Japanese Language and Literature
Journal of the American Association of Teachers of Japanese
jll.pitt.edu | Vol. 55 | Number 1 | April 2021 | https://doi.org/10.5195/jll.2021.156
ISSN 1536-7827 (print) 2326-4586 (online)

From a Romantic *Shōjo* to an Independent *Otaku*: The Transformations of the Female Protagonist in the *Sarashina nikki* Manga

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Introduction

Sarashina nikki 更級日記 (The Sarashina diary, ca. 1058) written by Sugawara no Takasue's daughter, or Sugawara no Takasue no Musume 菅原孝標娘 (1008–1059), is one of the literary works within the genre of *nikki bungaku* 日記文学 (diary literature or literary diaries) created by middle-ranking aristocratic women in the Heian period (794–1185).[1] Unlike famous classics such as *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (The tale of Genji, 1008) by Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 (970–1016) and *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子 (The pillow book, early eleventh century) by Sei Shōnagon 清少納言 (966–1025), only three manga adaptations of *Sarashina nikki,* considered a minor classic, have been published since 1991.[2] These adaptations belong to the genre of *shōjo* 少女 manga (young girls' manga), representing the subculture of girls and young women who both produce and consume it.[3] Focusing on key episodes and scenes in the three manga rewritings, I will examine how each recreates the heroine and why specific images of the eleventh-century woman emerged at the time they did. I will argue that the shifting representations of the female protagonist in *Sarashina nikki* reflect social developments in Japan since the 1970s, including the decreasing importance of patriarchal norms and traditional roles assigned to women in Japanese society. These adaptations reflect how the stereotypical view of young girls and women as cute (*kawaii* 可愛い), which implies obedience, passivity, and dependence, has shifted towards a new, modern image of Japanese women making independent choices regarding their social roles and careers.[4]

Shōjo manga emerged as a distinct genre after the Pacific War (1941−1945) from manga magazines that centered on idealized images of

girlhood, desirable feminine virtues, and socially conservative gender roles. Thus, creating a world for and about girls, expressed in a flowery, emotional style.[5] *Shōjo* manga has been a mirror of Japanese girls' and women's desires and expectations. In its subjects and expressions, not only does it reflect female aesthetics and social values, and fulfills female dreams, but it also influences them.[6] The genre was developed fully in the early 1970s when manga magazines started targeting readers of a particular age or gender and reached its "golden age" with the works of a group of innovative female manga artists called the Magnificent 49ers.[7] *Shōjo* manga evolved into romantic comics, distinct from *shōnen* 少年 manga, or manga for boys, which are focused on action and adventure.

Shōjo manga address the emotional lives of adolescent girls, and have a very distinctive feminine look and feel with "highly decorative, flowery or ornate patterns, where characters are crossing or breaking out of the panels on a page", in Patrick Galbraith's words. [8] The main character is usually a young girl whose story reads like a Bildungsroman.[9] The basic visual language of the genre consists of unnaturally big and expressive eyes, full page close-ups, complex page designs, and free-floating text, conveying the inner feelings of the characters and inviting readers to identify with them. The free-floating text expresses interior monologues, indicating characters' vague inner thoughts and approximating first-person narration.[10] The story often follows a non-temporal and non-linear structure, creating the emotional interiority and subjectivity of the intimate world of *shōjo* culture, whose main concerns are romance, family, and human relations.[11]

Shōjo manga reflect women's changing values about love, sex, family, and employment. [12] Themes of *shōjo* manga have been changing in response to the shifting roles of women in the still male-dominated Japanese society.[13] However, love has remained the central theme in the genre, regardless of the diversity of *shōjo* manga styles, such as drama, sci-fi, or suspense. In addition, *shōjo* manga has been credited for laying the foundation of the ubiquitous Japanese culture and rhetoric of *kawaii* (cute), with the readers of the *shōjo* manga magazine *Ribon* リボン (Ribbon) being the first *shōjo* generation to adopt the word in their vocabulary.[14]

The story of *Sarashina nikki* lends itself well to an adaptation into the genre of *shōjo* manga, as it covers the life of a woman from childhood to adulthood and is focused primarily on the heroine's emotional development, inner thoughts, and lyrical experiences. Moreover, the diary

follows the subjective logic of the protagonist's feelings instead of an objective, temporal line of events. The diary records the experiences of being confined at home, briefly serving at court, a single romantic encounter without any development, and extensive accounts of travel.

According to present-day scholarship, there are three defining features of *Sarashina nikki*.[15] The first one is the portrait of the protagonist as a passionate reader of fictional tales, *monogatari* 物語.[16] The diary describes her desire to obtain and read *monogatari*, her extraordinary attachment to fiction and poetry, and the way they influence her life. The second essential feature of the diary is the conflict between a strong feeling of religious duty and an equally strong passion for fictional tales. The diary recounts the complex relationship of the protagonist with religion through numerous spiritual dreams. She experiences feelings of guilt and inadequacy with respect to religious practice in her youth, especially due to her attachment to fiction, which was regarded as frivolous at the time. Third, there are a large number of lyrical passages and poems, which slow down the narrative development and create the impression that the diary is a collection of random episodes and reflections.

The diary contains very few details from daily life and there is very scarce information on major events typical of the social and personal experience of the time, such as courtship and family relations. As Sonja Arntzen states, "Takasue no Musume hardly mentions her marriage or the birth of her children and their upbringing. Particularly because marital relations and children are important themes in the other diaries of the same period, such as *Kagerō nikki* 蜻蛉日記 (The kagerō diary, ca. 974) by Fujiwara no Michitsuna no Haha 藤原道綱母 (936?–995), these omissions stand out."[17] The retrospective narration of *Sarashina nikki*, its multitude of perspectives, and its richness of allusions and intertextual references produce a complex and contradictory image of the female protagonist. At a surface reading she appears as a childish, naïve reader who harbors romantic dreams to become like one of the heroines in *Genji monogatari*; as she matures, she gives up her ideals of fairytale romance and laments her foolishness, settles down, and embraces religion. A deeper reading of the text, which considers the multitude of narrative voices and textual allusions, reveals that the heroine consciously chooses not to experience the romantic life of a *monogatari* heroine and is content to just dream about it.[18] However, she does not give up her passion for fictional literature. The constant references to tales and poems throughout the diary support the impression that *monogatari* are not rejected in favor of religion

and a more reasonable perspective of a wife and mother, but instead are embraced as part of the unique aesthetic world of the diary and a source of unfading inspiration and solace throughout the heroine's life.[19]

By presenting the main character as a *kawaii shōjo* (a cute young girl), the three manga adaptations of the diary invite readers to identify with the protagonist and manage to bridge the gap between the distant and unfamiliar culture of Heian and contemporary Japan. They all fall into the category of "proxy experience," a term created by Masuda Nozomi to denote *shōjo* manga set in distant historical periods and offer readers experiences that cannot be found in real life.[20] The three manga belong to the genre of educational manga or *gakushū manga* 学習漫画.[21] According to Masami Toku, manga in general "mirror changes in Japanese social and cultural conditions."[22] Therefore, the different representations reflect changing social values, stereotypes, and acceptable behaviors and roles of young girls and women in Japanese society since the 1970s.

The Cute Maiden Dreams of Prince Charming in 1991

The earliest manga version of *Sarashina nikki,* created in 1991 by Hazaki Yasumi 羽崎安実, is based on an animated version of the diary aired by the Japanese national TV channel, NHK, within the series "NHK's Reading the classics thorough manga" (*NHK Manga de yomu koten*, NHK まんがで読む古典).[23] Simply titled *Sarashina nikki*, this modern reworking is a comical, entertaining, and lighthearted interpretation of the eleventh-century diary, conforming to the thematic and visual conventions of *shōjo* manga.

The complexity and ambiguity of the Heian-period diary's storyline is remade into a simple account of a cute girl fascinated by fairytale romance who eventually gives up her childhood dreams and becomes a reasonable and responsible daughter, wife, and mother. The psychological intricacy created by the conflict between fictional tales and religion in the classical text is absent, and in the manga adaptation the role of religion is also minimalized. Moreover, this manga replaces the contemplative protagonist of the pre-modern text with a sweet, cheerful, energetic, outgoing, and naïve character who is constantly swayed by extreme emotions. Instead of the slow, peaceful, lyrical, and dreamlike rhythm of the Heian diary, the manga protagonist is placed in a highly action-driven narrative depicting dynamic and quickly developing events. The fast pace of events is expressed through multiple panels of different sizes jumbled tightly into each page in rapid succession. The contemporary colloquial

language, marked use of foreign loan words, different fonts distinguishing between characters' speech and thoughts, numerous onomatopoeic expressions sometimes positioned freely across the panels, and frequent use of punctuation marks and katakana add emphasis and enhance the dynamic narrative.

The background features a Heian-period setting enriched with contemporary realia, such as suitcases, maps, thermoses, and eyeglasses, adding comic effect and a sense of familiarity for the reader. As is typical for *shōjo* manga, romantic scenes abound in flowers, ribbons, stars, and hearts, and feature characters with big expressive eyes and dramatic facial expressions. Speech bubbles of different shapes and sizes distinguish between direct speech and inner thoughts of the characters. The absence of a third-person narrative voice makes the manga sound subjective. Throughout this manga adaptation, the protagonist, introduced as Sara-chan, addresses readers directly and tells her story in the first person, making her character accessible and relatable to young, modern audiences.

This manga adaptation is a very selective version of *Sarashina nikki*, with some episodes and scenes expanded or modified to achieve a comic effect and to complement the main story line—that of a girl's pursuit of romance and gradual disillusionment as she matures. The protagonist is presented as an ordinary girl, not much different from her peers in Japan in the 1990s. The modernized presentation of the main character bridges the gap between the distant culture of Heian and contemporary Japan, making the story sound universal and emotionally appealing to *shōjo* manga readers. However, this adaptation maintains traditional patriarchal norms and gender roles, still prevalent in the early 1990s, and presents conventional stereotypes of girlish femininity.

A look at the table of contents suggests that this adaptation is a selective interpretation of *Sarashina nikki* adapted to the *shōjo* manga genre requirements and reader expectations. It features four sections: "Sara-chan's greeting," "Sara, a dreamy girl from the countryside," "Going to the 'capital of flowers,'" and "Farewell, tales!" [24] An abbreviation of the toponym Sarashina in the title of the diary followed by the diminutive suffix *-chan*, the name of the main character, implies that the story is about a little girl. She is further described as a "dreamy girl from the countryside" in the second chapter, which corresponds to the description of the heroine in the diary, and adds a pastoral simplicity, purity, and naiveté to her image. Moreover, according to the title of the third chapter, Sara-chan is said to go to the "capital of flowers" (*hana no*

miyako 花の都), or Kyoto, in this case—a classical eulogistic or poetic term for a capital, also used in contemporary Japanese to refer to cities associated with romance and beauty, such as Paris or Florence.[25] The use of the term "capital of flowers" suggests a story that focuses on beauty and romance. The short self-introduction of the main character on the dust jacket of the manga enhances the cute and girly image of the heroine conveyed by the Table of Contents (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Manga 1991 dust cover, featuring Sara-chan's self-introduction, and showing the heroine as a young girl (left) and an adolescent (right). Courtesy of Hōmusha.

> Nice to meet you! I am Sara, a girl who loves tales sooo much. But unlike the capital Kyoto, in Kazusa where I live, you cannot get any tales, and this makes me really sad.
>
> By the way, my father is relocating for his job, and that's why we are all moving to the capital. In the city of my dreams… I wish to be able to have a romantic relationship with a prince who is like those in tales. ♥
>
> This is the m-a-i-d-e-n diary of Sara-chan, a young bookworm from the Heian period. [26]

This manga adaptation is introduced as an *otome nikki* 乙女日記 (maiden dairy). Referring to young unmarried girls, it carries connotations of purity and innocence. The word *otome* 乙女 (maiden) is highlighted by means of katakana and spacing within the word, marking its importance. It signals that this version belongs to the subgenre of *shōjo* manga, called *otome-chikku* 乙女チック (*otome*-like).[27] This subgenre of manga was popular in the 1970s and 1980s and dominated the pages of *Ribon* magazine. According to Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, the heroines are "shy,

ordinary, and not particularly intelligent. They are not necessarily beautiful but are *kawaii*. Images of female heroines in *otome-chikku* manga are typically depicted using motifs such as ribbons and frilled skirts against a backdrop of antique furniture."[28] The visual presentation of Sara-chan on the dust cover and throughout the manga follows the *otome-chikku* conventions portraying a cute, sweet looking, girly protagonist surrounded by flowers, with ribbons in her hair and big expressive eyes. The casual, light-hearted and cheerful tone of the protagonist's self-introduction and her simple and colloquial style are consistent throughout the work. Sara-chan addresses the reader directly, thus engaging the target audience, namely young girls, and convincing them from the very beginning that she is just like them. A sense of simplicity and familiarity with the literary work of the past is created using katakana and a heart at the end of the sentence.

It is typical for *otome-chikku* manga to present different types of the self in settings from ordinary life so readers can easily identify and relate to various characters in the story.[29] In the opening pages of this adaptation, Sara-chan invites readers into her room. The text states "*Sara-chan no heya e yōkoso*" (Welcome to Sara's room!) immediately creating feelings of intimacy and coziness with young audiences and thereby shortening the distance between the eleventh-century world of the Heian period and modern Japan.[30] The English text in bold capital letters "WHO IS SHE?" and the protagonist's explanation that her name sounds "kind of international" (*nantonaku kokusaiteki* なんとなく国際的) further emphasize that she is similar to popular girls in contemporary Japan, where one's association with a foreign country and ability to speak in English are considered trendy.[31]

Described as an *otome nikki*, this version implies that the story centers on the protagonist's maidenhood and youth. In other words, it depicts the period of her life when she is a *kawaii otome* (cute maiden), and therefore presents experiences that readers of *shōjo* manga can emotionally relate to. This impression is enhanced by the visual presentation of the protagonist on the dust jacket, showing her as a younger girl with short hair, and as an adolescent with longer hair (Fig. 1). This manga adaptation then diverges considerably from the eleventh-century *Sarashina nikki,* which was written retrospectively in the author's old age, covering forty years of her life and focusing little on her maidenhood.

Sara-chan introduces herself as a "literature girl" or a "bookworm" (*bungaku shōjo* 文学少女) who wants to go to the capital in order to read

tales (Fig. 1).[32] Similar to the original, Sara-chan is obsessed with acquiring copies of tales and reading fiction. When she finally receives a full copy of *Genji monogatari*, she is overjoyed, clutching the book close to her heart and exclaiming "my very own *Genji monogatari*!" (*watashi no Genji monogatari!!*) (Fig. 2).[33]

Figure 2. Sara-chan is happier than a queen or billionaire to own a copy of *Genji monogatati* (Hazaki 1991, 84). Courtesy of Hōmusha.

Figure 3. Sara-chan rejoices upon receiving a copy of *Genji monogatati* (left) (Hazaki 1991, 83). Courtesy of Hōmusha.

Sara-chan's image ecstatically leaping in the air and flying away in extreme joy, with roses floating around, is accompanied by a caption explaining that she "feels like she is in Heaven" (*ten ni noboru kibun* 天に昇る気分) (Fig. 3). The statement of the protagonist in *Sarashina nikki* that she feels so happy to receive a full copy of *Genji monogatari* that she would not even trade places with an empress, is modified in this modern manga adaptation to read, "I would not give up tales even for the status of an empress or the riches of a billionaire" (Fig. 2).[34] This statement, the

image of bundles of banknotes flying around, and the sound of them heavily landing around her as expressed by the onomatopoeic phrase *gan* ガン (bang), add a comical effect to the scene and a contemporary feel, making it easier for *shōjo* manga readers to relate to Sara-chan's extreme joy.

From the very beginning of the manga, Sara-chan is driven by her strong desire to find romance like those in the tales. In the first pages of the manga she puts both tales and romance on the same level of importance in her story. She gets lost in reverie about tales and their stories of "dramatic love" (*doramachikku na koi* ドラマチックな恋).[35] "Dramatic love" refers to the *Genji monogatari* heroines Ukifune 浮舟 and Yūgao 夕顔, admired by the protagonist of *Sarashina nikki*, and whose tragic stories of romance are full of drama and sadness. Describing herself as coming from the countryside and being uncouth, which is in line with the opening sentence of the diary, Sara-chan shares with readers what she has learned about the existence of tales, which are "so much more interesting (than anything else)" (*unto tanoshii mono* うんと楽しいもの), and that she cannot help but dream of an ideal romance between a beautiful princess (*utsukushii hime* 美しい姫) and a handsome gentleman (*sutekina tonogata* ステキな殿方) (Fig. 4). This episode of the manga version differs from the eleventh-century work in which the protagonist prays to *Yakushi nyorai* 薬師如来 (Healing Buddha) for tales, not for romance, saying: "Please grant that I should go to the capital as soon as possible where there are so many tales, and please let me get to read all of them."[36]

Figure 4. Sara-chan dreams of "dramatic" romance (Hazaki 1991, 13). Courtesy of Hōmusha.

Throughout the manga, tales function as Sara-chan's main motivation in a quest for fairytale romance. Fictional tales and legends are her source of inspiration for finding romance in real life, making them appear as a means in Sara-chan's obsessive search for a Prince Charming similar to the Shining Prince Genji from the eponymous tale. Romance in the eleventh-century work is also inspired by tales, but the protagonist's longing is more conceptual and is juxtaposed with her growing sense of guilt for not practicing religion more seriously, as revealed by her statement:

> I was not able to put my mind to that sort of thing. Instead, I daydreamed about being hidden away in a mountain village like Lady Ukifune, happy to be visited even only once a year by a high-ranking man, handsome of face and form, like the Shining Genji in the tale. […] This was all I mused about and it was even what I wished for.[37]

In contrast to the ideal of romance in *Sarashina nikki* as a passive, part-time relationship without commitment, dreaming and actively searching for a fairytale romantic experience constitute the main story line in the manga adaptation. Tales inspire Sara-chan to look for romantic love full of drama, conforming to the conventions of *otome-chikku* manga.

The longest episode in this adaptation is titled "Her first love—a young nobleman" (*hatsukoi no kikōshi* 初恋の貴公子).[38] It is an interpretation of an exchange of poems in *Sarashina nikki* between the heroine and an unidentified character by a mountain well during her stay in Higashiyama. Although there is no agreement about the meaning of the episode and whether the heroine's companion was male or female, or a friend, or a relative, some scholars interpret the poetic exchange as suggesting that the protagonist was having an affair.[39] In the manga adaptation, the Higashiyama episode contains details not found in the diary and is presented very extensively over ten pages as a romantic episode. One day, Sara-chan is bored and says, yawning, that "romantic encounters happen by chance" (*jissai deaitte totsuzen yo ne*).[40] The next scene shows a nobleman's cart which has stopped by Sara-chan's cart, and a letter intended for the heroine is handed in to the maid. The maid rushes to her lady with the letter that contains a poem beginning with the words "Of the mountain well" (*yama no i no* 山の井の).[41] Excited and nervous, Sara-chan cannot think of an answer. Some days later, the nobleman sends another poem leading Sara-chan to imagine that he might be in love with her. Though he never visits her, at the end of the episode Sara-chan continues

to hope that one day she will meet "the nobleman from the capital who looks like the Shining Genji" (*Hikaru Genji mitaina miyako no kikōshisama*).[42]

The Higashiyama episode in this adaptation correlates with the concept of ka*waii* in the genre of *shōjo manga,* which operates on the premise that the heroine will someday be found by someone who will treat her like a very special lady. As Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase explains, "this type of cuteness is based on weakness."[43] The essential meaning of the word *kawaii* is the "feeling of protecting the growth of someone weaker than oneself, while hoping to bring them toward a desirable condition," in Satoko Kan's words.[44] In contrast to the eleventh-century work, where the protagonist dreams of romance but does not seek it actively, the manga presents Sara-chan as a cute girl desperately looking for love. While the protagonist of the Heian-period diary appears as an independent-thinking character, who finds enjoyment in exchanging poems with friends, going on pilgrimages, and contemplating nature, Sara-chan embodies conventional femininity typical for *shōjo* manga, where romance is the quintessential aspiration, defining the identity of a young girl.

However, despite Sara-chan's obsession with romance, in a striking divergence from the eleventh-century diary, the only romantic episode in *Sarashina nikki* is not included in the manga. It features an indirect encounter of the protagonist with a distinguished courtier, Minamoto no Sukemichi 源資通, during her court service.[45] The episode consists of a long conversation on a rainy night among three people: the protagonist, another court lady, and Sukemichi. The dialogue is lyrical and centers on the beauty of the seasons, based on allusions to *Genji monogatari*. Takasue no Musume's poem about the spring moon impresses Sukemichi and he sides with her in his preference for spring, while the other court lady expresses preference for fall.[46] Although the encounter is indirect and only happens once, it is one of the longest episodes in the diary, signaling its importance. The episode is a beautiful description of the growing mutual attraction between the protagonist and Sukemichi, who seems to be close to her ideal of a prince like the Shining Genji but exhibits a discreet and moral behavior. [47] The absence of this episode in a manga focused entirely on romance is surprising. The omission of the episode may be related to the married status of the protagonist, making her romantic attraction to another man run counter to the patriarchal ideal of a good wife in twentieth-century Japan, who is dedicated and faithful to her husband and family. Another reason might be that the episode shows the protagonist

serving at court after marriage, whereas in the manga, Sara-chan quits working altogether and appears as a housewife. Like the heroine in *Sarashina nikki*, Sara-chan is eager to work, but her main motivation is finding fairytale romance at court in order to get married, driven by her growing anxiety that she might end up as a spinster (*ōrudo misu* オールドミス).[48] In contrast, this concern is never expressed in the eleventh-century diary.

Sara-chan's strong career aspirations reflect the increasing participation of Japanese women in the workforce after the enactment of the Equal Opportunity Bill in 1986, which made a growing number of career-track jobs available for women and contributed to the social acceptance of the term "career woman" *kyaria ūman* キャリアウーマン (Fig. 5).[49] At the same time, the heroine's concern about marriage reflects social attitudes in the workforce in the early 1990s when, despite the growing number of professional women, there was significant discrimination against female workers because of persisting stereotypes that portrayed women primarily as wives and mothers.[50] Shaped by the traditional stereotype of *koshikake shūshoku* 腰掛け就職, or temporary employment for women ending with marriage, the manga character Sara-chan quits her job after marriage. She follows the most commonly acceptable model for a woman's life in the early 1990s, that is becoming a *sengyō shufu* 専業主婦 (professional housewife).

Figure 5. Sara-chan's stepmother is a "career woman" (Hazaki 1991, 73).

Sara-chan's life story in the manga depicts a straight and clear trajectory from a *kawaii otome*, searching for romance, to a down-to-earth *sengyō shufu* after marriage. This image is enhanced by added scenes in the manga of Sara-chan being surrounded, protected, and guided by her loving family, which highlights her image as weak and dependent. Although the Heian-period diary depicts a few scenes of domestic and everyday life, the manga contains many more such scenes and describes them in greater detail. Specifically, they depict Sara-chan's daily life centered on housework and caring for her nieces.

The heroine's position as a daughter within a patriarchal family is further emphasized by the prominent father figure in this manga. Although the eleventh-century diary describes a deep affection between the protagonist and her father in the several scenes that feature him, he neither admonishes her nor gives advice. In this adaptation, however, the relationship between Sara-chan and her father is not only magnified, but the father is the main source of censure, guidance, emotional support, and inspiration for her. He is gentle, kind, sentimental, endearing, and funny but serves as a figure of authority that Sara-chan obeys unconditionally. Replace d with the monk who appears in a dream and criticizes the heroine for not being devout enough in the Heian-period diary, the heroine's father in the manga is the one who scolds her for not taking religion seriously. He further utters some key statements originally attributed to the narrative voice in the diary and blames Sara-chan for not practicing religion and going on pilgrimages. The inner tension of the heroine who is torn between religion and fiction in the classical work is presented as her father's opinion in the manga. As a respectful and affectionate girl who takes her father's advice seriously and obeys him, Sara-chan exemplifies the ideal daughter within the patriarchal family. The newly added scenes about housework, childcare, and family life in general reflect stereotypes of womanhood still dominant in the early 1990s despite the significant progress in the social, economic, and political role of women in Japanese society since the 1970s.[51]

The sharp contrast between the endings of the diary and the manga brings to light the major differences between the two and highlights stereotypes about gender roles expressed in the manga. Titled *Aa kekkon* ああ結婚 (Ah, marriage), the final manga episode describes in detail the protagonist's meeting of her husband, her feelings, and her marriage, whereas the diary only vaguely hints at the event.[52] The manga leaves out the psychologically complex experiences that conclude the classical text

and instead puts a strong focus on Sara-chan as a wife and mother— the culmination of her story. The manga ends on a cheerful note depicting the protagonist as a young wife and mother standing on the bank of Uji River 宇治川 with her little daughter contemplating writing her story one day—a scene absent from the diary. Uji is the setting of Ukifune's story, signaling Sara-chan's ongoing love for tales, similar to the heroine in the eleventh-century *Sarashina nikki.* The twentieth-century Sara-chan differs from the aged protagonist of the eleventh-century work who at the end of the diary agonizes over the passage of time and regrets not having practiced religion in her youth, but cheers up after a vivid dream of Amida 阿弥陀 promising to welcome her to the Western Paradise.[53]

The complex ending of the Heian-period diary featuring the protagonist's concern with her spiritual life is transformed in the manga into a simple message from Sara-chan that "becoming an adult means resigning yourself to your fate" (*otona ni narutte iū koto wa akirameru koto nano ne*).[54] This view embodies the idea of *akirame* 諦め, or happiness through resignation, which is a patriarchal stereotype that features Japanese women as submissive, meek, and ready to sacrifice their dreams and pursuits for their family.[55] Just as the heroine in the Heian-period work gives up her youthful romantic dreams and embraces her new social status as a mother and wife, so does Sara-chan relinquish her dream of marrying a man like the Shining Genji. However, Sara-chan's *akirame* is channeled into the traditional role of a good wife and a wise mother *ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母, and even her thoughts of writing about her life appear as a tentative idea, secondary to her primary role as a caregiver.[56] This change eradicates the importance of the retrospective nature of the eleventh-century *Sarashina nikki* and its deeply reflective and spiritual nature.

This manga adaptation presents a heroine who conforms to traditional feminine stereotypes of romance as a major pursuit in a young girl's life.[57]It endorses patriarchal values, represented in added scenes from domestic and family life, a magnified father figure and an image of the heroine as a dedicated wife and mother. It further conveys a message to young female readers that dreaming about fairytale romance is a normal stage in the process of growing up and emphasizes that real life differs because a girl's duty is to become a devoted wife and mother.

Although *shōjo* manga in general depicts characters that readers can both dream of and emotionally relate to, this interpretation of the Heian diary presents a reality different from that of modern Japan during the

1990s.[58] According to statistics, the number of women getting higher education and entering the work force and the percentage of unmarried women in their twenties and thirties steadily rose in Japan since the 1970s, fueling a decline in marriage rate.[59] Moreover, the percentage of women who never married doubled between 1970 and 1985 from 2 to 4.5%. Women's attitude to marriage also changed in that period with the percentage of women who viewed marriage as the best life-alternative declining from 36% in 1972 to 30% in 1984. In addition, whereas in 1972 according to only 7% of female respondents, marriage hampered women's freedom, in 1984 24% supported this view and preferred to remain single.[60]

Therefore, the reinforced patriarchal image of the Heian heroine in the manga contradicts the social reality in Japan during the 1990s and presents established stereotypes about women in a modern society where cultural and social conventions still play an important role.[61] One reason for this attitude may be the inclusion of the manga in a series by NHK, the Japanese public broadcaster, who has been actively upholding conservative gender roles as part of its strong promotion of the "Shōwa nostalgia."[62] This cultural trend towards idealizing Japan of the years of high economic growth (when the country became the second largest economy in the world by the late 1960s) became conspicuous towards the end of the Shōwa era 昭和時代 (1926–1989) and during the first two decades of the Heisei era 平成時代 (1989−2019), which was marked by economic instability and anxiety.[63] As Iwona Merklejn explains, the dissatisfaction with the present led to an idealization of the past and a feeling of nostalgia for the "good old Japan" of the Shōwa period.[64] An essential part of the "Shōwa nostalgia" is the conservative and moralistic gender stereotypes, viewing motherhood and a full devotion to the family as a woman's most important duty.

The Cute Maiden Gets Married in 1993

Two years after the production of the manga featuring Sara-chan, another manga adaptation appeared as part of the series *Kumon manga koten bungakukan* くもんまんが古典文学館 (Kumon Classical Literature Museum). Created by Kōzuki Akimi 晃月秋実, this manga offers a completely different reading of the Heian-period diary. It replaces the playful and colloquial tone of the earlier adaptation with a solemn and serious one as the short introduction on the dust jacket reveals:

> The classics are not simply old books. They are works that have been spreading joy and influencing people for a long time and are still full of life today. The series Kumon Classical Literature Museum uses manga to make works of classical Japanese literature easier to understand and to help you feel a little closer to their world…. The way of life and the soul of our ancestors come to life on these pages. We hope that by listening to the voices of people from the past, you can gain courage and inspiration in your own life.[65]

As the introduction reveals, this manga is part of an educational project teaching young readers about Japanese classics through the fun medium of manga and is designed to help children understand, appreciate, and take pride in Japanese literature and the past of their country. As a publisher of educational materials mainly targeting children, *Kumon shuppan* (Kumon Publishing) describes the series as "introducing Japanese classics through manga in a way that even elementary schoolchildren can understand."[66] The educational mission of the manga is further evident in the Table of Contents featuring a detailed introduction to the eleventh-century *Sarashina nikki*, the Heian period, the genre of *nikki bungaku*, *Genji monogatari*, and maps of the protagonist's pilgrimages.

In the front matter of the manga, the protagonist is defined as "a young girl who admires and loves tales with all her heart" (*monogatari ni akogare, mune tokimekasu hitori no shōjo*).[67] The back matter states "this is the story of a Heian woman who cherished her life" (*waga jinsei o itoshimu, Heian josei no ichidaiki*).[68] These two statements signal that in contrast to the 1991 manga version, romance is not viewed as an important part of the life story of the main character here. This manga presents a protagonist who is passionate about tales, but also independent and earnest in her endeavor to record and share her unique life story.

This adaptation begins with a frame showing the protagonist as an old grey-haired woman writing at her desk, and then as a young, curious girl, against the backdrop of Heian-period Kyoto (Fig. 6).[69] This juxtaposition alludes to the retrospective nature of *Sarashina nikki*. It also signals that the manga covers the entire life story of the protagonist, in contrast with the earlier manga adaptation, which focuses solely on her life prior to marriage. The frame quotes the famous opening line of *Sarashina nikki* in both classical Japanese and modern translation, suggesting that this version strives for accuracy in its educational endeavor (Fig. 6).

Figure 6. Opening page of manga 1993: the heroine as a young girl and as an old lady, writing her diary, against the backdrop of Kyoto during Heian (Kōzuki 1993, 8–9). Courtesy of Kumon shuppan.

The protagonist is no longer Sara-chan but is referred to as *hime* 姫 (princess or lady), an appellation that stresses her aristocratic status and reminds young readers that she belongs to a world different from theirs. Frequently using honorifics (*keigo* 敬語) and feminine sentence ending particles, such as *wa* わ, *no* の, *ne* ね and *yo* よ, the protagonist emerges as a well-bred and respectful girl who is cute but not silly, unlike the heroine of the earlier manga. This adaptation, too, employs techniques typical for *shōjo* manga—with full-size panels in a collage arrangement, depicting a feminine, refined, and reasonable protagonist with unnaturally large eyes and surrounded by flowers. The story is told in the first person, using speech bubbles to convey the heroine's inner world through her thoughts and feelings, which is typical for *shōjo* manga.

However, the visual style and the tone of this manga are not melodramatic like the earlier one. The speech bubbles are not free floating, the tone is serious and subdued, and foreign loan words and slang are avoided. The linear narration uses more square and rectangular panels arranged sequentially without overcrowding and too much juxtaposition, thus making the story easier to follow and putting less emphasis on the subjective expression of the heroine's inner world. The large numbers of poems quoted from the Heian diary, notes on every page, and detailed introductions at the beginning of each chapter, explaining the story, the language and culture of the Heian period, and differences with contemporary Japan, highlight the historical and cultural distance between the readers and the character. As a result of the more orderly visual style and more objective narration, this version is reminiscent of *shōnen* manga which focuses on the story rather than on the emotional world of the

characters.[70] The objective and orderly visual style and serious tone of the presentation can be explained with the manga's educational mission targeting schoolchildren of both genders. Also, the alternating panels in black and white, and in color, give the manga the appearance of a picture book appropriate for young children.

As a reader, *hime* is passionate but appears more mature than the character in the earlier manga. One scene that shows the difference in visual style and tone between the two manga versions is the episode in which she receives a complete copy of *Genji monogatari* (Fig. 7). The *hime* is excited and happy but she does not display any extreme emotions and excessive bodily movements.

The image in Figure 7 illustrates the *hime's* joy upon opening the box and discovering that it contains all the volumes of *Genji monogatari*. She expresses her joy in a very feminine and refined manner, keeping her composure. *Hime* states that "even if she became an empress, she would not feel happier" (*kōgōsama ni nareta to shite mo, kore hodo ureshii to omowanai wa*) (Fig. 8), rendering the famous statement from the classical work accurately.[71]

Figure 7. *Hime* is overjoyed to receive *Genji monogatari* (Kōzuki 1993, 61). Courtesy of Kumon shuppan.

Figure 8. *Hime* feeling happier than an empress (Kōzuki 1993, 61). Courtesy of Kumon shuppan.

The story follows the eleventh-century *Sarashina nikki* with very few exceptions. Although it presents the conflict between fiction and religion, the heroine's psychological complexity in the diary is superseded with the girl's growing concern about getting married and settling down, a concern not expressed in *Sarashina nikki*. The manga heroine feels *kokorobosoi* 心細い (forlorn) at not being settled after thirty and is hopeful of finding a good match when she enters court service, saying "I might meet someone nice if I went into court service" (*miyazukae ni dereba yoikata to au koto ga dekiru kamo*).[72] Considering the manga's educational approach and consistent accuracy to *Sarashina nikki*, these interpretations of the classic text stand out and prompt questions about their significance and underlying message. The protagonist is shaped according to derogatory views of women who are still sin gle after the age of twenty-five and resemble an "unsold Christmas cake" (*urenokori no Kurisumasu kēki* 売れ残りのクリスマスケーキ). Similar to the earlier manga, the heroine's marriage is presented in detail, which is another deviation from *Sarashina nikki*, where marriage is only vaguely hinted at. When the heroine finally marries, she is disappointed that her husband does not act like a hero from a courtly romance, and obediently accepting her fate she embraces her new life with a sense of duty and diligence, thus resembling the eleventh-century *Sarashina nikki* (Fig. 9). The ending of the manga does justice to *Sarashina nikki* by depicting the loneliness and psychological anguish of the heroine and by including the dream of Amida, in which the protagonist is promised salvation after death.

Figure 9. *Hime* gets married and accepts that there is not fairytale romance in real life (Kōzuki 1993, 106). Courtesy of Kumon shuppan.

The heroine of this manga appears as an imaginary middle-ranking aristocratic girl from Heian Japan, but similar to the previously discussed manga from 1991, her attitude to marriage complies with the predominant views on the social position of women in Japan during the early 1990s. The manga carries clear patriarchal overtones about a woman's main role as a good wife and wise mother. [73] The manga presents the eleventh-century work as a story of a girl who overcomes her illusions about fiction and firmly embraces marriage. The dichotomy between fiction and religion in the diary is superseded in the manga by the opposition between fiction vs. marriage and motherhood. This rewriting of the old diary conforms to what has been perceived as traditional ideals of femininity: sweet, obedient, and respectable girls become good wives and wise mothers. [74] Lacking in dramatic and humorous effects, this work is targeted at young readers and along with an accessible introduction to a classic, it attempts to instill in them the idea that "good" children, and especially "good" girls, should be knowledgeable about and cherish Japanese culture. Compared to the earlier manga, this adaptation presents a more mature version of the cute maiden. Whereas the 1991 adaptation aims at entertaining and convincing its young, targeted audience that the protagonist is like them, this one presents the protagonist as a character from the distant past who serves to inspire young children to take pride in their Japanese identity and promotes patriarchal stereotypes about women's social position.

The Female *Otaku* Resists Marriage in 2014

The most recent manga interpretation of the classical work by Shimizu Yasuyo 清水康代 appeared in 2014. It significantly differs from the earlier two manga adaptations. Titled *Sarashina nikki Heian jidai no ganso bunkei otaku shōjo no nikki (burogu)* (Sarashina nikki: The Heian-period diary/blog of the first arts-oriented female nerd 更級日記平安時代の元祖文系オタク少女の日記・ブログ), this adaptation transforms the protagonist into an *otaku* オタク or a nerd. *Otaku* is a term for a member of a subculture, especially those related to manga and anime, who are viewed as disconnected from reality and possess low communication skills. Why did the artist view the protagonist of the eleventh-century diary as a present-day *otaku*? In the early 1980s, *otaku* subculture had negative and sociopathic connotations. As Patrick Galbraith explains "the word 'otaku' 御宅, which means 'your home' and is used in some locales and settings as a second-person pronoun, came to be associated with the perceived excesses and perversions of fans. … 'Otaku' was meant to refer to

something different, strange, weird, unique, special, bad, wrong, and/or abnormal about certain fans and maniacs."[75] In the 1980s and 1990s, *otaku* became a notion used exclusively for men, and to quote Patrick Galbraith "especially for male fans of cute girl characters appearing in manga and anime".[76] Describing the tale's protagonist as *otaku*, the manga artist presents her as an original and independent female character who is passionate about her interests and hobbies. On the other hand, referring to the protagonist and manga readers as *otaku*, this version suggests an evolution in the perception of the notion into a mainstream, gender-fluid and less stigmatized social category, which has been embraced over the last twenty years. Additionally, in the last two decades, *otaku* has even become a transnational category.[77] The unprecedented popularity of Japanese pop-culture outside Japan in the early 2000s led to a changing perspective on the phenomenon of *otaku* as well. Realizing the economic and cultural benefits of the popularity of Japanese pop-culture on the international stage, the Japanese government started promoting anime, manga, and video games as part of a project called Cool Japan, which led to an increasingly positive view of the *otaku* subculture.[78] Even some Japanese celebrities and politicians have openly identified themselves with *otaku* culture.[79]

The main character of this manga, introduces herself as a *bunkei otaku* 文系オタク(arts-oriented otaku) called Sugawara no Takasue no Musume, the name by which the Heian writer is known (Fig. 10, top). She greets the reader with a casual "hello" (*konnichiwa* こんにちは) and addresses "all otaku girls from the twenty-first century" (*nijūisseiki no otaku joshi no minasan* ２１世紀のオタク女子のみなさん), telling them not to worry (*anshin shite* 安心して), because there were *otaku* girls like them in Heian, in an effort to appeal to contemporary female readers, who identify as *otaku* (Fig 10, top).

On the opening page, the heroine sports a contemporary-looking hairstyle with a ribbon, making her look *kawaii* (cute). Using contemporary and *otaku* slang she explains that even a thousand years ago there were girls who experienced *moe* 萌え (strong affection), *mōsō* 妄想 (delusion), and were completely absorbed in hobbies (*hamarimakuri* ハマりまくり). She adds that in her case, her inspiration (*moto neta* 元ネタ) is the *bestoserā* ベストセラー(bestseller) *Genji monogatari* (Fig. 10, middle). The opening page also features the author of *Genji monogatari*, Murasaki Shikibu, whose glasses make her look like a present-day intellectual woman. She is portrayed next to the author of the manga,

Shimizu, who poses as a teacher and lavishes on readers humorous and informative comments throughout the work (Fig. 10, middle). This image of the protagonist as an *otaku* increases the manga's appeal and presents the classical work as one transcending the eleventh century text as universal and resonating with the present. However, despite being innovative and presenting a protagonist who identifies with pop-culture and transnational values, this latest manga is the one that follows the classical text of the diary most closely, as well as being the most informative among the three adaptations analyzed in this article. Containing almost all episodes, this manga opens with a detailed introduction to the setting, historical period, and major themes in the diary, and includes key passages and poems in classical Japanese accompanied by modern Japanese translation and detailed commentary. This in-depth presentation of the language and culture of the eleventh-century work is in line with the new curriculum guidelines of the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, promoting the importance of Japan's "traditional linguistic culture" (*dentō-teki na gengo bunka* 伝統的な言語文化). These new guidelines focus on the importance of tradition and culture and children's early exposure to the country's heritage. [80]

Figure 10. Opening page of manga 2014: "Hello, I am an otaku like you!" (Shimizu 2014, 5). Courtesy of Futabasha

This manga's ability to simultaneously entertain and educate is exemplified by the heroine's passion as an *otaku* reader who is overjoyed at receiving the entire *Genji monogatari*. The scene is emotional and comical, showing the elated heroine in a close-up panel (Fig. 11). Her teary eyes, a halo around her head, and the angel wings she has, similar to the first manga, reveal her exhilaration. The protagonist exclaims that she is the happiest person in the world (*sekai ichi no kōfukumono* 世界一の幸福者) and utters loudly (as suggested by the bold letters) that not even the status of an empress means anything to her anymore (*mō okisaki no kurai datte me janai*) (Fig. 11).[81] Unlike the other two manga, this statement is also quoted in classical Japanese, and the author of the manga, Shimizu, appears on the panel, posing as a teacher with her pointer. Shimizu explains that an empress had the highest position among women in the Heian period, and that the heroine is the only person in its history to have uttered such a thing (*Heian shijō konna koto itta hito imasen*) (Fig. 11).[82]

Figure 11. The heroine's ecstatic joy upon receiving *The Tale of Genji* makes her feel like "the happiest person in the world" (Shimizu 2014, 41). Courtesy of Futabasha.

This twenty-first century rewriting of *Sarashina nikki* uses slang associated with *otaku* culture such as *moe*, *mōsō*, *niji gensaku* 二次元作 (derivative works), and like the 1991 manga adaptation, here too the protagonist's language is neutral and casual with hardly any sentence-ending particles typical for feminine speech. In contrast, the protagonist's speech abounds in girls' slang, loan words written in katakana, and contemporary notions, such as *tsuā* ツアー (tour), *kuizu* クイズ (quiz), *ōrunaito* オールナイト (all night), *bestoserā* ベストセラー(bestseller), *okaruto* オカルト (occult), *fasshon* ファッション (fashion), etc. The style and the tone of the manga bridge the gap between the Heian heroine and contemporary readers, including those who identify themselves as *otaku*.

She openly states that she does not want to be like all the other girls, saying "I don't feel like falling in love, or marrying or practicing religion like the rest of the girls out there" (*sokora no onna no ko no yōni ren'ai shitai toka kekkon-shitai toka kamidanomi-suru ki naish ine*) (Fig. 12).[83] The image of the protagonist as an *otaku* reader who is passionate about fictional tales but ignores reality and social conventions, corresponds to the sentiment sustained throughout the classical work of a heroine who stands out for her unconventional attitude to romance and social life.

In this manga, the visual presentation is typical of *shōjo* manga, depicting female characters with big eyes, using flowers at emotional scenes, constructing the story in collage-like panels, and (like earlier adaptations) showing characters with Western hairstyles and glasses. Numerous modern artifacts and notions give the ancient storyline a contemporary feel. For example, the heroine's sister is sporting glasses and is described as an *okarutozuki no bungaku shōjo* オカルト好きの文学少女 (young female bookworm attracted to the occult), and her step-mother is referred to with the familiar and colloquial term *mama* ママ (mother), written in katakana, and is portrayed with a Western hairstyle, giving the peace sign as if posing for a photo (Fig. 13).

Figure 12. Left. Heroine does not feel like doing what society expects from her (love, marriage, religious practice) (Shimizu 2014, 57). Courtesy of Futabasha.

Figure 13. Heroine's older sister and stepmother posing for a photo (Shimizu 2014, 9). Courtesy of Futabasha.

However, despite the similarity in visual style with the earliest manga interpretation from the 1991 *Sarashina nikki* (*NHK Manga de yomu koten*), in this manga the heroine is not focused solely on romance, and her idea of it is in line with the eleventh-century diary—it is an abstract "romantic world all in the head" (*nōnai ren'ai sekai* 脳内恋愛世界) (Fig. 14). The idea of romance in this manga is a truthful rendition of the *Sarashina nikki* heroine's aspiration to be like Ukifune by being visited once a year by someone like Prince Genji instead of striving to engage in real-life full-time romantic relationship, like the heroine in the earliest manga (Fig. 15).

Figure 14. Heroine is torn between romance in her head and real life (Shimizu 2014, 6). Courtesy of Futabasha.

Figure 15. Heroine dreams about being visited once a year by someone like Genji (Shimizu 2014, 58). Courtesy of Futabasha.

Figure 16. Heroine receives phone messages from her dream lover (Shimizu 2014, 59). Courtesy of Futabasha.

In this manga the idea of romance is presented comically, using contemporary artefacts, foreign loan words, and slang. The ideal romantic

partner is described by the slang expression *serebu de ikemen* セレブでイケメン (celebrity cool and handsome guy) and their imagined meeting is called *dēto* デート (a date) (Fig. 15). The heroine, depicted with a Western hairstyle and holding a mobile phone, receives a *raburetā* ラブレター (love letter) from her dream lover as an e-mail, exclaiming *mēru kitā* メールきたーっ♡ (an e-mail came), followed by a heart emoji. (Fig. 16) Their relationship is secret because they want to avoid a *sukyandaru* スキャンダル (a scandal), referring to Ukifune's troubled romantic entanglement with two lovers. The protagonist appears waiting for her prince and receives a message from him with many exclamation marks and emoji. He announces that he is on his way for a surprise visit and asks her to cool the champagne (Fig. 17).

The episode's use of contemporary slang along with the original text from *Sarashina nikki* exemplifies the manga's potential to both entertain and educate, and to help contemporary readers identify with the heroine, therefore facilitating engagement with the content and appealing to larger audiences. In addition to her passive and abstract idea of romance, the heroine is not interested in marriage. In fact, in contrast to the previous two manga that contain added scenes of her worrying about not being married in her early thirties, this manga shows the protagonist as fiercely and adamantly resisting marriage and expressing deep disappointment after her parents force her to marry, scenes not present in the eleventh-century diary. The idea of giving up her career for marriage upsets the protagonist greatly (Fig. 18).

Figure 17. Heroine receives phone messages from her dream lover and cools champagne, while waiting for him (Shimizu 2014, 60). Courtesy of Futabasha.

In the top panel of Figure 18, the heroine shares with the readers that she has gradually gotten accustomed to her part-time position as an attendant at court and hopes to have a successful career. The middle panel contains her angry exclamation "what are my parents thinking!!" (*mattaku nani kangaeten no uchi no oya wa!!*) and the bottom panel shows her angry exchange with her father, who tells her that they have found a good match for her.[84] The father orders her to get married (*omae kekkon-shinasai* おまえ結婚しなさい) (Fig. 18, bottom). The illustrations visually depict the heroine's shock and anger, with a close-up of her indignant face and the interjection *eeee* ええええっ (whaaat?) (Fig. 18, bottom). Here the protagonist tells her father that she opposes his wish because she has just started working, to which he urges her to shut up, because nothing good happens to women working outside the household.

Figure 18. Heroine vehemently opposes the idea of marriage (Shimizu 2014, 87). Courtesy of Futabasha.

The next frame shows the protagonist's mother warning her daughter that this may be her only chance to get married because of her advanced age. She further reminds her that marriage is a woman's greatest source of happiness at any age and time (*itsu no yo mo ii otto o mitsukete kekkon-suru no ga onna no ichiban no kōfuku da*) (Fig. 19).[85] Like the previous two manga, the scene reflects conservative attitudes regarding marriage and women's roles in Japanese society since the Meiji period, which are still prevalent today. However, this is the only manga of the three presenting the heroine's strong resistance to marriage. It reflects a steady social trend that started in the 1970s, and concerns women's choice of career over marriage. This trend has been negatively labelled *mikonka* 未婚化 (tendency to remain single) and *bankonka* 晩婚化 (tendency to marry late in life). *Bankonka* is the term used in the scene where the heroine's parents try to convince their daughter to get married (Fig. 19).

Figure 19. Heroine's parents try to convince her to get married (Shimizu 2014, 88). Courtesy of Futabasha.

The heroine of the manga eventually concedes to get married, admitting to herself that she is already *arasā* アラサー "around thirty" (Fig. 20). The age-related term *arasā* and the protagonist's identification with it suggest that age discrimination against women and the custom of labelling women who do not conform with established gender roles and traditional views of marriage dating back to the Meiji period are still widespread in Japanese society.[86] Such age related terms like *arafifu* アラフィフ (around fifty) and *arakan* アラ還 (around *kanreki* 還暦 or sixty) are only used for women, showing that age is still a crucial factor in socially situating women in Japan, while men are described in terms of their occupations or hobbies such as *sararīman* サラリーマン "salaryman" or

otaku.[87] It also echoes the stigma associated with single or childless women and those who are in their late thirties (or even older) and have a successful career. This stigma is expressed through the derogatory term of *makeinu* 負け犬 or "loser dog," used widely between 2003 and 2004 in the media.[88] However, despite age-related stereotypes about women still persistent in Japan, this manga also shows the progress made in dismantling traditional misconceptions about women by calling the protagonist *otaku*. In other words, the manga endorses descriptions of women informed by their hobbies and occupations, rather than age and marital status, thus putting the protagonist on an equal footing with men.[89]

Despite her eventual concession to marry because of her age, the manga presents the protagonist as an independent girl who, despite knowing that she differs from others, is courageous enough to make her own choices and struggle against roles imposed on her. This attitude resembles the heroine of the classical work, whose life decisions and experiences are in marked contrast with accounts of other women's lives written in the same genre.[90] The ending of the manga affirms the heroine's unusual lifestyle and character: she concludes that passionately reading tales and dreaming was worthwhile, and expresses no regrets declaring "it is all my life" (*zenbu atashi no jinsei*).[91]

This manga is an accurate rendition of the world of *Sarashina nikki*. It educates readers about the language and culture of the eleventh century, while successfully translating the unique artistic world of the diary through effective contemporary equivalents. Although the *otaku* heroine resembles the protagonists of earlier manga versions in being *kawaii* and exemplifying traditional feminine values, here she is free thinking, original, independent, and responsible for her actions and life choices.

Figure 20. "Well, I am almost thirty after all" (Shimizu 2014, 88). Courtesy of Futabasha.

Conclusion

The three manga adaptations recreate the protagonist of *Sarashina nikki* differently, reflecting accepted norms about femininity and gender roles during the time when they emerged. The earliest manga (from 1991), *Sarashina nikki* (*NHK Manga de yomu koten*), is a very selective and entertaining adaptation of the diary, presenting a typical *shōjo* manga character who is cute, sweet, and obedient. Her life story is that of a maiden whose main purpose is finding fairytale romance in real life. Focusing on romance, marriage, family life and motherhood, this version affirms traditional patriarchal stereotypes that were prevalent in the early 1990s about acceptable and desirable female roles in Japanese society, namely those of a cute maiden, a wife, and a mother. Its assertion of traditional gender norms reflects the "Shōwa nostalgia," promoted by NHK.

The second manga version (from 1993), *Sarashina nikki* (*Kumon manga koten bungakukan),* is an extensive and accurate rendition of the Heian diary, with a clear educational mission, targeting school-age children. However, the strong emphasis on the importance of marriage is in marked contrast to the classical text and suggests that this manga, too, promotes patriarchal values and strictly determined gender roles. The most recent adaptation of 2014, *Sarashina nikki: Heian jidai no ganso bunkei otaku shōjo no nikki (burogu)*, presents an active and independent *otaku* protagonist who is driven by passion, takes responsibility for her own choices, and tries to understand her unique life experience. It reflects the significant changes in the sociopolitical climate of Japan in the early 2000s, specifically the gradual rejection of the stereotypes about women's role in society being mainly that of a "good wife, wise mother".

The shifting representation of the heroine from a sweet *shōjo* to an *otaku* over the course of two decades conveys that in contemporary Japan women can pursue individual happiness, one that is not related to a family. However, the age-related ideas about women and marriage expressed in the latest manga also remind us that despite the progress made gender inequality in the family and workplace is still common in Japan.[92] By creating protagonists who resemble contemporary readers, these adaptations of a thousand-year-old literary work make a strong case that manga can be a powerful educational medium convincing readers that Japanese classics are worthy of study and appreciation.

NOTES

[1] The title of the diary, *Sarashina nikki* (The Sarashina diary), was not given by the author, but by subsequent copyists and scholars for purposes of identification. Sarashina is a mountainous region in central Japan, and it is not mentioned in the work. However, there is an indirect allusion to the place in one of the final poems in the diary. The name of the author is not known, because women's names were not included in genealogical records during the mid-Heian period. The author's father, Sugawara no Takasue 菅原孝標 (972–?), a provincial governor, *zuryō* 受領, was a direct descendant of Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845–903), a famous statesman, scholar, and poet of Chinese verse.

[2] These manga are:

Hazaki Yasumi 羽咲安実, *Sarashina nikki, NHK Manga de yomu koten 2* (Kadokawa Shoten, 1991). This manga was re-published in 2006: Hazaki Yasumi 羽咲安実, *Sarashina nikki, Kagerō nikki, NHK Manga de yomu koten 2* (Tokyo: Hōmusha, 2006).

Kōzuki Akimi 晃月秋実, *Sarashina nikki. Kumon no manga koten bungakukan* (Tokyo: Kumon Publishing, 1993).

Shimizu Yasuyo 清水康代. *Sarashina nikki: Heian jidai no ganso otaku joshi no burogu* (Tokyo: Futabasha, 2014).

[3] Takahashi Mizuki, "Opening the Closed World of Shōjo Manga," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Exploration in the World of Manga and Anime,* ed. by Mark W. MacWilliams, 114–135 (Longdon and New York: Routledge, 2008), 114.

[4] *Kawaii* describes a type of cuteness based on weakness. It implies that girls become special once they find the men of their lives, romance being their only source of confidence and self-affirmation. See Tsuchiya Dollase Hiromi, "The Cute Little Girl Living in the Imagined Japanese Past," in *International Perspectives on Shōjo Manga* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 45, 48.

[5] Takahashi, "Opening the Closed World of Shōjo Manga," 115.

[6] Toku Masami, "Shojo Manga! Girls' Comics! A Mirror of Girls' Dreams," in *Mechademia 2: Networks of Desire* (2007), 30.

[7] *Nijūyonengumi* 24 年組 is the collective name for a group of innovative manga artists born around 1949, or Shōwa twenty-four, including Hagio Moto 萩尾望都 (b. 1949), Takemiya Keiko 竹宮惠子 (b. 1950), and Ōshima Yumiko 大島弓子 (b. 1947). Considered the founders of contemporary *shōjo* manga, they introduced multilayered page layouts, elaborately girly designs, and androgynous characters. See Patrick W. Galbraith, *The Otaku Encyclopedia.* (New York: Kodansha, 2013), 163. See also Masuda Nozomi, "Shōjo Manga

and Its Acceptance: What is the Power of Shōjo Manga?" in *International Perspectives on Shōjo Manga* (Routledge, 2015), 21.

[8] Galbraith, *The Otaku Encyclopedia,* 205.

[9] Jennifer Prough, "Shōjo Manga in Japan and Abroad," in *Manga: An Anthology of Global and Cultural Perspectives,* ed. by Toni Johnson-Woods (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010), 45.

[10] Takahashi, "Opening the Closed World of Shōjo Manga," 128.

[11] Ibid., 128–9.

[12] Fujimoto Yukari 藤本由香里, *Watakushi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no.* (Tokyo: Asahi shinbun shuppan, 2008).

[13] Toku, "Shojo Manga! Girls' Comics!," 20.

[14] *Ribon* is a monthly *shōjo manga* magazine published by Shūeisha 集英社. First issued in 1955, it was targeted to girls between eight and fourteen years old. See also Masuda Nozomi, "Shōjo Manga and Its Acceptance: What is the Power of Shōjo Manga?" in *International Perspectives on Shōjo Manga* (Routledge, 2015), 29.

[15] The latest scholarship on *Sarashina nikki* includes:

Fukuya Toshiyuki 福家俊幸, Wada Ritsuko 和田律子、Kuge Hiroshi 久下裕利, eds., *Sarashina nikki no shinsekai*. (Tokyo: Musashino shoin, 2016).

Edith Sarra, *Fictions of Femininity: Literary Inventions of Gender in Japanese Court Women's Memoirs* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999).

Sonja Arntzen and Moriyuki Itō. *The Sarashina Diary, A Woman's Life in Eleventh-century Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

Wada Ritsuko 和田律子 and Kuge Hiroshi 久下裕利, *Sarashina nikki no shinkenkyū*. (Tokyo: Shintensha, 2004).

[16] *Sarashina nikki* is considered the only representative of this genre to feature a female protagonist who stands out as a reader, and the first account in Japanese literature about the powerful effect of reading fiction, specifically Murasaki Shikibu's 紫式部 (970–1016) *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 (The tale of Genji, 1008). *Sarashina nikki* offers valuable and unique testimony of the reception of *Genji monogatari* by the second generation of its readers. Fictional tales refer to courtly romance in Heian known as *monogatari* 物語. Tales were very popular, although they were disparaged as only being fit for the entertainment of women and children. *Monogatari* combine prose and poetry.

[17] It is also notable that the memoir does not mention that the author, Sugawara no Takasue no Musume, was herself a writer of *monogatari*, or that she was related to Sugawara no Michizane—facts that would be relevant in the context of the protagonist's passion for poetry and tales. Arntzen and Itō, *The Sarashina Diary*, 17–8.

Sarashina nikki is one of the six major representatives of the genre of *nikki bungaku* 日記文学, "literary diaries," from the mid-Heian period (900−1100). The other five are *Tosa nikki* 土佐日記(The Tosa diary, ca. 935), *Kagerō nikki* 蜻蛉日記 (The kagerō diary, ca. 974), *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子(The pillow book, ca. 1000), *Izumi Shikibu nikki* 和泉式部日記 (The Izumi Shikibu diary, ca. 1008), and *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* 紫式部日記 (The Murasaki Shikibu diary, ca. 1010). The underlying theme of the Tosa nikki, which describes a trip from Tosa to the capital Kyoto, is the grief over the death of the author's young daughter in Tosa. *Kagerō nikki* relates details of the author's relationship with her husband, her jealousy and frustration over being neglected as a second wife. *Kagerō nikki* also records the author's numerous pilgrimages and her devotion to her son and adopted daughter. *Izumi Shikibu nikki* describes the passionate relationship of the author with a prince. *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* is mainly a record of the author's service at the imperial court, and contains some childhood episodes. The representatives of *nikki bungaku* are first-person autobiographical works written in vernacular Japanese. They do not fit strictly into the category of a diary because they contain poems and rarely include dated entries. The unique literary quality of *nikki bungaku,* created by a mixture of personal reflection and poetry, gave rise to different terms for the genre in English: "lyrical diaries," "memoirs," "poetic diaries," "poetic memoirs."

[18] Edith Sarra, *Fictions of Femininity,* 140.

[19] The notions of wife and mother in Heian differed greatly from their contemporary meaning. Marriages were arranged between the prospective husband and the father of the bride, and there was no formal ceremony. Polygamy, with principal and secondary wives, as well as casual affairs, were common and acceptable. Husbands and wives usually lived separately and had a visiting relationship, where in most cases the husband visited the wife at her parents' house.

Higher ranking women had an important role in marriage politics, the most famous example being the powerful Fujiwara family who sought to control the imperial succession by educating and grooming their daughters in order to marry them into the Imperial household. See William H. McCullough, "Japanese Marriage Institutions in the Heian Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967): 103–167. Also see Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince* (New York, Tokyo, London: Kodansha International, 1994).

In *Sarashina nikki* the image of the author/protagonist as a wife and mother is not prominent, since there is no precise information on her marriage or the birth and upbringing of her children. Her husband, Tachibana no Toshimichi 橘俊通 (1002–1058), and her children (three, according to records) are mentioned indirectly and briefly towards the end of the diary. However, the following statements in the diary suggest that the author had settled into married life and was feeling genuine affection and devotion for her family. For example, the

passage right after the author is forced to marry by her parents: “Meanwhile, I became distracted by this and that and completely forgot even about the world of tales. I actually ended up feeling quite down to earth.” (Arntzen and Itō, *The Sarashina Diary*, 164).

In the following passage the diary hints at the author’s motherhood for the first time: “So now, resolving to concentrate single-mindedly on achieving a state of wealth that would allow me to raise “my little sprout” (a reference to her son) with all the plentiful care I wished ….” (Ibid., 180).

In the next three statements the author expresses heartfelt concern about the upbringing of her children and the successful career of her husband: “I just concentrated my hopes on seeing my young ones grow up as I desired, … my mind was full of earnest thoughts for the one on whom I depended, praying that he should achieve happiness in his career as others had.” Ibid., 194.

“How much I wish to live long enough in this world to see the young ones properly settled. Meanwhile, I worried anxiously to hear news of a fortunate appointment for the one I relied on.” Ibid., 202.

“At the time, all I could think about was how to raise the young children into adults.” Ibid., 204.

The description of a profound feeling of grief at her husband’s passing at the end of the diary, creates the impression that the author was fond of him, despite the initial disappointment at her marriage (see note 52): My husband came back to the capital in the Fourth Month of the following year. … my husband fell ill; on the fifth day of the Tenth Month, he died. I felt as though it were a bad dream; I could not imagine something like this happening. … I grieved as though lost in a dream.” Ibid.

[20] Masuda Nozomi, “Shōjo Manga and Its Acceptance: What is the Power of Shōjo Manga?” in *International Perspectives on Shōjo Manga* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 27.

[21] Gergana Ivanova’s introductory essay “Reading the Literary Canon through Manga in the Twenty-First Century” for the special section in this issue examines the phenomenon of *gakushū manga*.

[22] Toku, “Shojo Manga! Girls’ Comics!,” 27.

[23] NHK stands for *Nihon hōsō kyōkai* 日本放送協会, or Japan Broadcasting Corporation. Gergana Ivanova’s article “Beyond ‘In Spring, the Dawn’: Redeeming *The Pillow Book* through Manga” for the special section in this issue examines a manga adaptation of *Makura no sōshi* from the same series.

[24] *Sara-chan no goaisatsu* サラちゃんのごあいさつ

Yume miru inaka musume Sara 夢見る田舎娘サラ

Hana no miyako ni kite mireba 華の都に来てみれば

Monogatari yo sayōnara 物語よさようなら (Hazaki 1991, 4).

[25] *Hana no miyako*—a classical poetic symbol of ultimate elegance, refinement and fleetingness of life. In contemporary Japanese the term is often used in guidebooks for cities famous for their beautiful architecture and art, most often Paris and Florence (Firenze). See Kariyazaki Shōgo 假屋崎省吾, *Hana no miyako Pari wo tabi-suru Kariyazaki Shōgo teki*. Chikyū no arukikata Books (Tokyo: Daiamondo-sha, 2009). Also see Kanayama Hiromasa 金山ひろまさ, Wada Sakiko 和田咲子, and Watanabe Shinsuke 渡辺晋輔, *Hana no miyako Firenze: utsukushiki o mederu tame ni*. Bishoku to bijo to bigaku to (Tokyo: Arina shobō, 2020).

[26] はじめまして。私はサラ。物語の大〜好きな女のコ。でも、私の住んでいる上総の国じゃあ、京の都のようには、物語は手に入らなくって、悲しいわ。

ところが、お父さまが転勤になって、私たち、都に行くことになったの。憧れの都で…物語に出てくるような素敵な貴公子様と恋がしたい。♡

平安の文学少女サラちゃんの、オ・ト・メの日記です。(Hazaki 1991, dust cover).

The translation is mine.

[27] In *otomechikku*, *otome* stands for "maiden," and *chikku* for the suffix "tic" (as in "dramatic" and "romantic") (Galbraith, *The Otaku Encyclopedia*, 179). According to other researchers *otomechikku* stands for "otometique" or "maidenesque." See Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, "The Cute Little Girl Living in the Imagined Japanese Past", in *International Perspectives on Shōjo Manga* (New York, Routledge, 2015), 45.

[28] Tsuchiya Dollase, "The Cute Little Girl," 45.

[29] Masuda, "Shōjo Manga and Its Acceptance," 27.

[30] サラちゃんの部屋へようこそ. Hazaki 1991, 5.

[31] Ibid., 5.

[32] Ibid., 13.

[33] 私の源氏物語!! Hazaki 1991, 84.

[34] もしお后の位や億万長者の富ととりかえようっていったってもう手放さないわ!! Hazaki 1991, 84.

[35] Hazaki 1991, 13.

[36] Arntzen and Itō, *The Sarashina Diary*, 90.

[37] Arntzen and Itō, *The Sarashina Diary*, 142. "That sort of thing" refers to religious practice.

[38] Hazaki 1991, 99.

[39] Inaga Keiji 稲垣敬二, "Takasue no Musume no hatsukoi no hito wa 'shizuku ni nigoru hito' ka," *Kokugo to kokubungaku* (November 1968): 9–19.

[40]実際出会いって突然よね. Hazaki 1991, 100.

[41] Ibid., 101. The poem in *Sarashina nikki* reads:

山の井のしづくににごる水よりもこはなほあかぬ心地こそすれ (*Sarashina nikki*, ed. Inukai Kiyoshi 犬養廉, in Fujioka Tadaharu 藤岡忠美, Nakano Kōichi 中野幸一, Inukai Kiyoshi, Ishii Fumio 石井文夫, eds., *Izumi Shikibu nikki, Murasaki Shikibu nikki, Sarashina nikki, Sanuki no suke nikki*. *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* 26 (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1994), 309.

yama no wi no	More even than of
shizuku ni nigoru	the "water clouded by drops" falling
midzu yori mo	into the mountain spring
ko ha naho akanu	I feel as though I would
kokochi koso sure	never tire of this one

The translation is from Arntzen and Itō, *The Sarashina Diary*, 132–3.

[42] 光源氏みたいな都の貴公子様. Hazaki 1991, 106.

[43] Tsuchiya Dollase, "The Cute Little Girl," 45.

[44] Kan Satoko 管聡子, "Kawaii: The Keyword of Japanese Girls' Culture," in *Miryoku aru daigakuin kyōiku inishiatibu:<taiwa to shinka> no jisedai josei rīdā no ikusei*, 200–202. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu daigaku miryoku aru daigakuin kyōiku inishiatibu jinshakei jimukyōiku. 2007), 200.

[45] Minamoto no Sukemichi 源資道 (1060–?) was a high-ranking and talented courtier, whom the author met during her court service. Although the diary does not mention his name, he was identified by Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241), a prominent poet-scholar, who copied the original manuscript of *Sarashina nikki* before it was lost. He provided the diary with appendices consisting of a short biography of the author, and some facts on her family, the careers of her father, husband, and Minamoto no Sukemichi. Fujiwara no Teika was credited with preserving and transmitting many of the Heian period texts, which circulated in different copies during his time. See Arntzen and Itō, *The Sarashina Diary*, 15.

[46] The poem is the first by Takasue no Musume to be included in an imperial anthology, *Shinkokinwakashū* 新古今和歌集 (1205), poem 56, first Spring section:

あさみどり花もひとつに霞みつつおぼろに見ゆる春の夜の月 (*Sarashina nikki* 1994, 309).

asa midori	Lucent green—
hana mo hitotsu ni	misting over, becoming one
kasumitsutsu	with the blossoms too;
oboro ni miyuru	dimly it may be seen,
haru no yo no tsuki	the moon on a night in spring.

The translation is from Arntzen and Itō, *The Sarashina Diary*, 175.

[47] Ibid., 72.

[48] Hazaki 1991, 155.

[49] Kumagai Fumie, "Families in Japan: Beliefs and Realities," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 26.1 (1995): 135–163, 156.

[50] Yukiko Tanaka, *Contemporary Portraits of Japanese Women* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1995), 20.

[51] Ibid., 3.

[52] Hazaki 1991, 162. In *Sarashina nikki* the heroine's marriage is only hinted at in a comment expressing her disappointment that her parents stopped her from attending court service. She notes that they "shut me away at home," adding that "the situation I found myself in now was quite contrary to all my hopes." See Arntzen and Itō, *The Sarashina Diary*, 164.

[53] Amida 阿弥陀 (Amitābha) is the main Buddha in Pure Land Buddhism who vowed to save all those with a believing heart who called out his name before dying.

[54] 大人になるっていうことはあきらめることなのね. Hazaki 1991, 165.

[55] Ruth Linhart-Fischer, "Rethinking Western Notions of Japanese Women: Some Aspects of Female Japanese Reality versus Stereotypes about Japanese Women," in *Rethinking Japan*, vol. 2, ed. Adriana Boscaro, Franco Gatti and Massimo Raveri, 164–174 (New York: Routledge, 1990), 166.

[56] In the Meiji era ideology women had to comply to the ideal of "good wives, wise mothers" and "to provide the religious and moral foundations of the home, educating their children and acting as the 'better half' to their husbands." Sievers, Sharon L. *Flowers in Salt: The Beginnings of Feminist Consciousness in Modern Japan*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983), 22. (quoted in Ivanova 2018, 196).

[57] "Traditional feminine stereotypes" or "traditional ideals of femininity" is a reference to the Meiji period ideological construct still influential in late 20th century Japan. The Meiji idea of "traditional femininity" is based on the idea of *katei* 家庭 "the home", which is the Japanese version of the modern nuclear family, inspired by the Christian ideology of monogamy and the Western ideal of romantic love. There is a strict division of gender roles within the *katei*. Husbands work outside and wives have to comply to the ideal of a "good wife, wise mother" whose role is limited to the home and family, and whose main responsibility is the education of the children and creating a warm and nurturing environment for the family. See Orbaugh, Sharalyn. "Gender, Family, and Sexualities." In *The Columbia Companion to Modern East Asian Literature*, ed. Joshua Mostow. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 46—7.

[58] Lucy Fraser and Masafumi Monden, "The Maiden Switch: New Possibilities for Understanding Japanese Shōjo Manga (Girls' Comics)." *Asian Studies Review*, 41.4 (2017): 545.

[59] Linhart-Fischer, "Rethinking Western Notions of Japanese Women," 166.

[60] Yuzawa Yasuhiko 湯沢雍彦. *Zusetsu-gendai nihon no kazoku mondai.* NHK bukkusu 531 (Tokyo: Nihon hōsō shuppan kyōkai, 1987), 73.

[61] Kumagai, "Families in Japan," 155.

[62] "Shōwa nostalgia" is the term for a cultural trend promoted by Japanese media, idealizing the Shōwa period as a time when Japanese families and communities lived in harmony and mutual trust, and hard work was rewarded. For example, an expression of the "Shōwa nostalgia" can be seen in the "morning drama" or *asadorama* 朝ドラマ (*asadora* 朝ドラ) broadcast by NHK since 1961. In the last 20 years the Shōwa period has been the predominant setting for *asadora*. The popular serialized show, also called "serial TV novel" (*renzoku terebi shōsetsu* 連続テレビ小説), always centers on a female character who faces challenges and works hard to achieve her dreams. See Hans Brinckmann, *Showa Japan: The Post-War Golden Age and Its Troubled Legacy* (North Clarendon, Vermont: Tuttle, 2008), Merklejn, Iwona. "Remembering the Oriental Witches: Sports, Gender and Shōwa Nostalgia in the NHK Narratives of the Tokyo Olympics." *Social Science Japan Journal* 16: 2 (2013): 235–250, and Murakami Wood, David and Abe Kiyoshi. "The Aesthetics of Control: Mega Events and Transformations in Japanese Urban Order." *Urban Studies* 48:15 (2011): 3241–3257.

[63] Japan uses an era dating system, *nengō* 年号, according to the reign of the emperor. The Shōwa period (1926–1989) is named for the reign of Emperor Hirohito 裕仁 (1901–1989), Heisei 平成 (1989-2019) is the era of the reign of his son Akihito 昭仁 (b. 1933). The current era, Reiwa 令和, started on May 1, 2019, when Naruhito 徳仁 (b. 1960), Akihito's eldest son, ascended to the throne.

[64] Iwona Merklejn, "Remembering the Oriental Witches: Sports, Gender and Shōwa Nostalgia in the NHK Narratives of the Tokyo Olympics," *Social Science Japan Journal* 16.2 (2013): 235.

[65] 古典と言うのは、たんに「古い本」と言う意味ではありません。長い時代を通して人々に親しまれ、影響を与えつづけて、今もなおいきいきと、その生命を保ちつづけている書物のことを、「古典」と言うのです。そこでみなさんにも、日本の古典の世界に少しでも近づき、楽しんでもらおうと、この「古典文学館」では、漫画で内容をわかりやすくあらわしました。… ここには、私たちの祖先の暮らしや思いが渦巻いています。こうした昔の人々の生きた声に耳を傾けることによって、みなさんは生きる勇気と希望を手にすることができるでしょう. (Kōzuki 1993, dust cover). The translation is mine.

[66] https://www.kumonshuppan.com/ehon/ehon-syousai/?code=39248. Accessed February 20, 2021.

[67] 物語に憧れ、胸ときめかす一人の少女. Kōzuki 1993, front matter.

[68] 我が人生をいとしむ、平安時代の一代記. Kōzuki 1993, back matter.

[69] Since manga is read from right to left, this manga first presents the heroine as an old woman writing at a desk and then as a young girl. Kōzuki 1993, 8−9.

[70] Deborah Shamoon, "Situating the Shōjo in Shōjo Manga: Teenage Girls, Romance Comics, and Contemporary Japanese Culture," in *Japanese Visual Culture: Exploration in the World of Manga and Anime,* ed. by Mark W. MacWilliams (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 154.

[71] 皇后さまになれたとしてもこれほどうれしいと思わないわ… . Kōzuki 1993, 61.

[72] 宮仕えにでればよい方とあうことができるかも. Kōzuki 1993, 98–99.

[73] See note 56.

[74] See note 57.

[75] https://jmpc-utokyo.com/keyword/otaku/ Accessed March 24, 2021.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Itō Mizuko, Daisuke Okabe and Izumi Tsuji, eds., *Fandom Unbound: Otaku Culture in a Connected World* (New haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012), 12.

[78] Cool Japan is a movement and government policy proposing that Japan is a trendsetter for entertainment, technology, art, fashion, music and contemporary culture. It was inspired by an article by journalist Douglas MsGray titled "Japan's Gross National Cool," which suggested that Japan's global power came from its pop-culture, including manga, anime, and games. See Galbraith, *The Otaku Encyclopedia,* 50.

[79] Such as Asō Tarō 麻生太郎 (b. 1940), a Japanese politician who has been Deputy Prime Minister of Japan and Minister of Finance since December 2012. Asō previously served as Prime Minister of Japan from September 2008 to September 2009.

[80] Gergana Ivanova, *Unbinding the Pillow Book: The Many Lives of a Japanese Classic* (New : Columbia University Press, 2018), 152.

[81] もうお后の位だってメじゃない！！Shimizu 2014, 42.

[82] 平安史上こんなこといった人いません. Shimizu 2014, 41.

[83] そこらの女子のように恋愛したいとか結婚したいとか神頼みする気ないしね. Shimizu 2014, 57.

[84] 全くなに考えてんのうちの親は！！Shimizu 2014, 87.

[85] いつの世にもいい夫を見つけて結婚するのが女の一番の幸福だ！Shimizu 2014, 88.

[86] Alisa Freedman and Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, "'Count What You Have Now. Don't Count What You Don't Have': The Japanese Television Drama *Around 40* and The Politics of Women's Happiness," *Asian Studies Review* 35.3 (2011): 299. "Traditional views of marriage" refer to the ideology of *katei* and "good wife, wise mother" (see notes 56 and 57).

[87] Ibid., 299.

[88] Ibid., 299–300. term *makeinu* 負け犬 or "loser dog," was widely used between 2003 and 2005 in media articles about unmarried, childless women who had a successful career and spent money on fashionable entertainment and goods, maintaining the social ideals of the Bubble Era in Japan. The term was popularized by essayist and novelist Sakai Junko 酒井順子 (b. 1966) in her bestselling book *Makeinu no tōboe* 負け犬の遠吠え (Distant howling of the loser dogs) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2003).

[89] Freedman and Iwata-Weickgenannt, "Count What You Have Now," 299.

[90] See note 17.

[91] 全部あたしの人生. Shimizu 2014, 136.

[92] Veronica Gabriela Spiridon, "Women in Japanese Society: Constraint and Fulfillment," *Economics, Management, and Financial Markets* 6.2 (2011): 706.