WRITING THE LOVE OF BOYS:

REPRESENTATIONS OF MALE-MALE DESIRE IN THE LITERATURE OF MURAYAMA KAITA AND EDOGAWA RANPO

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By
Jeffrey M. Angles, M.A.

* * * * *

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Dissertation Committee:
Professor William J. Tyler, Adviser
Professor Richard Torrance
Professor Naomi Fukumori

Approved by

Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures
ABSTRACT

During the twenty-five years between the beginning of the Taishō period in 1912 and the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, the spread of medical psychology and sexological discourse helped contribute to the development of new ideas about masculinity and gender in Japan. Popular literature represented one forum in which people explored, promoted, and qualified these new ideas. The manifestations of male-male desire that one finds in the literature of the period, however, do not just passively reflect changes in contemporary ideology. Literary developments also helped shape the idioms that writers used to describe the subject.

This dissertation examines the representations of male-male desire in the bestselling works of two authors active during this window of change: the poet, writer, and painter Murayama Kaita (1896-1919) and the mystery author Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965). Through critical analysis and original translations of their works, this dissertation shows that their depictions of desire between men were shaped not only by changing ideas about gender relations but also the artistic movements and genres with which both authors were associated. By combining elements of gender studies and literary history, this dissertation examines the thematic interests, genre-related assumptions, and social expectations that molded their treatments of the subject.

Chapter One examines the florid representations of boyish desire in Kaita’s poetry and diaries from the early 1910s. These writings reflect Kaita’s pseudo-symbolist notion of the poet as a visionary who drew upon manifestations of beauty to create art. Chapter Two examines the relationship between decadent sentiment, male beauty, and Kaita’s own artistic aspirations in “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” (“The Bust of the Beautiful Young Salaino”), a story about a dream-like competition with Leonardo da Vinci for the love of one of Leonardo’s disciples. This chapter also examines the connections between pre-modernity, decadence, and male-male desire in Kaita’s story “Tetsu no dōji” (“Children of Iron”) and the play “Shuten dōji” (“The Saké-Drinking Youth”). Chapter Three examines “Satsujin gyōja” (“The Murdering Ascetic”) and “Akuma no shita” (“The Diabolical Tongue”), two mystery-adventure stories from 1915. Both
describe antisocial outlaws who act upon their desire for other men; however, the texts describe the characters’ desires as displaced by the logical order of modern civilization.

Chapter Four examines Ranpo’s essays on representations of male-male desire in Kaita’s work, which he saw as embodying an innocent and especially poignant form of boyish affection. These essays, along with Ranpo’s autobiographical essays about his crushes on other schoolboys during his youth, implicitly attempt to disassociate the love of boys from the moralistic and pathologizing rhetoric of sexology. As Chapter Five shows, some of Ranpo’s early fiction, including “Ningen isu” (“The Human Chair,” 1925), Issun-bōshi (The Dwarf, 1926-1927), Ryōki no hate (The Fruits of Curiosity-Hunting, 1930), shows an ambivalent attitude toward male homoeroticism. These works contain caveats reassuring readers about the “strangeness” of male homoeroticism even though they cater to the scopophilic curiosity of readers by incorporating scenes of male-male attraction. Similar dynamics are visible in the novel Kotō no oni (The Demon of the Lonely Isle, 1929-30), which features a man who prefers sleeping with men. Although the narrative voice describes the character’s feelings in sensational terms, at other times, Ranpo allows the character to describe his feelings in ways that make them comprehensible to the audience. Chapter Six examines Ranpo’s essays from the 1930s on same-sex desire in the writing of other authors, including Edward Carpenter, John Addington Symonds, and Walt Whitman. These essays represent a product of Ranpo’s ongoing explorations of the meaning and historical manifestations of same-sex love. Although these essays deal gingerly with the subject of male homoeroticism, these essays, like Ranpo’s autobiographical essays, defend boyish love and male camaraderie as beautiful and socially useful while arguing for the important position of male-male desire has played in literary history.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was several years ago on a warm afternoon in the book-filled study of Takahashi Mutsuo, the fascinating poet who would become the subject of my master’s thesis, that I first heard the name Murayama Kaita in a conversation about erotic desire and poetry. Soon afterward, in perusing Mr. Takahashi’s collection of essays Seishun o yomu (Reading Youth), I first became aware of Kaita’s brief and dramatic life.¹ Since then, Mr. Takahashi has written about Kaita several times with an enthusiasm that rekindled my interest in this provocative figure. Because it was this bit of karma that led me to the topic of this dissertation, it is only appropriate that I begin by thanking Mr. Takahashi.

High on a mountain slope above the city of Ueda in Nagano Prefecture is the cozy Shinano Drawing Museum, an intimate museum of works by artists who died at young ages like Kaita. There, on a cold day exactly eighty-two years after Kaita’s death, I came face-to-face with Kaita’s works and experienced the electrical shock of his dazzling color and vibrant lines for the first time. Working from his mountainside museum, the curator and author Kuboshima Seiichirō has promoted the work of Kaita so actively that virtually everyone in the nearby town knows Kaita’s name. Every year on the fourth Saturday of February, several hundred people gather in the evening for a memorial service that the museum hosts for Kaita. On the grounds beside the museum, Buddhist priests chant sutras in front of a photograph of the grinning young artist, and afterward, everyone partakes of a local saké appropriately named “Kaita.” That night, as I sipped my warm saké in the cold February mountains, I resolved to share some of Kaita’s work with the English-speaking world.

The largest collection of Kaita’s works and original manuscripts was purchased by the Mie Prefectural Art Museum in 1992. This museum also hosted one of the largest exhibitions of Kaita’s works to date: a 1997 exhibition celebrating the centennial of his birth.² When I visited


² Also cooperating in this exhibition was the Fukushima Prefectural Art Museum, which also houses some of his works and which also hosted the exhibition for one month, and the Asahi shinbun (Asahi Newspaper).
the museum in the autumn of 2001 to view the collection of manuscripts and drawings firsthand, the curators Higashi Shunrō and Ikuta Yuki spent a great deal of time with me, brought out pieces not on display, shared the museum’s newest discoveries, and gave me access to their extensive library of art historical material. They turned the first of many visits to Tsu into an unforgettable trip. I thank them for their openness and continuing friendship. Likewise, I also thank them for granting me permission to reproduce the photos of Kaita’s work that I have included in Appendix A.

I am especially grateful to the Japanese Ministry of Education and to The Ohio State University for their generous support during the time I worked on this dissertation. Between October 2000 and March 2002, I spent an extraordinary year and a half as a Monbushō research student at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto. It was there that I completed much of the preliminary reading for this dissertation under the guidance of Dr. Suzuki Sadami. Dr. Suzuki is a veritable encyclopedia of information on Japanese literature and culture during the early twentieth century, and his broad interests and vast knowledge shaped this dissertation in countless ways. Under his guidance, I learned a great deal about Ranpo and Kaita, plus many other topics as well. Most of this manuscript was written in the months between January and December 2003, during which I received a Presidential Fellowship from the Graduate School at The Ohio State University. As I worked on this project, I received frequent advice and moral support from my adviser, Dr. William J. Tyler, and the members of my dissertation committee, Drs. Richard Torrance and Naomi Fukumori. Their direction has made this dissertation much better and far less verbose than it would have been otherwise. Dr. Tyler’s expert proofreading and advice regarding translation improved the style of this dissertation greatly. Kokoro kara arigataku kansha itashimasu.

Several fans and scholars of Kaita work have given me great encouragement as worked on this project. When I spoke about my dissertation topic to the poet Aizawa Keizō, whose poetry I had translated in the past, I learned that by an amazing coincidence, he had been one of the editors of a large volume of Kaita’s paintings published in 1983. To help me in my project, Mr. Aizawa graciously gave me his first-edition copies of Kaita no utaeru (Songs of Kaita, 1920)

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3 For instance, they had just discovered that Kaita’s 1916 self-portrait, now in the museum’s collection, was painted over another face, apparently also a self-portrait, which was, in turn, painted over a landscape, perhaps by his mentors Kosugi Misei or Yamamoto Kanae (Figure 1). On this discovery, see Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Kodomo bijutsukan sōshūen (Tsu: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, 2001) 58-59.

and *Kaita no utaeru sono go (Songs of Kaita Continued, 1921)* – books far too valuable for a
graduate student like myself to purchase on his own (*Figure 14*). I therefore thank Mr. Aizawa
for his great generosity. (I also thank his partner, the jazz singer Kanamaru Masaki, for letting me
sample his superb cooking on several occasions.) Soon before I left Japan in early 2002,
Fukushima Yasuki, a tanka poet who made literary history during the 1960s by reciting his avant-
garde poetry to jazz accompaniment, invited me to a concert of his work in an intimate Tokyo
club called Mandala. That evening, he invited me on stage, introduced me and the subject of my
research, and gave a special performance of a series of new *zekkyō tanka* (“shouted tanka”) that
he had written about Kaita’s life.5 His infectious enthusiasm for Kaita’s work revived my own
eagerness to write about this young Taishō-period author. (In May 2003, I once again had the
honor of watching Mr. Fukushima perform to wild critical acclaim at the International Poetry
Festival in Medellín, Colombia. There, he demonstrated his incredible ability to captivate
audiences with his dramatic performances of modern tanka.) The composer Nishimura Akira
kindly provided me with copies of a score and recording of his settings of several Kaita poems,
thus feeding two of my greatest passions – classical music and poetry.6 Author and essayist
Sunaga Asahiko gave me a copy of his recent book on *bishōnen* in Japanese literature, which
mentions both Ranpo and Kaita.7 I also thank Ms. Tani at the Ōgai Memorial Hongō Library in
Tokyo for allowing me to view several of Kaita’s unpublished letters to Mori Ōgai’s son, Mori
Oto. Likewise, Maezawa Tomomi at the Yamamoto Kanae Memorial Museum in Ueda City gave
me access to certain letters by Kanae about his young cousin.

Edogawa Ranpo has many fans in modern Japan, and even today, many young readers
continue to read his popular books featuring the detective hero Akechi Kogorō and the Boy’s
Detective Club (*Shōnen tanteidan*). Partly as a result of this popularity, Japanese writers have
written a great deal about Ranpo, and his novels have been reprinted countless times. To help
guide researchers through this maze of research and republications, Naka Shōsaku, a researcher at

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5 Mr. Fukushima had written a series of tanka about Kaita’s life in the past: Fukushima Yasuki, *Fukushima
Yasuki zengashū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1999) 414-18. The tanka that Mr. Fukushima
performed that memorable night in 2002 has since been published in the book-length anthology *Fukushima

6 Nishimura Akira, *Aoiro hainen: Mubansō josei gashō no tame no, Murayama Kaita no shi ni yoru, Op. 3*
(The Bluish Deserted Garden: For Female Chorus, Prose Poems by Kaita Murayama), trans. Tomoko
Yonetsu, Bruce and Lynne Flanary (Tokyo: Ongaku no tomo, 2000).

the Nabari Municipal Library, has compiled several indispensable bibliographies of Ranpo’s own writing and research on Ranpo. Also, his website contains invaluable lists of writing by and about this important popular writer. Mr. Naka has on several occasions answered my questions regarding Ranpo’s work. Koike Tomoko of the Setagaya Literary Museum in Tokyo, which houses Kaita’s 1914 watercolor *Ni shōnen zu* (*Picture of Two Boys*), provided a copy of the Ranpo manuscript about this painting that I have translated in Appendix B. (At the time, it was not known where Ranpo had published the manuscript, but in the course of my research, I solved the riddle for them.)

I am personally indebted to many people for their personal support during the time I worked on this project. I extend my sincere thanks to my friends Suzuki Yasuko, Inagaki Miyako, Miyata Hotsue, Yamamoto Yuri, Iwai Shigeki, Stephen Miller, Judith Rabinovitch, Aung Kyi San, Aung Aung, Jampa Thinley, Lobsang Phuntsok, and to my parents, Janet and Wilbur Angles. Most importantly of all, I extend my greatest gratitude to Drew Banbury, who has been a source of immense inspiration, encouragement, patience, and understanding even when I was far away. This dissertation is therefore dedicated to him.

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Dedicated to Drew Banbury
VITA

July 10, 1971......... Born in Columbus, Ohio
1993………………. B.A., International Studies and Japanese,
    The Ohio State University
1996……………… Study Abroad, Kōbe Shōin Joshi Daigaku, Kobe, Japan
1997……………… M.A., Japanese Literature, The Ohio State University
1998……………… Study Abroad, Kōbe Shōin Joshi Daigaku, Kobe, Japan
1999……………… Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University
2000-2002……… Monbushō Research Student,
    International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyōto, Japan
2002……………… Graduate Teaching Associate, The Ohio State University

PUBLICATIONS

Research Publications

1. Jeffrey Angles, “Watching Commoners, Performing Class: Images of the Common People in

2. Jeffrey Angles, “Discovering and Textualizing Memory: The Tsuioku Shōsetsu of Naka
Kansuke and Takahashi Mutsuo,” Issues of Canonicity and Canon Formation in Japanese
Literary Studies: Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies, November 12-14,
1999, ed. Stephen D. Miller (West Lafayette, IN: Association for Japanese Literary Studies,

3. Jeffrey Angles, “Penisism and the Eternal Hole: Takahashi Mutsuo’s Homeuta,” Love and
Sexuality in Japanese Literature: Proceedings of the Midwest Association for Japanese Literary
Studies, November 6-8, 1998, ed. Eiji Sekine (West Lafayette, IN: Association for Japanese

4. Jeffrey Angles, Mineharu Nakayama and Ayumi Nagatomi, “Japanese Responses Hai, Ee,
Literary Translations


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: East Asian Languages and Literatures

(Modern Japanese Literature, Literary Criticism, and Japanese Language Pedagogy)
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract................................................................................................................... ii
Acknowledgments................................................................................................. iv
Vita ......................................................................................................................... ix
List of Figures....................................................................................................... xiii
Note on Texts......................................................................................................... xvi
Introduction.......................................................................................................... 1

Section I: Representations of Male-Male Desire in the Writing of Murayama Kaita (1896-1919) ......................................................................................... 30

Chapter 1: For the Love of Beauty: Adolescent Desire in Kaita’s Diaries and Poetry................................................................. 31

Chapter 2: Love, Death, Vitality, and the Pre-Modern Past: Fantasies of Desire in Kaita’s Early Prose.......................................................... 93

Chapter 3: Relegation to the Periphery: Male-Male Desire in Kaita’s Mystery-Adventure Fiction.......................................................... 137

Section II: Representations of Male-Male Desire in the Writing of Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965) ................................................................. 158

Chapter 4: (Re)Writing the Love of Boys: Ranpo Reads Kaita........................................ 159

Chapter 5: Curiosity and the Wary Observer: Male-Male Desire in Ranpo’s Fiction.................................................................................. 181

Chapter 6: Discovering the History of “Same-Sex Love”: Ranpo’s Essays on Literary Manifestations of Male-Male Desire....................... 226

Conclusion........................................................................................................ 267

Appendix A: Figures............................................................................................ 271

Appendix B: Original Translations....................................................................... 314
“The Bust of the Beautiful Young Salaino” (ca. 1913-1914) by Murayama Kaita……… 315
Selected Tanka (1913-1915) by Murayama Kaita ......................................................... 318
“Kaita and His Portrait of Two Boys” (1934) by Edogawa Ranpo.............................. 335
“Murayama Kaita” (1961) by Edogawa Ranpo................................................................. 341
Appendix C: Author Chronologies........................................................................... 343
Chronology: Murayama Kaita...................................................................................... 344
Chronology: Edogawa Ranpo......................................................................................... 354
Bibliography................................................................................................................... 376
**LIST OF FIGURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Murayama Kaita, Cover illustration for <em>Rak-gaki</em> (<em>Graffiti</em>, ca. 1911)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Murayama Kaita, Pink Love Letter (ca. 1913)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Murayama Kaita, Detail of the Pink Love Letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Photo of Yanase Masamu (ca. 1916)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Murayama Kaita, <em>Ibari suru otoko</em> (<em>Urinating Man</em>, ca. 1915)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Murayama Kaita, Page from sketchbook (1915) Urinating man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Murayama Kaita, Page from sketchbook (1915) “People I like”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Murayama Kaita, Study of human figures with the word “Decadence” (1915)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Box to the first edition of <em>Kaita no utaeru</em> (<em>Songs of Kaita</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Aubrey Beardsley, <em>Salome with the Head of John the Baptist</em> (1893)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Murayama Kaita, <em>Kosui to onna</em> (<em>Woman by a Lake</em>, 1917)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20. Murayama Kaita, Illustration for “Satsujin gyōja” (“The Murdering Ascetic,” 1915)
   Strolling in the mountains........................................................................................................288

21. Murayama Kaita, Illustration for “Satsujin gyōja,” Inside the den of thieves........289

22. Murayama Kaita, Illustration for “Satsujin gyōja, Toda murders his wife.........290

23. Murayama Kaita, Illustration for “Akuma no shita” (“The Diabolical Tongue,” 1915)
   The elongated tongue...........................................................................................................291

24. Murayama Kaita, Illustration for “Akuma no shita,” After the feast..................292

25. Murayama Kaita, Kojiki to onna (The Beggar and the Woman, 1917).................293

26. Murayama Kaita, Ni shōnen zu (Portrait of Two Boys, 1914)...............................294

27. Photo of Murayama Kaita’s Ni shōnen zu in the Ranpo’s home
   (Early Shōwa period)...........................................................................................................295

28. Photo of Ranpo seated below Kaita’s Ni shōnen zu (1939).....................................295

29. Ranpo’s manuscript for the essay “Murayama Kaita” (1961)....................................296

30. Ishii Tsuruzō, Death mask of Murayama Kaita (1919)............................................297

31. Sketch of Edogawa Ranpo’s study (1934).................................................................298

32. Postcard of Asakusa Park (Taishō period)...............................................................299

33. Photograph of Hyōtan-ike in Asakusa Park (Taishō period).................................300

34. Postcard of the ruined Ryōunkaku in Asakusa Park (1923).......................................301

35. Photo of the streets of Rokku in Asakusa Park (Taishō period)..............................302

36. Postcard of the streets of Rokku in Asakusa Park (Early Shōwa period)..............303

37. Kimura Shōhachi, Asakusa fūkei (Asakusa Scene, ca. early Shōwa period).........304

38. Takenaka Eitarō, Illustration for Ranpo’s novel Kotō no oni (The Demon of the Lonely Isle, 1929) Moroto Michio is seduced by his hunchback mother..........................305

39. Takenaka Eitarō, Illustration for Kotō no oni (1929) Moroto cowers before his mother..............................................................................................................306

40. Takenaka Eitarō, Illustration for Kotō no oni, Moroto embraces the narrator......307

41. Takenaka Eitarō, Illustration for Kotō no oni, Moroto makes sexual advances.....308
42. Photo of a round-table discussion with Ranpo and Hamao Shirō (1929).................. 309
43. Photo of Ranpo and Iwata Jun’ichi (1938)............................................................... 310
44. Photo of Ranpo’s bookshelves containing numerous rare, Edo-period volumes on male-male desire................................................................................................................ 311
45. Iwata Jun’ichi, Illustration for 1927 reprint of Ranpo’s short story “Odoru issun-bōshi” (“The Dancing Dwarf”) ................................................................. 312
46. Iwata Jun’ichi, Illustration for 1927 reprint of Ranpo’s novel Panorama-tō kidan (The Strange Tale of Panorama Isle)................................................................. 313
NOTE ON TEXTS


Similarly, all references to the works of Edogawa Ranpo, unless otherwise noted, are to Edogawa Ranpo, *Edogawa Ranpo zenshū*, 25 vols. (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1978-79). Volume numbers and page numbers appear in parenthesis and are separated by a colon.
INTRODUCTION

Shifting Discourse of Desire

The Taishō period (1912-1925) and the first few decades of the Shōwa period (1925-1989) witnessed great changes in Japan. The country experienced the thriving years of economic development and increased popular participation in politics known as the “Taishō Democracy.” This vibrant period of economic growth came to a rapid halt, however, with the depression that spread across the world in 1929. These economic troubles, in turn, set the stage for the economic pressure and political turbulence that led up to the Japanese invasion of China. Meanwhile, changes in the ideological climate of Japan were equally dramatic. The interwar years saw the spread of psychoanalysis, modern social engineering, feminism, socialism, cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and many other ideologies and social movements. Directly or indirectly, these phenomena all presented the Japanese population with new ideas regarding the healthiest or most productive ways for men and women to behave, and they helped set the climate for the development of new approaches to gender identity, including the Seitō-style woman, the mobo (“modern boy”), the moga (“modern girl”), or the androgyny so popular in this period. In tandem with these changes, the Taishō and early Shōwa periods saw a tremendous amount of discussion about sex and gender roles.

In the influential first volume of his famous history of sexuality, Michel Foucault dismisses the common perception that from the nineteenth century onward, Western European society had silenced discussion of sexual desire through censorship, taboo, and other mechanisms of repression. Instead, he points to a veritable explosion of writing about sex in the fields of law, sociology, medical sciences, psychology, physiology, evolutionary science, and so on. Ironically, at the same time that popular rules of sexual decorum were growing tighter among the lower and middle classes of Western Europe, institutions of law and science were inciting people to speak in greater detail about sex. Within the forums associated with these institutions, a vast body of
literature about sex developed, although this literature was profoundly shaped by the interests of the powers that sponsored the discussion.¹

Although Foucault’s study deals with Western Europe, the situation was similar in Japan during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. People often think about middle-class Japanese society as experiencing a series of increasingly tight strictures on the ways that people talked about sex in their personal lives or wrote about it in print; however, there was, in fact, a flood of writing that dealt with sexuality in all of its forms, including those forms of sexuality that Meiji- and Taishō-period rules of propriety had relegated to the margins of morality. Discussion of sex was not so much suppressed as channeled into certain forums, which then discussed sex in their own terms. As in Europe and America, Japanese medical doctors, psychologists, educators, eugenicists, and sexologists wrote a great deal about sexual behavior and desire. Many of the fields that talked about sex were dominated by people with university degrees or social standing, and these credentials allowed them to speak with authority about the “truth” of sex. The general public reacted to this new discourse in a variety of ways, including writing articles for the columns of sexological magazines or producing erotica that borrowed the new modes of speaking for the purpose of titillation. Popular literature represented one important arena in which people could write about and react to the ideas regarding sex and gender circulating around them. In fact, it is in the field of popular literature that one finds some of the most vital engagements with contemporary ideologies of sex and gender. In the midst of the complicated, multilateral exchanges and conflicting representations of erotic desire circulating in Japanese society, certain key ideas were repeated so often that they came to seem natural, factual, and even universal. The most durable of these discursive constructions have profoundly influenced the way that people think about eroticism and gender in Japan even today.²

¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (NY: Random House, 1990) 17-49. There are problems with Foucault’s study, which lumps together a number of disparate nations and cultures in Western Europe, each of which had its own traditions and means of understanding sexuality. Western Europe was not a single cultural block dominated by a single concept of sexuality that regulated all of its member nations equally.

² One of my key assumptions in writing this dissertation is that the ways in which people think about and understand sexual acts, erotic desire, and sexual identity change over time. In the last few decades, an increasingly large number of historians, literary scholars, and queer theorists have shown the degree to which key concepts relating to sexuality, including the idea of “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality,” are in themselves ideas with their own histories. These scholars emphasize that the ways that people understand sexual feelings, actions, and identities are not universal, nor are they absolute and unchanging. Quite the contrary. The ways people understand and describe sexuality are profoundly shaped by history and the discursive constructions that have evolved along with them. These studies do not necessarily negate other scholarship in the biological and psychological sciences that asserts the existence of something constitutionally built into certain people – be it the hypothalamus, glandular structure, or DNA – that
Male-male and female-female desire were two forms of desire that were discussed extensively in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Japan. The rhetoric used to discuss these forms of sexuality reveals that erotic desire between members of the same sex was treated as a key issue in the production of new ideas about gender and modern civilization. Social historian Gregory Pflugfelder’s survey of the language employed to describe male-male desire from the Edo period (1600-1868) through World War II points to a large number of documents from the popular discourse of the Meiji Period (1868-1912) that associate male-male sexuality with atavistic or uncivilized behavior. He shows that as Japan fashioned itself into a modern, centralized nation-state, discussion of so-called “civilized” norms came to imbue discourse on sexuality “with an astonishing thoroughness and rapidity, disseminating not only through legal pronouncements but also through popular writings ranging from journalism to fiction and poetry.” As the rhetoric of civilization came to bear on the discourse of sexuality, “male-male sexuality, which had enjoyed a prominent and respectable place in Edo-period popular texts, came during Meiji times to be routinely represented as ‘barbarous,’ ‘immoral,’ or simply ‘unspeakable.’” The thought of people engaging in erotic activity with members of their same sex provoked a growing amount of anxiety, and newspapers, educators, sexologists, and other authority figures spilled much ink about the perils of same-sex eroticism. One effect of this rhetoric was that many people shied away from discussing eroticism between men in a positive propels them to feel sexual arousal for certain kinds of people or to prefer certain sexual acts. Usually, the constructionist approach emphasizes the ways that historically contingent factors shape the ways that people interpret those desires. Of course, saying that a concept is a construction conditioned by historical factors should not be construed to mean that it is inert and has no power to affect the immediate lives of people. It is often the case that the ways that people think about sexuality profoundly affects their lives. Discursive constructions give shape to people’s views of themselves as subjects and even shape the ways in which their erotic desires play themselves out.


4 Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 193.
light. Edogawa Ranpo (1894-1965), one of the subjects of this dissertation, wrote in an essay from 1953 that the two major preoccupations of his life had been writing detective fiction and locating books having to do with amorous and erotic desire between men. During the early Shōwa period, his interest in male-male desire and its literary manifestations, he comments, was driven to new heights by the belief that almost no one, except for the young anthropologist and writer Iwata Jun’ichi (1900-1945), was interested in the subject. For Ranpo’s circle of friends, frank and positive discussion of male-male erotic desire had been relegated to the margins of acceptability. Ranpo’s feelings of isolation notwithstanding, there were others in Japan who were eager to think and write about the subject. As mentioned above, a good deal of this writing took place in fields such as psychology and medicine, which had become preoccupied with the meaning and implications of attraction between members of the same sex. Ranpo recognized this to be the case, and in early 1933 he began attending the monthly meetings of the Seishin bunseki kenkyūkai (Group for Psychoanalytic Research) expressly because he knew psychology to be especially interested in same-sex desire.

To chart the ways the Japanese talked about male-male desire over the course of the last three centuries, Pflugfelder’s study uses the central metaphor of “cartographies.” He explains that people use key ideas or cognitive maps to negotiate and navigate the social realities that confront them in real life. Like political maps of the world, whose lines are redrawn whenever one country absorbs another or breaks apart, these conceptual maps change over time, and new boundaries are drawn to include different ideas within certain conceptual territories. For instance, it is instructive to consider briefly the differences between the conceptual baggage of nanshoku and “same-sex love,” two key terms used at different points in Japanese history to chart manifestations of male-male desire. During the Edo period, some of the key concepts used to describe male-male sexuality were nanshoku (also read danshoku, literally “male eros”) and

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6 I have, like Pflugfelder, used the words “same-sex love” within quotation marks to refer to the medico-scientific understanding of male-male and female-female desire that arose in the late nineteenth century. The reason is that there were numerous different terms in Japanese used to describe roughly the same concept, including dōsei kōsetsu (“same-sex intercourse”), dōsei-teki shikijō (“same-sex erotic lust”), dōsei-teki jōkō (“same-sex sexual intercourse”), dōseiyoku (“same-sex desire”), dōseikan seiyoku (“sexual desire among the same sex”), dōsei ren’aishō (“same-sex love syndrome”), and dōsei sōshinshō (“same-sex love illness”).
shudō or wakashudō (“the way of the youth”). When people wrote about eroticism between men during the Edo period, they usually described the partners as being of differing ages and playing different, well-defined roles within the relationship. Generally, the younger partner, the wakashu, had not yet undergone the genbuku ceremony that marked his coming of age, and he continued to wear youthful clothes and forelocks (maegami). In fact, texts about male-male sexuality in the Edo period sometimes describe the fetishistic appeal of the wakashu’s forelocks, which serve as an outward signifier of youth and sexual availability. The wakashu was not necessarily expected to have sex with only one gender or the other. Many records from the Edo period describe relationships between wakashu and women; however, whenever the wakashu engaged in anal sex with a man, it was assumed that he would play the sexual role of the insertee. The other partner in the world of nanshoku was the older nenja, who wore adult clothes, had his pate shaved in the fashion typical of adult men, and shouldered the mantle of adult responsibility in society. When engaging in anal sex with a wakashu, the nenja was typically described as playing the role of inserter. An invisible boundary of adulthood was seen as separating the wakashu from the nenja. Each played relatively inflexible roles, but humorous texts sometimes describe older men transgressing these given roles by, for instance, covering their shaved pate with a kerchief and pretending to be wakashu. Although certain people might declare their preference for wakashu by calling themselves onna-girai (“women haters”), a preference for the erotic pleasures of men was considered a matter of personal taste. As the publishing industry expanded during the Edo period and presented the cosmopolitan public with an increasing number of texts on the pleasures of sexuality and the ways of the pleasure quarters, male-male eroticism also came to be frequently described within the rhetorical construct of shudō or wakashudō. Like the “way of tea” (sadō), the “way of archery” (kyūdō) and so forth, shudō was treated as a “way” (dō) that could bring great rewards if its intricacies were mastered by a connoisseur.

In the nineteenth century, the forms of male-male desire described as nanshoku and shudō came to be subsumed under the new notion of “same-sex love.” As Japan turned to Germany to import the latest knowledge regarding medicine, forensics, and psychology, Japanese scholars encountered the notion of homosexuality, which had recently spread throughout Europe. As early as the 1880s, translators and authors of medical texts were fashioning various Japanese words to

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7 For a detailed discussion of representations of male-male sexuality in the Edo period, see Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 26-96.

convey the concept of homosexuality. By the 1920s, the word dōseiai had become an especially common translation, although others continued to circulate for some time. Unlike other older discursive concepts, such as nanshoku or shudō, which referred specifically to relationships between men, the discourse of “same-sex love” incorporated both male-male and female-female attraction within a single conceptual territory. In other words, “same-sex love” referred both to male-male eroticism and to female-female eroticism, whereas nanshoku and shudō only described the age-graded eroticism between older men and younger boys. The reorganization of ideas surrounding eroticism was fundamentally grounded in the belief that sexuality should take place between a man and a woman. Both male-male and female-female sexuality involve taking a partner of the same sex and were therefore seen as violating this fundamental rule in a similar way. In short, the concept of “same-sex love” led Japanese for the first time to see male-male sexuality and female-female sexuality as two manifestations of a single phenomenon.

Although the rubric of “same-sex love” emphasized the connections between these two forms of eroticism, it also downplayed the importance of other elements that had been important in structuring earlier formulations of desire. Since the sole issue in defining “same-sex love” was the sex of the partner, this meant that the age, roles, and sexual practices of the partners were no longer at issue as they had been in the nanshoku and shudō of the Edo period. Whereas nanshoku and shudō involved a difference in the age of the partners and assigned specific roles to each person both in and out of bed, relationships characterized as representing “same-sex love” did not necessarily involve such asymmetries. Perhaps the most important aspect of the new concept of “same-sex love” was that medical practitioners, sexologists, and psychologists read a predilection for “same-sex love” into the interiority of its practitioners in ways that one did not find during the Edo period with shudō and nanshoku. Eager to understand the reasons why certain people preferred the same sex, medical psychologists and sexologists divided instances of same-sex eroticism into those that were “acquired” (kōtensei) or “congenital” (sentensei). “Acquired”

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9 Furukawa Makoto surmises that the reason the word dōseiai (“same-sex love”) eventually gained the widest currency was that during the 1910s and 1920s, the Japanese public and press were searching for a word to describe same-sex relationships between schoolgirls, which had recently become a subject of much concern. Many of the other words coined as translations of “homosexuality” incorporated overt references to intercourse or sexual desire. Many people, however, tended to assume that male-male desire was largely physical and female-female desire was predominantly spiritual, so eventually the word dōseiai, which ends with the character ai (愛), meaning affection or love of a spiritual nature, seemed the most appropriate to describe relationships between women. Furukawa, “The Changing Nature of Sexuality”: 115.

10 See Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 268-69. One prominent example can be found in Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō, Hentai seiyoku ron (Tokyo: Shun'yōdō, 1915) 115-53. Hentai seiyoku ron (On the
instances of same-sex desire were seen as developing later in life, perhaps due to environmental factors. “Congenital” cases, however, were generally seen as the product of mental or physical degeneracy that was relatively difficult, if not impossible, to cure. (Pflugfelder notes that although Edo-period authors occasionally described their characters as “born” lovers of boys, they did so primarily for hyperbolic effect, and did not imply the existence of any defect that led them to prefer males.) Regardless of this distinction, both “congenital” and “acquired” manifestations of “same-sex love” were seen as profoundly deleterious to one’s health and threatening to the gender identity of its practitioners.

_Nanshoku, shudo_, and “same-sex love” were not the only conceptual tools used to understand male-male desire in Japan from the early modern period onward, but the differences between these constructs illustrates the large gaps that could exist between the various conceptual and rhetorical structures used to describe love between men over the course of Japanese history. Even within a single time period, however, not all segments of Japanese society spoke about male-male desire in the same way. Representations of male-male desire generated for mass consumption tended to be quite different than those promulgated in official legal discourse. Both of these, in turn, differed significantly from images in medical and psychological discourse, which concerned itself with issues of health and pathology. Because these discursive realms remained somewhat independent of one another, the ways that people throughout Japanese society talked about male-male desire were not coordinated.

Also, historical factors might cause one of these realms, but not the others, to pick up the subject as a particularly salient issue. For instance, male-male desire became an important issue in the last few decades of the nineteenth century within the field of jurisprudence because of a series of changes in the legal code. In 1873, the centralized Japanese government promulgated the _Kaitei ritsuryō_, a law that prohibited anal intercourse (_keikan_) in its 266th article. (Officially, violation of this statute could earn as much as ninety days of penal servitude, but evidence suggests that only a handful of people were punished this severely under the statute.) The immediate reason for the promulgation of this statute was the concern of educators in Kyushu who were unclear about how homoerotic acts should be treated under the rapidly changing laws

Theory of Perverse Sexuality) circulated widely in Taishō Japan and is frequently seen as one of the most important works of Japanese sexology.

11 Pflugfelder, _Cartographies of Desire_, 268.

12 Pflugfelder, _Cartographies of Desire_, 158-62.
of the early Meiji period. Edo-period law in Kumamoto had a statute outlawing sexual violence perpetrated by men on other men, but early Meiji law, including the 1871 Shinritsu kōryō, remained silent on the subject. Interestingly, the 1873 Kaitei ritsuryō remained on the books only until 1882 when a new penal code modeled after Napoleonic law, which had no statutes against same-sex eroticism, went into effect. Accompanying each of these changes was a round of discussions about the nature of same-sex desire and the relationship between personal behavior and the nation. After the sodomy statute disappeared from the books in 1882, it seems to have become less of a salient issue in legal circles. In subsequent decades however, psychological medicine, sexology, and education all became increasingly concerned with “same-sex love” and discussed it at great length.

The uneven proliferation of these different strains of discourse about male-male desire means that at about any given moment during the Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa periods, there existed multiple ways of talking about it. Although certain conceptual models dominated at various times and in different forums, people living in the same age might well entertain different views about male-male desire. To make matters more complex, even those who participated in the same organizations and argued at the same tables about male-male desire might ultimately come to dissimilar conclusions about it. As a result, when examining the literature of early twentieth-century Japan, one cannot help but notice differences in the conceptual frameworks and language that various authors use to represent male-male desire.

The Textually Specific Approach to Male-Male Desire in Literature

In her provocative introduction to Epistemology of the Closet, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out the dangers inherent in social constructionist histories of sexuality that point to a specific time period or date as a turning point in the history of understandings of same-sex desire. Sedgwick argues that one effect of such studies is that they present an implied contrast between a falsely homogenizing understanding of a construct of same-sex desire as “we know it today” and an opaque past that loses its grainy historicity and internal contradictions. Such projects tend to...

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13 Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 147. It is tempting to assume that the law arose from concern about making Japan more “civilized.” As Pflugfelder notes, there was a significant degree of anxiety about looking “civilized” in Japan, and this resulted in increasingly zealous prohibitions against public nudity, sale of erotic woodblock prints, and so on, but Article 266 of the Kaitei ritsuryō was not a direct product of this. In formulating this part of the legal code, the Japanese drew on contemporary Qing-dynasty Chinese and pre-Napoleonic French law. See Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 171-72 and Furukawa, “The Changing Nature of Sexuality”: 109-10.
re-naturalize and reify notions of same-sex desire, while eliding the conceptual messiness and contradictions that are actually found within any given period, either past or present.\textsuperscript{14} The greatest danger of such studies is that readers will begin to assume that ideas used to understand same-sex desire represent “a coherent definitional field rather than a space of overlapping, contradictory, and conflictual definitional forces.”\textsuperscript{15} She argues that when various constructs relating to sexuality come into contact, they do not simply replace one another. Instead, earlier constructs rear up again and infiltrate later ones, producing instability and even contradiction with the latter. Only rarely, she hints, are categorical notions of same-sex desire unified or coherent.

In analyzing several works of literature produced in late nineteenth-century Europe and America, Sedgwick shows that the images of same-sex desire in them are not structured by one model superceding another and then dying away. Instead, the images are structured by “the relations enabled by the unrationalized coexistence of different models during the times they do coexist.”\textsuperscript{16}

Rather than mapping the larger, overarching, shifting contours of concepts related to same-sex desire, Sedgwick concentrates her attention on a handful of key texts. In doing so, she dissociates them from overarching historical narratives about the history of sexuality and shows that the texts represent a performative space in which individual authors create and recreate ideas about desire between men. Her analyses reveal that each author toys with a complicated and interrelated set of concepts. (She discusses most of these concepts in terms of binary oppositions, for instance, knowledge / ignorance, natural / unnatural, urbane / provincial, innocence / initiation, man / boy, Greek / Christian, and so on.) By focusing on the picture presented by each text, she shows that the terms used to represent male-male desire in literature are sufficiently complex that they are irreducible to one or another of the large, macroscopic schema described by historians. The inescapable conclusion is that images of male-male desire constructed by individual authors have to do as much – if not more – to do with other literary and thematic concerns shaping the texts than with the large, overarching concepts of male-male desire circulating in society.

Sedgwick problematizes the historical, macroscopic approach to sexuality by insisting on the


\textsuperscript{15} Sedgwick, \textit{Epistemology of the Closet}, 45.

\textsuperscript{16} Sedgwick, \textit{Epistemology of the Closet}, 47.
individual specificity of texts and challenging readers not to gloss over the minute granulations of a text that produce its meaning.

When sketching the contours of the conceptual models used to represent male-male desire in modern Japan, Pflugfelder hints that discursive models were never completely uniform and homogeneous, even within a single realm. For instance, he points out that within medicine, there was disagreement among Japanese psychologists and sexologists about whether it was possible to use medical means, such as hypnosis or other forms of therapy, to “straighten out” people with a “congenital” preference for members of the same sex. The different responses to this issue reveal varying attitudes about how deeply lodged sexual preference was in the psychology of the patient and how malleable sexual orientation really is. Pflugfelder also points out that the different modes of representing male-male desire were not entirely independent. Certain writers may move back and forth between discursive realms, drawing on various models found in each to develop their own strategies for making male-male desire comprehensible. These discrepancies sometimes manifest themselves at various points in a writer’s career, or even within the same literary work, as literary historian Jim Reichert has noted in a recent critique of Pflugfelder’s work.17 Edogawa Ranpo’s oeuvre provides a case-in-point. Ranpo was profoundly interested in finding out about male-male desire, and so he purchased a wide variety of texts that touch on the subject – a selection that ranges from the Greek classics to the works of Freud. As the final three chapters of this dissertation shows, at different points, Ranpo’s work draws upon the range of ideas presented in these various texts. Even within a single text, one sometimes finds discordant images of male-male desire. Kotō no oni (The Demon of the Lonely Isle), the only long novel Ranpo wrote that deals extensively with male-male love, is not much longer than two hundred pages, but it presents profoundly dissonant images of male-male love. At times, the novel represents male-male love as deviant, whereas at others, it shows it as closely akin to homosocial brotherhood. It is here that Sedgwick’s argument has applicability to Japanese studies: when one tries to locate commonalities in representations of same-sex desire across various works or when one tries to pigeonhole a particular author as presenting a specific formulation of desire, there is the danger of losing sight of the subtle disagreements and grainy inconsistencies present within the works in question.

Both the macroscopic approach to the history of male-male desire and the microscopic approach to individual texts are two important means of exploring representations of male-male desire across various works or when one tries to pigeonhole a particular author as presenting a specific formulation of desire, there is the danger of losing sight of the subtle disagreements and grainy inconsistencies present within the works in question.

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desire in Japanese literature and history. On one hand, it is certainly important to think about themes that are repeated in various texts about male-male desire. Studies that lay out coherent narratives and trace the development of ideas across texts do the important work of uncovering the historicity of those ideas. On the other hand, it is equally important to examine key foundational texts that presented the public with influential images of male-male love and eroticism. It is this kind of close reading in which one finds the inconsistencies, dissonance, and conceptual mixing and matching that is often glossed over by studies that paint the history of male-male desire in broad brushstrokes.

**Scope of this Dissertation**

This dissertation takes the latter, textually specific approach. My purpose is to look at the ways that two writers living in Japan in the early part of the twentieth century, a period of multiple, often conflicting notions about sexual desire, described male-male desire – that is, both amorous and overtly erotic desire – in their own writing. Although I believe that wider, macroscopic studies of images of male-male desire within particular time periods, social movements, or certain corners of the publishing world are certainly valuable, they tend to pay little attention to the fine details of the texts, even though the texts serve as the base on which their studies are built. My goal is not to supplant or overturn larger studies on the history of notions of male-male desire, such as those by Pflugfelder or Furukawa Makoto, but to supplement them by providing close examinations of a handful of key works that circulated widely at the time. In reading dozens of novels, poems, and short stories of the Taishō and early Shōwa periods that deal with various facets of male-male desire, I have repeatedly noticed the ways that authors at the time drew upon various literary styles, historical formulations of desire, and various social ideologies to create depictions of desire that are not consistent from work to work. When one examines the work of individual authors in detail, this conceptual hybridity and representational dissonance becomes especially apparent.

In the works I examine in this dissertation, the hybrid representations of male-male desire are not reducible to the sum of their component parts. Quite the contrary. Both the authors

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18 David Halperin notes that the tensions between interpretative emphases on continuity and discontinuity “reflect not only the high political stakes in any contemporary project that involves producing representations of homosexuality but also the irreducible definitional uncertainty about what homosexuality itself really is.” David Halperin, *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) 105.
examined in this dissertation, Murayama Kaita (1896-1919) and Edogawa Ranpo, develop modes of describing male-male desire that are subtly different from those of the authors and movements that inspired them. For instance, this dissertation shows that both Kaita and Ranpo were profoundly interested in Greek and pre-modern culture because they both cultures placed a premium on the aesthetic appeal of beautiful young men (*bishōnen*) and produced numerous texts about erotic or amorous desire between men. Still, the expressions of male-male desire in Kaita and Ranpo’s writing are not mere, passive reflections of kinds of expressions of desire that one might find in classical texts. This dissertation shows that both authors possessed distinct thematic interests and individual literary styles that also shaped their writing. While one might trace hints of the authors’ interests in Greek or pre-modern Japanese texts in the writing of each author, these interests are just two of several elements fused into a new whole.

The two figures this dissertation examines are the poet, painter, and short story author Murayama Kaita and the detective novelist Edogawa Ranpo. These two authors produced works that dealt extensively with sexual desire and became bestsellers in the Taishō and Shōwa periods. Contemporary publishing companies emphasized the element of “unusual,” even “perverse,” erotic desire in their work, helping them earn a reputation as having treated the theme with unusual candor. For instance, the publisher Ars, which released the *Kaita no utaeru (Songs of Kaita)*, the first volume of Kaita’s work to appear in 1920, ran a series of advertisements for the book in influential newspapers and literary magazines. In them, one finds the following summary of Kaita’s work.

This book is a posthumous collection of the poetry, reflections, and other writing of Murayama Kaita, a member of the Nihon bijutsuin (Japan Art Institute) who, while endowed with abundant natural talent, met a tragic death at the young age of twenty-four. He charged into the palace of art with extreme valor. He loved like a flame. He was constantly tortured by unusual sexual desires. He drank often, drew well, and composed poetry frequently. Leaving behind numerous superb works for the world to see, he rushed to his end, the curtain hurriedly falling on this short life of genius. Whoever reads this book, will sense his strength and directness; readers will be enchanted by the magical, mysterious beauty of his passionate thought and will be unable to hold back their cries of wonder.

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19 He was twenty-four by the old Japanese system of counting ages, twenty-two by the current system inherited from the West.

20 *Kaita no utaeru* by Murayama Kaita, advertisement, *Yomiuri shinbun*, 8 Oct 1920, Morning edition: 1. This advertisement also included laudatory passages about Kaita’s work from a number of important writers: the novelist and utopian critic Arishima Takeo (1878-1923), Takamura Kōtarō, writers Yosano Tekkan (1873-1935) and his wife Yosano Akiko (1878-1942), short story writer and poet Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), novelist Murō Saisei (1889-1962), and writer Taketomo Sofū (1891-1954). The ads appeared in slightly variant forms in the *Yomiuri shinbun* (*Yomiuri Newspaper*), Jul 10, 1920, Oct 8, 1920 and Jan 5, 1921; *Tōkyō hibi shinbun* (*Tokyo Daily Newspaper*) July 15, 1920; *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* (*Tokyo Asahi Newspaper*), Nov 22, 1920; *Kokumin shinbun* (*The Citizen’s Newspaper*), July 26, 1920;
This earliest of evaluations already identifies “unusual sexual desire” (ijō na seiyoku) as one of the salient characteristics of Kaita’s life and work. A review from August of 1920 by one of Kaita’s earliest fans, the novelist and utopian writer Arishima Takeo (1878-1923), also notes the important role of sexual desire in Kaita’s writing, calling Kaita a “centaur” whose “limbs were of dissipated Dionysian lust.”21 Partly as a result of such reviews, interest in Kaita and his writing grew to the point that the publisher Ars produced a second volume of his writing in 1921 and a book of photographic reproductions of his paintings in 1922. These three volumes quickly went through multiple printings and earned a significant following for the deceased painter-poet that lasted through the Taishō and early Shōwa periods.22 Although various writers remained interested in Kaita for different reasons, Kaita’s candor about his amorous feelings for other boys appears to have been one reason that he remained within the popular imagination. In 1926, the

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21 Arishima Takeo, Rev. of Kaita no utaeru, by Murayama Kaita, ed. Yamazaki Shōzō, Arishima Takeo zenshū, vol. 8 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1980) 407. After writing this review, Arishima purchased one of Kaita’s most important artistic works, the watercolor Kanna to shōjo (Girl with Cannas), for the large sum of one hundred yen. Arishima was so taken with this work that he hung it on the wall of his parlor where guests could see it. See Kure Shigeichi, Hana to fukurō (Tokyo: Yōshobō, 1947) 78. Also, in 1922, Arishima wrote a play called Domomata no shi (The Death of Domomata) about the final days of a young, passionate artist strongly resembling Kaita, and though Arishima does not use Kaita’s name to identify him, several characters in the play recite several of Kaita’s poems, leaving little doubt as to who inspired the play. Arishima Takeo, “Domomata no shi,” Arishima Takeo zenshū, vol. 5, (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1980) 361-86.

22 Personal accounts from the early Shōwa period suggest the influence that Kaita’s work had over the imagination of certain aspiring poets. Kusano Shinpei (1901-1988), one of the best known poets of the postwar period, writes in the introduction to his biography of Kaita that the shock of encountering Kaita’s dramatic poetry for the first time was one of the major factors encouraging him to pursue a career as a writer. Over the years, Kusano would publish a fictionalized treatment of Kaita’s death, a biography of Kaita, and several other impressionistic essays about the young writer. See Kusano Shinpei, Murayama Kaita (Tokyo: Nichidō shuppanbu, 1976); reprinted in Kusano Shinpei, Waga Kaita, Kusano Shinpei zenshū, vol. 6 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1981) 327-564; Kusano Shinpei, “Murayama Kaita no shi,” Shinchō 53.2 (Feb 1956): 216-25; Kusano Shinpei, “Murayama Kaita oboegaki,” Kusano Shinpei zenshū, vol. 5, 92-105; Kusano Shinpei, “Murayama Kaita,” Watashi no naka no ryūsei gun, Kusano Shinpei zenshū, vol. 11, 162-68. On Kusano’s interest in Kaita, see Irisawa Yasuo, “Kaita to Shinpei,” Yuriika 31.7 (Jun 1999): 128-29.

writer Itō Ken (1895-1945) mentions Kaita’s work in a 1926 list of Taishō-period works about “perverse psychology” (hentai shinri), and in 1934, Ranpo wrote an important article about expressions of male-male desire in Kaita’s work, which he admired greatly.23

Although Kaita’s work reached a large audience, Ranpo’s work circulated even more widely. After his literary debut in 1923, Ranpo quickly became one of the most popular and widely read detective writers of early twentieth century Japan, and during the 1920s and 1930s, his novels were serialized in virtually every important periodical of popular literature. In the late 1920s, the Japanese publishing industry began publishing numerous multi-volume sets of inexpensive books on various themes. Because of the vast popularity of Ranpo’s work, multi-volume collections of detective fiction and popular literature almost inevitably included his stories. Many, in fact, contained one or more volumes dedicated specifically to his work.24 In 1931 and 1932, the publisher Heibonsha published the first edition of Ranpo’s complete works of fiction in thirteen volumes. Within three years, they released a second twelve-volume set of his work.25 Shinchōsha, another of Japan’s largest publishers, quickly followed suit with a ten-volume collection.26 One reason Ranpo’s work appealed to such a broad audience was his willingness to treat various aspects of sexual desire, including male-male eroticism, which medical practitioners and sexologists had started describing as “perverse” (hentai). Publishers often emphasized the “astonishing” and even “perverse” content of his writing to sell copies of his work. For example, advertisements for Kotō no oni, Ranpo’s longest work to deal with male-

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23 Itō Ken, Hentai sakka shi (Tokyo: Bungei shiryō kenkyūkai, 1926) 19. It is clear that Itō Ken did not compile his list with the intent to criticize these works because his own work appears in the same list. Itō’s book is one product of the Taishō and early Shōwa-period fascination with “abnormal psychology” (hentai shinri) and was part of a multi-volume series called Hentai jū-ni shi (Twelve Perverse Histories). This series examined various topics with the purpose of uncovering interesting facts and unusual stories to surprise and fascinate readers. As Pflugfelder notes, the label “perverse” in popular parlance “did not always carry the same degree of stigma that it did in the medical context that gave it birth.” Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 287.


male love, often describe the content of the novel as “shocking” in order to entice readers. When the publisher Kaizōsha released Kotō no oni in book form, they ran a series of advertisements in the Tokyo edition of the Asahi shinbun (Asahi Newspaper), which declared the work to be “the shocking masterpiece of Edogawa Ranpo, Japan’s answer to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.” Specifically, it points to “the extreme perversion (kyokudo no hentai) and the brilliant spectacle of sick love (byōteki na aijō)” in the story.27 Other advertisements describe the presence of male-male love in less sensational terms, but still draw attention to it as a means of capturing the attention of curious readers. In the advertising blurb about Kotō no oni written for the first edition of Ranpo’s complete works published in 1931 and 1932, Ranpo’s friend and fellow detective writer Yokomizo Seishi (1902-1981) wrote, “the love for the same sex, which had been a long-standing desire of the author (sakka no hisashiki ganbō de atta dōseiai), had finally been incorporated into this novel.”28 An insert to another multi-volume collection of Ranpo’s works published in 1938 and 1939 emphasizes in bold-face type that Kotō no oni is “a work in which the author dealt with the topic of same-sex love.”29 The reputation that Ranpo earned for his treatment of male-male desire in Kotō no oni grew in subsequent years as he published numerous essays about the subject in various magazines. Many originally appeared in smaller magazines, such as the newly formed literary journal Buntai (Literary Style) or Seishin bunseki (Psychoanalysis), the journal of the Tokyo-based Seishin bunseki kenkyūkai, but a number appeared in important journals, such as the national monthly Bunrei bunjū (Literary Arts Spring and Autumn), the popular fiction monthly Taishū bunrei (Popular Arts and Letters), and the youth-oriented monthly Shin seinen (New Youth). Partly because of tightening censorship after the Japanese invaded China in 1937, Ranpo did not reprint these essays during the late 1930s or early 1940s. They would have to wait until 1947, two years after the end of World War II, when Ranpo republished them in the widely reprinted collection Gen’ei no jōshu (Lord of the Castle of Illusion).

27 Ranpo includes three variants of this advertisement in his personal scrapbook, which has been reprinted as Edogawa Ranpo, Harimaze nenpu (Tokyo: Tōkyō sōgensha, 2001) 200.

28 Edogawa Ranpo, Harimaze nenpu, 235.

29 Edogawa Ranpo, Harimaze nenpu, 359.
Schoolboy Love

One of the reasons for focusing on the writing of Kaita and Ranpo is that their representations of male-male desire circulated especially widely in Taishō- and early Shōwa-period Japan. A second reason is that these two writers offer a perspective on amorous and erotic desire between schoolboys that differs significantly from the representations of schoolboy desire in fiction and newspaper articles from the late Meiji period. When Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) published his famous semi-parodic imitation of a naturalist novel *Wita sekusuarisu (Vita Sexualis)* in the late Meiji period, he included a portrait of a school dormitory divided between boys that ascribed to two different definitions of masculinity: that of the “hard faction” (*kōha*) and that of the “softie faction” (*nanpa*). These two forms of masculinity involved significantly different behavior, speech, manner, clothing, and sexual choices. The novel describes the boys of the “hard faction” as gruff, coarsely dressed, dismissive of women, and professing a marked sexual preference for men, whereas the “softies” dress in a dandyesque fashion and prefer the opposite sex. (The two factions were not necessarily exclusive; in fact, the novel includes a character that makes a rapid transition from the company of the “hard faction” to the “softies.”) Ōgai’s novel describes adolescents of the “hard faction” using their status as upperclassmen to take advantage of *bishōnen* (attractive younger boys) and force them into a sexual relationship. Because a strictly hierarchical code of conduct governed virtually every aspect of dormitory life, young men confronted by intimidating upperclassmen had often had difficulty protesting. Sometimes the sexual advances of “hard-faction” boys took on more aggressive forms. As historian Donald Roden notes, by the turn of the twentieth century, certain dormitories were the setting for “storms” (*sutōmu*), a “nightly ordeal of violence and sometimes homosexual predation” in which

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upperclassmen might well force themselves onto younger boys whose social position as inferior meant a compromised ability to resist.32

During the late Meiji and Taishō periods, newspapers used increased media coverage of student affairs and violence among schoolboys to warn the public about the dangers of the brand of masculinity espoused by the “hard factions” within Japanese schools. Similar concerns were visible in reforms enacted by school administrators, such as the Christian, American-educated Nitobe Inazō (1862-1933), who worked to root out the aggressive and predatory culture of the “hard faction” in Daiichi kōtō gakkō (Tokyo First Higher School), the prestigious school that served as the gateway to Tōkyō teikoku daigaku (Tokyo Imperial University). Still, the “hard-faction” masculinity that educators fought was not yet gone from schoolboy culture by the time Ranpo and Kaita entered college preparatory school in 1907 and 1909 respectively. An essay from 1926 shows that the “hard-faction” adversity to weakness and femininity was alive and well in Ranpo’s school in Nagoya, and anything smacking of feminine softness was treated with scorn (16: 14-19). In the midst of this culture of gruff masculinity, Ranpo was often teased because he was a bishōnen with unusually soft features. At the same time, however, he received a number of love letters from classmates who professed their affection for him and urged him to become their boyfriend. He eventually formed a bond of passionate friendship with another bishōnen. This relationship was relatively egalitarian and manifested none of the predatory sexuality described in other accounts of Meiji dormitories. Likewise, Kaita fell in love with another younger schoolmate, and much of his early poetry is dedicated to describing the boy’s beauty.

The visions of amorous schoolboy desire described by Kaita and Ranpo stand in stark contrast to the codified, age-graded, “hard-faction” pursuit of male-male sexuality described in Ōgai’s novel and in many Meiji treatments of schoolboy life. Kaita and Ranpo are among the earliest of a new generation of authors whose writing describes amorous schoolboy relationships based on an appreciation of bishōnen beauty and shared interests, not on the age-graded hierarchical relationships of “hard-faction” boys in the Meiji period or – going back even further – the nenja / wakashū pattern of male-male sexuality described so often in Edo texts. This new generation of authors included Inagaki Taruho (1900-1977), Yamazaki Toshio, Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972), Hori Tatsuo (1904-1953), and Tachibana Sotō (1894-1959).33 In the

32 Donald Roden, Schooldays in Imperial Japan, 141.

writing of certain authors, such as Inagaki Taruho or Yamazaki Toshio, the sentimental depiction of egalitarian love between boys is due in part to the discursive shift in the early twentieth century that critic Isoda Kōichi has called the “revolution of emotion” (kanjō kakumei). Isoda notes that throughout the first few decades of the century, one finds elaborate expressions of personal and intimate feeling in a wide variety of authors ranging from the naturalist writer Mushanokoji Saneatsu (1885-1976) to the pseudo-symbolist, aesthetically inclined poet Kitahara Hakushū (1885-1942). These expressions of emotion, which often partake of the erotic, challenged the rigid Confucian notions of public morality seen in the official discourse of the late Meiji period and celebrated the individual spirit in ways that were often considered shocking and self-indulgent at the time. Kaita was certainly part of this revolution. Borrowing the highly aestheticized and personal language of Kitahara Hakushū, he celebrated the aesthetic appeal of bishōnen, including the attractive younger classmate for whom he entertained amorous feelings. Kaita’s personal writings show that he thought of himself as representing the vanguard of a new “aesthetic” breed of writer and artist that would celebrate intense personal emotion. For Kaita, questions of art and poetry were never far from an appreciation of boyish beauty, and in fact, Kaita saw his heightened sensitivity to male beauty as an important part of his artistic quest to develop the seed of genius he believed to exist in himself.

Coincidentally, in 1921, the same year the second volume of Kaita’s posthumous works was published, the novelist Ozaki Shirō (1898-1964) published an article called “Bishōnen no kenkyū” (“Research on bishōnen”) in the monthly magazine Kaihō (Liberation). Ozaki notes that with the rise of the notion of “perverse sexual desire” (hentai seiyoku), which described “same-sex love” as an inevitable consequence of deeply implanted instinct, ideas about male-male love and “way of the bishōnen” (bishōnendō) had undergone significant modification. Even though the brotherly bonds associated with Edo-period shudō had died out, he envisioned a new future in the artistic and literary world for the appreciation of bishōnen beauty: “I believe that as our artistic lives as Japanese gradually grow fuller and approach completion, a new practice of the

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34 Isoda Kōichi, Kindai no kanjō kakumei (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1987).
The worship of the bishōnen must arise in response to our deeply seated desires.”\textsuperscript{35} Kaita’s poems, with their disassociation from Edo- and Meiji-period codifications of desire, their idealizing worship of boyish beauty, and their seemingly innocent resistance to the tendency of sexologists to treat male-male love as pathological and deep-rooted, represent a development in the “worship of the beautiful youth” (bishōnen sūhai) that Ozaki envisioned. Although many of Ranpo’s stories feature dashing and attractive youths, Ranpo was less obvious about his “worship of the beautiful youth” than Kaita. Still, when writing as an adult about his own boyhood crushes on other schoolboys, he also did so in terms that emphasize the innocent, aesthetic side to these emotions, as if attempting to draw an implicit distinction between the crushes he felt and the erotic behavior that sexologists condemned. In other words, his essayistic treatments of schoolboy love also reflect a longing shared by Ozaki, who hoped for a new, non-pathologizing means for expressing appreciation of bishōnen beauty.

The Fad for Ero, Guro, Nansensu

A third important reason for examining Kaita and Ranpo side-by-side in this study is their important position vis-à-vis the social obsession in Japan with eroticism and the grotesque – a fad that resulted in a ready market for works dealing with marginalized forms of sexual desire, including male-male eroticism. After writing his schoolboy paeans to boyish beauty, Kaita tried his hand at writing mystery-adventure stories, in which he brought together his interests in male-male desire, crime, and decadence. In the process, he produced several stories tinged with the particular combination of sexual desire and the uncanny that would recur frequently in literature written in response to the popular obsession with eroticism and the grotesque that swept Japan during the 1920s and 1930s.\textsuperscript{36} In an article about Kaita from 1934, Ranpo points out that he was particularly taken with Kaita’s creepy mystery stories when he read them as a student in mid-


\textsuperscript{36} Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886-1965) was another author who anticipated the fad for eroticism and the grotesque in the 1920s and 1930s. Suzuki Sadami mentions Tanizaki and Kaita as two of several Taishō-period authors who helped set the stage for the fad for eroticism and the grotesque by helping produce “the contours of an aesthetics of the perverse and grotesque, an aesthetics that defamiliarizes objects by stripping them of context and coherence.” Suzuki Sadami, “Eroticism, Grotesquerie, and Nonsense in Taishō Japan: Tanizaki’s Response to Modern and Contemporary Culture,” A Tanizaki Feast: The International Symposium in Venice, ed. Adriana Boscaro and Anthony Hood Chambers, Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies 24 (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1998) 46.
1910s. Ranpo’s interest is particularly evident in a number of his works from the 1920s and 1930s that unabashedly borrow motifs and plot twists from his Taishō-period predecessor. Most importantly, the particular combination of eroticism and grotesque that appeared in Kaita’s stories recurs frequently in Ranpo’s stories of crime, murder, and erotic desire. Kaita’s stories, in other words, represent a starting point for the interest in eroticism and the world of the bizarre that recurs in Ranpo’s novels.

The terms ero, guro and ero, guro, nansensu, which are often used to describe Ranpo’s novels and other products of the culture of the 1920s and 1930s, are combinations of the roots of the English terms “erotic,” “grotesque,” and “nonsensical.” As critic Kida Jun’ichirō has pointed out, the three component words circulated independently for some time. It was not until relatively late in the development of the fad that they were pulled together into the set phrases ero, guro and ero, guro, nansensu. Even so, the terms seem to have had a particularly close relationship to one another at least as early as the 1930s. In 1932, the magazine Fujin kōron (Ladies’ Review) published a glossary of new, fashionable “modern” terms as a supplement to their magazine. This mini-dictionary explains that the word guro “signifies the bizarre (kaiki) and the unsettling (kimi no warui), and it is also used to refer to showy displays of eroticism that are frank to the point of being ugly (minikui bakari akudoi rokotsu na ero).” About the same time, Satō Giryō (1878-1951), the founder of the publisher Shinchōsha, compiled a collection of photographs that begins with three thematic sections labeled “erochiku,” “gurotesuku,” and “nansensu.” Already, the constellation of eroticism, the grotesque, and the nonsensical had started coalescing in the popular consciousness. The phrase ero, guro, nansensu sometimes

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37 Ranpo notes in an essay published in the magazine Aka to kuro (Red and Black) in 1946 that his detective novels were often considered representative of the era of “ero, guro” sensibility (17: 147). For a discussion of some of the many of other cultural phemonena covered by this term, see Ōuchi Tsutomu, “Ero guro nansensu,” Fashizumu e no michi, Nihon no rekishi 24 (Tokyo: Chūō kōron, 1967) 451-69 and Ranpo no sekai: Shōwa ero, guro, nansensu. Spec. issue of Bessatsu Taiyō 88 (Wi 1994).

38 Kida Jun’ichirō, “Toshi no yami to meikyū kankaku: Ero guro nansensu jidai to Edogawa Ranpo,” Bessatsu taimō 88 (Wi 1994): 13-14. Also see Suzuki Sadami, “Ero guro nansensu no keifu,” Bessatsu taimō 88 (Wi 1994): 8-13. Of course, these three elements operate to different degrees in different works. Some works may emphasize the grotesque, whereas some tend to be more erotic in nature. To maintain a sense that these were individual elements operating with some degree of independence within a larger cultural ethos, I use commas rather than hyphens between the component parts of the phrase ero, guro, nansensu. (In Japanese, the phrase is usually written with dots to distinguish the different components: エロ・グロ・ナンセンス.)

39 Fujin hisshū modango jiten, spec. supplement to Fujin kōron 17.1 (Jan 1932) 33.

appeared in derogatory contexts to mean something like “the nonsense of the erotic and grotesque,” but at other times, it appeared in contexts that seem to celebrate the phenomena being described. In a newspaper interview conducted in 1930, Ranpo mentioned that words *ero* and *guro* had in recent years come to mean something quite different than the original meanings of the words: “Far from meaning something unpleasant, as in the original meaning of the words ‘grotesque’ or ‘erotic,’ they represent something rather interesting…”

What links the erotic, the grotesque, and the nonsensical is a sense that each represents the seamy and shadowy forces brewing in the undercurrents of society – forces not constrained by the ethical and civil codes of civilized society. In other words, the fad for *ero, guro, nansensu* represented a fascination with those primal, idian, irrational, erotic and thanatotic urges ordinarily suppressed by the logical, civilizing superego of social ethics. As Pflugfelder explains,

> The celebration of the “erotic” (*ero*) in its myriad forms constituted a rejection of the Meiji dictum that sexuality was unsuited for public display or representation unless it conformed to the narrow standards of “civilized morality.” The elevation of the “grotesque” (*guro*) betrayed a similar disregard for prevailing esthetic codes, with their focus on traditional canons of beauty and concealment of the seamer sides of existence. Finally, the valorization of the “nonsensical” (*nansensu*) signaled a discontent with the constraining nature of received moral and epistemological certitudes.

When applied to literature, the terms *ero, guro* and *ero, guro, nansensu* are used to describe a wide range of writing that depicts the sexual, bizarre, ridiculous, irrational, frivolous, Dadaist, futurist, or dandyesque. In its more erotic manifestations, *ero, guro, nansensu* writing frequently describes forms of sexual desire that Japanese society had in recent decades started to consider aberrant and perverse, such as sadomasochism, fetishism, male-male homoeroticism, female-female homoeroticism, and nymphomania. At the same time that medical science and sexology identified and classified these forms of desire, it also imbued them with an element of danger or social unacceptability, thereby elevating their status as curiosities. By identifying and labeling these practices as depraved or deviant, medical psychology distanced them from its version of “normality” and “civilization.” In this way, they gave certain forms of sexuality an electrical

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41 “Shi ni e to ‘Shi no shima’: Kaiki na sōshokuhin ni kakkomarete (Edogawa Ranpo hen),” *Hōchi shinbun*, 26 Nov 1930: 6, reprinted in *Edogawa Ranpo*, *Hariemaze nenpu*, 220. Ranpo states that the new, fashionable use of the words *ero* and *guro* is rather unpleasant, and he comments that these words trivialize the ideas they originally expressed. Likewise, in an article published in 1946, Ranpo looks back on the fad for eroticism and the grotesque during the prewar period, noting that at the time, the words *ero* and *guro* were not used in to refer to the a titillating sense of “sensuality” and the “gruesome,” thus distorting their traditional meaning (17: 147). He argues that these characteristics are present in all literature but manifest themselves to different degrees in different works.

charge that would shock readers who encountered them in texts by popular writers. Pflugfelder notes that one element of the culture of *ero, guro, nansensu* was a “tacit alliance” between the medico-scientific understanding of sexual phenomena and consumer capitalism, which put certain forms of sexual desire “on display less for scientific reasons than because of their profit-generating possibilities.” While it is true that the forms of that the allegedly perverse forms of desire catalogued by doctors and sexologists feature prominently in *ero, guro, nansensu* literature, a close examination of these works, including those of Kaita and Ranpo, reveals that the texts do not merely passively reflect the language and thinking of medical psychology. As this dissertation shows, other generic, thematic, and personal factors were busily at work shaping the ways that writers at this time wrote about male-male desire.

**Biographical Considerations**

Although Kaita and Ranpo wrote extensively about amorous and erotic desire between men, the purpose of this dissertation is not to assert that Kaita and Ranpo were necessarily “gay authors” in the sense that they expressed an exclusive interested in men. In fact, both Kaita and Ranpo had relationships with women beginning in their late teenage years or early twenties. While in college preparatory school in Kyoto, Kaita wrote a great deal about the attractive qualities of other boys, and as an art student in Tokyo, he developed feelings for his classmate Yanase Masamu (1900-1945), who later became a key figure in the proletarian art movement; however, at about age seventeen, Kaita began experiencing passionate crushes on women, including a model at the art institute where he studied. Much of his later writing describes his powerful desire for women, his failed attempts to have meaningful relationships with them, and his tendency to turn to alcohol and even prostitutes to soothe the erotic desire burning within him.44

Like Kaita, Ranpo developed a passionate friendship with another boy in grade school, and in 1926, he wrote that his relationship with this schoolmate was his only experience with true love. In late 1919, however, Ranpo married a woman he had met while working in the Kansai


region, and in 1921, they had their one and only child. Like many married couples at the time, Ranpo and his wife seem to have remained comfortable companions over the years, but they do not appear to have shared much intimacy. In the late 1920s, Ranpo devoted himself to finding books and other bibliographic sources having to do with male-male desire, and he began spending long evenings away from home wandering through the city, especially Asakusa Park, a spot known for cruising and male hustlers. Ranpo’s own writings emphasize that his interest in male-male desire was not overtly sexual, and he asserts that he did not act on his interest. Still, his fascination with the life and writings of the British essayist and poet John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) – another married man who felt erotic desire for men – hints that Ranpo may have turned to Symonds’ example to see how to handle his own interests. Several friends have written that Ranpo was familiar with the gay bars in Shinjuku and other places in Tokyo during his later years, and he sometimes appeared at underground events held for gay people in private homes.\textsuperscript{45} Even now, one hears rumors in the Japanese literary world about affairs that Ranpo allegedly had with men.\textsuperscript{46}

In any case, the primary focus of this dissertation is not what Kaita and Ranpo may or may not have done in bed, but the ways in which they wrote about male-male desire in their works. Because both wrote autobiographical works about their schoolboy infatuations, biographical considerations are germane to a certain point. Many of Kaita’s poems are dedicated specifically to the younger classmate with whom he was in love, and not surprisingly, a number

\textsuperscript{45} The author Ono Kōji (1910- ) has written an account of going with Ranpo to a gay bar in Shinjuku, where Ranpo was a frequent customer. Ono states that there, Ranpo sat a young man in drag on his lap, and after a few minutes, the drag queen gave Ranpo’s forehead a kiss. With a comment about what a fun place that was, Ranpo suggested that they continue barhopping and try out another gay bar. Ono Kōji, \textit{Warera wa Ranpo tanteidan} (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1995) 152-54. Likewise, the author Yamamura Masao (1931-1999) recalls Ranpo inviting him and the mystery writer Ishihara Shintarō (1932-) to a gay bar in the Ginza. Yoshimizo Seishi, Mizutani Jun, Shima Kazuo, \textit{et al.}, “Nanshoku made jikken shita jōshikinin,” \textit{Uwasa} 1.2 (Sep 1971): 26. Heiji Tai, “Edogawa Ranpo to ‘Kare’,” \textit{Fuzoku kitan} (May 1971): 201-02 quotes a handful of accounts by various acquaintances of Ranpo about his visits to gay bars and other events. I thank Mark McClelland for providing a copy of Heiji’s article.

\textsuperscript{46} Despite his enormous stature in the world of popular Japanese literature, surprisingly, no full-length biography of him has yet been written. Almost all studies of Ranpo rely primarily on his own autobiographical writings, which treat the subject of his sexual desires gingerly. I have heard rumors from at least two prominent figures in the Japanese literary world about affairs that Ranpo allegedly had with men in the postwar period, but I have been unable to confirm them independently. The best autobiographical sources on Ranpo are his scrapbook, \textit{Harimaze nenpu}, and his memoirs, \textit{Tantei shōsetsu yon-jī-nen} (Forty Years of Detective Fiction). Other sources of biographical information about Ranpo include Matsumura Tami, \textit{Ranpo ojisan: Edogawa Ranpo ron} (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 1992); \textit{Edogawa Ranpo}, Shin bungei dokuhon (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsa, 1992); Suzuki Sadami and Matsuyama Iwao, eds., \textit{Edogawa Ranpo}, Shinchō Nihon bungaku arubamu 41 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1993).
of elements within his texts can be understood through knowing the nature of that relationship. Also, non-fictional writings, such as Kaita’s diary and personal letters, form an important percentage of his relatively small oeuvre, and so the critic would be remiss in ignoring them. Ranpo’s works, however, tend to be less autobiographical. Apart from a handful of essays about his childhood, the bulk of his writing on male-male love is not personal in nature. Still, Ranpo’s impressive scrapbook and memoirs give useful hints for the reasons why certain topics, themes, or modes of depiction appear in his fiction and essays, so this dissertation frequently draws upon his memoirs and personal essays to gain a fuller understanding of his texts. In short, the primary mode of analysis in this dissertation is not biographical, even though biographical considerations often shed light on particular texts.

In fact, one of the arguments of this dissertation is that biographical factors do not fully explain the ways that either of these two writers describes male-male desire. I argue that in looking at expressions of male-male desire in the work of a particular author, one should also consider a host of other factors that shape the ways in which desire is described—factors that include literary stylistics, genre-related considerations, and reader expectations. In his study of representations of male-male desire in Meiji fiction, Jim Reichert comments that multiple factors shape the ways in which authors might write about the subject. He notes that various types of language (e.g. Japanese stylistics \[wabun\] vs. the stylistics derived from classical Chinese \[kanbun\]), characters (e.g. priests or warriors), plot (e.g. tales of samurai devotion or love in the pleasure quarters), and genres (e.g. tales of murderous women \[dokufūmono\] or tales of kabuki actors \[haiyūmono\]), all had characteristic conventions that significantly shaped the means by which male-male desire was described in a particular work.\(^{47}\) Although biographical considerations might be relevant, especially in cases where works themselves make explicit reference to historical events, other literary factors do as much, if not more, to determine the particular idioms in which the authors wrote. In order to trace the literary styles and modes that Kaita and Ranpo used in producing their texts, I argue that it is essential to consider the literary movements and factors that made their writing possible.

Conversely, literary, stylistic, and genre-related expectations were not the sole determinants that shaped the way that individual authors wrote about male-male desire. Just as one finds modes of representation that do not perfectly match those that circulated in the realms of medicine, jurisprudence, and so on, one frequently finds depictions of male-male desire that do

not match what one might necessarily expect in a particular genre. Reichert notes in his study of Meiji-period fiction that writings on male-male desire often crossed generic borders, and borrowed modes of representation that one might typically expect to find in genres other than the one the author was using. A similar situation holds true with the Taishō- and early Shōwa-period literature of Kaita and Ranpo. Kaita drew upon recent stylistic developments in the free-style verse (shi) while writing his own tanka, short stories, and drama. Likewise, Ranpo drew inspiration for his fiction from various sources, including classical texts, the writing of other contemporary authors, as well as medical and psychological texts. The hybrid nature of the language these two authors used often shapes the ways they wrote about desire between men.

Adolescence and the Fracture in the Spectrum of Male-Male Desire

In writing this dissertation, I have generally chosen to use the words “male-male desire” or “desire between men” instead of “homosexuality” to refer to amorous and erotic desire between men. As recent developments in gender studies have shown, the notion of “homosexuality” in the West represents a specific formulation of male-male desire with its own historical roots and culturally bound implications. To talk about the works of Kaita and Ranpo as embodying “homosexual” feelings would set into play a number of modern assumptions associated with the word. (For instance, it is commonly assumed in contemporary America that a person who experiences “homosexual” feelings is most likely a “homosexual” or, at least, a “bisexual.”) Rather than applying culturally loaded terms such as “homosexuality,” “heterosexuality,” and “bisexuality” to describe Kaita, Ranpo, and the feelings described in their works, this dissertation instead explores the language and terms that the texts themselves use to depict amorous and erotic desire between men. The goal in doing so is to better understand the ways that Kaita and Ranpo thought about and represented male-male desire within the context of their own era.

48 Reichert, Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji-Period Literature, 15.

49 As Pflugfelder writes, “To impose such categories as ‘homosexuality’ and ‘bisexuality’ upon a society or conceptual universe, whether non-European or pre-nineteenth century, in which they would not have been understood in the same sense that they are currently understood, if indeed at all, and in which behavior often followed patterns quite different from those we associate with them in our own societies, is unwittingly to hide from view the experience of those very historical subjects whom we seek to comprehend.” Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 5.

The words “male-male desire” also draw a distinction between male-male desire and female-female desire. As mentioned previously, shudō, nanshoku, and other terms used during the Edo period did not
A more important reason for using the rubric “male-male desire” over “homosexuality” is that not all of the writings of Kaita and Ranpo deal overtly with sexual desire per se. Some texts, such as Kaita’s poems inspired by his classmate, describe an intense admiration of boyish beauty and feelings of spiritual love, while others, such as Ranpo’s essays on his boyhood crushes, describe profoundly passionate friendships. While I argue that hints of erotic attraction can be found here and there throughout these texts, genital sexuality enters the picture only rarely. Instead, it is more appropriate to think of these texts as describing a particular form of male-male desire that is tangentially related to homoerotic sentiment but that does not partake of it directly.

As a growing body of scholarship has shown, the relationship between overt homoerotic and homosocial amorous desire provides a crucial key to understanding the spectrum of gender relations within any given time period or society. In her groundbreaking work Between Men on expressions of male-male desire in English literature, Sedgwick describes a “continuum of homosocial desire” that ranges from asexual homosocial desire, which consists of same-sex friendship and bonding activities that do not involve eroticism, to homosexual desire, which is overtly erotic. Sometimes, these forms of desire overlap. (In Japanese history, for example, one might point to the “brotherhood bonds” among Muromachi-period and Edo-period warriors that involved pedagogical elements as well as erotic intimacy.) In other cases, the ends of the continuum are split by a fracture arising from homophobic anxiety about male-male sexual relations. Once the continuum is fractured, homoerotic and homosocial relations appear to apply to female-female desire. It was only with the development of the concept of “same-sex love” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that Japanese started to identify male-male desire and female-female desire as related phenomena. Kaita and Ranpo rarely ever mention female-female desire. Their writing suggests that either they were not especially interested in it or they were working within a mental framework which conceived of same-sex erotic desire as a phenomenon primarily associated with men. One of the rare instances when Ranpo mentioned female-female desire comes within the round-table discussion “Dōsei no risō to genjitsu” (“The Ideals and Reality of Same-Sex Love”) conducted in 1948 with Inagaki Taruho. There, Ranpo talks at great length about desire between boys, but his only mention of female-female desire is a passing reference to the Greek poetess Sappho, whom he calls the “progenitor of same-sex love among women (josei dōseiiai).” Edogawa Ranpo and Inagaki Taruho, “Dōsei no risō to genjitsu.” Kuiin (Jan 1948); reprinted in Barazoku 228 (Jan 1992): 31.


profoundly different in character, and the introduction of sexual desire into a relationship compels people to consider the relationship in a different light. In other words, anxiety over same-sex eroticism drives people to see friendships and erotic relationships as two distinctly different phenomena.

In early twentieth century Japan, a key factor governing the split between homosocial and homoerotic desire was the notion of youth. During the early part of the twentieth century, the ways the Japanese thought about youth and adolescence underwent significant changes. In writing about the origin of children’s literature in *Origins of Modern Japanese Literature*, critic Karatani Kōjin argues that before the turn of the century, children were not viewed as qualitatively different from adults in any significant way, and the ontological notion of childhood was created only during the Meiji and Taishō periods. This notion was then made to seem “natural” through what Karatani calls an “inversion” (tentō). He explains, “What we call ‘the child’ was itself discovered through such an inversion, and it was only after this that ‘real children’ or ‘realistic children’ could be seen… the ‘child’ that we see today was discovered and constituted only recently.”51 This provocative argument does not mention, however, one of the most important factors in establishing the notion of the child, namely a tendency to desexualize the young. Despite the advances of Freudian psychology, which read erotic desire into the behavior of children, society developed a tendency to deny children their status as erotic subjects and a reluctance to treat them as sexual objects. In the ontological structure of childhood, the threshold of puberty separated childhood and sexual oblivion from adulthood.52

Boys in premodern Japan were generally treated as full-fledged adults by their early teenage years, but during the late Meiji and Taishō periods, increased levels of attendance in middle and college preparatory schools meant an increase in the perceived length of time required for social maturation. Mori Arinori (1847-1889), the Minister of Education from 1885-1889, established a system that required four years of compulsory education for all students; however in


1907, the number of years of compulsory attendance was raised to six. School attendance remained poor through the last decade of the nineteenth century because students had to pay educational fees and many families required them to work at a young age, but in 1900, the system of fees for elementary school was abolished, and by 1907, 98 percent of children were receiving six years of education. Meanwhile, the number of universities and college preparatory schools multiplied as the number of students continuing to secondary education rose. As the period of educational maturation grew, so did the perceived length of the period of emotional, social, and sexual maturation. Educators, psychologists, and sexologists, who considered the proper upbringing of Japanese youth to be one of their most important tasks, wrote with increasing frequency about the need to police the sexual practices of students and adolescents, whom they saw as being at a critical age in their sexual development. In conjunction with this task, they became increasingly anxious about student sexual activity, especially among members of the same sex. To give one typical example, Bokyō sekai (World of Heroism) – the same youth-oriented journal to which Kaita submitted several mystery-adventure stories in 1915 – published a special issue in 1919 about “correcting bad sexual desire” (akuseiyoku kyōsei). This issue featured the advice of school administrators, religious figures, and numerous medical doctors about the importance of “proper” sexual behavior early on. It also included stories such as “Akuseiyoku ni ayamarareta shūsai no hisan naru matsuro” (“The Tragic End of a Brilliant Boy Who Took the Wrong Course of Bad Sexual Desire”), designed to scare students into behaving in ways that psychologists and administrators would deem appropriate.

These attempts to separate homoerotic activity from boyish camaraderie within the schools were not always successful, however, judging from the frequency with which period texts describe schoolboy relationships. Late adolescence, however, was the time when the distinction between homosociality and homoeroticism was driven home. In the minds of many, graduation from school meant that students should also leave behind the adolescent appreciation of boys and enter the “adult” realm of cross-sex desire and family. Late adolescence represented a transition when the male-male desire of youth was generally expected to give way to love between a man and a woman. The two forms of desire might spill over into one another during youth, but as youth gave way to adulthood, society typically expected the two to diverge.


54 Akuseiyoku kyōsei gō, spec. issue of Bokyō sekai 7.6 (May 1919).
Kaita and Ranpo’s writing reflects this social expectation. When describing the youthful
crushes of schoolboys, both authors routinely treat male-male attraction as an innocent and
especially poignant form of affection. When they deal with erotic desire among adult men,
however, both treat the subject more circumspectly. Although Kaita seems to have retained
sympathetic feelings toward male-male desire, he wrote two mystery-adventure stories in 1915
that describe homoerotic desire as having little place within the adult world of modern civilization.
Ranpo seems to have struggled to find an appropriate idiom to describe eroticism between adult
males. At times, he compromises with expectations imposed by the fad for *ero, guro, nansensu*
and associates male-male erotic desire with strangeness, criminality, or even deviance. A careful
reading of his works, however, reveals strong hints of his personal interest in male-male love, and
even his most damning representations contain passages that contradict or even subvert these
negative associations.
SECTION I:

REPRESENTATIONS OF MALE-MALE DESIRE IN THE WRITING OF MURAYAMA KAITA (1896-1919)
CHAPTER 1:

FOR THE LOVE OF BEAUTY:

ADOLESCENT DESIRE IN KAITA’S DIARIES AND POETRY

Early in the morning of February 20, 1919 in Tokyo, Murayama Kaita passed away from tubercular pneumonia exacerbated by the epidemic of Spanish influenza then sweeping Japan. A writer and art student, he was only twenty-two years and five months old at the time of his death. Though his untimely demise brought an end to a promising career that had barely gotten underway, ironically, it set in motion the mythology of Kaita’s life. Soon after his death, the Japanese literary and artistic world began to reexamine the life of this young artist and identified him as a passionate, inspired “genius.” As this interpretation took hold, his name entered artistic and literary history.

Even before he left his boyhood home of Kyoto to study art in Tokyo in 1914 at age seventeen, Kaita had made a precocious start as a poet by producing a considerable number of poems, many of which showed remarkable aptitude. He published these first poems in small, homemade magazines (kairan zasshi), which he and his friends circulated at school, but none reached an audience wider than friends and teachers. In early 1914, a local coterie magazine accepted one of his short stories, “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” (“The Bust of the Beautiful Young Salaino”) for publication, but just before his literary debut, the magazine ceased publication. In 1914 when he moved to the capital and became a student at the Nihon bijutsuin (Japan Art

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1 In the late 1910s, the mortality rates from the disease were far higher than any other time between 1886 and 1970. See William Johnston, *The Modern Epidemic: A History of Tuberculosis in Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 162 (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1995) 39. In some comments from 1967, Inagaki Taruho recalls that before he graduated from college preparatory school in 1919, he would routinely pass by a graveyard on his way home from school in eastern Kobe. He writes, “I remember very clearly that at one point when the Spanish influenza was going around, hundreds of coffins were piled up high there.” He seems to be describing the same epidemic that killed Kaita. Inagaki Taruho, “Wita makinikarisu chūkai,” *Inagaki Taruho zenshū*, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2000) 401.
Institute), he turned to the visual arts, but he never stopped writing altogether. In 1915, he published a handful of adventure-mystery stories. Meanwhile, he continued to write verse, some of which consisted of no more than telegraphic jottings a few lines long. Many of these, however, were written as private meditations and were not intended for public consumption.

Soon after Kaita’s death, Yamazaki Shōzō (1896-1945), a close friend and a fellow art student at the Nihon bijutsuin, collected Kaita’s verse, diary, and letters for publication. The anthology Kaita no utaeru (Songs of Kaita), which represented the fruit of Yamazaki’s efforts, brought Kaita into the literary limelight for the first time. The following year, Ars, the same publisher that released the first volume, published a second collection of Kaita’s work: Kaita no utaeru sono go oyobi Kaita no hanashi (Songs of Kaita Continued, Plus Stories about Kaita). This second volume contains his mystery-adventure stories, fragments of manuscripts for plays, fantasies, diary entries, and two final testaments, as well as eulogistic remembrances by friends, fellow artists, and classmates. Finally, in 1924, an assortment of his random jottings appeared in the art journal Atorie (Atelier), headed by Yamamoto Kanae (1882-1946). A leading figure in

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2 The Nihon bijutsuin was founded in 1898 when Okakura Tenshin (1862?-1913) quit his position as head of the state-sponsored Tōkyō bijutsu gakkō (Tokyo Art School), and gathered a group of artists to create a new organization “to maintain and promote the development of East Asian art (tōyō bijutsu) in the new era.” During the Meiji period, it nurtured the work of such important artists as the painters Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958) and Hishida Shunsō (1874-1911). After a period of financial difficulties, negative reviews of the experimental “mōrōtai” (“indistinct style”) in which Taikan and others were painting, and a dispersing of member artists, the Nihon bijutsuin was reorganized in 1914 under Taikan’s leadership. At the time Kaita came to study, it offered a flexible, intimate environment in which students could work alongside other students and teachers who provided advice and criticism. Each year, the organization hosted an exhibition in which the art of teachers and promising students were shown to the general public. Nihon bijutsuin hyaku-nen shi henshūshitsu, Nihon bijutsuin hyaku-nen shi, 15 vols (Tokyo: Nihon bijutsuin, 1989-99) provides a thorough examination of the institution, the artists who studied there, and the numerous exhibitions it hosted.

3 Murayama Kaita, Kaita no utaeru, ed. Yamazaki Shōzō (Tokyo: Ars, 1920). The publisher sometimes wrote its name in Roman letters “Ars,” like the Latin word for “art,” and sometimes in katakana (アルス “arusu”); for instance, the first edition Kaita no utaeru has the former on its slipcover and the latter in its endpapers. At the time, most of Ars catalogue consisted of books on art and anthologies of contemporary poetry, and so Kaita’s work represented a confluence of their two principal interests. In the 1920s, Ars would branch out into new fields, including leftist thought and sexology.

4 Murayama Kaita, Kaita no utaeru sono go oyobi Kaita no hanashi, ed. Yamamoto Jirō (Tokyo: Ars, 1921). From here onward, the title of this book will be abbreviated as Kaita no utaeru sono go. In the first of these two installments, Kanae writes that Kaita’s mother sent him a bundle of manuscripts, which he hoped to eventually compile into a third volume for publication by Ars. The plan never materialized, but later in 1925, he dedicated the large part of an issue Atorie to the memory of Kaita: Murayama Kaita o omou, spec. issue of Atorie 2.3 (Mar 1925): 86-115.

5 Murayama Kaita, “Kaita no zakkichō,” Atorie 1.2 (Mar 1924): 36-39; Murayama Kaita, “Kaita no sukechibukku,” Atorie 1.3 (Apr 1924): 41-43. In the first of these two installments, Kanae writes that Kaita’s mother sent him a bundle of manuscripts, which he hoped to eventually compile into a third volume for publication by Ars. The plan never materialized, but later in 1925, he dedicated the large part of an issue Atorie to the memory of Kaita: Murayama Kaita o omou, spec. issue of Atorie 2.3 (Mar 1925): 86-115.
the Nihon bijutsuin and the artistic world of that time, Kanae was Kaita's cousin and mentor. In the mid 1910s, he had played an instrumental role in urging his cousin to pursue art and had even arranged for his young charge to study art in Tokyo – a formidable task that involved overcoming the strong protests of Kaita's father.⁶ It seems likely that Kanae also played an instrumental role in arranging for the posthumous publication of Kaita's works, considering that Kanae's brother-in-law, Kitahara Tetsuo (1892-1957), was the head of the publishing house that released Kaita’s works.

Many of Kaita's best known poems are in the first person, and because they describe personal feelings, such as his desire to become a great and famous artist, his amorous and erotic feelings, his bitter loneliness, and his desperate wish to escape the tubercular infection that eventually killed him, these poems give the impression of being unmediated records of his innermost thoughts. As this chapter will argue in subsequent sections, however, these poems were in fact strongly shaped by current poetic and stylistic trends that shaped the ways he wrote about virtually all subjects, including male-male love. Before delving into the poems themselves, however, it is worth first examining his diary and letters in order to know a bit more about the people and situations that inspired them.

Kaita and His Loves

Two names that appear frequently in Kaita's collected works are Inō Kiyoshi (1897-1989, also identified by his initials or the sobriquet “the prince”), a younger schoolmate from the Kyōto furitsu daiichi chūgakkō (Kyoto Prefectural First Higher School), and Otama, a female model whom Kaita met while studying in Tokyo.⁷ Over the course of his short life, he experienced many fleeting attractions to both men and women, but the feelings he bore for Inō and Otama played a particularly large role in his emotional life. Yamamoto Jirō, a close friend

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⁶ Kanae was the son of Dr. Yamamoto Ichirō, the brother of Kaita’s mother, Murayama née Yamamoto Tama. On the life of Yamamoto Kanae see, Kosaki Gunji, Yamamoto Kanae hyōden (Nagano: Shinanoji, 1979). Kuboshima Seiichirō, the curator of the Shinano Drawing Museum in Ueda City, Nagano Prefecture, has written a fictional treatment of the relationship between Kaita and Kanae: Kuboshima Seiichirō, Kanae to Kaita: Waga seimei no homura Shinano no sora ni todoke (Nagano: Shinano mainichi shimbunsha, 1999).

⁷ In describing Kaita’s early life in Kaita no utaeru and its sequel, Yamamoto Jirō, Yamazaki Shōzō, and Imazeki Keiji refer to Inō as either “Y” or “I.” In the early twentieth century, many editors and writers added a Y to Japanese words beginning in a vowel; for instance, one often finds the city of Edo romanized as “Yedo.”
from grade school and the editor of Kaita no utaeru sono go, writes that Kaita’s passion for Inō and Otama remained constant until the day of his death. He writes that hours before Kaita died in February 1919, Kaita stumbled outdoors in a feverish fit and collapsed on the ground in the cold winter air. After his friends returned him to his room, he deliriously murmured the names of Inō Kiyoshi and “Otama, beautiful Otama” before falling silent. Some time later, after stammering to his friends that they should preserve his artwork and writing, he fell into a dreamlike state, muttered some cryptic phrases, and gave up the ghost. Because Yamamoto Jirō was not present at Kaita’s death, this tale may be apocryphal. Even though it is impossible to ascertain its veracity, this anecdote is in keeping with the spirit of the diaries, poems, and letters, which frequently mention Inō and Otama’s names.

When Kaita met Inō, the latter had been in Kyoto only a short time. Inō was a native of Fukui Prefecture, located along the Sea of Japan. He lived there until the age of fifteen when his father, Yasushi, the head of a local hospital, passed away. After that, Inō’s mother brought him to Kyoto to enroll him in the same school Kaita attended, hoping Inō would eventually continue to his father’s alma mater, Tokyo teikoku daigaku. (Inō later failed the entrance exams, and this dream never materialized).9 Yamazaki Shōzō and Imazeki Keiji (1893-1946), two fellow students from the Nihon bijutsuin, wrote in Kaita no utaeru that Kaita first fell in love with Inō in 1912.10 Inō, who was a year younger than Kaita, became well known as a bishōnen at school, and he had unusually fine and delicate features that inspired passion in the hearts of many students, including Kaita. This infatuation gave birth to a number of artworks, including a painting called Hikari no ōji (Prince of Light), which Kaita “secretly modeled after his lover” and displayed at school.11 Another portrait of Inō, a watercolor painted around 1914, now ranks among Kaita’s

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8 Yamamoto Jirō, “Kaita no shi,” Kaita no utaeru sono go oyobi Kaita no hanashi, by Murayama Kaita (Tokyo: Ars, 1921) 401-409. Kaita’s mother’s maiden name was Yamamoto, and therefore, Kaita had many relatives with this surname, such as his cousin, Yamamoto Kanae. Yamamoto Jirō, however, was not a blood relative.


10 Imazeki Keiji and Yamazaki Shōzō, “Murayama Kaita ryakuden,” Kaita no utaeru, by Murayama Kaita, <Final section> 1. The first edition of Kaita no utaeru paginates each section anew, but a later reprinting from 1927 has continuous pagination.

11 Imazeki Keiji and Yamazaki Shōzō, “Murayama Kaita ryakuden,” <Final section> 2. On November 13, 1913, Kaita mentions a similar artwork called Ōji (The Prince) in his diary, but it is unclear whether this is the same work or not (342).
most famous paintings (Figure 2). Yamamoto Jirō has written that Inō had a “beautiful yet cool
countenance that reminded one of da Vinci’s Mona Lisa.” In a hyperbolic flourish, he states that
“the visage of this young man would be lodged in all of Kaita’s artwork, and his poetry would be
exclusively given over to extolling his beauty.”

Kaita’s 1914 watercolor of Inō Kiyoshi shows that, despite Yamamoto Jirō’s claim, Inō
shows little resemblance to the famous Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519).
Yamamoto may have used this comparison for several reasons. In 1910, the poet and sculptor
Takamura Kōtarō (1883-1956), had used the same metaphor in a collection of poems describing
the melancholic beauty of several women from Yoshiwara, the large red-light district in Tokyo.
Kōtarō’s collection, which bears the hybrid French and Japanese title “Les Impressions des
oûonnas” (“Impressions of Great Women”), contains a poem “La sourire caché” (“The Hidden
Smile”) that describes meeting several women as beautiful and mysterious as “La Joconde” or “la
belle Mona Lisa.” Another poem by Kōtarō, “Ushinawareta Mona Lisa” (“The Lost Mona
Lisa”), published in the July 1911 issue of the literary magazine Subaru (The Pleiades), describes
the heartbreaking departure, and presumably the end of the narrator’s relationship, with one of
these beautiful women. In Kōtarō’s poems, and this one in particular, the metaphor refers to a
mysterious beauty loved from a distance – a love that is rendered particularly bittersweet by the
narrator’s inability to have a relationship with that beauty. This same kind of precarious and
ephemeral love plays a major role in Kaita’s fantasies of Inō, and so Kaita and his friends may
have borrowed the metaphor in these famous poems to describe Inō.

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12 Yamamoto Jirō, “Kaita no hatsukoi,” Kaita no utaeru sono go oyobi Kaita no hanashi, by Murayama
Kaita (Tokyo: Ars, 1921) 302.

the French name for the painting known in English as the Mona Lisa. Kōtarō studied abroad in France
from 1908 to 1909. His proficiency with French is visible in the titles and extended French passages in
these poems.

14 This poem contains the lines, “Mona Lisa shed no tears; / She merely smiled, showing pale-green teeth /
With the opacity of an orient pearl. / Separated from her picture-frame, / Mona Lisa walked away.”
Takamura Kōtarō, Takamura Kōtarō zenshū, vol. 1, 37-40; translation from Donald Keene, Dawn to the

15 Soon after Kaita went to Tokyo in 1914, he sought out Kōtarō in his atelier and became friends with him,
earning his friendship through impassioned discussions of art and poetry. Though we do not know when he
first encountered Kōtarō’s work, it seems likely he knew of it before leaving for Tokyo. For a selection of
Takamura Kōtarō’s works see, Kōtarō Takamura, A Brief History of Imbecility: Poetry and Prose of
Another reason for likening Inō to the Mona Lisa is the artistic and poetic inspiration he provided Kaita. In a passage entitled “Kaita no hatsukoi” (“Kaita’s First Love”), Yamamoto Jirō says that his friend’s imagination often ran wild with thoughts of Inō.

Something that strongly affected Kaita’s art from his boyhood to adolescence was his first love. That love was somewhat unusual. He was romantic, and, exactly like Keats, he released his dissatisfaction with reality in the mythological past, letting his fantasies run wild and becoming intoxicated to his heart’s desire with dreams.16

These fantasies worked their way into his artwork, providing him with artistic inspiration much like the beauty of Francesco del Giocondo’s wife, Mona Lisa, was said to have inspired the genius of Leonardo. As mentioned above, Kaita painted a number of watercolor portraits of Inō, and a large number of his early poems were dedicated to him. The depictions of bishōnen in Kaita’s work do not attempt to represent Inō as he was; instead, they present elaborate fantasies inspired by thoughts of him. Even in the diary containing notes about Kaita’s daily life, the visions of Inō that appear are poetic and cerebral in nature. For example, the entry from November 12, 1913 represents Inō less as an actual person than as a romanticized object of beauty.

Today in physics, we did an experiment in which we used a prism to bend light. The beauty of the sunlight passing through the prism – purple, yellow, red – was incredibly vivid, and I couldn’t help feeling as if the sunlight, colorless and colored at the same time, was divine.

“Prism” would truly be a fitting name for you, Inō (342).

The aestheticization of Kaita’s feelings for Inō is clear in the accounts of his nocturnal visits to Inō’s home. In his remembrances of Kaita, Yamamoto Jirō notes, “Every night, he would climb Kaguraoka near the house of the young boy [Inō]. That way he could watch the lights in the boy’s house from a distance.”17 The same day Kaita’s teacher showed his class the prism, Kaita wrote in his journal that he wandered from his home on Teramachi Avenue to a hill near Inō’s house: “From the fields where the rice stalks were cut and piled up, I heard the distant, red sound of a flute. In front of your house, a friend called out to me ‘Murayama,’ and my heart trembled. / That exalted laugh of yours flooded from your home, together with the light burning inside” (342). The friend who called his name may have been Hayashi Tatsuo (1896-1984), a younger schoolmate who later in life became a prominent intellectual historian. In a series of biographical interviews, Hayashi recalls his older classmate’s passion for the “incredible

“bishōnen” Inō. Hayashi says that because he lived on a rise directly above Inō’s home, Kaita would frequently come and chat merely as an excuse to stare at Inō’s house below. Another passage in Kaita’s diary from November 19, 1913, presents an account of a similar midnight trip to Inō’s home.

On the river embankment, I saw the light in the eastern sky. Sensing that the moon would probably appear, I told myself I would climb Mt. Yoshida and go to Kaguraoka. The moon was just rising over the lights decorating the surface of the city below. There was not a thing in sight that was not beautiful. I rested for a while at Munetada Shrine, intoxicated with the beauty of the landscape. Afterward, I looked down over your home, Inō, and was overcome with emotion.

Toward twelve o’clock, everything fell quiet. The stars were shining in the sky like specks of light reflecting on the sea. The moon was out, and my longing grew as hard as a jewel. A bell sounded in a temple or shrine. I lingered a few moments longer, looking down at the lake below your home and thinking of the song Moonlight. Ah, how much I long for you! (343)

In this account, he walks east from a river, mesmerized by the light in the eastern sky. After climbing to one of the smaller, subsidiary shrines of Yoshida Shrine, he lingers and gazes upon Inō’s home below and the neighboring lake in Kaguraoka. As his feelings well, the sight of Inō’s home against the moonlit landscape recalls the sad strains of music – perhaps Beethoven’s melancholy, minor “Moonlight” Sonata or Debussy’s wistful Claire de lune. His description of his longing growing as “hard as a jewel” most likely represents an elegantly disguised way of stating that he became sexually aroused at the thought of Inō.

Yamamoto Jirō attributes the highly cerebral, imaginative element of Kaita’s attraction to the fact that the two boys spent minimal time together in school and had little chance to get to know one another.

Kaita’s contact with the young boy never consisted of more than two or three meaningless conversations of a few words. Nonetheless, the reason his love remained unchanged over the course of several years is that Kaita’s romantic fantasies made him have dreams like those of Dante for Beatrice.

Yamamoto’s desire to eulogize Kaita as an artistic and poetic visionary, like Dante, leads him to downplay the amount of physical contact between Kaita and Inō. It is true the two spoke little at

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18 At some point, Kaita started asking Hayashi to take love letters to Inō, but Hayashi refused because he did not want to do anything that would make him “feel like a pimp.” Hayashi also comments that after Kaita went in 1914 to Nagano and then Tokyo, Kaita sent letters to him since he was unable to write to Inō, the foremost object of his devotion. At some point, these letters grew more affectionate, and one was even addressed to “Hayashi Tatsuo the Great.” These letters included sketches, watercolors, and snippets of poetry, but unfortunately, Hayashi lost them all in later years. Hayashi Tatsuo, Shisō no doramaturgii, Heibonsha raiburarii 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993) 144-45, 148-49.

school, but Kaita’s friend Yamazaki Shōzō recalls that after Inō came to Tokyo in 1915, the two resumed contact.

About that time, I heard from Y (who was living in Satakehara; Y was Kaita’s chigo-san since their days in Kyoto) that when Kaita would commute back and forth between Tabata and the Nihon bijutsuin, he would always stop by and pounce upon Y.

I heard Y would ask, “What do you want?” and Kaita would respond, “Just let me hold you – just for a moment. That’s all,” then Kaita would give Y’s cheek a lick.20

The word chigo-san, which Yamazaki uses to describe Inō’s relationship vis-à-vis Kaita, comes from the word chigo, which historically refers to young pages that served Buddhist priests or older warriors – figures associated with male-male desire in the popular imagination of the pre-Restoration period.21 In the twentieth century, the word continued to appear in non-erotic contexts to identify adolescent boys associated with temples or shrines, but schoolboys also used it to refer to a younger boy loved by another older male – contexts that describe the younger boy as a desired object, not in a desiring subject in his own right.22

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21 Chigo sometimes became the objects of their masters’ affections, and numerous texts describe the passions felt for a particularly attractive acolyte or page. By the fifteenth century chigo were the subject of a growing body of texts known as chigo monogatari (tales of acolytes), which described male-male desire in religious settings and which consistently place the chigo in the position of the object of affection. In many cases, these tales describe an older priest’s fascination for a lovely, adolescent chigo, who sometimes turns out to be a disguised Buddhist deity come to lead his admirer to enlightenment. For a description of these tales and a translation of one work, see Margaret H. Childs, “Chigo Monogatari: Love Stories or Buddhist Sermons?” Monumenta Nipponica 35.2 (Su 1980): 127-151. Childs has also translated one such story, Genmu monogatari (The Tale of Genmu) in Margaret Helen Childs, Rethinking Sorrow: Revelatory Tales of Late Medieval Japan, Michigan Monograph Series in Japanese Studies 6 (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 1991): 31-52, reprinted in Margaret H. Childs, trans., “The Tale of Genmu,” Partings at Dawn: An Anthology of Japanese Gay Literature, ed. Stephen D. Miller (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1996) 36-54.

Edo-period texts, such as the collection of humorous stories Seisuishō (Rousing Laughter) by priest and tea master Anrakuan Sakuden (1554-1642) also describe the chigo as the object of the erotic affections of priests, often in situations where affections were not necessarily reciprocated. Anrakuan Sakuden, Seisuishō, 2 vols., ed. Suzuki Tōzō, Iwanami bunko Yellow 30-247-1, 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1986); Miles Kenneth McElrath, Jr., The Seishuishō of Anrakuan Sakuden: Humorous Anecdotes of the Sengoku and Early Edo Periods, diss., University of Michigan, 1971; Ann Arbor: UMI, 1971, UMI 7123825. See Iwata Jun’ichi, “Nanshoku ishō shū,” Nanshoku bunken shoshi (Toba: Iwata Sado, 1973) 281-88 and Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 74-75 for discussions of this and other texts regarding chigo.

22 In a guide to terms associated with male-male desire, the anthropologist Iwata Jun’ichi noted that by the word commonly referred to “nanshoku shōnen,” or youths involved with other men. Iwata Jun’ichi, “Nanshoku ishō shū,” Nanshoku bunken shoshi (Toba: Iwata Sado, 1973) 281.
In 1915, Kaita included in his diary a series of particularly interesting entries concerning the relationship between him, Inō, and the young artist Yanase Masamu (1900-1945). In 1923, several years after Kaita’s death, Yanase served as a leading member of the anarchist and Dadaist movement Mavo. Still later, Yanase became a leading figure in the proletarian art movement, well known for his posters and political cartoons. At the time he knew Kaita, however, he was a young, attractive, and boyish adolescent who had recently arrived from his hometown of Moji in Kyushu, southwestern Japan. Kaita too had left Kyoto the year before to study at the Nihon bijutsuin. He was living in Tabata at the home of the painter, illustrator, and tanka poet Kosugi Misei (1881-1964), who had learned of his talent from Yamamoto Kanae. Also staying at Misei’s home was the art student Mizuki Shin’ichi (1892-1988), a native of Matsuyama who was studying oil painting at the Nihon bijutsuin. Kaita and Yanase met in late 1914 when Yanase came to visit Mizuki. Kaita soon developed strong amorous feelings for Yanase, who was beautiful and full of the ebullience of youth. (See Figure 6.) A December 1914 letter to Yamamoto Jirō states, “Do not worry about Inō; I have forgotten all about him so it’s all right. My current chigo-san is a fifteen-year old, adolescent painter who has natural talent” (408). At least for the time being, Yanase seems to have completely replaced Inō in Kaita’s affections.

Yanase makes only a few brief appearances in the telegraphic notes Kaita recorded in his diary, but it is clear that they had an intimate relationship. On May 15, Kaita writes, “Yanase has become so beautiful. Still I wish he’d firm up a bit (pishipishi shita tokoro o yōkyū suru).” After

23 Yanase’s name appears alongside those of the artists Murayama Tomoyoshi (1901-1977), Ogata Kamenosuke (1900-1942), Ōura Shūzō (1890-1928), and Kadowaki Shinrō on the “Mavo no sensen” (“The Mavo Manifesto”) describing the principles of the avant-garde movement. On Yanase’s involvement with Mavo, see Gennifer Weisenfeld, Mavo: Japanese Artists and the Avant-Garde 1905-1931 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). On Yanase’s life and art, see Aichi-ken bijutsukan, Yanase Masamu ten zuroku: Seijō 100-nen kinen (Nagoya: Aichi-ken bijutsukan, 2000) and Yanase Masamu kenkyūkai, Yanase Masamu: Hankotsu no seishin to jidai o mitsumeru me (Tokyo: Yanase Masamu kenkyūkai, 1999).

24 In an essay from 1927, Yanase describes Kaita at their initial meeting, saying he “had red cheeks and was full of energy.” Later, when Yanase returned for good to Tokyo after a trip home, he found Kaita living a life of squalor, although he seemed to not to mind his poverty much. He writes, “Though I was down and out, I was surprised to find someone so much destitute than I. Murayama Kaita came to visit. All that he had to cover his gigantic body was a happi coat several sizes too small and a pair of briefs. ‘I’ve been sleeping under the eaves ‘cause these days no one will put me up,’ he said. Showing no signs of this getting him down, he spit out his theories of art and then left. That day, he came and went barefoot.” Quoted in Sunouchi Tōru, Sezannu no nurinokoshi: Kimagure bijutsukan (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1983) 330-31.

25 Yanase was fifteen by the traditional Japanese method of counting ages, fourteen by the Western system.
a brief statement about his disappointment at the poor quality of the sketches he drew that day, he returns to the topic of Yanase, “This night of dangerous and sick play (kiken katsu byōteki na tawamure), I spend sleeping with Yanase. A storm in the night” (354). Judging from the entry describing the following day, it is clear the two spent the night together: “I woke at 10am. After having some fun with Yanase, at 4 or 5, I got on the train at Handa and went home” (355). As one commentator points out, these entries hint that the two had a sexual relationship, but it is ultimately unclear exactly what happened.\textsuperscript{26} Does the word tawamure refer to overt sexual activity? Does it refer to mere flirtations that aroused the two to “dangerous” levels? In a eulogistic essay written in 1921 or 1922, Yanase recalls horsing around with Kaita and a common friend, probably Mizuki Shin’ichi.

At this time, Kaita, who had moved from Kyoto, experienced same-sex love (dōseiren) for me, and at night, he would entice me out of the compound [where I lived]. His feverish lips would hesitate, growing warmer and warmer above his tall frame. This happened multiple times over the course of several days before he finally planted a painful kiss on my cheek and then ran away as if surprised at his own actions. At times like the nights that he, M, and I slept the night on the musty davenport in the corner, he would get me in the middle, and do things like pinch me with his thick fingers, strike me, and pull me close. This would last until daybreak put an end to our night of hysterical laughter and arousal.\textsuperscript{27}

The word “arousal” (kōfun), which can refer to either erotic or emotional excitement, leaves it unclear whether or not their relationship took an explicitly sexual turn.

The final appearance of Yanase in the diary also involves Inō. Dated May 24, 1915, the entry states that “in the evening, Yanase came,” but Kaita left him at the house and went to Ueno where he ran into someone and spent time in a café.

After that, I visited Inō in Iida. The guy’s pretty good at flattery.

I couldn’t help but be charmed by his beauty. His coloring has become more elegant than last year, giving the impression of a Leonardo sketch or a Luini painting. I decided to love him forever. Someday I’ll draw his portrait. It was a happy, truly fun evening. For the first time, I spoke with this lovely young man to my heart’s content. I’ll never forget this evening. When I went home, Yanase was gone (357).

This anecdote may help explain the disappearance of Yanase’s name from subsequent pages of Kaita’s diary. If Yanase was angry at being left so long for another boy, the relationship between them may have cooled. More important for the purpose of this discussion, however, is the extent

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\textsuperscript{26} Kuboshima Seiichirō, Kaiga hōrō (Tokyo: Ozawa shoten, 1996) 85.

\textsuperscript{27} Yanase Masamu, “Murayama Kaita-kun,” Murayama Kaita no subete, by Kanagawa kenritsu kindai bijutsukan (Kamakura: Kanagawa kenritsu kindai bijutsukan, 1982) n.pag. In the original Japanese, the word I have rendered “musty” is kabekusai (壁臭い), which seems to be an error for kabikusai (黴臭い).
to which Kaita experienced beauty in terms of art, especially that of the great artists of Western history. Drawn to Inō’s youthful beauty, he likens his countenance to an image by Leonardo or Bernardino Luini (c.1480-1532), two masters of the Italian Renaissance. The link between the visual arts and youthful beauty is apparent throughout Kaita’s works, most notably in the prose work “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi,” which describes a competition between Leonardo and Kaita for the love of a lovely youth – a competition that makes sense only when one considers that Kaita was drawn to the beauty of young men as a source of inspiration for art and poetry. Other passages from Kaita’s letters show that he often used passionate language to describe feelings that involve the appreciation of physical beauty. In a letter dated March 22, 1914, he wrote the following brief, jocular letter to Yamamoto Jirō.

Once again, a subject of my love has appeared.  
This time, it’s a little kiddo (chan-chan).  
In other words, the kiddo at Rashingyoku is mine.  
He’s only four or five, but he sure is pretty!  
You know, little kiddies are quite artistic in nature (399).

In this case, the attraction does not seem to be erotic as much as aesthetic in nature, but like the diary entries describing the beauty of Inō, the final line shows that he experienced the charms of the boy in relation to art.

Letters from the same year begin to mention attractions to women. A series of epistles written while on vacation in Nagano Prefecture in 1914 show that Kaita appreciated the aesthetic charms of both genders, but again, the nature of his attraction seems to be largely aesthetic. He writes to his former schoolmate Yamamoto Jirō that since coming to Nagano, he had developed infatuations for three people. Because Yamamoto knew his friend as a lover of boys, he begins his catalogue of these crushes with the disclaimer,

The first – don’t be surprised! – is for a girl.  
She is one of the girls who comes and learns sewing from an older lady in one of the detached houses within the compound of my uncle’s hospital where I am staying.  
She’s truly beautiful. She is a girl of the town and is not rustic.  
A cool voice not yet full of life – it truly enraptures me (401).28

The girl strikes Kaita as possessing an unworldly, unpretentious innocence. At the same time, she has a quiet beauty and sophistication missing from other, earthier local girls. These qualities,

28 Kaita was staying in the home of his uncle, Dr. Yamamoto Ichirō, the father of Yamamoto Kanae. Yamamoto Ichirō ran a small hospital, hence the reference to the hospital in the letter. (Kaita had not yet started manifesting signs of tuberculosis.)
when combined with her youth and lack of pretension, appealed to him, but he decided not to pursue a relationship with her. He writes, “I cannot become serious about her. / New men (atarashii hito) are not captured by women or the like” (402). The somewhat cryptic reference to “new men” appears to refer to a new, modern breed of artistic, sensitive individuals, which in his way of thinking, should not be especially susceptible to female charms, or at least those of a plebian nature. The same letter goes on to describe his feelings for two bishōnen whom he encountered in Nagano. One works at a stationery shop in Ueda, the nearest town to the home of Kaita’s uncle.

He is truly a bishōnen.
I have made a point of going to the stationery shop at least once every three days. As a result, we have become thoroughly familiar with one another.
Whenever he says to me, “Welcome! What can I do for you?” or whenever he pulls down the notebooks and things from the shelves, I am seized by a strong passion. Every time the boy sees me, he also smiles. I think his smiles are definitely a symbol of love (402).29

The pronouncement that the boy is a bishōnen indicates his awareness of the shop boy’s beauty, and the boy’s smiles lead him to feel his admiration is reciprocated. The second boy for whom Kaita developed strong feelings in Nagano was a student one year older whom he had met in Komoro the year before. Kaita comments that conversation comes easily because they are both artists. After commenting on the older boy’s skill, he declares, “He is a beautiful young man (utsukushii seinen). / I wonder if this wouldn’t be called love (rabu).” Here, the appreciation of personal beauty comes hand-in-hand with an attraction grounded in shared interests and homosocial camaraderie. Kaita notes, “He is taller than I, has a reddish bronze complexion, and reminds me a little bit of [Sawamura] Sōnosuke [VII],” a famous kabuki actor of the Taishō and early Shōwa periods. Interestingly, Kaita evaluates the older boy’s work and calls him a “youth” (seinen) as if disregarding the social grammar that ordinarily places him, the younger of the two, in the subordinate position. This is the only record of Kaita experiencing an amorous attraction to an older boy. In his relationships with Inō, Yanase, and the handful of other boys mentioned in his letters, he consistently plays the role of the senpai or upperclassman and thus maintains an

29 In discussing his own feelings and his suppositions at what the boy feels, Kaita transliterates the English words “passion” and “love” as passhon and rabu – a hint that he sees these ideas in terms of fashionable egalitarian notions of attraction. The term rabu had been used in Japanese at least as early as the 1880s, when Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935) used it in the 1885-86 novel Tōsei shosei katagi (The Character of Modern Students). When used by Christian-influenced writers such as Kitamura Tōkoku (1868-1894), it describes an affection between equal partners grounded in mutual respect and a lack of overtly carnal elements. On the use of the word rabu in Tsubouchi Shōyō, see Saeki Junko, Ren’ai no kigen: Meiji no ai o yomitoku (Tokyo: Nihon keizai shimbunsha, 2000) 12-18.
edge of social superiority. In this case, the relationship should be reversed, but he uses language that implicitly retains that edge by subjecting the older boy to his judgment.

While an art student in Tokyo, Kaita became more and more interested in women. He was romantically attracted to several, but the name that appears most often in his writings is the model Otama. Most likely, she worked with Miyazaki Kitarō, a prominent middleman who introduced models to Tokyo art schools, studios, and independent artists. Despite the best efforts of art historians to identify her, most of what we know still derives from Kaita’s writings. In his 1917 “Shitsuren no kiroku” (“Record of Heartbreak”), he recounts that when he first saw her, “All I had to do was look at her, and I felt as if I had imbibed a cool, delicious drink. My heart gleamed, telling me this was ‘love’ (koi)” (94). Their first meeting took place when he went with some other students in search of a model to paint. Kaita went back to see her several times before Otama was selected as a model to come to the Nihon bijutsuin. When he finally got the chance to paint her, Kaita “turned to the canvas as if in a dream.” After her modeling contract expired and she ceased coming to the studio, he looked for her until one day when, by chance, he happened to discover her working in an Asakusa movie theater. He started visiting the theater daily, and eventually he followed her to her residence in the Yoshiwara. As his “love reached new heights like a fountain,” he made the dramatic decision to move into an apartment to be near her (95). Made nervous by him tailing her, Otama grew fearful. He realized that it was now or never. One night, he confronted her in an alley and told her of his longing, but she rebuffed him with “eyes as cold as stone.” Toward the end of the essay, he laments tearfully, “I have lost myself” (96).

Depressed, he vacillated between disillusionment and a refusal to abandon his love. For a time, he numbed his loneliness with alcohol and prostitutes before leaving Tokyo on a long voyage. Ironically, the fact that he and Otama never consummated their relationship only magnified his passion. She remained a semi-abstract figure that he only knew from afar. Meanwhile, he created and maintained an idealized image of her, which he channeled into the large number of drawings and paintings of women he made that year. As with Inō, erotic attraction provided the inspiration for art. In this regard, he does not treat male-male and male-female affection as radically divergent phenomena. Both helped heighten his artiststic acuity, and both provided the inspiration for art.

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The most frequently anthologized portion of Kaita’s writing is the *shi* (poetry in non-traditional forms) he wrote during the first half of the 1910s. Much of his earliest poetry dates from his days as a student in Kyoto; in fact, approximately half of his entire output dates from 1913 and 1914 when his feelings for Inō were at their height. As early as 1911, he and his friends began producing small literary magazines that they circulated among schoolmates, friends, and teachers interested in literature. One of these magazines was called *Gōtō (Robbery by Force)*, and one of his earliest extant works is a 1911 pencil and watercolor poster advertising this magazine. Not all of his works were joint efforts with friends. He soon began creating a number of chapbooks of only his own work, which he also circulated among friends. These were stitched or stapled together, with watercolors and poems pasted into them, and artwork drawn on the covers. Their fanciful titles – *Mara* (a Sanskrit-derived term for the male member) or *Aoiro haien* (*The Ruined Garden in Green*) – hint at an interest in decadence while others – such as *Sora no kan* (*Feeling of the Sky*), *Kujakuseki* (*Malachite*), or *Arukaroido* (*Alkaloid*) – demonstrate a penchant for the rich, beaux-arts, exotic imagery then in vogue among Japanese writers.

The work written for these magazines represents a convergence of romanticism and symbolism, both of which had played an important role in Japanese letters since the late 1890s. The translations of translator, poet, novelist and physician Mori Ōgai and the pioneering work of the poet and novelist Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943) helped set the stage for the development of a strain of romantic writing, in which poets presented extended evocations of feeling not delimited by the constraints of traditional poetic form. It was also about the same time that Ueda Bin (1885-1942) also introduced European symbolist and decadent poetry into

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31 The category of poetry that developed in response to the stimulus of Western literature is usually called *shi* in order to differentiate it from traditional forms of Japanese verse. Though some think of *shi* as “Western-style verse,” by the late Meiji and Taishō periods, it had become naturalized to the point that it had become one of several natural choices for Japanese poets. It is also misleading to translate *shi* as “free-form verse,” in order to contrast it with the fixed metrical forms of tanka, renga, haiku, and so on, because much of the early writing in the genre known as *shi* was in fixed metrical patterns inherited from traditional Japan, just as much Western poetry at the time employed fixed metrical forms inherited from the past.

Japan through his translations and exegeses of the movement. Bin’s work fueled subsequent experiments by the poets Kitahara Hakushū (1885-1942), Kinoshita Mokutarō (1885-1945), and Miki Rofū (1889-1964) who adapted symbolism in their own writing. Working at the high tide of the fashion for symbolism, Kaita also incorporated the stylistic flourishes of symbolism in his early poetry. The brand of symbolism that became popular in Japan was founded on the notion of the poet as an artistic visionary – perhaps even a genius – who could find particularly powerful feelings in unexpected places. For Kaita, one of the greatest sources of inspiration was Inō, and so much of this early work describes his charms. First, however, before turning to a detailed analysis of the poems on male-male desire, this section will briefly consider the literary and stylistic context that enabled Kaita to write about the subject as he did.

The Meiji period saw dramatic experiments with verse as Japanese poets, exposed to the various forms and traditions of Western poetry, began forging new forms and types of poetic language. Some of the early major translations of Western poetry, such as those in Shintaishi shō (Selection of Poetry in the New Style, 1882) by the professor Toyama Masakazu (1848-1900) and philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō (1900-1944), broke with the moraic patterns of traditional poetry, but other translations, such as the collection Omokage (Vestiges), experimented with meter and style while retaining the diction and meter of classical verse. Omokage first appeared in 1889 as a special volume of Kokumin no tomo (The Subject’s Companion) and identified itself as the work of “S.S.S.,” a pseudonym for Shinseisha (Society of New Voices) headed by Mori Ōgai. Although the seventeen poems in the first edition included one by the Ming-dynasty poet Gāo Qī (1336-1374) and a selection from the classical Japanese Heike monogatari (The Tale of the Heike), most were translations of British and German writers, many of whom – most noticeably Lord Byron (1788-1824), Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1832), and Heinrich Heine (1797-

33 Kaita’s verse written between 1915 and 1919, displays certain similarities with the earlier work, such as first-person narration, hyperbolic expression, the frequent motif of loneliness, and so on, but it touches on a wider variety of themes, including his artistic inclinations and the struggle with tuberculosis. This verse tends to be more straightforward and simple than the earlier work – more like personal manifestos or diary-like jottings – perhaps because his interests in this period lay more with the visual arts than with poetry. This later poetry displays less of the pseudo-symbolist style visible in the earlier work. Since very little of this verse deals with male-male desire, the majority of it is falls outside the scope of this dissertation.

34 In addition to Ōgai, who chaired the group, the members were Ochiai Naobumi (1861-1903), Ichimura Sanjirō (1864-1947), Inoue Michiyasu (1866-1941), and Koganei Kimiko (1870-1956); however, Ōgai took sole responsibility for the work in 1892 when it appeared under his name in the collection of translations Minawa shū (Foam on the Water). The collection went through numerous editions and was read by much of the Meiji and Taishō literary world, including Kaita. For a transcription of the poems as they appeared in one of the later versions, see Mori Ōgai et al., Omokage, Meiji Taishō yakushi shū, Nihon kindai bungaku taikei 52 (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1971) 105-67.
1856) – dated from the early to mid-Romantic period. Ōgai’s group rendered the meaning of a number of the European poems into kanshi, a highly stylized poetic language derived from classical Chinese. In other poems, they attempted to replicate the meter or rhyme of the original while using pseudo-classical Japanese diction. While each poem attempted to preserve at least one facet of the original text, the results tended to resemble classical poetry in extended forms. Ultimately, the stylistic innovations of Omokage were less influential than the direct expressions of subjective experience and personal sentiment that characterize the collection.

Shimazaki Tōson is often identified as a key figure in the development of modern Japanese shi because of his “poems in new forms” (shintaishi), the most influential of which appeared in the 1897 volume Wakana shū (Seedlings), but in fact, many of the poems in Wakana shū are grounded in older prosodic conventions. Most of the poems, which had first appeared in the magazine Bungakukai, were written in combinations of alternating clauses of seven and five morae, thereby echoing the meter of much traditional verse. Likewise, his poetry displayed a preference for pseudo-classical verb endings and pre-modern literary rhetoric reminiscent of Heian-period Japanese; in fact, it was more than a decade before pseudo-classical language fell out of fashion. The poet Kawaji Ryūkō (1888-1959) is often identified as the first poet to fully abandon the kind of classical language in Tōson’s collection for “colloquial free poetry” (kōgo jiyū shi) or poetry in the “colloquial style” (kōgotai), which uses language and forms like one might encounter in actual speech. Many of Ryūkō’s contemporaries, however, were not quite this bold. Well into the Taishō period, numerous poets, including Kaita, still incorporated combined elements of pseudo-classical language even as they strove to forge new and modern idioms, imagery, and language. James Morita has commented that the greatest contribution of

35 Later editions consisted of the original seventeen poems plus two more, one by Gāo Qī and one by the German poet Wilhelm Hauff (1802-1827).

36 Ironically, one of the best known poems in the collection was not from the Romantic period, which had focused so intently on subjective experience, but from Elizabethan England. The translation in Omokage of Shakespeare’s “Song of Ophelia” from act four, scene five of Hamlet became especially well known; for instance, it was popular among the members of the magazine Bungakukai ( Literary World), the important forum for romantic poetry founded by Shimazaki Tōson and his friends. In fact, Shimazaki’s novel Haru (Spring) contains a scene in which the character Aoki recites the translation of “Song of Ophelia” from Omokage. See Shimazaki Tōson, Haru, Tōson zenshū, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1967) 11-13.


Tōson’s *Wakana shū* to modern verse was not in its prosodic innovations but in bringing “the romantic spirit” to maturity.\(^{39}\) Literary historian Donald Keene has presented a similar appraisal, locating the anthology’s significance in its liberation of emotions, especially romantic ones, from feudalistic dictates.\(^{40}\) From the earliest times, Japanese literature has been full of passionate expressions of the types of emotions that fill European Romantic literature, but Tōson’s contemporaries saw his lengthy evocations of emotion, especially amorous longing, as auguring a new development in Japanese poetry.

Another important development in the Japanese poetic world that set the stage for Kaita’s poetry was the rise of a vein of poetry inspired by French symbolism. In fact, Donald Keene has remarked that the current of symbolist-inspired poetry that swept late Meiji and early Taishō poetry was so strong that no author could remain in the mainstream short of adopting the symbolist style.\(^{41}\) Historians of symbolism in Europe and the Americas have characterized the movement as an intermediate step between a rationalist mode of representation and one that challenges the enlightenment notion that all things are fully expressible through concrete description.\(^{42}\) When the symbolist writers occupied the literary vanguard in late nineteenth-century France, they attempted to express ideas and sentiments in indirect, elusive language that they thought could lead to the innermost essence of a thing by appealing to the imagination rather than hard logic. In order to convey the “mysterious essence” of things, they deemed it necessary to develop a poetic language of obliqueness, subtlety, and allusiveness. By describing the familiar through oblique and sometimes even illogical vocabulary, language became “symbolic,” thereby broadening the range of resonant associations a particular signifier might invoke.

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\(^{39}\) Morita, “Shimazaki Töson’s Four Collections of Poems,” 369.

\(^{40}\) Keene, *Dawn to the West*, vol. 2, 209. Of course, there were pre-modern works that contained expressions of passion and desire that crossed the lines of socioeconomic class. One thinks, for instance, of Edo-period *kōshokubon*, “books on loving love,” which sometimes described adventures featuring light-hearted treatments of love and eroticism that did not always obey the social dictates imposed by socioeconomic hierarchy.

\(^{41}\) Keene, *Dawn to the West*, vol. 2, 218. This comment comes in the context of a discussion of the work of Susukida Kyūkin (1877-1945), a poet whose experiments with meter and form produced minimal offspring because symbolism carried the poetic world in a different direction.

\(^{42}\) For instance, Anna Balakian draws a trajectory through the development of literature that begins with romanticism and passes through symbolism to arrive at surrealism. She notes that this trajectory follows “man’s shunning of order and [the development of] his cult of the mystery of things unknown,” which replaces the enlightenment “desire to associate illumination with order or rationality.” Anna Balakian, *The Symbolist Movement: A Critical Appraisal* (NY: New York University Press, 1977) 14.
Verlaine (1844-1896) played a key role in stimulating the development of symbolism in France and later in Japan, where his work was the subject of influential articles and translations. Although he wrote his most important verse well before the word “symbolism” came into popular circulation in the mid-1880s, he helped supply the major symbols, the theme of personified nature, the tone of ennui and world-weariness, and the search for mystery that became characteristic of much later symbolist writing both in France and in Japan. Artfully illogical metaphors, webs of words, and carefully constructed discontinuities were included not to impede understanding but to capitalize on the possibilities of the vague by making possible a new kind of highly subjective reading that compelled the reader to participate in the process of interpreting the poem. Verlaine and later writers imbued their writing with a pensive, atmospheric quality by turning their poems into “writerly texts,” as Roland Barthes might have later called them. These

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43 Balakian, *The Symbolist Movement*, 70-71. Poets and writers used various, heterogeneous means to produce the effects associated with symbolism; therefore, it is fallacious to think about them all as belonging to a carefully defined, unified movement. Though literary historians often speak of symbolism as a movement with clear founders and adherents, in reality, it is a broad concept that has been retroactively constructed and reconstructed throughout literary history. Kenneth Cornell’s survey of French literary magazines and manifestos of the late nineteenth century suggests that there was little writing that was recognizably identifiable as “symbolist” before the term “symbolism” gained currency in the mid-1880s. Many of the figures associated with the literary magazines where the term appeared had published more criticism than poetry; therefore, there were few practical examples of the symbolist style. As a result, when the term was used at an early stage, it seemed to refer more to a “state of mind and a deformation of the language than a valid artistic concept.” Kenneth Cornell, *The Symbolist Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951) 42.

It was a manifesto published in *Figaro* in September 1886 by the Greek-born poet Jean Moréas (1856-1910) that gave the movement not only a name but a lineage. Moréas’s manifesto identifies a line of symbolist poets that included Verlaine, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), and Théodore Faullain de Banville (1823-1891). Moréas argues that symbolism required an “archetypal and complex style.” This style should be made up of “good language,” which has been “restored and modernized” and fashioned into phrases of “unpolluted words,” and which requires “firm periods to act as buttresses and alternate with others of undulating faintness, the significant pleonasm, the mysterious ellipsis, the suspended anacoluthus, every trope daring and multiform.” Moréas claimed that the purpose of writing in this style is “to clothe the Idea in a perceptible form which, nevertheless, would not be an end in itself; rather, while serving to express the idea, it would remain subject to it.” (The notion of the absolute Idea, which circulated widely within the discourse of neo-Platonism and Idealism, referred to a universal, mystical force believed to exist beyond ordinary manifestations of material things. According to Hegel and his followers, the Idea could be grasped momentarily through the revelations of art, religion, and philosophy.) Moréas believed that symbolist art would possess ambiguous and suggestive expressions that could point to the “Idea” but that would never grasp it fully, so that art would always remains subject to the mysterious essence it tried to describe. In Symbolist art, he comments, “the depiction of nature, the actions of men, all the concrete phenomena, could not show themselves as such: they are concrete appearances whose purpose is to represent their esoteric affinities with primordial Ideas.” Jean Moréas, “Moréas: A Literary Manifesto,” *Paths to the Present: Aspects of European Thought from Romanticism to Existentialism*, ed. Eugen Weber (NY: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1960) 207.

44 Only rarely did Verlaine use direct allegory, which later symbolists considered crass; instead, he juxtaposed commonplace words in ways that were fresh, new, and sometimes puzzling for contemporaries.
poems represented loosely organized strings of signifiers that invite the reader to create meaning through an organizing act of interpretation. One chief architect of this diffuse “writerly” style was Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891). Rimbaud also provided a model of the poet as a visionary of genius. In his way of thinking, “unremitting acts of violence against the tedium of common sense,” could lead one to arrive at a semi-mystical understanding of things. In the 1871 letter nicknamed “La lettre du voyant” (“The Seer’s Letter”), he writes, “I’m lousing myself up as much as I can these days. Why? I want to be a poet, and I am working to make myself a seer: you won’t understand this at all, and I hardly know how to explain it to you. The point is, to arrive at the unknown by the disordering of all the senses. The sufferings are enormous, but one has to be strong, to be born a poet, and I have discovered I am a poet.” By reordering of the senses through hallucinogenic drugs and sexual experimentation, the adolescent Rimbaud hoped to develop his ability to see the world in new and radical ways.

The poet, professor, and translator Ueda Bin played an essential role in introducing these ideas to Japan. In fact, he was the first in 1904 to translate the phrase “symbolist school” as shōchōha, the compound still in use today. Around the turn of the century, he published a

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45 Though Rimbaud ceased writing by the time that the term “symbolism” came into existence, later adherents of symbolism identified his radical use of language as an essential step in the evolution of their style. Another reason that Rimbaud figures prominently in histories of symbolism is his closeness to Verlaine. The sexual affair between Verlaine and Rimbaud, which ended in a dramatic shooting in Brussels in 1873 and a two-year jail sentence for the older poet, was a tremendous scandal in its time.


48 Ironically, his revolutionary experimentation goes only as far as poetic syntax and imagery and does not extend to poetic form. “Le bateau ivre” (“The Drunken Boat”) one of his most radical evocations of intoxicated, hallucinogenic, and cross-sensory experience, is written in alexandrines, and only two of his poems, “Marine” (“Seascape”) and “Mouvement” (“Movement”), display a clear break from the confines of regulated meter and rhyme. Nicholls, Modernisms, 28.

49 According to Earl Jackson, the word shōchō was first given a meaning corresponding to the word “symbol” in 1884 when political philosopher Nakae Chōmin (1847-1900) used it to translate the word symbole, which had appeared in L’esthétique (The Aesthetic) by Eugène Véron (1825-1879). (Mori Ōgai further popularized the word in his 1899 translation of the work of Johannes Volkelt.) Ueda Bin’s 1897 eulogy of Verlaine, “Paul Verlaine yuku” (“Paul Verlaine Passes”), uses the French word symboliste without Japanese gloss or translation; likewise, Bin’s 1899 article “Furansu shiika no shinsei” (“New Voices in French Poetry”), the earliest systematic presentation of Parnassian and Symbolist poetry, transcribes it into katakana as sanborisuto without translation. Only in the 1904 article “Furansu kindai no shika” (“Modern French Poetry”) does one see the first known instance of Bin’s use of the word shōchōha. The following year, when Bin published the translation of the poem “Parabole” by the Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren (1855-1916), he subtitled it “Shōchō shi” (“A symbolist poem”). Earl Jackson, Jr., “The Heresy of Meaning: Japanese Symbolist Poetry,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 51.2 (Dec 1991): 563-64.
number of articles about the theoretical concepts behind symbolism, but the most influential of his works was *Kaichōon* (*The Sound of the Tide*), a 1905 collection of Bin’s translations of European poetry.\(^{50}\) (A number of the translations in *Kaichōon* had already appeared in *Myōjō* [*Morning Star*], the literary journal of the Shinshisha [New Poetry Society], but it was in book form that these translations reached their largest audience.) The poet and editor Yosano Tekkan (1873-1935) noted that *Kaichōon* gave “the same nourishment to Meiji and Taishō poetry that Po Chü-I’s *Works* had afforded Heian literature.”\(^{51}\) Bin’s renditions, which retain the musicality and gentle melancholy of the original poems, are credited with revealing to the Japanese for the first time the distinctive nature of nineteenth-century French poetry.\(^{52}\) It inspired young poets such as Kanbara Ariake (1876-1952), the author of the first recognizably symbolist poems in Japanese, Kitahara Hakushū, and Miki Rofū.\(^{53}\) In the early 1910s, it also became one of Kaita’s favorite books.

The famous introduction to *Kaichōon* explains Bin’s understanding of the role of symbols in poetry and emphasizes the central role that readers play in interpreting poetic language.


\(^{51}\) Quoted in Keene, *Dawn to the West*, vol. 2, 228.

\(^{52}\) Keene, *Dawn to the West*, vol. 2, 227.

\(^{53}\) *Kaichōon* was not exclusively dedicated to symbolist poetry. In fact, it included verses by figures as diverse as Sappho and William Shakespeare; however, it was the translations of French poems that had the greatest impact on the Japanese literary world. Over half of the translations are by French and Belgian poets, especially those directly associated with symbolism or retroactively claimed by its adherents as originators of the style. Bin selected a number of poems that were particularly important in European symbolism, for instance, Verlaine’s “Paraboles” (“Parables,” trans. “Hiyu”), “Chanson d’automne” (“Song of Autumn,” trans. “Rakuyō”), “Mon rêve familier” (“My Recurring Dream,” trans. “Yoku miru yume”), as well as Mallarmé’s “Soupir” (“Sigh,” trans. “Toiki”). At the same time, it also included lesser known authors, such as the Belgian poet Emile Verhaeren (represented by six poems), the French poets Henri de Régnier (1864-1936, represented by three) and Albert Samain (1858-1900, represented by one). Finally, it also included the Greek-born poet who had given the symbolist school its name, Jean Moréas (represented by one).

Bin was not the only translator of symbolist poetry. Nagai Kafū (1879-1959) spent much of 1907 and 1908 in France, working first in a bank in Lyons and later enjoying the bohemian life of Paris. After returning, he produced the 1913 anthology *Sango shū* (*Corals*), which consisted largely of translations of French poetry. Seven poems from Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal* start off the collection, which also includes seven poems by Verlaine, and one by Rimbaud. Even though this new collection of work would no doubt have interested Kaita, his writings make no indication that he read it.
The function of symbols consists in borrowing their help to create in the reader an emotional state similar to that in the poet’s mind; they do not necessarily attempt to communicate the same conception to everyone. The reader who quietly savors symbolist poetry may thus, in accordance with his own taste, sense an indescribable beauty which the poet himself has not explicitly stated.\textsuperscript{54}

Bin indicates that the symbolist poem provides only a general guide for readers’ emotional reactions. By leaving only a series of loose relations between the images of a poem, the poet creates an open structure that allows a plurality of readings, enriching the potential complexes of meaning it might produce.\textsuperscript{55} Bin saw symbolism and its purposeful use of elliptical language and surprising juxtapositions of signifiers as allowing readers to appreciate a special allure that could not be found in flat, plain description of objects. Although the poem might not mean the same thing to everyone, he nonetheless hoped it would arouse similar feelings in various readers. His introduction implies that the poet should find a happy medium between the two extremes of flat, non-symbolic description and unintelligible strings of unrelated signifiers.

\textit{Kaichōon} also helped introduce the notion of “decadence” to the Japanese public by incorporating poems that plumb the depths of the human spirit and describe human emotion in all of its unseemliness. A number of poems in \textit{Kaichōon} were from the anthology \textit{Les Fleurs du Mal} (\textit{The Flowers of Evil}) published in 1861 by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867).\textsuperscript{56} While symbolism and decadence represented two early strains of European modernism, they had become inextricably confused by the beginning of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Kaichōon} introduced symbolist and decadent poetry side-by-side, thus reinforcing the impression that the two were


\textsuperscript{55} As Earl Jackson has noted, the rise of symbolism as a school in Japan meant that poets reveled in the opacity of language and the unrecoverability of singular meaning. Jackson, “The Heresy of Meaning”: 568.


\textsuperscript{57} In a discussion of Mallarmé, who she believes to have set the tone of decadence in late nineteenth-century symbolist poetry, Balakian writes, “‘Symbolist and Decadent!’ Too often histories of literature suggest that the famous ‘and’ is really an ‘or.’ But the ‘and’ is truer than the ‘or,’ and any suggestion of a duality is in truth a fallacy. The one could not exist without the other, and Mallarmé proves it from the very start by his own existence, in his writings as in his conversations.” Balakian, \textit{The Symbolist Movement}, 81-82. Peter Nicholls states that by the late nineteenth century, French culture had so frequently portrayed the writer as an embodiment of modern decadence that by the \textit{fin-de-siècle}, it was impossible to separate the two ideas in the popular imagination in France. Nicholls, \textit{Modernisms}, 42.
closely related, if not contiguous styles of writing. One of the most important documents of the Japanese symbolist movement, the introduction to the landmark anthology *Jashūmon (Heretical Faith)* published in 1909 by Kitahara Hakushū – one poet profoundly influenced by Bin’s translations – reveals the closeness of the connection between symbolism and decadence in the imagination of the Japanese literary world. The following is a full translation of the introduction, which served as a manifesto for the burgeoning Japanese symbolist movement.

The life force of a poem is found in intimation, not in simple explanations of phenomena. The poet addresses the faint, indistinct sobs of the spirit that arise amidst the limitless trembling of emotion that cannot be fully expressed through writing or speech. He is enamored with the pleasure of barely audible music, and he takes pride in the grief of his own impressions. Isn’t this the fundamental purpose of the symbol? We face the mysterious, we rejoice in visions, and yearn for the red of putrefying decadence. Alas! Even in our dreams, we, the disciples of a modern heretical faith, cannot forget the laments of marble sobbing in the pale white light of the moon. Nor can we forget the eyes of a sphinx tortured by a thick, Egyptian mist, sullied with crimson. Nor can we forget romantic music smiling in the sunset, nor the doleful screams of that state of mind surrounding the crucifixion of an infant. The ceaseless spasms of putrefying yellow wax, the olfactory sensation of a violin’s A-string being stroked, the sharp nerves of whiskey smothering in frosted glass, a sigh deeply scented of poison, grass the color of a human brain, the melancholy of a nightingale exhaustedly singing while under the anesthesia of the senses – all of these things too… At the same time, how hard it is to cast away the touch of scarlet velvet escaping into the faint sound of a distant horn.\(^{58}\)

Even though Hakushū recognizes the impossibility of fully capturing the subtle emotional states and the sensory perceptions that inspire the quiet “sobs” of the poet’s spirit, he implies that the poet should try to take them as the stuff of poetry. For Hakushū, the symbol served as a tool leading the sensitive poet (who, in Rimbaudesque fashion, becomes a seer) into a rich, mysterious world of subtle sensory perception. He could best reproduce these experiences for the reader, not by using flat description, but by using images, surfaces, and descriptions of sensation in fresh ways that would encourage the reader along the path of imagination. One purpose of the symbol according to him is to aid the poet in his yearning for “the red of putrefying decadence,” a longing Hakushū assumes to be present whenever a poet delves into the depths of the senses.\(^{59}\)

Hakushū welcomed “decadent” visions that depart from established standards of beauty and serve as a doorway into new, intense realms of perception. Throughout *Jashūmon*, one finds examples of items that do not belong to the classical canon of Japanese poetry: images of sobbing violins, blood-red wine, and twilight parks, as well as obscure Christian terms. Hakushū’s use of images,


\(^{59}\) Donald Keene notes Hakushū’s symbolism seems to have been largely an “indulgence of the senses, hedonistic and sometimes not fully controlled.” Keene, *Dawn to the West*, vol. 2, 243.
especially crepuscular ones, along with frequent evocations of ennui, sorrow, loneliness and despair, are strongly reminiscent of the decadent school of fin-de-siècle French writing.⁶⁰

Kaita’s early verse displays many hallmarks of Hakushū’s brand of decadent symbolism, including an awareness of the poet as a visionary and figure of genius. In the fourth poem in Kaita’s series “Shigatsu tanshō” (“Short April Verses”), written only a few years after Hakushū’s Jashūmon and less than a decade after Bin’s Kaichōon, the young poet expresses his awareness that he was standing, along with his poetic compatriots, at the dawn of a new era in which poetry would evoke intensely personal worlds of sensation.

Blow the bloodstained bugle!
The wind of aestheticism
Presses upon our breasts, first strong, then weak...
The days of late May burn with red
Then come round again, nostalgic and familiar
Ah! So then
Blow the bloodstained bugle
If our armaments are complete!

血染めのラツバ吹き鳴らせ
耽美の風は濃く薄く
われらが胸にせまるなり
五月末日日は赤く
焦げてめぐれりなつかしく
ああれば
血染めのラツバ吹き鳴らせ
われらは武装を終へたれば。(18)

The word tanbi, meaning “aestheticism” or more literally “addiction to beauty,” is compared to a wind that seems to blow across the literary landscape. In this manifesto-like poem, Kaita asks his readers to transform their subtle feelings, like the soft nostalgic familiarity one feels at sunsets of late May, into clarion calls to battle. He envisions the ranks of sensitive readers, potential poets, and artists as a militia armed with a new type of language.

One might also read the poem as addressing not just a rising army of sensitive writers, but perhaps even Japan as a whole. During the early Meiji period, the government had rushed to

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⁶⁰ In the “symbols” described in the introduction to Jashūmon, one finds another common characteristic of symbolist writing, namely the synesthetic combination of sensory perceptions; for instance, Hakushū combines tactile and visual cues in the mention of yellow-gray “trembling,” tactile and visual cues in the image of “smiling” music, olfactory and aural sensations the “scents” of a violin’s sound. The use of synesthesia to create mood appears frequently in the work of Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarmé and Hakushū. For instance, within the oblique language of “Jashūmon hikyoku” (“The Secret Song of the Heretical Faith”), a poem first published in the September 1908 issue of Chūō kōron (Central Review) and later considered one of the crowning achievements of Japanese symbolism, one finds a synesthetic blending of perception and mysterious, archaic imagery that gives the illusion of being pregnant with personal meaning. Three different translations of this famous poem can be found in Fukasawa, Kitahara Hakushū, 31; Jackson, “The Heresy of Meaning”: 566-57, and Charles Edward Fox, The Future in the Past: Kitahara Hakushū and the Modern Poetic Sequence, diss., Univ. of Michigan, 1998; Ann Arbor: UMI, 1998, 9825622, 34-35.
transform Japan from a feudal state into one with all of the accessories of modernity, including modern military force. By the late Meiji and early Taishō periods, however, many intellectuals had started complaining that Japan had largely ignored the inner world of the self. As the country moved from the early Meiji emphasis on civilization to an emphasis on culture in the late Meiji and Taishō periods, more and more writers began to explore the experiences, perceptions, and place of the individual within society. Hakushū’s introduction to Jashūmon and Kaita’s “Shigatsuタンショ” represent manifestations of this introspective drive. The ending of Kaita’s poem, “blow the bloodstained bugle / If our armaments are complete” signals that Kaita believed that the push to create a modern military state had given way to an atmosphere of free expression in which young poets could celebrate the self.

Kaita’s Contact with New Stylistic Developments

Diary entries and accounts from Kaita’s friends show that he was fascinated with many of the key works helping to reshape poetry and narrative. For instance, Yamamoto Jirō wrote the following in one of his remembrances of Kaita.

I remember that when he talked of Ėgai’s Sokkyō shijin (The Improvisatore) and Minawa shū (Foam upon the Water), Kaichōon, and so on, he would get in his eyes the enraptured look of a drunken man. He would move his head and hands about and would behave as if mad. He might walk about preoccupied, and then suddenly stop.61

Ėgai’s Sokkyō shijin was a translation of the German edition of Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen’s (1805-1875) romantic tale of an abbé-turned-minstrel who wanders about Italy and has several amorous adventures.62 It evokes art-filled cities, overgrown fields, colorful festivals, peasant homes, and ancient ruins – a lush world of intense passions and artistic inclinations that ignited the imagination of Kaita and many of his contemporaries. Ėgai’s translation was rendered in elaborate, lyrical language, which propelled the work to great fame in Japan. The collection Minawa shū, which first appeared in 1892, contained a number of short stories and poems Ėgai published elsewhere, including the entire text of Omokage. Much of the work Kaita wrote in the 1910s contains the same infatuated statements, sighs of love and loneliness, and expressions of adulation seen in Omokage. At the same time, they also contain the evocations of


scenery, color and synesthetic metaphors seen in the symbolist poetry of Kaichōon. The similarities between Kaita’s style and those of the French poets in Kaichōon were readily apparent to contemporaries; for instance, the advertisements that Ars ran in newspapers for Kaita no utaeru quoted the author Taketomo Sōfū as describing Kaita’s “impassioned, subtle, and profound emotions” as being “very close to those of Rimbaud and Baudelaire.”

One reason Kaita have been so fond of the three works cited above may relate to the personal connections between his family, Ōgai, and Bin. Kaita’s father Tanisuke had been the teacher of Ōgai’s younger brother, Mori Junzaburō. Tanisuke’s ancestors had been the official doctors to the lords of Tsuruoka Castle in Yamagata. Ōgai, who had studied medicine in Germany, was one of the foremost authorities on Western medicine in Japan at the time, and most likely, Tanisuke and Ōgai struck up a friendship while talking about medicine. Meanwhile, Kaita’s mother, Tama, was a maid in the Ōgai household. Eventually, Ōgai introduced Tanisuke to Tama, and the two became engaged. Tama left Ōgai’s employ before giving birth to Kaita, her first son, but she remained in contact with her former employers. The young Kaita became friends with Ōgai’s son Oto (1892-1967). In fact, Kaita is known to have sent six postcards to Oto in the decade between 1907 and 1917. Two from 1907 thank Oto for letters; one from 1912

63 Kaita no utaeru by Murayama Kaita, advertisement, Yomiuri shinbun, 8 Oct 1920, Morning edition: 1.
65 Iida Shizue, Fūka (Tokyo: Shinpūsha, 1998) 8. While serving as a maid in Ōgai’s home, Tama inadvertently found herself in the middle of one of the most infamous debates on art theory during the Meiji period. According to Kaita’s biographer, the poet Kusano Shinpei, one of Ōgai’s close friends, the artist Harada Naojirō (1863-1899) used Tama as the model for his 1889 painting Kiryū Kannon (Kannon Riding a Dragon), which depicts the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara solemnly standing upon a dragon rising from a misty lake. Kusano Shinpei, Murayama Kaita, 59. The following year, Harada exhibited the painting in the Naikoku kangyō hakurankai (Third Fair for the Encouragement of Domestic Industry). It won third prize for outstanding ability but achieved greater notoriety when Toyama Masakazu denounced it as no more than a romantic fantasy devoid of content. Ōgai leapt to his friend’s defense, and this response led to an extended series of rebuttals in public lectures and magazine editorials that made Kiryū Kannon one of the most discussed paintings of the year. About this painting and the subsequent debate, see Haga Tōru, Kaiga no ryōbun: Kindai Nihon hikaku bunka shi kenkyū (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 1984) 245-66.
expresses gratitude for magazines Oto sent. In the last card from 1917, Kaita apologizes for being out of touch and invites Oto to visit, proving that after Kaita came to Tokyo in 1914, he renewed contact but had difficulty keeping up his side of the friendship.

Kaita’s nephew, the woodblock print artist Murayama Tarō, has commented that according to family legend, Ōgai was the person who bestowed Kaita with his unusual given name.67 (Kaita’s given name is written with the characters, kai槐, meaning Sophora japonica, a kind of tree considered auspicious in China, and ta多, meaning “many.”) Ōgai’s diary, however, only mentions the Murayama children once. It recounts that during a work-related trip to Kyoto in December 1909, Kaita’s mother came to his inn with one of her sons, but it is unclear whether the son was the thirteen-year old Kaita or his younger brother Keiji, who was then ten.68 Also visiting Ōgai that day was Ueda Bin, who also shared a soft spot in his heart for Kaita’s mother. Ōgai’s son has written that after the Murayama family moved to Kyoto, Tama happened to meet Bin, then a professor at Kyoto Imperial University, at the home of Mori Junzaburō, who sometimes invited Tama to his home. Bin was so taken with Tama’s fine example of Edo dialect that he invited her to his house on a number of occasions.69 Bin assumed a professorship at Kyōto teikoku daigaku (Kyoto Imperial University) in 1908, and so Tama’s acquaintance with him predates Kaita’s earliest verse by only a couple of years. The fact that Kaita’s family associated so closely with these men of letters no doubt encouraged Kaita’s interest in the arts and probably even encouraged him to think of himself as a member of Japan’s literary and artistic elite.

Another important figure in the Japanese literary world who had a close relationship to Kaita’s family was Kitahara Hakushū. Kaita’s cousin and artistic mentor, Yamamoto Kanae, had been a close friend of Hakushū since the late Meiji period when Hakushū contributed a number of poems to the art and literature magazine Hōsun, which Kanae had helped to found in 1907. On December 12, 1908, at a restaurant near the Ryōgoku Bridge on the Sumida River, both Kanae and Hakushū participated in the first meeting of the Pan no Kai (Pan Society), an organization

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67 Iida Shizue, Fūka, 8.


that sought to promote interaction between visual artists and poets and to imitate the café discussions of art and literature common to France in the late nineteenth century. Attending the first meeting of the society – which was named after the mischievous Greek god of shepherds and flocks by poet and playwright Kinoshita Mokutarō – were a number of painters and poets associated with Hōsun. In addition to Hakushū, Kanae, and Mokutarō, the participants included Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958), Kanae’s colleague at the Nihon bijutsuin and an artist known for his oil paintings; Morita Tsunetomo (1881-1933), a painter and printmaker who worked in an impressionist style; and Yoshii Isamu (1886-1960), a poet of tanka verse. A number of these figures were attracted to Bin’s translations and the symbolist poems of Kanbara Ariake and Susukida Kyūkin, the first generation of Japanese poets to turn to symbolism. Several years later, Mokutarō recalled, “At that time, we enthusiastically read the history of impressionism and the artistic debates about it. Meanwhile, Ueda Bin was active, and influenced by his translations and so on, we dreamed of the lives of Parisian artists and poets and tried to imitate them.” As with Parisian literary groups like the Hydropathes, Zutistes, Chat Noir or Soirées de La Plume, which combined literary discussion with merrymaking, meetings of the Pan no kai often featured frivolity, music, the presence of geisha, and copious amounts of alcohol. The society disbanded four years later because there were no firm principles linking the group, but many important writers and artistic figures of the day, including Ueda Bin, Takamura Kōtarō, Nagai Kafū and Tanizaki Jun’ichirō participated before it disbanded. One of the crowning achievements of the group was the publication of Hakushū’s Jashūmon, which also contained one illustration by Kanae. Through these early interactions, Kanae forged a lasting relationship with the Kitahara family, which he eventually cemented through marriage. In 1917, Kanae married Kitahara Ie (1893-1959), Hakushū’s younger sister, and thus became the poet’s brother-in-law. Kaita mentions the event in his diary, simply stating, “Today I woke up, went to Tabata, stopping by my cousin’s house. Today is the day of Kanae’s marriage” (362). He does not mention Hakushū’s presence, however. In Kaita’s diaries, the only direct mention of Hakushū or his work comes from a telegraphic comment from July 12, 1917 that says he found Hakushū’s 1915 anthology of tanka Kirara shū (Mica) to be “interesting” (361). Because this comment comes


71 The Hydropathes, founded about 1878 by Emile Goudeau, was described by its founder as the negation of a literary school and featured members ranging from the novelist Guy de Maupassant (1850-1893) to actress Sarah Bernhardt (1845-1923). This group provided a model for the other later societies listed here. Cornell, The Symbolist Movement, 15.
about five years after Kaita’s earliest poetry, it cannot help us determine whether he had read Hakushū’s writing or not at that time. Still, Hakushū’s influence in early twentieth century poetics was so pervasive that it may have reached Kaita independently of such channels.

A number of the poems Hakushū wrote during his association with the Pan no kai display a highly aestheticized style, which in its lyrical accessibility and thematic concerns, resembles the symbolism of Verlaine. One often finds in them intense descriptions of sensory perception, the use of landscape and atmospheric conditions as indexes of emotional state, the consistent use of musical and rhythmic language, and the repeated expression of melancholic and love-haunted languor – all characteristics Kaita would emulate. Known for its pursuit of sensual beauty, this style represents an important stage in the naturalization of European symbolism by Japanese writers. Hakushū and his Pan no kai compatriots are often called the “aesthetic school” (tanbiha) because of their use of this highly aestheticized style. “Sora ni makka na” (“In the Sky, Crimson”), a short four-line poem that Hakushū first published in Hōsun in 1909 and later included in Jashūmon, is typical of the style. This poem became particularly popular, and during the Pan no kai’s meetings, members often sang it to the tune of Rappa no setsu (Strains of the Trumpet), a song popular during the Russo-Japanese war.

The lyrics juxtapose crimson clouds, dyed perhaps by the sunset, with a deep red glass of alcohol, perhaps wine, a foreign drink that evoked Europe and the decadent, aesthetically inclined culture of poetry and art centered there. Because the first, second, and fourth lines consist of subjects without predicates, the connection between the clouds, spirits, and the narrator’s melancholy is never explicitly stated. Perhaps the sight of the clouds recalls the image of wine or perhaps the narrator is seated directly beneath, wine in hand. The exact relationship between images is unclear, but their concurrence evokes a twilight moment of melancholic world-weariness that the narrator himself is at a loss to explain.

The poems that Hakushū wrote after Jashūmon continue to use pseudo-symbolist motifs to express emotion. For instance, Hakushū’s 1911 anthology Omoide (Memories) contains one

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72 Kitahara Hakushū, Hakushū zenshū, vol. 1, 29.
section of sixty-one brief poems titled “Danshō” (“Fragments”), which make extensive use of the stylistic motifs, juxtapositions, slightly illogical metaphors, and melancholic tone seen in his poetry from his days with the Pan no kai. The second poem in “Danshō,” for example, describes the melancholic loneliness of the narrator upon seeing someone depart.

Ah, such sadness, ああかなし、
Such pathetic sadness, あはれかなし、
You pass by, 君は過ぎます、
Amid the incense of a smoldering melody, 薫いみじきメロデアのにほひのなかに
Like the fading notes of a clarinet 薄れゆくクラリネットの音のごとく、
You pass me by. 君は過ぎます。

The departure of the narrator’s beloved causes a poignant moment of loss, and in a synesthetic simile, he likens her passage to the dying tones of a clarinet’s tune. In this simile, the narrator employs a mixture of olfactory and aural sensations. In its synesthetic combination of motifs, the poem evokes a passionate but fading song, which fills the air with its gentle, pleasant presence as it recedes. As the following chapter demonstrates, the melancholic tone, the carefully tuned breaks in logic, and the diffuse, atmospheric description of Hakushū’s poetry recurs often in Kaita’s poetry. Kaita wrote much of his early verse about male-male desire around 1913, when Hakushū’s influence over the literary world was at its height. Not surprisingly, much of Kaita’s early writing, which describes or was inspired by his passion for Inō Kiyoshi, displays the kinds of stylistic touches also present in Hakushū’s writing.

Although Kaita mentions a handful of poets in his diaries and letters, he seems to have been especially interested in Rimbaud’s poetry. In March 1913 he wrote, “Rimbaud’s Le bateau ivre (The Drunken Boat) and the ‘Verhaeren’ things are rather interesting” (345). It was about


74 Art historian Sasaki Teru has also suggested that a link exists between the images in Hakushū’s poetry and Kaita’s paintings. In 1915, Kaita produced one of his best-known images, Ibari suru razō (Nude Monk Urinating). This painting shows a nude figure with a glowing halo and a face much like Kaita’s clasping his hands in prayer as he urinates in the midst of a dramatic landscape of tall mountains (Figure 8). Sasaki suggests Kaita may have conceived of this image while reading Hakushū’s “Akaki sōjō (“Red Monk”) in Jashūmon or “Ibari suru orandajin” (“The Urinating Dutchman”) in Omoide. Sasaki Teru, “Tadaretaru bi no jikan tarashime yo,” 17. For the two poems Sasaki mentions, see Kitahara Hakushū, Hakushū zenshū, vol. 1, 17-18 and vol. 2, 212-13.


76 Kaita surrounds Verhaeren’s name with quotes, perhaps because he thought the proper name was a title.
this time that his schoolmates nicknamed him “Rimbaud,” knowing that the famous French poet, like their friend, was given to eccentric behavior and frenetic bursts of literary production. (One of the most famous examples of Kaita’s peculiar behavior occurred one night when he donned a grotesque mask and wandered through the streets of Kyoto while playing an ocarina to startle passers-by.\footnote{Inspired by this famous incident, the tanka poet Kasugai Ken (1938- ) has included the following poem in his anthology \textit{Miseinen} (\textit{Not Yet a Young Man}) from 1960: “A supple young tree bends / In the blowing gale / The young man Kaita / Too blows his ocarina / In fresh green tones” (疾風に若木がしなび青々とオカリナを吹 けり少年槐多も). Kasugai Ken, \textit{Miseinen} (Tokyo: Tanka shinbunsha, 2000) 16. I thank Suzuki Yasuko for sharing this poem with me.) In the March 1914 letter to Yamamoto Jirō, Kaita begins his list of “Nagano loves” with the proclamation, “This strange little ‘Rimbaud of simian society’ (enkō shakai no ramubō) has already dug up three loves here in this mountainous province” (401). Here, he parrots a sobriquet that Yamamoto and his friends had applied to him – one that comments on his adolescent poetic abilities and his foolish, simian-like qualities. A letter of December 1914 also to Yamamoto ends, “From here on out, it is not I who is Rimbaud. You are!” (410) Kaita then resolutely declares that his future lies in the visual arts, not literature. With this, he transfers his poetic nickname to Yamamoto, who was, at this point, more inclined toward literature than he.

\textbf{“He Who Knows You”: The Aesthetics of Longing}

Approximately half of Kaita’s poetic output dates from 1913 and 1914, and a significant percentage of it addresses someone identified only as kimi (“you” or “thou”) but who, in many cases, matches the description of Inō Kiyoshi. The contemporary poet Takahashi Mutsuo (1937-) states a common opinion when he writes that of Kaita’s poems, “the ones that stand independently and sparkle as poetic creations are concentrated in the years 1913 and 1914 when Kaita’s feelings of love for Inō were at their peak.”\footnote{Takahashi Mutsuo, \textit{Seishun o yomu}, 235.} One reason for the appeal of these works is their use of particularly lush, aesthetic language used to express romantic feelings. One consistently finds that instead of describing the bodily or facial appearance of the beloved himself, the poems employ less direct means to reveal the narrator’s state of mind, such as providing elaborate descriptions of the surroundings or the feelings the beloved inspires. Kaita’s atmospheric descriptions commonly involve rich, Hakushūesque imagery – jewels, color-laden...
skies, fireworks, sunsets, languorous sobs of instruments, and so on – to evoke the narrator’s feelings.

The use of landscape to set mood is a common motif in romantic and symbolist poetry. With these movements, landscape was usually presented not as an objective description of the external world but as a carefully crafted environment that served as a projection of the author’s singular vision. Verlaine and Baudelaire, the progenitors of many of the motifs dominating symbolist verse, often included shadowy landscapes in their work that seem to be pregnant with personal meaning. Perhaps it should therefore come as no surprise that Kaita, who eagerly read their poems in *Kaichōon*, would also employ landscape in his earliest work for similarly subjective purposes. One example is “Nigatsu” (“February”), one of Kaita’s earliest extant poems.79

You go – light and dark stripes streak heaven’s vault
In the pale twilight filtering through February
Snow falls over the beautiful sky
Adorned with chains of curved jewels
It falls steadily but because it is day
It becomes indistinct and vanishes
Even the Woman of the Weeping Marsh of Kashiwara
Spares her silver tears
And the farmers think fondly of the light
As ghostly and hazy as liquor
Is it dusk or merely midday?
You go – the staggering stripes of twilight
Cross the vault of heaven
Such pleasure I feel gazing upon it and walking with you

79 *Kaita no utaeru* gives the date 1913 for this poem, but since the anthology was compiled almost a decade later from manuscripts that were probably undated, one must take these dates with caution. The editors of the collection tell us that Kaita began circulating poetry among friends as early as 1911, and so some of the poems listed in *Kaita no utaeru* as coming from 1913 may have been written earlier. See Imazeki Keiji and Yamazaki Shōzō, “Murayama Kaita ryakuden,” <Final section> 1.

80 The third stanza contains a reference to a deity from Japanese mythology, the “Goddess of the Weeping Pond.” According to the seventh century *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*), she was born from a teardrop of the god Izanagi. Kaita’s poem states that the beauty of the winter sky laced with snow is so great that even the weeping woman will halt her tears to gaze at it for a moment. Uneotsutamoto Shrine, also known as “Nakisawame jinja” or “The Shrine of the Woman of the Weeping Pond” is located in Kashiwara City, Nara Prefecture. This mythological allusion and the subsequent mention of curved jewels (*magatama*), a type of jewelry often found in burial sites from protohistoric Japan, evoke the ancient past, whose distant furies and passions fascinated the adolescent Kaita.
This poem describes a winter walk underneath a snowy sky with a person identified only with the affectionate second-person pronoun kimi. Poet and critic Ōoka Makoto (1931- ) has asserted that the referent of kimi must have been Inō Kiyoshi; likewise, composer Nishimura Akira (1953- ), who has set some of Kaita’s poems to music, comments that this poem describes the love for one boy for another.81 Although Inō may well be the figure identified as kimi, the poem provides no overt clues as to the referent’s identity. This early poem, however, demonstrates one of the primary methods Kaita uses to set mood, namely placing the beloved against a backdrop of a vast sky or landscape, which then serves as the screen upon which the narrator’s feelings are projected.

The poem “Sora” (“Sky”), also from 1913, describes a similar scene.

If two, soaked by the beautiful sky,  
Should align their steps  
In that moment, a silver chain will pull the dusky air  
And sound out to the couple, shiny and glittering

This lovely music continues without stop  
For the sky is enraptured  
Two people walk  
Illuminated by the shining light of autumn

Beneath the beautiful sky shine the lights  
Trembling in the shape of a cross  
Ah, what a sight! Upon the great roads of the capital  
Two people walk caught up in rapture.

As the narrator and the friend accompanying him align their paces, the clouds in the sky form a silver chain while the dusky light of autumn spills over them. The surroundings not only set the mood. When the sky transfers its “rapture” to the couple at the end of the work, it seems to interact with them directly. This poem appears in Kaita no utaeru several poems after the introductory poem to a small, hand-made anthology called Aoiro haien (The Ruined Garden in Green), which Kaita dedicated to Inō. Although the editors of Kaita no utaeru did not indicate

81 Ōoka Makoto, Zoku oriori no uta, Iwanami Shinsho 146 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1981) 7; Nishimura Akira, Introductory notes, Aoiro haien: Mubansō josei gashō no tame no, Murayama Kaita no shi ni yoru, Op. 3 (The Bluish Deserted Garden: For Female Chorus, Prose Poems by Kaita Murayama), trans. Tomoko Yonetsu, Bruce and Lynne Flanary (Tokyo: Ongaku no tomo, 2000) 2. Both Ōoka and Nishimura appear to have been especially drawn to the first stanza. Ōoka selected only the first two lines of the poem to include in his anthology; likewise, Nishimura extracted only the first and final couplets of the poem to include in a pastiche of lines from Kaita’s early work called “Kimi ni” (“To You”).

62
exactly what poems appeared in the collection dedicated to Inō, “Sora” was likely one of them, given its proximity to the introductory poem.

One of Kaita’s most famous poems also uses atmospheric conditions and landscapes to suggest the effect produced by the beauty of his beloved. Here, however, landscape appears within the context of similes and metaphors instead of juxtaposition.82

Ah, he who knows you
Knows spring one month in advance
Your eyes are the vernal sky
Your cheeks, flowering cherries, red as blood
Jewels cover your hands and feet,
Casting the sunlight into dazzling forms
And he who knows you
Knows summer two months in advance
With just a look, one’s heart is set aflame,
Burning red as the sun setting over a land of fire
Simply stifled in the maddening heat,
One is driven to madness, wildly searching into eternity
Ah, he who knows you
Knows autumn three months in advance
Such a charming, sweet, and sad countenance
Your lips are hills and fields of cinnabar
Share with me just as they are
The dazzling autumn days in your exalted eyes
And he who knows you
Knows winter four months in advance
In your absence, all eyes fall to the ground,
All things lose light and color
Struck no longer by taste, scent, or sound
All merely waits in earnest for you, for spring to return

In this poem, the mere sight of kimi brings color and warmth into the narrator’s world, and kimi’s countenance provides the point of departure for the imaginary landscapes through which the intensity of the narrator’s feelings is revealed. Though the text veers from realism toward high conceptualization or even abstract description, it also lingers on kimi’s flushed lips, eyes, and

82 Because the looseleaf manuscripts on which Kaita no utaeru was based were never organized and typeset during Kaita’s life, he never had the opportunity to review his work, assign titles to certain poems, or discard less successful works that he did not want published. This poem is one of his many untitled works.
cheeks as if particularly drawn to these erogenous zones. The body serves as the point of departure for fantasy, and thus physical desire plays a subtle role in the dynamics of this poem.

This poem introduces another common motif in Kaita’s work: the prominent use of the color red. The first stanza likens the addressee’s cheeks to cherry blossoms, which are not the traditional pink or white of this celebrated flower, but the intense hue of blood, thereby imbuing a traditional poetic subject with new vital intensity. Later, the sight of the addressee evokes the scarlet sun of a land of flame, and toward the end, kimi’s lips evoke thoughts of an autumn landscape. In his laudatory review of *Kaita no utaeru* published in 1920, Arishima Takeo was one of the first writers to comment how often Kaita deployed color-related imagery.\(^8^3\) As he notes, Kaita splashes his poems with color, almost as if coating a canvas with oils. Purple, gold, blue, and green are among his favorite hues, but red appears with particular frequency, most often in contexts associated with passion. A passion for the color red continued throughout Kaita’s short career. In a single line written in a notebook in 1918, one year before his death, he quips, “The world is red, not blue nor yellow” (128).\(^8^4\) Shortly before his death, he wrote two especially well known poems, “Garansu” (“Garance”) and “Ippon no garansu” (“A Tube of Garance”) that express the intense, impassioned pleasure that he derived from garance, a dark red paint derived from madder.\(^8^5\)

The collection of the Mie Prefectural Art Museum includes an early love letter that Kaita wrote to an unnamed person identified only as “kimi.” Known in art history circles as the “Pink Love Letter,” it shows that Kaita used the motifs of landscape and the color red to describe his passions even in his personal writing. (See Figures 4 and 5.) The letter is written in gray letters on brilliant pink paper and is decorated with disconnected, wavy lines and a small image of a person seated by a fountain. Though the heavy watercolors obscure seven characters toward the middle of the letter, the majority of the text is legible.

\(^{8^3}\) Arishima Takeo, Rev. of *Kaita no utaeru*, 405. The contemporary poet Takahashi Mutsuo has also commented that Kaita’s tanka, like his other verse in non-traditional forms, overflows with intense colors that reflect the intensity of feeling in his short life. Takahashi Mutsuo, *Seishun o yomu*, 240. Takahashi also discusses the use of color in Kaita’s tanka in Takahashi Mutsuo and Sakai Tadayasu, “Kokichibito: Kaita no kakutō,” *Yuriika* 31.7 (Jun 1999): 99-101.

\(^{8^4}\) For a reproduction of the original page of the notebook containing this line, which is now in the Mie Prectural Art Museum, see Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, *Murayama Kaita ten*, 112. On the museum’s collection of manuscripts, see Higashi Shunrō, “Murayama Kaita: Sobō, shi genkō,” *Okada bunka zaidan kizō sakuhin shū II: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan no shožōhin yori*, Mie kenritsu bijutsukan (Tsu: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, 1999) 172-74.

\(^{8^5}\) See the translations of these poems in in Appendix B, where they appear in the body and footnotes of the translation of Edogawa Ranpo’s essay on Kaita from 1934.
Oh kimi!
Truly I cannot tell you
I am but one person yearning for you
My love is a beautiful electrical water fountain
In red □□□□□□□□ in silver
Spewing, rising, then raining down
Over the garden of my heart. There in the shade
I suppress my cries of one-sided love
The red moon rises faintly
Oh kimi! At least try to feel pity
For this longing of mine
(Do not be alarmed at reading this letter
Others can forgive this bad habit of mine
For writing this sort of thing…) Oh generous kimi!
Hide this in the depths of your smile!

Farewell for now. From the red demon

As elsewhere in Kaita’s work, landscape – here a park with a central fountain that erupts with dazzling glory – serves as a metaphor for the narrator’s emotions. Halfway through the letter, Kaita begins to imagine himself, like the small figure he drew on the letter itself, within this garden of emotion, lamenting his unrequited love. The red moon, which appears at the edge of the letter, hangs in the sky over the fountain and adds an eerie but lovely touch to this metaphorical garden of passion, cloaked in the night of unreciprocated desire.

The letter shows how much pleasure Kaita took in his feelings of loneliness and unrequited yearning. Beneath the text, Kaita has written in pale roman letters, “Chotto kirei deshō” (“Rather lovely, don’t you think?”) as if particularly pleased with his work. Kaita signs the letter “The Red Demon” (akaoni) coining an sobriquet for himself that combines the color red, which frequently appears in his descriptions of intense, passionate feeling, and the word “demon,” a creature that in Japanese legend often pursues its own desires with single-minded, animalistic devotion. (This nickname also involves a play on his given name. Kaita 槐, the first

86 Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 181. This letter does not appear in Kaita’s complete works.

87 It was during the Meiji period that fountains became common fixtures in public parks. In 1877, the government constructed the first fountain in a public space in Tokyo’s Ueno Park for the first Naikoku kangyō hakurankai (Domestic Exposition for the Encouragement of Industry) in imitation of the European expositions, which often placed fountains in public squares and piazzas. Soon afterward, many major parks in cities throughout Japan had them. Satō Akira, Funsui shi kenkyū (Tokyo: Intarakushon, 1999) 381-83.
character of his given name, contains on its right side the character oni, meaning “demon.”

The signature shows Kaita playfully adopting a decadent, desiring identity similar to that of the narrative persona of his early poetry. Both this letter, which was presumably written with a particular person in mind, and the early amorous poetry describe similar feelings in analogous literary styles.

Two motifs in the Pink Love Letter, namely the fountain and the red moon, also appear prominently in Hakushū’s poetry. “Fukiage no inshō” (“Impressions of a Fountain”), written in July 1908 and included in Jashūmon, contains a similar, melancholy scene of a fountain in a park.

The first stanza suffices to give a taste of the languorous, melancholy tone of the work.

The fountain’s slow dripping —
The depths of a misty park, the light of the setting sun
The yellow murmur of the basin,
All, now
The color of a sweet sigh.

噴水のゆるきしたたり。—
霧しぶく苑の奥、夕日の光、
水盤の黄なるさざめき、
なべて、いま
もののあまき嘆嘆の色。

As the title indicates, the poem presents impressionistic glimpses of a fountain in a park at sunset. Another poem, “Kōen no usugure” (“Dusk in the Park”), the first in Hakushū’s 1913 anthology Tōkyō keibutsu shi oyobi sono ta (Scenes of Tokyo and Other Poems), also describes a park with a fountain. The first stanza is as follows.

In the pale bluish, silver air,
Water drips discreetly from a fountain,
The dim light of dusk lingers for a moment,
As a woman passes seductively by,
the color of a fluffy feather boa.

ほの青き銀色の空気に、
そこなく噴水の水はしたたり、
薄明ややしばしまかえぬほど、
ふくらなる羽毛樸巻のいろなやましく
女ゆきかふ。

In subsequent stanzas, the poem evokes the sights, smells, and sounds of a park at dusk. There are, for instance, arc lights glowing in the mist, a train squealing in the silence, and flickering lights casting “hysteric eyes” at the narrator, but it is the conceit of the garden, the melancholic mood, and the artful looseness between individual elements of the scene that recur in the Pink Love Letter. Finally, the motif of the red moon, which hangs with such bittersweet melancholy

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88 The pink love letter shows no signs of ever having been folded to fit in an envelope, and it remained with Kaita’s sketches and writings until purchased in 1992. Judging from these facts, it seems to have never to have been sent.

89 Kitahara Hakushū, Hakushū zenshū, vol. 1, 92-93.

over the park in Kaita’s letter resembles the moon that appears in the fifty-first poem of “Danshō” in the anthology Omoide.

Red crescent moon,  色赤き三日月、
Red crescent moon  色赤き三日月、
Today again lying in bed  今日もまた臥所に
Your child blows his toy silver flute,  君が児は銀笛のおもちやをぞ吹く、
How peaceful is his play!  やすらけきそのすさびよ。91

The red moon adds a decadent, eerie touch to the calm scene. Unlike the Pink Love Letter where it hangs over a park, it here hangs over a bed with a child, who plays peacefully with a silver flute. There is little question that Kaita was using the same kinds of visual motifs that Hakushū and his Pan no kai compatriots had put into circulation.

“The Green Extravagance of Wheat Not Yet Become Wine”: The Poems to Inō

Though many of the early poems were probably written with Inō Kiyoshi in mind, only three shi and several tanka bear his name in their dedications. As mentioned above, Aoiro haien, one of his handmade anthologies from about 1913, was dedicated to “the prince,” Kaita’s nickname for Inō. Many anthologies of poetry from the time, including Hakushū’s Jashūmon, contain short introductory verses designed to set the tone for the work that follow. Kaita most likely wrote the following verse following that convention.

The Ruined Garden in Green

These poems are dedicated to my friend,  是等の詩はわが友なるあへかなる少年のそ
the helpless and pretty youth whom I shall call “the prince”  の異名を PRINCE と呼ばに捧ぐるなり

I long in earnest for extravagance –  われ切に豪奢を思ふ
For the extravagance of  青梅のにほひの如く
Sipping alcohol in a garden  感せまる園の日頃に
Where one is overcome by a feeling  酒精なむる豪奢を。(17)
Like the aroma of green plums

The poem above does not describe Inō directly, but the image of hard, unripe, green plums with an inviting fragrance suggests an undeveloped rawness not unlike that of an adolescent youth who

91 Kitahara Hakushū, Hakushū zenshū, vol. 2, 86.
has not yet quite reached the peak of maturity. With its intense yearning for sensual, indulgent pleasures beyond the narrator’s reach, the poem sets a tone of longing appropriate to a collection of poems about unrequited love. Incidentally, the comparison of the narrators’ beloved to an extravagant liqueur appears in another early poem, “Kimi ni” (“To You”), which also describes yearning from a distance.

Truly, you are the beautiful delay  
When twilight has not yet become night  
Truly, you are the green extravagance  
Of wheat not yet become wine

When you smile with your cool grin  
Of all that still has not reached the end of its path  
Nor met the peak of prosperity  
You exist fully, you exist until eternity

Then stay long, beautiful youth  
With your refined eyes, so wide and bright,  
Reflecting like faint jewels,  
Stay long into the twilight

Oh, when I part from you,  
How wrenching is my departure!  
But from a distance, I shall continue to long  
For you, my lord, as you smile in the twilight

The image of the ruined or abandoned garden (haien) central to the introductory poem of *Aoiro haien* appears in a large number of other poems from 1913 by Kaita. Numerous classical Japanese texts, such as *Ise monogatari* (The Tale of Ise) use the image of ruined gardens, often in descriptions of the domiciles of women living without male support, but the poet Miki Rofū had reintroduced it into the poetical lexicon with his anthology *Haien* (The Ruined Garden) of 1909. Rofū used the image of an unkempt garden near his home in Zoshigaya, Tokyo in the poem “Sariyuku gogatsu no shi” (“A Poem for Departing May”) to express his melancholic feelings regarding the rapid passing of youth.92 For Rofū, as for Kaita, the garden served as a symbol reflecting the state of mind of the narrative persona. Rofū, however, was not the only poet associated with the “aesthetic school” to use this image. The image of the ruined garden also appears in poem number forty-seven of Hakushū’s “Danshō.”

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Down the light rain comes, down it comes
Over the green of the abandoned garden
Singing faintly as it falls
Oh poppy flowers, poppy flowers,
Softly shall you burn …

為什麼，這個廢棄的園圃，
為什麼，為什麼，為什麼，因為小雨

廢棄的園圃，

這裡，這個廢棄的園圃，滿是翠綠的過長，充滿著浪漫的音符。

這首詩成為了“Danshō”中關於叙述者對另一位男人的感覺，以及這個被遺棄的園圃作為這個隱秘的熱情的背景。Rofū’s

Haien 代表了一項為革新實驗在文言文中的首次嘗試。在Ogai的翻譯或Tōson的詩中找到的規則的行，Rofū 營造了延展語言的片斷，那緊密地類似非規則的語法和文言文的對話式的語言，但他並沒有完全棄掉文言文。文學史家常常考慮詩歌“Hakidame”（“Rubbish Dump”）出版於Rofū 的朋友Kawaji Ryūkō (1888-1959) 在詩人雜誌Shijin (Poet)於1907年為首次寫完全在文言文中的詩歌。1914年，Kaita 跟隨這些寫者的腳步開始實驗在詩中的使用對話式語言，通過引入大量京都方言在他的詩中。雖然文言文的詩歌運動主要與自然主義詩歌和現實主義的寫法相聯，Kaita 將文言文語言以及詩歌中充滿強烈的想像力，甚至是現代主義的筆觸。

其中一首詩是，“Nigiyaka na yūgure”（“A Lively Evening”），是獻給“K.I.”的。這首詩描述了其中一次夜晚的出發Inō的家中，小川所述kaita的日記。在當時，Kaita 生活在Teramachi 路，幾條街到東部的Kamo River，所以為了去Kaguraoka的山丘，Inō住的地方，他本需要走近一英里。通過Kamo River，以及攀登山丘，他本會下降東北邊的山到Kaguraoka，稍微西南於Shirakawa-Imadegawa 交叉口。詩歌中描寫沿著路上的景點。

“A lively evening, isn’t it?
Really full of life, don’t you think?”
On this pale blue, deep evening,
What is so lively? What?
The beautiful sky over the eastern mountains,
The stars like a purple globe of rain


69
In the drunken vernal sky over the hills
Shine purple and light red like specks of hardened blood

“So lively, don’t you think?”
A group of ladies arrive,
A wanton crowd, like a line of jewels,
Their lovely white make-up shines in the dusk

Lights, lights, lights along Kamo riverbanks
Shine in gold, the arc lamps cherry pink
“Really lively, isn’t it?
A lovely night, don’t you think?”

Drops of spirits fall steadily
From my thistle-shaped nerves
Alongside my footsteps as I spring lightly along
The elegant lavender hem of Kaguraoka

“Lively, isn’t it?”
Pleased at my response
The group of lovely ladies, so numerous, replies,
“Yes, indeed…”

“A lively evening, isn’t it?
Really full of life, don’t you think?
How lovely of late
Is the beautiful child whom I love…”

As I descend Konoezaka Slope, I see the lavender
Plain of heaven reflected on the surface of the lake
The faint echoes of a silver flute
Trickle from the window of my beloved’s home

“A lively evening, isn’t it?
Really full of life, don’t you think?”
I, with my unrequited love, weep as I whisper,
“Yes, but how terribly lonely I am!”

In the original, all the passages that appear in quotes are written in the dialect used by women of the Gion district pleasure quarters. The first two lines of the poem, which give the poem its title and recurring refrain, represent the greeting of a group of geisha whom the narrator encounters while strolling through the eastern part of the city. In the next to last stanza, the narrator imitates their feminine language to voice his own thoughts about the “beautiful one” for whom he yearns. For the moment the narrator does so, he adopts a stock role in the Japanese literary imagination, namely that of a desiring geisha who is doomed to unrequited love by her station in life. Through
using their language as his own, the narrator assumes a role instantly recognizable to contemporary readers, and he gives voice to his own sad longings in a way that involves play across perceived boundaries of gender. Juxtaposed with these vernacular phrases is the language of high romanticism. The narrator paints an impressionistic picture of the city, relying heavily on descriptions of the evening sky and landscape to set the mood. At times, the sky is cool, dusky, beautiful, and quiet. At others, the light of the stars in the “drunken sky” is compared to “hardened blood,” a simile that brings to mind a spattering of dark red stars across the heavens. The use of the images of reflected stars, silver flutes, and sobs of unrequited love reveal the degree to which Kaita romanticized these sentiments, transforming them into highly aestheticized poetry.94

In 1913, Kaita dedicated the poem “Murasaki no mijin” (“A Fine Purple Dust”), to “Inō no kimi” (“You, my lord Inō”). (In this dedication, Kaita plays off the dual meanings of the word kimi, namely the second-person pronoun “you” and the original meaning of “lord” or “ruler.”) Like “A Lively Evening,” this work also speaks in highly romantic terms of unrequited love.

A fine purple dust, my affection
Scatters over the blue heaven of autumn’s end,
Dispelled in elegant fireworks
Over pale blue mountains and the vernal sky

A fine purple dust, my love
Seeks to catch you
Falling like a fountain or spray of pollen
So elegantly over your heart

As this fine purple dust entwines about you

94 The image of the silver flute (ginteki), which appears in “Nigiyaka na yūgure” and the diary entries about Kaita’s trips to Inō’s home, is a particularly common motif used to express melancholy in Hakushū’s work. For instance, the first poem in “Danshō” reads as follows.

Today again so sad I felt, all alone this evening
The faint sound of a small silver flute,
All alone, I sob faintly
My heart blowing clear in the dim light


Hakushū’s anthology of tanka verse Kiri no hana (Paulownia Flowers), published in January 1913, contains a section of sixty-three verses subtitled “Ginteki aibō chō” (“Melancholy Strains of a Silver Flute”). The section takes its name from the second poem: “Like a silver flute, / This plaintive / Monotone fades / Into the distance – / Is it no more than a dream?” (銀笛のごとも哀しく単調に過ぎもゆきにし夢なりしかな) The faint notes of a flute, which appears here in a simile, carry a dreamy, even otherworldly sadness much like in “Nigiyaka na yūgure.” Kitahara Hakushū, Hakushū zenshū, vol. 6, 14.

71
You shine gaudily,
A jewel set in the heavens
With its faces veiled briefly in haze
君は派手たる燭めきて見え
空にはめたる宝玉の
面はしばし打霞む

A fine purple dust, my heart
Lies strewn over the heaven of autumn’s end,
With a lament, it sobs with the skies
As you emerge in a burst of fireworks then hide away
紫の微塵となりてわがこころ
小春の空に散りしきぬ
なげきと空とすすりなく
火花と君といでかくる

A fine purple dust, my unrequited love
Disperses over you like a rain of crushed glass,
Somewhere, it may capture your love
Yet I ask no more that it be dust, to be beautiful
紫の微塵となりて片恋は
玻璃をくだきて君に散る
いづこに恋をとらふべき
ただ微塵なれ綺麗なれや

A fine purple dust, my yearning
Cannot withstand your scintillating form
And I weep, wandering into the lovely
Blue light of the end of autumn
紫の微塵となりてわが思い出
君が姿のきらめきに
心耐へせず泣きめぐる
小春の空の麗しき青き光に。(52)

This poem uses the highly romanticized conceit of comparing the narrator’s feelings to a cloud of dust that encircles his beloved but cannot hold him. This poem employs also several motifs popular in romantic poetry, such as the tears in the final stanza and the metaphor likening the narrator’s beloved to a jewel. At the same time, there are also distinct touches of symbolist-inspired aestheticism. The use of atmospheric conditions and the extensive use of fanciful signifiers, such as jewels, dust, fireworks, fountains, and other images foreign to the historical lexicon of Japanese poetry, combine to produce a work that describes male-male desire in an idiom that could have been written only after Japan’s encounter with symbolist poetry.

Hints of History, Baths of Blood

Kaita’s early work about amorous desire often involves historical motifs, especially motifs having to do with ancient Japan, an era that fascinated Kaita during his schooldays. An example is the four-line verse that opens the series “Gogatsu tanshō” (“Short May Poems”). The position of this poem in Kaita no utaeru suggests that this poem probably originally appeared in Aoiro haien, the small anthology dedicated to Inō.
In a lovely garden, the day of a grand imperial feast,
How the harp resounds!
Forgetting myself, I simply accompany you
Single-mindedly, wholeheartedly

The characters 奏篳 in the second line refer to a kugo, a two-sided, twenty-some-stringed harp performed in the ancient Far East. Also in the first line is the word sechie, which originally referred to the day when an emperor in the Nara or Heian court would host a large repast for his courtiers.

The poem “Chi no koshō” (“Pageboy of the Blood”), one of Kaita’s best known works, evokes the past in a poem describing a pageboy’s love for his warrior master who has recently been killed.

In the Muromachi and Edo periods, koshō (pageboys) were young warriors who attended to the demands of their older masters and sometimes became the object of their affections. In the poem, the attendant stares at the trickling blood of his master, who has apparently been slain in a battle, bout of swordsmanship, or a revenge killing. In a macabre touch, the narrator interprets the shining scarlet blood that flows slowly from master’s corpse as a final expression of love for the

95 “Gogatsu tanshō” consists of two poems. The second also describes the narrator’s love but does not use language or imagery that ties it to any specific time period.

Oh, how fine the flavor of the licking wind!
Oh, beautiful pageboy
Of the butchered noble!
Of the butchered noble!
Oh, pageboy who stares with such intensity
At the dripping blood of your master shining
As it trickles and trails forth, red and gold, red and gold!

Night has come
Here on this deserted, merciless eve
Someone begins to weep
Yes, oh pageboy of the maddened blood,
You too weep… You, beloved by the blood!

In the Muromachi and Edo periods, koshō (pageboys) were young warriors who attended to the demands of their older masters and sometimes became the object of their affections. In the poem, the attendant stares at the trickling blood of his master, who has apparently been slain in a battle, bout of swordsmanship, or a revenge killing. In a macabre touch, the narrator interprets the shining scarlet blood that flows slowly from master’s corpse as a final expression of love for the
pageboy beside him. This poem represents a departure from Kaita’s tendency to describe amorous feelings, especially male-male attraction, in the first person. Here, the love draws upon a specific historical paradigm of male-male desire, namely the bond of servitude and affection that existed between a warrior and his pageboy. The contemporary poet Takahashi Mutsuo has speculated, however, that although this poem is set in a time far removed the Taishō period, it is probably not completely unrelated to Kaita’s own life. He speculates that Kaita, who suffered under a powerful love Inō did not reciprocate, may have imagined himself as the deceased lord and Inō as the page. The master’s wounds, he argues, represent the “wounds” Inō has inflicted with his indifference, and the blood that pours forth symbolizes the passion that Kaita poured into his letters and artwork, even though they evoked no response from Inō.96 Takahashi assumes that the narrative voice, telling the page to weep, is that of Kaita, urging Inō to respond to his outpourings of emotion. After all, Kaita seems to say, these outpourings had already evoked the sympathy of other friends – the other voices weeping in the background of the poem. By insinuating a connection between himself and a fallen lord, Kaita sets himself up as a hero slain for love.

Support for this reading can be found in the somewhat more directly autobiographical poem “Chi ni shimite” (“Stained in Blood”), which dates from about the same time and uses a similar image of streaming blood as a metaphor for passion. The poem appears in Kaita no utaeru as the fourth work after the introduction to Aoiro haien and was almost certainly one of the poems in the anthology dedicated to Inō.

Stained in blood, I yearn for you
On this May afternoon
My red heart trembles
Within my pathetic body
In this abandoned garden which knows no end
In this extravagant month of May
When your form stands before me
Single-minded, I am no more
My blood has run dry
And I think I shall die
I wish to dispose of you, so splendid and cruel of heart,
And die stained in blood

血に染みて君を思ふ
五月の昼過ぎ
赤き心ぞ震ふ
あはれなるわが身に
はてしらぬ廃園に
豪奢なる五月に
君が姿立てる時
われはなくひたすらに
わが血は尽きたり
われは死なむと思ふ
華麗なる残忍なる君をすてて
血に染みて死なん。

96 Takahashi Mutsuo, “Chi no teki mote: Murayama Kaita ni okeru shiga ryōsai,” Geijutsu shinchō 48.3 (Mar 1997): 70-71. Takahashi calls this poem “a masterpiece without parallel before or since in the history of our country’s modern poetry.”
Kimi, to whom the poem is addressed, is described as beautiful yet cruelly indifferent, and the narrator yearn to escape his grip. The melodramatic declaration of his wish to achieve this end through death is not a sincere expression of the intention to commit suicide but a fantasy demonstrating the extent of the author’s passive-aggressive passion. The narrator’s psychological suffering leads him to think of physical wounds, and the fantasy of a sanguine death serves as a metaphor for his distress. Takahashi does not mention “Chi ni shimite” in the essay cited above, but the fact that this poem was written about the same time as “Chi no koshō” supports Takahashi’s reading of the latter poem as a sanguine fantasy of longing and resultant pain. In anything, “Chi no koshō” represents a more explicit evocation of the fantasy first presented in “Chi ni shimite.”

Both of these poems display the connection between the decadent motif of blood and the themes of intense passion and erotic attraction. This connection is visible in several other early works. For instance, Kaita wrote the following tanka in 1914.

Along with
The purple light
A beautiful young man
Full of blood
Walks away 97

紫の光とともに血の満ちし美少年こそ歩みゆきけれ (164)

This tanka describes an attractive bishōnen departing through the purple light of sunrise or sunset. The unusual expression “full of blood” may describe the flush of his cheeks, but more likely, it refers to some vitality or erotic attractiveness the boy possesses. Elsewhere, as in the 1913 poem “Nigaki toki” (“When Bitter”), the image of blood is used more impressionistically, as if included merely to evoke a sense of powerful intensity.

In those bitter moments,
Red blood drips onto the fruit of a cherry tree

苦き時桜実に
赤き血滴たれり

There are numerous approaches to translating tanka poetry. I follow the precedent of many translators who break the translation into five lines to imitate the internal structure of the five parts composing the traditional tanka form. (While the typical moraic pattern of a tanka is 5-7-5-7-7, some poets, including Kaita, did not always obey the demands of meter.) Others translate them in a single line of text, following the tradition in Japan of providing no returns within a poem, while still others adopt a freer layout of multiple returns and unique spacing to reflect the linguistic starts, stops, and pauses within the original text. While fewer breaks give a better sense of the élan that carries one through a tanka in the original Japanese, I have chosen to include returns so as not to obliterate the internal pauses, stops, and starts of the original.
And a sob rings through
The beautiful sky

I was walking alone
When, like a great peacock of Silla,
A beautiful young boy played
Coming, lavender, to my side

In the bitter fruit of a cherry
Hides a soiled grief
While a sob rings through
The beautiful sky

I was standing alone
Making these poisonous jewels
Shine in the midday sun
As I weep, the month of May passes, rich and dense

The narrator uses the image of his blood dripping onto an unripe, bitter cherry as one of an impressionistic string of images that describes the narrator’s mood after a particular bishōnen approaches then departs. This poem also uses a simile to compare the boy to a peacock from Silla, a Korean kingdom that lasted in various forms from the mid-fourth century to the tenth century. In this way, it endows him with a regal, exotic air of the distant past.

As this poem shows, the beauty of bishōnen represented, in Kaita’s eyes, a magnificent and mysterious vision that led him into the realm of the decadent and self-indulgent emotion that he celebrated in his poems. The connection between youthful, male beauty and powerful emotion is particularly visible in an untitled shi from 1913 that floridly describes the poignant “music of decadence.”

Oh, this is the sound of pleasure, still not fading,
In the dawn of a beautiful new world of poets…!

Oh beautiful, decadent sound
Of pleasure that shall never fade…!
It may dissipate if we drink the blood-stained wine
But it will come again, in the remnants of exhaustion

The sky lets fall raindrops that blanch
In the morning light of June
Oh, beautiful pale blue!
In it, I already see the passion of noon
Oh, beautiful, deep music
Which does not escape into eternity!
Oh, music of decadence which knows no day nor night!
As you tremble so lightly, you invite unbearable pain

Both in tone and choice of metaphor, this poem is reminiscent to Hakushū’s statements in the introduction to Jashūmon that the truly sensitive poet is “enamored with the pleasure of barely audible music” and yearns “for the red of putrefying decadence” as he faces “the mysterious” and “rejoices in visions.” Like Hakushū, Kaita uses the metaphor of music to describe the subtle emotions that arise from suggestive images and symbols – emotions that only sensitive individuals can detect. “Decadence” (taihai) does not refer here to decay or deterioration, but to the indulgent celebration of one’s emotions. The beautiful music of decadence, he announces, is audible in the work of the new generation of tanka poets who passionately extol their feelings, and Kaita, who recognizes this music, implicitly positions himself as their spiritual kindred – one of a vanguard of artistic visionaries who would reshape modern poetry. In the final lines of the first stanza, he locates one source of this music in the trembling windpipe (nodobue, literally “throat flute”) of a beloved boyfriend (otoko no kareshi) – a comment that shows he saw amorous appreciation of men as one source of the intense, powerful emotion he valued so greatly.

The Desiring Persona in Kaita’s Tanka

As the poem about the “music of decadence” suggests in its opening lines, Kaita wrote a large number of tanka during his days as a schoolboy. His complete works include one hundred and fifteen tanka from 1913 and 1914, the same years when he composed his most often anthologized shi. This is almost half of the total number of tanka he is known to have produced. The fact that Kaita became interested in tanka is entirely in keeping with his highly romantic tendencies and grandiose artistic inspirations. During the late Meiji period, the poet Yosano Akiko (1878-1942) had helped refashion this ancient form of poetry into a vehicle for powerful romantic expression with the intense evocations of amorous and erotic desire in her 1901 anthology Midaregami (Tangled Hair). Incidentally, Yosano Akiko was taken with Kaita’s work. The advertisements for Kaita no utaeru that Ars published in newspapers during 1920 quotes Akiko as saying, “Mr. Kaita’s art is a tremendous marvel. I believe that he was the first completely decadent poet to have been born in Japan.”

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99 Incidentally, Yosano Akiko was taken with Kaita’s work. The advertisements for Kaita no utaeru that Ars published in newspapers during 1920 quotes Akiko as saying, “Mr. Kaita’s art is a tremendous marvel. I believe that he was the first completely decadent poet to have been born in Japan.”
no ichiaku (*A Fistful of Sand*, 1910) and *Kanashiki gangu* (*Sad Toys*, 1912) also gave the form new life by using direct and unadorned imagery that frequently departs from the traditional poetic lexicon. Many of Takuboku’s poems describe heartache, disappointment, a sense of life’s futility, and the intensity of momentary sensations. As a result, many of his poems give the impression that he has poured his innermost thoughts into them. Although Akiko and Takuboku’s works elicited significant controversy, they were both recognized as geniuses during their own lives and helped contribute to a sense that tanka was the verse form of choice for artistic innovators and even geniuses. For a young writer such as Kaita, who was preoccupied with cultivating his own sensitivity and developing his own abilities as an artist, the decision to write tanka seems a natural one. Although Kaita’s poems are heavily colored with Akiko’s obsessive romanticism and Takuboku’s dejection, what makes Kaita’s tanka unlike those of his contemporaries is their liberal use of pseudo-symbolist motifs and strikingly imaginative metaphors. Until recently, Kaita’s tanka received far less attention than his work in other genres, but the last decade has seen considerable reevaluation of his tanka. Critic Tamaki Tōru’s study of early twentieth-century tanka argues that his tanka were nothing short of groundbreaking. Although the possibilities they present went unexplored by other poets, Tamaki comments that Kaita’s tanka, along with those of his contemporary Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892-1927), display a strong individualism that offered an alternative to the “realism of the lonely Japanese people” (*sabishii Nihonjin no riarizumu*) that dominated mainstream Japanese literature after their deaths.100

Many of the tanka from his schooldays describe feelings quite similar to those expressed in his *shi*: the yearning of a desiring, dejected lover whose ceaseless admiration for his beloved leads him to self-indulgent melancholia. Nonetheless, a handful of key poems show that he took particular pleasure in playing this role. Judging from the dedications and theme headings, Inō provided the inspiration for a large number of tanka, but many describe him within highly romanticized terms, often as a “prince” or a “lord” who seems to have stepped right out of classical literature. For instance, the following verse dates from 1913.101


101 Appendix B contains translations of these tanka and others on similar themes.
You, whom I call my
Lovely prince of flowering quince,
Watching you
All the daylong
Is more than I can bear

This poem, like a number of others, plays with the two possible meanings of *kimi*: the affectionate second-person pronoun meaning “you” and the root meaning of “lord,” or one who bears princely or regal status. By calling the referent *kimi*, this poem evokes both senses of the word simultaneously, creating a poem that resembles what an amorous courtier might have sent to a beloved prince in the age of the classical court. The narrator has christened him the “prince” of *Chaenomeles lagenaria*, an ornamental quince (*boke*) that produces white or pinkish flowers in the spartan cold of early spring. (The word *boke*, which is of Chinese etymological derivation, is not part of the traditional lexicon of Japanese poetry.) The narrator gives no sign of interacting with his beloved; he only watches him from a safe remove. A second poem from the same year once again uses the prince motif in combination with the flowering quince.

In the afternoon
Which brings the beautiful
Quince to bloom
The palace servant stops –
‘Tis you, my beautiful lord

The poem evokes the image of a court with one or more servants, who suddenly stop as if struck by the lord’s appearance.

While it is clear that the passionate, dejected but determined longing of the narrator of these poems corresponds in some degree to Kaita’s own feelings, his poetry contains a certain amount of romantic role playing as does the verse of Shimazaki Tōson, Kitahara Hakushū, Yosano Akiko, and other late Meiji poets who wrote on romantic love. For instance, a diary entry written November 19, 1913, soon after Kaita met Inō, describes the first time he passed a poem to the younger boy.
Today, out of mere caprice, I wrote the following poem and passed it to you in the sideyard.

When I think
With all the world
Of you, Inō,
How my tears fall
With the rain!

世をこめて稲生の君を思ふ時涙は雨とふりにけるかな

As a result, when I met you watching a baseball game after class, you blushed bright red, and I felt quite sorry for you (343).

Kaita’s statement that he wrote the poem just for fun (tawamure ni) suggests that he was merely playing the role of a lovesick courtier on a whim. If so, the poems should be not be read as a transparent record of Kaita’s feelings, but as imaginative literature colored by fantasy. The encounter with Inō in the schoolyard spurred Kaita’s imagination. That night Kaita made one of his many nocturnal peregrinations to Kaguraoka to the home of the young boy, and the next day, he gave eight more tanka to Inō, who quickly put them in his pocket. Kaita’s diary records in a hyperbolic statement that as the boy took them, Kaita’s eyes “overflowed with tears of gratitude” (343). The diary does not tell us which eight poems he gave to Inō; it includes only one poem, which was probably composed after their encounter.

I have started falling in love
With beautiful you
Who comes into existence
Congealing from the purple smoke
Of an incense burner

紫の香炉のけぶの凝りて成りし美しき君を思ひそめけり (343)

Even though the expression of budding love may accurately reflect Kaita’s feelings of blossoming love, the image of his lover appearing out of a waft of smoke is clearly a fanciful product of his imagination. When he describes his experience as the earnest lover yearning from afar, he does so in the rich language of exotic, aesthetic writing, producing a narrative persona whose feelings appear almost morbidly strong.

One recurring element of the love poetry of 1913 and 1914 is the decadent tendency to treat the love object as a rich vision of beauty. The following poem from 1913 provides an example.
It is an opulent
Person whom I adore,
As opulent
As the color of
That Western wine

豊かなる人をこそ好め西欧のかのぶだう酒の色の如くに (159)

The phrase *yutaka naru* (meaning opulent, rich, ample, or abundant) could be describing either
the physical or spiritual characteristics of the beloved. The narrator may be saying he prefers
someone as abundantly full of life as wine is rich in color, or someone who is physically ample,
with a body as splendid as wine. The simile in this poem recalls Hakushū’s early poetry and
Kaita’s introductory poem to *Aoiro haien*, both of which use images of alcohol to evoke a *fin-de-
siècle* air of decadent intensity. The desiring persona in the tanka does not find himself
unwittingly admiring such visions of beauty; instead, he embraces them. One poem from around
1913 describes the self-satisfaction the narrator experiences as he thinks about the person he has
become under *kimi*’s influence.

I will look back upon
Myself as a child
Who bore this dissipation
All because of you
And I will be happy

君故にこの放埓をせおぶ子と我を見かへりうれしくなりぬ (160)

The narrator reflects that when he thinks in the future about the “dissipated” or even “licentious”
(*hōratsu*) person he is now, he will be satisfied since *kimi* was the cause.

Another side to the desiring, “decadent” persona in Kaita’s poetry is that of the lover who,
like Goethe’s Werther, is so consumed with longing that rejection sends him into utter despair.
For instance, the following tanka from 1913 describes this misery.

In this world
Dispatching dull
Gray days everyday
The misery I feel,
All alone…

鈍色の日頃を送る世界には唯一人のわれの衰れさ (161)
In his loneliness, the narrator experiences time as a never-ending string of monotonous gray days. The poem provides a snapshot of the narrator’s feelings at a given moment, but other poems comment self-reflexively on the narrator’s position as the dejected lover.

Do not
Think of me with pity
Not I, the ruffian,
Who spends
Every day hated

憎まれて日頃を送る無頼子のわれをあはれと思ひ給ふな (161)

This poem probably addresses the same person as the poem that immediately follows, given the similarity in tone.

Oh, you, you…
Simply hate me in earnest
This way
All the more light
Will fall upon you

君よ君ただひたすらに我を憎めかくて君には光増しなむ (161)

Both poems have a passive-aggressive tone that reveals the irritable side of the infatuated lover. In rejecting the addressee’s pity in the first poem, the narrator insinuates that he really wants something more. In the second, he tells the addressee to go ahead and scorn him so he can be rid of the “ruffian” who loves him.

A number of the Kaita wrote about this time contain clear hints of erotic desire. Lips often appear as the focal point of this desire, as in the poem that begins “Ah, he who knows you” quoted previously. The following example was written in 1913.

Thinking of the touch
Of your lips my thoughts
Are thrown into disarray
How I long
For you, beautiful you!

くちつけを思ひて思乱れけり美しき君いかに思ふや (161)

The erotic desire in this poem, which centers on the thought of a kiss between narrator and addressee, is all the more pronounced when read in the wake of the tanka that immediately precedes it.
I think of luring you
In the coming spring
And seizing you
In the evening darkness
Of the Shogun’s Mound

来む春は君をいざなひよひやみの将軍塚に抱かんと思ふ (160)

The “Shogun’s Mound” (Shōgunzuka) was a hillock in the detached grounds of Seiren’in Temple in the hills of eastern Kyoto. This spot, named for a statue of a general said to have been erected there in the late eighth century, is higher than the surrounding land and provides a view of the city streets and Mount Hiei; however, it also offered enough privacy for erotic encounters. The mound was only a short walk from Inō’s home in Kaguraoka, and so it is not surprising that Kaita should have imagined a tryst with him there.

On New Year’s Day of 1915, Kaita wrote six tanka, to which he gave the heading “K o omou kouta” (“Small Poems Composed While Thinking about K”). These poems describe a walk with a friend for whom he feels a passionate friendship, presumably the friend identified only as “K” in the dedication. The identity of “K” is unclear. At the time Kaita wrote the poems, Inō Kiyoshi remained in Kyoto. Though the poems could be about an imaginary stroll with him, it seems more likely that they are about another friend in Tokyo, considering the emphasis that these poems place on friendship – something that Kaita had not developed with Inō. When Japanese names are written in Roman letters, K is an extremely common initial, and not surprisingly, Kaita had other friends in Tokyo with the K at the start of their name. One particularly likely possibility is that “K” was Imazeki Keiji, a young art student painter who had come from Chiba to study painting at the Nihon bijutsuin. Although three years older than Kaita, the two became close friends, and along with Yamazaki Shōzō, the future editor of Kaita no utaeru, they were known at school as “the three musketeers” (sanjūshi). After Kaita’s death, Imazeki was intimately involved in the efforts to memorialize his friend. In 1920, he compiled a chronology of his life with Shōzō for Kaita no utaeru, and in 1925, he published several remembrances about Kaita for a special issue of the art magazine Atorie. In any case, the first three poems of “K o omou kouta” are as follows.

The joy of waiting
For a dear friend
Penetrated my heart
And then the two of us
Walked together

よき友を持つ嬉しさのしみじみと心にしみて二人歩みぬ
As in the poems to Inō, the purpose of this set of verses is to record feelings, not in a factual account of the time the narrator and the addressee spent together, but to provide a powerful, exclamatory statement of romantic feelings. Worthy of note is the relative consistency of the tone with other poems by Kaita. This series shows that Kaita’s romantic appreciation of male beauty extended beyond that of Inō, who had inspired many of his poems during the previous two years. Even though the narrator’s feelings are largely homosocial in nature, the narrator’s attention to the addressee’s lips in the second poem introduces an unmistakable element of homoeroticism that echoes the erotic desire in the earlier work inspired by Inō’s beauty.

In 1915, Kaita wrote three of his most homoerotic poems; however, editors at Ars deleted several key words to protect the book from government censors. Well before the Taishō period, the Japanese government had in place a system of censorship designed to suppress material having to do with eroticism or the “dangerous thoughts” (kiken shisō) of political movements such as Marxism, socialism, anarchism, or anti-imperialism. As a general rule, government censors examined books, newspapers, and magazines after publication, and if they were found objectionable, the censors would require publishers to pull the offending work from circulation. As a result, a ban could have dire financial consequences for a publisher, who had already put forth the money required to print the work in question. In order to avoid such losses, publishers resorted to a system of self-censorship in which editors used fuseji to hide potentially problematic words or passages. Each of the following tanka contains fuseji that conceal references to something erotic, almost certainly the male genitalia.\(^\text{102}\)

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\(^\text{102}\) Japanese has many possible words that the blanks, including dankon (男根) inkei (陰茎), and the slang chinboko (ちんぼこ). Unfortunately, because so little remains of the third poem, it is difficult to guess the nature of the simile Kaita used.
These poems apparently drew their inspiration from the sight of a nude male model, whom he most likely encountered at the Nihon bijutsuin. (Most of the models who appear in Kaita’s sketches and paintings from his days a student were women, but he did produce occasional images of nude men. See Figure 13.) In the first two poems, Kaita treats homoerotic desire in relatively unadorned language, as if beginning to break away from the highly romantic and effusive imagery present in his earliest tanka. At the same time, however, the poems show an interest in parts of the body that, as the fuseji show, were not considered part of polite conversation at the time.

Incidentally, the same year Kaita wrote these tanka, he produced his most important artistic treatment of the nude male body, the oil painting *Ibari suru rō* (Nude Monk Urinating), which some scholars have seen as having a homoerotic subtext (Figure 8). The painting shows a man standing in a dramatic landscape of red mountains as he clasps his hands in *gasshō*, a gesture of Buddhist respect, and urinates into a monk’s bowl at his feet. Both the composition and use of color draws the viewer’s eyes directly to the figure’s genitals. The penis is a slightly lighter shade of red than the surrounding flesh, and from it, a yellow, black, and scarlet stream of urine arcs gracefully away from the figure’s body. The mountains in the background create a sense of depth,
and the close cropping of the space around the central figure give the impression that the painting thrusts the body of the monk toward the viewer. This image, which ranks among the most memorable of Taishō-period art, has generated much discussion among critics and art historians, some of whom comment on the erotic qualities of the painting.  

Certainly, it is not difficult to locate an erotic subtext, considering that in both urination and ejaculation involve expelling liquid from the penis. About the same time that he made the painting, Kaita also made a woodblock print and two sketches that also show similar subjects. Three of the images show the penis pulling away from the body as if partially erect, and next to the rougher of the two sketches, Kaita has scratched out the figure of a well-endowed, fully aroused man in mid-ejaculation. (See Figure 9.) The presence of this explicitly sexual image next to one of a man urinating suggests that Kaita may have been using the image of urination in order to suggest a sexual element of bodily release.

Kuboshima Seiichirō, the curator of the Shinano Drawing Museum which owns many of Kaita’s sketches, surmises that Kaita was channeling the homoerotic attraction he felt for the bishōnen Yanase Masamu into the images of urinating men. Kaita is known to have given the blue woodblock print to him. As a matter of fact, a photograph of Masamu from the mid-1910s shows the print hanging behind him on the wall of his study (Figure 6). Likewise, the more polished of the two sketches was discovered among Yanase’s papers after his death. It seems likely that Kaita either gave it to him or produced it one day while the two were conversing about new artistic projects. Kuboshima draws upon this information to speculate that the painting and sketches represent an indirect means of expressing the sexual arousal Masamu inspired in


Incidentally, Fukushima Yasuki has written the following tanka, which combines the image in the painting Ibari suru razō with the weather of the final evening of Kaita’s life: “A stark naked monk is visible, / Hands pressed together / As he urinates – / The snow falls steadily, / Never pausing” (合掌し小便をする裸僧みゆ切なかりしも雪降りしきる). Fukushima Yasuki, Fukushima Yasuki zengashō, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1999) 415.

104 Kuboshima Seiichirō, Kaiga hōrō, 87-90. Sasaki Teru also links the painting to Kaita’s feelings for beautiful young men by discussing it in the context of Kaita’s feelings for Inō. Sasaki Teru, “Tadareraru bi no jikan tarashimeyo,” 16-19.
Kaita. This supposition, while interesting, cannot of course be proved. It is true, however, that the face of the monk in the painting bears a marked resemblance to Kaita’s own, suggesting that it is a self-portrait of sorts. In the painting and the sketches, a brilliant halo surrounds the figure. Suzuki Sadami has noted that certain aspects of Kaita’s writing reflect a Taishō-period trend toward what he calls seimeishugi (“vitalism”), a world view that places a powerful élan vital or “life force” at the heart of all things, especially sexuality. Although Suzuki focuses on Kaita’s writing and does not discuss this painting in particular, the figure in Ibari suru razō with its intense, radiating halo might be read as depicting the artist’s pious rapture when he comes in contact with this vitality through the orgasmic experience of bodily release.

Two years after creating this painting, Kaita wrote a brief work called “Itsutsu no yume” (“Five Dreams”), which like Natsume Sōseki’s famous work Yume jūya (Ten Nights of Dream) published in 1908, consists of accounts of several surreal dreams without explanatory commentary. One of the stories, called “Ten no ibari” (“Urine from Heaven”) describes the narrator’s feelings as he hovers above the earth and urinates on the world below. In the story, the airborne narrator feels embarrassed, but as his need to urinate grows, he finally lets go.

When I saw the urine from my groin pointing and falling to the earth like a straight, long, golden rod, I was so enraptured that I shed tears.

Nonetheless, I felt my face grow bright red.

I could see a crowd of about five thousand people below looking up at me and laughing in unison so I hid my face and tossed in my sleep (142).

The narrator feels rapture bordering on orgasmic bliss as long as he ignores the people below. In short, this story describes the kind of pleasure that can result from an act that society generally

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105 Critic Kobayashi Masahiro has taken a different approach in locating the sexual content of these images. He draws upon Freudian theories of infantile sexual development to discuss Kaita’s images of urination as displaying an “inversion” of “normal” infantile sexuality. Kobayashi Masahiro, “Hōnyō suru Kaita,” Yuriika 31.7 (Jun 1999): 199-203. For a discussion of the relationships that several sexologists have drawn between urination and the sexual act, see Jonathan Weinberg, Speaking for Vice: Homosexuality in the Art of Charles Demuth, Marsden Hartley, and the First American Avant-Garde (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) 108-11, which discusses the erotic subtext of a 1930 watercolor of several sailors urinating together by the American painter Charles Demuth.


treats as base and embarrassing – an apparent contradiction that Kaita boldly explores in the sketches and painting from 1915. The combination of sacred and profane elements deals with the contradiction inherent in a system of morality that frowns upon certain acts, even though those acts can bring about pleasure. These images are also another product of the artist’s ongoing interest in the decadent discovery of powerful feelings in places or acts not traditionally considered beautiful.\textsuperscript{108}

**Soldiers on a Train**

The poems that Kaita wrote after moving to Tokyo in mid-1914 display less refinement and literary pretension than the earlier Kyoto poetry, which he wrote for circulation among friends, classmates, and teachers. Many of these new poems, which he probably never intended to circulate, describe the narrator’s desire to become a great artist. Of the poems about art, the majority are concerned with the theme of confidence – either the narrator’s utter lack or abundance thereof. With dizzying rapidity, the poems swing between the two extremes of despair and narcissistic self-congratulation. When one reads them without accounting for their flights of fancy or poetic hyperbole, the portrait that emerges is one of a manically depressed young artist, given to fits of frenzied production and outbursts of emotion – a view that does not always match contemporary accounts of Kaita as pensive and somewhat reserved.\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{108} Another piece of artwork that displays this interest in decadence is the drawing Ars used for the frontispiece of *Kaita no utaeru* and its sequel: a line drawing of a centaur-like creature playing a flute and standing over the English words “half animalism” [sic] (Figure 14). These words are Kaita’s own translation of the word hanjūshugi invented by Naturalist writer Iwano Hōmei (1873-1920) in his 1906 treatise *Shinpiteki hanjūshugi* (Mysterious Half-animalism). In this disjointed and rambling philosophical treatise, which draws on the thought of Swedenborg, Emerson, and Maeterlinck, Hōmei argues that the body and the spirit do not exist independently of one another and are fundamentally tied to nature. Chapter Eighteen presents the Centaur, a creature that is an indivisible combination of humanity and animal life, as a symbol of this idea. Hōmei also argues that since the universe is constantly changing, one should savor each moment. He also comments that sexual activity as well as the creation of art and literature all are all in their own way momentary acts, but he praises them as acts of asserting individuality in the face of constant change. Iwano Hōmei, *Iwano Hōmei zenshū*, vol. 9 (Tokyo: Rinsen shoten, 1995) 3-103. Kaita comments in his diary in March 1913 that he skimmed part of this work, but that the ideas in it were “already familiar” (345). Critic Yōichi Nagashima comments that Iwano’s theory was frequently understood by contemporary Japanese readers, and Iwano was considered “bestial” and a prophet of decadent dissolution. Kaita likely saw him in such a capacity. Yōichi Nagashima, *Objective Description of the Self: The Literary Theory of Iwano Hōmei* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1997) 65.

\textsuperscript{109} This view of Kaita has intrigued many fans and given rise to several recent colorful treatments of his life. These include a fictionalized biography by Kuboshima Seiichirō, the head curator of the Shinano Drawing Museum, two treatments of Kaita’s life in tanka poetry by the avant-garde tanka poet Fukushima Yasuki (1943-), known for his “zekkyō” (shouted) recitations of tanka to jazz accompaniment, and one
between 1914 and 1919 about art are self-therapeutic attempts to work out his frustrations or manifestations to encourage himself in his quest to become a successful artist. Meanwhile, homoerotic desire almost completely disappears from Kaita’s poetry. One notable exception however, is the long and relatively prosaic poem from 1915, “Densha no naka no gunjin ni” (“To Soldiers in a Train”). In it, the narrator describes how his feelings of self-doubt and dissatisfaction about his artwork are brought into high relief when he encounters a handful of powerful, attractive soldiers in a train.

My train moves forward
Outside are the magnificent fields and skies of May
The train flies through the outskirts of Tokyo
I am aboard one of the bogie cars I adore

The car is full of terrifyingly ugly people
Including five or six men kneaded out of the country mud
Who take unnatural, theatrical poses
Also there is a female foreigner speaking Japanese
Holding her albino-like child who screams and cries

A whole row of the color of shit, pimples, rancid fat
Foul breath, the ignorant imbeciles –
Together they crowd this train
Together with the wrinkled face of a woman worn from wantonness

Suddenly, I bolt up –
In the healthy menace of
Two officers by my side
What beauty!

Our warriors, strong men of the yellow race,
I sing my praises to you!
Your muscular countenances and attitudes
Elevate my rotten, degraded heart

Oh, soldiers, oh soldiers!
I have a memory of drawing a trifling picture
My dissatisfaction and regret over it make me weep
I am on edge, smeared with ash

The attraction the narrator experiences for the soldiers appears to be somewhat homoerotic in nature. Unlike the attraction described in the poems about Inō, his attraction is not in response to the physical beauty of the soldiers but the power they represent and their complete freedom from the concerns dogging him. The fourth to tenth stanzas describe the soldiers as an embodiment of a strong and vital force that stands in contrast to the weak, countrified, distracted figures elsewhere in the train. When the narrator sees the soldiers’ beautiful, muscular faces and masculine demeanor, he reads in them the authority and strength he lacks, and this gives birth to attraction and admiration. Given the vague threat of their weapons, the soldiers manifest the institutionalized potential for violence that keeps order throughout the Japanese empire. Alongside this power, his artistic difficulties seem insignificant. The narrator expresses his goal of becoming a proud being like them, and as his determination grows, he performs a volte-face and begins deriding the soldiers, having recognized them as little more than ordinary men with flashy uniforms and big swords. The final paragraph contains three fuseji, which block out two words that the editors at Ars imagined censors might find objectionable. In this case, the fuseji in
the final stanza were clearly included to block out language that might have been seen as offensive to the military and therefore potentially seditious. Moreover, in the end, Kaita seems to say, the artistic genius is superior to the ordinary military hero.

**Shapes of Desire**

Apart from the poem “Chi no koshō,” with its depiction of an attractive youth alongside a dead warrior who once loved him, Kaita’s poetry from the first half of the 1910s, the period during which he regularly depicted desire for attractive boys in his work, tends to avoid terms that lock him into a particular codification of desire, such as the age-graded shudō of the Edo period. Likewise, Kaita’s poetry does not describe male-male desire within the framework of the predatory, tough, and misogynistic brand of “hard” masculinity that often appears in descriptions of schoolboy relations in the Meiji period. The avoidance of these particular codifications permits the expression of desire ungoverned by overt hierarchies in the social status. Though the narrators in the works do not ascend to the kinds of stock roles one sees in Edo or Meiji representations of male-male desire, they do not break from tradition entirely – the consistent use of the bishōnen as aestheticized object of desire shows continuity with earlier formulations of desire. By fixing their gaze upon the figure of the beloved, the texts adopt the characteristic stance of much Edo-period and Meiji-period popular discourse on male-male sexuality, which describes the youth more as an object to be appreciated and less as desiring subject in his own right. Never in these poems do we find more than a passing sign of the bishōnen’s own desires; never is the narrative voice that of a bishōnen yearning for another male to seduce him. The treatment of the beloved as the romanticized object of desire has much to do with the nature of the relationship between Kaita and Inō. Because the two were not especially close during the years that Kaita yearned for Inō, the latter’s feelings remained for Kaita largely sealed from view.

The one stock role that Kaita does consistently adopt in his poems is that of the romantic artist who experiences sensations to their fullest, savoring them in order to cultivate his own emotional sensitivity. As mentioned above, one relatively consistent theme throughout his earliest writing is the connection between aesthetic and erotic attraction and powerful even

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110 Yamamoto Tarō, the editor of Kaita’s complete works, suggests that the missing words might be *saru* (猿) meaning “monkeys,” and *gunjin* (軍人), meaning “soldiers” (64). “Monkeys” is certainly derogatory enough that editors might have removed it, but the word “soldiers” in the final line is not particularly offensive. More insulting words, however, like *ahō* (阿呆), *baka* (馬鹿), or *gusha* (愚者), all of which deride the addressee’s intelligence, better fit the context.
“decadent” emotion. Like Hakushū who sought out unusual and exotic “visions” that would help stimulate his emotions as he strove to write his poetry, Kaita turned to the beauty of young boys like Inō to experience the kind of romantic emotion that he associated with poetry. As a number of the poems translated above suggest, Kaita specifically cultivated his own feelings toward bishōnen like Inō, shaping them with the aesthetic language of symbolism in order to produce poetry. As a young man preoccupied with testing and developing his own artistic vision and abilities, Kaita eagerly borrowed from the styles of the great poetic geniuses of his era as he strove to develop his own style. Although the poetry that resulted is sometimes almost excessively dramatic, other poems show sensitive and original touches that anticipate the language of later Japanese modernist poets. The relationship between the appreciation of male beauty, “decadent” emotion, and the quest for artistic vision apparent in these poems is particularly pronounced in “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi,” a short, poetic prose work that Kaita wrote in late 1913 or early 1914. It is to this and other prose works that the next chapter turns.
CHAPTER 2:

LOVE, DEATH, VITALITY, AND THE PRE-MODERN PAST:
FANTASIES OF DESIRE IN KAITA’S EARLY PROSE

Over the course of his life, Kaita wrote a considerable number of works in prose. During his days as a student in Kyoto alone, he produced a half-dozen stories and plays. Although some are not polished or particularly refined, others display the visionary and even hallucinogenic qualities present in his best-known poetry. Male-male desire features prominently in at least three works from his schoolboy days: the short story “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” (“The Bust of the Beautiful Young Salaino”), which describes a competition for the love of a young man between Leonardo da Vinci and a narrator identified with Kaita’s own name; the incomplete but sophisticated novella “Tetsu no dōji” (“Children of Iron”), which concludes with an encounter between a wandering aristocrat and a group of nude children bathing in a river; and the play “Shuten dōji” (“The Saké-Drinking Youth”) which rewrites a popular legend about a flesh-eating demon and includes an original subplot about the demon’s youth as a pageboy in a Buddhist temple.¹ Despite the fact that these works are in different genres, they share a number of characteristics. First, like Kaita’s poems, they treat male beauty as the source of powerful emotions and a sense of intense vitality. Second, they are all extremely imaginative and, in some cases, overtly hallucinogenic. Third, they show a connection between powerful emotion and “decadent” subject matter, such as frighteningly beautiful gorgons, murderous urges, and scenes of death, which anticipate the mystery-adventures stories that Kaita would write in 1915 and 1916. Fourth, they associate male-male desire and the intense emotions it brings with settings outside the usual ordered world of civilization. In the case of “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi,” the setting is a dark, dream-like realm outside Kyoto, whereas in the other two works, it is the pre-modern past, far removed from what Kaita saw as the stultifying world of modern

¹ See the translation of “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” in Appendix B.
civilization. This chapter examines these three works and, in the process, examines the formulations of male-male desire in each.

“Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” (“The Bust of the Beautiful Young Salaino”):
Kissing the Severed Head of Genius

Kaita wrote “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” in late 1913 or early 1914 when he was seventeen years old. At this time, Kaita was getting ready to graduate from college preparatory school and was busy thinking about what he should do with his future. Although Kaita had his heart set on a career in art, his father Murayama Tanisuke was vehemently opposed to the idea and wanted him instead to go onto further education in an agricultural school. Partly to work out these issues, Kaita corresponded with his cousin, the artist Yamamoto Kanae who was in Paris at the time. Kanae was one of the first people to recognize Kaita’s gifts. Although his letters to Kaita have been lost, a letter to his own parents dated December 28, 1913 indicates the direction that Kanae thought his young cousin’s future should take.

Has it been settled that Kaita will go to an agricultural school? Murayama [Tanisuke] won’t listen to reason, and this is a real problem. I think that it would be a shame to do anything to harm Kaita’s natural gifts as an artist. […] It seems that if he were to develop his talents, he might reach a point that people like me would be no match for him.2

In fact, Kanae was so thoroughly convinced of Kaita’s genius that in the same letter, he volunteered to pay Kaita’s tuition to the Nihon bijutsuin and offered to arrange for his close friend, the artist Kosugi Misei to take care of Kaita in Tokyo.

In the end, Kaita, with Kanae’s encouragement, prevailed over his father and went to Tokyo to study art. The surreal fantasy “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi,” written before this decision was made, reflects Kaita’s growing artistic aspirations and rising determination at a time when it was unclear whether or not he would be able to dedicate himself to the visual arts. While one can read the story merely as a hallucinogenic account of a competition for the affections of an attractive youth, to do so is to ignore the question of why Kaita chose Leonardo as one of the characters. This section argues that the story, replete with its overtly homoerotic text, represents a fantasy of artistic transfer in which Kaita establishes himself as heir to the greatness of one of the major figures of European civilization and thus positions himself in the vanguard of the art

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2 Yamamoto Kanae, Yamamoto Kanae no tegami, ed. Yamakoshi Shūzō (Ueda: Ueda-shi kyōiku iinkai, 1971) 68.
world. The connection between male beauty, artistic vision, and the pursuit for genius appears here and there in Kaita’s poetry, but nowhere is it more explicit than in this story.

On March 27, 1914, Kaita wrote in his diary that he had just learned that “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” was to appear in the April issue of Tobano, a Kyoto coterie magazine. He comments that the work makes him “very embarrassed;” nonetheless, he hopes that it will attract the attention of his teachers (344). In a letter to one of them, he wrote, “In this month’s issue of Tobano, a literary journal published in Kyoto, I have published a frightful piece of prose about stealing Leonardo da Vinci’s lover. You might find it somewhat nauseating, but please take a look at it when you pass by the bookstore” (298). Tobano, however, ceased publication about the time the story was scheduled to appear. In a 1914 letter to Yamamoto Jirō, he comments, “It is a good thing Tobano went under,” as if the demise of the magazine had spared him discomfiture (402). Another undated letter asks, “Is that book [sic] Tobano still coming out?” (404) Yet another from December 1914 queries, “Hasn’t Tobano started publishing again?” (409) These letters carry mixed signals. On the one hand, Kaita wanted people to see it, but on the other, he was also uncomfortable about it appearing in print. His embarrassment probably stems from the work’s unrestrained and seemingly personal expression of sexual desire, which climaxes in a kiss between a narrator identified with Kaita’s own name and the disembodied head of the young man named in the title. At the same time, he was also proud of the work. The prose has a highly experimental, even proto-modernist feel with its extremely short, almost telegraphic, unadorned sentences that produce a feel of unusual intensity and immediacy.3

The work begins with the narrator, a boy who is named Murayama Kaita like the author, gazing at the lights of Kyoto in the distance. As he walks westward, he crosses a river. Although Kaita may have been imagining the Katsura River in western Kyoto as he wrote the story, the river also seems to represent the boundaries of the conscious mind with its social, civilizing order. When the narrator crosses it, he finds himself far removed from the order of the city, standing alone in a primordial no-man’s land. His thoughts descend “into a deep, deep hole,” as if turning inward to plumb the hidden, subterranean realm of the subconscious (202). Just then, the

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3 Given the surrealistic description, brevity, and quick pace of the story, “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” reads like a record of a dream. As mentioned in the last chapter, Kaita did record several dreams in the 1917 work “Itsutsu no yume,” and one wonders if this story perhaps had a similar origin. Like Natsume Sōseki’s Yume jīya, Kaita’s surreal, dream-like hallucinations anticipate a strain of hallucinatory writing (genres bungaku) within Japanese modernism that produced works like “Kasei unga” (“The Canals of Mars”) by Edogawa Ranpo, Issen ichibyō monogatari (One Thousand and One Second Stories) by Inagaki Taruho, “Neko-machi” (“The Town of Cats”) by Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886-1942), and “Kataude” (“One Arm”) by Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972). All of these works describe surreal events ungoverned by the logic of daily life.
disembodied bust of a beautiful young man appears floating before him. As the title of the story states, the head is that of Andreas Salaino né Gian Giacomo de Caprotti (c. 1480-1524), who at age ten joined the studio of Leonardo da Vinci. History tells us that Salaino was one of Leonardo’s best-loved pupils for about three decades and remained with him until the political turbulence that led to Leonardo’s emigration to France. Leonardo is known to have been particularly partial to attractive boys, and no doubt Kaita saw a similarity between himself and the Renaissance master in this.

The disembodied head of Salaino that appears before the narrator is both a bishōnen and a gorgon at the same time. His lips are described as “red as fire, red as flame” (202) and later “feverish bronze,” and his eyes are “as resplendent as the tail of a peacock” and shine “like a light, like a diamond” (202-03). These eyes, which look at the narrator “as if with a touch of embarrassment,” serve as a silent index of Salaino’s affection, and even though no words are exchanged, the narrator boldly asserts, “I knew he loved me” (202). In fact, the eyes even serve as the departure point for an ironic simile that suggests overt sexuality even though Saliano’s body is absent, robbing him of the ability to engage in corporeal sex: “His eyes were clad in layer after layer of emotion, like a kimono worn twelve layers thick. Underneath those layers of fabric would be his beautiful, opulent naked body” (202). Salaino’s head is crowned with snakes like the Medusa, the gorgon of Greek mythology who possessed the power to turn anyone who looked at her into stone. At the end of the story when Salaino’s “long, sweetly scented hair” bushes against the narrator’s cheek, however, it does so “softly, like a serpent’s touch” (203). The hair no longer consists of medusan snakes but ordinary human hair, which moves lightly across the narrator’s face.

As the flying head approaches the narrator, the ghostly figure of Leonardo da Vinci suddenly appears, and Salaino’s head disappears into the darkness. The Renaissance artist challenges the narrator, asking him if he loves Salaino. When he responds with a yes, Leonardo

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4 Salaino’s name is also sometimes written Sallai or Salario and originates from a nickname meaning “Little Devil” in Tuscan. Leonardo’s notes state that Salaino made a good deal of trouble when he was young, sometimes stealing money or selling things that belonged to others; nonetheless, Leonardo is reported to have taken special joy in the attractive boy and kept him as a special pupil. On Leonardo and Salaino’s relationship, see Kenneth Clark, *Leonardo da Vinci*, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1967) 58-59. See also Anna Maria Ferrari, “Caprotti, Gian Giacomo,” *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 5, comp. Jane Turner (NY: Macmillan Publishers, 1996) 688-89.

5 Records differ on whether or not Salaino accompanied Leonardo to France. Some say that he stayed with the house with the vineyard in Italy where they had lived together. Leonardo’s will bequeathed Salaino this estate and a number of his works.
asserts that Salaino belongs to him, and the narrator realizes that Leonardo is his “rival in love” (203). With blood boiling, the narrator announces to Leonardo that he will steal Salaino. Partially angry, partially amused, Leonardo acquiesces. He states that if the narrator is sincere, he will give Salaino away, ceding him to his “weak little opponent” who deserves his compassion (203). With this, Leonardo disappears, and Salaino returns. As the disembodied head approaches for a kiss, the impassioned narrator cries out, “Ah, my beautiful, my gentleman! You never belonged to Leonardo. From tonight onward, you will be my darling. You will rule my heart” (204). The narrator has established himself as the rightful heir to the bishōnen Salaino and takes him from Leonardo.

Although at one level, the story describes an erotic competition for the love of a youth, it also has a secondary symbolic meaning. As the previous chapter noted, Inō, regardless of his own reticence, inspired Kaita to produce numerous poems, drawings, and watercolors. As in the May 1915 diary entry in which Kaita compares Inō to a “Leonardo sketch” or a “Luini painting,” Kaita saw bishōnen as embodiments of a beauty that naturally lent itself to the visual arts (357). Gaining control over the affections of Salaino, and pledging eternal allegiance to him, represents a fantasy in which the author symbolically professes his dedication to the muse of beauty and the pursuit of art. Moreover, Salaino serves as a symbol of the artistic and ideological legacy of Leonardo da Vinci, the mythologically grand figure of the Italian Renaissance. The fact that Salaino comes disembodied to the narrator as only a head without any support, suggests that when the inheritance of the high Renaissance reached Kaita in Japan, it was little more than a cerebral entity lacking grounding, support, or roots. In a sense, Leonardo’s artistic legacy is disembodied, missing the historical context that would allow it to stand on its own. The fact that this legacy of the Renaissance has come to him in a disembodied state, however, does not disturb the narrator of the story. He is eager to accept it, even without the support of ideology or tradition. The narrator “Kaita” has traveled for that purpose from the city of Kyoto, a city frequently associated with traditional Japanese culture in the popular imagination, toward the west. As he stands in the mysterious, unpopulated world that is neither occident nor orient, he is left alone to confront Leonardo. There are no other people or artists surrounding him, competing for the inspiration and heritage that Salaino represents. The biggest challenge to the narrator accepting this legacy comes from Leonardo himself. When he confronts the narrator, he emphasizes the difference in their ethnic backgrounds. The first time he addresses the narrator, he shouts, “You, the Asian! Murayama Kaita!” Moments later, Leonardo calls the narrator, “a little yellow man from the East (hingashi no kōshi),” diminutive, even denigrating terms that
emphasize difference in ethnic and cultural background (203). The narrator, however, does not perceive cultural or racial differences as a barrier to artistic continuity. He stands up for himself, ignores the perceived boundaries of racial and national difference, and insists on his right to the disembodied representative of Leonardo’s inspiration and legacy. In the end, Leonardo concedes and confers Salaino to the narrator. In short, the fantasy of taking Salaino from Leonardo represents a dream of transference in which Kaita, a young artist working far from the source of the techniques and ideas that shaped Western art, inherits the legacy of the artist often considered a pinnacle of Western art and civilization.

One of the most likely sources for Kaita’s information about the relationship between Salaino and the Renaissance master is the 1869 essay on Leonardo by the British art historian Walter Pater (1839-1894). This essay appeared as part of the collection *The Renaissance*, which became an indispensable part of Western education soon after its publication. Pater states that

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6 By the time Kaita wrote this story, Japanese sources had said little about Salaino. For instance, Tamaki Mai’s otherwise thorough survey of Renaissance art from 1912 does not even mention Salaino’s name. Tamaki Mai, *Seiyō bijutsu shi* (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1912). Iwamura Tōru’s survey of Italian Renaissance art introduces Salaino only briefly to say that, although he is credited with being a great artist, no extant works can positively be accredited to him. Iwamura Tōru, *Seiyō bijutsu shiyō: Itari kaiga no bu* (Tokyo: Shūzanbō shoten, 1904), 82. (No extant works bear his signature, but since the time Iwamura wrote his survey art historians have hypothesized that Salaino was the artist of *Virgin and Child with St Anne* at the University of California, Los Angeles, *St. John the Baptist* in the Ambrosiana Biblioteca in Milan, and some copies of Leonardo’s paintings in the Louvre. See Anna Maria Ferrari, “Caprotti, Gian Giacomo,” 688-89.)

In 1910, Sigmund Freud (1859-1939) wrote the article “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood,” which was particularly influential in spreading the image of Leonardo as a homosexual in the West. Freud draws upon several facts from Leonardo’s life to speculate about Leonardo’s sexual orientation: the charge that Leonardo had engaged in “immoral” acts with a model of ill repute in 1476, a statement in Leonardo’s notebooks expressing revulsion for heterosexual coupling, the closeness of his relationships with his students, and a perceived androgyny in some of his paintings. Freud suggests that probably no sex took place between Leonardo and his students; instead, he calls Leonardo’s sexual desire an example of “ideal (sublimated) homosexuality” in which the libido is sublimated into the productive urge for research. Sigmund Freud, “Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 11, trans. Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth Press, 1957) 57-137. Even though this article was widely read in the West, Kaita could not have read it. The article was first translated into English in 1916, and given Kaita’s lack of familiarity with German, it is impossible that he could have read it before writing “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” in late 1913 or early 1914. (Incidentally, Inagaki Taruho’s writings about male-male desire show familiarity with the contents of Freud’s article. Taruho mentions the high points of Freud’s article in a 1930 article for the magazine *Gurotesuku* [*The Grotesque*] and in a 1951 summary of a round-table discussion he had four years earlier with Edogawa Ranpo on the subject of same-sex desire. Inagaki Taruho, “Shin inutseruzuregusa,” *Inagaki Taruho zenshū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2000) 256-57, 360.

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7 *The Renaissance* was published in book form twice during the Taishō period: Urutā Pētā [Walter Pater], *Bungei ōkō*, trans. Tanabe Jūji (Tokyo: Hokusaidō, 1915); Urutā Pētā [Walter Pater], *Runesansu*, trans. Sakuma Masakazu (Tokyo: Shunshī Sha, 1921). Both translations, however, are later than Kaita’s story, meaning that Kaita could not have read them. Pater’s work, however, was well-known in Taishō-period Japan even before Tanabe’s translation; in fact, one character in Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s novella *Konjiki no*
“of all the interests in living men and women which may have filled his life at Milan,” the master’s attachment for Salaino alone is recorded, and Pater uses this as evidence to argue that the master possessed a special love for the attractive lad. Pater describes the drawing Study of the Heads of an Old Man and a Youth located in the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence. The bust of the youth in this drawing, he states, “might well be the likeness of Andrea Salaino, beloved of Leonardo for his curled and waving hair – belli capelli ricci e inanellati – and afterward his favorite pupil and servant.” (See Figure 15.) The description of Salaino’s hair echoes that in the famous sixteenth-century biography of Leonardo by painter Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), who recorded that Salaino was a “pleasingly graceful and handsome boy” who had “beautiful, thick, curly hair which greatly pleased Leonardo.” After describing the drawing, Pater shifts gears and provides a long, detailed description of a painting in the Uffizi that depicts the severed head of the Medusa, a painting that many mistakenly attributed to Leonardo at the time Pater was writing. (See Figure 16.) He describes the Uffizi Medusa as a product of the master’s interest in the


10 In one of the earliest biographies of Leonardo, Vasari describes a remarkably realistic image of the Medusa painted by the master. Vasari writes that in order to create this image,

Leonardo carried into a room of his own, which no one but he himself entered, crawling reptiles, green lizards, crickets, snakes, butterflies, locusts, bats, and other strange species of this kind, and by adapting various parts of this multitude, he created a most horrible and frightening monster with poisonous breath that set the air on fire. And he depicted the monster emerging from a dark and broken rock, spewing forth poison from its open mouth, fire from its eyes, and smoke from its nostrils so strangely that it seemed a monstrous and dreadful thing indeed.

Vasari, The Lives of the Artists, 288. After 1540, when Medusa hung in the Palazzo della Signora, it vanished. The mistaken connection between the painting of a Medusa in the Uffizi and the one described in Vasari’s biography dates to the late eighteenth century. Despite Uffizi records showing that the work was actually the work of a late sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century Flemish artist, in 1782, Luigi Lanzi wrote in a gallery guidebook that the Uffizi Medusa was the same painting Vasari had described. The fallacious attribution circulated through numerous European guidebooks, and in fact, Percy Shelley (1792-1822) wrote a poem describing it as if it were a work by Leonardo. See A. Richard Turner, Inventing Leonardo (NY: Knopf, 1993) 114-17. By the early twentieth century, however, the tide of opinion had turned. When Kimura Shōhachi published his biography of Leonardo, he commented the Medusa by Leonardo had vanished by the sixteenth century. Kimura surmises that the Uffizi Medusa was the work of another artist who painted this work after the description of Leonardo’s painting in Vasari. Kimura Shōhachi, Leonarudo, 175.
“interfusion of the extremes of beauty and terror,” which had manifested itself in the master’s youth. The description of the disembodied head of Salaino in the story, which also combines beautiful and frightful elements, echoes Pater’s descriptions of Study of the Heads of an Old Man and a Youth and Head of Medusa – descriptions that appear almost side-by-side in the famous essay. Both Pater and Kaita mention the beauty of Salaino’s hair several times, and both describe images of Salaino that show nothing more than his disembodied head.

The idea of kissing a severed head also echoes the biblical tale of Salome and John the Baptist. In this story, Salome, the beautiful, young daughter of Herodias, is granted a wish by the king after a particularly fine dance, and she chooses the shocking trophy of the Baptist’s severed head. This tale enjoyed a revival in late nineteenth-century Europe, thanks to Oscar Wilde’s (1854-1900) much expanded French-language adaptation for the stage, which climaxes with a dramatic kiss between Salome and the severed head of the prophet. This fin-de-siècle work, ripe with eroticism and decadence, captured the imagination of the European art world; in fact, an opera adaptation by Richard Strauss (1964-1949) opened in 1905 with a German adaptation of Wilde’s text as the libretto. Mori Ōgai published the first translation of Wilde’s Salome in 1909 in the journal Kabuki. Later, he included it in a widely circulated series of one-act plays, where

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[11] Pater, The Renaissance, 86. In a famous example of impressionistic and highly subjective art criticism, Pater writes, “What may be called the fascination of corruption penetrates in every touch its exquisitely finished beauty. About the dainty lines of the cheek the bat flits unheeded. The delicate snakes seem literally strangling each other in terrified struggle to escape from the Medusa brain. The hue which violent death always brings with it is in the features; features singularly massive and grand, as we catch them inverted, in a dexterous foreshortening, crown foremost, like a great calm stone against which the wave of serpents breaks.” Pater, The Renaissance, 87-88.

Incidentally, Hans Christian Andersen’s novel The Improvisatore, which Kaita read and loved in Mori Ōgai’s famous translation Sokkyō shijin, also describes this painting, emphasizing the horrifying beauty in the work. It states, “Leonardo da Vinci has painted a Medusa’s head, which is in the gallery at Florence. Everyone who sees it is strangely captivated by it, and cannot tear themselves away. It is as if the deep, out of froth and poison, had formed the most beautiful shape – as if the foam of the abyss had fashioned a Medician Venus.” Hans Christian Andersen, The Improvisatore, trans. Mary Howitt (NY: Hurd and Houghton, 1869) 94.

[12] This story appears in Matthew 14: 3-11 as follows.

For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her. And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist’s head in a charger. And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath’s sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.

The same story is retold in similar terms in Mark 6: 18-28. King James Version.
Kaita, a fan of Ōgai’s translations, might well have read it.\(^{13}\) A letter dated 1914 indicates that Kaita was at least familiar with the content of Wilde’s play.\(^{14}\) Illustrator Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898) was one of many European artists attracted to Wilde’s play, and in April 1893, he published an illustration of Salome kissing John the Baptist’s gorgon-like head in a French magazine (Figure 17). The same year, Beardsley produced a series of illustrations for an English edition of the play, and this series rapidly became some of his most celebrated work. Kaita’s writings indicate he was especially fond of Beardsley, and therefore, he likely knew these prints. Interestingly, one of his love letters to Inō praises Inō’s beauty by comparing him to a Beardsley illustration. He writes, “I adore you and think that you are the most beautiful person in the world, for you resemble so strongly one of the nervous beauties drawn by the artist Aubrey Beardsley. I truly adore the work of Beardsley.”\(^{15}\) Kaita does not explicitly mention the Salome prints, but the thought of Inō in conjunction with Beardsley’s work may have represented a step toward the production of “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” in which the protagonist kisses the severed head of his beloved.

Even if Kaita was familiar with Pater’s Renaissance and Wilde’s Salome, this still leaves open the question of why Kaita chose to write a story about a competition with Leonardo. The hagiographic descriptions of Leonardo from early twentieth-century Japan show that in Japan, as well as in the West, Leonardo was often identified as a genius who represented the zenith of the Renaissance, one of the greatest eras of human achievement in history. For instance, Sekai bijutsu shi (History of the World’s Art) edited by Ogawa Ginjirō and published in 1905 holds up Leonardo as the pinnacle of the Italian Renaissance.

\(^{13}\) Salome appeared in the 1910 collection Zoku hitomakumono (More One-Act Plays), which was then combined with an earlier collection of plays to form the book Hitomakumono (One-Act Plays). Mori Rintarō, Zoku hitomakumono (Tokyo: Ifūsha, 1910); Mori Rintarō, Hitomakumono (Tokyo: Momiyama shoten, 1912). Wilde’s play was also summarized in Araki Shūichi, Kindai geki monogatari, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Dai Nippon tosho, 1913) 184-96, which was designed for younger audiences.

\(^{14}\) In this letter, Kaita relays a humorous commentary by his aunt on the play, replete with a clever pun: “What’s up with that play Salome or Zarame or whatever? Granulated sugar (zarame) is too crunchy for me. No matter how much you love someone, what the heck are you going to do with someone’s severed head? ‘Gimme his head, gimme his head’ and all that – It’s crazy” (399-400). The only other mention of Wilde in Kaita’s oeuvre is a somewhat cryptic remark on art in a letter to Yamamoto Jirō written about 1914. He writes, “I want to go through life, both of us holding fast – a high-density life in which not even one second has been spent foolishly. One must not look at art in a relativistic way. After all, Wilde and others looked at it relativistically. As for this point, it is often the case that certain artisans and farmers are more artistic in their sentiments than artists” (401).

\(^{15}\) Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 181.
Of all the artists that we can count, even the ones who stand out the most and who show undeniable superiority in a certain field, there is none – regardless of who they are – that shows a genius that can compare to that of Leonardo da Vinci. Even if we do not find in him the fullest expression of the human spirit, we should identify him as the highest manifestation of it; in all situations, he is the most perfect representative of the Renaissance. His performance in each, individual field showed the highest talent; he was a painter, sculptor, musician, poet, and architect as well as an engineer, mathematician, and naturalist.16

The image of Leonardo as the pinnacle of Renaissance achievement also appears in the writing of the art critic Iwamura Tōru (1870-1917).

He has been given a variety of titles. He has been evaluated as realist or idealist; he has been called daydreamer, magician, and scientist. One might say he is well suited to all of these titles; one might also say none of them truly fit. People say he was a man of many talents, and he succeeded without exception at everything he put his hand to. Truly, he was an extraordinary genius.17

The emphasis on Leonardo’s many abilities is scarcely surprising, considering that even Vasari, one of Leonardo’s earliest and most influential biographers, went to great pains to emphasize that Leonardo excelled not only in the visual arts but as a musician, mathematician, engineer, and so on.18 The May and June 1905 issues of Nihon bijutsu (Japanese Art), published by the Nihon

16 This book belonged to a large series of books called Teikoku hyakka zensho (Complete Imperial Collection of Books on All Subjects), consisting of over two hundred volumes on various subjects published around the turn of the twentieth century. This series was widely distributed and served as reference books in libraries and universities. Ogawa Ginjirō, ed., Sekai bijutsu shi, vol. 2, Teikoku hyakka zensho 143 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1905) 190-91.

17 Iwamura Tōru, Seiyō bijutsu shi, 79. There were other critics who were more balanced in their view of Leonardo. Between 1890 and 1892, Okakura Tenshin (1862-1913) delivered a series of lectures on art history, the first such lectures in Japan, at the Tōkyō bijutsu gakkō (Tokyo School of Fine Arts). Soon afterward, his notes appeared as Taisei bijutsu shi (History of Western Art). There, Tenshin argues that the concept of art was defined differently in the Italian Renaissance and in late nineteenth-century Japan. Whereas modern eyes tend to interpret Leonardo as having interests across the board, in Leonardo’s day, most of these interests fell within a single, broad territory identified merely as the visual arts (bijutsu).

People say that Leonardo is an extraordinary painter and a great European master. However, at that time there was a tendency for Italian artists to boast multiple accomplishments. By not distinguishing between the various accomplishments and by identifying them all as “art,” they all occupied equally important positions in fields such as metal sculpture, casting, and so on. Nonetheless, over subsequent generations, painting and sculpture were the only accomplishments ranked highly. At the time Italy underwent its great flourishing, however, all fields of art were seen as equal and there was no distinguishing between them. For that reason, people now say that at that time, there were many artists who displayed multiple talents in different fields of art.

Tenshin does not deny that Leonardo possessed remarkable, perhaps unparalleled artistic skills, but by putting the notion of art into historical perspective, he historicizes the claim that Leonardo excelled in many different arts – a claim that with later authors becomes one of the major criteria for classifying Leonardo as a genius. Okakura Tenshin, Okakura Tenshin zenshū, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1980) 236.

18 Art historian Patricia Rubin notes that Vasari’s biography provides images of ideal virtue and brilliance designed to serve as models for contemporary readers. In his work, Vasari renders “concrete the supremely abstract goal offered by the neoplatonic model by which, through contemplation, the mind arrives at
bijutsuin, the same art institute where Kaita began studying in late 1914, carry an transcript of a lecture about Leonardo and his place in Renaissance culture by Ueda Bin. He describes Leonardo’s importance in terms even stronger than those of Iwamura Tōru. After calling Leonardo a genius numerous times, he writes, “Speaking grandly, I believe that he is the greatest person to have existed anytime between primitive times and the present day. Napoleon, Alexander the Great, Caesar – they all pale by comparison. Old, new, east, west – there is no one as great as he.”19 He continues by describing Leonardo as blessed with personal beauty (a statement that dates to Vasari) as well as having talents in the visual arts, prose, poetry, mathematics, singing, musical performance, invention, engineering, military strategy, zoology, botany, mineralogy, and other fields of science. Bin’s article mentions that this kind of hagiographic discourse provided fodder for Meiji-period critics who assumed that Japan must produce similar figures of greatness before it could be seen as having “come of age” in the modern world.

There are those in society who select the examples of the old masters of the West to stimulate, give incentive to, and spur on the contemporary Japanese art world. Why don’t Japanese painters paint like Raphael? Why don’t they think like Michelangelo? Or why don’t they sense things like Leonardo, our subject today? There are many people who denounce the Japanese art world without good reason, asking them why they do not readily produce anyone on par with these geniuses.20

During the Meiji period, as Japanese society strove to refashion itself into a modern nation that could take its place among the fully independent, “civilized” nations of the world, the Japanese art world also underwent a massive overhaul. Over the course of the Edo period, Japanese art had been incorporating Western knowledge, perspectives, and colors in woodblock prints and anatomical drawings, but the rapid increase of intercourse between nations just before the Meiji Restoration meant that Japanese artists suddenly had an unparalleled degree of access to Western artistic styles, techniques, and visual vocabulary. As Meiji artists began mastering these elements, there was a sense among some Japanese critics that as long as Japan failed to produce artists on par with the great masters of European art history, the domestic art world still had not come of age. In his article on Leonardo, however, Bin argues that geniuses such as Leonardo are remote

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in time and culture from the present moment, and for contemporary artists to paint like them is not productive. He writes, “Out of what necessity do the Japanese of today follow the works of these great geniuses and slavishly imitate their works? Instead, they should use creative thought and draw close to the beauty of their greatest creations.” According to this argument, what Japan needed was not painters or sculptors who could work in a style mimicking that of the masters but creative individuals who could learn from the masters and move in their own creative directions to produce something fresh and new. He suggests that Japanese artists, having inherited the technique of the European masters, should achieve greatness not through slavish imitation, but through putting this inheritance to good use and moving forward in new directions.

Kaita’s writings reveal his wish to do exactly that. One of his earliest works to do so is the 1913 essay “Hito no sekai” (“The World of Man”), which mentions Leonardo’s name in a discussion about what it means to be a genius. This essay employs the logic of evolutionary theory to describe the genius as a visionary who differs from the remainder of society and contributes the benefits of that difference to future generations. It argues that every individual inhabits a “world” that differs slightly from that of all other people, but the worlds inhabited by geniuses are significantly different from those of ordinary people. By sharing the visions reaped within their own individual worlds, geniuses help create a richer culture on which future generations can build, thus enriching life for all of humankind (291-92). The language and argument of this article strongly resembles that of a famous 1896 article on the meaning of genius by Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902), an important literary critic and novelist of the Meiji Period. This article, first published in the magazine Taiyō (The Sun), argues that, before all else, the genius is creative and uses this creativity to create new worlds that did not exist before. Chogyū borrows the language of German Idealism to state that these worlds possess elements of the universal, unchanging truth, which then is introduced through the work of the genius to the rest of humanity. Though Kaita does not explicitly evoke the notion of a universal “Idea” that represents the truest principles of the universe, he does place similar emphasis on the role of creativity and the concept of the genius as a creator. As examples of significant innovators, he

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22 Takayama Chogyū, “Tensai ron,” Chogyū zenshū, vol. 2 (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1905) 218-27. In 1895 and 1896, a number of prominent cultural and literary figures wrote articles about the theory of genius, but Chogyū’s article is one of the best known of these articles. The discussions on the theory of genius, in which Ōgai and other writers participated, attracted the attention of many young readers, who responded by writing their own articles on genius for magazines of student writing, such as Shonen bunshū (Collection of Youth Writing) and Seinenbun (Young Mens’ Writings).
mentions Sir Isaac Newton (ca. 1642-1727), Plato (ca. 428 BCE-ca. 348 BCE), Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), and Leonardo, each of whom Kaita says, “created his own world” which “had nothing to do with the worlds of other ordinary people” but eventually “spread over the rest of humanity.” The essay concludes by stating that the purpose of life is to “create worlds that are utterly different” from all that has gone before, “worlds that are close as possible to the worlds of geniuses” (291-92). “Hito no sekai” makes it clear that around the time “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” was written, Kaita was already concerned with taking inspiration from figures of genius to produce original work and ideas that would widen the world’s intellectual and artistic base.

Since, as Bin noted, Leonardo was one of the yardsticks used by the Japanese art world to measure its own developmental maturity, it is not particularly surprising that, as an aspiring artist, Kaita would long to be recognized as a genius on par with him. The fullest expression of these thoughts appears in a short manuscript in which Kaita addresses Leonardo directly. The manuscript, which was written in 1914, the same year that “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” was to appear in the magazine Tobano, expresses Kaita’s thoughts as he encourages himself in his artistic pursuits. He begins by describing feelings of inferiority vis-à-vis the Renaissance master.

Oh, my Leonardo!
When I think of your life, I always feel like bonds of strong leather constrain my body. That is because you are like me. It is because I am walking the same path as you. By the time that you were nineteen years old, you had made a distinguished name for yourself as an artist, a name known for great power and beauty. However, I too am now nineteen years old. I have many reasons to be ashamed about my own degree of ability as an artist. Ah, Leonardo, you are superior to me! (296).

Although Kaita feels paralyzed by Leonardo’s greatness, he vows to surpass him. He says, “I am here to tell you that I now have many ideas that are superior to yours. In terms of aesthetics and ability, you have one up on me, but I believe I am not inferior to you” (296). The narrator vows that his nineteenth year will represent a point of departure from which he will proceed down the master’s path of excellence: “I will create like you; I will think like you” (296). In a rhetorical flourish, he ends with the following declaration.

You are smiling like the Mona Lisa.
Ah, how many times has your smile eaten into my life force! That smile is your life; that smile is the high point of all humanity. I too shall smile. Through that smile of mine, my life too will smile.

23 Kaita is nineteen by the traditional Japanese system of counting ages. By the modern system of counting ages, he would have been seventeen or eighteen.
Oh Leonardo! I will live like you. I will proceed like you.
Oh, how I, through my great incomplete self, shall smile like you! (296-97)

The thought of Leonardo basking smugly in his position as a seminal figure of civilization is a thorn in Kaita’s side. Nonetheless, he recognizes that it is only through working like Leonardo and giving everything to his own creative instincts that he will become the legitimate heir to the master’s legacy of greatness and exceed him. Though Kaita admits that he is an incomplete individual who is far from ideal, he is determined to smile with satisfaction.

A diary entry from mid-May, 1917, indicates that even three years later, Kaita continued to think of Leonardo as a model of intellectual and artistic clarity.

The world is only as clear as one’s head is.
If anything, the act of clearing things up is painful.
I must not escape from this pain.
My heart roars with desire to taste the joy of the blind man whose eyes were opened at Tsubosaka Temple.24
I want to put my head in order and clear it out.
I want to make Leonardo my so-called “mirror.”

The same year, the thought of Leonardo and his artwork make a subtle appearance in Kaita’s famous oil painting Kosui to onna (Woman by a Lake, Figure 19). Kaita had developed an amorous attachment for an early middle-aged, distant relative named Sasa Sao (1885-?), who lived near the home of Kosugi Misei in Tabata. Sao had treated him kindly, and he responded with his affection.25 Kaita’s friends, knowing of his feelings for the older woman, started calling her his “Mona Lisa,” perhaps because the painting Kosui to onna, which used Sao for its model, strongly resembles Leonardo’s famous portrait.26 (See Figure 18.) Both figures display an

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24 This is a reference to the nineteenth-century jōruri play Tsubosaka reigen ki (Account of Miraculous Happenings at Tsubosaka). In the story, a woman who is married to a blind man makes pilgrimages to Tsubosaka Temple to entreat the bodhisattva Kannon to restore her husband’s sight. Feeling remorseful for putting his wife in such a situation, the husband throws himself off a cliff. Devastated, his wife soon follows, but by a miracle, the two are returned to life and the husband finds himself able to see.


26 About the use of the nickname “Mona Lisa” for Sasa Sao, see Yamamoto Sanzō, “Kaita to obasan,” Kaita no utaeru sono go oyobi Kaita no hanashi, by Murayama Kaita, 322-23. On the relationship between Kaita and Sasa Sao, see Sasaki Teru, “Utsukushii obasan: Murayama Kaita Kosui to onna saikō,” E 366 (Aug 1994): 19-22. Sasaki uses comparisons of the painting with pictures of Sao plus the fact that Kaita eventually gave Kosui to onna to her family to come to the convincing conclusion she was the model for the painting. Sasaki also makes some other interesting but ultimately unprovable speculations; for instance, Sasaki guesses that while Kaita was painting Sao, he also may have envisioned Otama, one of his other great loves. Sasaki guesses that the body of water in the background of Kosui to onna is a port on Izu Ōshima, a resort and artist colony where Kaita went to heal wounds from disappointment in love. If so,
enigmatic smile, and both occupy a similar position within the entire space of the painting itself. Moreover, both sit in similar positions with hands quietly clasped as if unaware of or even exempt from the flow of time, while landscapes of mountains and flowing water unfold behind them. Clearly, long after writing “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi,” Kaita continued to think of Leonardo and his artwork.

A number of writings from 1915, Kaita’s first year in art school, show that Kaita was poignantly aware Japan was on the threshold of developing a new, brilliant artistic scene, and Kaita never saw himself as far from these developments. In a 1915 poem about Picasso, a painter that struck his fancy at this time, he uses military terms to describe his position at the vanguard of Japanese modernism: “I, like you / desire to paint magnificently / I am a new conscript in the army of Japanese painters” (58). Another poem states, “I will likely create a mighty art / I will do so within a magnificent world of perception / I am sure of this” (61). Even more dramatically, he writes that his work meant a new beginning for the geniuses of Japan: “Ah! The completion of this canvas / means a beautiful dawn for the birth of genius / Look! Here I am creating / happiness for the whole of Japan” (71). Only in the context of such aspirations to grandeur does Kaita’s story of amorous rivalry with Leonardo make sense.

Desire and Vitality in the Pre-Modern Past

About the same time Kaita wrote “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi,” a work ripe with fin-de-siècle decadence, he also wrote a handful of other prose pieces. A number of these reflect his interest in ancient Greece and the semi-mythological history of early Japan, which he believed offered a more intense and vibrant way of life than modern civilization. His interest in the vitality and power of the ancient world is again related to his ongoing interest in the kinds of powerful emotion he thought should form the material of poetry. For Kaita, ancient history represented an arena rich with vitality, strength, power, and decadent intensity – elements he seemed to find lacking in modern Japanese civilization with its refined ways and subtle system of aesthetics. Doubtless a second reason for his fascination with the ancient world lies in the appreciation for male-male desire he found in the culture of ancient Greece and pre-modern Japan. Yamamoto Jirō comments,

He passionately adored tales of ancient Greece. At the same time, he had a deep interest in the legends of the mythological past of our country. Moreover, he was always endeavoring to depict the enigmatic qualities of the age of the gods in his free form verse, his Japanese-style verse, and his artwork. At some point, these ideas became linked in his mind to the notion of the *bishōnen*. For him, the so-called “*bishōnen*” was different from the *bishōnen* of the late Tokugawa Period. In anything, the *bishōnen* to him represent something closer to Apollo in Greek mythology.27

Kaita did not see *bishōnen* not as willowy, soft, and quiet figures, but as embodiments of vitality, intensity, and life – qualities present in the figure of Apollo, the handsome young Greek deity associated with the sun.

Kaita read a great deal about ancient Greece. For instance, his diary mentions that on March 29, 1914, he read the Greek historian Herodotus’s account of Ptolemaic Egypt, the third book of Plato’s *The Republic* in a translation by Kimura Takatarō (1870-1931), and a part of a guide to classical Western philosophy (344).28 Later the same month, he also read Takatarō’s biography and translation of the work of Anacreon (c.572-488BC), a late Greek lyric poet from Asia Minor who often wrote about the pleasures of wine, beautiful boys, and women (344).29 Of the Greek authors whom Kaita read, however, Plato excited him most. He writes in his diary that after reading *The Republic*, “I have become determined to read all of Plato.” In fact, his interest was so strong that he tried reading Plato in English as well. Hayashi Tatsuo describes encountering Kaita one day in a public library when Kaita walked in carrying an English translation of Plato.

He appeared from who knows where, walking in faltering steps. That guy was always as aimless and abrupt as a clown. Wouldn’t you know it, he had come to return a magnificent, imposing Western book. When I asked, “Whatcha reading?” he replied, “Plato.” Well, you can bet how surprised I was! Of course, I had heard of Plato, but who would have imagined that Kaita was commuting to the library everyday and perusing this philosopher, unparalleled in ancient or modern times, as if there were nothing to it? What’s more, he said, “And the books are damn heavy too.” He told me which of the five or six volumes he was looking at this time.30

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28 Kaita mentions the edition of *The Republic* he read was the second volume of a series (344). He appears to be referring to *Puratōn* [Plato], *Puratōn zenshū*, trans. Matsumoto Matatarō and Kimura Takatarō, 5 vols. (Tokyo: Tōzanbō, 1903-1911), which contains Takatarō’s translation of *The Republic* in the second volume.


30 Hayashi Tatsuo, *Shisō no doramaturō*, 146-47. Hayashi, who later became a prominent intellectual historian, states that he was annoyed that Kaita had been able to read Plato before he could. In what seems to be a case of sour grapes, he makes light of Kaita’s achievement by commenting that Plato’s dialogues were common reading fare for Greek adolescents and therefore could be fascinating to even young men in modern times.
Kaita’s interest in Greek philosophy resurfaced in 1917. In early or mid-May, Kaita commented in his diary that he was “investigating Greek philosophy” (360). Several days later on May 17, he went to the library and turned again to his beloved Plato’s *Protagoras* (360).

Inspired by these texts, Kaita stated several times he wanted to live like an ancient Greek. A letter from early 1914 states, “I intend to approach a Hellenistic outlook in life, and so I have undertaken the task of reading Plato and so on” (297). On March 27, 1914, he records in his diary, “It seems that my head has once again become base. Starting next month, I will start living a pure Hellenic life.” This comment shows that he saw a strong contradistinction between “Hellenism” and “baseness” (344). Three days later, he notes, “I have started to want to live a Dionysian life,” indicating that he imagined one facet of the Greek culture to involve the pursuit of passion, art, and creativity (344). By October 18, 1915, he comments that his life had veered from its “Hellenistic” direction of the year before: “Has my spirit of Hellenism gone off someplace and entirely disappeared? I shall expend all my power trying to get it back” (334). Several years later in 1918, he jotted on a piece of paper, “I want to be a sick Greek (*Yande iru Girishiajin de aritai*)” (127). To the right of this comment, he wrote and crossed out the name Anacreon, the wine-loving Greek poet whom Kimura Takatarō had introduced to Japan several years before as a “hedonist poet” (*kairaku shijin*). Anacreon, it seems, provided him with the model of the “sick Greek” he wanted to become. In sum, Kaita was clearly aware of two different facets of Greek culture: one that kept “baseness” at bay and one that featured bacchanalian indulgence and decadent passion.

Another reason for his admiration of ancient Greece has to do with Greece’s importance in art history. Among the many personal manifesto-like poems describing his frustrations with painting and hopes for the future, three mention ancient Greece. In an untitled verse from 1915, Kaita laments that he must break with all that he has accomplished in the past and start his artistic endeavors anew. Halfway through the poem, he asserts,

I must break free and escape
The lowly, mean jail in which I am penned
I must leap forward
Toward a world as free as the sky or the sea

31 The manuscript that contains this line is now in the collection of the Mie Prefectural Art Museum. The name Anacreon appears to the right, and the comment “The world is red, not blue nor yellow” appears to the left. Also on the left side is a sketch of a boat that resembles a gondola. See Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, *Murayama Kaita ten*, 112.
Toward the world of Titian, of Rodin, of the Greeks
From this pain, so difficult to bear,
I must, with a single leap, burst into flight
I will fly, upward I will fly

In his list of great artists to emulate, he includes the Greeks alongside the names of the Italian Renaissance painter Titian (1477?-1576) and the French sculptor August Rodin (1840-1917). The same year, Kaita also wrote “Sora tobu ware” (“I, Who Fly through the Sky”), a poem that conceitedly states that he achieved the goal put forth in the poem quoted above. After bragging that he has managed to “fly high” and break ranks with the ordinary, banal brand of artist that “has given the Taishō period its shape,” the final stanza concludes,

Oh, all of the various kindred souls with whom I run!
Oh Giotto! Oh Pompeians! Oh Greeks!
And oh ye, artists of Egypt!
You are surprised at me,
It is that you do not keep watch
I have flown in the exalted heavens amidst
The lovely clouds of the “new ancient past”
Soaring far, far above mediocrity

The young artist confidently states that his own work incorporates some of the qualities of the ancient and Renaissance art, and it opens a fresh, innovative realm that he calls the “new ancient past.” It appears he wrote this work to convince himself of his artistic mastery; however, this self-assuredness soon gave way to insecurity. One untitled poem from 1916 begins by vowing to work hard to achieve recognition.

I hope to be called a beautiful youth
I hope to be called an artist of honor
As in the thought of that strong land of Greece –
I must strive to reach this point

Unlike the other two poems, which mention Greece’s high level of artistic achievement, this poem expresses a desire to be a beautiful youth as well as a revered painter, two different kinds of figures that brought praise in classical Greece.

One final element of Kaita’s “Hellenism” was a sympathetic identification with the Greek worship of beautiful young men. One finds evidence of this in a series of heads labeled “Suki na hitobito” (“People I like”), drawn in a notebook in 1915 (Figure 11). Underneath the visages of Georges Jacques Danton (1759-1794) and Maximilien Robespierre (1758-1794), two key players
in the French Revolution, is a profile of a youth identified as a “Greek bishōnen.” At first glance, Danton, Robespierre, and the Greek youth seem strange bedfellows. Known for his instrumental role in overthrowing the French monarchy, Danton set up the Revolutionary Tribunal and dominated the first Committee of Public Safety, founded in 1793. That same year, Robespierre, a leader of the Jacobins, took control of the Committee and started the infamous, Reign of Terror, in which anyone seen as opposing his particular form of social revolution was quickly arrested and guillotined. Though Robespierre’s demagoguery is particularly infamous, both he and Danton, whom Robespierre eventually killed, were fanatically devoted to what they saw as the virtuous cause of the Revolution. The fact that Kaita places a Greek youth alongside these two revolutionaries reflects the simultaneity of his interest in the classical world, especially its passionate reverence of beautiful young men and his decadent fascination with blood and the idea of violence. These two seemingly disparate interests are linked by Kaita’s belief that each rendered life particularly poignant and intense.

At the height of his interest in ancient Greece, Kaita also became interested in the Japanese past, especially its mythological origins and ancient history. For instance, on March 29, 1914, he read an archeological journal about Nara-period sculpture and a book called *Nihon kōkogaku* (*Japanese Archaeology*), probably the often-reprinted Meiji text by Yagi Sanzaburō (1866-1942) and Tsuboi Shōgorō (1863-1913). This interest in the ancient past manifests itself in motifs visible in Kaita’s earliest poetry, such as the comma-shaped stones (*magatama*) that were worn as jewels in ancient Japan and appear in the early poem “Nigatsu.” The book about ancient Japan that most captured Kaita’s imagination was the semi-mythological *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*), a chronicle of Japan’s past compiled by the eighth century court to provide a history and imperial genealogy from the time of Japan’s mythological origins through the reign of the Empress Suiko in the early seventh century. Late Meiji- and Taishō-period public schools often introduced stories from the *Kojiki* in ethics or “moral teaching” (*shūshin*) classes. From the Meiji period until the end of World War II, ethics classes were part of compulsory education for all primary and secondary school students. Teachers used stories from the *Kojiki* and the eighth century *Nihon shoki* (*Chronicles of Japan*) to explain the divine origins of the imperial family.

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32 Unlike the two figures from the French Revolution, who are drawn in great detail as if sketched from plaster busts or pictures in a history textbook, the Greek bishōnen is less detailed and somewhat generic, suggesting that Kaita drew him from imagination. In fact, Kaita sketched another almost identical profile on the same piece of paper but scratched one out as if displeased with it. Another page in the same sketchbook contains an almost identical sketch, which is also identified as a “Greek bishōnen.”

and thus tried to inculcate loyalty and obedience to the emperor while fashioning students into model citizens for the empire. Kaita most likely encountered the text in this context.

Kaita’s diary never mentions what elements of the *Kojiki* most excited him, but two passages from 1915 suggest that his interest does not have to do with nationalism or emperor worship, but with the intense power and decadent passions described in the book. On January 12, 1915, he wrote the following in one of his many artistic manifestos.

I must be Goya –  
I must be Picasso –  
[I must have] the blood and heart of a Spaniard!  
The role bestowed upon me by heaven is to interpret this nation of Japan based upon its true significance, upon the *Kojiki*;  
The art of the Japanese people, an ample race with rich blood, was certainly not to be found with Utamaro or Hokusai, only with me (353).

Kaita’s desire to interpret the “true significance of the nation of Japan” (*Nipponkoku no makoto no igi*) does not mean that he wants to produce art containing expressions of nationalism of the state-building sort; instead, he hopes to reinterpret the very meaning of “Japaneseness” by drawing on the intensely powerful passions of the ancient nation. In the nineteenth century, the Japanese, largely in response to Western interest, had developed a great interest in the woodblock prints of Edo-period artists, including Kitagawa Utamaro (1753-1806), best known for his finely crafted illustrations of women of the demimonde, and Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), known for his images of beauties and landscapes. The result of this rising interest was the reification of the idea of Japan as a particularly refined nation concerned with aesthetics and understanding man’s limited place within the natural world. Kaita, however, dismissed the view that Edo-period woodblock prints represented exemplars of Japanese sensibilities. He felt that the vital, powerful images of the Japanese in the *Kojiki*, with its gargantuan passions, fights, and betrayals, better describe the Japanese with their “rich blood” (*koeru ketsueki*). He deems traditional media insufficient to channel this brutal, primeval vitality into art. Instead he turns instead to the expressionistic power of Spanish painters such as Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), known for his penetrating, hallucinogenic and often brutal images, or Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), whose bold experiments with color and form sent shock waves through the early twentieth-century art world. Ironically, only through drawing on the aesthetic and stylistic vision of these Spanish artists could Kaita hope to depict a Japanese sensibility he felt had yet to be explored.

Later that same year during a stay in Nagano, he wrote a letter to his cousin Yamamoto Kanae that expresses similar sentiments.
The best book in Japan is certainly the *Kojiki*. To be honest, I cannot cover the entire book [in my art]. My wish is to somehow capture the spirit of the age and turn it into great art so that the Japanese can experience it directly. For this purpose, murals, plays, poetry, fiction, oil paintings, music – every type of artistic tool will be necessary (300).

Again, Kaita does not seem to be interested in the nationalistic emperor-worship often associated with the *Kojiki*. Instead, he finds the book valuable for its archetypal expression of the intense, primitive side of Japan he wishes to explore. He continues, “in the future, I want to try fundamentally reinventing the meaning of that which is often called ‘typically Japanese,’ *i.e.* the kinds of ideas brought back to Japan from critiques of the Edo period by Westerners.” Once again, he singles out the woodblock prints of the Edo period for attack: “I break out in a cold sweat when I think that at one point, I was enraptured with pictures of the floating world” (300).

The pre-modern world, with all of its poignant passions, decadent intensity, and artistic acuity, appears in two prose works that also involve a homoerotic appreciation of male beauty: “*Tetsu no dōji*” from 1913 and the play “*Shuten dōji*” from early 1914. The former describes the wanderings of an aristocratic narrator through the wilds of Japan and climaxes in an encounter with a group of nude children bathing in a river – a scene that the narrator interprets as a direct expression of the “power” of nature. The latter piece, which reworks a popular pre-modern legend of a flesh-eating demon, describes the life of a young temple acolyte in the tenth century whose beauty earns the admiration of a powerful, demonic priest who changes his life. Neither of these imaginative works was completed; nevertheless, they are worth examining in detail because they represent extended treatments of homoerotic desire within historical contexts and reflect the grandiose passions that Kaita associated with the pre-modern world.

“*Tetsu no dōji*” (“Children of Iron”): The Yearning for Anarchic Action

In 1913, Kaita began writing the long prose poem “*Tetsu no dōji,*” which combines his interest in the “powerful” pre-modern world with a “Hellenistic” appreciation of the youthful body. On November 16, he mentions the work for the first time in his journal, stating simply, “I continue to write ‘Tetsu no dōji.’ The title characters will be in it from the third chapter on. One chapter will be about a full one hundred pages of manuscript paper. The work is a dramatic poem” (342-43). A letter sent early in 1914 to a teacher shows his high hopes for the melodramatic work: “In no time at all, I will launch into the second part of my novel, ‘Tetsu no dōji.’ I would like you to read it if possible.” An undated fragment written about this time states, “Before long, I’ll finish the majority of my work “*Tetsu no dōji.*” When I have polished it as
much as I can, I think it will serve as a fine memorial to my youth. I have made it as impressive as D’Annunzio’s *The Maidens of the Rocks*” (292). Although Kaita was confident about his progress, he never finished the work. When his friends collected his manuscripts for inclusion in *Kaita no utaeru sono go*, they located only three chapters of the work, which they reproduced with a note declaring the work incomplete. Decades later, relatives of Yanase Masamu discovered a handwritten manuscript of the story in Yanase’s estate. This manuscript contains one previously unknown page of text. Moreover, it indicates that the three chapters that make up the version published in 1921 were actually subsections of one larger chapter, which was apparently never followed by a second.

Most likely, the pride Kaita took in the work stemmed from its imagistic and stylistic richness. Extant portions of the work are filled with expressionistic, often hyperbolic descriptions of scenery that produce florid, colorful images in the imaginations of readers. As in Mori Ōgai’s translation *Sokkyō shijin*, a book that Kaita particularly loved, the descriptions of setting are rarely objective. The tale is narrated by a protagonist who interprets the sights about him in terms of vitality and primordial power. The narrator is the second child of an aristocratic family who has wearied of the “manmade hell” of the capital of Kyoto and has left to wander the mountainous countryside of Japan. As the story begins, he has been wandering for three years. Five months of this time he has spent among the rocky, wild ranges of the rural province where the narrative begins. He tells us that time does not seem to pass in the mountains.

34 The work Kaita mentions is by Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863-1938), an Italian poet and writer who, early in his career, wrote in a particularly florid, late Romantic style. (In later years, however, D’Annunzio became associated with various other literary and social movements, ranging from Naturalism to Futurism and Italian Fascism.) A Japanese translation of the novel by Yaguchi Tatsu (1889-1936) appeared in 1913, about the time Kaita wrote this fragment of text. Gaburiere Danunchio [Gabriele D’Annunzio], *Iwa no shojō*, trans. Yaguchi Tatsu (Tokyo: Shin’yōdō, 1913).

35 Murayama Kaita, *Kaita no utaeru sono go*, 33-53. This version is the one that appears in Murayama Kaita, *Murayama Kaita zenshū*, 184-96. Unless otherwise noted, page references will be to the latter since it is the most widely available edition of the text.

36 Murayama Kaita, “Tetsu no dōji,” ms. in collection of Yanase Nobuaki, Kamakura. I thank Higashi Shunrō and Harada Hikaru for giving me access to Kaita’s original manuscript. When the Museum of Modern Art in Kamakura held a large exhibition of Kaita’s work 1982, the curators published the newly discovered version in the exhibition catalogue: Kanagawa kenritsu kindai bijutsukan, “Tetsu no dōji,” *Murayama Kaita no subete* (Kamakura: Kanagawa kenritsu kindai bijutsukan, 1982) n. pag. The final portion of the newly discovered manuscript also appears as “Radō no mure (‘Tetsu no dōji’ no uchi)” in Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, *Murayama Kaita ten*, 186-88.

Incidently, Yanase Masamu has written in a remembrance of Kaita that “Tetsu no dōji” is a direct record of not just the kind of “dissipated, daring” language Kaita habitually used but also of the beauty- and intensity-seeking life he lived. Yanase Masamu, “Murayama Kaita-kun,” n. pag.
In this mountainous province, one sees no traces of past or present anywhere. Instead, one finds the raw exposition of the fact that time is absolute and indivisible. A millennium ago, the current day, and a millennium to come – they all reside together within these mountains as a single, timeless entity (185).

Wandering though this “land of eternity,” his closest companions are the eternal mountains that surround him. His descriptions set a stage of primeval power and virility.

They are beings that bear all the vitality of the sun. They are violent. By innate disposition, they are great villains. They are warriors. They are robust men. With their inviolable, sublime aspirations, sharp, steep, ample forms, and brute strength, they scheme to exceed their own width. They stretch on and on, never stopping (184).

The mountains are a powerful presence that surrounds the narrator and endangers him with their volcanoes and treacherous paths. They also seem to have human emotions. “One can also see the love between mountain range and mountain range. The negotiations that take place between all great beings are here, full to overflowing in this magnificent mountainous country” (184).

Eros and thanatos exist side by side in the stones of the mountains, which are as capable of destruction as well as love. Significantly, the mountains are explicitly gendered as masculine. They are “robust men” (kyōsō na dansei) and form the boundaries of an exclusively male space of primeval energy and intensity. The remaining portion of the text contains no depiction of encounters with women. Instead, adult men and boys who are seemingly ignorant of women seem to dominate the mountainous region. Furthermore, as latter passages reveal, the narrator is attracted to figures that embody the kind of masculine intensity of the mountains. No space is allotted to women nor to any kind of gentle subtlety that stands apart from the mountains and their mysterious power.

After an elaborate description of the volcanic range, the blood-red setting sun, and a sanguine river, the narrator climbs to an old building in the mountains. Feeling as if his journey is about to undergo some important change, he climbs to the top where he finds a rare Indian bell. As he rings it, its echo sounds ominously, telling him that his journey is about to end, perhaps in death. At precisely this moment, he sees “narrow green fields in an area surrounded by mountains. In the middle of it, trembled a small town clouded over in a mist of silvery purple” (187). With the bell’s portentous sound still ringing in his ears, he descends to the town. The next morning, he gets his first good look at the town. He says, “After only a few steps, I learned that this town had considerable age and decay” (188). The town appears somnolent, as if civilization has suppressed all the primordial strength visible in the surrounding landscape.
As he walks, the narrator encounters two scenes that hint of male-male attraction, but like everything else in the town, the attraction is restrained. In one of many quiet streets lined with walls, he spies two men who stand staring at one another. They gaze at one another, “without any expression, standing slightly apart as if afraid of one another” (189). Clearly there is some relationship that binds the two. An almost electrical charge seems to exist between them, but they remain fixed in silence. The image of two men separated by distance strikes the narrator as a strangely appropriate symbol for the town, which he has nicknamed “the town of walls” (188). He continues on his way, stunned by the silence pervading the anesthetized streets. As he wanders, he catches sight of a shirtless worker who is hard at work wielding a large hammer.

His great hammer moved up and down creating tremendous noise. I did not feel as if I had encountered some evil god. No, I was struck by intense wonder. At the same time, I was trapped in a feeling of solitude that I could do nothing about. Oh, the color and luster of his body were so metallic! I stood for a while gazing at his extraordinarily developed muscles. The man did not turn my way. It was as if he were rooted there like a statue in a museum (189).

The sight of the powerful body of the worker – a blacksmith, cooper, or some other type manual laborer – inspires admiring wonder and loneliness in the narrator. This combination of feelings hints that he yearns to be connected somehow to the man. The laborer’s every move brims with vital energy, and his muscles reveal the power and strength within him. Still, he remains “rooted as a statue,” and though he pounds with his hammer, he does not break free from the patterns and routines of work. As a result, the power running through him does not transform itself into any meaningful dramatic action. He is hard at work, but he remains like the inhabitants of the “town of walls” surrounded by a self-imposed fence of propriety and routine. Although the scenes with the two silent men and the laborer both contain hints of a vital energy that borders on the erotic, in neither case is the energy released from its ordinary channels and transformed into action. Later that evening, the narrator witnesses one man attempting to steal money from a sick beggar who is virtually powerless to defend himself. This extreme example of weakness incites the narrator, and he vows to stay in the town to teach the “inferior citizens” about the passions and strength of the noble mountains, which they “were incapable of noticing” (191).

The next morning, the sun is ferociously hot. A river flows through the town, and as he looks into its refreshing waters, he exclaims, “Ah! I am restored to life again” (191). As a refuge from the heat, the water serves as a place of resuscitation, and he feels healthy and strong beside it. At one point, he encounters a group of workers, which lend the setting “the feel of some ancient foreign country” (192). The feeling grows stronger as he wanders downstream and encounters a scene that brims with vitality.
A group of nude children were playing joyfully at the base of the bridge. The sight of them was so vital and brilliant that I felt a warm flush suddenly spread across my face, and my heart began to tremble. I stood there and said to myself, without thinking, “I have been too jaundiced in my view of this town.” What was this scene presenting itself before me? The embodiment of joy itself. The very element that comprises compassion. A clear, golden nest of honeybees (193).

In these passages and in the title of the work itself, the nominal used to identify the children is dōji. In classical Japanese, this term generally signifies “children,” but it referred particularly often to boys, such as serving boys or male acolytes in temples. (In the nō theater, for instance, the “dōji mask” depicts the countenance of a youthful male.) Though the text does not specifically identify the dōji in the river as all male, the fact that boys were more likely to show scantily clad bodies in public than women, suggests that the crowd of children in the story consists largely, if not exclusively, of boys. The scantily clad children, who are oblivious of anything but their play, are blissful, young, and full of primeval energy. As they flit about in their energetic, zealous play, they strike the narrator as passion personified. The narrator states, “I was seeing an image of the ancient past. I could not help thinking of the scene as extremely mythological” (194). Just moments earlier, he had wondered if he was not actually having “a dream about Greece” (193). This passage contains an obvious anachronism. Prior to the Meiji Restoration, information about the Western world was scarce and limited primarily to scholars of fields like medicine and Western studies (rangaku). For this reason, it is unlikely that the son of an aristocratic family from the capital would have known anything about ancient Greece at all. This textual error apparently arises from Kaita’s eagerness to associate the scene with the vibrancy and candor of ancient Greece, a civilization he particularly admired.

Of course, the narrator is projecting a great deal onto the sights before him. This is especially clear in the following passage, which construes the play of the children as full of the primordial, masculine “power” churning in the surrounding mountain ranges.

Since entering this mountainous province, I had for five months been immersed in terrifying power. I had dedicated myself to uncovering the power that exudes from the mountains. I had managed to make some of it mine along the way, but what I had really hoped to capture was that element within humanity. And then I had descended into this plain. I had been disappointed in this insignificant town. I had wondered sadly if I had lost sight forever of the strong beauty that resides within humanity. Now however, I was happy. At that moment, the power of humanity was there before my eyes. A moan escaped from my lips. In the space a single moment, all my senses had transformed into an exquisitely crafted mirror. I was equipped with a thousand eyes that moved as one. There, in that very moment, the true form of humanity danced before the mirror I had become. A group of bright red, unclothed children were playing joyfully on the surface of the beautiful afternoon water (193).
Even though the narrator had gaped in awe at the powerful, muscular body of the worker the day before, it is the children that best display the masculine, vital power of the mountains. As in many of Kaita’s poems, the text links the abstract qualities or feelings of the central figures to the surrounding landscape.

The narrator’s attraction to the children appears to be partly erotic in nature. While staring at them, he blushes, and his heart beats quickly. In the following passage, his gaze lingers on the bodies of the children, evaluating their torsos, arms, legs, and skin in turn.

There seemed to be about twenty of them. They were all stalwart youths. With complete freedom, they moved their two arms and two legs attached firmly to their uniformly thick, ample torsos. They moved just like the figures in an Egyptian bas-relief. Their red skin shone and, wet from the river, caught the sun from above. They were truly beautiful. A sensual feeling rippled through the entire group (193).

The play of the sunlight on their sunburned skin and the movement of their thick limbs makes the narrator acutely aware of their bodies. He notes, for instance, “When four or five of them dove energetically into the water, their buttocks glistened with a flash of light” (193). As they play, he comments, “I was truly moved by the ever-changing relationship between the innocent flesh of the swimming children and the beautiful ripples of the water” (194). The sensual, voluptuous feeling (nikkan) exuded by their bodies is closely linked to the intense, brilliant vitality of the children’s play and movement. Clearly, the children in these passages are not desexualized beings. In fact, a major reason they excite the narrator so much is that they have not taken on the cold reticence of adulthood.

What made me happy was that they were certainly not adults. They were human. They were not made of metal. Truly, these children were completely alive as they splashed about, full of health and vigor. Of course, they were the children of the townspeople who I thought were worthy of nothing but scorn. Although the children were of the same blood, they had not yet been sullied by fatherhood. They were the children of humanity in its purest form. They were untainted raw material. They could come together to form anything. They had within them all the “power” of humanity (194).

The narrator suggests that as young men pass the threshold into adulthood, they lose their vital energy. Even if they become strong and powerful like the laborer whom the narrator saw the previous day, they have routines that keep them rooted and their energies channeled into social useful projects. The narrator does not launch into a diatribe against the society that forces people into narrow routines, but the text contains a clear criticism of the world that restrains adults and keeps them from realizing their full potential as vibrant, vital beings.

Although the children’s play full of an innocent eroticism, it also possesses another side – one of cruelty. When the narrator recognizes the children possess all of the “power” of
humanity,” he notes, “Truly they were children of a violent storm. They were children so brave that they could endure these battles between one another. Their beautiful, joyous games here in the river were really preparations for war. They were really soldiers-in-training, weren’t they?” (194)

Suddenly struck with fear by the thought that these “soldiers-in-training” will soon return and join the ordinary ranks of the “silent, hateful” people in the town, the narrator approaches the children, who resemble animals or the warriors of ancient times.

They were all sturdy and innocent. Their beautiful blood-red skin was thick like that of half-wild beasts, inflamed by repeated exposure to the sun over the course of many days in a row. Wet, it gave off a fresh, youthful scent. Ah, this skin was their armament! They looked at ease as they surrounded me, and I could not help remembering the ancient Emperor Jinmu. With only an extremely small contingent of underlings, the great emperor of so long ago had courageously driven his forces among the lowly, savage enemies that covered the land.

They had been victorious in battle. And thus, their country eventually expanded to encompass the whole territory of Japan. Wasn’t I just like the Emperor Jinmu and these children like the honorable retainers following him from Mount Takachiho? (194-95).

The narrator likens himself to the semi-mythological first emperor of Japan, and the bathing children to the princes and valiant retainers whom Emperor Jinmu commanded eastward as he expanded his territory across the Japanese archipelago. The narrator of the story sees himself as a contemporary version of this ancient leader, and he is eager to transform the youthful “soldiers” into a force that will revitalize the town through action. As the narrator resolves to lead the children, the story rises to a climax.

In that moment, a great wind arose in my heart. Borne by it, blood rushed through my body, splashing and overflowing in a great uproar. All of my nerves were as red and raw as the children before me. Nervous tension welled within me, dancing up. Perhaps it was because my eyes glimmered so extraordinarily, all twenty-some children looked at me at once. In a glance, I took in the faces of all of them – all identical countenances, all identical faces. I was struck by their uniformity, and I became as intoxicated as if I had consumed a whole jug of saké. Ah, my warriors! The time has come for your joyful play to turn into a great battle! In effect, I was turning to them and crying out, “Go ahead and betray! Perform your exalted act of treachery!” (196)

Hoping to spark a revolution in the life of the town, the narrator calls upon them to deliver a coup to the somnolent order of the town. Only a radical, dramatic act can channel the children’s erotic,

37 The Kojiki states that when the offspring of the heavenly deities Amë-nigisi-kuni-nigisi-ama-tu-piko-piko-po-nō-ninigi-nō-mikōtō (more commonly called “Ninigi-no-mikoto”) came to earth in order to govern the Central Land of the Reed Plains, the spot where he alighted was on a peak of Mount Taka-ti-po (“Takachiho” in modern Japanese). Several generations of gods stayed there until Ninigi-no-mikoto’s great-grandson Jinmu departed from the palace on the mountain and traveled eastward to find a new spot from which to rule. See Kojiki, trans. Donald L. Philippi (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1968) 141, 163.
vital energy in a new direction and unleash a new understanding of “power” within the
townspeople.

In the version published in Kaita no utaeru sono go in 1921, the narrator’s frenzied call
for betrayal is followed by a single sentence that states his heart suddenly became “full of
contempt, and, I began to abuse them furiously with unbearable words (196).” The narrator
tries to spur the children to action by inciting them to anger. If the children respond with
violence toward the narrator, their action might provide exactly the blow to the town’s quiet
routines that the narrator envisioned. The version of the manuscript discovered in the estate of
Yanase Masamau trails off in a quite different fashion, however. The sentence that concludes the
1921 version is absent. In its place, one finds a continuation of the scene quoted above.

…In effect, I was turning to them and crying out, “Go ahead and betray! Perform your exalted act of
treachery!”

I found them truly charming, and they evoked a strong feeling of nostalgia within me. I gazed long
and hard at them. With a real sense of familiarity, they returned my look. Moments later, the sun
reappeared. As it came out once more over the red stage, they raised a cry of joy and jumped into the
water – every last one of them. The spray showered me. With my heart full of valiant ambition, I fled
from the river as if I were mad. I told myself I must come up with a design for a tremendous plan of
action. Lost in thought, I reached my inn. The sunset was spilling through the window, and the
lamplight glowed like a diamond. I stared intently at my third-floor room, thinking that this space
would become a den of great rebellious traitors. I smiled. At night, I once again became intoxicated
over the mysterious feel of the hot spring. Later in bed, I murdered, one after another, the fantastic
thoughts that floated up in my mind.38

This version gives no hint that the excited children rose against the narrator. Instead, the narrator
ruminates on how to channel the vital, erotic energies of the children into action. Following the
passage above, one finds only the title of the next subsection, “Osore no oka” (“Hillock of Fear”),
which hints that Kaita planned to have subsequent events take an alarming turn.39

The same year Kaita wrote “Tetsu no dōji,” he wrote a poem called “Dōji gun’yoku”
(“Children Bathing Together”), which describes a scene much like the one near the end of “Tetsu
no dōji.” The narrator of this early poem describes encountering several children bathing one
summer afternoon in a shallow river, which runs in front of a ridge of dark, glassy mountains.
(There are, however, two rivers in Kyoto that fit the description in the poem: the Kamo, which

38 Murayama Kaita, “Tetsu no dōji,” ms. in collection of Yanase Nobuaki, Kamakura, 26-28; reprinted in
Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 188.

39 Murayama Kaita, “Tetsu no dōji,” ms. in collection of Yanase Nobuaki, Kamakura, 28. The title of the
subsection comes in the leftmost column of the manuscript page. Because the entire page is full of writing,
it is unclear if Kaita simply abandoned the story after writing the title of the next subsection or if he wrote
more pages that were then lost.

120
runs parallel to the Higashiyama mountains in east central Kyoto, and the Katsura, which flows southward from the Arashiyama mountains in west central Kyoto.) The poem is not realistic in style; instead, it depicts the scene in an expressionistic style dominated by splashes of intense color.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children Bathing Together</strong></td>
<td>童児群浴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain ridges of black glass, drops of red blood,</td>
<td>黒き玻璃の山脈、赤き血の滴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The voice of an ibis in a sharp, incomprehensible sky…</td>
<td>げせぬ鋭き天のときの声</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All these things raise an extraordinary purple lament</td>
<td>これらみな紫の異常になげく</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On this summer afternoon</td>
<td>夏の午後のとき</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavender, red, and yellow stain the transparent air</td>
<td>薄紫、赤、黄は透明を伝染し</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And overflow heaven and earth</td>
<td>天地にみなぎりたり</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While a sulfuric spring spreads beneath the earth</td>
<td>硫黄泉は地底をつたふ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Releasing the beautiful scent of steam</td>
<td>美しき湯気の香はする</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sun now dances a <em>nō</em> play of the tides of blood</td>
<td>この時太陽は血潮の「能」を舞び</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children now amuse themselves in the wide river,</td>
<td>この時童子等は大川に喜戯す</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing in its purple whirlpools,</td>
<td>紫の渦巻きに</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the reflections of heavens above</td>
<td>うつれる空に喜戯せり</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The golden children laugh and show their red mouths</td>
<td>黄金の童子等は赤く笑へり</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As they stand in the water reflecting heaven and earth</td>
<td>一瞬にして人食びとにとらはるる</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They laugh loudly and powerfully</td>
<td>ばかりの恐れ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concealing a momentary fear as great as if they had just been seized by</td>
<td>おしかくし勇ましく大笑す</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cannibals</td>
<td>天と地とうつしし水に</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These children, with their metallic flesh,</td>
<td>げに金属の童子等は</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dive into the water</td>
<td>怪しく焼けしその顔に</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And play like reptiles, wearing boundless smiles</td>
<td>無窮の笑を帯ばしめつ水にとび入り</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On strangely tanned cheeks</td>
<td>爬虫の如く戯れつ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As I gaze at them, a bead of pale blue sweat</td>
<td>かくも眺めてわが胸は</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lodges in my breast</td>
<td>薄青き珠玉の汗を宿し</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My fear at this manifestation scorches my nerves</td>
<td>この表現の怖さに全神経は</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I stand still and shudder</td>
<td>焦げはてじつとおののく</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The abdomens of the children shine red –</td>
<td>童子の腹赤く輝く</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five, six, seven of them along the lovely riverbanks…</td>
<td>五、六、七、美しき河水のそばに</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh, gathering of sunburned children,</td>
<td>おう赤き童子の群よ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As red as the ancestors of the sun!</td>
<td>太陽の祖先の如き赤さもて</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As the children, deep red, play,</td>
<td>赤い童子は喜戯せり</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They project onto the black glass ridge of the mountains</td>
<td>黒き瑠璃の山脈にほの赤き幻燈うつる</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a scarlet image</td>
<td>血の滴、低き天つたひてゆけば</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Should drops of blood spread over the low sky
The call of the heavenly ibises will not fade so listlessly

Like jewels, all things shine
As random thoughts seize me
My eyes trail over the river’s shoals
And I think fondly upon the sun dancing distantly in the depths of the sky

Both the poem and the story draw a close relationship between the foreground, with the children exuberantly playing and demonstrating their youthful energy, and the surrounding setting of the mountains. In both the poem and the story, the children have turned metallic bronze or red from the sun.

There are some differences between the story and the poem, however. First, the relationship between the children and the surrounding landscape differs subtly in terms of direction. In the story, the mountains serve as the source of the power that animates the children, but in the poem, the mountains are the glass backdrop upon which the children project their images, creating an effect like that of a “magic lantern” (gentō). Overhead, the sun performs the slow dance of a nō play as it crosses the sky, a dance that the narrator likens to the ebb and flow of blood within the body. Reflected on the surface of the water are the heavens, and in the reflection, the children play, performing their own vital dance of life like that taking place overhead. Second, the children’s eroticism is somewhat more understated in the poem than in the story. As the narrator of the poem watches the children, he feels a pearl of pale blue sweat coalesce on his chest – a hint that the children inspire a special excitement within him.40 However, the text does not dwell on the shape or appearance of their bodies, even though we know the children are at least half-nude from the mention of their red abdomens. Finally, in the story, the threatening side of the children’s “power” becomes visible to the narrator only toward the end, when the children remind him of the warriors of ancient mythology. In the poem, however, the ominous side of the children’s play is visible throughout the work. As early as the third stanza, the text begins casting their play in a strange light by emphasizing the redness of their wide laughing mouths, the reptilian quality of their movement, and the color of the “strangely tanned cheeks.” These grotesque qualities inspire fear within the narrator, “scorching”

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40 Takahashi Mutsuo speculates that Kaita probably identified with one of the blissful bathing youths, and therefore, this poem, along with “Chi no koshō” represents a fantastic, illusory “self-portrait,” but he provides no textual evidence to support this reading. In fact, the relative consistency of the narration in both “Tetsu no dōji” and “Dōji gun’yoku” suggests that, if Kaita identified with anyone, he probably identified more with the narrators than the youths. Takahashi Mutsuo, “Chi no teki mote,” 72.
his nerves and causing him to tremble. The tension between vitality and thanatos is clear throughout the fabric of the poem, which repeatedly uses the image of dripping blood in combination with the images of mountains and the children’s innocent play.

“Shuten dōji” (“The Saké-Drinking Youth”): The Aesthetics of Murder

In both “Tetsu no dōji” and “Dōji gun’yoku,” a relatively commonplace scene of childhood takes on almost mythological largesse, endowed with intense passion and hyperbolic grotesqueness. The texts bring out a structural tension between erotic, vital energy and the vaguely threatening power that it inspires it. The connection between vitality, eroticism, and thanatotic energy, however, is far more pronounced in another work from the same period, the incomplete play “Shuten dōji.” This work is one of three short plays Kaita wrote in 1913 and 1914, about the time that he wrote “Tetsu no dōji” and “Dōji gun’yoku.” All three display a decadent fascination with crime and murder. “Akujo jidai” (“Age of the Wicked Woman”), which first appeared in Kaita no utaeru sono go, is a three-act play about a woman who challenges a group of bandits inhabiting the woods near her village and who eventually drives them to their deaths. The manuscript of the play “Goshiki satsuriku” (“Massacre in Five Colors”) disappeared before Kaita’s works were collected for posthumous publication. Consequently, little is known about it today. The title hints that the play depicted an explosion of destructive energy – a theme present also in his play “Shuten dōji,” which reworks a popular legend of a flesh-eating demon who creates his own kingdom in the mountains outside the capital of old Japan. Unlike traditional versions of the story, Kaita’s retelling is from the point of view of the demon. Kaita does not depict him as a murderer but as a heroic figure who shares his singular vision with the world by acting upon his decadent predilections.

Around March of 1914, Kaita wrote in a letter, “Since last spring, I have been working on the plan for a great play. Since I am a little morbid by nature, I soon lead my characters in the direction of sadism, cannibalism, necrophilia, and other forms of perverse sexual desire” (297). Although he does not specify which play he was writing about – it could be either the missing “Goshiki satsuriku” or “Shuten dōji” – this description matches the content of the latter especially well. On March 22, 1914, he wrote in his diary, “Since the afternoon, I have been working on the prologue for “Shuten dōji,” but I am not particularly pleased with it” (344). His interest, however, seems to have picked up when he reached the heart of the work and started writing about the themes mentioned in the letter above. A letter to Yamamoto Jirō written on May 1 says, “Now I
am writing ‘Shuten dōji.’ It will be a five-act play, and I have just finished the first act. It looks like it will turn out well” (399). Nonetheless, he went only as far as the beginning of the third act before abandoning the project, leaving the unfinished draft reprinted in Kaita no utaeru sono go.41 Even though the work is incomplete, there are two reasons it is worth examining in this study. First, it contains the longest invocation in Kaita’s oeuvre of the age-graded nanshoku practiced among priests and acolytes in pre-modern Japan. Second, it depicts male-male love in terms of decadence, placing it against a backdrop of murder and the supernatural, thus creating a bizarre and even otherworldly atmosphere like one would find in his mystery-adventure stories from 1915. In fact, this story represents an early expression of the combination of eroticism and grotesquery that became so popular in the 1920s and 1930s – in other words, the kind of sensibility embodied in the work of later writers such as Edogawa Ranpo.42

Over the centuries, the legend of the flesh-eating demon Shuten dōji of Mount Ōe in Tanba Province has inspired countless works of art and literature.43 The legend dates at least as

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41 The fact that the extant portion of Shuten dōji is a draft and not a fragment of an incomplete manuscript is clear from a note at the end of the first act that says, “Another day I will boldly revise this work, adorning the language and ideas with the abundant beauty of D’Annunzio” (270). The reason why he did not finish the play is unclear. He may have simply become too busy with his move to Tokyo. Another possibility is that once he had worked the themes of male-male erotic desire and cannibalism into the first two acts, he felt like he had sufficiently explored the themes that interested him, and the idea of writing more lost its excitement.

42 One commentator notes that this play’s evocation of a “strange space of horror japonesque” (horā japonesuku na ikākan), one finds an aesthetically inclined type of horror that also recurs in postwar works like “Sakura no mori no mankai no shīta” (“Under the Blooming Forest of Cherry Trees”) by Sakaguchi Angō (1906-1955) and Omnyōji (The Sorcerer of Chinese Divination) by Yumemakura Baku (1951- ). Higashi Masao, “Kaisetsu: Tanbi to kaii no senpūji – Murayama Kaita no kiseki to kiseki,” Murayama Kaita: Tanbi kaiki zenshū, by Murayama Kaita, ed. Higashi Masao, Denki no hako 4 (Tokyo: Gekkan M bunko, 2002) 475.

43 These works range from handscrolls and plays for the nō and kabuki theaters to children’s picture books and animation. The best known retelling of the legend for the nō theater is the play Ōyama (Mount Ōe). See Ōyama, Yōkyoku taikan, vol. 1, ed. Sanari Kentarō (Tokyo:Meiji shoin, 1992) 553-72; Ōyama (The Demon of Ōyama), trans. H. Mack Horton, Twelve Plays of the Noh and Kyōgen Theaters, rev. ed., ed. Karen Brazell, Cornell University East Asia Papers 50 (Ithaca: Cornell University, East Asia Program, 1990) 150-67. The Shuten dōji story was the subject of a large number of kabuki plays, including Shuten dōji (first performed in 1638), Imayō shuten dōji (A Modern Day Shuten Dōji, 1681), Shuten dōji oni taiji (The Subjugation of the Demon Shuten Dōji, 1684), Ōyama no oni taiji (The Subjugation of the Demons of Mount Ōe, 1684), Shuten dōji furiwakegami (Parted Hair of Shuten Dōji, 1733), Ōyama (Mount Ōe, 1861), Ōyama shuten dōji (1867), and Ōyama Minamoto no Tuvamono (Ōyama and the Courageous Minamoto Warriors, 1887). The conflict between Watanabe Tsuna and Ibaragi Dōji, one of Shuten dōji’s demonic mignons, also became the subject of other kabuki plays. Modern Japanese retellings of the story for young audiences include Nosaka Akiyuki, Otogi-zōshi shuten dōji (Tokyo: Shūseiha, 1982) and Funazaki Yoshihiko, Shuten dōji (Tokyo: Dotomosha shuppan, 1994). Retellings for English-speaking audiences include The Ogres of Oyeyama (Tokyo: T. Hasegawa, 1891); Yei Theodora Ozaki, “The Goblin of Oyeyama,” Warriors of Old Japan and Other Stories (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909) 109-31; and
far back as the Ōeyama ekotoba (Illustrated Story of Mount Ōe) from the late fourteenth century, but it reached a particularly wide audience when Shibukawa Seiemon, an Osaka publisher, included one version of the story in his multi-volume Otogi bunko series at the turn of the eighteenth century. In this version, the emperor sends the brave hero Minamoto Raikō, his retainer Watanabe Tsuna, and several other followers to subdue Shuten dōji and his horde of demons after Shuten dōji kidnaps the daughters of several high ranking officials from the capital. Raikō’s band of warriors disguise themselves as mountain-dwelling priests and travel to the demon’s mountain castle, praying at several shrines along the way. In answer to their prayers, the three gods of Hachiman, Sumiyoshi, and Kumano come to them as old men and deliver advice about how to defeat the demons. They explain that Shuten dōji got his nickname, literally “the saké-drinking youth,” because of his particular fondness for alcohol, and they advise Raikō and his crew to use this to their advantage. With this counsel, one of the gods produces a flask of magical saké, which, if consumed by demons, will neutralize their ability to fly.

Flask in hand, the heroes press onward. They encounter a woman weeping by a river as she tries to remove a bloodstain from some clothing. Through her tears, she identifies herself as one of the daughters abducted from the capital, and she tells Raikō’s crew that Shuten dōji and his crew have been consuming her fellow prisoners in gruesome feasts of human flesh and blood. The heroes are on their way to the demon’s castle when they happen across Shuten dōji in person.


In 1891, the Otogi bunko series was republished for modern audiences under the title Otogi-zōshi (Companion Booklets), and in the twentieth century, literary scholars began using the term otogi-zōshi, not just to refer to the volumes of the Otogi bunko series, which included Shuten dōji, but to the entire genre of late Muromachi and early Edo fiction. Chieko Irie Mulhern, “Otogi-zōshi: Short Stories of the Muromachi Period,” Monumenta Nipponica 29.2 (Su 1974): 181-98 provides a survey of otogi-zōshi in the wider, generic sense.


Like the other retainers named in the story, Minamoto Raikō (also sometimes called Minamoto no Yorimitsu, 948?-1021) was a historical figure. He is also the subject of a number of legends that describe his military prowess and his adventures traveling throughout Japan. In addition to the legend about Shuten dōji, Watanabe no Tsuna (953-1025) appears in a legend about the subjugation of a demon that lived in the Rashōmon Gate in south central Kyoto.
A wind that smelt of blood started to blow, thunder and lightning crackled in the sky, and as they started to lose all sense of direction, the demon appeared before them. Light red in color and tall in stature, the demon had mussed hair cut short in the style of a youth. He wore a kimono of a large lattice-weave pattern and a scarlet hakama. Leaning on a rod of iron, he stood still and glared at his surroundings – the sight was enough to make one’s hair stand on end.\footnote{Ōshima Tatehiko, ed., “Shuten dōji,” 456.}

Once inside the castle, Raikō’s band gives Shuten dōji the magical saké, prompting him to invite them to dinner. On the menu are human forearms, thighs, and flanks, accompanied with blood to drink. The heroes accept this odd cuisine, stating that they are wandering Buddhist pilgrims who gladly accept all that is presented them. Next, they pour the magical liquor they had received earlier from the gods. As Shuten dōji grows tipsy, he begins to tell his visitors a long story about his past. He begins, “I am originally from Echigo province and was a child acolyte (chigo) raised in a mountain temple, but because of resentment toward a priest, I stabbed a large number of priests to death.”\footnote{Ōshima Tatehiko, ed., “Shuten dōji,” 460.} Afterward, he describes how he tried to enter Mt. Hiei, but was turned away and wandered aimlessly about the countryside until settling in the present spot. He regales his guests with tales of his recent exploits, watches them dance, and imprudently takes his leave to sleep off the effects of the magical liquor.

When the heroes proceed into his bedchamber, they find that Shuten dōji has reverted to his demonic form.

He was more than two jō in stature [over twice the height of a regular man], and his hair was red and bristly. Horns had sprouted in his hair, and his whiskers and eyebrows had grown thick and bushy. His limbs were like those of a bear, and they were thrown in all directions. Just looking at his sleeping form was enough to make the hair on one’s body crawl.\footnote{Ōshima Tatehiko, ed., “Shuten dōji,” 467.}

The three gods of the shrines reappear and tell the heroes they have tied the demon’s limbs to the pillars of the room. The heroes attack the incapacitated demon and sever his head from his body; however, in a final spasm of death, the severed head flies through the air and clamps its teeth upon Raikō’s helmet. After all of the other demons have been dispatched, the warriors return the surviving maidens to the capital, whereupon the emperor welcomes them with pomp and circumstance.\footnote{The nō play Mount Ōe contains many of the same features of the otogi bunko version, but there are significant differences. Shuten dōji (the shite) first appears to Minamoto Raikō (the waki) in the guise of an}
As this summary indicates, the third-person narration of the *Otogi bunko* version focuses on the bravery of Raikō and his crew as they engage Shuten dōji and his followers, who are terrifying, ugly creatures and behave with inhuman cruelty. Kaita’s incomplete stage version, however, tells the story from a completely different perspective. Instead of focusing on Raikō, the text focuses on Shuten dōji and portrays him in a relatively sympathetic light. The shift in perspective and identification is immediately clear from the monologue that opens the play. According to the stage directions, a narrator, clad in black clothes and a mask and bearing a burning torch, steps in front of the pale red curtain of the stage and announces, “This play is a battle cry for one whose evil was so great that he could even enrage hell. It is a sutra to evil in all of its beauty; it is a superbly sacred, esoteric transmission of beauty and power” (262, emphasis in original). The first lines of the work lay out its main theme – beauty, power, and evil are not necessarily strangers to one another; instead, the combination of power and evil bring about a certain decadent beauty.

The narrator announces that the play will reveal the “auspicious dogma of Shuten dōji, the sole sage in Japan’s two and a half thousand years of history,” and states, “this play is a battle with you, a spear that will slaughter you, a flame…” (262) According to the narrator, the moment in which this flame singses the audience will have enormous significance.

In that moment, the nation of Japan will open its eyes for the first time and will know deep within itself its own greatness, beauty, power, and joy. In that moment, our Shuten dōji will straddle the scarlet ring of the sun and return wildly into the eastern skies. Shuten dōji will be reborn again. The nation of Japan will become the nation of this saint. It will become paradise. Truly, this play is the forerunner for our sage, Shuten dōji. First and foremost, it is the flame that will purify the way and purify the country. Listen all of you! It is the terrifying flame that will put an end to all of you dwarfish creatures with your yellow faces and your lack of pride; it is the terrifying flame that will extinguish the country of Japan (262).

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attractive temple acolyte, and as they drink together, he tells the story of his past in a question-and-answer session (*mondo*). Shuten dōji says he is from Mount Hiei, but he was driven out when the priest Dengyō created the temple complex there in the late eighth century. (In the *Otogi bunko* version, Hiei is mentioned not as his home, but merely as one place where he wanders after leaving Echigo.) As he finishes his speech, Shuten dōji flirts with Raikō, who is still disguised as a wandering Buddhist monk. He coyly states, “monks hold the temple boys much dearer than they do the gods themselves! Since you are priest and I, a lad, can you but show me kindness?” This sexually suggestive bantering, which plays off the popular knowledge that priests often had amorous feelings for temple acolytes, is cut short when Shuten dōji, drunk with the alcohol Raikō has brought, retreats to his bedchamber. After a digression (*ha*) about a relationship between one of Raikō’s servants and a woman whom Shuten dōji has kept in servitude, Raikō and his fellow travellers discover that Shuten dōji has reverted to his natural form as a demon. A battle ensues, and Raikō kills Shuten dōji as in the *Otogi bunko* version. Ōeyama, trans. H. Mack Horton, *Twelve Plays of the Noh and Kyōgen Theaters*, ed. Karen Brazell, 158.
Kaita uses the hyperbolic language of messianism to set an apocalyptic tone that foreshadows the scenes of destruction and horror in the play. One function of this hyperbolic diatribe seems to have been a heavy-handed attempt to evoke an atmosphere of morbid decadence like that in the works of Edgar Allan Poe, an author whom Kaita particularly loved.50 One reason for Kaita’s interest in Poe was Poe’s willingness to explore the most antisocial act of all, namely murder. In a fragment of prose from 1913 or 1914, Kaita writes, “I respect murder. This is because murder imbues people with fear and seriousness. Poe has depicted and refined murder” (293). Murder

50 Poe, with his fantastic and often grotesque forays into the darkside of human nature and the supernatural, represented an important voice of nineteenth-century decadent writing. Yamamoto Jirō, remembering his friend’s reading habits writes,

It seems that he was particularly interested in the work of Poe, etc. After being strongly moved by one of those especially frightening tales, he once made a grotesque mask and wore it each night as he stroll about the grounds of the Imperial Palace, Kaguraoka, and other places. One time, he also took a primitive type of flute called an ocarina which is made out of clay and walked through the suburbs on the east side of Kyoto as if he were a sleep-walker entirely given to his own fantasies.

Yamamoto Jirō, “Shōnen no Kaita,” 290. In a letter to Yamamoto written in early 1914, Kaita refers to his masked nighttime excursion when he writes, “I hear that someone in Kyoto was wearing a mask of death” (404). Kaita’s behavior in this anecdote was almost certainly inspired by Poe’s short story “The Masque of the Red Death” from 1842. In the story, a mysterious figure enters a party during a time of plague. He is wearing a mask of the “countenance of a stiffened corpse” that was “besprinkled with the scarlet horror” ravaging the land. When the revelers attempt to apprehend the interloper, they find the offender’s mask and grave clothes “untenanted by any tangible form.” Within moments, all die of the plague. Edgar Allan Poe, The Illustrated Edgar Allan Poe, ed. Roy Gasson (London: Jupiter Books, 1976) 222-27.


A letter to a teacher from early in 1914 indicates that Kaita tried to read Poe in the original, but was not very successful. He writes, “I worship Poe, but I am a troubled worshiper because I cannot yet read him. I am one of those people who when looking directly at something in English can grasp nothing more than the general meaning. As a result, I feel even very insignificant things very strongly” (297). Despite this admission, he tried his hand at translating a short story by Poe a year later. On May 20, 1915, he wrote in his journal, “The idea of getting up this morning was none too appealing so in bed I translated Poe’s ‘[The Murders in the] Rue Morgue.’ It’s a pretty sloppy translation, [but] I will turn it into money for tools for my artwork” (356). This translation seems to have never made its way into print. “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” had been translated already by Aeba Kōson (1855-1922) in 1887, Enomoto Haryū in 1882, Osada Shūtō in 1899, Fukasawa Yoshijirō in 1909, and Mori Ōgai in 1913. See Kawato Michiaki and Sakakibara Takanori, eds., Pō shū and Mori Ōgai, trans., “Byōin yokochō no satsujinhan,” by Edgar Allan Poe, Mori Ōgai zenshū, vol. 11, 543-586.
gives rise to fear, an emotion that gives life a direct immediacy, making it precious and intense. One of the most visceral of emotions, fear activates all the senses and makes one experience the world in an intense and direct way. In a letter to Yamamoto Kanae from about the same time, Kaita writes, “After reading the fiction of Edgar [Allan] Poe, things such as blood relations, heredity, and psychological illness have started to look unusually beautiful and interesting” (300). He also adds that he has also become interested in the Gothic atmosphere evoked by animistic folk religion, superstitions, and local, folk customs – the sort of atmosphere he worked into “Shuten dōji.”

By creating an ambiance that echoes the Gothic world of Poe and folk superstition, the play attempts to scare the audience and thus activate their senses. At the same time, it valorizes the spirit – although not the practice – of the decadence and animalistic hedonism suppressed by the judicious and smoothly functioning order of modern civilization. In the Otogi bunko version of the legend, Minamoto Raikō acts as an agent of the virtuous emperor and the rational civilization he represents. With the divine aid of three benevolent deities, he subjugates Shuten dōji, a barbarous, evil force who threatens the emperor’s innocent citizens. In other words, the traditional telling of this story, with its sympathetic treatment of Raikō, is about the suppression of wild instincts and barbarism, thus making life more secure and facilitating the smooth functioning of the state. Kaita’s play does not spurn this barbarism; instead, the text praises Shuten dōji and thereby reverses the black-and-white, good-versus-evil conflict that dominates traditional versions of the story. Rather than shunning wild, primeval power, the narrator welcomes it, inviting it to challenge the quiet existence of the people in the audience and rouse the slumbering Japanese to embrace hitherto shunned pleasures. In its valorization of the primeval, irrational forces of primitive strength, the play embraces the intensity of the pre-modern past. With his dark clothes and anachronistic torch, the narrator seems the very embodiment of atavistic darkness and primitiveness. As he opens the play, the narrator expresses a yearning for a new kind of society that will embrace the qualities Kaita admired in the gothic world of folk superstition.

The first act of the play takes its cues from the drunken demon’s speech in the Otogi bunko edition and portrays Shuten dōji’s early life in a monastery in Echigo province. One soon learns, however, that Kaita has modified a major premise of traditional versions of the story. Shuten dōji is no longer a horrifying demon; instead, he is a chigo acolyte who is so beautiful that all the monks in the monastery immediately fall in love with him. The act begins with five monks on stage. Their conversation rapidly turns to the extraordinary charm of the young acolyte
living among them. One monk notes, “Of course a chigo that lovely could not be found anywhere here in the Land of the Rising Sun. Even if you looked all through China and India, I’m sure you still wouldn’t find his equal” (263). Another comments that even though he had spent his entire youth with Shuten dōji, he never grew immune to his charms: “Since I always see him, I would have expected the stimulating effect he has over me to grow weaker, but he’s so beautiful that he causes a great agitation in my heart every time I see him” (264). One of the monks states that Shuten dōji is so beautiful that “he is more sacred than the Buddha in the main hall” of the temple. Another concurs, “For some reason, whenever I walk in front of that boy, I feel like I am bound hand and foot by beautiful golden chains” (265). Although the monks recognize his arresting, powerful beauty, their conversation suggests that there is something mysterious, disturbing, and perhaps even foreign about the boy’s countenance.

Surely, the chigo is beautiful, but there’s something I can’t quite fathom. When I walk in front of him, I can’t help feel all the hair on my body stand on end. It’s really something. You’ve really got to see the beauty and the sharpness of that child’s eyes for yourself. Just take a look at the redness and the voluptuousness of his lips! He certainly is beautiful, but it’s no ordinary beauty (263).

In the Otogi bunko version, Shuten dōji’s appearance was so frightening that it caused one’s hair to stand on end, but in the play, it is the boy’s unusual allure that produces the same effect.

Shuten dōji’s “mysterious” beauty, we learn, distracts the monks from their life of non-attachment and causes great strife within the monastery. His beauty, especially when he was fourteen and fifteen, was so great that he distracted many monks from their life of Buddhist non-attachment. The abbot of the temple was no exception, and he treated Shuten dōji as his personal erotic toy and guarded him jealously from the other monks. One of the monks on stage snarls that he plotted to kill the abbot in order to steal the acolyte. This was not an isolated incident; over the years, the abbot expelled nearly a dozen monks from the monastery because they had challenged him for the adolescent’s affections. This subplot clearly derives its inspiration from the numerous pre-Restoration texts that described the ability of a young acolyte’s beauty to penetrate the priestly shield of non-attachment. (One example of many examples of such a work is the second story of Ihara Saikaku’s Edo-period collection Nanshoku ōkagami [The Great Mirror of Male Love], which tells of two boys who were so beautiful that when an elderly Buddhist aesthetic sees them, “his concentration on future salvation failed him and the good deeds he had accumulated in previous incarnations went to naught.”51)

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Among the ten or so men expelled from the monastery was a priest with whom Shuten dōji developed a particularly affectionate relationship. One of the monks gossiping on stage states that when the abbot expelled this priest, his young partner became extremely lonely and started drinking heavily. (This anecdote provides a reason for Shuten dōji’s love of alcohol, which is absent in other versions of the story.) When the beautiful acolyte, about whom the audience has heard so much, finally walks on stage, he launches almost immediately into a soliloquy describing the inextinguishable melancholy that has assailed him in the years since the priest disappeared. In it, he avows, “I cannot forget the priest. His voice, his glittering eyes, are carved distinctly in my heart. Carved there eternally…” (265) Shuten dōji and the priest spent only a brief three months together, but to the boy, these months “were more precious than three thousand years” (266). Shuten dōji says when the priest first appeared at the temple, he felt a “mysterious feeling of nostalgia” as if the sight of the monk recalled a faint memory of his forgotten past (266). Despite the fact that the priest was hideously ugly, Shuten dōji says he fell deeply in love with him, and they began a sexual relationship. He explains, “Though it is embarrassing to say, my sexual desire was that of a woman. Therefore, the monk gave me his love. He loved me like a madman.” (266). In describing his own sexual preferences as those of a woman (“ore no seiyoku wa onna no seiyoku de atta”), Shuten dōji states not only that he was attracted to men but that he wanted his partner to penetrate him. The following sentence (“dakara sono hōshi mo ore o ai shite kureta”) suggests that the monk gladly fulfilled this role, giving the boy the sexual fulfillment he desired. The kind of sexual relationship described here, with an older priest playing the role of phallic inserter and a younger chigo as receptive partner,
appears frequently in pre-Restoration literature. In much of this writing, however, the narration focuses on the feelings of the older partner who appreciates the younger partner as an erotic object; rarely does the reader of such literature find accounts of the feelings of the *chigo* himself. Although the play employs the kinds of stock characters seen in older literature, Shuten dōji’s soliloquy gives the *chigo* an opportunity to narrate his own desire, breaking with traditional depictions of beautiful youths in literature by permitting the sexual object to take center stage as a desiring subject in his own right.

Shuten dōji tells the audience that as the relationship progressed, the priest admitted that he was not human but a *rasetsu* (*rākṣasa* in Sanskrit), a kind of demon who, according to Buddhist mythology, would charm people and consume their flesh. (Though the other monks were aware that he was from the distant land of *rasetsu*, they had chosen to believe that the odd-looking monk was Indian.) A second revelation soon followed. Shuten dōji too was not fully human, but was the child of a Yamato princess and the king of the *rasetsu*. Even before Shuten dōji summarizes this conversation, the monk’s dialogue and stage directions— which call for an actor that is “extremely beautiful, slightly dark, with a certain foreign appeal” (265)— provide hints that Shuten dōji may not be of purely Japanese descent. His mixed bloodlines provide a reason why he is not ugly like other *rasetsu*. He has kept the form of a human but taken the seductive qualities for which the *rasetsu* were known. They also provide a reason for the violent behavior that appears later on: it is in his nature to eventually destroy the people whom he seduces. The *rasetsu* priest inculcates his heretical faith in Shuten dōji by explaining that the Buddha had lied to humanity and that there is no Pure Land. Placing his thick lips against the boy’s ear, he explains, “Living in this world young and beautifully, leading a life of pleasure—that is virtue for you” (266). He teaches that drinking saké keeps one young and beautiful, but more importantly, he recommends that Shuten dōji pursue the “world’s greatest pleasure”: the suffering of women. He states, “In this world, the greatest taste, smell, and color all belong to female blood and flesh. The greatest sound that can reverberate through the world is the sound of a female crying out in pain (267).” Shuten dōji follows the *rasetsu*’s advice and begins drinking. As he does so, he finds a desire to engage in violent, misogynist acts growing within him. Even though his demonic urges escalate, he cannot act on them as long as the abbot of the monastery is there to constrain him.

Shuten dōji laments that the master has, for the last five or six years, “sacrificed me to his desire for sex” (267). At this point, Shuten dōji’s soliloquy ends, and the master enters. The stage directions describe him as a “thin old man who is extremely decadent in his sexual desires”
Looking at the sky, the abbot remembers that when he was a student, the great diviner Abe no Seimei had told him that he would die on a night when the stars were aligned as they are that night. This heavy-handed piece of foreshadowing prepares the audience for the dramatic act of murder that will follow. At this point, a group of travelers appears on stage and announce that they are the ones who, many years earlier, had left Shuten dōji, the “honorable prince of the south,” at the temple. The abbot pretends that he knows nothing of the boy, and the frustrated visitors leave. Having overheard the entire conversation, Shuten dōji charges furiously on stage, berates the monk for holding him hostage all these years in “the mountainous depths of this poor land,” and vows to expand the “territory of the land of the rasetsu into this land of Japanese dwarves.” In a flourish that ends the first act, he kills the master and runs down the road where he slaughters the travelers who had abandoned him in the monastery years before.

The second act, which takes place in Shuten dōji’s iron palace on Mount Ōe, depicts some of the many murders mentioned in the Otogi bunko version of the story. The stage directions for the second act call for settings in an “overstated, hallucinogenic” blend of gold, red, purple, and blue – the same brilliant hues that appear so often in Kaita’s poetry. The set depicts a ruined garden, another stock image in his work, set within the castle grounds. On center stage is a cherry tree in full bloom. The play tells us that under the tree, the castle dwellers have buried the bloody flesh and broken bones of numerous women who have become their victims, and the tree, which draws upon the “fertilizer” of their corpses, has produced spectacular flowers that are scarlet instead of the white or pink of most cherry blossoms. This image echoes Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s famous short story “Shisei” (“The Tattooer”) first published in 1910, three years before Kaita began drafting his play. In Tanizaki’s story, the protagonist, hoping to awake the sadistic side within a woman whom he wants to seduce, shows her a painting entitled Hiryō (The Fertilizer), which depicts a maiden standing beneath a cherry tree, which blooms beautifully thanks to the “fertilizer” of male corpses underneath. In “Shuten dōji,” the gender of

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53 Abe no Seimei (921-1005) was a historical figure who lived in the mid-Heian period and who became famous as an onmyōji, a practitioner of the magical system of divination based on Chinese practices. He had a reputation of being able to foretell the future with incredible accuracy, and over the centuries, his mystical abilities became the subject of many legends in Japan.

54 At the end of the story, the woman whom the tattooer has shown the painting wakens to her own sadistic desires and turns upon the man, saying, “All my old fears have been swept away – and you have become my fertilizer!” – a reference to the broken male bodies under the cherry tree of the painting. In his translation of this story, Howard Hibbett has changed the name of the painting to the more commonsensical
the victims is reversed. Decomposing women give the cherry tree its beauty, but the effect is the same; both stories evoke a horrifying yet beautiful scene that is, quite literally, rooted in violence and death.

When Shuten dōji’s followers capture several unfortunate girls in the mountains nearby, he interrogates the girls. Though frightened, they soon fall under the hypnotic spell of his beauty and offer to sacrifice themselves to him. One states, “If it is for this beautiful leader, I will gladly give you my blood, my flesh, my tears, even my suffering.” Another agrees, “I want to have those beautiful lips tear my flesh apart” (272). Shuten dōji accepts their offer and executes the majority of the girls offstage. As he and his compatriots feast on their flesh and blood, he listens to the screams of the remaining princesses, whose cries sound to him like “the reverberations of paradise” (274). He announces, “I have created this music! It is the product of my own feelings! My feelings have penetrated the entire bodies of the women who are raising those screams! My feelings have become the red liquor we drink tonight!” (275) While it is true that he created the “music” of their cries by temporarily sparing the lives of the girls, the final line of the passage hints at another more sinister meaning. Because he demonstrates no overt erotic interest in women, he is free from any attraction that might stop his misogynistic violence. Of course, the gleeful willingness of the women to die for his extraordinary beauty also encourages the demons to carry out his horrific acts. In the middle of the feast, Ibaragi Dōji, one of Shuten dōji’s underlings, runs onstage and announces that Watanabe no Tsuna approached him in the streets of Kyoto. Right as Ibaragi Dōji transformed himself into a woman to disguise himself, Tsuna leaped upon him and lopped off his hand with a sword. (This account differs significantly from the Otogi bunko version, which has Ibaragi Dōji transform himself into a woman in order to attack Tsuna.) Act two of Kaita’s play ends with Shuten dōji and the other demons vowing to carry out revenge for this unprovoked attack. Because Kaita never wrote more than a few dozen lines of act three, it is impossible to know how he would have ended his play. Given the fact that he treats Shuten dōji so sympathetically, one can guess that the slaying of the demons would not have involved the great heroism and bravery of traditional versions of the legend.

All in all, homoerotic attachment plays a major role in “Shuten dōji,” especially in the first act concerning his early life. Whereas the Otogi bunko version mentions only that the murders took place as the result of “resentment” (netami) for a priest, the murders in Kaita’s version arise as an explosion of pent-up frustration at the abbot’s repeated sexual affronts and

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Shuten dōji’s anger at having been denied knowledge of his true nature for many years. Sexual domination by another male provides one motive for the beautiful acolyte’s outburst of homicidal anger, and a sexual preference for men helps him keep free from attachments that would still his hand toward his female victims. Nonetheless, male-male eroticism is not presented in an entirely negative light. It forms the basis of the relationship with the rasetsu priest, which serves as a conduit for the younger boy to feel genuine, even tender affection and to collect information about his true nature and missing past.

As mentioned above, certain characters in Kaita’s play echo those that populate pre-modern depictions of male-male desire. The image of the abbot as an oversexed man, who engages his own erotic appetite while purging the monastery of all major competitors for Shuten dōji, reflects the popular notion in the pre-modern period that priests privately indulged in sensual pleasures while preaching non-attachment in public. This image is visible in texts such as Daigōji temple’s Chigo no sōshi (The Book of Acolytes), a scroll that contains vivid illustrations of the sexual relationship between a chigo and an abbot, and the light-hearted kōshoku literature of the Edo period, which pokes fun at priests by describing their excessively amorous proclivities. The image of the rasetsu, by contrast, is completely different from the kind of treatment one might find in Buddhist mythology. Kaita discards the common image of rasetsu as cruel, heartless beings that devour human flesh. Instead, the rasetsu priest is a loving, kind figure who excites Shuten dōji to true desire and helps him awaken to his true nature. The rasetsu priest plays an important role in that it reveals a softer, passionate side of Shuten dōji, also absent in traditional versions of the story.

Both “Tetsu no dōji” and “Shuten dōji” present visions of mysterious, dark, and dream-like worlds of seemingly mythological proportions. Both center on characters that discover a powerful beauty that can imbue existence with an élan absent in ordinary modern life. In “Tetsu no dōji” this vital energy is best manifested in the brisk play of a group of children who splash in the shallow waters of a river and who exude a strong bodily presence with clearly erotic overtones. In “Shuten dōji,” the title character discovers arousal in the ugly countenance of a demonic rasetsu priest who teaches him about sex, alcohol, and murder. As mentioned above, Kaita grew interested in the idea that fear and danger inspired by the threat of violence, especially murder, could ironically endow existence with the kind of intensity that he also believed homoerotic attraction could bring. Not surprisingly, one finds a close link between
homoeroticism and thanatos in much of his prose. This link is also present in his mystery-adventure fiction from 1914 and 1915, the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3:

RELEGATION TO THE PERIPHERY:
MALE-MALE DESIRE IN KAITA’S MYSTERY-ADVENTURE FICTION

In 1914 and 1915, Kaita published a handful of stories in the magazines Bōken sekai (World of Adventure) and Bukyō sekai (World of Heroism). The magazine Bōken sekai was first published in 1908 by Hakubunkan, a large publishing firm that made its fortune by publishing textbooks and popular magazines in the Meiji Period.¹ One function of Bōken sekai, which was co-edited by the popular author Oshikawa Shunrō (1876-1914), was to appeal to readers who had enjoyed tales of military adventure and heroism during the Russo-Japanese War.² Bōken sekai often contained allegedly true stories of adventure, exploration, military prowess, and accounts of

1 Bōken sekai was the second of three late Meiji- and Taishō-period journals that specialized in adventure stories. The first was Tanken sekai (World of Exploration), started in May 1906 by the publisher Seikōsha, which capitalized upon the wave of patriotic sentiment accompanying the Russo-Japanese War to present tales of Japanese adventure and exploration abroad. In the wake of a conclusion to a war that many Japanese found disappointing, the stories in Tanken sekai presented new fantasies of imperialistic superiority and Japanese valor. In addition to fiction, it carried tales of exploration, record-breaking achievements, scientific developments, and “unusual” customs from around the world. Before going out of publication at the dawn of the Taishō era, it published works by several of the great literary figures of the day, including Kōda Rohan (1867-1947), Iwano Hōmei (1873-1920), Yanagawa Shun’yō (1877-1918) and Kodama Kagai (1874-1943). Nakajima Kawatarō, a historian of mystery fiction, has commented that Hakubunkan’s journal Bōken sekai was clearly designed to take over part of the market share held by Tanken sekai. Nakajima Kawatarō, Nihon suiri shōsetsu shi, vol. 1 (Tokyo: Tōkyō sōgensha, 1993) 184-85.

2 Shunrō entered the publishing company Hakubunkan at the introduction of the author Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933) and served as a lead reporter for Shajitsu gahō (Graphic Pictorial), a magazine that featured photos and stories about the Russo-Japanese War. This magazine ceased publication in 1907. The following year, Shunrō became part of the editorial crew of Bōken sekai. Shunrō is best remembered in Japan for his important role in developing the “adventure story” into an independent genre of children’s fiction. His works include the wildly successful, Jules Verne-like, six-volume series set in the Pacific and Indian Oceans: Kaitei gunkan (The Battleship at the Bottom of the Sea, 1900), Bukyō no Nippon (Heroic Japan, 1902), Shinzō gunkan (The Newly Built Battleship, 1904), Bukyō kantai (Heroic Armada, 1904), Shin Nippontō (New Japan Isle, 1906), and Tōyō bukyō dan (East Asian Heroic Troupe, 1907). On Shunrō, see Nakajima Kawatarō, “Suiri shōsetsu,” Taishō bungaku tsūshi / shiryō, Taishō bungaku taikei: Bekkan (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980) 248-251; Kitagami Jirō, “Bukyō no bōken,” Bōken shōsetsu ron: Kindai hirō zō hyaku-nen no hensen (Tokyo: Hayakawa shobō, 1993) 335-41; and Itō Hideo, Meiji no tantei shōsetsu (Tokyo: Shō bunsha, 1989) 255-64.
“primitive” lands, all of which reflected Japanese nationalism and imperial ambitions. At the same time, however, it also included mysteries, including translations of Western detective stories, and ghost stories. Virtually every issue of the magazine contained a story or article by Oshikawa Shunrō; however, after a dispute with the publisher, Shunrō left Hakubunkan. In October 1911, he founded the periodical *Bukyō sekai* with the capital of an entrepreneur named Yanaginuma Kensuke. This monthly magazine, which was published from 1912 to about 1923, strongly resembled the magazine that Shunrō had edited earlier, and it too carried tales of exploration, non-fictional adventure stories, editorials, sports-related tales, and translations of mysteries.³

Kaita became involved with these magazines through the artist Kosugi Misei. In 1914, when Yamamoto Kanae was writing letters from Paris in order to arrange for Kaita to go to Tokyo and study at the Nihon bijutsuin, he enlisted the help of Misei, a close friend who had studied in Paris with him. In *Kaita no utaeru*, Misei recalls that when he was in Paris, he first saw Kaita’s work on a postcard sent to Kanae’s studio.

> The work of this middle school student was Western and fresh in a way most appropriate for the rented atelier in Paris, and I could imagine him speaking French right off the bat. It would have been no stretch of the imagination to envision exactly the opposite situation – that the deep red picture sitting on the white enamel [desk in Kanae’s studio] had been sent to us in Japan by a young Parisian artist.⁴

Even before Kaita and Misei ever met, he wrote to the young boy expressing admiration for his work. In a May 1914 letter to a third party, Kaita proudly announced that he had received a letter from Misei who “apparently thought I was ‘a youth with rare natural talents’” (400-01). On Kaita’s behalf, Kanae wrote letters from Europe to Misei and arranged for Kaita to enter the Nihon bijutsuin, where Misei was currently a fellow, and to stay in a small, detached building on

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³ Yanaginuma’s publishing company, called Bukyō sekaisha in its early years and simply Bukyōsha later on, at first concentrated primarily on books on adventure, sports, and physical activity for young people. Later, it branched into the field of sexology, which often concerned itself with the sexual lives of young adults. One of the early forays into this field was *Akuseiyoku to seinen byō* (*Bad Sexuality and the Illnesses of Adolescents*, 1921) by the popular Japanese sexologist Habuto Eiji. In 1930 and 1931, the company published the twelve-volume set *Sei kagaku zenshū* (*Complete Works of Sexual Science*, 1930-31), which contained works by many of the sexological authorities of the day. Other Bukyōsha works on sexuality included pharmacist Kubota Itaru’s *Kobi shinkō* (*New Thoughts on Aphrodisiacs*), and a translation of a work by German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, *Jinrui sei fūzoku shi* (*History of Mankind’s Sexual Customs*), both published in the early 1930s.

Misei’s property. Misei lodged with Misei and his wife from July 1914 until the spring of 1916. During that time, Kaita became quite close to the couple, and Misei encouraged not only Kaita’s art, but his writing as well.

Several years before Kaita came to Tokyo, Misei had started serving as a contributing editor to Bōken sekai. In fact, he joined the staff soon after Hakubukan started publishing it in 1908. For several years, Misei produced the covers for almost every issue, took charge of illustrations for the magazine, and, in the process, illustrated many of Oshikawa Shunrō’s stories. When Shunrō left Hakubukan to start Bukyō sekai, Misei also began working on the illustrations for the new magazine. Through Misei, Kaita became involved with Bukyō sekai. This development was not out-of-character, considering that he had adored reading fiction since grade school. (One friend commented that after reading foreign mystery fiction, Mori Ōgai’s translations, and Natsume Sōseki’s writings, Kaita, “with his rich imagination, would become intoxicated with romantic dreams, and there were frequently times that he did not know the dividing line between fantasy and reality.”) On August 6, 1914, Kaita accompanied Oshikawa Shunrō and several editors, contributors, and fans of Bukyō sekai on an outing to the northern part of the Kantō region. In a letter written after the fact, Kaita declared to a friend, “Chūzenji Lake was really wonderful. I am illustrating an article [about the trip] that will appear in next month’s magazine” (415). For the article about the trip, Kaita contributed sketches and some commentary as well.

Soon afterward, Kaita published his first piece of mystery-adventure fiction in the April 1915 issue of the magazine. The story “Satsujin gyōja” (“The Murdering Ascetic”) contained a number of Kaita’s original illustrations and occupied a significant percentage of the magazine’s

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5 Several years before, Kosugi had played a key role in reestablishing and restructuring the Nihon bijutsuin. Kosugi suggested that the institute should function not as a strictly regimented organization with teachers and pupils, but as a series of studios where artists could gather and learn from upperclassmen and those with more experience. Under the pseudonym Kosugi Hōan, Misei would in future years also become well known for his oil paintings on Japanese and Chinese themes and his tanka poetry.

6 A number of other figures from the Nihon bijutsuin also contributed to Bukyō sekai, perhaps encouraged by Misei. For instance, the June 1916 issue contains a large color illustration by the Nihon bijutsuin artist Kurata Hakuyō (1881-1938) for a rip-roaring story about international intrigue, disguise, and deceit. Likewise, Kaita’s cousin Yamamoto Kanae, who was studying abroad in Paris at the time, wrote an account about a brave and beautiful bijūnen who boldly navigated a plane through war-torn territory. Yamamoto Kanae, “Giyū seinen hikōka Ishibashi Katsunami,” Bukyō sekai 5.7 (Jun 1916): 57-59.


8 Kaita’s contributions plus those of several other famous members of the expedition have been reproduced in Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita: Tanbi kaiki shōsetsu zenshū, 312-37.
pages. Later in August of the same year, the magazine published his “Akuma no shita,” once again with his original illustrations. In late October, Kaita sent Bukyō sekai a third story, “Maenden” (“An Account of a Magical Monkey”).

Apparently encouraged by these early successes, Kaita also submitted the story “Madōjiden,” (“Biography of a Magical Boy”) to the magazine Bōken sekai, which still had a larger circulation than its imitative offspring. Bōken sekai published this story in August and September 1916.

Although adventure stories (bōken shōsetsu), tales of the bizarre (kaiki shōsetsu), and detective or crime fiction (tantei shōsetsu) would evolve into separate genres in the 1930s, authors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often incorporated elements of all three into a single work. The fiction that Kaita published in Bōken sekai and Bukyō sekai was no exception. Each of these stories shares the spirit of adventure characteristic of these magazines, but they also incorporate elements of crime and ratiocination in their plots. “Satsujin gyōja” recounts the events that take place when the protagonist wanders into the wild mountains of Nagano Prefecture and encounters a gang of murderous bandits. “Akuma no shita” contains two parts, one which involves following a string of clues to discover a testament hidden in urban Tokyo, and one which describes the murderous ends that one man goes to in order to fulfill his ravenous desire to eat human flesh. “Maenden,” which probably drew inspiration from Edgar Allan Poe’s famous short story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” is about a mysterious, magically endowed primate behind a series of grisly murders in Tokyo.

“Madōjiden” is full of action and describes a series of battles between an ordinary mortal and a youth endowed with magical powers. While some of these battles take place on the ground, one of the action-packed confrontations takes place in an airplane hundreds of feet above the earth.

The immediate motivation for Kaita to write these mystery-adventure stories was financial need. By late 1914, Kaita was living on a shoestring budget. In order to purchase art supplies, books, and the growing quantities of alcohol he consumed, he scrimped on food. He grew as thin as a rail in the process, but even stinting on essentials did not provide enough money

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9 Though Kaita writes in his diary that he sent “Maenden” to World of Heroism on October 21, 1915, my investigations have shown that it did not appear in issues 4.12 (Oct 1915), 4.13 (Nov 1915), 5.1 (Jan 1916), 5.2 (Jan 1916), 5.4 (Mar 1916), 5.5 (Apr 1916), 5.12 (Nov 1916), 5.13 (Nov 1916), or 5.14 (Dec 1916). Further investigation and hunting in used bookstores is needed to determine whether or not it might have appeared in one of the issues of the magazine not listed above.

10 As noted in the previous chapter, Kaita’s wrote in his journal on May 20, 1915 that he attempted to translate Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in order to earn some extra money. This was less than half a year before he sent “Maenden” to Bukyō sekai.
for all the supplies he needed or the trips he wanted to take. Writing for magazines represented a pleasant, relatively easy way to make a few extra yen. A 1915 letter comments, “They have used the piece of fiction ‘Satsujin gyōja’ which I wrote for the April issue of Bukyō sekai, and at the end of the month, I will be receiving ten yen in payment” (419). He states that Misei encouraged him to use this amount of money, a hefty sum for a poor student in early Taishō Japan, to take a trip to Nagano. In October of that year, he followed Misei’s advice. On October 15, while staying at his uncle’s home, Kaita wrote in his diary that he would need about three and a half yen for art supplies (333). Again, he picked up his pen and wrote “Maenden” in order to get it. According to his diary, he wrote half of the story on October 20 and sent it to Bukyō sekai the following day (335-36). These diary entries indicate the speed with which he tossed off these stories.

Until recently, studies of Kaita’s writing tended to pay little attention to his mystery-adventure stories, even though Edogawa Ranpo wrote in 1934 that these works, so “full of madness, evil, and nightmares,” rank alongside the crime fiction of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō and Satō Haruo as some of the finest mysteries in Japan. Only recently have scholars started to reevaluate the place of these stories in literary history. Nakajima Kawatarō’s history of Japanese mystery fiction states that Kaita’s stories, like many others in the same magazines, are somewhat unrefined, but he notes that they pioneered a type of artistically inclined tale of the bizarre (kaiki shōsetsu) that uses first-person narration and detailed description to imbue fantastic accounts of mysterious and bizarre figures (kaijin) with realism.12 In decades to come, popular authors like Ranpo, who wrote detailed narratives about crimes committed by reclusive and eccentric criminals, would further popularize such tales. Literary historian Suzuki Sadami has also commented that Kaita’s stories exemplify a particular brand of Taishō mystery fiction (tantei shōsetsu) that associated mystery fiction with the search for surprising curiosities.13 This brand of mystery fiction would expand significantly as writers during the 1920s and 1930s catered to audiences interested in the erotic and the grotesque.

11 Yanase Masamu, writing about the height of their friendship in 1914 or 1915, said that sometimes Kaita would surprise everyone by consuming large amounts of tobacco and water, saying he did not need anything to eat. Yanase Masamu, “Murayama Kaita-kun,” n. pag. Weakness from malnutrition made Kaita particularly susceptible to the tubercular infection that finally killed him.

12 Nakajima Kawatarō, Nihon suiri shōsetsu shi, vol. 1, 187. The stories all appear in Kaita no utaeru sono go under the rubric kaiki shōsetsu.

13 Suzuki Sadami, “Kaita no jidai,” 165.
This chapter examines “Satsujin gyōja,” in which male-male erotic desire plays a large role, and “Akuma no shita,” which is about one man who acts upon secret desires that have clear homoerotic overtones, even though never described in specifically erotic terms. Like “Shuten dōji,” both stories portray desire within contexts that involve crime and even murderous behavior, yet the narration displays momentary sympathy or identification with the criminals. Both stories also align the feelings of the main characters with peripheral status, either by having them live as outlaws outside of the reach of the Japanese police or by simply describing their desires as having little place within the civilized world. It is not surprising that Kaita should have chosen to describe male-male desire in conjunction with peripheral status, considering that both stories were written for the mystery-adventure magazine Bukyō sekai, which frequently published articles about alternative spaces outside of the Japanese state and the allegedly uncivilized behavior that would take place there. The fact that Kaita wrote both stories during the year Kaita developed his first major interests for the opposite sex, however, suggests that other, psychological factors are at work in shaping these stories. As this chapter argues, both stories reflect the psychological dynamics involved in the process of accommodating an attraction to the same sex within an ideological regime that condemns such desires.

“Satsujin gyōja” ("The Murdering Ascetic"): The Return of the Repressed

Like many other pieces of crime fiction written about this time in Japan, “Satsujin gyōja” consists of a narrative within a narrative. The first-person narrator who begins the story, an artist that is never identified by name, is walking one winter night along the streets of Tokyo. In the darkness, he encounters a bar owner turning away a drunk whom he berates as a madman. Feeling a mixture of curiosity and pity for the man, the narrator invites him back to his apartment where they drink together. The drunken man turns out to be an archaeologist named Toda Genkichi, and it is he who tells the tale that forms the bulk of the work.14

14 This narrative structure strongly resembles the structure of nō dance-drama, which typically begins with a character (waki), usually a traveler or wandering priest, who encounters the leading character (shite), often a ghost lingering in the world due to some attachment or trauma. At the waki’s prompting, the shite relays an account of his or her hardships, which then forms the bulk of the narrative. Kaita and other Taishō- and early Shōwa-period mystery writers such as Edogawa Ranpo, Kosakai Fuboku (1890-1929), and Hamao Shirō (1896-1935) who used variations on this convention probably did not do so with nō in mind specifically; however, this structure is particularly well suited for tales of crime and the bizarre. The first narrative provides the reader clues about the demeanor, psychology, and credibility of the second narrator that can confirm or cast doubt over the veracity of the second, embedded tale. The first narrator (the waki-figure) does not have first-hand knowledge of the events of the second narrative (that of the shite-figure), nor does he or she necessarily even believe in them. Skillful authors sometimes play with this
Toda states that he was once married to a girl named Toyoko whom he loved dearly. He declares, “She was a magnificent woman. She was full of life and had a masculine audaciousness about her” (208). One year after the two were married, this masculine daring manifested itself when she suggested a trip to the mountains of Nagano despite news that a band of roving murderers was hiding in the woods. Ignoring the reports, the two rent a villa deep in the wooded mountains.

As the commentator Higashi Shunrō notes, mountains in Kaita’s work often serve as other worlds (ikai) where “abnormal forces manifest themselves in forms that range from the bizarre (kaiki) to the mysterious (shinpi).” In “Shuten dōji,” mountains serve as a setting for the demonic castle where, far away from the clutches of the law, the inhabitants engage in the murderous pursuit of hedonistic pleasure. Likewise, in “Satsujin gyōja,” mountains serve as a lawless zone where ordinary concepts of virtue and evil do not apply and murder can take with almost zealously religiously. There, law and morality lose the grip they exercise elsewhere, and forces suppressed by civilization spill forth. In other words, mountains represent a territory in which primordial, suppressed, and even anti-social drives manifest themselves independently of the civilizing force of law that ostensibly governs them.

The primary agent of these forces is the reclusive bandit leader whom Toda encounters soon after his arrival. One day while on a walk, he stumbles across a cave. Inside, Toda notices an ancient coffin, which contains within it a secret door – a threshold that symbolically leads into a new realm of deadly power. Toda crawls through. Inside, he discovers the secret lair of the bandits hiding in the woods. Two men accost him, bind him, and bring him before their leader. By an incredible coincidence, the leader happens to be Nomiya Kötarō, a friend with whom Toda

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15 As mentioned above, Kaita used the money from “Satsujin gyōja” to visit his uncle’s home in Ueda City in Nagano Prefecture, which is surrounded by large mountains. Kaita had also spent almost two months there the previous year.

16 Higashi Shunrō, “Tare ka ibari suru,” Yuriika 31.7 (Jun 1999): 178. This article is primarily about the painting Ibari suru razō (Figure 8), but in order to figure out what certain elements of the painting, such as the mountains in the background, might have represented to Kaita, Higashi turns to his prose.
shared an erotic relationship years ago when they were students in a college preparatory school in Kyushu.

At this point, Toda’s narrative turns to the past and describes the relationship he had with Nomiya years before. Toda recalls that when he was a teenager, he had quite a reputation as a *bishōnen*. He says, “I was loved by numerous upperclassmen, but no one made as profound an impression on me as this Nomiya Kōtarō” (211). Nomiya was an upperclassman in his fifth and final year of higher school, where he was infamous as a delinquent. Although he was tough, skilled in judo, and got into lots of fights, Toda found him to have a “mysterious charm.” A relationship developed between them soon after Toda entered school as a freshman.

He loved me, and in the end, he invited me back to his house. Every day afterwards he would play only with me. He had no parents and was all alone, but he lived quite luxuriously, borrowing a room from a certain temple. In no way did he teach me anything bad. He did not influence me negatively in any way. Nonetheless, I was prohibited from playing with Nomiya in my own house. The stronger that prohibition was, the stronger my attachment to him became, and before I knew it, it had gotten to the point where I developed morbid, strong feelings of love for him (211).

Here, as in many accounts of schoolboy relationships during the Meiji and Taishō periods, the older partner is a strong, physically dominant “bad boy” and the object of his affection, a particularly lovely *bishōnen*; however, unlike the relationships described in Mori Ōgai’s *Wita Sekusuarisu* from 1909 or the numerous newspaper articles that describe the problems of “hard-faction” masculinity during the late Meiji period, the older partner is not described as a predator feeding on the affections of the innocent. Rather, he is a misunderstood and ultimately lonely youth who craves affection, and Toda, the younger partner, eagerly reciprocates. Meanwhile, the prohibition that Toda’s parents place on their son only excites his passion to new heights.

Significantly, Kyushu, the place that Toda names as his home, was frequently associated with male-male desire in much of the popular and pseudo-scientific discourse about the subject in Meiji and Taishō Japan. Satsuma, now known as Kagoshima Prefecture, was often named as the epicenter of a culture of male-male eroticism. Various nineteenth-century sources describe local institutions in Kyushu, such as the *hekogumi*, an organization formed by men banding together in order to hone their skills at the martial arts, and *gojū*, organizations designed to socialize young males. Both types of organizations provided virile, all-male environments where eroticism might blossom between young men. Although these institutions no longer operated on a large scale in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Satsuma became associated with the practice of male-male eroticism in the popular imagination. Gregory Plugfelder has described the link between Satsuma and male-male eroticism in the popular imagination as the result of new
discourses relegating the practice of male-male desire to “certain peripheral areas of experience,” namely the historical past, the southwest of the country, and the world of adolescence, in order to help define “more mainstream subjectivities – the new Japanese, the national citizen, and the responsible adult.” One contributing factor contributing to – or perhaps a symptom of – the associations between male-male eroticism, a martial brand of masculinity, and the island of Kyushu was the great popularity in the Meiji period of the novel Shizu no odamaki (The Humble Bobbin), an Edo-period work by an unknown author that describes an amorous relationship between two Satsuma warriors in the sixteenth century. In fact, the novels Tōsei shosei katagi (1885-86) by Tsubouchi Shōyō and Wita Sekusuarisu by Mori Ōgai both mention Shizu no odamaki as a favorite work of the tough groups of Kyushuites who routinely practiced male-male eroticism. The popular association between the southern island, virile masculinity, and male-male erotic practice lasted well into the early Shōwa period, when in 1921 Ozaki Shirō wrote,

In the college preparatory schools of particular regions, especially around Kyushu, the way of nanshoku (nanshokudō) flourishes to a degree that has hardly changed from old times. The majority of those are people who have dedicated themselves to martial arts such as judo and kendo. From this, we can see that the way of the warrior and the way of the bishōnen (bishōnendō) should not be at all separated.

17 Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 203.

18 On Shizu no odamaki, see Reichert, Representations of Male-Male Sexuality in Meiji-Period Literature, 27-86. Reichert argues that one appeal of Shizu no odamaki to Meiji audiences was probably the description of a relationship embodied with an intensity of feeling that could not simply be reduced to the relatively conventional, overdetermined language used to articulate it.

19 Ozaki Shirō, “Bishōnen no kenkyū,” Kaihō 3.4 (Apr 1921): 540. The popular association notion of Satsuma as a den of male-male eroticism circulated not just in Japan but in the West as well. In 1902, the author of children’s fiction Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933), who was teaching in Germany, was asked to contribute an article to the annual publication of the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), which had been founded by Magnus Hirschfeld five years earlier. The result was Suweyo-Iwaya [Iwaya Sazanami], “Nan-šo-k’ (die Päderastie in Japan),” Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen 4 (1902): 265-71. This article describes Satsuma as an place where male-male eroticism was practiced extensively. The British socialist critic Edward Carpenter (1844-1929) draws upon Iwaya’s article in his chapter about same-sex eroticism in Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk, which quotes Iwaya as stating that male-male desire “has spread more widely in the Southern part [of Japan] than in the Northern provinces. There are regions where the general public knows nothing of it. On the other hand, in Kyushu, and especially in Satsuma, it is from of old very wide spread.” Like other writers who emphasized a connection between martial prowess and the practice of male-male desire, Iwaya states that one possible reason is that Satsuma natives “prize courage and manliness so very highly.” He states that it is common to hear “that the population in those provinces where the love of youths prevail is more manly and robust, while in regions which are void of it the people are softer, more lax, and often more dissolute.” Edward Carpenter, Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk: A Study in Social Evolution (London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1919; NY: Arno Press, 1975) 148.
By identifying Kyushu as the home of the characters in his story, Kaita brings into play a series of cultural assumptions that associated men from the southern island with a brusque version of masculinity and a propensity for male-male eroticism.

At the same time, Toda’s statement that he developed “morbid, strong feelings of love” (byōteki na tsuyoi renjō) for Nomiya reflects an increasingly common assumption among people in the Taishō period that a powerful attraction to the same sex was deleterious to the health or even pathological in nature. Educators and sexologists at the time often argued that like masturbation, profligate behavior with prostitutes, or such other “unproductive” sexual practices, sexual relationships between boys were unhealthy and adversely affected the bodies and minds of the boys involved. As a result, warnings about the dangerous spiritual and intellectual effects of same-sex eroticism abound in early twentieth-century writings on sex and health; for instance, Seiten (The Laws of Sex, 1926) by Habuto Eiji, one of Japan’s most prominent sexologists and a frequent commentator on the alleged evils of same-sex erotic practice, states that it brings about “exhausted vitality, the rise of what is called ‘neurasthenia’ as well as other disorders, in due time the subsiding of one’s developing strength and intellectual facilities, and subsequent low spirits.”

By characterizing his feelings for Nomiya as byōteki (“morbid,” “sick,” or “pathological”), Toda hints that at least part of him buys into the notion that strong amorous feelings for the same sex are somehow unhealthy or even deviant. These reservations, however, seem to have arisen after Toda’s marriage and were not present during his youth when he gave himself to Nomiya enthusiastically. Nomiya had started dabbling in hypnosis, and this provided Toda with the perfect excuse to submit to the older boy.

Being put to sleep by Nomiya was always an extraordinary pleasure. I don’t remember at all what sorts of things happened while I was asleep, but I felt an indescribable happiness when I gave myself to him so he could put me to sleep with his various powers. In the end, it got to the point where with one look from Nomiya, I would lose consciousness completely (211).

The willingness with which Toda turned himself over to the older classmate suggests he was not averse to what might happen while his defenses were down. Hypnosis did not induce the boy to

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20 Medical doctors often argued that masturbation was a leading cause of neurasthenia and even lead to tuberculosis and other diseases associated with physical degeneration. See Sabine Frühstück, “Managing the Truth of Sex in Imperial Japan,” The Journal of Asian Studies 59.2 (May 2000): 335-36. On September 17, 1918, Kaita wrote in his diary, “Onanism and ordinary sexual desire are not things that should be seen as poisonous for the body; [however] for the spirit, they are poison” (385). As Kaita’s tuberculosis grew worse in late 1918, his desire to create art grew stronger and more desperate. He swore in his writing several times to put an end to his sexual yearnings and his consumption of alcohol and tobacco, apparently believing that they were clouding his mental faculties and his dedication to his artwork.
engage in sexual behavior he found unappealing; rather, it provided Toda with a pretext for lowering his inhibitions and acting on desires already present. While hypnotized, Toda was in a willing state of surrender, and Nomiya could do what he liked with the younger boy.

These encounters did not continue indefinitely. Before long, Nomiya left for higher education in Tokyo with tears in his eyes. As the schoolboys parted, Nomiya tells Toda that their fates were linked, and they would certainly meet again. Even in Nomiya’s absence, Toda’s yearning for him remained intense.

Just thinking his name, I would feel longing so strong that tears would blur my eyes. No matter how much time passed, this feeling did not want to go away. This lasted until the time that I entered university. For some reason, I wanted to meet him so much that I went around looking for him, but I could not find him. After getting a wife, however, I never thought about him. Not even once (212).

The longing continued as long as Toda remained single, but when he married Toyoko, the new relationship displaced his schoolboy love. By turning his attentions to a woman, Toda succeeded in suppressing his feeling for the older boy – at least temporarily.

As he encounters his former love, Toda feels his old desires return. He remarks that although Nomiya’s face had grown sharp with nervous strain, he could see “how beautiful he had become” (212). As Nomiya penetrates Toda with his gaze, casting “the glitter of those eyes deep into my heart, I became conscious that this person in the depths of this strange cave was the same person for whom I had long ago felt such a serious bond of friendship” (212). Although Toda experiences joy, he senses a conflict between his newly rediscovered feelings for Nomiya and his commitment to his wife.

When I saw his face, I became excited and a feeling of elation came over me, but then a strong conviction suddenly rose in my heart. I already had a wife whom I loved more than any other. The beautiful, virile friend who was now before me had once been the only one to occupy my world. Now, however, that world was Toyoko’s (213).

Toda realizes that there is a clash between his feelings for Nomiya and for his wife, who had only temporarily displaced Nomiya in his heart. He attempts to put an end to this conflict by vowing to stay faithful to his wife and not giving into the arousal he feels for his former companion.

Nomiya admits that he and his troupe are the famous gang of murderers who had been causing so much concern in those parts. This prompts Toda to think, “Could the fellow who identified himself as the head of that gang of evil bandits truly be my sworn brother of so long

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ago, the same man whom I had loved so dearly all long?’ (213) Nomiya expresses his joy at their reunion and announces that despite their long separation, he had not forgotten Toda even for a moment. He proclaims that he will initiate Toda into his world by teaching Toda the joy of killing, which is the “greatest pleasure on earth” (213). These “musical words” draw Toda in despite his reservations: “Nomiya had a magic that was ten times more powerful than that mysterious magic which he had during our school days. I found myself drawn to him” (213).

Toda makes an unsuccessful though melodramatic stand, stating that their intense relationship was a thing of the past, and that he had now had a wife: “I love her passionately. Apart from her, I have nothing in my life. Of course, I will not become the apprentice of a criminal!” (213) Nomiya responds that he too burns with desire – an eternal desire for Toda – and despite Toda’s protests, he casts a hypnotic spell, providing the excuse Toda needs to drop his inhibitions. A cloud of smoke seems to block his vision. Nomiya’s “terrifying eyes gleamed with a light like that of the stars,” and Toda loses consciousness (214). As Toda stands mesmerized, Nomiya says they will meet again at midnight, five days later, and he releases his captive.

Because Toda’s memories of the events in the cave disappear, he and his wife do not flee before the fateful day. In the meantime, Toda finds a new joie de vivre, and his passion for Toyoko grows more intense, as if one part of him is cherishing the woman that Nomiya has cursed. Each night, however, he is haunted by a dream in which he stands atop a mountain with valleys on either side. A city glitters on one side, and on the other is a foreboding lake of blood over which a single blood-red star twinkles like “a witch’s eye” (215). Though not explained in the text, these dreams clearly depict Toda’s feelings of being torn between the forces of law, civilization and the ordered life of a modern citizen, which are represented by the city, and a more primitive, elemental, and intense life as a renegade, which is signified by the sanguine lake. After he has these dreams, he finds himself in a discombobulated state, unable to focus on anything and acting as if afflicted with a “dual personality disorder” (215). Nomiya’s hypnotic influence has exacerbated a split between his conscious and unconscious mind, and it has drawn out two clashing aspects of his personality: one dominated by the rules of society in which marriage and

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22 The metaphor of lovers as sworn brothers (gikyōdai) was used commonly in pre-Restoration Japan to describe male-male relationships that contained both homosocial and homoerotic elements. The metaphor of brotherhood implied that the relationship between partners was permanent and retained an element of asymmetry, with one partner as the “older brother” and one as the “younger brother.” In pre-Restoration Japan, this usually meant that the senior sibling offered protection, social guidance, and perhaps material aid, whereas the other partner responded with respect, obedience, and sometimes even intimate access to his person. The metaphor of brotherhood bonds for two male partners continued to be used at least until the time Kaita wrote this story. On Edo-period manifestations of this metaphor, see Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire*, 41.
his wife play a central role, and the other marked by a yearning for the exciting, dangerous world
of brute strength and anti-social behavior that his boyhood lover represents.

This psychological conflict builds until the night of the fifth day. Toda wanders outside
into the garden, and his wife accompanies him. As Toda gazes at a neighboring mountain, he
sees a red light like the one in his dream. As he calls out to Toyoko to ask if she sees it too, his
hand comes across a blue-handled blade in his pocket. Gripping it tightly, he strikes out and kills
his wife in a single blow. Toda is incredulous, yet he experiences no regret, realizing that his
actions are the product of Nomiya’s hypnotic spell. The desire that Toda felt for his wife has
collapsed under the hypnotic power that Nomiya now exercises over him. As his passions for
Nomiya returns, it destroys the woman who had displaced it. Although he had relegated his
schoolboy passions to the periphery by assuming the head of a household and the mantle of social
respectability, his earlier passions did not die but merely remained out of sight, ready to resurface
when given the opportunity.²³

After killing his wife, Toda feels a tap at his back. When he turns, he finds Nomiya
carrying a covered lamp and swathed in black clothing. “Nomiya’s sharp countenance was
bathed in pale light as he smiled at me” (217). In Kaita’s illustration for this scene, Nomiya, who

²³ During the Meiji and Taishō periods, numerous medical doctors believed that it was possible to use
hypnotism to modify sexual feelings. Although there were exceptions, such as Morita Yūshū who in 1931
wrote skeptically about all attempts to modify the designs of “nature,” many figures in psychology and
medicine argued that hypnotism could nudge a person’s sexual preferences in a different direction. Quoted
in Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 275. For example, the sexologists Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō
discuss hypnotism as one potential “cure” for same-sex desire in their famous work Hentai seiyoku ron.
(The others are “recuperation therapy,” a treatment that is allegedly good for those who suffer from same-
sex desire in junction with neurasthenia, and “marriage therapy” or, in other words, marrying the patient to
a member of the opposite sex and thus providing easy access to cross-sex eroticism.) Hypnosis, Habuto
and Sawada comment, is “more or less effective” and is only highly recommended for those with “mild
cases” (keishō), not “advanced ones” (jūshō). Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō, Hentai seiyoku ron (Tokyo:
Shun’yōdō, 1915) 345. As the wave of sexological and psychological studies grew in the years after
Kaita’s death, various other writers continued to advocate the use of hypnosis to straighten out patients who
preferred the same sex. For instance, Ōtsuki Kenji (1891-1977), the psychologist, translator of Freud, and
close friend of Edogawa Ranpo, wrote in 1936 that parents and brothers should help guide adolescent
relatives back to cross-sex love, but once adolescence is over and a sexual preference for the same sex has
set in, the use of hypnotic suggestion therapy can provide particularly effective treatment. Ōtsuki says
psychoanalysis is also effective, but since it takes much time, hypnotic therapy is the quickest remedy.
Ōtsuki Kenji, Ren’ai seiyoku no shinri to sono bunseki shōchō hō (Tokyo: Tōkyō seishin bunsekigaku
kenkyūjo shuppanbu, 1936) 228.

Kaita’s story, however, turns the medico-psychological discourse about sexuality and hypnotism on its
head, not by using hypnotism to cure male-male desire but to help evoke it. By the standards of
contemporary law, Nomiya would have been breaking civil law by using hypnosis to gain intimate access
to Toda’s person. In 1907, the existing law regarding “obscene acts” underwent revision, and the sentences
for sexual acts involving sexual coercion or erotic involvement with minors became significantly stiffer.
Article 178 of the new provision stated that “obscene acts” committed with someone who was unconscious
is clad in simple, loose robes, resembles a prophet of some ancient religion as he holds his lamp high for Toda to follow (Figure 22). Toda, who still holds the knife in his hand as he stands over the corpse of his wife, is also clad in a light kimono or nemaki instead of the dapper, Western-style clothing is seen wearing in illustrations of earlier scenes. Clearly, Toda is already one step closer to becoming yet another murdering ascetic. As Nomiya leads him back to the cave in the mountains, Toda leaves behind his modern, family-oriented life and embraces the primitive, rough life of hedonistic excitement that Nomiya represents. Back in the cave, Toda is “determined to do just as Nomiya said. He smiled with satisfaction when I responded that I would never leave him again. After that, we drank saké together and once again swore our brotherhood vows” (218). With this vow, their past relationship resumes where it left off years before.

Toda learns that hidden throughout the mountain range are seven other caves, each of which houses countless bandits. Each member of the underground organization owns a blue-handled dagger like the one Toda used to kill his wife. With these, they conduct “murder not for the sake of armed robbery, but murder for the sake of murder” – just to enjoy the sheer thrill of killing (218). Toda remains in the mountains for five months, during which he kills twenty-three men and women in his new “cold-blooded life of hedonistic pleasure” (218). In this community of male outlaws, Toda revels in the intoxicating pleasure of thanatotic power.

Toda’s life outside the social grammar of the modern, civilized world comes to a rapid end when suddenly he regains his conscience and his affection for his wife. One snowy day as he wanders by the abandoned villa where he had killed her, his body is seized with psychosomatic trembling as if suppressed thoughts are fighting to make themselves felt. The seizure is so severe that he falls, and his head hits a stone. The blow breaks Nomiya’s hypnotic spell; Toda’s conscience returns, and he begins weeping for the wife he has killed. In a rapid denouement to the story, he flees the mountains and tells his fantastic tale to the police, but they do not believe him. Since then, Toda says, he has recounted his story many times but has been unable to find anyone willing to believe him. By ignoring the antisocial, destructive forces lurking in the mountains, society relegates them to the apparent safety of oblivion.

Here, the story within a story comes to an end. The next morning, the artist awakens to find Toda gone. A couple of days later, he reads in a newspaper that Toda has been stabbed to death with a blue-handled knife like one belonging to the bandit gang. The bandits have executed or unable to resist were to be published with penalties equivalent to those levied for exercising sexual violence or coercion.
the sheep that left the flock – the sworn brother who abandoned his fraternal bonds. This rapid
denouement suggests the incompatibility between Nomiya’s impassioned life of crime and the
safe order of civilization. Meanwhile, Nomiya and his band of murderers remain hidden from
society, much like the male-male erotic desire had remained hidden within the depths of Toda’s
unconscious mind. When the bandits reappear, however, they present dramatic challenges to the
regime of “normality.”

Like “Shuten dōji,” “Satsujin gyōja” revolves around the theme of a man who leaves the
ordinary world behind and turns to a life of criminal indulgence. The flatness of the descriptions
of Toda’s feelings for his wife and the ease with which Toda recovers his long-buried desire
suggests that Kaita’s interest lay more with the impassioned, renegade life Toda led with Nomiya
than Toda’s typical, sedate home life with Toyoko. In a sense, “Satsujin gyōja” is an exploration
of the fantasy of an unrestrained space filled with masculine vigor, power, and male-male
eroticism. While other authors might align crime and same-sex desire as a criticism of the latter,
Kaita never condemns male-male desire in any way. In fact, even though Nomiya awakened the
desire that led Toda to kill his wife, the narrative treats him remarkably sympathetically. Never
does it denounce him as a murderous monster. If anything, the stories of his roguish youth
emphasize how lonely and misunderstood he was. Nomiya almost certainly represents the daring,
dangerous, insouciant figure that Kaita, with all of his infatuation with mysteries and adventure
stories, imagined he might become if he threw off the shackles of ordinary civilization. There are
a number of unmistakable similarities between author and character that suggest a parallel
between the two. Both were fascinated with the macabre as schoolboys. Both had the public
persona of a strong, carefree fellow, but both were secretly lonely and yearned for the affections
of particularly attractive, younger bishōnen from school. Both left their beloved bishōnen to
pursue higher education, and both had a connection with the mountainous regions of Nagano. Of
course, the regret and woe Toda feels at the end neutralizes any impression that Kaita might have

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24 The sexological and psychological discourse of the era tended to align cross-sex desire with the family
and the preservation of organized society, while aligning same-sex desire with deviancy, poor health, and
familial ruin. In Hentai seiyoku ron for instance, Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō give a number of
examples of crimes arising from same-sex desire: a Japanese student beaten to death in a violent come-on,
a couple breaking into a building to conduct consensual sodomy, and a January 1892 murder in Tennessee
in which one woman killed another. Though Habuto and Sawada fail to question whether or not such
crimes are, in per capita terms, more frequent among same-sex couples than cross-sex couples, the
overriding message is that the passion of same-sex relationships, in conjunction with the weakness of the
spirit and intellectual faculties that it allegedly produced, gave rise to antisocial behavior that damages the
been valorizing an antisocial existence of murder. “Satsujin gyōja” represents no more than a fantasy.

At the end of the story, the fantastic, uncontrolled mountain society where men live, love, and murder remains separate from the remainder of the civilized world and virtually unknown by all but the artist who conveys Toda’s account to the audience. Toda’s death shows the difficulty of crossing back and forth between the youthful, uninhibited, “wildness” of male-male desire and the organized, “civilized” region of cross-sex desire and the family. Still, Nomiya continues to exercise his influence from the invisible reaches of the unknown. Kaita seems to say in the end that when male-male desire is relegated to the periphery, it does not lose its power entirely.

“Akuma no shita” (“The Diabolical Tongue”): Hungering for Flesh

The relegation of male-male desire to an indomitable but invisible periphery is an appropriate ending for what would turn out to be the last important work in which Kaita would deal overtly with the subject of male-male erotic desire. After “Satsujin gyōja” appeared in Bukyō sekai in April 1915, the subject of male-male erotic desire disappears almost completely from his writing. Kaita went on to publish a handful of other mystery-adventure stories. Of these, only “Akuma no shita” deals with male-male attraction, but it does so in a rather oblique fashion.

Like “Satsujin gyōja,” “Akuma no shita” consists of a narrative within a narrative. In the first part, the anonymous narrator receives a mysterious telegram that reads only, “Kudanzaka 301, Kaneko.” Recognizing it to be from his friend Kaneko Eikichi, an eccentric young poet (not unlike Kaita himself), the narrator walks to Kudanzaka, a long sloping street in the Chiyoda Ward of Tokyo. As he walks, he remembers his first meeting with Kaneko at a dinner party two years earlier. He recalls that Kaneko had extraordinarily large “hot, blood red” lips that looked “like a bronze stick broken and bent double,” and the narrator could not help stare as he shoveled food into them (222). The narrator’s penetrating gaze angers Kaneko, but as they two drink together, they eventually become friends. Back in the narrative present, Kaneko is nowhere to be seen at Kudanzaka, and so the narrator proceeds to Kaneko’s home, only to find the police there. The narrator learns that Kaneko had committed suicide without leaving any note. Perplexed, the narrator returns to the spot where he had been waiting for his friend. Wondering what the number 301 on the telegram could refer to, his eyes alight on the pieces of stone that cover the gutter. Counting from the end of the street, he turns over the three-hundred-and-first stone. Underneath it, he finds the long suicide note that forms the four final chapters of the story.
In it, Kaneko tells the strange story of his life. Because his father died when he was relatively young, Kaneko grows up with his mother, his father’s mistress, and his half-brother in the mountains of Hida in northern Gifu Prefecture. His description of his youth as moody, sensitive, tender-hearted boy recalls Kaita’s own adolescence.

From early on, I was a truly strange child. I certainly was not innocent like all the other children. I enjoyed silence and solitude, and I did not try to play with others. I would walk in the mountains, and stand absentmindedly in the shadow of the rocks while gazing at the clouds floating across the sky. These romantic habits grew increasingly morbid as the years passed… (225)

This morbidity grows as the result of a strange illness that makes Kaneko crave unusual foods: plaster, slugs, frogs, snakes, grubs, caterpillars, and so on. As he recovers, his appetite returns to normal, but when his mother dies, he develops a case of severe neurasthenia. In the midst of this trauma, he looks at the mirror one day and sees that his tongue has undergone a radical transformation.

My tongue was really long. I suppose that it probably was three and a half inches or so. When had it become so long? And what a frightening shape it was! Was it really my tongue? No, no, it couldn’t possibly be! Still, I took hold of the mirror and looked more closely. As I stuck out my tongue, the large lump of flesh, lubricated by saliva, slid between my lips. The entire surface was covered with hard, sharp warts of a purple, brocaded color. Looking carefully, I saw to my astonishment what looked like warts were really needles. Growing over the whole surface of my tongue were small needles like those on the tongue of a cat (226).

Faint from the horror of this discovery, he hears a voice within his own head explaining, “Your tongue is the tongue of a devil. A diabolical tongue will be not be satisfied with anything less than diabolical fodder. Eat, eat everything! And seek out diabolical fare! If you do not, your tastes will never be satisfied!” (226-27) In the following two months, Kaneko’s diet consists of dirt, paper, mice, cattails, jellyfish, blowfish, rotten vegetables, lizards, leeches, newts, and other odd fare. At the same time, however, he begins to experience an almost irresistible desire to consume human flesh. Kaneko is horrified by this desire, which he sees as violating the laws of order and morality supporting the Japanese nation. In one passage, he berates himself for his cannibalistic urges saying, “You are not a native of the Congo! You are one of the virtuous Japanese!” (227)

25 Hamada Yūsuke, a scholar of early Japanese detective fiction, notes that “Akuma no shita” associates cannibalism with the foreign, much in the same way that the short works “Aozukin” (“The Blue Cowl”) by Ueda Akinari (1734-1809) and “Bishoku kurabu” (“The Gourmet Club”) by Tanizaki Jun’ichirō mention cannibalism in the context of Chinese culture. Perhaps more than these other stories however, the association in Kaita’s text between cannibalism, Africa, and the lack of civilized “virtue” reflects social Darwinist assumptions about the superiority of Japanese civilization and the backwardness of other less
Even though Kaneko is reluctant to embrace his cannibalistic desires, they grow to the point that he leaves propriety behind. One night, as he is passing through a graveyard in Nippori, his hunger gets the best of him, and he frantically attempts to exhume a corpse to eat. Inside a coffin, he finds the decomposing corpse of a beautiful woman. Back at home, as he consumes the pieces of flesh he cut from her body, he feels his “diabolical tongue dance about.” He sinks into “an ecstasy as if high on opium.” He thinks, “I am fully satiated for the first time since birth” (228-29).

Having left behind shame and fear, Kaneko begins planning to kill someone so that he can consume a fresh corpse. His testament recalls, “Every person I encountered stirred my appetite. The ones that looked the most delicious were the boys and girls of fourteen or fifteen years old. Every time I encountered one, I could not help feeling as if I was ready to gobble them up” (229). One day, in a train, he spies a particularly attractive young man. “Although a little rustic in appearance, he was truly a graceful and beautiful young man. My mouth began to water. My saliva began to run” (229). Kaneko trails the young man through Ueno Park, and near Shinobazu Lake, he knocks him out with chloroform. After taking his drugged victim home in a rickshaw, he gazes at the boy again. “Looking at him by the light of the electric lamp, I saw that the young man was truly beautiful” (229).

Driven to new heights of excitement by the boy’s beauty, Kaneko stabs the boy with a knife. “The eyes of the boy who had been out cold until just then, suddenly opened wide. In short measure, his black irises lost their light, and his face grew pale. I embraced the youth, who was as white as a sheet, and I lowered him into a holding chamber beneath the floor” (230). Over the course of several days, he consumes the bishōnen’s corpse, organ by organ. Only toward the end of this process does he notice a crescent-shaped birthmark on the right foot of the boy. Earlier on, Kaneko’s testament had included in passing a mention of a birthmark on the foot of his half-brother, and with horror, Kaneko realizes that he has metaphorically just eaten his own flesh and blood (Figure 24). Horrified, he writes his last testament and commits suicide. In a final, ambiguous denouement, the friend who shares the testament with the audience states that an

autopsy revealed needles all over Kaneko’s tongue; nonetheless, he surmises that the bizarre story in the testament was “probably nothing more than the fantasy of a poet” (230).

The text never links Kaneko’s cannibalistic desires overtly with eroticism, but the story has undeniably strong erotic overtones. Kaneko’s urges first appear when his tongue begins manifesting phallic qualities, becoming unusually long, pointed, and dark in color. (One of Kaita’s original illustrations for the story portrays Kaneko sticking out his tongue. In the background are two bottles – one unmistakably phallic and one bulbous, even testicular in shape – as if hinting at a relationship between their phallic shape and that of Kaneko’s tongue. See Figure 23.) When Kaneko is about to taste human flesh for the first time, the tongue “dances about” like a penis that is suddenly grown erect. Finally, as he fulfills his secret desires for the first time, he experiences an almost orgasmic feeling of ecstasy. Although both boys and girls whet his appetites equally, Kaneko chooses a particularly attractive bishōnen to fulfill his desires, and this gives the final scenes a clearly homoerotic ring. Significantly, the criteria he uses to select him are not girth or meatiness but general physical attractiveness. The final scene in which Kaneko plunges his knife into the body of his half-brother also has a clear sexual echo. As Freud mentions in his famous study of the symbolism of dreams, “all elongated objects” as well as “all weapons and tools are used as symbols for the male organ: e.g. ploughs, hammers, rifles, revolvers, daggers, sabers, etc.” After the boy dies, Kaneko gazes into his open eyes and lifts him to the secret chamber he has prepared. Apart from the murder, the scene is not unlike a cinematic seduction with the male protagonist picking up and sweeping his lover into the bedroom.

Hamada Yūsuke has noted in his discussion of the story the similarities that might lead one to associate consumptive and erotic desire. Both hunger and the desire for sex involve drives at the level of the id, and both are not controllable through willpower alone. Both involve a physical union between subject and object and thus blur the boundaries between interior and exterior. Most importantly however, Hamada notes that both cannibalism and sex between men have been treated as taboo within modern Japanese society. Of course, in terms of the degree of institutionalization or the severity of the legal consequences, the two activities are probably more dissimilar than similar. School dormitories, parks, and in the postwar period, gay bars,


bathhouses, and clubs have provided outlets for same-sex eroticism throughout recent Japanese history; however cannibalism has never been institutionalized to a comparable degree. Despite these obvious differences, however, Hamada rightly suggests that the descriptions of Kaneko’s cannibalistic desires, surrounded by a cloud of secrecy, sound remarkably close to the furtive erotic yearnings of a man suffering from a form of sexual desire he is afraid to act upon. As Kaneko struggles with his developing appetites, a conflict develops between what he wants and what society expects, and this conflict gives rise to confusion, shame, and a heightened sense of elation when he finally does act on those desires. The trope of secret desire, which plays such an important role in this story, is a particularly powerfully charged one within ideological regimes that condemn eroticism between members of the same sex. When Kaneko describes the secret hunger his *bishōnen* half-brother evokes in him, the text gives the impression of speaking as much, if not more, about erotic desire that consumptive desire. At the time he wrote the story, Kaita was eighteen years old, an age when society increasingly expected individuals to satiate their sexual appetites in marriages with members of the opposite sex – an expectation generally, (though not intrinsically) accompanied by a prohibition that excises eroticism from the acceptable spectrum of male-male relations. “Akuma no shita” may be read as an exploration of the complicated feelings that affects a person suffering from some form of prohibited desire – desires relegated to the periphery of civilized society.

Soon after the publication of “Satsujin gyōja” and “Akuma no shita” in 1915, descriptions of Kaita’s amorous feelings for attractive *bishōnen* disappear almost entirely from his diary, poetry, and random jottings. Instead, they are replaced by descriptions of the appeal of women like Otama, whom he first encountered in late 1915 or 1916. Just as much of his early writing describes pining from a distance for Inō Kiyoshi, his writing from Tokyo begins to describe his unrequited longing for the beautiful women he meets. Superficially, it seems Kaita had “graduated” from male-male desire to cross-sex desire just as society expected. However, the fact that Kaita wrote two stories involving desire and secrecy about this same time seems no coincidence. Both stories involve men acting upon desires that the text aligns with the uncivilized or bizarre. Although the connection between abnormal desire and peripheral status may seem a natural one for a magazine that routinely featured stories of exploration and faraway lands, the fact that Kaita chose to include hints of homoerotic desire in these mystery-adventure stories may well have been triggered, at some level, by his own “graduation” to cross-sex desire.
and the relegation of his own adolescent desires for other boys to the periphery of his own experience.

As the fad for eroticism and the grotesque reached new heights in the 1920s and 1930s, an increasing number of authors would write tales with fantastic and bizarre plots reminiscent of Kaita’s mystery-adventure stories. Like Kaita, many of these authors would reflect in their work, either consciously or unconsciously, major issues of the day, including attitudes toward male-male desire. One of the most famous and popular of these authors was Edogawa Ranpo, and so the next section of this dissertation turns to him.
SECTION II:

REPRESENTATIONS OF MALE-MALE DESIRE IN THE WRITING OF EDOGAWA RANPO (1894-1965)
CHAPTER 4:

(RE)WRITING THE LOVE OF BOYS:
RANPO READS KAITA

Despite a relatively late literary debut at age twenty-eight, Edogawa Ranpo rapidly became one of the most popular authors of the early Shōwa period and a key figure in the history of Japanese mystery fiction. His real name was Hirai Tarō, and he was born in the town of Nabari in Mie Prefecture, but he spent most of his youth in Nagoya. As a student there, he devoured adventure and mystery writing in translation. Later, while working on a bachelor’s degree in the political science and economics department of Waseda University, he read the stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) and Edgar Allan Poe in English to quench his thirst for detective fiction and stories of the bizarre. In 1915, he sent his first mystery story, “Hinawajū” (“The Matchlock Gun”), to Bōken sekai, but they declined to publish it. Another eight years passed before he finally published his debut work “Ni-sen dōka” (“The Two-Sen Copper Coin”) in the magazine Shin seinen (New Youth) and introduced the name Edogawa Ranpo to the world.¹ (Pronounced quickly, this humorous nom de plume sounds much like the name of the American pioneer of detective fiction, Edgar Allan Poe, whom he admired.²) In the same issue that carried “Ni-sen dōka,” Kozakai Fuboku (1890-1929), a doctor, criminologist, and future detective novelist, wrote in a glowing review that the story delighted him by proving that Japan had a detective writer as intelligent and capable as any in the Western world.³ The


² Ranpo combined the surname Edogawa, meaning “the Edo River” (江戸川) with a droll first name he coined by combining two characters meaning a “wild walk” (乱歩). Early manuscripts show that he toyed with other combinations of characters, such as the homophonic 江戸川藍巓, written “Edo River – Indigo Peak,” but from the time of his literary debut onward, he used the former characters for his pen name.

³ Kozakai Fuboku, “‘Ni-sen dōka’ o yomu,” Shin seinen 4.5 (Apr 1923): 264-65; reprinted in Edogawa Ranpo, Shin bungei dokuhon (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1992) 134-35. This kind of praise, which singled out Ranpo as the leader of Japanese mystery fiction, has led to the misunderstanding that Ranpo
following year, Ranpo dedicated himself to writing full time and began churning out large numbers of stories for *Shin seinen* and other magazines, including *Shajitsu hôchi* (*Real Reports*) and *Kuraku* (*Pleasure and Pain*). The success of these early works was so great that over the course of the 1920s and 1930s, the number of magazines soliciting stories and essays from him grew exponentially. Before long, he had published in virtually every important national forum of popular literature, and radio stations and private organizations frequently engaged him as a speaker.

In 1934, in the midst of his rapid ascent in the literary world, he published a small essay called “Kaita *Ni shōnen zu*” (“Kaita and HisPortrait of Two Boys”) in *Buntai* (*Literary Style*), a minor literary magazine that had been in publication for only about a year. (See the translation in Appendix B.) In this essay, Ranpo describes the admiration and fascination he felt when he first read Kaita’s mystery-adventure stories many years earlier as a student in Nagoya. The revelation that he had enjoyed Kaita’s work would probably not have come as a surprise to contemporary fans familiar with Kaita’s stories. Many of the bizarre and nightmarish tales that Ranpo began writing in the late 1920s involve extraordinary villains and outlandish twists in plot much like

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was Japan’s first modern detective novelist. This dubious claim, which was no doubt promoted by Ranpo’s eagerness to differentiate his writing from that which came before, appears in the introductory comments of Ranpo’s first English translator, James Harris. There, Harris wrote that before the devastating Kantō earthquake of 1923, “no Japanese writer had attempted a modern detective story, although there did exist numerous translations of the works of Western writers.” James B. Harris, Introduction, *Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1956) ix.

Doubtless part of the problem arises from confusion over the definition of the “modern detective novel.” Well before Ranpo entered the literary scene, numerous authors such as Kuroiwa Rukō, Oshikawa Shunrō, Kōda Rōhan (1867-1947), Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, Satō Haruo, and Murayama Kaita had written stories that incorporated elements of ratiocination, sleuthing, mystery, and crime within stories of adventure, intrigue, the bizarre, and the grotesque. Some of these, such as the novella *Iki ningyō* (*The Living Doll*) written by Izumi Kyōka (1873-1939) in the 1890s, even feature the adventures of professional detectives. By the time that Ranpo came on the scene, however, critics lamented the fact that Japanese writers seemed less interested in ratiocination and sleuthing than the bizarre and erotic. “Ni-sen dōka,” which emphasizes the process of ratiocination used to decipher in a secret code, apparently struck Kozukai Fuboku and his contemporaries as being closer akin to Western manifestations of the genre of detective fiction (*tantei shōsetsu*). In writing later works, however, Ranpo began to rely heavily on evocations of the bizarre, the grotesque, and adventure, much as his predecessors had done.

those of Kaita’s mystery-adventure stories. As the first part of this chapter shows, Ranpo’s stories show such strong similarities to Kaita’s stories that the resemblance cannot be coincidental.

Although Ranpo’s essay begins with an overview of Kaita’s career, its central focus is the theme of male-male desire in Kaita’s artwork and writing, which Ranpo sees as extolling the beauty of young men and the “love of the Greeks” (17: 69). In the latter part of the essay, he promotes a vision of Kaita’s work as reflecting the dreamy passions of early adolescence. As case-in-point, he points to the 1914 watercolor *Ni shōnen zu* (*Portrait of Two Boys*), which he had recently purchased and hung in his study (Figure 26). By emphasizing the idealizing and asexual aspects of adolescent love between boys, Ranpo in effect attempts to disassociate youthful schoolboy manifestations of male-male desire from the notion of perverse sexual desire advanced by sexologists, psychologists, and educators. Although later chapters in this dissertation will show that Ranpo did not always describe male-male erotic relations in a completely flattering light, his essays about his own romantic attachments during his schooldays treat non-sexual manifestations of schoolboy love as a particularly innocent and poignant type of love.

**Diabolical Appetites: Ranpo’s Novels and Precedents in Kaita’s Fiction**

Ranpo’s memoirs *Tantei shōsetsu yon-jū-nen* (*Forty Years of Detective Fiction*) state that during his youth, he was, like many other male elementary students of the period, an avid fan of the adventure stories of Oshikawa Shunrō. In order to read them, he began to purchase *Bōken sekai* regularly at a local bookstore (20: 15). When Shunrō left *Bōken sekai* and founded the magazine *Bukyō sekai*, Ranpo also turned to the new magazine, which he continued to read even after Shunrō died in 1914. In the pages of this magazine, he encountered Kaita’s name for the first time. In 1934, he writes in his essay on Kaita that “Akuma no shita” struck him with its “special charm.” Even though it reminded him of nineteenth-century decadent writing, it struck him as “completely unlike anything that had preceded it.” His admiration increased when he read “Satsujin gyōja” and “Madenen,” two unconventional stories full of “madness, crime, and nightmares” (17: 68).

In another essay, “Kyōshū toshite no gurotesuku” (“The Grotesque as Nostalgic Longing”) published in 1935 in the *Yomiuri shinbun* (*Yomiuri Newspaper*), Ranpo mentions Kaita’s name as one of Japan’s foremost modern authors of the grotesque. His article argues that mankind experiences a kind of nostalgic longing for the mysterious and horrific “totemic art” (*tōtemu geijutsu*) of the distant past, and so people create descriptions of the grotesque in art and
literature to satisfy this longing. “The beauty of the grotesque,” Ranpo comments, “belongs to dreams and to that world of poetry completely cut off from present reality” (17: 48). He notes that elements of the grotesque appear in the work of a number of modern Japanese authors, including Hirotsu Ryūrō (1861-1928), Izumi Kyōka, Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, and Akutagawa Ryūnosuke; however, they do not depict it often enough to be considered true “authors of the grotesque” (gurotesuku sakka).

Instead, I want to name someone in another field, the artist Murayama Kaita, as a representative of the Japanese Grotesque School (Nihon gurotesuku-ha). His uncanny oil paintings such as Kojiki to kifujin (The Beggar and the Noblewoman) are not undeserving of being called “grotesque.” What I am really talking about is his writing, however. His posthumous collection Kaita no utaeru contains three works that he called mysteries, but they are not really mysteries as much as stories of bizarre and frightening fantasies. The tale of a mysterious adolescent who had a scarlet, thorny tongue like that of a cat remains particularly imprinted in my memory. Even now, I cannot forget it (17: 49).

Literary historians have noted that Ranpo often borrowed motifs, ideas, themes, or even key scenes from the writing of other authors whom he admired and then used them as threads to weave new, unique tapestries of his own. In many cases, the act of borrowing seems to have been a means to pay homage to other writers whom he either admired or knew personally. One particularly obvious example is the 1925 short story “Yaneura no sanposha” (“The Walker in the Attic”) contains scenes that strongly resemble those in the works of Tanizaki Jun’ichirō and Uno Kōji (1891-1961), two of his favorite contemporary Japanese authors. His memoirs state that he had no interest in the realistic narratives of Naturalist literature that were in fashion at the time, and he had therefore lost almost all interest in Japanese literature. When he happened across the highly imaginative works of Tanizaki, however, he became “ecstatic with joy” and saw how exciting Japanese literature could be. After reading Tanizaki, he began to explore other

4 Ranpo is referring to the oil painting usually known as Kojiki to onna (The Beggar and the Woman), which dates from 1917 (Figure 25). The painting is an allegorical treatment of Kaita’s own feelings of dejection as he begged for morsels of love from women who did not return his affection. In September 1917, Kaita showed the painting at the fourth Saikō Nihon bijutsuin tenrankai (Restored Japan Art Institute Exhibition) in Ueno, where it won the prestigious Academy Prize (Bijutsuin shō) worth 200 yen. Apart from the paintings of Yamamoto Kanae who had just returned from Europe, Kaita’s painting appears to have been one of the major topics of conversation among visitors. In Chūō bijutsu (Central Art), the art critic Saitō Yoichi called it a strange but appealing picture, saying that it is not dramatic but shows considerable feeling and a sense of “truth.” Saitō Yoichi, “Bijutsuin no yōga,” Chūō bijutsu 3.10 (Oct 1917): 34. In Bijutsu (Art), Yamamoto Kanae wrote that the picture is interesting and that “the blood of French anachronism is flowing” in Kaita’s veins, but the picture lacks any depth or strength. He criticizes it, stating that the problem “is not in the production, but in the program of his production.” Yamamoto Kanae, “Bijutsuin no yōga,” Bijutsu 1.12 (Oct 1917): 10. Kaita’s journal shows that he was not upset by this review; in fact, he was pleased that Kanae called his work “anachronistic” and that he was not just ignored altogether (365). The present whereabouts of Kojiki to onna are unknown. Most likely, it was destroyed in the conflagrations in Tokyo during World War II.
contemporary writers, including Uno Kōji who presented his readers with eccentric and garrulous protagonists (20: 23, 57). One of the best known works of Tanizaki’s early career is a 1911 short story called “Himitsu” (“The Secret”), which describes a world-weary young man who tries to quell his chronic ennui by donning a woman’s kimono and wandering through the labyrinthine streets of Asakusa in Tokyo in order to see things from a new perspective. The opening of Ranpo’s story “Yaneura no sanposha” contains an almost identical scene. Suffering from a relentless sense of boredom, the protagonist wanders through the streets of Tokyo dressed in various disguises, including women’s clothing, in an attempt to alleviate the tedium of daily life (1: 251). “Yaneura no sanposha” also echoes Uno’s 1918 short story “Yaneura no hōgakushi” (“The Bachelor of Law in the Attic”), which is about an idle, young man who assuages his boredom by hiding in his closet and peeking at passers-by. After wandering the streets of Tokyo in drag, the protagonist of “Yaneura no sanposha” begins to behave much like the peevish and dissatisfied protagonist of Uno’s story. While living in his closet for extended periods of time, he discovers how easy it is to crawl into the attic, and once there, he realizes that he can spy on the other tenants in the building through holes in the attic floorboards. Although “Yaneura no sanposha” develops into a detective mystery that moves in an entirely different direction, the early scenes are strongly reminiscent of these two famous works by Tanizaki and Uno.

In the early postwar period, Ranpo wrote that he was best suited to writing short stories, not long novels: “Thinking up plots for long tales is not my forte. It is for that reason that even to this very day, I have never once written a long novel in the truest sense of the word – a novel that is consistent from beginning to end” (20: 97). Usually, he would start serializing a longer novel without having worked out the fine details of the plot, and, as he notes in his memoirs, he would sometimes become bogged down in the details of a novel partway through (20: 100). For instance, after publishing the first nine installments of Yami ni ugomeku (Wriggling in the Dark) in the magazine Kuraku in 1926, he became stuck and did not know how to finish the novella. Almost one year later, he finally published an ending to the story in a volume of his stories released in Heibonsha’s series Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū (Collection of Modern Popular

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These final chapters show a strong resemblance to Kaita’s story “Akuma no shita,” suggesting that he turned to Kaita’s story for inspiration. In Ranpo’s novella, the protagonist Nozaki Saburō and his friends discover the secret of a cruel hotel manager who has committed murder to feed his desperate desire to consume human flesh. In retaliation, the manager imprisons them for days – perhaps even weeks – in a pitch-black, underground cave. The cave also contains the bodies of several of the manager’s past victims, and Nozaki and his fellow prisoners survive only by feeding on the corpses. The final three chapters, first published in 1927, begin with Nozaki escaping the subterranean jail via a rent in the ground opened by an earthquake. Even though he is now free, he retains an irrepressible desire for human flesh. As he makes his way to a mountain temple, the thought of the bodies buried in the graveyard excites him.

His appetite for human flesh is so great he begins digging, desperately trying to uncover the corpses, just as Kaneko had done in Kaita’s story “Akuma no shita.” At this point, the cannibalistic manager appears in the graveyard, having come to exhume and consume the corpse of Nozaki’s recently deceased girlfriend who was buried there. Nozaki attacks him, partly to stop the manager and partly because he has been fantasizing about his bulky flesh ever since he had begun to consume human flesh. Suddenly, the narrative jumps forward to the following morning. Nozaki has hanged himself after killing the manager, eating part of his body, exhuming his girlfriend, and devouring her heart. The final paragraph of the novella states, “The thin corpse of the hanging man was covered from mouth to chest with hideous blood. On his gigantic tongue, which dangled limply from his mouth, a great number of little lumps of flesh glittered like gold in the sunlight” (2: 239). In both stories, the gory, larger-than-life tongue signifies the cannibalistic desires of its owner – desires that are not constrained by the gender of the victim. Ranpo’s text, however, has less of a homoerotic subtext in that there is only a passing mention of the desire that the thought of the manager’s body arouses in Nozaki. Still, the conclusion of both stories is unmistakably similar. Both protagonists choose suicide because there is no space within society for people with such “diabolical” appetites.

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Another work that refers to Kaita’s “Akuma no shita” in more directly is Ranpo’s novel Ryōki no hate (The Fruits of Curiosity Hunting), serialized from January to December 1930 in Bungei kurabu (Literary Arts Club). In it, the protagonist Aoki Ainosuke wanders throughout the low-lying areas of Tokyo in search of oddities and adventures to help quell his chronic boredom. One way he finds excitement is to “confuse reality with novels and enjoy the wild fantasies” that result from this suspension of reality (4: 179). One place he frequents is Kudanzaka.

The reason is there was a deceased artist named Murayama Kaita whom he liked a great deal. Even though Kaita wrote only three works of mystery fiction, the protagonist of one of his mysteries was a strange man with a raspy tongue like that of a carnivorous beast. In the plot of this work, this fellow hides a testament or something behind the stone fence at Kudanzaka, indicates the location of the spot with a code, and then passes the message along to someone (4: 179).

The text states that even though the area has changed dramatically since Kaita wrote his story, Aoki gazes “with a strange feeling” at the stone wall along the road. (In Kaita’s original, the testament was not hidden behind a wall but underneath the stone covering of a gutter.) Aoki’s interest in Kaita’s writing described in this passage represents a thinly veiled expression of Ranpo’s admiration for his Taishō-period predecessor.

Another scene in Ryōki no hate may have taken inspiration from “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi.” Several times while wandering through the city, Aoki happens upon an individual who is the mirror image of his friend Shinagawa Shirō. He follows him and discovers that this doppelganger is a criminal of the foulest sort. One evening, Aoki pursues him to a house and peeps through a window where he sees Shinagawa’s double standing before the severed head of a beautiful woman. “The eyes of the bust were half closed, its eyebrows drawn together, and its mouth open so that one could see the tip of the tongue between the rows of teeth. It had an anguished expression that bordered on the obscene” (4: 222). Seen from Aoki’s vantage point, the double appears to kiss this beautiful yet horrifying bust. Only at the end of the novel does the reader learn that Shinagawa’s double is the leader of a conspiracy who uses cosmetic surgery to produce doubles of influential politicians, police chiefs, and other authority figures in order to replace them and take control of the operations of government. The bust that Shinagawa’s double had embraced was only the head of a mannequin that a doctor used during surgery to guide him in molding the face of his patient. Although Kaita’s name does not appear in the scene of the kiss, it seems likely that that this scene contains another imbedded reference to his works.

As Itō Hideo, a historian of Japanese mystery fiction has noted, Ranpo’s novel Ningen hyō (The Human Leopard) serialized in Kōdan kurabu (Storytelling Club) from January 1934 to
May 1935 also seems to have drawn inspiration from “Akuma no shita.” At the beginning of the work, a strange man with pinched, shining eyes enters a café and begins staring at a particularly lovely waitress. As he consumes a large piece of steak, the protagonist of the novel, Kamiya Shigeo, sees his oddly elongated, red tongue.

Ah, was that the tongue of a human being? Covering the whole surface of its pure red flesh were little hangnails as if it had sprouted needles. Every time he moved his tongue, they shifted in swift undulations and bristled like grass buffeted by the wind. The tongue was by no means human. No, it was feline. Kamiya had once raised a cat; therefore, he knew how terrifying feline tongues were. This man had the tongue of a brutal carnivore – the tongue of a cat, tiger, or maybe even a leopard (10: 12).

The reader soon learns that this leopard-like man, who is named Onda, has superhuman strength and is able to climb vertical surfaces like a large cat. Although he speaks, wears clothing, and even has a father who appears to be a Homo sapien, he is really some type of evolutionary misfit who plots to capture beautiful women and tear them limb from limb. In the suspenseful scenes when Onda acts upon his murderous impulses, the text presents detailed descriptions of the tongue. For instance, the following passage appears halfway through the novel when Onda kidnaps a woman and tries to murder her.

She saw those red lips gape open like a tunnel. Then, from the inside of the dark tunnel, an enormous tongue emerged. Ah, that tongue! She saw it with extraordinarily clarity. Sharp projections grew all over its dusky surface as if it were a hill of needles, and with each movement of the tongue, she could see them flutter back and forth – whoosh whoosh – like reeds rustling in the wind (10: 93)

As in Kaita’s text, Onda’s abnormally long tongue is marked with feline needles and serves as the signifier, if not the source, of the owner’s antisocial desires. Despite the similarities between the tongues in Kaita’s and Ranpo’s story, Ranpo never describes Onda’s urges as cannibalistic. Onda uses his beastly mouth to rip their bodies apart, but the text never describes him as consuming the flesh of his victims. Whereas Kaneko in Kaita’s story acts out of irresistible cannibalistic desire, Onda is motivated by a misogynist blood-thirst that drives him to destroy attractive women.

Although Kaita’s text has a distinct homoerotic subtext, Ranpo’s text merely portrays Onda as an enemy of family and the order of cross-sex relationships. As the plot unfolds, Onda and his enemy Kamiya become embroiled in a life-or-death competition first for the waitress Hiroko whom Onda kills, and second for Kamiya’s subsequent lover, an actress named Egawa.

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9 Itō Hideo, *Taishō no tantei shōsetsu*, 325-26. Itō also notes that Ranpo’s *Ningen hyō* has strong similarities to Kuroiwa Ruikō’s *Ayashinomo* (The Suspicious Person).
Ranko who resembles Hiroko to an uncanny degree.\textsuperscript{10} Though Onda kills Hiroko for no obvious reason, competition from Kamiya spurs him on to try to kill Ranko. As the novel progresses, his goal seems to take her from Kamiya more than anything else. Onda moves into an oppositional, binary relationship with Kamiya and later with the detective hero Akechi Kogorō, whom Kamiya hires to help him.\textsuperscript{11} After Akechi appears, the central conflict of the novel turns into a competition between Akechi and Onda over the fate of Fumiyo, Akechi Kogorō’s happy newlywed. Onda captures her, imprisons her in a bear suit, and places her in a circus ring with a tiger, forcing her to fight within inches of her life. Although Akechi succeeds in rescuing her, his foe escapes by hot-air balloon.\textsuperscript{12} In the final paragraphs of the story, life returns to normal, but the detective hero Akechi feels haunted by the thought of Onda, who he imagines to be laughing at him from his balloon high in the stratosphere (10: 152-53). Not even the famous detective Akechi, the embodiment of superior rationality and order, is able to completely eradicate the specter that the lingering threat of perverse, asocial desire can pose to the family unit.

\section*{Reading the Love of Boys: Ranpo on Kaita’s \textit{Ni shōnen zu} (Portrait of Two Boys)}

During the years in which he wrote the novels mentioned above, Ranpo moved several times. In April 1933, he rented a home in Kuruma-machi in the Shiba Ward of Tokyo, which contained an old, earthen storehouse behind the main house. He converted the structure into a study by filling it with books, Western-style furniture, and assorted oddities. While decorating the Western-style room on the second story, he decided to see if he could locate a painting by

\textsuperscript{10} The name Egawa Ranko (江川蘭子), which sounds much like Ranpo’s own name, was no doubt a textual joke to amuse readers. The two surnames differ only by the exclusion of a single character, and the given names differ only by a single consonant. The name Egawa Ranko also appears as the title character of a \textit{gassaku shōsetsu} – a novel written jointly by Ranpo, Yokomizo Seishi (1902-1981), Kōga Saburō (1893-1945), Ōshita Udaru, Yumeno Kyūsaku (1889-1936), and Morishita Uson between September 1930 and February 1931 in \textit{Shin seinen}. Beginning with Ranpo, each writer wrote one chapter then passed it along to the next author until the work was complete. Edogawa Ranpo, Yokomizo Seishi, Kōga Saburō, \textit{et al}, \textit{Egawa Ranko: Gasaku tantei shōsetsu} (Tokyo: Shun’yō bunko, 1993).

\textsuperscript{11} Ranpo had created the character Akechi Kogorō in his 1925 short story “D-zaka no satsujin jiken” (“Murder on the Sloping Streets of D”), where he appears as an aloof, eccentric, yet brilliant amateur criminologist. Akechi reappears in dozens of later works, including Ranpo’s famous detective novels for children. In these later works, he loses his eccentric aloofness and becomes a professional private investigator who acts as a supreme embodiment of intelligence, rationality, and order.

\textsuperscript{12} This method of escape had been used by the villain of Ranpo’s novel \textit{Kyūketsuki} (The Vampire) published in 1930 and 1931, and it would be used again by the “Mystery Man of Twenty Faces” (\textit{Kaijin ni-fū mensō}), the villain of \textit{Shōnen tanteidan} (The Boy Detective’s Club), published in 1937.
Kaita for the wall. (He comments in his memoirs that this was the first time he had a lived in a house with a Western-style room, and so he took great pains in decorating it [20: 286-88].) In his essay “Kaita Ni shōnen zu,” Ranpo notes that he had first encountered Kaita’s paintings at an exhibition in Ueno nearly twenty years before, when he stood for a full hour before one of Kaita’s paintings.\(^\text{13}\) In hopes of obtaining one of Kaita’s pictures, he enlisted the help of Matsuno Kazuo (1895-1973), the illustrator for Shin seinen since 1921.\(^\text{14}\) Matsuno put Ranpo in contact with Nagashima Shige (1893-?), a friend of Kaita and former student at the Nihon bijutsuin. Through him, Ranpo got hold of Ni shōnen zu, which he hung in his study.\(^\text{15}\) In June 1934, the stage designer Yoshida Kenkichi (1897-1982) visited Ranpo’s study and wrote the following description of it.

> In this room, which remains dark all day (and cool all summer because the ceiling is so high and the walls of the former storehouse so thick), Ranpo works by the light of a lamp even in midday. On one of the shadowy walls is a large, framed watercolor done by Murayama Kaita early in his career. (Kaita wrote about three mysteries, and that was the reason Ranpo liked this painting and had someone help him obtain it.) It is as if the weird air emitted by the glass over the painting makes the room even darker.\(^\text{16}\)

\(^{13}\) Kaita’s work appeared in the first annual Nika exhibition in 1914, the first Nihon bijutsuin shūsaku ten (Japan Art Institute Study Exhibition) in 1915, and the second Saikō Nihon bijitsu-ten in 1915. All of these exhibitions were held in Ueno. Ni shōnen zu did not appear in any of them, however. The first public showing of this painting apparently was the posthumous, commemorative exhibition organized by Kaita’s friends and held November 11-30, 1919 in Jinbochō, Tokyo. In describing this exhibition, an art critic for the Yomiuri shinbun (Yomiuri Newspaper) put this watercolor at the top of a list of Kaita’s work. “Kioku ni atai suru Kaita shi no geijutsu,” Yomiuri shinbun, November 18 1919, 7. The catalogue for the exhibition shows that it was in the private collection of a certain Mr. Hayada at the time. Murayama Kaita isaku tenrankai mokuroku (Tokyo: Kabutoya gado, 1919) 78.

\(^{14}\) Matsuno Kazuo worked with Shin seinen until 1948. For much of this period, he drew illustrations for novels in the magazine. He is also known for his covers and illustrations for the celebrated novels Kanzen hanzai (The Perfect Crime) and Kokushikan satsujin jiken (Murder in the Hall of Black Death) by Oguri Mushitarō (1901-1946). See Yamashita Takeshi, Shin seinen o meguru sakka-tachi (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1996) 21.

\(^{15}\) At the Nihon bijutsuin, Nagashima Shige studied with the painter Arishima Ikuma (1882-1974). From 1922 to 1925, Nagashima lived in France, and after returning to Japan, he participated in the Shun’yōkai (Spring Sunlight Society), a group of artists specializing in oil paintings (yōga), woodblock prints, and etchings. This group began with six students, including Kosugi Misi and Yamamoto Kanae, all of whom left the Nihon bijutsuin in 1920, the year after Kaita’s death. After World War II, Nagashima stopped exhibiting and disappeared mysteriously from the art scene. Nothing is known about what became of him. See Nihon bijutsuin hyaku-nen shi henshūinkai, Nihon bijutsuin hyaku-nen shi, vol. 4, 956.

\(^{16}\) Yoshida Kenkichi, “Bundan kō engaku: Sakka no shosai o miru,” Shinchō 31.6 (Jun 1934): 144-46. Another description of Ranpo’s fashionably “modern” (modan) study in Kuruma-machi mentions Ranpo’s stylish (haikara) desk, which stands in contrast to the room’s traditionally Japanese shadows. This description, however, does not mention Kaita’s painting. Edogawa Ranpo, “Tantei shōsetsu to katarushisu (jo),” Yomiuri shinbun, May 20, 1933: 4.
Accompanying the description is a sketch showing the painting in a frame diagonally across from a window, which would have bathed it in indirect light (Figure 31). Ranpo’s desk, which sat perpendicular to the window, provided a clear view of the painting as he wrote. In July 1934, Ranpo moved to Ikebukuro in order to escape the noise of the railway tracks near his Kurumamachi home. This house also had an earthen storehouse in the backyard, and once again, he converted it into a study. The painting hung there until after Ranpo’s death from a cerebral hemorrhage in 1965.17 (See Figures 27 and 28.)

Kaita had painted this brilliantly hued watercolor of two adolescent boys in 1914, soon after moving to the home of Kosugi Misei in Tabata, Tokyo. A recently discovered manuscript written by Yanase Masamu in the early 1920s mentions that Kaita was in love with two youths who regularly visited Misei’s home, and he invited them to become the models for a watercolor – almost certainly the same one Ranpo acquired.18 Art historian Sasaki Teru has used this information, Kosugi’s diary, interviews, and photographs to arrive at the conclusion that the boys were two relatives of Kosugi who frequented the house in the early Taishō period.19 The plump boy on the right of the painting, who sports the close-cropped hair of a young student, gazes outside the frame as if looking at the painter or something beside him. There is no sign that he is interacting with the boy at his side; instead, his attention is focused on a spot outside the painting. Meanwhile, the tall, thin boy beside him gazes silently at his friend. His face is almost expressionless and provides little indication as to what he might be thinking. In short, the relationship between the boys is unclear from visual clues alone.

Ranpo became convinced, however, that “what the picture depicts is not just a simple image of two boys. Hidden deep within it, one finds the beautiful Greek love that dominated Kaita’s life” (17: 70). This is perhaps true to a certain extent. Yanase’s manuscript indicates that Kaita painted the boys because he had a crush on them, but Ranpo’s essay focuses on the relationship between the two figures in the painting, not the relationship between the artist and his

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17 Fortunately, Ranpo’s study survived the fire-bombings of Tokyo, although much of Ikebukuro was devastated. After Ranpo’s death, his son Hirai Ryūtarō (1921- ), put the painting on display along with several manuscripts in the Setagaya Literary Museum in Tokyo, where it currently hangs.

18 Yanase Masamu, “Murayama Kaita-kun,” Murayama Kaita no subete, n. pag.

19 He concludes that the boy on the right of the watercolor is Kosugi Masaki (the fourteen-year old son of Misei’s brother) and the boy on the left is either Sagara Toshizō (the thirteen-year old nephew of Kosugi’s wife) or Kosugi Takashi (the eight-year old son of Misei’s brother). Sasaki Teru, “Kosugi shi kigû no shînen-tachi: Murayama Kaita no suisai Futari no shônen o megutte” E 413 (Jul 1998): 26-30.
subjects. Although there is no definitive clue that the boys are in love with one another, Ranpo asserts that they are. In fact, he goes one step further and interprets the figure on the right as Kaita himself. He notes that the boy on the right with the round, plump face that seems “so unyielding and mischievous,” vaguely resembles the death mask that the sculptor Ishii Tsuruzō (1887-1973) cast the afternoon after Kaita’s death (Figure 30).20 The boy on the left of the painting, he guesses, is Kaita’s “Mona Lisa,” the bishōnen Inō Kiyoshi “for whom he yearned so much” (17: 70). Although this interpretation is without foundation, this interpretation is understandable in light of Yamamoto Jirō’s claim in Kaita no utaeru sono go that Kaita loved Inō so much that the young boy’s face appeared in all of his artwork.21

In the same essay, Yamamoto includes a passage of several paragraphs, supposedly written by Kaita himself, that describe an encounter between two adolescent boys, one of whom is in love with the other. Ranpo quotes them in his essay to support his interpretation of the relationship between the boys in the painting as one of passion.22 The passage describes a young boy gazing longingly at a slender, extraordinarily beautiful bishōnen. The first boy then approaches him and hands him a single cherry blossom that he had pressed between sheets of paper. The gift of this “silver link of spring” moves the recipient, and the passage states he will no doubt cherish it as a remembrance of the boy who gave it to him.23 In several places, this almost cinematic passage describes the encounter as a moving “lithograph” (sekibanga) – a clue that the text might have originally been a description of one or more pieces of art Kaita hoped to create.

Ranpo’s essay makes the tenuous claim that “except for the part about the cherry blossom, this dream, this magnificent, lithographic vision has been transposed into the watercolor portrait of two boys that now hangs in my room” (17: 71). Nonetheless, there are a number of

20 A photo of this death mask appeared in Kaita no utaeru, which Ranpo owned. The death mask is currently in the collection of the Mie Prefectural Art Museum, and a copy is also on display at the Shinano Drawing Museum. Ishii Tsuruzō was a sculptor and fellow in sculpture at the Nihon bijutsuin. He made a career not only with his sculpture and paintings but also by illustrating many works of modern Japanese literature, especially historical novels, such as those of Nakazato Kaizan (1885-1944), Yoshikawa Eiji (1892-1962), and Naoki Sanjūgo (1891-1934).


22 He also surmises that the passage consists of some random jottings or Yamamoto’s reconstitution of something Kaita once told him, but their exact origin is unclear. As literary historian Nakajima Kawatarō has noted, the passage appears nowhere in Kaita’s extant works. Nakajima Kawatarō, Nihon suiri shōsetsu shi, vol. 1, 180.

23 Yamamoto Jirō, “Kaita no hatsukoi,” 301.
noteworthy discrepancies between the passage and the watercolor. The text states that the encounter takes place in April, but Ranpo notes that the scene in the painting probably takes place in summer.\(^{24}\) The text describes the boys standing at a distance from one another until one boy approaches the other and gives him a cherry blossom. In the watercolor however, the boys are adjacent to one another, and there is no sign that such an exchange has or will take place. The quote from Yamamoto’s essay concludes, “The lithograph shows a vision of utter joy,” yet neither boy in the painting appears particularly enraptured.

In 1961, Ranpo published an abbreviated version of the 1934 essay on Kaita. (See the translation in Appendix B.) In it, the relationship between the painting and the passage in *Kaita no utaeru sono go* is even more confused. In this condensed essay, Ranpo summarizes Kaita’s passage about the exchange; however, Ranpo’s summary sounds more like the painting than the passage he was allegedly describing.

Two youths are standing by one another in a topaz-colored April garden. The youth on the right has a round face that reminds one of Kaita himself, and the youth on the left has a thin face with moist skin. He is a “bishōnen who calls to mind an extravagant flute, whose notes sound endlessly.” Enveloped in delicate emotion, the two are in love.

After going to some trouble, I found a picture by Kaita showing this same subject matter, and I was able to get it from one of Kaita’s friends.\(^{25}\) In his summary of the passage, Ranpo makes it sound as though the boys stand to the left and right as in the painting, but Kaita’s passage does not indicate the position of the two boys in relation to one another. He also declares that one boy in text resembles Kaita, but there is nothing in the passage to justify this statement. In sum, the belief that the painting was an artistic reworking of the vision described in the passage in *Kaita no utaeru sono go* was based on a reading of the painting that overlooks certain details and interprets others in ways that privilege the theme of male-male desire, which is not made explicit by the semiotics of the painting itself.\(^{26}\)

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\(^{24}\) Sasaki Teru believes that the flora and the somewhat heavy clothing of the boys indicate that the scene is set in late summer or early autumn. Sasaki Teru, “Kosugi-shi kigū no shōnen-tachi,” 26.

\(^{25}\) This short essay appeared in the first edition of *Tantei shōsetsu yon-jū-nen*, where it was written in small font enclosed in a box. Ranpo was famous for hating blank pages in his books. When publishers returned to him galleys of his essays, he would sometimes write short essays to fill pages that had only a few lines on them. This essay appears to have been one of those space-fillers. Edogawa Ranpo *Tantei shōsetsu yon-jū-nen* (Tokyo: Tōgensha, 1961) 196. This short essay does not appear in memoirs in the Kodansha version of Ranpo’s complete works published in 1978 and 1979.

\(^{26}\) There are other hints that Ranpo was engaging in selective visual reading. For instance, his descriptions of the painting do not emphasize the color blue, which in fact dominates the painting, but garance, the deep red which had become known as Kaita’s trademark, thanks to a famous poem that Ranpo quotes. In fact,
(Re)writing the Love of Boys

The eagerness to interpret the ambiguous relationship between the two boys in the watercolor as one of love says less about the painting itself than Ranpo’s own eagerness to uncover instances of male-male desire in art and literature. A number of writers have commented as much; for instance, the author and essayist Sunaga Asahiko (1946- ) writes that Ranpo’s “particular passionate way of speaking” about the painting reveals a strong personal interest in the subject. 27 Sociologist Furukawa Makoto sees the fact that Ranpo placed the painting in a prominent position in his private study as showing a positive, affirming outlook on male-male love, which remained for him a largely “hidden passion.” 28 Although it is no doubt true that Ranpo was interested in the idea of love between men, one should qualify this statement by noting that at least in his writing, he emphasizes that his interest is primarily in asexual manifestations of male-male desire like the boyish infatuation he finds in Kaita’s painting.

By the time the article appeared, such youthful passions had been subsumed under the rubric of “same-sex love.” As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, translators and authors of medical and psychological texts had been fashioning various Japanese words to describe the concept of “homosexuality,” which they had encountered in Western science and medicine in the last half of the nineteenth century. By the 1920s, however, the word dōseiai had become the most widely used option. Unlike the notion of shudō which emphasized a difference in the ages of the two male partners, dōseiai did not emphasize such qualities and could be used to describe any amorous or sexual relationship between two men or two women. In short, this new concept of understanding “same-sex love” was accommodating enough that even the kind of youthful, non-sexual, adolescent crushes that Ranpo found in Kaita’s work fell under the rubric of dōseiai. By the time Ranpo was writing, enough people in the medical and educational

when writing the manuscript for the condensed version of the essay published in 1961, Ranpo crossed out the word “indigo” (ai) and instead wrote that the painting is primarily “red.”


28 Furukawa Makoto, “Ranpo to dōseiai,” Bessatsu Tajyō 88 (Wi 1994) 120. Furukawa says that since Ranpo’s works do not directly express any “positive” images of love between men, it is only through the fact that he placed this painting on the wall that one can see his positive feelings toward his “hidden passion (himeraretajō netsu).” (This phrase comes from the title of Ranpo’s article on male-male desire in the life and writings of John Addington Symonds.) This chapter, as well as subsequent ones, however, re-evaluates the claim that Ranpo’s depictions of male-male desires were not “positive.”
establishments had written about the deleterious effects of male-male love that the amorous inclinations and erotic habits of adolescents had become the subject of grave concern. Educators, psychologists, and sexologists wrote about the need to police the sexual practices of students so that any indulgence in a “perverse” desire for the same sex could be stopped before it poisoned their young minds and bodies. For instance, the sexologists Sawada Junjirō and Habuto Eiji point out in their classic work of Japanese sexology *Hentai seiyoku ron* that even manifestations of “platonic love” could be perilous. They argue that great men like Socrates and Plato may have been able to satisfy themselves with a form of love that sublimated erotic desire into an idealizing “platonic love.” Ordinary people, however, are less able to control themselves, and for them, asexual love between members of the same sex could mean the beginning of a slippery slope that would place the adolescent in grave peril.29

In “Kaita Ni shōnen zu,” however, Ranpo paints a quite different picture of boyish adolescent love by emphasizing its youthful and platonic qualities. He portrays the encounter in the painting as dreamy and chaste, characterized more by a simple aesthetic appreciation of beauty than carnal desire. By commenting that the face on the left appears to be that of Kaita’s “ideal lover” and “Mona Lisa” Inō, he reads into the painting a highly aestheticized form of desire that is not necessarily even erotic in nature. By discussing the aesthetic and qualities of the painting while overlooking any erotic subtext that might be there, he implicitly distinguishes between the kind of youthful love of boys he finds in the watercolor and other, more explicitly erotic manifestations of male-male love. If anything, he seems to suggest that the youthful relationship between the boys belongs to a special cherubic and innocent category of male-male desire that is free of injurious effects.

Poet and critic Matsunaga Goichi (1930- ) notes that Ranpo’s reading of Kaita’s painting emphasizes “cherubic innocence,” “platonic love,” and perhaps even a touch of “narcissism.” Matsunaga surmises that the painting spoke particularly strongly to Ranpo because it revitalized memories of male-male desire he had experienced during his own youth.30 A few years before writing the essay on Kaita, Ranpo wrote a number of autobiographical essays that describe his own relationships with other schoolboys as a youth in Nagoya. The most explicit of these is “Ranpo uchiakenbanashi” (“Ranpo Tells All”), published in the September 1926 issue of *Taishū*

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In it, Ranpo describes a relationship much like the one he locates in Kaita’s painting. He writes that when he was in his early teens, he was a shy, weak, gentle, and attractive youth. As a result, others teased him by calling him an “ee ko” (literally “good boy”), a term used to describe bishōnen who were seen as effeminate. This nickname caused him much embarrassment. As a matter of fact, he comments that even seventeen years later, just the memory of it was enough to send a chill up his spine. Since his school was infused with an ethos of ultra-masculinity that treated anything weak and effeminate as “strictly off limits,” the word nanjaku, meaning “weak” or “soft,” represented the ultimate insult. Anything seen as fitting this description, including “ee ko,” became the object of derision. The nickname also contained an implicit sexual-come on, and many boys would approach him with it, implying that he should let them have sex with him. He comments that there were many boys at school who played the role of chigo and serving as a junior partner in an amorous relationship. Students would gossip about who was seeing whom, but few of these relationships ever developed to the point of becoming “unclean” (kegarawashii). “We would sometimes go to a point that bordered on indecency (kiwadoi tokoro made), but we never experienced that sort of thing. For the most part, our relationships were platonic” (16: 15-16).

As evidence of the asexual nature of their relationships, he describes a crush he had on an artsy, smart, athletic boy with whom he exchanged a number of love letters. (Love letters were common at school, he writes, and he received a fair share of them from other boys.) Ranpo and the other schoolboy spent little time together until the summer holidays, when they went on an outing to the sea with some other students and a teacher. Quite by chance, they happened to end up sharing a mosquito net with several other students, and each night, Ranpo and his admirer would lie next to each other, even though the other students were nearby. Ranpo writes that he was not especially upset by this turn of events. In fact, he secretly hoped that something might happen between them, and as he waited, he experienced a “vague but oppressive pleasure.” His partner was old enough to have erotic desires, “but nonetheless, he became awfully formal with me. Each evening would pass without anything happening. I felt somewhat dissatisfied” (16: 16). This forthright confession provides proof that the feelings he bore the other boy contained a desire to experiment sexually with the other boy. Despite Ranpo’s protests that the relationships between him and other schoolboys were “platonic” in nature, physical longing was present in the shadows, even if he did not act upon them. Clearly, Ranpo was waiting for the other boy to initiate a sexual relationship, but in the end, he never did. Ranpo’s waiting came to an abrupt end.

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31 Edogawa Ranpo, “Ranpo uchiakebanashi,” Taishū bungei 1.9 (Sep 1926): 77-82.
when one night the boy showed Ranpo a knife. When rumors circulated about this, a teacher interrogated Ranpo, asking if the boy had been threatening him. The teacher separated them, and for a long time afterward, teachers and classmates looked askance at the other boy. Meanwhile, Ranpo felt a “humiliation that was worse than death” (16: 17).

The essay also tells of a happier, yet equally asexual relationship that Ranpo calls his “first love.” When Ranpo states that he is going to describe his first love, he prepares his readers with the following statement.

I’m not going to get all sentimental about a woman. I say this because my partner was not a woman. In any case, I suppose the result was the same. What I’m saying is that we were playing at same-sex love. One often finds that sort of relationship. It was truly platonic and passionate. In fact, it seems I used up all the love in my life for just that one person of the same sex (16: 15).

From the outset, Ranpo emphasizes that their relationship was not one of “same-sex love” per se, but merely two adolescents “playing at same-sex love” (dōseiai no manegoto) without ever engaging in a “real” physical relationship. He thus draws a fine line between relationships like his and the more explicitly sexual ones which teachers and sexologists warned against. Like Ranpo, the boy for whom he developed these feelings was well known as a bishōnen, and troublemakers at school often gave him a hard time too. When Ranpo was about fourteen, the two became close and exchanged many love letters full of “very uncontrolled things” (zuibun darashi no nai koto); for instance, one letter stated, “I want to gobble you right up” (Kimi o kutte shimaitai, 16: 17). Like a “shy young girl in love,” he thought about the other boy day and night, and when classmates teased him about it, he turned red. At the same time, however, he felt an “unparalleled ecstasy” inside. Since neither of the partners was the chigo, Ranpo and his friend treated one another like equals and “loved each other like man and woman.” As Furukawa Makoto has noted, this description implicitly draws a line between Ranpo’s experiences and the nanshoku relations of Edo period, which typically involved inequality of the sexual partners and often led to sexual consummation. Likewise, these descriptions distinguish Ranpo’s love from the “hard-faction” predatory relationships described in Mori Ōgai’s Wita sekusuarisu and journalistic accounts of schoolboy desire from the turn of the century.

Ranpo’s youthful passion for the other boy was so strong that even the simplest touch inspired great emotion. A single stroke of the other boy’s hand would run through him (zokutto

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shinkei ni kotaeru), and when they held hands, “I would become feverish and my body would tremble.” In the following passage, he describes one of the highlights of their relationship.

I still remember the happiness of secretly touching one another’s hands at the house of a mutual friend where we had met. We did it right as our friend was watching us. There was a knothole in his desk, and when I stuck my finger in it from above, the other boy secretly put his hand inside and clasped my finger from below. I have never experienced that feeling ever again, not with anyone, not even a woman (16: 18).

Holding hands, however, was as far as their physical relationship went, and the two never exchanged even a simple kiss. “Sadly, however,” Ranpo concludes, “love between members of the opposite sex is short, yet love between members of the same sex is even more fleeting.” The two grew apart, and before the other boy finished his college preparatory studies, he fell ill and died. Thus it was, Ranpo says, he expended all of his love during his youth when he still did not understand matters having to do with sex.” At one point as he finishes narrating the tale of his “first love,” he asks his readers a rhetorical question, “This kind of platonic love is not at all uncommon, is it?” Clearly, his belief is that such manifestations of male-male desire are more common than many people readily acknowledge.

The “Uncleanliness” of Sexual Desire

Ranpo’s reading of Kaita’s painting as depicting an idealizing, innocent form of youthful passion represents an indirect attempt to defend the boyish attractions he had felt in his own childhood – powerful attractions that flirted with eroticism but that remained unconsummated and therefore, in his view, unsullied. His eagerness to idealize youthful, asexual desire, in effect, disassociates youthful male-male desire from other, more explicit forms of male-male eroticism and thus resists the growing wave of social anxiety regarding sexual desire among boys. To put it another way, Ranpo implies the innocence and harmlessness of a form of desire that the sexological and psychological establishments treated as problematic. Although Ranpo does not directly challenge these institutions directly, the essays about his own youth make it clear that he believes that youthful, non-sexual manifestations of desire are not equivalent to adult erotic love. Throughout the essay, Ranpo busily insists that his relationships were platonic, hinting that he views platonic love to be different in character than love of an erotic nature. The final few pages of the essay make it clear, however, that he considers not only male-male intercourse but also male-female intercourse to be “unclean.” He writes that he has experienced attraction to the opposite sex and even acted upon it a few times, but he says, “it just did not feel like the real
thing. Perhaps because it was accompanied by sexual relationships, it seemed there was something impure about it, and therefore, it did not feel like love.” The essay does not say who Ranpo slept with, but the statement is written in terms broad enough to include all the women in the past, including his wife, Murayama Ryū, whom he had married in 1918. The essay assures readers that his experiences with women were not entirely unpleasant, but because of the introduction of carnal sexuality, there was something “animalistic” about them (16: 18).

Later essays express similar feelings; for instance, in the essay “Waga seishun ki” (“Record of My Youth”) published in 1952, he states that during his teenage years, he found the opposite sex to be “abhorrent” (ken’o) and traditional Japanese music for the koto and samisen to be “indecent” (hiwai). These prejudices kept him from the demimonde, where both are readily available, and so he never even tried sleeping with women until his twenties. He comments, however, that even after his abhorrence for the opposite sex dissipated, he could not think of a member of the opposite sex as a “sublime being” (yuitsu mujō no mono), no matter how beautiful she was (22: 30). In “Boku wa ren’ai funōsha” (“I am a Man Impotent in Love”) published in 1949, he describes his aversion to sexuality – both same-sex and cross-sex sexuality – in language suggestive of medical psychology. The essay begins with the declaration that he is a ren’ai funōsha, a medical-sounding compound that means, literally, a “person incapable of love.” He states that he is unable to experience the passion of sexual love and blames his failure on society, which teaches that sexuality is ugly.

From our youths, society drums it into us that our genitals and sexual activity are ugly, horrible things. Although the liquids expelled by the human body are in no way ugly, for millennia, our customs have treated them as so ugly that we even find the smell of them to be horrible. The view that the genitals and sexual activity are ugly is closely related to this. Were that not the case, then wouldn’t we consider art, sculpture, plays, performances, and poetry that depict sexual activity to be the highest kind of art? (22: 30-31)

Although this passage exaggerates greatly – the genitalia and sexuality were never condemned categorically by all of Japanese society – Ranpo is right in noting that the genitalia and certain sexual acts had been the subject of considerable anxiety during the modern period. He continues, stating that when young people who have been taught to revile the genitalia learn that it was not the stork that brought them into the world but those very same sexual organs, they are assailed by “severe feelings of inferiority.” The situation, according to him, only gets worse when they learn that the genitals also are the “true source of love, which one is taught to be the most sublime thing

33 Ranpo later revised the title of the essay to simply “Ren’ai funōsha” (“Impotent in Love”).
in life.” As one tries to reconcile the “sublime beauty” (shibi) of love with the “supreme ugliness” (shishū) of the acts performed by those parts of the body, one only experiences more confusion and shame (22: 31). The idea that certain parts of the body were unseemly and best excluded from view and polite conversation clearly reflects the notions of bodily hygiene and propriety that were taking root among the Japanese middle class in the early twentieth century.34

In a round-table discussion with the radio personality, comedian, and raconteur Tokugawa Musei (1894-1971) published in Shūkan asahi (Asahi Weekly) in 1954, Ranpo again repeats the idea that he finds the idea of sexual encounters with women unappealing. At one point, Musei says that he heard that Ranpo never found the “ideal woman.”35 To this, Ranpo replies, “When I was a boy, I experienced something like love (ren’ai), but it was not love accompanied by sexual desire” (22: 161). He suggests multiple reasons: feelings of inferiority, an inability to find a woman who evoked strong passion, and a fundamental “anti-romantic” streak (22: 162). The foremost reason, however, is a belief “that sexual desire is something that is truly unclean.” Half-jokingly, he explains, “People are born from the dirtiest part of the body. I just can’t respect love that tries to get there as its goal. [Laughs] It’s no good to teach people that. We’ve got to teach what is beautiful and what is sacred.” When Musei asks him if he is more interested in “same-sex love” (dōseiai), Ranpo responds,

       ER: That was in my youth. Before I felt sexual desire.
       TM: So that was also before all those unclean things, eh? [Laughs]

34 Perhaps not coincidentally, Inoue Shōichi’s study Pantsu ga mieru (I Can See Your Panties) finds that it was not much later in the early Shōwa period that many Japanese women began to wear Western-style underwear for fear that someone might catch a glimpse of their genitalia under their dresses or kimono. Inoue Shōichi, Pantsu ga mieru: Shūchishin no gendaishi, Asahi sensho 700 (Tokyo: Asahi shinbunsha, 2003).

35 In 1935, Musei had written an article for Shin seinen called “Edogawa Ranpo-shi no shikyō o kiku” (“Inquiring after Mr. Edogawa Ranpo’s State of Mind”). In it, he notes an apparent contraction between Ranpo’s soft, even slightly feminine personal demeanor and the horrifyingly bloody scenes in his novels. He states that the reason for this probably lies in “perverse psychology” (hentai shinri), or more specifically, Ranpo’s “perverse sexual desires” (hentai seiyoku). He speculates that Ranpo “probably has more feminine traits than the ordinary person not just in his face, but also in his heart.” Musei does not speculate outright that Ranpo prefers sleeping with men, but this seems to be what he is insinuating. Musei was probably trying to amuse his audience by applying the label of “perverse psychology” that often appears in Ranpo’s novels to the author himself, but at the same time, his article reflects the kinds of speculations that most likely went through the minds of many fans who had read Ranpo’s autobiographical essays. Tokugawa Musei, “Edogawa Ranpo-shi no shikyō o kiku,” Shin seinen 16.1 (Jan 1935): 285-88. Perhaps not coincidentally, Musei’s article appears alongside an article that Ranpo had written about John Addington Symonds badgering Walt Whitman to reveal his personal thoughts about male-male eroticism. (See the discussion of this article in the next chapter.)
ER: Platonic love for the same sex is not bad. I am quite interested in same-sex love, and in fact, I am researching it in books and other sources. I don’t put it into practice that often though (Jikkō wa amari shinai ga ne).

TM: “Don’t often”? By that do you mean that sometimes you do? [Laughs]

ER: It means that I am not totally disinterested in such things.

TM: Quite a literary way of putting it. [Laughs]

ER: I am interested in both women and in men, but it isn’t good to put that interest into practice (22: 162).

As the passage notes, Ranpo had profoundly ambivalent feelings about sexuality in general. On one hand, he did possess a special curiosity about male-male desire, and as the final chapter of this dissertation shows, this curiosity led him to collect a large number of rare texts on the subject. On the other hand, his writings often express great anxiety over manifestations of male-male love that involve overt expressions of sexuality. As if to rationalize these feelings, he theorizes that society teaches all people to feel horror for the genitalia. In his case, however, these feelings are amplified to the point that he is “unable to love.” In this way, he accounts for his apparent disinterest in intercourse with women as well as any other socially induced anxieties he shares about male-male eroticism.

Incidentally, after publishing his “tell-all” essay in 1926, Ranpo appears to have become increasingly hesitant to write any more about his own youthful sexual feelings and experiences. After reading a Japanese translation of the autobiographical work *Si le grain ne meurt...* (If it Die...) by the French novelist André Gide (1869-1951), Ranpo decided that he would try his hand at writing a comparable work for *Purofuru* (Profile), a Kyoto-based magazine of mystery that had been asking him to serialize a work in their journal. The result was the 1937 work Kare (He), which although narrated in the third person, describes the author’s own life. Ranpo published four installments, in which he describes the circumstances of his birth and the first decade of his life, but the narrative breaks off soon before the protagonist enters puberty. Ranpo’s memoirs state that when he reached the point where he was ready to talk about “a certain incident in my youth having to do with sexual desire, I stopped abruptly, completely stuck.” He explains, “I was too embarrassed to write about it. Perhaps if I was one of those authors of pure literature who wrote as if it was a matter of life and death, I would have been able to do it, but the reason that I wrote detective fiction is that it is not about such life-and-death matters. I began writing for fun” (21: 17).

Reading the first installments of the aborted work, one finds that Ranpo frequently hints how fundamentally he is different from the other boys around him. In fact, the work begins with an epigraph from *If It Die...*, in which the eleven-year old Gide burst into tears before his mother,
repeating, “I’m not like other people... not like other people!” (17: 10). The text itself emphasizes how close the protagonist was to his grandmother, how little he liked his father as a youth, and how passionately he loved art and literature – all things that Ranpo, who was familiar with the basics of Freudian psychology, likely saw as contributing to or symptomatic of an unusual psychological profile. It is clear that Ranpo had Freud in mind while writing. At one point, the narrative in passing describes the protagonist’s feelings toward his father in terms of the Oedipus complex. The text states more will be said about that later, but because the work was abandoned partway through, Ranpo never followed up on this lead. As luck would have it, Purofiru discontinued publication right at the time that Ranpo became stuck, and he was spared the quandary of how to write about his first sexual desires. Although the magazine Shupio (named from the Russian word шпион [shpion], meaning “spy” or “detective”) offered to carry the continuation of the work, Ranpo declined. The world never learned what exactly had caused Ranpo so much consternation that he could not write about it.37


37 Sunaga Asahiko finds it an “interesting” coincidence that Ranpo wrote Kare about the same time he began writing his numerous articles about dōseiai in literature. Sunaga Asahiko, “Ranpo no hisoka naru dōseiai,” Yuriika 19.5 (May 1987): 187. Ultimately however, it is unclear whether the “certain incident having to do with sexual desire” that caused Ranpo to quit writing necessarily had to do with male-male eroticism. It could have also had to do with other sexual feelings or acts, such as masturbation. (Gide’s autobiography, which inspired Ranpo to try writing his, describes in some detail his discovery of masturbation and his feelings regarding the act.)
CHAPTER 5:

CURIOSITY AND THE WARY OBSERVER:
MALE-MALE DESIRE IN RANPO’S FICTION

As mentioned in previous chapters, many examples of Japanese mystery fiction from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries incorporated elements of detection and crime-solving alongside elements of adventure, the bizarre, and the erotic. When Ranpo first came on the literary scene, however, he attracted attention because he focused more on detection, code-breaking, and analyzing evidence than on spicing up his story with touches of eroticism and grotesquerie. His debut story “Ni-sen dōka” published in 1924 includes an extensive description of an ingenious code, the means by which it is deciphered, and the unexpected reversal that occurs when a second message is found encrypted in it. Likewise, “Ichimai no kippu” (“A Single Ticket”) published the same year, involves extensive analyses of seemingly insignificant fragments of evidence to determine who committed a crime. With the publication of the short story “D-zaka no satsujin jiken” (“Murder on the Sloping Streets of D”) in 1925, however, Ranpo began to introduce elements of eroticism and the grotesque into his work. This story follows the process by which the detective hero Akechi Kogorō discovers that a woman found murdered in her shop was killed in the midst of sadomasochistic games with her husband. This combination of problem-solving and sexuality, especially its “perverse” manifestations, recurs in many novels that Ranpo would write in years to come.

Ranpo was one of many popular authors during the 1920s that recognized the appeal that various forms of sexuality held for contemporary, urban audiences. By publishing works containing elements of eroticism, authors and editors of popular magazines such as *Shin seinen*, *Gurotesuku* (The Grotesque), or *Hanzai kagaku* (Criminal Science) contributed to the cultural ethos during the 1920s and the 1930s known as “ero, guro, nansensu” (the erotic, the grotesque, and the nonsensical). Some postwar scholars have looked at the prewar fad for the erotic and the grotesque as a means of withdrawing from the developments of the 1920s and 1930s to create an alternative sphere of imaginative play that consciously resisted incorporation into the productive

181
goals of the nation-state.1 Others have thought of it as a mere commodity designed to seduce readers. Both of these views, however, tend to overlook the important relationship between this literature and crucial social issues of the day. A growing body of studies has shown that such literature, although written for popular entertainment, involves key social and ideological issues that relate to the nation, the empire, science, medicine, sexuality, and the changing spectrum of gender relations.2 While the literature of the fad for ero, guro, nansensu was born partly from market demands and the economic interests of the individual authors, it also served as a popular forum for exploring key issues of the period.

As argued in the introduction, popular authors found a perfect wedding of the erotic and the grotesque in the categories of “perverse sexual desire” (hentai seiyoku) described by sexologists and medical practitioners, and not surprisingly, these forms of sexuality begin appearing with increasingly frequency in the literature of the Taishō and early Shōwa periods. Beginning with “D-zaka no satsujin jiken,” Ranpo’s novels touch upon a host of issues related to sexuality, including gender transformation, sadomasochism, pygmalionism (doll-love), necrophilia, and so on.3 About the time that he wrote his 1926 “tell-all” article which describes

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2 Two works that have been particularly useful in reading the literature created during the fad for ero, guro, nansensu as reflecting social currents and ideological trends are Suzuki Sadami, Shōwa bungaku no tame ni (Tokyo: Shichōsha, 1989) and Suzuki Sadami, Modan toshi no hyōgen: Jiko, gensō, josei, L’esprit nouveau series 7 (Kyoto: Hakuchisha, 1992). A useful study of the way Ranpo’s novel Kotō no oni plays with ideas borrowed from medicine, eugenics, and social science can be found in Jim Reichert, “Deviance and Social Darwinism in Edogawa Ranpo’s Erotic-Grotesque Thriller Kotō no oni,” Journal of Japanese Studies 27.1 (Wi 2001): 113-41.

his amorous crushes in grade school, Ranpo also wrote several fictional works that include scenes
of same-sex desire – a subject that seems to have particularly fascinated him. This chapter argues
that partly because of the ero, guro, nansensu mode he used to depict male-male eroticism in his
fiction, his early fictional texts on same-sex desire display profoundly ambivalent messages. In
several of the stories, characters encounter same-sex desire while engaging in a “hunt for
curiosities” (ryōki); therefore, erotic desire between men is inevitably coded as curious and
perplexing. At the same time, however, these passages also display a clear fascination with male-
male eroticism that sometimes seems at odds with the rhetoric used to describe it.

This mixed rhetorical mode is especially visible in the novel Kotō no oni (The Demon of
the Lonely Isle), Ranpo’s only novel to feature a major character whose sexual preferences are
exclusively for the same sex. The story is narrated not by this character, however, but by a friend
who repeatedly expresses his inability to understand his comrade’s “mysterious love” (fushigi na
aijō). Ranpo’s decision to narrate the novel from the point of view of the friend allows the
narrative to vacillate between a critical and sensationalistic mode, which describes manifestations
of male-male eroticism as strange and even animalistic, and a relatively approving mode when
the character that prefers men gets the opportunity to explain his own feelings. Ultimately
however, as the text vacillates between these two rhetorical modes, it still gives the impression
that Ranpo conceived of homosocial and homoerotic desire as representing two profoundly
different means for men to relate to one another.

Ryōki and the Search for “Strange” Sexual Desire

In the early 1930s, the word ryōki, written with the two characters 猟奇 meaning
“hunting [for the] strange,” began appearing in dictionaries of new, fashionable, and modern
words. As these dictionaries show, ryōki involved a scopophilic desire to uncover strange and
bizarre “curiosities,” especially ones having to do with the erotic, so that the onlooker might
experience a degree of precarious excitement and even titillation. For example, one dictionary
from 1931 comments that ryōki means the “search for the strange / unusual (ki),” but that “it is
often used in cases having to do with sexual desire, such as chasing after the erotic (ero) and
seeking out the grotesque (guro).”4 Another dictionary published the same year concurs: “The

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635. I thank Imaeda Kumiko for sharing her thoughts on the term ryōki, and I look forward to the
publication of her research on misemono and the related phenomenon of ryōki.

183
word *ryōki*, which has become common in recent circulation, means, just as the characters suggest, searching for the strange (*ki*). Within the word’s nuances, however, one finds a strong tint of eroticism (*ero*) and the grotesque (*guro*)."5

People engaging in *ryōki* could conceivably satisfy their quest for “curiosities” in ways that were not erotic in nature, such as going to see the sideshows and public spectacles found in many of the large cities of Japan during this time. As the dictionary entries mentioned above show, however, the word *ryōki* also involved an erotic side, as people sought out manifestations of erotic desire that Japanese society had recently identified as strange. In such contexts, *ryōki* was closely linked to the concept of “perverse sexual desire” (*hentai seiyoku*) that had gained currency with the work of sexologists, medical practitioners, and moral reformers. By designating certain sexual practices as perverse or deviant, the notion of perverse sexual desire excluded them from the realm of the normal and civilized. Ironically, by condemning these forms of desire, sexologists put in place boundaries of propriety that thrill-seeking curiosity seekers might purposefully transgress. By labeling certain sexual acts and forms of sexual desire as strange, medical psychology and sexology helped turn them into the kinds of “curiosities” that curiosity-hunters might seek out. In this regard, the sexual dimension of *ryōki* is intimately related to the categorizing function of sexological discourse.

Not surprisingly, those who engaged in *ryōki* were often looked upon with suspicion. One of the dictionaries quoted above includes an entry for *ryōkibyō kanja* (literally “patient with curiosity-hunting disease”). It states, a person who habitually engages in *ryōki* is a “perverse entity who seeks extraordinary stimulation and feels an interest in things that go beyond common sense. They are people for whom strolling in the Ginza, unemployment anxiety, the cinema, cafés and such do not provide enough stimulation; therefore, they hunt about wildly in all directions.”6 Another source concurs that the *ryōkibyō kanja* is “a perverse modern youth that seeks out extraordinary types of stimulation” when the stimulation afforded by daily life “does not suffice.”7 Some sources discuss this phenomenon specifically as a product of modernity; for example, one dictionary asserts, “when the nerves of modern people are no longer allow them to


6 Nakayama Yūgorō, comp., *Modan go manga jiten*, 635.

7 Kojima Tokuya, *Bunruishiki modan shin yōgo jiten* (Tokyo: Kyōbunsha, 1931; Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1995) 142. This volume does not contain an entry for *ryōki*.
be content with the hackneyed and the commonplace, they begin to crave the stimulation afforded by the abnormal and the strange. As examples, this source mentions the excitement afforded by staying in allegedly haunted inns or searching through secret, scary parts of town. It explains, “there is no problem as long as people are only interested in ryōki-like activities, but this can grow worse and people can become afflicted by ryōki (hiryōkiteki sonzai). These people call themselves ‘ultramodern’ but their actions smack of insanity, for they gladly do unusual, terrifying things that violate common sense.” As examples, the dictionary points to various “perverse groups” of men that go to live with lepers, dress in bright red girlish kimonos, grow their hair particularly long, or paint their faces with ink and rouge – all for the sake of increased levels of stimulation. The equation between modernity, a heightened need for stimuli, and perverse psychology is evident in a definition of hentai shinri (perverse psychology) found in another dictionary from 1931: “Perverse psychology is one special characteristic of modern man. As culture progresses and urban life becomes increasingly more complicated, people are not satisfied unless they have exceedingly strong stimulation. All of their interests and feelings lean increasingly toward the unhealthy.”

The increased usage of the word ryōki in the early Shōwa period reflects a rising interest in things that might enliven the lackluster existence of the middle classes. Interestingly, about a decade or so before ryōki began appearing in dictionaries, annyu, the Japanese transliteration of the word ennui, started appearing in dictionaries of new, modern words, suggesting that the educated middle classes saw tedium as a product of modern civilization. One dictionary, for instance, states that ennui is a “morbid characteristic that comes from modern civilization,” reflecting the popular notion that this sentiment had developed with the advance of capitalism and

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8 Gendai henshūkyoku, comp., Gendai shingō jiten, 474-75.


10 For instance, one dictionary from 1919 defines the word as “boredom, tedium, disgustedness.” Jidai kenkyū kenkyūkai, comp., Gendai shingō jiten, Kindai yōgo no jiten shūsei 1 (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1919; Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1994) 10-11. Another from 1925 repeats this but adds that it can also mean “anxiety” or “worry.” Hattori Yoshika and Uehara Rorō, comps., Atarashii kotoba no jibiki, 2nd rev. ed., Kindai yōgo no jiten shūsei 3 (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1925, Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1994) 44. An identical definition is found in Kita Sōchirō and Kōjimachi Kōji, comps., Modango yōgo jiten, Kindai yōgo no jiten shūsei 13 (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihonsha, 1930; Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1995) 32. One amusing dictionary from 1931 gives the following sample sentence: “These days, I have felt ennui with everyday, human life.” By way of pragmatic explanation, the dictionary states, “one should in this case accompany this statement with the music of a subtle sigh.” Nakayama Yoshigorō, comp., Modango manga jiten, 31.
While one dictionary pinpoints the development of this sentiment at the fin-de-siècle, another writes that this sense of “boredom, laziness, or vague anxiety” afflicts untold numbers of contemporary intellectuals, “especially young girls.”

Judging from the literature of the period, popular authors seem to have been another bunch particularly afflicted with ennui. Thanks in large part to the expansion of the urban, middle class during the first decades of the twentieth century, the readership for popular literature increased rapidly, producing more people who were willing to spend part of their disposable income on reading material. During the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, this meant a rapid rise in the number of magazines, and in turn, this created more possibilities for authors to support themselves through writing. Although this new generation of writers often lived meagerly, freedom from the constraints of long days in factories or offices meant a plentitude of free time. Free time, however, is as often a curse as it is a blessing, and many young writers found themselves afflicted with the aimlessness that arises from understimulation. Not surprisingly, many contemporary writers, including Tanizaki Jun’ichirō, Satō Haruo, Uno Kōji, Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886-1942), and Ogata Kamenosuke (1900-1942), included extensive descriptions of ennui in their fiction and poetry. Not surprisingly, many of these authors turned to ryōki and explored the cities and countryside of Japan for interesting sights and sounds that might stimulate their imaginations.

Ryōki appears numerous times in Ranpo’s oeuvre as a remedy for boredom. For instance, the story “Yaneura no sanposha,” which was mentioned in the previous chapter, describes the life

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of Gōda Saburō, who is afflicted with a boredom so intense “it probably was a type of psychological illness. No matter what sort of entertainment he tried, no matter what sort of work he did, no matter what he would do, his world was not the least bit interesting” (1: 249). After trying various professions, experimenting with different pastimes, and moving multiple times, he finally develops an interest in crime fiction that eases his boredom somewhat. Meanwhile, he takes to wandering in a ryōki-like fashion through the bustling district of Asakusa with its small shops, amusement areas, theaters, sideshows, and pleasure districts. The novel states, “Asakusa was like a toy box, which if suddenly emptied would rain down various gaudily colored paints. For a person with a taste for crime, the amusement areas of Asakusa were a superb setting” (1: 251). As these outings grow more frequent, Gōda begins dressing up in a various costumes and pretending to be different types of people – laborers, beggars, students, and so on – while walking the streets. In one passage, these ryōki-related searches take on a homoerotic dimension. Gōda discovers that cross-dressing gives him a considerable thrill, especially when he flirts with men.

Of the costumes that he tried, dressing as a woman pleased his morbid habit the most. Accordingly, he sold off his kimono, watch, and other things so that he could earn some money to buy an expensive wig and used ladies’ clothing. On those occasions when he would wear his beloved female outfits for an extended period of time, he would put an overcoat over his head and leave his lodgings under the dark cloak of night. He would then remove the overcoat at an appropriate place and set off. One time, he strolled around a lonely park; another, he entered a movie theater as it was closing. There, after purposely entering the seats reserved for male cinema-goers, he went as far as trying some risky escapades with the men there. He derived great pleasure from the illusion brought about by the clothing, and he imagined himself toying with various men as if he were a “poison-woman” like Dakki no Ohyaku or Uwabami Oyu (1: 251-52).

Stories of murderous women, often called “poison women” (dokufu), were popular in the late nineteenth century, and storytellers, storybooks, kabuki actors, and sensational journalists told their stories in various forms. One of these stories was about Dakki no Ohyaku, a beautiful prostitute who killed her clients. Another was the story of Uwabami Oyu (“Oyu the Python”), a widow who seduces her husband’s murderer then kills him in revenge. In “Yaneura no sanposha,” Gōda pretends to be these seductresses and makes erotic overtures to the men in the movie theater while fantasizing about ushering them to an untimely death. Whether or not these “risky escapades” (kiwadoi itazura) involved actual physical contact is unclear, but the context makes it clear that Gōda’s play involves a homoerotic dimension. The fact that the other men do not recognize him as a man only seems to add to Gōda’s excitement.

Ranpo’s essays show that, like the main character in “Yaneura no sanposha,” Ranpo also wandered through the city in costume, trying to quell his boredom. In the essay “Mudabanashi” (“Idle Chatter”) published in January 1928, Ranpo states that boredom drove him to spend whole
afternoons and evenings sitting on benches in Asakusa Park and wandering about in disguise (16: 29-34). He does not mention doing drag, but one of his most famous novels, *Inju (The Beast in the Shadows)*, published in *Shin seinen* in 1933, suggests that perhaps female clothing may have been one of his disguises. This complex novella describes the fear of a woman who claims that she is being stalked by Ōe Shundei, a popular detective writer. Ranpo cleverly describes the character Shundei as resembling himself to an incredible degree, and even the names of Shundei’s writings sound strikingly familiar to readers who know Ranpo’s fiction. At one point, one of the principal characters makes the following speech after denouncing Shundei.

“…all detective novelists are monsters. Men try transforming themselves into women, and when they really get the taste for curiosity-hunting (*ryōki no shumi*), they go ahead and actually try doing it. Why, a certain novelist dressed up like a woman one night and went parading around Asakusa Park. And then, he even tried imitating love with a man!” (*otoko to koi no manegoto sae yatta*, 3: 257)

The text does not identify Shundei – the character who conspicuously resembles Ranpo – as the writer who walked around Asakusa Park in drag, but given the high degree of self-reference in the novella, Ranpo may have been insinuating that he was the writer in question. In any case, the text is unequivocal in stating that people who are particularly interested in *ryōki* might turn to cross-dressing and perhaps even homoerotic encounters to satisfy their yearning for adventure.

**The Appeal of Asakusa**

During the Taishō and early Shōwa period, Asakusa Park was popular not just among *ryōki* seekers, but among vast segments of the population of Tokyo. In the years immediately after the Meiji Restoration, the area around Sensōji Temple was designated one of Tokyo’s first public parks, and a few years later, two large ponds, Ōike (Large Pond) and Hyōtan-ike (Gourd-Shaped Pond), were created to the west of the temple’s main hall. In 1885, a long row of brick shops called the Nakamise were created in 1885 in front of the main hall of Sensōji. Nearby, an entertainment district known as Rokku developed along Hyōtan-ike, complete with a large number of theaters, opera houses, and in later years, cinemas. (See Figures 32-37.) One historian of Tokyo has noted that it was in Rokku “where the cultural life of Meiji and Taishō Tokyo

14 Later in the story, it turns out that Ōe Shundei is the woman’s own nom de plume, and the story about being stalked is nothing but an imaginative concoction. Even though the character Shundei does not exist, none of the characters know this for the majority of the narrative, and they make acerbic comments about Shundei’s work and personality. In writing these passages, Ranpo was clearly making tongue-in-cheek comments about his own writing and lifestyle.
unfolded its brightest blossoms.”15 In the late Meiji and Taishō periods, the theaters in Rokku became home to the immensely popular “Asakusa Opera,” which consisted of musical revues and light opera as well as full-blown opera in the European style.16 Small shops, public performances, freak-shows, caged animals, and gardens filled the areas of Hanayashiki and Okuyama. In 1890, private developers created the park’s most famous structure, a tall brick tower with a wooden frame that dwarfed all other buildings in the Tokyo metropolis. Known officially as the Ryōunkaku, this building was popularly called the “Asakusa jū-ni-kai” (Asakusa Twelve Stories), and it stood at one end of the Rokku. Visible throughout the metropolis, this huge structure of about sixty meters immediately became an important symbol of Japanese modernity, and the top of the tower became one of Tokyo’s most important tourist attractions, offering an expansive view of the rapidly growing city below.17 (The elevator that took passengers to the top was the first public elevator in the city. It also served as another attraction, even though it was not usable for most of the tower’s history. Soon after the tower was opened, the elevator was deemed unsafe, and visitors were obliged to climb the stairs to the top.) When an earthquake in 1894 caused the building to shake precariously, the bottom portion of the structure was reinforced with steel girders, but when the Great Kantō Earthquake struck on September 1, 1923, the top floors collapsed, leaving only the lower seven or eight stories (Figure 34). On September 23, the remains of the tower were demolished, but nonetheless, the tower retained an important position in the cultural imagination of Tokyoites. Most of Ranpo’s visits to Asakusa Park were well after the earthquake and the demolition of the tower, but the memory of the bustling walkways of Asakusa Park before the earthquake held a strong appeal for him. In fact, one of Ranpo’s most famous short stories, “Oshie to tabi suru otoko” (“The Traveler with the Picture of Pasted Cloth”) published in Shin seinen in 1929, takes place in and around the twelve-storied tower, which had already become the object of nostalgia for Asakusa aficionados like him (6: 9-24).18


16 On the Asakusa opera and some of the cultural developments in Asakusa during the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, see Edward Seidensticker, Low City, High City: Tokyo 1867-1923 (San Francisco: Donald S. Ellis, 1985) 267-71.

17 Hosoma Hiromichi, Asakusa ju-ni-kai: Tō no nagame to “kindai” no manazashi (Tokyo: Seidōsha, 2001) provides a fascinating portrait of this building and the surrounding area in the late Meiji and Taishō periods.

The metropolitan parks offered space for people from different walks of life to interact, and as such, they served as a forum for flirtation, prostitution, or even full-fledged physical encounters. The dark corners of parks provided places where couples could avoid prying eyes, and from at least late Meiji onward, they served as semi-private sites of escape in a city where few people could afford to rent an apartment or house by themselves. Two of the most popular places for amorous encounters were the parks in Asakusa and Hibiya. According to one article that appeared in Chūō shinbun (Central Newspaper) in 1916, even so-called “respectable” people such as doctors and schoolteachers went to Hibiya to meet on the park benches and fields to engage in “half-animalistic actions” (hanjū-tekiki). Inoue Shōichi, a scholar of architecture and the history of sexuality in Japan, has shown that sex in Tokyo’s parks gave enough concern to police that they stepped up patrols in the parks for the specific purpose of inhibiting such behavior.

Texts from the period show that Tokyo’s parks, including Asakusa, provided furtive meeting places for men. Inagaki Taruho’s essay “Shōnen tokuhon” (“Youth Reader”), a revised version of a text first published in the magazine Gurotesuku (The Grotesque) in 1930, lists an area on the far side of Hyōtan-ike in Asakusa Park in a list of places where men might meet other men for sex. In the short story “Rōkō” (“Squalid Alleyways”) published by the leftist writer Kataoka Teppei (1894-1944) in 1934, the two homeless workers meet on a park bench in Asakusa and start an “unnatural relationship” (fushizen na kankei) which continues for months. Hamao Shirō’s article “Dōsei kō” from 1930 states it was common knowledge that men could purchase the services of effeminate male prostitutes (kagema) after eight p.m. in one corner of Asakusa Park. The art critic Andō Kōsei also noted in his writing that kagema were a common sight by the pond in Hibiya Park and behind Sensōji in Asakusa.


20 Inoue Shōichi, Ai no kūkan, 45-49.
23 Hamao Shirō, “Dōsei kō”: 140-41. In another anecdote about eroticism in public places, Hamao relates the following humorous story: “A certain young policeman was walking through XXX Park when a certain foreigner called to him, saying ‘Keikan, keikan!’ When he looked, he saw that the foreigner had a five-yen bill in his hand and was making an odd gesture. At that point, the officer realized that what the foreigner
Ranpo’s memoirs and essays show that he spent a great deal of time in Asakusa Park.\textsuperscript{25} In fact, one article from the middle of 1931 indicates that he sometimes spent the night there. A reporter from the \textit{Asahi shinbun} decided that he would play detective and follow Ranpo from his house. After trailing Ranpo to the park, he found him sitting alone on a bench near some other men. When the reporter approached him, Ranpo was taken aback and asked worriedly if the reporter intended to write about finding him there. Ranpo then defended his presence in the park by saying that he liked to talk with the vagrants and the police. He also commented that he often spent whole nights in the park, chatting with different men.\textsuperscript{26} During these nocturnal visits, Ranpo apparently ran across people who had gone to the park to search for erotic encounters. As early as 1926, Ranpo described in an article “Asakusa shumi” (“A Taste for Asakusa”) the kinds of people one might see at night in the park. One of them is a “strange type of person” (\textit{igyō no mono}): “Although they are men, they are painted with white make-up. They say, ‘Choi, Anata! Hey, you there!’ to people passing by and beckon to them as they twist their bodies seductively. These fellows are what are known as outdoor \textit{kagema} (\textit{yagai kagema})” (16: 23).

Two passages from novels written about the same time describe men flirting in the park. In both cases, the texts insist that the protagonists are not personally interested in such matters; however, both people watch the actions of the men with great attention as if curious to see what will happen. The novel \textit{Issun-bōshi} (The Dwarf), published from 1926 to 1927 in the \textit{Asahi shinbun}, begins by describing the promenades of the protagonist Kobayashi Sanzō as he strolls through Asakusa Park. The following passage, which is little more than an aside, describes the kinds of people Sanzō sees.

Most of the people he saw were tramps looking for places to sleep, detectives, and uniformed police officers who made their rounds every thirty minutes rattling their sabers. There were also curiosity-seekers (\textit{ryōkisha}) like Sanzō. However, there was also a queer kind of person (\textit{isshu iyō no jinshu}) that did not belong to any of these groups. As soon as you realized that they had been sitting on a bench near you for a few moments, they would stand up, start walking along the same path as you, and was calling out was not the word \textit{keikan} meaning “police” [but the homophone meaning ‘sodomy’].” The name of the park has been blocked out by fuseji, but because there are three characters missing, it seems clear that the name of the park is Hibiya, which is written with the three characters (日比谷).

\textsuperscript{24} Quoted in Furukawa Makoto, “The Changing Nature of Sexuality,” 106.


wander back and forth aimlessly. When they met another person strolling on the dark path between the trees, they would look meaningfully into the other person’s eyes or ask for a light, even if they already had their own matches. Their faces were shaved extremely neatly, and their faces were perfectly smooth. A lot of them wore navy-colored kimonos with sashes in the kakuobi style (3: 100-01).

Sanzō wants to find out exactly what these people are doing, even though “it was not impossible for him to imagine from the way that they walked.” Still, he hesitates out of fear that they would find it strange to be approached by a middle-aged man like him (3:101). One evening, he notices a short, dwarfish man – the man in the title of the novel – staring at two people nearby. Curious to know what he is looking at, Sanzō looks in the same direction and sees two men seated together in the shadows.

Two men were seated on a bench and were talking in low voices. One was a gentleman dressed in western clothes and the other was a man who looked like he spent most of his life having fun.

As he stroked his mustache, the man in the suit stated in a muffled voice, “Unusually warm, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, real warm these last few days,” answered the playboy quietly.

The two seemed to be meeting for the first time, but there was something strange about the combination of the two of them. Both looked about forty. One of them was stiff and formal like a petty official, and the other was a pure Asakusa man through and through. The hour had grown so late that they were in danger of missing the last train, but even so, there they were talking insouciantly about the weather. Very strange. The couple must have had some designs on one another. Kobayashi felt his curiosity grow.

“So, how’s business?” asked the man in suit as he stared up and down at the plump body of the other man. His tone indicated that he was not particularly interested in the answer.

“Well…,” answered the plump man. He leaned forward and planted both elbows on his knees and hung his head as he spoke. Their boring conversation continued for a little while; nonetheless, Sanzō took his cue from the dwarf and did not avert his gaze for a long while.

In due time, the man in the suit stretched with an “Aah” and stood up. No sooner had Sanzō noticed this than the man cast a nervous glance in Sanzō’s direction. Strangely enough, he then sat down again on the same bench just a hair’s breadth away from the plump playboy. Feeling this, the plump man cast a look in the direction of the suited man and immediately returned to his original posture. The balding forty-year old gave a coquettish look as if embarrassed.

The man in the suit suddenly extended his arm as far as it would go – it looked like he had the arms of a monkey – and he took the hand of the plump fellow beside him. The two whispered to each other in muffled tones for a moment and then stood up from the bench, having reached some sort of agreement. With their arms all but entwined, they walked down the hill together (3: 102-03).

Clearly, the two men are “cruising” – looking for potential sexual partners. Ranpo’s attention to detail shows that Sanzō, who is watching the scene, is fascinated by their behavior. In great detail, the narrative voice describes the intimacy of the couple’s movements and gestures, which seem incongruous with the banality of their conversation. At the same time, the text is marked with conjunctions such as “strangely enough” (fushigi na koto ni wa) which show that Sanzō finds the whole scene rather odd. As a result, the passage sounds like it is narrated by someone who is curiously examining the customs of a group of people with whom he does not particularly
identify, much like an ethnographer standing in the middle of a foreign culture. Following the passage is a statement that emphasizes that, despite his curiosity, Sanzō cannot comprehend such expressions of homoerotic desire: “Sanzō felt a chill run along his spine. It is a strange metaphor, but this chill was a lot like the one he experienced when he saw the wax dummies in a hygiene fair. It was a feeling not of unhappiness or fear or anything that he could really describe” (3: 103).

The mention of wax statues in a hygiene fair (eisei hakurankai) brings to mind mannequins of dissected, deformed, or disease-ridden bodies, things that are disturbing when one imagines oneself in a comparable state. Similarly, Sanzō’s frisson is an unconscious reaction to the thought of himself engaging in sexual intimacy with another man. If the reader had started to draw any inferences about Sanzō’s own sexual interests based on his interest in the scene, this unambiguous sign of distaste puts them to rest.

A passage in the novel Ryōki no hate from 1930 again describes an encounter that appears, at least at first, to have homoerotic overtones. The protagonist Aoki Ainosuke is standing near Hyōtan-ike in Asakusa Park when he happens to see a group of apparently homeless adolescent boys wandering the street. Among them is a “fine-looking adolescent who stood out from the others” (4: 217). He attracts Ainosuke’s attention with his upscale “Ginza look,” and the two lock gazes. This flirting prompts Ainosuke to remember the “Asakusa street boys” (Asakusa sutorīto bōi), who sell themselves to men for money.

The youth stared unflinchingly at Ainosuke. He was wearing spring clothes dominated by navy blue and, in the same color, a tweed cap that resembled one that someone might wear with a school uniform. Floating up from the darkness beneath the visor, which was pulled down far over his face, was a pale face with soft contours. He was a beautiful youth. Ainosuke was by no means a pederast (pederasuto), so he wasn’t especially happy about being stared at, but he didn’t feel especially displeased either (4: 217).

Although the boy’s advances do not flatter him, they do not bother him terribly as long as the boy does not try to carry them any further. For a few moments, Ainosuke becomes caught up in the sights and sounds of the bustling park, but the boy speaks to him and brings him back to reality.

All of the sudden, Ainosuke heard someone say “Hey there!” The voice seemed to call out to him elegantly, almost as if whispering in his ear. He turned around and saw the beautiful youth from before standing there. He had slipped up alongside Ainosuke.

Ainosuke was a loss for words. That was because he had learned one time what would happen when an Asakusa Urning tried to seduce you (4: 218).

The boy begins whispering to him about money, and he tells Ainosuke that there is a place nearby that can “make miracles.” Ainosuke stares back. He is at a loss about what to say. The text states, “The lamps illuminating the movie theaters reflected off the pond and lit the boy’s face
with their diffuse light. He was beautiful, but it was a strange kind of beauty. Like a mask in the
nō theater, his face was perfectly symmetrical, giving it a feeling of artificiality” (4: 218). As
Ainosuke stares, the boy realizes that Ainosuke has misunderstood his intensions, and he states,
“Oh no, I am not one of them. I’m not a woman.” (With this denial, the boy lumps together male
hustlers with women, implying that men who sleep with other men are not completely male.)
The boy mumbles something about being a broker in miracles, and when the confused Ainosuke
tries to clarify what he means, the boy suddenly departs. Much later in the novel, we learn that
the boy was not an “Asakusa Urning” after all, but a member of a gang of criminals who used
surgery to create doubles of influential civil servants in order to take over the government.

What is important for our discussion is the attitude of the protagonist when he mistakenly
believes the bishōnen is coming on to him. Although Ainosuke does not seek an intimate
encounter with the boy, he is curious about people like him. In fact, the text states, that a
“curiosity-seeker like Ainosuke could not help but be aware of the existence of such boys”
hustling in the park. Far from being an irritant, their presence recalls the bustling, cosmopolitan
atmosphere of the park before the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923.

After the loss of the twelve-storied tower and the Egawa girls, Ainosuke was not especially excited by
Asakusa, which seemed to just stretch on and on without interest. If pressed, one could still see traces
of Asakusa’s former strange appeal in the decadent Yanagi-bushi, Mokubakan, the strange things on
the second floor of the aquarium, the groups of homeless in the park, and the street boys. It was the
atmosphere that these things evoked that made him set out for Asakusa at least once every two months
or so (4: 217).

The Egawa girls, who performed in a theater along Hyōtan-ike, were one of the most popular
shows in Rokku, startling audiences with their ability to balance on giant wooden balls while
juggling and performing acrobatics. Yanagi-bushi was a form of music popular in Asakusa
during the Taishō period, and it was performed in inexpensive music halls throughout the quarter.
The Mokubakan was home to a popular merry-go-round that Ranpo visited frequently and
described lovingly in his famous short story “Mokuba wa mawaru” (“The Merry-Go-Round Goes
Round”) published in 1926 (3: 191-99). Next to it was the aquarium, which hosted the Kajino
Fōri (Casino Follies) on its second floor. Open for business in 1929, this intimate hall became
well known for its titillating musical revues and performances, which were seen as epitomizing a
new ethos of eroticism and decadent modernism. (In an essay from 1930, Kawabata Yasunari, a
frequent visitor to Kajino Fōri, described it as a manifestation of “modern-style eroticism,
nonsense, and tempo – in a word, it is a copy of the reviews one sees in Western movies.” He
comments that it differs from the pre-earthquake Asakusa Opera in its use of jazz.

194
accompaniment. Ainosuke is, in other words, not interested in the hustlers of Asakusa Park for sexual reasons, but he enjoys seeing them because like the other places he mentions, they recall the ethos of sexuality, innocent fun, and cosmopolitanism of Asakusa before the 1923 earthquake.

In short, the protagonists of both Issun-bōshi and Ryōki no hate are not looking for a sexual encounter with another man, but both gaze upon manifestations of male-male erotic desire with interest, either curious to find out how it operates or eager to recall the erotic cosmopolitanism of the past. Watching these manifestations of erotic desire proves interesting, even when the protagonists are reluctant to engage directly in the activities they are watching. In both cases, the text displays a certain “push-and-pull” dynamic. They evoke the scopophilic interest of the scene for readers but, at the same time, they carefully preserve the boundaries between witnessing subject and viewed object. Such “push-and-pull” dynamics can be found in many texts from the heyday of ero, guro, nansensu that deal with subjects that psychology and sexology had described as “perverse.” Texts displaying this push-and-pull dynamic usually stir up reader interest by describing a certain phenomenon as frightening, strange, or outside the bounds of ordinary propriety. At the same time, these texts describe the phenomenon with a careful attention to detail, giving the reader the impression he or she is catching a glimpse of a world ordinarily shut off from view. Ranpo’s works are typical of this type of popular ero, guro, nansensu literature in that they appeal to the voyeuristic impulse to witness perverse forms of eroticism while at the same time allowing the reader to maintain the comfort of moral and ethical superiority.

Transformation and Eros

Ranpo’s characters do not always just peek into the world of the “strange,” however. In certain cases, they also enter it directly through adopting unusual and surprising identities that allow them to experience the world in radically new ways. In one of Ranpo’s most often quoted essays, “Henshin ganbō” (“The Desire for Transformation”) published in February 1953 in Tantei kurabu (Detective Club), Ranpo states that he believes fantasies of metamorphosis to be universal. He writes, “Human beings are not satisfied with themselves as they are.” Consequently, they fantasize about becoming other people, creatures, or things (19: 151). In fact, he suggests the desire to dream about becoming someone else explains the continuing popularity of storybooks

and novels about attractive young men and women, heroes, and the like – people read about the things and people they would like to become. He writes that, in the real world, make-up and costumes provide means for a person to transform themselves.

The desire to transform oneself… One can see how universal this desire is if one just thinks about make-up. Applying make-up offers a subtle way of transforming oneself. When I was a boy, I would sometimes put on plays with my friends. I was amazed at the strange pleasure I would feel when I would borrow women’s clothing and put on cosmetics in front of a mirror (17: 154).

Many critics have noticed that the use of disguises and costume for the purpose of self-transformation appears frequently in Ranpo’s fiction, and in a number of cases, this self-transformation involves crossing the boundaries imposed by gender-related expectations. In addition to the passages from “Yaneura no sanposha” and Inju quoted above, cross-dressing appears in a number of novels, such as Kyūketsuki (The Vampire), published from 1930 to 1931 in Hōchi shinbun (Report News), in which a bishōnen dresses as a woman in order to fool some kidnappers. Still, these scenes tend to be relatively brief and, with the exception of the one in “Yaneura no sanposha,” they have few if any homoerotic overtones.

One example of transformation that does involve hints of homoeroticism is the famous short story “Ningen isu” (“The Human Chair”). The editor of the magazine Kuraku, in which it was published in 1925, had read “Yaneura no sanposha” in Shin seinen and asked Ranpo to write for his magazine. As Ranpo was coming up with the plot for the story, he was sitting across from a chair when he thought how much the chair resembled the crouching figure of a human being. This image provided the inspiration for the story, which consists largely of the text of a letter sent to a successful female writer. The letter describes the experiences of a workman who attempts to escape the tedium of his all-too-ordinary life by hollowing out a space inside a large armchair and climbing inside. Soon after the workman places the chair in the lobby of a hotel and climbs inside, he has his first experience as a “human chair.”

Before long, I heard a man breathing heavily through his nose. Just as I was wondering what might happen next, a large body, which seemed to be that of a Westerner, plopped itself on my knees and

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29 In one scene, the bishōnen Mitani Fusao comes up with an “unusual plan” (kigi na ichian) to deliver a ransom to kidnappers who insist that a certain woman deliver the money. Stating that he once played a woman on stage when he was a student, he offers to put on her clothes and go in her stead. That night, the clean-shaven Fusao dresses up in a woman’s kimono, make-up, and wig. The text states that as he did so, “it seemed he had more than a small interest in dressing up as a woman – so much so that he suggested the idea. He did such a good job at it that one would never think he was anything but a real woman” (7: 29).
As the man sits upon him, and he finds himself experiencing an “exceedingly mysterious sensation.” Even though the foreigner is unaware of what is happening, the workman touches the most intimate parts of his body. With his groin directly beneath the man’s derrière, the workman suddenly realizes that his hideout gives him intimate physical access to the person seated in the chair, and he is consumed with anxiety. He states, “In my excess of fear, I hunched up tightly in the darkness inside the chair. As the cold sweat ran from my armpits, I lost all ability to think, and I just sat there, my mind a total blank” (2: 15). One reason for his trepidation is his fear that he will be discovered, but this fear is heightened by the anxiety of coming into such intimate contact with the body of another man – contact that apparently provokes a degree of “mysterious” arousal in him. This kind of anxiety, however, only appears when the man sits on him. When women sit on his lap, the workman feels relatively at ease, and he becomes sexually aroused without experiencing any unease. In a surprise, turnabout ending typical of many of Ranpo’s early stories, the workman’s letter turns out merely to be a clever joke. The entire strange story, including the account of the homoerotic encounter with the oblivious foreigner in the hotel, is neutralized by the ending, which throws into high relief the fictionality of the unusual story.

Another story that features transformation as a prelude to erotic experience is the short fantasy “Kasei no unga” (“The Canals of Mars”), published in Shin seinen in 1926. Soon after Ranpo’s debut, he published a large number of stories in Shin seinen, but as he earned a literary reputation, other magazines started soliciting manuscripts from him. His memoirs state that Morishita Uson, the editor of Shin seinen who had promoted his work at the beginning of his career, appeared somewhat disappointed because he was writing so much for other magazines. To ease his feeling of obligation to Uson, Ranpo turned to an old notebook from his adolescence in which he had written a “dream-like thing that was rather like a prose-poem” (20: 108). The draft, which dates from about 1917, became the basis for “Kasei no unga.” Ranpo appears to have remained particularly fond of this story over the years, perhaps because of its hallucinogenic qualities. In his memoirs, he recalls that because Uson was a stickler for good literary style and

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30 For a slightly different translation of this passage, see Rampo Edogawa, Japanese Tales of Mystery and Imagination, 12.

well-crafted plots, Uson seemed to have been disappointed by the works Ranpo tossed off in late 1925 and early 1926 (20: 107). The dream-like story “Kasei no unga,” which differed from his more plot-driven stories, apparently represented Ranpo’s attempt to prove that he had not exhausted his creative abilities.

The story begins with a narrator walking through a strange world the color of gray ink. As his eyes adjust to his surroundings, he realizes that he is in a dark, wet forest that blocks the sky with a thick mat of spidery branches. Frightened and alone, he walks through the still forest which drops leeches upon him from overhead. (This opening strongly resembles a scene in Izumi Kyōka’s famous novel, Kōya hijiri [The Holy Man of Mount Kōya], published in Shin shōsetsu [The New Novel] in 1900. Kyōka’s novel also describes a man who becomes consumed with panic while walking through a dark, uncharted forest where leeches drop from the trees in horrifying numbers.32) As he wanders about, the narrator happens upon a pond in the woods. As he gazes at the pond, he feels as if the sky, forest, and water are ready to burst with expectation. It is as if they were waiting for someone to appear, and their expectation filled the air with “exceedingly covetous lust” (donran kiwamaru yokujō, 2: 261). At precisely at this moment, the narrator looks down at his body, which he finds is completely nude, and he sees that he has transformed into a beautiful woman. “When I saw that my body was not that of a man but the voluptuous flesh of a virginal maiden, I completely forgot that I was a man. I smiled as if everything was exactly as it should be. Ah, my flesh! In my happiness, I felt my heart swell and rise into my chest” (20: 261).

Pleased with his full-figured femininity, the narrator imagines himself as a conqueror who had seduced thousands of men. He suddenly realizes the lusty landscape has been waiting for him to appear: “The beauty of this landscape was not complete in and of itself. It was just a backdrop to something else. And now, I had appeared before the backdrop of the landscape as the most magnificent actor imaginable!” The narrator swims to the center of the lake and climbs on a rock, where he throws himself into an energetic and seductive dance. After flailing about in what seems like the “death throes of an inchworm, a caterpillar, or an earthworm,” he realizes that something is still lacking – the color red (2: 262). The narrator begins tearing at his “full breasts, well-rounded stomach, fleshy shoulders, vigorous thighs, and beautiful face” with his sharp fingernails, and his blood begins running in thick streams over his white flesh. As he looks

at his reflection in the pond, he thinks how much the streams of blood look like the red “canals of Mars” crisscrossing the surface of the planet.\textsuperscript{33} Once again, the narrator begins his dance upon the rock, flailing about in a bold erotic display. As his dance reaches the height of its frenzy, the fantasy suddenly ends. The narrator is lying in bed, and a woman beside him is trying to rouse him, thinking that he is having a nightmare. In the last line, as the narrator’s eyes focus on her, she fills his field of vision like a “gigantic celestial body,” perhaps the planet to which he compared himself in the dream (2: 263).

Eroticism and the grotesque play equally important parts in this story, but what makes the story typical of literature produced in conjunction with the fad for \textit{ero, guro, nansensu} is the interplay between horror and arousal. Although the narrator repeatedly states that his surroundings fill him with fear, he finds something vaguely familiar in them. This ambivalence is visible even in the first line of text, which states, “It was as if it were cold outside – a shudder of fascination passed through me as if to say, ‘I’m back in that place again’” (2: 259). The shudder is one of appeal (\textit{miryoku}), instead of sheer, numbing horror. Later, as the narrator wanders through the woods, his fear is tinged with a vague sense of nostalgia (\textit{natsukashisa}), almost as if he has returned to a place that he once knew (2: 260). The place is not one of dread, but of what Freud describes in a famous essay as the “uncanny” (\textit{unheimlich}), “that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar.”\textsuperscript{34} Freud notes that expressions of the uncanny in fiction involve the expression of an idea that is relegated to the unconscious because it is either infantile in nature or it involves some deep-seated desire that one cannot act upon in ordinary existence. Because the uncanny involves condemnation and suppression by the conscious mind, visions or thoughts that evoke it are viewed with fear. At the same time, however, this fear is tinged with vague fascination because the psyche at some level desires the very object the conscious mind is telling it to fear.

What the narrator appears to desire at an unconscious level is the transformation that comes in the second half of the story, namely rebirth in a form, which, according to the binary

\textsuperscript{33} The Italian astronomer Giovanni Schiaparelli had used the word \textit{canali} in 1877 to refer to what he thought were naturally formed channels on Mars, but it was Percival Lowell, the amateur American astronomer (and author of several influential books on Japanese society), who theorized at the turn of the century that the reddish \textit{canali} on the surface of Mars were utilitarian waterways made by intelligent Martians. This theory created a firestorm of popular interest, and the term “the canals of Mars” became a well-known as a symbol of the mysterious and otherworldly.

logic of heterosexuality, would allows him to accept and even act upon his sexual desire for men. The story describes a journey of rebirth. It begins with a vague world of little differentiation. This world gives way to a womb-like forest that holds him tight within its web of branches and fleshy leeches. Like a newborn, the narrator has little idea how he got there, but continues traveling in order to get out. Only when he stumbles upon the break in the womb-like forest does he discover that he has been reborn as a woman. The fact that he remembers his previous existence as a man reveals that this fantasy is not one of simple rebirth from masculinity into femininity, but one of a single psyche discovering its body in a new way. The narrator’s fascinated discovery that he has adopted a body that resembles that of his own lover, presumably the one who wakes him at the end of the story, hints that he covets her sexual role. In becoming a woman, however, he does not become passive in any way. In fact, he imagines himself conquering men and displaying his power over them.

My black hair was as abundant and full as a wig treated with oil; my limbs were as intrepid and full of vigor as an Arabian horse, and my pale skin was as beautiful and lustrous as the belly of a snake. How many men had I conquered with this flesh? What was it like when they prostrated themselves before me as their queen? (2: 261)

The narrator never completely abandons his own position as desiring subject. Even during his frenetic Salome-like dance upon the rock, he acts as both desiring subject and desired object simultaneously as he stimulates the “lustful,” silent world around him. He slips from sadist to masochist with blissful abandon, and the sight of blood on his ravished body only excites him to another round of erotic dancing. This fantasy thus allows him to play out a hidden desire to experience sadomasochism and sexual penetrability, which the narrator does not permit himself to experience in the waking world.

In an early review of the story in Shin seinen, Togawa Sadao praised Ranpo’s ability to stir up a sense of fear in the reader through evoking a “world of a certain, fantastic kind of uncanny beauty,” but he criticized the trite ending in which the narrator awakens from his dream. He deems the coda unnecessary and comments that all it does is draw attention to the story’s fictionality. This, however, is precisely its intended function. For readers disturbed by the gender-bending and sadomasochistic desires in the story, they restore a sense of order. Cutting rapidly from the hallucinogenic world of dreams to the bed where the narrator lies beside his female lover, the text moves from a mental space of polymorphous sexual desire to a “real” one that is limited and defined by cross-sex relationships. As the dream dissolves, the narrator returns

to the subjectivity of the waking world, and the female body is returned to the position of the Other. The sadomasochistic, gender-bending, and perhaps even homoerotic desires in the dream have been re-relegated to the fringes of consciousness. Like “Ningen isu” which reassures readers that the letter within the story is nothing but a fantasy, “Kasei no unga” expels sadomasochistic fantasy to the edge of the narrator’s waking world.

The Appeal of “The Strange” in Kotō no oni (The Demon of the Lonely Isle)

Like “Kasei no unga,” Ranpo’s long novel Kotō no oni displays a distinctive combination of horror and attraction vis-à-vis “the strange.” The story was serialized in fourteen installments of the journal Asahi between January 1929 and February 1930. About this time, the number of popular magazines in Japan was growing with unprecedented rapidity. In 1918, 3,123 magazines were registered with the state, but by 1932, the number had risen to 11,118. In the mid-1920s, the magazine Kingu (King) published by Kodansha had made media history by selling more magazines per month than any other magazine in Japanese history. When first printed in 1925, the magazine sold 740,000 copies, and within a year, it was selling a million copies per month.36 Hakubunkan, the publisher of Shin seinen, was eager to stake out its share of the rapidly expanding market for popular magazines, and it responded by creating the magazine Asahi (Morning Sun). Hasegawa Tenkei (1876-1940), the chief editor of the new magazine, asked Morishita Uson (1890-1965), the editor of Shin seinen at the time of Ranpo’s debut, to approach Ranpo to encourage him to write a novel for serialization beginning in their inaugural issue. Although Ranpo had become one of Hakubunkan’s brightest stars with the resounding critical success of the novella Inju, Ranpo refused at first, claiming that he did not have the ability to create long, involved plots. Eventually, however, his feeling of indebtedness to Uson prevailed, and he agreed. The result was Kotō no oni, Ranpo’s second book-length novel.

The idea for the novel came to Ranpo while he was on vacation in the Kii Peninsula in the southern portion of the Kansai region. His close friend, the writer and anthropologist Iwata Jun’ichi (1900-1945), who was from the area, came to visit him, and together, they spent a few days together visiting the fishing villages and islands at the southern tip of peninsula. The time they spent together provided inspiration for the novel in at least two ways. First, Iwata had

brought a volume of Mori Ōgai’s writings, one of which included a passing reference to a Chinese story about people who purposefully crippled others. This inspired Ranpo to continue reading about the handicapped when he returned to Tokyo. At some point, he came up with the idea for a story about an evil hunchback who takes out his hatred on the world by purposefully creating a race of mutilated people. More importantly for the purposes of this study, the time Ranpo spent with Iwata inspired him to write about male-male desire in the novel. As the next chapter will discuss in more detail, Iwata Jun’ichi was, like Ranpo, extremely interested in same-sex amorous and erotic desire, and in 1949, he wrote a short article that names Iwata as one of his his “great teachers” on the subject. The two often spent a good deal of time talking about the subject, and this influenced Ranpo to try writing about it in a novel. In talking about Kotō no oni in his memoirs, Ranpo states,

There is almost nobody in modern times who is interested in same-sex love other than when it appears in the context of writing about classical Greece, Rome, or the Genroku period. For that reason, I thought the idea of writing something about same-sex love in modern times for a popular entertainment magazine might be misguided. However, in those days, I often talked with Iwata about the historical facts of same-sex love, both east and west. Perhaps I was influenced by our discussions. But because it was a detective novel that I was to write, I was not able to write about this queer form of love as I liked. It was just a hindrance to the story (20: 201).

Nonetheless, Ranpo did include in Kotō no oni a character, Moroto Michio, who is interested exclusively in the same sex. It is unclear what exactly Ranpo meant when he stated that he was not able to write about this “queer form of love” (iyō na ren’ai) as he wished. He may have been disappointed that the generic expectations of mystery fiction, namely the need to explore the motivation and particulars of a crime, meant that his character’s feelings could not take center stage for the duration of the entire novel. It is true that Moroto’s feelings are described here and there in the novel, but the relationship between him and the man he loves is only one in a complicated tangle of subplots involving murder, adventure, and even the search for hidden treasure. Ranpo may also have felt unable to create a relatively sympathetic portrayal of male-male erotic desire because he felt a need to cater to the popular obsession with the erotic and grotesque. Although the novel sometimes treats the character Moroto quite sympathetically, other parts of the novel describe male-male desire as strange and even deviant, especially in the beginning of individual installments, where the references to Moroto’s “strange” sexual desires were particularly likely to catch the eyes of curious readers. In those parts of the novel, Moroto’s preference for the same sex is presented as one element of the plot designed to startle and fascinate curious readers eager to encounter the “grotesque.”
Readers’ responses to these depictions over the decades have been mixed. In 1978, the literary historian Nakajima Kawatarō wrote, “I want to show my respect for his unusual courage and passion for rejecting a compromise with society and trying to bring to life this singular form of love in his work.” More recent critics in the West, however, have been far harsher.

Mark Driscoll’s study of the work argues that although Moroto’s character has redeeming characteristics, “his coding follows the standard homophobia of Japanese and European sexology which tended to read (and occasionally still reads) homosexuality as in its essence inclined towards the sadistic, hysterical, and ‘perverse.’” In addition, Mark Silver’s reading of the novel claims the story’s treatment of Moroto is one element in a regime of normality and conformity so heavy-handed that it raises “the specter of fascism.”

Certainly, the narrator of the novel does sometimes describe male-male desire in ways that are far from flattering, but the remainder of this chapter argues that to dwell exclusively on these is to ignore the complicated and often oppositional modes of representation in the text. As one strategy to catch the attention of readers, Ranpo at times has Minoura, the narrator of the story, describe Moroto’s sexual proclivities as “strange,” but elsewhere, Ranpo shifts the locus of narration and gives Moroto the opportunity to describe his feelings directly in long quotations, thus breaking down the stereotypes established elsewhere in the text. The result is a complex “push-and-pull” dynamic that consistently undermines expectations set up by the text itself.

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39 Mark Driscoll, Erotic Empire, Grotesque Empire, 82-83.

40 Mark Silver, “Irrepressible Deviants and Island Dystopias.”
In a finely nuanced article about the novel, Jim Reichert has noted that the text “destabilizes such essential binaries as normal versus abnormal, fit versus unfit, hero versus villain, and respectable citizen versus deviant.” Reichert notes that by incorporating into his detective novel a number of “seemingly incompatible generic formulas, topics, and images,” Ranpo creates a web of mixed signals that complicates readings of the novel as expressing either a clear endorsement or categorical disapproval of male-male erotic desire. Reichert notes that the terminology used to describe Moroto and his sexual preference are constantly shifting throughout the text, but he stops short of identifying patterns that govern the ways that the terminology and the narrator’s responses to Moroto change. The remaining half of this chapter argues that there is a pattern governing the descriptions of Moroto and his sexual desires, and there are three factors at work within this pattern. First and most obviously, the question of what is happening in the plot at any given moment has a large bearing on the narrator Minoura’s view of Moroto and therefore significantly shapes the language he uses to describe him. Second, the references to Moroto’s sexual preferences as strange or aberrant almost always appear at the beginning of new installments of the novel, where they are likely to catch the attention of readers eager to read about the erotic and grotesque. (As mentioned above, the novel was published in fourteen installments serialized from January 1929 to February 1930. Each installment consists of several chapters; therefore, when the novel is reproduced in book form, unless there are special annotations, it is difficult to identify where the individual installments began.) Third, the text reproduces the split formulation of desire visible in other works. Like Ranpo’s other novels and essays, Kotō no oni treats homosocial desire as largely unproblematic and even desirable, yet homoerotic desire is described with a tone that swings between revulsion and fascination.

Because the novel shifts tone frequently in its discussion of male-male desire, it is worth examining the relevant passages in the order they appear in the text to see how they set up expectations then later undermine them. The novel consists of a first-person narrative written by a protagonist named Minoura. At the onset of his tale, he captures his audience by stating he

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41 Reichert, “Deviance and Social Darwinism”: 120.

42 One contemporary edition of the text that shows the way the novel was serialized is Edogawa Ranpo, Kotō no oni, Edogawa Ranpo Series 1 (Tokyo: Sōgen suiri bunko, 1987). This edition includes the illustrated headings at the beginning of each installment of the story and the illustrations that accompanied the story.

43 Because the names of some of the characters are relatively unusual, I have gone to the magazine Asahi where the novel originally appeared to check the furigana glosses. Throughout this chapter, I have used the readings that appear there. (Most other English-language studies of Kotō no oni provide misreadings of these names, no doubt due to the fact that they are relatively unusual.) Incidentally, Minoura’s given name
has experienced things so frightening that they caused his hair to turn completely white in the course of a single night. He also mentions another mystery: a gruesome scar on his wife’s side that is so big it looks as if some third leg had been amputated. The long and bizarre tale in which he explains these enigmas begins, “I think that I must also withstand my embarrassment and also reveal a homosexual-like incident (dōsei-tekai na jiken) in which a certain person came between us” (4: 10). As the story unfolds, the reader learns of a love triangle between Minoura, his friend Moroto, and Minoura’s lover, the beautiful and gentile Kizaki Hatsuyo. (Kizaki is not the wife whom Minoura mentions in the first lines. The identity of the mysteriously scarred wife is revealed only on the last page of the novel.) Minoura’s first mention of the subject of male-male desire treats it as embarrassing or shameful, but to interpret this passage as mere homophobia would be to miss the point of its inclusion. As the summary below will indicate, Ranpo often includes references to Moroto’s sexual preference for men and his “strange” behavior in order to entice his audience. Almost always, these seemingly negative references appear toward the beginning of installments where readers are especially likely to encounter them. Minoura’s reluctance to talk about male-male desire is, in other words, a coy ploy designed to attract attention and draw curious readers into the story. Ironically, Minoura’s reticence to talk about the subject whets the appetite of readers intrigued by the current fashion for “grotesque” displays of eroticism. As we will see, parts of the novel cater to this audience by incorporating scenes charged with male-male erotic tension, but in other parts, Ranpo treats Moroto’s character remarkably sympathetically, giving him the opportunity to describe his own feelings, longing, and loneliness. The reluctance to discuss same-sex desire was clearly not shared by Minoura’s creator, Ranpo, who manipulates these references to male-male erotic attraction for his own strategic purposes.

Minoura explains that he and Hatsuyo were colleagues in a trading company and were engaged to be married. Soon after their engagement, however, Hatsuyo began receiving offers of marriage from Moroto, a researcher in medical science who lived in the same lodgings as Minoura. These offers are particularly surprising considering that Moroto “seems to have felt a rather serious homosexual love (dōsei no ren’ai)” for Minoura (4: 13). Minoura explains that for several years, Moroto “bore a certain kind of incomprehensible love (aru fukashigi na renjō)” for
him. He did not respond in kind, but Moroto’s good looks and natural intelligence lent Moroto a certain charm, and the two became good friends.

Of course, I could not possibly understand that sort of love, but I did not find anything especially unpleasant in his profound academic learning, his speech and behavior that suggested that he might be a genius of sorts, or his features with their strange appeal. For that reason, as long as his behavior did not cross certain boundaries, I was not averse to receiving his goodwill as the simple love of a friend (tian naru yūjō toshite no kōi, 4: 18).

These feelings developed when Minoura was a seventeen-year old student in his fourth year of technical school, and Moroto a twenty-three year old budding professional.44 Rumors begin to circulate that the two friends are “queer” (hen), and Minoura noticed that Moroto would sometimes flush when they would exchange glances. Minoura understood this as masked erotic attraction: “Such things went on at school as little more than play, so when I imagined Moroto’s feelings, I would sometimes blush even when I was all alone. Still, it was not an especially unpleasant feeling” (4: 18).

Minoura tacitly acknowledges Moroto’s erotic affections, and although he does not return them, he is not particularly disturbed by them either. If anything, he seems to secretly enjoy them.

As far as I knew, Moroto was a bishōnen with a most noble air, both in terms of body and spirit, and even though I certainly did not feel a strange attachment (myō na aichaku) for him, I gained a little more confidence in my appearance when I considered that he found me a suitable match for his choosy tastes (4: 13).

At some point, Moroto asks Minoura to go to a public bath, and there, Moroto offers to scrub his back. Minoura comments, “At first, I interpreted this as simple kindness, but when I became

44 Iwata Junko, who is Iwata Jun’ichi’s granddaughter, has written a recent semi-fictional work about the relationship between Iwata and Ranpo. In writing the novel, Iwata Junko apparently referred to her grandfather’s diaries, which document his friendship with Ranpo. In the novel, the character based on Iwata character interprets Kotō no oni as a “long, long love letter” to him. The novel notes that there is a six-year age difference between Moroto and Minoura, just like between Ranpo, who was born in 1894, and Iwata, who was born in 1900. Iwata Junko, Ni seinen zu: Ranpo to Iwata Jun’ichi (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 2001) 178. (Incidentally, the title of the book, meaning A Portrait of Two Young Men, represents a slight modification of the title of Murayama Kaita’s painting Ni shōnen zu, which the author uses as a symbol of the asexual love between her two main characters.)

While the age difference fits, it is unclear whether or not Ranpo actually identified with Moroto. If Iwata was the basis for any of the characters in the novel, it seems more likely that Moroto was modeled after him, since it was he who came from the southern part of the Kii Peninsula – that place that is identified as Moroto’s home in the novel. Also, Iwata Junko’s novel describes Iwata as being madly in love with Ranpo, much as Moroto loved Minoura. Iwata’s son is currently considering publishing Iwata’s diaries, but at the moment, the diaries remain unavailable to researchers. Iwata Sadao, letter to the author, 16 June 2003. If Iwata’s diaries are ever made public, they may shed light on the question of the relationship between Iwata and the characters in Kotō no oni.
aware of his feelings, I still let him do it. My self-respect would not be wounded if that’s all the further it went” (4: 18). The clear implication is that an asexual friendship is permissible or even desirable, but a sexual relationship would have been illicit and wrong. For this reason, Minoura is careful to police the divide between homosocial and homoerotic desire, and guards against sending any message that might be seen as permitting the development of a physical relationship. For instance, he notes that he and Moroto would frequently walk together, holding hands or putting their arms around one another’s shoulders. Sometimes he would sense a “strong passion” emanating from Moroto’s fingers. This would cause Minoura’s heart to pound, and he would let Moroto hold his hand “as he wished,” but he never grabs Moroto’s hand in return (4: 19).

Although Moroto begins to treat Minoura more and more like a suitor by giving him presents, taking him to the theater, tutoring him in foreign languages, and so on, Minoura responds only with an asexual friendship. He writes, “For a while, there was a time when a simple look at my face would make him melancholy. He would grow quiet and let out nothing but sighs” (4: 19).

The issue of Moroto’s unreciprocated feelings comes to the forefront half a year into their friendship. One night after drinking, they return to the building where they live, and Moroto enters Minoura’s room. As Minoura reclines on his bed, Moroto stands over him and abruptly says, “You are beautiful.” For a moment, Minoura imagines himself as a woman being courted by the handsome bishōnen standing over him.

What he was saying seemed very strange. At that moment, the strange thought flitted through my mind that I had been transformed into a woman, and that the youth standing beside me with his beautiful face, which had become all the more flushed and appealing because of his intoxication, was my husband (4: 13).

Moroto touches Minoura’s hand and comments that it feels hot. At this point, there is a single line break in the text, as if there is a skip in the narrator’s consciousness of the events. With this break, the fantasy of cross-sex seduction is broken, and the narrator recoils from Moroto’s intimate touch. Moroto realizes that he has gone too far, and he apologizes.

Moroto puts his hands over his face. A moment later, he states, “Please don’t look upon me with contempt. You probably think I’m disgraceful. You are a different race than I. You are a different race from me in every sense, but I cannot explain what that means. Sometimes I become so afraid that I start trembling” (4: 20). One sense in which Moroto belongs to a different “race” has to do with the nature of his sexual feelings. This passage hints that he think of himself

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45 The line break is present in the first publication of the text in Edogawa Ranpo, *Kotō no oni, Asahi* 1.1 (Jan 1929): 120.
as profoundly unlike men who love women, and he begs Moroto not think of him as “disgraceful” or “contemptible” (asamashii). Moroto’s words echo the work of psychologists and sexologists who attempted to categorize so-called “perverse sexuality” into various taxonomic types, thus arguing that people who experience those forms of desire had a distinct psychological and perhaps even physiological constitution. Later in the novel when readers learn about Moroto’s past, however, one realizes that a second meaning may be hiding behind this tearful outburst. One learns that Moroto is the son of a cruel hunchback who has separated himself from the majority of humanity by living on a small island, where he lives with a small crew of people deformed in some way or another. Even later, we learn that Moroto’s father has used a combination of torture and medical science to refashion ordinary people in unusual and sometimes surprising shapes, like the title character of the fin-de-siècle horror novel The Island of Doctor Moreau (1896) by H.G. Wells (1866-1946). In a sense, the young Moroto, who has been sent to Tokyo by his father to research the newest developments in surgical science, is an unwilling heir to this merciless pursuit of a new “race” of freakish human beings. (Incidentally, in one of several jokes embedded in the text, the name Moroto 諸戸 sounds like the near homonym morōto or “The Island of Moreau.” The reference to Wells’ novel is made all the more explicit by the fact that the young Moroto is a medical doctor. Meanwhile, Moroto’s given name, Michio 道雄, is comprised of two characters meaning “path [of the] masculine” – a reference to his preferences for the same sex.)

The exchange in Minoura’s room does not make Minoura feel hatred. He writes that as Moroto begged him to remain friends, “I kept silent out of strong emotion. However, as I watched Moroto begging with tears running down his face, I was helpless to prevent hot tears from welling up in my own eyes” (4: 20). Although some part of Minoura appears to sympathize with Moroto, he is not willing to engage in a sexual relationship with Moroto and so he moves out of the building. Nonetheless, Moroto continues to bear feelings for Minoura, which only grow stronger as time passes.

Not only did he not abandon his strange love. After that, it seemed to outdo itself, growing all the more intense and profound with the passing days and months. When we would run into each other, Moroto would usually spill out his heartrending thoughts for me in a kind of spoken love letter, which was without precedent. This kept up until I entered my twenty-fifth year. Aren’t such feelings almost impossible to comprehend? Even if I had retained the vestiges of youth in my smooth cheeks or I had not developed the musculature of ordinary adults and instead kept the sleekness of a woman, his feelings would still be equally hard to fathom (4: 20).
The on-going nature of Moroto’s passion seems to perplex Minoura as much, if not more than the very fact that it is directed toward him, a man. Given Moroto’s passion, it comes as a great surprise that he should begin courting Minoura’s sweetheart Hatsuyo. Minoura suspects Moroto is attempting to get back at him and steal his paramour, thus depriving him of the bliss of love that Minoura had denied him earlier.

The beginning of the second installment of the novel begins with a statement of the oddity of the situation: “It was a terribly strange circumstance. One man’s love for another was so great that he tried to steal the other’s lover. An ordinary person could not even imagine such a situation” (4: 21). This exclamatory statement recapitulates the plot, but at the same time, it also emphasizes the seemingly extraordinary nature of Moroto’s actions in hopes of capturing the attention of new readers. As further enticement, the text incorporates a letter Moroto had written Minoura in order to explain his “strange feelings” (iyō na kokoromochi): “I am unable to feel any attraction for women. If anything, I feel hatred for them and feel like they are unclean. Can you possibly understand these feelings? What I feel is not just a simple feeling of embarrassment. It is something frightening. Sometimes I get so frightened that I cannot stand it” (4: 21). Ranpo is clearly appealing to a common association in the popular imagination between male-male desire and a profound dislike for women that would make Moroto look abnormal, suspicious, and perhaps even like a potential criminal.

When Hatsuyo is discovered murdered in her apartment a short time later, Minoura suspects that Moroto is the murderer, even though he has no theory explaining how Moroto may have gained access to her room. One bit of circumstantial evidence contributing to his suspicions is Moroto’s visit to the antique shop next to Hatsuyo’s apartment soon after the murder; however, the primary reason for his suspicion is Moroto’s “perverse” and “misogynistic” personality. When he suspects Moroto is the perpetrator, Minoura thinks,

Perhaps these flights of fancy were all too ridiculous, but one cannot judge so-called “people of perverse nature” (henshitsusha) like Moroto by the regular standards. Wasn’t he incapable of love for the opposite sex? Didn’t I suspect him of planning to steal my lover away from me because of his love for members of the same sex? And weren’t his requests for Hatsuyo’s hand in marriage just a little too ardent? Wasn’t his pursuit of my love just a bit too crazed? (4: 41)

When he thinks about Moroto’s work in experimental medical research, which involves the cold-blooded killing and dissection of animals, he becomes increasingly convinced that Moroto must be responsible for Hatsuyo’s death. Ranpo is clearly playing upon a popular connection between

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46 Edogawa Ranpo, Kotō no oni, Asahi 1.2 (Feb 1929): 286.
psychological “perversion” and the willingness to breech ethics, even by committing uncommon cruelty or murder. As we will see later on, however, Ranpo subverts this expectation by turning Moroto into one of the heroes of the novel.

Ranpo allows suspicion of Moroto to build. Minoura hires a private investigator to look into the murder. Before long, the investigator is stabbed to death like Hatsuyo. Minoura runs into Moroto twice, first on the day of the investigator’s murder, and second at a performance by a small circus troupe. These encounters only further convince him of Moroto’s guilt. A few pages into the beginning of the fourth installment of the story, one finds a recapitulation of the story, which argues that the clinching factor in his suspicion was his knowledge of Moroto’s personality and his impassioned desire for Minoura. “It was not just because of external factors [that I found him suspicious]. I had sufficient reason to suspect Moroto on psychological grounds. This is extremely difficult for me to talk about, but he seems to have entertained an amorous attachment for me that was so strong ordinary people could not possible imagine” (4: 50). He speculates that Moroto had proposed to Hatsuyo, even though his heart was not in it, as a jealous attempt to keep him from achieving happiness. He also thinks, Moroto “failed in his quest for her hand, and so properly speaking, Hatsuyo represented his rival for my love. I imagined that in a burst of emotion, he might have killed his rival. No one knew for sure. This would not have been impossible” (4:50).

Armed with only circumstantial evidence, Minoura goes to Moroto’s house to confront him. The conversation that ensues entirely dispels the suspicion clouding Moroto’s name. In fact, Moroto explains that his affection for the narrator was so great that he started independently investigating Hatsuyo’s murder on Minoura’s behalf. Also, Moroto describes the loneliness and jealousy that drove him to begin courting Hatsuyo.

“I was so jealous of you and that woman that I could hardly stand it. Before you met her, even if you were not able to understand my feelings, at least your heart did not belong to another. But your attitude completely changed when that woman Hatsuyo appeared before you. Do you remember that night – oh, it must have been the month before last – when we went to the Imperial Theater together? I could not stand the look in your eyes, which seemed to be chasing endlessly after some vision. What’s more, didn’t you tell me all about her? You were so cruel and cool about the whole thing; you were so happy. How do you think I was feeling at that moment? This is all so embarrassing. As I always say to you, it is unreasonable for me to think I have any right to press you with these feelings. Still, I felt as if I had lost all hope in the world when I saw you like that. I was utterly dejected. I was sad about your love. Even more than that, I hated these unusual feelings of mine so much I could hardly stand it.” (4: 54)

In this scene, Moroto does not come across as a devious man with diabolical, criminal appetites. He does not appear as the psychological “degenerate” (henshitsusha) that earlier passages made him out to be. If anything, he is lucid and articulate, and he has thought extensively about his situation and rues the pain that his love for Minoura has brought. When Minoura begins tearfully mourning the loss of the woman he loved so much, Moroto responds, “I understand your feelings all too well. Still, your situation is a far happier than mine. Why? Because Hatsuyo’s heart never wavered even though I tried so hard to earn her hand in marriage. She never wavered even though her mother, to whom she was bound in duty, recommended so fervently that she accept my offers” (4: 54-55). The comparison between the situations of Moroto, who suffers under the weight of unreciprocated desire, and Minoura, whose love was returned for at least a while, makes Moroto appear all the more unfortunate. This testimonial deflates Minoura’s anger, and compels him and the reading audience to see him in a more understanding light. Although his passion is for a man, his dejection and jealousy are presented in a relatively gender-neutral way so that even readers who have little experience with male-male attraction might understand his motivations. The passages surrounding this quote do not describe him as “strange” or “perverse”, thus opening a space for the reader to feel compassion or sympathy for him. By allowing Moroto to speak for himself and articulate his sorrows, his image undergoes a profound shift. Instead of presenting him as a degenerate with perverse sexual desires, the text presents him as a sensitive, suffering, and vulnerable individual.

Moroto reveals what he knows about the crime. He hypothesizes that the architect behind the murder hired a child acrobat from the circus to hide in a large vase in the antique shop next to Hatsuyo’s apartment. That night, the child lowered himself through a door in the kitchen floor of the antique shop into the storage compartment below the apartment building. From there, he crawled through a trap door in Hatsuyo’s kitchen into her apartment.48 When this fanciful line of deduction turns out to be correct, Moroto and Minoura become allies in the search for the murderer. Moroto’s impressive skills as a detective further elevate his stock in Minoura’s eyes, thereby increasing his attractiveness to Minoura.

48 Western detective novels of the time often feature a crime committed in what appears to be sealed room, and a number of Ranpo’s novels use variations on this theme. Ranpo was keenly interested in various features of Japanese architecture that would make different sorts of crimes possible. For instance, in “Yaneura no sanposha,” the protagonist Gōda Saburō spies into neighboring rooms by climbing through the long, undivided attic that topped many apartment buildings in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods. Likewise, in the discussions in Kotō no oni about how Hatsuyo’s murder was committed, Moroto states that the murder was possible due to a unique “issue of Japanese architecture” (4: 60). The storage compartment under the floor of the kitchen, which the child acrobat uses to gain access to Hatsuyo’s apartment, was a typical feature of many Japanese apartments. In many Japanese apartments today, the storage compartment in the kitchen is only an insulated box set into the floor with a cover that hides it from view.
and Minoura realizes how little he knows of his friend. The beginning of the fifth installment of the novel reflects this re-evaluation: “Through my long interactions with him, I knew that he was a sexual invert (seiyoku tōsakusha), a researcher of the creepy field of anatomy and dissection, and a rather eccentric character, but I never imagined he had such outstanding abilities at detection” (4: 58). Minoura’s suspicions about Moroto, which were based only on flimsy suppositions regarding the nature of Moroto’s sexual preferences and job, give way to a positive evaluation of his mental acuity. In the process, Moroto is transformed from suspect into a master detective and becomes another of Ranpo’s eccentric detective heroes.

Moroto and Minoura’s shared mission gives the men a new sense of camaraderie and opens the possibilities to a form of homosocial bonding that had been shut off before. When the narrative summarizes the nature of their relationship in the sixth installment of the novel, Moroto’s desire for Minoura, though still described as “mysterious” (fushigi), is treated merely as an accent that makes their detective work a little more exciting.

Although the situation was quite serious, I developed a rather good humor about the whole affair. When I would look at Moroto, he also showed a light-hearted, childlike state of excitement. There is no question that in some corner of our young hearts, we took great pleasure in secrets and enjoyed adventure. Between him and I was something you could not exactly subsume under the simple word “friendship.” Moroto felt a mysterious form of love for me. Of course, I was not really able to comprehend his feelings, but I could understand them intellectually. More than anything else, such sentimentality about our interaction like you might find if one of us were a member of the opposite sex. Perhaps that’s what made our detective work together all the more pleasant (4: 75).

Elements of Moroto’s homoerotic attraction for Minoura infiltrate the homosocial bonding that now links them in their common cause. As long as these feelings do not spill into overt eroticism, Minoura welcomes the zest they add to the mission.

Here, Ranpo is clearly playing with one of the key conventions of Western mystery fiction. Much classic detective fiction from the early twentieth-century Britain or the United States features an eccentric bachelor detective whose sexual interests are conspicuously ambiguous. In the Sherlock Holmes stories of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle or the Philo Vance novels of S.S. Van Dyne (1887-1939), the detective heroes seem impervious to the charms of the opposite sex; however, their closest comrades are skirt-watching men who accompany them on their adventures. More than anything else, such sidekicks highlight the protagonist’s lack of interest in the opposite sex, thereby creating a structure in which the all-too-obvious absence of desire lends itself to a reading of the protagonist as somehow different than other men. Ranpo

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makes his first nod to this convention earlier in the novel when Minoura hires the private investigator, Miyamagi Kōkichi, to investigate Hatsuyo’s death. The text describes Miyamagi as a brilliant and eccentric playboy who quickly falls for women but grows tired of them with equal rapidity; however, the text also hints that women might not be the sole objects of his sexual interest. Minoura states that Miyamagi seemed to have a “certain interest in my looks,” and he gazes at Minoura with unusual intensity (4: 32). When Miyamagi sends away his other visitors, he draws attention to Minoura’s looks by stating, “A beautiful guest has come” (4: 33). Finally, when Moroto and Miyamagi happen to meet outside the murder scene, they silently gauge each other as if sending non-verbal messages about one another’s sexual orientations. Minoura observes, “although they had only stated their names, it seemed like they knew a great deal more about each other than just that. Their exchange of greetings seemed pregnant with meaning” (4: 37). Later Miyamagi says of Moroto, “He seems like a clever, beautiful man, doesn’t he?” (4: 38) Minoura blushes, realizing that Miyamagi is attempting to gauge whether a homoerotic relationship exists between Moroto and him. After Miyamagi’s murder, Ranpo moves Moroto from the position of suspect to detective, upsetting expectations established earlier in the novel. In doing so, he replaces the detective with classically ambiguous sexual interests with a new, different kind of hero who clearly prefers men. By openly addressing the issue of Moroto’s sexual desires, Ranpo shatters the traditional vagueness that surrounds the homosocial relationship between detective and sidekick. Kotō no oni represents an unusually early example of a detective novel where the homosocial camaraderie visible in other works of mystery fiction is clearly infiltrated with and even inspired by homoerotic desire.

In their investigations, the two learn that a mysterious hunchback had ordered the child acrobat to kill Hatsuyo. With this, the plot begins to move in a different and increasingly fantastic direction. While trying to ascertain the identity of the hunchback, Minoura and Moroto rely on a number of clues. The first was a document that Hatsuyo had possessed since she was adopted as an infant. Pasted inside the cover, they discover a series of encrypted clues that they suspect will lead to a treasure. (The use of a code leading to treasure is, of course, a major trope of much mystery and adventure fiction, including the classics “The Gold Bug” by Ranpo’s namesake Edgar Allan Poe and “Ni-sen dōka,” Ranpo’s own debut story.) The second clue has to do with the appearance of the island where Hatsuyo lived as a girl – the island where the treasure and the murderer are both to be found. The third clue is a long memoir uncovered by Miyamagi before his own death. Written in the uneducated, scrawling hand of a near illiterate, this moving testament was written by one of Moroto’s father’s victims, a girl named Hide-chan who had lived
her entire life locked in a room on his island. In reading it, Moroto and Minoura encounter perplexing references to multiple arms, two heads, fights between the two parts of the author, and the strangeness of seeing people with only one head. Only gradually does it dawn on Moroto and Minoura (as well as the reader) that Hide-chan is one half of a strange, co-joined pair of two people that looks like Siamese twins of separate sexes. (Siamese twins, of course, are always of the same sex. We later learn that Moroto’s father had used surgery to sew together a boy and girl during their infancy.)

The island described in both Hatsuyo’s remembrances and Hide-chan’s testimony perfectly matches the island off the coast of Wakayama Prefecture where Moroto spent his youth. (Not coincidentally, it is the same area where Ranpo and his friend Iwata Jun’ichi traveled on the journey that gave Ranpo inspiration for the novel.) As it turns out, Moroto’s own father, the

50 In another of Ranpo’s textual jokes, the name of the other half of this strange set of twins is “Kit-chan” (吉ちゃん). If the two characters that comprise their individual names are put together (秀吉), one gets the personal name of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598), the regent who ruled Japan in the late sixteenth century. Ranpo appears to be playing off of the popular knowledge that Hideyoshi was an infamously unattractive man.

51 The description of Hide-chan and Kit-chan as two members of the opposite sex joined in one body is reminiscent of a famous passage in Plato’s Symposium, one of the works which Ranpo read when he became fascinated with ancient Greece. At a dinner-table discussion, Aristophanes, the Athenian poet and writer of comedies, entertains the group by putting forth the view that in the beginning of the world, there was a race of beings that consisted of two faces, four arms, four legs, and two sets of genitalia. This race of beings became so arrogant that they tried to overthrow the gods. As punishment, Zeus and Apollo split the creatures in two, separating the two faces, sets of limbs, and so on, into two separate beings. When this work was complete, the two were left with a desperate yearning for the other, and this, Aristophanes explains, was the origin of the love. Plato, “Symposium,” Trans. Michael Joyce, The Collected Dialogues of Plato, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) 526-74.

Another work describing a related phenomenon is the comic kibōshi novel Sogitsugi gin-giseru (The Cojoined Silver Pipe) by Santō Kyōden (1761-1816). This work recounts a dream about a pair of twins who share one body but have two heads, one of each gender. With amusing detail, the story describes the ways in which they work out – or fight out – their differences, including those having to do with amorous pursuits. In Kyōden’s story, the couple is finally separated when a doctor cuts off the male head, attaches it to a corpse, and reanimates it as a new and independent individual. Although Kyōden’s novel is of a humorous bent, there are some similarities to the letter in Kotō no oni, such as the descriptions of the knock-down, drag-out fights that sometimes arise between the two co-joined heads. Santō Kyōden, Sogitsugi gin-giseru, Santō Kyōden zenshū, vol. 1, ed. Santō Kyōden zenshū henshū iinkai (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1992) 384-400.

52 Iwata’s hometown was in nearby Toba on the southeastern coast of the Kii Peninsula. When Moroto and Minoura go to the island in the novel, they pass through Toba and head to the nearby port of “K” where they catch a boat (4: 109). The description of “K” sounds much like Kushimoto, which is on the southernmost tip of Wakayama Prefecture. Although there is a large island called Ōshima southeast of the town, the rocky island where Moroto spent his youth appears to be the product of Ranpo’s imagination.

This is not the only novel by Ranpo to feature a strange, otherworldly island off the coast of the Kii Peninsula. Panorama-tō kidan (The Strange Tale of Panorama Isle) describes a wonderland of unusual and startling spectacles created by an eccentric millionaire on a tiny island. In the novel, the island is
hunchback Moroto Jōgorō, is the mastermind behind Hatsuyo’s murder. When Moroto realizes that his father is the culprit, he describes his own strange past on the island for Minoura. He had grown up in a strange home with hunchback parents, surrounded by servants with unusually shaped bodies. Although his tyrannical father would have preferred to keep him in this environment, he let Moroto go to school on the condition that he would study experimental medicine and eventually return to the island, bringing his knowledge with him. Moroto’s tale shows that the cruel personalities of his parents have shaped his fate in virtually every way imaginable.

His sexual preferences are no exception. As Moroto tells the tale of his strange and unfortunate past in the eighth installment of the novel, he reveals the reason for his aversion to the opposite sex.

“That is because the woman who calls herself my mother – that horrifically ugly hunchback woman – loved me not as a mother loves a child, but as a woman loves a man. It is almost too embarrassing to talk about. What happened is so awful that whenever I think about it, I feel a queasy churning in the pit of my stomach as if I am going to vomit. After I turned ten, I was reproached and tortured endlessly for the sake of my mother. Her face, which was as big as a ghost’s, would come hovering over me and would start licking at me everywhere without regard to where she was touching. Even now, just remembering the feeling of those lips makes my hair stand on end. When I would rouse myself from that unpleasant, creepy-crawly feeling, I would find that my mother had lain down in my bed. She would say, ‘You’re such a good boy…’ and request unspeakable things of me. She showed me every sort of ugly thing imaginable. My suffering, which was almost impossible to bear, lasted three years. To be honest, she was one of the reasons that I wanted to leave home. I had seen all of the sordidness of that thing called woman. At the same time, I began to feel it was not just my mother that was unclean but all women, and I began to feel hatred for them. I suspect that my inverted sexual feelings of love (tōsaku-teki na aijō), which you know about so well, came from that” (4: 103).

This passage explains the root of the dislike for women that had made Minoura suspect Moroto of Hatsuyo’s murder. The result of this confession is that Moroto looks less like a strange, psychologically disturbed man than a hapless victim of incestuous rape who, because of his experiences, has turned from women forever. Once again, the text deconstructs the view of

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described as being just off the coast of “M Prefecture,” not far from “the bay of I.” This is most likely a reference to the bay of Ise in southern Mie. After graduating from Waseda University, Ranpo worked in southern Mie Prefecture and therefore knew the area well.

Mark Driscoll provides an extended reading of Kotō no oni as a fantasy of imperialism and colonial violence apparently based on the mistaken assumption that the island is located in the South Pacific. See Driscoll, Erotic Empire, Grotesque Empire, 88. Although Minoura describes the area as “feeling like another world” than Tokyo, the setting is clearly an isolated island on the fringe of the Japanese state but not outside of it. The island is still within sight of the Kii Peninsula, and the travelers pay the boatman less than a day’s wages to take them there (4: 109). The dialect of the people on the island is somewhat different from the Japanese spoken in Tokyo, but there is never any suggestion that they speak another language altogether. Properly speaking, the island is not a periphery of the empire; it is merely an island toward the edge of the country where ordinary Japanese law and social life holds loose sway.
Moroto as a perverse misogynist and presents Moroto in a light that would have been more understandable to contemporary audiences. By giving him the ability to speak for himself, the text allows him to present his “strange” sexual preference for men in terms intelligible to readers with little knowledge about same-sex eroticism. Of course, the explanation he provides promotes the popular misassumption that male-male desire is rooted in a dislike for women – a largely erroneous view that nonetheless gained wide circulation in the popular imagination and in the literature of sexology.\(^{53}\) Later in the story, we learn that the hunchback parents who adopted Moroto were not really his biological parents. The woman who abused Moroto as a boy was not really his mother, but nonetheless, the effect is the same. The story of sexual abuse explains Moroto’s aversion to female sexuality to the reader, and it provides a shocking subplot that would have likely startled readers with its combination of eroticism and the grotesque.

The fact that the illustrator Takenaka Eitarō (1909-1988) provided not one but two illustrations of this important scene shows that editors played up the erotic and grotesque appeal of Moroto’s seduction to capture the attention of readers. (Takenaka was an illustrator for a number of Hakubunkan’s publications, including *Shin seinen* and *Asahi*. In working with *Shin seinen*, he provided illustrations for works of many of the best known detective writers of the interwar period.) The first of the two illustrations comes strategically placed at the beginning of the eighth installment where it would have been among the first things readers would have seen (Figure 38). As the mother’s head turns with her tongue exposed and eyes glowing with vampirish intensity, Moroto cowers beside her. For readers who have not yet read about the seduction, it is unclear what the massive lumps on the back of the mother are, and the question of what is actually happening hangs tantalizingly in the air. The second illustration appears in close proximity to the passage describing the seduction, and it shows Moroto as a boy recoiling from the ghostly figure of his mother hovering over him (Figure 39). Both illustrations contribute to a frightening atmosphere that highlights the grotesque and erotic elements of Ranpo’s text.

The atmosphere grows increasingly bizarre as the two amateur detectives reach the island where Moroto Jōgorō and his wife live. Moroto spends several days with his parents, leaving

\(^{53}\) The explanation in the text may also reflect a familiarity of the Freudian notion of the Oedipus complex. Freud had theorized that the web of attraction and repulsion that infants felt for their parents contributed to the development of gender attributes and, under most circumstances, to a passion for members of the opposite sex. If something were to happen to upset the ordinary development of the male child, however, such as an overly close relationship with the mother that led to a sense of identification with her or, conversely, a trauma that compelled him to stop thinking about her as a sexual object, Freud theorized the child might begin to develop an erotic attraction to members of the same sex. About the time he wrote this novel, Ranpo is known to have purchased two multi-volume sets of Japanese translations of Freud. The first appeared in 1929, the year in which he serialized the majority of *Kotō no oni*.  

216
Minoura free to explore the island, search for the treasure, and find the unfortunate “twin” Hide-chan with whom he promptly falls in love. After spending days trying to convince his father to abandon his cruel ways, Moroto comes to the conclusion that no reconciliation is possible with him. Minoura’s narration tells us,

Moroto abandoned his wavering determination [to win over his father], and he severed the bonds of obligation that tied him to his parents. However, when I would think that his illicit love for me was one important factor behind this result, I felt extremely strange. Moroto’s mysterious passion was utterly incomprehensible to me. If anything, I found it rather frightening (4: 128).⁵⁴

While Minoura gladly partakes of the homosocial relationship that arises as a result of their shared mission to find Hatsuyo’s murderer, free Hide-chan, and foil Jōgorō’s diabolical plans, he expresses horror at the thought of the “illicit love” (furin naru aijō) for men that underlies the alliance. This passage appears early in the eleventh installment of the novel and, once again, appears to have been included largely to remind readers about Moroto’s attraction to Minoura. Before this passage, the novel has said little about the erotic component of Moroto’s feelings since the two came to the island, even though the two had been sleeping in the same room without incident. The first paragraph of the twelfth installment also foregrounds Moroto’s love for Minoura and expresses Minoura’s concern about the nature of their relationship. Minoura states that Moroto had been so disturbed by seeing his parents again that he had started talking in his sleep.

During his nocturnal babblings, he would sometimes say my name. I felt alarmed and apprehensive when I realized how large a place I held in his subconscious. Even if he was a member of the same sex, wasn’t it terribly bad of me to pretend to be oblivious while interacting with him, even as he continued to yearn for me? I gave serious consideration to the matter as I lay in bed unable to sleep (4: 140).⁵⁵

While Minoura worries that compartmentalizing the homoerotic elements of the relationship is cruel to Moroto, he expresses reservations about the current state of their friendship. The fact that Minoura still experiences alarm at Moroto’s erotic attraction shows that he remains disturbed by the thought of Moroto crossing the line they have tacitly drawn in the sand.

When Moroto does cross this line in the penultimate installment of the novel, Minoura reacts with horror. The fateful scene comes after Moroto and Minoura crack the code in Hatsuyo’s document, and it leads them to a well near the Moroto mansion. At the bottom of the

⁵⁴ Edogawa Ranpo, Kotō no oni, Asahi 1.11 (Nov 1929): 118.
well, they discover an entrance to a vast complex of subterranean passageways that criss-cross the length of the entire island. Armed with ropes, matches, and candles, they enter the caves in search of the treasure. In the meantime, Jōgorō or one of his henchman cuts the ropes that the two men have used to mark their way, and before long, the two find themselves hopelessly lost in a twisting labyrinth of pitch-black passages. After nearly drowning when the tide rushes into caves through an underwater crevasse, they walk around in the pitch blackness with increasing despondence and hunger. After days of growing despair, Moroto says to Minoura,

“Just like we have no light in this place, we are in a world without law, morality, customs, or anything. Even though I may only have a little time left to live, I want to forget all those things for at least a few moments. There is now no shame for us, no etiquette, no ostentation, no suspicion, nothing. We are like two infants born into a world of darkness” (4: 157).

Moroto pulls Minoura close to his side, and as they embrace in the darkness, their cheeks touch. An erotic encounter appears to lie just around the corner. This is made particularly clear by Takenaka Eitarō’s illustration of the scene, which shows an exhausted face, presumably that of Minoura, covered by another, presumably that of Moroto (Figure 40). The latter wears a sinister expression as though he is ready to devour his friend. Although the position of the two figures is similar to a love-crazed embrace like one might well see in the cinema, the ominous expression on Moroto’s face serves another function. By showing him in an unfamiliar and rapacious light, the picture disturbs the benign image of Moroto who, in recent installments of the novel, seemed to have comfortably adjusted to the role of Minoura’s friend, ally, and fellow detective. (The fact that Moroto uttered Minoura’s name in his sleep is evidence that he had only relegated his desire to the back of his mind and not erased it completely.) The unsettling illustration suggests that behind the mask of friendship lurks a predator waiting for the opportunity to fulfill the sexual desires that the novel has described so often as “strange” and “mysterious.”

Moroto then tells Minoura more about his family, explaining that his father had loved another woman during this youth, but she had mistreated him cruelly because of his handicap. His anger at the “normal” world festered, and he became determined to take revenge on society by turning Japan into a “land of cripples” (fugūsha no kuni, 4: 159). By twisting medical science to his own purposes, he begins creating people with severe defects, apparently under the Lamarckian belief that these defects would be passed on to their children. Hide-chan, Minoura’s newfound love, is one product of his perversion of medical science. Moroto expresses his envy

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56 In discussing this illustration, Reichert, “Deviance and Social Darwinism”: 124-25 includes a still from the 1928 German film Ungarische Rhapsodie (Hungarian Rhapsody). In it, the lovers are portrayed at similar angles, and the man’s expression shows a comparably love-crazed intensity.
and laments that he has been jealous for so long, first as Minoura fell for Hatsuyo and again now that he has fallen for Hide-chan. Reminding Minoura that they will never make it out of the caves alive, he begs Minoura to be with him saying, “forget the customs of the terrestrial world, forget the shame that they feel up there. Accept my request, and take my love” (4: 161). In response, Minoura thinks,

I had no idea how to respond to the loathsomeness of his request. Probably everyone feels like this, but whenever I think of anyone other than a young woman as an erotic object, I feel an indescribable disgust go through me like a cold chill, and my hair stands on end. It meant nothing for me to come into contact with the flesh of someone as a friend. In fact, it was a pleasant feeling. However, when it came to physical love, the flesh of a member of the same sex would make me feel sick to my stomach. Physical love was another facet of that thing called exclusive love. So was animosity.

Moroto was trustworthy as a friend, and I was able to feel goodwill toward him. However, the more trustworthy he was, the more difficult it became for me to bear the thought of him as the object of sexual desire. Although I was desperate, and death was staring me in the face, I could not help feeling disgust (4: 157).

Although Minoura admits that the touch of a male friend can be quite pleasant, it takes on an entirely different character when motivated by the search for sexual fulfillment – a sure sign that he conceives of homoeroticism and homosociality as two profoundly different forms of desire. This passage, as well as the encounter that follows, is narrated from the point of view of alleged “normalcy.” Minoura assumes that “probably everyone” is equally hesitant to entertain advances from members of the same sex, thus emphasizing what he sees as the fundamental strangeness of Moroto’s desires. By appealing to the logic of normality, the text casts Moroto’s erotic advances in a light that makes them look strange and perverse. Interestingly, this passage echoes the feelings that Ranpo describes in his memoirs when talking about his relationship with Iwata Jun’ichi. There, Ranpo steadfastly denies the presence of any homoerotic relationship between him and Iwata. As an example of how far they stayed away from one another, he mentions that during the trip that inspired this novel, their hands brushed against one another in an erotically suggestive way. This, he mentions, was enough to fill him with a sense of “revulsion” (20: 282).

For a moment, Moroto withdraws into the darkness, weeping with disappointment. A moment later, however, he draws close to Minoura like a “snake approaching its prey” (4: 162).

When I realized what has happening, the snake was already by my side. What on earth? Was he able to see my shape in the darkness or did he possess some sixth sense? I was so shocked that I tried to run away, but at some point, something caught my leg. A hand held me as fast as a trap holding a bird. Losing my momentum, I fell flat on the rocks. The snake came slithering up the length of my body. I wondered whether or not that mysterious beast could be Moroto. It was not so much human as a creepy sort of animal.

I groaned in fear.
This fear was completely different than the fear of death. It was a far more unpleasant fear that I cannot possibly describe.

Like a goblin rising out of the sea, that hair-raisingly eerie thing that lives hidden deep in the heart of humanity had presented me with its bizarre and frightening form. I was in a living hell of darkness, death, and monstrous beasts.

I had lost my power even to groan. I was too frightened even to raise my voice.

Cheeks that burned like fire laid themselves over mine, which were sweaty with fear. Panting breath like that of a dog, a strange body odor… Then sleek and slippery mucous membranes sought out my lips and came crawling over my face like a leech (4: 162).

In the illustration accompanying the embrace, Moroto grips Minoura firmly from behind while the latter flails about and rolls his eyes upwards in horror (Figure 41). Overhead one sees the outline of a bat, which accentuates the creepy atmosphere. The text, however, focuses solely on Moroto, who seems to have transformed from his usual, attractive, dapper self into some inhuman, animalistic monstrosity. His desires have transformed him into a creature whose form is barely intelligible to the allegedly “normal” Minoura. Here, Kotō no oni returns to the codification of male-male desire implicit in earlier descriptions of Moroto’s “strange” love – one that treats homoeroticism as strange, frightening, and barely even imaginable. At this point, Minoura’s narrative breaks away from the caves and states that Moroto is no longer of this world. (We later learn that Moroto died before Minoura began committing his story to paper.) Minoura states he is afraid of writing something that might embarrass the dead, and so he fast-forwards to a point when something moves in the darkness next to the couple. There, the eleventh installment comes to a suspenseful close. In the twelfth and final installment, one finds the unexpected movement had come from a boatman who had been washed into the caves when his boat capsized in the sea. The couple is once again thrust into the world of humanity with all of its concern for shame and heterosexual normality, and Moroto calls off his advances.

The scene in the cave seems to draw its inspiration from a scene in Sokkyō shijin, Mori Ōgai’s famous translation of Hans Christian Andersen’s novel The Improvisatore. There, a painter named Federigo takes Antonio, the young male narrator, into a catacomb-like series of caves to be alone with him. With florid, romantic detail, the boy describes the experience of walking through a series of seemingly never-ending passageways and unwinding a spool of string to keep their bearings. Still, they lose the string and become lost in the darkness like Minoura and Moroto. When Antonio becomes frightened and frantically searches for the lost string, the painter Federigo tries to calm him, first by offering him presents then by threatening to beat him. At this point, Federigo suddenly forces himself on Antonio: “Then he bound his pocket-handkerchief round my arm, and held me fast, but bent himself down to me the next moment, kissed me vehemently, called me his dear little Antonio, and whispered, ‘Do thou also pray to the
A moment later, they begin searching again, but soon they fall into despair.
Federigo attempts to quiet him with a second affectionate advance.

After vainly searching, he threw himself upon the ground, cast his arm around my neck, and sighed, “Thou poor child!” I then wept bitterly, for it seemed to me that I never more should reach my home. He clasped me so closely to him as he lay on the ground that my hand slid under him. I involuntarily grasped the sand, and found the string between my fingers.

*Sokkyō shijin* was extremely popular with Ranpo’s generation, and Ranpo was well acquainted with the story. In fact, when Minoura and Moroto first enter the subterranean caverns through the well, *Kotō no oni* includes a series of extended quotations from Ōgai’s translation to describe the experience of walking though a series of seemingly unending caves. For readers aware of the homoerotic encounter in Ōgai’s best-selling translation, the inclusion of these passages may have foreshadowed the coming homoerotic encounter between Moroto and Minoura; however, Ranpo’s novel recasts the scene in Andersen’s novel by making the scene more explicit and, in typical ero, guro, nansensu fashion, playing up the “strange” and “animalistic” aspects of Moroto’s desire to shock and fascinate readers. While the use of the caves as a setting for homoerotic desires was almost certainly inspired by Ōgai’s famous translation, they also serve a more symbolic function. The caves represent a space that is antithetical to the terrestrial world and irrational in every way, from their unpredictable shape to the dangers lurking around every corner. As Moroto notes, the civilizing forces of law, morality, and custom do not hold sway there, and so desire ordinarily suppressed overground might manifest itself there. When Moroto foists himself upon Minoura, Moroto states he has come in contact with “that hair-raisingly eerie thing that lives hidden deep in the heart of humanity (*ningen no kororo no okusoko ni kakurete iru, zotto suru hodo bukimi na mono*)” – a dramatic metaphor for those urges often driven underground by the civilizing forces of morality and order.

On one hand, the scene strongly reinforces the impression that male-male erotic desire is perverse, animalistic, and to be resisted even in places far from watching eyes. On the other hand, however, the tremendous detail in the first part of the scene and the carefully worded writing suggest that Ranpo took vicarious pleasure in presenting this scene in all of its scopophilic detail to his audience. The author draws out the scene by having Moroto move slowly up the narrator’s body like a snake. Only when Moroto’s mouth locks upon Minoura’s does the narrative break.

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away from the scene in the cave and jump forward to a later point in the story. The technique of breaking away at a critical moment leaves the question of how far they actually went tantalizingly unclear. Ranpo had used the technique of breaking away from a narrative at a suggestive point in an erotic encounter in a number of novels from the same period, including *Issun-bōshi* (The Dwarf, 1926-1927), “Imomushi” (“The Caterpillar,”” 1929), and *Kumo-otoko* (Homo araneus, 1929-1930). As in the case of *Kotō no oni*, the effect is the same: Ranpo compels readers to use their imaginations to fill in the details while, at the same time, he protects his novel from possible bans by censors on the grounds of obscenity.

Even though Ranpo may have taken a subversive pleasure in evoking this scene of male homoeroticism, the novel ends with a return to a stereotypical and safe version of normality. The story of Moroto’s erotic attraction to Minoura is, as the summary above has hinted, one of several subplots that involves tropes of normality, deformation, and even perversion – tropes structured by the logic of medical science and eugenics – however, within the last few pages of the novel, all of these subplots are given a quick denouement. After a few more days of wandering, Moroto, Minoura, and the boatman who came across them in the darkness discover a rope that leads them to Jōgorō, who is madly dancing on a large pile of gold. His ecstasy at finding the treasure has plunged him into incapacitating madness that prevents him from carrying out his cruel vision of turning Japan into a “country of cripples.” Back in the light of day, Minoura finds that his hair had turned white, apparently because of the fear he had experienced underground, perhaps during his encounter with Moroto. The servants and mutilated prisoners on the island are saved, and Moroto uses his surgical skills to separate Hide-chan and Kit-chan, thus undoing some of the havoc wrought by Jōgorō’s cruel use of science. (This surgery was the source of the gigantic scar mentioned in the first pages of the novel.) Hide-chan uses the gold from the treasure to build a home and hospital for the handicapped, where they once again put medical science to use for benevolent purposes. Hide-chan marries Minoura, who puts the encounter in the cave behind him, apparently relegating it to the dark, subterranean caverns of memory.

Moroto is unable to bury the past, however. He locates his birth parents and goes to visit them, but within a month, he falls sick and dies. The novel ends on a sentimental, even romantic note with an excerpt from the death notice sent Minoura: “Until the moment he drew his last breath, Moroto Michio did not call out his father’s name nor his mother’s. He just held your letter close to himself, saying nothing but your name over and over again” (4: 173). This coda suggests that it was Minoura’s rejection that caused him to pine away and die. Jim Reichert correctly states that the ending suggests that “although a world where the regime of normalcy
prevails is inevitable, there is always a segment of the population that is sacrificed to this conventional social order.” Reichert has also noted that the heavy-handed tone of the last words opens the possibility of an ironic reading that highlights the impossibility of this tidy ending, which clears away all hindrances to Minoura’s marriage. The ironic possibilities of this statement may be greater than Reichert acknowledges. Through these lines, Moroto adopts the role of the valiant, romantic lover, who would sooner die for love than abandon his feelings. This romantic role is in keeping with descriptions of Moroto early in the novel as a singularly attractive bishōnen who is almost perfect in appearance, intellectual faculties, and academic credentials—complimentary qualities that are strangely at odds with the image of him as an immoral, psychological “degenerate” that Minoura’s narrative sometimes presents. By focusing on Moroto in the final lines of the novel, the text provides one final blow to the damning treatments of Moroto presented elsewhere. In the end, he is not the erotic, grotesque creature seen earlier in the cave. If anything, he is an unfortunate, love-struck man who in many ways conforms to the image of the dashing, romantic lover. Minoura is, by his own repeated admissions, unable to comprehend Moroto’s “strange form of love”; the final lines subtly foreground this bias and, once again, helps undermine the negative images of male-male passion that Minoura’s narrative sets up elsewhere. Like much early twentieth-century European and American fiction about same-sex desire, which dispatches the main character in death, suicide, or victimization, Kotō no oni ends with Moroto’s death; however, in its time period, this ending probably elevated his stock as a character. He does not die as a miserable, self-hating man, but as a star-crossed, romantic, tragic hero unable and unwilling to fit into the restrictive world of cross-sex normality.

The Late Fiction

*Kotō no oni* was Ranpo’s last fictional work to deal explicitly with homoerotic desire; however, his later novels often describe close homosocial relationships between men. In fact, some of these relationships are so close that Ranpo fans have often suspected that they masked a mutual erotic attraction. The most famous example is the camaraderie of the detective hero Akechi Kogorō and his faithful adolescent sidekick Kobayashi, who serves as the head of the Boy’s Detective Club (*Shōnen tanteidan*) in many of Ranpo’s novels for children. Kobayashi made his first appearance in the novel *Kyūketsuki*, which was serialized in the *Hōchi shinbun* in

59 Reichert, “Deviance and Social Darwinism”: 134.

223
1930, the height of Ranpo’s bibliographic research into male-male desire. In the novel, Kobayashi is described as an attractive “thirteen or fourteen year old with cheeks like apples” – an explanation that has lead a number of writers to recall Ranpo’s idealizing essays about the love of boys and even the ruddy-cheeked youth in Murayama Kaita’s painting *Ni shōnen zu* (7: 49). Although Akechi’s wife appears in a number of novels from the 1930s, she disappears without explanation from later novels, and Kobayashi replaces her as Akechi’s trusted companion. In a short essay called “Kobayashi shōnen no koto” (“On the Young Boy Kobayashi”) published in 1949 as an appendix to the novel *Seidō no majin* (*The Magic Man of Bronze*), Ranpo describes the relationship between the novel’s two heroes.

Kobayashi is smart and quick as a squirrel, so he is an important, even indispensible helper for the detective Akechi. For that reason, our detective hero loves Kobayashi as if Kobayashi were his own protégé. The boy respects his mentor from his very core, and is as close to Akechi as if Akechi were his father or older brother. […] Young Kobayashi would gladly walk through fire for his *Sensei*. If the detective Akechi thought Kobayashi was in danger, he would gladly risk his life to go to Kobayashi’s rescue. That’s how deep the love (*aijō*) is that binds them. All they have to do is look into one another’s eyes without saying a word to know immediately what the other is thinking. For that reason, the two can pick up in the twinkling of an eye and work together so shrewdly that it leaves onlookers speechless in astonishment.  

Ah, what an enviable relationship between mentor and protégé! If the two just put their minds together and act, they’re no match for any thief or man of mystery. Japan’s finest detective hero and Japan’s finest adolescent assistant – that’s who they are!

Clearly, Ranpo envisions the relationship between Akechi and his protégé Kobayashi, who has become sixteen by the time of *Seidō no majin*, as manifesting the powerful, homosocial love that sometimes binds mentor and disciple; however, their relationship never develops an overtly homoerotic dimension. Any physical element that may exist in their relationship is not made explicit in the text.

Although the novels written after *Kotō no oni* do not explore same-sex eroticism in any overt way, Ranpo continued to grow increasingly interested in love between men. During the 1930s, he wrote numerous essays about various manifestations of homoerotic desire in the literature of Europe, America, and Japan. (The articles on Kaita examined in the previous chapter are among these articles.) Although the essays fall short of endorsing homoerotic behavior

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wholeheartedly, they do not use the graphic, heavy-handed language of horror and grotesquerie seen in the climactic cave scene of Kotō no oni. Most likely, Ranpo’s decision to turn away from fiction as a means of exploring same-sex love was due to the feeling, expressed in his memoirs, that detective novels did not provide a forum to “write about this queer form of love as I liked” (20: 201). The relatively free form of essays allowed Ranpo to avoid sensationalizing rhetoric and the generic demands of mystery fiction, which treated male-male desire merely as a “hindrance to the story.”
CHAPTER 6:

DISCOVERING THE TEXTUAL HISTORY OF “SAME-SEX LOVE”:
RANPO’S ESSAYS ON LITERARY MANIFESTATIONS
OF MALE-MALE DESIRE

In 1949, Ranpo published an article in the magazine *Asahi gurafu (Asahi Graph)* entitled “Futari no shishō” (“My Two Teachers”) about the two close friends who, during the 1920s and 1930s, encouraged his interest in male-male desire (22: 51-52).¹ The first was Hamao Shirō (1896-1935), an important lawyer, politician, and mystery writer; and the second was Iwata Jun’ichi, the anthropologist, writer, and artist mentioned in the last chapter. As this chapter shows, these two friends approached the study of male-male desire from different angles, but both argued male-male desire had played a large role in history and needed to be better understood by modern society. Inspired by them, Ranpo’s began reading an ever growing number of books and articles about male-male desire. Like Kaita before him, he developed an interest in the literature of pre-Restoration Japan and ancient Greece, both of which offered numerous stories of love and sex between men. Likewise, he read a number of works by modern European, American, and Japanese writers who treated the subject in their writing.

In an essay written in 1936, Ranpo asserts that from the time of ancient Greece to the present day, there were many “great masters of art and letters whose works cannot be fully understood” while unaware of the “psychology of same-sex love” (dōsei ai seishin) that contributed to them. As examples, he points to the American poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892), the British poet and literary historian John Addington Symonds (1840-1893), the British explorer and translator Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890), the British social theorist and activist Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), Walter Pater, André Gide, and Oscar Wilde (17: 66). This list reflects his growing awareness that one could not overlook the role of male-male desire in literature and literary history without getting a distorted view of the works in question. Ranpo’s

essays anticipate the work of later writers who, influenced by the gay and queer rights movements of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, would rectify the silence of earlier literary scholars and cast new light on canonical literature. Still, Ranpo’s essays fall short of endorsing all forms of male-male desire, from asexual, boyish crushes to overtly erotic acts, in an equal fashion. Like Symonds and Whitman, two of the authors whom he treats at length, Ranpo is especially eager to discuss instances of male-male desire that emphasize emotional and asexual passion, but his essays consistently treat eroticism between men somewhat more circumspectly.

**Ranpo’s First “Teacher”: Hamao Shirō**

Hamao Shirō, the first of Ranpo’s two mentors, had studied law at Tokyo teikoku daigaku and graduated with a law degree in 1923. Soon afterward, Hamao was appointed Deputy Prosecutor to a local Tokyo court, and in no time, was promoted to the prosecutorial bureau of the greater Tokyo court system. In 1925, he was given the rank of shishaku, the fourth in a system of five grades of peerage established by the Meiji constitution. In 1928, he opened his own legal practice, and in 1933, he became a member of the House of Peers in the Diet, a lofty position that he occupied until his premature death from a cerebral hemorrhage two years later at the age of thirty-nine. Hamao’s interest in same-sex desire, and male-male desire in particular, was closely related to his interest in crime and jurisprudence. Even before becoming a member of the Diet, he began publishing articles on crime in plays, novels, and the humorous rakugo stories of professional raconteurs. A number of these essays display a strong interest in criminal psychology and examine “perverse” erotic desires that might give rise to crime. For instance, in “Hentaisei no hanzai ni tsuite” (“On Crimes of a Perverse Nature”) published in Shin seinen in 1928, Hamao discusses a number of crimes in Tokyo that involved various forms of erotic desire: a sadomasochistic relationship that ended in murder, a fetishist who stole women’s undergarments (koshimaki) for masturbatory purposes, one man’s attempt to kidnap and have sex with a prepubescent girl, and so on. Hamao does not condemn the desires that lead to these

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2 Hamao was the grandson of Katō Hiroyuki (1836-1916), a highly influential Meiji-period political thinker. Katō also served as instructor to the Meiji emperor, member of the Meirokusha, and the House of Peers. In 1918, however, Hamao was adopted from the home of his biological father, the medical doctor Katō Terumaro, into the home of Hamao Arata (1849-1925), an educational administrator who served as president of Tōkyō teikoku daigaku and later as the head of the Privy Council, a body of advisors to the emperor and government.

actions; instead, he condemns only the criminal actions themselves. Probably because dōseiai was foremost on the list of many sexologists’ lists of “perversions,” Hamao mentions it, but he states only that same-sex eroticism was not problematic in and of itself. He points out that because the Japanese legal system does not condemn erotic practice between members of the same sex, such relations were not in any way criminal. He states that “crimes involving same-sex love” (dōseiai no hanzai jiken) were relatively uncommon in Tokyo because Japan, unlike certain European nations, did not ban same-sex eroticism as “unnatural sexual misconduct” (fushizen inkō).4 As a result, there was little need to act in a criminal fashion to fulfill same-sex erotic desire, and sexuality between members of the same sex rarely came to police attention.

Penile penetration of the anus, called keikan (sodomy) by the legal establishment, had in fact been illegal for a brief period of Japanese history. Under Article 266 of the Kaitei ritsuryō promulgated in 1873, criminalized anal sex between men; however, this law lasted only until 1882 when a new penal code, the Keihō, came into effect.5 Because it was silent on the subject of keikan, the Keihō abandoned the laws of several years before and in essence made anal penetration legal. (An earlier version of the law promulgated in 1880 had criminalized “obscene acts” that did not involve minors or coercion, but the wording of the law left it unclear whether or not male-male and female-female sexual acts fell under this rubric.) The change in the 1882 law was made largely in response to the suggestions of the French jurist Gustave Boissonade, whom the Ministry of Justice had brought to Japan to administer the writing of a new penal code. Although he proclaimed himself to be no friend of “disgraceful sins” such as sodomy, Boissonade

The other articles were by the twentieth-century sexologist Asada Hajime (1887-1952), the doctor and specialist in forensic pathology Takada Giichirō (1886-?), and the founder for the Nihon seishin igakukai (Japanese Society of Psychiatric Medicine) as well as the editor-in-chief of the magazine Hentai shinri (Perverse Psychology) Nakamura Kokyō (1881-1952), all three of whom wrote prolifically about “abnormal” psychology. As interest in sexology grew during the late 1920s and 1930s, Shin seinen carried an increasing number of articles on the subject. Among the other articles that Hamao wrote for Shin seinen was “Hentai satsujin kō” (“Reflections on Perverse Murders”), which speculates about the psychological motivations of three serial killers in Indiana, London, and Melbourne. Hamao Shirō, “Hentai satsujin kō,” Shin seinen 11.6 (May 1930): 190-205.

4 Hamao Shirō, “Hentaisei no hanzai ni tsuite”: 281.

5 Pflugfelder notes the irony that the criminalization of the seemingly “uncivilized” practice of same-sex eroticism owes much to China, the country that Japanese would soon begin to think of a paragon of barbarism. Pflugfelder’s detailed analysis of the changes in Meiji law compares Chinese law with the Japanese one patterned after it, describes the steps behind its promulgation, and examines three court cases in which the criminal justice system prosecuted offenders of the law. See Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 159-69.
pointed out that Napoleonic law had determined that sexual relations were a personal matter that should be left out of the public realm, provided that they did not involve minors or coercion.6

Like many of his contemporaries who wrote about same-sex erotic desire, Hamao distinguished between lasting preferences for the same sex and situational homoeroticism that arose as a result of being denied access to members of the opposite sex. For instance, he mentions that when men are incarcerated, they engage in sexual relations with other men but such behavior “does not appear to be pure Homosexualität.” Although he did not think highly of Japanese sexologists, he was, in this regard, not unlike his contemporaries Sawada Junjirō and Habuto Eiji who, in their Hentai seiyoku ron, distinguish between “innate” erotic desire for the same sex and desire that develops later, usually as a consequence of environmental factors.7 As his choice of the German word Homosexualität shows, Hamao was drawn to the works of European sexologists, such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840-1902) and Albert Moll (1862-1939), who located the roots of same-sex attraction in the psychological make-up of the individual. Like them, he agreed that a continued erotic preference for the same sex was not just simply a choice but something that had deep roots within the constitution of the individual.

The notion that sexual preference sprang from a deep, eradicable difference within people appears in two articles Hamao published in 1930 in the women’s magazine Fujin saron (The Housewife’s Salon). In these two articles, Hamao presents a relatively humanistic treatment of male-male desire that examines and criticizes popular sexological notions about same-sex eroticism. In September, the magazine carried the first of these two articles: “Dōseiai kō” (“Thoughts on Homosexuality”). In it, Hamao borrows the German word Urning (ūrungu) to describe people who continue to feel erotic attraction for the same sex even after others of their age group have started falling for the opposite sex.8 This noun, coined by the German journalist Karl Ulrichs (1825-1895), refers to an intermediate sex, consisting of the biologically male Urning (Urninge in the plural) and the biologically female Urningin. (Carpenter, Symonds, and others in late nineteenth-century Britain often used the word “Uranian” as an English adaptation of Ulrich’s German word, but Hamao prefers the original German.) Throughout the article, Hamao provides the katakana gloss Urning for the Japanese compound dōseiaisha (a combination

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6 Quoted in Plugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 170. See also Furukawa Makoto, “The Changing Nature of Sexuality”: 110.

7 Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō, Hentai seiyoku ron, 106.

8 Hamao Shirō, “Dōseiai kō,” Fujin saron 2.9 (Sep 1930): 137.
of the characters dōseiai, meaning “same-sex love,” and the character meaning “person”) or he uses the words Urning and dōseiaisha interchangeably.⁹ Although Hamao argues that dōseiai, consists of both homosocial love (dōseikan no renjō, lit. “love between members of the same sex”) as well as homoerotic love (dōsei seiyoku, lit. “sexual desire between members of the same sex”), he comments that the two are profoundly different emotions. The type of love, which is experienced by the Urning, he says, is “completely different in character from the same-sex love characterized by friendship (yūjō-tekidōseiai)” that, for instance, schoolboys sometimes experience for one another. The type of love experienced by the “true Urning” is “exactly like the kind of love (koi) that normal boys who reach a certain age experience for the opposite sex; it is the state of mind of people who are still struck by the beauty of the same sex no matter how much time passes.”

Although Hamao accepts the belief advanced by medical and psychological discourse that congenital dōseiaisha / Urninge are predisposed to homoerotic desire by nature, he criticizes writers such as Krafft-Ebing and Albert Moll who are “apparently unable to see the dōseiaisha as anything other than a sick person.”¹⁰ He says that if one defines same-sex love as sick, it will of course be seen in the light of pathology; however, Hamao notes that many other people, such as Edward Carpenter, present a quite different picture of love between members of the same sex. (In fact, the argument that same-sex desire is only as “sick” as it is defined to be comes directly from Carpenter’s study The Intermediate Sex, which states, “men and women of the exclusively Uranian type are by no means necessarily morbid in any way – unless, indeed, their peculiar temperament be pronounced in itself morbid.”¹¹) Hamao argues, “the word dōseiai has recently been misunderstood and has come to be loathed and detested by society,” but this antipathy on the part of society is profoundly misguided.¹² For much of the essay, he describes historical and contemporary instances of dōseiai without referring to the rhetoric of illness. Although he does not challenge the assumption that same-sex desire develops as a result of an innate disposition, he argues in favor of liberating dōseiaisha from the stigma of disease.

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⁹ The compound dōseiaisha seemed to catch on slightly slower than the word dōseiai, but it had already become relatively common by the 1930s.


One way Hamao tries to improve the image of dōseiaisha is to draw a link between same-sex desire and famous people throughout history. Hamao provides a long list of important artistic and political figures recognized in Europe as Urninge: Michelangelo (1475-1564), William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Pyotr Tchaikovsky (1840-1893), Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), Franz Schubert (1797-1828), Francis Bacon (1561-1626), Alexander the Great (356-323 BCE), and Julius Caesar (100- ca. 44 BCE). To this list, he tentatively adds the name Confucius, pointing out that the Lùn yǔ (Analects) describe Confucius’s terrible sense of loss when a close male friend passes away. Hamao comments that although Japanese historiography did not distinguish between platonic love and eroticism between members of the same sex, leaders like Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651), Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), and Ōta Dōkan (1432-1486) are all known to have experienced some form of desire for other men. More than these figures though, he feels Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) probably belongs on the list of Urninge. He points out that the British sexologist Havelock Ellis argued that most great men have lived in the company of Urninge, if they were not Urninge themselves.\(^\text{13}\) He also states that “one cannot overlook the fact that among people who have Urning-like tendencies, one finds an extremely high number of exceptionally smart men.”\(^\text{14}\) He gives a partial explanation for this phenomenon by saying that one finds a parity between members of the same sex that one does not find among male-female couples. He says that as a result, partners in same-sex relationships tend to encourage one another more than couples in cross-sex relationships; for example, male students in love can encourage one another in their academic or athletic activities because they are standing on “the same front,” facing the same problems with similar physical and intellectual capacities.\(^\text{15}\) Such arguments clearly reveal that Hamao was writing in the context of a male-

\(^{13}\) Hamao Shirō, “Dōseiai kō”: 137.

\(^{14}\) Hamao Shirō, “Dōseiai kō”: 139. Incidentally, this kind of argument has often been used to argue for greater tolerance or awareness of same-sex desire. For instance, “Queers Read This!,” the 1990 leaflet that came to seen as the founding document of Queer Nation, contained a long list of important historical figures who, under some conditions, felt desire for a member of the same sex. This line of argument has often been criticized for collapsing the distance between cultures and time periods that saw same-sex desire in profoundly different lights. Queer theorist and classicist David Halperin notes that he finds that this line of argument smacks of “a kind of gay chauvinism, a homosexual essentialism”; however, it still is useful in that it asserts a continuity between “whatever features of ancient, exotic, or culturally distant societies may be at odds with contemporary institutions, practices, and ideologies of homophobia.” Halperin, How to Do the History of Homosexuality, 16.

\(^{15}\) Hamao Shirō, “Dōseiai kō”: 139. The argument that same-sex desire goes hand-in-hand with pedagogical relationships appears in a slightly less problematic form in Carpenter’s The Intermediate Sex, which discusses at great length the importance of same-sex bonds in education. Carpenter, The Intermediate Sex, 222.
dominated, even chauvinistic society that kept the sexes apart and assumed that there were profound differences between the intellectual and physical abilities of men and women.

Hamao states that people who experience same-sex erotic desire often “give up on themselves as sexual perverts (hentai seiyokuja), treat their actions as something to be ashamed of, and carry them out as furtively as possible.” As a result, “in big cities such as Tokyo, these people humbly walk through the darkness” out of the sight of others, even though their erotic practices are not illegal.16 He states that some such people take refuge in Asakusa Park and other metropolitan parks where they meet for surreptitious encounters. As a result, such places are home to a large number of sex-workers and their customers, who include foreigners (the population that “seems to welcome the sex workers the most”) and those experimenters who come to sample eroticism with the same sex out of an “interest in curiosity-hunting” (ryōki shumi). The article ends with a strong statement addressed to “all dōseiaisha”: “You all must first find out about what exactly same-sex love is, but you must not feel pointless shame or hide yourself away. To do so is foolish. You must clearly grasp the social significance of this thing which we call dōseiai.”17 He also sends a clear message to those who write on the subject: “Commentators too should grasp the substance [of dōseiai] and recognize its value.” His list of further reading includes works by Carpenter, Ellis, and Magnus Hirschfeld (1868-1935), all European “homophiles” who argued in different fashions for social acceptance of people who prefer the same sex. At the end of his list, Hamao snidely remarks, “The reason that I did not list any resources in our language is not for pedantic reasons. It is just that there are no sources in our language that are worth looking at.”18 In a single sweep, Hamao dismisses the work of all Japanese sexologists, including the prominent Sawada Junjirō and Habuto Eiji, who had argued so strongly that “same-sex love” was pathological and deleterious to the health.

In response to the essay, Hamao received such a large number of letters from self-avowed dōseiaisha that two months later he published a follow-up article in the same magazine. “Futatabi dōseiai ni tsuite” (“More about Homosexuality”), contains an even stronger call for the liberation of dōseiaisha from the stigma of illness. Hamao states that the letters he received from all quarters of the country were full of confessions of many “courageous” and “determined”

17 Hamao Shirō, “Dōseiai kō”: 141-42.
18 Hamao Shirō, “Dōseiai kō”: 142.
individuals who described their intense suffering. Hamao sums up six major themes of the letters. First, all the authors felt utterly alone and isolated from other people like them. Second, they generally believed themselves to be “deformed” (fugusha) or “invalids cursed by a life-long illness” (isshō norowareta byōnin). Third, the majority were ashamed of themselves. Fourth, many had received medical attention because of their sexual preferences, but this did not change them in any significant way. Fifth, the authors expressed feelings toward the opposite sex ranging from “cold indifference” (reitan) to “misogyny” (jonin ken’en); however, some had gone ahead, married, and had children because these feelings were not understood by society. Sixth, some were unhappy to the point of considering or even attempting suicide.19 Because much of the early discourse that discussed same-sex desire as pathological came from recognized “experts” or figures with medical degrees, it was presented from a position of superior knowledge and presumed to talk about the dōseiaisha while leaving little room for him to speak his own situation.20 Hamao recognized the letters he had received as representing the voices of dōseiaisha who had internalized this sexological discourse and who now spoke from the compromised position of a stigmatized minority. He comments that the letters represented only the voices of a tiny fraction of all the dōseiaisha in Japan, and one should multiply the anguish described in the letters by a factor of thousands to gain a fuller picture of the suffering that the medical establishment had wrought. Convinced that “a true understanding of the Urning is the most pressing problem for modern society,” Hamao states that he has decided to write his second article on behalf of the masses of silent, suffering others.21

He calls upon society to treat Urninge with greater respect. Women need to understand the issue because social pressure often forces Urninge into marriage against their will. Although he cautions that it is best if the “extreme Urning” avoids marriage altogether, he warns that it is possible that the groom may not say anything; therefore, women should be aware of the issue in case their husbands are hiding their true sexual preferences.22 To the male Urninge themselves, Hamao emphatically asserts, “dōseiai is not an illness. It is a part of one’s personality.”23 As a

20 See Pflugfelder, Cartographies of Desire, 296 on the power relations inherent in medical and popular discourse.
21 Hamao Shirō, “Futatabi dōseiai ni tsuite”: 60.
22 Hamao Shirō, “Futatabi dōseiai ni tsuite”: 61.
23 Hamao Shirō, “Futatabi dōseiai ni tsuite”: 62. Emphasis is Hamao’s.
result, there is no way to “cure” an “innate” erotic interest in the same sex. He contradicts those who say that psychological disease or neurasthenia gives rise to feelings of dōsei. In fact, he argues that, if anything, social oppression gives rise to nervous disorders because dōsei is so little understood in modern society. Because it is not an illness, there is no reason to look for medical help, nor any reason to go suppress one’s feelings and marry. He asks, “Isn’t it better that each of you, with your individual personalities, courageously proceeds with your own lives?”

He argues that not everyone in modern society needs to father children; Urninge can instead contribute in other ways to society. The major opposition to their acceptance stems from the conflation of same-sex desire with sickness and shame. Because scientists and doctors were the first to take up the issue in dealing with their “sick” patients, it is natural that people fell under the illusion that all dōsei were suffering from illness, but this mistaken impression can only be countered by information. He states, “I hope that dōsei will feel able to present their position clearly to society in some way or another. Of course, this will probably not be easy and will require courage. I look forward to the day when such courageous figures will emerge from groups of Urninge.” Only through listening to such figures can society gain a “true understanding” of the problems that dōsei face. One could not rely upon medical doctors nor upon journalists drawn by the “recent interest in the erotic and grotesque” to produce a “true understanding” of the phenomenon. Such people only treat same-sex erotic desire as pathological, bizarre, or an object of curiosity.

About the same time he wrote these two articles for Fujin saron, Hamao was also busy writing fiction, some of which appeals to the fad for the erotic and grotesque that he criticizes as

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24 This argument again comes from Edward Carpenter who writes in The Intermediate Sex that nervous ailments “ought perhaps to be looked upon as the results rather than the causes of the inversion.” The pressure of growing up knowing that discovering that one’s “deepest and strongest instincts” are the object of social stigma causes “great strain and tension of nerves.” As a result, “if such disturbances are really found to be commoner among homogenic lovers than among ordinary folk, we have in these social causes probably a sufficient explanation of the fact.” Carpenter, The Intermediate Sex, 211.


26 Here again, Hamao echoes Carpenter, who states, “the medico-scientific enquirer is bound on the whole to meet with those cases that are of a morbid character, rather than with those that are healthy in their manifestation, since indeed it is the former that he lays himself out for. And since the field of his research is usually a great modern city, there is little wonder if disease colours his conclusions.” Carpenter, The Intermediate Sex, 211-12.

27 Hamao Shirō, “Futatabi dōsei ni tsuite”: 63.
producing skewed portrayals of same-sex desire. Within the four years between his debut in 1928 and his death in 1932, he published numerous short mysteries and three full-length detective novels. Thanks to his experience with the legal system, Hamao had a great knowledge of loopholes and possible errors in the workings of the law, and he used them in his fiction. Many of his stories are about situations that seem like crimes but are not, that involve crimes which are not prosecutable, that involve false convictions, and so on. A number of these stories also involve elements of “perverse” sexual desire, presumably to add spice to the plot and attract contemporary readers. For instance, in his debut novella Kare ga koroshita ka (Did He Kill Them?) published in Shin seinen, a young man is erroneously executed for two deaths that take place when a couple’s sadomasochistic games get out of hand. The text states that the married couple who are found dead in the novel did not lead “a normal sexual life.” To satisfy themselves, they required elaborate sexual performances featuring interrogation and persecution: “The husband would doubt his wife, and he would torture her to make her confess. In acting out this game, he would attain satisfaction, and the wife also enjoyed being tortured.”

The June 1931 short story “Madamu no satsujin” (“Murders for Madam”), which appeared in the journal Asahi, tells the tale of a young man who willingly becomes the slave of a sadistic mistress. As he participates in various sexual activities with her – bondage, sadomasochism, and a ménage à

28 In fact, his debut was followed by so many works that within less than half a year of his literary debut, the publisher Gaizōsha dedicated half a volume to his work in their series Nihon tantei shōsetsu zenshū (Complete Works of Japanese Detective Fiction). Hamao Shirō and Hisayama Hideko, Hamao Shirō / Hisayama Hideko shū, Gendai tantei shōsetsu zenshū 16 (Tokyo: Gaizōsha, 1929).

29 In an often quoted essay on the history of the Japanese detective novel, Edogawa Ranpo writes that Hamao, along with Kōga Saburō and Yamamoto Nogitarō (1889-1951), were authors of “legal detective fiction” (hōritsu-teki tantei shōsetsu), fiction that depicts situations that the present system of law cannot sufficiently handle (16: 215).


trois with another male slave – his self-effacing devotion grows to the point that he willingly takes the fall for her when she murders the other slave and kills a servant who may have witnessed the crime. In both stories, sadomasochism appears merely as a motive leading to murder, and there is relatively little exploration of the details of the psychology of the people who experience these desires.

“Akuma no deshi” (“The Devil’s Apprentice”) published in Shin seinen in 1929 is the only work in which Hamao deals extensively with male-male desire. In it, he does little to promote the kind of sympathetic, “true understanding” of dōseiai he would call for in the following year. The entire story is told as a single epistle written by a jailed criminal, Shimaura Eizō, who attempts to shift moral blame for his actions onto a friend with whom he had an affair many years before. The addressee of the letter is Tsuchida Hachirō, who is now a prosecutor in the Tokyo courts. The story opens with Shimaura begging Tsuchida “who was once closer to me than my own brother” to listen to his story. Shimaura has been accused of killing his mistress by forcing her to take an overdose of sleeping pills. He insists, however, that he did not commit the crime, and her death was a tragic accident. He admits that he was plotting to kill his wife, but he did not have a chance to carry it out before this other tragedy occurred.

Before divulging the details, Shimaura reminisces over his past relationship with Tsuchida. During their days as students together in a school dormitory, the two shared a close


Male-male erotic desire does not figure prominently in Hamao’s other works. (Literary historian Nakajima Kawanaka has stated that he had heard that Hamao told Ranpo that same-sex desire was not something that one should write about in detective novels. Yoshimizo Seishi, Mizutani Jun, Shima Kazuo, et al. “Nanshoku made jikken shita jōshikinin”: 27.) Commentator Kenda Manji, however, has wondered if Fujie Shintarō, the great detective hero introduced in Satsujinki (The Murderous Demon), might not prefer men. Gonda Manji, “Kaisetsu: ‘Hōritsu-teki tantei shōsetsu’ no senkūsha,” Hamao Shirō shū, by Hamao Shirō, Nihon tantei shōsetsu zenshū 5 (Tokyo: Sōgen suiri bunko, 1985) 765. The unmarried Fujie seems impervious to the charms of the opposite sex, even to the extent that he habitually comments, “I have never been in love with a woman, nor has one fallen in love with me… No matter what, I never feel like respecting that thing known as womanhood, nor can I believe in it.” Hamao Shirō, Satsujinki, Hamao Shirō shū, ed. Kitamura Kaoru, Nihon tantei shōsetsu zenshū 5 (Tokyo: Sōgen suiri bunko, 1995) 285.

33 Hamao uses the same name, Tsuchida Hachirō, to identify a prosecutor in another story entitled “Shisha no kenri” (“The Rights of the Dead”), also published in 1929. In terms of plot, however, the two stories do not overlap in any obvious way. Interestingly, Tsuchida has the same job as Hamao did in the early 1920s, raising the question of the degree to which Hamao modeled Tsuchida after himself. Hamao Shirō, “Shisha no kenri,” Hamao Shirō shū, ed. Kitamura Kaoru, Nihon tantei shōsetsu zenshū 5 (Tokyo: Sōgen suiri bunko, 1995) 125-74.

34 Hamao Shirō, “Akuma no deshi,” Hamao Shirō shū, 84.
relationship. Shimaura, the younger of the two, writes that he had been overwhelmed by Tsuchida’s commanding personality, and believing he had found someone who truly understood him, he felt love for the older boy. He writes, “I felt you alone were both my brother and my lover,” and “I respected you, even believing everything that you did was right.”35 For two years, this “burning friendship” continued with such intensity that Shimaura declares, “For us, the opposite sex was nothing.” This all changed, however, when Tsuchida transferred his affections to a younger *bishōnen*, abandoning the love and friendship that Shimaura had believed would last forever. Shimaura complains, “Of course, we were lovers of a certain sort. And it was clear that I had been cast aside by my lover.”36

As he sits in jail, he accuses Tsuchida of implanting a “diabolical philosophy” in him. He states that originally he would not have hurt a fly, but Tsuchida infected him, partly through their relationship itself and partly through showing him books about crime and homosexuality.

At that time, there were not as many books about fear and crime available in translation as there are now. Therefore, if we wanted to know about those things, we had no recourse but to refer to the original works. You would bring books from someplace – books by authors such as Poe, Doyle, Freeman, and also Krafft-Ebing, all of whom I had never heard of. Under the pretext of studying language, you introduced them to me in large numbers, right? At the same time, you also explained Carpenter, talked about Whitman, and introduced me to Montaigne.37

The first three writers, Poe, Doyle, and R. Austin Freeman (1862-1943), are famous for their novels about murder and crime, and therefore no doubt inspired the boys to think about such things. The other authors all discuss same-sex desire in contexts ranging from the pathologizing to the liberating.38 Clearly, Shimaura believes that male-male desire is one important factor contributing to the criminal desires that he believes Tsuchida to have implanted in him.

38 As mentioned above, Hamao commented on Krafft-Ebbing’s unsympathetic treatment of *dōseiaisha* in his 1930 essays. In the same essays, Hamao mentions all of the other writers listed here as either examples of *Urnings* or authors of important books about same-sex erotic desire. Montaigne is probably the most surprising inclusion in this list. In the sixteenth century essay “De l’amitié” (“On Friendship”), he extolled the virtues of the rare, magnificent power that can exist when men engage in a loving friendship, and he draws extensively on classical references to make his case. On the one hand, Montaigne speaks of sexuality between men in ancient Greece as “rightly abhorrent to our manners” and objects to male-male eroticism from the standpoint of public morals. On the other, he extols the philosophical, pedagogical bonds underlying classical relationships as models of the kind of intense bond that should exist between men and women. Michel de Montaigne, *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, trans. M.A. Screech (NY: Penguin, 1987) 210.
After leaving school, Shimaura tries to break with what he has learned from Tsuchida by throwing himself into a relationship with a woman, Ishihara Sueko, who became “a goddess of salvation” for him. Unlike Tsuchida “who could feel absolutely nothing for the opposite sex and who hated any sentimentalism,” Shimaura engages in a deep love affair, but this affair is cut short by her father’s insistence that she marry someone else. In resignation, Shimaura marries another woman named Tsuyuko. He did not love her, but he married her for sex and her money. Over time, Tsuyuko begins to irritate him with her sycophantic goodness and understanding. Any sign of sexual or emotional desire on her part sends him into a rage, and he imagines killing her as the only way out of the torturous relationship. At this point, he complains that the traces of Tsuchida’s diabolical philosophy begin to make themselves felt, implying that the relationship he had with Tsuchida, “woman-hater (onna-girai)”, left behind traces of misogyny that are just now manifesting themselves. About this same time, Shimaura runs into his former lover Sueko, begins an affair with her, and decides to murder his wife. He decides to trick Tsuyuko into taking an overdose of sleeping pills, but the plan backfires when not her, but his beloved mistress takes the fatal dose. In short, Shimaura’s long letter attempts to prove his innocence, first by explaining his version of the events – Sueko took the pills, but he did not intend for her to do so – and, second, by trying to blame someone else for the homicidal desires that led him to consider murder in the first place. The “devil” Tsuchida becomes the site of phantastic projection onto which Shimaura transfers undesirable qualities and socially unacceptable impulses within himself, thus turning Tsuchida into an embodiment of all the urges that cannot be integrated into the social self.

In short, “Akuma no deshi” implies a connection between male-male desire, crime, and perhaps even mental aberration that, ironically, Hamao would criticize harshly in his essays of the following year. Such ironies were not atypical of the writing associated with the fad for the erotic and grotesque from the late 1920s through the 1930s. Although an author might have a personal

39 Hamao Shirō, “Akuma no deshi,” Hamao Shirō shū, 94.

40 Since Tsuchida is never given a voice in the story, the story is entirely one-sided, and Tsuchida never is given the chance to become more than some devilishly evil specter hanging over Shimaura’s past. Interestingly, the illustrator Takenaka Eitarō, who created the illustrations the first publication of “The Devil’s Disciple,” reflects Tsuchida’s abstract, ghostly quality in an indistinct, hazy image of Tsuchida together with Shimaura. In stark contrast to the faceless image of Tsuchida, illustrations of the women in the story all have clear expressions. As Takenaka’s perceptive illustrations show, the women in the narrative are vivid, and we see them and their emotions in detail, but Shimaura presents Tsuchida as nothing more than a shadowy presence reduced to a few abstract characteristics.
sympathy or affection for male-male desire, he or she might describe it as strange and exciting in order to appeal to readers. Another possibility is that the sympathetic author might compromise with negative social stereotypes and portray male-male desire in a fashion that does not accurately represent his or her true feelings. In the case of Hamao’s “Akuma no deshi,” it is likely that Hamao meant for readers to be somewhat skeptical of Shimaura. After all, the idea that Tsuchida was a little demon, implanting and cultivating evil tendencies in his disciple, seems strangely at odds with his present position as a prosecutor in the Tokyo court system.\footnote{There is no hint in “Shisha no kenri,” the other 1929 story that involves Tsuchida as a prosecutor, that he is untrustworthy or decadent in any way.} Second, Shimaura is careful to note that even in his youth, Tsuchida did not himself engage in any indecent acts, though he allegedly encouraged others to do bad things. Third, the fact that Shimaura was able to move on to a sexually successful relationship with Sueko suggests that he was indeed able to move past the misogynistic feelings that he associates with Tsuchida and male-male eroticism. In short, Hamao may well have designed the text so that the tenuous connection between same-sex desire and criminality falls apart under close scrutiny.

**Ranpo Reads Carpenter**

Ranpo got to know Hamao through his early essays on crime and literature, but when Hamao began publishing fiction in *Shin seinen*, the same magazine that carried many of Ranpo’s earliest stories, the two became friends. In a eulogistic essay published in 1936 after Hamao’s death, Ranpo remembered his friend as a multi-talented man with a thorough knowledge of *rakugo* and the theatre as well as a passion for mah-jongg, *shōgi*, and social dance (20: 334). The primary factor in their friendship, however, was a shared interest in same-sex desire. Ranpo’s memoirs describe Hamao as a well-read “researcher of homosexuality (*homosekushuariti*) who had been influenced by Edward Carpenter and others” (20: 334). In fact, Hamao was the person who first lent him Carpenter’s *The Intermediate Sex*, the same work Hamao praised in 1930 as the best study of the social ramifications of male-male desire in modern society.\footnote{Hamao Shirō, “Futatabi dōseiai ni tsuite”: 64, 65.} This book greatly encouraged Ranpo’s interest in the subject (22: 51).

*The Intermediate Sex*, which was first published in book form in 1908, argues there are “distinctions and graduations of Soul-material in relation to Sex – that the inner psychical affection and affinities shade off and graduate, in a vast number of instances, most subtly from
male to female, and not always in obvious correspondence with the outer bodily sex.” In Carpenter’s view, biological sex and internal personality are two independent axes that range from masculinity, which he stereotypes as fiery, brutish, tough, and powerful, to femininity, which he conceives of as sensitive, emotional, and appreciative of beauty. In many cases, biological gender and personality both tend toward similar directions, but there are also many cases where the two do not correspond. The result is what he calls a “mixed or intermediate type,” which includes “Uranians,” people who are attracted members of the same sex. Carpenter finds that “Uranians” display an “immense capacity of emotional love,” which benefits society in fields like nursing and education. In fact, the treatise suggests that the love of Uranians is less likely to be constrained by social class and can therefore lead to beneficial educational and philanthropic results. The kind of love seen among Uranians, he argues, is necessary for the rise of a “true Democracy,” which can only exist when love connects even the “most estranged ranks of society.”

For at least twenty years prior to writing this treatise, Carpenter had been involved with various British socialist groups, including the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and the Socialist League founded by William Morris (1834-1896). Many of Carpenter’s works that date from before the turn of the century argue that the move toward socialism must be predicated on new values that respect spiritual growth and foster the personal fulfillment of all people, regardless of socioeconomic class. In The Intermediate Sex, Carpenter idealistically saw Uranian love as auguring this new set of values.

[... ] it is possible that the Uranian spirit may lead to something like a general enthusiasm of Humanity, and that the Uranian people may be destined to form the advance guard of that great movement which will one day transform the common life by substituting the bond of personal affection and compassion for the monetary, legal and other external ties which now control and confine society.

The capacity for emotional bonding and care, which Carpenter saw as the salient characteristic of Uranians, put them in an ideal position to lead society toward a brighter future. Because of this social message, the socialist activist and thinker Yamakawa Kikue (1890-1980) translated The Intermediate Sex into Japanese only a few years after its publication in Britain. Her translation

43 Carpenter, The Intermediate Sex, 186.
44 Carpenter, The Intermediate Sex, 187.
45 Carpenter, The Intermediate Sex, 237.
46 Carpenter, The Intermediate Sex, 238.
first appeared in the feminist literary journal *Safuran (Saffron)* in 1914, then in book form from Ars in 1919.\textsuperscript{47} Interestingly, in the introduction to book version of the translation, the socialist writer Sakai Toshihiko (1870?-1933) comments that his comrade Yamakawa did not agree with all of Carpenter’s arguments. He does not say specifically what elements of Carpenter’s theories she found objectionable, but Gregory Pflugfelder notes that this warning “conveys the ambivalence with which many Japanese socialists and other leftist writers of the early twentieth century approached the topic of ‘same-sex love’.”\textsuperscript{48}

In an article published as a 1936 supplement to *Sekai bungei daijiten* (*Great Dictionary of World Arts and Letters*), Ranpo discusses the work of Carpenter, Gide, and J.A. Symonds, all of whom “published serious works that defended the spirit of same-sex love (dōseiai seishin) – or praised it rather – each in their own way” (20: 66). All three of these writers, Ranpo says, felt as if they had no choice but to combat a “general lack of understanding” on the subject. In his opinion, Carpenter was the boldest of the three, since his equation between the “spirit of same-sex love” and socialism flew so strongly in the face of mainstream British thought. In addition to *The Intermediate Sex*, Ranpo’s article also mentions two other works by Carpenter. The first, *Ioläus: An Anthology of Friendship*, was first published in 1902 and consisted of an anthology of writings on same-sex desire, and male-male desire in particular, culled from classical Greece, Rome, and Persia, nineteenth-century Europe, America, and other nations.\textsuperscript{49} The other, *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk*, consists of several essays from 1911 and 1914 and attempts a trans-historical survey of male-male desire across various cultures. The purpose of these essays is to show that across various cultures, “intermediate types” had not always been the subject of persecution and denunciation. In fact, Carpenter argues quite the contrary; their “special nature” had led them to occupy positions associated with social divination (for instance, prophets, priests, wizards and witches), the arts (inventors, artisans, and craftmakers), and the military (generals and soldiers) – all positions that served a “positive and useful function.”\textsuperscript{50}


\textsuperscript{48} Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire*, 308.


\textsuperscript{50} Carpenter, *Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk*, 9.
Ranpo took particular notice of the final chapter of the collection: “The Samurai of Japan: and Their Ideal.” There, Carpenter argues that the chivalrous ideals of bushidō were rooted in the personal, amorous relationships between warriors. He writes, “It was not so much the fair lady of his dreams, or even the wife and family at home, that formed the rallying point of the Samurai’s heroism and loyalty, but the younger comrade whom he loved and who was his companion-at-arms.”

Ranpo sums up and evaluates Carpenter’s argument in an article published in 1936.

In this chapter, Carpenter speaks about the similarities between Japanese bushidō, Japanese military strength, and the military strength of the Dorians of ancient Greece; he explains that the secret of both lies in a Greek-style love of men (Girisha-teki danseiai). This may sound somewhat odd to us in the modern era, but a far-away, third-party observer can sometimes say things that strike close to the bull’s-eye, can’t they? (17: 55)

Ranpo, however, was as interested in the literary evidence that Carpenter produced to support his thesis as the thesis itself. Carpenter demonstrates the central role of male-male desire in Japanese military life by quoting the work of German ethnographer Ferdinand Karsch-Haack (1853-1936), who had published a study in 1906 that surveyed a number of Japanese works of fiction. Among them were Nanshoku ōkagami (The Great Mirror of Male Love) by Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) and Shizu no odamaki (The Humble Bobbin) by an unknown Edo-period author. Both novels were familiar to Ranpo, but Carpenter also discusses one work Ranpo had never heard of: Mozuku monogatari (Tale of Weeds in the Sea), an allegedly true tale of two bishōnen who committed suicide together in the early seventeenth century. Surprised to learn about this story from an author from “far-away England,” Ranpo decided to locate the original. He found versions in two collections of texts compiled in the Edo period, and he learned that the humorists Ōta Nanpo (1749-1823) and Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848) both knew the text intimately and had written postscripts to different versions of it. The story also appears with minor changes in

51 Carpenter, Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk, 146-47.
52 Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, “Das gleichgeschlechtliche Leben der Ostasiaten Kulturvölker: Chinesen, Japaner, Koreer,” Forschungen über gleichgeschlechtliche Liebe (Munich: Seitz & Schauer, 1906) 111-13. Carpenter’s text quotes Karsch-Haack’s misleading exclamation that Shizu no odamaki and Mozuku monogatari “were till a few years ago classic reading-lessons in the Japanese schools!” Carpenter, Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk, 155. While Shizu no odamaki was extremely popular among schoolboys, it was read for extracurricular purposes. Mozuku monogatari, meanwhile, did not enjoy the popularity of the other work. The reference of seaweed in the title of the story is metaphor for the seemingly rootless impermanence of human relationships.
Saikaku’s *Nanshoku ōkagami* and the anonymous *Nanshoku giri monogatari* (*Tales of Male Love and Obligation*). Several Edo-period essays, guides to the city, and histories also mention the story, implying that it was relatively well known before the Meiji Restoration. Ranpo presents the fruit of these bibliographic searches in “Shudō mokuzuzuka” ("Mokuzu Mound Commemorating the Way of the Youth") published in *Bungei shunjū* (*Literary Arts Spring and Autumn*) in 1936. In his memoirs, he recalls that this essay was one product of his interest in “writing on same-sex love” (*dōseiai bunken*) and represented the culmination of much research. He proudly states, “It is not the kind of essay that one can write in a single night. Reports based on extensive readings of documents are seen as relatively worthless compared to creative fiction, but in my opinion, my essay is equal to ten dumb pieces of literary hackwork” (21: 17). After describing how he first learned about the tale, he summarizes the story and corrects a number of small textual errors in Carpenter’s retelling. The main figure of the story is the pageboy Itami Ukyō who, in his early adolescence, is so attractive that when Funegawa Uneme, two years his senior, catches a mere glimpse of him, it is enough to make Uneme fall

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411-32. Ranpo mentions that the popular writer Ryūtei Tanehiko (1783-1842) also owned a version of the story (17: 59).


55 Edogawa Ranpo, “Shudō mokuzuzuka,” *Bungei shunjū* 16.9 (Sep 1936): 320-26. In later reprintings, the word *shudō* was dropped from the title, which became simply “Mokuzuzuka.”

56 In telling the story, Ranpo draws on both Carpenter’s version and the other Japanese texts he located. To point out discrepancies, misspelled names, or other textual problems in Carpenter’s version, Ranpo uses katakana. Furukawa Makoto notes that Ranpo is seeing the story through a double lens: one imposed by his own distance from the Edo-period culture described, and one imposed by the transnational distance between Carpenter’s version and the story itself. Furukawa, however, misreads Ranpo’s use of katakana, which seems to have been largely procedural, as evidence of cultural distance. Furukawa sees the katakana as evidence that Ranpo felt some off-putting distance (*iwakan*) when reading the story, which ultimately found less satisfying than stories about male-male desire in Greece. Furukawa Makoto, “Edogawa Ranpo no hisoka naru jōnetsu,” 64. While it is true that Ranpo wrote less about manifestations of male-male desire in Japan than in the west, there seems to be little evidence that he was any less interested in manifestations of male-male desire in Japanese history. In fact, the fact that he purchased numerous valuable Edo-period books about the subject is evidence to the contrary. As the following section mentions, Ranpo wrote mostly about manifestations of male-male desire in the West largely because his friend, the anthropologist Iwata Jun’ichi, was busy writing about Japan.
madly in love. In fact, Uneme is so taken with Ukyō’s beauty that he develops a mysterious ailment no doctor can cure. Uneme’s lover at the time, Shiga Samanosuke, pressures him to state what is troubling him. (In Carpenter’s version, Samanosuke, whose name is misspelled, is only a close friend of Uneme.) Uneme confesses his new love but states that since a relationship is impossible, he has no choice but to wait for death. Samanosuke takes pity on Uneme and contacts Ukyō on his behalf. Ukyō replies with a favorable response, which heals Uneme’s illness instantly. Even though they must dedicate themselves to their lords and therefore have few chances to see one another, they pledge their love to one another. This state of affairs continues until another warrior named Hosono Shuzen also falls for Ukyō. The latter rejects Shuzen’s advances, and Shuzen is so humiliated that he vows to kill Ukyō. Meanwhile, Ukyō finds that he is in danger and takes action into his own hands by going to Shuzen’s own quarters and killing him. Although the authorities exonerate Ukyō, Shuzen’s father presses the case and has the boy condemned to death by ritual self-disembowelment. When Uneme hears that his beloved is to die, he rushes to Keiyōji Temple in Asakusa, where they exchange tearful words and commit suicide together. At the end of the tale, the star-crossed lovers are buried together in a mound in the temple grounds (17:57-58).

Ranpo found himself “gradually becoming so taken with this story of Uneme and Ukyō’s love” that he decided to locate the mound where the two were buried (17:60). After some research, he learned that Keiyōji Temple had moved several times before finally settling in Imado. Armed with the address, he made his way to the desolate site.

Guided by the priest who lived and worked there, I entered the vacant lot at the back where the main building of the temple had burned down, leaving only its stone base behind. When I asked about “Mokuzu Mound,” he said that it was right there. Alongside the stone platform of what was formerly the main building, a large number of unrelated gravestones had tumbled over. They looked like fallen corpses. Among them was a naturally shaped stone of about two and a half or three feet in width. It was dirty, covered with weeds, and lay pitifully on its side. The characters “Mokuzu Mound” had been carved deeply into its surface in angular characters about five inches high (17: 61).

Ranpo found himself so moved by the sight of the commemorative stone, which stood in lieu of the mound itself, that he visited the temple grounds three or four more times. On his most recent visit, he found the stone surrounded by blooming flowers. The essay ends with the following description of the dejected place.

With the summer flowers as its offerings, the monument to the two boys lay forlornly on its side. It lay there with an oblivious look to it. Someone had drawn some meaningless angular and curved lines on the stone with white ink. This was probably the naughty handiwork of the neighborhood children. For the children, this monument
was no more than a hunk of stone worthy of their graffiti. For the adults too, this was no longer anything more than a single piece of stone (17: 61).

This ending contains an implicit lament for this all but forgotten love story. For Ranpo, the stone represents a symbol of the powerful male-male love that had faded with the decline of shudō-style relations. Located in the forgotten rubble of a graveyard behind a ruined building, the commemorative marker and the feelings it represents belong to an entirely different age. Like the stone, Ranpo implies that such sentiments lie almost completely out of view, relegated to a peripheral position by the changes in cultural mores that had accompanied Japan’s entry into the modern world.

**Ranpo’s Second “Teacher”: Iwata Jun’ichi**

In subsequent years, Ranpo continued to collect a vast number of pre-Restoration Japanese books on male-male desire. These included original *ukiyo-zōshi* (popular fiction of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), *hachimonjiya-bon* (popular fiction often about the floating world, courtesans, and disowned sons of wealthy or powerful men, published by the Kyoto publisher Hachimonjiya Jishō in the early eighteenth century), and other rare books of the Edo period.57 (See Figure 44.) In fact, he joked in the essay “Watashi no shūshūheki” (“My Habit of Collecting”) from 1953 that he had collected so many books on the subject that he had come to resemble Akechi Kogorō, the detective hero of many of his novels who lived surrounded by massive piles of tomes.58 In the decades following the publication of “Shudō mokuzuzuka,” Ranpo published a number of other short works, including a conversation with Inagaki Taruho in the magazine *Kuiin* (*Queen*), that briefly discussed manifestations of same-sex desire in Japanese literature and history; however, despite his avid collecting, “Shudō mokuzuzuka” and his essay on Murayama Kaita from 1936 represent his only extended treatments of male-male desire in Japanese literature. Instead, most of his writing on love between men deals with expressions of desire in ancient Greek, European, and American literature. The primary reason seems to have been a decision to turn over the study of male-male desire in Japanese history to his close friend Iwata Jun’ichi. Like Ranpo, Iwata was fascinated with male-male desire and its expressions in history and literature, and the two encouraged one another in their pursuit of bibliographic

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sources. In fact, they framed their attempts to find books and articles on the subject as a
lighthearted competition between them. While Iwata tried to find as many references as he could
on male-male desire in Japanese and East Asian literature, Ranpo focused his energy on European
and American literature.59

Iwata was born in Toba City, Mie Prefecture as the third son of parents Miyase Tōyōfu
and Iwata Tei, but soon after his birth, his parents divorced. Despite the absence of his father,
Iwata lived a relatively comfortable life, which permitted him to pursue his own interests without
worrying a great deal about finances. When Iwata was about fifteen, he started writing to
Takehisa Yumeji (1884-1934), an illustrator and artist who had gained great popularity during the
Taishō period with his pictures of long, slender, delicate women. The first encounter between
Yumeji and Iwata took place in 1915 when the artist made a visit to Toba, and as their friendship
grew, Iwata went to Kyoto to help Yumeji prepare for a private exhibition. Encouraged by his
friendship with Yumeji, Iwata quit school and enrolled in the Bunka gakuin (Institute of Culture),
where he studied art. In the meantime, Iwata learned to paint the willowy figures typical of the
work of his mentor. In fact, he became so good at them that some commentators have noted that
their work was virtually indistinguishable.60

On August 18, 1918, when Iwata was visiting his hometown of Toba, he held a small
solo exhibition of his paintings in a local elementary school. For nearly a year, Ranpo had been
working in the electrical division of a shipbuilding yard in the same town. In a 1957 essay about
his friendship with Iwata, Ranpo recalls that he went to see Iwata’s exhibition, and there, they
met for the first time (22:45).61 Iwata’s diaries reveal that over the course of the remaining time
Ranpo spent in Toba, the two met six or seven times at a local church that served as a meeting
place for youth of an intellectual bent, but eventually, the two went their separate ways. Their
reunion came some years later in 1925. At that time, Iwata was an art student in Tokyo, and

59 Ranpo contains a partial list of Western works he found in 22:46. The list contains many now famous
nineteenth-century and early twentieth century treatises on the subject, including works by Ulrich, Krafft-

60 Iwata’s son asserts that a number of drawings commonly believed to be by Yumeji are actually the work
gabunshū – Eiri man’yōshū, by Iwata Jun’ichi (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1979) 57. (This appendix gives a useful
account of Iwata’s life and friendship with Ranpo.) Yumeji so valued Iwata as his young pupil that he put
Iwata in charge of editing a collection of his work published in 1917: Takehisa Yumeji, Yumeji jojōga

61 Iwata Jun’ichi’s granddaughter, Iwata Junko, has described the meeting in her novel about her
grandfather and Ranpo. See Iwata Junko, Ni seinen zu, 9-25.
Ranpo was living in Moriguchi, outside Osaka. Ranpo had recently established himself as a writer and was visiting Tokyo in order to participate in a discussion on the radio about the detective novel. Iwata heard the broadcast, and when he learned from a newspaper where Ranpo was staying, he stopped by the lodgings. That evening, the two had a long discussion in Ranpo’s room, during which Iwata mentioned a story about homoerotic desire that he had serialized in a local newspaper in 1920. Ranpo expressed a strong desire to see the story, and the two exchanged addresses so Iwata could send it to him.

A strong friendship soon developed between them, and this friendship led to a number of literary developments. Iwata provided illustrations for a number of Ranpo’s early works when they were reprinted in Heibonsha’s *Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū* (*Complete Works of Modern Popular Literature*) in late 1927 (Figures 45 and 46). These illustrations so pleased Ranpo that he wrote in a supplement to the volume, “their grotesque appeal matches my work exactly, and they bring out the flavor of my fiction in a way that is several levels more skilled, monstrous, and bloody than my words alone.” About the same time, Ranpo invited Iwata to serve as the secretary of Tankisha, a group of writers who met in Nagoya between late 1927 and autumn of 1929 to brainstorm for plots, look over one another’s work, and write joint works (*gassaku shōsetsu*) for publication in *Shin seinen*, *Sandē mainichi* (*Sunday Mainichi*), and other journals.

The most important developments, however, have to do with Ranpo and Iwata’s shared interest in male-male desire. After discovering their common interest, Iwata and Ranpo began trying to locate as many titles as possible having to do with love and eroticism between men. This soon became a consuming passion. Ranpo wrote in 1953, “In my life up to this point, the things in which I have taken the greatest interest are detective novels and the collecting of bibliographic sources on male-male love. When I reflect, I realize that I have spent the greatest amount of time on these two pursuits.”

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62 This account is based upon the Nov 13, 1925 entry of Iwata’s diary, which is quoted in Iwata Kyōnosuke [Iwata Sadao], “Tōkyō Hongō ‘Ise Sakae Ryokan’ no yoru: Ranpo to Iwata Jun’ichi no dōseiai bunken no kenkyū,” *Bungei zuihitsu* 39 (Oct 2001): 28.

63 Iwata published a number of other stories in small coterie journals throughout the 1920s.


65 The six writers that formed the core of this group were Kozakai Fuboku, Kunieda Shirō, Hirayama Rokō (1882-1953), Hasegawa Shin (1884-1963), Haji Ōeji (1893-?), and Ranpo.

that this “secret interest” seemed “to interest no one else, only us.” Although Ranpo and Iwata lightheartedly framed the project as a race to see who could find the most sources, they also shared many sources that they thought might interest one another. The two became regular correspondents and exchanged at least eighty-seven known letters and postcards between 1932 and 1944. Of these, about eighty percent dated from 1939 to 1942, and at least half have to do with desire between men.

Because Iwata was not preoccupied with the demands of the literary world like Ranpo, he was able to devote himself to writing about the sources they had uncovered, and before long, he began producing a series of essays on the history of male-male desire in Japan that would eventually appear as Honchō nanshoku kō (Thoughts on Male Love in Our Kingdom). Iwata tried to publish them in the widely read Chūō kōron (Central Review), but this possibility did not pan out, and instead he serialized the first half in Hanzai kagaku (Criminal Science), a monthly magazine that published light essays on sexuality and criminality as well as detective and crime fiction. After nine articles or so, Iwata took a break to examine the sources he continued to locate, and during this hiatus, the magazine went defunct. After Iwata’s death from illness in 1945, Ranpo had the remaining essays serialized in Ningen tankyū (Human Explorations), a titillating, postwar journal that published essays on various manifestations of sexual desire. It was not until 1974 that the work finally appeared in book form. Iwata’s work examines


descriptions of male-male desire throughout history, drawing upon texts ranging from the Heian-period imperial collections of tanka poetry to medieval and early modern works. In particular, Iwata focuses on several historical phenomena having to do with male-male desire. These include the chigo cults that arose in temples during the medieval period, the brotherly bonds that developed among warriors during the Period of Warring States, the sexual culture of the nō and kabuki theater, the brothels and male prostitutes of the Genroku period, and so on. Some of Ranpo’s essays praise Iwata’s “unprecedented” work and note that even though a number of works on the subject began to appear in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, Iwata’s was the most thorough and scholarly (20: 155; 22: 47). While working on this series of essays, Iwata also compiled a large bibliography of works having to do with male-male desire. Around 1943, Ranpo, who was depressed by having been virtually silenced by the oppressive system of censorship during the war, gave Iwata all of the cards containing the bibliographic information that he had collected, and he encouraged Iwata to compile a list under his own name. During the height of the Pacific War, Iwata compiled a collection of about twelve hundred sources, which he titled Nochi iwatsutsuji (Later Wild Azaleas).70 Iwata tried to publish it in a private edition, but due to the paper shortage, it was not published until after the war, by which time Iwata had already passed away.71

In his memoirs, Ranpo recalls that during the late 1920s and early 1930s, Iwata was his only good friend (20: 282). Together, they wandered around Tokyo, especially Asakusa Park, which was filled with all sorts of outdoor curiosities, ranging from open-air performers to male hustlers. Iwata and Ranpo also visited countless used-book stores in Tokyo and other cities. In Kyoto, they went together to Sanbōin in Daigoji Temple in order to see the Chigo no sōshi (Book of Acolytes), a scroll several hundred years old that contains graphic images of erotic encounters between priests, nobles, and an acolyte (22:45). On another occasion, they visited the island-studded seashore of the Kii Peninsula, giving Ranpo the inspiration to produce the novel Kotō no


71 With an introduction from Ranpo, the bibliography started to appear in the magazine Kisho (Rare Books), but the magazine went out of print in the middle of serialization. Thanks again to Ranpo’s help, Iwata’s bibliography finally appeared in its entirety in 1956. Iwata Jun’ichi, Nanshoku bunken shoshi (Tokyo: Koten bunko, 1956; Toba: Iwata Sadao, 1973).
oni. At some point during their friendship, the two also wrote a series of loosely linked verses *(kasen)* about *wakashū*, the young men that were the objects of desire in *shudō*-style relationships.72 Ranpo comments in his memoirs, however, that this closeness does not mean that they had a “relationship of same-sex love” (20: 282). Although they would often stay together in the same room while traveling, “even touching his hand would be enough to evoke a feeling of revulsion.” Ranpo attributes their closeness to other reasons. Iwata had much to teach him with his fastidious attention to bibliographical sources. He was a personable and talkative person who would sometimes put on airs, and so he appealed to Ranpo, who humbly described himself as quiet and slow-witted by comparison. Ranpo’s denial of any physical relationship appears to be partially self-protective in nature. No doubt, he included this denial in his memoirs partly to keep tongues from wagging and partly to emphasize that his interest in male-male desire was intellectual rather than physical.

**Reading Into the “Secret Passion” of J. A. Symonds**

In early 1933, when his friendship with Iwata Jun’ichi was at its height, Ranpo began attending the meetings of the Seishin bunseki kenkyūkai (Group for Psychoanalytic Research) held each month in Tokyo. In his memoirs, Ranpo explains that he was interested in psychoanalysis primarily because it dealt so often with same-sex desire (20:282). Other members of the group shared his interest, creating an atmosphere in which the subject could be discussed freely. The leader was the psychologist Ōtsuki Kenji (1891-1977), a Marxist critic-turned-psychologist who had completed some of the earliest translations of Freud. (About this time, Ranpo purchased two large collections of Freud’s works, including one with Ōtsuki’s translations. In his memoirs, he writes that he read them with great interest. 20: 282).73 Other members of the group included Yabe Yaekichi, another translator of Freud and the author of an introductory study of psychoanalysis; the doctor and painter Koyama Ryošū (1898-1991); and the psychologist and translator Iwakura Tomohide (1904-1978). The group also brought together a number of people involved with literature, such as the critic and Naturalist theorist Hasegawa

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72 Ranpo first published this series of linked verse first in 1947, well after Iwata’s death (22:49-51).

Tenkei (1876-1940); the translator of mystery fiction Tauchi Chōtarō; the anthropologist Nakayama Tarō (1976-1947); and the translators Katō Asatori (1886-1938) and Miyajima Shinzaburō (1892-1934). Also involved was the young writer Takahashi Tetsu (1907-1971) who aspired to a career as a writer of fantasy (20:282). (In later years, Takahashi Tetsu would become one of the foremost popular sexologists in Japan with his large numbers of writings on “perverse sexual desire” and its many various manifestations.) Because so many in the group were interested in literature and the arts, the meetings often involved discussions of these subjects. When the group began publishing the magazine Seishin bunseki (Psychoanalysis) in May 1933, the journal included not just academic studies of psychology but also discussions of art, literature, mythology, and even occasional literary works.

In the inaugural issue of Seishin bunseki, Ranpo began serializing an article called “J.A. Shimonzu no hisoka naru jōnetsu” (“The Secret Passion of J.A. Symonds”) about male-male desire in the life and work of John Addington Symonds, a leading Victorian writer best known for his monumental studies of classical Greek poetry, his biographies and of several key figures of literary history, and his translations of Italian Renaissance autobiographies. Ranpo had encountered Symonds’ work in the course of his readings about male-male desire and developed a tremendous interest in Symonds’ life and work. Ranpo states early in his article that his purpose in writing about Symonds is not to examine his scholarship, although Ranpo says that has an “intimate relationship” to the subject of the article (17: 74). Instead, Ranpo uses Symonds’ texts and biography to speculate about his sexual preferences and how they manifested themselves in his writing.

One of main sources of Ranpo’s information was a biography compiled from Symonds’ memoirs, diaries, and letters by his former pupil and confidant Horatio F. Brown (1854-1926).  


From reading Brown’s biography, Ranpo could not have known that when Symonds started writing the memoirs in 1889, one of his purposes was to describe his strong attraction to men, his long personal struggle against the constraints of Victorian morality, and his clandestine sexual life in order to provide a case study for psychologists and show others with similar feelings that they were not alone. The memoirs describe his first pseudo-sexual dreams, his conflicted feelings about sexuality while a student, his sexual experiences with men, his frequent encounters with male hustlers, his journeys abroad to seek sexual gratification, his passionate tryst with a Venetian gondolier, and so on. Although Symonds was eager to publish his memoirs in order to console other men with similar feelings, he ultimately refrained from doing so. Instead, he willed the manuscript of his memoirs to Brown with the instructions that they be preserved, and if possible, made public at some point in the future when they might not cause trouble for Symonds’ wife and four children. Brown, however, was eager to publish a study of his friend, and so he selected innocuous passages from the memoirs and combined them with excerpts from letters and diary entries to produce the biography that Ranpo read. In doing so, Brown profoundly distorted Symonds’ record of his erotic feelings and excised his arguments against the Victorian view that male-male eroticism was carnal in nature. Ranpo proves, however, that even with Brown’s expurgated biography, an astute reader could occasionally catch a glimpse of Symonds’ true erotic feelings.

Ranpo begins by pointing to dreams that suggest Symonds experienced a homoerotic attraction to men; for instance, he draws attention to a recurrent dream in which “the beautiful face of a young man, with large blue eyes and waving yellow hair” visited Symonds, drew close, and kissed him before disappearing in the darkness (17: 76). Based on his reading of Brown’s biography, Ranpo notes that Symonds did not experience an Oedipal interest in his mother and a subsequent conflict with his father – the conflict that would, in the thought of Freud and his followers, propel a young man toward an interest in the opposite sex. Ranpo notes that Symonds experienced a “mysterious coldness toward his mother and a loving attachment to his father,” and probably “in his case, his feelings of love for the same sex (dōsei renjō) had to do with putting himself in the position of a woman” (17: 80). Symonds’ memoirs, which were in turn quoted by


Brown, denied that he was in any way “effeminate,” but Ranpo reads this defensiveness as evidence that he must not have been especially masculine. Ranpo states that “it probably would not be wrong to think of him, in the words of Ulrich, as one type of a female spirit in a male body (anima muliebrio in corpore virili inclusa)” (17: 81), and he notes that Symonds’ dreams feature himself as the erotic object of other men, not as a subject who pursues desire in his own right.

In these passages, Ranpo reproduces a number of stereotypes prevalent in early twentieth century discourse on male-male desire. First of all, he employs the trope of “inversion” seen in the writing of Ulrich and many of his contemporaries. Ranpo makes Symonds’ sexual orientation intelligible by assuming there was something “feminine” about Symonds, even though the biography expressly denies this. Second, Ranpo reads this femininity into the very structure of Symonds’ psyche. Ranpo attributes Symonds’ alleged femininity to a disruption of the processes of the Oedipus complex, which teach the child to identify with one sex or the other. In this way, Ranpo implies that in some psychic way, Symonds was half-man, half-woman. His subsequent attraction to men was not just a matter of actions, but an indication of a far more profound psychological constitution. In Symonds’ case, Ranpo associates this attraction with “passivity,” suggesting that Symonds did not identify with the sexual aggressiveness of other men but wanted instead to be “loved” – a euphemism that suggests that Ranpo suspected Symonds of preferring the role of insertee in anal sex. (In fact, Symonds unexpurgated memoirs are purposefully vague about what he did in bed.)

To Ranpo, Symonds represents a case study of an “Urning” who, despite his sexual desires, tried to live a life that would appear “normal” to most outsiders.

Just now, I have said that one could classify Symonds’ personality as that of an Urning. Readers who do not know how serious Ulrich, the man who created this word, actually was, this noun tends to evoke thoughts of dens of male hustlers in and around Berlin. Ulrich did not use the word only to refer to such things. He also used it to refer to the unhappy people who go about hiding desires that are difficult to control – people who carry on living lives that are not the slightest bit different from those of regular people. Symonds was one of those unhappy people. According to his memoirs at least, his external life did not diverge from the ordinary path in any way (17: 81).

Although he had suggested earlier that Symonds was probably not an “ordinary” man, he states that Symonds tried to live an “ordinary” life with a marriage and children. This, Ranpo guesses, was probably not enough to make him content.

So what happened to the love he felt during his youth, his longing for Greek-style love? Did his unusual passion merely disappear along with his marriage? No, surely one cannot think that it did. He probably struggled with it. Then, he probably overcame the feelings in his heart. He had too much refinement to put into concrete practice the desires in his heart just as they were. He was not
courageous or shameless enough to rebel against the manners and customs of society. The legal code and social customs of England at that time were stricter than we today can possibly imagine (17: 82).

In a 1946 summary of this essay for his memoirs, Ranpo writes emphatically, Symonds “was not a practitioner” of male-male desire, and the only way his “passion, which he kept a great secret to the very end,” made itself visible was in his research (20: 285).

Of course, Ranpo did not have access to Symonds’ complete memoirs, which show that after the age of thirty, Symonds had hundreds of encounters and several significant relationships with men. The key point, however, is that Ranpo builds, largely upon supposition, an image of Symonds as an abstinent “Urning” who, confined by the strictures of Victorian culture, channeled his interest in men into spiritual love and bibliographic research. Ranpo uses this image, first, to evoke reader sympathy and, second, to suggest the “ unhappiness” of the lives of seemingly “normal-acting Urningen” who feel as if they must restrain their sexual feelings. In describing the intense pressure placed upon such men in Victorian England, especially around the time of the highly publicized arrest of Oscar Wilde, Ranpo laments the fact that such men did not have access to more recent theories of same-sex desire. He writes, “we can imagine what it must have been like in Symonds’ era, which was earlier even than that of Oscar Wilde. Symonds ended his life without ever seeing the spread of a scientific understanding of this kind of abnormal psychology” (17:82). Like his friend Hamao, Ranpo assumes that if social stigmas were set aside, the theories of medical psychology could provide a potential source of liberation for men such as Symonds by explicating the nature of their desires and raising consciousness about them.

Although Ranpo guesses incorrectly that Symonds was “probably too cowardly and fastidious” to engage in sexual relations with men, he does correctly detect that Symonds created a high-minded admiration of spiritual love as an attempt to negotiate a compromise between his sense of morality and his erotic desires (17: 83). Ranpo provides a long excerpt to this effect from the 1893 essay “The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love” in which Symonds argues that both the love of the Greeks and of the chivalrous knights for fellow men differs profoundly from carnal desire. Ranpo quotes Symonds as saying that in theory, “both Greek and mediaeval types of chivalrous emotion were pure and spiritual enthusiasms, purging the lover’s soul of all base thoughts, lifting him above the bondage of the flesh, and filling him with a continual rapture” (17: 83).

Paul Robinson notes that as part of his ongoing rationalization of his erotic attraction to men, Symonds associated male-male desire with the Greek culture that the Victorians held so dear and Whitmanesque ideals of democratic brotherly love. These ideas, however, set such high standards that “they made the mundane task of having a reasonable sex life excruciatingly difficult for Symonds.” Robinson, *Gay Lives*, 8.
Ranpo uses this statement as evidence that Symonds drew a sharp line between sexual relationships and the kind of aestheticized love that other essays locate in the idealistic camaraderie of the Greeks, Whitman, and other writers.

Much of the remainder of Ranpo’s long article consists of a catalogue of passages in Symonds’ works that deal with male-male desire. In Ranpo’s opinion, the fact that Symonds wrote such passages indicate the author’s own amorous and erotic interest in men. For instance, he surmises that Symonds chose to write a biography about Michelangelo “because this great artistic master was unparalleled in extolling the virtues of Hellenism – that is, both in general and in the sense of same-sex love (dōsei ren’ai).” Ranpo writes that in the works and life of Michelangelo, “one finds a strong hue of platonic same-sex love.” He states, Michelangelo possessed “effeminate feelings of the same sort as Symonds” and was probably “a sort of Urning.” Most likely, this led Symonds to feel some sort of kinship with him (17: 96). Ranpo provides a similar explanation for Symonds’ interest in the artist Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571), whose autobiography Symonds translated for publication in 1888. Ranpo points to a passage in Symonds’ Renaissance in Italy that tells of Cellini going to a party with an attractive youth in drag, tricking everyone at the party to declare the youth the “fairest of the fair,” and then causing a commotion when he reveals the boy’s true gender. Ranpo comments that this story shows that Cellini’s “nature was not one that felt sexual revulsion for the same sex” (17: 98). He quotes Symonds as noting that Cellini was “sensitive to every kind of physical beauty.” Ranpo interprets this remark as meaning Cellini’s sexual interests included beautiful youths, and in this sense, Cellini was like Symonds (17: 98).

Ranpo notes that, apart from the possible exception of Cellini, Symonds discusses manifestations of male-male desire in terms of spiritual love, the appreciation of beauty, democratic philios, chivalrous honor, and other seemingly noble virtues (17: 98). Symonds


82 John Addington Symonds, Renaissance in Italy: The Fine Arts (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909) 331.

83 Symonds, Renaissance in Italy, 333.

84 Symonds, Renaissance in Italy, 333. This was certainly true of the accounts of male-male love in Symonds’ memoirs. Although Ranpo did not have access to the unexpurgated version, one finds that in them, Symonds downplays the carnal or animalistic side of his own affairs with men. Instead, he
was, effectively, attempting to lend ideological respectability to the concept of male-male love by associating it with virtues that contemporary readers would admire. One example of a passage in which Symonds links male-male love with traits that would have appealed to Victorian (as well as Japanese) audiences is the following excerpt from the 1873 *Studies of the Greek Poets*.

Greek mythology and history are full of tales of friendship, which can only be paralleled by the story of David and Jonathan in our Bible. The legend of Herakles and Hylas, of Theseus and Peirithous, of Apollo and Hyacinth, of Orestes and Pylades, occur immediately to the mind. Among the noblest patriots, tyrannicides, lawgivers, and self-devoted heroes in the early times of Greece, we always find the names of friends and comrades recorded with peculiar honor. [...] In a word, the chivalry of Hellas found its motive force in friendship rather than in the love of women; and the motive force of all chivalry is a generous, soul-exalting, unselfish passion. The fruit which friendship bore among the Greeks was courage in the face of danger, indifference to life when honour was at stake, patriotic ardour, the love of liberty, and lion-hearted rivalry in battle. “Tyrants,” said Plato, “stand in awe of friends.”

In his translation of this passage, Ranpo often renders Symonds’ word “friendship” as *danseiai* (literally “love of men”) – a choice of words that can be use for both brotherly and sexual love. When writing about the passage, Ranpo comments, “one cannot overlook the flames of Symonds’ passion for Greek-style love of men (*girisha-teki danseiai*) licking up from between the lines” (17: 88). Although Ranpo’s principle argument has to do with the sexual interests of Symonds and not the nature of male-male desire in general, he does not challenge Symonds’ arguments, giving the impression that he largely agrees with them. In the case above, he does not comment on the content of the passage itself. Instead, he leaves intact the central thesis that passionate friendships between men are not necessarily pathological or carnal but are linked to upstanding virtues.

The intersection between virtue and male-male desire represents the main focus of one of Symonds’ works that most interested Ranpo: *A Problem in Greek Ethics*, which Symonds first published in a private edition of ten copies in 1883. Symonds followed it with a second volume, *A Problem in Modern Ethics*, published in 1891 in a private edition of fifty volumes. Ranpo emphasizes “the purity of his relationships, his attitude towards his partners as ‘comrades,’ the help and guidance he was able to offer his sexual partners.” Grosskurth, introduction, *The Memoirs of John Addington Symonds*, 22.

purchased copies of later, limited-edition re-printings of these volumes from a used bookstore in England, and in subsequent years, he treated them as two of his library’s treasures (17: 72; 20: 285, 22: 47). Of the two books, A Problem of Greek Ethics seems to have interested him most. Several times in the immediate postwar period, he wrote that he hoped to translate it into Japanese someday.86

A Problem in Greek Ethics presents a survey of the history of male-male love in ancient Greece, which Symonds calls a rare example “of a great and highly-developed race not only tolerating homosexual passions, but deeming them of spiritual value, and attempting to utilize them for the benefit of society.”87 Symonds draws on a large number of texts to argue that in Homeric Greece, male-male desire had not yet been institutionalized, although as the Iliad shows, there sometimes existed intense, non-sexual friendships among comrades-in-arms. He explains, “Companionship in battle and the chase, in public and in private affairs of life, was the communion proposed by Achilleian friends – not luxury or the delights which feminine attractions offered. The tie was both more spiritual and more energetic than that which bound man to woman.”88 With the development of a martial culture in Doria, Symonds states that the heroic love of male comrades spread among military men, and as it came to involve a pedagogical aspect, it became increasingly common among civilians of differing ages. Meanwhile, other elements of society began to practice the love of boys for purely carnal reasons. One overriding theme in Symonds study is that the Greeks made a careful and rigorous distinction between “pure” manifestations of male-male love and ones that involve commercial

86 Ranpo mentions this in a 1946 postscript to a reprinting of “J.A. Shimonzu no hisoka naru jōnetsu” (17: 100), the 1948 round-table discussion Edogawa Ranpo and Inagaki Taruho, “Dōsei ai no risō to genjitsu”: 30, and in the 1949 essay “Futari no shishō” (22: 51). Ranpo knew of A Problem in Greek Ethics at least as early as 1936, when he mentions in an essay that Gide had quoted it in Corydon (17: 68). Ranpo’s dream of translating the book never materialized. Incidentally, a 1960 note appended to a reprinting of one of his essays reveals that he had recently discovered that another Japanese author, Jugaku Bunshō, had provided an introduction to the text in his 1934 Shomotsu no michi (20: 285). Jugaku, a bibliophile interested in rare and unusual texts, gives an outline of Symonds’ major works and provides a detailed summary of a few texts, including A Problem in Greek Ethics. Interestingly, Jugaku consistently translates the Greek notion of paiderastia, described in Symonds’ text, with the word nanshoku. In one place, he comments that this translation is, in its narrow sense, inappropriate – probably because the cultural baggage associated with the two concepts is somewhat different. Jugaku, however, comments that he will use the term because he was unable think of anything better. Jugaku Bunshō, Shomotsu no michi (Tokyo: Shomotsu tenbōsha, 1934) 218.

87 Symonds, A Problem in Greek Ethics, 1.

88 Symonds, A Problem in Greek Ethics, 3.
transactions or licentiousness. Symonds quotes the *Dissertationes* of the second-century
Maximus of Tyre as providing an archetypal distinction.

> The one tends to the good of the beloved; the other to the ruin of both. The one is virtuous; the other
incontinent in all its acts. The one has its end in friendship; the other in hate. The one is freely given; the
other is bought and sold. The one brings praise; the other blame. The one is Greek; the other is
barbarous. The one is virile; the other effeminate. The one is firm and constant; the other light and
variable.\(^8\)

Perhaps more important, however, is the next part of the passage, which argues that the
“virtuous” type of male-male love leads to improved interpersonal relations and intense close
fraternization, whereas the “carnal” and hedonistic type of male-male love leads only to social
disorder.

> The man who loves the one love is a friend of God, a friend of law, fulfilled of modesty, and free of
speech. He dares to court his friend in daylight, and rejoices in his love. He wrestles with him in the
playground and runs with him in the race, goes afield with him to the hunt, and in battle fights for
glory at his side. In his misfortune he suffers, and at his death he dies with him. He needs no gloom of
night, no desert place, for this society. The other lover is a foe to heaven, for he is out of tune and
criminal; a foe to law, for he transgresses law. Cowardly, despairing, shameless, haunting the dusk,
lurking in desert places and secret dens, he would fain be never seen consorting with his friend, but
shuns the light of day, and follows after night and darkness, which the shepherd hates, but the thief
loves.\(^9\)

Symonds writes that by the time Maximus of Tyre wrote these passages, the sensuous
manifestations of male-male desire had increasingly overtaken its idealistic manifestations. Still,
he argues that certain voices within Greek society continued to delineate between the two types of
desire, at least until Greece became part of the Roman Empire. Afterward, the Romans
developed such a culture of carnality that Symonds says the Christians saw no choice but to
separate themselves “from nature, which had become incurable in its monstrosity of vices.”\(^9\)
The idea that the strictures of Christian Europe destroyed the open, Dionysian qualities of
classical civilization left a strong impression on Ranpo. In one of his essays, Ranpo writes that as
he read about Greek civilization, he felt himself growing antagonistic to Christianity, even though
he had not read the Bible himself and did not possess firsthand knowledge of the religion (22:
90).


In the essay “Hoittoman no hanashi” (“On Whitman”) published in the magazine *Shin seinen* in 1935, two years after his long essay on Symonds for *Seishin bunseki*, Ranpo discusses Walt Whitman as a modern writer who deals with the virtuous qualities of male-male love, much as Symonds had in his writing on the ancient Greeks.\(^9\) Interestingly, Ranpo’s article seems more concerned with Symonds’ reaction to Whitman’s work than the famous poems themselves. Drawing on the memoir *With Walt Whitman in Camden* by Horace Traubel (1858-1919), Ranpo writes that from about 1872 to 1890, Whitman and Symonds exchanged a large number of letters. In one early letter from 1888, which Ranpo translates into Japanese, Symonds presses Whitman to speak more about the nature of the “manly love” that appears in his famous collection *Leaves of Grass*.

> What the love of man for man has been in the Past I think I know. What it is here now, I know also – alas! What you say it can and shall be I dimly discern in your Poems. But this hardly satisfies me – so desirous am I of learning what you teach.
> Some day, perhaps – in some form, I know not what, but in your own chosen form – you will tell me more about the Love of Friends. Till then I wait.\(^9\)

Whitman responded evasively, apparently knowing full well that Symonds hoped for an explication of his views on male-male love, in both its amorous and erotic manifestations. Symonds continued to send more letters that approached the subject more circumspectly and apologized for his questions.\(^9\) Ranpo writes of this state of affairs, “The tenacity of the introverted Symonds which burned like a blue flame… The silence from Whitman each time… Isn’t this story so mysterious that it scares you somehow?” (17: 64). Finally, Whitman sent his famous response in a letter dated August 19, 1890, which Symonds partially reprints in *A Problem in Modern Ethics*.

> That the Calamus part [of *Leaves of Grass*] has ever allowed the possibility of such construction as mentioned is terrible. I am fain to hope the pages themselves are not to be ever mentioned for such

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Ranpo theorizes that Whitman’s apparent irritation was due to a mistaken impression that in asking about the poems, Symonds was insinuating that Whitman used male camaraderie to mask the “sick, criminal parts” of physical, erotic desire (17: 64).96 Ironically, Whitman was ultimately agreeing with the idea put forth in *A Problem of Greek Ethics*, namely that male-male desire could have positive manifestations with beneficial attributes and effects, such as greater fraternity between men, but these qualities were somehow lacking in displays of outright male-male eroticism.97 Both Whitman’s consternation-filled letter and Symonds’ study *A Problem of Greek Ethics* present the common assumption that homoeroticism and homosociality are quite different forms of desire with profoundly different effects.

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96 Symonds was indeed inquiring about the relationship between male-male sexual attraction and the feelings of camaraderie that Whitman describes, but he does not insinuate that they are “sick” or “criminal.” The August 3, 1890 letter that provoked this response had noted that the essay “New Spirit” by Havelock Ellis had expressed perplexity about the doctrine of “manly love” in the “Calamus” poems of *Leaves of Grass*. Symonds uses this as a springboard to ask, “In your conception of Comradeship, do you contemplate the possible intrusion of those semi-sexual emotions and actions which no doubt do occur between men? I do not ask, whether you approve of them, or regard them as a necessary part of the relation. But I should much like to know whether you are prepared to leave them to the inclinations and the conscience of the individuals concerned?” Symonds, *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, vol. 3, 482. Italics in the original.

97 The fact that Symonds essentially agreed with Whitman (at least on paper) is clear from his response. On September 5, 1890, he wrote to Whitman, “I am not surprised; for this indeed is what I understood to be your meaning, since I have studied *Leaves of Grass [sic]* in the right way – interpreting each part by reference to the whole and in the spirit of the whole. The result of this study was that the “adhesiveness” of comradeship had no interblending with the “amativeness” of sexual love.” Still, Symonds goes on to point that eroticism and camaraderie could spill into one another: “Yet you must not think that the ‘morbid inferences,’ which to you ‘seem damnable,’ are quite ‘gratuitous’ or outside the rage of possibility.” He points out that the feelings Whitman describes are like those of the early Greeks with their “enthusiasm of comradeship in arms” and like those of the “certain percentage (small but appreciable) of male beings” who are born with “inverted” tendencies. Still, in the end, Symonds emphasizes that one should think of homosocial camaraderie and homoeroticism as separate entities, and he agrees not to lump them together when talking about Whitman’s work: “I am so profoundly convinced that you are right in all you say about the great good which is to be expected from Comradeship as you conceive it, and as alone it can be a salutary human bond, that the power of repudiating those “morbid inferences” authoritatively – should they ever be made seriously or uttered openly, either by your detractors of by the partizans of some vicious crankiness – sets me quite at ease as to my own course.” Symonds, *The Letters of John Addington Symonds*, vol. 3, 493.
The interest of these two writers in forms of male-male love that excluded eroticism is quite similar to the interest Ranpo professed in his own essays. No doubt for Ranpo, as well as Whitman and Symonds, the distinction between camaraderie and carnal desire allowed him to render his own interest in the manifestations of male-male desire – the “good” manifestations at least – ideologically respectable. In Ranpo’s eyes, the writings of Symonds and Whitman no doubt reinforced the notion that homosociality and homoeroticism represented two neighboring but significantly different ways for men to interact with one another.

**Ranpo’s “Grecomania” and Musa Puerilis**

For Ranpo, Symonds’ writings served as an introduction to the culture and writings of ancient Greece, which would fascinate him for years to come. In his essays, Ranpo sometimes referred to his readings in Symonds as the beginning of his period of “Grecomania” (17: 53; 22: 90). The essay “Shosai no tabi” (“Travels in My Study”) from 1940 describes elaborate visions of daily life in the ancient Peloponnesus, thus demonstrating that Ranpo’s interest extended to many areas of Greek culture. Nonetheless, the essay comments that Symonds’ *A Problem in Greek Ethics* left a particularly profound impression – a clue that his interest in Greece during the 1930s sprung from the discovery that male-male desire played a large role in classical Greek culture (17: 53). Not only did Ranpo peruse Japanese translations of the Greek classics, he also turned to the dual English and Greek editions of the Loeb Classical Library to read works not yet available in translation. Among the titles he is known to have read were *The Lives of Eminent Philosophers* by Diogenes Laertius, which often mentions the affections that certain thinkers bore for their teachers and followers, and *The Deipnosophists* by Athenaeus of Naucratis, which describes everything from the glories of food and the personalities of the cooks who made it to the philosophy, lifestyles, customs, and amorous proclivities of the people who consumed it.98

One work that particularly interested Ranpo was *Musa Puerilis* (sometimes also called *Musa Paedika* or, in English, *The Adolescent Muse*), an anthology of poetic epigrams believed to have been compiled by Strato of Sardeis, a poet from the early second century CE.99 Ranpo first

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discusses the collection in “J.A. Shimonzu no hisoka naru jōnetsu,” where he provides a translation of Symonds’ paraphrase of Strato’s famous epigram of the garland-weaver (17: 92). This tender work, ripe with romantic longing, describes the narrator’s passion upon encountering a particularly lovely youth in a garland-weaver’s stall. In the original, the narrator approaches the youth and speaks to him, but the boy blushes and hurriedly sends him away. The narrator then buys some flowers as a pretense to be near him and prays to the gods that they might be together. In Symonds’ expanded, Victorian reinterpretation, the boy does not send his admirer away but suggestively kisses a bud and hands it to him. The narrator pretends to be hosting to a bridal feast, and he asks the boy to come deck his room with flowers so that they might be together for a moment. In a later note appended to “J.A. Shimonzu no hisoka naru jōnetsu,” Ranpo writes that he realized how creative Symonds’ version was only when he read other translations of the same poem after publishing his article. He comments that Symonds’ interpretation was undoubtedly colored by his own “passion” for male-male desire (17: 92).

At some point in the 1930s or 1940s, Ranpo translated a number of other epigrams from Musa Puerilis. In 1947, he unearthed two drafts of his translations and published them in the article “Shudō kasen” (“Linked Verses on Male Love”) in the magazine Kindai kidan (Strange Tales of Modernity). While some of the short poetic works in Musa Puerilis are quaint and tender, a number, including the two in “Shudō kasen,” are done in a comic vein. The first, which is by Strato, provides a clear expression of erotic interest in a man’s derrière: “If a plank pinched Graphicus’ behind in the bath, what will become of me, a man? Even wood feels.” The second, which Ranpo mistakenly attributes to Strato but which is actually by Statyllius Flaccus, is also comic: “Just as he is getting his beard, Lado, the fair youth, cruel to lovers [ἐρασταῖς], is in love with a boy. Nemesis [the goddess of retribution] is swift.” The work implies that Lado, who was once cold to those who wanted him, is now filled with frustrated sexual passion because the boy he desires is unresponsive to his overtures. In his translation, Ranpo has rendered the Greek

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101 Symonds, Studies of the Greek Poets, 525.

102 Republished as Edogawa Ranpo, “Wakashū kasen,” Edogawa Ranpo suiri bunko, vol. 60, 44. Ranpo was likely using the dual language text of the Loeb Classical Library as his original.

erastes as nenja, a term used in the period of the Warring States and the Edo Period to refer to the older partner in a sexual relationship, thus equating the division of roles within the Greek system of erotics to the division of roles in pre-Meiji nanshoku. In doing so, he assumes a rough equivalency between the Greek system of paiderastia and the pre-Meiji system of nanshoku, which typically featured the pattern of a one-way progression from younger, desired wakashu to older, desiring nenja.104

In the early 1950s, Ranpo’s friend Inagaki Taruho began planning an anthology of works about shōnen’ai (the love of youths), and he asked Ranpo to contribute a number of translations from Musa Puerilis. The anthology never materialized, but in an essay from 1954, Taruho published Ranpo’s translations of the works he had discovered at the height of his period of “Grecomania.”105 Taruho included a Ranpo’s re-translation of Strato’s poem about the garland-weaver, the two short pieces included in “Wakashu kasen,” and nine other selections. Several express attraction to youths or disappointment that a beloved boy has developed facial hair and lost his boyish beauty. One of the epigrams Ranpo translated is by Strato, who humorously describes the turning of tables when a beloved boy comes of age and wants not just to be penetrated by his partner, but to do some penetrating as well.

I delight in a prime of a boy of twelve, but one of thirteen is much more desirable. He who is fourteen is a still sweeter flower of the Loves, and one who is just beginning his fifteenth year is yet more delightful. The sixteenth year is that of the gods, and as for the seventeenth it is not for me, but for Zeus, to seek it. But if one has a desire for those still older, he no longer plays, but now seeks “And answering his back.”106

Ranpo also includes another epigram by Strato, which couches erotic thoughts in a humorous address to a scroll held by a particularly beloved youth.

Happy little book, I grudge it thee not; some boy reading thee will rub thee, holding thee under his chin, or press thee against his delicate lips, or will roll thee up resting on his tender thighs, O most

104 The Greek system of pederastia and Japanese nanshoku were not completely congruous in all respects, but Ranpo, like a number of his contemporaries who mention ancient Greece in their own writings about male-male desire in Japan, assumed a certain degree of correspondence between them.

105 Inagaki Taruho, “Shin inu tsurezuregusa,” 263-67. Taruho had intended to call the anthology Momoiro no hankachi (The Peach-Colored Handkerchief) in reference to his 1924 story “R-chan to S no hanashi” about a boy who falls in love with a schoolmate with a lacy handkerchief of this color. In 1974, Taruho’s publisher released a collection of writings about the love of boys under the title Momoiro no hankachi, but it included only Taruho’s works. See Inagaki Taruho, Momoiro no hankachi (Tokyo: Gendai shichōsha, 1974).

The fact that Ranpo chose these humorous erotic poems for inclusion in Taruho’s anthology demonstrates his ongoing interest in Greek sexuality even in the postwar period. During the 1920s, when he wrote about eroticism between men, especially in the essays describing schoolboy love in his own youth, he did so warily, emphasizing what he saw as a profound difference between homosocial and homoerotic desire. These translations by Ranpo suggest, however, that several decades later, he was more willing to lend his name to treatments of male-male desire that did not resort to defensive statements delineating between homoerotic and homosocial desire.

* * *

In the mid-1930s, as Ranpo’s Grecomania reached its zenith, financial and work-related considerations forced Ranpo to write fewer long essays about male-male desire. In his memoirs, he writes that reviewing the monumental works of Symonds in English alone proved a formidable task that kept him from writing fiction for a long time. In fact, Ranpo published no fiction whatsoever between December 1932 and October 1933, the period during which his long article on Symonds was serialized in *Seishin bunseki*. As pressure mounted from his editors at *Shin seinen* to produce another story, he writes that he had no choice but to stop writing manuscripts like the long one on Symonds, which offered no payment in return for his labor (20: 285). As a result, most of his later treatments of male-male desire from 1933 onward are limited to the relatively short essays, interviews, and brief translations mentioned in this and the previous chapters.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s when the Pacific War got under way, Ranpo’s writing about same-sex desire was confined solely to his correspondence with Iwata Jun’ichi and the perhaps the undated translations from *Musa Puerilis*. After the war, he helped publish work of Iwata, who had died in 1945. While no doubt part of his motivation came from the wish to

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108 In response to the demands of *Shin seinen*, Ranpo started serializing the story “Akuryō” (“The Evil Spirit”) in November of 1933, but he discontinued the story after three installments. Clearly, his heart was not in the story.
preserve the work to which Iwata had dedicated an important part of his life, another was his desire to promote the view that male-male desire had played an inalienable role in history – a view he espoused in his literary essays written in the early 1930s. Meanwhile, Ranpo continued to collect works on male-male desire. In 1949, well after the deaths of both Hamao Shirō and Iwata Jun’ichi, he wrote,

Having lost my two teachers, I am completely alone. That is because there probably is not anyone else anywhere who is interested in such bibliographic sources. An interest in which no one in the world shares, an interest that I alone in this large world have – from this thought a strange attachment bubbles up within me, and it seems that I will be unable to give up my hunt for these sources (22: 52).

Nonetheless, in 1953, he wrote that “since the end of the war, research and essays dealing with homosexuality have started to appear at a surprising rate.” As a result, he writes, “I feel as I have lost ten to twenty percent of my interest in this subject.” With the liberalization of censorship after the end of the occupation of Japan, there was an explosion of light reading on sexuality, which included the new magazines Ningen tankyū and Amatoria. As the identical subtitle of these two journals “Bunkajin no sei kagaku shi” (A Magazine of Sexual Science for Cultivated People) indicates, these two magazines contain discussions of many manifestations of sexuality, including male-male eroticism, in a format that is titillating but preserves a façade of respectability. Although these journals often describe such manifestations as aberrant, their exposés often reveal a curiosity or understated interest in the subject. In many ways, the sympathetic yet reticent tone of Ranpo’s essays from the early 1930s anticipated the attitudes of these postwar journals.

Ranpo did contribute a small amount to the rising tide of postwar writing on male-male desire. In 1948, he cooperated with Inagaki Taruho to produce a round-table discussion for the small magazine Kuiin, which describes manifestations of same-sex desire in Japanese, classical Greek, and modern European and American literature. In it, he mentions a large number of the titles that he had uncovered during his bibliographic searches during the 1930s, and he touches briefly upon the highlights of a number of texts. For a special May 1952 issue of Ningen


111 Edogawa Ranpo and Inagaki Taruho, “Dōsei ai no risō to genjitsu.” Because the magazine Kuiin had a relatively small circulation and promptly went out of print, Taruho summarized the conversation in 1951 for the Nagoya literary journal Sakka (Authors). See Inagaki Taruho, “E-shi to no isseki: Dōsei ai no risō to genjitsu o megutte” Inagaki Taruho zenshū, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2000) 346-66. For Ranpo’s comments on the conversation, see 22:46. Incidentally, an essay about the beauty of nanshoku appeared
tankyū on self-published books having to do with eroticism, he wrote an essay describing his friendship with Iwata and listing a number of key findings during in their joint bibliographical searches (22: 44-51). The following month, he published another remembrance of Iwata Jun’ichi in Ningen tankyū.112 None of these two essays, however, shows any sign that Ranpo had continued his bibliographic researches in the postwar period.

As the publishing industry recovered during the Allied occupation of Japan, Ranpo began writing an overwhelming number of articles about his past as a writer and the history of the detective novel. Between 1945 and 1949, however, the only piece of fiction he published was the conclusion to a children’s series he had started published during the war. When he finally started publishing fiction again in January 1949, he wrote primarily for a juvenile audience. Seidō no majin (The Magic Man of Bronze), serialized through December 1949 in the magazine Shōnen (Youth), was the first of many wildly popular mystery-adventure novels for adolescents that starred the detective hero Akechi Kogorō and his trusted sidekick, the adolescent Kobayashi. Although these mysteries feature the homosocial love between the detective mentor and his young protégé, there is no mention of any physical dimension to their relationship. Over the remainder of his life, Ranpo wrote little else about male homoeroticism, leaving the subject for a new generation of writers.

under Ranpo’s name in the journal Senryū matsuri (A Festival of Humorous Verse) in November 1948, but this was written by a ghost writer. The fact that this article was written under Ranpo’s name, however, shows that Ranpo was known in literary circles for his appreciation of male-male desire.

Because Murayama Kaita and Edogawa Ranpo were close contemporaries, born only two years apart, and were of a similar socioeconomic class, they shared similar educational backgrounds. During their days in college preparatory school, both experienced the culture of schoolboy love, and even after graduation, they continued to cherish the memories of the bishōnen they loved during their schooldays. Kaita’s posthumously published works include a large number of poems written during the height of his largely unreciprocated passion for his schoolmate Inō Kiyoshi. The descriptions of passion included in these poems reflect a passion grounded in an aesthetic appreciation of boyish beauty. Consequently, they differ significantly from the kinds of predatory erotic passions described in Mori Ōgai’s novel Wita sekusuarisu (Vita Sexualis), which connects male-male desire with a gruff and harsh masculinity that rejects anything suggestion of the feminine. Ranpo’s autobiographical essay “Ranpo uchiakebanashi” from 1926 notes that many students at his school in Nagoya adhered to this kind of brusque form of masculinity; nonetheless, he was able to forge a relationship with a bishōnen based on an egalitarian, passionate friendship grounded in mutual attraction.

Although these two writers experienced similar attractions to other boys during their youths, the ways they wrote about these infatuations were conditioned by external literary factors and their own thematic interests. As shown in Chapter One, Kaita’s poetry concerning his feelings for other boys is heavily colored by the highly ornate, pseudo-symbolist, aesthetic language that became fashionable in poetic circles with the success of Ueda Bin’s anthology Kaichōōn (The Sound of the Tide) and the poetry of Kitahara Hakushū. Not coincidentally, Kaita’s family was personally acquainted with Bin, Hakushū, and a number of other important figures in the literary world, and as a matter of fact, it was Mori Ōgai, one of the best known writers of the time, who introduced Kaita’s parents. As a result, Kaita seems to have seen himself, at least during his days as a schoolboy, as born to Japan’s literary elite, and he expended great effort to cultivate the writer he thought to exist in himself. The symbolist view of the poet as a visionary who transposed manifestations of beauty and other profound feelings into rich webs of evocative language greatly appealed to him, and so he turned to one of the subjects that moved
him most – the beauty of Inō and other boys – as inspiration for his poetry. There is little
evidence that he paid much, if any heed to the tendency of medical practitioners and sexologists to
describe male-male love as pathological and deleterious to one’s health. Instead, his poetry
describes boyish beauty as a source of the powerful “music of decadence” that poet should listen
to when producing art (32). Other poems show a contrary pleasure in the Wertheresque feelings
of dejection that he felt; however, these celebrations of decadent and morose feelings in no way
reflect the pathologizing views of same-sex desire espoused by the medical and sexological
establishments. To the contrary, they are closely related to Kaita’s project of cultivating and even
indulging in personal feeling.

Kaita’s prose displays a connection between male-male desire, “decadence,” and
antisocial activity in several works, although they make no overt reference to sexological or
medical discourse. His incomplete play “Shuten dōji” (“The Saké-Drinking Youth”) from 1914
presents male-male desire within a work that presents a vision of decadent beauty and heightened
sensibilities that can arise as the result of horror. Likewise, his two mystery-adventure stories
“Satsujin gyōja” (“The Murdering Ascetic”) and “Akuma no shita” (“The Diabolical Tongue”) from 1915 describe the murderous activities of two protagonists who become outlaws, one while
hypnotized by his former male lover, and the other while giving in to powerful cannibalistic
desires. In each case, Kaita treats the protagonists as the subject of interest, not condemnation.
The fact that the texts do not find fault with the perpetrators of the crimes hints at Kaita’s personal
sympathy with the characters, even while reflecting a clear awareness that their desires had little
space within adult society.

The fiction Ranpo wrote during the 1920s, when eroticism and the grotesque were
becoming increasingly common in popular fiction, also displays a fascination with feelings and
acts that society considered antisocial and strange, including male-male desire. Typically,
however, the narrators of these works defensively identify themselves as not interested in sex
with other men, and their descriptions of male-male desire are couched in reservations that label it
strange or uncanny. The result is a contradictory push-and-pull dynamic within the texts. At the
same time the works present protracted evocations of same-sex desire that fulfill the scopophilic
curiosity of readers, they present it from the relatively safe point of view of so-called “normality,”
thus setting up a protective distance between reader and the actions and feelings described in the
text. Nonetheless, the 1929-1930 novel Kotō no oni (The Demon of the Lonely Isle), Ranpo’s
longest work to deal with male-male desire, sometimes subverts the view of male-male desire as
perverse or strange by presenting alternate, more favorable or sympathetic images that overturn
the assumptions presented elsewhere within the novel. In other words, within Kotō no oni, the
tension between the scopophilic desire to depict same-sex desire and the need to remain within
the safe world of “normalcy” gives way to a complicated struggle to find an appropriate idiom to
describe male-male love and eroticism.

Clearly, Ranpo was writing from a different epistemic vantage point than Kaita had
during the mid-1910s. Whereas Kaita’s mystery-adventure stories relegate male-male eroticism
to a marginal position within society without condemning it directly, Ranpo’s early fiction, while
apparently interested in scenes of homoeroticism, expresses reservations about it, largely because
the texts are narrated from the point of view of characters who think of cross-sex desire as the
default state of normality. In later works, however, Ranpo turns to non-fiction to explore the
theme of same-sex desire. Most likely, he felt that mysteries, especially stories that appeal to the
popularity of eroticism and the grotesque, tended to skew its portrayals of homoerotic desire to
match the tastes of the general reading public. The essays he wrote in the 1930s show a
comparatively rational attempt to explore the subject of male-male desire. Although he remained
hesitant to write about adult homoeroticism in a light that embraced it categorically, he eagerly
wrote about expressions of male-male love he found in important works of literature, especially
ones that were less likely to be seen by contemporary Japanese as immoral or degenerate. These
literary expressions of same-sex desire gave him ammunition as he argued for the importance of
the position of male-male love in social and literary history.

In 1934, when Ranpo wrote about Kaita’s works in the essay “Kaita Ni shōnen zu”
(“Kaita and His Portrait of Two Boys”) Ranpo describes Kaita’s work as embodying a particularly
innocent, platonic, and idealizing form of male-male love. In the process, he draws an implicit
distinction between the homosocial boyish attraction in Kaita’s work and overt expressions of
homoerotic desire. The same defensive attitude is more pronounced in Ranpo’s description of his
own romance with another schoolboy, which he zealously defends as platonic in nature.
Although this kind of defense ultimately has the problematic result of reifying the notion that
homosociality and homoeroticism represent two profoundly different ways for males to relate to
one another, Ranpo’s ultimate purpose seems to have been to reclaim a portion of that spectrum
of male-male relationships from sexologists who, like Habuto Eiji and Sawada Junjirō in Hentai
seiyoku ron (On Perverse Sexual Desire), treated even platonic manifestations of “same-sex love”
as potentially dangerous. In short, Ranpo used his personal and literary narratives as an implicit
social critique against those voices that categorically condemned all manifestations of male-male
desire.
Encouraged by his friends Hamao Shirō and Iwata Jun’ichi who saw a lack of understanding of male-male love and its place in society as significant social problem, Ranpo continued writing essays about the important role that male-male love had played in literary history. Some essays, such as “J.A. Shimonzu no hisoka naru jōnetsu” (“The Secret Passion of J.A. Symonds”) published in 1933, reveal his hope that “scientific understandings” of “abnormal psychology” could improve the quality of life for people suffering as a result of the popular misapprehension that male-male erotic desire arose as the result of psychological illness (17:82). (Hamao Shirō had presented this argument three years earlier in two articles that drew extensively on the thought of Edward Carpenter.) Ranpo’s article reveals that he did not necessarily think of the entire psychological and medical establishment itself as the enemy of same-sex desire. (Ranpo had, after all, joined the Seishin bunseki kenkyūkai [Group for Psychoanalytic Research], headed by the Freudian psychologist Ōtsuki Kenji, for the express purpose of finding a group of people willing to talk about male-male love.) Rather, the problem was the moralistic tendency of society to teach that sexual activity, especially among members of the same sex, was undesirable, unclean, and immoral – a theme often repeated in the moralistic denunciations of “same-sex love” by sexologists.

The writings of both Kaita and Ranpo represent two voices within a long, ongoing, multifaceted cultural dialogue in Japan about the meaning of male-male love and eroticism – a dialogue given new urgency in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by the proliferation of writing about sex and the notion that certain forms of sexuality were unhealthy and even uncivilized. Caught up in the midst of this dialogue, both writers responded in their own respective ways and used different modes of representation as they explored and worked out for themselves what male-male love meant. It is clear from the relatively diverse representations in their writing, however, that what male-male desire signified to them at any given moment had as much, if not more to do with other personal and thematic concerns as with the kinds of discourse circulating in society at large. At the same time, Kaita and Ranpo’s treatments of the subject do not represent flat works that can easily be pigeonholed as simply representing one view of same-sex desire or another. Instead, they represent complicated, idiosyncratic engagements, not just with the rhetoric of “same-sex love,” but with a wider array of themes that include art, friendship, decadence, excitement, and even the nature of modernity itself.
APPENDIX A:

FIGURES
Figure 1: Murayama Kaita, *Jigazō (Self-Portrait, 1916)*, Oil on canvas, Mie Prefectural Art Museum.

Source: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita Self-Portrait, 12 Dec 2003
Figure 2: Murayama Kaita, Inō zō (Portrait of Inō, ca. 1913), Watercolor on paper, Shinano Drawing Museum.

Figure 3: Murayama Kaita, Cover illustration for Rak-gaki (Graffiti), one of the homemade magazines in which Kaita circulated his earliest work (ca. 1911), Watercolor on paper, Whereabouts unknown.

Source: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 130.
Figure 4: Murayama Kaita, The “Pink Love Letter” (ca. 1913), Watercolor on paper, Mie Prefectural Art Museum.

Source: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 115.
Figure 5: Murayama Kaita, Detail of the “Pink Love Letter” showing a figure seated in a park by a fountain.

Source: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, Cover.
Figure 6: Photo of Yanase Masamu (ca. 1916) when he was a student at the Nihon bijutsuin (Japan Art Institute). Pinned to the wall behind him is Kaita’s woodblock print *Ibari suru otoko* (*Urinating Man*). The presence of Kaita’s woodblock print in Masamu’s quarters testifies to the closeness of the relationship between the two.

Figure 7: Murayama Kaita, *Ibari suru otoko* (*Urinating Man*, ca. 1915), Woodblock print on paper. This is the same woodblock print that appears in the above photograph of Yanase Masamu.

Figure 8: Murayama Kaita, *Ibari suru razō (Nude Monk Urinating, 1915)*, Oil on canvas, Shinano Drawing Museum.

(Left) Figure 9: Murayama Kaita, Page from sketchbook (1915), Ink and graphite on paper, Shinano Drawing Museum.

(Right) Figure 10: Murayama Kaita, *Ibari suru razō* (Nude Monk Urinating, 1915), Graphite on paper, Library of Musashino Art University.

Figure 11: Murayama Kaita, Page from sketchbook (1915) Ink on paper, Shinano Drawing Museum. On the right, Kaita has written “People I like.” The heads are labeled, from left to right, “Danton,” “Robespierre,” and “Greek bishōnen.”

Figure 12: Murayama Kaita, Study of human figures (1915), Ink on paper, Shinano Drawing Museum. In the upper right hand corner, Kaita has written the word “decadence” in English.

Source: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 61, 66.

281
Figure 13: Murayama Kaita, *Otoko* (*Man*, ca. 1917-18), Oil on canvas, Private Collection.

Figure 14: Box to the first edition of *Kaita no utaeru* (Songs of Kaita) with an undated illustration by Murayama Kaita. The words “Half Animalism” [*sic*] under the figure are Kaita’s translation of the final word from the title of the Naturalist writer Iwano Hōmei’s famous treatise, *Shinpiteki hanjūshugi* (Mysterious Half-Animalism, 1906).

Figure 15 Leonardo da Vinci, *Study of the Heads of an Old Man and a Youth*, Drawing on paper, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence. Walter Pater speculates that Andrea Salaino might have been the model for the youth on the right.

Figure 16: Flemish artist (Formerly attributed to Leonardo da Vinci), *Head of Medusa* (16th century), Oil on wood, Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Figure 17: Aubrey Beardsley, *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* (1893), Ink and watercolor on paper. Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey.

Figure 18 (Left): Leonardo da Vinci, *La Gioconda*  
(Mona Lisa, 1503-06), Oil on Wood, Musée de Louvre, Paris.

Figure 19 (Right): Murayama Kaita, *Kosui to onna*  
(Woman by a Lake, 1917), Oil on Canvas, Pola Museum of Art.

Sources (Fig. 18) Louvre Museum Official Website, 12 Dec 2003 <http://www.louvre.fr/louvream.htm>.  
(Fig. 19) Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 83.
Figure 20: Murayama Kaita’s illustration for the first publication of “Satsujin gyōja” (“The Murdering Ascetic”) in Bukyō sekai (World of Heroism). Toda Genkichi walking in the mountains where he spots a cave in the side of a hill. Hidden inside is the lair of a murderous gang of thieves.

Figure 21: Murayama Kaita’s illustration for the first publication of “Satsujin gyōja” in Bukyō sekai. Toda is brought bound before the leader of the gang, Nomiya Kōtarō, who as a schoolboy, happens to have been the object of Toda’s love.

Figure 22: Murayama Kaita’s illustration for the first publication of “Satsujin gyōja” in Bukyō sekai. Nomiya approaches Toda who, in a hypnotic trance, has just killed his wife Toyoko.

Figure 23: Murayama Kaita’s illustration for the first publication of “Akuma no shita” (“The Diabolical Tongue”) in *Bukyō sekai*. Kaneko Eikichi sticks out his tongue, which has become unusually large as the result of a mysterious illness.

Figure 24: Murayama Kaita’s illustration for the first publication of “Akuma no shita” in *Bukyō sekai*. After eating most of the corpse of his attractive young murder victim, Kaneko discovers a crescent-shaped birthmark on his victim’s foot and realizes to his horror that he has just eaten his estranged half-brother.

Figure 25: Murayama Kaita, *Kojiki to onna (The Beggar and the Woman, 1917)*, Oil on canvas, Whereabouts unknown (Probably destroyed).

Figure 26: Murayama Kaita, *Ni shōnen zu* (Portrait of Two Boys, 1914), Watercolor on paper, Setagaya Literary Museum.

(Left) Figure 27: Photo of Murayama Kaita’s 1914 watercolor *Ni shōnen zu* in the house of Edogawa Ranpo in the early Shōwa period.

(Right) Figure 28: Ranpo seated below Murayama Kaita’s *Ni shōnen zu*. The writing along the top of the photo reads, “My Picture by Kaita,” and along the side is the date March 1939. The photo is inscribed with thanks for the recipient’s work on a book display.

Sources:
(Fig. 27) Shinpo Hirohisa, ed., *Edogawa Ranpo arubamu* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō shinsha, 1994) 58;
(Fig. 28) Aranami Chikara, *Hidaruma Kaita* (Tokyo: Shunshūsha, 1996) 9.
Figure 29: Ranpo’s manuscript for the essay “Murayama Kaita” in *Tantei shōsetsu yon-jū-nen* (Forty Years of Detective Fiction), Setagaya Literary Museum. (See translation in Appendix B.)

Figure 30: Ishii Tsuruzō, Death mask of Murayama Kaita (1919), Mie Prefectural Art Museum. In the essay “Murayama Kaita Ni shōnen zu,” Edogawa Ranpo compares Kaita’s face as seen in this death mask to that of the boy on the right hand side of the painting Ni shōnen zu (Fig. 26).

Source: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 146.
Figure 31: Sketch of Edogawa Ranpo’s study included in his scrapbook. On the left margin is a sketch of Kaita’s painting *Ni shōnen zu*. The sketch was first published in Yoshida Kenkichi, “Bundan kō gengaku: Sakka no shosai o miru,” *Shinchō* 31.6 (Jun 1934): 145.

Figure 32: Postcard of Asakusa Park from the Taishō period. On the far left is the Sekai-kan theater, and on the right is the Hyōtan-ike. The skyscraper in the center is the famous twelve-storied Ryōunkaku, which served as a symbol of Japanese modernity until its destruction after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. Most of Ranpo’s visits to Asakusa, however, were when he was living in Tokyo after the earthquake.

Figure 33: Photograph of the buildings along the southwest side of Hyōtan-ike in Asakusa Park during the Taishō period. Many of the buildings are movie theaters and stages.

Figure 34: Postcard showing the twelve-storied Ryōunkaku before and after the Great Kantō Earthquake of September 1, 1923. Collection of the author.
Figure 35: Taishō-period photo of the bustling streets of Rokku, the entertainment district of Asakusa Park. The streets are lined with movie theaters and other businesses.

Source: Ranpo no jidai: Shōwa ero, guro, nansensu, 69.
Figure 36: Early Shōwa-period postcard showing Rokku in Asakusa Park as Ranpo probably saw it. On the right is the Denkikan, one of the most popular cinemas in Tokyo. Although films had been shown elsewhere before, the Denkikan, which opened in October 1903, was the first theater in Japan to specialize regularly in film. In 1926, the building was rebuilt in concrete and iron scaffolding, as it is seen here.

Figure 37: Kimura Shōhachi, *Asakusa fūkei (Asakusa Scene)*, Watercolor. This undated painting, probably from the early Shōwa period, gives a sense of the bustle and energy of Asakusa during the time that Ranpo frequented it. Students, female entertainers, and men in fashionable hats can be seen wandering through the painting.

Figure 38: Illustration by Takenaka Eitarō for *Kotō no oni* (*The Demon of the Lonely Isle*, 1929). This illustration comes at the beginning of the installment in which Moroto Michio describes being seduced by his hunchbacked mother. The picture, with the lumps upon the mother’s back and her unsettling, predatory expression, was clearly designed to entice readers with its atmosphere of eroticism and grotesquerie. The words at the right of the illustration identify the genre of the novel as “a detective story about the bizarre.”

Figure 39: Illustration by Takenaka Eitarō for Kotō no oni. Moroto is about to be seduced by his mother. Halfway through the novel, Moroto offers an account of repeated molestation by his mother to explain his horror for women and his sexual preference for men.

Figure 40: Illustration by Takenaka Eitarō for Kotō no oni. In this scene, Moroto and Minoura are trapped in a series of subterranean caverns. Moroto appears as if he is about to take advantage of Minoura, who is weak from exhaustion and hunger.

Figure 41: Illustration by Takenaka Eitarō for Kotō no oni. Moroto forces himself on the tired and exhausted Minoura. The embrace is interrupted a moment later when someone discovers them in the darkness.

Figure 42: Photograph from a 1929 round-table discussion on the detective novel. From left to right are Kōga Saburō, Edogawa Ranpo, Hamao Shirō, Ōshita Udaru, Katō Takeo, and Morishita Uson. Kōga, Ranpo, Hamao, and Ōshita were all detective writers who published extensively in Shin seinen. Katō was a representative of Bungei jidai, the journal that hosted this discussion. Uson had been the editor-in-chief of Shin seinen in 1923 when Ranpo made his literary debut.

Figure 43: Edogawa Ranpo and Iwata Jun’ichi outside of Tsu Station, Mie Prefecture in September 1938. Ranpo identified Iwata Jun’ichi and Hamao Shirō as his two “great teachers” on the subject of same-sex desire.

Figure 44: Photo of the shelves inside the earthen storehouse that Ranpo used as a study. The boxes, which are labeled in Ranpo’s hand, contain editions of old, rare books. On the center shelf are a number of titles that have to do with male-male desire and *bishōnen*.

Figure 45: Iwata Jun’ichi’s 1927 illustration for Ranpo’s short story “Odoru Issun-bōshi” (“The Dancing Dwarf”). The illustration shows the title character enacting murderous revenge against members of a circus troupe that has been cruel to him.

Figure 46: Iwata Jun’ichi’s 1927 illustration for Ranpo’s novella *Panorama-tō kidan* (*The Strange Tale of Panorama Isle*). This illustration shows fireworks extending like a great spider across the sky of Panorama Isle. Below is a tumult of bodies engaging in orgiastic pleasure in a lake full of flowers.

Source: Edogawa Ranpo, “Ni-sen dōka” hoka jū-shichi hen, 529.
APPENDIX B:

ORIGINAL TRANSLATIONS
THE BUST OF THE BEAUTIFUL YOUNG SALAINO

(Bishōnen Saraino no kubi)

ca. 1913-1914, Published posthumously

By Murayama Kaita

It was a night thick with yearning, a yearning so thick that it was as if dark purple and precious black liqueur covered the earth and filled the air. On that terrifying night, little white and red specks of light shimmered throughout the landscape, some near, some far.

As I watched these lights glittering nearby and in the distance, they called to me like a nostalgic longing for the past. They reminded me of the eyes of women in ancient Greek art. I could not help thinking someone had gouged out the limpid eyes of beautiful Greek women and strung them across the night.

I was on the prowl. I was prowling aimlessly through Kyoto that October evening. My skin was numb from the night. It had been dyed by the beautiful night sky. Purple. My thoughts had wandered, but to where, I didn’t know. Yet my eyes managed to locate every beautiful thing in sight. With every second, my eyes shifted like a moving picture and came to rest on a different sight, each exquisite in its own right. I gazed at the river. I gazed at a gathering of women. I gazed at a group of lights.

I passed through a cluster of shadows. I crossed a bridge. I passed through a large temple gate and looked at the stars. And so it went. It was already the middle of the night by the time I came to the boundary of the earth and the dark sky. I stood in an evil field, right in a patch

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1 This story was written in late 1913 or early 1914, but because Kaita’s plans for publishing it in a Kyoto coterie magazine fell through, it was not published until 1921 when it appeared in the posthumous collection Kaita no utaeru sono go oyobi Kaita no hanashi (Songs of Kaita Continued, Plus Stories about Kaita). This translation was based upon Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, Revised 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Yayoi shobō, 1997) 201-04 and will appear in William Tyler, ed., Modanizumu: An Anthology of Modernist Japanese Prose 1914-1939 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, Forthcoming).
of mud. The city twinkled in the distance. At some point in my wanderings, I had left it behind. I was now in pitch-blackness. The night was quiet in its profundity. Wildly quiet. My thoughts descended into a deep, deep hole.

A sudden, unexpected chill came over me, and with it, my heart skipped a beat. My tempestuous passion revived. That was when I caught sight of the bust of Salaino. He was a vision. The object of my devotion. My beloved. My lover. I was looking at the head of my beloved Salaino. It was bronze, a mass of deep red bronze. Thousands of serpents writhed about it. His beautiful hair convulsed wildly and without restraint, rising in alternating waves of pleasure and anguish. In the midst of that tangled fog of serpents, his eyes glittered, yet remained motionless.

He was staring right at me. Yet no matter how much I stared back, I could see no more of him than his neck and head. The depths of his eyes revealed a profound affection. They were clad in layer upon layer of emotion like a kimono of twelve robes piled upon his beautiful, opulent naked body. I waited, gazing intently at the regalia of affection in his eyes. How beautiful his eyes were! His eyelashes were as resplendent as the tail of a peacock.

I was happy. Oh, so happy! This beautiful young man seemed to bear me no ill will. His eyes looked at me with a touch of embarrassment. He said nothing, but I knew he loved me. His lips were as red as fire, as crimson as flame. “Salaino… Salaino…” I called his name, and he smiled. His eyes shone like a light, like a diamond before my eyes. I called again, “Salaino…” This time my voice grew stronger. It echoed far, far across the midnight darkness and returned to where I stood. Salaino’s head smiled at me with a disarming look.

But then, that forbidding genius Leonardo rose out of nowhere, and the head of my beautiful, young Salaino – that bust of bronze – flew away, reeling into the darkness of the night. I cried out, “He’s gone! He whom I worship is gone!” I glared at Leonardo, and a shudder of fear shot through me. “Salaino… The head of my beautiful Salaino…” Leonardo had cast it aside, sending it hurtling toward the heavens. With savage speed, the beautiful bust had flown away and vanished. I was filled with pain. Salaino’s form had disappeared from sight, and Leonardo’s forbidding face had taken its place.

Leonardo’s eyes were dead. His body was dead. He had been bewitched by the Medusa, and in a ghastly act, turned to stone. But no, his eyes spoke. His arms moved. His mouth trembled with indignation. I was now his enemy. Here was the great Leonardo, and he was pitted against me. This was the face of Leonardo da Vinci in 1502. He asked, “Do you love my Salaino?”
“Yes,” I answered.

Leonardo retorted, “But Salaino is my adonis!” The words filled me with pain. The darkness was so deep. Truly, I did love Salaino, the beautiful Salaino. Leonardo had become my rival in love.

“I will steal him from you,” I replied.

For a moment, Leonardo stood indignant and still, but then, a moment later, he smiled like the Mona Lisa. His dead eyes, his dead lips smiled at me. “You will steal my beloved!?"

“Yes!” At that moment, my heart became a ball of fire. Blood coursed through my body, rushing through my veins with all the violence of an erupting fountain.

Once again, Leonardo called out to me, “You, the Asian! Murayama Kaita! Do you pine for my beautiful little Salaino? Do you want to steal my little pet? Does your passion for him burn like fire? Very well then. I shall give him to you. Yes, I shall give you my beautiful Salaino. I give you the long hair that writhes like serpents. I give you Salaino in all of his wonderful strangeness. He has betrayed me for you, a little yellow man from the East. I give him to you, my weak little opponent. You deserve my love.”

Leonardo then raised his hands and grasped the dark sky. At that moment the electric lights came on again, and the bust of the beautiful Salaino appeared once more before my eyes. Leonardo had vanished, taking his mysterious smile with him. Appearing in his stead was the young man with his beautiful grin. The head approached. Its hair came close. Rushing skyward, blood filled my lips. Salaino’s voluptuous lips – his feverish bronze lips – brushed mine. His long, sweetly scented hair grazed my cheek. Softly, like a serpent. His mysterious perfume drew my senses into an ecstatic trance, into a dream of hell. Salaino’s hair, perfuming the air, pressed gently against me.

“Ah, my beautiful little lord! You never belonged to Leonardo. From this night forward, you will be mine. You will rule my heart.” As I called to him, my voice reverberated against the vault of the midnight sky, which settled over us as dark and thick as black liqueur.
SELECTED TANKA\(^1\)
1913-1915, Published posthumously

By Murayama Kaita

Tanka from 1913

When I think
With all the world
Of you, Inō,
How my tears fall
With the rain!

世をこめて稲生の君を思ふ時涙は雨とふりにけるかな (343)

I have started falling in love
With beautiful you
Who comes into existence
Congealing from the purple smoke
Of an incense burner

紫の香炉のけぶの凝りて成りし美しき君を思ひそめけり (343)

You, whom I call my
Lovely prince of flowering quince,
Watching you
All the daylong
Is more than I can bear

美しき木瓜の皇子と異名せる君をひねもす見るが耐へせぬ (159)

\(^{1}\) These translations are based upon Murayama Kaita, *Murayama Kaita zenshū*, Revised 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Yayoi shobō, 1997). The page numbers appear next to the original Japanese poems.
It is an opulent
Person whom I adore,
As opulent
As the color of
That Western wine

豊かなる人をこそ好め西欧のかのぶだう酒の色の如くに (159)

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*Dedicated to the Prince (Four tanka)*

A beautiful sky –
Should this sky
Not appear
Sound a flute
And the prince will come

美しき空この空の来りぬと笛吹き鳴らせ皇子は来る (160)

I pass
A grove of plums
And its painfully
Bitter aroma
Reminds me of you

梅林の中を過ぎりてその痛く苦きにほびに君を思へり (160)
This is how
Renoir painted –
A fountain
The color of mother’s milk,
Splashes you with sorrow²

ルノアールかく画ぎしや乳色の噴泉君が愁ひにかゝる (160)

Trying not to weep
You brusquely
Take your leave
Like the dew that departs
For places unknown

泣かんとす君はすげなくわれをすてづれにかゝる露の如くに (160)

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Rain and the Prince (Four Tanka)

Having shut the great
Silver door of June,
The heavens
Spill rain and
Hide you from view

六月の銀の大扉をとざしたる天は雨ふる君をかくすや (160)

² Kaita had mixed feelings about Renoir. In letter from Tokyo dated August 19, 1914, he comments about his roommate Mizuki Shin’ichi, “The fellow with me now is just a cheap knock-off of Degas, drawing nothing but clowns standing on balls. He is Degas Japon [sic]. What should I be? Well, at the moment, in my heart, I want to become Renoir Japon. Crowds of pretty girls, female flesh, landscapes of red and purple and blue, war – this kind of simple decadence occupies the territory of my heart.” (416) At other times, however, Kaita seems less keen on Renoir. An undated fragment of writing comments, “My heart desires Rodin’s sculptures more than [Puvis de] Chavannes’ pictures; and Van Gogh and Daumier’s more than Renoir, Sisley, or Pissarro” (293).
A rainy day –
The nimbleness
Of your steps
Through the misty
Streets you walk

雨ふる日君が歩みのすばしこさ行手の街の霞みにけるを (160)

When I think
Of □ □
As a cup of blood,
Cruel thoughts –
I tremble violently \(^3\)

□□をば血の杯と思ふ時虐思ぞ重く打顫ふなる (160)

In the sky over
City streets of flowing blood
Silver rain strikes
Diagonally down –
I think of this and am sad

流血の街の空には銀の雨斜にせまると思へばかなし(160)

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\(^3\) The editors of *Kaita no utaeru* have blocked out two characters of the original tanka with *fuseji* in order to hide material that may have caused government censors to ban the book. Most of the original manuscripts have disappeared, making it impossible to know with certainty what the missing words in this poem were. One likely candidate, however, is *mara* (魔羅), a Sino-Japanese adaptation of the Sanskrit word *māra*, which can mean, among other things, the male member. Kaita appears to have been particularly fond of this word and even used it as the title for a small, self-published anthology of his own work.
I will look back upon
Myself as a child
Who bore this dissipation
All because of you
And I will be happy

君故にこの放埓をせおふ子と我を見かへりうれしくなりぬ (160)

I think of luring you
In the coming spring
And seizing you
In the evening darkness
Of the Shogun’s Mound

来む春は君をいざなひよひやみの将軍塚に抱かんと思ふ (160)

Thinking of the touch
Of your lips my thoughts
Are thrown into disarray
How I long
For you, beautiful you!

くちつけを思ひて思乱れけり美しき君いかに思ふや (161)

In this world
Dispatching dull
Gray days everyday
The misery I feel,
All alone…

鈍色の日頃を送る世界には唯一人のわれの哀れさ (161)
Do not
Think of me with pity
Not I, the ruffian,
Who spends
Every day hated

憎まれて日頃を送る無頼子のわれをあはれと思ひ給ふな (161)

Oh, you, you…
Simply hate me in earnest
This way
All the more light
Will fall upon you

君よ君ただひたすらに我を憎めかくて君には光増しなむ (161)

In the afternoon
Which brings the beautiful
Quince to bloom
The palace servant stops –
‘Tis you, my beautiful lord

美しきぼけの花咲く昼すぎにみや人止むる美しき君 (162)

How beautiful!
Would that you were
The prince
Of a lonely sunset palace
In early spring

美しや君はさびしきはつ春の夕日の宮の皇子ともがな (162)
How I miss you,
Oh, prince of the people!
Yet I think for all time
He will never return
To his palace⁴

A detached palace –
It is I who am
Your detached palace
How I broke down in tears
At this thought

４ In this and the following tanka, the narrator uses the metaphor of a palace to refer to himself. The first expresses the narrator’s nostalgic longing when he thinks of the beloved “prince” whom he fears will not return. This thought leads the realization expressed in the second poem, namely that the narrator is nothing but a detached palace – an abode far from the imperial person.
Along with
The purple light
A beautiful young man
Full of blood
Walks away

紫の光とともに血の満ちし美少年こそ歩みゆきけれ (164)

Tanka from 1914

From 1913 to early 1914, a certain auspicious prince lodged at the foot of Munetada Shrine in Kaguraoka. How many times have I wept at the sight of your beautiful, sharp eyes? (Eleven tanka dedicated to K.I.)

Peacock Eyelashes

What resides there
In your eyelashes
So much more beautiful
Than the purple feathers
Of a peacock? 5

紫の孔雀の毛より美しきまつ毛の中に何を宿すや (163)

5 This tanka combines a common motif of traditional verse, namely the tear as an expression of emotion, and two distinctly Kaitaesque motifs: the color purple and the image of a peacock, both of which recall the exotic aestheticism of symbolist-inspired poetry. Kaita frequently uses the word kujaku (“peacock”) both to reference to the bird itself and within the compound kujakuseki (“malachite,” literally “peacock stone”). Other poems in this eleven-tanka sequence contain a variety of images, for example, jeweled universes, lapis-colored worlds, and love forged into a silver chain, which recall the imaginative imagery of symbolist poetry.
With a light heart
I think of you
And find myself
Left behind in a world
Of precious jewels

浮々と君を思へば宝玉の世界の中に残されにけり (163)

When tears of unrequited love
Wet my heart,
I feel a wretchedness so great
Even a lapis-colored world
Would weep

片恋の涙に心しめす時瑠璃色の世も泣ける哀れさ (163)

In the sky over the capital
Twilight starts to show
The decorative stain
Of burning lights –
How I long for you!

ともし火を飾りぞめたる薄明の都の空に君をしのびぬ (163)

Oh, sunset
Of beautiful spring
When my tears of sadness
Know no bounds! –
Where are you, my prince?

かなしさの涙きはまる美しの春の日ぐれよ君はいづこに (163)
I think of
Wrapping the night
In yūzen cloth
And casting it into
The pale light of your eyes

友禅に夜をつつみて君が眼の薄ら明りへ投げむとぞ思ふ (163)

I have become
Yet another
Of the many who drown
In the pale light
Of your eyes

君が眼の薄ら明りに溺れたる群集の中の一人となりぬ (163)

The pale rose
Sky over the capital
Is permeated
More by your scent than
The stain of the falling rain

薄薔薇の都の空をふりそむる雨より君のにほひそめけり (163)

Looking back, dear me, what a ruffian I was!

You take in
Even the love
Of a scoundrel –
What benevolence!
I weep for joy

悪漢の恋をも君は入れたまふなさけよわれはうれしさに泣く (164)
Oh, the bitterness of unrequited love when I take leave
and cannot even hear the sound of your voice!

I, who carry
My one-sided love
From spring to spring –
Oh my beloved,
Do not laugh at me!

かた思ひ春より春へはこびゆくわれをば君よ笑ひたまふな (164)

Unto eternity
I will think of you –
This love will form
A silver chain and
Pull me into the future

とこしへに君を思はんこの恋は銀鎖となして未来へ曳かん (164)

***

When my thoughts
Turn to the prince
My feet float
Even more lightly
Through the rain

プリンスとふと思ふ時わが足は浮かれてゆくも雨ふる中に (165)
Forever,
It is beautiful you I will think of,
Beautiful you
I will think of,
You I will think of

とこしへに君を思はん美しき君を思はん君を思はん (165)

Ah, though I
Will love you
All the more
You, all the more,
Will likely forget me

ああわれはひとへに君を恋すれど君はひとへにわれを忘れん (165)

I celebrate
The days of youth
That have passed by so beautifully,
So darkly, so uncomely
And I weep

美しく暗くみにくく過ぎさりし少年の日をめでてわれ泣く (165)
Tanka from 1915

Small Poems Composed While Thinking About K (Six tanka):
Written after returning home from a stroll in Asakusa, the evening of January 1

The joy of waiting
For a dear friend
Penetrated my heart
And then the two of us
Walked together

よき友を持つ嬉しさのしみじみと心にしみて二人歩みぬ (166)

My friend!
Please do not think of me,
Who long whole-heartedly
For your lips,
In the ordinary way!

わが友よわれ切に汝の唇を思へりわれをなみげと思ふな (166)

Oh, dear friend!
When I think of you,
Happiness
Penetrates my heart
Like intoxication!

よき友よ汝を思へばうれしさは酔ひの如くに心にしむも (166)
“Dear friend!”
All alone, I call out
To heaven and earth –
When I walked with you
This evening, I was glad

親友とあめつちにただひとりよぶ汝と歩めり今宵うれしき (166)

Ah! I catch a whiff,
So like peppermint,
Of the refined heart
Of a friend
And I weep

あゝ友の薄荷に似たる品のよき心のにほひ嗅ぎてわれ泣く (166)

These pure feelings
Are brighter than the sky –
Before you
I could not be impure
Even if I tried

清情は空より明し汝が前に濁らむとして濁り得ぬわれ (166)

***
Staring long and hard
At □□□□,
As my eyes glitter,
My heart
Is refreshed 6

口口口□をじっと見つめてわが眼玉輝やけば心すがすがしかり

The male model’s
Pointed
□□□□
Is so beautiful
I saw it in my dreams

とがりたる男モデルの□□□□は夢に見し程美しかりき

The hair of
□□□□ so resembles
□□□□□□
Of □□ –
How beautiful!

□□□□□の毛はさも似たり□□の□□□□□□□□□□に美しきかな (167)

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6 The publisher of Kaita no utaeru removed several words from this poem, as well as the following two poems, to conceal references that may have caused censors to ban the book. Judging from context, the missing words almost certainly describe male genitalia.
Verses From Late May (Five Tanka)

When the golden iris  
Breaks into bloom  
I feel my poverty  
To the very core  
Of my being

金色のイリスの咲けば貧しさのしみじみと身に感じられけり (167)

Nothing incites  
My envy more than  
The park where the  
Youths gather –  
All with their lovely faces

若人のみみぬよきが集まりて遊ぶ園ほどねたましきなし (167)

Ten p.m.  
At the lovely  
Youth’s home –  
The time I bid him “farewell”  
And stood up to go

うるはしき少年の家の午後十時‘さらば’と吾の立ちしかの時 (167)

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7 This poem seems to describe the May 24, 1915 visit Kaita made to Inō’s home in Tokyo. The poem uses the same adjective uruwashii (“lovely”) that also appears in the diary entry about Inō’s beauty. The time of the departure in the poem also matches the account in the diary, which relates that Kaita stayed well into the evening.
Fine indeed was the day
I spent playing
With that refined youth,
Sweating rivulets
Of pale purple

品のよき若人と遊ぶ日こそよけれ薄紫の汗をながして (167)

Covered in the
Aluminum of loneliness –
This is how
I feel today
At this very moment ⁸

さびしさのアルミニウムに蔽はれし心地ぞすなる今日此頃は (167)

⁸ The English loan word *aruminiumu*, written in katakana, still had an unusual ring in the Taishō age, when such scientific-sounding words were still not a part of everyday Japanese, much less the poetic lexicon of tanka. Another poem that plays with the possibilities of such unusual language is Hakushū’s modernistic poem “Butsuri gakkō ura” (“Behind the School of Material Sciences,” 1910), which lines up scientific-sounding names of numerous chemical compounds and plays with the esoteric qualities of their unfamiliar names. Kitahara Hakushū, *Hakushū zenshū*, vol. 2, 361-63.
KAITA AND HIS PORTRAIT OF TWO BOYS

(Kaita Ni shōnen zu)

1934

By Edogawa Ranpo

The beauty, the fear of real existence… Like the blue sky, no matter how much you gaze upon these things, their depths are unknowable. When one first awakens to them in one’s youth, they are like a mysterious dream replete with astonishing color. I am apt to forget such things, but thinking now of Murayama Kaita helps me remember.

The two volumes Kaita no utaeru (Songs of Kaita) and Kaita no utaeru sono go (Songs of Kaita Continued) are always by my side. I feel as if all of the sentiments that I treasure have found their finest expression within them.

Before his death at the age of twenty-four from a respiratory illness brought on by fatefully flaunting the rules of good health, he was a painter at the Nihon bijutsuin (Japan Art Institute), where he studied Western-style painting.2 He earned a reputation as a genius on the basis of his pictures, some of which have strange names like Roppon no te aru onna (Woman with Six Hands), Ibari suru razō (Nude Monk Urinating), Joshira to raisha (Women with Leper), Saru to onna (Monkey with Woman), and Kojiki to onna (The Beggar and the Woman). Almost twenty years, I stopped and stood for a full hour before one of his paintings at an exhibition in Ueno.

Needless to say, Kaita poured the greater part of his passion into his paintings, but his charm – the reason I am so taken with him – is not only to be found in his unique artwork.

1 First published in the June 1934 issue of Buntai (Literary Style), and later republished in several collections of essays. The translation is based on Edogawa Ranpo, Edogawa Ranpo zenshū, vol. 17 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1979) 68-71.

2 Kaita was twenty-four by the old Japanese system of counting ages, but by the current system of counting ages introduced from the West, he was twenty-two and several months old at the time of his death.
I first learned of Murayama Kaita’s existence through his detective stories, not his artwork. At the time, I was in Nagoya finishing up my grade school education. I was an avid reader of the magazine *Bukyō sekai* (*World of Heroism*), and it was there – or perhaps in *Bōken sekai* (*World of Adventure*) – that I encountered his mystery story “Akuma no shita” (“The Diabolical Tongue”). The story was completely different anything I had ever read before. I was struck by its special charm, which shone with the brilliance of all the primary colors. Where on earth had he found such a diabolical sensibility? I thought I detected the light of Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Rimbaud – authors said to fascinate him when he was still just seventeen – glittering in his eyes. Still deeper was the influence of Poe. The least one could say about it is that “Akuma no shita” managed to capture a kind of fear that appealed to the intellect.

He also wrote two other mysteries as well. Although “Akuma no shita” best fits the mold of mystery fiction, it is not a stretch to label them all with this rubric. The other two stories are “Satsujin gyōja” (“The Murdering Ascetic”) and “Maenden” (“An Account of a Magical Monkey”). Both are full of madness, evil, and nightmares. Even if Kaita’s expressive technique was not perfect, these short stories show an extraordinary sensibility and an unusual touch.

Kaita himself probably thought little of these mystery stories, which he dashed off merely to earn a little pocket money; however, they rank alongside Tanizaki Jun’ichirō’s “Hakuchū kigo” (“Ghostly Words in the Afternoon”) and Satō Haruo’s “Shimon” (“Fingerprints”) as some of the finest detective fiction in Japan.

In my opinion, another of Kaita’s major charms is the fact that he passionately loved ancient Greece. It is not unusual for an artist to love ancient Greek sculpture, but his fascination was not just limited to this one aspect of Greek culture. He devoured ancient Greek thought and life with all of his youthful ignorance and intuition. In the process, he delved into Greek culture at a much, much deeper level.

In diary entries that he wrote when he was nineteen, one sees he already was reading Plato in Japanese translation with great interest. He makes comments such as, “It seems that my poetry has again become vulgar. Starting next month, I will begin living a purely Hellenic lifestyle.” Even after he came to Tokyo and started studying art at the Nihon bijutsuin, he continued to frequent the library and read Plato.

It is difficult to believe Kaita’s feelings of same-sex love developed as a result of discovering Plato, but it cannot be denied that his readings aestheticized, exalted, and encouraged

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3 “Akuma no shita” appeared in *Bukyō sekai* in August 1915.
his feelings. In the poems, fiction, plays, diaries, and personal comments in Kaita no utaeru and its sequel, he sings hymns to young men and the love of the Greeks. He does it again and again. At times, his language is quite refined. At other times, however, he sings with a wild animal’s naïveté and lack of affectation.

When I acquired a Western-style study last summer for the first time in my life, I looked at the bare wall, and Kaita’s pictures immediately came to mind. If I was going to hang a picture on the wall, I would prefer one by Murayama Kaita more than other by more accomplished artists. I tend to stay at home a lot, but I left my hermitage frequently for the express purpose of finding one of his works. In the end, I presumed upon Matsuno Kazuo. Through the good offices of his friend Mr. Nagashima – Kaita’s friend, fellow artist, and a member of the Shun'yōkai (Spring Sunshine Society) – I was finally able to obtain one of Kaita’s paintings. (Mr. Nagashima’s name appears frequently in Kaita’s diary and letters.)

The work is a watercolor portrait about sixty centimeters wide and eighty centimeters tall. It is dominated by the color indigo, and the dense color gives an impression of thickness. Kaita painted it in 1914; therefore, one might classify it as one of his early studies. Questions of the skill of the painting aside, I was greatly pleased by its special theme. Kaita’s personality and way of thinking seem to exude from the very surface of the painting.

The painting depicts two boys of about twelve or thirteen, whom we see from the waist up. They are lingering on a veranda on a summer afternoon, and in the background is the modest garden of a country house. (Particularly conspicuous in the overgrown garden are some red dahlias and yellow evening primroses.) The two boys fill a large part of the painting, and boldly painted around their outlines is the distinctive color that has been called “Kaita’s garance” – a deep hue of red that seems to shine as brilliantly as colored glass.

That single tube of garance cost nearly two yen
But what a pleasure it is
To squeeze it with abandon!
Even if the two yen go directly down the drain
Not even a thousand yen would be too much to ask for it
Squeezing garance from the tube
Brings more pleasure than even buying a prostitute

4 Ranpo does not quote the final three lines of the poem: “This garance is certainly a better buy / Than an evening passing round a two-yen bottle of saké / the pleasure of garance is that great (二円で酒が一本ついて一晩まはしかなかったより / たしかにガランスは他だ / ガランスの快楽は善い) .” Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, 130. Kaita wrote this poem in December 1918, a few years after painting the picture Ranpo describes. It appears in Songs of Kaita as “Garansu” (“Garance”), a title which takes its name from the French name for a deep red pigment derived from madder. Alongside it appears an even better known poem, “Ippon no garansu” (“A Tube of Garance”) on a similar theme.
Throughout the indigo surface of the painting, one finds the garance Kaita praises in this poem.

Since hanging the picture in my room, I have had the opportunity to gaze at it for long stretches of time. As I did so, I gradually came to realize that what the picture depicts is not just a simple image of two boys. Hidden deep within it, one finds the beautiful Greek love that dominated Kaita’s life.

One finds a hint of Kaita’s own face somewhere in the countenance of the plump, robust, exceedingly ruddy boy who is seated on the right and who seems so unyielding and mischievous. The boy’s face looks like that of the death mask cast by Ishii Tsuruzō.

The lithe, pale youth resting spellbound opposite him is probably Kaita’s “Mona Lisa.” During his life, Kaita felt a deep amorous attachment for a man, whom he could not help but compare to his image of the ideal lover, Leonardo da Vinci’s Mona Lisa. In the cheeks of the pale youth in the painting, one can see the smile of Kaita’s own “Mona Lisa” – the boy for whom he yearned so much.

A Tube of Garance

Do not hesitate, do not feel shame
Move directly forward
Take your tube of garance
Press it straight onto your palate
Squeeze it straight out
Paint directly with this garance
Paint with it alone
Until the last of the tube is gone
Coat the sky with garance
Paint the trees with garance
Cover the grass with garance
Paint 口口 with garance
Even paint God with garance
Do not hesitate, do not feel shame
Move straight forward and
Cover your poverty
With your tube of garance

Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, 130-31. In the first publication of this poem, the editors of Kaita no utaeru replaced two characters in the sixth line from the end with fuseji. The poet Yamamoto Tarō, the editor of the Kaita’s complete works, guesses that the missing word might be māra (penis), but Kusano Shinpei surmises that the censored word was tennō (emperor), perhaps because of the honorific in the verb egaki-tatematsure. The editors of the multi-volume series Nihon no shiika (Japanese Poetry), however, disagree, stating that it is hard to believe that Kaita would evoke the emperor in such a context. See the commentary for Murayama Kaita, “Ippon no garance,” Horiguchi Daigaku, Saijō Yaso, Murayama Kaita, Ozaki Kihachi, Ed. Itō Shinkichi, Itō Sei, Inoue Yasushi, et al, Nihon no shiika 17 (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1968) 286.
Kaita has another masterpiece entitled *Hikari no ōji* (*Prince of Light*). The title that suggests that when he painted it, he was depicting the schoolmate whom he loved during college preparatory school. I hear that this painting is preserved at his alma mater in Kyoto. Nonetheless, *Ni shōnen zu* is particularly dear to me because it depicts his dreams, which were both universal and abstract.

I am not just making this up. I am not comparing what I know about Kaita’s personality to what I see in the picture to produce just random impressions. He has also a dreamy piece of writing that seems to be directly describing the portrait of the two boys. This prose poem, which recounts a fantasy that Kaita had, describes the watercolor so aptly that if I were to make a caption for the watercolor, I would want to place it right by the painting.

In *Kaita no utaeru* one finds an essay “Kaita no hatsukoi” (“Kaita’s First Love”) written by Kaita’s close friend Yamamoto Jirō. It quotes Kaita as he describes a dream he had. (The first paragraph of the quote below is Yamamoto’s commentary.)

Something that strongly affected Kaita’s art from his boyhood to adolescence was his first love. That love was somewhat unusual. He was romantic, and exactly like Keats, he released his dissatisfaction with reality in the mythological past, letting his fantasies run wild and becoming intoxicated to his heart’s desire with dreams. He passionately adored tales of ancient Greece. At the same time, he had a deep interest in the legends of the mythological past of our country. Moreover, he was always endeavoring to depict the enigmatic qualities of the age of the gods in his free form verse, his Japanese-style verse, and his artwork. At some point, these ideas became linked in his mind to the notion of the *bishōnen*. For him, the so-called “bishōnen” was different from the *bishōnen* of the late Tokugawa Period. In anything, the *bishōnen* to him represent something closer to Apollo in Greek mythology. Because he was so imaginative, even in the midst of everyday life, he would often envision scenes like the following one.

It is near midday in April. Close to twelve o’clock noon. No shadows are visible anywhere in the picture. Something admirable is hiding in this beautiful, colorless (though slightly cloudy) world of topaz.

Two young boys are standing near one another. It is clear they are in love. The tall one shudders with emotion for some reason, and this makes him blush.

He extends his right hand to the other boy.

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5 The whereabouts of *Hikari no ōji* are currently unknown.


7 In Yamamoto Jirō’s original, the following paragraphs are in quotes as if Yamamoto relays Kaita’s dream sequence word for word. Though Ranpo does not include quotation marks, he copies Yamamoto’s account of Kaita’s dream without modification.
Here, we must look clearly. The second boy is a truly beautiful young boy, the likes of which one rarely sees. He brings to mind an extravagant flute that plays on endlessly. His face is fair with moist skin.

He beautiful eyes gaze intently at the taller boy, watching him. This look is the perfect touch to complete this April scene of the coquettishly smiling boys. Ah, as he looks at the other boy with this expression, he takes something in his right hand. What is it?

The object links the enraptured, distracted hearts of the two boys; it is this which is at the heart of the lithograph.

He is holding a single cherry blossom. A lovely, lightly colored flower. It has probably been pressed for days between sheets of paper. The color has faded a bit, but the five petals still hold together. In its small way, the tiny blossom links the boys’ distracted thoughts with the spring. A pale light falls upon the blossom then recedes. The boy gives the silver link of spring to the beautiful young boy. The boy’s hand is exceedingly graceful. He is glad as he takes the small cherry blossom. Surely he will keep it with him. The lithograph shows a vision of utter joy.  

The wording of the passage above suggests that Kaita may have dashed it off in the margin of one of his notebooks or somewhere. Another possibility is that Yamamoto remembered something Kaita said before his death and recorded it in his own words. In either case, apart from the section about the cherry blossom, this dream – this magnificent, lithographic vision – has been transposed into the watercolor portrait of two boys that now hangs in my room.

Now, in my dimly lit study, I live with Murayama Kaita’s dream, and this dream gives me a mysterious joy.

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8 Though Ranpo ends his quote from Yamamoto Jirō here, Yamamoto continues to describe Kaita’s love for Inō Kiyoshi (identifying him only by the initial “I”), whose beauty he likens to that of the Mona Lisa. No doubt it was this simile that inspired Ranpo earlier in this essay to liken the boy on the left of Ni shōnen zu to Leonardo da Vinci’s famous painting.
MURAYAMA KAITA

SUMMARY OF KAITA AND HIS PORTRAIT OF TWO BOYS

(Murayama Kaita Kaita Ni shōnen zu basui)

1961

By Edogawa Ranpo

Since the Taishō period, Murayama Kaita has been extolled as a genius for the mysterious style of painting he manifested in works such as Roppon no te aru onna (Woman with Six Hands), Ibari suru razō (Nude Monk Urinating), Joshiba to raisha (Women with Leper), and Kojiki to onna (The Beggar and the Woman). Kaita also left behind three bizarre detective stories. All of them appeared in the late Meiji-period magazine Bōken sekai (World of Adventure) – Or was it in Bukyō sekai (World of Heroism)? They are “Akuma no shita” (“The Devil’s Tongue”), “Satsujin gyōja” (“The Murdering Ascetic”), and “Maenden” (“Tale of a Magical Monkey”). “Akuma no shita” is exceptionally mystery-like, and as a young reader in college preparatory school, it shocked and delighted me.

Kaita’s fiction and poetry, along with several recollections about him appear in the volumes, Kaita no utaeru (Songs of Kaita) and Kaita no utaeru sono go (Songs of Kaita Continued). I read these with great interest. That is because they are filled with Kaita’s feelings of longing for Greek-style love for other men. One finds in them a beautiful prose poem that Kaita appears to have written in the corner of one of his notebooks or some such place. Two youths are standing by one another in a topaz-colored April garden. The youth on the right has a round face that reminds one of Kaita himself, and the youth on the left has a thin face with moist

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1 This essay is a summary of the ideas published in the longer 1934 essay in Buntai. It appeared in Edogawa Ranpo Tantei shōsetsu yon-jū-nen (Tokyo: Tōgensha, 1961) 196. This translation, however, is based on Ranpo’s original hand-written manuscript, now in the collection of the Setagaya Literary Museum in Tokyo (Figure 29). In this manuscript, Ranpo crosses out numerous passages, giving us the unusual opportunity to see his thought processes at work as he wrote the essay.

2 In the middle of the word “Greek,” Ranpo has obscured one or two characters, leaving them illegible.
skin. He is a *bishōnen*, the likes of which are rarely seen. The youth on the right is a “*bishōnen* who calls to mind an extravagant flute, whose notes sound endlessly.”³ The youth on the right is giving a pressed cherry blossom to the youth on the left. Enveloped in delicate emotion, the two are in love.

After going to some trouble, I found a picture—watercolor picture by Kaita showing this same subject matter, and I was able to obtain it from one of Kaita’s friends. It is a watercolor of about sixty centimeters wide and eighty centimeters tall. It is a picture rich in individuality and makes conspicuous use of indigo and the red that has been called “Kaita’s garance.” To this day, it hangs in my room where I gaze upon it each day. (Excerpts from *Waga yume to shinjitsu* [*My Dreams and the Truth*] published by Sōgensha.)⁴

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³ Ranpo incorrectly quotes Yamamoto Jirō’s essay, inserting the word *bishōnen* where it does not appear in the original.

⁴ The publisher Tōkyō sōgensha released *Waga yume to shinjitsu* (*My Dreams and the Truth*) in 1957. It collects a number of articles about same-sex desire that Ranpo wrote over the years. Among them are the essay “Kaita Ni shōnen zu” (“Kaita’s Portrait of Two Boys”), which is the same as the 1934 article from *Buntai* (minus Kaita’s surname in the title). *Waga yume to shinjitsu* also includes many of the articles discussed in chapter five of this dissertation.
APPENDIX C:

AUTHOR CHRONOLOGIES
CHRONOLOGY: MURAYAMA KAITA¹

1896 (Meiji 29)
- September 15: Murayama Kaita is born as the eldest son of Murayama Tanisuke and his wife Tama in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture. Tanisuke was a native of Yamagata Prefecture and was at the time an instructor in a grade school in Yokohama. Tama was a native of Aichi Prefecture, and before marrying Tanisuke, she lived with her family in Tokyo. Before her marriage, Tama had served as a maid in the household of the author Mori Ōgai (1862-1922), and it was there that her employer introduced her to Tanisuke.
- October 15: Tanisuke requests voluntary retirement from the school in Yokohama, where he had taught since June 1894.

1897 (Meiji 30) Age 0/1
- Tanisuke is hired to teach in Kōchi Prefecture in Shikoku. En route, the family stops in Tama’s hometown in Aichi Prefecture, where Kaita and his mother remain at the home of Tama’s sister, Tazu. Kaita is placed in his family’s register (koseki tōhon) while they stay there. Soon afterward, however, Tama and Kaita leave for Shikoku to be with Tanisuke. They settle in Kotaka, Tosa-gun (now part of Kōchi City).

1899 (Meiji 32) Age 2/3
- May 27: Kaita’s younger brother Keiji is born.

1900 (Meiji 33) Age 3/4
- May: Tanisuke moves to Kyoto in order to teach at the Kyōto furitsu daiichi chūgakkō (Kyoto Prefectural First Middle School).
- The family lives in 58 Miyagaki-chō, Teramachi Street North from Kōjinguchi, Kamigyō Ward, Kyoto City. This is located within a few hundred feet from the spot where the great novelist Murasaki Shikibu lived 900 years earlier.

¹ This chronology is based on Kusano Shinpei, Murayama Kaita, 3rd ed. (Tokyo: Nichidō shuppansha, 1989); Itō Kyō, “Nenpu,” Murayama Kaita ten: Seitai 100-nen, by Mie kenritsu bijutsukan (Tsu: Mie kenritsu bijutsukan, 1997): 166-173; Kaita’s own diaries; and my own research.
1903 (Meiji 36) Age 6/7
- March: Kaita graduates from preliminary school.
- April: Kaita enters elementary school. Soon afterward, the Murayama family moves a few hundred meters away to 1, Sakuragi-chō, Teramachi Street North of Imadegawa, Kamigyō Ward, Kyoto, and Kaita transfers to another elementary school.
- December 28: Kaita’s younger sister Ikuko is born.

1904 (Meiji 37) Age 7/8
- January 9: Kaita’s younger sister Ikuko dies.

1905 (Meiji 38) Age 8/9
- While in third grade of elementary school, Kaita begins to draw using a set of colored pencils purchased by his father.
- September 9: A younger brother Matsuo is born, but dies a week later on the fifteenth.

1907 (Meiji 40) Age 10/11
- Kaita’s fifth grade teacher sets aside current educational policies and tries teaching in a less formal way to encourage creativity among his students.

1908 (Meiji 41) Age 11/12
- July 25-August 25: Kaita spends the summer learning to swim in Tsu, Mie Prefecture with his mother and brother Keiji. There, he writes Iso nikki (Beach diary).

1909 (Meiji 42) Age 12/13
- March: Kaita graduates from elementary school.
- April: Kaita enters college preparatory studies in the Kyōto furitsu daiichi chūgakkō (Kyoto Prefectural First Higher School). By that time, Kaita’s father was teaching at another school in the city.

1910 (Meiji 43) Age 13/14
- In July, when Kaita is in his second year of college preparatory school, his cousin, the painter Yamamoto Kanae (1882-1946), visits Kyoto and stays for several days with the Murayama family. Kanae gives Kaita some equipment for oil painting, thus encouraging Kaita’s interest in art.

1911 (Meiji 44) Age 14/15
- Kaita and his friends at school publish a small coterie magazine called Gōtō (Robbery by Force), which they circulate among themselves. On his own, Kaita creates many small

- The family moves to a few hundred meters again to Ōharaguchi, Imadegawa Street, West of Teramachi Street, Kamigyō-ku, Kyoto. Kaita sleeps on the second story of an earthen warehouse behind the house. Kaita’s father has retired, and his mother is running a small shop nearby.

1912 (Meiji 45 / Taishō 1) Age 15/16

- Kaita’s cousin Yamamoto Kanae goes to Europe to study painting in France. Kaita sends numerous watercolors, prints, posters, and letters to Kanae in France, feeling he is the only one who understands his desire to create art.

- August: Kaita wanders to Nara on foot. Because of a lack of money, he spends the night in jail where a kind policeman allows him to spend the night.

- October 13-15: Kaita travels to Tokyo on a school trip.

1913 (Taishō 2) Age 16/17

- Sometime about this time, Inō Kiyoshi (1897-1989), a native of Fukui Prefecture, moves to Kyoto and begins attending the same school as Kaita. Kaita develops a crush on Inō and extols his beauty in a number of poems. Late in 1913, he begins making nocturnal peregrinations to Inō’s house in Kaguraoka, and he gives him a number of tanka poems.

- During the summer holidays, Kaita goes to Nagano where he stays in the large home of his uncle, the dentist Yamamoto Ichirō (Yamamoto Kanae’s father). Kaita makes many sketches there.

- October 16-21: Kaita travels to Kyushu and Shikoku on a school trip. He sketches in these locations.

- November 9-13: Kaita holds a small exhibition of his artwork at the encouragement of his art teacher. There, he shows nine works, including Chikuma kawara (Bed of the Chikuma River), Ōji (The Prince), Shinshū no mura (Village in Nagano), Nōka no yoko (Side of a Farmhouse), Kaiko no sōko (House for Storing Silkworms), Enten (Burning Sky), Kugatsu no ya (September Field), Haru (Spring), and others. As thanks for their help, Kaita gave Chikuma kawara to his art teacher and Ōji to the principal of the school.

- November 1: A younger sister Ariko is born.

- In late 1913 or early 1914, Kaita writes “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” (“The Bust of the Beautiful Young Sālaino”).

346
1914 (Taishō 3) Age 17/18

- “Bishōnen Saraino no kubi” is scheduled to appear in the Kyoto coterie magazine Tobano, but the magazine goes defunct.
- March: Kaita graduates from college preparatory studies.
- May 1-June 24: On a roundabout route to Tokyo, Kaita stops at the home of his uncle Yamamoto Ichirō in Nagano. There, he waits to hear from the painter Kosugi Misei (1881-1964, later known by the name Kosugi Hōan), a member of the Saikō Nihon bijutsuin (Restored Japan Art Institute, hereafter abbreviated as Nihon bijutsuin). In 1913, Kosugi and Kanae had lived together in Paris, and as a result, Kosugi saw the artwork Kaita had sent Kanae. After Kosugi returned to Tokyo, Kanae arranged through letters for Kaita to stay at Kosugi’s home.
- May 6: Kaita’s essay “Ema-dō o aogite” (“Looking up at the Hall of Painted Plaques”) appears in the Kyoto supplement to the Asahi Shinbun (Asahi Newspaper).
- June 25: Having heard from Kosugi, Kaita goes to Tokyo.
- July 5: Kaita begins living with fellow art student Mizuki Shin’ichi (1892-1988) in a detached house on the property of Kosugi Misei and his wife. The home is located in 155 Tabata, Takinogawa Village, Kita-teshima-gun (now in Kita Ward), Tokyo. Kaita continues to stay there until the spring of 1917.
- August: Kaita goes on trip to Nikkō and Ashio with a number of writers and editors associated with the boy’s adventure magazine Bukyō sekai (World of Heroism). Kaita contributes several illustrations and a few impressionistic thoughts to a description of the trip in the magazine.²
- September: Kaita becomes a student at the Nihon bijutsuin.
- September 21: Kaita’s younger sister Kikue is born in Kyoto, but dies soon after on November 20.
- October 1-31: The first annual Nika exhibition is held in Ueno. Kaita shows three works: Shokubutsuen no ki (Trees in a Botanical Garden), Teien no shōjo (Girl in a Garden), and Tabata no gake (Precipice in Tabata). Teien no shōjo appears in the November issue of the art magazine Mizue along with a warm review by printmaker Oda Kazuma (1882-1956), who calls it an “exceedingly fine work.”³ In the same issue of Mizue, painter Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958) calls Kaita and Mizuki Shin’ichi’s work in the Nika exhibition “revolutionary works overflowing with youthful vigor.”⁴

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- On November 4, artist Arishima Ikuma (1882-1974) mentions Murayama Kaita’s name in the Yomiuri Shinbun (Yomiuri Newspaper) as an example of what he calls the “Color Sect” (shikisaiha) of Japanese post-impressionists.5

- November: The painter Yokoyama Taikan (1868-1958) who heads the Nihon bijutsuin, purchases one of the paintings Kaita displayed in the Nika exhibition for ten yen. Kaita uses the money to take a trip to Tateyama in Chiba.

- In late 1914, Kaita meets the young art student Yanase Masamu (1900-1945) through Mizuki. Yanase becomes a student in the Nihon bijutsuin about the same time. Kaita develops amorous feelings for Yanase, and the two begin an intense relationship; however, this cools off in May 1915 sometime after Kaita goes to see Inō, his former sweetheart from Kyoto.

- In late 1914, Kaita paints Ni-shōnen zu (Portrait of Two Boys), taking as the model two young visitors to Kosugi’s home. (After Kaita’s death, Edogawa Ranpo purchases this painting.)

**1915 (Taishō 4) Age 18/19**

- March 5-15: The first Nihon bijutsuin shūsaku ten (Japan Art Institute Study Exhibition) is held in Ueno. Kaita displays Roppon no te aru onna no odori (Dance of the Six-Handed Woman), which was later lost, and other oil paintings.

- March and April: Kaita goes to Nagano and stays at the home of his uncle.

- April: Kaita’s short story “Satsujin gyōja” (“The Murdering Ascetic”) appears in Bukyō seikai along with three of his own illustrations for the story.

- August: Kaita’s short story “Akuma no shita” (“The Diabolical Tongue”) appears in Bukyō seikai along with two of Kaita’s illustrations.

- October 14-31: The second Saikō Nihon bijutsuin ten (Restored Japan Art Institute Exhibition) is held at the Seiyōken in Ueno. Kaita’s painting Kanna to shōjo (Cannas and Girl) receives a prize. Painter Saitō Yori comments in the Tokyo nichinichi shinbun (Tokyo Daily Newspaper) on October 29, 1915 that many people would find it a terrible picture, but he liked it. Despite certain faults in the picture, Saitō writes that one could sense Kaita’s artistic power, good understanding of things, and expressive ability, though all of these elements were still unfocused.6 Critic Komiya Toyotaka (1884-1966) writes in Shin shōsetsu (The New Novel) that it was more rigid than the brilliantly colored work shown last year in the Nika Exhibition, and to the degree that he was previously interested in Kaita’s work, he was now anxious for his future.7 Fellow painter Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958), who had praised Kaita’s work a year before, writes in Chūō bijutsu (Central Art) that the purpose of the work was unclear, but in the application of the color

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5 Arishima Ikuma, “Yōga no shūkaku (Jū),” Yomiuri shinbun, November 18 1919, Morning edition, 7.


7 Komiya Toyotaka, “‘Bijutsuin’ to ‘Nikakai’ to “Bunten’ to,” Shin shōsetsu 20.11 (Nov 1915): 123.
and the strong brushwork, one could sense a good character at work. Though these reviews are mixed, the painting received more critical attention than any other student work.

- Late October: Kaita again goes to Nagano and stays with Yamamoto Ichirō. There, he writes Shinshū nikki: Seisaku to shikō (Nagano Diary: Production and Thoughts). Also, he writes the short story “Maenden” (“An Account of a Magical Monkey”), which he sends to Bukyō sekai in order to earn some extra money.

- Kaita’s family moves to Tokyo and settles in Kagura in Ushigome Ward. Kaita’s father had come first to look for work, while Kaita’s mother, Keiji, and Ariko stayed temporarily at the home of Yamamoto Ichirō in Nagano.

1916 (Taishō 5) Age 19/20

- In spring, Kaita leaves the home of Kosugi Misei and moves into a six-mat room on the second floor of a building on a back street in Nezu, Hongō Ward, Tokyo.

- About this time, Kaita is madly in love with a model named Otama. In his pursuit of Otama, he moves near her home in Nihonzutsumi, Asakusa Ward (now Daitō Ward), Tokyo.

- June: Kaita goes to Okazaki in Aichi Prefecture to take his army entrance examination. (He still appeared in his aunt’s family register there, hence his need to travel there for the examination.) Before going, he pays his rent and abandons the room in Tokyo. Before reaching Okazaki, he wanders for a time in the mountains of northern Gifu Prefecture and Tenryūkyō in Nagano Prefecture.

- July: After returning from Okazaki to Tokyo, Kaita goes to Izu Ōshima where his friend Yamazaki Shōzō (1896-1945) was staying. He spends all of August there before returning to Tokyo.

- August-September: Kaita’s short story “Madōji den” (“Account of a Magical Boy”) is serialized in two issues of the magazine Bōken sekai (World of Adventure).

- September: Kaita and Yamazaki Shōzō begin living together in a six-mat room in Yaegaki-chō, Nezu, Hongō Ward, Tokyo. In the morning, he works on his art projects, and in the afternoon, he works at a factory. There, he earns extra money by using a hot stylus to draw patterns and decorations on paddles and other wooden paraphernalia.

- December: Yamamoto Kanae returns from France after a prolonged period of study abroad. (At one point he had temporarily fled to England to avoid the destruction of World War I, but he spent the majority of his time in Paris.) Before coming home, he travels to Italy in 1916, and he spends summer in Russia, where he is especially impressed with folk crafts.

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1917 (Taishō 6) Age 20/21

- April 1-15: The third Nihon bijutsuin shūsaku ten is held on the grounds of the Institute. Kaita shows his works *Kosui to onna* (*Woman by a Lake*) and *Kosuchūmu no musume* (*Costumed Maiden*). Kaita receives an honorable mention along with several other students, including his friends Mizuki Shin’ichi and Imazeki Keiji (1893-1946).

- About this time, Yamamoto Kanae helps Kaita approach Shibugawa Terukichi, the Kansai industrialist who was supporting Kanae, Ishii Hakutei (1882-1958), and other artists at the Nihon bijutsuin. In the end, Kaita does not receive any support.

- June: Kaita moves to a second story, four-and-a-half mat room in Araki, Yotsuya Ward, Tokyo. He completes one of his masterpieces, the painting *Kojiki to onna* (*The Beggar and the Woman*).

- Mid-August: Kaita again goes to Izu Ōshima, where Yamazaki Shōzō is again painting. Kaita stays until just before the September exhibition in Tokyo.

- September 11-30: The fourth Saikō Nihon bijutsuin ten is held in Ueno, and this exhibition includes a large number of paintings that Yamamoto Kanae had completed in Europe. Kaita’s *Kojiki to onna* is selected for display in the general category, and it receives the Institute Prize (Bijutsuin shō) worth two hundred yen. In *Chūō bijutsu* (Central Art 3.10), Saitō Yoichi calls it a strange but appealing picture, saying that it is not a dramatic picture but shows a large amount of feeling and a sense of “truth.”9 In *Bijutsu* (Art 1.12), Yamamoto Kanae writes that the picture is interesting and that “the blood of French anachronism is flowing” in Kaita’s veins, but the picture lacks any depth or strength. He criticizes it stating that the problem “is not in the production, but in the program of his production.”10 Kaita’s journal shows that he is pleased to have attracted so much attention. The overwhelming majority of the other paintings in the exhibition were of landscapes, and the remainder consisted of still lives and portraits, giving an extremely academic feel to the entire show. Other than Kaita’s painting, the only two other paintings in the exhibition that showed people interacting were Kosugi Misei’s *Yamasachihiko and Seiko* (*Western Lake*), and even in the latter there are just two small, impersonal figures dancing in an enormous landscape.

- September 26: Yamamoto Kanae promises to give Kaita ten yen upon the condition that Kaita will not drink, but Kaita cannot live up to the promise and does not receive the money.

- September 29: Yamamoto Kanae marries Ie, the younger sister of the poet Kitahara Hakushū (1885-1942) and the head of Ars publishing house Kitahara Tetsuo (1892-1957).

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9 Saitō Yoichi, “Bijutsuin no yōga,” Chūō bijutsu 3.10 (Oct 1917): 34. Because Yamamoto Kanae had just returned from Europe at the end of 1916, this was the first opportunity to show his European work at a Fine Arts Academy exhibition. As a result, Kanae’s work received overwhelmingly more attention in the press than any of the other artists represented there.

- October: Kaita moves to another apartment in Nezu, Hongō Ward, Tokyo.

- December: With money from his part-time job at the design-burning plant, he goes on vacation for four nights and five days with his friends.

- December 15: Kaita is nominated to the position of “Friend of the Institute” at the Nihon bijutsuin.

- December 28: Kaita goes on a sketching trip to Chiba Prefecture and stays until January 2.

1918 (Taishō 7) Age 21/22

- January: Kaita plans to go to Nagano and stay with Yamamoto Ichirō, but he runs up a bill at a sushi restaurant near Kameido Tenjin, and loses all of his travel expenses.

- January 30: Kaita moves to an apartment in Shitaya-ku, Tokyo.

- February: Kaita starts painting Fūsen-dama no tsuku onna (Woman with Balloons) on a canvas received from Kosugi Misei, but the work remains unfinished and eventually disappears.

- February 17: Kaita and his younger brother Keiji help Yamamoto Kanae look for a new apartment, and together they walk throughout the city. Kanae eventually decides on a place in Nippori.

- February 20-March 31: Kaita rests and takes a trip to southern Chiba Prefecture to create works for the fourth Nihon bijutsuin shūsaku ten. In early March, he returns home once to submit the works he had completed, and in mid-March, he returns again to see the exhibition itself.

- March 16-31: The fourth Nihon bijutsuin shūsaku ten is held on the grounds of the institute. Six of his works are displayed, including Kigi (Trees), Jigazō (Self-Portrait), Kujūkurihama (Kujūkuri Shore), and Otoko no shūsaku (Male Study). Kaita receives an honorable mention along with Yamazaki Shōzō and three other students.

- April: Kaita imposes upon Yamazaki Shōzō, who is living in a Western style building in Nezu, and the two begin living together again.

- About this time, Kaita begins manifesting symptoms of tuberculosis. He recovers temporarily under the care of his friends Yamazaki Shōzō and Ishihara Gen’ichirō.

- May 1-10: Kaita shows three works, Bukōsan (Mt. Bukō), Shinshū no ichibu (Part of Nagano), and Tōge no ichibu (Part of a Ridge), at an exhibition of pictures of mountains held by the Nihon sangaku kai (Japanese Mountaineering Club).

- June: Kaita’s tuberculosis recurs. He leaves the house with Yamazaki Shōzō and goes to live with his parents in Kagura, Ushigome. There, he creates a work he intends to submit to the Nihon bijutsuin, Tabako-nomi (Smoking Tobacco).
Mid-August: Kaita leaves for southern Chiba Prefecture, hoping for his health to return. He entrusts the work *Tabako-nomi* to his mother to turn into the Nihon bijutsuin. To receive the results of the submission, he returns to Tokyo on September 7.

September: The fifth Saikō Nihon bijutsuin ten is held in Ueno, but the work *Tabako-nomi* is not accepted. Kaita destroys it.

September 10: Kaita and his friend Yamamoto Jirō leave for southern Chiba Prefecture. After his friend returns to Tokyo, Kaita thinks of traveling to one of the nearby islands, but abandons the plan for health and financial reasons.

September 25: With ten yen from Kosugi Misei for travel expenses, Kaita travels to Katsuura in southern Chiba by train.

October: Several times, Kaita switches cheap hotels in Kominato and Amatsu, near the Pacific Ocean in Chiba Prefecture. In the fishing village of Nabuto (now Futomi, Kamogawa City), Kaita coughs up a large amount of blood and approaches the brink of death. He is found alone on the seashore as if he has left himself out to die. He is rushed to a nearby clinic.

Late October: With somewhat improved health, he returns to Tokyo by train with Yamamoto Jirō who has come to see him. Once in Tokyo, he stays with his parents.

November: The businessman Shimizu Shōtarō, who is in charge of Shimizu Steam Ships and several other companies, gives Kaita, Yamazaki Shōzō, and Imazeki Keiji thirty yen each as a monthly allowance. This money comes thanks to a good word from Yamamoto Kanae, who is on good terms with Shimizu.

Late November: With his recent windfall, Kaita rents a house in Yoyogi, far from the surrounding train lines. The house has a six-mat room, a four-mat room and a kitchen. Kaita names the house “Sanka sanbō” (“Mountain Hut Below the Bell”).

November: Kaita dedicates himself to work in his new quarters. A number of Kaita’s other friends, including Yamazaki Shōzō, Sugimura Keisuke, and Yamamoto Jirō also live in Yoyogi, and they fondly begin calling their group “The Yoyogi Utopia.”

About this time, Kaita writes his first testament as if preparing for death.

**1919 (Taishō 8) Age 22**

January: Kaita spends his mornings drawing at the Nihon bijutsuin and his afternoons sketching in his own chambers. He continues to eat irregularly and drink.

February 1-11: The fifth Nihon bijutsuin shūsaku ten is held in Ueno. Kaita shows eight works: *Matsu to enoki* (Pine tree and Hackberry), *Yuki no tsugi no hi* (Day Following Snow), *Matsu no mura* (Clump of Pines), *Jigazō* (Self-Portrait), *Matsu to ie* (Pines and House), *Ōshima fūkei* (Landscape of Ōshima), *Bō-kōshaku tei enbō* (Perspective with a Certain Baron’s Mansion), and *Yoyogi no ichibu* (Part of Yoyogi). Kaita receives a prize for his work.
- February 7: Kaita writes his second testament.

- February 14: Kaita spends the day in bed, infected from the previous night with influenza.

- February 15: Yamazaki Shōzō’s friend who is a physician comes to treat Kaita. There is a continuous fall of light snow, sleet, and rain.

- February 19: Late at night, Kaita bursts outside and collapses in a field. He is discovered some time later and returned to his room.

- February 20: Kaita dies around 2 am from tuberculosis exacerbated by influenza. He is twenty-two years and five months old.

- November 11-30: An exhibition of Kaita’s remaining works is held at the Kabutoya gado (Kabutoya Gallery) in Jinbo-chō, Tokyo. Twenty-four oil paintings, seven watercolors, and numerous sketches are put on display.

1920 (Taishō 9)

- June: Ars publishing house, which is headed by Yamamoto Kanae’s brother-in-law, releases Kaita no utaeru (Songs of Kaita), a volume of Kaita’s poetry and diaries. A party is held to celebrate the publication. In attendance are several representatives of the literary establishment, including Akutagawa Ryunosuke (1892-1927), Kawaji Ryūkō (1888-1959), Taketomi Sōfū (1891-1954), and Hata Kōichi (1896-1957).

- October: Arishima Takeo (1878-1923) purchases Kaita’s watercolor Kanna to shōjo for one hundred yen. Kaita’s friends use the money to erect a special gravestone in Zoshigaya Cemetery in Tokyo.

1921 (Taishō 10)

- April: Ars publishes Kaita no utaeru sono go oyobi Kaita no hanashi (Songs of Kaita Continued, Plus Stories about Kaita), which contains Kaita’s prose and a series of remembrances written by friends.

- October: Ars publishes Kaita gashū (Collection of Kaita’s Pictures).
CHRONOLOGY: EDOGAWA RANPO

1894 (Meiji 27)
- October 21: Hirai Tarō, the future Edogawa Ranpo, is born in the town of Nabari in Mie Prefecture. He is the first son of Hirai Shigeo and his wife Kiku. Shigeo was a descendant of the Tōdō family, which had served as provincial lords during the Edo period. After becoming one of the first class of graduates from the Kansai hōritsu gakkō (Kansai Law School, now renamed Kansai University), Shigeo moved to Nabari as a public official, where he worked for only about a year before moving to a position elsewhere.

- Ranpo’s grandmother Wasa takes care of him during his infancy.

1897 (Meiji 30) Age 2/3
- Hirai Shigeo changes jobs and becomes the head clerk of the Tōkai bōshoku dōmei (Tōkai Spinning and Weaving Union).

- The Hirai family moves to Nagoya.

1898 (Meiji 31) Age 3/4
- Hirai Shigeo takes a job at the Nagoya shōgyō kaigisho (Nagoya Commerce Council).

1900 (Meiji 33) Age 5/6
- About this time, Ranpo’s grandmother Wasa spends lots of time reading novels about domestic life, but Ranpo’s mother Kiku enjoys the mystery fiction and literary adaptations of Kuroiwa Ruikō (1862-1920).

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1 Because Ranpo was so prolific, this chronology mentions only his major fictional works and the essays discussed in this dissertation. Also, I have left out works that ghostwriters published under Ranpo’s name. For an exhaustive list of all of Ranpo’s publications, see the three-hundred page chronology Naka Shōsaku, ed., Edogawa Ranpo shippitsu nenpu, Edogawa Ranpo rifarensu bukku 2 (Nabari: Nabari shiritsu toshukan, 1998). This chronology is based on Suzuki Sadami, “Ryaku nenpu,” Edogawa Ranpo, Shinchō Nihon bungaku arubamu 41 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1993) 104-08 and my own research. Naka Shōsaku has compiled a large chronology of Ranpo’s life, which is available at Naka Shōsaku, ed., Edogawa Ranpo nenpu shūsei, 12 Dec 2003 <http://www.e-net.or.jp/user/stako/ED1/E04-00.html>.
1901 (Meiji 34) Age 6/7
- Ranpo enters the Nagoya shirakawa jinjō shogakkō (Nagoya Shirakawa Normal Elementary School).

1903 (Meiji 36) Age 8/9
- Ranpo reads the work of the children’s author Iwaya Sazanami (1870-1933) with great interest. His mother reads him the novel *Hichū no hi* (Secret of Secrets) by the novelist and reporter Kikuchi Yūhō (1870-1947), who was serializing the story in the Ōsaka mainichi shinbun (Osaka Daily Newspaper).
- Ranpo becomes fascinated with projection equipment, magic lanterns (*genjō*), and lenses of all sorts. Years later, lenses would feature prominently in a number of his fictional works.

1905 (Meiji 38) Age 10/11
- Ranpo enters the Nagoya shiritsu dai-san kōtōshō gakkō (Nagoya Municipal School Number Three for Elementary and Higher Studies).
- Ranpo begins publishing a small coterie journal with his friends.

1907 (Meiji 40) Age 12/13
- Ranpo enters the Aichi kenritsu dai-go chugakkō (Aichi Prefectural Fifth Higher School).
- Over summer vacation, Ranpo goes to Atami, and there, he reads the mystery novelist Kuroiwa Ruikō’s *Yūrei tō* (Tower of Ghosts), which impresses him deeply. Among his other readings are works by Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916), Kōda Rohan (1867-1947), and Izumi Kyoka (1873-1939).

1908 (Meiji 41) Age 13/14
- Hirai Shigeo opens a store, which he calls “Hirai shōten” (“Hirai’s”).
- Ranpo purchases some movable type and makes a magazine.

1910 (Meiji 43) Age 15/16
- Ranpo and two of his friends run away from their school dormitory, planning to go to Manchuria, but they are discovered and suspended.

1912 (Meiji 45 / Taishō 1) Age 17/18
- March: Ranpo graduates from middle school. He plans to open a publishing company specializing in publications for young readers.
- June: Hirai shōten goes bankrupt.
The entire family moves to Masan, a port city in south-central colonial Korea. Ranpo gives up his plans to continue with higher education; however, in September, he enters a two-year preparatory course for Waseda daigaku (Waseda University) and moves into lodgings associated with a printing company in the Hongō Ward of Tokyo. He goes to school while working part-time in the printing company.

December: Ranpo changes lodgings but stays in Hongō Ward.

1913 (Taishō 2) Age 18/19
- March: Ranpo plans to create a newspaper that he intends to call Teikoku shōnen shinbun (Imperial Youth Newspaper), and he experiments with writing novels for serialization.
- Spring: Ranpo moves in with his maternal grandmother in the Ushigome Ward of Tokyo.
- September: Ranpo enters the Politics and Economics Department at Waseda daigaku.

1914 (Taishō 3) Age 19/20
- With his friends from school, Ranpo creates the magazine Shironeji (White Rainbow), which they pass around to friends and acquaintances interested in literature.
- Fascinated by detective fiction, Ranpo peruses the English-language mysteries of authors such as Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930).
- November: Ranpo becomes involved with editing the bulletin of a representative from Mie Prefecture to the National Diet.

1915 (Taishō 4) Age 20/21
- Ranpo does a number of part-time jobs, including working as a home tutor and a member of the circulation desk at the Tokyo metropolitan library.
- Ranpo reads a large number of Western mysteries and attempts translating Doyle. He also becomes fascinated with the history of codes. (This is reflected in his debut work published eight years later.)
- Ranpo reads the mystery fiction of Murayama Kaita in Bukyō sekai (World of Heroism) and is greatly impressed by his original and horrific stories.
- Autumn: Ranpo writes the story “Hinawajū” (“The Matchlock Gun”), which he submits to Bōken sekai (World of Adventure), but the story is rejected.

1916 (Taishō 5) Age 21/22
- Ranpo writes a graduation thesis entitled Kyōsō ron (On Competition) and graduates from university in August.
- Although he dreams of going to America and becoming an author of detective fiction, he finds a job in the Nishi Ward of Osaka with a trading company, where he is charge of trade with the South Pacific.
1917 (Taishō 6) Age 22/23
- Impressed with the novella *Konjiki no shi (A Golden Death)* by Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886-1965), Ranpo reads the work of other modern Japanese writers, including Satō Haruo (1892-1964) and Uno Kōji (1891-1961).
- Back in Osaka, Ranpo begins to sell typewriters for a living.
- About this time, Ranpo writes a manuscript that he calls “Kasei no unga” (“The Canals of Mars”).
- November: Ranpo gets a job with the electrical machinery section of Toba zōsenjo (Toba Shipbuilding Yard) located in the port city of Toba in Mie Prefecture.

1918 (Taishō 7) Age 23/24
- Ranpo does editorial work for the bulletin published by the shipbuilding yard where he works.
- Ranpo becomes interested in the writing of Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881).
- As part of the shipbuilding yard’s attempt to promote relations with the local population, Ranpo founds the Toba otogi kurabu (Toba Companion Club).
- Ranpo travels around the islands surrounding the Kii Peninsula.
- August 18: Ranpo visits an exhibition of artwork by the young painter Iwata Jun’ichi (1900-1945) in an elementary school of Toba. Iwata and Ranpo run into one another several times in Toba, but they lose touch with one another.
- Winter: Ranpo meets his future wife, Murayama Ryū, who is a young local woman from Mie Prefecture.

1919 (Taishō 8) Age 24/25
- January: Ranpo quits the shipbuilding yard.
- February: In the middle of Dangozaka in the Hongō Ward of Tokyo, Ranpo opens a bookstore, San’nin shōbō (Three Men Bookshop) with two of his brothers, but this enterprise is not very successful.
- Ranpo considers becoming a private investigator but does not. In the meantime, he becomes an editor for the comic magazine *Tokyo Puck*.
- November: To supplement his income, he tries selling Chinese-style noodles at an outdoor stand.
- Winter: Despite his poverty, he marries Murayama Ryū.
1920 (Taishō 9) Age 25/26

- January: The publisher Hakubunkan releases the first issue of Shin seinen (New Youth), the magazine in which Ranpo will make his literary debut two years later in 1922. Morishita Uson (1890-1965) is the editor-in-chief. The first issue, which is written with young men in the countryside in mind, contains stories of self-cultivation, happenings inside and outside of the country, and tales of Japanese émigrés. In subsequent issues, the magazine begins to feature an increasingly large amount of mystery fiction translated from Western languages.

- February: Ranpo gets a job at the Tōkyō-shi shakai kyoku (Tokyo Municipal Social Office).

- Ranpo submits some of his own comics to various magazines.

- In consultation with a friend from the shipbuilding yard where he worked in Toba, Ranpo founds the Chiteki shōsetsu kankōkai (Organization for Publishing Intellectual Fiction). He also plans to start a coterie magazine called Gurotesuku (The Grotesque), but because he is not able to collect enough members, the plans fall through.

- He writes the story “Sekkai no himitsu” (“The Rock’s Secret”) under the pen name Edogawa Ranpo, which he writes with the characters 江戸川藍峰. The pen name he has chosen sounds much like a Japanese transliteration of the name of the American writer Edgar Allan Poe.

- In July, he quits his job, and in October, he moves to Osaka where he becomes a reporter for the Ōsaka jiji shinpō (Osaka Current Events News).

1921 (Taishō 10) Age 26/27

- February: Ranpo’s wife gives birth to the couple’s first and only child, their son Hirai Ryūtarō.

- April: After moving to Tokyo, Ranpo becomes the head clerk of the Nippon kōnin kurabu (Japan Artisan’s Club).

- Ranpo’s family moves twice during the year, first to Takinogawa and then to Tatsumaki in Ushigome Ward, Tokyo.

1922 (Taishō 11) Age 27/28

- February: While working at the office of the Nippon kōnin kurabu, he begins working another job in a managerial position for a company that manufactures pomade.

- Ranpo and his family move to a home near Ikebukuro station.

- July: After quitting his jobs, he moves to Moriguchi in the greater Osaka area. There he writes the two short stories “Ni-sen dōka” (“The Two-Sen Copper Coin”) and “Ichī-mai
no kippu” (“A Single Ticket”). The latter story has roughly the same plot as the story “Sekkai no himitsu,” which he had written in 1920.

- Ranpo hears the writer, essayist, and translator Baba Kochō (1869-1940) give a lecture about mystery fiction in Kōbe. In October, Ranpo sends him the two stories he had written that summer. He signs the stories with the characters he would use henceforth: 江戸川乱歩.

- November: Having heard nothing from Kochō, Ranpo sends both of his stories to Hakubunkan’s magazine Shin seinen.

- December: He begins work at the Ōhashi bengōshi jimusho (Ōhashi Law Office) where he does collection work and other odd jobs.

1923 (Taishō 12) Age 28/29

- April: Shin seinen publishes the story “Ni-sen dōka,” introducing the writer Edogawa Ranpo to the world. The story is about the events that unfold when one young man plants a cleverly encoded message where his roommate will find it. Hidden within this message, however, is a second encrypted message that negates the first, more obvious message. Alongside this story, Shin seinen publishes a celebratory review of the work by the doctor and future mystery writer Kozakai Fuboku (1890-1929), who praises Ranpo’s ingenious code and argues that the story could stand alongside the finest Western mystery fiction.

- June: Ranpo and his family move to a new apartment in the greater Osaka area.

- July: Shin seinen publishes his story “Ichimai no kippu,” which describes minute examinations of seemingly insignificant evidence to determine the perpetrator of a crime.

- July: Ranpo takes a job at the advertising bureau of the Ōsaka mainichi shinbun, where earns five or six hundred yen per month.

- September 1: An enormous earthquake rocks the Kantō region and starts conflagrations that destroy much of Tokyo and neighboring cities.

- November: Shin seinen publishes his short story “Osoroshiki sakugo” (“A Frightening Error”).

1924 (Taishō 13) Age 29/30

- April: Ranpo moves to Moriguchi in the greater Osaka area. There he lives with his parents who have fled the devastation of the Kantō earthquake.

- June: Shinansen publishes his short story “Ni haijin” (“Two Cripples”).

- October: Shin seinen publishes his short story “Sōseiji” (“Identical Twins”).

- After consulting with Kozakai Fuboku, he decides to become a professional writer. In November, he quits his newspaper job in Osaka.
January: Shin seinen publishes the short story “D-zaka no satsujin jiken” (“Murder on the Sloping Streets of D”), which first introduces the character Akechi Kogoro. This novel describes Akechi as he investigates the death of a saleswoman who, as it turns out, was murdered by her husband in the midst of sadomasochistic games. A large number of Ranpo’s subsequent novels feature Akechi, who is portrayed as a brilliant and eccentric private investigator.

February: Shin seinen publishes the short story “Shinri shiken” (“The Psychological Test”).


April: Shin seinen publishes the short story “Akai heya” (“The Red Room”). In Osaka, Ranpo and several of his friends, including the Shin seinen editor and detective novelist Yokomizo Seishi (1902-1981), found the Tantei shumi no kai (Detective Club) for people interested in mysteries and detective work.


August: Shin seinen publishes the short story “Yaneura no sanposha” (“The Walker in the Attic”), which soon becomes one of Ranpo’s most famous stories. This story describes an eccentric young man who climbs into the attic over his apartment building and spies through holes in the floor at the people living below. Eventually, he commits murder, but his guilt is exposed by the detective Akechi Kogoro.

September: Shin shōsetsu (The New Novel) publishes the short story “Hitori futayaku” (“One Person, Two Roles). Shajitsu hōchi begins publishing the short story “Giwaku” (“Suspicion”), which lasts for three installments. Ranpo begins to publish large numbers of essays about the detective novel and other subjects. The detective club that Ranpo and his friends had established in April begins publishing the journal Tantei shumi (Detectophilia). Ranpo works as an editor on the inaugural issue.

September: Ranpo’s father dies.

October: Kuraku publishes the short story “Ningen isu” (“The Human Chair”) about a man who hides himself inside of a chair in order to experience the world in new ways.
- November: Ranpo serves as the announcer for a Tokyo radio program about detectives. Iwata Jun’ichi heard about the program and went to the inn in Tokyo where Ranpo was staying. The two renewed their friendship and talked late into the night. They soon discover their shared interest in writing having to do with same-sex desire.

- December: The inaugural issue of the journal *Eiga to tantei (Movies and Detectives)* publishes the short story “Seppun” (“The Kiss”). The magazine *Taishū bungei (Popular Arts and Literature)*, in which Ranpo will publish several stories in the future, releases its inaugural issue.

1926 (Taishō 15 / Shōwa 1) Age 31/32

- January: *Kuraku* begins serializing the novella *Yami ni ugomeku (Wriggling in the Dark)*, which continues for nine installments until December, but Ranpo abandons the story and does not complete it until late 1927. The story describes a series of murders committed to feed one character’s cannibalistic desires. *Shin seinen* publishes the short story “Odoru issun-bōshi” (“The Dancing Dwarf”). *Tantei bungei (Detective Arts and Literature)* publishes the short story “Dokusō” (“Poisoned Grass”), which earns great praise from leftist writers. *Fujin no kuni (The Housewife’s Nation)* begins publishing “Fukumen no butōsha” (“The Masked Dancer”). *Sändō Mainichi (Sunday Mainichi)* begins serializing the novella *Kohantei jiken (Incident in the Lakeside Inn)*. *Shajitsu hōchi* begins publishing “Futari no tantei shōsetsuka” (“Two Detective Novelists”), but Ranpo abandons the project after two installments.

- Ranpo moves to a home in the Ushigome Ward of Tokyo.


- April: *Shin seinen* publishes the short story “Kasei no unga,” based on Ranpo’s manuscript written in or around the year 1927. The short, hallucinogenic work describes a dream about a man transforming into a woman and engaging in a frenzied, self-destructive, yet seductive dance.

- May: In *Shin seinen*, Ranpo publishes the first installment of a *gassaku shōsetsu* (jointly written novel) called *Go-kai no mado (The Fifth Story Window)*. Over the course of the next five months, Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke (1892-1931), Morishita Uson, Kōga Saburō (1893-1965), Kunieda Shirō (1887-1943), and Kozakai Fuboku each write a different installment of the story. Ranpo also makes an appearance on Osaka radio.

- June: *Shin shōsetsu* publishes the short story “Monoguramu” (“Monogram”). *Fujin kurabu (Ladies’ Club)* begins serializing the novel *Kage-otoko (The Man of the Shadows)*.

- July: *Taishū bungei* publishes the short story “Osei tōjō” (“Enter Osei”) about a woman who kills her husband by smothering him inside of a locked chest, but the magazine is suppressed by literary censors.

- September: *Taishū bungei* publishes his essay “Ranpo uchiakebanashi” (“Ranpo Tells All”) in which Ranpo recalls the homoerotic flirtations and crushes he experienced during grade school. *Shin seinen* publishes his essay “Asakusa shumi” (“A Taste for Asakusa”)
in which he describes the appeal of Asakusa Park and its bustling streets. *Sensha* (Tank) publishes the short story “Shinkirō” (“Mirage”).


- December: *Tōkyō asahi shinbun* (Tokyo Asahi Newspaper) begins serializing the novel *Issun-bōshi* (The Dwarf), which continues until February 1927. The novel describes the murders and sexual intrigues in a rich family blackmailed by a kniving dwarf. This is Ranpo’s first full book-length novel.

- About this time, Ranpo often spends long hours wandering through the bustling streets of Asakusa Park, sometimes with his friend Iwata Jun’ichi and sometimes on his own.

1927 (Shōwa 2) Age 32/33

- A film version of Ranpo’s novel *Issun-bōshi* is released.

- Dissatisfied with his writing style, Ranpo stops writing novels temporarily and travels along the coast of the Sea of Japan.

- October: The publisher Heibonsha releases a volume of Ranpo’s stories in its series *Gendai taishū bungaku zenshū* (Collection of Modern Popular Literature). This volume contains a new ending for the novella *Yami ni ugomeku*, which had previously been left incomplete. It also contains angular, modernist illustrations by Iwata Jun’ichi. The volume sells 160,000 copies.

- Ranpo spends time in Kyoto and Nagoya.

- November: Ranpo and several of his friends from the magazine *Taishū bungei* form a literary group in Nagoya called the Tankisha. Over the next several years, members of the group cooperate to write essays about popular fiction and *gassaku shōsetsu*, including the story “Nokosareta hitori” (“The One Left Behind”), which appears in *Sandē mainichi* in December. Iwata Jun’ichi serves as the secretary of the group.

1928 (Shōwa 3) Age 33/34

- January: Ranpo undergoes surgery for empyema.

- March: Ranpo moves with his wife and child into a rented home in Ushigome Ward of Tokyo.

- April: Ranpo and his family move to Tozuka-machi in Shinjuku, where they have bought a house for lodgers. After restoring the house, they open up a small house for borders.
- The author Yokomizo Seishi publishes a number of short stories in Shin seinen and other magazines under Ranpo’s name. This is Ranpo’s first experience with a ghostwriter.

- August: Ranpo begins serializing the novella Inju (The Beast in the Shadows) in Shin seinen. Because the story contains a number of surprising twists and sarcastic comments about a mystery novelist who sounds much like Ranpo himself, the novella is extremely popular among readers.

- October: Sandē Mainichi begins publishing a gassaku shōsetsu called Hakutō no kyōjin (The Giant with the White Hair) written by the members of the Tankisha.

1929 (Shōwa 4) Age 34/35

- January: Ranpo begins serializing the novel Kotō no oni (The Demon of the Lonely Isle) in Asahi, a new monthly magazine published by Hakubunkan, the same publisher who released Shin seinen. The novel continues serialization until February 1930 and is Ranpo’s only full-length novel to deal extensively with same-sex erotic desire.

- January: Ranpo publishes “Akumu” (“Nightmares”) in Shin seinen. Later, Ranpo publishes part of the work independently under the title “Imomushi” (“The Caterpillar”). “Imomushi.” This story, which describes the suffering of a veteran who has become a quadruple amputee, evokes praise from leftist writers for its powerful description of the horrors wrought by war. In subsequent decades, it becomes one of Ranpo’s best-known stories.

- March: Ranpo and the Tankisha publish the story “Igai na kokuhaku” (“An Unexpected Confession”) in Sandē Mainichi.

- April: Ranpo’s friend and fellow detective writer Kozakai Fuboku dies. After his death, Ranpo uses his influence to help get Fuboku’s complete works published.

- June: The magazine Kaizō (Remodelling) publishes the first of two installments of the short story “Mushi” (“Bugs”). Shin seinen publishes the story “Oshie to tabi suru otoko” (“The Traveler with the Picture of Pasted Cloth”) about a man who falls in love with a doll whom he sees through a telescope and mistakes for a real person. In the end, he too transforms himself into a doll to be with her. In subsequent decades, this imaginative story becomes one of Ranpo’s most frequently anthologized works.

- August: Kōdan kurabu (Storytelling Club) begins serializing the long novel Kumo-otoko (Homo araneus), about a murderer who kills women in displays of eroticism and terrific cruelty. The combination of the grotesque and erotic make the story extremely popular, and the story is released in book form the following year.

- About this time, Ranpo becomes friends with the lawyer and detective novelist Hamao Shirō (1896-1935). Hamao, like Ranpo, is interested in the subject of same-sex desire. In 1929, Hamao publishes one short story “Akuma no deshi” (“The Devil’s Apprentice”) about a man who reflects on his schoolboy relationship with another boy, and in 1930, he writes two articles for Fujin saron (The Housewife’s Salon) that argue that a lack of understanding about same-sex love was one of the greatest problems facing society. Hamao lends Ranpo a copy of The Intermediate Sex by the British social thinker and
homophile Edward Carpenter (1844-1929). This work encourages Ranpo to find out more about male-male love.

1930 (Shōwa 5) Age 35/36

- January: Bungei kurabu begins serializing the novella Ryōki no hate (The Fruits of Curiosity Hunting), which lasts until December of the same year. This novel describes a man who wanders through Asakusa and other parts of the city in search of unusual curiosities that might quell his sense of boredom. In the process, he uncovers a plot to take over the operations government.

- July: Kōdan kurabu begins serializing the long novel Majutsushi (The Magician).

- September: Shin seinen begins serializing a gassaku shōsetsu called Egawa Ranko written by the members of the Tankisha. Ranpo, who wrote the first installment of the story, gave the female title character a name that sounds amusingly like his own. Höchi shinbun begins publishing the long novel Kyūketsuki (The Vampire), which continues serialization until March 1931. This is the first novel to feature the young boy Kobayashi, who later becomes the faithful sidekick of the detective hero Akechi Kogorō. The bestselling magazine Kingu (King) begins serializing the novel Ōgon kamen (The Golden Mask), which continues until October 1931.

- November: An Esperanto translation of “Ichimai no kippu” and other stories is published in book form.

1931 (Shōwa 6) Age 36/37

- January: Asahi begins publishing the story Mōju (The Blind Beast) about a blind man who lures women into a bizarre underground world full of body parts made of rubber and then dismembers them.

- April: The magazine Fuji begins serializing his story Hakutōki (The White-Haired Demon). Bungei kurabu publishes his story “Mera hakase no fushigi na hanzai” (“Dr. Mera’s Strange Crime”).

- May: Heibonsha begins publishing the first edition of Ranpo’s complete works in thirteen volumes. Tantei shumi publishes his story “Jigoku fūkei” (“The Landscape of Hell”).

- June: Kōdan kurabu begins serializing the novel Kyōfuō (The King of Fear).

- August: An Esperanto translation of Ranpo’s Ōgon kamen is published.

- September 18: Japan begins a full-scale invasion of Manchuria, which results in the establishment of the Japanese protectorate of Manchuguo in March 1932.

- November: The lodging house Ranpo had run with his wife goes out of business.

1932 (Shōwa 7) Age 37/38

- March: Ranpo takes a break from writing and begins traveling through the country.
- April: He publishes the story “Hinawaju,” which he had written a decade and a half before.

- June: Ranpo’s younger sister Tama dies.

- October: Tantei kurabu (Detective Club) publishes Ranpo’s installment of a gassaku shōsetsu called Satsujin meiro (Labyrinth of Murder), written by Ranpo and several friends, including Hamao Shirō. After this, Ranpo publishes almost no fiction for an entire year.

- December: A stage version of his novel Inju opens in Shinbashi.

1933 (Shōwa 8) Age 38/39

- January: Ranpo begins participating in the monthly meetings of the Seishin bunseki kenkyūkai (Group for Psychoanalytic Research) because of his interested in same-sex desire. The meetings bring together a number of other writers, psychologists, anthropologists, and amateur sexologists interested in the same subject. The group is headed by Ōtsuki Kenji (1891-1977), one of the early translators of Freud and the author of several popular books on psychological theory.

- April: Ranpo and his family rent a home in Kuruma-machi in the Shiba Ward of Tokyo. He coverts the earthen warehouse behind the main house into his study. He begins thinking about obtaining a painting by Murayama Kaita to hang on the wall, and so he gets into contact with one of former Kaita’s classmates. Sometime before June 1934, he obtains Kaita’s watercolor Ni shōnen zu (Portrait of Two Boys) painted in 1914. Ranpo becomes convinced that the painting depicts two boys in love with one another.

- June: The first of four installments of the article “J.A. Shimonzu no hisoka naru jōnetsu” (“The Secret Passion of J.A. Symonds”) begins appearing in Seishin bunseki (Psychoanalysis), the journal of the Seishin bunseki kenkyūkai. In it, Ranpo draws on the writings of British literary historian and poet John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) to argue that, despite Symonds’s marriage, he was erotically attracted to men.

- November: Ranpo breaks his almost one-year long hiatus from fiction by publishing the story Akurei (The Evil Spirit) in Shin seinen. After three installments, however, he abandons the manuscript and publishes a public apology for not finishing the story.

1934 (Shōwa 9) Age 39/40

- January: Kōdan kurabu begins serializing the novel Ningen hyō (The Human Leopard), which continues until May 1935. This is the first of Ranpo’s novels to feature a villain who does not appear to be fully human. Also in January, Ranpo begins serializing the novel Kuro tokage (Black Lizard) in Hinode (Sunrise), and he and his friends begin serializing a gassaku shōsetsu called Kuroi neji (Black Rainbow) in Fujin kōron (Ladies’ Review).

- June: Ranpo publishes an article called “Kaita Ni shōnen zu” (“Kaita A Portrait of Two Boys”) in the journal Buntai (Literary Style). In it, he describes his admiration for Kaita’s writing and artwork.
- July: Ranpo and his family move to Ikebukuro San-chōme in order to escape the noise of the railway tracks near their Kuruma-machi home. This house also had an earthen storehouse in the backyard, and again, Ranpo converts it into a study where he keeps many of his books and the watercolor by Murayama Kaita. Ranpo keeps the house until the end of his life.

- September: The novella Zakuro (Pomegranate) appears in the widely circulated journal Chūō kōron (Central Review). This is the first time that one of his works appears in a mainstream national magazine that is not dedicated specifically to popular fiction.

- December: The magazine Kingu begins serializing Ranpo’s story “Yōchū” (“Bewitching Bug”).

1935 (Shōwa 10) Age 40/41

- January: Heibonsha begins publishing a twelve-volume set entitled Ranpo kessaku senshū (A Selection of Ranpo’s Great Works).

- January: Shin seinen carries an essay called “Hoittoman no hanashi” (“On Whitman”) in which Ranpo recounts the pressure that John Addington Symonds placed on Walt Whitman to reveal his views on male-male love.

- June: Ranpo undergoes surgery and does not publish any fiction for the remainder of the year.

- October 29: Ranpo’s friend Hamao Shirō dies unexpectedly from a cerebrial hemorrhage at the age of thirty-nine.

1936 (Shōwa 11) Age 41/42

- January: The magazine Shōnen kurabu (Youth Club) begins to serialize the novel Kaijin ni-jū mensō (The Mystery Man of Twenty Faces), which features Akechi Kogorō and his adolescent sidekick Kobayashi combating a clever thief who is a master of disguise. In future years, Ranpo writes many other novels featuring the same characters, and many become classics of Japanese children’s fiction. Also, the magazine Kōdan kurabu begins serializing Ryokui no oni (The Demon Dressed in Green), which continues until February 1937.

- January: In the detective fiction magazine Purofurū (Profile), Ranpo publishes a eulogistic essay about Hamao Shirō.

- April: The magazine Tantei bungaku (Detective Literature) publishes a special issue on Ranpo.

- May: Shunshūsha publishes a collection of Ranpo’s essays called Oni no kotoba (Words from a Demon).

- September: Bungei shunjū (Literary Arts Spring and Autumn), a large magazine for a general readership, carries Ranpo’s essay “Shudō mokuzuzuka” (“Mokuzu Mound of Male Love”), which describes a literary account of a double love-suicide between two
men during the Edo period. This essay attests to Ranpo’s ongoing interest in the subject of male-male love in literature and is his longest essay about same-sex desire in Japanese literature and history. Ranpo’s memoirs later recall that this was a particularly difficult piece for him to write, but he thinks of it especially fondly.

- December: Kingu begins serializing the novel *Daianshitsu* (*The Great Dark Room*), which continues until June 1938.

- December: The magazine *Purofīru* carries the first installments of *Kare* (*He*), an autobiographical novel in which Ranpo describes his youth in the third person. Ranpo derived the inspiration for the work from the autobiographical piece *Si le grain ne meurt...* (*If it Die...*) by the French novelist André Gide (1869-1951). Ranpo publishes four installments of *Kare* over subsequent months, but when he reaches the age when the protagonist is undergoing his sexual awakening, Ranpo finds himself too embarrassed to continue, and he abandons the work.

- December: *Sekai bungei* carries a short essay Ranpo had written on male-male eroticism in the literature of John Addington Symonds, Edward Carpenter, and André Gide.

**1937 (Shōwa 12) Age 42/43**

- January: *Shōnen kurabu* begins serializing the novel *Shōnen tanteidan* (*The Youth Detective Club*), which continues until December. This work, which again features Akechi Kogorō, his sidekick Kobayashi, and the “Mystery Man of Twenty Faces,” becomes another of Ranpo’s classic works for children.

- March: *Kōdan kurabu* begins serializing the novel *Yūrei-tō* (*Ghost Tower*), which continues until April 1938.

- July 7: The Marco Polo Bridge Incident precipitates a Japanese invasion of mainland China.

**1938 (Shōwa 13) Age 43/44**

- January: *Shōnen kurabu* begins serializing the novel *Yōkai hakase* (*The Man with the Doctorate in the Supernatural*), which lasts until December.

**1939 (Shōwa 14) Age 44/45**

- January: *Kōdan kurabu* begins serializing the novel *Ankokusei* (*The Pitch-Black Star*), and the magazine *Fuji* begins publishing *Jigoku no dōkeshi* (*Hell’s Jester*). Both novels continue serialization until December. Meanwhile, *Shōnen kurabu* begins serializing *Daikinkai* (*The Great Lump of Gold*), which continues until February 1940.

- March: Ranpo was ordered to drop his short story “Imomushi” from a collection of work published by Shun’yūdō. The reason was that the story carried a strong anti-war message. The order comes as a blow to Ranpo, and he decides to take a lower literary profile during the war.
1940 (Shōwa 15) Age 45/46
- April: Shōnen kurabu begins serializing the story Shin takarajima (New Treasure Island), which continues until March 1941.

1941 (Shōwa 16) Age 46/47
- Apart from the conclusion of Shin takarajima, Ranpo publishes no fiction or essays this year. All of his previous works go out of print, and he finds himself without appreciable income.
- April: Ranpo begins compiling Haremaze nenpu (Scrapbook Year-by-Year), which documents his life and literary career. (This scrapbook serves as a major resource for much of the research conducted on Ranpo and his life in later decades.)
- December: Japan bombs Pearl Harbor, and the US declares war on Japan.

1942 (Shōwa 17) Age 47/48
- Under the pen name Komatsu Ryūnosuke, Ranpo begins publishing a series of stories called Chie no Ichitarō (Ichitarō the Wise) in Shōnen kurabu. This series of kagaku monogatari (tales of science) continues until April 1943.
- July: Ranpo becomes the vice-president of a local resident’s organization.

1943 (Shōwa 18) Age 48/49
- November: Hinode begins serializing Ranpo’s technological spy thriller Idai naru yume (A Great Dream), which continues until December 1944.

1944 (Shōwa 19) Age 49/50
- Ranpo’s only literary publications this year are the conclusion of Idai naru yume and a brief article in November about gardens.

1945 (Shōwa 20) Age 50/51
- Ranpo’s only publication in 1945 is a small article in the New Year’s Day issue of Hinode. He publishes neither fiction nor any other articles, largely because paper shortages have brought the publishing industry to a virtual standstill.
- February: Ranpo’s friend Iwata Jun’ichi, who has been living in the Kansai region in recent years, dies unexpectedly from illness.
- April: Ranpo’s family is evacuated to Fukushima in north-central Japan.
- May: Most of Ikebukuro is destroyed in an air raid, but miraculously, the fire is put out before it destroys Ranpo’s house and earthen warehouse.
- June: Ranpo, who is suffering from malnutrition, leaves Tokyo.
- August 15: Japan surrenders to the Allied forces, ending World War II.

1946 (Shōwa 21) Age 51/52

- A large number of Ranpo’s prewar novels come back into print in book form. In December, Ranpo publishes an expanded version of his novel Ryōki no hate from 1930.

- Ranpo writes no fiction for the next few years. Instead, most of his literary activity consists of essays about the detective novel and its history, both in the west and in Japan.

- Ranpo puts his support behind Hōseki (The Jewel), a new magazine specializing in detective fiction. Hōseki publishes its first issue in March.

- April: Ranpo founds an organization called the Doyōkai (Saturday Club) to promote friendship among detective writers.

- October: The film Paretto naifu no hanzai (Crime with a Palette Knife), based on his short story “Shinri shiken” from 1925, opens in theaters.

1947 (Shōwa 22) Age 52/53

- Ranpo publishes large numbers of essays, mostly about western mystery fiction, for various publications.

- June: The Tantei sakka kurabu (Detective Author’s Club) is founded, and Ranpo becomes the first president. He travels throughout the country giving talks on detective fiction.

- October: Kindai kidan (Strange Tales of Modernity) carries a short article called “Shudō kasen” (“Linked Verses on Male Love”), which contains a series of verses that he and Iwata Jun’ichi had written several years previously.

- December: Ranpo publishes a final, previously unpublished story written for his series Chie no Ichitarō.

- December: Ranpo and the writer and essayist Inagaki Taruho (1900-1977) publish a round-table discussion on same-sex desire in literature in a small magazine called Kuiin (Queen). In it, Ranpo describes the content of a number of books he had uncovered during the height of his bibliographic searches with Iwata Jun’ichi. Meanwhile, Taruho plans an anthology of texts on bishōnen’ai (the love of beautiful youths), and Ranpo gives him several texts he had translated years before from the classical Greek anthology Musa Puerilis compiled by Strato of Sardeis. Taruho’s anthology never materializes, however.

1948 (Shōwa 23) Age 53/54


- December: A film adaptation of the novel Yūreitō (1937-1938) is released.
1949 (Shōwa 24) Age 54/55

- January: The magazine Shōnen (Youth) begins serializing the novel Seidō no majin (The Magic Man of Bronze), which continues until December. Ranpo publishes the essay “Boku wa ren’ai funōsha” (“I am a Man Impotent in Love”) in Shunkan nyūsu (Weekly News). This autobiographical essay describes Ranpo’s inability to experience love.

- September: Asahi gurafu (Asahi Graph) publishes the short essay “Futari no shishō” (“My Two Teachers”) in which Ranpo describes the support his deceased friends Hamao Shirō and Iwata Jun’ichi gave him when he was researching male-male desire.

- October: The magazine Shin seinen begins serializing Ranpo’s memoirs Tantei shōsetsu san-jū-nen (Thirty Years of Detective Fiction). (Shin seinen serializes them until July 1950 when the magazine goes out of business. After that, Ranpo continues serializing them in Hōseki beginning in March 1951.)


1950 (Shōwa 25) Age 55/56

- January: The magazine Shōnen begins serializing the novel Tora no kiba (The Tiger’s Fangs), which continues until December.

- March: The newspaper Hōchi shinbun publishes the short story novel Dangai (The Cliff).

- A motion picture called Hyōchū no bijo (The Beautiful Woman of the Icicle), which is based on Ranpo’s novel Kyūketsuki from 1930-1931, appears in theaters.

1951 (Shōwa 26) Age 56/57

- January: The magazine Omoshiro kurabu (The Omoshiro Club) begins serializing Sankakukan no kyōfu (Fear at Three-Point Manor), and Shōnen begins serializing the novel Tōmei kaijin (The Transparent Mystery Man). Both novels continue serialization until December.

- May: The publisher Iwaya shoten releases Gen’eiijō (The Castle of Illusion), an anthology of Ranpo’s previously published essays.

1952 (Shōwa 17) Age 57/58

- January: The magazine Shōnen begins serializing the novel Kaiki yon-jū mensō (Forty Faces of the Bizarre), which continues until December.

- January 29: The Ōsaka shinbun (Osaka Newspaper) publishes an article by Ranpo called “Shūshūheki” (“My Collecting Habits”) in which he describes his passion for collecting books on male-male desire.

- May: Ningen tankyū (Human Explorations) publishes Ranpo’s article “Dōsei bungaku shi ni tsuite: Iwata Jun’ichi no omoide” (“On the History of Homosexual Literature: My
Memories of Iwata Jun’ichi”). (Later, he republishes the article without the words ni tsuite “on” in the title.)

- June: Ningen tankyū publishes Ranpo’s article “Honchō nanshoku kō ni tsuite” (“On Thoughts on Nanshoku in Our Kingdom”) about the origin and significance of Iwata Jun’ichi’s research into male-male love and eroticism in Japanese history.

- July: Ranpo becomes honorary president of the Tantei sakka kurabu.

- December: The Pacific edition of the American newspaper Stars and Stripes introduces Ranpo’s detective hero Akechi Kogorō as the Japanese equivalent of Sherlock Holmes.

1953 (Shōwa 28) Age 58/59

- January: Shōnen begins serializing the novel Uchū kaijin (The Mystery Man from Outer Space), which continues until December.

- February: Tantei kurabu publishes the essay “Henshin gannō” (“The Desire for Transformation”) in which Ranpo discusses the universality of the desire to transform into someone or something else.

- July: Ranpo appears in a NHK Radio performance called Ni-jū no tobira (Twenty Doors).

- October: Hōseki begins publishing a gassaku shōsetsu called Kikei no tenjo (The Deformed Heavenly Maiden). Ranpo writes the first installment, which is followed by others by Ōshita Udaru, Tsunoda Kikuo (1906-1994), and Kigi Takatarō (1897-1959), all detective novelists who had formerly been associated with Shin seinen.

- November: Under Ranpo’s name, the novelist Takeda Takehiko (1919-1988) publishes a new version of the novel Ōgon kamen (1930-1931) for children. Over the coming years, Ranpo often entrusts ghost writers to revise his early novels for juvenile audiences.

1954 (Shōwa 29) Age 59/60

- January: Shōnen begins serializing the novel Tettō no kaijin (The Mystery Man of the Iron Tower), which continues until December.

- June: Radio Tokyo begins broadcasting an adaptation of Kaijin ni-jū mensō as a serial radio drama. In the coming years, several other radio stations adapt the novel for broadcast.

- June: The newspaper Ōsaka sangyō keizai shinbun (Osaka Industrial Economics News) begins serializing the novella Kyōki (Lethal Weapon), which continues until July.

- July: Inagaki Taruho includes Ranpo’s translations of homoerotic verses from the Greek anthology Musa Puerilis as an appendix to an essay he publishes in the magazine Sakka (Authors).

- October: Ranpo celebrates his sixtieth birthday. The Edogawa Ranpo Prize (Edogawa Ranpo shō) is established. In the future, this prize becomes one of the most coveted awards for detective fiction. Iwaya shoten publishes Ranpo’s memoirs in book form. Bessatsu
hōseki (The Jewel – Extra Edition) and Tantei kurabu both publish special issues to commemorate Ranpo’s birthday.

- November: The ghost writer Hikawa Ro (1913-1989) publishes an adaptation of Ranpo’s novel Ningen hyō (1934-1935) for juvenile readers. In coming years, Hikawa rewrites many of Ranpo’s early novels by adapting the scarier and more erotic passages. Hikawa publishes several original stories under Ranpo’s name.

- December: Shun’yōdo begins publishing Ranpo’s complete works in sixteen volumes. Shōchiku Studios releases a feature film adaptation of the novel Kaijin ni-jū mensō, which becomes extremely popular.

1955 (Shōwa 30) Age 60/61

- January: Omoshiro kurabu begins serializing Ranpo’s novel Kage-otoko (The Shadow Man). Shōnen begins serializing the novel Kaitei no majutsushi (The Magician from the Bottom of the Sea), and Shōnen kurabu (Youth Club) begins serializing the novel Haiiro no kyōjin (The Gray Giant). All three novels continue serialization until December.

- January: Shōchiku Studios releases a feature film adaptation of the novel Seidō no majin.

- February: Shin Tōhō Studios releases a feature film adaptation of the novel Issun-bōshi.

- April: The popular literature monthly Ōru yomimono (All Things to Read) releases the short story “Tsuki to tebukuro” (“Moon and Gloves”).


- September: Yomiuri shinbun (Yomiuri Newspaper) begins serializing the novel Tantei shōnen (Detective Youth), which continues until December.

- October: The novel Jūjirō (The Crossroads) is published directly in book form.

1956 (Shōwa 31) Age 61/62

- January: Shōnen begins serializing Ranpo’s novel Mahō hakase (The Man with a Doctorate in Magic), and Shōnen kurabu begins serializing the novel Ōgon hyō (The Golden Leopard). Both novels continue serialization until December. A special edition of Shōnen kurabu contains the novella Tenkū no majin (The Magic Man in the Air).

- March: Nikkatsu Studios releases a film based on Ranpo’s work called Shi no jūjirō (Crossroads of Death).

- Charles Tuttle Publishing releases a book of English translations of several of Ranpo’s most famous short stories written early in his career. The translations were completed with the help of Ranpo himself, who read and explained the original texts line by line to the translator James Harris, who could understand but could not read Japanese.
1957 (Shōwa 32) Age 62/63

- January: The monthly magazine Shōjo kurabu (Girl’s Club) begins serializing the novel Mahō ningyō (The Magic Doll); Shōnen begins serializing the novel Yōjin gongū (Gong, the Mysterious Man), and Shōnen kurabu begins serializing Sākasu no kaijin (The Mystery Man at the Circus). All three novels continue serialization until December. The first issue of the new magazine Tanoshii san-nen-sei (Fun for Third-Graders) carries the first of three installments of the novel Mahō yashiki (The Magic Mansion).

- April: Tanoshii san-nen-sei carries the first of twelve installments of the novella Akai kabutomushi (The Red Beetle).

- August: Ranpo becomes editor-in-chief of the magazine Hōseki.

- August: Tōkyō sōgensha publishes a book of Ranpo’s autobiographical essays, Waga yume to shinjitsu (My Dreams and Reality). This novel contains a large number of the essays that Ranpo had written about male-male desire.

- A stage adaptation of the novel Panorama-tō kidan opens at the Tōhō gekijō.

- November: Sangyō keizai shinbun (Industrial Economic News) begins serializing the novel Tsuma ni shituren shita otoko (The Man who Lost His Wife), which continues until November.

1958 (Shōwa 33) Age 63/64

- January: Shōjo kurabu begins serializing the novel Tōjō no kijutsushi (The Conjurer in the Tower); Shōnen begins serializing Yakō ningen (The Glow-in-the-Dark Person), and Shōnen kurabu begins serializing Kimenjō no himitsu (The Secret of the Castle with the Strange Façade). All three novels continue serialization until December.

- April: The magazine Shōgaku yon-nen-sei (Fourth Grader in Elementary School) begins serializing the novel Tetsujin Q (Q, The Iron Man), which continues until March 1959.

- August: Tanoshii ni-nen-sei (Fun for Second Graders) begins serializing the novel Fushigi na hito (The Mysterious Man), which continues until March 1959.

1959 (Shōwa 34) Age 64/65

- January: Shōnen begins serializing the novel Kamen no kyōfuō (The Masked King of Fear), which continues until December.

- April: Tanoshii san-nen-sei begins serializing Mei tantei to ni-jū mensō (The Famous Detective and the Mystery Man of Twenty Faces), which continues until December.

- October: Tanoshii ni-nen-sei begins serializing a version of Kaijin ni-jū mensō rewritten for a young audience. The novel continues serialization until March 1960.

- November: Tanoshii ichi-nen-sei (Fun for First Graders) begins serializing another version of Kaijin ni-jū mensō. The novel continues serialization until March 1960. Also,
the publisher Tōgensha publishes the novel *Petenshi to kūki-otoko* (*The Swindler and the Man of Air*) in book form.

1960 (Shōwa 35) Age 65/66

- January: *Shōnen* begins serializing the novel *Denjin M* (*M, The Electric Man*), which continues until December. *Hitchikokku magajin* (*Hitchcock Magazine*) carries the short story “Yubi” (“Finger”), which is an adaptation of a story Ranpo had written in 1928.

- April: The magazine *Shōgaku roku-nen-sei* (*Sixth Grader in Elementary School*) begins serializing the novel *Ore wa ni-jū mensō da* (*I am the Man of Twenty Faces!*), which continues until March 1961.

- September: The magazine *Kodomo ie no hikari* (*Light of the Children’s Home*) begins serializing the novel *Kaijin to shōnen tantei* (*The Mystery Man and the Youth Detective*), which continues until September 1961.

- October: Ranpo undergoes surgery for empyema.

1961 (Shōwa 36) Age 66/67

- January: *Shōnen* begins serializing *Yōseijin R* (*R, The Man from the Mysterious Planet*), which continues until December.

- July: Tōgensha publishes an expanded version of Ranpo’s memoirs, called *Tantei shōsetsu yon-jū-nen* (*Forty Years of Detective Fiction*). This version of the memoirs includes a brief, new essay about Murayama Kaita’s painting *Ni shōnen zu*, which reiterates in slightly different form most of the same ideas seen in the essay about Kaita published in June 1934.

- October: The publisher Tōgensha begins publishing an eighteen-volume version of Ranpo’s complete works that incorporates his own revisions and commentary.

- November: Ranpo receives the Purple Ribbon Medal (*Shijū-hō-shō*) from the government for his writing.

1962 (Shōwa 37) Age 67/68

- January: *Shōnen* begins serializing the novel *Chōjin Nikora* (*Nicola, the Superman*), which continues until December. This is the last work of fiction Ranpo publishes.

1963 (Shōwa 38) Age 68/69

- Although Ranpo publishes no new fiction this year, he continues to publish numerous essays.

- January: The Nihon suiri sakka kyōkai (*Japan Mystery Author’s Guild*) is established, and Ranpo becomes its first president.
1964 (Shōwa 39) Age 69/70

- Ranpo’s literary production comes to a virtual standstill. His literary production is limited to his responses to a few surveys and critical praise for various novels. A translation of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* by Edgar Allan Poe is published in his name, but it was translated by a ghost writer.

1965 (Shōwa 40) Age 70/71

- Morishita Uson, the former editor of *Shin seinen* who had first brought Ranpo’s work to public attention, dies. In June, Ranpo publishes a eulogistic essay for him.

- July: Ranpo publishes the essay “Kaijin ni-jū mensō to shōnen tanteidan” (“The Mystery Man of Twenty Faces and the Youth Detective Club”) about the infamous villain and group of young detectives who had served as the main characters for so much of his postwar fiction.

- July 28: Ranpo dies of a cerebral hemorrhage.

- August 1: The Nihon suiri sakka kyōkai holds a funeral for Ranpo in Aoyama, Tokyo. He is buried in the city of Tsu in Mie Prefecture with a Buddhist name (*kaimyō*) that he had selected.
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376
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379


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397


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