FEMALE WRITERS AND AUTONOMY IN LOVE: "ROMANTIC ADULTERY" IN JAPANESE LITERATURE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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This study explores the voices of women in modern Japanese literature, focusing on female writers' desire for autonomy in love during the beginning of the 20th century. Interestingly, female writers of this period often depict unfaithful wives. To explain this phenomenon, we examine the Japanese enthusiastic pursuit of European literary trends, such as the romantic reception of Paolo and Francesca in Dante's *Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*), which glorifies adultery in the name of "true love." In the Japanese literary world, empathy with the romantic concept of love idealized a longing for true love and overcame negative feeling towards adultery. Under these circumstances, female writers raised their voices for independence in love and marriage. Exemplifying the writers who adapted European literary and philosophical trends into their works to confront the laws and customs of Meiji Japan, this study clarifies that the trends paradoxically endorsed and created an explosive freedom for women to explore the concept of love.

Keywords: Japanese female writers, adultery, Paolo and Francesca, true love, autonomy

1. Introduction

Literature is a vehicle for "voices," a platform where subjectivity, autonomy, or resistance can be presented. This study examines fluctuations in the modern Japanese notion of adultery during the early 20th century, focusing on the "voices" of unfaithful wives as written by female writers. Although the Japanese modern penal code of 1880 (*Meiji 13nen Dajōkan Fukoku Dai 36gō*) considered criminal

conversation punishable by imprisonment, the literary world at that time transgressed the bounds of decency and glorified adultery in the name of "true love." This study clarifies that this trend was encouraging, especially for emerging female writers who voiced their autonomy in love.

Among the various moral codes set by society, adultery has always been a topic of discussion in literature around the world, and Japan was no exception. In his work *Kōshoku Gonin Onna* (*Five Women Who Loved Love*, 1686), Ihara Saikaku (1642–1693) portrayed the tragic death of unfaithful wives during the Edo period (1603–1868), where illicit intercourse with a married woman was considered a grave crime punishable by death. The process of modernization in Japan did not change this attitude towards infidelity, where the penalty for a married woman who commits adultery is imprisonment, while adultery by a married man is not criminalized under the abovementioned Criminal Code.

In this context, it is significant that some female writers dealt with the subject of adultery in their works. *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*), the first Japanese literary magazine established by women in 1911, was an important social/literary contribution for the emergence of feminism in the country. The members of the Bluestocking Company and the magazine caught the curious, mocking eyes of society at the time, often causing scandals and leading to the magazine being banned several times. It is notable that the magazine was first banned in 1912 for a short story in the April issue, which was judged to be a work that affirmed adultery. "Tegami" ("Letter"), written by Araki Iku (1888–1943), is a five-page epistolary story that describes a married woman's love for her young lover. In the text, "I" earnestly expresses her feelings for her lover, Hideo, although they had broken up six months earlier. The letter ends with "I" inviting Hideo to meet her in "that room," since "my husband will be away from the beginning of next month" (Araki 1912, 105):

> I remember everything about our first night together. The stars at dawn were a guide to love [...]. You always said the sweetest things. We held each other as we looked at the stars and talked for a long, long time about things we would be ashamed for others to hear. Even the waves of the sea seemed to be enjoying themselves, singing sweet songs and kissing the shore unceasingly. Even happier than that, the two of us created an unforgettable memory. (Araki 1912, 106)

To fully grasp the context of this work and its significance to society in that period, we should examine the Japanese literary world's transgression of the bounds of decency, possibly due to the influence of the Western literary canon. Western literature and its translation played a momentous role in Japanese modernization during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Wakabayashi and Sato-Rossberg

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

(2012, 1) state: "Japan has often been portrayed as a 'translation superpower' and Japanese history as a history of translation."[1]

This study initially examines the reception of Paolo and Francesca's episode in Dante Alighieri's *La Divina Commedia* (*The Divine Comedy*, c. 1308–1321) and its romantic revival during the 19th century, followed by an analysis of female writing on this issue during that time to clarify the alterations to the literary notion of "adultery" during the initial decades of 20th century. Furthermore, the circumstances also encouraged female writers, who were searching for autonomy regarding love and marriage, to speak out. Ōtsuka Kusuoko (1875–1910) created female characters who uninhibitedly voiced their own desires in *Tsuyu* (*Dew*, 1908) and *Soradaki* (*Incense Burner*, 1908). In the first issue of *Bluestocking* (September 1911), Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971) carried a declaration of women's rights, where she emotionally refers to Auguste Rodin's sculpture *Le Baiser* (*The Kiss*, 1882), which is an image of Paolo and Francesca. In the same first issue, Araki Iku published *Yōshin no tawamure* (*A Flirtation of the Sun God*). Through an analysis of these works, this study examines how they re-interpreted the modern masterpiece and the ideology of romantic love, and how female writers sought autonomy in love while challenging the taboos such as adultery.

2. *The Divine Comedy* in modern Japan

The first translation of Italian literature into Japanese appeared in 1884, where it was a partial translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1348–1353). This was eventually followed by translations of Dante Alighieri during the early 20th century. *The Divine Comedy*, the epic poem written by Dante between 1308 and his death in 1321, is widely considered as a preeminent work of Italian literature and one of the greatest works of world literature. Divided into three parts – the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso – the poem's imaginative and allegorical vision of the afterlife is particularly attractive for both Christian readers and Japanese readers.

It was Ueda Bin (1874–1916) and the literary group that produced the magazine *Bungakukai* (*Literary World*), who contributed to the reception of *The Divine Comedy* in Japan (Kenmochi 1976, 320). Ueda was a student of Lafcadio Hearn and the German-Russian philosopher Raphael von Koeber at Tokyo Imperial University. Although he could neither speak nor read Italian, with his knowledge of English, French, and German, he became a significant figure in introducing and translating Western literature.

The first article by Ueda about Dante was a brief introduction to Dante's life with a portrait by Giotto, published in *Literary World* in October 1895. Moreover,

[1] For the arguments that take up this issue in East Asia, see Wong (2017).

in the special issue of the magazine published in May 1896, Hirata Tokuboku (1873–1943) wrote an article "Jigoku no maki no issetsu" ("Passage of the Inferno"), which centers on the episode of Paolo and Francesca.

The episode of Paolo and Francesca, featured in Canto 5 of the Inferno, was based on a true story from 13th century Ravenna. The Lord of Ravenna, Paolo Guido da Polenta, made his 14-year-old daughter Francesca marry the eldest son of Malatesta, the lord of Rimini, to end the long war. While Francesca was married to the Malatesta's eldest son, Giovanni, also called Gianciotto, she fell in love with her husband's younger brother named Paolo. When Giovanni discovered their affair in 1285, he killed both the lovers.

In *The Divine Comedy*, Dante depicts the poet putting the following question to Francesca. This is from Longfellow's translation, which was the version read by the Japanese literati during the Meiji era (1868–1912):

116 And I began: Thine agonies, Francesca,
117 Sad and compassionate to weeping make me.
118 But tell me, at the time of those sweet sighs,
119 By what and in what manner Love conceded,
120 That you should know your dubious desires?

(Dante 1866, 47)

Francesca recalls how the act of reading the book on Lancelot of the Lake and Guinevere was the earliest root of love between them:

121 And she to me: There is no greater sorrow
122 Than to be mindful of the happy time
123 In misery, and that thy Teacher knows.
124 But, if to recognise the earliest root
125 Of love in us thou hast so great desire,
126 I will do even as he who weeps and speaks.
127 One day we reading were for our delight
128 Of Launcelot, how Love did him enthral.
129 Alone we were and without any fear.
130 Full many a time our eyes together drew
131 That reading, and drove the colour from our faces;
132 But one point only was it that o'ercame us.
133 When as we read of the much-longed-for smile
134 Being by such a noble lover kissed,
135 This one, who ne'er from me shall be divided,
136 Kissed me upon the mouth all palpitating.
137 Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it.
138 That day no farther did we read therein.

(Dante 1866, 47)

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

In his article, Hirata (1896, 1–6) reinterpreted and described this episode of Paolo and Francesca as follows:

> Among the poisonous flame and miasma, there is a clump of reeds by a stream, with beautiful fragrant flowers. It is the renowned episode of Francesca, a sorrowful passage at the end of the Canto five in the Inferno. [...] The poet, who fainted hearing the tragic passage, has made the people faint, in Italy and in the world. [...] Francesca's love was a sin. A pure sin cursed on the ground and permitted in the sky.

Here, Hirata based his theory of "pure sin" on Boccaccio. Disregarding his own words "an illicit love affair is awfully corrupted," he admits it as "pure," sympathizing with Francesca. Ueda Bin also followed this view of Francesca. He introduced Dante Gabriel Rossetti in the January issue of *Literary World*, carrying Rossetti's painting *Paolo and Francesca* (1855) and his translation of Francesca's confession. In his book *Shisei Dante* (*Dante the Great Poet*), published in 1901, Ueda stated that the tragic love of Francesca as two masterpieces of the Inferno, and praised the former as "the most influential story that moved later poets and evoked numerous imitations, expatiations, translations and critiques" (Ueda 1979, 103). He also delivered a lecture titled "Gekishi Furanchesuka" ("Francesca: A Dramatic Poem") in July 1904.

3. The romantic reception of the episode and its development toward the fin-de-siècle

To understand Ueda's particular attention to this episode, we should observe the discourse on *The Divine Comedy* in Europe, as the Japanese reception of the text reflects the European literary trends of the day.

The Divine Comedy was rediscovered in the age of Romanticism. The romantic reappraisal of Dante invited greater attention to the episode of Paolo and Francesca, a tendency which spread to the European art scene during the 19th century, making the two lovers a romantic subject for painting, music, and theatre. Guglielmo Locella observed this enthusiasm in *Dantes Francesca da Rimini in der Literatur, Bildenden Kunst und Musik* (*Dante's Francesca da Rimini in Literature, Art, and Music*), which was published in Germany in 1913.

In the 19th century, "Paolo and Francesca" was introduced as a theme for painting by Marie-Philippe Coupin de la Couperie in his *Les amours funestes de Francesca de Rimini* (*The Tragic Love of Francesca da Rimini*, 1812). Inspired by Coupin de la Couperie, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, a neoclassical painter who was against the rise of Romanticism, created his version in 1819. Both paintings and an earlier work by J. A. Koch (1805–1810) depict Paolo and Francesca about to kiss, while reading the story of Lancelot and Guinevere, with Francesca's

husband Giovanni preparing to kill them in the background. Interestingly enough, Romanticism transformed the composition of the paintings. In his work in 1854, Ary Scheffer focuses on the two lovers embracing in the winds of hell, placing Dante and Virgil as observers. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, divides his painting *Paolo and Francesca da Rimini* (1855) into three parts, with the following scenes on each screen: the kiss of Paolo and Francesca on one side, the lovers embracing in the winds of hell on the other, Dante and Virgil on the center panel. Eventually, artists became more focused only on the lovers. This suggests a shift in audience reception, where the episode was no longer about adultery, but about the romantic love that invalidates a marriage without love. A work that represents such reception is George Frederic Watts's *Paolo and Francesca*, painted between 1872 and 1875. Having read John Aitken Carlyle's translation of the Inferno, Watts seems to have been attracted by the theme of Paolo and Francesca for a long time. The Watts Gallery in Surrey has Watts's sketch of this episode from 1849. His work has been regarded as one of the most important among the Paolo and Francesca paintings from the turn of the century. In 1899, Stephen Phillips (1864–1915) published a dramatic poem, *Paolo and Francesca*, with this work as a frontispiece. When the book became a bestseller, Watts's visual depiction also gained popularity.

The tragic love of Paolo and Francesca has been widely referred to in literature at least since Louise Labé's remark during the 16th century, followed by Blake, Coleridge, Byron, Tennyson, and others. In Victorian England, Francesca was even considered to have "not committed the sin of adultery" (Milbank 1998, 151). This artistic trend extended into the literary world during the end of the century. As mentioned, Stephen Phillips's dramatic poem, published in 1899, became a great success, making the author highly acclaimed by critics (Monroe 1916, 260; Buckley 1966, 238).

The important point in this dramatic poem is that it modified character representations, portraying Francesca as an innocent (and pure) maiden and Paolo as a young man torn between his love for Francesca and a sense of guilt. In 1902, it was adapted into a play, which had a long run at the St. James's Theatre. In Italy, Gabriele D'Annunzio wrote the play *Francesca da Rimini* in 1901, starring Eleonora Duse, one of the most acclaimed actresses in Europe during that time. D'Annunzio is also compassionate toward Francesca, having Giovanni deceive Francesca into marrying him by sending Paolo as proxy for the marriage proposal. Furthermore, Arthur Symons (1865–1945), a critic and poet who translated *Francesca da Rimini* into English in 1902, mentions in its introduction:

> Towards her husband her attitude is quite without modern subtlety; he has won her unfairly, she is unconscious of treachery towards him in

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

> loving another; she has no scruples, only apprehensions of some unlucky ending to love. (Symons 1902, vi)

It is worth noting that in Japan, the romantic aspect of *The Divine Comedy* was emphasized from the beginning. This view of Paolo and Francesca owes much to the interpretation of *The Divine Comedy* in this context, as pointed out by Hirakawa (2000, 15). The reception trends of Paolo and Francesca in Europe led to the initiation of the Japanese reception of *The Divine Comedy*. Some Japanese intellectuals who were in London at that time witnessed the enthusiastic reception of Francesca's episode. One of these intellectuals, Shimamura Hōgetsu (1871–1918), watched Phillips's play in June 1903 and bought a copy of the poem. Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), who stayed in London from 1900 till 1903, also had Phillips's book. He refers to the play in his article "Eikoku genkon no gekikyō" ("The Present Situation of English Plays"), which came out in the 1904 summer issue of the theatre magazine *Kabuki*. The experiences and interests of Japanese literary figures prompted the Japanese performance of *Francesca no hiren* (*The Tragic Love of Francesca*) at the Hongōza Theater in September 1904. Written by Matsui Shoyō (1870–1933), this work was based on the episode in Ueda's *Dante the Great Poet*, and it was reported in the December issue of *Kabuki* wherein Ueda had introduced the outline of D'Annunzio's play as an inspiration to Matsui for this play (Ueda 1980, 76).

The works of the Japanese literati generally adopt the same stance as Phillips and D'Annunzio, endorsing the romantic reception of the episode, which in turn glorifies adultery in the name of true love. This trend pervades even modern literary works as seen in *America Motogatari* (*American Stories*, 1909) by Nagai Kafū (1879–1959), where the author bewails the fate that pushed him to leave his girlfriend and compares his own love to that of Romeo and Juliet, and Paolo and Francesca. It seems that adultery is of no concern to him, as he states that both tragic couples died for true love:

> I truly believe that our love was never less than that of Romeo or Paulo and Juliet or Francesca. We knew well that once we parted we might never see each other again—a beautiful dream of one instant brings lifelong sorrow; still from the following day on, we would go to the deserted woods at the edge of the village every afternoon and share deep kisses, in order to show we would live on and sing of love, forever lost... (Nagai 2000, 224–225)

4. Ōtsuka Kusuoko's re-reading of a modern masterpiece

Rather intriguingly, the Japanese male literati did not hesitate to diffuse the romantic reception of adultery to a female audience; the main audience of Ueda Bin's lectures were the women who studied traditional Japanese poetry. The theater was also a new social phenomenon for middle- to upper-class women. In these circumstances, it is also noteworthy that the reception of the episode specifically encouraged emerging female writers who sought autonomy in love. The first case in point is that of Ōtsuka Kusuoko (1875–1910).

Ōtsuka Kusuoko is known for creating middle- to upper-class female characters who uninhibitedly voice their own desires. Born as the eldest daughter of a judge, Kusuoko graduated from Tokyo Women's Normal School in 1893 with top honors. In 1895, she married Oya Yasuji, a graduate student of aesthetics who would open the first aesthetics department at Tokyo Imperial University after studying in Europe for four years the following year. Ōtsuka studied traditional poetry since her childhood – alongside Sasaki Hirotsuna (Nagisono, 1828–1891) and Sasaki Nobutsuna (1872–1963) – and from 1895, she began to publish novels and other works in literary magazines such as *Bungei Kurabu* (*Literary Club*). She succeeded in attracting attention within the literary world, and eventually published two books: *Harekosode* (*Short Sleeved Kimono for Special Occasions*), a collection of short stories and translation, in 1906, and the novel *Tsuyu* (*Dew*) in 1908.

The novel *Dew* was serialized in the newspaper *Yorozuchōhō*, from July 9 to September 13, 1907. The protagonists of this story are Tazumi Suzune and Hinomori Shizuko, who just graduated from a girls' high school and entered a research course. Suzune is the only daughter of a dry foods wholesaler in Nihonbashi, and although she has been brought up without any difficulties, she cannot bear the thought of taking over the family business or marrying her father's distant relative, Keisaku, who has helped the family business since graduating from primary school and now runs the wholesaler. Suzune dislikes Keisaku and falls in love with Dr. Kamisaka, who has returned from Europe, but when she hears that Kamisaka has run back to Japan from England leaving his mistress, she becomes disillusioned and reassesses Keisaku's seriousness. Meanwhile, Shizuko's health begins to fail after her financial support from her brother-in-law is cut off upon her graduation. After refusing a marriage proposal forced upon her by her brother-in-law, and then being declined a job as a tutor for a noble family, Shizuko commits suicide by throwing herself under a train. The story ends with Suzune and Keisaku's wedding scene.

Shiota Ryōhei (1983, 275) describes this work as "mediocre" and points out that Ōtsuka's works are "strongly imitative." Although we have to admit that *Dew* is not a novel of high quality, this is not to say that there is nothing worth noticing

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

in this work. Ōtsuka's works are interesting because they sometimes reinterpret previous literary works from her point of view.

The most significant scene is that of Suzune and Shizuko becoming disillusioned with Kamisaka. The girls meet Shizuko's cousin by chance in Ikaho, and are told that Kamisaka ran back to Japan, leaving his four-year-old daughter behind in England, with no words to his mistress. Upon hearing this, they lose their admiration for him. We should note that the image of Kamisaka depicted here is one possible future for Toyotarō, the protagonist of Mori Ōgai's (1862–1922) *Maihime* (*The Dancing Girl*, 1890), which was already highly acclaimed as one of Mori's masterpieces during that time. Needless to say, the plot of an elite man who goes to study in Europe and finds a lover there was not only used by Mori. A female writer, Kitada Usurai (1876–1900), also deals with this theme in her work *Uba* (*Nanny*) from 1896. However, Kitada's work focuses on the tragedy of the heroine who finds her fiancé return to Japan with "a beautiful Western lady of 22 or 23." In *Dew*, the girls are disillusioned by the fact that Kamisaka did not marry his lover in England, which is similar to criticism of Toyotarō, whose abandonment of his pregnant girlfriend drove her to madness. In this way, Ōtsuka re-reads *The Dancing Girl* from a woman's point of view. For her, *The Dancing Girl* is not a masterpiece of beautiful tragic love, but a story that shows how an elite young man, who is responsible for "modernizing and civilizing" the nation by overthrowing Japan's old-fashioned values, can act selfishly towards women.

5. Deconstruction and reconstruction of romantic love ideology

In this context, Ōtsuka's novella, *Soradaki* (*Incense Burner*) – the first part of which was serialized in *Tokyo Asahi Newspaper* from April 27 to May 31, 1908, and the sequel from May 18 to June 26 the following year – is quite a deliberate work. Although *Incense Burner* has been regarded as a work influenced by Natsume Sōseki's *Gubijinsō* (*The Poppy*, 1907) (Shiota 1983), essays pointing out the significance of this work from a feminist perspective began to appear during the late 1990s, spearheaded by Saeki Junko's essay (1998). In this section, first, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the heroine of this work dismantles the romantic love ideology of the time, which favored platonic love.

The heroine of *Incense Burner* is Hinae, a beautiful woman who "loves the fashions of a country 4,000 miles away" and who is "known to be the most talented woman of her time." Since the death of her fiancé at the age of 17, she has "tried to remain single for as long as possible" until she reaches the age of 26, working as a secretary of a women's association, a reporter for a women's magazine, and even becoming a governess and socializing with the aristocracy. To satisfy her "sense of honor," she marries a member of the House of Representatives, a man

over 50, as an attempt to raise her social status. What Hinae suggests is that "marriage" and "work" are not necessarily opposites for women, and that marriage is not the goal of a woman's life.

Hinae's appearance in the newspapers might have been a shock to the female readers of the time, who were more accustomed to the *ryōsai kenbo* ("good wives and wise mothers") figures in fiction. Marriage, which has nothing to do with *love*, brings social status to the heroine. Rather, Hinae actively displays her sexuality after marriage. She plans to keep her husband under her "charming control." In this sense, her sexuality is an important strategy:

> The man was forced to sniff a strong rose scent, which started out pleasantly intoxicating, but eventually became painful. And even if he thought it was painful, he could not get rid of it; it was forced upon him, and he was forced to sniff it even when his body and mind were exhausted. (Ōtsuka 1966, 336)

In this way, Hinae comes close to the image of the fin-de-siècle *femme fatale*. Hinae's sexual attractiveness is described as a "strong scent," a description that echoes the declaration of victory of the heroine in Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Il Trionfo della morte* (*The Triumph of Death*, 1894), which was translated by Ueda Bin in 1901 and has had a great influence on modern Japanese literature (Hirayama 2011; Hiraishi 2012).

> I am always the unconquered. You have known with me all the enjoyments for which your endless desire was thirsty, and I will clothe myself in lies that will endlessly provoke your desire. [...] I am stronger than your thought. I know the secret of my transfigurations in your soul. I know the gestures and the words that have the virtue of metamorphosing me in your eyes. The odor of my skin has the power to dissolve a world in you. (D'Annunzio 1896, 309)

For Hinae, even rape is not so much of a problem. After being humiliated by her husband's friend, Count Kiyomura, Hinae achieves her goal of greater social prosperity with Kiyomura's help.

In this way, Hinae, who is half-intentionally described as a "coquette," is no longer a woman with the same values as Suzune in *Dew*. Hinae presents the image of a new woman who is not defeated by society. She does not connect "love" with "marriage," but actively demonstrates her sexuality in a way that embraces the male desires expressed in Western literature, which had a great influence on Japanese male intellectuals.

However, what is strange about this novel is that Hinae, who is supposed to play the role of dismantling the ideology of romantic love, can also be read as party to romantic love. Hinae is fascinated by her stepson, Kiichi, who bears a striking

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

resemblance to her dead fiancé. In the last episode of the first part, Hinae visits Kiichi's room when her husband is away. It is notable that Hinae refers to *Paolo and Francesca* by George Frederic Watts to describe her affection. She takes out a copy of the painting and asks him to explain the story:

> Francesca leaned back against Paolo's chest, a strong, sturdy man with a strong frame, whose nose was straight in the Italian way, whose lips were tight, whose eyes were hidden by the robe he wore, but whose eyes shone like stars, clouded by the sorrow of love. Taking one of the man's hands firmly in hers, Francesca's beautiful eyelids were partly closed, and she seemed to be sobbing with joy at her inextricable bond, even as she agonized over her eternal sin. Their clinging bodies are slanting in the air, blown about by the eternal winds of hell.
>
> When one looks at the painting carefully, Dante's poem comes alive in Watts's brushwork, and one feels the sadness of love cutting into his/her heart. (Ōtsuka 1966, 326)

Hinae tries to confess her feelings to Kiichi through this painting, saying "A woman loves someone, like Francesca, forgetting her husband... But she's pitiful, if it is heartrending true love... Love does not obey the dictates of reason."

What is described here is Hinae's desire for "true love" and her readiness to commit adultery for it (at this point of the story, the relationship between Hinae and Kiyomura has not occurred). As Hinae's feelings are unrequited, she tears Kiichi and his girlfriend apart. Later, Hinae repeats her feelings regarding Francesca after her husband's death, telling Kiichi that,

> I think that those who blame Francesca are more pitiful than ashes, because the mysterious power of love is not at the disposal of man. It's not like the weathervane, which changes direction with the wind. (Ōtsuka 1966, 374)

The technique employed by the author here, to use (often Western) pictorial arts to enliven the emotions of the characters was innovative. It seems that the technique of Ōtsuka also influenced her mentor, Natsume Sōseki.[2] Hinae justifies her extramarital desire by referring to Dante. Watts's painting lends the protagonist some persuasiveness as it was also well-known among the Japanese literati owing to its presence in Phillips's book.

After Watts passed away in July 1904, the literary journal *Jidai Shichō* (*Spirit of the Times*) dedicated an article to him in the September issue, which also carried *Paolo and Francesca*. Although Watts had other renowned masterpieces, such

[2] The serialization of Sōseki's *Sanshirō*, in which a picture of mermaid by Waterhouse appears, does not begin until September 1, three months after this description.

as *Hope* (1855), the Japanese literati nonetheless selected *Paolo and Francesca* as this choice clearly shows the impact of Phillips's work on Japanese literary world. Saitō Nonohito (1878–1909), a member of the editorial board of *Spirit of the Times*, also wrote an article in *Teikoku Bungaku* (*Imperial Literature*) entitled "Alas, Francesca" in October 1904, where he describes Paolo and Francesca in Watts's painting as follows:

> Alas, poor Paolo and Francesca, they are now abandoned in the depths of hell. Holding each other like the warp and weft of a brocade, without tears, without smiles, and without a nest to follow, they drift and wander in this sad black cloud. Look, they are like a vision, thin and shadowy, pale faces, eyes sunken and closed, no red on the cheeks, no trace of a smile on the lips. The tears have now dried up, and the sorrow has become a panting. In silence, in anxiety, all their passions have vanished, and only the bloodless, voiceless anguish and agony remain. Oh, what a pity that their shadows are fading! This is the wage of the sin of their eternal love. (Saitō 1904, 84–85)

Concerning Watts's picture, Arthur Symons once again plays an important role. There is a chapter for Watts in Symons's *Studies in Seven Arts* (1906), where he describes *Paolo and Francesca* at length:

> In *Paolo and Francesca* passion is seen eternalized at the moment of weary ecstasy when desire has become a memory, and memory has extinguished the world. These bodies are like the hollow shell left by flames which have burnt themselves out, and they float in the fiery air, weightless and listless, as dry leaves are carried along a wave of wind. All life has gone out of them except the energy of that one memory, which lives in the pallor of their flesh, and in the red hollows of the woman's half-closed eyes, and in the ashen hollows of the man's cheeks. (Symons 1924, 66–67)

Widely read in Japan, Symons's argument in *Studies in Seven Arts* found leverage within the Japanese literary scene. Saitō Nonohito continued to write in praise of *Paolo and Francesca*. In the article, "The Romanticism in Japanese Literature," published in November 1907, Saitō expresses admiration for *Paolo and Francesca* as one of Watts's masterpieces, emphasizing the romantic spirit of the episode: "Among love stories, the story of Paolo and Francesca is the most romantic and pathetic one" (Saitō 1970, 165).

Being sensitive to this literary trend,[3] Ōtsuka cleverly states Hinae's opinion: "But, for Francesca, she would find some satisfaction in her sorrow, even being

[3] We should also note that Ōtsuka Yasuji, the husband of Kusuoko, who became a professor of aesthetics at Tokyo Imperial University after he studied in Germany from 1896 to 1900, apublished a record of a lecture entitled "A Discussion of Romanticism and the Current State

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

cast into Hell" (Ōtsuka 1966, 327). "Loveless marriage has no power before *true love*" is indeed the basic principle of romantic love ideology (Ōsawa 1996, 90). Since Watts's picture was used in the novella, Paolo and Francesca's episode, interpreted as a tragic story of *true love*, lent persuasive power to the argument made by Hinae, and gave the readers of *Incense Burner* an alternate interpretation of the protagonist as a poor coquette who was actually seeking *true love*, not unlike Marguerite Gautier.[4] This is why the story ends without condemning her. In the literary world, empathy with the romantic love ideology idealized the longing for *true love* and overcame negative feelings towards adultery. It also encouraged female writers to speak out, seeking to express their own subjectivities when it came to love and marriage.

6. Female writers in *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*)

Now, I would like to focus on the female writers who gathered around the magazine *Seitō* (*Bluestocking*). In her essay published in 1939, Miyamoto Yuriko (1899–1951) describes the women's magazines of the time, emphasizing how *Bluestocking* was different:

> The first issue of *Bluestocking* was published in 1904, and it had a certain freshness as a literary magazine for women. At the time, *Joshi Bundan* (*Women's Literature*) and *Murasaki* (*Purple*) were considered as magazines for young women with literary ambitions. Although they were decorated with illustrations of Watanabe Yohei and Takehisa Yumeji, who had the taste of the neo-romantic era, their covers were always the pictures such as "Kimuko, the wife of Representative Hyūga, in Western dress," or "The son of Representative Inukai Tsuyoshi and his wife." The portraits of women writers and poets, who were starting to work in the same period, were never included. The title of "the wife of a representative of the Diet" is all that is left of her, and her name as a unique woman has been eliminated as if it were no mystery at all. Their titles are written out, but even their names are completely missing. This is a concrete example of how old social sentiments were embedded in

of Japanese Literature and Art" in 1902, wherein he identified leading figures of the "new wave of Romanticism" of the late 19th century as "Rossetti, Morris, Stevenson, Swinburne, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Bourget, Pierre Loti, Rod, Huysmans, Zola, Hauptmann, Sudermann, Ibsen, Dostojewsky, Tolstoi, D'Annunzio, Maeterlinck," and included Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and Watts to "those who belong to the New School in painting" (Ōtsuka 1902, 14).

4 *La Dame aux Camélias*, written by Alexandre Dumas fils, was one of the earliest translated works of fiction to appear in Japan. The earliest example, *Pari jōwa: Tsubaki no omokage* (*A Parisian Romance: The Vision of the Camellia*), was published in 1884. It can be said that Marguerite Gautier was known to some extent to the Japanese intellectuals at the time.

> a society where young women were allowed to aspire to literature. In such an atmosphere, *Bluestocking* was novel, intellectual and dynamic. (Miyamoto 1986, 290–291)

Women's sexuality had been an issue tackled by *Bluestocking* from the very beginning, an issue which had never been taken up in *Women's Literature*. It was not until the Taishō era (1912–1926) that women's sexuality came to be discussed in modern Japan (see Suzuki 2010). In 1914, Ikuta Hanayo (1888–1970) wrote an essay titled "Taberu koto to teisō to" ("About Survival and Chastity") in the magazine *Hankyo* (*Repercussion*), which developed into the "Teisō ronsō" ("Chastity Debates") among the women were who gathered at *Bluestocking*. However, as Kawamura (1996, 121) pointed out, this debate avoided confronting the issue of women's sexuality. The issue converged on virginity, and the debate never deepened to include the presence or absence of women's sexual desire.

The sexology of the Meiji period, developed through the transfer of Western sexology, suppressed the sexuality of women who were not engaged in the sex industry. The "chastity debates" mentioned above were not free from this idea. However, if we look at Japanese literature in the first decades of the 20th century (from the end of the Meiji era to the Taishō era), it is precisely at this time that women who affirmed their sexual desires and sometimes tried to demonstrate their own sexuality were portrayed, even by women themselves.

Women's sexuality has been circumscribed by men and discussed in men's logic and language. Women in the sex industry have been granted "active sexuality," while "the girls of good families" were considered asexual (see Saitō 2006). However, fiction appeared to be a means of escape. The Japanese literary world at the time was earnestly following the Western literary trends and absorbed a wide range of female figures from European literature. This included, for example, Ibsen's heroines who try to break out of the male ideal of womanhood. Decadent fin-de-siècle literature was also full of depictions of women as "sexual beings." The desires of these characters had much to do with their attempts to be subjective, both sexually and humanly; within the fin-de-siècle aesthetics, the concept of *femme fatale* was exemplary in taking an inordinate pleasure in making men their own.

It is worth noting that, by the end of the Meiji period, the young Japanese literati's sense of self and others was being eroded by fiction. From the 1890s onwards, the members of the Ibsen-kai (Ibsen Society) seriously discussed the possibility of "women like Hedda coming out of women's colleges" (Ibsen Society 1907, 172–179). Apparently, the Japanese intellectuals of this era wanted to project Western fiction onto the real society of Japan. The "Shiobara Incident," a strange double-suicide attempt in 1908 between Morita Sōhei (1881–1949) and Hiratsuka Haruko (later to become Raichō) would be remembered as a typical example of the

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

mixture of reality and fiction.[5] In fact, the women who were gathered at the *Bluestocking* party were called Japanese "new women," and it is noteworthy that the image of "new women" in Japan was partially constructed by the dominantly male literary imagination under European influence. With Hiratsuka Haruko/Raichō as the chief editor, *Bluestocking* could be considered, in this sense, as the result of the women's participation in the male literary imagination. Indeed, *Bluestocking* attracted many girls because they recognized the heroine of *Baien* (*Sooty Smoke*) in relation to the magazine (Sasaki 1994, 111).

It is important to note that Morita's *Sooty Smoke*, which encouraged young readers to idolize Hiratsuka as a "new woman" to such an extent, was a work heavily influenced by the decadent literature of the *fin-de-siècle* Europe. Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Triumph of Death*, the text with the greatest influence on the Shiobara affair, features a tormented man who cannot resist his "invincible" lover and finally commits suicide with her. The heroine, Ippolita, is depicted as a *femme fatale*. Manabe Tomoko, the heroine of *Sooty Smoke*, was developed under the influence of this novel and resembled exactly the kind of woman that the members of the Ibsen Society had hoped for. As a *femme fatale*, Tomoko fully expresses her sexuality. Although the description of Tomoko is indeed a result of men's sexual fantasies, her queenly appearance makes her seem, at least in the first glance, to be a woman who affirms herself as a being who has acquired sexual agency. For the readers, Hinae in *Incense Burner* was reborn as Tomoko of *Sooty Smoke*, and this Tomoko lives, speaks, and publishes a magazine *Bluestocking*. Seeking other models for the "new woman," the magazine also looked to the women in Ibsen's plays, featuring Hedda Gabler from the very beginning, and Nora, and Magda. Other than Nora, the heroines of Ibsen's works did not necessarily attract the sympathy of Japanese female readers, yet the characters who had and expressed a strong will provided Japanese women with a guideline for their own actions.

Concerning the Paolo and Francesca episode, Hiratsuka Raichō published "Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta" ("In the Beginning, Woman Was the Sun"), as the words of the magazine's launch in the first issue of *Bluestocking* in September 1911. In this manifesto, Hiratsuka refers to Rodin's sculpture *The Kiss* (1882–1889) with emotion:

> I think of [Rodin's famous sculpture] "The Kiss," a kiss that melts everything in the crucible of passion, my kiss. A kiss that is actually one. Spirit! Flesh!

[5] In 1908, Morita Sōhei, a pupil of Natsume Sōseki, ran away with Hiratsuka Haruko, a graduate of Japan Women's university, to Shiobara to commit double suicide but were taken into custody. This incident became a scandal as they were intellectuals who attempted suicide under the influence of D'Annunzio's fiction, *The Triumph of Death*. Later, Sōhei published a novel *Baien* (*Sooty Smoke*, 1909) based on the incident. See Amano (2013) for a summary of the incident and Morita's work in English.

> Rapture of tranquility at the extremities of ecstasy. Repose! The beauty of rest! Tears of deep emotion surely sparkle with golden light. (Barsley 2007, 99)

In a passage that follows, Hiratsuka confesses that she "received many hints and suggestions" from the Rodin issue of a literary magazine *Shirakaba* (*White Birch*) published in November 1910. Rodin was an object of admiration for the Shirakaba Coterie during that time, and this special issue shocked and impressed the young Japanese intellectuals. As this particular work of Rodin's is an image of Paolo and Francesca, Hiratsuka's glorification of *The Kiss* might have been meant to affirm the passionate love, while also implying a denial of the contemporaneous marriage system. In Japan, marriage was still considered as a family affair, and most marriage partners were decided for their daughters by fathers. The kiss in Rodin's sculpture could be interpreted as a symbol of the women's liberation from customary marriage.

Now, let us go back to Araki Iku. She became a member of the Bluestocking Company and published a play *Yōshin no tawamure* (*A Flirtation of the Sun God*) in the first issue of *Bluestocking*. Although the first article of the general rules of the Bluestocking Company was to "promote the development of women's literature," the literary works published in the magazine were markedly underdeveloped and have not attracted much critical attention. It is only in recent years that the texts published in *Bluestocking* have come to be studied in earnest. However, if the early issues of *Bluestocking* "had a meaning similar to that of the consciousness-raising movement of radical feminism" (Ōkoshi 1996, 109), the fiction published in the magazine also has the capacity to voice a variety of concerns and aim to raise awareness.

A Flirtation of the Sun God has four characters: Yoshiko, a married woman who runs away with a student, her husband Moriya who follows her, a 22-year-old student Haruo, and the student's girlfriend, Urako. Yoshiko, after running away to a mountain with Haruo, wants to go back to the city, while Haruo is satisfied with "the power of love." Meanwhile, Urako and Moriya meet at the home of the mountain's ruler, Yurihime (Princess Lily). Urako teaches Moriya about "sincerity" and reminds Yoshiko that "pretending to be something you're not is the scariest thing you can do" (Araki 1911, 81). Through the power of Princess Lily, Urako's words reach Yoshiko, who realizes that she has been lying to herself and thus leaves the mountain. The story ends with Urako proclaiming the victory of "sincerity."

The play can be understood as a tribute to the virtue of Urako. In contrast, Yoshiko is described as "tall and beautiful," but "lacking warmth in her eyes;" her appearance is reminiscent of Hinae from *Incense Burner*. Similarly, Yoshiko does not deny her sexuality, admitting that she "played" with Haruo. However, after leaving Haruo and returning to the city, Yoshiko declares that she will live for her-

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

self from then on. This conclusion is also similar to that of Hinae, where Yoshiko, an adulterous married woman, is not punished for her display of sexuality. Furthermore, when Urako meets Moriya, she says to him:

> If you continue as you are now, you will lose your position when women awake. Even if you do find your wife, you will have to live a life of misery. (Araki 1911, 77)

Urako's argument reveals that Yoshiko's running away is due to her husband's lack of "sincerity," and that Yoshiko's actions could be linked to her "awakening." The awakening of women – in other words, the acquisition of subjectivity – remains an important theme in *Bluestocking*. In this way, Araki addresses the issue of female sexuality from the author's own perspective.

Araki's *Letter* can be read in this same context. "I," the unfaithful wife who narrates the story, writes in the style of a woman who is newly educated during the Meiji period. She must know the romantic love ideology through literary magazines and translations of Western literature, similarly, identifying "sincerity" and "true love" as her own issues. She does not suffer from her husband's unfaithfulness or violence: "He is always smiling, giving me hair ornaments, rings, sweet things, and long kisses in the morning when I wake up." They seem to be a couple without any problems. However, "I" sees the couple's relationship as something "strange," in that it is "treating love like a very useful machine." The problem, she states, is that her husband has "never given me his heart." She feels that her husband does not want to touch her heart and "only needs to see me smile and pretend to be sweet." She extols that such a sweet and gentle image of a wife is also "created by men's imagination." She cannot be satisfied with the fact that her husband is satisfied with the image of his ideal wife within his own fantasy and does not seek any further heart-to-heart communication. Recalling Urako's warning to Moriya in *A Flirtation of the Sun God*, "I" is a woman "awakening." Additionally, this wife, "one of the chaste ones," declares: "I don't want to receive such words. I'd rather be embraced by a serious love like a human being." She yearns for "a life of heart-to-heart contact, rather than a day of pretense, even if it is an act ruled by the name of a terrible sin," to which she then invites her old lover.

Just as Hinae uses Paolo and Francesca to defend her notion of "true love," here, women are able to exercise their full agency and are even willing to disobey the law for the sake of "serious love." Moreover, this text also reveals that "true love," which justifies any deviation from the norm, is based solely on the value judgment of "I," the subject. The most important aspect was for women to acquire a sense of agency, something that only men possessed and women were deprived of.

7. Conclusion

The image of a woman who expresses her will and tries to live freely without being bound by traditional values and social conventions appearing in Japanese literature at the beginning of the 20th century was originally the product of the male literary imagination influenced by Western literature. This study has revealed that these new images of women also encouraged women writers. Araki Iku and Ōtsuka Kusuoko used the imagination of male authors to create an "awakening" in female characters, who asserted their spiritual and physical subjectivity. What becomes clear when the ideology of romantic love is re-read from a woman's point of view is that the fidelity of a wife means nothing in the face of "true love." Their works, which have never been accorded much literary value, are important as they represent the voice of the women of their time.

Nevertheless, the "true love" of a woman, unbound by the institution of marriage and which female writers sought to pursue in their works, was hardly acceptable in real society. On July 5, 1912, Kitahara Hakushū (1885–1942), a modern poet with a promising future, was accused by his neighbor, Matsushita Chōhei, of adulterous relationship with his wife. The next day, Kitahara and Matsushita's wife, Toshiko, were arrested and detained. On July 6, the *Yomiuri Newspaper* reported this incident and called Kitahara a disgrace to literature and art. It has been pointed out that this incident caused a great deal of damage to Kitahara's mind and body (see Kanazawa 1998), and his anguish is also expressed in his traditional poetry collection *Kiri no hana* (*Paulownia Flower*, 1913). As a matter of fact, Matsushita Chōhei had a mistress and had already filed to divorce Toshiko even before the adultery lawsuit. He withdrew the charges with a settlement of 300 yen, paid by Kitahara's younger brother, leaving only the scandal. Toshiko later married and divorced Kitahara; after their divorce, she worked at a bar in a hotel for foreigners in Yokohama under the name Lily. Kitahara depicted her in *Paulownia Flower*:

> I want to see her again... I opened my eyes in a flash, and found a cockscomb shone as if it was mocking me. She was really like a cockscomb, who had the charm and beauty of a tomboy, a liar, clever, foolish, vain, crazy and terrible devil... Everything about her was mysterious enough to tempt and deceive my artistic desires, and to drag me around. (Kitahara 1985, 145)

From this passage, it is obvious that Kitahara framed Toshiko as his *femme fatale*. Although this case demonstrates how strict the real world is about adultery, it should also be pointed out that this description of Toshiko overlaps with the image of women seeking freedom as portrayed in *Bluestocking* fiction.

As we have seen, women began to speak out in order to liberate and empower their desires in the name of true love, at least in fiction. Their voices on love, marriage, and sexuality were sometimes quiet, inadequate, and inconsistent in the

 DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

eyes of those in the present. However, what these voices convey is a willingness to re-appropriate an image of women which men had constructed through their own engagement with Western literature and to establish a new image of women in Japanese literature, one that women wanted – one that allowed them to choose their own love, marriage, and sexuality according to their own free will.

DOI: 10.5507/ff.23.24462691.12

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