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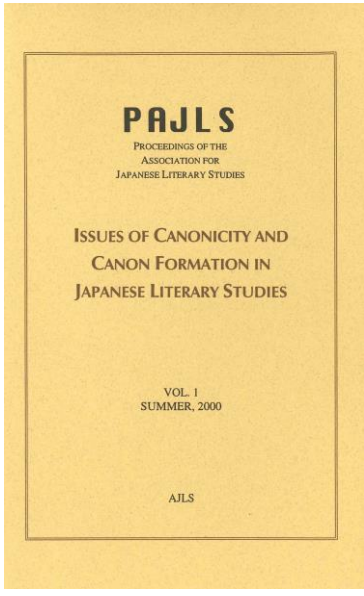

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CANONIZATION AND COMMODIFICATION: ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE *TALES OF ISE* IN THE MODERN ERA

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By the early nineteenth century, illustrations and visual appropriations of the tenth-century court romance *Ise monogatari* [Tales of Ise] existed in a bewildering variety. There was the standardizing iconography of the Saga-bon (Fig. 1) [all figures are at the end of the article], first published in 1608, and reproduced, with minor changes, continually throughout the Edo period.[1] There was the elite iconography of what would eventually be called Rimpa,[2] recycling imagery from the fourteenth-century Ihon, or "variant," illustrated version. There were parodies born out of the standardization of the Saga-bon[3] and Narihira's close association with *shunga*.[4] By the eighteenth century, *Tales of Ise* was appearing on the stage, which in turn led to it functioning as a major trope of *mitate-e*, or visual parodies.[5] Finally, by the same period there were editions of the *Ise* designed to serve as primers,

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[1] The two best and most easily accessible collections of *Ise-e* reproductions are Chino Kaori, *(Emaki) Ise monogatari e*, Nihon no bijutsu 6.301 (Tokyo: Ibundō, 1991); and the exhibition catalogue *Ise monogatari no sekai*, Gotoh Bijutsukan, 1994. On Saga-bon see also Katagiri Yōichi, ed., *Ise monogatari (Keichō jūsan-nen-kan Saga-bon dai-isshu)* (Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 1981), and Fritz Rumpf, *Das Ise Monogatari von 1608 and sein Einfluss auf die Buchillustration des XVII. Jahrhunderts in Japan* (Berlin: Wurfel Verlag, n.d.).

[2] See Murase Miyeko, *Rinpa to Ise-e*, Kanshō Shirīzu II (Nezu Bijutsukan, 1999).

[3] See Shinoda Jun'ichi, *Nise monogatari e: e to bun/bun to e* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1995).

[4] See Timon Screech, *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan 1700-1820* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 200-05.

[5] See Nakamachi Keiko, "Ukiyo-e ga kioku shita 'Ise monogatari e'," *Jissen Joshi Daigaku bungaku-bu kiyō* 41: 169-94; and in English, "Ukiyo-e Memories of *Ise Monogatari*," *Impressions* 22 (2000): 54-85.

especially for girls.[6] We see, then, a rich proliferation of imagery associated with the *Ise* throughout the Tokugawa period, designed for a number of different markets, distinguished both by gender and educational level. Regardless of medium, however, Narihira and the *Ise* were firmly identified in the popular mind with romance.

Needless to say, this kind of reputation caused something of a problem for Meiji-period educators and scholars when Japan needed a canon of "national literature" at the start of its modernization drive in the latter half of the nineteenth century. I would like to start my discussion with a Meiji 7 (1874) painting by Kikuchi Yōsai (1788-1878), now in the Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Berlin, entitled "Narihira Visiting Prince Koretaka."[7]

It is Yōsai's work which opened the 1993 exhibition called *Egakareta Rekishi: Kindai Nihon Bijutsu ni Miru Densetsu to Shinwa* (Painted History: Legends and Myths as Seen in Modern Japanese Art).[8] In particular, his massive *Zenken Kojitsu* (Wise Men of the Past, Ancient Customs), a ten-volume compendium of the pictures and legends of 571 historical personages from Japan's ancient age up to the Nanboku-chō period, is credited by Kinoshita Naoyuki with "opening up the new genre of history painting." Yōsai completed this work after eleven years, in 1836 (Tempō 7), but it was not published until thirty-two years later, in 1868, that is, the first year of Meiji. In that same year, Yōsai presented a copy to Emperor Meiji. He was later awarded the title "Knight-Painter of Japan" (*Nihon gashi*) (33).

Yōsai's painting depicts the latter half of Episode 83:

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[6] See Joshua Mostow, "Translation and Illustration in Moronobu's *Tales of Ise*," Association for Asian Studies annual meeting, March 9, 2000.

[7] Reproduced in Hirayama Ikuo and Kobayashi Tadashi, eds., *Hizō Nihon Bijutsu Taikan*, vol. 7: *Berurin Tōyō Bijutsukan* [Japanese Art, The Great European Collections, vol. 7: The Berlin Museum for East Asian Art] (Kodansha, 1992), 184. The original work measures 53.6 x 79.6 cm.

[8] "Egakareta Rekishi"-ten jikkō i'in-kai, ed., *Egakareta Rekishi: Kindai Nihon Bijutsu ni Miru Densetsu to Shinwa* (Hyōgo Prefectural Museum of Modern Art & Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Modern Art, 1993).

> . . . one day, while he [Narihira] was in constant attendance at the palace, he was astonished to learn that his patron [Prince Koretaka] had become a monk. When the First Month came around, he resolved to go and pay his respects to him at Ono, a place blanketed with snow at the foot of Mount Hiei. With much difficulty he made his way to the hermitage, and found the prince looking bored and forlorn. He lingered on and on, reminiscing about the past; but though he would have liked to remain still longer, his official responsibilities obliged him to start back at nightfall. As he set out he recited,
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | Wasurete wa | When for an instant I forget, |
> | Yume ka to zo omou | How like a dream it seems . . . |
> | Omoiki ya | Never could I have imagined |
> | Yuki fumiwakete | That I would plod through snowdrifts |
> | Kimi o mimu to wa. | To see my lord. |
>
> He went back to the capital in tears.[9]

The earliest example of a pictorialization of this scene is a panel on silk from what is believed to have been a screen, now hung as a hanging scroll, and believed to date from the Kamakura period.[10] It shows Narihira making his way through the snow into the prince's residence, an attendant holding an umbrella over him and a page boy following behind. The fourteenth-century Ihon,[11] in contrast, shows Narihira arriving on horseback (clearly the model for Yōsai) and then speaking with the monk-prince in his abode; and it is this part of the episode that the early sixteenth-century Ono Family

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[9] Helen Craig McCullough, trans., *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan* (Stanford UP, 1968), 127-28.

[10] Reproduced in *Ise monogatari no Sekai*, figure 74; Chino, figure 115.

[11] Chino, figure 116.

scrolls choose to represent this episode as a whole.[12] The imagery of the Kamakura-period screen reappears in the late Muromachi Hokuni scrolls,[13] and it is this image that then is standardized in the Saga-bon (Fig. 1). Having Narihira arrive on foot better conveys the sense of the poem's line *yuki fumi-wakete* ("stepping through the snow"), and the fact that he does so in bare feet is a suitable image of devotion to the prince (a rigor not required of him in the Kamakura period screen, where he is clearly shod).

The political message underlying Yōsai's treatment is explicated in the first Meiji period edition of the *Ise* in 1890, which explains that Prince Koretaka was denied the position of emperor due to the intrigues of the Fujiwara clan, which put instead Koretaka's younger brother, born of a Fujiwara mother, on the throne, and thus allowed his Fujiwara grandfather to serve as Regent. The text claims that it was only Narihira who remained loyal to Prince Koretaka, and that he even schemed to break the Fujiwara hold on power. The introduction ends by recommending Narihira as a paragon of devotion to the imperial family.[14] In the context of the new Meiji state, this makes Narihira a patriot, and it is suggested that his various morally reprehensible actions, such as abducting the future Nijō Empress, may have actually been resistance against the Fujiwara hegemons. It is this reading of the *Ise*, I would suggest, that Yōsai has perfectly expressed. That is to say, Yōsai is *not* presenting Narihira's actions as simply the devotion of one nobleman to a patron, nor as simply a touching case of personal loyalty; rather, Yōsai's painting creates a place for the viewer to join Narihira in his devotion to the legitimate successor to the throne and thus to affirm his loyalty to the new imperial state, which was framed as a "restoration" of legitimate imperial rule.

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[12] Chino, figure 117.

[13] Reproduced in Itoh Setsuko, *Ise monogatari e* (Kadokawa, 1984), 88.

[14] For more on this edition, see Joshua Mostow, "'Miyabi' to jendā—kindai ni okeru *Ise monogatari*," Haruo Shirane & Tomi Suzuki, eds., *Sōzō sareta koten: kanon-keisei, kokumin kokka, Nihon bungaku* (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1999), 331-34; and in English, "Modern Constructions of *Tales of Ise*: Gender and Courtliness," Haruo Shirane and Tomi Suzuki, eds., *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 96-119.

Yet this masculine, explicitly politicized reading is not the interpretation of the *Tales of Ise*, or of the Heian period as a whole, that would prevail. Instead, the Heian period would become gendered "feminine," providing an indigenous, emotion-based culture, whose marriage to Tokugawa-period concepts of manliness and duty would be fundamental to many male thinkers' definition of modern Japan. This masculinist definition increasingly identified the "traditional" with the feminine. This feminization of the past combined with the rise of folklore studies, reflecting a self-ethnologizing move that produced yet another internal Other. Scholars such as Arai Mujirō, for instance, saw the *Ise* as a treasurehouse of ancient customs.[15]

At the same time, the Taishō era saw the rise of the "Modern Girl" and the escape of women into public spaces, most especially as consumers. Magazines produced for women exploded in this period, giving rise to the term *joryū bungaku* or "feminine writing." In this context, the *Ise monogatari* was "packaged" for female consumers.[16]

In Taishō 6/1917 appears what seems to have been the first translation of the Tales into modern Japanese since the seventeenth century, the *Shin'yaku e-iri Ise monogatari* (Tales of Ise, Newly Translated and Illustrated), translated by Yoshii Isamu, with illustrations by Takehisa Yumeji.[17] Yoshii followed this the next year with his rendition of *Genji, Genji monogatari jōwa* or "*Tale of Genji* Love Stories." This was one in a series *Jōwa shinshū* (New Collection of Loves Stories) put out by Oranda Shobō, which repackaged classical works with Takehisa's popular imagery, aimed at the new consumers of "women's literature."

The ethnographic element can be most clearly seen in Takehisa's illustration for the Izutsu episode,[18] obviously inspired by Tsuchida Bakuen's

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[15] See Mostow, "Miyabi."

[16] On the origins of the term *joryū bungaku*, see Joan E. Ericson, *Be a Woman: Hayashi Fumiko and Modern Japanese Women's Literature* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).

[17] Yoshii Osamu and Takehisa Yumeji, *Shin'yaku e-iri Ise monogatari* (Tokyo: Oranda Shobō, T. 6/1917). The reproductions in this article are from the copy of this work owned by the Takehisa Yumeji Bijutsukan, Tokyo, and are used with permission.

[18] *Ise monogatari no seki*, fig. 114-2.

1912 (Meiji 45) "Island Women" (*Shima no Onna*) and, like Bakusen's painting, turning the characters of the *Ise* into feminized "primitives," rendered stylistically through "Japan-Pictures" (*nihon-ga*). The ultimate source here is of course Gauguin.[19] However, Gauguin-esque primitivism must serve a very different function when it is employed by/for the "primitive" herself. Likewise, we see in Takehisa's work an *appropriation* of *japonisme*, as in the Klimt-esque illustration to Episode 95 (Fig. 2).

Some of Takehisa's figures share in the gender ambiguity prevalent in the Taishō period.[20] His portrait of Narihira for Episode 1 (Fig. 3), for instance, follows closely Takehisa's typical poses of women in the period, with the S-curve and oversized feet or hands. And in several cases, Takehisa introduces a female figure into an illustration. For instance, Fig. 4 illustrates the poem of Episode 81:

Shiogama ni	When might I have come
Itsu ka kinikemu	To Shiogama?
Asanagi ni	How pleasant it would be
Tsuri suru fune wa	Were fishing boats to appraoch
Koko ni yoranan.	In the morning calm.[21]

In fact, however, the poem is recited by an aged Narihira, and no woman whatsoever makes her appearance in this episode. On the other hand, the illustration to Episode 90 (never before pictorialized, to my knowledge), gives a vision of the man's object of desire (Fig. 5):

> Once there was a man who for some time had been trying desperately to win an unresponsive lady. Moved perhaps by pity, the lady at length agreed to receive him on the following night with

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[19] On Bakusen and Gauguin, see Ikeda Shinobu, *Nihon kaiga no josei-zō: jendā bijutsushi no shiten kara* (Chikuma Shobō, 1998), 161-200.

[20] See Donald Roden, "Taishō Culture and the Problem of Gender Ambivalence," J. Thomas Rimer, ed., *Culture and Identity: Japanese Intellectuals during the Interwar Years* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990).

[21] Trans. McCullough, 124.

only a screen between them. The man was overjoyed, but he could not help worrying lest she change her mind. He sent her this poem attached to a gorgeous spray of cherry blossoms:

Sakurabana	Alas! Could one but feel certain
Kyō koso kaku mo	That the cherry blossoms
Niou tomo	So radiant today
Ana tanomigata	Would still be the same
Asu no yo no koto.	Tomorrow night.

No doubt his fears were justified.[22]

Here again, as in Episode 37, Takehisa has chosen to depict a very independent-looking woman, as if foregrounding the similarities between women of the Heian and the "moga" of Taishō.

This is not to say that Takehisa's work makes no reference to the earlier iconography of the *Ise*. His illustration for Episode 119 (Fig. 6), for example, is very close to the Saga-bon (Fig. 7), as is that for Episode 71 (Figs. 8 and 9). Often, however, they are given a psychological depth that is new, such as the Beardsley-esque angst portrayed in Episode 27 (Fig. 10). What they are *not* given, of course, is any explicit political interpretation.

* * *

Ise monogatari is one of nine works included in the "NHK Manga de Yomu Koten" series, first published in 1993 and already through four printings by 1998.[23] Clearly in the *shōjo manga* style, by Hosomura Makoto, the inside blurb reads:

> Looong, long ago, there was a man called Ariwara no Narihira.
>
> Regardless of the fact that he was born the grandson of an emperor, due to the power of the Fujiwara clan, which was like that of the rising sun, his success in the world was uncertain.

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[22] Trans. McCullough, 132-33.

[23] Hosomura Makoto, *Ise monogatari*, NHK manga de yomu koten 6 (Kadokawa shoten, 1993). Illustrations are used with permission of Kadokawa.

> However, not only was "his appearance beautiful (*yōshi tanrei*)," but when he was made to compose Japanese poetry, he was the best (*tōdai zui-ichi*). A "playboy" who seduced woman after woman, following his own free-will.
>
> Centered on those travels of splendid love, this is a poem-tale that paints various scenes of love through the exchange of poems.

Two important elements of this description are first, its presentation of the political interpretation of the *Ise*, that is, that the Tales are somehow related to Narihira's conflict with the Fujiwara clan; second, the text presupposes the reader's familiarity with the biography of Narihira in the *Sandai Jitsuroku*:

> *Taibō kanrei*: "In appearance he was elegant and handsome."
> *Yoku yamato-uta wo tsukuru*: "He excelled in the composition of Japanese poems."[24]

Yōshi tanrei is clearly supposed to be a modern but still sinified paraphrase of *taibō kanrei*. *Tōdai zui-ichi* also suggests an official Chinese text, though it has no parallel in the *Sandai Jitsuroku*. *Waka o tsukurasereba*, on the other hand, is a near-direct quote.

What all this suggests is that, although the inside back-cover blurb claims that this text is designed for school children, so as to make the classics more accessible to them, the intended reader for this *manga* actually is someone who has already studied the *Tales of Ise* in school and who will not be scared away by some difficult Chinese characters—in other words, a woman ranging from high school-age to her twenties or thirties.

Like the Ihon, the *manga* version employs only some of the 125 episodes, woven together to form a biographical narrative of Narihira. In fact, the *manga* version reduces the entire *Ise* to eight chapters. Given this extreme reduction, it seems particularly significant that the penultimate epi-

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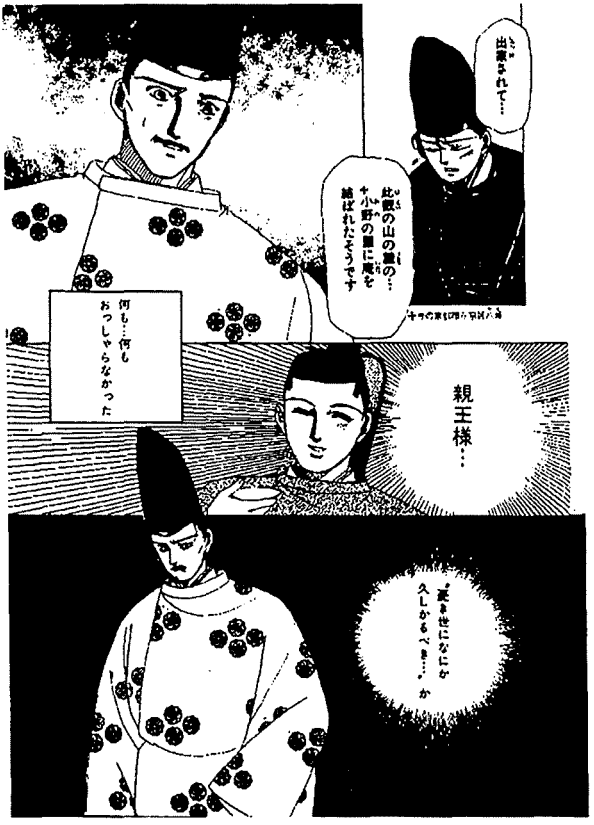
[24] Quoted by McCullough, 42-44.

sode is none other than "Nagisa no In" (Episode 82), which includes the Ono no Iori episode (number 83):

Finally, after having spent that Spring night in pleasant conversation with His Highness, I heard: "What did you say? His Highness . . .? Is it true?"



"They say he has renounced the world . . . and put together a hermitage at the Village of Ono . . . at the foot of Mount Hiei."

Your Highness . . . you said nothing . . . nothing. Or is this was you meant when you said "What lasts long in this world of pain?"

Your Highness . . . how pitiful!

The new year dawned, and in the First Month I made up my mind and visited His Highness where he was residing at the Village of Ono.

"It has been a long time, Your Highness."

"Oh, Narihira!"

"—Your Highness . . ."

"Come, come, closer to the fire here. . . . It's so good of you to have come, Narihira."

"What do you do to pass the days?"

"Well . . . there's nothing to do . . . I just pass each day in a daze, you know."

"—Your Highness . . ."

"When I think of it, last year seems completely like a dream . . . admiring the cherries with everyone seems long ago . . ."

". . . those were the good days . . . when all I wanted to do was savor elegance . . . it is so sad, that I can never return to those beautiful days. . . ."

cough "Your Highness!" *cough cough*

"It's alright . . . it's nothing serious, Narihira. . . ."

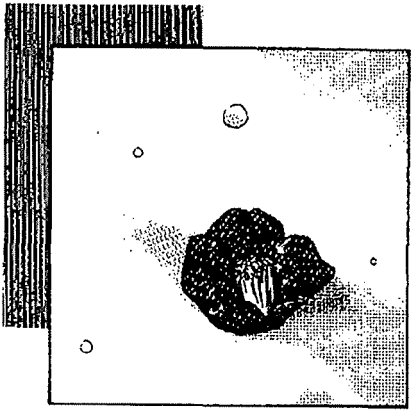
Ah, I wanted to stay by his side like that and serve him . . . but . . . There were ceremonies, and work for me at Court. Never had I resented my lot as much as at that time.

Seeing how he looked now, I really felt that it was not at all real, but had to be a dream. Never did I think to see myself making my way through snow this deep to meet my lord.

The episode ends, however, with the following editorial comment:

> Regarding Imperial Prince Koretaka's sudden renunciation of the world, it was said that it was due to the fact that, although he was the emperor's eldest son, he did not ascend the throne, and it was his younger brother, Imperial Prince Korehito, who acceded to it. However, this happened fourteen years earlier. According to *The True Record of Three Reigns* (*Sandai Jitsuroku*), it was recorded that the Imperial Prince renounced the world "due to illness."

惟喬親王の突然の出家は
第一皇子であった親王が
帝位につけず
弟の惟仁親王が即位した為と
言われていましたが
これは十四年も前の事です
「三代実録」によりますと
親王の出家は〝病気の為〟と
記されています



This is a very rich text. First, we note that it is told in the first person, by Narihira, reflecting the tradition of reading the *Tales of Ise* as Narihira's autobiography. Second, the political reading of Prince Koretaka's retirement from the world is explicitly raised, but dealt with in a very ambiguous fashion, which allows the text to, in a sense, have its cake and eat it too.

For his part, Koretaka is certainly presented as a political exile. There is not the slightest suggestion that there was any religious motivation in his renunciation. Indeed, he seems rather confused by his own predicament. Yet on the other hand, he is also made culpable. This culpability is suggested by his phrase "*ano koro wa yokatta. Watashi wa tada, fūryū wo ai shite itakatta no da ga . . .*" (All I *wanted* to do in those days was savor elegance"). This phrasing suggests that at some other, subsequent point in time he *wanted*, that is, actively desired, to do something *other* than simply enjoy the flowers. What would that have been? To become emperor? This simple desiderative hints at some sort of political plot that Koretaka became involved in—a plot that failed and resulted in his exile.

Yet all these hints and suggestions are short-circuited by the Prince's cough and the report from the *Sandai Jitsuroku* that Koretaka renounced the world due to illness. Yet even here, this information is presented in the weakest possible way, with a double-marking of reportage (*. . . ni yorimasu to . . . to ki sarete imasu*) and quotation marks around the information. Certainly, such care does not inspire confidence, but makes the information appear more like "the party line." Finally, there is the introduction of the camelia in the snow, an image completely created by the artist and one that I would contend suggests a sense of sacrifice.

Finally, there is the whole dimension of gender and sexuality. There is certainly a *yaoi* aspect to Narihira and the Prince.[25] Koretaka is rather femi-

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[25] I am referring here to *manga* that depict male homoeroticism, but whose primary audience is young women. See Sharon Insella, "Japanese Subculture in the 1990s: *Otaku* and the Amateur *Manga* Movement," *JJS* 24.2 (1998): 289-316; Frederick L. Schodt, *Manga! Manga!: The World of Japanese Comics* (Kodansha International, 1983), 137; Frederick L. Schodt, *Dreamland Japan: Writings on Modern Manga* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996); and Midori Matsui, "Little girls were little boys: Displaced femininity in the representation of homosexuality in Japanese girls' comics," Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman, eds., *Feminism and the Politics of*

nized and Narihira clearly devoted (though forced to go "back to work" against his true desires). The frail and sickly image of the Prince clearly calls forth a desire in the older Narihira to care and protect, creating an emotionally satisfying model of love analogous to that presented in both *yaoi* and Takarazuka Theatre.

We see then how an explicitly loyalist read of *Ise* was used in the Meiji period to rehabilitate Narihira. This recuperation emphasized his position as a captain in the military and his devotion to the imperial family.

In contrast, power politics seems to play no role in Yoshii and Takehisa's *Ise*, where the implied viewer is explicitly feminine. Here, rather, we have Narihira the lover, but also a distinct foregrounding of female agency.

In a way, the *manga* version represents the combination of these two approaches. The issue of imperial politics is squarely faced, but the text is clearly designed for female readers. Partly, the presentation of the Koretaka/Fujiwara conflict reflects contemporary scholarship, which the *manga*'s readers have probably been taught in college. Yet the work of the *manga* text goes much deeper. Especially important is its presentation of a feminized, yet culpable, imperial family—one which calls forth the unfailing, if thwarted, love of the autobiographical protagonist. Considering the role of imperials such as Crown Princess Masako in the feminine press (and the fact that the women who marry into the imperial family are always "commoners"), it seems fair to suggest that this NHK *manga* is to some extent attempting to frame its readers' relationship to the modern emperor-system (*tennō-sei*). The cultural work of *Ise* goes on.

Difference (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1993). Many thanks to Sharalyn Orbaugh for these references.

Fig. 1. Saga-bon, *Tales of Ise*, Episode 83

Fig. 2. Takehisa Yumeji, *Tales of Ise*, Episode 95

Fig. 3. Takehisa, Episode 1

Fig. 4. Takehisa, Episode 81

Fig. 5. Takehisa, Episode 90

Fig. 6. Takehisa, Episode 119

Fig. 7. Saga-bon, Episode 119

Fig. 8. Takehisa, Episode 71

Fig. 9. Saga-bon, Episode 71

Fig. 10. Takehisa, Episode 27