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Tanabe Seiko, Feminism, and the Making of a Love Novel¹

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Introduction

Genre has been one of the central concerns of modern Japanese literary studies, as illustrated by the formidable scholarship dedicated to the highbrow genre of I-novels, and the numerous tomes on popular genres such as domestic novels, detective fiction, and girls' novels.² Some of these monographs consider genre at “the point of production” by focusing on writers, the repertoire of devices and the conventions they employ, while others analyze genre at “the point of reception” by examining communities of readers, their interpretative strategies as well as their social and historical contexts.³ In this latter approach, genre is not always defined by a set of features inherent in the text but emerges from the relationship between text and readers.⁴ This is a pragmatic understanding of genre, according to which genre is “an effect of framing” by paratexts and cultural discourses.⁵ In this paper, I build upon this latter approach in demonstrating the key role of the book format in shaping the genre of a work. I consider an example of the relatively understudied genre of love novels (恋愛小説 *ren'ai shōsetsu*).⁶ Although the term “love novel” appears with some frequency in the Japanese publishing world, it does not indicate a clear set of generic characteristics, as in a formula plot, style, or point of view. Thus, a narrow, morphological definition of the genre is not possible. That is why, in the Japanese context, the genre of love novels is best understood as the “effect” of frames of interpretation.

Yet, to the extent that the label “love novel” is used, it must carry at least some associations and assumptions about love. Love is no less difficult to define and grasp than genre. It is a fluid concept, contingent on historical and social factors. In my analysis, I focus on “romantic love” (恋愛 *ren'ai*) in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries of Japan. Romantic love is a modern concept developed within the Western



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European Christian context. This Western Christian ideal of romantic love has as principal tenets that true love should blossom into marriage, and that sexual relationships, understood as an expression of love, should be confined to marriage. This concept was imported into Japan in the late nineteenth century, but only gained widespread currency amongst the general population in the postwar era as yet another expression of democracy.⁷ In fact, Japanese sociologists have described romantic love as an “ideology” that was used during the high-economic growth period to forge stable nuclear families wherein the two partners subscribe to clearly defined gender roles and support the economy via “production and reproduction.”⁸ Beginning in the 1990s, however, this normative, rigid notion of love has lost its appeal and power, giving way to a more flexible view of romance. As sociologist Tanimoto Naho has demonstrated, love has ceased to be a serious, all-consuming affair and has become a game (*asobi*) as more people postpone marriage, never marry, and have multiple romantic partners.⁹ Thus, what counts as a love novel depends not simply on the content of the text, but on the meaning of “love” at a certain point in time. A literary work can be labeled a “love novel” only when the romantic experience depicted in the text corresponds with the general view on love embraced by a significant number of readers. At other times, the same novel might be assigned to other genres. Given the instability of both genre and generic attribution, it is perhaps not surprising that publishers signal the genre of literary works various paratextual elements, including generic labels. “Love novel” is one such label.

The publication and reception history of the novel *Iiyoru* (言い寄る Intimations, 1973), written by Tanabe Seiko (田辺聖子, 1928–2019), exemplifies this instability of genre. *Iiyoru* was initially serialized between June and December 1973 in the soft-pornographic medium of *Shūkan taishū* (週刊大衆 Popular weekly), a weekly magazine for men. The novel plays into the voyeuristic male gaze by detailing the quotidian life (including sexual encounters) of the heroine, a single, working woman in her thirties. It is therefore something of a puzzle that *Iiyoru*, a work of pornographic origins, was prominently advertised as a love novel upon its rerelease in 2007. Even more puzzling is that it is specifically celebrated as a representative work of a feminist writer. How can we explain this transformation of genre, from lowbrow entertainment for men to a respectable love novel for women?

In this article, I identify and examine three literary and social forces that are responsible for this transformation: (1) The text of *Iiyoru* and its

publication format, (2) changes in the ideology of romantic love, and (3) the reappraisal of Tanabe Seiko's life and work by feminist critics. When readers first encountered *Iiyoru* in the pages of a men's weekly magazine, their interpretation of the novel was framed by written and visual texts within the magazine. These paratextual cues primed readers for a pornographic and titillating experience. In contrast, when readers buy the same work in one volume (whether an old copy from 1974 or a more recent edition from 2007 or 2010), this frame is no longer present, and new frames replace it. I argue that new paratexts such as the dustjacket and book *obi* encourage readers of the hardcover or paperback format to interpret the work as a love novel. It is because of its various formats that the text of Tanabe's novel has been read, at different times and places, as both soft-pornography and as a love story. The change in reception of this novel is an example of the expansive and dynamic scope of genre, which covers not just text, but also paratexts, material form, methods of dissemination, time, and place. The genre of *Iiyoru* is a conversation. Its text may lie at the center of this conversation, but it has neither first nor last word.

Tanabe, the author of *Iiyoru*, was born in Osaka in 1928. Fond of reading and writing, she majored in Japanese literature at the Shōin Women's Vocational School (樟蔭女子専門学校 Shōin joshi senmon gakkō) between 1944 and 1947.¹⁰ After graduation, she held a white-collar job for seven years (until 1954) before dedicating herself exclusively to writing. In 1955 she furthered her studies for about a year at the newly established creative writing school Osaka School of Literature (大阪文学学校 Osaka bungaku gakkō). Although she was awarded the prestigious Akutagawa prize in 1964, Tanabe could not break into the literary establishment (文壇 *bundan*). Indeed, Tanabe was the graduate of institutions for the masses. She was not the product of an exclusive apprenticeship with an older, established writer like Tamura Toshiko (田村俊子, 1884–1945), who had studied under Kōda Rōhan 幸田露伴, 1867–1947).¹¹ Nor did she have the family pedigree of Enchi Fumiko (円地文子, 1905–1986). And, unlike Kōno Taeko (河野多恵子 1926–2015), who was also born in Osaka and received the Akutagawa Prize in 1963, Tanabe never moved to Tokyo or joined a literary coterie there.¹² Tanabe's humorous tone and persistent use of the Osaka dialect might have further contributed to her exclusion from highbrow literary magazines.

Indeed, her education, life experience, and literature are more readily associated with the popular rather than the highbrow. Tanabe herself

embraced her status as a popular writer and published countless short stories, novels, and essays in a variety of media such as newspapers, monthly magazines for women, and weekly magazines for men. Her works can be divided into four broad categories: essays, fiction set in the present, historical fiction, and biographies of famous literary figures.¹³ Her stories set in the present often feature single women (usually past the marriageable age) who are professionals in a creative field, or married women whose lives and interests go beyond maintaining the household. *Iiyoru* is part of this category.¹⁴

The Serialization

Iiyoru was serialized in the weekly magazine *Shūkan taishū* between June and December 1973. Two questions emerge when we consider *Iiyoru* as a serialization: Is the voice of the novel congruent with the voice of its publication forum? And how was the text consumed and interpreted as a serialization? A brief overview of weekly magazines will clarify how *Iiyoru* was in close dialogue with its initial publication venue and the reading practices of the magazine's readership.

One of the most visible changes in the publishing landscape of postwar Japan was the proliferation of weekly magazines following the establishment in 1956 of *Shūkan shinchō* (週刊新潮 Weekly new wave), the first weekly magazine issued by a publishing house.¹⁵ In a few years, the circulation of *Shūkan shinchō* reached one million copies. Scores of other publishers followed, including *Asahi geinō* (アサヒ芸能 Asahi entertainment, published by Tokuma shoten), *Shūkan myōjō* (週刊明星 Weekly morning star, published by Shūeisha), *Shūkan gendai* (週刊現代 Weekly contemporary, published by Kōdansha), and *Shūkan taishū* (週刊大衆, published by Futabasha). Publishing houses did not have the journalistic network to collect and relay reliable news so they decided to focus instead on providing human-interest stories, gossip, and fiction.¹⁶ One commentator has summarized the main three themes of the weekly magazine articles as “sex, scandal and money.”¹⁷ Within a decade, over fifty new weekly magazines were issued, and the circulation of weekly magazines surpassed that of monthlies.¹⁸ Over time, the market of weekly magazines has become increasingly segmented, according to age and gender, with several weeklies targeting women, some weeklies aimed at young men, and other weeklies dedicated exclusively to manga for boys or girls. However, the majority of weeklies have continued to target the commuting working men, with editors simplifying and shortening articles,

and adding visual content in order to fit the reading practices and interests of their core audience.¹⁹

Discussing specifically the weekly magazine *Asahi geinō*, sociologist Kageyama Kayoko has shown how the magazine thrived following the implementation of the 1956 anti-prostitution law, which ended officially sanctioned red-light districts. Naturally, this law did not mean that prostitution no longer existed. Rather, sex was now covertly available as part of an array of services, including massage, hostess dinners, and striptease acts. *Asahi geinō* capitalized on the transformation of the sex industry and became a guidebook on available sexual services.²⁰ Initially *Asahi geinō* distinguished between “women of a pleasure district-like world” (赤線的世界の女 *akasenteki sekai no onna*) and married women who were unrelated to the realm of pleasure and fantasy.²¹ Kageyama notes, however, that around 1972 this distinction between the two categories of women disappeared. Within the pages of *Asahi geinō*, women unrelated to the sex industry, such as students, office employees, and married women became a new target of men’s sexual fantasies.²²

The same phenomenon can be observed in *Shūkan taishū*. For instance, a 1973 issue contains two articles, one on the “techniques” of the Yotsuya masseuses (四谷パンマ *Yotsuya panma*) and another on dating courses that “could be recommended even to professors and female students.”²³ A couple of purported non-fiction serializations, also from 1973, recount torrid romantic adventures that push the boundaries of traditional marriage without any reference to prostitution. One series details the pleasures of wife-swapping (written in Chinese characters as 夫婦交換 *fūfu kōkan* and glossed as スワッピング *suwappingu*), with the confessions allegedly written by the swapped wives themselves.²⁴ Thus, in weekly magazines, women who in theory should have had only one sexual partner became available to other men, all the while maintaining their respectable social status.

Alongside incendiary articles and raunchy pictures, weeklies have also provided readers with fiction. As early as the 1960s, the king of mass-media, Ōya Sōichi (大宅壮一, 1900-1970), observed: “recently, the newly-established playgrounds of weekly magazines have gathered many new fans. It’s only natural that what comes out of it is neither ‘pure literature’ (純文学 *jun bungaku*) nor ‘popular literature’ (通俗文学 *tsūzoku bungaku*) but a third type of literature, the ‘weekly literature’ (週刊誌文学 *shūkanshi bungaku*).”²⁵ Ōya names Matsumoto Seichō (松本清張, 1909–1992) as one of the representative writers of this kind of new literature. According

to Ōya, writers of weekly magazine literature were “not raised by the literary establishment, but come from the ranks of salarymen, have a broad view of the world, and diverse sources of inspiration. Their sensibilities thus match the sensibilities of readers.”²⁶ This description fits Tanabe Seiko, too. The novels serialized in weeklies cannot be ascribed to a single genre; they include detective fiction, historical fiction, gangster (*yakuza*) fiction and erotic fiction (官能小説 *kannō shōsetsu*). It is this latter genre that thrived and continues to thrive in weekly magazines.

A prime example of erotic fiction is Uno Kōichirō’s (宇能鴻一郎, 1934–) novel *Asobi zakari* (遊びざかり Peak of play), also serialized in *Shūkan taishū* in 1973, around the same time as Tanabe Seiko’s *Iiyoru*. Uno is recognized for his employment of a first-person feminine point of view in erotic fiction. The narrator of *Asobi zakari* is a lonely housewife who presents in detail her sexual yearnings and adventures while the husband is away. What does a stay-at-home wife do when the husband is not around? The woman confesses: “I have nothing to do. After my husband leaves for work, I am just idling away on the second floor of this apartment building.”²⁷ Finally, the wife decides to exercise a little: “It would be a bit too much to change into a sports outfit, so I am standing in front of the mirror, wearing just my bra and panties.”²⁸ From here things deviate: “Will I just have to spend my time like this, without showing my beautiful body to anybody?”²⁹ The feeling escalates. The wife goes out, meets a man in a crowded elevator, and accompanies him to a hotel. This and her other sexual encounters are motivated mostly by boredom and exhibitionistic desire. The wife drifts into relationships and passively accepts the advances of men. Despite employing a first-person female point of view, the novel is far from an exploration of feminine interiority and sexual desire. The female character remains a mechanical doll, the voice of a man’s sexual fantasy of a woman’s sexual adventures.

Uno’s novel is an enumeration of sexual acts, described in detail with the immediacy of the present tense. Following the conventions of pornography, it emphasizes the sexual pleasure of the woman, not of the man.³⁰ Uno offers detailed descriptions of the woman’s physical reactions: her body relaxes or gets tense, she pants heavily, moans and screams, offering both an audible and visual spectacle. In contrast, the male body is presented in generic terms. Uno’s narrator herself defends the structure of pornography and offers one more explanation for its focus on the female body: “I’m sorry to say this, but the male nude is comical. Compared to a woman’s body, it is not very beautiful. After all, the one who is admired,

loved, and possessed is the woman.”³¹ Such sentiments appear to encapsulate the philosophy of men’s weekly magazines. The weeklies offered lonely men on their commute a woman to admire, love, and possess.

Tanabe Seiko used this lowbrow medium as the arena to debut her light-hearted and feminist novel *Iiyoru*. This work shares some similarities with Uno’s erotic novel. It is centered around the private, erotic life of an “ordinary” woman, Noriko. The protagonist narrates in first person about her daily life and complicated romantic experiences, including her involvement with two men and her unrequited love for a third one. Noriko is a single, working woman in her early thirties. Despite her age, she is not actively searching for a husband, though she would be willing to marry Gorō, her childhood friend. In her relationships with other men, however, she is carefree and not interested in a stable or serious relationship.

Like many novels serialized in weekly magazines for men, *Iiyoru* features sex. Yet these scenes do not conform to the conventions of pornography. Readers never hear Noriko pant or scream in delight. In fact, sexual climax is never described. The sex act itself is often presented metonymically: “The breeze was crisp, and I very much enjoyed having my skin slowly caressed by a man’s hand, while laying down in the cold sheets.”³² The only body parts mentioned are the lover’s hand, and Noriko’s skin, imparting a gentle, non-genital image of sex. This elliptical description which conveys the mood of the female character is admittedly sensual rather than pornographic, distinguishing Tanabe’s work from erotic novels such as Uno’s.

Instead of using sex itself, Tanabe titillates readers with foreplay and conversation. The “first night” (初夜 *shoya*), a concept usually associated with premarital sexual inexperience, becomes the name of an erotic game that Noriko plays with her lover. In another scene, Noriko, in bed with a man, cuts the erotic tension with a whimsical joke:

His eyes pointed at me like two barrels of a gun. His mouth smiled, but his eyes didn’t. I wanted to smile at him, but my face was stiff. I was so afraid of his strength that for a second, I froze. He noticed that with a keen sensibility, and said to me gently:

“You have such a beautiful body. You’re so young. No matter how many times I look at you, I feel like saying ‘nice to meet you’ yet again.”

“I bet you say ‘nice to meet you’ to lots of women.”³³

「きれいな体。若いねえ……何べん見ても『初めまして』という気になっ

てしまう」
「はじめまして、という人は多いでしょ？」

Similarly to Uno's narrative, Iiyoru captures the female protagonist's physical and mental reactions during her sexual encounters. But Noriko uses her witty words to undermine the man's attempt at dominating her through his physical strength and penetrating gaze. It is one way through which the narrative resists the typical visual dynamic described by film scholar Laura Mulvey as "woman as spectacle" and "man as bearer of the look."³⁴

The novel further critiques the "woman as spectacle" formula through a series of paintings by Noriko. The protagonist is an artist and designer. In her work, she confronts the stereotypical feminine poses that appear everywhere from men's magazines to fine art museums. Her art is both sexual and visual, as if to fit the medium in which her story lives. Some of her paintings portray girls sitting on the toilet, and others feature girls eating toast. This incongruous juxtaposition of girls and inelegant objects satirizes the sexualization of the female body. In her favorite painting, titled "Crotch-frame" (又眼鏡 *mata megane*), Noriko absurdly hypersexualizes her female subject. Noriko herself describes her own work:

In the painting I am working on now, a woman (*onna*) is standing firm, with her legs wide apart. She is looking at the world upside-down, from between her legs....

The woman is wearing white panties, pink shoes, and a wrist-watch. Her hair is arranged in two braids, but she is past the age of childhood. She is completely absorbed and fascinated by the new dimension of the world she sees from between her legs.³⁵

Everything about the woman in her painting is exaggerated, from her attire to her contorted and unnatural pose; it is femininity taken to the extreme. The painting as described in the novel has the marks of soft-pornography. The woman appears alone, adorned with the fetishistic objects of virginal white underwear, pink shoes, and pig tails—visual markers that elicit desire. In soft-pornography, the look of the woman, as Kaite Berkeley writes, "directly addresses either the reader or parts of her own body."³⁶ Furthermore, the woman's gaze is supposed to be imbued with either a latent sexual yearning or the ecstasy of autoeroticism.³⁷ In Noriko's painting, however, the woman's gaze is directed at the world. It

does not search for the eyes of a male gazer. While the painting invites the male viewer's scopophilia – the pleasure of looking at erotic images—the content of the painting expresses the woman's epistemophilia—the curiosity to know oneself and the world.³⁸ The woman in the painting might be the object of the male gaze, but she is also projecting her own gaze onto the world. She is both spectacle and spectator. She sees the established model of “[w]oman as image, man as bearer of the look”—and she looks back.³⁹ This simple act liberates her. It transforms her from a consumable object into an autonomous force. Although the potential viewer or reader cannot know what she sees, the “crotch-framed” world suggested by the title has clear sexual connotations. The woman's worldview is framed by her own sex, sexuality, and sexual experience.

This “crotch-frame” could apply to the entire novel. Indeed, at the end of this chapter, itself titled “Crotch-frame,” Noriko has just had sex with a man she barely knows. She compares herself to the woman in the painting as she gazes at the world. Thus, the narrative captures the world through Noriko's “crotch-frame.” Noriko uses this frame to observe men, their bodies and their walking style: “[Mizuno] had a confident walk. It was different from Gō's swift and strong walk, and from Gorō's melancholic bearing. His movements were saying: This is the best way to do it, there is no other way. This made him irresistibly charming.”⁴⁰ She also spies on her lovers while they bathe and observes both the habitual and the sensual in their actions. To this, she adds yet another layer: “This mundane activity of ‘a man washing his hair’ is as important as ‘the fun activity’ he was doing with me before. That's because in both cases one can feel the man's toughness, his bold attitude towards life.”⁴¹ In bathing and in sex, Noriko recognizes a man's personality, “his bold attitude towards life.” In this way, Noriko's crotch-gaze paradoxically desexualizes the male body. A man's naked body, even in an intimate moment, appears to her as a manifestation of his worldview and priorities: “His movements gave me the impression that ‘Hey, I'm a busy man. I've got countless projects, of which girls are just a fraction, a fraction of a fraction in my life.’”⁴² Even when she derives pleasure from the male body through her gaze, she notices that the man can still detach himself from the situation and maintain his subjectivity.

One can imagine that many male readers bought the weekly *Shūkan taishū*, opened its covers to enjoy the pictures of nude or semi-nude girls, then let their gaze wander into the imaginary world of Noriko. But she was not there to simply parade in front of the readers and excite them. Noriko looked back. And she looked without reservation or embarrassment.

Tanabe played with the conventional structure of the gaze—man admires, woman is admired—in a novel serialized in a visual medium that reproduced this structure on every page.

The text's literary critique of the sexualization of women in visual media likely resonated with the contemporaneous women's lib critique of the same phenomenon. For instance, at the famous 1971 women's lib camp (*ribu gasshuku*), activists gathered naked to protest the use of the female nude for obscene purposes in pornography and in high arts. Contrary to their wishes and to the very message they were promoting, photos of the naked activists became in weekly magazines (including *Shūkan taishū*) the source of scandalous news and titillating materials.⁴³ The misuse of such photos parallels the contradictory use of Tanabe's novel, which provided entertainment to men along with a critique of both sexual norms and the objectivation of women.

It is likely that most male readers in the 1970s either dismissed or overlooked Tanabe's attempt to rework the "woman as image, man as bearer of the look" structure of the gaze.⁴⁴ The reason lies in the paratexts of *Iiyoru* as a serialized novel. Even if the author does not conform to the voice of the magazine, and writes the text independently of the suggestions of editors, the reader consumes the serialization alongside other articles and photos included in the magazine. If we take the paratext to be, as Gerard Genette defines it, "this fringe at the unsettled limits that enclose with a pragmatic halo the literary work," then it is possible to postulate that in a magazine, any text becomes the paratext of another text included in the same issue.⁴⁵ The reader does not enjoy a serialization in isolation but as part of a mosaic of texts. All the other texts in the same magazine issue shape the meaning and interpretation of the serialization, they become its "thresholds of interpretation," the subtitle of Genette's monograph on paratexts. From the point of view of the reader, the serialized text represents only a piece of a mosaic of fictional and non-fictional texts, photographs and drawings, produced not by one, but by multiple authors. In this mosaic, motifs reinforce and amplify each other. A reader would likely pay more attention to the pattern of themes that recur both in the serialization and in the articles surrounding it, and disregard other themes that are not prominently featured in the same publication venue. Thus, one can surmise that stimulated by other images and texts in *Shūkan taishū*, many readers likely enjoyed the understated sex scenes in Tanabe's novel and the playful dialogues between Noriko and her lovers. The nuance of Noriko's art or her unusual habit of spying on men while

they bathe were small islands of literary innovation, probably overlooked and overwhelmed by the ocean of paratextual cues.⁴⁶

The Book

What happens when a text is re-contextualized, separated from the nude photos and other paratextual evidence of its origins, rereleased as a single volume, advertised on the *obi* as a “love novel,” and embraced as such by a new audience? In this section, I argue that it then simply *becomes* a love novel. Book historian Roger Chartier observes that “[t]he book always aims at installing an order, whether it is the order in which it is deciphered, the order in which it is to be understood, or the order intended by the authority who commanded or permitted the work.”⁴⁷ *Iiyoru* as a book, as a single volume, demands a full reading, from cover to cover.⁴⁸ In great contrast to serialization, the premise of the book, as Chartier suggests above, is that a diligent reader should engage with the text as a whole and in the order in which it is presented, even if in practice not all readers do so.

All book formats are invested with meaning. One can imagine a hypothetical situation in which all novels were printed on the same type of paper, identical typeset, and identically bound with white covers, without a title or author, or any other paratextual clues. Even this seemingly “neutral” format would have an effect on readers: all novels, no matter their content, would appear to be equal in value and importance – or at least presumptively equal. Of course, in the real world, novels vary in material form. Their covers are hard or soft, their dustjackets present images and designs. These variations capture the reader’s attention and are implicit statements regarding their content. For example, the complete collection of an author’s works suggests that the author is in fact worthy of researchers’ attention. Similarly, a paperback (文庫本 *bunkobon*) version of a text is proof that the work is in demand, and that many readers want easy and affordable access to that text. Either way, the book invests a formally serialized text with “new legitimacy,” to borrow another phrase from Chartier.⁴⁹ Thus, the book version of *Iiyoru* discourages interpreting the text as light, shallow, and ultimately disposable, the way it was most likely perceived when serialized in *Shūkan taishū*. Instead, it encourages the reader to take the text seriously.

The book bellyband or *obi* is another key paratext that influences the reception of a text. A salient feature of Japanese book culture, the *obi* is a slip of paper wrapped around the bottom of a book, on top of the dustjacket.

Its main purpose is advertising the work through catchy blurbs and ad copies. Oftentimes the *obi* includes references to the genre of the work. The generic labels included on the *obi* help the reader make sense of the text from the outside, sending a signal that is arguably more informative than the title, if not the author. In a novel with multiple and overlapping plots, a reader may be more likely to interpret the whole as, say, a love novel, if its *obi* so advertises. Thus, the *obi* can determine the interpretation of its contents; it has not only a commercial function, but also unintended literary implications.

Two *obi*—one from the 1974 first edition of *Iiyoru*, and another from the 2007 edition—offer insights into the reception of Tanabe’s novel. One year after its serialization in 1973, *Iiyoru* appeared as a hardcover book (単行本 *tankōbon*).⁵⁰ Its *obi* at this time used feminist rhetoric such as the expression “sexual liberation” (性の解放 *sei no kaihō*): “A poignant yet light-hearted modern affair (*koi*). The uplifting life of a woman who awakens to sexual liberation and experiences contemporary liaisons (*koi*).” The early 1970s represented the peak of second-wave feminism, and it is understandable that publishers would capitalize on this phenomenon.

The phrase “sexual liberation” has multiple interpretations. For Japanese women’s lib activists, it did not simply mean a woman’s right to enjoy sexual relations outside marriage. Their view was more nuanced. For instance, key activist Tanaka Mitsu (田中美津, 1945–) believed that the denial of female sexuality was linked to female subordination, and she argued for sex as a form of communication between two equal partners.⁵¹ For Noriko, sex does represent a form of communication and bonding with her lovers. Thus, linking *Iiyoru* to the sort of “sexual liberation” promoted by women’s lib activists was indeed appropriate.

Nevertheless, the popular press offered readers a simplistic representation of the feminist agenda. For instance, the 1971 women’s lib camp was described in *Shūkan josei jishin* (週刊女性自身 *Woman’s self weekly*) as “a meeting on the topic of sexual liberation.”⁵² The selective quotes from the participants focused on sex techniques and appeared to emphasize women’s sexual pleasure only. Thus, it is likely that for many readers sexual liberation meant a woman’s quest for sexual pleasure. Either way, there was again a gap between the actual concerns of the activists and their portrayal in the mass media. But “sexual liberation”—however understood—was the phrase most readily associated with the women’s lib movement in the popular discourse. In this way the topic of “sexual liberation” and Tanabe’s novel likely appealed to both readers

genuinely interested in the movement and to men seeking titillating material.

Thus, in one year, *Iiyoru* was repackaged as a general-audience novel. Yet, publishers stopped short from calling it a love novel (*ren'ai shōsetsu*), advertising it instead as an “amorous novel” (恋の長編小説 *koi no chōhen shōsetsu*). That is because until at least the early 1970s, the word “love” (*ren'ai*) had a relatively serious and specific meaning. It referred to the “romantic love” that developed in the Christian Western world and was imported to Japan in the late nineteenth century. This sort of romantic love presupposes a mind-body hierarchy. Physical relationships are not excluded from love, but they are subordinate. They may only follow a strong spiritual bond and must be confined to marriage.⁵³ “Romantic love” became a widely debated topic in the early part of the twentieth century, but in practice it was embraced by the masses only in the postwar era, as yet another expression of democracy.⁵⁴ Indeed, in the postwar period, there was a shift from arranged marriages (お見合い結婚 *omiai kekkon*) to love marriages, best exemplified by the 1959 marriage of Crown Prince Akihito to a commoner, Shōda Michiko, following a much-publicized courtship.⁵⁵ This event became “a testimony to the power of romantic love in postwar Japan,” as Jan Bardsley describes it.⁵⁶

Such a narrow view of romantic love conflicts with the whimsical treatment of sex in Tanabe’s novel. Thus, it is not surprising that the novel was advertised in 1974 as an “amorous novel” (*koi no chōhen shōsetsu*). The term *koi* is a safer choice of diction. It is a word that has been used in premodern Japanese literature to describe a variety of amorous relationships that differ from modern romantic love. It carries sensual connotations to this day as it often describes the euphoric state of “being in love” (恋している *koi shite iru*). In fact, literary scholar Suzuki Keiko argues that Tanabe has a premodern romantic sensibility, as she embraces both the sensual and the sexual, and rejects the body-spirit dichotomy and hierarchy. Suzuki praises Tanabe’s lack of “guilt” (罪悪感 *zaiakukan*) over pre- and extra-marital affairs.⁵⁷

Tanabe’s approach to love, however, is not a return to premodern values. Rather, it is a successful escape from the modern romantic love ideology. Not only is sex no longer confined to marriage, but marriage itself is not the principal interest. Furthermore, the romantic ideal that there could be only one true love in one’s life does not apply in this novel. For Noriko, the love experience is no longer bound to one person. Noriko simultaneously takes pleasure in her unrequited love for Gorō, enjoys a

light-hearted relationship with Gō, and the thrill of an unexpected affair with the older, married Mizuno.

Over the decades since *Iiyoru*'s initial release, social mores have caught up with the content of the novel. In 2007 the novel was reissued in hardcover with an *obi* advertising it as “the latent potential of Japanese love novels” (これが日本の恋愛小説の底力 *Kore ga Nihon no ren'ai shōsetsu no sokojikara*).⁵⁸ In 2010, a new paperback edition was also released. This edition is still in print a decade later. Over the decades since the initial release of *Iiyoru*, social mores have caught up to the content of the novel. The work is now marketed and consumed as a love novel.⁵⁹ Indeed, not only do twenty-first century editors have few if any reasons to shy away from labeling this work as a “love novel,” but phrases such as “sexual liberation” would now sound anachronistic. The novel has lost its shock value.

The author herself has characterized *Iiyoru* as a “love novel.” For instance, in the afterword to the 2010 paperback edition, Tanabe Seiko explicitly claims that *Iiyoru* is the product of her desire to write “a different type of love novel,” but she does not elaborate on how her novel might have differed from other contemporary love novels.⁶⁰ However, in a 2002 conversation between Tanabe and writer Kawakami Hiromi (川上弘美, 1958–), Tanabe explains that one of the major differences between her novels and love novels by male authors of her generation is the choice of female characters. She says: “Back then, the protagonists of love novels were women of the night such as bar and club hostesses. So, I wrote about women who were socially the equals of men, women who could fall in love just like men did.”⁶¹ Tanabe's description of love novels by male authors might be an oversimplification. However, it is true that independent women past marriageable age did not feature prominently in the popular works of Tanabe's contemporaries, men or women. As literary scholar Koyano Atsushi has demonstrated, popular literature at the time focused on the sexual transgressions of married women and the platonic romance involving young female protagonists.⁶² Thus, Tanabe's representation of single, sexually liberated women in love deviated from the conventions of popular literature from the same period. However, it is difficult to assess to what extent Tanabe actually envisioned *Iiyoru* as a love novel from the beginning. It is more likely that the author herself relabeled *Iiyoru* and other of her works as “love novels” at a later point in her career in order to expand her readership and maintain an interest in her works.

Yet neither a publisher's *obi* nor an author's self-criticism, either by themselves or in concert, are sufficient to assign a work to a genre. The consent of a third actor—the reader—is required. In this way, genre assignation is like a contract among the producers and the consumers of the work. To be a love novel—however defined—it must be that both producers intend *Iiyoru* to be a member of the genre *and* consumers in fact read it as such. *Iiyoru* therefore could not be a love novel in its own time. It had to wait for people's attitudes towards both sex and love to change. *Iiyoru*'s time eventually arrived.

Romantic views and sexual mores in Japan have changed considerably since the 1970s. Sociologist Tanimoto Naho traces the differences in the discourse on love in Japan between the 1970s and the 1990s. According to one survey she cites, in the 1970s about 40 percent of women believed marriage equates with happiness. In the 1990s, the number dropped to 5 percent.⁶³ Similarly, in the 1970s, almost 40 percent of popular magazine articles on love presented the romantic experience as a story that either culminated in marriage or ended in disappointment.⁶⁴ The choice at the time was either be married or be miserable.

Recent audiences, it seems, have simply rejected the premise of that choice. By the 1990s, only 2 percent of magazine articles on love fit the marriage-or-disappointment paradigm. According to their confessions published in popular magazines, readers now explore and enjoy the experience of dating itself. As Tanimoto argues, lovers concentrate on deriving pleasure from the process of dating, rather than the hope of marriage.⁶⁵ This change in attitude correlates with an increase in the number of unmarried people, and an increase in the age of marriage.⁶⁶ Separation and failed courtships are no longer disappointments. They are “new beginnings” (始まり *hajimari*, 新しい出発点 *atarashii shuppatsuten*) and opportunities for growth.⁶⁷ Currently, couples interact in an enriched relational space. They can be “more than friends, less than lovers” (友達以上、恋人未満 *tomodachi ijō, koibito miman*).⁶⁸ They can be exclusive or not. They can be casual or serious. Sex can be casual or serious. Simply put, contemporary Japanese lovers are more like Noriko. *Iiyoru* was not a love novel of its time. It is a love novel of this time.

Feminism

Paratextual cues are not the only reasons why the reception of *Iiyoru* has changed. Over time, prominent academics and activists have also been

noticing a subversive message in Tanabe's works and concluded that her fiction is feminist.

Non-fiction writer Kirishima Yōko (桐島洋子, 1937–) was one of the first public personalities to remark on the feminist potential of Tanabe's writing. Kirishima rose to prominence in the early 1970 after publishing personal letters and essays about her love, life and career and became known as an independent, single mother of three. In 1976, Kirishima made the following comment: “Tanabe Seiko is not typically associated with the women's lib movement. Even men who oppose the movement readily accept her novels and conclude that the world would be a wonderful place if only all women were as gentle and carefree as Tanabe. But in my opinion, she is feminism's greatest ally.”⁶⁹

Kirishima did not elaborate on how or why Tanabe might be “feminism's greatest ally,” but her comment is significant because it indicates that in the early 1970s Tanabe was “not typically associated” with the women's lib movement. There are several reasons for this. First, Tanabe was at least one decade older than the women at the center of the movement, who were part of the baby boomer generation. Second, at the time Tanabe did not make any direct comments on the movement and its goals. Third, she was popular with a male audience and was known for her warm and sympathetic portrayal of conservative, middle-aged men. To a certain extent, the general audience still does not associate her with feminism. For instance, in 2006, critic Saitō Minako declared that “most people probably did not realize it, but Tanabe is a ‘*ribu no onna*.’”⁷⁰ Thus it is remarkable that very early on, Kirishima noticed a feminist streak behind the seemingly pleasurable and harmonious world of Tanabe's literature.

In 1983, feminist writer Ochiai Keiko (落合恵子, 1945–) praised the “freedom of being single” (シングルの開放感 *Shinguru no kaihōkan*) pervading Tanabe's work.⁷¹ Although in the early part of the twentieth century there were already women writers who depicted in some form the “freedom of being single,” they did so in works targeting the literary elites rather than the masses. In contrast, Tanabe wrote for a popular audience in popular venues. It is likely that Ochiai found Tanabe's novels to be a refreshing source of inspiration both for her personal life and for her literature; Ochiai herself was in her thirties and single. Her early 1980s novella *Shinguru gāru* (シングル・ガール “Single girl”) features a protagonist who turns down a marriage proposal and criticizes her lover because “he, too, believes that the only proof of love a man can give a

woman is the position of wife.”⁷² Ochiai’s stance towards marriage aligns with that of Tanabe’s literature. Not surprisingly, Ochiai concluded that “although she is not being vociferous, there is a feminist point of view hidden” in Tanabe’s work.⁷³

The short-lived literary magazine *Femina* dedicated an issue to Tanabe Seiko in 1991. In this issue, feminist icon and scholar Ueno Chizuko explains the strategy of Tanabe’s feminism and why her work appealed to a male audience: “If you attack men head-on, they will get defensive. A man’s world is surrounded by a thick wall, and in the end, it is we who are going to get hurt.... You made men read your work and laugh at it. But you also succeeded in saying what you wanted to say.”⁷⁴ Ueno rightly identifies humor as a key element of Tanabe’s success. Humor is a constant and defining trait of Tanabe’s literature (including fiction and non-fiction) and is one of the tools employed to convey feminist ideas without offending more conservative readers.⁷⁵ But more recently, Hiromi Tsuchiya-Dollase has warned that “although the humor in her fiction is an effective vehicle for imparting subversive ideas,” Tanabe wrote first and foremost in order “to entertain.”⁷⁶ Thus, Dollase emphasizes that Tanabe was not necessarily driven by a feminist agenda.

Other feminist scholars do not find feminist ideas in Tanabe’s literature. According to literary scholar Iida Yūko, the first objective of feminism is to disrupt the masculine status quo, while its second and ultimate objective is to erase the idea of “woman.”⁷⁷ Iida believes that Tanabe’s works succeed on the first but fail on the second. The root of the failure, according to Iida, is that they do not question the standard heterosexual model or the male/female gender binary. Iida does not reveal the sources for her feminist philosophy, but she does appear to be influenced by the “gender free” debates unfolding in Japan from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s. Many Japanese feminists embraced the phrase “gender free” over “gender equality” (男女平等 *danjo byōdō*) because the latter could be interpreted as “separate but equal.” Instead, “gender free” held the promise of “eliminating gender” altogether.⁷⁸ Tanabe’s writing does indeed take for granted and reinforces the binary opposition between “men” and “women.” This is similar to the stance of women’s lib activists, such as Tanaka Mitsu, who was known for her “investment in a heterosexual logic.”⁷⁹ Thus Iida’s observations are accurate, but anachronistic. Iida’s criticism continues. She claims that Tanabe’s depictions of the so-called “high-misses” (ハイ・ミス *hai misu*) – single, working women in their thirties – merely described an established fact and

did not advance any feminist frontier even at the time they were first published.

Although the “high-misses” indeed existed in the 1960s and 1970s, they were marginalized rather than celebrated. That is why scholar Kan Satoko places Tanabe’s work featuring single, mature female protagonists on the frontier of the postwar discourse over the lifestyle and life choices of single women that came of age after the war. According to Kan, the women’s husbands and lovers – actual and potential – perished in the war.⁸⁰ Their choices were limited. Those who never married were not celebrated as “free.” They were at best pitied, and at worst ignored. Many such women who were forced to live a celibate life rallied under the direction of Ōkubo Sawako (大久保さわ子, 1926-) and in 1967 formed an organization that sought to change laws and practices that discriminated against single women.⁸¹ It is also Ōkubo who coined the term “high-miss” to replace the disparaging “old-miss” (オールド・ミス *ōrudo misu*). Thus, Kan concludes that Tanabe’s purposeful employment of the new term coupled with her portrayal of independent and optimistic Noriko constituted political gestures. Kan further argues that Tanabe’s works contributed to redefining the marginalized “high-misses” into positive and admirable figures who lead happy and fulfilling lives. In the context of the novel’s fictional setting, Noriko’s independence and free spirit are seemingly whimsical traits. Yet, within the context of her time, these traits were defiant.

Although the term “high-miss” has fallen out of usage, the debates regarding the lifestyle of single women over thirty have not ended. On the contrary, they have only further accentuated as more women either marry later in life or choose instead to remain single. Just as Tanabe has strived to present a positive image of single women in her works, essayist Sakai Junko (酒井順子, 1966-) also rejects the negative stereotypes about unmarried women in her 2003 essay collection *Makeinu no tōboe* (負け犬の遠吠え *The distant howl of the loser dog*). Sakai strategically and ironically employs the derogatory expression “loser dog” (負け犬 *makeinu*) to describe single women over thirty, while also celebrating their free time and disposable income. In fact, in the 2008 manga adaptation of *Iiyoru*, protagonist Noriko is described by the term *makeinu* rather than the now outdated “high-miss.”⁸² The manga thus emphasizes the similarities between Tanabe’s message and contemporary women’s plight. It also demonstrates the continuous relevance of Tanabe’s novel to twenty-first century readers and to the feminist movement.

Tanabe herself expressed the deep affinity she felt with the women's lib movement: "At some point I read the writings of liberation activists and thought: They're absolutely right. There was no doubt about it. These women have articulated and organized the kind of thoughts I had harbored for a very long time."⁸³ Whether Tanabe meant for her works to be feminist statements or not, it is undeniable that Tanabe intuited and articulated some of the sexual inequalities of her time. As literary scholar Julia Bullock has suggested, "it may be time to rethink histories of feminism that privilege explicitly political speech over other methods of feminist discourse."⁸⁴ In another essay, Bullock notes that "feminist discourse" can appear in "an unexpected place—in 'popular' culture, conventionally understood to be an apolitical form of entertainment, or else voiced in an unfamiliar cadence—effectively helping us to rethink the boundaries of 'feminism' in postwar Japan."⁸⁵ Tanabe's literature expands "the boundaries" of Japanese feminism and contributes to the feminist history of Japan.

Perhaps fueled in part by Tanabe's reevaluation by several notable feminists and academics, the Tanabe Seiko Literary Museum (田辺聖子文学館 Tanabe Seiko bungakukan) opened in 2007. Tanabe's seniority further endowed her with respectability. In anticipation of Tanabe's 80th birthday, from 2006 to 2007 NHK aired a morning television series inspired by Tanabe's life. The prestigious literary journal *Kokubungaku and kaishaku* (国文学と解釈 National literature and interpretation) also published a 2006 special issue dedicated to Tanabe. And publishing house Shūeisha issued a collection of her complete works (全集 *zenshū*). The change in the reception of her work did not happen exclusively through its repackaging and relabeling. The author was also rebranded through articles, interviews, and conversations (対談 *taidan*) among authors, academics, and editors in literary magazines. Over the years, Tanabe has achieved both popular and critical acclaim, which in turn facilitate the interpretation of *Iiyoru* as a love novel penned by a feminist writer.

Conclusion

The shift in the genre of Tanabe Seiko's *Iiyoru* from disposable literature included in a men's weekly to a celebrated love novel demonstrates how extratextual elements can reframe the genre of literary works. The genre of *Iiyoru* was first transformed with its material form. The serialized version, even as it satirized the "woman as spectacle," fundamentally appealed to men. In its book form, paratextual cues from the *obi* and

feminist reappraisals encouraged both men and women to update their literary expectations of love and love novels. The example of *Iiyoru* shows us that both the genre of a work and its feminist message are not fixed and inscribed in the text, but fluctuate depending on various actors such as readers, material format, and historical context. *Iiyoru* is thus a lesson in the instability of genre and the ambiguity of feminism.

NOTES

- ¹ I am grateful to Anne Sokolsky, Rebecca Copeland, and the two anonymous reviewers for their invaluable feedback. I would also like to thank my mentors James Reichert, Indra Levy, Yoshiko Matsumoto, and Steven D. Carter for their help with this article. I also wish to express my appreciation to my colleagues Linda Galvane, Motoi Katsumata, and Mia Lewis for their comments and suggestions.
- ² For the I-novel, see Tomi Suzuki, *Narrating the Self: Fictions of Japanese Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1997). On domestic fiction, see Ken Ito, *An Age of Melodrama: Family, Gender, and Social Hierarchy in the Turn-of-the-Century Japanese Novel*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2008). On detective fiction, see Amanda Seaman, *Bodies of Evidence: Women, Society, and Detective Fiction in 1990s Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004). On girls' fiction, see Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, *Age of Shōjo: The Emergence, Evolution, and Power of Japanese Girls' Magazine Fiction* (Albany, N. Y.: SUNY Press, 2019).
- ³ David Duff, "Introduction," in *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. David Duff (Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 14.
- ⁴ Tomi Suzuki's work on the I-novel best exemplifies this focus on the point of reception, as she demonstrates that the I-novel refers not to a set of formal characteristics of the text but to a "discourse."
- ⁵ Gale MacLachlan and Ian Reid, *Framing and Interpretation* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 89. Cited in John Frow, *Genre* (London: Routledge, 2005), 109.
- ⁶ Previous critical works on love novels include: Eileen Mikals-Adachi, "Romantic Adventures in Prose: *Ren'ai Shōsetsu* (Romance Novels) by Yuikawa Kei," *U. S.–Japan Women's Journal* 43. 1 (2012): 85–105; Saegusa Kazuko, *Ren'ai shōsetsu no kansei* (Tokyo: Seidosha, 1991); Koyano Atsushi, *Ren'ai no Shōwa-shi* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 2008); Kawata Uichirō, *Onna no*

ko o korosanai tame ni: kaidoku nōshuku kangen hyakupāsento no ren'ai shōsetsu (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2012).

- ⁷ Jan Bardsley, “Fashioning the People’s Princess: Women’s Magazines, Shōda Michiko, and the Royal Wedding of 1959,” *U. S.–Japan Women’s Journal* (2002): 58.
- ⁸ The phrase “romantic love ideology” (ロマンチック・ラブ・イデオロギー *romanchikku rabu ideorogī*) is widely used by Japanese sociologists. See, for instance, Tanimoto Naho, *Ren’ai no shakaigaku: “asobi” to romantikku rabu no hen’yō* 恋愛の社会学—「遊び」とロマンティック・ラブの変容 (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2008), 68–75. Senda Yuki, *Nihon-gata kindai Kazoku—doko kara kite doko e iku no ka* (Tokyo: Keisō shobō, 2011), 11.
- ⁹ Tanimoto, *Ren’ai no shakaigaku: “Asobi” to romantikku rabu no hen’yō*.
- ¹⁰ It is now Shōin Women’s University.
- ¹¹ Anne Sokolsky and Tim Yamamura, “‘Dorei’(Slave): A Play by Tamura Toshiko.” *Asian Theatre Journal* 27. 2 (2010): 203.
- ¹² Julia Bullock, *The Other Women’s Lib: Gender and Body in Japanese Women’s Fiction* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), 39–44.
- ¹³ The only novel by Tanabe translated in English is her biography of Yosano Akiko, titled *Sensuji no kurokami: Waga ai no Yosano Akiko* (千すじの黒髪—わが愛の与謝野晶子). See Tanabe Seiko and Meredith McKinney. *A Thousand Strands of Black Hair* (London: Anthem Press, 2012).
- ¹⁴ In Japanese, most notable scholarship on Tanabe includes a 2006 special issue (別冊 *bessatsu*) of journal *Kokubungaku to kaishaku*. In English, see Hiromi Tsuchiya-Dollase’s chapter on Tanabe included in *Age of Shōjo* and So Hyun Chun, “Blowing Away Convention: Enchi Fumiko, Tanabe Seiko and Aging Women in Modern Japanese Literature,” (Ph. D. diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 2016). For more on Tanabe’s life and career, see Fumiko Y. Yamamoto, “Tanabe Seiko” in *Japanese Women Writers: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Chieko I. Mulhern, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), 397–402. The article also lists a couple of English language translations of short pieces by Tanabe.
- ¹⁵ Until then only newspaper houses had established a couple of weekly magazines in the prewar era.
- ¹⁶ Asaoka Takahiro, “Kōdo keizai seichō no tōrai to shūkanshi dokusha—sōgō shūkanshi to sono dokusha de aru sararīman o chūshin ni,” in *Zasshi media no bunkashi: Henbō-suru sengo paradaimu*, ed. Okada Akiko and Yoshida Noriaki (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2012), 142–145.
- ¹⁷ Nagao Saburō, *Shūkanshi keppūroku* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2004), 15.
- ¹⁸ Sakamoto Hiroshi, “Sen kyū hyaku go jū nendai *Shūkan Asahi* to Ōya Sōichi: rensai *Gunzō dansai o megutte*,” in *Zasshi media no bunkashi: Henbō-suru*

- senjo paradaimu*, ed. Okada Akiko and Yoshida Noriaki (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2012), 72.
- ¹⁹ Asaoka Takahiro, “Kōdo keizai seichō no tōrai to shūkanshi dokusha,” 151.
- ²⁰ Kageyama Kayoko, *Sei, media, fūzoku: Shūkanshi Asahi geinō kara miru fūzoku to shite no sei* (Tokyo: Hābesutosha, 2010), 54.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 128.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 131.
- ²³ *Shūkan taishū*, October 18, 1973.
- ²⁴ The *Shūkan taishū* series of articles on wife swapping began on November 29, 1973 and ended on December 27, 1973.
- ²⁵ Ōya Sōichi, cited in Sakamoto, “Sen kyū hyaku go jū nendai,” 98–99.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 87.
- ²⁷ Uno Kōichirō, “Asobi zakari 8,” *Shūkan taishū*, September 27, 1973, 66.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ For more on the conventions of pornography in Japan, see chapter 4 in Mori Naoko, *Onna wa poruno o yomu: Josei no seiyoku to feminizumu* (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2010). For the trends in erotic novels, see Nagata Morihiro, *Nihon no kannō shōsetsu: seihyōgen wa dō shinka shitaka* (Tōkyō: Asahi shinbun shuppan, 2015).
- ³¹ Uno Kōichirō, “Asobi zakari 1,” *Shūkan taishū*, August 9, 1973, 71.
- ³² Tanabe Seiko, *Iiyoru: Shiteki seikatsu* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 1982), 56. All translations are mine.
- ³³ Tanabe, *Iiyoru*, 73.
- ³⁴ Laura Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 20, 19.
- ³⁵ Tanabe, *Iiyoru*, 44–45.
- ³⁶ Kaite Berkeley, *Pornography and Difference* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1995), 70.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 70–79.
- ³⁸ For more on the distinction between scopophilia and epistemophilia, see Laura Mulvey, *Fetishism and Curiosity* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1996), 53–64.
- ³⁹ Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 19.
- ⁴⁰ Tanabe, *Iiyoru: Shiteki seikatsu*, 60.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 69.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*

- ⁴³ Tanaka Aiko, “Ūman ribu no ‘sei kaihō’ saikō: Beddo no naka no taitōsei kakutoku ni mukete,” *Joseigaku nenpō* 28 (2007): 112–113.
- ⁴⁴ Mulvey, *Visual and Other Pleasures*, 19.
- ⁴⁵ Gérard Genette, quoted in Richard Macksey, “Foreward” in Gérard Genette, *Paratexts; Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xvii. Genette exclusively analyzes codices, so his theory needs to be expanded and adapted to periodicals.
- ⁴⁶ Yet, it is possible to also envision that the sexually liberated, independent figure of Noriko allowed some male readers to reconsider the sex-crazed housewife from Uno Kōichirō’s novel and see her not as an object of male desire, but as the subject of her own sexuality. In this sense, it is possible to see feminist elements even in Uno’s lowbrow works.
- ⁴⁷ Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), viii.
- ⁴⁸ In book history, the term “book” refers to a variety of formats, including scrolls, codices, or electronic texts. Here I use the term “book” in the sense of single volume bound as a codex and containing the entire text of a novel.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁵⁰ Tanabe Seiko, *Iiyoru* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1974). An image of this *obi* is available on the webpage of the Tanabe Seiko Bungakukan at <http://bungakukan.osaka-shoin.ac.jp/bookdata/detail.php?no=210>. Accessed on February 24, 2020.
- ⁵¹ Vera Mackie, *Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment and Sexuality* (Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 145.
- ⁵² Tanaka Aiko, “Ūman ribu no ‘sei kaihō’ saikō,” 111.
- ⁵³ Saeki Junko, “From *iro* (eros) to *ai* = love: the case of Tsubouchi Shōyō,” trans. Indra Levy in *Translation in Modern Japan*, ed. by Indra Levy, 85–113 (New York: Routledge, 2010).
- ⁵⁴ For a discussion of the discourse on romantic love in early twentieth century Japan, see Kanno Satomi, *Shōhi-sareru ren’airon: Taishō chishikijin to sei* (Tokyo: Seikyūsha, 2001).
- ⁵⁵ Katō Shūichi, *Ren’ai kekkon wa nani o motarashita ka: Sei dōtoku to yūsei shisō no hyakunen kan.* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 2004), 13.
- ⁵⁶ Jan Bardsley, “Fashioning the People’s Princess: Women’s Magazines, Shōda Michiko, and the Royal Wedding of 1959,” *U. S.–Japan Women’s Journal* (2002): 57.
- ⁵⁷ Suzuki Keiko, “Gokujō no ren’ai shōsetsu o midoku-suru,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō bessatsu* (2006): 141.

- ⁵⁸ Tanabe Seiko, *Iiyoru* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2007) A copy of this edition with the original *obi* is included in the collection of the Kanagawa kindai bungakukan. The website of the publishing house Kōdansha reproduces the text of the *obi* on its webpage, although the image of the *obi* is not included. <https://bookclub.kodansha.co.jp/product?item=0000183887>. Accessed on February 24, 2020.
- ⁵⁹ Already in 1978, on the back of the dustjacket of the first paperback version, *Iiyoru* was described as a “love novel” (*ren'ai shōsetsu*). The description retains some of the language from the 1974 *obi*: “A love novel (*ren'ai shōsetsu*) that casually describes the poignant yet light-hearted lifestyle of someone who awakens to sexual liberation and experiences contemporary liaisons (*koi*).” See Tanabe Seiko, *Iiyoru* (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 1978). Copies of this edition can be found relatively easily on the used book market.
- ⁶⁰ Tanabe Seiko, “Atogaki ni kaete” in Tanabe Seiko, *Iiyoru* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2010), 395–396.
- ⁶¹ Tanabe Seiko and Kawakami Hiromi, “Ren'ai shōsetsu somosomo banashi,” *Subaru* 24.5 (2002): 78.
- ⁶² Koyano Atsushi, *Ren'ai no Shōwa shi*, 273.
- ⁶³ Tanimoto Naho, *Ren'ai no shakaigaku*, 48.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 59–51.
- ⁶⁷ Tanimoto, *Ren'ai no shakaigaku*, 56.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 50.
- ⁶⁹ Kirishima Yōko and Ozawa Ryōko, “Onna ga kuru,” *Asahi jōnan*, February 1976, 47.
- ⁷⁰ Saitō Minako, quoted in Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, *Age of Shōjo*, 123.
- ⁷¹ Croissant, “16 no ren'ai shōsetsu ni miru Tanabe Seiko-ryū ren'ai sahō,” *Croissant*, May 1983, 21.
- ⁷² Ochiai Keiko, *Shinguru gāru* (Tokyo: Shūeisha, 1982), 84.
- ⁷³ Croissant, “16 no ren'ai shōsetsu ni miru Tanabe Seiko-ryū ren'ai sahō,” *Croissant*, May 1983, 21.
- ⁷⁴ Tanabe Seiko and Ueno Chizuko, “Bungaku to feminizumu no kōfuku-na kaikō,” *Kikan femina tokushū Tanabe Seiko* 3.1 (1991): 88.
- ⁷⁵ In fact, *Iiyoru* was initially described as a “humorous novel” (ユーモア小説 *yūmoa shōsetsu*) in *Shūkan taishū*, but the label was dropped after a couple of installments.
- ⁷⁶ Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase, *Age of Shōjo*, 124.

- ⁷⁷ Iida Yūko, “Tanabe Seiko to feminizumu, kasanari to chigai to,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō bessatsu* (2006): 176.
- ⁷⁸ Yamaguchi Tomomi, “‘Gender Free’ Feminism in Japan: A Story of Mainstreaming and Backlash,” *Feminist Studies* 40.3 (2014): 555, 550.
- ⁷⁹ Setsu Shigematsu, *Scream from the Shadows: The Women’s Liberation Movement in Japan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 119.
- ⁸⁰ Kan Satoko, “Sensō dokushin josei he no manazashi,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō bessatsu* (2006): 154–157.
- ⁸¹ For instance, single women were not entitled to public housing, even when their low income made them eligible. See Kan, 155–156.
- ⁸² See Hanatsu Hanayo, *Iiyoru*, 2 volumes (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2009). It was initially serialized in women’s weekly magazine *Josei seibun* (女性セブン Women’s Seven).
- ⁸³ Tanabe and Ueno, “Bungaku to feminizumu,” 92.
- ⁸⁴ Julia Bullock, *The Other Women’s Lib*, 166.
- ⁸⁵ Julia Bullock, “Rethinking Literature and the Arts,” in *Rethinking Japanese Feminisms*, eds. Julia C. Bullock, Ayako Kano, and James Welker (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2018), Kindle.

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