

Harvard Asia Quarterly

A Journal of Asian Studies Affiliated with the Harvard University Asia Center



REPRESENTATIONS OF GENDER
AND SEXUALITY IN ASIA

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The *Harvard Asia Quarterly* is a professional academic journal of Asian studies affiliated with the Harvard University Asia Center. We publish four times a year on multidisciplinary topics related to issues in East, South, Central, and Southeast Asia. We remain dedicated to facilitating scholarly exchange within the academic community by publishing highly researched and well-documented articles relevant to the discourse on contemporary Asia. In maintaining short publication cycles, we seek to provide timely commentary on the issues relevant to Asian studies today.

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

The Fall 2014 issue of the *Harvard Asia Quarterly* focuses on Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Asia. This issue aims to provide an engagement with key themes in studies of gender and sexuality that departs from the Journal's previous issues centered primarily on topics of social policy and international relations.

Amidst recent reportage of discrimination against local LGBTQ groups on international media challenging Thailand's perceived gay-friendly culture of tolerance, we begin with an interview with Ara Wilson, Associate Professor of Women's Studies and Cultural Anthropology at Duke University, on Thailand's localized queer and sexual identities embedded in the infrastructure of embodied capitalist modernity and international economic markets.

Excavating origins, Jennifer Cullen takes up the canonization of the Meiji Era writer Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896) – often considered the first woman writer of modern Japanese literature – as a site of contention revealing shifting gender roles and representations of an idealized Japanese femininity. In her article, Leslie Winston interrogates differing representations of the hermaphrodite in Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō (1912-1926) Japan that challenged the prototype of a binary sexual paradigm promoted by sexologists.

Crossing borders, Sylvia Lee examines the orchid paintings of seventeenth-century Chinese courtesans to illuminate how they were seen as sensual performances and tokens of courtship or seduction, which courtesans used to their advantage.

Moving forward to the turn of the twentieth century, Yun Zhang traces the transformation of Female Student imagery in China from the late Qing to early Republic era. Zhang argues that the Female Student assumed agency and appeared as a bold, active, and potentially subversive figure via the prototype of New Woman celebrated in 1920s China.

On her part, Miya Xiong Xie examines the conspicuous unspeakability of war rape during Chinese wartime fiction produced during the Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) and its relation to the crisis of national identity.

In contribution to discourse on contemporary literary production, Justyna Jaguscik looks at three Chinese female poets – Zhai Yongming (b. 1955), Lü Yue (b. 1972), and Zheng Xiaoqiong (b. 1980) – and representations of femininity vis-à-vis the subaltern body in their work. Jaguscik posits that these poets boldly present a feminist perspective in depicting the subaltern body to counter the hegemony of a male-centered literary discourse.

Lastly, Svati Shah, Associate Professor Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Massachusetts – Amherst, shares her views about India's recent changes in the public arena around discourses regarding gender and sexuality in light of her ethnographic work in Mumbai.

With the increasing visibility of Asia's LGBTQ and feminist issues on international media, this issue strives to provide intriguing perspectives on the embodiment of gendered and sexual lives in the region. The HAQ hopes that readers will find the articles in this issue illuminating, and that future scholarship on the region will continue to engage with the dynamic and distinctive history and contemporary manifestations of gender and sexuality in Asia.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rachel Leng". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Rachel" and "Leng" being capitalized and prominent.

Rachel Leng
Editor-in-Chief, *Harvard Asia Quarterly*

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INTERVIEW WITH ARA WILSON

ON QUEER POLITICAL ECONOMY IN THAILAND AND
TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



RACHEL LENG · HARVARD UNIVERSITY

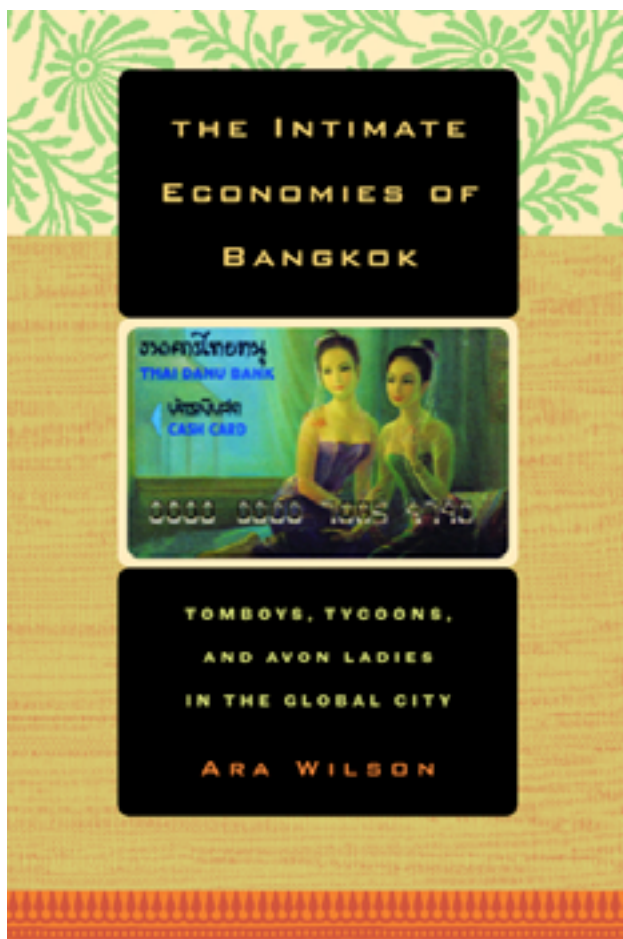


Thailand is known for being one of Asia's most liberal countries toward LG-BTQ communities: it is a signatory of the U.N's declaration of Human Rights and is at the forefront of legalizing same-sex marriage, with a bill already in parliament while many countries in the region still criminalize homosexuality. This image of broad social acceptance is boosted by Thailand's Tourism Authority's open marketing of the country as a gay-friendly holiday destination. However, recent reports of regular discrimination against local LGBTQ groups in the international media have challenged Thailand's perceived culture of tolerance. Rachel Leng from the *Harvard Asia Quarterly* speaks with Professor Ara Wilson (above) on Thailand's localized queer and sexual identities embedded in the infrastructure of embodied capitalist modernity and international economic markets.

Please tell us more about your ethnographic research vis-à-vis gender and sexuality in Bangkok, Thailand. What aspect interested you the most?

When I began research in Bangkok, there really was not a lot of analysis of gender or sexuality beyond that which looked at the role and status of women. For example, from my studies, I had no idea that there was a "tom" figure, the masculine female/female-to-male (FTM)/tomboy role, which has now received much more attention. At the time of my doctoral research, feminist theory was being reorganized around new theoretical currents drawing from both post-structuralism and continental theory, and queer theory had only just emerged. I was interested in finding ways to integrate these currents, centered on the West and in humanities disciplines, with political economic approaches and through grounded, empirical studies in the global South. I still think that combining, for example, Foucaultian and Marxist approaches with concrete research in Asia presents challenges for methods, analysis, and intellectual community.

The product of that research was *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: Tomboys, Tycoons, and Avon Ladies in the World City*, my ethnographic study published in 2004. Rath-



er than focus an entire book on the “tom” or the sex worker, it was important to me to embed examinations of what can be sensationalized topics within a broader array of explorations of sexuality and gender at the intersection of different economic modalities (like folk or moral economies and capitalist economies).

In your work with NGOs and the UN, you propose a feminist study of globalization and queer political economy (QPE). Could you share your thoughts on QPE and why you use “queer” (as opposed to gendered/sexual/intimate)?

I actually would like more critical reflection on queer even if I also use it, often as a short hand. Queer is meant to be a troubling term, but in truth, I think that a lot of its troubles are not actually the interesting sort, and I don’t want to reify queer as meaning anti-normativity, as much of queer theory does. A crucial question that area-scholars need to ask is, what does it mean to use a term that emerged to criticize the normalization of gay and lesbian (and maybe bisexual) identities in places where this liberal normalizing process has not happened? What are the sex/gender norms that are being challenged in a particular site? For instance, much of male-male sex may not be celebrated, but in many places it is allowed to happen on the down-low. Is this queer? If male purchase of sexual services is taken for granted in a particular milieu, is commercial sex work transgressive? It seems as if what counts as queer is often defined in relation to a Western normativity, which may make sense when criticizing Western imperialism, but I am not sure it captures everyday life for most communities in Asia.

Many of those individuals reaching for “queer” seem to believe that it can function as a critical transnational category that is not complicit with the enduring hegemony of Euro-American intellectual frameworks in defining theory; that is, they believe that “queer” can escape Euro-centrism or imperialism in ways that terms like lesbian, feminist, or gay did not. I don’t agree, and in fact I think that feminist scholarship has had far more reflection on the power-laden nature of research, categories, and the subject-object relation than queer studies have. So I worry that “queer” is being taken up in critical Asian studies in a way that bypasses these questions, as inherently radical, even though part of the mobility of term queer is in fact because many outsiders (e.g.: mainstream heterosexuals) don’t even know what the term means. Ergo while using lesbian or gay might invite censorship, queer can pass below the radar. Such use might be strategic, but it’s certainly not more radical than the by now codified categories of sexual identity.

To put it briefly, I use queer provisionally and as a short hand, because it is a term that many individuals within my various fields (Women’s, Area, Queer Studies and Anthropology) are currently using, and it is easier than listing the ever-expanding set of the sorts of people we mean by the term

*Ara Wilson is Associate Professor of Women’s Studies and Cultural Anthropology at Duke University and co-chair of the Association for Queer Anthropology (AQA). She has been conducting research in Bangkok for more than two decades and has worked with regional NGOs, particularly around the 1995 UN Women’s Conference in Beijing. Wilson is the author of *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok: Tomboys, Tycoons, and Avon Ladies in the Global City* (University of California Press, 2004), an article “Queering Asia” which helped develop the concept of the intra-Asian queer, and other articles on Bangkok. She has also written on intimacy, transnational feminism, queer anthropology, the World Social Forum, and sexual rights.*

Rachel Leng is a Master’s Student in Regional Studies - East Asia and a Harvard GSAS Merit Fellowship recipient. She is the Co-Editor-in-Chief at the Harvard Asia Quarterly, a 2014-2015 Intellectual/Cultural Fellow at Dudley House, and President of the Harvard East Asia Society (HEAS). She also assists the Director at the Harvard Asia Center’s Publications Program, working with new manuscripts in East Asian research.

into a long unpronounceable acronym. But I would love to see more discussions about why and how we are using queer in non-Western contexts.

In your book on *The Intimate Economies of Bangkok* (2004), you discuss how capitalist markets are intertwined with local economic systems to create new sexual identities and lifestyles, ranging from “tomboys” to corporate tycoons to sex workers. In the last decade since the book has been published, there have undoubtedly been changes in Thai contemporary society vis-à-vis globalizing influences. Are there now additional ways that intimate lives are reflective of recent developments in transnational capitalist markets? Or, how has the significance and implications of tomboys, tycoons, and Avon Ladies shifted?

If I describe my approach as a kind of cultural political economy, I have to acknowledge that I pay far more attention to the economic than the political aspects. So if we're asking about change, anyone even remotely aware of Thailand has to recognize how important political conflict has been for the nation and particularly in its violent expressions in Bangkok. This conflict has dramatized changing class formations, or changes to the relation of class to politics, which surely must be manifested in relation to gender and sexuality, but I am unable to articulate how. I do see a shift to a more liberal acceptance of the tomboy, and interestingly, I feel I am seeing a definition of the tom as an erotic object for the femme in tom-dee and lesbian communities, which feels new. The *kathoey* (MTF transgender) role appears to have become a very class-inflected position, marking a lower class identity. You see wealthy Sino-Thai tom but you don't see wealthy Thai *kathoey*. And now, transgender and transsexual are becoming more well-known as potential ways to define identity, in part through international NGO discourse, media, and the internet, but also particularly as Thailand emerges as a leader in sex-reassignment surgery (SRS) worldwide. The addition of these identifiers will interact with, and likely change the older tom and *kathoey* categories.

I am interested in seeing how new work that will not just map the new configurations of identities emerging across East and Southeast Asia, which is being done, but that will also push the analysis in ways that make it even more relevant to area studies and other disciplines. I am excited by projects that articulate realigned states, different versions of domestic and global capital, with the emerging ways of living out sex and gender in everyday life or in cultural production. At the same time, I think much of the work on sexuality and gender in Asia, as elsewhere, remains on a discursive plane which escapes the kind of economic and everyday realms I have been trying to describe. For example, discussions of policy tend to focus on the textual content of policy, rather than draw on Science and Technology Studies (STS) or material-culture or organizational frameworks to locate sexuality/gender in the ways that policies are made and in their very uneven applications. The amazing new queer Asian film genre and the

explosion of scholarship providing close readings of it, have helped reveal the incredible complexity of sexuality unfolding in the region, but I would still like to see more research on the capital, production, and reception of these texts.

In regards to feminist issues, specifically the sex work industry in Thailand, many Thai sex workers actually work outside of Thailand, in other parts of Asia or in the West, and send money back to their families, thus still contributing to the local Thai economy. What are the implications of such transnational movement and flows of money, people, and social life for your conception of sexuality, gender and ethnicity in non-Western modernity?

This is an interesting question, but I have to say, there is such smart work being done on these questions about the Philippines, where the scale of emigration is so much bigger, that I would first look there to consider how diaspora or emigration and remittances are percolating with sex/gender domains in Manila and the nation. I also always seek to integrate discussions of sex work with other forms of labor, such as domestic labor. There's the work of Martin Manalansan, Kale Fajardo or Lieba Faier. And in truth, I think Thai cis-female commercial sex workers could use a break from the academic gaze. There's plenty left to say about customers – it's amazing how relatively understudied they remain – and there is little in-depth scholarship on Thai men or *kathoeyes* who have sex with men. In writing about Thai sex worker for foreigners, it was important to me to not reproduce sensational discourse about them. I once presented a paper called “How Not to Write about Sex Work,” which basically said, “we need to stop assuming that more representation of this sort of domain is a necessary or good thing.”

In your ethnographic field work in Bangkok, you also worked with Sino-Thai communities. Could you share any insights as to differing conceptions of sexual and gendered identities across the Chinese and Thai communities?

As your readers might be aware, the Sino-Thai community in Thailand is one of the most assimilated communities anywhere in the world, so there is probably less stark differentiation of norms than elsewhere. Still, there may be broad differences in sex and gender. Jiemin Bao's work says the most about this, but those would also have to be crosscut with differences of class, ethnicity, rural/urban, and so on. I think an interesting question might be, how are conceptions of ancestral China (or province, like Hainan) involved in understandings of sex/gender? In my book, I explain how the Sino-Thai ethnicity changed in relation to capitalist transformations in ways that reformulated the nexus of economics with sex/gender. The Sino-Thai identity has become much more of a positive identification associated with economic development. Among the toms, Sino-Thai identity is always also a class identity. There are other Asian identities which

are relevant to understanding sex/gender dynamics in Thailand as well. For example, Dredge Kang argues that the Thai gay male scene has now oriented to a Korean version of the pan-Asian ideal, manifest in the K-pop style's popularity. Some Sino-Singaporean gay men shuttle to Bangkok for a fun queer weekend. So several of us are more interested in the sex/gender dimensions of a range of complex flows across Asia – intra-Asian or inter-Asian flows, including pop culture and tourists.

Your current comparative project on medical tourism to Thailand and Singapore is fascinating. Could you comment on the main differences (or similarities) between the flow of bodies in the form of tourism to both countries?

In my work, I have argued that gendered embodiment of Thai people themselves helped generate Thailand's capacity for medical tourism. That is, the demand for cosmetic surgery by sex workers and MTF *katheoy* helped advance Thailand's skill-based "comparative advantage" in global medical markets.

This past year or so, I have been working on a Mellon funded project at Duke on "Science Studies as Area Studies," which has brought together scholars working on bioscience, technology, and medicine in Asia. We are interested in asking how the grounded area studies in South, East, and Southeast Asia not only apply STS frameworks, but also modify Eurocentric accounts of science and medicine. It was marvelous to gather the work of Aihwa Ong, Judith Farquhar, Mei Zhan, Sarah Pinto, Vincanne Adams, Naveeda Khan, Warwick Anderson, and others scholars. The project speaks to the ways in which Asian Studies is being revitalized by cross-regional thematic questions, like those of STS, and by the post-national emphasis that moves beyond country studies to examine flows of empire, capital, knowledge across Asia, the Global South, the former Second World, or East to West. I would like to see studies of queer subjects be more connected with these important directions in Asian studies. This Mellon project is ending, but I hope that it has helped shape some continuing conversations.

Could you please share more about your current book project on *Sexual Latitudes*? Any other upcoming projects readers should look forward to?

Sexual Latitudes is less an ethnographic project grounded in Southeast Asia and more of an analytical project. It is based on my observation that much of the discussion of transnational sexuality brings greater sophistication and care to understanding sexuality (as a modern, power-laden category) than it does to the transnational, which often is little more than a gesture to neoliberalism. I hope the book will help queer and sexuality studies scholars see the benefit of paying greater attention to the nitty gritty operations of globalizing processes; in other words, I hope that the cases I dis-

cuss will show how we can get at less obvious, and arguably more core, dynamics of global power for sexuality, by examining how forces that cross nation-states – transnational power – are constituted, and locating sexuality within them. Space is too short to give an example, but I've published early versions of chapters such as "NGOs as Erotic Sites" and "Post-Fordist Desires: The Commodity Aesthetics of Bangkok Sex Shows" (which brings us back to Bangkok). I am also writing about the question of culture in transnational analyses of sex/gender. With powerful global flows, particularly in the vision of analyses of Euro-US power or of neoliberalism, what are we speaking about when we speak of cultural variation or "living otherwise"? How are feminist and queer studies using the culture category? I suggest that use of other terms (discourse, normativity) still partake of the culture categories logic and overall that transnational queer and feminist studies uses different, even contradictory, modes of analyzing power for transnational and local frames but in an unexamined and possibly contradictory way.

Terms such as "Queer Asia" are gaining currency as there is an increasing consciousness that queerness in Asia manifests itself differently from in the West. Should there also be a separate conception of sexual and gender or feminist rights and embodied life, rather than Western frameworks in neoliberal and transnational contexts?

I wouldn't speak in a normative way about what rubrics people living in Asia should use. Rather, I am interested in seeing what they do use, and how this articulates with previously existing rubrics – but again, not just at a discursive plane, but in a way which embeds these categories within broader social fields of material and symbolic arrangements.

A BLANK PAGE: THE CANONIZATION OF HIGUCHI ICHIYŌ



JENNIFER KOCH-WESER CULLEN · NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

The Meiji Era writer Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896) enjoyed a smooth and rapid canonization after her early death and has occupied the preeminent position of first woman of modern Japanese literature ever since. Her assumed virginity played an important role in the construction of her image as a tragic heroine and has influenced literary scholarship on her work, increasing the desire and license of scholars to retrospectively “complete her text.” While physical virginity was a very new concept in Japan with ambiguous connotations, it became during Ichiyō’s lifetime a site of contention amid evolving gender roles, literary practices, and moral systems. In this article I argue that Ichiyō scholarship not only demonstrates the gender bias in Japanese literary studies and canon formation, but also allows us to trace the evolution of conceptions of bodily and literary “purity” and the struggle over representations of ideal Japanese femininity.

ARTICLE

Although Higuchi Ichiyō (1872-1896) published only 21 short stories in the course of four years, by her death at age 24 she was recognized by her contemporaries as the greatest woman writer of the Meiji period, a title that still remains firmly in place. The very brevity of her life and years of creative output lent themselves to this rapid and stable canonization: the incompleteness of Ichiyō’s life and career left a void that both invited and facilitated the construction of a wide range of portraits of Ichiyō the woman and interpretations of her body of work. I will argue here that Ichiyō’s assumed virginity has played a role in much of this scholarship, not only influencing portraits of Ichiyō herself, but textual interpretation as well, and has increased the desire and license of scholars to retrospectively complete her text. This case study demonstrates one instance of the gender bias in Japanese literary studies and canon formation, which has been treated in depth by several scholars recently.¹ Physical virginity was

¹ For example, Tomiko Yoda, *Gender and National Literature*, and Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki, eds. *Inventing the Classics* both treat gender and canon construction, while Rebecca Copeland’s *Lost Leaves* and Joan Ericson’s *Be a Woman* look at Meiji and

a new concept in the Meiji Era (1868-1912) in Japan, and it became a nexus for unresolved tensions between traditional moral and ethical systems and imported ideologies. Portraits of Ichiyō and her work over the decades, which often make reference either to her actual virginity or to an abstract quality of “purity” in her texts, reveal surprisingly various understandings of ideal Japanese femininity and literary style over time. This case study also demonstrates an instance of the proclivity of critics in many cultures to view the physical body and sexual history of the author as relevant to textual analysis, to a much greater extent for female authors than for male.

I have ordered this examination of Ichiyō scholarship by theme: first, I discuss discourse over Ichiyō’s character and whether or not she was a virgin; second, I look at arguments over the “purity” of her writing; and finally, I review political interpretations of her work. Each theme has been present in some form ever since her emergence on the literary scene. Although conditions have led certain interpretations to become dominant in particular historical moments—for example the emphasis placed on her financial distress in discourse during her lifetime or criticism of her passivity from feminist writers in the 1910s—there was never any lack of dissenting views. In fact, all viewpoints seem to resurface repeatedly at intervals. For this reason I have grouped the survey by theme rather than chronology.

Rebecca Copeland writes that by dying young, “Ichiyō would ever remain a favored daughter...an incompleteness that endears her to a reading audience.”² This “incompleteness” is not only due to her early death, however; it also arises from the common perception of single women as vulnerable and unfulfilled. By the time she had turned twenty, Ichiyō’s father and older brother had both died and her fiancé had broken off their engagement, leaving Ichiyō, her mother, and a younger sister to support themselves.³ Ichiyō began writing fiction at least in part to support their household, and soon became the pupil of Nakarai Tōsui (1861-1926), a writer of serialized fiction for the *Asahi Shinbun*, a major Tokyo newspaper. These early works are now generally dismissed as pulp sentimentality, overly influenced by Tōsui, and written in a “belabored classical style.”⁴ From her diary entries during this period, it is believed that Ichiyō felt a deep, unrequited love

for Tōsui, but eventually broke off all contact with him when rumors threatened her reputation. Ichiyō continued to write stories of lovesick waifs and women in highly stylized prose, often to the neglect of plot and character development, while her family’s financial situation quickly worsened. Moving to ever cheaper housing and attempting to support themselves by taking in laundry and running a dime store, Ichiyō’s subject matter shifted to the lower classes and her style took on some elements of realism. These stories, generally considered her best, won Ichiyō the support of several influential literary men from the romantic school, such as Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) and Kōda Rohan (1867-1947). She was therefore just beginning to gain recognition from the literary establishment when she succumbed to tuberculosis and died in poverty.

The tragic brevity of Ichiyō’s life not only arouses sympathy, but it also prevents her independence and assumed virginity from taking on the negative connotations of spinsterhood or the willful refusal of reproductive duty, often associated with the figure of the older virgin in Japan. Such negative associations gained strength in the modern era as the pronatalist climate intensified from the 1890s through 1945. In addition, her relatively meager output and the lack of retrospective self-commentary have left her body of work largely open to interpretation. In this article, I will show how contention over the meaning and value of physical virginity has mirrored contention over ideals for modern Japanese literature and women’s writing in particular, producing contradictory images and analyses of Ichiyō’s work: some have found in her person and prose the epitome of bodily and cultural purity, while others emphasize her progressive incorporation of Western literary style and ideology and cast doubt on either her virginity itself or its positive value. Ichiyō as eternal virgin is infinitely malleable, a blank page awaiting completion.

GENDERED CONCEPTS

Why does anyone know or care whether or not Higuchi Ichiyō was a virgin? For most readers in Japan and the US today, the meaning of virginity seems obvious at first, but it proves to be quite vague when examined closely. The meaning of virginity for an author and their life’s work also has an obvious connotation—a lack of experience—but may seem frivolous and vulgar as a subject of discussion. The concept of virginity is a cultural construct and has varied widely over time; even within a single culture the import of virginity is dependent on factors such as age, gender, class, and sexual orientation. For this article, I use a cumbersome definition of physical virginity first introduced to Japan in the early Meiji period through Western medical texts: the lack of experience of heterosexual, penetrative, genital intercourse. While this would seem to apply equally to men and women, most will

Taisho era constructions of women’s writing as a separate category of literature.

² Rebecca Copeland, *Lost Leaves: Women Writers of Meiji Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 226-7.

³ Which they attempted to do by taking in laundry, sewing, and running a penny-candy store. See Robert Lyons Danly, *In the Shade of Spring Leaves: The Life and Writings of Higuchi Ichiyō, a Woman of Letters in Meiji Japan*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) for a full biography of Ichiyō.

⁴ Danly, 61.

Jennifer Cullen has a PhD in Modern Japanese Literature from UCLA and is the author of “A Comparative Study of Tenko: Sata Ineko and Miyamoto Yuriko” (2010) and *Writing Purity: The Rise of Virginity as a Literary Concern in Modern Japan* (forthcoming). She is currently an adjunct professor of Japanese Popular Culture and Film at Northeastern University.

agree with *The Kinsey Institute New Report on Sex* of 1990 that “the concept of virginity has historically been applied only to women.”⁵ Due both to anatomical differences and reproductive roles—the presence of the hymen as proof of a bride’s virginity and guarantee of bloodline—this gender bias has also been ascribed by feminist scholars to various forms of sexism⁶ and many women today dismiss the idealization of virginity as “a sham being perpetrated against women.”⁷ This was true in premodern Japan as well, at least among the very upper classes, where a woman’s fidelity to her husband was grounds for divorce, but polygyny was an acceptable practice.

There are similar gender biases held towards conceptions of literary inspiration and creation. As Susan Gubar explains, Western thinking about authors and texts has consistently employed masculine imagery, with the act of writing often envisioned as “the pen-penis writing on the virgin page.”⁸ The association of the feminine with a physical and objectified body and the masculine with a transcendent mind seen in this metaphor discounts the possibility of female subjectivity and literary production. Women’s writing has been further inhibited by cultural injunctions against complaint and critique, obstacles to public and professional realms, and prohibitions against sexual expression and self-exposure. In this sense, restrictions on sexual and literary activity overlap—despite being encouraged in men, free sexual and literary expression of women is often seen as transgression. This was certainly true in Japan during Ichiyō’s lifetime, where female writers were often criticized as akin to prostitutes, in that they both exposed themselves publicly through writing and placed this extension of their selves on sale, and suffered close scrutiny of their private lives.⁹ Rebecca Copeland has argued that Ichiyō’s impoverished background and assumed physical virginity were crucial in rendering her act of writing innocent and acceptable. I would further argue that while Ichiyō’s writing was indeed excused and praised because of the purity of her image, her vulnerability and assumed innocence also opened the door to her contemporaries and later scholars to appropriate both her person and her work for the construction of two modern ideals of purity: the Japanese woman and Japanese literature.

Physical virginity is a relatively new concept in Japan. There were no terms that correlated to physical virginity and no evidence that the Japanese had a conception of “[female] virginity as designated by the presence of the hymen”¹⁰ until

the 1875 publication of *Zokakiron*, an American reproductive anatomy book.¹¹ Initially, the importance of virginity to both individual and societal sexual morality and health was viewed as a Western concept. This perception was in part drawn from the fact that “virginity” was promoted mainly by Christian missionaries and converts who cast physical virginity as an essential element of spiritual purity, and members of the military medical community who were concerned about venereal disease. Literary romanticists in Japan began to celebrate the figure of the female virgin in the 1890s, endorsing a superior kind of love in which the spiritual is privileged over the physical. This trend is most clearly seen in Kitamura Tōkoku’s 1892 essay, “*Shojo no junketsu o ronzu*” (On the purity of virgins) in which he argues that virgins are the only women suitable as love objects and artistic inspiration, a direct challenge to the geisha heroines of the preceding century of pleasure quarter literature.¹² Though the motivations of these disparate groups varied drastically, they all linked physical virginity to purity—whether spiritual, physical, or literary—while sexual promiscuity was linked to pathology and corruption. In the first half of the Meiji Era, the physical and spiritual purity of the virgin was promoted as one of the benefits of Westernization to the nation, most often contrasted with existing polygynist traditions, the hedonistic culture of the pleasure quarters, and the fluid marriage practices of rural commoners.

As virginity gradually rose in importance among female virtues, it came to be cast as a traditional feminine ideal under threat from Westernization. The transition of virginity, originally a foreign concept and ideal for unmarried women, to a naturalized element of native female virtue was contentious.¹³ Negative associations with female virginity persisted, as extended maintenance of virginity implies both a rejection of male desire and reproductive duty and can easily morph from passive virtue to aggressive militancy. As a result, the concept of virginity is not only associated with purity but also with the abject, that which “lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the...rules of the game.”¹⁴ In other words, the very lack (of worldly experience or integration with the mundane) that renders the virgin “pure” paradoxically renders her abject and threatening. This applies rather neatly to modern Japan by the end of the Meiji Era, when “the good wife, wise mother” had become the dominant female ideal and motherhood was a woman’s main source of

sexuality). Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1990, 528.

⁵ June M. Reinisch, *The Kinsey Institute New Report on Sex*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 113.

⁶ For example as a means of controlling female independence and sexuality or as a manifestation of male ownership of the female body.

⁷ Jessica Valenti, *The Purity Myth: How America’s Obsession With Virginity Is Hurting Young Women*, (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2009), 20.

⁸ Susan Gubar, “‘The Blank Page’ and Female Creativity,” *The New Feminist Criticism*, Elaine Showalter, ed., (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 295.

⁹ Copeland, 221.

¹⁰ Ueno Chizuko, “Kaisetsu 3,” *Nihon kindai shisō taikei 23: Fūzokusei* (An outline of modern Japanese thought: Customs/

¹¹ James Ashton’s *Book of Nature*, 1865. Terms such as *teisō* (貞操) and *teisetsu* (貞節) were used to refer to chastity, the sexual fidelity of a wife to her husband, an important neo-Confucian female virtue.

¹² By this I mean *gesaku*, a playfully written literary genre of the Edo Era in which romances and slapstick adventures were frequently set in the pleasure quarters, detailing the interactions between *geisha* and prostitutes and their male customers.

¹³ I discuss this transition in depth in my forthcoming book, *Writing Purity: The Rise of Virginity as a Literary and National Concern in Modern Japan*. In brief, this was part of the process of defining Japanese culture as distinct from and superior to the West.

¹⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, tr. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 2.

validation. The power of this ideal increased further in the 1920s and 30s under pronatalist policies. As an unattached woman, Ichiyō's presumed virginity and aggressive pursuit of literary recognition threaten to shift her into the realm of the abject. As a result, scholars throughout the years have felt compelled to explain or "complete" her life and work by interpreting her ideologically, artistically, and bodily. The images they have imposed upon the canvas of Ichiyō's life range from the modern Murasaki or "the last woman of old Japan" to a left-leaning feminist and forerunner of Western realism. She has won the sympathy of established male writers, the enmity of modern feminists, the approval of proletarian writers, and in more modern times, the adoration of film and television audiences—demonstrating the paradoxically sexy and off-putting taboo "purity" of the virgin.

WAS SHE A VIRGIN?

Whether or not Ichiyō was, indeed, a virgin, is one of the most enduring questions in Ichiyō scholarship. Doubts of her virginity arose around two issues: her relationships with Nakarai Tosui and the other literary men who visited her and the sudden dramatic change in her subject matter and narrative style in late 1894. In particular, "Child's Play" (Takekurabe, 1895-6), which focuses on children in the pleasure quarter, and "Troubled Waters" (Nigorie, 1895), which features a prostitute for its heroine, invited close scrutiny of Ichiyō as a "sexual body."¹⁵ As Tsukada Mitsue noted in 1967, this excessive interest in her virginity has distorted scholarship, shifting research from textual analysis toward psychoanalytical interpretation.¹⁶ Why was this question so important? When Ichiyō began writing in the mid-Meiji era, women writers were a curiosity, "forced to circulate themselves as "commodities" within the media of newspapers and magazines."¹⁷ To many, "a woman who sells her fiction [was] little more than a woman for sale."¹⁸ As geisha and prostitutes were legally designated hinin (non-persons) throughout the Edo Era, such associations were potentially ruinous: journals practiced strict self-censorship hoping to prevent official censorship and reader disapproval. During Ichiyō's lifetime therefore, an impeccable character was crucial to favorable reception and early champions of women's writing such as Iwamoto Yoshiharu emphasized the responsibility of women writers to provide models of virtue and femininity for their readers.¹⁹ As Hoshino Tenchi's (1862-1950) introduction of

works by Ichiyō, Wakamatsu Shizuko, and Tanabe Kaho in 1893 demonstrates, writers and editors strove for a spotless and refined image: "these princesses dye their brushes for creations pure, graceful, and elegant."²⁰ Aware that rumors had sprung up about her relationship with Tōsui, Ichiyō broke off the mentorship in 1892.²¹ A few years later, however, unchaperoned visits from various literary men, such as Baba Kocho (1869-1940) and Saitō Ryokuu (1868-1904), coupled with the grittier content of her stories, again sparked rumors of sexual experience. Mori Ōgai was one of the first to defend Ichiyō from insinuations, explaining in 1896 that although she admittedly had a "strange personal history for a virgin,"²² it was her residence at the edge of the pleasure quarters that allowed her to write so realistically about prostitution. This early inclination to defend Ichiyō's reputation eventually waned as writing by women became more common, but has never disappeared altogether, as evidenced in Kojima Seijirō's 1941 claim that "the key to how a 24 or 25 year old maiden could write such brilliant masterpieces as 'Troubled Waters' and 'Child's Play'...is her difficult life."²³ As Rebecca Copeland argues, Ichiyō's poverty was not only a convincing explanation for her strange address and subject matter, but also excused Ichiyō's pursuit of a career in literature, casting her as a tragi-romantic figure, and arousing the sympathy of readers and the literary elite. I would argue, however, that it is in fact the tension between Ichiyō's image as a passive and pure virgin, her tenacious pursuit of a literary career, and her inappropriate subject matter that fueled fascination in Ichiyō's physical body and in the body of her work.

Few explicit accusations against Ichiyō's sexual status made it into print, but evidence of their oral proliferation is found in the frequency with which descriptors such as "pure" and "refined" were used in the defenses published by male friends and later literary scholars. This quote from an anonymous author in 1908 is an example of the kind of speculation her supporters were responding to:

Probably at this time Ichiyō had some extremely big experience. This was a maturing period for her, her confidence grew, she built a base for emotion, her heart awoke, and she came to face life.²⁴

The vague insinuation and the fact that the author

writer" in the Meiji Era.

¹⁵ Satoko Kan, *Media no jidai: meiji bungaku o meguru jokyō* (The age of media: the circumstances of Meiji literature). (Tokyo: Futabunsha shuppan, 2001), 200.

¹⁶ Tsukada Mitsue, *Gokai to henken—Higuchi Ichiyō no bungaku* (Misunderstandings and bias: the literature of Higuchi Ichiyō), Tokyo: Chuo Koron jigyo shuppan, 1967), 125.

¹⁷ Kan Satoko, *Media no jidai*, 152.

¹⁸ Copeland, *Lost Leaves*, 221.

¹⁹ Rebecca Copeland, "The Feminine Critique: 'Womanliness' and the Woman Writer," in *Woman Critiqued: Translated Essays of Japanese Women's Writing*, ed. Rebecca Copeland, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 23. See also Joan Ericson, *Be a Woman*, for a detailed discussion of the construction of "woman

²⁰ Hoshino Tenchi, "Bungakkai hakkō shogen" (A few words upon publication of *Bungakkai*), *Bungakkai*, 1893.1), in Seki Ryōichi. *Higuchi Ichiyō: Kōshō to shiron* (Higuchi Ichiyō: Research and Essays). (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1970), 421.

²¹ Shioda Ryohei cites indignant diary entries revealing her desire to clear her name in his biography, *Higuchi Ichiyō*, (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1960), 132.

²² Mori Ōgai, "Shigikaki" *Mezamashigusa*, 1896.1, see Kan Satoko, *Media no jidai*, (Tokyo: Futa bunsha shuppan, 2001).

²³ Kojima Seijiro, "Tensaijo" (Female genius), *Gendai*, 1941.9, in Wada Yoshie, *Higuchi Ichiyō Kenkyū* (Higuchi Ichiyō Research), (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentaa, 1992), 262.

²⁴ Anonymous, "Higuchi Ichiyō," *Bunsho Sekai*, 1908.5, in Wada, 123.

chose to remain anonymous is indicative of the harm an explicit accusation could have caused to Ichiyō's reputation. Soma Gyofu's 1910 article naming Ichiyō "the last woman of old Japan," however, is more typical and has become the most dominant representation:

Should she follow where her heart led and live as her inner self demanded? Ichiyō's mind was too bound by ancient restrictions she did not have the courage to break. In the end, Ichiyō sacrificed herself and spent her whole life in a lonely, painful atmosphere.²⁵

In this essay, Soma names Ichiyō's virginity a symptom of her timidity and failure to abandon the traditional female virtues of self-sacrifice and passive submission to neo-Confucian restrictions. He then compares her with his contemporary, Yosano Akiko (1878-1942), who had conducted a well-publicized premarital love affair with Yosano Tekkan. Naming Akiko "the first woman of new Japan" because of the quality of active rebellion in her poetry, which he calls "songs of female pleasure," he implicitly designates sexual experience and the pursuit of sexual pleasure as crucial elements distinguishing the old-fashioned and modern woman. This image of Ichiyō as an ideal of traditional Japanese femininity was an important element in Ichiyō's rapid canonization as the first Meiji woman writer.

Toward this end, the desexualized images of Ichiyō created by her contemporaries were crucial. The images take a variety of forms—frigidity, masculinity, presexual innocence, and elderly resignation—but all serve to deny negative aspects associated with female passions, such as jealousy, vanity, and irrationality. For example, although Kojima Usui (1873-1948) admits that "Ichiyō must take responsibility for the fact that, although a woman who should value feminine virtue above all else, she looks for immoral and indecent materials." He claims that her portrayal is not "emotional" but "reasoned," and that "compared to the heated passions of other women writers, hers has a tendency to be excessively cold and...truly purified."²⁶ Soma Gyofu similarly wrote, "her mind is feverish, but her breast is cold,"²⁷ her work is suffused with "cold emotion."²⁸ Several other portraits set Ichiyō apart from other women by masculinizing her, a project that Rebecca Copeland calls the transformation of Ichiyō into an "honorary man." For example, Baba Kocho describes Ichiyō as having "taken a step in the direction of becoming a man... she was a delightful woman to talk to. I thought she was a woman that a man could talk to intimately without falling in love."²⁹ Writing in 1926, Saitō Kiyomori describes Ichiyō similarly. He notes upon her failure to pay attention to her

appearance, and continues to describe, "Ichiyō's natural qualities were masculine and purposeful...she maintained a sharp rationality and didn't forget herself, even in instants when her emotions burned."³⁰ Her former mentor Tōsui claimed that Ichiyō "did not have the time to think of such things as love at all" and described her as "a woman with an elderly heart of 40 or 50."³¹

Many of these recollections, however, were written decades after Ichiyō's death, when her position in Japanese literature as the first woman writer of modern Japan was secure and served as a yardstick against which other women writers were measured. It is therefore possible to see them as attempts to share in her glory. Kōda Rohan, for example, names Ichiyō the greatest woman writer of Meiji due to her "intelligent, stimulating, and detailed observation, in contrast to the usual stilted, impudent, and pretentious female writing style."³² He then emphasizes the lack of a father figure in Ichiyō's life and implies that it was her association with himself and other men of *Bungakkai* that allowed her "to make striking progress" and transcend the level of other women writers.³³ Rohan's descriptions of Ichiyō tend to emphasize her vulnerability—her "girl's weak arms," her "soft heart of a young person"—and her traditional virtues, such as "filiality to her mother."³⁴ Rohan's Ichiyō thus becomes an innocent young girl molded by her male mentors.

The proprietary nature of male Ichiyō scholarship is revealed in an odd episode: Ichiyō's former schoolmate Miyake Kaho, a successful writer herself who was crucial to the launching of Ichiyō's career,³⁵ also dismissed rumors of a love affair with Tōsui, calling Ichiyō a "capricious tomboy" who criticized men a lot and "never fell in love."³⁶ Despite their own desexualizing descriptions, male scholars have generally dismissed Kaho's words in a negative sense, reading them within the context of an assumed rivalrous relationship. As Seki Reiko writes, Kaho always assumes the "evil role in the Ichiyō monogatari"³⁷ against which male scholars can provide

³⁰ Saitō Kiyomori, "Higuchi Ichiyō ni tsuite" (On Higuchi Ichiyō), *Kokubungaku kyoiku* 1926.9-10, in Wada, 246.

³¹ Nakarai Tōsui, "Ichiyō joshi" (Miss Ichiyō), *Chuō kōron*, 1907.6, in Yoshida Seiichi, *Higuchi Ichiyō kenkyū* (Higuchi Ichiyō scholarship), (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1956), 121.

³² Kōda Rohan, "Ko Higuchi Ichiyō joshi," in *Higuchi Ichiyō no Bungaku*, (Higuchi Ichiyō's literature), (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan sentai, 1973), 85.

³³ *Ibid.*, 84

³⁴ Kōda Rohan "Higuchi Ichiyō" in *Kaizō* 37, and Kōda Rohan, "Ichiyō zenshu jō" (preface to *Ichiyō zenshu*), 1912, in Aoki Ichiyō, "Jusanya – sono katei shosetsuteki seikaku ni tsuite" ("The Thirteenth night" – on its *katei shosetsu* characteristics), *Kaishaku*, 1962.8, in *Higuchi Ichiyō no Bungaku*, 86.

³⁵ "Umoregi" was published in *Miyako no Hana* (1892.11) on Kaho's recommendation.

³⁶ Miyake Kaho, "Jobungō ga katsuyaku no omokage" (Traces of the activities of a female literary master), *Jogaku sekai*, 1908.7, in Wada, 380.

³⁷ Seki Reiko, "Tatakau 'chichi no musume' – ichiyō tekusuto no seisei" (Fighting "father's daughters" – the generation of the Ichiyō text), in *Onna ga yomu nihon kindai bungaku: feminizumu bihyō no kokoromi*, ed. Egusa Mitsuko, Urushida Kazuyo, (To-

rescue. Kaho's recollections were interpreted through the stereotype of female jealousy.

The men who published recollections rarely fail to describe Ichiyō's physical appearance, which they agree was only mediocre. Baba notes her near-sightedness,³⁸ Tōsui notes her thin hair, sallowness, and hunched back,³⁹ and Rohan calls her "sober and clever-looking. She was not ugly, but she was not a beauty."⁴⁰ Hashimoto Takeshi argues that such men "were trying to prove that they did not visit because they were bewitched by her feminine charms."⁴¹ I would add that the insistence with which they note her physical flaws is counterpart to the above attempts at desexualization and amounts almost to a denial of Ichiyō's physical body altogether. Ironically, in the very next generation, plays and films of Ichiyō's life were cast to portray Ichiyō as a traditional Japanese beauty.⁴² To some extent, this is due to the nature of the media—audiences expected beautiful actresses—but Katsumoto Seiichiro argues that a beautiful Ichiyō was one manifestation of the wartime spirit of the 1930s, in which Ichiyō served as a Japanese alternative to Western women. Beginning already in the 1920s, the government undertook a "moral cleansing of the nation" restricting and regulating popular culture. In particular, representations of female virtue were policed in the entertainment media and independent, unmarried women were cast as a threat to social morality.⁴³ Ichiyō's virginity was therefore essential to the maintenance of her position within the newly formed modern literary canon at this time and also to the creation of Ichiyō herself as a nostalgic and romantic image of all that was pure and elegant in the Japanese past.

Some of the most heated debates over Ichiyō's virginity occurred during the late 1930s and 40s. This period, when demands on female purity as the core of national morality were at their strongest and frequently enforced by the police, was

kyo: Shinyōsha, 1992), 36. In fact, Shioda Ryohei went so far as to claim that it was Kaho who had spread rumors of an affair with Tosui in the first place. See Shioda's *Higuchi Ichiyō*, 132. On the other hand, given the ghettoization of *joryū sakka* as an isolated subcategory within Japanese literature and the habit of contemporary scholars to raise Ichiyō above other women writers, often specifically above Kaho, her description of Ichiyō may in fact be warped by jealousy.

³⁸ Baba Kochō, "Ichiyō zenshu no matsu ni," in Wada, 27.

³⁹ Nakarai Tōsui, "Ichiyō joshi," in Yoshida, 116.

⁴⁰ Kōda Rohan, "Ko Higuchi Ichiyō joshi," in *Higuchi Ichiyō no Bungaku*, 84.

⁴¹ Hashimoto Takeshi, "Ichiyō kaisoki ni kansuru wazuka no mondai" (A slight issue with reminiscences of Ichiyō), *Ronshu Higuchi Ichiyō III*. (Higuchi Ichiyō Essay Collection III). Tokyo: Ōfū, 2002, 219.

⁴² Katsumoto Seiichiro, "Ichiyō: Ware wa onna narikeru mono o," in Takahashi Toshio. *Higuchi Ichiyō 'Takekurabe' sakuhinronshū* (Collection of essays on Higuchi Ichiyō's 'Takekurabe'). (Tokyo: Kress shuppan, 2001), 66. Films and plays based on Ichiyō's life began in the late 20s and have continued into the present day, with her beauty strongly foregrounded.

⁴³ Many scholars have written on the figure of the modern girl, or moga, in the 1930s and 40s. See for example, Elise Tipton, *Cleansing the Nation: Urban Entertainments and Moral Reform in Interwar Japan*, or Miriam Silverberg, "The Modern Girl as Militant," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600—1945*.

also the peak of pronatalism. Women were daily exposed to propagandistic encouragement to "give birth and multiply."⁴⁴ Virginity, at the intersection of these two axes, was extremely fraught. In 1939, Shioda Ryōhei used his understanding of virginity to analyze her "emotionally heightened" texts, claiming "a virgin is both fastidious and passionate."⁴⁵ Kanzaki Kiyoshi's 1939 investigation of Ichiyō's relationship with Nakarai Tōsui through her diaries and stories is an extended defense of the purity of her "first love."⁴⁶ In 1941 however, Wada Yoshie also conducted an investigation of Ichiyō's diaries and argued that she was not a virgin, that her relationship with Tosui was consummated. This text met with such a harsh reaction, that when Wada published a follow-up study of Ichiyō in 1943, "the seven improper passages from which it could be 'deduced' that there was a physical relationship between Ichiyō and Tōsui had been deleted."⁴⁷

Despite the drastic liberalization of the media in the postwar period, the same insistence on Ichiyō's virginity continued. In his 1956 "Short History of Ichiyō Scholarship," for example, Seki Ryōichi goes into great detail over the many ways Ichiyō scholars have portrayed Ichiyō, but mentions only Katsumoto Seiichirō's 1948 dismissal of the "Ichiyō-as-non-virgin-theory," without providing any information on the theory itself.⁴⁸ This may be related to the tendency in 1950s and 60s popular entertainment media to depict Japanese women as wholesome and chaste, deflecting female sexuality onto Western women,⁴⁹ which I interpret as an element in the effort to differentiate Japanese culture from encroaching American culture. The question of Ichiyō's virginity has become less of an issue since the 1970s. Not only had Japan established itself by then as an economic power with a vibrant culture of its own, but the influence of US feminism and the sexual revolution eroded the central importance of virginity to conceptions of female virtue in general. In addition, literary criticism in which a text is read through the life experiences and character of the author (*sakkaron*) went out of fashion in Japanese academia. Still, a debate in 1985 between Maeda Ai, an influential literary critic, and Sata Ineko, a well-respected author, demonstrates the tenacity of the issue. The debate began when Sata questioned the virginity of Ichiyō's most famous heroine, Midori of "Child's Play," thereby reviving and shifting the earlier focus on Ichiyō's virginity to the more abstract level of textual analysis and the virginity of the female protagonist. In "Child's Play," 13 year-old Midori,

⁴⁴ I refer to the set of policies encouraging women and families to have more children, using the slogan *umeyo, fuyaseyo*.

⁴⁵ Shioda Ryōhei, "Higuchi Ichiyō," *Murasaki* 1939.6-8, in Wada, 216.

⁴⁶ Kanzaki Kiyoshi, "Musubarezareishi Ichiyō no hatsukoi," in Wada.

⁴⁷ Yamamoto Hiroshi, "Ichiyō no danseimon dai, sono ni" (Ichiyō's problems with men, pt. 2), *Takanoyama daigaku kokugo kokubun*, #23-26, 206.

⁴⁸ Seki Ryōichi, "Ichiyō kenkyū koshi" (Short history of Ichiyō scholarship), 1956, in Seki, 450.

⁴⁹ See Laura Miller, *Beauty Up: Exploring Contemporary Japanese Body Aesthetics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 24.

whose older sister is already a prostitute, has her hair done in the adult style and changes from a lively tomboy to a sullen and withdrawn young woman. Ichiyō's text gives no definitive explanation for this depression:

There were just sad things, vague things. Feelings...she couldn't put them into words. They made her cheeks burn. Nothing she could point to – and yet lately everything discouraged her. So many thoughts; none of them would ever have occurred to the Midori of yesterday.⁵⁰

Kōda Rohan's initial understanding of this emotional change as signaling the onset of menses and the concurrent awareness of her future as a prostitute has generally been accepted over the years. The 1980s debate began when Sata Ineko expressed doubt towards this theory, saying that all girls begin to menstruate, and rarely do their personalities change so extremely.⁵¹ Instead, Sata argues that Midori's depression is brought on because she has already been sold to a customer: she has lost her virginity. Sata claims that it is with this reading that "Child's Play" is transformed from merely a "beautiful *shōjo shōsetsu*" into a work of modern literature, in which the commodification of women in Japanese society is criticized.

Maeda Ai responded to Sata's article by defending Rohan's initial explanation and noting that all of the major Ichiyō scholars had accepted this theory.⁵² Though he notes elements of social criticism in the text, he finds that as a whole it is rather a nostalgic sense of innocence that permeates her depiction of children in the pleasure quarters and likens the experience of reading the story to "returning to lost memories from faded photos in an old album."⁵³ Maeda notes the many aporia in the text, and argues that Sata's mistake is "trying to fit a phantasmagoric text into the frame of the modern novel."⁵⁴ Indeed, Sata is forcing Ichiyō's work into a modern frame: it is clear from her argument that Sata believes losing one's virginity is an event of central importance in a girl's life and that sexual initiation without consent or desire is potentially soul-crushing. Such concepts, however, only began to appear in discourse during the Taishō era, mainly in the writings of the New Women who explored female sexuality and advocated female self-awakening and independence. In 1895, a girl's virginity was still largely under the protection of her father, and it is not clear that its loss, if sanctioned and ordered by a parent (as in the case of Midori), would cause shame or despair. Still, Sata's argument is fairly convincing: whether she has actually lost her virginity or not, Midori has clearly had an emotional shock. She has been transformed from a "delightful, saucy child" into an overly-self-conscious,

"awkward and unhappy" young woman, "timid" and "forever blushing" as though ashamed or humiliated. Midori's appearance near the end of the story, "bright and stately as a Kyōto doll"⁵⁵ marks her transformation into a prostitute, her body a commodity. Timothy Van Compernelle argues that in Midori, Ichiyō has created a model of what feminist critics have called "embodied subjectivity," a continuity between the corporeal and the emotional, in which after some unexplained event, she loses her confidence and it is "as though her subjectivity has been taken from her."⁵⁶

The debate between Sata and Ai also highlights the gendered nature of postwar Ichiyō scholarship that Seki Reiko noted in 1992, in which male scholars "surround and protect Ichiyō, and tend to her like an object of worship."⁵⁷ Throughout, Sata feels compelled to excuse herself for "not knowing the world of Ichiyō scholarship."⁵⁸ According to Yabu Teiko, Sata's reading shook the literary community, but was ultimately rejected because it weakened earlier analyses by insiders, and in particular that of Kōda Rohan.⁵⁹ When Sata notes "a general tendency to want to leave Midori to the end as a beautiful virgin"⁶⁰ she is correctly identifying the desire on the part of the male literary establishment to maintain an image of Ichiyō and her most beloved protagonist as pure, "favored daughters." As I will explore in the following section, this purity is not limited to the body of Ichiyō, however, but to her body of work as well: Ichiyō's writing has also been analyzed and appropriated in varying ways in the quest to define modern Japanese literary purity.

WAS HER WRITING PURE?

One reason that the above debate cannot be resolved is the general difficulty of Ichiyō's allusive and elliptical writing style.⁶¹ Wada Yoshie interprets this as an issue of gender: the natural reticence of a woman writer, who hesitates to describe vulgarity in detail.⁶² Kamei Hideo also assigns the ambiguities in Ichiyō's texts to an ultimate refusal to "step foot into" the space of the pleasure quarters.⁶³ These ellipses create a lack of information which transform the texts themselves into abject space inviting and facilitating completion. As Yabu Teiko writes,

⁵⁵ Higuchi Ichiyō, "Child's Play," 283.

⁵⁶ See Timothy Van Compernelle, *The Uses of Memory: The Critique of Modernity in the Fiction of Higuchi Ichiyō*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁵⁷ Seki Reiko, "Tatakau 'chichi no musume' – ichiyō tekusuto no seisei," 34.

⁵⁸ Sata Ineko, "'Takekurabe' Kaishaku e no hitotsu gimon," 280.

⁵⁹ Yabu Teiko, "Takekurabe ronsō, sono ta" (The Takekurabe debate, etc.), *Nihon kindai bungaku*, May, 1987; reprinted in Takahashi, 320.

⁶⁰ Sata Ineko, "'Takekurabe' Kaishaku e no hitotsu gimon," 283.

⁶¹ The question of Midori's virginity is matched by an equally large question concerning the death of Oriki in "Troubled Waters," namely whether her death is murder or suicide.

⁶² Wada Yoshie, *Higuchi Ichiyō* (1941), in Takahashi, 53.

⁶³ Kamei Hideo, *Meiji bungakushi* (History of Meiji literature), (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2000), 222.

⁵⁰ Higuchi Ichiyō, "Child's Play," tr. Robert Danly, in Danly, 285.

⁵¹ Sata Ineko, "'Takekurabe' Kaishaku e no hitotsu gimon" (One doubt with regard to explanations of "Takekurabe"), *Gunzō* May, 1985, in Takahashi, 281.

⁵² Maeda Ai, "Midori no tame ni" (For Midori), in Takahashi, 287.

⁵³ Maeda Ai, "Kodomo tachi no jikan" (The time of children), *Tenbō*, 1975, in Takahashi, 128.

⁵⁴ Maeda Ai, "Midori no tame ni," in Takahashi, 292.

'Problematic work' and 'difficult to understand work' have become stock phrases" for Ichiyō's texts, and in particular the "blanks in the text" have become sites from which to seek new possibilities of understanding the works.⁶⁴

The ambiguities have also allowed for multiple and often contradictory interpretations of Ichiyō's texts.

The moniker "last woman of old Japan" relates to the dominant view of her writing style as well, most often described as a mix of the allusive language and emotional tone of Heian *monogatari* and the playful punning and free-form sentences of Edo *gesaku*, alongside modern realism and elements of social criticism.⁶⁵ Ichiyō therefore embodies a continuous tradition of Japanese literature, from female-authored classical texts through pleasure quarter fiction, finally arriving at the early stages of the Western-influenced modern Japanese novel. Yet this trajectory is not as simple as it sounds: Ichiyō's stories, though they span only a few years, are not all written in the same style, nor is the traditional cannon stable.

Ichiyō's stories, which consist of mainly romantic tales of orphans and upper-class women written in a very stylized prose dense with literary allusions, derived from her education in classical Heian poetry and her reading of popular *gesaku* fiction. This background was looked down upon by some—Hirata Tokuboku, for example, dismissed Ichiyō as "a woman not one step beyond her grounding in *Genji*, *Saikaku*, and *kokubungaku*."⁶⁶ But for many, such a style was both suitable and desirable for a woman writer. An anonymous review of "Umoregi" ("An Obscure Life") in December, 1892, praises her style:

I am pleased to have the honor of introducing a new woman writer, Miss Ichiyō ...According to the preface by Miss Kaho, she is a fellow student under Nakajima Utako of the Haginoya. A hard-working potter, living without friend, disciple, or wife, but only with his younger sister O-chō in a lonesome dwelling before the Nyorai Temple in Takana-wa covered in bottle gourd, with smoke from a mosquito smudge rising to the eaves, laments the withering of his art, and with no one to pour out the fantastic ideas inside his breast, his insides seethe and feverish tears well up. The conception of her writing is extraordinary and the style so sharp one doubts that it was written by a woman at all. Hereafter, we hope that her achievements will deepen and she will exert herself for literature.⁶⁷

The reviewer's flowing prose and description of the potter's dwelling, which recalls the decaying, overgrown house of

⁶⁴ Yabu Teiko, "Higuchi Ichiyō 'Nigorie'," *Josei Bungaku o manabu hito no tame ni* (For those studying Women's Literature), Watanabe Sumiko, ed., (Tokyo: Sekai Shisoshu, 2000), 201.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Danly, 133.

⁶⁶ Hirata Tokuboku, *Bungakkai zengo* (The Years of *Bungakkai*), quoted in Shioda, 220.

⁶⁷ Anonymous review of "Umoregi" in *Jogakusei*, December, 1892; reprinted in Katsumoto, 64. From some of the phrases used in the review and other factors, he believes the author to be Hoshino Tenchi.

the Akashi princess⁶⁸ in *The Tale of Genji* deliberately confuses Ichiyō with her protagonist and links both to Murasaki Shikibu and her characters as well. Yet at the same time, the reviewer's evaluation of her "sharp" style separates Ichiyō from contemporary women writers and further confers honorary manhood.

The canonization of Heian *monogatari* by women as central to classical Japanese literature had only recently begun. Up to 1890, only *The Tale of Genji* was studied as a text of any worth. From that time on, however, the qualities of classical Japanese *jūbungaku* (pure literature) came to be defined as "entertaining rather than practical," having an "effeminate style," and the ability to "make the spirit of the nation's people graceful, elevated, and pure."⁶⁹ Ichiyō's early stories, written in classical literary style, tapped into this new interest in a native tradition and its association with purity. Those who first discovered and supported her, such as Ōgai and Rohan, were disgusted with current trends in literature, such as the works of fantasy by Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939) or the "lurid realism"⁷⁰ of Hirotsu Ryūrō (1861-1928) that tended toward the grotesque and sensational. Instead, they sought a modern realism that nevertheless incorporated traditional aesthetics, a balancing of literary beauty and objective description.

It was not until "Child's Play" was published in 1896 and reviewed by Mori Ōgai, Kōda Rohan, and Saitō Ryokuu (1867-1904), however, that Ichiyō's writing was widely recognized and praised in this way.⁷¹ Although "Child's Play" and her other masterpieces⁷² retain the allusive language and elements of classical prose style, she now replaced the aestheticized romantic melodrama of her earlier stories with realistic documentation of life among the lower classes, including women of the pleasure quarters among the main characters. This blend of classical style with detached observation yielded a "modern Murasaki," an image that struck a chord with many readers and writers alike. As Hoshino Tenchi put in 1927,

Just at the height of the fantasy-school, this work of realism and detached observation, characteristic of a *keishū sakka*, that portrays minute emotions without holding back, appeared and attracted the attention of the people.⁷³

⁶⁸ See "The Safflower" and "The Wormwood Patch" chapters.

⁶⁹ See Tomi Suzuki's article "Gender and Genre: Modern Literary Histories and Women's Diary Literature," in Haruo Shirane, *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 71-95.

⁷⁰ Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West: Japanese Literature in the Modern Era*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 144.

⁷¹ "Takekurabe" was first serially published in *Bungakkai* from January, 1895 to January, 1896, but attracted little attention. Ichiyō then published a revised version all at once in *Bungei kurabu* in April, 1896.

⁷² I would include in this category "Otsugomori" (1894), "Nigorie" (Troubled Water, 1895), "Jusanya" (The Thirteenth night, 1895), and "Wakaremichi" (Separate Ways, 1896).

⁷³ Hoshino Tenchi, from his afterword to "Takekurabe," *Shinchōsha daihyōteki meisaku senshu 7*, quoted in Yuji Takashi, "Takekurabe," *Higuchi Ichiyō ron*, 1926, in Takahashi, 19.

Soma Gyofu's comment implies that it was Ichiyō's already established link to past tradition that allowed a positive reception for her new, somewhat scandalous material:

The hearts of the women of old Japan, oppressed over hundreds of years, have gained in Ichiyō a genius of the Meiji era, who for the first time cried out their sorrow and pain.⁷⁴

As I discussed above, Ichiyō's realistic portrayal of women in the prostitution district sparked rumors of sexual experience; in terms of literary inspiration the stories also led to speculation over external literary influences on her work. What is most striking about an 1895 review of "Child's Play" by Ōgai and Rohan, are their attempts to define Ichiyō in opposition to the European Naturalism just coming into fashion among the *bundan* at that time.

Ōgai: It is not strange that, as one of the authors of the *bundan* of today, which is overrun by Naturalists, this author chose to set her story here. What is strange, is that characters who usually appear – beasts in the shape of humans – in extreme imitations of the writings of Zola and Ibsen, are here instead real human beings we can both laugh and cry over. I look at the sources from which the author takes her material and the poetry that comes forth and I see that under her brush the dust is swept away and flowers bloom.

Rohan: Recently, whether because of society's taste, critics' taste, or the taste of writers, only strange stories are written. Each one that we read, we furrow our brows and can't help but mutter that in trying to make something new, they have lost the essence of the body and made a wound instead. But I am overjoyed to see good writing like this work by this author, that doesn't fall into the vices of the times and has substance of its own.⁷⁵

Ōgai and Rohan both abhorred the vulgarity of French naturalists Zola and Maupassant, then extremely influential amongst writers in Japan. While acknowledging the influence of objective realism on her new works, they emphasize Ichiyō's continued attention to literary aesthetics consistent with the classics.

Other critics sought precedent for Ichiyō's subject matter in the ribald and playful gesaku texts of the Edo Era, such as those by Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) whose texts enjoyed a revival in the mid-1890s. This was a bit trickier, however, as gesaku was neither highly esteemed by all, nor was the subject matter generally considered appropriate for a female writer. When Kojima Usui linked her to the gesaku tradition, he was careful to excuse her depiction of women in "shameful occupations" as coming from a desire "to beautify these dark parts of society."⁷⁶ As the decades passed, however, the vulgarity of pleasure quarter literature became a site for nostalgia, and the

⁷⁴ Soma Gyofu, "Higuchi Ichiyō ron" (On Higuchi Ichiyō), *Waseda Bungaku*, 1910.1, in Wada, 135.

⁷⁵ "Sannin jōgō" (Three long-winded men), *Mezamashigusa*, 1896.4, in Yoshida, 95-99.

⁷⁶ Kojima Usui, "Ichiyō joshi" (Miss Ichiyō), *Bunko*, 1896.11, in Wada, 99.

association of gesaku texts with base sexuality was replaced with an aestheticized image of the pleasure quarters as a reservoir of Japanese culture, uninvaded by Western influence. Soma Gyofu therefore names her "Chikamatsu's daughter" for the neo-Confucian elements in her stories and the portrait of old Japan they evoke.⁷⁷ Nagai Kafū also reads her works as a direct continuation of Edo puppet theater in an essay from 1935:

The emotions and characters that appear in the works of such writers as Ichiyō, Ryūrō, and Kyōka, closely resemble those of Edo *jōruri*. ... It is from the Tokyo of the past... as the years go by, the lights and noises of a stimulating modern city have drowned out this tune.⁷⁸

Kafū is here linking Ichiyō to the writers of "lurid" fiction, to whom she was first celebrated as a refreshing alternative, but effaces any hint of vulgarity, describing their texts as suffused with a melancholic nostalgia for a lost Japanese past.

The doubts surrounding Ichiyō's virginity are paralleled by doubts surrounding literary influence: was Ichiyō contaminated by Western literary trends or did she remain a "purely" Japanese writer? The poet Togawa Zanka reported in 1896 that Ichiyō had read a translation of *Crime and Punishment* "over and over" and was deeply impressed by it,⁷⁹ but most of her contemporaries denied the influence of Western literature. For example, Koda Rohan stated, "to be frank, Ichiyō made striking progress only after she approached *Bungakukai*"⁸⁰ and Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943) claimed, "she had no schooling in Western thought, but developed by listening to Baba, Togawa, Hirata, Ueda, and Bizan."⁸¹ As *joryū bungaku* (women's literature) was cast as the epitome of national tradition,⁸² it became increasingly important that women writers, and in particular Ichiyō as their representative, practice a "purely Japanese" literary aesthetic. Later scholars have continued to emphasize her insulated career: Shioda Ryōhei acknowledges that Ichiyō had read *Crime and Punishment*, but declares that she was not "formally influenced" and instead "it was the men of *Bungakukai* that granted realism and individuality to Ichiyō's works."⁸³ In this way apparently Western elements in Ichiyō's writing are domesticated because they were transmitted to her through Japanese men. Yoshida Seiichi ridicules this protective stance as the desire to maintain her

⁷⁷ Soma Gyofu, "Higuchi Ichiyō ron," in Wada, 134.

⁷⁸ Nagai Kafū, "Sato no konjaku" (Changing times of home), *Chūō kōron*, 1935.3, in Takahashi, 51.

⁷⁹ Togawa Zanka, "Higuchi Natsuko nushi o itamu" (Mourning Higuchi Ichiyō), *Jogaku zasshi*, 1896.12, in Hiraoka Toshio, "Yukure no zangeki" (Tragedy of her passing), *Ronshu Higuchi Ichiyō III* (Higuchi Ichiyō Essay Collection III), (Tokyo: Oufuu, 2002), 103.

⁸⁰ Kōda Rohan, "Ko Higuchi Ichiyō joshi" (The late Miss Higuchi Ichiyō), *Seiko* 1905.7, in *Higuchi Ichiyō no Bungaku*, 84.

⁸¹ Shimazaki Tōson, "Ichiyō joshi to sono shuui" (Miss Ichiyō and her surroundings), *Kokumin Shimbun* 1908.11, in Takahashi, 14.

⁸² Tomi Suzuki, *Inventing the Classics*, 71.

⁸³ Shioda, 223.

image as a “virgin of the deep inner chambers,”⁸⁴ a simile that likens Ichiyo to a member of the Shogun’s harem during the Tokugawa Era, women who had no interaction with the outside world except through the Shogun himself. Yoshida’s use of this simile to ridicule denials that Ichiyo was intellectually influenced by foreign men is particularly clever, however, because it demonstrates the absurdities that result when the physical and intellectual are linked: the women of “the inner chambers” were almost by definition not virgins, rendering the simile ironic. Katsumoto Seiichiro agreed, arguing that “it is shortsighted to understand works such as ‘Child’s Play’ and ‘Troubled Waters’ as formed only from the tradition of *Genji* and *Saikaku*.”⁸⁵ In other words, this is another unresolvable debate that hinges on the nature and degree of Ichiyō’s “purity” as a Japanese woman/writer. Yoshida Seiichi best demonstrates the link between bodily and textual purity in an article from 1935, in which he raises the question of Ichiyō’s virginity, but then shifts his focus immediately to the question of how “intimate” Ichiyō was with foreign literature.⁸⁶ In this way Yoshida implies that exposure to foreign literature is a contamination equivalent to sexual experience.

The publication of Ichiyō’s diaries in 1912 initially attracted attention for the clues they provided to her personal life, but the canonization of Heian *nikki* (diaries) in the 1920s as the epitome of national tradition⁸⁷ brought them renown as literature in their own right and further solidified Ichiyō’s position as a direct link to the past. As Tomi Suzuki argues, it was the modern notion of literature as a means to express and develop a genuine self—the dominant ideology of Japanese Naturalism which found its ultimate form in the I-novel—that first brought scholarly attention to Heian Era *nikki*. Ichiyō’s diaries thus become another link between Heian literature and the modern I-novel, creating the illusion of a continuous line of Japanese literary tradition. Matsuzaka Toshio, for example, writing in 1983, calls her diaries “I-novels before there were I-novels”⁸⁸ but specifies that “the I-novel quality” of Ichiyō’s diaries is not connected to European naturalist influence. Rather it is “purely” Japanese, having a certain quality that runs throughout traditional Japanese literature, specifically the genres of *waka* and *nikki*.⁸⁹

POLITICAL APPROPRIATIONS

Ichiyō’s sudden death so soon after achieving recognition was a great tragedy and has left both readers and scholars with burdens of regret. The desire to “complete” her unfinished work, in combination with the elliptical nature of her prose that invites creative interpretation, has allowed and induced many Ichiyō scholars to interpret her texts in ways

⁸⁴ Yoshida, 291.

⁸⁵ Katsumoto, 68.

⁸⁶ Yoshida Seiichi, “Higuchi Ichiyō no hitoshiryō” (One material on Higuchi Ichiyō), in Wada, 289.

⁸⁷ Tomi Suzuki, *Inventing the Classics*, 71.

⁸⁸ Matsuzaka Toshio, *Higuchi Ichiyō Kenkyū* (Higuchi Ichiyō research), (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan sentaa, 1983), 29.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 259.

sued to their own political leanings. As Seki Ryōichi notes:

In the era of the romantic school she was understood as romantic, in the era of naturalism, she was understood as naturalist, in the era of proletarian literature she was understood and criticized from the position of proletarian literature.⁹⁰

As Ichiyō was first discovered and supported by the men of *Bungakkai*, her works have most frequently been evaluated as part of the romantic school. This tenacious interpretation, casts Ichiyō as a direct link to past literary traditions, as in Shioda Ryohei’s 1960 description of Ichiyō’s fictional world as “a beautifully limited world...where elegance is central and thought is not stressed.”⁹¹ This image was never completely stable, however. In fact, Shioda himself had argued in 1939 that although Ichiyō was ruled by neo-Confucian ideology, she had sought to show women a path toward independence through her fiction.⁹² Many prominent Ichiyō scholars have found in Ichiyō a precursor of the New Women of the 1910s who sought self-expression through literature and sharply criticized the sexism embedded within Japanese society. Matsuzaka Toshio, for example, called her “the first woman of modern Japan to raise a resisting voice”⁹³ and Seki Ryoichi found a violent resentment and deep pessimism lurking behind her refined elegance.⁹⁴ Some have taken this even farther, finding leftist ideology in Ichiyō’s texts. As early as 1895, Taoka Reibun, an advocate of socially conscious literature, noted her humanism and sympathy for the lower classes.⁹⁵ The socialist Fukushima Yasoroku, who visited Ichiyō a few months before her death, noted her avowal of “a most urgent need for aid to the lower classes” and “was greatly moved by the passages that bring tears of sympathy for the lower classes” after reading “Troubled Waters.”⁹⁶ These efforts to cast Ichiyō as a leftist continued into the postwar period, with Ekida Katsutoshi’s attempt to trace her ancestry back to peasant stock⁹⁷ and Miyamoto Yuriko’s designation of Ichiyō as a proletariat; the first woman to support herself through writing.⁹⁸ The ambiguity of Ichiyō’s ideology, however, is frequently acknowledged. Matsuzaka Toshio laments,

The real tragedy is that Ichiyō did not realize her true intentions – the salvation of the poor, for example – that those intentions ended without being understood, and that even today, seventy years after her death, they have not been understood sufficiently.⁹⁹

⁹⁰ Seki, 459

⁹¹ Shioda Ryōhei, “Higuchi Ichiyō,” *Murasaki*, 1939, in Seki, 457.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 460.

⁹³ Matsuzaka, 2.

⁹⁴ Seki, 424.

⁹⁵ See Seki, 458.

⁹⁶ Fukushima Yasoroku, unpublished diary entry from September 6th, 1896, in Wada, 84. Also see Matsuzaka, 30-31.

⁹⁷ Ekida Katsutoshi, “Higuchi Ichiyō to Kōshu no nōmin” (Higuchi Ichiyō and the Kōshu peasants), *Shin Nihon Bungaku* 1953.12, in Seki, 448.

⁹⁸ Seki, 436.

⁹⁹ Matsuzaka, 31.

Given her abrupt death, the small number of texts she left behind, and the great transformation in her style and themes, Ichiyō's "intentions" are easily interpreted to suit the ideology of the critic and to remain relevant to the age.

Throughout this article I have noted the desire to protect and complete Ichiyō on the part of male scholars, arguing that this is a result both of gender bias in literary theory and gendered conceptions of the female virgin as both vulnerable and threatening within patriarchal order. I would like to conclude by discussing criticism of Ichiyō's character and writings by two women writers who rose to prominence in the late Meiji Era, Yosano Akiko and Hiratsuka Raichō (1886-1971). The coincidence of their strikingly negative views and their gender demonstrates the power of the concept of virginity to affect literary interpretation. Yosano attacked Ichiyō's writing in 1909 as both derivative and unrealistic, accusing Ichiyō of writing only "things that would appeal to men," such as portraits of suffering, beautiful young women, and of "using men's work as her model" rather than developing her own modern style.¹⁰⁰ Raichō pursued this critique further in 1912, singling out this passage in Ichiyō's diary:

In my dreams I say what I think, as I think it. My happiness to be able to say what I think as I think it disappears when I wake and am returned to my body, with the many things that I must not say or are hard to say. I sit at my desk for a while and think that truly I am a woman and I do not know if I should say the things that I think.¹⁰¹

Raichō declares that "this section of Ichiyō's diary sums up the basic thought running throughout all of Ichiyō's twenty-some works."¹⁰² Agreeing with Soma Gyofu's description of Ichiyō as "a woman of old Japan," Raichō criticizes the neo-Confucian ideal of feminine self-sacrifice and the internalized sexism that gave her work "a negative value."¹⁰³ While many scholars have understood these critiques as another example of female rivalry, I will argue that it is particularly the image of Ichiyō as a virgin, and their recognition of its central role in Ichiyō idolatry, that vexes these New Women. For Yosano, who was an advocate of motherhood rights and whose 1909 essay quoted above is largely "a fierce denunciation of men who refuse to grant women status as national subjects in their role as life-givers,"¹⁰⁴ Ichiyō's virginity meant that she had never experienced the difficulties of a Japanese woman's life: the "life or death" matters of love, pregnancy, and childbirth. As a result, "the female characters Ichiyō created are beloved

by men...because they are false, created from aesthetics."¹⁰⁵ For Raichō, who in 1912 was more concerned with combating double standards in sexual morality, it seems to be the paternalistic nature of Ichiyō's supporters that rankles:

It is not strange that men are enchanted by a feminine woman writer...who makes them aware of their own strength in comparison to her weak female characters. ...but aren't such feminine and masculine characters proof that Ichiyō lacked individuality herself?¹⁰⁶

Raichō implies that Ichiyō was manipulating her male reader by relying on gender stereotypes.

The response to Raichō's attack was swift and demonstrates the tensions surrounding feminism at the time. Morita Sōhei (Raichō's former lover) agreed that Ichiyō was a "self-important moralist who believed that all women should think the way that she did,"¹⁰⁷ but many others were outraged and attempted to undermine the feminist position by painting it a bourgeois luxury. Shimazaki Tōson called the New Women "idol destroyers" and argued that it was unfair to criticize her lack of feminist ideology retrospectively.¹⁰⁸ Kiuchi Teiko (1887-1919) pointedly wrote that "Ichiyō would not even have thought of having a casual love affair, as is common among many in society," and goes on to portray sexual freedom as a luxury: "Ichiyō did not find it sad or bitter to spend her whole life a pure virgin because she was tormented by poverty."¹⁰⁹ Soma Gyofu also attacks the bourgeois position of the New Women:

Hiratsuka Raichō and Tamura Toshiko criticize Ichiyō without addressing [her economic situation] because neither has faced the problems of really being independent. Both Hiratsuka and Tamura criticize Ichiyō for being in thrall to morality. It is not only that Ichiyō subordinated physical desire to morality, but that she had more important problems....You cannot say that someone who shamelessly eats her parents' food or clings to her husband is really a new woman...I would prefer that the claims of the new women be more in the spirit of the common people rather than aristocratic claims.¹¹⁰

Kiuchi and Soma contradictorily imply that if Ichiyō had had a little more time and money, she might indeed have indulged.

Both Raichō and Yosano had a personal stake in their critique of Ichiyō as ideal Meiji woman writer. Raichō had been the target of much media attention following the 1908 Shiobara incident.¹¹¹ Similarly, Yosano's premarital affair with

¹⁰⁰ Yosano Akiko, "Ubuya Monogatari" (Tale of the birthing room), *Tokyo meiroku shinbun*, 1909, in *Yosano Akiko zenshu* V40, (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980), 10.

¹⁰¹ Higuchi Ichiyō, February 20, 1896 diary entry quoted in Hiratsuka Raichō, "Onna toshite no Higuchi Ichiyō joshi" (Miss Higuchi Ichiyō as a woman), *Seito* 2.1, in *Hiratsuka Raichō-chō zenshu*, V1 (Tokyo: Otsuki shoten, 1983), 152.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 172.

¹⁰⁴ Leith Morton, *The Alien Within: Representations of the Exotic in Twentieth Century Japanese Literature*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 79.

¹⁰⁵ Yosano, 10.

¹⁰⁶ Hiratsuka Raichō, 154.

¹⁰⁷ Morita Sohei, "Ichiyō joshi ron" (On Miss Ichiyō), *Joshi Bundan* 8.12, 12.

¹⁰⁸ Shimazaki Tōson, *ibid.*, 4

¹⁰⁹ Kiuchi Teiko, *ibid.*, 23.

¹¹⁰ Soma Gyofu, *ibid.*, 16-19.

¹¹¹ This was the media's term for her attempted double-suicide with a lover, the married author Morita Sōhei.

Yosano Tekkan was common knowledge. In other words, both women had been publicly exposed and heavily criticized as non-virgins. On the political level, however, the New Women were in the process of critiquing gender stereotypes and restrictive sexual morality. Specifically, Raichō and her colleagues at the journal *Seito* were attempting to shift conceptions of female virtue from physical virginity and docile self-sacrifice toward gender neutral qualities such as emotional responsibility, economic independence, and artistic creativity.¹¹² As “the last woman of old Japan” and a symbol of restrictive tradition, the virgin Ichiyō made a natural target.

CONCLUSION

Woman is often constructed as the bearer of cultural tradition, the keeper of the past, while men forge ahead with modern progress. Keeping with these cultural conventions, the “last woman of old Japan” could just as well be an obedient daughter, a faithful wife, or a wise mother, as she could a pure virgin. However, these first three neo-Confucian types are all defined in relation to one man, whether father, husband, or son. That possessive presence in the background would have limited the ability of contemporaries and later scholars alike to adopt Ichiyō for their own, create an image that suited their aims, and analyze her works accordingly. As for those who chose to see Ichiyō as progressive, the unthreatening young virgin was a much more endearing image to enlist in your cause than a woman of questionable morals.

The virgin is viewed as unformed and incomplete. You have not really become adult, especially if you are female, until you have lost your virginity. Likewise, Ichiyō’s writing is generally viewed as immature. Analyses of Ichiyō and her literature often emphasize ellipsis, lack, and incompleteness as aspects of purity—a lack of foreign influence, lack of vulgar sexuality, and a lack of definite political ideology. Although differing opinions on texts by scholars of various ideologies can be seen surrounding any author, Ichiyō’s early death allows an extreme case. Rarely is one author placed in so many contrasting categories with such conviction. It is Ichiyō’s death while still a very young woman, and specifically, while still a virgin, that facilitates such rampant co-optation of her character and her works. The abject quality of the virgin female – her incompleteness, unknowability, and failure to fit into any social role – is mirrored by the deliberate ellipses in Ichiyō’s texts, and the blank pages of her potential future literary production, inviting questions that cannot be answered.

¹¹² There have been many texts written on the New Women of *Seito* and their writings. See, for example, Hiroko Tomida, *Hiratsuka Raicho and Early Japanese Feminism*, or Dina Lowy, *The Japanese New Woman: Images of Gender and Modernity*.

THE TROPE OF THE HERMAPHRODITE IN MODERN JAPAN



Postcard courtesy of Paul McAlpine/Kinouya Collection

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ABSTRACT¹

This essay examines representations of the hermaphrodite in Japan during the Meiji and Taishō periods. The advent of sexology, which promoted a strict binary sexual paradigm, increasingly denied the existence of “true” hermaphroditism, as it challenged categories of female and male, as sexologists defined them, physically, emotionally, and behaviorally. The acceptable gendered behavior of the hermaphrodite, who had the sex organs or tissue of both sexes, could not be known. Discourse on the hermaphrodite emerged to counter the science of sex, representing those who violated the expectations of either category of sex. Specifically, I interrogate the trope of hermaphroditism in the stories of Shimizu Shikin (1868-1933) and Tanizaki Jun’ichiro (1886-1965), who use it for different purposes. Shikin aims to advance the cause of women’s rights, while Tanizaki employs it for aesthetic reasons. The hermaphroditic figure is viewed in a positive light in Shikin’s work, and as intriguing, though decadent in Tanizaki’s.

¹ I would like to thank the reviewers for their thoughtful suggestions. And I am also grateful to Satoko Naito for her insightful comments.

ARTICLE

For centuries in Japan, hermaphroditism was associated with disease and bad karma, until sexologists and scientists medicalized it in the modern period. It then became a moving target, so to speak. That is, the standards by which to determine the sex(es) of an individual, kept shifting. The inability to fix the ultimate criterion of sex was deeply vexing because it called into question the categories of “male” and “female,” as well as the dimorphic sexual paradigm, in which so-called “true hermaphroditism” could not fit.

The negative view of hermaphroditism persisted into the Meiji period (1868-1912). For example, writer Kanagaki Robun (1829-1894) refers to so-called “poison woman” Takahashi Oden² as a hermaphrodite (*shiyūsōsei*) in order to demonize her. He exploits hermaphroditism to condemn girls who are physically stronger than he believes they ought to be.³

² Oden is among the most famous “poison women” (*dokufu*), who were accused of serious crimes such as murder, and sensationalized in serialized tales, drama (kabuki), or visual art in the 1870s and 80s.

³ Kanagaki Robun, *Takahashi Oden yasha monogatari (The Tale of Demon Takahashi Oden, 1879)* in *Meiji kaika-ki bungaku shū 2*

The narrator in Robun's tale asserts:

That men and women differ from each other sexually, as well as in their nature, is according to God's plan. The small difference in the exquisite workmanship of the physiques of men and women is only for the purpose of reproducing the human race. However, a woman who is spiritually superior to men is borne by the confusion of what is called androgyny (*shiyūsōsei*) by western philosophers.⁴

Oden is represented as a wild, rowdy eight or nine-year old, who is more interested in fisticuffs with boys than battledore and shuttlecock, games appropriate to young girls. Robun portrays this so-called masculinity in a woman as unnatural and criminal.⁵

Moreover, in newspaper articles from the Meiji and Taishō (1912-1926) periods, hermaphrodites choosing to live as either men or women, once discovered, are scorned and described in terms such as degenerative (*hensei*) and having a deformity (*kikei*). The article "A Man with Two Urethras" in 1915 provides a clue to what is unacceptable to the government: "[. . .] because he was unsuitable as a man for conscription, he was disqualified."⁶ The state attempted to construct a rigid binary of sex as a means of control. There was no room for subjects who couldn't conform to the categories of "men" or "women." Just as sexual norms became increasing codified and sexual paradigms transformed in the new nation state, the hermaphrodite was redefined under a new sexual regime. And the medico-scientific community was crucial to achieving this.

Sexology (*seiyokugaku*), dominated by Austro-German doctors and other professionals, was the study of sexuality at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The belief was that sexual behavior was based on biological laws, and the

medical profession should be responsible for its regulation.⁷ The ultimately hegemonic form of knowledge about sex promoted by these sexologists did not gain ascendance without a struggle, however. Sexual discourses proliferated, as Michel Foucault (1926-1984) has famously written to describe the modern period. And with discourses and sexualities multiplying, the power of the state consolidated as it regulated and policed sex. Foucault notes that in 19th century Europe "the homosexual was now a species," and so too were "peripheral sexualities" and "minor pervers."⁸

In Foucault's introduction to the memoirs of the hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin, he asserts that for centuries hermaphrodites were people with two sexes, and it was only until the modern period that western societies insisted that there should be one "true" sex.⁹ This corresponds to Alice Dreger's *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, which traces the debate on and search for the so-called "true sex" of the hermaphrodite in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Dreger calls the period from 1870 to 1915 the Age of Gonads, when the "true" sex of an individual was determined by one thing: "the anatomical nature of the gonadal tissue as either ovarian or testicular."¹⁰ Even when they were thwarted by missing testicles or ovaries, or organs whose identity could not be confirmed, medical and scientific men persevered in denying true hermaphroditism. However, in 1915 Doctor William Blair Bell, of the Royal Infirmary at Liverpool opined that a (so-called) dysfunctional sex gland was inadequate as the sole marker of sex. In spite of Bell's evidence and pronouncement that the gonadal criterion did not make sense, the belief in only two true sexes continued.

Similarly in Japan, the "homosexual" was now categorized, medicalized, and psychologized, and the hermaphrodite, who had had two sexes, was now revealed to have one, true sex. The medical doctor, in the era that followed, would be the interpreter or the creator of a single true sex per individual.¹¹ Sexology's influence was widespread. It is not sur-

Meiji bungaku zenshū, vol. 2, ed. Okitsu Kaname (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1966-67), 4, 11; Christine Marran, *Poison Woman: Figuring Female Transgression in Modern Japanese Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 11.

⁴ Kanagaki, *Takahashi Oden*, 4.

⁵ Kanagaki, *Takahashi Oden*, 11.

⁶ "Futatsu no nyōdō aru otoko" ("A Man with Two Urethras") originally published in *Osaka kokkei shinbun* (*Osaka Humor Newspaper*), November, 1908. Reprinted in Miyatake Gaikotsu, *Hannanyōkō* (*Thought on Hermaphroditism*, 1922) in *Miyatake Gaikotsu Chosakushū* (*Collected Works of Miyatake Gaikotsu*), vol. 5, eds. Tanizawa Eiichi and Yoshino Takao (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1986), 374-75.

⁷ Gregory Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 244.

⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, v. 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

⁹ Michel Foucault, introduction to *Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), vii.

¹⁰ Alice Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 29.

¹¹ Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, 166.

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prising that it surfaces in the work of Tanizaki Jun'ichiro (1886-1965), given his interest in sex and decadence, and in that of Shimizu Shikin (1868-1933), because of her interest in gender roles and equal rights.

It is in this context of competing discourses and representations of sex from the 1890s to the 1910s that I extract the trope of the “hermaphrodite,” a figure, or a literary device, that agitates an oppressive sexual regime by combining two sexes or erasing both. My purpose in investigating this trope in literature during this period is to demonstrate the counter-discourses to a sexual regime that was being imposed upon the citizenry as the nation-state advanced its national and imperial designs. As Japan consolidated state power, colonized neighbors, strengthened the military, and continued industrialization during this period, the hermaphrodite emerges to signal the direction in which the state and its medico-scientific apparatus was directing society. As sexologists and medical practitioners continued reinforcing and instantiating categories of the “male” and “female,” “normal” and “pathological,” the hermaphrodite gave the lie to the dimorphic sexual paradigm. Modern Japan made the hermaphrodite an issue because the modern subject had to be male or female; anything else became unintelligible.

In an essay entitled “Joshi kyōiku ni taisuru kibō”¹² (“Expectations of Girls’ Education”)¹³ published in 1896, women’s rights advocate Shimizu Shikin imagines a hypothetical hermaphrodite in his/her “perfectly formed body” (*kanzen naru katachi*) as a “complete human being” (*kanzen naru hito*)¹⁴ and later uses this figure as the paradigm for several characters in her short stories. Shikin breaks the causal link between sex and gender, thereby refuting the popular notion that behavior is rooted in the body. The hermaphrodite figure appears again in the early work of Tanizaki, demonstrating his keen interest, intellectually and aesthetically, in the European Decadence movement, including the sexual freedom and exoticism intrinsic to it. Stories such as “The Secret” (Himitsu, 1911), among others, valorize and preserve sexual possibilities that sexology would close off. These representations reinforce a fluidity of sex in bodies that refuse subjugation, thereby complicating the trajectory of the dominant sexual ideology. In the remainder of this essay, I examine this complicated term and then explore Shikin’s and Tanizaki’s representations of ambiguously sexed individuals.

MANY TERMS, MANY NEBULOUS CONCEPTS

I follow Dreger’s reasoning in using the term “hermaphrodite” for “subjects of anatomically double, doubtful,

and/or mistaken sex...”¹⁵ Although the word is considered by some to be offensive or frightening today,¹⁶ the categories of male, female, and hermaphrodite were quite changeable at the turn of the last century, and “hermaphrodite” was the term that was primarily used during the historical period under study herein. In using the term, I wish to convey the sense of confusion and potential misunderstanding that existed at the time. Several Japanese terms referring to persons of doubtful sex were in use during the period, such as “*futanari*,” “*hannannyō*,” “*otoko-onna*,” and “*han’in’yōsha*.”¹⁷ The neutral term Shikin uses, *ryōsei guyūsha*, means having the genitalia of both sexes. It is not only stiff and academic-sounding but ambiguous, for the term includes homosexuality as well.¹⁸ Moreover, it includes both *ryōsei* (both sexes) and *chūsei* (neutral/in between), as Robertson defines them, though I mainly discuss individuals having characteristics of both sexes (*ryōsei*). Yet, individuals caught in between (*chūsei*), violating the norms of maleness and femaleness, lend themselves to interrogation in figurative terms. *Chūsei* “emphasizes the erasure or nullification of differences.”¹⁹ Since it was believed that “biological sex” determined behavior, the neutral body refers to the discrepancy between gender markers, such as hair or clothing, and so-called sex. The concept of difference underlies the necessity of both terms. Not only is the category of “female” the other of “male,” but *ryōsei* (and *chūsei*) is an additional *other* necessary to the naturalized binary of male and female. Both violate, or dismantle, the biological sex-determines-behavior rule. Whether *ryōsei* or *chūsei*, I would like to be clear that the terms “hermaphrodite,” “intersexual,” and “DSD” (disorders of sex development) are all problematic, and activists and intersexed persons today do not agree on the use of these terms.

“Hermaphrodite,” problematic as the term may be today, denotes male and female organs or tissue in the same body. It is not *desire* that is androgynous, as some would have it (then and now); it is the *body*. Desire is the very thing that troubles societal norms so deeply. That a person who appears to be a particular sex feels desire for someone of the same sex, disturbs the logic of heteronormativity and its pathologizing of same sex desire, which is at the root of sexologists’ refusal of “true” hermaphroditism.

In the early 20th century, the translation of a book entitled *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (1908) by philosopher and poet Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) exacerbated the confusion over terms

¹² Shimizu Shikin, “Joshi kyōiku ni taisuru kibō” (“Expectations of Girls’ Education”), in *Shikin zenshū*, ed. Kozai Yoshishige (Tokyo: Sōdo bunka, 1983), 477-82.

¹³ I’ve written about this essay in “Beyond Modern: Shimizu Shikin and ‘Two Modern Girls’” and translation of “Two Modern Girls (Tōsei futari musume, 1897) by Shimizu Shikin, *Critical Asian Studies* (39.3) September 2007: 447-481 and elsewhere.

¹⁴ Shikin, “Joshi kyōiku,” 481.

¹⁵ Dreger, *Hermaphrodites and the Medical Invention of Sex*, 30.

¹⁶ Emi Koyama, “From ‘Intersex’ to ‘DSD’: Toward a Queer Disability Politics of Gender” (keynote speech delivered at the Translating Identity conference, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vermont, February, 2006); Dreger et al 732.

¹⁷ Miyatake Gaikotsu, *Hannannyōkō (Thought on Hermaphroditism)*, 26.

¹⁸ Shirasu Masako, *Ryōsei guyū no bi (The Beauty of Hermaphroditism)* (Tokyo: Shinchosha, 1997), 17-18.

¹⁹ Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 50.

and their definitions. Feminist socialist Aoyama (later Yamakawa) Kikue translated a version of the book in the magazine *Safuran* (*Saffron*) in 1914 and subsequently in book form in 1919. Aoyama translates Edwards' title as *Chūseiron* (*On the Intermediate Sex*). However, Carpenter does not write on the category of the hermaphrodite; his book is an apologia for homosexuality. Carpenter states that women may have "a strong dash of the masculine temperament" and there are men with a "feminine sensibility."²⁰ He cites Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895)²¹, who wrote of people whose bodies belonged to one sex but mentally and emotionally belonged to the other: "[. . .] there were men, for instance, who might be described as of a feminine soul enclosed in a male body."²² Consequently, such people would fall in love with others of their own sex. This was Carpenter's purpose: to explain and justify homosexuality. He describes such types of people stereotypically: males tend to be timid, gentle, and emotional; females are bold, active, and fiery.²³ Whether extreme and exaggerated or of a "normal" type, they belong to "the Intermediate race" ("*chūseiteki shuzoku*" in Aoyama's translation).²⁴ Both Edwards' book in English and Aoyama's abridged translation in Japanese were influential. In addition to the example of Aoyama, the very popular writer Yoshiya Nobuko refers to Carpenter and his ideas.²⁵ Therefore, the web of terms and ideas referring to hermaphroditism in Japanese and a similar complex of notions in the west reinforce the imprecision and misunderstanding of the concepts.

In 1922, journalist, publisher, and satirist Miyatake Gaikotsu published a book on hermaphroditism entitled *Hannannyōkō* (*Thought on Hermaphroditism*), a collection of newspaper articles from the early 1700s to the early 1920s on hermaphrodites, along with Gaikotsu's remarks and explanations. He uses the term "han'inyō" for hermaphrodite, coined after *futanari*. He explains in the preface that he uses the title *Hannannyōkō* based on a series of books, *Wu tsā tsu* (*Five Miscellanies*), written in China at the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), which mentions a person who is a man fifteen days of the month and a woman for the other fifteen days. One of the entries in a Japanese medical dictionary, *Byōmei ikai* (*Disease Names and Explanations*, 1686), echoes

this idea of sex transmutation in the course of a month.

In sum, language was not consistent in signifying categories of subjects, and the subjects themselves were not well understood. However, the subjects I investigate in Shikin's and Tanizaki's stories figuratively embody both sexes. In so doing, they reveal how sex is constituted in the subject and how disruptive transgression of sex and gender roles can be.

SHIKIN'S "MODERN COUPLE"

Two brief stories comprise "Imayō fūfu katagi"²⁶ ("The Nature of the Modern Couple"), both negotiating wifely subject-positions vis-à-vis the realities of marital relations and their ideals. The subtitle of the first part is "The Scholar-Wife not Becoming to a Housewife" (*Sōmen wa tsubushite mo tsubushi no kikanu gakusha no okusama*). The opening presents a blissful, intimate, loving couple whose greatest concern is what gifts to buy each other. Enjoying their "*dōken kōsai*" (equality in social intercourse), which is based on the wife's status as a schoolteacher and her contribution to the household finances, they send each other off to work and go for outings holding each other's hands. This sort of tender and equal regard for each other, especially publicly, was highly unusual in 1897. However, the wife's unexpected pregnancy and subsequent delivery of a baby change their lives. Expenses increase, and money becomes tight. Because they both work, they need the services of a maid and a nurse, whom they eventually relieve in order to save money. The wife then assumes their responsibilities. Finally, at the husband's behest, the wife unwillingly quits her job as schoolteacher because she cannot manage all of the childcare and housework while also fulfilling her teaching responsibilities. From this point, the husband uses rougher language and issues arrogant orders to her, in no small part because she is not used to housework and often makes mistakes. The wife feels the sting of his insinuating remarks and criticism and wonders why he doesn't help in the kitchen. On one occasion the husband tells his wife that he wants to eat *sōmen* (noodles), so she prepares the meal with the hope that she might recover credit by preparing the dish well. However, she pours cold water over the *sōmen* instead of boiling it. To cover up the failure, she feigns a sudden pain in her stomach. Her husband is alarmed and immediately asks where he should rub her. As he nurses her, she is relieved to know that she hasn't lost his love and confesses the *sōmen* blunder. The husband realizes that his treatment of his wife in making her perform housework, which she is not good at, ruins the merits she does possess, just as the method the wife uses to make the *sōmen* ruined the *sōmen*. He tells her he must think of a new idea. The husband ends the vignette with a pun (*kakekotoba*) on his name, Shimota, to express his regret (*shimatta*).

On the first page of the story, the narrator immediately calls into question the gender positions of the husband and wife through their ostensibly equal partnership in the mar-

²⁰ Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1908), 17.

²¹ Ulrichs, "convinced from an early stage that male-male love was natural and inborn, was the most determined and influential pioneer of homosexual emancipation." (Volkmar Sigusch, *Karl Heinrich Ulrichs: Der erste Schwule der Weltgeschichte* [*Karl Heinrich Ulrichs: The First Gay Man in World History*], (Berlin: Verlag rosa Winkel, 2000), 18. Sigusch maintains that Ulrichs ought to be acknowledged as the "father" of the homosexual movement" (20).

²² Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, 19.

²³ Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, 26.

²⁴ Edward Carpenter, "Chūseiron" ("On the Intermediate Sex"), in *Safuran* (*Saffron*), trans. Aoyama Kikue, May, 1914, 16.

²⁵ Michiko Suzuki, *Becoming Modern Women: Love and Female Identity in Prewar Japanese Literature and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) 37.

²⁶ Shikin, "Imayō fūfu katagi," in *Shikin zenshū*, ed. Kozai Yoshishige (Tokyo: Sōdo bunka, 1983), 88-92.

riage:

[. . .] in the manner of their greeting each other, one couldn't tell which one was the husband...The wife's role is divided between them. Every morning when they're preparing to leave for work, the wife sends off her husband by bringing his walking stick to him, while in consideration for his wife, the husband directs the maid to attend to his wife's shoes.²⁷

Gender positions are confused by both partners violating the traditional roles created for them. The husband is more polite in his greeting to his wife than custom demands. Moreover, he is too considerate of his wife regarding things that need not concern him, such as her preparation to go to work, especially considering that her mere going out to work violates the norm of a wife in this class. They are hermaphroditic in the sense that they both display gendered behaviors of both sexes (*ryōsei*), thereby confounding the logic that biological sex determines behavior. In her essay "Expectations of Girls' Education," mentioned earlier, Shikin reasons that social expectations of gendered behavior are what lead people to scorn hermaphrodites, despite the fact that a person possessing the reproductive organs of both sexes is complete. That is, the hermaphrodite can perform in the style of both sexes and is not restricted to one set of behaviors. This is preferable because, "We cannot distinguish the traits necessary for men from those for women."²⁸

In effect, the husband is also a wife, while the wife is also a husband. The wife demonstrates her agency in spite of her gender, which allows her independence from a husband who delimits her action, behavior, and self-definition. She authorizes her own teaching at a girls' school and her attention to her husband. "Whenever they take a walk, holding hands," either one could be saying, "Today is my treat,"²⁹ because the wife has the financial independence that affords her the luxury of treating her husband. She posits herself through a rejection of a traditional wifely role and an assumption of the husband's role, defining the gendered boundaries around which she lives her life.

The shifting positions of the wife before and after giving birth reveal assumptions about women's roles. It is the biological capability of the female that leads to the husband trying to manipulate her into his notion of female behavior. Because she bears a child, he insists that she assume household and child-care responsibilities, and ultimately give up her teaching job. From this point on, the husband attempts to relocate his wife's subject-position according to his view of what a woman should be, apparently changed from her pre-baby position. In other words, once she has fulfilled a biological imperative, she must also fulfill a male-inscribed female gender imperative. All of their discord stems from the wife's discomfort with a role into which she has been forced after she has the baby. The wife reveals in her struggle an abject position through her rejection of the housewife role, thereby ex-

posing the boundary between the domain of the reinscribed female position, which fits comfortably in the housewife role, and of the "uninhabitable" realm beyond.³⁰ In her husband's view now, the wife's biological sex fully informs her gendered sex.

In Butler's terms, through an identification with the female sex, women who constitute the marginalized zones in contrast to the reinscribed female subject—"unfeminine" (*onna-rashikunai*) women, lesbians, unmarried women, "oversexed" women—are abjected or excluded. I would add hermaphrodite to this list of marginalized and abjected "peripheral sexualities." The subject is constituted through this process. In spite of the fact that the couple's roles were androgynous and her self-determined position was in play, her abject possibilities remained untested: "Those accustomed to the subjugation of women (*dansonjohi*),"³¹ purposely come to see the couple with such an unusual reputation. The wife was not subjected by her husband but posited by her own self. However, once the husband subjects his wife, puts her into a female subject-position dictated by patriarchal prescriptions of femaleness, and otherwise treats her as inferior to himself, the abjected female-position falls into relief. She is not happy with the traditional wifely role, nor is she skilled at it. In this sense, she moves toward an "unlivable zone," thereby exposing her husband's presumptions of the sexed subject and her own.³² In other words, in the course of the story, their sexes change, from hermaphroditic to "male" and "female," and then presumably back to hermaphroditic, which is more satisfactory for both.

In this struggle between and within roles of marriage partners, Shikin depicts the institution of marriage as unstable. The partnership begins to crumble when the equality and interchangeability of the partners disintegrate. Because marriage is an historical construct, the requirements and definitions of it change according to social and economic developments. The couple in Part I of "Imayō fūfu katagi" is depicted as ideal; they enjoy equal rights with each other. She has a job that she is good at and, we can assume, that she finds fulfilling. Their respectful and loving conduct towards one another, or in other words, the wife behaving in a "masculine" way and the husband in a "womanly" way, is so unusual that they are a spectacle (*kenbutsu*) that people come to see. In fact, at the time, such unfeminine behavior as a woman cutting her hair very short was proscribed. Similar to the strange couple, the hermaphrodite may distract and disrupt the expectations

²⁷ Shikin, "Imayō fūfu katagi," 88.

²⁸ Shikin, "Joshi kyōiku," 481.

²⁹ Shikin, "Imayō fūfu katagi," 88.

³⁰ The process of "assuming" a sex, by which the subject is formed, requires the "production of a domain of abject beings," those "repudiated," or denied by the subject, according to Butler. This process is based on the notion of the "abject," outlining the border or margin of what comprises the subject. Abject positions are what corresponding normative, hegemonic positions are not. Butler explains that the subject maintains its domain by repudiating abject "zones of social life" in order to protect its legitimacy and acceptance. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 3.

³¹ Shikin, "Imayō fūfu katagi," 88.

³² Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 3.

of onlookers if his/her sexual identification or appearance is different from his/her behavior. Violations of expectations of sexed behavior strike at an intensely sensitive nerve, proving how fundamental sex is to subject formation.

More than unstable, in a sense the couple's entire relationship can be seen as abjected and the husband ostracized, if not abjected himself. The relationship rejects custom and functions successfully outside the expectations of society, though they are thoroughly interpolated into a conventional social world of profession and status. The couple consciously acknowledges their refusal of the dominant ideology by saying that if they are not embarrassed by their outward display of courtesy and regard for each other, then they have nothing to be concerned about. However, after she has the baby, the husband wants his wife to assume housewife responsibilities. The marriage changes from ideal to unhappy because of their new roles and because their roles are tied to economic constraints. The institution of marriage as an economic arrangement that guarantees a man's ownership of property and children becomes an issue between the couple when the husband enforces the fulfillment of the role of middle-class wife.³³ The couple must renegotiate their marriage because the husband finally understands that the latest arrangement is not working.

The caveats about marriage dramatized in this and other stories by Shikin, attest to her distrust of a union based on Confucian ideals of womanhood and wifely self-sacrifice and obedience to a husband. In "Koware yubiwa" ("The Broken Ring," 1891), her debut story, which won her an audience, Shikin calls for a rethinking of traditional (patriarchal) marriage as instead, a union of two equal partners, equally educated and equally fulfilled.

Equality in marriage is one cause, but fundamental to it is women having rights equal to those of men. Shikin deploys hermaphroditic figures to advance this cause by demonstrating the hypocrisy of prescribed sex roles and the false logic of the naturalized and overdetermined link between body and behavior.

TANIZAKI'S "SECRET"

[It] is a well-known fact that in Tanizaki's early work this sort of protagonist indulging in hermaphroditic (*herumafuroditikku*) self-intoxication frequently appears...--Noguchi Takehiko³⁴

Noguchi's assertion that hermaphroditic-type characters frequently appear in Tanizaki's early work is well known may come as a surprise to some. Much Tanizaki criticism focuses on the writer's fascination with the West, his oriental-

³³ Middle-class women customarily stayed within the home. Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women, 1890-1910," in *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*, ed. Gail Lee Bernstein (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 158.

³⁴ Noguchi Takehiko, *Tanizaki Jun'ichiro ron (On Tanizaki Jun'ichiro)* (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1973), 69.

ism, and his sexual themes including sado-masochism. While these comprise the core of Tanizaki scholarship, central to an understanding of his work, my concern is his particular deployment of sexual politics and tropes. The presence of the hermaphrodite is provocative, and investigating the means by which the writer achieves representations of such a figure is revealing of the sexual economy and the constructed nature of sex. Tanizaki renders sexology's binary model of sex flawed at best, if not wholly inadequate.

In addition, Tanizaki's use of the hermaphroditic figure coincides with his interest in decadence and aesthetics. He exploits the hermaphrodite in a sharply contrastive way to Shikin, his only cause being art for art's sake. In "The Secret," allusions to French literature, along with the setting of Asakusa and the presence of the doubly sexed (*ryōsei*) protagonist, contribute to the decadent atmosphere. Moreover, the narrative showcases Tanizaki's use of spectacle, which he masterfully develops to enhance the hermaphroditic character.

The first-person narrator of "The Secret," "Mr. S. K." (as written in the Japanese text), limns a dreamy world of old Tokyo—hidden enclaves, monasteries, and strange neighborhoods. The protagonist is the Des Esseintes-type³⁵, blasé, world-weary anti-hero. This topos of boredom coincides with *ryōki*, or curiosity hunting, popular during the 1920s and 30s. Out of boredom the curiosity seeker desires to experience something transgressive.³⁶ Tanizaki's S. K. seems to be of this type, asking, "Is there nothing strange and mysterious enough to enliven these jaded nerves? Can't I live in a barbaric, absurd dream world removed from reality?"³⁷ He feels the desire to hide out downtown (*shitamachi*) and savor an air of secrecy. After settling into his room in a temple, S. K. starts a practice of getting drunk, dressing in disguise, and going out to stroll. After experimenting with various costumes, he sees a woman's kimono that he absolutely must try on. He then becomes smitten, so to speak, with wearing women's clothing. "Sometimes I even felt jealous of women, who, because of their circumstances, could dress up without hesitation in the silk crepes I loved so much."³⁸ (Notably, S. K. positions himself as a woman also through jealousy, which he expresses for women, and other women look jealous of him as a woman

³⁵ The protagonist of *Against Nature*, Des Esseintes, is in a state of degeneration when the novel opens. Contemptuous of humanity and exasperated by its banality, he exhausts himself in all forms of revelry and pleasure to the point of decrepitude. And still, tedium overwhelms him. Des Esseintes epitomizes the anti-hero of twentieth-century Western literature and the abulic young man of Tanizaki's early literature. It is the inchoate form of the abulic protagonist that finds its apotheosis in Des Esseintes from *À Rebours* (variously translated as *Against the Grain* or *Against Nature*), although Huysmans incurs a more direct debt in the work of Charles Baudelaire. This anti-hero re-emerges in several short stories by Tanizaki.

³⁶ Jeffrey Angles, "Seeking the Strange: *Ryōki* and the Navigation of Normality in Interwar Japan," *Monumenta Nipponica* 63.1 (2009): 117.

³⁷ Tanizaki Jun'ichirō. "Himitsu" ("The Secret"), in *Tanizaki Jun'ichirō zenshū* 1 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1966), 196.

³⁸ Tanizaki, "Himitsu," 199.

a number of times throughout the story.)

Ensnared in his living quarters, S. K. surrounds himself with books full of strange tales and illustrations, including Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Sign of Four* and "even a French book on wondrous Sexuology [sic]."³⁹ That the book is French is conspicuous, since Austro-German researchers dominated sexology. Of course, the book need not refer to an actual one, but I suggest the strong possibility that this "French book" refers to Huysmans' *Against Nature*. For one, though not a book of sexology, *Against Nature* tantalizes with an array of sexual practices, "perversions," and delights, including sex with a hermaphrodite. The other argument in support of this book is the precedent set by Oscar Wilde in inserting Huysmans' novel and thus its decadent implications into *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.⁴⁰

At the same time, Tanizaki's "French book" gestures to a famous work of sexology entitled *Le fétichisme dans l'amour* ("Fetishism in Love," 1887) by Alfred Binet, who was the first to name the phenomenon of fetishism.⁴¹ Nye points out that "Fetishism in Love" received wide exposure because of its publication in the distinguished journal *Revue philosophique*. Such a reference in "The Secret" would be fitting in light of the prominent role that fetishism plays in Tanizaki's work. It could be said that S. K.'s attraction to feminine dress is a fetish.

Against Nature and "Fetishism in Love" implicate each other in the sense that Des Esseintes displays classic fetishistic yearnings reminiscent of psychiatric case studies, as Nye describes them.⁴² One of these incidents includes Des Esseintes' encounter with Miss Urania. To overcome his sexual impotence, Des Esseintes would imagine Miss Urania transforming into a man while he would become a woman. "This exchange of sex between Miss Urania and himself had excited him tremendously."⁴³ However, this fetish fails because he finds her feminine in her behavior in spite of her having become a man physically. The hermaphroditic state does not arouse him.

Clearly, Des Esseintes' enervated and bored condition is extreme, to the point of torpor. Tanizaki's deployment of boredom resembles Huysmans', but Tanizaki's characters rouse themselves to action. In S. K.'s case, he develops a practice of dressing as a woman and going to the theater.

As if performing a ritual, he assumes another sex as he dresses himself in differently sexed apparel and make-up:

From the touch of the long underkimono, the decorative collar, the underskirt, and the red silk lined sleeves that rus-

³⁹ Tanizaki, "Himitsu," 198.

⁴⁰ In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Lord Henry gives Dorian a copy of a "yellow book," the color signifying the decadent French novel. Stanley Weintraub, *Beardsley: A Biography* (New York: George Braziller, 1967) 28.

⁴¹ Robert Nye, "The Medical Origins of Sexual Fetishism," in *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, eds. Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 21.

⁴² Nye, "Medical Origins," 25.

⁴³ Joris-Karl Huysmans, *A Rebours (Against Nature)*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Penguin Books), 97.

ted, my flesh was given the same sensations relished by the skin of all ordinary women. I put on white make-up from the nape of my neck to my wrists, and a wig in the gingko-leaf style. I covered my head with a large scarf. Then I boldly lost myself in the crowd of the night streets.

It was as if feminine blood began to flow through my veins naturally, and I gradually lost masculine feelings and my masculine pose.⁴⁴

The narrative draws the reader's eye to the objects of the protagonist's focalization, articles of clothing, and his somatic, haptic experience. It continues with his body parts and then his entire figure vanishing into a crowd. Images are restricted to the body or embellishments of the body such as make-up or clothing. This sequestering of the reader's attention induces a visual claustrophobia. The mental vision lingers on S. K.'s body, make-up, and clothing, until "feminine blood" comes with "masculine feelings."

The narrative represents sex as mutable and unstable. Gender markers, such as clothing and make-up, are capable of changing S. K.'s sex. At one point the protagonist delightfully exclaims, "[. . .] I saw myself reflected in a large mirror elegantly and completely transformed into a woman." He notes that his eyes and mouth move like a woman's.⁴⁵

In the above scene and throughout the story, the narrative provides the hermaphrodite's focalization and omits reactions from others to her/him. Filtered through S. K.'s narrative, others gaze at him/her, but the reader does not know their thoughts. As if to say the normative point of view is insignificant, the hermaphrodite controls the narrative, thereby asserting a subject who accords to neither model of dimorphic sex. In the age of sexology, which insists upon bifurcated sexual ideals, S. K. gleefully enjoys his sexual fluidity.

The protagonist continues to monopolize the gaze. In a scene a few pages after he feels feminine blood flowing through his veins, S. K. goes to the second floor of a jammed movie theater.

The film would stop occasionally, and when the lights went on suddenly, I peered from deep within the shadow of my large headscarf, surveying the faces of the throng overflowing the theater. Tobacco smoke permeated the air above the heads of the crowd below, like a cloud wafting up from a valley bed. I was secretly elated that many men peeked curiously at my old-style, large scarf, and many women stole covetous glances at the shades of my chic outfit. Among the spectacle of the women (*mimono no onna*), it appeared that none was as remarkable as I in terms of being unique, alluring, and beautiful.⁴⁶

In this case the first-person narrator manipulates the "camera" eye to him/herself vis-à-vis other characters and spatial organization. S/he is situated above the crowd and when the lights go on, the spectators presumably must look up,

⁴⁴ Tanizaki, "Himitsu," 200.

⁴⁵ Tanizaki, "Himitsu," 201.

⁴⁶ Tanizaki, "Himitsu," 203.

craning their necks or shifting in their seats in order to see him/her. In so doing, s/he draws the gaze of reader and character alike to the spectacle of his/her womanly beauty; the shaft of light that has spilled out onto the screen shifts to the second floor seats now becoming a spotlight trained on S. K. The spectacle that was the film is now S. K., who savors his/her spectacle-ness, as it were.

It is as if Tanizaki writes this story using a mechanical eye (or camera) through which to separate out his protagonist. S/he is distanced from others even among a crowd. Tanizaki's strategy is his cinematic-type focusing of attention through defamiliarization. The familiar objects of kimono, ginkgo-leaf style hair, and so on, are abruptly rendered strange on a man who enjoys feminine blood running through his veins. Tanizaki's narrative telescopes these articles of clothing, painted lips, and so forth, and then widens the image to include perhaps "real" women staring at the protagonist. Or, the widened image takes in the loss of masculine feelings contrasting with a woman's eyes and mouth.

The narrative achieves this scopic regime by first delineating space between the audience and the smoky air above, followed by sexually distinguishing between the men in the audience and S. K., and then distinguishing between the women and S. K. S/he is individuated as different from the men and from the women, maintaining an hermaphroditic position.

Martin Jay identifies three visual subcultures, or "scopic regimes of modernity." Corresponding to movements in western European art, these scopic regimes are: Cartesian perspectivalism; the "art of describing"; and the baroque, the last two of which offer alternatives to the hegemony of the Cartesian tradition. Cartesian perspective refers to a singular, eternal, and disembodied point of view:

The abstract coldness of the perspectival gaze meant the withdrawal of the painter's emotional entanglement with the objects depicted in geometricalized space. The participatory involvement of more absorptive visual modes was diminished, if not entirely suppressed, as the gap between spectator and spectacle widened.⁴⁷

The Cartesian perspective is bound up with a scientific worldview and subjective rationality in philosophy. Inherent in this rationalism is an "unrelenting dualism" between subject and object, body and mind.⁴⁸ Thomas Lamarre adds that Cartesianism has also helped create a system of inquiry, categories of knowledge, and the way in which we see connections among categories. Tanizaki challenges Cartesian perspectivalism by drawing scenes that play on perspective of subject and object and male and female, and revel in ekphrastic delight, wherein the narrative seems to sketch a visual work of art. In the scene described above and elsewhere,

⁴⁷ Martin Jay, "Scopic Regimes of Modernity," in *Vision and Visuality*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988), 8.

⁴⁸ Thomas Lamarre, introduction to *Mechademia 7: Lines of Sight*, ed. Frenchy Lunning (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), x.

the text has a close connection to art, certainly in content and style, but significantly in the layout of scenes as well. Space is proportioned and scaled. At the same time, his alternative visual order renders human subjects as disconnected. It overcomes sexual dualism and destabilizes the unified subject. Tanizaki's style in achieving this is similar to baroque, as Jay describes it. The baroque dazzles and disorients with a multitude of images, refusing a monocular perspective and celebrating excess.

S. K. loves being looked at until he is overpowered by the charm of an enchanting woman, who happens to be sitting nearby in the movie theater. He feels like an "unsightly, wretched monster" (*minikuku asamashii bakemono*) in the make-up he so carefully applied and the kimono he so painstakingly dressed himself in. "I couldn't compete at all with either her femininity or her beauty."⁴⁹

Coincidentally, he had a love affair with this beautiful woman some years earlier and dropped her. They exchange notes and then resume the affair, but she insists that he not know where she lives. So, he is blindfolded when he comes to her house. He loves the thrill and the dreamlike quality of the affair (and the disorientation, at first). She, on the other hand, fears the spell will be broken by the mundane reality of her living circumstances, if he finds out where she lives. And, of course, that is what happens.

S. K.'s use of the word monster (*bakemono*) to describe himself, in contrast to the beautiful woman, or "yōjō" (enchantress), as he calls her, is fraught with meaning. Teratology enjoys a long history in Japan. The category of *bakemono* or *obake* includes a variety of monsters, goblins, ghosts, phantoms, and so on. *Bakemono* literally means, "changing thing," but it also extends to aberrant and oddly formed entities.⁵⁰ Without venturing into a "pandemonium" of such creatures, as Michael Foster calls it, it is worthwhile considering the significance of Tanizaki's use of the word *bakemono*.

S. K.'s femininity and beauty are a sham next to the woman's. Yet, instead of calling himself a fake or a woman *manqué*, he emphasizes his grotesqueness through the word *bakemono*. Anthony Chambers translates *bakemono* as "freak,"⁵¹ capturing that aspect of monstrosity, though he might have chosen the word "monster" or "horror show." S. K. is indeed a "changing thing," assuming different forms: male, female, and hermaphroditic. Moreover, S. K. is *other* to the norm.

The hermaphrodite is a monster; both resist classification,⁵² transgress boundaries, oppose "nature," have befuddling bodies, and are other to the standard or heteronormative human. The hermaphrodite/monster affirms the

⁴⁹ Tanizaki, "Himitsu," 205.

⁵⁰ Michael Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade: Japanese Monsters and the Culture of Yokai* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 6.

⁵¹ Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, "The Secret," in *The Gourmet Club: A Sextet trans. Anthony Chambers* (Tokyo and London: Kodansha, 2003), 59.

⁵² Michael Foster, *Pandemonium and Parade*, 10.

normative subject in its difference⁵³ but may also be a threatening reminder of any lurking inadequacy in the normative subject. Despite changing definitions of these concepts over time and culture, the monstrous and the normative are held fast in “a mutually constitutive relationship.”⁵⁴

“The Secret” invokes the monstrous, and therewith reaffirms S. K.’s decadence and decadent surroundings. While directing attention to the beauty of the woman to whom he compares himself, he highlights the speciousness that lurks skin deep beneath his artfully wrought beauty. Just as the discourse surrounding monsters speaks to the preoccupations and concerns of a society at any historical moment, so, too, does the discourse on the hermaphrodite. Nevertheless, Tanizaki deploys the hermaphrodite to serve his own artistic purpose. In so doing, the narrative demonstrates the mutability of the subject, sexually and psychologically.

Many secrets constitute “The Secret.” Odaka Shūya asserts that in Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, only a secret can impart romance (mystery and wonder) to modern life and that Tanizaki implies the same notion in “The Secret.”⁵⁵ Be that as it may, S. K. secretly dresses as a woman until an ex-lover recognizes him. He secretly visits a secret lover until he tires of her, when her secret location is exposed and the allure evaporates. But not all secrets are created equal; they provide varying degrees of titillation. I maintain that “The Secret” exploits sex as *the* secret, while speaking of it incessantly, as Foucault says about sexual discourse of modern (western) societies.⁵⁶ The secret has a multitude of possibilities, just as sexualities do. “The Secret” capitalizes on the hermaphroditic figure effectively to achieve the possibilities of sex, breaking down the gaze and perspective, and creating art while implicitly commenting on art.

While Japanese sexologists, along with their western counterparts, persevered to prove that “true hermaphroditism” did not exist, narratives such as Shikin’s and Tanizaki’s illuminated issues that troubled the efforts to achieve the modern, dimorphic sexual paradigm, even if their hermaphroditic characters may not actually have doubly sexed bodies. As Foucault most famously outlined, the history of sexuality is the history of discourse.⁵⁷ To be clear, there was no rupture in the history of the hermaphrodite in Japan. The discourses became legal and medicalized because of the creation of the nation-state and its subsequent needs in terms of soldiers, workers, and wives at home. The negative view of the hermaphrodite persisted from the pre-modern era to

the modern, but now the figure was implicated in a network of power interests (state, military, medical, scientific) in the historical moment. The hermaphrodites represented in “The Nature of the Modern Couple” are cast in a positive light, and in “The Secret” as intriguing. The fact that discourses arose to contradict or perturb authoritative dicta accords with Foucault’s refutation of the “repressive hypothesis,” in which, “Power operated as a mechanism of attraction; it drew out those peculiarities over which it kept watch. Pleasure spread to the power that harried it; power anchored the pleasure it uncovered.”⁵⁸ Counter discourses of the hermaphrodite continued as did the power interests that prevailed.

⁵³ Magrit Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster: Encounters with the Vulnerable Self* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2002), 28.

⁵⁴ Shildrick, *Embodying the Monster*, 29.

⁵⁵ Odaka Shūya, *Seinenki: Tanizaki Jun’ichiro ron (Adolescence: On Tanizaki Jun’ichiro)* (Tokyo: Ozawa shoten, 1999), 106.

⁵⁶ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 35.

⁵⁷ Others, of course, have demonstrated the same idea, and in detail. For example, Thomas Laqueur’s *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1992) and Anne Fausto-Sterling’s *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000) make it clear that “knowledge” about sex and the body constantly changes.

⁵⁸ *The History of Sexuality*, 45.

ORCHID PAINTINGS BY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CHINESE COURTESANS

EROTIC PERFORMANCES AND TOKENS OF SEDUCTION



Xue Susu; *Outline Ink (Wild) Orchid* (section); 1601; handscroll; ink on paper; 31.8 x 598.17cm; The Honolulu Museum of Art.

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ABSTRACT

A survey conducted by Ellen Johnston Laing indicates that seventeenth-century Chinese courtesans, who were painters, preferred to paint orchids. Scholars have suggested that courtesan painters produced paintings of orchids of acceptable quality by using few and simple brush strokes during their gatherings with literati patrons. Other scholars have demonstrated that courtesans made use of the symbolism of orchids to establish themselves as hermits, or as secluded beauties waiting for their soul-mates. This article offers another approach to interpreting this phenomenon: understanding how audiences viewed courtesans' paintings of orchids and how courtesans derived benefit from those paintings. I suggest that the painting of orchids was seen as a sensual performance and that the orchids were seen as representations of the painter's physical beauty. I also contend that orchid paintings were presented and received as tokens of courtship or seduction, which courtesans used to their advantage.

INTRODUCTION

A statistical survey conducted by Ellen Johnston Laing indicates that the favorite subject matter painted by Chinese courtesans during the seventeenth century was the orchid.¹ Laing proposes that orchids are relatively easy subjects to learn and paint; one could achieve an acceptable result with just basic art training.² Tao Yongbai and Li Shi offer similar explanations, suggesting that painting orchids took relatively little time and required less technical skill than that needed to paint landscapes. Considering that orchids could be painted in a short amount of time and that painting was only one of the activities offered at parties or gatherings between patrons and courtesans, orchids would have been good subjects for

¹ Ellen Johnston Laing, "Women Painters in Traditional China," in *Flowering in the Shadows: Women in the History of Chinese and Japanese Painting*, ed. Marsha Weidner (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990), 91-93.

² ———, "Wives, Daughters, and Lovers: Three Ming Dynasty Women Painters," in *Views from Jade Terrace: Chinese Women Artists 1300-1912*, ed. Marsha Weidner, et al. (Indianapolis, IN: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1988), 37.

courtesans to paint as an entertainment for their patrons during group socializing.³

In Hsu Wen-mei's studies of the meaning of orchids, she concludes that courtesan Ma Shouzhen 馬守真 (1548-1604) used her paintings of orchids to allude to Qu Yuan 屈原 (343-278BCE). In the seventeenth century, orchids were often associated with the scholar-poet Qu Yuan, who used orchids in his poems to symbolize seclusion and his loyalty to the state of Chu. Ma Shouzhen successfully converted that symbolic meaning—expressing loyalty to one's lord—to express her loyalty to her romantic love.⁴ Daria Berg comments that courtesan Xue Susu 薛素素 (active 1575-1652) used orchids as the subjects of her poetry to represent herself as a hermit.⁵

The above discussion raises important points that require further investigation. As Ellen Johnston Laing and Li Shi have commented, when courtesans painted orchids at gatherings, they painted publically (i.e., in front of their patrons). Since courtesans often painted to please their patrons, the patrons' reactions to the paintings by courtesans might have dictated what and how the courtesans created. How were these courtesans being viewed while painting? How were the art work and the process of painting being viewed? As Hsu Wen-mei and Daria Berg have commented, courtesans made use of the symbolism of orchids—which was shared between them and their patrons—to represent their own virtue. Were other meanings attributed to orchids that were commonly known among circles of courtesans and patrons?

This article answers the above questions through examining inscriptions and paintings made by courtesans, as well as inscriptions written by their clients. I suggest that when

courtesans painted in front of their patrons, both the act of painting and the object of the painting were seen as sensual performances. While the subject of orchids in courtesans' paintings often alluded to Qu Yuan, I believe that painted orchids simultaneously referred to the physical bodies of the beautiful painters.⁶ This reference enabled the paintings of orchids to be given and received as tokens of seduction or courtship. I also believe the multiple meanings of orchids in the paintings by courtesans gave the courtesans flexibility to both highlight their virtue and entice their clients.

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY COURTESANS

The first emperor of the Ming dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), established the pleasure quarters in Nanjing, the administrative center, to host public functions for the court and scholar-officials. Courtesans were trained in many forms of highly skilled theatrical performances, as well as artistic pursuits, and specialized in hosting literary gatherings. Some courtesans were trained in literati pursuits—such as writing poems, painting and writing calligraphy, playing the zither, and singing opera—to serve prominent scholar-officials. By the seventeenth century, courtesan culture became a popular trend among elites and wealthy commoners and the pleasure quarters in the Qinhuai district of Nanjing were frequently visited by literati.⁷ Yu Huai 余懷 (1616-1696) described how he would hold literary parties in the garden of a courtesan named Li Shiniang 李十娘 (dates unknown) and have her hire additional courtesans to attend to the needs of his guests.⁸

PAINTINGS OF ORCHIDS BY COURTESANS

Many courtesans, such as Ma Shouzhen, were famous for painting orchids.⁹ Ma Shouzhen, also known as Xianglan

³ Tao Yongbai 陶咏白 and Li Shi 李澍, *Shiluo de lishi* (Chengsha: Hunan meishu chubanshe, 2000). Li Shi 李澍, "Mingdai mingyuan mingji huihua yishu bijiao," *Meishu shilun*, no. 1 (1992): 74-78. Painting was probably one of the activities in the parties or gatherings between courtesans and patrons. To paint a decent landscape painting often took many days. In contrast, completing an orchid painting with a few simple brush strokes probably took half an hour.

⁴ Hsu Wen-mei 許文美, "The Orchid and Bamboo Paintings of the Late Ming Courtesan Painter Ma Shou-chen," *The National Palace Museum Research Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (2004): 81-115.

⁵ Daria Berg, "Cultural Discourse on Xue Susu, A Courtesan in Late Ming China," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009): 183-185. Ma Shouzhen and Xue Susu were courtesans whose painting skills were praised by seventeenth-century literati. Also, a body of their paintings and writings is available for our discussion. Another famous courtesan, Gu Mei 顧眉 (1619-1664), was also a skillful painter of orchids. However, there are indications that three of her major works that feature orchids and are collected in museums today, were painted after her marriage.

⁶ Orchids were used frequently even before the Ming dynasty as a symbol of female beauty, usually referring to neglected or abandoned women. This will be discussed in detail in this article.

⁷ The term "literati" refers to men who studied the Confucian Classics. Some succeeded in passing the imperial examination and became scholar officials.

⁸ Yu Huai 余懷, *Banqiao zaji*. Edited by Li Haiyong 李海榮 and Jin Chengpin 金承平. (Nanjing: Nanjing chubansha, 2006), 14.

⁹ Wang Zhideng 王禛登, *Ma ji zhuan*. Edited by Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆. Ming Dynasty ed, In *Gen shi chao*. (Tainan: Zhuang yan wenhua shiye, 1995; reprint, *Si ku quan shu cun mu cong shu zi bu* vol. 193 and 194), 530-531. Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, *Jia yi sheng yan*. Vol. 17, In *Zhongguo yeshi jicheng xubian*. (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2000). Yu Huai 余懷, *Banqiao zaji*, 9-23. Courtesans such as Xue Susu, Gu Mei 顧眉 (1619-1664), Bian

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湘蘭 (orchid of the Xiang river) and Yuejiao 月嬌 (beauty of the moon), was a famous courtesan possessing multiple talents, who was active in the pleasure quarters of Nanjing. She was an accomplished singer, writer, poet, calligrapher, and painter, who had also written scripts for operas.¹⁰

Ma Shouzhen's contemporaries recognized her as a skilled orchid painter. In the entry on Ma Shouzhen in *Wusheng shi shi*, Jiang Shaoshu 姜紹書 (1573-1638) describes her as very skillful in painting orchids and bamboo and that her paintings were sought after. Jiang also compares her painting skill with that of two very famous artists: Zhao Mengjian 趙孟堅 (1199-c1267) of the southern Song dynasty and Guan Daosheng 管道升¹¹ (1262-1319) of the Yuan dynasty.¹² Zhao Mengjian was famous for painting flowers with the double-outline method¹³, and Guan Daosheng was famous for her paintings of bamboo and orchids. According to Wang Zhideng 王穉登 (1535-1612), Ma Shouzhen had mastered the skills of writing poems, calligraphy, and painting orchids.¹⁴ Wang Zhideng commented that Ma Shouzhen had learned the essence of orchid painting from two influential artists, Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322) and Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559).¹⁵

In Figure 1, Ma Shouzhen depicts an orchid plant as her subject matter and places it in the foreground. The shape of the rock is outlined. A light wash and dry brushwork are used to depict the texture of the rock. There is an indication of a ground plane, but no indication of a distant background. The overall composition is very simple and sparse, featuring only one orchid plant. The sparseness and simplicity of the single orchid and the inscriptions in Figure 1 indicate that the painting might have been produced within a very short time and could have been composed during a social gathering.

A small format fan painting in Figure 2 could have been created at a similar occasion. The painting features a rock and orchids on the right side with only an indication of the ground. The rock is outlined simply. The long orchid



Figure 1 Ma Shouzhen; *Orchid and Rock*; 1572; hanging scroll; ink on paper; 52.5 x 29.1cm; Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Sai 卞賽 (dates unknown), Bian Min 卞敏 (dates unknown), Kou Baimen 寇白門 (dates unknown), and many others were described as skillful in painting orchids.

¹⁰ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Lie chao shi ji xiaozhuan*, In *Mingdai zhuanji cong kan* vol. 11. (Taipei: Ming wen shuju, 1991), 805. Yuho Tseng, "Women Painters of the Ming Dynasty," *Artibus Asiae* 53, no. 1/2 (1993), 252-253.

¹¹ Guan Daosheng was the wife of the Zhao Mengfu 趙孟頫 (1254-1322).

¹² Jiang Shaoshu 姜紹書, *Wusheng shi shi*. Edited by Lu Fusheng 盧輔聖. Vol. 4, In *Zhongguo shu hua quan shu*. (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1992), 861.

¹³ In the double-outline method 雙鉤 of painting, thin lines are used first to outline the shape of the objects and then sometimes to fill in the color of the object. The method is often used in depicting flowers and birds.

¹⁴ Wang Zhideng 王穉登, *Ma ji zhuan*, 530-531.

¹⁵ Wang Zhideng 王穉登, *Ma ji zhuan*, 530-531. Zhao Mengfu and Wen Zhengming painted orchids with calligraphic lines and their painting styles influenced literati painters during the Ming dynasty. Hsu Wen-mei 許文美, "The Orchid and Bamboo Paintings of the Late Ming Courtesan Painter Ma Shou-chen," 88-89.

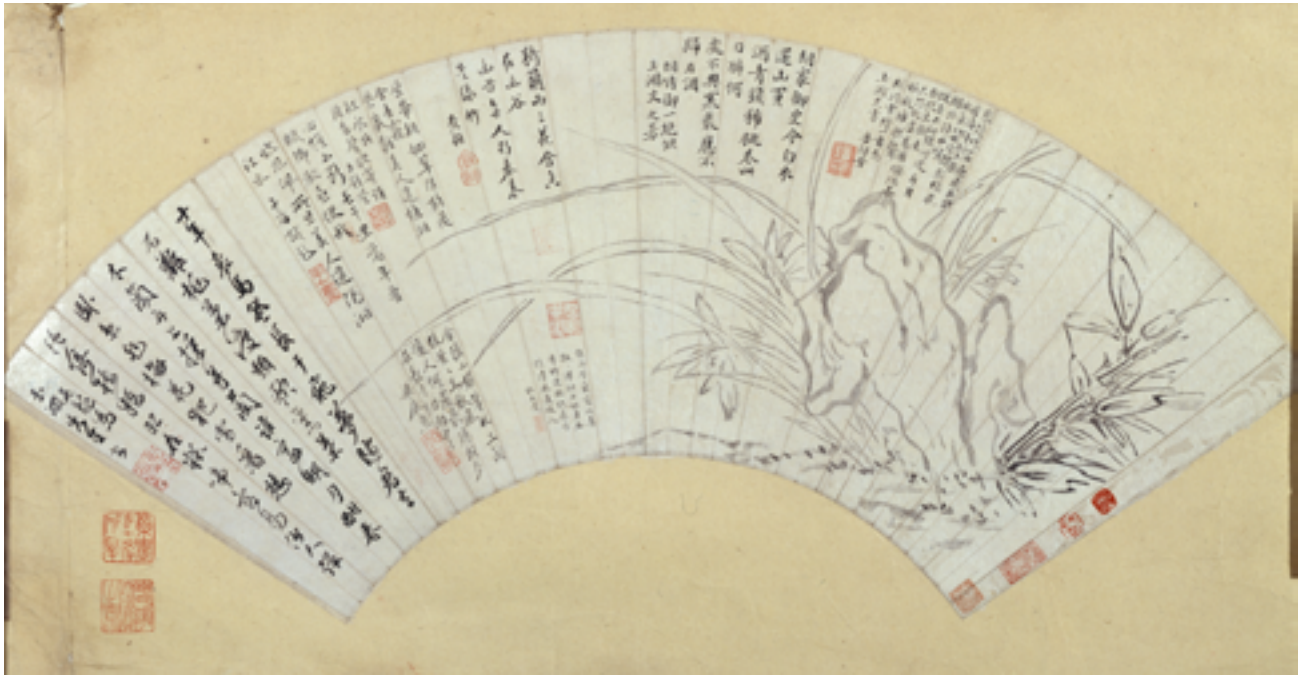


Figure 2 Ma Shouzhen; *Orchid, Bamboo and Rock*; fan; ink on paper; 16.3 x 50.3cm; The Palace Museum, Beijing. (Inscription was written by Ma Shouzhen, Wang Zhideng, Liang Chenyu 梁辰魚 (1521-1594), and Du Dashou 杜大綬 (sixteenth-seventeenth century).)

leaves were painted using the double-outline method. Ma Shouzhen and other famous literati inscribed on this painting, which might indicate that it was produced at a gathering with those literati. However, long handscrolls of orchids, such as those painted by Xue Susu (Figure 3) and Ma Shouzhen (Figure 4), were very complicated and could take days and even months to complete. It seems unlikely that they could have been completed easily in a social gathering.

Xue Susu was a very talented courtesan active between 1570 and 1620.¹⁶ According to Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602), Xue Susu wrote beautiful calligraphy, was accomplished in painting orchids and bamboo, and was skillful in shooting a moving target while riding a galloping horse. She studied Buddhism with Yu Xianchang 俞羨長 (dates unknown), and learned to write poetry from Wang Tonggui 王同軌 (c. 1530-after 1608).¹⁷ As an accomplished writer, Xue Susu published two collections of poems, from which only a few poems remain. It is believed that Xue Susu had married many times, once to a General Li, and once to the famous writer Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578-1642).¹⁸ According to Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664), she died in Suzhou as a concubine of a wealthy admirer.¹⁹ Jiang Shaoshu also writes in

Wusheng shi shi that Xue Susu was accomplished in painting orchids and bamboo: Her strokes were vigorous and swift, and her orchids and bamboo bore unique expressive qualities that even skillful painters could not surpass.²⁰

Xue Susu employed varying brushwork styles to depict *Outline Ink (Wild) Orchid* (Figure 3). The texture of the rocks was achieved by including a combination of ink wash, outline, and dry brush. Graded ink washes helped define the shapes and model the forms of the rocks. Xue Susu depicted the orchid flowers and the sweeping curves of the leaves using the double-outline method. By examining the brush strokes, one can see the various degrees of pressure she applied to her brush, thereby creating lines of uneven thicknesses. The twists and turns of the leaves were done by the subtle turn of her wrist. Her brushstrokes are as decisive and quick as was described by Hu Yinglin.²¹ Even though she painted with quick brush strokes, it does not follow that the painting could have been hastily completed at a social gathering. If we examine it carefully, the layout and the composition of the whole painting is complex and features visually-connected clusters of orchids. The artist would have had to plan carefully as well as master techniques in brushwork to complete this piece.²² Similarly, the painting, *Orchid, Bamboo and Rock*, (Figure 4) by Ma Shouzhen has a complicated composition featuring clusters of orchids and rocks. The alternation of images and

¹⁶ Kang-i Sun Chang, Huan Saussy, and Charles Yim-tze Kwong, eds., *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 227-228.

¹⁷ Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, *Jia yi sheng yan*, 832. In Hu Yinglin's writing, he refers to Wang Tonggui as Wang Xingfu 王行甫.

¹⁸ Chang, Saussy, and Kwong, eds., *Women Writers of Traditional China*, 227.

¹⁹ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Lie chao shi ji xiaozhuan*, 82.

²⁰ Similar description can be found in Jiang Shaoshu 姜紹書, *Wusheng shi shi*, 861.

²¹ Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, *Jia yi sheng yan*, 832.

²² Tseng Yu-ho, "Hsueh Wu and Her Orchids, in the Collection of the Honolulu Academy of Arts," *Arts Asiatiques* 2, no. 3 (1955): 197-208.

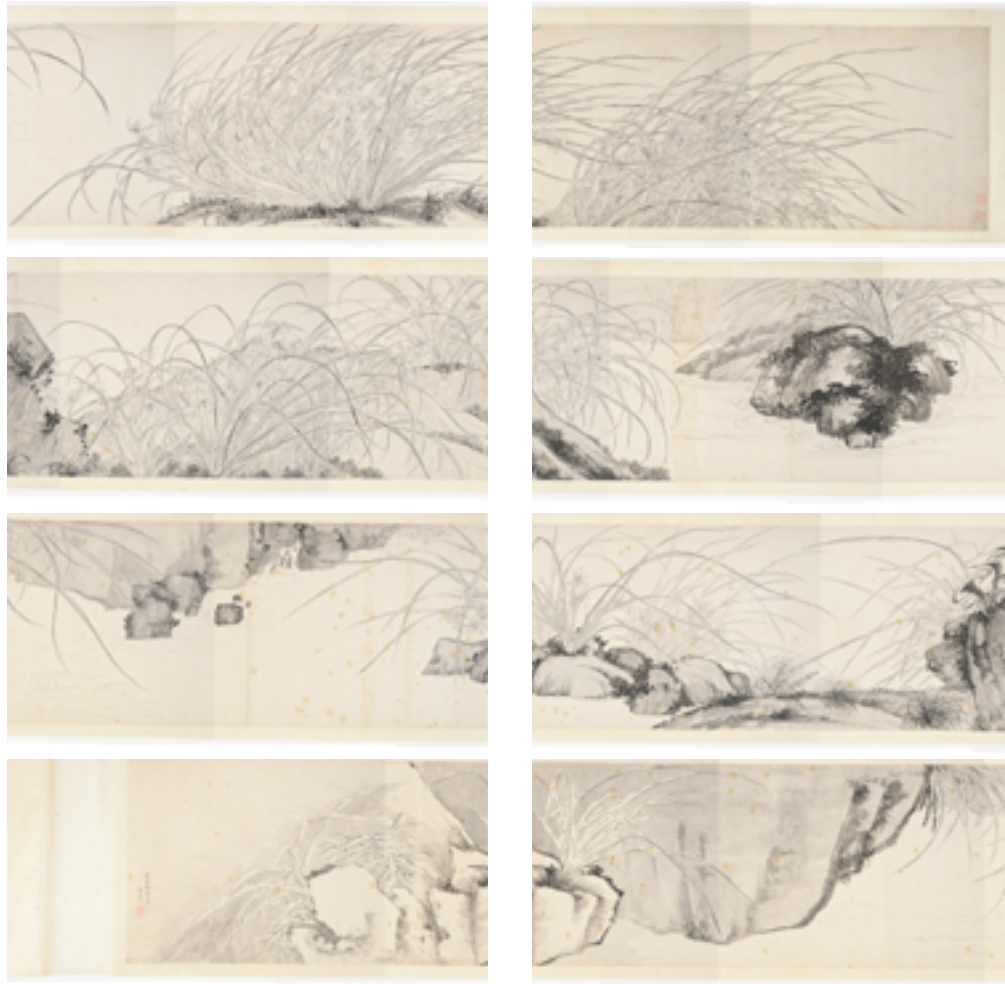


Figure 3 Xue Susu; *Outline Ink (Wild) Orchid*; 1601; handscroll; ink on paper; 31.8 x 598.17cm; The Honolulu Museum of Art.

spaces created a rhythmic pattern in the overall composition. From these examples, it is clear that some courtesans' paintings of orchids were not produced at parties or social gatherings. However, wherever they were created, these paintings can all be viewed as performances in their own right.

PAINTING AND PUBLIC PERFORMANCE

In the Ming dynasty, attending theatrical performances became a popular form of entertainment among the court, local elites, and the literati; and composing operas or lyrics became a form of literary expression. For example, the opera *Peony Pavilion* 牡丹亭 was written by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616) in the sixteenth-century, and subsequently became a very popular production and book, which circulated within circles of Ming dynasty elites.²³

Theatrical performances were also closely related to the pleasure quarters, since the performers were often courtesans or singing girls. In *Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記, Yu Huai describes the different entertaining performances of courtesans, includ-

ing singing, playing the zither and other musical instruments, acting in operas, shooting arrows, and painting.²⁴ These activities were often the highlights of social gatherings among literati and courtesans. For example, Xue Susu often fascinated her clients with her skill at shooting targets while riding a galloping horse.²⁵

The popularization of theatrical performances during the Ming dynasty influenced painting styles, particularly that of the Zhe School (浙派) painters, who were active in Nanjing. Gao Musen believes that the forceful and dramatic brushwork, tension created by tonal variations, and exaggeration of facial expressions found in Zhe School paintings are due to the influence of theater and opera.²⁶

While the elements of theatrical performance can be found in a static object, such as a painting, the action of

²³ Jin Ningfen 金寧芬, *Opera History of the Ming Dynasty* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2007), 1-7.

²⁴ Yu Huai 余懷, *Banqiao zaji*, 9-21. Yu Huai made a list of famous courtesans who were active in the Banqiao area. Under each entry, he described the appearance, skill, and clients of each courtesan.

²⁵ Hu Yinglin 胡應麟, *Jia yi sheng yan*, 832. Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Lie chao shi ji xiaozhuan*, 810.

²⁶ Gao Musen 高木森, "Mingchao xingongting pinwei yu zhepai zhi jianli 明朝新宮廷品味與浙派之建立," *Meiyu yuekan* (1997), 2.

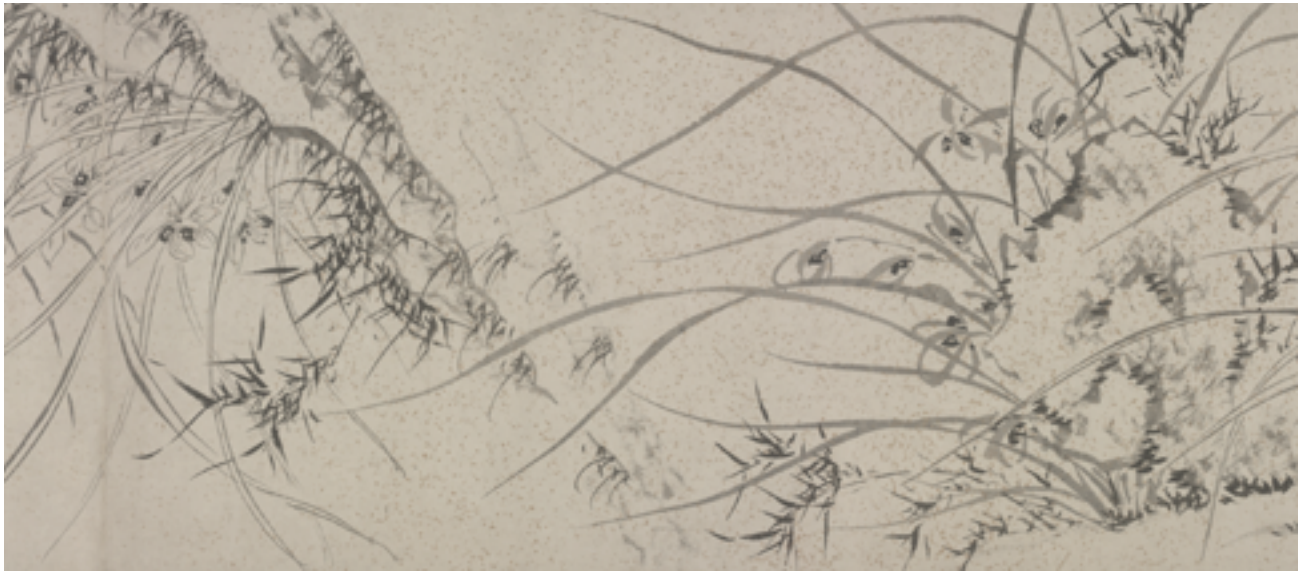


Figure 4 Ma Shouzhen; *Orchid, Bamboo and Rock* (section); 1604; handscroll; ink on gold flecked paper; 28. 8 x 243. 3cm; The Palace Museum, Beijing.

painting itself was also considered to be a form of entertainment and performance as the following stories illustrate. Records indicate that Wu Wei 吴伟 (1459-1508), a leading professional painter of the Zhe School, often painted as a performance and used it to his advantage. Wu Wei came from a scholarly family and was trained in the Classics when he was young. After the death of his father and the family's wealth declined, Wu Wei discontinued his studies and worked as a professional artist. As an artist, he was described as an untrammelled character who often painted in front of audiences.²⁷ He was also famous for his debauched lifestyle of heavy drinking and frequenting courtesans. Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1540-1620) recounts an incident when Wu Wei was summoned by Emperor Xianzong 明憲宗 Zhu Jianshen 朱見深 (1447 to 1487). Wu Wei was so drunk that he could not walk steadily, and had to be supported under his armpits when he appeared before the emperor. Yet, the emperor was not offended, and ordered Wu Wei to create a painting named *Pines and Spring* 松泉圖. The drunken Wu Wei splashed ink onto the paper and moved the brush spontaneously; gradually, he produced the pine trees and other features of the painting while amusing and impressing the audiences. The emperor exclaimed that Wu Wei might be an immortal²⁸ (Wu Wei's sobriquet is Xiao Xian²⁹ 小僊 meaning little/lesser immortal).

Another amusing incident described by Zhou Hui 周暉 (1546 – unknown) happened when Wu Wei attended a drinking party at his friend's estate and again painted while drunk. This time, he inked a lotus seed-case and dabbed it

on the paper. The host could not figure out what Wu Wei intended to paint. After Wu Wei pondered for a while, he turned the ink-dabs into a painting of crabs.³⁰

These two incidents portray Wu Wei as a genius who could paint spontaneously and creatively in front of audiences. Drinking seemed to help release himself from the restrictions of societal norms and paint freely. The two incidents also indicate that it was probably a common practice for audiences to appreciate the entertaining process of creating a painting by the time of the Ming dynasty. Moreover, both incidents emphasize the theatrical elements of painting such as the way a painting can gradually come into form (as described in the *Pine and Spring* incident) or how a painting can take a dramatic turn with an unexpected result (as seen in the incident of paintings crabs). The action of painting together with the theatrical usage of ink and brush became a performance. More importantly, as an unsuccessful scholar who studied the Classics but did not pass the civil service examinations, Wu Wei was able to take center stage and capture the attention of the audience through the action of painting. James Cahill comments that Wu Wei had successfully used his talent of spontaneity to create the image of an “unhindered” or “untrammelled” artist, without dropping his status to that of a craftsman or an artisan.³¹ I would suggest that the element of performance contributed to the making of Wu Wei's spontaneity.

²⁷ Shou-chien Shih, *Style in Transformation: Studies on the History of Chinese Painting* (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1996), 203-207.

²⁸ Jiao Hong 焦竑, *Guochao xianzheng lu juan 115*, In *Si ku quan shu cun mu cong shu shi bu*, Vol 106. (Taiwan: Zhuang yan wenhua, 1996), 520.

²⁹ The character “僊” can be written as “仙”.

³⁰ Zhou Hui 周暉, *Jiangsu sheng jin ling suo shi si juan*, In *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1983), 297-303.

³¹ James Cahill, *Parting at the Shore: Chinese Painting of the Early and Middle Ming Dynasty, 1368-1580* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, 1978), 100. Shih, *Style in Transformation: Studies on the History of Chinese Painting*, 203-207.

AN EROTIC PERFORMANCE

We do not have similar accounts of painting performances by a courtesan painter. But from the stories of Wu Wei, we could see that painting could be viewed as entertaining performances. Creating paintings at literary gatherings was likely to be a form of entertainment offered by courtesans. Moreover, painting performances possibly helped courtesans enhance their attractiveness since, in the seventeenth century, the act of painting by women was eroticized. Li Yu 李漁 (1610-1680) portrayed the phenomenon in his opera script, *Yizhong yuan* 意中緣. *Yizhong yuan* was an invented story based on four actual seventeenth-century characters—two courtesans: Lin Tiansu 林天素 (also known as Lin Xue 林雪) and Yang Yunyou 楊雲友, and two literati: Chen Jiru 陳繼儒 (1558-1639) and Dong Qichang 董其昌 (1555-1636). In one scene of the opera, Li Yu describes how men viewed the action of painting by one of the heroines who needed to sell her paintings to make a living. In this scene, a group of rich literati visited the heroine who sat and painted behind a curtain made of strings of pearls. The literati suspected that she might have a “ghost painter” and they requested that the lady raise the curtain and create the painting in front of them. However, this was just an excuse for them to admire the beauty of the painter. The curtain was raised and the lady ordered her servant to grind the ink, after which she began to paint. The literati then admired the beauty of her face and voice, and tried to observe the smallness of her feet. In Li Yu’s description, the lady was in control of how she was viewed: She ordered her servants to raise the curtain and to lift the skirt of the table knowing that this allowed her clients to observe her face as well as her feet. The painter and the audience were aware that the object of appreciation was not the painting itself; rather, it was the sensual experience of viewing the process of painting.³²

The sensual experience derived from watching the body movements and hand gestures of a courtesan painting orchids was described by Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609-1672), a famous literatus of the seventeenth century. Wu wrote a long poem about a courtesan³³ painting orchids. Wu was said to have had a close relationship with the courtesan Bian Sai 卞賽 (dates unknown) who was famous for painting orchids with dense ink and complex layouts.³⁴

The lady painting the orchid is fifteen years old,
Playing the lute, lamenting the spring rain,
I still remember the first time I saw her after her debut,
Her hand brushed softly against the curtain and we became very close,
She paints orchids on the *shu* 蜀 paper near the window,
She nibbles her fragrantly glossed lips as she paints,
Once her delicate wrist dips the brush in the ink, the orchid

³² Li Yu 李漁, *Li Yu quan ji*. Vol. 4. (Hangzhou shi: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1991), 386-388.

³³ Wu only described the courtesan in the poem; he did not indicate if she was actually Bian Sai.

³⁴ Yu Huai 余懷, *Banqiao zaji*, 18.

on the paper begins to sprout easily,
But her heavy bracelet and her loose sleeves seem to hinder her to freely stretching out the leaves,
The courtesan, like flowers, I wonder if it/she has yet bloomed,
I treasure the time when she was in deep thought to determine the composition of the painting,
The person who is watching would only admire her beauty,
...

畫蘭女子年十五，生小琵琶怨春雨。
記得妝成一見時，手撥簾帷便爾汝。
蜀紙當窗寫晚蘭，口脂香動入毫端。
腕輕染黛添芽易，釧重舒衫放葉難。
似能不能得花意，花亦如人吐猶未。
珍惜沉吟取格時，看人只道儂家媚...³⁵

In this poem, Wu Weiye focuses on the process of the painting and the physical body of the courtesan. The readers could imagine the sensual experience of watching the courtesan dipping the brush in the ink, sensing the fragrance of her lips, and admiring the courtesan stretching out her hands when she painted.

As the descriptions by Li Yu and Wu Weiye indicate, courtesans painting in front of audiences at parties or gatherings with literati were likely viewed as providing erotic performances. However, I believe that even though long handscrolls (such as Figure 3 and Figure 4) might not have been completed in front of audiences, they can also be viewed as performances. If viewers of the handscrolls closely examine the compositions, tonal variations, and calligraphic lines, they could trace the path of the painters’ hand and re-enact, or even fantasize about, the body movements and hand gestures made by the painters.³⁶

Moreover, the orchids painted by courtesans seem to relate closely to the physical bodies of the courtesan. As seen on the fan painting by Ma Shouzhen in Figure 2, Du Dashou inscribes:

Who has painted this life sketch for the beautiful orchid?
The tender and light swaying leaves are like the body of a beautiful lady;
With the fragrant breeze softly emanates from waving the silk fan from time to time,
I realize that such a pure breeze must be my old friend/lover.
誰與芳蘭寫此真，飄飄渾似玉娟身，
幽香時逐輕紈送，方信清風是故人。³⁷

The inscription suggests that the orchid was seen as the beautiful lady – Ma Shouzhen. Her body was as tender and elegant as the leaves swaying lightly in the air and her fra-

³⁵ Wu Weiye 吳偉業, *Meicun jia cang gao*. Vol. 2. (China: Wujin Dong shi song fen shi, 1916-1922).

³⁶ Wen Fong, “Why Chinese Painting Is History,” *The Art Bulletin* 85, no. 2 (2003), 259-264. Monica Merlin, “The Nanjing Courtesan Ma Shouzhen (1548-1604): Gender, Space and Painting in the Late Ming Pleasure Quarter,” *Gender & History*, 23,3 (2011): 630-652. Merlin also discusses how Ma Shouzhen’s paintings could be viewed as her performative body.

³⁷ The inscription on Figure 2.

grance emanated on the breeze. Similar reactions to orchid paintings might have been common; painting orchids might have helped courtesans to entice their patrons and present themselves as attractive ladies.

USING ORCHIDS TO PRESENT ONE'S VIRTUE

In the seventeenth century, orchids were associated with the scholar-poet Qu Yuan (343-278BCE) and symbolized seclusion and the virtue and loyalty of a gentleman. Qu Yuan served as a court official of the State of Chu during the Warring States period (c.475-221BCE). He was banished by the King of Chu and sent into exile to the remote area of Xiang in the south. Not only was Xiang far from the center of politics, it was also a place where diseases often caused sickness and death. Despite all his hardships and throughout his exile, Qu Yuan continued to be concerned with affairs of state and was loyal to the King of Chu. He composed many poems and finally committed suicide by drowning himself as a sign of loyalty to the state of Chu.

In the poem, *Li Sao*, Qu Yuan used the fragrance of wild orchids as an analogy for his virtue. The orchids grew in the wild and emanated a strong fragrance; Qu Yuan was banished to the wild but his loyalty to the lord was as strong and pervasive as the orchid's fragrancy. The subject of orchids subsequently was used by literati who wished to allude to the story of Qu Yuan. By the seventeenth century, the subject of orchids was further used to symbolize a virtuous or talented man waiting to be recognized. Similar to Qu Yuan's exile, a courtesan was "abandoned" by society and existed at its margins where she waited to be recognized as both a talented artist and a loyal beauty. Once her beauty and virtue were recognized, she might have the chance to marry out of the pleasure quarters and join proper society.

Orchids painted by courtesans (Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, and Figure 4) resemble orchids painted by literati such as Wen Zhengming, the leading literati painter of the Wu School (吴派), who was active in Suzhou during the sixteenth century. As seen in Figure 5, *Orchid and Bamboo*, by Wen Zhengming, the wild orchid plant is sprouting from the cracks of rocks, indicating that the plants thrived in a harsh environment. The long and slender orchid leaves are depicted by calligraphic lines of uneven tones and thicknesses. The compositions painted by courtesans and by Wen Zhengming are also similar in that they do not depict distant backgrounds behind the orchids and rocks.

Ma Shouzhen's (1548-1604) and Xue Susu's choices of subject matter and painting styles closely followed the preferences of Wu School literati.³⁸ Li Shi has pointed out that it was probably necessary for the courtesans to tailor their artwork to the taste of their patrons by employing Wu School conventions and visual language.³⁹ However, Ma Shouzhen and Xue Susu also seemed to have appropriated this conven-



Figure 5 Wen Zhengming; *Orchid and Bamboo*; Ming dynasty; hanging scroll; ink on paper; 62 x 31. 2cm; National Palace Museum, Taipei.

³⁸ Laing, "Wives, Daughters, and Lovers," 38.

³⁹ Li Shi 李滉, "Tan mingdai nühuajia Ma Shouzhen hua lan," *Wenwu*, no. 7 (1991): 81-83.

tion to give it another layer of meaning and to create their personae as courtesan artists. Ma Shouzhen inscribed the following on one of her paintings, *Orchid, Bamboo, and Rock*, dated 1563:

Though companion to small grass,
Furtive orchid fragrance emanates from the valley;
Its true heart is entrusted to a gentleman,
To be brushed by a clear breeze from time to time.
雖與小草伍，幽芬出谷中，
素心拖君子，時可拂清風。⁴⁰

On another painting, *Orchid and Rock* (Figure 1), dated 1572, Ma Shouzhen writes:

Jasper shadows brush against Xiang River;
A pure fragrance floats from the secluded valley.
翠影拂湘江，清芬瀉幽谷。⁴¹

In the inscriptions above, Ma Shouzhen compared herself to the orchids of the Xiang River alluding to the story of Qu Yuan. On *Orchid, Bamboo and Rock* (Figure 4), dated 1604, Ma Shouzhen composed a poem:

It is not worthwhile to treasure the lush and dense grass,
The nine fields of orchids by the highlands of the Xiang River are more endearing and approachable.
When one is indoors and one needs to purposely forget his sense of smell;
Could one realize that the hermit is in the secluded valley?
離離瀟艾不堪珍，九畹湘皋更可親，
入室偏能忘嗅味，始知空谷有幽人。⁴²

The phrase “fields of orchids by the highlands of the Xiang River” refers to the poems written by Qu Yuan. By alluding to Qu Yuan, the courtesan is made to resemble him—a virtuous person banished to the wild. The last couplet of the poem suggests that the courtesan, being an improper woman according to social norms of the time, was equivalent to being in the wild (not indoors). For one to really admire the virtue of the courtesan (being a hermit in the poem), one had to ignore the fact that she was improper. Ma Shouzhen’s inscriptions suggest that she hoped the viewer of her paintings of orchids would see her in the same way that the reader of *Li Sao* saw Qu Yuan. To recognize the beauty and virtue of Ma Shouzhen, who worked in a brothel, one had to ignore the

fact that she was promiscuous.

Moreover, Ma Shouzhen’s other name, Xianglan, alludes to the story of the Goddesses of the Xiang River (Xiangjun 湘君 and Xiangfuren 湘夫人), who were the wives of Emperor Shun 舜帝.⁴³ Xiangjun and Xiangfuren committed suicide by drowning themselves in the Xiang River after learning of the death of the emperor. Heaven rewarded their loyalty and virtue by making them the Goddesses of the river. Hsu Wen-mei concluded that Ma Shouzhen not only alluded to the story of Qu Yuan, but also the Goddesses of Xiang. However, when the orchid was painted by a courtesan, the allusions were twisted slightly. The orchids in the painting indicated not only that the receiver—to whom the courtesan was loyal—was her soul-mate but also, possibly, a romantic lover who could become a husband.⁴⁴

Similar to Ma Shouzhen, other courtesans such as Xue Susu, used the same allusions. Daria Berg also analyzed Xue Susu’s poem, *Painting Orchid* 畫蘭, and concluded that the content alludes to a morally good woman and the title indicated that the painter was a courtesan.⁴⁵ Ma Shouzhen and Xue Susu used inscriptions and poems to draw analogies between themselves and the orchids, such that each was the “gentleman” in the secluded valley. Even though she (the orchid) worked in an improper profession, her virtue (the fragrance) would spread. She waited for the like-minded gentleman (hopefully, a potential husband) to whom she could entrust herself. By painting orchids, courtesans could express hardship and project the personae of “virtuous beauties” who possessed great academic knowledge, and who would be loyal and devoted lovers.

It is likely that the courtesans’ patrons were aware of these messages. On the handscroll, *Orchid and Rock*, 1572 (Figure 1) by Ma Shouzhen, Wang Zhideng records:

Sweet nourishment from the rain of Prime Spring,
Secluded orchids from hundreds of green acres.
In the mountain studio, sits someone alone,
Drinking wine, reading the *Li Sao*.
芳澤三春雨，幽蘭九畹青，
山齋人獨坐，對酒讀騷經。⁴⁶

Xue Mingyi 薛明益 (c.1563-unknown) inscribed on the same painting:

⁴⁰ Although the painting is by the same artist and has the same name as the one in Figure 4, it is a different painting that does not appear in this article. The painting by Ma Shouzhen (*Orchid, Bamboo, and Rock*, 1563, ink on paper, hanging scroll, 102.23 x 31.12 cm) is in a private collection; it is published in Weidner et al., eds., *Views from Jade Terrace*, 72-74. The translation of the inscription can be found on page 72.

⁴¹ Hsu Wen-mei 許文美, “The Orchid and Bamboo Paintings of the Late Ming Courtesan Painter Ma Shou-chen,” 102. Hsu discusses that Ma Shouzhen specified that the orchid is located at the Xiang River, which refers directly to Qu Yuan’s poem, *Li Sao*. The translation can be found in *ibid.*, 76.

⁴² Ma Shouzhen’s inscription on Figure 4.

⁴³ Eileen Grace Truscott, “Ma Shou-chen: Ming Dynasty Courtesan/Artist” (University of British Columbia, 1981), 32-33.

⁴⁴ Hsu Wen-mei 許文美, “The Orchid and Bamboo Paintings of the Late Ming Courtesan Painter Ma Shou-chen,” 100. A soul-mate referred to someone, mainly a patron, who could understand the virtue of the courtesan. Not every patron could become her soul-mate. It would be ideal if a courtesan could develop a close relationship with, and even marry, her soul-mate. In many cases, the soul-mate might not intend to marry the courtesan to be his concubine. But a romantic lover who could become a husband would be able to give legitimacy to the courtesan so she could enter proper society. If she was lucky, he could also be the courtesan’s “soul-mate”.

⁴⁵ Berg, “Cultural Discourse on Xue Susu,” 183-184.

⁴⁶ Translation can be found in Weidner et al., eds., *Views from Jade Terrace*, 76.

In a deserted valley, secluded orchids grow dense –
 Unnoticed, but naturally fragrant;
 Unfurling elegant colors to welcome the spring,
 Dew-moistened, sending off their pure fragrance.
 空谷幽蘭茂，無人亦自芳，
 迎春舒秀色，泥露發清香。⁴⁷

By mentioning, “sitting alone,” “reading *Li Sao*,” “pure fragrance,” and “secluded orchids grow in deserted valley,” Wang Zhideng and Xue Mingyi recognized that Ma Shouzhen’s message alludes to the story of Qu Yuan. Their inscriptions demonstrate that they understood that Ma Shouzhen was describing herself as an unrecognized beauty.

THE MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF ORCHIDS

The act of painting orchids could be seen as an erotic performance comprising body movements, fragrances, and the beauty of the courtesan herself.⁴⁸ At the same time, the subject of orchids was used among literati and courtesans to symbolize one’s virtue. All these various qualities attributed to orchids allowed a courtesan to use orchid paintings as tokens of courtship or seduction. For example, Wang Wei 王薇 (c. 1600-ca. 1647) used the ambivalent meanings of orchids to her advantage, as seen in the following poems.

Two Poems about Painting Orchids with the Courtesan

《艷小姬畫蘭二首》

I borrow the ink brush that my lover (郎)⁴⁹ uses to draw
 my eyebrow,
 To paint this silk fan for my lover;
 The silk fan will be embraced in your arms held close to
 your chest (懷)⁵⁰,
 When you open the fan you will see me.
 借郎畫眉筆，為郎畫紈扇，
 紈扇置郎懷，開時郎自見。⁵¹

Under the quiet window the ink is dense,
 I personally annotate the *Li Sao*,
 What a pity that the good name of this pure orchid
 Is smeared by mixing with the thorny bush.

⁴⁷ Translation can be found in Weidner et al., eds., *Views from Jade Terrace*, 76.

⁴⁸ The use of orchids in poems served similar purposes as their use in paintings. Daria Berg also analyzed the poem, *Poem Written on Behalf of Xingfu as a Present for Scholar Xue from the Western Brothel*, written by Hu Yinglin that described Xue Susu as a beauty and a precious commodity. Berg, “Cultural Discourse on Xue Susu,” 187-189.

⁴⁹ The character “郎” indicates a man or a lover of the courtesan.

⁵⁰ During the Ming dynasty, both men and women wore kimono-like garments. One side of the garment would cross and overlap the other on the wearer’s chest and a belt was used to keep the halves of the garment closed. The word, 懷, refers to the area where the flaps of fabric overlaid each other near the chest.

⁵¹ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Lie chao shi ji*, Vol. 54. (Shanghai: Guo guang yin shua suo yin shua, 1910), 66-67.

幽窗墨麝濃，騷經親自注，
 為恨子蘭名，抹入棘叢去。⁵²

Wang Wei used the first poem to express her romantic love, represented by the fan painted with orchids. Her lover was expected to treasure the fan by placing the fan inside his robe closest to his chest (懷). In the next poem, Wang Wei compared herself with the orchid in the thorny bush, that is, the harsh environment of the pleasure quarters. She even referred directly to *Li Sao*, thereby highlighting her virtue. The two poems about painting orchids focus on the relationship between the courtesan and her lover, projecting her desire, as well as her virtue.

The literati also fully recognized that courtesans used orchid paintings as tokens of seduction. In one poem written by Fan Fengyi⁵³ 范鳳翼 (dates unknown), titled “I refuse the fan (painted with orchids) given to me by the Beauty Gu⁵⁴”:

Who would have the honor to meet the blooming orchids
 in a secluded valley?
 Where would one acquire the fan that demonstrated the
 unconventional talent?
 The painted orchids comes from the beauty’s hands
 The fragrance of the orchids seems to come from the beau-
 ty’s breath
 The orchids and the beauty share a similar nature and spirit
 The beauty (orchids painted on the fan) is in my arms close
 to my chest (懷袖中)⁵⁵
 The orchids (in the painting) seem to want to speak but
 smile to me
 But the orchids are not Mei, they are not the same.
 幽谷蘭滋誰見求，何來便面呈風流，
 繪之乃自美人手，吹氣疑出美人口，
 蘭與美人性韻同，美人在予懷袖中，
 蘭亦欲言向予笑，不是眉生那得肖。⁵⁶

Here, the painting of orchids in a fan format was used as a token of courtship or seduction. The orchids in the painting were seen as a representation of the courtesan painter. As described by Fan Fengyi, the orchids and the beauty shared a similar nature and spirit. As in Wang Wei’s writing, Fan Fengyi, the receiver, was expected to treasure the fan and “place the painting close to his chest/heart.” This gesture would be analogous to valuing their relationship or holding the beauty in his arms. Fan Fengyi refused the fan as a token of love, and stated that the real courtesan was what he preferred. Fan Fengyi seemed to complain slightly that the courtesan did not take him seriously and he was not satisfied with only the fan. From Fan Fengyi’s reaction to the gift, it seems that this token (the fan) of their love relationship was used by the courtesan to entice her client.

These multiple meanings of orchids might have helped a courtesan negotiate her relationships with the receivers of

⁵² Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Lie chao shi ji*, 66-67.

⁵³ Fan Fengyi obtained a *jinshi* 進士 degree in 1598

⁵⁴ Gu probably refers to Gu Mei.

⁵⁵ Refer to footnote 50.

⁵⁶ Fan Fengyi 范鳳翼, *Fan Xunqing shiji*, Siku jinhui shu cong kan (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997), 9-10.

her paintings. Paintings were not simply objects, they embodied social interactions. Responses to a painting could take the forms of inscriptions, colophons, or other written discussions.⁵⁷ Based on responses to their paintings, courtesans might have been able to ascertain whether the receiver was a like-minded friend, a potential lover, or simply a “flirt.”

CONCLUSION

Many seventeenth-century courtesan painters were said to be skilled at painting orchids. Scholars, such as Ellen Johnston Laing and Li Shi, have suggested that paintings of orchids might have been easy to execute at a social gathering; other scholars, such as Hsu Wen-mei and Daria Berg, have demonstrated that courtesans made use of the symbolism of orchids to express their virtue by alluding to Qu Yuan. This article does not aim to explain why courtesans painted orchids more frequently than other subject matter. There is no doubt that courtesans painted in social gatherings with literati, and in most cases painted to please their clients. Hence, this article suggests that we try to understand how audiences viewed the paintings of orchids by courtesans, and how courtesans benefited from such paintings

This article illustrates that the process of painting by courtesans can be viewed as an erotic performance highlighting the body movements and gestures of the courtesan painters. Moreover, as we can see from the patrons’ inscriptions, the orchids in the courtesans’ paintings might refer directly to the beauty and fragrance of their physical bodies. This erotic quality of orchids was probably well known by the courtesans and their patrons. Additionally, the fact that orchids symbolized unrecognized loyalty and talent was also well known among courtesans and literati. Hence, the subject of orchids was flexible enough to be used by courtesans to both present their virtues and entice their patrons.

⁵⁷ Richard Vinograd, “Situation and Response in Traditional Chinese Scholar Painting,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 46, no. 3 (1988): 365-374.

THE UNSPEAKABILITY OF WAR RAPE: LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF WAR RAPE DURING THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR



Stage photo from the film *Devils on the Doorstep*: A woman hides herself away from the Japanese soldiers.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the conspicuous unspeakability of war rape during the Sino-Japanese War (1931-1945) as represented in the fiction produced in China during that period. Through an extensive reading of wartime stories and a close reading of rape stories in Xiao Jun's *The Village in August* and Ding Ling's "When I was in Village Xia", I hope to argue that the unspeakability of rape in wartime China has to be understood in its relation to the crisis of the collective identity of the nation. In other words, the unspeakability as such is not only because the traumatic event is intrinsically beyond the framework of reason, imagination and language; Nor is this silence only due to the intentional definition by the authorities of the permissible themes and subjects of literary writing. Rather, in wartime China, rape stories rhetorically remind people of the common fear staring them in the face: the utter extinction of their nation, their identity and their own lives. It is this fear that makes rape *unspeakable* in Chinese wartime fiction.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the conspicuous unspeakability of war rape during the Sino-Japanese War as represented in the fiction produced in China during that period. As the study will show, among more than four hundred short stories and novels produced in China during the war period, only a small number of stories (less than twenty) directly mention the rape of women, which forms a sharp contrast to the number of pieces dealing with killing or plunder. Moreover, wartime writers took great pains to establish some dramatic writing strategies to downplay war rape experiences. In this paper, I would like to examine why and to what extent war rape was deliberately avoided or obscured in fiction published from 1931 to 1945,¹ and how individual traumatic experiences

¹ The texts under discussion here range from 1931-1945, a date that needs clarification. The full-scale war against the Japanese army in China took place from 1937-1945, but the overt resistance against Japan began with Japan's occupation of North-east China, renamed "Manchukuo" by the occupiers, in 1931.

were manipulated and transformed allegorically into a collective discourse. To account for the unspeakability of rape, I will first locate the problem within the theoretical context of trauma studies and trace the cultural significance of rape in Chinese history. I will then move on to a close reading of several stories of wartime rape to provide a new reading of the literary representations of both the individual and the collective trauma in war-time China.

I will argue that the unspeakability of rape stories in wartime China has to be understood in its relation to the crisis of the collective identity of the nation. I will examine this inextricable relationship by highlighting three facts. First, a rhetoric of rape that uses the rape of women as a figure for the violation of the collective and the nation is established in literary narratives throughout Chinese history and especially during times of war. Second, influenced by the traditional Chinese conception of rape, the rape of women is primarily understood as the total destruction of their subjectivity, with no possibility of future survival or redemption. Finally, based on the two points above, war rape evokes the specter of the total destruction of the collective and the nation both bodily and spiritually, a deadly fear that haunts the collective consciousness. Therefore, a literature largely used as a propaganda tool to help save the nation and the people from extinction will tend to keep silent about war rape, since it is such a crucial symbol of the crisis of the collectivity.

My analysis will show that the unspeakability of trauma in literary works is not just because the traumatic event is intrinsically beyond the framework of reason, imagination, and language, which is the central argument of the classical psychoanalytical approach to trauma studies. Nor is this silence only due to the intentional definition by the authorities of the permissible themes and subjects of literary writing. Rather, we may find such unspeakability to be a converging

Japan's domination was extremely brutal in North-east China, which forced a group of writers, known as the "Northeastern Writers Group", to escape from that area to reveal the atrocities of the Japanese army and the desperate living conditions in that area, including war rape. Therefore the literature of North-east China from 1931 to 1937 will be an indispensable part to my discussion. As to the ending date of 1945, it is the ending of the war but apparently not the ending of war literature. However, as I will further explain in my article, the representation of war rape as well as the war after 1945 is radically different from that during the war period, because an ultimate and more or less dramatic triumph (partially due to the US use of atom bombs in Japan) decisively changed people's perspective on the war. War rape occurs more frequently in post-war literature with entirely different rhetorical structures and functions, given that the existential external threat to Chinese nationhood had disappeared, which will not be discussed in my article. Therefore, I will limit my discussion to Chinese fiction about war and war rape during the period 1931-1945.

point of many discourses that restrain the trauma from literary articulation, all of which are deeply rooted in the specific cultural and historical context.

ACCOUNT FOR THE UNSPEAKABILITY: A CULTURAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, AND LITERARY APPROACH

In *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Dori Laub examines the unspeakability of trauma mainly from the perspective of psychology: a traumatic event bears "its otherness to all known frames of reference – that it was beyond the limits of human ability (and willingness) to grasp, to transmit, or to imagine... There was therefore no concurrent 'knowing' or assimilation of the history of the occurrence."² He and Shoshana Felman attribute the unspeakability of trauma to the original event, indicating that firstly there exists a traumatic event and secondly a direct and immediate representation of such an event is impossible in nature. This view is later developed by Cathy Caruth, who claims not only that the wounding event is "not available to consciousness" because it is experienced "too soon, too unexpectedly," but also that it cannot be left behind and will repeat itself unwittingly and unremittingly against the survivor's will.³ In her view, such repetition, such "delayed appearance," can tell us "of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available."⁴ Thus, in these classical psychoanalytical trauma theories, the original event and its later haunting are the defining character of both individual and collective trauma.

Jeffrey C. Alexander's later concept of *cultural trauma*, however, differentiates the representation of events from original events and collective trauma from individual trauma. According to Alexander, "Events are one thing, representations of these events quite another. Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity."⁵ He denies the original traumatic event as the precondition of the formation of social and cultural trauma by claiming that it is the abruptly dislodged meanings of the collectivity that "provide the sense of shock and fear, not an event."⁶ Therefore, what matters for him is the mediation pro-

² Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 84.

³ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 2-4.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, Jeffrey C. Alexander, et al., ed., (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2004), 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*

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cess of making original events into cultural trauma (he calls it “trauma process”), including the complex interactions among the carrier group, the victims, the audience, and institutions.⁷

If, as Jeffrey Alexander indicates, the process of mediation is unavoidable to the representation of trauma at the level of the collectivity, then the unspeakability of collective trauma will be more complicated than what Cathy Caruth believes. It involves not only the abnormality of the event itself and individual psychology but also the whole process of meaning-making and representation of the event. In short, such unspeakability is determined by a variety of contextual factors rather than by a single intrinsic attribute of the original event. In Alexander and Rui Gao’s research on the memory of the Nanjing Massacre, for example, the authors attempt to account for the abnormal domestic silence surrounding the trauma of the massacre from a social and political perspective, indicating that it was the intricate relationship between different political powers and the CPC’s definition of victim groups by class rather than by nation that caused the downplay of the massacre.⁸ Instead of taking a psychological approach, they focus on the political appeal of the carrier group with the authority to articulate representations of the trauma.

Nurtured by both theoretical schools, my study attempts to cover the psychological, rhetorical, cultural, and political factors in the process of writing (or *not-writing*) about war rape. As I will show, these factors are all relevant to the understanding of the unspeakability of war rape in relation to the violation of collective identity. The individual psychological dimension should not be excluded from the process of “trauma making” (a phrase I will use to capture the notion of the emergence of a certain discursive formation) at least in the literary field, because authors of literary works, in the end, are individuals, and their works are the representation of their internalization of the outer world. Such internalization, no matter how much they may be influenced by political policies and propaganda, becomes part of their psychology, one which filters into the public sphere through their writings. And when we find something in common there (in this instance, their avoidance of the topic of war rape), by looking into their individual inner world we can delve into the collective awareness of reality, which has a direct impact on the collective self-identification.

UNDERSTANDING OF WAR RAPE IN CHINESE CULTURE

There are many studies on the purposes and effects of war rape,⁹ and a consensus is that the symbolic meaning of

war rape surpasses its actual effect. Rape, whether civilian or martial, has its symbolic social meaning as an expression of male intimidation of and domination over women rather than merely a forced sexual act.¹⁰ Therefore, from ancient times, rape was seen as the illegal occupation of other men’s property.¹¹ War rape further expands the symbolic meaning of rape from the level of the individual to that of the collective: it expresses one community’s intimidation of and domination over another through the figure of a forcible bodily control of women.¹²

If we define “rape story” as “stories with rape episode,” then rape is far from being unspeakable. Wartime rape has been recorded throughout history and across the world in historiography, religious texts, literature, and art for different purposes.¹³ In modern times, as awareness of nationalism increases and as propaganda techniques develop, reports of war rape during or after the warfare by the victim community are frequently used as propaganda to arouse hatred towards and justify the attack on the enemy, as seen in World War II¹⁴ as well as present-day conflicts.¹⁵

In China, the referential relationship between the rape of women and the humiliation of the nation is decisively culturally rooted. The ancient Chinese use the same word *zhen* both for a woman’s behavior of keeping her chastity and for a person’s behavior of keeping moral integrity, in many cases the loyalty to his nation,¹⁶ and many early rape stories written for the education of women’s virtue are about those who resist attempted rape by the intruders to her city or nation.¹⁷ Therefore, in China rape is conventionally related to the intimidation of the collective and resistance to rape is more than an individual behavior. Here the raped (or the desired) woman serves as both the synecdoche and the metonymy of the collective. Synecdoche because the woman is literally a member of the community and the conquest of a community must be realized by the conquest of the members of the community. Metonymy because, as I have indicated above, the perpetration of rape, directs not only to the targeted woman, but also to the man to whom the woman belongs, usually the woman’s father before marriage and husband after marriage. As we know, metonymy lies in the continuity rather than

wood Press, 2004), 269-70.

¹⁰ See Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975), 15; Claudia Card, “Rape as a Weapon of War,” *Hypatia* Vol. 11, No. 4 (1996):7.

¹¹ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 16-30.

¹² Card, “Rape as a Weapon of War,” 11.

¹³ For examples of rape stories in different cultures and of different historical periods, see Gottschall, “Explaining Wartime Rape,” 130; Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 31-39; Smith, *Encyclopedia of Rape*, 269-70.

¹⁴ Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*, 43-44.

¹⁵ V. P. De Francisco and C. H. Palczewski, *Communicating Gender Diversity: A Critical Approach* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007), 247-8.

¹⁶ Zhang Yihe and Chen Chunlei, *Zhen Jie Shi (The History of Chastity)* (Shanghai: Shanghai Literature and Art Press, 1999), 40-41.

¹⁷ Many rape stories of such kind can be found in Chinese historiographies such as *Book of Jin Dynasty* 96: Biographies 66; *History of Ming Dynasty* 301-303: Biographies 189-191.

⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁸ Jeffrey C. Alexander and Rui Gao, “Remembrance of Things Past: Cultural Trauma, the Nanking Massacre and Chinese Identity,” in *Tradition & Modernity: Comparative Perspectives*, Yan Shaodang, et al., ed., (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), 273-79.

⁹ For example see Jonathan Gottschall, “Explaining Wartime Rape,” *The Journal of Sex Research* May 2004: 129-36; also see Merrill D. Smith, ed., *Encyclopedia of Rape* (Westport: Green-

the similarity between the two objects, as in the relationship between the owner and his belongings. In Ancient China, where the whole political system was developed and evolved as an analogy of family,¹⁸ the same symbolic meaning of rape expands naturally from within a family to the larger political scale. Therefore the rape of the female members of a community is seen as the bodily occupation of the belongings of all the male members. In such a cultural context, the general resistance to rape becomes a figure for the *collective's* defense against intrusion and humiliation by intruders and for the survival and dignity of the collective.

During the Sino-Japanese war, war rape occurred on a large scale in China,¹⁹ and authors of anti-Japanese literature understood the propaganda value of the rape story. Generally speaking, except in the Enemy-Occupied Area, representation of the rape story did not violate the basic trend of literature despite differences in local cultures. It is legitimate to integrate rape stories into heroic revenge stories or stories that display the atrocity of the enemy. Moreover, writers typically have a strong desire to write about rape. Yu Dafu, a leading modern Chinese writer, explicitly discussed the possibility of writing rape stories: "What solemn and brilliant stories they are, where villagers sacrifice themselves and manage to kill the enemies after their wives or daughters have been raped;"²⁰ "We should also depict the pathetic scene of being killed, plundered and raped."²¹ The "Declaration by the Anti-Enemy Association of Literary and Art Circles" also encouraged writers to write about Japanese atrocities including rape: "Our fathers, brothers and sisters are being killed, plundered, and raped... Killing and rape became their glories... We must cry out the crisis of the nation and declare the crimes of the barbarous Japanese."²²

The desire to write about rape can be understood within two contexts. The first, as the total Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937, war-time fiction quickly acquired a strong tinge of reportage and the boundary between reportage and literature was often blurred.²³ Fiction writers were asked to

write down immediately what really happened, mostly the atrocities committed by the Japanese in China, so as to arouse Chinese people's consciousness of resistance. In this sense, rape stories fell well within the ideal objects of wartime reportage-fiction. Meanwhile, fiction, as a genre of literature, requires representation at a more rhetorical level than reportage. For example, during war time the leading Chinese writer Mao Dun suggested that fiction should focus more on the person and the spirit of the whole people rather than on a single event (Mao Dun 26); and from 1938 on grand narratives began to prevail over portraits of incidents, because wartime writers favored an epic style to picture the great era,²⁴ and were compelled to transform the events and figures in their stories into allegories of a grand theme: the destiny of the war and the spirits of the nation. Rape stories, too, when written in literature, functioned as the symbol of the nation's fate. It is this reportage-allegory, so characteristic of Sino-Japanese wartime fiction, that came to define the mode of literary representation of war rape.

THE REPRESENTATION OF WAR RAPE IN CHINESE WARTIME FICTION

Among the few rape stories in wartime fiction, most are represented in extremely brief or obscure ways. One way is to give a one-word or one-sentence report of the rape event, such as "the Japanese army have occupied the city for several days and committed plunder, rape, and destruction,"²⁵ or "Her elder daughter may have been raped to death."²⁶ Another way is to depict rape as a desired but uncommitted crime because the woman escaped or killed herself before being raped. We cannot find a rape scene even in the piece that gives a direct account of how the Japanese intruders captured local women to be their "comfort women" after occupying local villages.²⁷ Instead, at the beginning of the story, the author depicts a scene of Japanese soldiers looking for women's shoes or blouses to comfort their sexual desire,²⁸ and then the story quickly moves to the negotiation between the local villagers and the Japanese regarding the provision of comfort women. Another telling case that reveals the unusual avoidance of rape scene at the price of illogical plot is Lu Li's short story "The Collapse of the Nest."²⁹ There the woman protagonist recalls the suffering of her family: Her husband was killed by the Japanese soldiers because he attempted to rescue his younger sister from the insults of the soldiers. His three children and

¹⁸ Fei Xiaotong, "Chaxugeju: The Differential Mode of Association," *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 66-67.

¹⁹ For records of sexual violence in Nanjing during the Nanjing Massacre, see Iris Chang *The Rape of Nanking* (New York: Basic books, 1997), 89-99; in Northern China during the 1940s, see Yishida Yoneko and Wuchida Tomoyuki, *Kōdono murano seibōryoku: dānyantachi no sensōwa owaranai* (*Sex Violence in Yellow Land Villages: Grandma's War is not Over*) (Tokyo: Soudosha, 2004).

²⁰ Yu Dafu, "Zhan Shi de Xiao Shuo" (Fiction in the Wartime) (1938), in *Er Shi Shi Ji Zhong Guo Xiao Shuo Li Lun Zi Liao* (*Source of Chinese Fiction Theories of the 20th Century*), Qian Liqun ed., Volume 4 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1997), 22.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²² "Zhong Hua Quan Guo Wen Yi Jie Kang Di Xie Hui Xuan Yan" (Declaration by the Anti-Enemy Association of Literary and Art Circles in China) (1938). *Xin wen hua shi liao* 1995.4: 25; 72.

²³ Qian Liqun, *Zhong Guo Xian Dai Wen Xue San Shi Nian* (*Thirty Years of Chinese Modern Literature*) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1998), 447-448.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 450.

²⁵ Li Huiying, "Zui Hou Yi Ke" (The Last Lesson) (1932), in *Li Huiying Dai Biao Zuo* (*Representative Works of Li Huiying*) (Beijing: Huaxia Press, 1998), 271.

²⁶ Ai Wu, "Shou Nan Zhe" (The Sufferer), *Wen yi zhen di* Vol.3, No.6(1939): 991.

²⁷ Wang Pingling, "Huang Cun zhi huo" (Fire in a Bleak Village) (1939), in *Kang Zhan Wen Yi Cong Xuan* (*Selections of Anti-Japanese Literature*), Vol.1, ed. Li Huiying (Chongqing: Zhong guo wen hua fu wu she Press, 1942), 185-95.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 185-6.

²⁹ Lu Li, "Fu Chao" (The Collapse of the Nest), *Feng Huo* 4 (1937): 55-57.

mother were then killed in sequence. Finally his house was put on fire. However, in the whole scene the author does not mention whether the younger sister was raped or killed or burned by the Japanese, and the woman protagonist was not at home at that time so she avoided the disaster.

Contemporary theories on the representation of trauma, and of rape in particular, offer only a limited explanation of the phenomenon mentioned above. They are not sufficient to fully explain the sharp contrasts between the widespread articulation of a strong desire to write about rape and the *actual rarity* of rape in wartime literary writings, as well as between this narrative rarity and the copious depictions of other kinds of atrocities.

To be sure, in literature in general and in Chinese literature in particular, rape stories are frequently associated with obscenity and therefore are hard to elevate to the level of epic, even a tragic epic, but once represented in an indirect and allegorical way, stories of rape have the full potential to become an integral part of a grand narrative. According to Mieke Bal, the experience of rape is unspeakable in literature in any direct way,³⁰ but at the same time she is aware of the large number and the legitimacy of rape stories told in a displaced and allegorical way.³¹ One example she gives is the story of the rape of Lucretia in Livy's *History of Rome*, in which rape is first displaced by suicide – Lucretia kills herself after being raped, and then the whole rape story is displaced by the epic story of revenge and the even more epic account of the foundation of the Roman republic. In Modern Chinese Literature, similar examples can also be found in postwar Chinese revolutionary fiction, where allegorical accounts of rape, fashioned for political propaganda purposes, become highlights of the narratives.³² In the case of Chinese war-time literature, however, even rape stories told in a displaced or indirect manner are highly restricted and deliberately distorted.

To account for this, the first thing to notice is that, besides functioning as the synecdoche and metonymy of the collective humiliation and resistance, in war-time literature, a strong *rhetorical* connection between the rape of women and the humiliation of the nation becomes more explicit than in ancient literary works. In other words, beyond synecdo-

che and metonymy, women being raped were represented and read as the direct *metaphor* of the nation being intruded upon. Some stories parallel rape with the fate of the nation as antitheses, exemplifying a comparable relationship between the two: “The Japs want to trample every place in our China; the Japs want to sleep around with every woman;”³³ “All the water in Guihua River cannot wash away the humiliation of my whole life; the whole city of Guizhou has died ... after the dwarfs fought their way in.”³⁴ The woman speaker in the second quotation is gang-raped by Japanese soldiers in the text. In a novel written right before the end of the war, the author explicitly makes the trope as “Beiping (the former name of Beijing) ... is just like a woman at the mercy of rape.”³⁵

Here we notice that in all the quotations the raped or desired woman is identified not with an intangible collective or political entity to which she belongs but with a thoroughly tangible “land”: every place in the country, or the city of Guizhou, or the city of Beiping. The land is being trampled just as the women are being raped. With the concept of nation becoming more tangible in modern times, and with the image of China turning feminine from the perspectives of both outsiders and insiders as the country suffers from a series of defeats and crises for nearly a century,³⁶ it is now possible for the author and the reader to conceive a more direct metaphorical relationship between the raped woman and the humiliated motherland.

Second, just as in the past rape has been perceived as the illegitimate deprivation of women's cherished chastity by men,³⁷ the special property of which is that *once lost it cannot*

³⁰ Mieke Bal, “Visual Rhetoric: The Semiotics of Rape,” in *Reading “Rembrandt”: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition: The Northrop Frye Lectures in Literary Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 68. Also see Mieke Bal, “The Story of W,” in *A Mieke Bal Reader* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 41-3.

³² For example, in many revolutionary literary works published in the 1950s, women raped by the Japanese, the KMT soldiers, and evil landlords were highlighted in order to justify the legitimacy of the CCP. In *Lin Hai Xue Yuan* by Qu Bo (Beijing: Ren min wen xue Press, 1957), a woman named Li Xiu'e, was repeatedly raped by numerous men associated with the landlord class. *Ku Cai Hua* by Feng Deying (Beijing: Jie fang jun wen yi Press, 1958), another classical revolutionary novel, features several detailed descriptions of the sites where rape had just happened in the opening chapters, with both the Japanese and the landlords as perpetrators.

³³ Ai Wu, *Jiang shang Xing (Travel on the River)* (Chongqing: Xinqun Press, 1943, reprinted by Shanghai: Xinqun Press, 1947), 26. The sentence in Chinese reads: “我們中國每一個地方，他東洋鬼子都想糟踏，每一個女人，他東洋鬼子都想亂來。” It is a neat couplet, and the verb 糟踏 (zao ta) in the first clause means both to ruin a place and to rape a woman.

³⁴ Cao Ming, “Shou Ru Zhe” (The Violated) (1940), *Zhong Su Wen Hua Za Zhi* Vol.6, No.6 (1940): 60. The sentence in Chinese reads: “我這一輩子的羞辱，用盡桂花河的水也洗不乾淨，桂洲，整個死去了，自從矮種打進來以後就死掉了！” This is the confession by a woman after being gang-raped by the Japanese soldiers. Grammatically, the confession is made up of two sentences: “The humiliation of my whole life cannot be washed away even with all the water from Guihua River” and “Gui Zhou, the whole city has died after the Japs came in.” However, the two parts are combined into one run-on sentence by a comma, and so the confession moves naturally from the humiliation of the woman to the death of the city.

³⁵ Lao She, *Si Shi Tong Tang (Four Generations under One Roof)*, Book I. *Huang Huo (Perplexed and Terrified)* (1944) (Tianjin: Baihua Wenyi Press, 1979), 1109. Book I was written and published in 1943-1945 in Chongqing, and Book II was completed in 1946. Lao She then moved to the US, where he completed the writing of Book III. The Trilogy was first published in 1979 in Tianjin in full.

³⁶ Rey Chow, “Seeing Modern China: Toward a Theory of Ethnic Spectatorship,” in *Woman and Chinese Modernity: the Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1991), 5-8; 24.

³⁷ Qtd. in Luo Tsun-yin, “Marrying My Rapist?! The Cultural Trauma among Chinese Rape Survivors,” *Gender & Society* 14: 583.

be retrieved, in modern wartime literature, rape is also represented as a damage beyond redemption, something that is “inscribed” on the victim’s body³⁸ and “can never be washed away.”³⁹ As a result, in the few literary works that include images of raped women, these victims are portrayed as being incapable of fighting for long. In Luo Feng’s “The Bleak Village,” for example, the woman protagonist becomes insane after being raped by a Japanese soldier. Every night she asks her family to put her into a basket and sink her down into a well, and spends the whole night there. The first time she meets the narrator, a visitor to the village, she immediately shouts, “The evil Japanese cannot rape me!”, and throws herself into the well. She is rescued by the narrator, but her husband is unsatisfied, because he sees her as a burden that prevents him from joining the anti-Japanese army. He says, after his wife is rescued, “You shouldn’t have pulled her out; ... I wish her to die, to die, then I will have no burden and can do my duty (of fighting the Japanese).”⁴⁰

To be sure, there are works that try to empower the raped women as the subject of the fight against the Japanese despite their “unchastity,” but such empowerment is conditional. In Xiao Jun’s *The Village in August*,⁴¹ Qisao, the wife of a member of anti-Japanese militia, is raped by the Japanese army, and her husband is killed during a fight. Before her husband dies, she wants to join the militia but is refused by all because they believe a woman can only be a burden. Even in her family she is depicted as a housewife that cries all the time. After her husband’s death, she puts on her husband’s uniform and gun and is finally accepted by the group. She knows that from then on “she becomes the same as a man... and is able to not only defend herself against the humiliation by the Japanese but also kill them at her will.”⁴² This indicates that a raped woman can become powerful only when she denies her own identity as a female and a victim, and transforms herself into a man. However, before long she becomes seriously ill due to the previous rape and cannot hold the gun anymore. Finally she dies. In Cao Ming’s “The Violated,” the woman protagonist is raped but she keeps it secret. However, she is deeply afraid of her experience being known by others and becomes extremely weak after the event. Finally, at the price of her life, she heroically decides to destroy the machine in the Japanese factory where she works. This short story somehow shows the possibility of a raped woman fighting against the Japanese, but the price is self-destruction.

There are nevertheless two short stories that characterize the rape victims as women warriors. They are “Faith in the Tearful Eyes” (1939)⁴³ and “When I Was in Village Xia”

(1941)⁴⁴ by the woman writer Ding Ling. I would like to focus on these stories because it further discloses why, in the wartime literature, the fate of a woman raped by the Japanese can mean nothing but a total destruction beyond redemption.

In “When I was in Village Xia,” the woman protagonist, Zhenzhen (which means “chaste” in Chinese), volunteers, after being raped by the Japanese army, to become a “comfort woman” so as to gather information for the anti-Japanese organization. After a while she becomes seriously ill due to unprotected sexual activities and is sent back to her village. But she finds that it is no longer possible for her to live in the village because of the rumors and conflicts around her among the villagers and her family. In this piece the power of the raped woman comes exactly from her experience of being raped (because that is why she can become an intelligence agent spying on the Japanese army) and it forms a brilliant subversion against other writings about war rape that downplay the victims by presenting them as being totally disabled. In 1948, the short story was praised by a major critic for “the richness and shining greatness” of the soul of the woman protagonist, and also for the author’s capacity to “make us believe in Zhenzhen and the revolution.”⁴⁵ However, in 1957, in an extreme left-wing attack on Ding Ling, her protagonist Zhenzhen is criticized as “a shameless woman that has lost the chastity of the nation and betrayed the motherland and the people.”⁴⁶ Zhenzhen’s fate in the story in effect reflects the story’s fate in literary history, one which reveals the great difficulty for a war rape victim who tries to redeem her shame and wound by living on and keeping fighting, to be accepted by the society. In the story, the restoration of a war raped woman has to paradoxically rely on the sexual relationship the woman has with the intruders, which is what the victim community tries hard to turn its face against. As a result, at least in these literary texts, war rape *cannot* be redeemed, and therefore the victim can never again be considered a heroic fighter against the Japanese.

Moreover, the short story implies a disturbing ambiguity. In the story, Zhenzhen tells the narrator that young Japanese girls write beautiful letters to the Japanese soldiers and that she learned Japanese in the army, and the narrator heard people say that Zhenzhen has a big golden ring, a gift given by the Japanese. These indicate that there was a positive side in Zhenzhen’s daily life in the Japanese army, which cannot be expressed explicitly in the story because it would contradict Zhenzhen’s anti-Japanese resolution. Here I would like to take the Japanese Writer Tamura Taijiro’s short story “The Devil of the Flesh” as a reference.⁴⁷ The writer took part

³⁸ Luo Feng, “Huang Cun” (The Bleak Village), *Zhong Liu* (1937) 3:174.

³⁹ Cao Ming, 60.

⁴⁰ Luo Feng, 177.

⁴¹ Xiao Jun, *Ba Yue de Xiang Cun (The Village in August)*, Shanghai: Nuli Press, 1935. The Novella is one of the first and most widespread anti-Japanese literary works in China.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 147.

⁴³ Ding Ling, “Lei Yan Mo Hu zhong Zhi Xin Nian” (Faith in the Tearful Eyes), *Wen yi zhan xian* No.4 (1939): 1-25.

⁴⁴ Ding Ling, “Wo Zai Xia Cun de Shi Hou” (When I Was in Village Xia), *Zhong guo wen hua* Vol.3, No.1 (1941): 23-30.

⁴⁵ Feng Xuefeng, “Cong Meng Ke dao Ye” (From ‘Meng Ke’ to ‘The Night’) (1948), in *Ding Ling Yan Jiu Zi Liao (Resource of Ding Ling Studies)*, ed. Yuan Liangjun (Tianjin: Tianjin ren min Press, 1982), 299.

⁴⁶ Hua Fu, “Ding Ling de fu chou de nü shen” (Ding Ling’s ‘Nemesis’), *Wen Yi Bao*, 1958. 3.

⁴⁷ Tamura Taijiro, “Nikutai no akuma” (The Devil of the Flesh)

in the Sino-Japanese War in the same area as Zhenzhen's story happens and wrote the story after he returned to Japan. The story is written from a soldier's first-person perspective. The woman protagonist in his story is captured by the Japanese army and forced to work for them. She is a communist who believes that Japanese Imperialism is forever the enemy of the Chinese People; but, at the same time, she falls in love with a Japanese soldier who protects her in the army and has a sexual relationship with her. She feels shamed and afflicted by the relationship; however, "she did not evade me in order to get rid of the affliction." Instead, "she tried to forget about it by putting herself into my arms."⁴⁸ Nonetheless, during the relationship the woman protagonist tries to seek chances to get connected with other communists and escape from the army. In a sense, this Japanese short story presents a possible story of a raped woman, a story which can only be hinted at implicitly, if not suppressed completely in Chinese war-time fiction. Both Tamura Taijiro's and Ding Ling's stories are based on their real-life experiences,⁴⁹ in which they represent the raped women's ambiguous feelings towards the Japanese soldiers; though it is true that, as some Japanese critics point out, in Tamura Taijiro's writing the woman protagonist's experience has been distorted by the first-person male voice.⁵⁰ Moreover, in both stories, having sexual relationships with the Japanese plays a crucial role in the women victims' struggles for survival. These two stories further explain why in war-time fiction most rape victims end with total destruction. It is because the survival story (including self-redemption) of a raped woman can involve further sexual contacts with or at least positive feelings towards the enemy, which are considered humiliating

and are thus denied by the victim community. The dangerous women survivors have thus to be eliminated from the literary texts.

As shown above, raped women in wartime fiction are depicted as completely destroyed. We have many stories that talk about how those being plundered, humiliated, tortured, and wounded rise up to fight against the Japanese. Only those who have been *raped* are excluded. Even the voices of the revenge for rape are not sonorous: in many literary texts, the avengers recall the trauma of the death of families in every detail with resentment and determination; but in wartime fiction we seldom see those who avenge his families' rape recount their trauma in the same way.

A total and irrestorable destruction without the possibility of further survival was *exactly the danger faced by the whole nation* during this war, especially after 1938, when the Japanese launched full-scale war for a year, and overoptimistic sentiments of the Chinese faded away. Before the Sino-Japanese war, China had gone through the humiliation of signing unequal treaties with and ceding lands to several foreign countries and the confusion of its cultural and political identity in the whirl of a series of cataclysms. However, as the war broke out, what was threatened was not only Chinese cultural or political identity but also *the entire land of the nation as well as the body of every individual*. The question of losing identity became the question of losing every foundation upon which identity could be built. At that time China's economic and military power was so weak that the only hope for the country to win the war was international support. Mao's *On Protracted War*, written in 1938, well manifests the pessimism spread around, both descriptively and theoretically, even though, ironically enough, the article was intended to convince the people of their ultimate triumph.⁵¹ However, such pessimistic discourses were seldom expressed explicitly in public articles. When people are not aware of the danger of extinction, a pessimistic reminder may spur them on; but when people are all too aware of it, such discourse may only serve to convince them further and thus contradict the main object of wartime literature: to "save the nation from extinction."⁵²

(1946), in *Tamura Taijiro senshu (Selected Works of Tamura Taijiro)*, Vol.1 (Tokyo : Kusano Shobo, 1948), 9-76.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁹ Ding Ling heard of Zhenzhen's story during her visit to the villages in the Liberated Area and later elaborated it into "When I was in Xia Village." See "Tan Zi Ji de Chuang Zuo" (Talks on My Writing) (1982), in *Ding Ling Quan Ji (Complete Works of Ding Ling)* Vol. 8 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei ren min Press, 2001), 87-8. Besides, many critics relate Ding Ling's writing about Zhenzhen with the author's own experiences in Nanjing when captured by the Nationalist Party. During this incarceration she had a daughter with the traitor, Feng Da, who had already had a relationship with Ding Ling, and had brought the Nationalist Party police to her home. See Wang Xueying, "Lun Ding Ling de Xiao Shuo Chuang Zuo" (On Ding Ling's Fiction), *Shanghai Wen Lun* 1988.5; Zhu Hongzhao, "Changes in Ding Ling's Thoughts after She Went to Yan'an," *Yan Huang Chun Qiu*, 7 (1999): 53-5. Tamura Taijiro's "The Devil of the Flesh," according to Onishi Yasumitsu, recounts the author's real experience in Shanxi Province. Onishi even discovers the real name and life story of the woman protagonist. See Onishi Yasumitsu, *Tamura Taijiro no sensō bungaku: chūgoku sanseishō de no jūgun taiken kara (Tamura Taijiro's War Literature: From the Military Experience in Shanxi Province)* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 2008), the whole book and 36-43 in particular.

⁵⁰ Yishida Yoneko and Wuchida Tomoyuki, 31. Also see Akiyama Yoko, "Tamura Taijiro ga egaita zhenzhen: *Nikutai no akuma saidoku*" (Tamura Taijiro's Depiction of Chastity: Re-reading of "Nikutai no Akuma"), *Chūgoku jyoseishi kenkyū* 19 (2010): 22-34.

⁵¹ In *On Protracted War*, two facts are repetitively emphasized by Mao: the first is "the enemy is strong and we are weak," and the second is "the danger of the extinction of the nation is real". The main doctrine in which he nevertheless believes is that China will eventually win the war and that this victory lies in the hope for domestic political progress in China and in international aid. Mao Zedong, *Lun Chi Jiu Zhan (On Protracted War)* (Shanghai: Yi bao tu shu bu), 1938.

⁵² In Li Zehou's "The Dual Variation of Enlightenment and Saving the Nation from Extinction," he argues that Chinese thoughts, culture, and literature exhibited two directions during the May Fourth movement in 1919, that is, Enlightenment (qi meng) and Saving the Nation from Extinction (jiu wang). However, because of the critical domestic and international political environment, the direction of Saving the Nation from Extinction soon became the dominating direction that overshadowed that of Enlightenment till the 1980s. Li Zehou, "Qi Meng yu Jiu Wang de Shuang Chong Bian Zou," in *Zhong Guo Xian Dai Si Xiang Shi (A Historical Study of Thoughts in Modern China)*

In short, rape is absent in wartime literature, not only because it is too humiliating to write about, or only because rape is unspeakable in any direct way in literature. To be fair, these two factors both help explain the unspeakability of rape in wartime literature. However, I would like to highlight the reason that rape rhetorically reminds people of the common fear staring them in the face: the utter extinction of their nation, their identity, and their own lives. It is this fear and its contradiction with the main and overwhelming themes of the wartime literature that makes rape *unspeakable*.

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER THOUGHTS

In 2000, the Grand Prix winner of the Cannes Film Festival, a Chinese film titled *Devils on the Doorstep*,⁵³ was banned in Mainland China. It tells a story of villagers ordered under threat by a Japanese soldier to take care of a Japanese captive until a certain date. The villagers agree out of fear. But even after the date has long passed and no one cares whether the captive is alive or not, they are still afraid of killing the captive. Finally, the captive is set free by the villagers but this only leads to the death of the villagers themselves. The film was banned because it “failed to represent the Chinese people’s hatred and resistance against the intruders against the background of anti-Japanese war; on the contrary, it demonstrates and exaggerates their blindness, numbness and slavishness.”⁵⁴ This example reveals that despite the passage of time, the articulation of the great fear of the Chinese people confronting the Japanese was still to be restrained. Such silence makes it almost impossible for the Chinese people to envisage the very weakness in themselves disclosed during the Sino-Japanese war.

In my opinion, the unspeakability of war rape in war-time fiction should be understood as a result of a variety of contextual factors rather than as a single psychoanalytical syndrome. Rhetorically, the symbolic meaning of rape in China allows an explicit metaphorical relationship between war rape and the violation of the nation, and between the resistance to rape and the defense of the nation. A gender context makes rape a symbol of total and irrecoverable destruction without the possibility of further survival. Historically, China was in a situation where there was a real danger of the extinction of the people in certain areas, as well as of the nation itself. This possibility hung over everybody’s head, which is what rape, allegorically, refers to. Psychologically, writers tend to avoid mentioning in detail what they feel fearful of and humiliated by, especially before they have a triumphant ending to alleviate these fears. Finally, the literary milieu in modern China that accentuates the propagandist function of literature makes

it even more difficult to articulate rape – the symbol of the fearful fate of the nation – in a public sphere like literature.

However, in trying to account for the complexities of this unspeakability I by no means wish to justify it. Jeffrey Alexander has discussed the possibility of restricting social solidarity and leaving others to suffer alone by not participating in the process of trauma making,⁵⁵ and I believe that in war-time China this “not participating” and “not representing” can also be a strategy to reinforce the solidarity of the community. But its negative effects have been overlooked. As the censorship of the film *Devils on the Doorstep* shows, by obliterating the past humiliation and weakness from public articulation, members of the collective are prevented from fully confronting and reflecting on what they have gone through. Moreover, it is the oppression of the articulation of women’s stories in the name of nationalism and revolution. It makes the suffering of women during wartime invisible to the readers at that time and afterwards. Even in the few cases that speak of war rape, an allegorical approach prevents them from fully presenting the actual suffering of the victims, and going deeply into their actual inner experience.

Despite the incongruity between individual story and collective articulation shown above, there are still possibilities of connecting individual with collective trauma. I agree with Alexander that “trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain; it is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity’s sense of its own identity.”⁵⁶ To fully comprehend this acute discomfort, the representation of trauma at the individual level can be illuminating. As I have indicated, especially in war-time literature, personal stories are written and read as the allegory of collective narratives. In other words, the preexistent collective themes, which, during war-time, revolve around “saving the nation”, dominate the writing and reading of individual trauma. This may confine people’s reading of individual stories, but from my perspective, it can be seen to work in the reverse direction. What is truly “unspeakable” in wartime is collective weakness and powerlessness in the face of an imperial enemy. To read rape stories as allegories, then, does not necessarily mean to truncate the story to fit the grand theme; rather, it can mean to empower, through allegorization, the representation of individual suffering as a testimony of a *truly unspeakable* collective weakness and powerlessness. We can never afford to lose sight of individual traumas, not only because individuals are important in themselves, but also because stories of the fate and experience of individuals may help us to discover collective pains and fears, pains and fears which are suppressed in the *public* sphere in order to preserve, under extreme threat, the identity of the collectivity.

(Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, 2008), 1-46.

⁵³ *Gui zi lai le (Devils on the Doorstep)*, Dir. Jiang Wen, 2000. Film.

⁵⁴ “Guan yu *Gui zi lai le* de shen cha yi jian ji shen wei hui ming dan” (Review Comments on *Devils on the Doorstep* and the List of Members of the Review Committee), in Qi zhi, *Jiang Wen de qian shi jin sheng: Gui zi lai le (The Previous and Present Life of Jiang Wen: Devils on the Doorstep)* (Taipei: Boya Bookstore, 2011), 6.

⁵⁵ Jeffrey Alexander, 1.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

THE EMERGING MODERN WOMAN: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE “GIRL STUDENT” IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY URBAN CHINA



A cover page of a girl student playing tennis from the *Journal of Women's Eastern Times* in 1912.

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ABSTRACT

In the last decade of the Qing dynasty, *nü xuesheng* (female student/girl student) emerged as a distinctive category to designate the Chinese women who were exposed to modern women's education. Although the late Qing reformers attempted to refashion female students as the effective carriers of new knowledge in the national order, they simultaneously expressed concerns on the potential threats that female students posed to the society and the public spaces. This paper examines the transformation of the representations of the Female Student from the late Qing to the early Republic era. I argue that the Female Student was not always a passive object subject to the intellectuals' criticism and public

scrutiny. Rather, she assumed agency and appeared as a bold, active, and potentially subversive figure in the republican era. This Female Student image represented the prototype of New Woman that was to be celebrated in 1920s China.

ARTICLE

In January 1915, the prominent commercial women's journal *Funü zazhi* 婦女雜誌 (The Ladies' Journal) was published in Shanghai. One of the journal's primary objectives was to mold "female students (*nü xuesheng* 女學生)"—the journal's targeted audience—into desired "wise mothers and virtuous wives" for China's new Republic. In the pages of *Funü zazhi*, however, the reformist writers' appeal to the ideal

of good wife and wise mother was frequently paralleled with their criticism towards the Female Student. Such criticism on the Female Student usually appeared under two rubrics. She was either cited as a negative example embodying the undesirable repercussions of modern women's education, or she was represented as a modern reincarnation of the unvirtuous and immoral female stereotype that was the antithesis of the good wife and virtuous mother ideal.

This was not the first time that female students faced severe attack from the intellectual discourse or public debate. The criticism of female students in effect ran side by side with the history of the development of modern women's education in China. When the Qing court first sanctioned women's education in 1907, it also prescribed detailed regulations for female students to make sure that their behaviors cause no threats to the social order. In addition to the government rules, the female students also attracted public attention and curiosity. Various representations of female students from the popular press evidenced that the Female Student image was inevitably subject to the public gaze or scrutiny at this time. But images of the Female Student began to change from the 1910s in the urban cities such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, and a few other coastal cities. This paper traces the transformation of the representations of the Female Student from the late Qing to the early Republic era as a new urban culture was flowering and unprecedented public spaces became readily accessible for women who received modern education in China. I aim to show that, unlike her late Qing predecessor who tended to be demure and passive, the early Republican Female Student was active, bold, and gazed back to the public. Because of these new characteristics, I render and define her as "girl student" in the Republican period, as I will elaborate in the following sections, to distinguish her from her late Qing sister under present study. As the "girl student" gained increasing visibility in the urban public spaces, she also demonstrated more and more complex, if not contradictory, attributes of the modern woman.

FEMALE STUDENTS IN THE LATE QING CONTEXT

Women's education was a recurring topic in the intellectual discourse of Chinese modernity. From the last decades of the Qing onwards, proponents of women's education, including reformists and conservative officials and educators, viewed it as a useful vehicle to strengthen the ailing Chinese nation. The late Qing reformist intellectuals relentlessly addressed how women's intellectual defects, which were largely due to their lack of education, were detrimental to the nation's development. Despite that the reformists had reached a consensus on the significance of women's education, the pur-

poses and contents of women's education remained largely contested. Women's education, argued the reformist pioneer Liang Qichao, would enable women to undertake productive work and gain economic independence and more important, would cultivate knowledgeable mothers who can produce eligible national citizens.¹ Like Liang, the majority of reformers sought to find a new balance between domesticity and productivity by stressing women's roles both as virtuous housewives and mothers and contributors to the national economy.²

The Qing government, in line with most nationalist reformers, approved women's education for practical and nationalistic purposes, while simultaneously seeing it as an effective means to refashion traditional virtues and domestic skills for women. When the Board of Education officially sanctioned women's public education in 1907, the conventional Confucian way of educating girls still played an ostensible role in the new educational principles and curriculum guidelines. Although female students were exposed to an unprecedented range of new learning, such as ethics, physics, mathematics, geography, and gymnastics, they were also expected to carry on the traditional feminine virtues such as the "Four Womanly attributes": the virtue 婦德 (*de*), the speech 婦言 (*yan*), the carriage 婦容 (*rong*) and the work of a wife 婦功 (*gong*).³ Moral cultivation was of particular significance. New textbooks for female students were usually titled "*Nüzi xiushen duben*" 女子修身讀本 and appropriated the Western exemplary women's stories to serve the purpose of cultivating female students as moral and nation-minded citizens.⁴ In addition, the regulations prescribed that female students were prohibited from political participation, free choice of

¹ Liang Qichao, "Lu nüxue" 論女學, in Liang Qichao, *Yinbing shi heji* 飲冰室合集文集 1 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1936), 37-44.

² For the late Qing reformist writings on women's education, see, Joan Judge, "Reforming the Feminine: Female Literacy and the legacy of 1898," in *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China*, ed. Rebecca E. Karl and Peter Zarrow (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), 160-162.

³ The four womanly attributes were first prescribed in the *Zhouli* 周禮 (Rites of Zhou) and later elaborated by Ban Zhao 班昭 (ca. 49-ca. 120). They were the core concepts in the conventional Confucian education of women. See, Susan Mann, "Learned Women in the Eighteenth Century," in *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*, ed. Christina K. Gilmartin et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 27-46.

⁴ For example, in 1906, Xu Jiaxing 許家惺 composed a famous reader for female students called *Zuijin nüzi xiushen jiaoke shu* 最近女子修身教科書. For a delineation of female textbooks at the turn of the twentieth century, see, Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History: The Past, the West, and the Woman Question in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 2008.

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marriage and social intercourse with men. Female students were also exhorted to divest themselves of superficial adornments such as fancy clothes and make-up.⁵ Girls' schools were thus regulated as a segregated domain where female students were expected to be quiet, frugal, and moral.

These prescriptions, however, faced increasing challenge as an ever-expanding public space was opened for the female students whose number underwent drastic growth in the last years of Qing.⁶ It is worth noting that "public space" connoted multilayered meanings for different groups of female students. For example, at the turn of the twentieth century, a small number of female students from elite backgrounds ventured out into the public space through studying abroad, participating social and political activities, and initiating feminist movements. Specifically, they availed themselves of the new print medium—the women's press—to articulate and construct a *nüjie* 女界 (literally "women's world")—an imagined community signifying new spatial and temporal potential for Chinese women. Not only did these progressive female students transcend geographical boundaries, but also the gendered spheres underpinned by the long-held Confucian "inner/outer" doctrine. For these female students, as Weikun Cheng has succinctly argued, the notion of "public" could "suggest a gender gap, a new terrain of competition and the development of a feminist movement."⁷ On a deeper level, their "going public" was justified and enhanced by their abilities to write and articulate their own voices, as evidenced in their various writing practices in the women's press. The writing itself also suggested the opening of new imaginary public spaces.

But for the majority of female students who did not enjoy the privilege of pursuing studies overseas or "going public" via writing, the public spaces were more physically tangible and related to everyday life, and were also susceptible to the government's policing and scrutiny. Early in 1904, Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 (1837-1909), the Governor-General of Hunan and Hubei as well as the primary designer for the national education reform program, explicitly expressed his concerns about the potential threats that young girls' "going public" could incite. He deemed it highly inappropriate for "young girls to enter schools in large groups and wander about the streets."⁸ The Board of Education's 1907 regula-

tions further imposed specific rules on student behavior and dress code. For example, female students were instructed to wear cotton gowns in light or dark blue color, and to abandon silk clothing, face powder, rouge and any kind of ornamentation. Following Western fashions was expressly prohibited.⁹ The stipulations became more detailed and rigid as the government later issued another regulation on the uniforms for female students. The regulation proposed, "uniforms must be long gowns that reach below the knees, the hem must be two inches above the ground with no slits, and with one-inch borders on the sleeves and the front."¹⁰

At the same time, the visible female students attracted the public's attention and curiosity. The late Qing women's journals, along with some prominent daily newspapers, frequently ran columns or articles on female students' involvement in a wide range of activities that were considered beneficial for the society and the nation. Despite the official proscriptions against female student involvement in politics, these articles foregrounded female students as the representatives of "women's world" and encouraged them to participate politics and national affairs.¹¹ Nonetheless, much of the periodical press held ambivalent attitudes toward the sensational spectacle that female students invoked in the public arena. In his examination of the public attitudes of women's education in the late Qing pictorial journals, Chen Pingyuan has shown how female students were subject to public scrutiny and the male gaze that usually had sexual overtones. For example, regulations such as those forbidding female students to go to school in groups or parade in the streets and markets might be intended to protect the frail female students from harm, but these rules simultaneously disclosed the potential consequence that female students' publicity may have caused: male voyeurism. "For male readers," as Chen notes, "the concept of 'female student' acted as a cultural signpost encompassing attributes of 'fashion' and 'sex' that were ripe with playful possibilities."¹² For example, the scene of a troop of female students walking on the street with guns over their shoulders was decidedly sensational for the public gazers. Because all the elements about the female students—their pretty faces, deportment, uniforms, and their three-inch golden lotus

rpt. 1972).

⁵ "Xuebu zou ding nüzi shifan xuetang zhangcheng zhe (fu zhangcheng)" 學部奏定女子師範學堂章程折 (附章程), in *Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao* 中國近代學制史料 2, ed. Zhu Youhuan (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1987), 674.

⁶ The number of female students (including those who studied abroad), rose exponentially from 468 in 1904 to 26,465 in 1909 and continued to amount to 141,130 in 1912 as the new Republic was founded. See I. Lewis, *The Education of Girls in China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1919), 34. There were no reports from 1910 to 1911 because of the Revolution.

⁷ Weikun Cheng, "Going Public Through Education: Female Reformers and Girls' Schools in Late Qing Beijing," *Late Imperial China* 21. 1 (2000): 108.

⁸ Zhang Zhidong 張之洞 et al., *Zou ding xuetang zhangcheng* 奏定學堂章程, (Taipei: Jindai Zhongguo shiliao congkan, 1904,

⁹ Xuebu zou zun ni nüxue fuse zhangcheng zhe (bingdan) 學部奏遵擬女學服色 (並單), in *Zhongguo jindai xuezhi shiliao* 2 (di er'ji), 675-676.

¹⁰ Quote from Chen Pingyuan, "Male Gaze/Female Students: Late Qing Education for Women as Portrayed in Beijing Pictorials, 1902-1908," trans. Anne Chao, in *Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China*, ed. Qian Nanxiu, Grace Fong and Richard J. Smith (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008), 332.

¹¹ For example, the 1907 *Dagong bao* 大公報 and *Shuntian shibao* 順天時報 published a fair number of articles on female students' active involvements in public and national affairs. See Paul Bailey, "'Unharnessed Fillies': Discourse on the 'Modern' Female Student in Early Twentieth-Century China," in *Wusheng zhi sheng III: Jindai zhongguo de funü yu wenhua* 無聲之聲 III: 近代中國的婦女與文化, ed. Luo Jiurong and Lü Miaofen (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindai shi yanjiu suo, 2003), 342-345.

¹² Chen Pingyuan, "Male Gaze/Female Students," 345.



Figure 1, Cover image of the first issue of *Funü shibao*, June 1911

feet—could invoke voyeuristic desires.¹³ Likewise, the pictorial illustrations of female students also engaged readers in the voyeurism, nourishing a popular taste for the spectacle of the female students' publicity.

Female students assumed a dual role from the outset of the promotion of women's education. On the one hand, they were integrated to the modernization agenda that rendered them the most ideal carriers and transmitters of traditional virtues and new knowledge in a national order. On the other hand, female students destabilized the long-standing Confucian strictures of gender segregation and posed new threats to the social order. The threatening aspects of the female students would continue to be heatedly discussed and highlighted in the early Republic. At the same time, the images of female students in the Republican era became more diversified and contested.

A NEW REPRESENTATIONAL CATEGORY: THE GIRL STUDENT

Facilitated by the expansion of women's schools as well as the loosening up of sex segregation regulations, female students grew in record numbers as the new Republic was

founded in 1912.¹⁴ They emerged as a significant social category and became more visible in physical public spaces of urban cities, such as school campuses, street demonstrations, public parks and boulevards. At the same time, representations of "girl students" abounded in the imaginary public spaces such as the new fiction and the periodical press. Although both "female/woman student" and "girl student" are equivalent translations of the Chinese term *nǚ xuéshēng* 女學生, I contend that "girl" denotes a subversive and transgressive potential that the direct rendition of the Chinese term "女"—"female" or "woman"—fails to signify (as I will detail below). In their collaborative study on the global images of "the Modern Girl" in the 1920s and 1930s, Alys Eve Weinbaum and other scholars have noted the multifaceted meanings the term "girl" connotes. They argue, compared to the

¹⁴ Many schools were forced to adopt co-education policy due to the lack of resources before 1912. It is worth mentioning that only the number of primary school students increased drastically; the higher education was still not accessible for women at this time. See Paul J. Bailey, "'Unharnessed Fillies': Discourse on the 'Modern' Female Student in Early Twentieth-Century China," 332.; Harriet T. Zurndorfer, "Gender, Higher Education, and the 'New Woman': The Experiences of Female Graduates in Republican China", in *Women in China: the Republican Period in Historical Perspective*, ed. Mechthild Leutner and Nicola Spakowski (Münster: Lit, 2005), 450-481.

¹³ Chen Pingyuan, "Male Gaze/Female Students," 346.

term “woman,” the word “girl” reveals the “contested status of young women and their unstable and sometimes subversive relationship to social norms relating to heterosexuality, marriage and motherhood.”¹⁵ Here, the term “girl” laid its emphasis on the evanescent free space women occupied between childhood and adulthood. Similarly, the images of “girl student” in the 1910s disclosed the young female students’ contested status and their complex relationship with social conventions and prescribed female roles. Perry Link has also noted that “girl student” was a term “carried within it the interest of a paradox” and this special category of young women often implied their tendency to go beyond the proper women’s roles.¹⁶ Unlike the late Qing “female student” who was the subject of public gaze, the “girl student” began to boldly gaze back at the public and surfaced to represent the emerging “modern woman” in the urban spaces.

Two cover pictures of *Funü shibao* exemplify this dynamic between the girl students and the gazes during the 1910s.¹⁷ The cover of the inaugural issue presents a picture of

¹⁵ *The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Alys Eve Weinbaum et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 9.

¹⁶ Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 220.

¹⁷ The illustrator of the first cover image is not clearly identified. The cover image of the second issue was painted by Xu Yongqing 徐詠清 (1880-1953), a noted watercolor painter who also

two girl students holding a copy of the journal *Funü shibao* itself [Fig. 1]. Both girls depicted in the cover wear similar garments with variation only in color: plain hip-length jackets with side slits, side fastenings, and high collars—very popular clothing for young urban women at that time.¹⁸ What makes this image particular is that the two girls’ own likenesses also appeared in the cover of the journal they are holding. The self-referential gaze and the act of turning back to the reader conveyed a dual meaning. On the one hand, they suggest the possibility of self-possession and the resistance of being watched. On the other hand, to the viewer, the girl students and their own portraits are both on display, yet their act of looking at themselves implies their possible complicit role in the act of display. It may also suggest the girl students’

illustrated other covers for *Funü zazhi* in 1915.

¹⁸ In 1910, the most common clothing style for urban women was a long jacket worn over a skirt or trousers. It was only proper for young girls to wear the jacket over the trousers, and married women had to wear the jacket with a wrap-around pleated skirt which covered their trousers. For details on the transformations of women’s clothing and fashions in the early Republic China, see, Ellen Johnston Laing, “Visual Evidence for the Evolution of ‘Politically Correct’ Dress for Women in Early Twentieth Century Shanghai,” *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 5.1 (2003): 69-114. For the early Republican fashions for men and women, see Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China, 1911-1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 49-60.



Fig. 2, left, *Funü shibao* 2, 1911



Fig. 3, right, *Funü shibao* 9, 1913

awareness of reflecting on themselves as the embodiment of modernity against the vast and barren background laid out in front of them.

Following the first issue, the cover of the second issue carried another photo of a girl student. The girl is shown wearing a white jacket with light green checked pattern and tight-fitting trousers [Fig. 2]. She wears cloth-soled, cotton-topped shoes and her feet are clearly not bound. Carrying a small satchel under her arm and a large umbrella in the other hand, she is about to enter the school. Yet she turns back and looks directly outward at the viewer in a distance. In contrast with the illustrations of late Qing female students that were looked at by the primarily male readership, this image of girl student's gaze back at the viewer disclosed her refusal to be watched passively, creating a dynamic relationship with the viewer. Moreover, unlike the previous cover photo of two girl students, this cover girl student was shown alone, without being accompanied by her fellow girl students or escorted by servants. This implies her independence as a young modern woman and her increasingly prominent role in the public spaces.

In addition to these two photos, *Funü shibao* published several other cover pictures on the "girl student" in its subsequent installments.¹⁹ The girl students are portrayed either in the outdoor environments or in the movement, or in both. For example, the cover of the ninth issue depicts two girl students walking hand in hand on a bridge [Fig. 3]. The satchels indicate that they may go to school in the morning or head over home after school. They have the same hairstyle—a long braid down their backs with a fringe over the forehead. While the student in the previous illustration quietly stands in front of a school, these two girls are caught right in the act of walking. Interestingly, both of them are looking at the vast landscape laid out in front of them, complete with boats, which signal the enlarging spaces they begin to occupy.

THE NEW FASHION TRENDSETTER IN THE URBAN PUBLIC SPACE

For the "girl student" in the 1910s, her attire was often of particular significance for it was the barometer of fashion and style at this time. The 1910s was the period in which the "girl student" became the fashion trendsetter in the urban cities like Shanghai where prostitutes and courtesans had used to lead the fashion trends previously.²⁰ As the cover photos

¹⁹ The cover images of *Funü shibao* primarily featured two kinds of women: young women and married women. Of the cover images of young women, three are decidedly on girl students based on the school settings or the school-related objects they carry such as books or schoolbags. The rest of the young women are depicted in different tasks and occupations. The scenes included young girls playing tennis in the court, knitting by a window, fishing, or enjoying the cool air at a summer night. In spite of the different settings, these young women are depicted wearing the similar clothing and having the similar hairstyles as the girl students. It is highly possible that they were also girl students beyond the school setting.

²⁰ Yu Xingmin and Tang Jiwu, *Shanghai: jindaihua de zaochan er* 上

demonstrate above, all the students are dressed in a combination of long jacket and tight trousers that emphasized modesty and simplicity. As plain as their dresses may seem, they were far from unfashionable. Some scholarship has discerned that the checked patterns on the girl students' jackets are recognizably Western²¹—which was a distinctive characteristic of Chinese female fashion during the 1910s. A 1915 article from *Funü zazhi* noted the popularity of the adoption of Western fashions among the girl students. "In our country, there are a good number of women studying English," wrote the author, "but those who consider themselves to have a good command of it all opt for Western fashions and elect to wear Western clothing."²²

The pursuit for Western fashion and style was not only reflected in the clothing, but also in the accessories. An article from *Shenbao* cataloged the must-have items for a fashionable woman in Shanghai:

a pair of sharp-head, high-heeled fine leather shoes 尖頭高底上等皮鞋一雙
a sable muff 紫貂手筒一個
two or three diamond or gold brooches 金剛鑽或寶石金扣針二三只
a white wool string or a fur shawl 白絨繩或皮圍巾一條
a pair of new-style gold-rimmed spectacles 金絲邊新式眼鏡一付
a crescent ivory comb 彎形牙梳一只
a silk scarf 絲巾一方²³

Not surprisingly, some girl students also flocked to follow such fashion trends. A critic wryly remarked, "Some girl students would wear gold-rimmed spectacles even if they are not near sighted, and wear high-heeled leather shoes even when it is not raining."²⁴

海：近代化的早產兒 (Taipei: Jiuda wenhua, 1992), 275. For the role that the prostitutes and courtesans played in the fashion reform in urban Shanghai, see Luo Suwen, "Lun qingmo shanghai dushi nüzhuang de yanbian (1880-1910)" 論清末上海都市女裝的演變, 1880-1910, in *Wusheng zhisheng II: jindai zhongguo de funü yu shehui* 無聲之聲 II：近代中國的婦女與文化, ed. You Jianming (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiu yuan jindai shi yanjiu suo, 2003), 141-172. For more discussion on courtesans as fashion leaders represented in late Qing fiction, see, Paola Zamperini, "Clothes that Matter: Fashioning Modernity in Late Qing Novels," *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture* 5. 2 (2001): 195-214.

²¹ Carol C. Chin, "Translating the New Woman: Chinese Feminists View the West, 1905-1915", *Gender & History* 18.3 (2006): 504.

²² Ren Yanyou, "Lun jiating yi shi zhu zhi dang zhuyi" 論家庭衣食住之當注意, *Funü zazhi* 1.5 (1915): 8.

²³ "Shimao pai" 時髦派, in "Ziyou tan" 自由談, *Shenbao* (January 6, 1912).

²⁴ Shao Piaoping, "Lixiang zhi nü xuesheng" 理想之女學生, *Funü zazhi* 1. 3 (1915): 3. Eileen Chang also noted the inextricable connection between Western products and modernity: "The indiscriminate importation of things foreign went to such an extent that society girls and professional beauties wore spectacles for ornament since spectacles were a sign of modernity." See, Eileen Chang, "Chinese Life and Fashions," *XXth Century* 4.1 (1943), 59.

Similar criticism of the girl students' showy and extravagant clothing soon prevailed in the periodical press and particularly in the women's journals. A female author woe-fully lamented the ways in which the Shanghai girl students of Normal and Primary schools squandered money on clothing. According to the author, these girl students not only used Chinese silk, but also used silk imported from other countries. They sought novelty in styles as well as in fabrics. In spite of their conspicuous consumption and relentless competition with each other, what concerned the author most was that the flashy clothing of the girl students demonstrated little distinction from that of the prostitutes:

Shanghai is a gathering place for prostitutes and it is a universally acknowledged view that the clothing of prostitutes is outlandish and ostentatious. But nowadays even the enlightened girl students imitated the prostitutes by wearing this kind of clothing. Under such complicated and confusing circumstance, who can distinguish between girl students and prostitutes? 上海為妓女薈萃之地，服裝之奇麗，久為社會所公認。今以文明之女學生，而亦尤而效之。試問迷離撲朔，又孰能辨其是為女生，是為妓女哉？²⁵

The author reiterated one of the most debated topics from the late Qing through the Republican period: the malleability between the social worlds of girl students and prostitutes. In the late Qing, critics of women's education either frequently repeated the similar story of a debauched woman dressing like a girl student to incite licentiousness or condemned the girl schools as dubious sites for the illicit mixing of the sexes.²⁶ But here, the author's criticism of the confusion was not as much directed to the women's education as to the girl students' own fashion tastes. In other words, it was not the public space that women's education opened that produced such ambiguity. Rather, it was the girl students' own behavior that facilitated the blurring of the lines between reputable and disreputable women.

Unlike her somewhat demure and passive late Qing counterpart, the "girl student" in the Republican era appeared to be active, bold, and sometimes subversive. She represented the prototype of New Woman that was yet to be celebrated in the late 1910s and early 1920s. More significant, the contested discourses of "girl student" in the republican women's journals soon found resonance in the intellectual class's discourse of modern women a decade later.

CONTESTING DISCUSSIONS ON THE "MODERN" GIRL STUDENT

By the 1910s, the major women's journals such as *Funü shibao* and *Funü zazhi* began to engage debates on what an ideal girl student should look like and what qualities she should possess. Article after article deplored the ubiquity of

young female students walking on the street exhibiting their expensive clothes, devoting energy to learn foreign languages, and neglecting the knowledge of domestic science. Worse still, these girl students completely disregarded their duties in the household. Under such circumstances, reformist writers felt the necessity of prescribing guidelines or doctrines for female students to adhere to. For example, in 1915, the famous journalist Shao Piaoping wrote an article to criticize female students of his time and exhorted them to transform into the ideal girl students in terms of six aspects, including personal hygiene, national learning, clothing, showing respect to teachers and classmates, household management, and contributing to the society and nation.²⁷ Although Shao took a sympathetic tone when he was prescribing solutions for the perceived problems girl students had, he could hardly conceal his disparagement. As he commented derisively in the beginning of the article, "When girl students have just learned the basics of the English alphabet, they start writing love letters so that their parents won't be able to read them; even there are some who know some Chinese, they use it for improper purposes."²⁸

Once again, the girl students' clothing was at the forefront of Shao's criticism. He observed that girl students indulged in extravagant and showy clothes and competed with each other in pursuing these external trappings. "School uniforms," Shao sadly lamented, "are discarded as worn-out shoes."²⁹ He was also dissatisfied with the fact that girl students chose foreign products over national products. Shao pictured the ideal girl student as someone who:

[She] always wears cotton school uniforms either when she is at school or when she goes out. She should value the cleanliness of her clothing rather than the extravagancy of it, the decency of her dress rather than the frivolity of it. Her skirt should *not* be too long and her jacket *not* too short. When there are family gatherings or banquets, she could wear beautiful clothes that are domestically manufactured. Her footwear *must* be made by herself and her clothes *must* be sewn by herself. 在校則布服而着校衣，出外亦然。求其清潔而不求其華麗，求其端重而不求其飄忽。裙不過長，衣不過短。或親戚宴會，則衣雖美而必用國貨。履必自制，衣必自縫。³⁰

While the "sartorial correctness" of female students was government-imposed in late Qing, it was now the intellectuals dictating the dress codes for girl students in the early Republic.

Some articles drew causal links between girl students' clothing and their behaviors. Ruihua, the principle of a girls' school in Wuxi province, made a stark contrast between girl students' fine dresses and their loosening morals and unseemly conduct. She acerbically noted that the so-called girl students went to school by car, wore silk clothes and long

²⁵ Zhang Zhu Hanfen, "Lun Shanghai nü xuesheng zhi zhuangsh" 論上海女學生之裝束, *Funü shibao* 1. 11 (1913): 12.

²⁶ Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History*, 77-78.

²⁷ Shao Piaoping, "Lixiang zhi nü xuesheng," 1-5.

²⁸ Shao Piaoping, "Lixiang zhi nü xuesheng," 1.

²⁹ Shao Piaoping, "Lixiang zhi nü xuesheng," 2.

³⁰ Shao Piaoping, "Lixiang zhi nü xuesheng," 3.

skirts, tied up their hair, and looked around them with an air of haughtiness. They seemed serious about their study but in fact they only learnt the most superficial knowledge. Despite their fashionable attire, they were in actuality shallow and frivolous and abusing the real meaning of freedom. The author concluded by casting doubts on whether women's education could be beneficial for national salvation due to the girl students' degenerating morals and lack of real education. Talking about free marriage, family revolution, wearing leather shoes, or cutting their hair, Ruihua asserted, would not be of any benefit for the nation.³¹

Girl students were also questioned for their motives in pursuing studies. Cheng Zhanlu, a novelist and journalist of the time, wrote that girl students usually approached education only for two purposes: the first one was to follow the trend because going to school was a fashionable thing and the second one was to become school teachers in the future. To Cheng, both motives were narrow and myopic. He bemoaned that because of the prevalence of the first purpose, education for many women was merely a decorative and vainglorious activity and that's why the society tended to associate the term "girl student" with negative connotations. Even those who did not go to school attempted to imitate the girl students' clothing and behaviors. As a result, the title of "girl student" was nothing different from those over-used slogans that appeared in newspaper advertisements or on street wall posters, such as "*weisheng* 衛生 (hygiene)", "*wenming* 文明 (cultivated)" and "*tebie gailiang* 特別改良 (especially improved)".³² In the rest of the article, Cheng exhorted girl students to pay more attention to the pragmatic knowledge relevant to everyday life. Having worked as a girls' school teacher, Zhanlu provided advice based on his own pedagogical experience.

The importance of providing proper education for women propelled a certain Xiazhen to distinguish the "good" girl students from the "not so good" ones. Xiazhen began by stating that she herself had been a girl student and was a proponent of women's education. But she disagreed with the girl students' disregard of practical knowledge and domestic matters. Asserting that she was familiar with the mentality of girl students, she classified four groups of girl students: (1) The Group of Excellency (*youliang pai* 優良派). Girl students who fell under this category saw the study of domestic economics as the primary task and did not aim to pursue profound knowledge. Xiazhen argued that girl students of this kind were most badly needed in society. (2) The Group of Letters (*xuewen pai* 學問派). Girl students of this group were obsessed with studying science and were careless about the study of domestic economics. The author bewailed that the majority of girl students belonged to this group. (3) The Group of Arrogance (*zijin pai* 自矜派). These girl students were egotistical and immodest in their opinions. They were

disrespectful towards teachers and flaunted their "knowledge" in front of their husbands. (4) The Group of Vanity (*fuxiao pai* 浮囂派). These girl students saw women's education as decorative activity undertaken as a recreation. They were the source of bad habits and were the silverfish of society.³³ This overview was another attempt to exclude the young women students who were not dedicated to household matters from the definition of the ideal girl student. The classification on the one hand underscored the urgency for girl students to obtain practical knowledge of domesticity, on the other hand, reveals the tendency that girl students began to seek independent professions through education. Both Cheng Zhanlu and Xiazhen mentioned that a good number of girl students aspired to become schoolteachers.

Another female contributor from *Funü shibao* named Wei Hongzhu also detailed a list of prescriptions for girl students based on her own experience. She argued that the prevalent accusations of girl students' moral laxity were unjustified. As a former girl student, she admitted it was understandable that girl students aspired to enjoy more freedom. She wrote,

"Once they are granted with the same rights in education with men, girl students are like caged birds that break the confines, the imprisoned who have escaped from the jail. Such unexpected freedom and release enable the girl students to express their high spirits vigorously and develop their indisposition freely. Even the flying birds cannot be as free as them." 一旦興學設教育，視同男子，為女生者，如久困之鳥，驟脫樊籠，久拘之囚，遽離狴犴。意外之遭，盡情之喜，其志氣飛揚，性情發暢，自有一種天際飛鴻不可方物之驟。³⁴

But those ill-informed tended to slander such expression of freedom as debauchery. Criticizing these people as "ignorant and unreasonable", Wei beseeched the girl students to enhance self-cultivation and be more prudent about their behaviors. Although the author noticed that "girl students nowadays loosen their hair, tighten their clothes, narrow their sleeves, wear gold-rimmed spectacles and leather shoes, carry leather bags and blatantly seek publicity on the street,"³⁵ she was more concerned about the consequences that resulted from such showiness instead of the act itself. Wei frequently used her own experience of having been student to prescribe proper behaviors for girl students. For example, she told readers that she by nature liked sightseeing and exploring scenic places and she would go to a good place of interest despite the fact that men and women tourists were usually mixed in those places. Asserting that sightseeing and excursions would promise good spirits and rid one of negativity, she advised girl students to enjoy these activities too.

Wei exhorted girl students to fully devote themselves to pursuing knowledge and saw it as an end in itself. Un-

³¹ Ruihua, "Jinggao nü xuesheng" 敬告女學生, *Funü zazhi* 1. 7 (1915): 6-8.

³² Cheng Zhanlu, "Duiyu zhuchi nüxue zhe zhi zhiyan" 對於主持女學者之危言, *Funü zazhi* 1. 7 (1915): 2.

³³ Xia Zhen, "Yu zhi zhonggao yu nü xuesheng" 余之忠告於女學生, *Funü zazhi* 1. 4 (1915).

³⁴ Wei Hongzhu, "Duiyu nü xuesheng zhi zhiyan," 對於女學生之危言, *Funü shibao* 4 (1911), 10.

³⁵ Wei Hongzhu, "Dui yu nü xuesheng zhi zhiyan," 11.

like her contemporaries, she did not emphasize the study of household management in women's education. In contrast, she complained that housekeeping occupied most of her time and she regretted not having studied harder and learnt other types of knowledge when she was a student.³⁶

Nevertheless, both male and female critics castigated girl students' excessive attention to appearances—a sign of hedonism—and reiterated the importance of virtue and morality. For the reformist writers, only the girl students who rejected exterior adornments and valued inner qualities such as morality and virtue could be considered ideal girl students. The portrayals of ideal girl students were often seen in short stories. Cheng Zhanlu's short story "One hour's thoughts" intended to outline for readers the ideal qualities of girl students. The story begins with a female teacher marking her students' assigned essays titled "It's better to decorate the interior rather than the exterior" (飾容不如飾心說). The teacher soon frowned upon one girl student's argument that "one's exterior cannot be left unadorned, yet one's interior cannot be neglected." She instantly recollected that the author of this position had a proclivity for self-adornment. Criticizing such an argument as "frightful," the teacher began to contemplate her own experiences. In order to promote women's education, she had abandoned all the accessories and endured immeasurable hardship. Yet she was determined to cultivate respectable girl students who "were not contaminated by old customs, not vainglorious, and did not value Western products over Chinese ones."³⁷ Toward the end of the story, readers learn that the teacher successfully rectified the girl student's improper disposition in regards to "decoration."

In 1916, *Funü zazhi* serialized a story in its eleven installments out of twelve that year. Written in vernacular style, the story tells of the life trajectory of a girl student named Mufan慕凡 (homophone for "model" in Chinese). Born to a peasant's family in a small village, Mufan was clever in mind and skillful in hand. For instance, she was capable of maintaining a clean household as well as keeping a good study record at school. More importantly, she masterfully applied the knowledge she learnt at school to everyday life. After graduation, she became a teacher at a girls' school for she aspired to cultivate more respectable girl students. The whole story was divided into eighteen chapters and each depicted a laudable attribute of Mufan's. The last chapter ends with Mufan's happy marriage and her decision to found a school with her husband.³⁸ Like many other stories featuring ideal girl students, this story also replicates a stereotypical image of model girl students the reformist writers had called for. As her name suggests, Mufan was merely a physical entity that bore all the desirable characteristics of an ideal girl student.

Compared to the virulent attack of the status quo of girl students, such vision and imagery of "moral" and "fru-

gal" girl students seemed, however, didactic and monolithic. To a certain extent, the reformist writers' denunciation of the "frivolous", "shallow", and "restless" girl students further attested to these girl students' increasing visibility in the public spaces and their agency in the ever-expanding urban social and cultural practices. Nevertheless, both the criticism and the call for ideal girl students revealed the complex feelings that the reformist writers held toward the emerging "modern women" images that were embodied by the girl students and toward "modernity" itself in general.

THE EMERGING NEW WOMAN

The existing scholarship on the late Qing and early Republican female students and the development of women's education present a number of different explanations. The first explanation is that the discussions on female students reflected the concerns over the direction of modern women's education. For example, in his examination of the intellectual discourse on female students from the late Qing to the early Republic, Paul Bailey argues that the criticism of them revealed the conservative strand of modern women's education. The conservative officials and writers feared that the frivolous and "badly behaved" girl students would destabilize the family, social and gender order.³⁹ Emphasizing that the policing of girl students was a collaborative enterprise from both conservative and reformist writers, Joan Judge discerns that the disciplining of the dress codes and unconventional behaviors attested to the female students' social and gender liminality.⁴⁰

These explanations either elide to take into account the gendered voices in the debate or simply regard the female writers' voices as having been co-opted into male writers' perspectives. As I have shown above, although the female contributors most of the time held the same views as their male counterparts, they at times articulated their ambivalent stances. Second, these explanations fail to examine the agency and subjectivity of girl students who embodied the rapid progress of modernization and Westernization in the 1910s. Perry Link astutely notes that the "girl students" emerged as a significant group that constituted the new social and representational category of "new-style women."⁴¹ As demonstrated in this chapter, the early Republican image of "girl student" was an essential part of the modern woman image that was gradually being formulated in the face of rising urban consumer culture. More significant, the accentuation on the girl students' morality and virtue would be reinstated in the call for "new woman" in the eve of the May Fourth movement, and the debate of girl students in the 1910s would find its reincarnation in the intellectual discourse of New Woman

³⁶ Wei Hongzhu, "Dui yu nü xuesheng zhi zhiyan," 13.

³⁷ Zhanlu, "Yi xiaoshi zhi sichao" 一小時之思潮, *Funü zazhi* 1.2 (1915), 1-2.

³⁸ Hu Jichen, "Mufan nüer zhuan" 慕凡女兒傳, *Funü zazhi* 2. 11 (1916): 133-136.

³⁹ Paul Bailey, "'Unharnessed Fillies': Discourse on the 'Modern' Female Student in Early Twentieth-Century China", 342-345.; also see his, "'Women Behave Badly': Crime, Transgressive Behavior and Gender in Early Twentieth Century China," *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 8.1 (2006): 156-197.

⁴⁰ Joan Judge, *The Precious Raft of History*, 77.

⁴¹ Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks*, 220-28.

in the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1918, Hu Shi made a public speech at Beijing Women's Normal College. The college female students constituted the audience of Hu Shi's speech. Under the title of "American Women," Hu introduced to his audience various types of women in America among which the kind of "New Woman" (*xin funü* 新婦女) he rendered most laudable. Hu wrote,

"New Woman" is a new word, and it designates a new kind of woman, who is extremely intense in her speech, who tends towards the extreme in her actions, who doesn't believe in religion or adhere to rules of conduct, yet who is an extremely good thinker and has extremely high morals.

“新婦女”是一個新名詞，所指的是一種新派的婦女，言論非常激烈，行為往往趨於極端，不信宗教，不依禮法，卻又思想極高，道德極高。⁴²

Hu Shi's stress on the attribute of "extreme high morals" in the New Woman was readily reminiscent of the critics' appeal to moral superiority in their envisioning of the ideal girl student. Kristine Harris notes that the imported concept of New Woman in China did not refer to someone with political goals, yet the "new woman" in Western countries otherwise had the explicit connotation of politically vocal Feminism.⁴³ Such a requirement of New Woman that she be apolitical was in fact a continuation of the Republican critics' call for model girl students who were supposed to take no interest in politics.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the New Woman, what she wore, where she went and how she comported herself, became a heated topic widely discussed by the burgeoning urban intellectual class. Discussions focused on what kind of new woman was the authentic or real modern woman as opposed to the inauthentic or fake modern woman. In their debate, the inauthentic modern woman was identified as frivolous and indulgent in superficial trappings, whereas the real modern woman was someone who was educated, politically conscious, independent and patriotic. In her illuminating study of the debate on modern woman from the 1920s to 1930s, Louise Edwards argues that the reformist intellectuals' desire to regulate the modern woman revealed their profound anxieties over their diminishing power in governance.⁴⁴

As a matter of fact, the debate on girl student in the 1910s had already manifested the elements germane to the debate on New Woman a decade later. Edwards also points out that the reformist intellectuals who engaged in the debate on the modern woman during the 1920s and 1930s "consisted of urban men and women who had either received Western-style educations or who had cosmopolitan

outlooks."⁴⁵ Because of the similar educational backgrounds or values they shared, both men and women writers tended to identify themselves as essential parts of the elite class and therefore possessed the discursive authority to police the "inauthentic" modern woman. In this protracted debate, women writers mostly allied themselves with the elite men writers in criticizing and prescribing the ways of how a modern woman should behave, while hardly demonstrating, if not concealing, their own gendered stances. In other words, these women writers aligned themselves in class terms rather than in gender terms in the debate of the modern woman. In this present study, although the women critics of "girl student" were able to express their gendered views distinct from those of the men critics, there was also a noticeable trend that the majority of the female contributors' criticism began to conform to that of their male counterparts' in the debate of girl students. This conformity signaled the birth of an intellectual class that was ultimately formulated in the 1920s. Such alliance in turn laid a solid foundation for the popularization of New Woman into China in the subsequent May Fourth Movement.

⁴² Hu Shi 胡適, "Meiguo de furen" 美國的婦人 (The American women), *Xin qingnian* 新青年 (*The New Youth*) 5. 3 (1918): 233. The translation is cited from Kristine Harris, "The New Woman: Image, Subject, and Dissent in 1930s Shanghai Film Culture," *Republican China* 20. 2 (1995): 64.

⁴³ Harris, "The New Woman," 65.

⁴⁴ Louise Edwards, "Policing the Modern Woman in Republican China," *Modern China* 26. 2 (2000): 115-147.

⁴⁵ Louise Edwards, "Policing the Modern Woman," 121.

“THE WOMAN ATTEMPTING TO DISRUPT THE RITUAL”

REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMININITY AND THE POETICS OF THE SUBALTERN BODY IN CONTEMPORARY CHINESE FEMALE-AUTHORED POETRY



Li Xinmo's performance act "Re-writing One Hundred Years of Solitude," 2014. Photograph courtesy of the artist. Li Xinmo (b. 1976) is a painter and performance artist who is currently based in Beijing. She is loosely associated with the feminist literary scene and has also performed pieces influenced by women's poetry. Li is an artist who "disrupts the rituals" of the mainstream art scene.

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses representations of femininity in the poetry of three women authors from China – Zhai Yongming (b. 1955), Lü Yue (b. 1972), and Zheng Xiaoqiong (b. 1980) – whose works are associated with a distinct feminine poetics. These poets do not shy away from representing their feminist point of view, and their texts are often written against the hegemony of a male-centered literary discourse. At the same time, however, they counter some of our long-standing expectations surrounding female-authored poetry.

Drawing upon examples from their works I argue that since the late 1980s, the past and present subaltern condition of women has been a crucial point of interest for women poets in Mainland China. Since then, these authors have been preoccupied with the search not only for an independent poetic language, but also for a genealogy of female creativity, to which they might adhere in their artistic endeavors.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the ages poetry has been regarded as a genre suitable for women in Chinese literature. It is commonly acknowledged that, with regard to numbers alone, “no nation has produced more women poets than China.”¹ Yet if this is so, why have the majority of female authors sunk into oblivion? Professor Michelle Yeh, a renowned researcher and translator of Chinese poetry, noticed in one of her books, that women poets often remained “bound by literary conventions and moral constraints narrower and more rigid than those for men.”² This opinion sheds some light on the marginalization of the female tradition in pre-modern Chinese poetry. The majority of women poets from Imperial China adhered to a highly conventional feminine (*wanyue*) writing style and, as such, were habitually considered inferior to their male counterparts by readers.³ The skillfully composed “bound” verses

¹ Kang-i Sun Chang, “Ming-Qing Women Poets and Cultural Androgyny,” *Critical Studies* 18 (2002): 21-32.

² Michelle Yeh, *Anthology of Modern Chinese Poetry* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1992), xv.

³ This writing style of “delicate restraint” was traditionally defined

of feminine poetry did not challenge the prevalent gender regimes and their symbolic representations. Most often, literary skills, like bound feet, remained the valuable asset of the elite woman trained to satisfy men's desires.⁴

Only in the twilight of the Qing Empire and the ensuing political and social upheaval did a number of women poets begin to transgress the confines of pre-established representations of women in literature. Near the end of the nineteenth century, Qiu Jin (1875-1907), one of the pioneers of "literary feminism,"⁵ voiced her anger and cried out: "Arise! Arise! Chinese women, arise!"⁶ No later than the next generation, numerous young women began to take up her call in an attempt to alter the face of modern Chinese literature. Chen Hengzhe (1890-1976), Bing Xin (1900-1999), and Lin Huiyin (1904-1955), to name but a few influential female voices of this era, followed Qiu Jin and "swept aside convention."⁷

It was not until the second half of the 1980s, however,

as gentle and soft, fine and smooth, indirect, sentimental, etc. It harmonized well with the typical themes of "boudoir" poetry, such as love, grief, nostalgic longing, as well as complaints of mistreatment and abandonment. The notion of female authorship in imperial China is additionally blurred by the fact that many male poets practiced "literary cross-dressing" and expressed themselves in a conventional female voice, for example, when impersonating a nostalgic, abandoned woman. See Maija Bell Samei, *Gendered Persona and Poetic Voice. The Abandoned Woman in Early Chinese Song Lyrics* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004).

⁴ Recently, literary scholars have collected and anthologized numerous texts by women from the pre-modern era. This has triggered discussions about an independent female tradition in Chinese poetry. Even if these scholars argue for the existence of a not-entirely convention-ridden feminine imagery in imperial literature, they will still agree that the vast majority of women writers occupied positions on the peripheries of the literary canon. Consequently, professors of literature Kan-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy speak of women's authorship in traditional China as a "predicament": "Women writers are very much a part of Chinese literature. Though their place has been contested, though they have encountered the usual sorts of peremptory dismissal and trivialization, and though the benefits of literary reputation typically eluded them, they did participate in that vast conversation." This "vast conversation" was, and often still is, conditioned by the traditional male-centered rhetoric. See Kan-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy, ed., *Women Writers of Traditional China. An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1999), 3.

⁵ Amy Dooling, *Women's Literary Feminism in Twentieth Century China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁶ Qiu Jin, *Stones of the Jingwei Bird*, translated in *Writing Women in Modern China*, ed. Amy Dooling and Kristina Torgeson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 4.

⁷ This is the closing verse from Qiu Jin's poem "An Inscription for a Portrait of Myself (in Male Dress)" translated in Wilt Idema and Beata Grant, *The Red Brush. Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2004), 795.

that the term "women's poetry" (*nüxing shige*) entered the academic vocabulary.⁸ This new critical concept was shaped by vivid discussions, which arose as the literary world struggled to get to grips with the emergence of the young Sichuan poet, Zhai Yongming (b. 1955). The publishing of her first poem sequence *Nüren* (Women) in 1986⁹ is commonly believed to have marked the birth of a self-conscious female voice in modern Chinese poetry.

In the first part of this paper, I focus on the poetry of Zhai Yongming. Since her pathbreaking literary debut, Zhai has remained the most outstanding and influential figure on the feminist literary scene.¹⁰ A consensus among literary critics exists with regard to the impact of her poetic language on an entire generation of women poets.¹¹ She has also been

⁸ In 1987 poetry critic and scholar Tang Xiaodu published an essay seen as the first inquiry into the original poetical language proposed by women poets. See Tang Xiaodu, "Nüxing Shige: Cong Heiye dao Baizhou" [Women's Poetry: From the Dark Night into the Bright Day], *Shikan* [Poetry Periodical] 2 (1987): 58-59.

⁹ Zhai Yongming, *Nüren (liu shou)* [Women (six poems)], *Shikan* 6 (1986): 13-16.

¹⁰ With feminist literary scene I refer to the group of women poet, who cooperate with the unofficial journal *Yi* [Wings]. This journal is entirely dedicated to female-authored poetry. The first issue was published in print in 1999. Since 2002 it is available online as an e-zine (<http://site.douban.com/206010/room/2670940/>). The main editor, the poet-scholar Zhou Zan (b. 1968), occupies a special place in contemporary Chinese poetry, not only due to the value of her own literary contributions, but also as a result of her theoretical work on women's poetry. Many of the essays and discussions published in the journal are dedicated to the concepts of feminism, women's writing and the discourse of sex/gender difference and its relation to poetry. Zhai Yongming has been coediting the journal and publishing her works there since its establishment. Other female poets who collaborate regularly with the journal are Tang Danhong (b. 1965), Lan Lan (b. 1967), Yu Xiang (b. 1970), Lü Yue (b. 1972), Mu Qing (born in the 1970s), and Cao Shuying (b. 1979). Consequently, it has to be stressed here, that I do not perceive Zhai Yongming as a representative of all women authors in China, but of those, who write against the tradition of indirect and soft feminine style in poetry. I argue that Zhai Yongming, Lü Yue and Zheng Xiaoqiong consciously adhere to a direct and forceful language in order to express their female point of view.

¹¹ See Nan Fan, "Shenti Xiucixue: Xiaoxiang yu Xing" [Body Rhetoric: Representation and Gender], *Wenyi Zhengming* [Literature and Art Contend] 4 (1996), 30-39, Zhang Qinghua, "Fuhuo de Nüwa Chengge Dang Ku - Dangdai Zhongguo Nüxingzhuyi de Dansheng yu Nüxingzhuyi Shige" [Resurrected Nüwa is Composing Songs Full of Grieve - Birth of Contemporary Feminism in China and Feminist Poetry], *Zhongguo Nüzi Xueyuan Shandong Fenyuan Xuebao* [Scholarly Journal of the Shandong Division of Chinese Women's College] 2 (1999), 42-48, Zhang Hong Jeanne, *The Invention of a Discourse: Women's Poetry from Contemporary China* (Leiden: CNWS Publication, 2004), Zhai Yongming and Ouyang Jiange, "Nüxing Shige" [Women's Po-

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actively shaping the theoretic discourse of women's poetry with her numerous essays dedicated to the phenomenon of female authorship and the meaning of gender difference in literature. As a consequence of her interest in female creativity, Zhai has distanced herself from the concept of neuter literature and art. In 2010 she claimed, for example, that "not only poems are marked by gender difference, but even politics, military affairs, economics, they are all marked by gender difference."¹² Due to her avant-garde stance Zhai may be seen as representing those women authors in China who regard themselves as belonging to an alternative feminine literary tradition. Throughout the ages this tradition has been marginalized in the male-centered literary canon.

In the opening section of the paper, I briefly discuss the novelty of Zhai Yongming's poetic vocabulary, focusing particularly on the "black night" metaphor, which she introduced in her first cycle of poems as the imaginary birthplace of feminine consciousness in the post-revolutionary era. Zhai's innovative poetics took on the topic of female identity as it emerged in the moment, when the previously hegemonic representations of masculinity and femininity had already been turned into an object of critique. While a questioning of gender roles was displaced from official aesthetic discourse during the Mao era – which only accepted and reproduced a limited set of heteronormative codes for representing socialist men and women – since the 1980s a renegotiation of gender roles has begun to take place. Specifically, it was the experience of the female body that presented itself as an important point of departure in Zhai's early poetic exploration regarding the possibilities of speaking as a woman. The poet did not shy away from depicting the psychobiological dimension of women's lives. Consequently, critics identified her writings with the emergence of an original poetics of the body. This focus on previously tabooed phenomena – such as the physical experience of adolescence, menses, childbirth, and bodily decay – all retold from the distinct feminine perspective, broadened the range of poetical language. Since then, Zhai has been representing women's flesh and bodily fluids in her poetry – subjects that previously entered the somatophobic literary canon only incidentally. She was the first to bring to her verse these mundane, even abject, aspects of womanly being in the world. Consequently, Zhai's poetry may be regarded an important inspiration for the tidal wave of women's writing (*nüxing xiezu*) during the late 1980s and 1990s.¹³ These women authors' efforts to un-veil and un-silence the female body in literature has been acknowledged by succeed-

ing critics,¹⁴ who agree, that these poets helped at least one group "out" of their subaltern condition, namely the well-educated, urban woman.¹⁵ These radical poets felt compelled to steer away from the hegemonic gender representations of the revolutionary era in the search for their own definition of feminine freedom.

In the main body of this paper, I introduce some representations of femininity expressed in Zhai's poems of the new Millennium. Drawing upon these examples, I argue that since the turn of the century, body poetics has remained one of the defining features of women's poetry. Nevertheless, since the late 1990s Zhai's efforts to represent female bodily experience have been matched by other female writers, who have sought to establish not only an independent poetic language, but also a relevant genealogy, a dissident line of female creativity.

As a result, not only Zhai, but also other women poets such as Yi Lei (b. 1951) and Hai Nan (b. 1962), have been revisiting the traditional regimes of gender representation from which, they argue, female bodies as well as creative powers have been displaced. Zhai's poetry and polemical essays have been essential to this trend and epistemic questioning. Perhaps like no other poet, for the last twenty years she has been concerned with the creativity and literary output of other women. Not only female authors, but also increasingly women artists have captured her attention. In the year 2008, for example, she published a collection of essays dedicated to women's art.¹⁶ Zhai has repeatedly expressed her concerns and feeling of responsibility toward Chinese women artists, who, as she told me in an interview, may not be able to speak for themselves in the same way as writers and, consequently, remain silenced and underrepresented.¹⁷

In the final part of the paper, I discuss another important shift of interest that became visible in women's writing of the new century. In contrast to the nocturnal, introspective rhetoric identified with women's poetry of the 1980s and 1990s, the voice of female grief and anger has become significantly louder in the last ten years. Women still speak out against the remnants of patriarchy, but now also, and even more often, in reaction to growing social injustice on a global scale, and the associated exploitation and victimization for the sake of economic development. Significantly, when reacting in writing to manifestations of injustice and the suffering of women, some authors question, at the same time,

etry], *Dangdai Guoji Shitan* [Contemporary International Poetry] (2010), 97-124.

¹² Zhai Yongming, "Nüxing Yishi, Furen Zhijian, Cisheng" [Feminine Consciousness, Women's Views, and the Female Voice], in Zhai Yongming, *Nü'er Qiang. Zhai Yongming Sanwen* [Women's Wall. Essays by Zhai Yongming] (Xiamen: Lujiang Chubanshe, 2010, dated 2008), 263.

¹³ Most important female novelists belonging to this wave of self-exploring women's writing are, among others, Xu Xiaobin (b. 1953), Tie Ning (b. 1957), Lin Bai (b. 1958), and Chen Ran (b. 1962).

¹⁴ See Chen Xiaoming, *Zhongguo Dangdai Wenxue Zhuchao* [Trends in Contemporary Chinese Literature] (Beijing: Beijing University Press 2009), 398-423.

¹⁵ See Xu Kun, *Shuangdiao Yexing Chuan* [*Shuangdiao. Rowing in the Night*] (Taiyuan: Shanxi Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1999), Dai Jinhua, "Class and Gender in Contemporary Chinese Literature," in ed. Tao Jie, et al., *Holding Up Half the Sky*, (New York: Feminist Press at the City University of New York, 2004), 289-301.

¹⁶ Zhai Yongming, *Tianfu ruci* [Born in this Way] (Beijing: Dongfang Chubanshe, 2008).

¹⁷ I interviewed Zhai in 2010 in Beijing. The interview was later published as "Yu Yang Shuang Yi Xi Tan" [A Talk With Yang Shuang (Justyna Jagusik)] in *Xingshi Pinglun* [New Poetry Review] 2 (2012), 254-276.

their right to speak of other women's predicaments. While reclaiming the right to the expression of gender difference, feminine sexuality and subjective experience was crucial to women's writing of the early post-Mao era, speaking of these phenomena today remains difficult, but for different reasons. I analyze two poems by Lü Yue and Zhai Yongming to show the current aporia in the representation of women's bodies in the time of an all-engulfing global media spectacle.

In the closing section of the paper I refer to the example of Zheng Xiaoqiong (b. 1980), who, like her elder counterparts, has transgressed her subaltern position through the poetic act. Belonging to a younger generation and being of rural origin, Zheng speaks from a different position than Zhai Yongming or Lü Yue. Nevertheless, she shares with them the faith that, in spite of everything, writing poetry as a way of enacting female agency still matters.

BEGINNINGS: THE BLACK NIGHT AND THE BODY POETICS

A distinctive bodily poetics was intrinsic to the innovative language proposed by women poets of the 1980s and '90s. Previously, genuine representations of female bodily experience had been excluded, not only from the Maoist era's aesthetic canon of revolutionary realism and romanticism, but also from pre-modern traditions. Consequently, a celebration of gender difference and the emergence of feminine consciousness in women's poetry of the 1980s became essential to bidding farewell to the Maoist "iron girl" model of femininity (or its evident lack). Jeanne Hong Zhang, author of the only scholarly work in English dedicated to post-Mao Chinese women's poetry, aptly summarizes the significance of women's poetry engaged in this process by stating that the "writing of the female body by Chinese women poets sends out a strong message against political and discursive restraints."¹⁸ Within a period of only three years, from 1985 to 1988, sometimes called the "golden age" (*fanrongqi*) of women's poetry,¹⁹ poetical self-representations of female bodily experience challenged the traditionally "somatophobic" high-brow literature. Women poets, followed shortly afterwards by a group of female novelists, were the first to introduce a self-assured female persona into literature. As has already been mentioned in the Introduction, this figure expressed herself in an innovative poetic language, the origin of which may be traced back to Zhai Yongming. With her "black night," she inspired her fellow women poets to transgress the limits of the official genderless language.²⁰ In their rebellion against

convention-ridden constructions of femininity as found in classical and modern poetry, these poets created a novel female imaginary, a chthonic, nocturnal, and sensual world. They filled this feminine space with insights gained in the process of revising myths, re-reading symbols, and recovering long-forgotten heroines. In this way, female authors sought to establish a feminine culture, one that would finally provide them with "a room of their own."²¹

The woman who inhabited this room depicted femininity in an unfamiliar mode. All the main traits of this new post-Mao poetic representation of femininity may be found, for the very first time, in the preface Zhai Yongming wrote to her twenty-poem cycle, *Women*. This short introductory essay, titled "Black Night Consciousness,"²² was composed in 1984 and published officially for the first time in 1993. The heading of this text already includes two images essential to the female-authored "revolution in poetic language,"²³ namely, the dark and nocturnal nature of the new feminine consciousness. In her literary debut, Zhai Yongming wrote not only herself, but also other women, back into the realm of darkness of the "black night." It was a significant and, at the same time, subversive poetic gesture, which marked a definitive break with the dominant intellectual rhetoric of the Republican and Maoist eras, both of which promoted ideals of modernization through scientific enlightenment and technical progress. Since the late Qing, reformers, in their attempts to enlighten society, have turned darkness, or, literally, the dark night, into a standard metaphor of the misery that women suffered at the hands of such a traditional, backward society. Zhai Yongming's creative re-appropriation of the "black night" therefore undermined the linguistic domain of revolutionary modernity and engendered a new "line of flight"²⁴ in women's history. In the rhetoric of the modernizers, the "black night" represented the backward and oppressive past, from which the progressive intellectuals desired to free themselves. She, the black night – the woman – was to be enlightened, first by the technical progress of electric lamps, and shortly after, through the cult of the Reddest Red Sun. Zhai Yongming undermined this mindset in her early texts

¹⁸ Zhang, *The Invention of a Discourse*, 64.

¹⁹ Zhou Zan, Untitled interview with Zhai Yongming, reprinted in *Shige yu Ren* [Poetry and People], ed. Huang Lihai and Bu Yongtao (unofficial publication, 2003), 29.

²⁰ Later on Zhai described her own influence on many young poets who started to imitate her as a "black whirlwind" (*hei xuanfeng*). See Andrea Lingenfelter, "Translator's Foreword," in trans. Andrea Lingenfelter, *The Changing Room. Selected Poetry of Zhai Yongming* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011), xiv.

²¹ Zhai Yongming revisits the beginnings of contemporary women's poetry in Mainland China in some of her essays. Due to the political situation, the literary education of her generation was rather random and interrupted, but she was familiar with the conventional canon of classic Chinese poetry. Her self-study of women's literature started later. Zhai, along with other women poets and critics, however acknowledges the initial inspiration influence of Western female-authored and feminist texts, specifically Sylvia Plath's confessional poetry. See Zhang, *The Invention of a Discourse*, 36-41.

²² Zhai Yongming, "Heiye de yishi," in Zhang Qinghua, *Zhongguo xin shiqi nüxing yanjiu ziliao* [Materials for researching women's [writing] of the Chinese new era] (Jinan: Shandong Wenyi Chubanshe, 2006), 70-72.

²³ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

²⁴ See Brian Massumi, "Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgments," in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), xvi.

with the creation of a dark space in which female subjectivity was imagined independently of the aggressive masculine narrative of progress.

Primarily, the turn back to the “black night” offered a novel language in which femininity could be represented in the post-Mao era.²⁵ At the same time, it marked an opening towards alternative systems of perception and knowledge that had remained outside the rationale of the masculine “cogito.” These mythological, sensual, pre-secular ways of perceiving and being had been gradually expelled from mainstream culture, be it Confucian or revolutionary. The discourse of women’s poetry embraced these previously silenced phenomena, such as the experience of the female body and spirit. For example, Zhai Yongming pointed in her earliest texts to this emancipatory, but also fatal, potential buried in the “black night:”

“An inborn inner fear and a destructive premonition are hidden in women’s bodies. It is this presentiment that, in a reality brimming with all possibilities, eventually let us be absorbed by a predestination from which there is no redemption. For these reasons, the woman poet expands her own mythical world, linked to the moment of birth, as well as to the netherworld. On this increasingly blurred boundary, it is keeping to the truth of the inner darkness that allows you, after you have been painfully enlightened, to discover the black night consciousness. Only this is the destruction of your personal anxiety. (...)”

[The black night consciousness] allowed me to free myself to a state of pure knowledge and experience of myself, society and humankind.”²⁶

An unprecedented outburst of female creativity followed the publication of this text and numerous women authors began to experiment with nocturnal imagery. In their literary endeavors, they not only focused on the destiny of their own generation, but also “explored their own mythical world,” tracing feminine paths from the past as well as from distant geographies. Their poems may therefore be regarded as belonging to the global archives of women’s history.

REVISITING THE PAST

Since the 1990s Chinese women poets have established a poetic repository of inquiries into the lives of other women, in which femininity is most often represented as a tragic or, at least, precarious position. For instance, Zhai Yongming’s endeavors to recover the authentic female voice in poetry may be best encapsulated as an exploration of the boundaries imposed by the “premonition” (or alternatively, in Chang and Saussy’s words, the “predicament”), mentioned in her early essay “Black Night Consciousness.”

²⁵ Concurrently, it was as well an attempt to re-appropriate and recast the Chinese *yin* and *yang* cosmology along feminist lines.

²⁶ Zhai, “Heiye de Yishi,” 70. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Chinese are mine.

One of the poetic images that Zhai introduces in her writing to represent a feminine way of being in the world is the so-called “women’s wall” (*nü qiang*). In 1996 she wrote an essay dedicated to this ancient architectonic structure,²⁷ and to date it has remained a significant metaphor in her writing. Her latest selection of prose works, which consists of entirely new contributions along with revisions of older essays, was published, for example, under the title “Nü’er Qiang” (Women’s Wall). Additionally, in her latest collection of poetry, published in 2012, Zhai included a revised version of a longer poem, also entitled “Nü’er Qiang.”²⁸

It is not only in her essay dedicated to the “women’s wall,” but also in many of her other works, that Zhai depicts pre-modern, as well as contemporary, ideals of femininity as being constructed through the imposition of various confinements primarily meant to discipline female bodies. This recurrent motif may be found, for example, in the long poem “Yu Xuanji Fu” (Rhapsody on Yu Xuanji, written in 2005).²⁹ In Zhai’s opinion, Yu Xuanji (c. 844 – c. 871) was one of the most gifted women poets in Chinese history and, consequently, one of the heroines of the recovered female tradition in literature. In addition, Yu was a famous concubine, and an alleged murderer; the poetess was found guilty of murdering her servant girl out of jealousy. Due to her low social status and, moreover, to accusations of having committed a scandalous atrocity, for which she eventually paid with her life, Yu Xuanji’s works were generally not included in the strict canon of Tang poetry. In her poem, Zhai not only retells Yu’s short life-story, but also inquires into the reasons behind the marginalization of women writers in the history of literature.

According to Zhai, in traditional society there was no place from which female authors could exercise their agency in any lasting way. Nevertheless, she admits that the act of writing, if performed by a woman, is itself a mode of negation of male-centered rhetoric. Accordingly, literary creativity allowed brief moments of self-fulfillment, in which the female subject could feel empowered to speak with an unrestrained voice, giving her momentary escape from the subaltern con-

²⁷ First published in Zhai Yongming, *Zhishang Jianzhu* [Edifices on Paper] (Shanghai: Dongfang Chubanshe, 1997, dated 1996), 15-20. Later revised and reprinted in Zhai Yongming, “Nü’er Qiang,” in Zhai, *Nü’er Qiang. Zhai Yongming Sanwen*, 129-133.

²⁸ Zhai Yongming, “Nü’er Qiang,” in Zhai Yongming, *Hang jian Ju: Shiji 2008-2012* [The Space between the Lines: Collected Poems 2008-2012] (Chongqing: Chongqing Daxue Chubanshe), 49-53. “Women’s wall” (*nü qiang*) is the term Zhai introduces first in her essay. It was originally used in pre-modern literature to refer to a certain type of architectonic structure, a wall approximately 90 centimeters high. With the modern expression *nü’er qiang*, which literally means “daughter’s wall,” the poet refers directly to a painting under the same title by He Duoling, which depicts a small girl standing behind a wall. In what follows, she uses the ancient “women’s wall” and contemporary “daughter’s wall” synonymously. In my translation I use “women’s wall” for both of them.

²⁹ Zhai Yongming, “Yu Xuanji Fu,” in Zhai Yongming, *Zui Weiwan de Ci* [Most Delicate Verses] (Beijing: Dongfang Chubanshe, 2008), 74-81.

dition before she was necessarily bound up in that discourse again. Despite the possibility of such brief spells of freedom, Zhai acknowledges that, in pre-modern times, the status of “woman poet” was a subject position only available to female authors who showed “delicate restraint” in their writings and obeyed to the rules of the patriarchal order in their lives.³⁰

In her “rhapsody” Zhai Yongming focuses on real and imagined boundaries. The first image to emerge in the poem is that of Yu Xuanji locked in a cangue on her way to the execution site, after she has been found guilty of murdering her maid. Zhai then lifts this scene into a universal dimension in describing the yoke as simply another type of female “attire” to be “worn.” Concurrently, in a play of intertextuality, she alludes to the following verse from Yu Xuanji’s original text: “I resent these gauze robes of mine, which conceal lines of a poem . . .”³¹

Both the ancient and the contemporary poet associate feminine garments, a metaphor for the “other sex,” with yokes, suggesting that they limit women’s physical and social mobility in similar ways. Zhai interprets Yu Xuanji’s lamentation of her “inferior”, female position as more than just the expression of an individual’s frustration with the impossibility of living up to their ambitions. In Zhai’s opinion, it symbolizes the collective destiny of many anonymous women in pre-modern times:

“Cangues were the attire of many ancient women
Fluttering all over the sky strung together
They could turn into white kites but could not rise up to
the heavens.”³²

The aforementioned “women’s wall” is another confining boundary that Zhai Yongming has recovered from the past to represent the destiny of the female sex. In her essay “Women’s Wall,” Zhai introduces several pre-modern textual references that mention this ancient architectonic structure. This low wall with its uneven surface may be found, for example, in the writings of Liu Yuxi (772-842) or Li Yu (1610-1680). Zhai agrees with Li Yu’s sarcastic comment from *Xian Qing Ou Qi* (Casual Expressions of Idle Feelings) that even if this short wall was sometimes claimed to have a defensive function, in everyday life it was actually understood mainly as means of restraining women’s visibility and mobility.³³ In what follows, Zhai focuses on the connection between the “women’s wall” and the gaze. Indeed, Zhai shows that this link was already made in the earliest etymological definitions of this construction.

³⁰ See Zhai’s essay dedicated to Yu Xuanji, Zhai Yongming, “Zihen Luo Yi Yan Shiju” [I Resent These Gauzes of Mine, Which Conceal Lines of a Poem], *Nü’er Qiang*, 253.

³¹ Translated in *Women Writers of Traditional China*, Chang and Saussy, ed. 75.

³² Zhai, “Yu Xuanji Fu,” 74, translated by Justyna Jagusick and Helen Wallimann.

³³ Zhai quotes from Li Yu, *Xian Qing Ou Qi* [Casual Expressions of Idle Feelings] in *Li Yu Quanji* [The Collected Works of Li Yu] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe 1991), vol. 3, 183. Here I paraphrase the pages 131-132 from Zhai’s essay.

This should come as no surprise to readers acquainted with contemporary feminist discussions.³⁴ Significantly, in her inquiry into the meaning of the “women’s wall”, Zhai advances a reading that looks beyond its obviously obstructive and hindering qualities and focuses much more on the aporetic nature of the “women’s wall.” According to her, while the wall confined women, it was also capable of stimulating their transgressive desires.

Here Zhai Yongming suggests the potential existence of pre-modern female agency, which she claims could express itself in certain circumstances, such as under the influence of passionate love. The wall was not high enough to completely obstruct the young maidens’ field of vision and sometimes only one curious glimpse sufficed to discover the beloved one. According to Zhai, these short moments, in which women’s gazes crossed boundaries, were often the most precious. They allowed them to escape, symbolically, their enclosure in the traditional courtyard:

“In ancient times women were confined for long times in the depths of the inner quarters, and they were not allowed to leave the houses. Nevertheless, this low wall reached only the height of their shoulders, and could not really prevent women living inside the house from occasionally taking a glimpse into the spring air outside. Moreover, the wall is a dead object, and humans are certainly alive, so the women’s wall became a popular [literary] motif in ancient times. Specifically, this architectural form influenced the way in which the ancient women peeped, and it formed their peeping nature. Often one glimpse was enough for them to discover their sweetheart, or to change their lives.”³⁵

In Zhai Yongming’s writing, the women’s wall functions as a double-edged sword. It was originally built with the intention of separating upper-class women from the outside world, subjecting them to the power of their kin. Consequently, it symbolized the spatial isolation and displacement of women from the public domain, which was furthermore paralleled by the marginalization of feminine creativity within the symbolic realm of traditional China.

Zhai’s reading does not, however, end with this conclusion. Subsequently, the poet deconstructs the physical obstacle with her claim that it paradoxically opened a space for the negation of the patriarchal order by the not-fully tamed female gaze.

It is not only women’s creativity and sight that Zhai associates with a subversive or transgressive potentiality hidden within the feminine margins, a force, she suggests, which is strong enough to intervene into the Confucian routine of ancient China. With her poem “Women’s Wall” she adds another dimension to the picture, one that is indispensable for traditional representations of femininity – the supernatural. A low wall was often described in the genre of *chuanqi*, conventionally defined as stories reporting “weird or unusual love

³⁴ See for example Laura Mulvey’s classic essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16 (1975): 6-18.

³⁵ Zhai, “Nü’er Qiang”, 130.

affairs” and “leaning towards the supernatural.”³⁶ In a great number of such tales, the male protagonist, by crossing the wall, entered into a dangerous realm of strangeness which was the territory of female ghosts:

(...) There is no sight of the tale of the White Snake³⁷ in this world
and there is either no sight of Nie Xiaoqian³⁸
They wrote poems chanted poems
Fell in love with scholars suffered from love sickness
Why do they always appear as female bodies?
Hidden next to *Taihu* stones or hidden behind the women’s wall
They are materialized ghosts blood turned green
for the sake of disguising themselves
for the sake of conjugal bliss.”³⁹

This stanza not only mentions the woman’s wall, but brings together other popular features essential to the representation of femininity in pre-modern times. Again, Zhai focuses on boundaries and potential moments of transgressions. In addition, the opposing acts of veiling and unveiling play an important role since in order to find love and happiness, the female spirits need to hide their true shape and masquerade as mortal women. Once more, women’s creativity and literary talents are placed outside the space of conventional femininity. In fact they become associated with the dangerous and the demonic realm.

Zhai Yongming’s poetical “herstories” show how throughout the ages women have been forced to surrender to the patriarchal order and to sacrifice much of their freedom, sensibilities, and happiness. The range of their mobility, vision, and writing has been restricted by the rules inherent within the traditional social order. Zhai’s writings, moreover, point to the coexistence of two mutually exclusive images of femininity in Imperial China. On the one hand there was the normative ideal of the dutiful wife and loving mother, hidden behind the women’s wall in the inner quarters of the traditional courtyards. These women, who subjected themselves to this special regime, were idealized for their purity and virtue in mainstream literature. They were represented and spoken for by men. Particularly in poetry, femininity was highly conventionalized and reduced to a question of style:

³⁶ Wilt Idema and Lyold Haft, *A Guide to Chinese Literature* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1997), 135.

³⁷ The famous tragic love story of a white snake spirit that lived in the Western Lake in Hangzhou. The spirit transformed into a woman and happily fell in love with a young man. Her husband died of shock after discovering that his wife was not human.

³⁸ Nie Xiaoqian was one of the many beautiful female ghosts depicted in Pu Songling’s collection of fanciful stories, *Liaozhai Zhi Yi*. Nie became the ghost wife of a Ning Caichen, an upright scholar who saved her from evil demons. Nie’s love for Ning and her commitment to his family were rewarded with the restoration of her human nature. Significantly, Nie was also a gifted painter. For the English translation of the story see trans. Sidney Sondergard, *Strange Tales from Liaozhai by Pu Songling*, vol. 1 (Fremont: Jain Publishing Company 2008), 223-241.

³⁹ Zhai Yongming, “Nü’er Qiang,” 51.

“But, in times of women’s absence [from society], “*weiwan-pai*” [the soft and feminine style] was adopted as a masculine substitute for the expression of the female voice. We may say, the “female voice,” produced by men, was saturated with male narcissism and male fantasies of the feminine.”⁴⁰

Yet there was also, on the other hand, the image of the demonic, fallen woman that existed in folk stories, and which became an important source of inspiration for the *chuanqi* genre. These stories showed that transgression was possible, but even more they warned of its consequences.

Contemporary women poets regard this uneasy heritage as essential to their own artistic empowerment. They connect their own “black night consciousness” with an older, alternative feminine literary tradition, which emerged on the margins of the literary canon, for example in the folk tale. In addition, in her poem “Nü’er Qiang,” Zhai calls the women hidden behind the garden wall her “sisters” (*jiemei*).⁴¹ In doing so, she points to another important feature of the female literary tradition, namely, the feeling of solidarity among (writing) women. These bonds also became a viable means of transgressing the limitations imposed by the patriarchal order. To date, they see the close cooperation of women writers and feminist critics as essential to establishing and strengthening the position of the female author within the literary field.

THE SPECTACLE OF THE FEMALE BODY

One of the problems women artists currently encounter is the hyper-visibility of the female body in popular culture. Many of these images are designed for commercial purposes and cater to the scopophilic gaze of the male viewer. This is naturally the case in many contemporary pornographic productions, but even in run-of-the-mill cultural entertainment the scantily clad heroine is omnipresent. This everyday objectification of the female body and its anatomical units overshadows any representation of the gendered body.

Not surprisingly, women poets in China have recently found themselves trapped by this dilemma. As already mentioned, the 1980s saw the introduction of a distinctive bodily poetics, thanks to which even the most intimate experiences could finally be expressed on feminine terms. Consequently, female-authored representations of love, sexuality, eroticism, and bodily sensation played a central role in the process of renegotiating gender roles in the post-Mao era. Since the turn of the century, and with the ongoing integration of China into the global media landscape, little remains of the revolutionary asceticism of the Maoist utopia. In response to the changing socio-economic context, women poets have become increasingly self-reflective in their writings. Their latest works reflect a growing awareness of the impossibility of simplistic gender representations.

In her poem “Zhi yige Qitu Pohuai Yishi de Nüren” (To a Woman Attempting to Disrupt the Ritual) the author

⁴⁰ Zhai Yongming, *Nü’er Qiang*, 266.

⁴¹ Zhai Yongming, “Nü’er Qiang,” 49.

Lü Yue (b. 1972) describes a foreign female protester who is eventually turned into a media spectacle for an international TV audience. The stranger's desperate performance remains inscrutable to those in front of the screen. Furthermore, instead of struggling to make sense of it, they conveniently focus on her body and attire, "typically" feminine attributes that are used to evaluate a woman's public performance. In this poem Lü Yue suggests that one of the possible reasons behind the misreading of the stranger's performance is her gender:

"To a Woman Attempting to Disrupt the Ritual

On a Paris street, handsome young policemen stop a foreign woman attempting to disrupt a diplomatic ritual. One holds her armpits, one grasps her legs, smiles on their faces, she is being taken away to a police vehicle, which is spread with sweet scents, she is taken away, toward the TV screens of the entire world. Five billion judges sitting on their sofas, they ask for an even closer shot... We don't know this woman, this woman is Tibetan, and Tajik, Rwandan, Taliban, she is Jewish, we know this woman, this woman is woman's.

She screams with excitation like a monkey, and grasps the policemen's hands as if she were on a swing, exposing parts of her belly's skin

the abdomen is hard enough to be used as a bullet, sleek enough to climb on the male gang's title pages
there is no embrasure on its surface, only the uncivilized shape of the navel, like us

She has all the parts that we have

A white T-shirt, grey jeans, a scarf and a belt, shoes and socks, earrings fingerings necklaces

It disappoints us that she has not made herself up as a hairy foreigner

There is no polytheistic golden tattoo on her left arm
She is not hiding a purple tail in her jeans.⁴²

Lü Yue seems deeply pessimistic about the possibility of any sort of female-authored disruption of rituals in the contemporary world, which operates mainly through the complicity of male-centered politics, state powers, and media agencies. Furthermore, she negates the widespread belief that public protest, here literally on a global stage, enlarges the possibility of reaching one's goals. So long as the audience refuses to leave the intellectual comfort zone of their sofa, this subversive act will be understood as mere entertainment. Lü shows how, in the mass media, gender and ethnic differences are being turned into a spectacle of "otherness" and "sameness." If the ethnic performance is perceived as "inauthentic" and fails to match up with common fantasies of "exotic femi-

ninity," it will finally be judged as disappointing and uncivilized by the audience.

The anonymous woman from Lü Yue's poem emerges in an era in which the international audience is instantly updated on the plights women encounter all around the world. We have been nourished by images of veiled women as symbols of oppression, or of abusive conditions in sweatshops where those in power pray upon vulnerable women and children. While the representation of the other "third world" woman as a passive victim seems to be rather "unproblematic", Lü Yue's poem points to the difficulties a woman encounters when she attempts to transgress the conventional role of a silent observer.⁴³ She exposes herself to the risk of being misread, due to the fact that her show of feminine agency does not conform to public expectation. In doing so, she recalls the figure of the subaltern in Gayatri Spivak's much-discussed well-known text.⁴⁴ She may, in fact, be introduced through Spivak's own words: "Here is a woman who tried to be decisive in *extremis*. She 'spoke,' but women did not, do not, 'hear' her. Thus she can be defined as a 'subaltern' – a person without lines of social mobility."⁴⁵ The female protester of the poem cries out in a convulsive act of self-representation, aiming at the establishment of a counter-discourse to the diplomatic rituals of global politics, which do not speak for her. Instantly, the protester's desperate performance is re-presented as an image of the media for an international audience. Consequently, Lü Yue's poem may be read as a discussion of the duplicity of representation, a distinction that is also crucial in Spivak's reasoning. Both authors open their texts with an inquiry into the idea of representation as displaying a nexus between aesthetics and politics and which thus becomes inextricably linked to notions of "looking at" and "speaking for" others.

Furthermore, they both seem to agree that representation inevitably involves a betrayal to specific connotations of gender, race, and class. In Lü Yue's poem the demonstrating stranger fails not only once, but actually "five billion times," with every single act of misreading that takes place in front of the TV screen. This misrecognition, or inadequacy of a carefully planned dissident act, plays a similarly significant role in Spivak's argument. In her text, she recalls the story of a young Indian female independence fighter, who committed suicide because she found herself unable to confront the task of political assassination. Nevertheless, the unhappy insurgent was later remembered by her family as the girl who had terminated her life in the course of an illicit love affair.

⁴³ For example the recent discussions around the feminist protest group Femen demonstrate the political topicality of Lü Yue's concerns.

⁴⁴ Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), 271-313. See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak? (Abbreviated by the Author)," in ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 28-37.

⁴⁵ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak? (Abbreviated by the Author)," 28.

⁴² Published online in a collection of ten feminist poems, assessed Aug. 15, 2014, <http://www.china-gad.org/Treasure/ShowArticle.asp?ArticleID=13188>.

This failure of communication finally brought Spivak to her conclusion that the subaltern cannot speak.⁴⁶

Another question that is closely linked with the political dimension in Spivak's text is the representational responsibility for the intellectual female author with regard to lower-class women. Women poets in China, even if often silenced and displaced from the literary field in the past, have since the 1980s successfully established a discourse of women's poetry. Even if they still suffer from gender discrimination in an unequal society, their position can no longer be seen through the theoretical lens of subalternity. At the same time, in the course of China's economic transformation, women particularly from the lower social strata have been confronted by their increasing vulnerability.⁴⁷ These women have been made to suffer not only as a result of structural inequality, but primarily in relation to an insecurity. This insecurity is brought about by their previously marginal experiences of unemployment and migration, as well as through the rise of the sex business and possibly related eruptions of gender-based violence. These issues have not gone unnoticed by female intellectuals, who have embraced the uneasy task of speaking for these other women.

Zhai Yongming's poem "Guanyu Chuji de yi ci Baodao"⁴⁸ (Report on a Child Prostitute) sheds light on the ambiguous character of this well-meant task. This text is based on the newspaper report of a twelve-year-old peasant girl who was abducted and forced into prostitution. By the time her father found her, she was half dead. The lyrical voice recalls the story with journalistic candor and with a focus on the physical and psychological damage inflicted on the child. The poem is first of all the poet's enraged response to the cruel reality of a world gone berserk. Nevertheless, Zhai does not want to downplay the problematic fact that her text is actually based on a media re-presentation of a personal tragedy. The poet asks herself how to speak about this incident in a meaningful way without simply reproducing the spectacle of subaltern suffering delivered daily by the mass media. She agrees with Lü Yue's sober opinion that such hardship is most often converted back into the common object of nonreflective consumption:

"In part she's just a picture in the paper
12 years old standing in a group of girls
You can't see she's missing an ovary
You could say it's just a story in the news
Every day our eyes take in thousands of pieces of informa-

tion
They control the pleasures of consumers
They stream by just like this "item"
Masses of information hotlines and global perspectives
Like a huge rough rug wiping away one person's feeble suffering
People like us take a glance and that's all
Crumple up the paper stuff it in a dark metal bin"⁴⁹

With their poems, Zhai and Lü both address the indifference with which the audience reacts to re-presentations of the subaltern experience. In addition, Zhai voices her ethical doubts about composing a poem based on this tragedy. From an aesthetic point of view, the proper poetic language in which this crime could be represented seems not to exist. It is beyond the scope of the conventionally feminine, or soft and gentle (*weiwan*), voice in Chinese poetry. Furthermore, it cannot be retold in the masculine voice of the heroic tradition, which provides neither the relevant vocabulary to represent such sexual violence, or the pain of the female victim. Zhai finally confesses to the reader:

"Reading the paper I keep thinking:
You can't write a poem about this
You can't turn poetry into something like this
You can't chew up a poem
Or hammer words into teeth to constantly bite

(...)

Poem, bandages, photos, memory
They scratch at my eyes
(Here in the retinal zone where dark and light meet)
It's all quite clear: it's useless
No one cares about this damage
It's just a daily quotient of data
Creating a life of misery for someone else"⁵⁰

In one of her later essays, Zhai discussed the growing interest of writing intellectuals in the lives of those belonging to the lower strata. She perceives the re-entry of these disenfranchised groups into the intellectuals' field of perception as logically connected with (and continuing) the critical spirit of May Fourth literature. The poet significantly repeats, in this essay, some questions already raised in "Report of the Child Prostitute;" these are questions concerned particularly with the possibility of an engaged, artistic re-presentation of the subaltern:

"However, the contemporary 'writing of the lower strata' is doubtlessly a return to this [May Fourth] tradition and its continuation. It brings the community of the 'silent ones' at the bottom of society to the fore and expresses their collective demands (...).

⁴⁶ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 103-104.

⁴⁷ Zhai Yongming expressed her concerns about the deteriorating position of women under the current revival of Confucian culture. See Andrea Lingenfelter, "China's Foremost Feminist Poet Zhai Yongming Converses on Her Art, Her Bar and Chinese Women's Writing, Past and Present," an interview with Zhai published in the online journal *Full Tilt* 5, accessed Oct. 28, 2014, http://fulltilt.ncu.edu.tw/Content.asp?I_No=35, as well as Zhai, "Yu Yang Shuang Yi Xi Tan", 262-264.

⁴⁸ Zhai Yongming, "Guanyu Chuji de yi ci Baodao," in Zhai, *Zui Weiwan de Ci*, 17-19. Translated as "Report on a Child Prostitute," in Lingenfelter, *The Changing Room*, 148-153.

⁴⁹ Lingenfelter, *The Changing Room*, 151-153. Translation modified.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* Translation modified.

What must be stressed here is that the [recognition of the] social responsibility of literature does not mean that esthetic merits have to be sacrificed; literature is an important art form. Accordingly, it has its own distinctive rules and features and even where the social function of literature is emphasized its esthetic character must be preserved; “lower strata literature” being no exception.”⁵¹

SUBALTERN SELF-REPRESENTATION

Since the turn of the century, the struggle of the lower classes under the post-socialist regime has become a prominent subject, and not only in writings by professional authors. Concurrently, the literary phenomenon of the writing of the lower strata (*diceng xiezuo*) has become one of the focal points of recent discussions in the literary field. As I have demonstrated in the previous section, after the turn of the century – in reaction to the growing awareness of social divisions – the no-longer subaltern woman author turned her attention towards the disenfranchised classes and ethnic other. At the same time, however, it became gradually clearer that silent and absent rural women were no longer universally confined to that position. Some of them have already begun to write from this position and are showing themselves to be capable of self-representation. They are, however, still only a small minority, while the majority remains captured in silence and is, at best, re-presented in a similar manner to the ones described by Zhai Yongming and Lü Yue.

A telling example may be found in Zheng Xiaoqiong’s literary career (b. 1980). Zheng is the most recognized female poet now writing out of and on behalf of this social stratum, and her works embrace the task of representation with as much fervor as the older women poets with an intellectual background. Her poems also document the search for an alternative self-representation, located outside the prevailing popular, masculine imaginary, in which the underclass woman, especially, most often figures as a silent victim or a sexual object. In line with earlier women poets, who adopted a nocturnal poetics as a means of countering the enlightened masculine cogito, Zheng also remains critical of the ritualized celebration of modernization and development. Her criticism is however primarily grounded in the bodily experiences of female migrant workers.

Consequently, one of the recurrent figures indispensable to the articulation of her critique of global capitalism, industrialization, and patriarchal traditions, is the subjected and suffering female body. By repeatedly invoking this image, she reveals the true cost of economic growth, and furthermore, shows that as a general rule they are disproportionately paid by lower-class women. In her early poetry cycle titled “Jinhualun” (The Theory of Evolution), for example, Zheng thematizes the unequal power relations in an anonymous city.

She shows how the weak (women from the countryside) are exploited and preyed upon by the stronger “species” (men):

“(…) the buildings of the male city glimmer before me
the glass signs are full of female bodies. The amazing spring
awakening of the overwintered seedbed of lust
The mask of the city is growing inside my occluded veins,
an earthworm hibernating in the lower strata
Its gloomy look, women sitting in the pool of neon lights.
Their bodies
in crude shower rooms, naked charm, the city square erected
by man’s tool
The weight of restless lights has compressed the earth, and
bent the feminine body
The women’s duckweed-like roots plunge through the city’s
concrete ground.”

(from “Jianjiao de Qiuyin” Shrieking earthworm)⁵²

In each of the six poems of this cycle, Zheng addresses the multiple dimensions of social inequality, which primarily originates from the intersection of gender with rural background, but cannot simply be reduced to the interplay of these two factors. Furthermore, both here and in other poems, Zheng often introduces a historical dimension to demonstrate that the current situation is only the most recent actualization in a long tradition of physical co-optation by the wealthy and powerful throughout the ages. In her skillful poetic montage of swiftly alternating lyrical images, Zheng moves freely between different enactments of injustice, showing the exploitation of nature, women, the rural environment and finally, of certain nations and regions within the global capitalist order:

“(…) the economists cry out
the market economy has no heart, the weak are prey to the
strong, my rural sisters have no alternative but
to be dished up on their beds, the economists’ books devoid
of humanity become the compass of the market economy,
carved into the nation’s dead bones, carved into the ribs of
the rural poor.
Its green bodily fluids like flowing tidal waves, and all the
time I sit in the heart of darkness in the South,
seeing with my own eyes my sisters becoming infertile
among the chemical products, their sighs
become the wounds of our times (…)”

(from “Jiuri de Zhizhu”, Spider from the Old Days)⁵³

Similar images may be found in many of Zheng’s poems. As a consequence, she is best known for her representations of the pained female body, which publicly expose the suffering of workers shut off behind factory walls. Zheng con-

⁵¹ Zhai Yongming, “Wenxue de Shehui Chengdan he ‘Diceng Xiezuo’” [Literature’s Social Responsibility and ‘Lower Strata Writing’], accessed Dec. 7, 2013, <http://theory.people.com.cn/GB/49157/49165/7107816.html>, accessed December 7, 2013.

⁵² Zheng Xiaoqiong, “Jinhualun” (The Theory of Evolution), Zheng Xiaoqiong’s blog, accessed Aug. 11, 2014, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_45a57d3001000ak6.html. Unless otherwise noted, all poems by Zheng Xiaoqiong are translated by Justyna Jagusik and Helen Wallimann.

⁵³ Ibid.

stantly revisits these places of injury, be it factories or broths, and fixes in her texts the traumatic symptoms that many of her fellow workers have suffered. She wants them to be remembered, and from this perspective, her highest achievement has been bringing these obscured bodies back into the public vision. Thanks to her, the pain of an anonymous, silent assembly line worker is represented in the “elite” genre of poetry:

“(…)
and nobody notices that the woman worker at the machine
is having her period
the tide surging within her body, under her trembling
shoulders
silent pain, cut off by the cutter bar, pounded to pieces
her helplessness, the scared look in her eyes, her noiseless
sighs
all drowned out by the industrial age, everything industry
breeds
inevitably engulfs her entirety, her body, her soul
her thoughts, her dreams, cut out, reassembled to become
Glossy goods on the shelves, waiting to be sold.”⁵⁴

Zheng Xiaoqiong was a migrant worker herself, and even if her poetic talent allowed her to switch the production line for a desk, she remains bound to her responsibility as a witness for all female workers. Through the subversive act of poetry she writes herself out of the subaltern condition. Today she is recognized as an author and cultural worker that represents and re-presents the painful existence of factory workers, which otherwise would remain untold, hidden behind the factory and “women’s walls” of China’s South.

CONCLUSION

At the high tide of women’s writing in the post-Mao era, female authors devoted themselves to the exploration of topics of subjectivity and sexual difference. Both were represented through the “black night consciousness,” the rise of which enabled a revision of previous gender representations. After centuries of being displaced, silenced or spoken for by men, women authors were primarily concerned with challenging the gender-unspecific artistic ideals of Maoism. At the same time, however, they questioned the subaltern status of women in the patriarchal tradition. As the example of Zhai Yongming has shown, women poets surveyed the changing boundaries through which the feminine condition had been delineated. These poets aimed at the representation of various moments of women’s manifest agency, and its subsequent periods of silence. They traced ruptures in the traditional symbolic order caused by the eruption of female creativity and recovered subversive acts as milestones in the process of establishing their own system of reference. Finally, they successfully broke away from the dominant poetics, with

⁵⁴ Zheng Xiaoqiong, “Wuye Nügong” [Female Worker at Midnight], in Zheng Xiaoqiong, *Sanluo zai jitai shang de Shi* [Poems Scattered on the Machine] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Chubanshe, 2008), 37.

its male-oriented linguistic traditions, to establish a counter-discourse in women’s poetry.⁵⁵

While the effort to recover women from the past may be generally seen as unproblematic, some women poets are becoming increasingly aware of the current representational impasse. Significantly, as the aforementioned examples of Lü Yue and Zhai Yongming show, women poets have manifested a growing interest in not only local, but also global structures of constraint to which women have been subjected.

The migrant worker poet Zheng Xiaoqiong has gained poetic credibility for documenting the suffering originating from this new captivity. In line with the older generation of poets, she has also been searching for moments of transgression, which are still possible in these oppressive, inhuman conditions. While her general opinion of future development remains deeply pessimistic, she seems to agree with the older poets on the transgressive potential of writing poetry and love. In her poem “Ju” (Play) we find the following (self-) representation of a female migrant worker as a poet:

“(…) other people imagine her life
in rags, as if she came out
of an ancient tragedy, actually her days are dull and tough
in every grain a silent soul is hiding
She writes poetry on the machine of the Chinese
This old but fictitious medium. She installs herself
in a working position at the assembly line,
using her employee number to replace
name and gender, by a lathe drill sands, cuts
her heart is full of love and complaints, but there are people
who wish
to discover the depth of the times in these tempers
yet she is hiding inside her meager body, using up every-
thing
to adore herself, these landscapes, rivers and the era
these wars, capital, scenes, for her
are worth less than this love (…)”⁵⁶

This fragment shows that in the process of writing – which constitutes a moment of transgression for the alienated factory worker – a new subjective project emerges on the horizon of society. The speaking subject knows that she cannot be properly contained within the available representational discourse, in which the female migrant worker figures as a passive victim, one whose name and gender has been erased. In fact Zheng is aware of the fact that every text that she delivers will be misread and co-opted by others, but she does not cease to speak for herself. She does not want to be represented by women poets or intellectuals, but to be recognized by them as an equal, a poet.

⁵⁵ See Zhang, *The Invention of a Discourse*.

⁵⁶ Zheng Xiaoqiong, Ju [Play], in Zheng, *Sanluo Zai Jitai shang de Shi*, 26-27.

INTERVIEW WITH SVATI SHAH

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SEXUALITY, MIGRATION, AND URBANIZATION IN INDIA



RACHEL LENG · HARVARD UNIVERSITY

India has recently experienced tremendous changes in the public arena around discourses regarding gender and sexuality, especially concerning LGBT groups and women's rights. These include increasing levels of visibility for LGBT communities, in part due to efforts to decriminalize consensual sodomy between adults, and the Supreme Court's landmark April 2014 decision recognizing a "third gender." At the same time, the public outcry against the New Delhi gang rape incident in 2012 and against subsequent sexual assaults against women have raised international media attention about the treatment of women, anti-rape activism, and feminism in Indian society. Rachel Leng from the *Harvard Asia Quarterly* speaks with Professor Svati Shah (right) about these topics, which are embedded in her work on the political economy of sexuality, migration, and urbanization in India.

Your first ethnographic monograph, entitled *Street Corner Secrets: Sex, Work and Migration in the City of Mumbai*, was recently published in August 2014 by Duke University Press. What drew you to research and write on this topic?

I came to the topic in the 1990s through my interest in HIV, while I was a student in Emory University's Master's of Public Health program. My professor Dr. Stanley O. Foster, who was active in the small pox eradication campaigns of the 1970s, showed our International Health Policy class a video of an interview he had done with an activist in India who was working with sex workers there. I did an internship in Mumbai a short time later with an organization working



to prevent HIV transmission in one of Mumbai's main red light areas. I spent two months there, and conducted interviews with women who were living there and doing sex work. I noticed that, no matter what I asked, they all kept returning to the question of "blame" regarding why they were earning a living in this way. I realized

that they were actually responding to a discourse that was extremely historicized and more overdetermined than I had imagined. I wanted to understand it better, and decided to pursue a PhD in order to do so.

In your studies of sexual commerce and LGBTQ migration in India, do you consider yourself to have a feminist approach?

Of course! These interests are not mutually exclusive. There are many feminisms, and I am able to do my work because of the perspectives that debates within feminism offer me.

In your book, *Street Corner Secrets: Sex, Work and Migration in the City of Mumbai* (2004), you focus on women who migrated from rural underdeveloped areas in India to Mumbai and how they sell sexual services to earn

a living. Could you tell us more about the distinct environment for sex work in Mumbai at the moment – how is it perceived by the public and how widespread is it?

Sexual commerce is highly stigmatized all over the world, and India is no exception. One of the things I talk about in my book is how the term “the public” is often used to refer to a specific group of people (i.e. respectable, middle class, heteronormative citizens), and generally does not include sex workers. This characterizes the history of laws governing sexual commerce all over the world, and characterizes the legal climate for sexual commerce in India as well. I believe there is a range of public perception regarding sexual commerce, from those who believe it should be eradicated, to those who see it as a livelihood option that some people undertake, along with many others, and everything in between. The current situation regarding sexual commerce in India is complicated by the rise of the discourse on trafficking, which conflates prostitution with trafficking, and gives primacy to the idea that the exchange of a sexual service and money is itself a violent act, rather than locating violence where I think many sex workers would locate it (e.g., in police harassment, or in the inability to negotiate about working conditions because sexual commerce is illegal and so highly stigmatized). Given this state of affairs, it is difficult to know exactly how widespread sexual commerce is. We are living in a juridical moment when sex work is being driven further underground in India, where brothel raids and closures being undertaken as measures to protect and rescue sex workers are actually having the opposite effect.

Following up on the current state of India’s prostitution industry, how do the women you worked with perceive sex work and how does this influence their choice to enter the industry?

This is common question about sex work. Historically speaking, framing sex work as something that is either “forced” or “a choice” is relatively new. Until about a hundred years ago, there was a more prevalent understanding of sex work as a phenomenon that has an economic context, both broadly speaking and in the individual lives of people who do

it. The paradigm of choice imagines a world full of individual actors who are good or bad, who do good or bad things to other individual actors. While it is not wrong to imagine that individual actors do decide about whether or not to engage in any particular activity, the paradigm of choice only provides partial information on how and why people decide to sell sexual services. In *Street Corner Secrets*, I talk about impoverished, landless migrants coming to Mumbai and negotiating various livelihood options, of which sex work may be one. The people with whom I spoke and spent time were lower caste and originated from communities where agricultural day wage labor was their main source of income. In the city, they did day wage construction work, sex work, and piecework to survive. Rather than focus on the originary moment when women started selling sexual services, I focus on how they survive from day to day. This approach does not claim that people do not experience violence in the course of selling sexual services, but it does not reduce all sexual commerce to violence, either. Rather, it examines what the structural contexts of engaging in sex work are, and how selling sexual services fits into a range of income generating activities that economically impoverished migrants negotiate in order to survive.

You engaged with a number of sites during your ethnographic research, from day wage labor markets to red light districts. Can you share more about your field work experiences there and what similarities or differences you found across people in these sites?

I engaged with three main field sites during my field research, and used fairly standard ethnographic research methods, including participant observation, archival research, and discourse analysis. I spent as much time as I could in each space for 18 months, and made numerous follow up trips afterward. In saying that I did “participant observation,” I do not mean that I did construction work, piecework or sex work over the course of field work. It means that I became a presence in these places, established rapport with people there, and over time had conversations and made observations that serve as primary sources for my analyses and critiques in the book.

Svati Shah is an Associate Professor Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, where she also holds an adjunct appointment in Anthropology. Previously she was awarded a postdoctoral fellowship in Sexuality Studies at Duke University, and has taught at Wellesley College and New York University. Dr. Shah earned a PhD from Columbia University’s joint doctoral program in anthropology and public health; she also holds an MPH from Emory University. As a 2013-2014 Fulbright Fellow, she began another long-term ethnographic study of the intersections of sexuality, economic inequality and land use through a study of LGBTQ movements and discourses of economic distribution and class in India.

Rachel Leng is a Master’s Student in Regional Studies - East Asia and a Harvard GSAS Merit Fellowship recipient. She is the Co-Editor-in-Chief at the Harvard Asia Quarterly, a 2014-2015 Intellectual/Cultural Fellow at Dudley House, and President of the Harvard East Asia Society (HEAS). She also assists the Director at the Harvard Asia Center’s Publications Program, working with new manuscripts in East Asian research.

The three sites where I spent the most time for this projects were a day wage labor market, where people mainly solicited short term contracts for construction and building repair work, a street where women solicited clients for sexual services, and one lane in a well-known red light area in Mumbai. While there was not one “community” with which I was in contact, there were numerous similarities and shared contexts between people in the three sites, which also called into question the idea that people were either forced to do sex work, or chose to do it freely. These similarities included that almost everyone in each site had been a landless agricultural worker in his or her village, and almost everyone with whom I spoke was from a lower caste community in a rural area. Everyone cited problems with caste-based repression and with the lack of access to potable water and to education as reasons why they left their villages to come to Mumbai. The most striking similarity was that of shared livelihood histories among people in each site. Women soliciting construction work from day wage labor markets had done sex work in the past, or were soliciting clients for sex while also soliciting contracts for construction work. Women soliciting clients for sex work from the street also did construction work when they could find it. Everyone doing sex work in the red light areas with whom I spoke had at some point in time solicited construction work from a day wage labor market. That there seemed to be a shared set of livelihood strategies among people in these disparate places called into question the widely held notion of sex work as being a discrete activity which excludes the possibility of having engaged with other work. With respect to the epistemology of prostitution, this insight questions how knowledge about illegal and stigmatized practices like sex work is produced, and especially questions why sex work is produced as a transparent and “knowable” phenomenon.

In India, prostitution (defined as the exchange of sexual services for money) is not officially criminalized, but many related activities are, including soliciting in public space, and living off of the earnings of a sex worker. How do sex workers navigate these gray spaces between legal and illegal work?

The metaphor I use to talk about how people navigate the legal issues in these contexts is to say that sexual commerce is subject to an “open secret,” where everyone, including local law enforcement, knows that it is happening, and have widely varying relationships to it. Some law enforcement officials benefit from sexual commerce directly, through bribes or other involvement. Others benefit as people who conduct raids on places where sexual commerce takes place. Still others are genuinely trying to advocate for sex workers in whatever way they can, or are simply indifferent. There is a vast distance between the letter of the law and its practice, as scholars of the law have been arguing for years.

Do you think similar trends as what you observed in

your ethnographic work in Mumbai and described in your book can be seen in other big cities in India, or are there differences across the country?

I do think there are similar trends in other major Indian cities, in that red light districts are being closed or reduced in size all over the country. This is due to numerous factors, including the rising prices of real estate in urban centers all over the world, and the convergence of interests, between real estate developers, the police, and anti-trafficking advocates who believe that closing red light districts will prevent or reduce human trafficking. I think one contribution I make in the book is in connecting sexual commerce in Mumbai with other issues, including migration, access to land, and water rights, questions which are difficult to ask when we use the trafficking framework as the main lens or paradigm for understanding the exchange of money and sexual services. That is not to say that people are not trafficked or that they do not work in conditions of debt bondage, for example, but it is to say that centering the question of trafficking as something criminal networks or individuals do to vulnerable people does not necessarily help us to understand the economic crises and contexts that produce expanded informal and underground economies in cities like Mumbai. These are not necessarily “trends,” but they are factors that, I would argue, we should account for in aiming to understand and address sexual commerce anywhere in India, or anywhere in the world, for that matter.

Following the 2009 New Delhi High Court decision overturning Section 377 criminalizing “sodomy” (and, by proxy, homosexuality), Indian LGBT communities have witnessed increasing levels of visibility. This increasing visibility has continued even after the Indian Supreme Court reversed the New Delhi High Court decision in 2013 and upheld Section 377. In April of this year, the Supreme Court of India recognized a “third gender” - one that is neither male nor female - which will have implications for how people identify themselves in official government documents, and could have an impact on education and employment for transgender people. This development has a significant impact on the hijra community in India, which is one of the most well-known transgender-spectrum categories in South Asia. What are your thoughts on these recent developments and what do you think is the next step for LGBT activism in India?

The New Delhi High Court’s amazing 2009 decision was overturned in 2013 by India’s Supreme Court, which, a full two years after hearing arguments, issued a decision that upheld India’s colonial-era anti-sodomy law. Among other things, the decision claimed that there was no constitutional right to legal protection for gay individuals, and that LGBT people in India constitute a “miniscule minority.” This rationale for upholding 377 is particularly disturbing, as it seems to misunderstand the premise of constitutionalism, which

is to uphold the rights of all of a nation's citizens, and not simply the rights of the majority. The decision came during a period of heightened visibility for LGBT people in India, and cannot actually reverse the trend toward more openness on these issues in the media and in countless social and political spaces. At the same time, the decision has predictably resulted in greater police harassment of LGBT people, and especially of gender non-conforming people and gay men. The Supreme Court decision acknowledging a third sex in India is welcome, though its benefits are complicated, given that many of the people who now may now have access to a different gender categorization on official documents are still rendered criminals by Section 377. Taken together, these two legal decisions convey just how complex discourses and politics of gender and sexuality in India are, and have historically been.

Some of the next steps in LGBT activism in India include both educating people about and understanding the legal terrain in which LGBT people in India now live, and continuing to push for decriminalizing same-sex sex between consenting adults. For transgender people, this agenda also includes addressing the mixed blessing of a Supreme Court decision that does not seem to recognize trans men as much as it does *hijras* and trans women. It also means addressing the fact that, while this decision legally recognizes a third gender, many of the people whom this decision would affect do not identify with a third gender category, but, rather, as men or women. LGBT activism is taking many new forms in India at the moment, forms which extend far beyond the legal realm as well. I think that, overall, people are trying to expand spaces for themselves to live and thrive. It is a complex but exciting time.

Any upcoming research projects?

I have started a new project on LGBTQ movements and questions of economic inequality. These questions have always been present in Indian political discourses, and have been foundational within spaces of feminism and sexuality politics in India. This project will focus on both urban and semi-urban spaces of LGBTQ movement building, as well as other movement spaces where questions of economic inequality are being developed and addressed. I am particularly interested in the intersections of questions of land use and displacement and sexuality politics, particularly within the auspices of Indian social movements, including women's movements and the various segments of the Indian left. I am working toward another long-term ethnographic project that deals with these questions in their everyday complexity. This project extends my interests in migration, land use, economic inequality, gender and sexuality, which are discussed in the book with respect to questions of sex work and migration in Mumbai. I am currently working on a series of articles that explore these intersections theoretically, within the auspices of anthropological theories and ethnographic research, feminist scholarship, and sexuality studies.



REISCHAUER INSTITUTE OF JAPANESE STUDIES

THE REISCHAUER INSTITUTE OF JAPANESE STUDIES (RIJS)

The Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies (RIJS), established in 1973 as the Japan Institute and renamed in 1985 to commemorate the retirement of Professor and former Ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer, is one of Harvard's core international centers. It coordinates closely with the Harvard Asia Center and with other Asia-related centers, promoting research on Japan and also increasing public understanding of, and interest in, Japan and Asia in the United States and abroad.

Its mission is carried out by the Full Committee (FC), which is comprised of thirty-five faculty members, including tenured professors, junior faculty, and emeritus faculty from across the University whose research and teaching relate to Japan. From the FC, fifteen tenured faculty compose the Executive Committee (EC), which serves as the Institute's governing body. The Institute aspires to strengthen ties not only between Harvard University and Japan, but also between local communities and international partners by facilitating programs, research, and teaching on Japan.

Such commitment by the Institute can be seen not only through the support RIJS provides for faculty research, but also through various initiatives. Every year, for instance, the Institute invites leading visiting scholars to collaborate with faculty, contribute directly to ongoing RIJS research endeavors, and participate in an array of lectures and seminars. In addition, the Institute sponsors a postdoctoral fellowship program, awarded annually to 4 or 5 promising scholars in the field of Japanese studies.

RIJS also organizes and/or supports a wide array of collaborative study projects, seminars, conferences, colloquia, and other research activities that contribute to the exchange of ideas. For example, the Japan Forum, a series of research presentations by scholars in a variety of fields and disciplines sponsored by RIJS, has convened over 660 times since its debut in 1974. The Japan Disasters Digital Archive (<http://www.jdarchive.org>), an online collaborative resource created in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, and the Constitutional Revision research project (<http://rijs.fas.harvard.edu/crrp>), attuned to one of Japan's most vital, on-going debates, keep RIJS at the forefront of contemporary Japanese Studies. Student support also constitutes a large portion of the RIJS mission. Every year, graduate and undergraduate students receive support to travel to Japan for dissertation research, language study, internships, and summer school programs.

The Institute maintains a dynamic publications program that has produced a number of prizewinning books on Japan. Further, its collaboration with the Harvard Weatherhead Center for International Affairs serves to reach beyond the confines of Japanese Studies, fostering social scientific research on Japan's role in the world and as an advanced industrial nation. Finally, RIJS provides support for the Japanese language collection in Harvard libraries while maintaining the Documentation Center on Contemporary Japan that serves as a major resource for social science research on Japan.

For more information on the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies, view: <http://rijs.fas.harvard.edu>.



HARVARD SOUTH ASIA INSTITUTE

About:

The Harvard University South Asia Institute (SAI) engages faculty and students through interdisciplinary programs to advance and deepen the teaching and research on global issues relevant to South Asia.

SAI is a university-wide research institute at Harvard that engages faculty members and over 300 students through interdisciplinary programs to disseminate knowledge, build capacity, and engage in advocacy on issues that are shaping South Asia today.

With 2 billion people facing similar challenges throughout South Asia, there is a critical need for solutions and systems to support such a significant global population. SAI programs and projects are working to actively address issues of equity, sustainability, and livability. Through research conducted by students and faculty, to partnerships with governments and organizations to seminars held on campus and across the world, SAI is working to improve the lives of all people throughout the region and beyond.

Harvard University formally recognized the South Asia Initiative as an academic institute in 2013, signaling the university's longstanding commitment to the region and the beginning of an exciting new era for South Asian studies at Harvard. SAI now serves as the premier center on regional studies, cross-disciplinary research, and innovative programming, pertaining to South Asia.

For students:

SAI offers research and internship grants to Harvard graduate students and Harvard college undergraduate students (freshmen, sophomores, and juniors) to be used during the summer and winter sessions.

In 2014, SAI awarded 46 grants to students to do a variety of internships and research projects in India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Grant recipients represent the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, College, Graduate School of Design, Divinity School, Kennedy School, Medical School, and School of Public Health.

More resources for students: <http://southasiainstitute.harvard.edu/students-page/>

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The central hub for faculty, students, leading scholars in the field, and visitors to join together as a community for the study of Korea, the Korea Institute is devoted solely to the support and development of Korean Studies at Harvard.

Among the numerous scholarly activities and cultural events supported by the Korea Institute are the Kim Koo Forum on Korea Current Affairs, the Korea Colloquium series, our Korean Film series (open to the general public), and other programs devoted to Korean history, literature, language, and more. A new series, the SBS Leadership Forum, will be introduced in Fall 2013. Now entering its fourth decade, the Institute recently celebrated its 30th anniversary with a retrospective of Korean studies at Harvard. Photos and videos from this and other events can be found at the Institute's Facebook and Vimeo pages.

A highlight for Harvard undergraduates and graduate students each summer is the chance to study and work in South Korea.

The Korea Institute partners with the Harvard Summer School (HSS) to offer a study abroad opportunity for Harvard undergrads to travel to Seoul and join Korean students in taking classes taught by Harvard professors. The Korea Institute also offers opportunities for Harvard College students to attend, at reduced or waived tuition rates, summer classes at Korean universities. In addition, undergraduates may apply for summer internships sponsored by the Korea Institute in partnership with corporations, NGOs, and the National Assembly of Korea. The Korea Institute supports research projects undertaken by Harvard faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students.

Calendar of Events: <http://korea.fas.harvard.edu/events>

Facebook Page: <http://www.facebook.com/ki.harvard>

Vimeo Channel: <http://vimeo.com/channels/koreainstitute>

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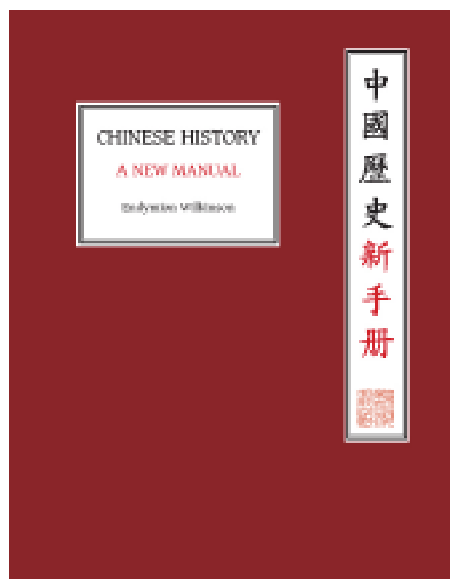


*ON THE MARGINS OF EMPIRE:
BURAKU AND KOREAN IDENTITY IN PREWAR AND WARTIME JAPAN*
Jeffrey Paul Bayliss

Two of the largest minority groups in modern Japan — Koreans, who emigrated to the metropole as colonial subjects, and a social minority with historical antecedents known as Burakumin — share a history of discrimination and marginalization that spans the decades of the nation's modern transformation, from the relatively liberal decade of the 1920s, through the militarism and nationalism of the 1930s, to the empire's demise in 1945.

Through an analysis of the stereotypes of Koreans and Burakumin that were constructed in tandem with Japan's modernization and imperial expansion, Jeffrey Paul Bayliss explores the historical processes that cast both groups as the antithesis of the emerging image of the proper Japanese citizen/subject. This study provides new insights into the majority prejudices, social and political movements, and state policies that influenced not only their perceived positions as "others" on the margins of the Japanese empire, but also the minorities' views of themselves, their place in the nation, and the often strained relations between the two groups.

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Endymion Wilkinson



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