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Recommended Citation

Nicklas, Kaileigh, "Sex in Japan: It's a Straight Man's World" (2015). *Honors Theses, 1963-2015*. 73.
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Sex in Japan: It's a Straight Man's World

Asian Studies Honors Thesis

Kaileigh Nicklas

Background:

In many ways, Japan is revered as one of the most forward minded countries in the world. For decades Japan was the second largest economy, just behind the United States, and its ability to recover from WWII greatly surpassed many states in similar economic situations. The everyday tourist in Japan today would be amazed at the technological feats of Akihabara¹ and Odaiba², molested by the constant glow and flashes of pachinko, karaoke, and endless entertainment. One might marvel at swaths of young Japanese women dressed in maid outfits, photos of beautiful girls plastered to street posts advertising male-gearred products and alcohol, promising a good time. On any given morning an entire fleet of mothers and nannies bike their children to preschool. Walking past the magazine rack in any convenience store passersby might observe several men browsing through porn magazines or *hentai*³ manga, the volumes not even concealed or wrapped. And why are these occurrences so common? Because despite Japan's grand advances, there remains a significant gap between gender and sexual equality- and maid cafés and J-pop are only the beginning.

To further illustrate this problem, a comparison of the treatment of Igarashi Megumi versus the Kanamara matsuri highlight the disparity between how male and female bodies are handled by the public. Igarashi Megumi designed a boat based on a 3-D model of her vagina. She used money from sponsors of her work to create the boat, and when it was completed she took the kayak out for a test ride. She was then arrested for obscenity in July

¹ District in the Chiyoda ward of Tokyo

² Large artificial island in Tokyo Bay, Japan, across the Rainbow Bridge

³ Anime and manga pornography

2014, and again on December 3rd, 2014⁴. Igarashi's work does not sexualize women's bodies- the vaginal qualities of the boat are barely noticeable and one might not recognize it as a vagina until it is pointed out, but is still considered obscene by the government. In direct contrast to Igarashi's arrest, however, is the Kanamara matsuri. This festival is a celebration of fertility, and the main symbol of the festival is a giant steel penis, erect in the air, carried throughout town⁵. There are special penis candies that people of all ages and genders suck on (though photos of the event primarily feature crowds of women sucking on the candies) and no one objects. There are even vagina candies, but they are advertised as "pussy", which is a term largely associated with sexual aggression or negativity. There are huge profits from the sales of these candies, and no one is going to mistake what it is that is for sale. The penis and vagina candies are incredible graphic, but the marketability of these products apparently trumps any claims of obscenity that the government might make. So while the public is happy to turn a blind eye to sex when a profit is involved, or bodies are being sold, personal expression and celebration of the body accounts to criminal offenses.

Upon reviewing the works of several contemporary Japanese women's writers, and the comparison of their male counterparts, it is clear that already a division exists between how women view themselves, and how men view women, through a fictitious lens; which provides insight to how women are viewed in the real world. Even further, works composed by non-Japanese, male writers such as Arthur Golden contribute to this division between actual female sexuality, and perceived female sexuality by acting the role of

⁴ Adelstein, Jake and Kubo, Angela Erika "What's Japan's Problem With Vaginas?" The Daily Beast. 2015.

⁵ Kanamara Matsuri." Wikipedia. January 11, 2015. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanamara_Matsuri.

experts in Japanese femininity and presenting their works to portray the Japanese woman. At times, outwardly these text appear to empower non-male sexual expression, however, male authors further reinforce traditional gender roles that privilege male-dominated sexual expression while being regarded as empowering feminist works. Simultaneously, female authors are reprimanded for expressing sexuality in fiction and women who publicly depict their sexuality in real life (without selling it to men) are censored and publicly humiliated.

This project will specifically focus on the power dynamics of sex in Japanese society through gender roles, female sexuality, and the rise of Japanese feminist movement. An observation of sexuality in Japan from such female works as *The Apprenticeship of the Big Toe P* and *Snakes and Earrings* in contrast to male works such as *Norwegian Wood* and *Memoirs of a Geisha* provide further insights to the role that sex plays in the Japanese community. By closely examining these texts and accompanying film adaptations through a critical feminist perspective and with the aid of scholarly articles and documentaries, this project seeks to determine the limits of non-male sexual expression and its evolution in Japan.

The authors chosen for this project reflect contemporary works that have been successful in the mainstream society. Both female authors have recognition in the literary world, and their novels are successful in mainstream societies despite the controversial themes they portray. This might suggest that the issues that they portray do not pose a threat to the standards set by the heteronormative patriarchy, however, evidence suggests that the novels succeed in correlation to the fictional aspects of the pieces. Neither authors

are cited as authoritative voices within marginalized communities, or as representatives of scholarly materials. In opposition, despite being both male and non-Japanese, Arthur Golden speaks as a scholarly reference to the lives of women. His work portrays the problematic perspective of the male voice as the authority of women's bodies and lives. *Memoirs of a Geisha* is incredibly popular, and read as representing truth even in direct contrast with actual memoirs written by actual geisha. Murakami, too, was selected for his mainstream popularity and praise he has received for portrayals of realistic characters, specifically women, despite his not being a woman himself.

Literature Review: The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P

When addressing political issues in feminist literature, female authors often struggle to be taken seriously or to not have their work bombarded with negative stereotypes. Issues of the female body, especially, meet aggressive confrontation. Therefore, authors such as Reiko Matsuura's *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P* implement a world outside the bounds of "reality" in order to depict divisions in gender normativity; thereby deflecting crippling objections from male-dominated societies. Matsuura does this through Mano Kazumi, who strangely develops a penis where her big toe on her right foot used to be⁶. This physical alteration, however, additionally serves to critique a discourse about the female body that exists not only in Japanese society, but all societies ruled via the patriarchy⁷.

⁶ Matsuura, Reiko. *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P: A Novel*.

⁷ Schalow, Paul Gordon., and Janet A. Walker. *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* p.124

Kazumi is not the only character who exhibits an alteration to her body to set her outside the boundary of gender normativity. Several other characters, the members of an elusive groups called the Flower Show, possess unusual features all relating to their sexuality. Masami is a transitioned male to female (MtF), Tamotsu has a conjoined twin, Aiko breaks into a rash when in contact with other human beings. The further the physical “deformity” lapses from the expected physicality of “male” and “female”, the more violent the reaction⁸. For example, Kazumi’s fiancé Masao, who represents the social norm of a Japanese man, attempts to cut off her penis toe, justifying his actions claiming the penis fundamentally changes Kazumi, stating, “You’ve been getting weird on me ever since you acquired that freaky thing of yours.”⁹ In fact, Masao, upon first receiving the toe-penis, denies that Kazumi is still a woman¹⁰ and states that Kazumi wanted to be a man the entire time. The scene question the correlation of gender identity and the presence of biological organs. Does Kazumi automatically become less of a woman because of her penis? During this encounter, Masao glares at Kazumi saying, “So, you wanted to be a man. Is that it?” To which Kazumi replies, “Hardly! And I haven’t become a man.” Masao deflects all of Kazumi’s affirmations of her female gender simply because she now possesses a male organ.¹¹

Additionally, the reaction of Kazumi’s penis as the only requirement of deconstructing her female identity to the streamline society that Masao presents directly opposes the reaction garnered through the character Masami. Masami wants to be a woman, acts the part, has had sexual reconstruction surgery, but constantly is referred to

⁸ Matsuura, Rieko. *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P: A Novel*. P.183

⁹ Ibid p.61

¹⁰ Ibid p.37

¹¹ Ibid p.37

through male pronouns. If the phallus metonymically functions to signify masculinity, then why does Masami's vagina not serve to complete the transformation of Masami from "he" to "she. Masami wants to be a woman, and people dismiss this desire as silly and ridiculous. This broaches the question of gender versus sex and the complicated role sex organs play in this determination.

The treatment of Masami in the novel suggests a larger dilemma of gendered language within Japanese society. In Win Lunsing's essay, "The Politics of Okama and Oname: Use and Abuse of Terminology Regarding Homosexuality and Transgender." Lunsing references the term Okama in relation to homosexual and transgender persons and states, "'Okama' which used to be written with the character for 'kama' (cooking pot) originally referred to the anus and eventually, by implication, to men whose rear is penetrated during sex." Lunsing continues to state, "When referring to the anus, 'okama' can also be seen as stressing the supposed feminine aspect of being penetrated."¹² According to this terminology, gender and sex go hand in hand. If a person experiences penetration in sex, they, by proxy to perceived female roles, take on feminine traits. This sentiment, however, exists primarily in regards to homosexual men, who consider the use of okama as derogatory¹³.

Transgendered individuals, on the other hand, find the use of okama much less offensive, and in some instances consider okama a term of endearment¹⁴. One such individual arguing for the positive, less sexually focused, use of okama is Miyazaki Rumiko,

¹²Lunsing, Win. "The Politics of Okama and Oname: Use and Abuse of Terminology Regarding Homosexuality and Transgender." *Genders, Transgenders and Sexualities in Japan*. London: Routledge, 2005.

¹³ Ibid p.82

¹⁴ Ibid p.87-88

a MtF school teacher and author¹⁵. Miyazaki stated that, “among MtF transgender people there were many who disliked alternative terms such as “josousha” (literally, “female dresser,” a little used term for MtF cross dressers), because they felt that their femininity was expressed by more than dressing in women’s clothes and therefore preferred to be known as ‘okama’”¹⁶ In this sense, the femininity associated with the term acted in favor of those individuals transitioning from male to female roles. This, however, does little to address the matter of the terms’ association with sex, rather than gender.

Glorification of women’s lack of a penis in the story are met with strikingly realistic disclaimers to the glamorous life of a woman in the world of male-dominated sex. This point comes up during the unveiling of Kazumi’s penis to the Flower Show in an encounter between Shigeki and Aiko¹⁷

“I hope you won’t take this the wrong way, but there are times when I really envy women, because they’re always ready’ I was a bit annoyed to hear this tired, shopworn, blast-from-the-past male cliché coming from Shigeki, of all people, but Aiko did not hesitate to respond, ‘Yes, exactly. We always ready, that’s why we get raped.’ This caused Shigeki to raise his eyebrows. ‘On the other hand,’ Aiko continued, ‘maybe men think that women are always ready because they can be forced in a way that men can’t? Do you envy our potential to be forced?’ Aiko had a smile on her face, but it wasn’t exactly sweet.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Both members of the Flower Show, their act is together

¹⁸ Ibid p.292

Shigeki's naïve statements are met with extreme harshness, even more exaggerated because of his supposedly unique perspective on sex. Interestingly, Aiko very negatively brings up the how women are often seen as potentially passive member in violent sex, similar to the vision painted by Kazumi's former fiancé, Masao. When Kazumi becomes sexually aggressive towards Masao, he claims to "feel like a woman." And when questioned why, he replies, "Because I'm lying her passively while you do what you want."¹⁹ Women are passive vessels for their male counterparts to relieve their sexual urges.

This is the clichéd male fantasy that dictates sexual norms, and further solidifies gender norms of the aggressive man and the passive woman. This same fantasy contributes to the feminine nature of anal penetration. Just like the woman's vagina is "always ready" for sex, the anus is not limited to the constraints of needing an erection and therefore is "always ready" for sex. Again, the vessel for sex- the anus- is available for penetration (presumably by the male phallus) at any time, instilling passivity, and therefore femininity, in the subject of penetration. In correlating passivity and readiness for sex with femininity, the feminine association of penetration directly impacts the perceived role of the anus in sex.

What happens, however, when we exclude sexual organs, or sex in general, from a person's gender identity? Initially Kazumi receives her penis toe with shock and embarrassment, but as the story progresses she embraces her penis while simultaneously maintaining her female gender identity. The penis does not make her a man, rather Kazumi's penis empowers her to identify aspects of the society she previously ignored or

¹⁹ Ibid p.51

unconsciously rejected. Lunsing refers to ingrained homophobia in Japanese society in instances where homosexuality is not public, stating, “Japanese disquiet over non-normative sexuality is aimed at anything that deviates from a highly limited common-sense discourse.”²⁰ Therefore, when forced to consider sexuality in a non-straightforward manner, her reaction is rather positive. The existence of her penis, and the realization that her penis does not change her gender identity, allows for exploration of her sexuality-specifically in regards to her relationship with Eiko²¹.

However, this same penis that empowers Kazumi to reflect beyond her previous life and gain independence reveals a society in which a person’s ability to wield self-awareness stems from male physicality. In contrast, Tamotsu, a member of the Flower Show, often loses control of himself and seems to go into a state of unconsciousness resulting from aggression towards his lack of a penis of his own.²² True, Tamotsu’s body possesses a penis, but it is his conjoined brother who claims the genitalia. Tamotsu’s abuse of his brother’s penis (he punches his brother’s penis, sticks it into a vagina that has teeth, twists it as if to pull it off his body) demonstrates yet another method the author takes to address the impact that penis worship in Japan has on the mental stability of men with deformities. Tamotsu feels less of a man because his penis is non-functional, and he cannot pleasure his girlfriend with his penis. This causes extreme emotional and mental distress and Tamotsu often becomes violent as a result.

²⁰ Ibid p.83

²¹ Matsuura, Rieko. *The Apprenticeship of Big Toe P: A Novel*. P. 295

²² Ibid. p.183

Literature Review: Snakes and Earrings

Sexual violence very much exists in the real world. However, stories of sexual assault and abuse are uncomfortable. And therefore ignored. In order to clearly represent sexual violence against women to the larger society and gain popular notice, such stories must dwell in the realm of fiction. Numerous Japanese women writers clearly depict several forms of sexual violence against women in their literature through highlighting physical abuse, emotional manipulation, and gender-reversal homicide. These strategies further exemplify violence done to women while simultaneously providing evidence that sexual violence is not just a “women’s issue” by implementing one or all of the three strategies of women writers as explained by Sharalyn Orbaugh.

Sharalyn Orbaugh methods easily apply to authors who write about sexual violence with intent to make political statements. The first method, “to maintain and describe the current configuration of power, exposing the harm done through them”²³ remains the most typical method in stories addressing sexual abuse. In this style of writing, the female, or female representation, undergoes harm and her abuse becomes the main focus of the story in order to reflect the overall harm to society that the dichotomy poses. Stories in which the woman plays very little outside of the victim not only exist in feminist literature as a realistic portrayal of violence in real life, but is often distorted in male aimed entertainment to fulfill sexual fantasy.

²³ Orbaugh, Sharalyn, “The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women’s Fiction” Schalow, Paul Gordon., and Janet A. Walker. *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* p.123

Because of the manipulative nature of Orbaugh's first strategy, the second strategy of "to maintain and describe the current configuration of power, but to invert the hierarchy of value, to valorize the object/passive side of the equation."²⁴ Serves to satirically glorify the objective value of women as positive, ironically representing the passive woman as empowered by the system rather than degraded by it. She chooses to be controlled by her oppressor, she is asking for it, and whatever is done to her body results from her initial choice. She is obviously manipulated, in fact, her manipulation is exaggerated or overly aggressive. This method unveils the disturbing sexualization of method one and pushes sexual violence once again into reality.

Orbaugh's final method describes that writers "might choose to maintain the current binary configurations of power, but to reverse the gender coding of the hierarchical power roles. Instead of being silent, woman can speak; instead of being the object of the others' gaze, they can use their eyes..."²⁵ Here, violence is typically inflicted by women on the people they love or that depend on them. Mothers murder their children and husbands. Daughters and sisters inflict harm on their parents and siblings. The bodies of women who are typically the victims of violence are used instead to cause the harm they are so used to receiving. But Orbaugh warns that "these are not simple revenge fantasies."²⁶ Rather, the shocking violence involved in these stories makes a political statement about the existing power dichotomy. Violence committed by women as opposed to that of men is considered shocking in the current society, but the same violence committed by men remains a norm. Another example of this method is the death of a character who represents the female, but

²⁴ *ibid*

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ibid*

in reality is still male. The murderer does not necessarily have to be female in these situations, but the victim must always represent femininity. This last example, however runs into the issue of whether the author chooses to write realistically or not. In realistic situations, the protagonist successfully overturns the power hierarchy, but tragically remains in a world dominated by it and thus must fail. Her triumph quickly diminishes and the end game results in tragedy, further highlighting the existing structure to the favor of the author's purpose.

Hitomi Kanehara's novel *Snakes and Earrings* utilizes strategies one and two to shock the reader through the realistic violence it portrays. Though this violence is realistic, the novel often pushes into an other-world atmosphere, distancing these themes from "real" life. This distancing can desensitize the reader towards the violence; however, the graphic nature of the novel entices further dialogue about the reality of sexual violence. The novel focuses around nineteen-year-old Lui and her obsession with body modification. Already the theme of the body and needing to change it sets the premise of the story- her body is wrong, and must be changed. This change, however, starts as her choice. She gauges her ears, stretching her earring holes to the point where people would start to stare. She describes her ears as "lined with 0g, 2g, and 4g earrings from the bottom up."²⁷ Until the moment she is introduced to the snake tongue, the initial bodily focus, each modification has been her choice. She describes her introduction to this style of modification as, "without thought, by instinct alone"²⁸ Her choices, from this point on, are all rashly made or influenced by others. As method two describes, she acts the part of the passive women,

²⁷Kanehara, Hitomi. *Snakes and Earrings* P.3

²⁸Ibid P. 1

empowered by the system she resides in. In this case, this system is that of the sado/masochist relationship.

Lui does not exactly seem passive. She takes pride in her aggressive sense of fashion and likes to appear risqué, but even she admits that her will-power progressively dissipates. In a conversation with her close friend, Maki, Lui is asked, “What’s going on with you? Is this new punk of yours trying to make you get [a snake tongue]? Are you two an item or something? Has he completely brainwashed you?”²⁹ To which she considers if she is in fact brainwashed. She describes it as, “a shudder inside as all my morals and values started crashing to the ground.” Just insinuating that Lui’s sense of morality no longer exists entices the reader to assume that her actions from that point are no longer hers to control, but the result of an irresistible vice. Her abuse, then, naturally follows her abandonment of morality.

However, her abuse is considered more an exchange for what she really desires, and her bodily harm simply collateral damage. The greatest example of this interaction occurs when she and Shiba-san discuss tattooing a Kirin³⁰ onto her body. He seems to hesitate in relenting to do the tattoo, first stating that he is inexperienced in creating a Kirin, then eerily alluding to the sacred nature of the Kirin, proclaiming that, “Maybe if you get a Kirin, Lui, you’ll be damned too.”³¹ When he finally does relent, Lui asks how much it would cost to do the Kirin in combination with Ama’s³² dragon. Shiba replies, “Hmm...how about...one fuck,”

²⁹Ibid P. 20

³⁰ A sacred beast in Japanese mythology, a combination of a deer, a bull, a wolf, etc.

³¹ Ibid P.33

³² Lui’s boyfriend, introduced the snake tongue, punk, has a dragon tattoo on his back

Lui blithely replies, "That's all?"³³ Once this exchange takes place, the novel continues to describe in graphic detail a violent sexual encounter between Shiba and Lui.

Though physical violence is obviously prevalent in this novel, physical abuse does not envelop the entirety of the violence inflicted against women, or representations of women, within the novel. Emotional manipulation leading to aggressive sexual relations represents a faction of sexual violence related to rape. Lui continues to return to Shiba not just because of some exchange of sex for goods, but also because of a certain sense of the danger that would come from not returning, hinted at in conversations. After their first violent encounter, Shiba tells Lui, "If you break up with Ama, you become my girl, all right?" Followed closely with, "But if we did get together it would be with marriage in mind." Lui's response to this is to think, "I tried to imagine what married life with Shiba-san would be like, and whether it would be something I'd be likely to survive."³⁴ Already she feels like she is in physical danger, and not just the type of play danger associated with sadomasochistic sex.

Later, when discussing Lui's tattoo (which she paid for with sex) Shiba says, "But what should I do if I find myself suddenly overcome with the desire to kill you?"³⁵ Shiba constantly alludes to his desire to murder Lui, to his satisfaction at her suffering. And yet, Lui feels she cannot stop seeing him. For one, in order to finish the tattoo she has become obsessed with, she must go to the artist: Shiba. It is also implied that Shiba will not let her stop seeing him even after she is finished with the tattoo. He asks her, "Can I fuck your dead

³³Ibid P.34

³⁴ Ibid 40-41

³⁵ Ibid 64

body?”³⁶ This possessiveness combined with Shiba’s tendency to act violently forces Lui deeper into a relationship that she no longer wants. Lui describes how Shiba, “grabbed my hair and pulled it upward. My neck muscles twitched with the unexpected pressure. Shiba-san grabbed my chin and made me look up. ‘Want to suck it?’ I found myself nodding my head, as I didn’t feel like I could, or should, say no to Shiba-san.”³⁷ She clearly does not actually want to have sex, but from the build-up of barely veiled verbal threats, Shiba manipulates Lui into a violent sexual relationship.

Snakes and Earrings, however, is not just about sexual violence towards women. Through the utility of Orbaugh’s third method³⁸, this novel effectively portrays sexual violence towards a man acting both as a male and female representation of society. The death of Ama is neither clean nor glossed over, just as sexual based murders of women are never neatly contained. When Lui goes to the morgue to identify Ama’s body, she claims, “The Ama I saw at the morgue was no longer a human being, but just a body.” And continues on to describe his physical state saying, “A weblike pattern was carved into his chest with a knife, and he had cigarette burns all over his body. All his nails had been pulled off, and something that looked like an incense stick was sticking out of his penis.”³⁹ The sexual nature of his death remains the most important aspect of this description, especially given his stereotypically feminine attributes: he cries, is described as beautiful, and relies on the companionship of Lui- all traits commonly associated with femininity. However, equally important is the duality of his nature, because despite his “feminine traits” he is

³⁶ Ibid 72

³⁷ Ibid 73

³⁸ Orbaugh, Sharalyn, “The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women’s Fiction” Schalow, Paul Gordon., and Janet A. Walker. *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* p.123

³⁹ Kanehara, Hitomi. *Snakes and Earrings* p.104

also described as a tough guy, someone capable of beating another man to death.⁴⁰ Though he amplifies violence done to women because of his femininity, his masculinity displays a problem inflicted on all of society because of unequal power dichotomies.⁴¹

Literature Review: Norwegian Wood

Haruki Murakami is well known and praised for his well-rounded, complex characters. However, if one were to read *Norwegian Wood*, the lack of complex female (even male) representation trumps his acclaim to writing realistic characters. The characters of *Norwegian Wood* are predictable and represent common, even clichéd, archetypes: Watanabe Toru is the tortured young college man who no one understands; Midori the sexual, airheaded nymph with a tragic backstory; Naoko the depressed, beautiful young woman caught up in her own fantasy world⁴². One might argue that Murakami's archetypical representation depicts reality- after all, isn't that how archetypes originate? In regards to women, though, these characterizations further depict male dominated norms and therefore represent a type of woman realistic only in the sphere of the male dominated society.

Consider Midori. When Watanabe and Midori first meet, he does not recognize her because she has changed her hair. Her response to his surprise when he finally remembers her and comments on the change is, "You're right" she said, 'I had a perm this summer, and it was just awful. I was ready to kill myself. I looked like a corpse on the beach with seaweed stuck to my head. So I figured as long as I was ready to die, I might as well cut it all

⁴⁰ Kanehara, Hitomi. *Snakes and Earrings* p.46

⁴¹ Orbaugh, Sharalyn, "The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women's Fiction" Schalow, Paul Gordon., and Janet A. Walker. *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* p.123

⁴² Murakami, Haruki, and Jay Rubin. *Norwegian Wood*. New York: Vintage International, 2000.

off”⁴³ Already Midori comes across as shallow and self-obsessed. All she cares about is how pretty she is. And later, her shallow nature is only verified in her description of her desperation for an egg fryer. She states, “When I was in my first year of high school, I had to have an egg fryer- a long, narrow pan for making dashimaki style of fried eggs we’re eating. I bought it with money I was supposed to use for a new bra. For three months I had to live with one bra. Can you believe it? I’d wash my bra at night, go crazy trying to dry it, and wear it the next day...”⁴⁴ Midori’s primary concerns are her looks and cooking. She exults the ideal feminine behaviors in almost all aspects...

...But only almost, because despite Midori’s domestic leanings, she expresses raw sexuality. Her attitude towards sex is ridiculously vulgar (she constantly references viewing porno flicks and asks Toro to take her to “a real S and M one”⁴⁵) and Watanabe often chides her, expressing that she should be more lady-like⁴⁶. In fact, Watanabe seems to be the expert on femininity in the novel. When he and Midori are sitting on her roof smoking she pushes her cigarette butt into the roof and he exclaims, “Girls are supposed to be a little more elegant when they put their cigarettes out. You did that like a lumberjack.”⁴⁷ And when it comes to sexuality, that women independently possess sexual desire in the way that men do does not even come to mind, as evident in his response to Midori asking Watanabe about male masturbation. Watanabe claims, “‘Just a few guys drinking and jerking off.’ ‘Does that include you?’ ‘It includes every man on the face of the earth,’ I

⁴³ Ibid p.50

⁴⁴ Ibid p.69

⁴⁵ Ibid p. 184

⁴⁶ Ibid p. 184

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 70

explained, 'Girls have periods and boys jerk off. Everybody.'⁴⁸ Watanabe explains male masturbation by comparing it to an involuntary biological function of the female body. Not only does this trivialize the notion that women might masturbate and have similar sexual urges to women, but it pronounces that all men have uncontrollable and involuntary masturbatory urges. This translates into sexual intercourse as well. When a man has sex with a woman, the woman is merely a more pleasant vehicle for masturbation⁴⁹. Even when Naoko dies, Watanabe's main lament is that "her flesh no longer existed in this world."⁵⁰ He does not resent that a kind, intelligent, caring woman has died, he suffers because her beautiful body has been destroyed by death. Her personality never mattered to him, so the story does not give her a personality. And where women writers might utilize passive characters for satirical purposes that illustrate pre-existing societal expectations of womanhood⁵¹, this portrayal of passive women in literature written by Murakami further validate pre-existing expectations of womanhood rather than criticize them.

In general, sex does not seem to hold much weight in this novel. One can hardly read a dozen page without it being mentioned, and everyone seems to be intimately engaged. Despite this, there is no real intimacy in the sex itself. The only real moment of sex in the novel where the act itself is described with a level of privacy is when Watanabe and Naoko sleep together for the first time. The scene, described with the following, "She clutches at my erection. Her opening was warm and wet and asking for me. And yet, when I went inside, she tensed with pain. Was this her first time, I asked, and she nodded. Now it was

⁴⁸ Ibid p. 63

⁴⁹ Ibid p. 209

⁵⁰ Ibid p. 272

⁵¹ Orbaugh, Sharalyn, "The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women's Fiction" Schalow, Paul Gordon., and Janet A. Walker. *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* p.123

my turn to be confused. I had assumed that Naoko had been sleeping with Kizuki all that time.”⁵² is the only time the reader feels embarrassed to read what happens. The lack of sexual experience here, and the typical vulnerability that goes with it, are evident.

Unfortunately one accurate depiction in a whole novel does not rectify the bland sexuality of women that persists through the end of the novel. After this point, Naoko too becomes just another vessel in which Watanabe’s needs are met. Naoko “exposes herself” to Watanabe and he marvels at her thinking, “The body that Naoko revealed before me now, though, was nothing like the one I had held that night. This flesh had been through many changes to be reborn in utter perfection beneath the light of the moon”⁵³ And later, Naoko casually jerks Watanabe off in a meadow.⁵⁴ After Watanabe “takes” her virginity, Naoko’s sexual innocence completely dissolves and she acts in ways that bring sexual pleasure only to Watanabe, even at the expense of her mental health. Not only does Naoko derive little pleasure from her sexual acts with Watanabe, she feels violated because of them. She reacts to sex with Watanabe with, “I never want someone to violate me like that again.”⁵⁵ Even though Naoko consented to sex, and does not regret their actions (she even describes it as the most wonderful thing that has happened to her) she still describes being penetrated as a violation.

From the assumptions that the novel makes, one might infer that sex as a whole is a base biological necessity rather than a significant action between people. Sex is so casually tossed about, and even harmful, that a rational person might leave it out of their life

⁵² Murakami, Haruki, and Jay Rubin. *Norwegian Wood*. New York: Vintage International, 2000 p.40

⁵³ Ibid p. 132

⁵⁴ Ibid p. 143

⁵⁵ Ibid p.283

completely. Not only does *Norwegian Wood* further instigate a stigma of non-existent female focused sexuality, even Midori's sexual fancies favor male tastes, but implies that sexuality as a whole cannot peacefully coexist with romantic, emotional relationships. Sex and romance are separate. Watanabe loves Naoko emotionally, but cannot stay sexually faithful to her because sex and romance do not live in the same circles. Watanabe's friend Nagasawa sleeps with "hundreds"⁵⁶ of girls, but does not consider that to be cheating, while his girlfriend Hatsumi refuses to leave him because they have an emotional relationship, even if their sexual relationship suffers. Murakami not only writes predictable characters, but writes off sexuality in women while simultaneously snuffing the importance of male sexuality as base human biological needs, therefore removing any agency or complexity that his characters and their sexual relationships might have portrayed.

Literature Review: Memoirs of a Geisha

Arthur Golden is often praised as an expert in Japanese studies, especially in regards to his knowledge of geisha. Golden claims his novel, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, is based on the life and personal accounts of Mineko Iwasaki, a former geisha, and academically recognized works on Geisha often site him as a resource⁵⁷. However, Iwasaki was outraged when Golden published his novel and made statements saying, "He has made a mockery of Japanese culture." She responded to Golden's novel in Kelly Foreman's Essay, *Bad Girls Confined*, as follows:

⁵⁶ Ibid p. 207

⁵⁷ Golden, Arthur. "Why do Geisha Exist?" *Geisha: Beyond the Painted Smile*. New York: George Braziller

What is written in Arthur Golden's book is false... He got it wrong... For me, personally, this is a libel, an infringement... also a libel against Gion as a whole... Real geisha don't tie men's shoes- maids do that. Real geisha don't take [time] off from their training. Golden got the organization of the geisha house wrong, and misunderstands the painted smile of the traditional *noh* dancer... The book was all about sex. He wrote the book on the theme of women selling their bodies. It was not that way at all.⁵⁸

When confronted with Iwasaki's unrest, Golden replied with, ""If someone writes a book about your 'family,' the closer it is to truth, the more you aren't going to like it... One myth is that geishas are prostitutes. That myth is wrong. The other myth is that geishas are not prostitutes. That myth is wrong, too."⁵⁹ Golden neither confirms nor denies that his information is flawed, and he is still considered an expert in the field of Japanese study relating to geisha. Though Iwasaki published memoirs of her own, Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* is the novel with the film and that is read in classes worldwide.

Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* does include historical facts that clearly represent social norms connected to geisha and some of the traditions passed down through geisha houses; however, Golden does very little to reverse misconceptions about the connection that Western influence made with Geisha and sex. When Chiyo, the young protagonist of the story, searches for her sister after their separation and enslavement, she is told that her

⁵⁸ Foreman, Kelly, "Bad Girls Confined" p. 36 Miller, Laura, and Jan Bardsley. 2005. *Bad girls of Japan*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan

⁵⁹ Galloway, Joseph L. 2000. "Protests of a geisha." *U.S. News & World Report* 128, no. 10: 12. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost (accessed March 25, 2015).

sister is in a jorou-ya⁶⁰. This term is never explained pointedly to Chiyo- nor to the reader- but it is implied that this term expresses a prostitution district and later clarified with, “[The women] wore kimono and hair ornaments similar to geisha, but their obi were tied in the front rather than the back. I’ve never seen this before and didn’t understand it, but it’s the mark of a prostitute.”⁶¹ The comparison to Geisha already presents an association between the two very different professions and negatively associates prostitution with what geisha do. Arthur Golden himself falls prey to the misconception of geisha as a symbol of (specifically) submissive sex created during and after the Meiji Restoration via Western representation of geisha on equal level of consorts. His writing style, however, is not the only evidence of the unjust magnification of sex within geisha life- the story itself is a timeline for how this misconception developed.

With the increased number of Western visitors to Japan, the demand for sexual companions for those Westerners also increased. Though this demand remained relatively small during most of the Meiji Restoration itself, the number of Westerners who did experience the “comforts” of Japan spread stories of their time with “authentic Geisha.” Often this reputation stemmed from the fact that Westerners a) could not afford to spend time with a real geisha, and b) even if they could afford it, tradition dictates that one must be invited to a teahouse by a recognized customer. Very few, if any, Westerners would ever be invited, and as such the only “geisha experience” possible would have been confined to that of the “hot springs geisha”⁶² Golden’s novel mentions these women with, “If you’ve

⁶⁰ じょろうや
女郎屋

⁶¹ Golden, Arthur. *Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel* (p.83)

⁶² *Geisha*. Produced by Films on Demand; Films Media Group

ever visited a hot springs resort or some such place, and been entertained by women masquerading as geisha who are really prostitutes...”⁶³But this is the only section in which Golden distinguishes the difference between geisha and prostitute. After the Meiji Restoration, and once WWII concluded, the swarm of Westerners entering Japan arrived with the same false information; if you want to have a good time, seek out a geisha. Many prostitutes ran with the terminology and its popularity in the post-defeat era⁶⁴ and claimed to be geisha to lure ignorant American soldiers in for business⁶⁵.

Golden’s novel depicts the progression of Japan from isolated fishing villages, to traditional teahouses, to the Kyoto recognized in part today. As the novel progresses and modernity seeps in, the role of geisha, though unchanging, becomes more and more confused by outside observers. As the observers become more Western, the more sexual the perceived role of geisha becomes, until one of the geisha of the novel actually perpetuates this myth: Pumpkin. Without other options, Pumpkin resorts to prostitution during and in the conclusion of the war. She uses her former geisha status to her advantage, and unfortunately she represents a common occurrence during the war. However, in the reestablishment of geisha in Kyoto, sex certainly was not a part of the tradition. Golden perpetuates the misconception by focusing on Sayuri’s mizuage⁶⁶ for the majority of the novel⁶⁷, but he does illustrate the difference between a prostitute and geisha well through his historical timeline of how this misconception originated. The erroneous image of geisha

⁶³ Golden, Arthur. *Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel* (p.358)

⁶⁴ In reference to Japan’s defeat after WWII

⁶⁵ *Geisha: Beyond the Painted Smile*. New York: George Braziller

⁶⁶ 遊女などの水揚げ ゆうじよ みづあげ i.e. her virginity

⁶⁷ Golden, Arthur. *Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel*

still exists today, though several texts and documentaries have appeared to contradict this negative image.

George Braziller's text *Geisha: Beyond the Painted Smile* thoroughly describes the difference between Geisha (and consequently maiko), elite courtesans, and licensed prostitutes. There is more to the distinction of each "profession" than their dress, but these markers certainly help to initially identify the women of each sect. The licensed prostitute, by law, wore their obi tied in the front both to mark her as a woman selling sex⁶⁸, and to enable her to quickly dress herself between clients. Elite courtesans wore multiple robes and a multitude of hair ornaments, these features distinguishing them from the common prostitute; but similar to that of the licensed prostitute, courtesans too were constricted by law to tie their obi in the front to mark their profession⁶⁹. And where the prostitute and courtesan compete for attention with ornate kimono and gaudy hair ornaments, the geisha's beauty is a more subdued attention to detail. Braziller describes the geisha's attire as such, "The classic denoisho geisha outfit consists of a black, trailing kimono with minimal decoration, an obi that crisscrosses in front and hangs low in the back, white facial makeup with pink highlights, and hair done in the shimada hairstyle."⁷⁰ Though this depiction certainly does not limit the geisha to this singular fashion, the significant details which separate the geisha in appearance alone from a prostitute/courtesan are the subdued nature of her dress, and the obi tied in the back.

⁶⁸*Geisha: Beyond the Painted Smile*. New York: George Braziller (p.44)

⁶⁹Ibid (p.46)

⁷⁰ Ibid (p.48)

Without looking at these difference from a solely stylistic approach, the nature of the geisha's work becomes clearer just in looking at her dress. The obi is expertly tied in the back, signifying that once put on it is expected to stay on for the duration of her day and through each event she attends. Her clothes and hair are modest save from a single patch of exposed skin at the neck, detracting from her physical state: unless performing her art, the geisha is a sidepiece to a gathering rather than an actual attendee. Geisha are masters of the traditional arts; dance, song, Japanese instruments. There are aspects of companionship, but as Jan Bardsley and Laura Miller mention in *Manners and Mischief: Gender, Power, and Etiquette in Japan*, "Men who make overt sexual requests will initially be treated as silly little boys before finding themselves increasingly unwelcome."⁷¹ Though minor aspects if the Geisha life pertain to sex itself, Western expansion in Japan lead to an increased atmosphere of the "mystical Geisha girl" and her sexual promiscuity.

How, though does the misconception of geisha as sexual objects detriment the perception of female sexuality? Geisha do only represent a small fraction of female society in Japan. Despite their limited numbers, though, geisha remain the peak representation of femininity and the "perfect woman"⁷² according to Bardsley and Miller. If this ideal representation of womanhood remains primarily the object of pleasure for men, this only further perpetuates the myth that women lack sexuality of their own; even in Golden's novel Sayuri's desires for the Chairman stem from admiration⁷³ rather than a sexual lust. The image of the geisha as sexually neutral does little more to benefit the image of women's

⁷¹ Bardsley, Jan, and Laura Miller. "The Perfect Woman." In *Manners and Mischief: Gender, Power, and Etiquette in Japan* (p.74)

⁷² Ibid

⁷³ Golden, Arthur. *Memoirs of a Geisha: A Novel*. p. 114

sexuality either. The geisha, then, represents the perfect woman only in the form of the male gaze. She is alluring in her knowledge of refined arts, but she never flaunts her intelligence in the face of her male patrons. She is chaste, but not a prude, silently agreeable, charming, and always with a smile on her face. This image is obviously the construction of male fantasy- each characteristic the geisha possesses serves to boost the ego of her male patrons. Already this “perfect woman” fights an uphill battle for female sexual representation, and further misconstrued glorification of the geisha as a prostitute serves only to wash out any possibility that women might have a sexual appetite of their own beyond the line of duty.

Not all representations of the geisha depict coy virgins or promiscuous “entertainers” however, and the geisha profession in the modern setting does serve to liberate women through providing an independent employment outlet. Through pursuit of maintaining traditional Japanese arts and hours of study, the life of a geisha does not translate into the track of a housewife and mother which many young Japanese women feel pressured into. This lifestyle comes with no expectation for the geisha to hit a certain age and leave the profession to raise a family.

Already, an established geisha culture exists in Japan, and this culture dates back hundreds of years. But in one novel, Arthur Golden has changes the global interpretation of the geisha and her history. In Kimiko Akita’s essay, “Bloopers of a Geisha: Male Orientalism and Colonization of Women's Language” she uses Golden “to illustrate how men create (dictate) most of what we know about women and women's lives (a landscape foreign to

men) and how men treat women as Other and alterity and misrepresent them”⁷⁴ Akita argues that not only does Golden cater to the fantasies of a Western audience through the scandalization of truth⁷⁵, his subsequent translations are translated to include language that further misrepresents geisha; and by extension, women⁷⁶. Comparatively, Golden represents a real life example of what Sharalyn Orbaugh described as the second method of female writers: to satirically glorify the objective value of women as positive, ironically representing the passive woman as empowered by the system rather than degraded by it.⁷⁷The flaw, however, is that Golden’s beliefs about geisha are not satirical, and they are widely recognized as true. In fact, according to Kelly Foreman, “Even though Golden’s story is fiction, it has been embraced globally as a true geisha biography and an authoritative account of the karyuukai (the geisha world)”⁷⁸ Despite facing real accounts of the geisha world that refute Golden’s “knowledge”, his accounts are considered a more accurate representation and therefore do not only perpetuate myths about geisha (and therefore womanhood) but deepen them.

Adaptations:

In order to appeal to modern audiences, novels often adapt into films. Films not only make novels more accessible (why take days to read the book when you could watch it in a few hours?), but serve to emphasize scenes visually that might be lost in writing. For

⁷⁴ Kimiko, Akita. 2009. "Bloopers of a "Geisha": Male "Orientalism" and Colonization of Women's Language." *Women & Language*

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Orbaugh, Sharalyn, “The Body in Contemporary Japanese Women’s Fiction” Schalow, Paul Gordon., and Janet A. Walker. *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing* p.123

⁷⁸ Foreman, Kelly, “Bad Girls Confined” p. 36 Miller, Laura, and Jan Bardsley. 2005. *Bad girls of Japan*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan

women writers, the ability to visually represent violence, passivity, and sexuality can, at times, more effectively evoke desired reactions from their audience. The violence in Kanehara's *Snake and Earrings* suddenly has not only a description, but a sound and visual to it. When Lui cries during sex with Shiba, her wails are audible. You can see the tears streaming down her face. You can watch her spiraling alcoholism rather than just read it, and the visual effect is uncomfortable at best. Which means that Kanehara has succeeded.

In addition to visually representing narrative, films serve to more clearly depict the intended roles of characters. Ama, for instance, takes on a bouncy, child-like demeanor in the film. And though his characterization in the novel provides a description of his stunted emotional maturity, the film fully encompasses this trait. When Ama first takes Lui to Shiba's shop to have her tongue pierced, Lui and Shiba engage in an intense discussion about S&M sex, all the while in the background Ama attempts to put out candles with a crop by aggressively swinging it back and forth. His actions, in contrast to the graphic conversation of Lui and Shiba, only further convey his childishness. On the other hand, Ama very violently attacks and kills a man in the street who harasses Lui. This suggests that, though childish, Ama is not necessarily innocent. His femininity, too, comes out more in the film than in the novel. The casting of Ama, an actor with an angular face and a slender body similar to that of Lui, in addition to his sudden bursts of emotion visually serve to reinforce his role as a female representation.

Where *Snakes and Earrings* serves to enhance the experience of the novel and further engage dialogue about sexual violence and its political implications both in and out of the novel, the film adaptation of *Norwegian Wood* reduced the novel to a cheap replay of

the failed sex life of Watanabe Toru. The film certainly excels in terms of scenic beauty, artistic cinematography, and soundtrack, but in terms of plot the film collapses entirely. The film downplays Midori's sexuality (as ridiculously vulgar as it was in the novel, at least she expressed some sexuality) and the most obscene she ever acted was in mentioning a single sexual fantasy and telling Watanabe to take her to a porno after the death of her father. All of her sexuality is tinged with sadness and halfhearted attempts. In the film, Midori's sexuality is portrayed as compensation for the tragedy in her life.

Similarly, Naoko's mental derangement in the film doubles in regards to its representation in the novel. She constantly lapses into screaming hysteria and her speech is rapid, coupled with confusing jumbles of dialogue that lead to nowhere. In the novel Naoko's death comes as a shock, because throughout the book her characterization remains, for the most part, calm and put together with the occasional bout of crying. The only indication that we get of her deteriorating mental state is when Reiko mentions that Naoko has started to hear voices, and this does not happen until much later. The film draws up a picture of the deranged and hysterical Naoko from the start.

Each of the characters suffered a stripping of backstory and personality. Even as a stand-alone film, *Norwegian Wood* failed to deliver complex characters and intriguing plot. Perhaps, then, the film succeeded in showing the failings of the novel. In stripping away all of the redeeming qualities of the novel (Reiko's backstory and physical appearance, Midori's sexual freedom, etc.), the film exposed the poorly depicted female representation and the overly simplified explanation of sexuality and sex between young people.

In contrast, the film, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, coexists nicely with the novel, and one might argue that the film represents a well done adaptation of a novel. That said, all of the things that make the novel problematic in terms of representation of geisha exist in the film. The entire plot of the film is still how to sell Sayuri's mizuage and how she can free herself from her lowly servant position by becoming the most successful geisha (as a result of selling her virginity) while simultaneously winning the affection of the (much older) chairman. Even though the passing comment of, "Geisha do not sell their bodies, they sell their art"⁷⁹ is made, every action before and after that single piece of dialogue suggests otherwise. Even Sayuri's eventual relationship with the chairman is seen as primarily sex based.

The film, however, did expand on Sayuri's own sexuality. Just because her role in life is that of an entertainer and servant to traditional Japanese arts, does not mean that her own feelings no longer exist. She does not become asexual as soon as she ties the obi, and neither does her sexuality propel itself into hyper sexuality just because she is a geisha and geisha are portrayed as sexual objects. The artistic merits of the film enhance the enjoyment of its viewing, and the soundtrack adds a vibrancy that matches Sayuri's enthusiastic pursuits of her future. Yes, the film is problematic because the novel was problematic, but at least the characters were not rushed and bleached of all of their intricacies. Where *Norwegian Wood* butchered the plot, *Memoirs of a Geisha* rose to the challenge, and where *Snakes and Earrings* challenged the objective view of female and non-

⁷⁹ *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Directed by Rob Marshall. Produced by Lucy Fisher, Douglas Wick, and Steven Spielberg. By Robin Swicord and Shizuko Hoshi. Performed by Ziyi Zhang, Ken Watanabe, and Michelle Yeoh. United States: Sony Pictures Entertainment, 2005.

male representation in the media, *Memoirs of a Geisha* only validated the male based social norms of the female role. As an adaptation, the film did its job.

Real Life Movements:

Kanehara's novel *Snakes and Earrings* and later film adaptation represents one out of many novels confronting sexual violence in Japan. And though the movement boast few numbers of supporters in relation to abusers, there are networks in Japan that fight against sexual violence towards women outside the scope of fiction, such as アジア女性資料センター (Asia-Japan Women's Resource Center a.k.a. AJWRC). These networks struggle to enlist support because people feel uncomfortable when faced with the faces of people who actually exist. Fiction provides an outlet for those who are not willing to confront the reality of this violence in their own society, opening a safe space for dialogue.

In 2013, I personally was involved with a program put on by AJWRC. It was a fashion show to illustrate sexual violence inflicted on women in Japan. Weeks were spent preparing the program, pamphlets were printed, and custom shirts made. The office for AJWRP was located in a co-op, and the space was small and crowded with materials needed to keep the organization running. When the time came for the fashion show, the models vastly outnumbered the people who came to watch. But the energy remained high. Today, AJWRC has doubled in size, and the organization is only getting stronger. That said, those for AJWRC solidly remain in the minority, and the male dominated society continues to thrive in Japan.

Popular culture further supports the argument that the male-ness is something to be celebrated; that male sexuality is a good thing, and that female sexuality should remain

out of the lime light. This raises the issue of censorship of the vagina, not just in literature, but in real life. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Igarashi Megumi, an artist who created a 3-D model of her vagina, and was arrested for obscenity in relation to this model, is often referred to as “Rokudenashiko” meaning the “no good girl”⁸⁰. She has a reputation for her “graphic” displays of female genitalia, and has been arrested multiple times because of it. However, Kanamara matsuri⁸¹, a festival for a giant steel penis, is a widely celebrated event and a season for merrymaking. The penis is a sign of fertility and celebration. The vagina? Unless being sold, it should be hidden.

Conclusion:

The continued value and significance of this project within Asian Studies as an illumination of gender and sexual challenges in Japan serves to prove that the development of sexual expression in Asia continues to be a priority to female writers and their target readers. The selected novels of Japanese women writers signifies that blatant expressions of non-male sexuality within fiction does in fact exist, and these expressions are even successful. However; outside of fiction, non-male sexuality often suffers suppression from societal expectations and even faces legal repercussions. Actions of censorship of the female body, when that body is not serving a sexual purpose, highlight the objective view of women’s bodies within Japanese society, which expands to reflect an issue in society at

⁸⁰ Adelstein, Jake and Kubo, Angela Erika “What’s Japan’s Problem With Vaginas?” The Daily Beast. 2015.

⁸¹ “Kanamara Matsuri.” Wikipedia. January 11, 2015. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kanamara_Matsuri.

large. Many movement to increase non-male sexual representation exist; but without a blanket of fiction, these movement often suffer for being “too real” and uncomfortable.

Until the female body stands on the same level as the male body, and sexual agency of women is acknowledged outside of fiction, an unequal representation of sexuality will persist. Free representation of sexuality will remain works of fiction and dangerous spurts of social movements that end in arrest and censorship, or poorly attended protests in out of the way spaces until male masturbation is no longer put on the same level as menstruation and vagina boats are just as common as penis festivals. Equal sexual representation does not mean a sexual free-for-all, it means that women are not shamed for having sexual desires and that the bodies of women are exulted on the same level as their male counterparts.

Efforts to inject equal sexual representation into the Japanese society are being made. The society is not stagnant, and works of fiction depicting strong female and non-male sexuality emerge every year. Someday these pieces will not have to be fiction, and until that time Igarashi Megumi will make her boats and the models of AJWRC will stomp their way across the stage, no matter how small the audience.

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