western media rarely have happy endings. The Christian preoccupation with the idea that homosexuality is a sin leads to writers, consciously or not, writing a narrative trope referred to colloquially as "bury your gays" (Wells 21/02/2018). Essentially this trope requires that the plot punish the "transgression" of homosexuality with death. Much as it is unlikely to see writing in which villains succeed, it is almost unheard of in Western media to see Queer characters having happy endings. The equivalent in the Girl's Love

genre was outgrowing homosexuality and marrying heterosexually. As a white person, growing up in the West and living his adulthood in Japan, this is the kind of Queer media Keene would have been exposed to in his non-academic life.

In a context where one's experience of Queer plotlines is deeply influenced by the "bury your gays" trope, it is indeed shocking to see a plotline where Queer characters live happily ever after without forswearing homosexuality or gender variance. However, that cannot be read backward into historical material. To say that it "strains the imagination to think of the people involved living happily ever after" is a value judgement on the validity of their life choices (Keene 1989, 20). Neither the Empress nor the Heavens punish these women for their homosexuality. Chūjō is punished, meaning that divine or karmic punishment is present as a force in the story, but that is for her use of malevolent magic. The other women live to old age, happily, and together. Presumably changing nothing about their sexual practices (Keene 1989, 19–20).

The Princess in Search of Herself is surely only one of many understudied pieces of writing that should be included in the future study of Japan's Queer History. If it is homophobic and Keene was merely preserving the contemporary judgements of the piece, then that needs to be laid out explicitly and systematically in a way that cannot be misread as relying on implicit anti-lesbian assumptions.

5.2 *The Tengu Zōshi*

The *Tengu Zōshi* is a medieval picture scroll meant to criticize the actions of the major temple complexes by comparing the monks to demons called *tengu*. In one scroll, the Miidera-A scroll, there is a small detail in which two women are walking together, This section has been

interpreted by art historian, Kuroda Hideo in his book *Sugata to Shigusa no Chūseishi* (*Form and Gesture in Medieval History*), as a criticism of lesbianism in the convent (Kuroda 1986, 18–23). His argument hinges on the presence of a line from the short story accompanying this set of scenes criticizing illicit sexuality and the idea that homosexuality and heterosexuality were so common in monasteries as to be ineffective criticisms of illicit sexuality as a whole. I would argue that within the context of the document and the scene it is more likely a criticism of drunkenness than lesbianism. Kuroda's argument has three main weaknesses: 1) There is not enough evidence that female homosexuality was stigmatized enough in the public consciousness that it would be recognizable in a visual medium, 2) Male homosexuality is extensively criticized in the other scrolls of the *Tengu Zōshi* in a much more explicit way than the scene depicting the two nuns, and 3) There is an overarching criticism of dancing as a sexualized act in the document and the scene with the nuns includes a depiction of monks dancing wildly in praise of Amida.

Lesbianism is a form of sexuality that needs to be socially constructed as sex before it can be stigmatized or assumed to be recognizable. Because lesbian sex does not involve a penis, it is often the case that it will not fit into narratives of what sex consists of in a local construction. As such, the fact that there is little evidence of anyone defending lesbianism at the time does not naturally mean that it was a stigmatized form of sexuality. It could just mean that it was a non-entity. If there was enough narrative construction work being done in the Kamakura period that lesbians would be able to be recognized by any onlooker without being explicitly pointed out, then that would certainly show up in a wealth of documents from the time.[39] It might be the case

[39] In my research I was able to find only two scholars that referenced this interpretation of the Miidera-A scroll, Wakabayashi Haruko and Bernard Faure. Neither Wakabayashi nor Faure engage with this interpretation critically, merely acknowledging it, and they did not bring in any discussions of similar pieces from the time period. Conversely, the lesbian scholars I have looked at do not reference this or any similar work as an example of pre-modern lesbianism. Given the current state of scholarship on the topic it appears that the *Tengu Zōshi* would have been standing alone as a document constructing negative medieval lesbianism or it would have to be the only one

that, like *The Princess in Search of Herself*, these hypothetical documents have not been the focus of scholastic rigour. If it was the case that nuns were being criticized for lesbianism then one place Queer historians should look for evidence of the endeavour of constructing lesbian sexuality is in disciplinary records from convents of the period. Kuroda does not reference any such work.

The short story section of this part of the Miidera-A scroll does not mention female homosexuality at all, but rather offers criticism of what the author characterizes as wrongly singleminded devotion to Amida Buddha, the immodest dress that apparently characterized them, and the gluttony of these monks. Wakabayashi Haruko, in her monograph on the scrolls, translates the setsuwa accompanying this image in the following way:

> Not long after, there appeared in the world a group of people whose appearance and actions were strange. Some are called *ikko shū* [the "single-mind" sect]: They detest those who believe in buddhas other than the Amida Buddha and despise those who worship gods and deities. All people have different causes and conditions (*innen*), and therefore their ways of reaching enlightenment are different: Some have *innen* with the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and with their help they are emancipated; others need the help of various gods and deities and reach enlightenment with the help of these manifestations. However, *ikko* people confine themselves to the worship of the Amida Buddha and detest any other practices and sects. This is an act of extreme stupidity…. Because of their deep attachment to the wrong view they do not wear the Buddhist stole [*kesa*] even though they claim to be monks. They wear *umaginu* [literally, "horse robe"] and *often do not wear undergarments.* When they chant the *nembutsu* they dance, shaking their heads and shoulders; they bray loudly like wild horses or wild monkeys. *The men and women do not hide their genitals,* grab food as they feed themselves and favour injustice. Such behavior must create karma for rebirth in the realm of beasts (Wakabayashi 2012, 106–107 *emphasis mine*).

The lines Kuroda refers to when he argues for the possibility that the two women walking together are lesbians are "they often do not wear undergarments" and that "the men and women do not hide their genitals." These two statements are interconnected and definitely constitute a

to have been subjected to scholarly attention. This does not correlate with the way negative images of lesbianism tend to be created in the discourse of stigmatization.

criticism of modesty and sexual morality but there is nothing in the text that indicates lesbianism being present in the criticism. This lack of framing combined with an image that simply consists of two women walking together is not enough to posit a criticism of lesbianism in a context where the readers are not already primed to expect it.

Kuroda's argument that male homosexuality was so common as to not be an effective depiction of illicit sexuality flies in the face of the fact that at numerous points in the story told by this set of scrolls there is an explicit visual criticism of the sexual relationships that existed between monks and acolytes. The most blatant example of this being in the Tōji scroll where the presence of peeping toms looking into the acolytes changing tent (Wakabayashi 2012, 104). Given the critical nature of the *Tengu Zōshi* it is hard to think that these peeping toms are not a criticism of the sexual impropriety that surrounded rituals. Acolytes appear six more times in the *Tengu Zōshi*, in one case taking on the wings of *tengu* to show their corruption by being associated with the monks who are ever-present in these scenes.

There are four criticisms of dancing in the *Tengu Zōshi*. The Tōji scroll involves *shirabyōshi*, dancers who might be female or acolytes. In any case, the rapt attention of a crowd of tengu indicates that the creator of the scroll did not approve. The Kōfukuji scroll shows an acolyte dancing for a packed crowd of monks, nobles and *tengu*. Again, the critical nature of the scrolls indicates that this is being presented as a distraction. The third example is also in the Miidera-A scroll, where dancers are depicted distracting a crowd of monks, *tengu*, nobles, and acolytes lounging around. The fourth example is in the Miidera-A scroll where the monks and nuns dancing wildly in praise of Amida are criticized for acting without dignity and not wearing undergarments. It seems much more likely to me that this is the part of the image criticizing the illicit sexuality of the "single mind sect". Unlike the two women calmly walking together, the

dancing monks' and nuns' robes are flying up with the force of their dancing. Furthermore, if they are not wearing undergarments, rowdy dancing would make their robes fly up and expose their genitals to all the monks', nuns', and onlookers' sight . Such a situation would constitute a heterosocial violation of monastic sexual modesty. I believe that this connection between the criticisms in the short story section and the depiction of that criticism is more direct than positing lesbianism in such a subtle discussion.

If the women in the image are not lesbians then what is their depiction meant to criticize? I would argue that due to their placement, walking from a scene of gluttony to one of dancing, they are leaning on each other out of drunkenness. The presence of drunken women in a context where monks were dancing without care for modesty would be an essentially heterosexual critique that is more likely to have existed in the time period.

5.3 *Secret Techniques*

The 17th century Japanese health manual, *Secret Techniques*, presents lesbian sex as a form of masturbation and masturbation in turn as health care facilitating the proper flow of energy (Walthall 2009, 7, 10). *Secret Techniques* was allegedly written by a nun named Shūrei. Much of the book is aimed at young men who want to have a good sexual relationship with their wives, but there is a significant section focusing on gynaecological ailments Shūrei argues result from improper care of genitalia among single women (Walthall 2009, 7). Shūrei explains solo masturbation as a beginner practice and then encourages young women to find an older woman to mentor them in the more advanced techniques (Walthall 2009, 8–9). In all of these cases she takes great care to make sure the young women are silent and keep from being caught (Walthall 2009, 8).

The mentorship model of female same-sex sexuality is especially interesting given that Shūrei claims to be a nun. We see a similar focus on homosexuality as an essentially hierarchical system of mentorship existing in masculine monastic circles in the *chigo monogatari*, a genre of erotic literature which flourished in the 14th to 16th centuries centering on the relationship between a young novice and an older monk (Endsjø 2011, 123). The historical relationships between monks and *chigo* (acolytes) that the tales are based on are highly problematic as they are predicated on the normalization of sexual relationships between adults and minors in their care. That is not to say that there are not examples historically where the younger partner valued the relationship and wanted to continue it after they aged out of the *shudo* (pederastic) construction of homosexuality. There are both historical and fictional accounts from the time of monks and former *chigo* continuing their relationships even if they did not always end well (Atkins 2008, 950–951).

Queer stories are fundamentally bound up in their times and the structures of power that sought to create identities. The creation and preservation of Queer narratives are ultimately practices of creating and performing systems of value. As more work is done to center the history of women's same sex eroticism more of the information needed to understand the way same-sex eroticism manifested and was constructed or erased in premodern history. As this inquiry happens it is important that the information be made as widely available as possible since historical representation has a material impact on Queer people living in the current-day. Much of the information I have found on WLW history in Japan has consisted of short discussions or one-line acknowledgements of the existence of Japanese texts that have never been fully translated. This is a material barrier to widespread understanding of these figures in the North American Queer community. In order to include a more diverse set of Queer historical

experiences in mainstream Queer discourse it is necessary that discussions of these stories be unbiased and accessible in English. The historical reality of North-American Japanese language infrastructure being destroyed during the Second World War and the lack of post-war reparative action to rebuild that infrastructure means that information available only in Japanese is inaccessible to a large number of people within Canada and the United States.[40] The act of making information on Queer Japanese history available in English is therefore a necessary part of intersectional Queer allyship in a deeply unfair historical context. Young Queer women of Japanese descent who might not be able to fluently read Japanese deserve access to discussions of pre-modern Japanese Queerness that might help form an understanding of Queerness as a part of a unified, embodied experience that does not rely on predominantly white role models.

[40] As part of the racist backlash to the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941, Canada forcibly shut down all Japanese language infrastructure in British Columbia. At the time, Japanese language infrastructure consisted of Japanese language schools and three Japanese language newspapers. The New Canadian, an English language paper for the Japanese-Canadian population was allowed to continue publishing under government direction, filled this gap somewhat by becoming bilingual (Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre 2020). The Japanese-Canadian community was permanently affected by the experience of internment and Japanese language infrastructure has not recovered fully due to the internalized message that assimilation was a way to be safe (Johnson and Bowen 12/05/2020).

CONCLUSION

What do the examples set by historical figures mean for current-day women who love women? The way their narratives are shaped, especially in popular and Queer publications has an outsized influence on the part they are allowed to play in current-day discourse. Queer people, as a marginalized group, have extremely high levels of poverty and homelessness that make expensive academic sources unaffordable. Compounding this problem is the matter of language. The historical fact that the Japanese-language infrastructure that had supported Japanese-English bilingualism in North America prior to World War II was destroyed has meant that generations of Japanese-Canadians were systemically discouraged from having the level of fluency that would have allowed easy access to untranslated works published in Japan (Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre 2020; Mullins 1988, 220). Adding to this the fact that Japanese academia has been so noticeably resistant to Queer historical inquiry that it was called out for that in a book about European Queer History (Skinner 2000, 29). These barriers have contributed to the dominance of Eurocentric and America-centered narratives in the mainstream of English language Queer identity creation.

6.1 Otake as a role-model in Izumo Marou's writing

Noted Lesbian author and activist, Izumo Marou details a trip she and her wife took to the house once occupied by Yoshiya Nobuko and Monma Chiyo in Chapter nine of her book *Love Upon the Chopping Board* (Izumo and Maree 2000, 78–90). Otake and Hiratsuka are presented as one of the three prominent lesbian couples of Japanese history alongside Yoshiya Nobuko and Monma Chiyo, and Miyamoto Yuriko and Yuasa Yoshiko (Izumo and Maree 2000,

84). The trip reads like a pilgrimage. Two women trying to get a better understanding of their own circumstances by physically visiting a place important to their predecessors. The three pairs of women whose homes they visited are often discussed together as three of the most famous lesbian relationships of early 20th century Japan (Izumo and Maree 2000, 78–90; Wu 2007, 77–99, Suzuki 2010, 1–33). Of these three, only Yoshiya Nobuko and Monma Chiyo were in a lasting relationship. But it is still notable that these are the women that were accessible to Izumo and Maree as touchstones of connection to the past, connection to an imagined community, and the negotiation of a narrative of what it means to be a Queer Japanese person. The narratives of Queerness are both constituted out of the past and imposed upon it, as we can see in their explanation of the importance of Otake's life.

There would have been a kind of horrible poetry to Otake's life if it had ended during the depressive episode after her relationship with Hiratsuka ended. It would have been a tidy, contained story to tell. Woman comes out, talks about her love, society turns on her, her friends turn on her, she dies. Even today, around the world, too many Queer lives end tragically; cut short by violence and societal oppression. Homophobia and transphobia take a tragic toll on Queer minds and bodies and the reality of that violence weighs on the Queer collective unconscious. There are too many martyrs; too many stories of inspiring people who were found dead, by their own hand or others. The lack of Queer narratives with non-tragic endings affect the creation of new narratives to the point that Queer people end up writing about people like Otake as if their stories also end while they are young. Even though she gives readers the chance to see a woman who loved women so joyfully grow old, become a mentor, and ultimately die of something unrelated to her Queerness she is reduced to yet another tragedy. Survival is too messy to be put in a single narrative.

Someone looking for Otake's life in the materials available in English would think that nothing happened in Otake's life after she got married. Her life story is treated as a tragedy. Izumo Marou and Claire Maree go so far as to conclude their account of Otake's life with:

> Kōkichi, eventually, broken-hearted over Raichō, abandoned the man's name she had adopted, threw away Japanese art and, in accordance with the stipulations of the feudal family system, wore traditional bridal wear as she was wed into ceramic artist Tomimoto Kenkichi's old Nara family.
> (Izumo and Maree 2000, 87).

As I tried to demonstrate in this thesis, her story did not end upon her marriage. She lived a life in defiance of the forces in her time's civic religion and in her family that tried to shape her and her daughters into "good wives" and "wise mothers" who would uphold the state. She became a role model for young feminists of her time due, in no small part, to her embodied politics and her work in creating space for feminist expression. For women taking a second look at her example, she is someone who looked to include women from other classes and experiences in first-wave feminism, an approach that was not taken by most feminist activists of her time.

6.2 Murasaki as a role-model in Komashaku's writing

Komashaku Kimi, herself a notable figure in the Queer history of Japan, framed her own experience reading Murasaki's work as an intimating experience between her and her mother; taking something her mother loved and seeing something of herself in it (Komashaku 1991, 11). The fact that Murasaki Shikibu is an object of respect lends a power to the ways in which she is interpreted. The fact that a modern Queer woman could look at Murasaki's effort recording the details of women's bodies and sufferings and see something familiar in it is a process of value to the discussion surrounding Japanese Queer history. Even the work of someone trying to disprove

Komashaku's argument would yield valuable insights since that work would require finding evidence of how female same-sex desire was constructed at the time. However, that work has not been done.

References to Komashaku's work are few and far between, often consisting of no more than a line acknowledging the existence of the source. For example, Watanabe Mieko's contextualizing essay in *Sparkling Rain* an anthology of lesbian literature from Japan says only that "While the historical sources are few regarding female same-sex relations, one example is Komashaku Kimi's *Murasaki Shikibu no Messeji* [...], which explores the ardent, even erotic treatment of female characters by the author of the 11th century *Tale of Genji*" (Watanabe 2008, 33). There has been very little academic interest in the thesis of *Murasaki Shikibu's Message* so the baseline it could provide, as an argument to pick apart and form other evidence around, has been largely overlooked. As such I have tried to present Komashaku's argument as one that should be taken as serious analytic work where Komashaku's identity acted as a valuable lens.

Murasaki and Otake represent two very different kinds of Queer discourse. Murasaki is a person upon whom a first attempt at uncovering and asserting historical lineage is currently being enacted, while Otake was a person who consciously participated in the construction of lesbian sexuality in her time. Both are historical figures who modern Japanese women who love women, notably Komashaku Kimi and Izumo Marou, have been able to see themselves in while looking for specifically Japanese historical role models. Both women used writing as a tool to pursue some sort of liberation from the forces of heteronormative society and both embodied that liberatory politics. Murasaki did this by choosing and promoting the non-heterosexual path of Buddhist monasticism as an escape from the sufferings caused by compulsory heterosexuality and Otake did it by displaying and talking about her gender non-conformity and love of women

openly, and working toward a counter narrative to the "good wives, wise mothers" narrative that tried to force women into a single restrictive model of femininity for the benefit of the state. Prior to this analysis, these stories had either not been presented in English or the narratives had been curated in a way that left out significant information. By focusing on the systems of power and value-creation that interacted in their lives and legacies, I sought to clarify an underdiscussed idea: the ways Queer Japanese women have interacted with religious and cultural systems, both by embracing and rejecting them when they needed to do so. Historical models of Queer Japanese womanhood exist despite the religious, cultural, and legal forces suppressing their expression. The work of finding these overlooked stories is only a small but necessary part of a larger effort to uncover the histories and legacies of marginalized people all over the world. The world will only be made better for the diversity they provide.

Bibliography

Abe, Hideko Nornes. "From Stereotype to Context: The Study of Japanese Women's Speech." *Feminist Studies*. pp. 647-71. Iss. 21, no. 3 1995.

Atkins, Paul S. "Chigo in the Medieval Japanese Imagination" *The Journal of Asian Studies*. Vol. 67. No 3. Pp. 947-970. 2008.

Bardsley, Jan. *The Bluestockings of Japan: New Woman Essays and Fiction from Seito 1911–16*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2007.

Bardsley, Jan. "The New Woman Meets the Geisha: The Politics of Pleasure in 1910s Japan" *Intersections: Gender and Sexuality in Asia and the Pacific.* Iss. 29. 2012. http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue29/bardsley.htm

Copeland, Rebecca L. "Hiratsuka Raichō" in *Japanese Women Writers: a biocritical sourcebook.* ed. Mulhern, Chieko Irie. pp. 132–143 Greenwood Publishing group, 1994.

Daibu. *The Poetic Memoirs of Lady Daibu*. Translated by Philip Harries. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980.

Encyclopedia Britannica. "Burakumin" *Encyclopedia Britannica, inc*. (18/11/2015) Accessed 12/08/2020 https://www.britannica.com/topic/burakumin

Endsjø, Dag Øistein. *Sex and Religion Teachings and Taboos in the History of World Faiths*. London: Reaktion books, 2011.

Faure, Bernard. *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998.

Fischer, Felice. "Murasaki Shikibu: The Court Lady" in *Heroic With Grace: Legendary Women of Japan* ed. Chieko Irie Mulhern. pp. 77-128. New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc, 1991.

Ghose, Lynken. ""Karma" and the Possibility of Purification: An Ethical and Psychological Analysis of the Doctrine of "Karma" in Buddhism." *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 35, no. 2 (2007): 259-89. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40014869.

Goldstein-Gidoni, Ofra. "Kimono and the Construction of Gendered and Cultural Identities." *Ethnology* Vol 38 no 4. pp 351-370. Autumn 1999.

Goodman, Roger. "The 'Japanese style welfare state' and the delivery of personal social services" in *The East Asian Welfare Model: Welfare Orientalism and the State.* Edited by Roger Goodman, Gordon White, and Huck-ju Kwon. pp 139-158. London: Routledge, 1999.

Grapard, Allan G. "Japan's Ignored Cultural Revolution: The Separation of Shinto and Buddhist Divinities in Meiji (shimbutsu bunri) And a Case Study: Tōnomine" *History of Religions*. 23 (3): 240–265. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Hiratsuka, Raichō. *In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun: The Autobiography of a Japanese Feminist*. Translated by Teruko Craig. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.

Hiratsuka, Raichō. 1911. “原始、女性は太陽であった” http://hanaha-hannari.jp/emag/data/hiratsuka-raichou01.html

Itō, Noe. 1970. “Zatsuon” *Ito Noe Zenshu* (Tōkyō : Gakugei Shorin) pp. 7-120

Ives, Mike. “Official Apologizes After Blaming Childless People for Japan’s Shrinking Population” *The New York Times*. 5/02/2019 https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/05/world/asia/japan-population-women-children.html

Izumo, Marou and Claire Maree. *Love Upon the Chopping Board*. Melbourne: Spinifex press, 2000.

Johnson, Falen and Leah Simone Bowen. “S3: Where is Japantown?” *The Secret Life of Canada*. Season 3 Episode 4. Toronto: CBC Radio, 12/05/2020. Podcast.

Jozuka, Emiko and Junko Ogura. “Japan's deputy prime minister blames women 'not giving birth' for declining population” *CNN* 5/02/2019 https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/04/asia/japan-taro-aso-women-demographics-intl/index.html

Kano, Ayako. *Japanese Feminist Debates: a century of contention on sex, love, and labour*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i press, 2016.

Keene, Donald. “A Neglected Chapter: Courtly Fiction of the Kamakura Period” *Monumenta Nipponica*. Vol. 44. No. 1 pp. 1–30. 1989.

Kern, John Christopher. *Changing Perspectives on a Classic: Premodern Commentaries on the First Chapter of the Tale of Genji*. Ohio State University, 2014. Dissertation.

Ketelaar, James Edward. *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Komashaku Kimi. *Murasaki Shikibu no Messeji*. Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1991.

Komashaku, Kimi and Tomiko Yoda. "A Feminist Reinterpretation of "The Tale of Genji": Genji and Murasaki." *U.S.-Japan Women's Journal. English Supplement*, no. 5 pp. 28-51. 1993.

Konagaya, Hideyo. "Performing the Okinawan Woman in Taiko: Gender, Folklore, and Identity Politics in Modern Japan." University of Pennsylvania, 2007. https://libproxy.wlu.ca/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.libproxy.wlu.ca/docview/304832881?accountid=15090.

Kuroda, Hideo. *Sugata to shigusa no chūseishi: ezu to emaki no fūkei kara*/姿としぐさの中世史：絵図と絵巻の風景から. Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1986.

Leupp, Gary. *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

Mason, Jessica. "Things We Saw Today: Historians Can't Comprehend that the "Lovers of Modena" Might Have Been Gay" *The Mary Sue* (14 Sept, 2019) https://www.themarysue.com/things-we-saw-today-historians-cant-comprehend-that-the-lovers-of-modena-might-have-been-gay/

Meyers, Jeffery. "Mishima's Suicide" *Michigan Quarterly Review* Vol. XLIX, issue 4. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2010. http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0049.418

Mostow, Joshua S. *Pictures of the Heart: The Hyakunin Isshu in Word and Image*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996.

Mullins, Mark R. "The Organizational Dillemmas of Ethnic Churches: A Case Study of Japanese Buddhism in Canada" *Sociological Analysis.* Vol. 49, No 3. Pp. 217-233. 1988.

Murasaki Shikibu. *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*. Translated by Richard Bowring. Toronto: Penguin Random House, 2005.

Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. Translated by Royall Tyler. Toronto: Penguin Random House, 2003.

Murasaki Shikibu. *Murasaki Shikibu, Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs*. Translated by Richard Bowring. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Newsome, Sara M., "Autobiography in Disarray: Setouchi Jakuchō's Use of Biography as Self-Expression in Beauty in Disarray" *Arts & Sciences Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 2016. https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/art_sci_etds/700

Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre. "Japanese Canadian Timeline" 2020. https://centre.nikkeiplace.org/research/japanese-canadian-timeline/

Osaki, Tomohiro. "LDP lawmaker Mio Sugita faces backlash after describing LGBT people as 'unproductive'" *The Japan Times*. 24/07/2018. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/07/24/national/politics-diplomacy/ldp-lawmaker-mio-sugita-faces-backlash-describing-lgbt-people-unproductive/

Otake, Kokichi. "Returning From Asakusa (To Raichō)" *Sparkling Rain: and other fiction from Japan of women who love women*. Edited and Translated by Barbara Summerhawk. pp. 41. Victoria: New Victoria Publishers, 2008.

Pan, Lynn. "Two Ways of Escape" *When True Love Came to China*. Hong Kong University Press, 2015.

Pflugfelder, Gregory M. *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Rickert, Alex. "Incident in Tokyo's Gay District Reignites Debate About Trans Rights in Japan" *Gaijinpot blog*. 12/06/2019. https://blog.gaijinpot.com/incident-tokyo-gay-district-debate-trans-rights-japan/

Robertson, Jennifer. *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California press, 1998.

Robertson, Jennifer. "Dying to Tell: Sexuality and Suicide in Imperial Japan." *Signs* 25, no. 1 1-35. 1999. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3175613.

Rupp, Leila J. *Sapphistries: a global history of love between women*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009.

Sasamoto-Collins, Hiromi. *Power and Dissent in Imperial Japan: Three Forms of Political Engagement*. Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2013.

Sawabe Hitomi. "Unions and Disunions: Three Early Twentieth-Century Female Couples" in *Transforming Japan: how feminism and diversity are making a difference.* Translated by Kimberly Hughes. Edited by Kumiko Fujimura Fanselow. pp. 48–68. New York: The Feminist Press, 2011.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

Seigle, Cecilia Segawa. *Yoshiwara: the Glittering World of the Japanese Courtesan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993.

Skinner, Patricia. *Studying Gender in Medieval Europe: Studying Gender in Medieval Europe: Historical Approaches*. London: Palgrave, 2018.

Shepley Omori, Annie and Kochi Doi. *Diaries of Court Ladies of Old Japan: The Sarashina Diary, The Diary of Murasaki Shikibu, The Diary of Izumi Shikibu*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1920.

Suzuki Michiko. *Becoming Modern Women: Love and Female Identity in Prewar Japanese Literature and Culture.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.

Tondo, Lorenzo "'Lovers of Modena' skeletons holding hands were both men" *The Guardian.* (12/09/2019) https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/12/lovers-of-modena-skeletons-holding-hands-were-both-men-study

Thacker, Eugene. 26/03/2016 "Black Illumination: the disqualified life of Osamu Dazai"

The Japan Times. Article. https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/03/26/books/black-illumination-disqualified-life-osamu-dazai/#.V2wvD7RRfdk

Wakabayashi, Haruko. *The Seven Tengu Scrolls: Evil and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy in Medieval Japanese Buddhism*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii press, 2012.

Watanabe, Mieko. "Overview of Lesbian Literature in Japan" *Sparkling Rain: and other fiction from Japan of women who love women*. Edited by Barbara Summerhawk Pp. 33 –38. Victoria: New Victoria Publishers, 2008.

Watanabe, Sumiko. *Seito no Onna: Otake Kōkichi den*. Tokyo: Fuji shuppan, 2001.

Walthall, Anne. "Masturbation and Discourse on Female Sexual Practices in Early Modern Japan" *Gender and History* Vol. 21. No 1. Pp. 1-18. 2009.

Wells, Zoë. "'Bury your gays' - the history of a negative trope" *The Boar*. Coventry: The University of Warwick, 21/02/2018 https://theboar.org/2018/02/bury-your-gays-history-negative-trope/

Welker, James. "From Woman's Liberation to Lesbian Feminism in Japan *Rezubian Feminizumu* within and Beyond the *Ūman Ribu* Movement in the 1970s and 1980s" *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms* Edited by Julia C. Bullock, Ayako Kano, and James Welker pp. 50–67. Honolulu: University of Hawaii press, 2018.

Wieringa, Saskia E. "Silence, Sin, and the System: Women's Same Sex Practices in Japan" *Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in a Globalizing Asia*. Ed. Saskia E. Wieringa, Evelyn Blackwood, and Abha Bhaiya. Pp. 23–45. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

Wu, Peichen. "Performing Gender along the Lesbian Continuum: The Politics of Sexual Identity in the Seito Society" *Women's Sexualities and Masculinities in a Globalizing Asia.* Ed. Saskia E. Wieringa, Evelyn Blackwood, and Abha Bhaiya. Pp. 77–99. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007.

Yang, William. "'I feel lucky': Taiwan holds first gay marriages in historic day for Asia" *The* Guardian, 24/05/2019 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/24/taiwan-holds-first-gay-marriages-in-historic-day-for-asia