

**TRANSCENDING BOUNDARIES:**  
RETHINKING GENDER ROLES AND SEXUAL NORMS THROUGH  
TRANSNATIONAL DISCOURSE IN THE LITERATURE, ART, AND SOCIAL  
ACTIVISM OF KINDAI TOKYO AND BOHEMIAN NEW YORK, 1899-1932

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION:

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TRANSNATIONAL DISCOURSE IN THE LITERATURE, ART, AND SOCIAL  
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This thesis uncovers and explores a transnational dialogue between moderns in New York and Tokyo in the early twentieth century through which intellectuals, writers, and activists explored their ideal social and sexual relationships in a rapidly changing and globalizing world. I argue that larger worldwide political and economic changes, in particular, Imperialism, commercialism, urbanism, and the first World War ultimately created then shaped the dialogue from one focused on exploring interracial relationships through art and literature in the first decade of the twentieth century to one centered around feminism, Neo-Malthusianism, and birth control activism by the 1920's. However, the issue of increased female independence remained constant.

By analyzing the roles of New York City and of Tokyo, of America and Japan, as constructed spaces that opened a set of possibilities for men and women in the early twentieth century and by situating writers Nagai Kafu and Winnifred Eaton, and social activists Shizue Ishimoto and Margaret Sanger as participants and cultural interpreters, this thesis illuminates how the transcendent intellectual boundaries of cities during this first period of globalization invited a re-examining of gender roles and social and sexual

relationships in two cities portrayed as historically unconnected. This thesis employs the larger goal of breaking down the Orientalist binary between East and West by demonstrating that Tokyo intellectuals, artists and social critics were involved in a dialogue concerning non-normative gender roles and relationships usually only attributed to denizens of transatlantic cities like New York, London, and Paris.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii.
Acknowledgements	iv.
List of Illustrations	vi.
I. Introduction	1.
II. Two Cities at the Dawn of a Tumultuous New Century	9.
III. Nagai Kafu: New York Women, Realism, and <i>Renai</i>	18.
IV. Winnifred Eaton: Orientalism, The New Woman and Interracial Romance	30.
V. <i>The Cheat</i> : Fears at the Dawn of the Great War	40.
VI. Margaret Sanger and Shizue Ishimoto: Feminism and Neo-Malthusian Doctrine in the 1920's	46.
VII. Conclusion	67.
Bibliography	70.
Appendix	74.
Curriculum Vitae	75.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. <i>Sunday Afternoon in Union Square</i> 1912 (John Sloan)	74.
Figure 2. <i>Haymarket</i> 1907 (John Sloan)	74.

## I. Introduction

*“To the young New York is everything like it or not.”* –Nagai Kafu

In April of 1907, at a time when young modernistic American men and women were fleeing their inhibited, often bucolic, lives for the freedoms and uncertainties of New York City, Japanese writer, social-critic, and self-described “wanderer” Nagai Kafu looked across the East River from a Brooklyn window and composed these words:

“I am fond of nighttime in the city. I love its brightly lit quarters. As you well know I preferred twilight in Ginza or an evening at Yoshiwara to the moon of Hakone or the waves of Oiso, and stayed alone at my home in Tokyo even during the summer, rather than going to a resort.

So it goes without saying that since my arrival in New York, the evenings of this great city on the new continent, where there is no place without bright lights, have given me so much pleasure. Oh New York is an amazing nightless city. It is a bright, dazzling, and magical world of electric lights that must be very hard to imagine in Japan.”<sup>1</sup>

The story “Night Stroll” was soon sent back to Tokyo, quickly published and devoured by Japanese audiences. Like their American counterparts, these young, avant-garde hopefuls, mostly from Tokyo, were also grappling with the social restraints that were a byproduct of being caught in between the old and the new in a rapidly modernizing society. Although Kafu<sup>2</sup> quipped that in Japan this strange, Occidental city “must be hard to imagine,” Tokyo, like New York, was quickly changing and modernizing. Still, vivid imagination posed as the apparatus through which *tobei*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nagai, Kafu, *Amerika Monogatari* translated by Mitsuki Iriye (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 203. While the original Japanese was read for my study all quotes used in my essay were taken from Mitsuko Iriye’s translation.

<sup>2</sup> Nagai “Kafu” is a penname. The author’s actual name was Nagai Sokichi, but in the Japanese tradition once an author acquires a penname he is thenceforth referred to by that name in all scholarship. Since Americans have also followed the tradition when discussing Kafu in scholarship this study will continue to use penname not surname.

<sup>3</sup> The Japanese term *tobei* (crossing to America) was used in turn of the century Japan to refer to writers, publishers, and periodicals that specialized in the West, especially the United States.

authors willed young middle-class *Tokyojin*<sup>4</sup> to dream of this fantasized urban world: the “brightly lit”, “nightless” New York, where they could finally be free of Meiji Japanese social restraints.

Yet, it was not solely Japanese audiences that were rapt with interest in New York. Early twentieth century New Yorkers held a special interest in Tokyo and Japan. Nagai Kafu’s representations of New York were only one piece of an international dialogue between New York and Tokyo through which intellectuals and writers explored their ideal social and sexual relationships in a rapidly changing and globalizing new urban world. By exploring the roles of New York City and of Tokyo, of America and Japan, as a constructed spaces that opened a set of possibilities for men and women in the early the century and by situating writers Nagai Kafu and Winnifred Eaton, social activists Shizue Ishimoto and Margaret Sanger as participants and cultural interpreters, my study illuminates how the transcendent intellectual boundaries of cities during this first period of globalization invited a re-examining of gender roles and social and sexual relationships in two cities historically portrayed as unconnected.

In her 1997 book entitled *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America: 1890-1924* Mitziko Sawada was the first to focus a study on the historical connection between New York and Tokyo and to counter the historiographical stereotype that turn-of-the-century Japanese immigrants were a homogenous group of rural peasants hailing “from four poor agricultural prefectures in southwestern Japan, uneducated,

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<sup>4</sup> Like in the previous study conducted by Mitziko Sawada, this study employs the Meiji Japanese appellation “*Tokyojin*” which means “native of Tokyo” to refer to both people from Tokyo and people who moving from the country to Tokyo ascribed to the modern Tokyo mentality.

unmarried, and male.”<sup>5</sup> Instead she paints a complex picture of identity formation in a tumultuous Japan and explains how this funded the industry of *tobei* books and magazines. This literature in turn drew many young elites, mostly male and from Tokyo, to idealize New York City, convincing many to leave everything behind and relocate to New York City: a modern city free from the restraints and troubles of Meiji Japan, where one could study Western literature, start a successful business, or have a *renai* (pure love) relationship with a New York woman.

Sawada’s study, which focused mostly on the importance of New York to the Japanese, leaves us with valuable questions that have yet to be answered in relation to the connection between New York and Tokyo in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. What “New York” did Japanese writers come in contact with and thus write about? What ideas influenced their conceptions and opinions of New York City? Conversely, how and to what extent did young New Yorker intellectuals use American images and conceptions of Japan in the creation their social and sexual ideals? How did larger societal and political changes during and after World War I effect and shape these dialogues?

Drawing upon Gail Bederman’s scholarship this study identifies gender as a historical, ideological process through which bodies come to determine certain roles and kinds of authority for individuals. When gender is constructed as a fact of nature, gender’s dynamic and changing character is obscured.<sup>6</sup> Systems of sexuality and gender are inextricably linked. Drawing on Robert Padgug’s work, this study also holds that, in addition to being dynamic and constructed, both sexuality and gender systems are unique

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<sup>5</sup> Mitzi Sawada, *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890-1924* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 2

<sup>6</sup> Gail Bederman. *Manliness and Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7.

to and reflect the cultures in which they are developed. In “Sexuality and Historical Meaning” Padgug asserts that “what is meant by [gendered] divisions and the roles played by those defined by these terms varies significantly from society to society and even within each society by class, estate, or social positions.”<sup>7</sup>

The men and women engaged in dialogue between the New York and Tokyo in the early twentieth century came from different gender systems, rapidly changing due to separate but interconnected reasons related to modernity. What these seemingly disparate moderns had in common was a desire to understand, influence, and in some cases revolutionize their world by reaching beyond culturally accepted norms that prescribed fixed innate social roles. Specifically, they relied upon intercultural exchanges that their physical and intellectual travels between New York and Tokyo allowed in order to unsettle the accepted norms of their own cultures. However, this did not mean that individuals within this network were untouched by the modes of thinking against which they rebelled.

This study identifies “the modern” as a category of historical analysis. In Rita Felski’s words it posits “the continuing relevance of the category of the modern as a means of coming to grips with long-term processes of structural change and equally important, of assessing the differing, uneven and often contradictory impact of such processes on particular social groups.”<sup>8</sup> But what does the polysemic term “modern” and its varying forms imply? According to Felski “rather than identifying a stable referent or set of attributes, “modern” acts as a mobile and shifting category of classification that serves to structure, legitimize, and valorize varied and often competing perspectives on

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<sup>7</sup> Robert Padgug in *Passion and Power* ed. Kathy Peiss and Christine Simmons (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 24.

<sup>8</sup> Rita Felski. *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 9

society and polity. This study will draw upon Felski's definitions of "modernization," "modernity," and "modernism."

According to Felski *modernization* denotes complex socioeconomic phenomena: such as technological innovation, industrialization of production, rapid urbanization, the development of the nation-state, and expanding capitalist markets, that originated in the context of Western development but have spread globally.<sup>9</sup> *Modernity* is an overarching periodizing term that denotes a philosophical distinction between "traditional" societies structured around the importance of divine authority and "a modern secularized universe predicated upon an individual and self-conscious subjectivity."<sup>10</sup> Lastly, according to Felski, *modernism* is a *mélange* term referring to specific artistic forms and schools.<sup>11</sup>

This study will also use *modernism* to refer not just to artistic schools of thought but to related intellectual, philosophical, political ideals as well. To that end I draw upon Daniel Joseph Singal's definition. "Modernism should properly be seen as a *culture*—a constellation of related ideas, beliefs, values, and modes of perception—that came into existence in the mid to late nineteenth century, and that has a powerful influence on art and thought on both sides of the Atlantic since 1900."<sup>12</sup> This study further posits that modernism's influences spanned beyond the borders of the Atlantic and offers Tokyo as one example of modernism's global reach. These shared transnational principles explain why in an age of increased xenophobia, modernist intellectuals and activists, such as Ishimoto and Sanger, were avidly interested in collaborating transnationally.

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<sup>9</sup> Felski, 13.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Joseph Singal. "Definition of American Modernism," *American Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1987): 7

In the 1990's some historians and scholars began to move away from the essentialist historical methodology that incorrectly separated regions of the world into unconnected, constructed nations by demonstrating the interconnectedness of ideas in early modern and modern Atlantic World. For example, in 1994 Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske's *Budapest and New York* explored the relationship between late nineteenth/early twentieth century New York and Budapest and the development of modern urbanism. Focusing on "the relation of a metropolis to its nation, and a nation's relation to its metropolis,"<sup>13</sup> Bender and Schorske assert the importance of the relationship the two cities shared to each other's political, social, and cultural development.<sup>14</sup> Taking a wider view by focusing on the United States, England, Germany, and France in the early twentieth century the concept of regional influence is well explained by Daniel T. Rodgers in *Atlantic Crossings*: "Even the most isolated of nation-states is a semipermeable container, washed over by forces originating far beyond its shores."<sup>15</sup>

While Felski, Bender, Schorske, and Rodgers have explored transnational relationships between American and European cities and countries, fewer studies have demonstrated the influence of cultural and intellectual exchange between the United States and Japan. Although past scholarship has attempted to link Japan with Weimar Germany or New York with Paris and Berlin the international web of intellectuals and activists between New York City and Tokyo, including and connected to such individuals as Nagai Kafu, Yone Noguchi, Winnifred Eaton, Margaret Sanger, Shizue Kato, Mary Beard, Agnes Smedley, Havelock Ellis, and Keikichi Ishimoto has not yet been explored.

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Bender and Carl E. Schorske. *Budapest & New York* (New York: Russel Sage, 1994), 28

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel T. Rodgers. *Atlantic Crossings* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1998), 1.

Focusing on networks between the United States and Europe and ignoring similar potential connections between the United States and Asia, historians have upheld the Orientalist concept attacked in 1978 by Edward W. Said in *Orientalism*. Said asserts that Western countries imagined themselves as having an inextricable connection and constructed themselves a “rational, masculine” Occident by defining themselves as fundamentally opposite of Eastern countries, defined as the “backwards,” “luxuriant,” and “feminized” Orient. This ethnocentric, gendered, and racist binary allowed the Occident to rationalize political, cultural, and racial supremacy over the Orient.<sup>16</sup> While previous studies have added great value to transnational scholarship, this study enriches them by refuting the still prevalent Orientalist attitude which incorrectly casts the United States and Japan into separate, unconnected spheres. It demonstrates that historically there is a cultural and intellectual connection between New York City and Tokyo. In this way, modernism was an inflection of a larger globalizing process in the early twentieth century.

To better understand the connection between New York and Tokyo in the early twentieth century this study will employ memoir, romantic fiction, art, political essays, film and newspaper articles and editorials. Chapter two gives a background of the rapid social, economic, and political changes experienced in Japan and the United States, with an eye towards New York and Tokyo at the fin-de-siècle. Chapter three explores and compares Nagai Kafu’s New York memoirs from *Amerika Monogatari*, with writings by more well-known American moderns: Stephen Crane and the art of Ashcan artist John Sloan. This chapter will set the stage by establishing both American and Japanese

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<sup>16</sup> Edward J. Said. *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), 3.

interest in changing gender norms and sexual relationship and will further demonstrate that modernist writing, art, and thought was not confined to the United States and Europe.

Chapter four will then employ Orientalized interracial romantic fiction written by Winnifred Eaton to demonstrate the particular ways that Americans used Tokyo and Japan to construct their ideals of male and female roles and sexual and social relationships in an increasingly imperialistic age. Chapter five further explores that topic and how those ideals changed with the onset of World War I and increased American xenophobia.

Chapter six explores how after World War I the network and dialogue surrounding New York and Tokyo changed from one surrounding writing and art and became much more politically focused, particularly around feminism, Neo-Malthusianism, and the issue of birth control. Chapter six uses personal letters from the Margaret Sanger archives at the Sophia Smith College at Smith College to establish that the connection between Sanger and the Baroness Ishimoto was deeper than a mere working relationship. It will use published and unpublished articles and memoirs to demonstrate the complexity with which New Yorkers and Tokyojin understood each other, and the importance of each city to the imaginings and goals of the other. The autobiographies of Shizue Ishimoto and Margaret Sanger, published in 1935 and 1938 respectively, will be analyzed to further trace both sides of this network and to better understand how each city is reflected in dialogue.

## II. Two Cities at the Dawn of a Tumultuous New Century

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the United States, like Japan, was immersed in a period of regeneration which would last from 1865, the end of the Civil War, to World War I.<sup>1</sup> For the United States, this rebirth was characterized by an end to slavery but an expansion of its overseas empire, new citizenship laws which were inclusive of African-Americans and new immigration laws aimed at restricting Chinese and Japanese migrants, and the promotion then restriction of laissez-faire capitalism. New scientific discoveries, such as germ theory, radioactivity, and Darwinism, as well as an arsenal of modern inventions, transformed communication and transportation and at once led to feelings of both power and helplessness, invigoration and insignificance, in the national consciousness<sup>2</sup>. For Japan, the reinstatement of the Meiji Emperor in 1868 and the encroachment of Western imperialism swept the nation from its two-hundred and fifty year period of isolation and quasi-feudalism into an era deeply committed to modernization, industrialization, and the acquisition of new territory. This new era became known as Meiji Ishin, in English the Meiji Restoration, but more accurately translated as the Meiji Renewal.

Political transformation was not the only evidence of regeneration. New mentalities, in line with the international and domestic ambitions of both countries, were undergoing reforms. In the United States, the Civil War impacted the nation through memories and fantasies of heroism<sup>3</sup> which left many feeling unmanly, unfulfilled, and insecure. Many men and women, yearning for a more intense experience, pined for “the

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<sup>1</sup> Lears, Jackson, *Rebirth of a Nation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009) 1

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 66

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 5

need of release from bourgeois normalcy into a realm of heroic struggle”<sup>4</sup> which in many ways created the mentality that allowed for American imperialist expansion. Related to this, a crisis of masculinity and theories promoting the biological superiority of Anglo-Saxons were all sweeping the nation. During this dark period of regeneration, connected with Protestant reform, many Americans turned to faith and found their own “heroic struggle” in Progressivism, by striving to right what they saw as the societal evils of alcohol, poverty, and social injustices. However, this movement, which was in some ways connected to Social Darwinism, reinforced ideas of middle-class, male, Anglo-Saxon superiority.

Similarly in Japan, the Meiji Restoration saw the beginning of a huge cultural and political shift with an “overbearing state ideology that engendered patriotism, new class biases, sexism, and feeling of superiority over all Asians.”<sup>5</sup> In this new Japan, Edo, the old capital during the reign of the Tokugawa Shogunate, was renamed Tokyo and became the center of a new urban mentality. This new mentality went hand in hand with the idea of *kindai Nippon* (modern Japan) which for many meant having a middle-class identity not dependent on high birth, but on education, wealth, and connections to the world of commerce, business and politics, and was defined by schooling, work, marriage, friends, use of accent, leisure activities, and place of domicile.<sup>6</sup>

In this new Japan culture was developed in modern cities, particularly Tokyo, and transmitted to the country not the other way around as it had been in the previous Edo era. Intellectual and artistic culture instead of “folk” culture became representative of

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<sup>4</sup> Lears, 9

<sup>5</sup> Sawada, 40

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 66

Japan, an attitude supported by state policy.<sup>7</sup> Residents of the former Edo and newcomers flocked in from the countryside to become a part of Tokyo's new urban culture and mentality. They believed themselves to be superior to other Japanese and renamed themselves "Tokyojin": a word that literally means "people of Tokyo", but carries much deeper implications. The suffix "*jin*" means person or people but is usually used to designate the importance of national identity over city or town of residence, which is described with the suffix "*ko*", meaning child. Likewise, in the previous Edo era, residents referred to themselves as *Edokko*, "children of Edo". By renaming themselves Tokyojin, Meiji era residents of Tokyo were expressing the importance of the city to their own identity and sense of belonging. Thus being Tokyojin meant more than simply being born in the city of Tokyo, it implied that a certain mentality, personal qualities and tastes separated participants in this new city culture from other Japanese.

Kindai Nippon and the Tokyojin became intertwined with what was known as *wayō* (Japanese-Western) sensibility, an appreciation for or adherence to aspects of mixed Japanese and Western culture. To be considered part of this refined and worldly middle class, one had to take on Western dress and other Western customs. One architectural magazine in 1898 encouraged its readers to "keep a coal stove going in the winter, and upon returning home from the office, remove your suit jacket and don a maroon smoking jacket. Read a book while you grip a large British-style pipe between your teeth."<sup>8</sup> According to Mitziko Sawada, "on the surface this advice seemed to advocate an imitation of the West, but it cannot be interpreted so simply. Its symbolic meaning conveyed aspects of Japanese authority and authoritarianism, which state and

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<sup>7</sup> Sawada, 59

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 67

private ideologues used in the complex process of redefining Japanese culture and constructing a national ideology.<sup>9</sup> Like Japan, the United States also employed similar ideas of cultural and racial superiority by promoting the importance of business, masculinity and a middle-class, Anglo-Saxon identity. In the United States, however, this was tempered by American democratic principles, preventing an overt, state supported ideology.

During the Meiji Restoration, middle-class gender-roles became more restrictive. Previous practices such as arranged marriage, the separating of male and female children after the age of seven and the oppressive female ideals of *ryosai kenbo* (good wife, exemplary mother) and *danson johi* (respect men, revile women) had only been practiced by the samurai class, but during the Restoration they were promoted by the state for all classes of Japanese, especially the new scholarly and business-oriented middle-class. Since contact between unrelated girls and boys was restricted after the age of seven, this homosocial culture led many Japanese in the Meiji era, especially women, to develop an extreme shyness towards the opposite sex,<sup>10</sup> and men and women rarely had friendships or outings across gender-lines. Many young elites at the turn-of-the-century found these relationships to be oppressive and believed Occidental relationships to be less restrictive.

In New York at the turn-of-the-century gender roles were also changing, but whereas in Japan they were becoming more restrictive, in New York new freedoms were being realized. In New York, women's daily lives were changing rapidly. More access to jobs not only meant that working women had the money to enjoy leisure activities and

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<sup>9</sup> Sawada, 67

<sup>10</sup> Kunio Yanagida. *Japanese Manners & Customs in the Meiji Era*. (Tokyo: Obunsha, 1957), 229.

socialize outside the home, but also they were imbued with a sense of independence and individuality.

According to Kathy Peiss, “the complex passage from Victorian culture to modernism involved, among many other changes, a redefinition of gender relations, what might be termed the shift from homosocial to heterosocial culture”.<sup>11</sup> In the previous Victorian ideology, which still held some sway in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially outside cities, women and men were isolated spatially and psychologically.<sup>12</sup> However, with the development of mixed-sex commercial leisure culture such as the cinema, urban nightclubs, and amusement parks, homosocial boundaries were breaking down and “young women experimented with new cultural forms that articulated gender in terms of sexual expressiveness and social interaction with men, linking heterosocial culture to a sense of modernity, individuality, and personal style.”<sup>13</sup> Imagining urban spaces, such as Coney Island or a late night cafe, where young men and women could enjoy personal conversations and flirtations with an independent woman and without obligation, was refreshing to Tokyojin men, who were often married young to women they barely knew and had little contact with outside the home-life.

In the United States, young intellectuals, artists, and social critics opposed to more stringent definitions of sexual, psychological, and physical normalcy and grappling with both changing political and social mentalities reacted with a revived sense of hope in modernity and with scathing criticism of what they believed to be Victorian “traditionalism”. It was a new century and while some were filled with trepidation many

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<sup>11</sup> Kathy Peiss. *Cheap Amusements* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 6.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 7

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 6

felt that anything was possible: the growth of a world of leisure which women could now enter, new philosophies that had the potential to right class and gender inequalities would change the world. Starting in the 1890's and early 1900's, new artistic and literary movements such as fauvism and cubism or the urban realism of the Ashcan Artists and of the journalist Stephen Crane seemed to represent the city and the new century better than the past impressionism or romanticism could. These young artists and writers met on the streets of Greenwich Village mixing and conversing with assertive middle-class "New Women", independent working women, Jewish socialists, anarchists, and hip "New Men".

Still, however, American historians have long held that New York did not arise as America's cultural and intellectual capital until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This sentiment is captured well by Christine Stansell. "New York had long been an interesting place but never one that exerted special appeal...when Herbert Croly argued in 1903 that New York was the one American city where "something considerable may happen" he was expressing only a distant hope."<sup>14</sup>

What Americans were only starting to learn in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the idea that New York was a world-class American city, the cultural pulse of the nation, was a fact that Japanese intellectuals already knew. While many Americans of the same period viewed New York as a separate space, culturally removed from the rest of the nation: "a devil's playground swarming with painted women and confident men"<sup>15</sup>, the Tokyojin accredited New York's boldness as containing the true *Amerika tamashii*: the spirit of America.

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<sup>14</sup> Christine Stansell, *American Moderns* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000),4.

<sup>15</sup> Lears, 47

In 1906 the Japanese-American Commercial Weekly published these words, “The prejudices of the people of San Francisco should burn and disintegrate like the houses in the recent earthquake...New York is a mature discreet adult compared to San Francisco which is a demon brat.”<sup>16</sup> More familiar with the racism experienced by Asians in places like California, Japanese intellectuals knew that they would be treated poorly on the West Coast, but believed, New York City to be more mature and its people to be elite and of a better character than those outside the North East. In this world-class city the Tokyojin of kindai Nippon felt they would be appreciated and respected by their fellow urban brethren: modern elite New Yorkers.

In May of 1907 the widely read tobei magazine, *Amerika*, wrote in reference to the Russo-Japanese War hero General Kuroki Tamemoto Tamesada’s visit to New York, “Kuroki Fever in New York has risen beyond the boiling point!...New Yorkers respect his fighting spirit!”<sup>17</sup> The successful businessman Ryoichiro Arai once said, “Although I don’t know anything about Paris, I think it must be much inferior to New York.”<sup>18</sup> In his letters Arai never mentions the negative sides of New York: disease, overcrowding, and prejudice; as he was living in New York City from the 1870’s onward, he undoubtedly observed and experienced such things.<sup>19</sup> Another tobei publication persuaded its readers that “Historically, Americans have held the Japanese in high esteem.”<sup>20</sup>

Fascination with New York was fueled in part by tobei publications, deriving its name from a then current wayo concept: *tobei netsu* (crossing to America fever). These

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<sup>16</sup> Sawada, 12

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 17

<sup>18</sup> Haru Matsukata Reischauer. *Samurai and Silk: A Japanese American Heritage*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 201

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 202

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 119

publications printed books, essays, magazines, newspapers, travel guides, cultural guides, and subjective histories that dissected the American character, and promoted the United States as a land of wealth and freedom aimed at persuading middle and upper-class Japanese to travel to the West, particularly New York. Tobei publications, like many of the elite Tokyojin was highly classist and espoused the importance of the “right” type of Japanese emigrant. They criticized imin passport holders, migrant workers, as “coarse and vulgar laboring men, much like the coarse and vulgar Chinese laborers in Japan. They congregate only where Japanese is spoken...Ignorant country yokels who don’t even know the ways of Tokyo act as if they’re in their own provinces.”<sup>21</sup> These sentiments stemmed largely from the Meiji fear that the Japanese would become subject to the same Exclusion Act that had befallen the Chinese in 1882 and that Japan would thus be embarrassed internationally.

To understand both New York’s appeal to Japanese audiences it is important to understand the highly Occidental character of tobei publications. An inversion of Edward Said’s concept of Orientalism, “Occidentalism was binary, homogenous, and essentialist—constructed in terms of culture and social behavior.”<sup>22</sup> However, unlike Western Orientalism, Japanese Occidentalism did not justify the nation’s imperialist projects and was developed with an awareness of the position that the West had placed Japan in.<sup>23</sup> Like Orientalism, Japanese Occidentalism had strong political connotations, was intimately associated with power, and employed superficial understandings based mostly on physical and national characteristics which rendered the concrete lives of the

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<sup>21</sup> Reischauer, 114

<sup>22</sup> Sawada, 175

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 175

Occidental other irrelevant.<sup>24</sup> Occidentalism, which Nagai Kafu and other Japanese writers employed in their depictions of New York, “reduced understanding to products of the imagination.”<sup>25</sup> This does not mean that the Meiji Japanese saw the East as opposite the West; more correctly, Japan stood alone in its uniqueness. The concept of *kindai* Nippon was constructed in conjunction with the Japanese concept of the Occident. At the same time reverse-Orientalist views were used in constructing an image of Japan as superior to its Asian neighbors.

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<sup>24</sup> Sawada, 175

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 175

### III. Nagai Kafu: New Women, Realism, and *Renai*

In both New York City and Tokyo, rapidly occurring modernization encouraged the old order to give way to the new, which in turn gave way to new urban mentalities in both cities. These changes were accompanied by both excitement at what lay in the future and by the pain of adjustment. In Tokyo, many young elites unsure of the direction their nation was moving in began to idealize and fantasize about New York City, a modern Occidental city where they could imagine freedom from Meiji social restraint. Finding himself in New York City in 1905, the place that most captured the “spirit of America”, Nagai Kafu was thus able to place himself in an invaluable position: a reporter of American gender roles and social and sexual relationships.

Just as working women were gaining independence and the old Victorian homosocial order was breaking-down, Bohemians, New Women and New Men, and other New York moderns were espousing freer and more egalitarian relationships. Ideas such as Feminism, the birth control movement, and “free love” were gaining popularity in the city. Both working and middle-class women walked without male chaperones and partook of leisure activities, some of which they were previously restricted from. For example, in the story “Midnight at a Bar”, after visiting a Yiddish theater on the Lower East Side, Kafu goes out to a nearby bar and fraternizes with the establishment’s motley assortment of patrons: working men, single, independent cigarette-smoking women, chatty theatergoers, and prostitutes indistinguishable from “good” women.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kafu, Nagai, *Amerika Monogatari*. Trans Mitsuye Iriye (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000 (1908), 182-188

In no way was this New York wholly representative of American society, however. Middle-class male Japanese readers longed to imagine the pleasures of a relationship free from strict Meiji mores or an escape from an unfulfilling arranged marriage. With the unchallenged idea that New York bore the “true Amerika tamashii” and with an essentialist attitude imputing a similar homogenous character to all Americans, Kafu’s interaction with New York moderns bolstered the Japanese Occidental view that all American women were bold, with uninhibited qualities and ideas. This chapter reveals how New York women, gender roles, and ideal relationships were imagined in Nagai Kafu’s *Amerika Monogatari*, by exploring and comparing them with depictions of New York by American modernist artists and writers: John Sloan, Randolph Bourne, and Stephen Crane.

Born to a Princeton and Rutgers educated high-ranking bureaucrat-turned-businessman father and an artistic Tokyoin mother, Nagai Kafu, like many young Tokyoin elites at the fin-de-siècle, had ambivalent feelings towards the West. His authoritarian father forced a stringent Chinese and American education upon the young Kafu, while his artistic mother, adept at both *nagauta* (long epic songs) and *koto* (the Japanese harp), attempted to foster in Kafu an interest in traditional Japanese arts.<sup>2</sup> For the second generation of “modern” Japanese, to which Kafu belonged, juxtaposition between a social rhetoric which inscribed Japanese superiority and respect for what was presented as “traditional” Japanese culture while at the same time nationally promoting certain aspects of American and European culture was confusing. It is not a surprise that many of this second generation, like their counterparts in New York, surrounded by a

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<sup>2</sup> Edward Seidensticker, *Kafu the Scribbler*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1963), 4

rapidly changing and unknowable globalizing world, developed their own modern ideals which were sometimes in opposition to the state's nation building rhetoric.

Inspired by tobei propaganda, many of this new generation, Nagai Kafu included, were interested in the newly translated editions of Western literary genius. Particularly fond of French naturalists such as Emile Zola and Alphonse Daudet, in 1898 Kafu joined a smaller subset group of *Ken'yusha*: Japan's first modern literary society formed in 1895<sup>3</sup>. The group to which Kafu belonged was specifically interested in the demimonde and the darker aspects of life. By the age of twenty-three he was already respected as a promising writer, had written several well-received novels, and had attained a mentor: Hirotsu Ryuro, a popular and well-connected novelist. Although Kafu had attained a job as a reporter for the Yamato Shinbun, an important Tokyo-based daily, he had also flunked out of the University and was sent by his shamed father to the United States to earn prestige by becoming a *kichosa* (a person who has returned from time spent abroad).<sup>4</sup>

With a greater interest in France than the United States, and no interest in the West Coast or Midwest, within one year Kafu made his way to the one American city renowned in Japan for artistic achievement: New York. In a novel twist on the Japanese literary tradition of *nikki* (diary writing), Kafu kept a journal, albeit written in an urban realist-style, and through his connections with Hirotsu Ryuroo, Ozaki Koyo, and *Ken'yusha* he was able to periodically send back stories written in New York and other cities to be published in tobei periodicals.

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<sup>3</sup> Seidensticker, 14

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 18

Early during his stay in New York City, Kafu had become acquainted with the writing of Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire's call to artists to see spectacle and modernity in the forms of city life had greatly influenced Kafu's writing style away from Zolaesque naturalism to urban realism. Urban realism was also popular with the Ashcan artists who sought to depict real life scenes of city life. Through a comparison of the two we can see the influence that bohemian New York had on both Nagai Kafu's work and that of Ashcan Artists, such as John Sloan.

This shared relationship is easily observed by comparing the beginning of Kafu's story "Long Hair" (1908) to John Sloan's painting *Sunday Afternoon in Union Square* (1912) (Appendix, Figure 1). John Sloan's painting depicts a lively spring scene in Union Square in which young New Yorkers walk along a cement walkway donning new clothing styles and observing each other, the women without chaperones. Likewise "Long Hair" opens with: "Unlike the countryside, where the coming of spring is heralded by blooming flowers and singing birds, in New York one knows that spring is not far away by the latest models of women's hats...I am one of those who love the fashions of this country, so rich in their variety of colors, so I decide to take advantage of the fine weather one day in order to watch the crowds of people."<sup>5</sup>

Like Kafu's "Long Hair", *Sunday Afternoon in Union Square* is both subtly sensual and invites the possibility for interaction or flirtation.<sup>6</sup> In fact, later in the story, the opportunity for interaction is realized when Kafu is confronted with a colorfully dressed blonde woman and her younger, unusually long-haired Japanese beau. Shy at the

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<sup>5</sup> Kafu, 45

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Zurier. *Metropolitan Lives* (New York: WW Norton, 1995), 79.

moment, he searches them out later through a friend to understand their unorthodox relationship. He discovers that the nameless New York woman at twenty-eight is ten years the senior of Kunio, the long-haired Japanese student at Colombia and the two have been living together unmarried for two years.

She is a capricious divorcee and he is a man for whom “the usual positions of men and women are completely reversed; although he is a man, his ideal is being held in a woman’s arms and to spend a dreamlike life under her protection.”<sup>7</sup> Further it is explained that Kunio grew his hair long because it pleased his lover to “tear at it whenever she flew into a rage.”<sup>8</sup> The narrator who is at first disturbed by the “role reversal” is later converted to the appeal of such a relationship.

“Long Hair” demonstrates both the Occidentalist views evident in Kafu’s writing and the Japanese fascination with unorthodox, less-restrained “American” relationships. While Kunio’s long back story is revealed in several pages, the woman remains a nameless stock type: the beautiful, unrestrained, unpredictable white American woman. Further, the plot leaves the reader with the feeling that Kunio, the young elite Japanese man, through this free though aberrant “American” relationship has finally found happiness living in New York after spending an unhappy youth living under the strict control of his family in Japan.

The narrator also reveals that Kunio was worried that his lover might tire of him some day and leave the city. In some ways this is reminiscent of the close friendship between New York bohemians Alyse Gregory and Randolph Bourne described in

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<sup>7</sup> Kafu, 52

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 54

Christine Stansell's *American Moderns*. "They were best friends, and the platonic bond of the Colombia man, primed for greatness, with the poet suffragist counts as a high achievement of the experimental life...to Alyse Gregory more than anyone else, Bourne confided his dearest hopes, his hurts in love, his professional despair, and the sad state of his finances. 'Please don't leave me in a lurch, and make me feel a precarious incident,' he teased her once when she contemplated leaving New York."<sup>9</sup> Both Bourne and the character Kunio, like men in both Japan and the United States at the time, were interested in closer, deeper personal relationship that in some ways twisted the usual gender roles as perceived by both Americans in the midst of a "crisis of masculinity" and Japanese during a time when to be masculine meant to be the decision-maker possibly married to a stranger.

Bourne's friendship with Gregory and Kafu's story about Kunio should not, however, be taken as evidence that all or even most New York bohemian men or Tokyojin elite men desired complete gender egalitarianism. The feminism touched upon by Kafu and by New York "New Men" often had less to do with sharing outside work and household responsibilities. Rather, these "New Men" were more concerned with a desire to find an engaging and capable conversational and intellectual partner, which these men felt was necessary in their own quest for self-actualization. Stansell explains that when it came to New York bohemian men and women, many men still had a subliminal psychological need to "get a leg up" on the women and "reassert their ascendancy."<sup>10</sup> Also evident in many of Nagai Kafu's stories the heroines are always both intelligent conversationalists but extremely feminine and Kafu always goes to great

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<sup>9</sup> Stansell, 267

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 263

lengths to describe their physical characteristics: an action that has both underlying sexist and Occidentalist motivations.

An example of this sentiment can be found in the story “Rude Awakening” in which, out of all the oddities of New York, the protagonist, Mr. Sawazaki, a Japanese businessman bored by an arranged marriage, is no longer interested by the skyscrapers that once amazed him, instead fascinated now by the “figures of narrow-waisted and large-hipped women with their breasts pushed up by corsets.”<sup>11</sup> Finally, Sawazaki becomes infatuated with the young widow Mrs. Denning, a pleasantly “short” and “plump” American woman with dark hair, who comes to work in his office. She is a dreamy but passive woman. Her personality is best captured when she explains to Sawazaki that because she never liked getting up in the morning, preferring to sleep until noon, she never troubled her late-husband to take her to dinner or the theater. In the end, they share only one evening walk in which they share a deep personal conversation, something missing from Sawazaki’s marriage, and then she disappears, never to return to work at the office.

This feeling of infatutory love, existing outside the physical and intensified by distance was a popular topic in late Meiji Japan. In pre-Meiji Japanese culture, the concept of romantic love, or *koi*, was characterized as physical love followed by a brief period of sadness or joy. This concept did not separate the emotion of love from sexual pleasure. In fact, the two went hand in hand. However when Western books began to be translated and the Japanese read Western stories, they were exposed to the Western idea that true or pure love existed outside the physical, a concept that had not been popular in

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<sup>11</sup> Kafu, 107

Japanese literature since the Heian Period: 794-1185. The Meiji Japanese shaped their own concept of “true love” from the Western ideal and called it *renai*. Even if sexual love occurred, *renai* existed separately as an infatuation from “the depths of one’s soul”.<sup>12</sup>

New York strangely fit into this “*renai* fever”. Just as New York was presented as the “right-type”, an elite world-class city that would accept the elite world-class Tokyoin, bold, free-spirited New York women, were depicted in literature and periodicals as the right-type of women with which to have a *renai* relationship. They were described as “aggressive, but very feminine and sweet; conceited, rebellious, and obstinate, without etiquette and gentleness, but wise and pragmatic.”<sup>13</sup> All qualities lent towards willingness to participate in a deeper conversation, which in turn could encourage the formation of a more personal, emotional relationship, followed by pining. This stereotype of New York women being forceful and independent but feminine, combined with the idea that in a New York a man could be more publically demonstrative with his wife and lovers, was the extra bonus needed to convince some Tokyoin men to come to the East Coast, particularly New York. In New York “one could reject the arbitrary marriage rituals and social customs of Japan and anticipate free and open relationships with [American] women. One could discover *renai*, pure and true love from the depths of one’s soul.”<sup>14</sup>

The most prominent example of *renai* in Kafu’s stories is found in “A June’s Night Dream”. The story begins as a crying Kafu is looking at Staten Island from a steamer carrying him to France, the home of his love, Rosalyn, whom he knows will

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<sup>12</sup> Sawada, 160

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 165

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 173

never see again. He goes on to admit that “I do like Western women. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than to discuss Western art under a Western sky by Western waters with a Western woman in a Western language, be it English, French, or any other.”<sup>15</sup> Kafu goes on to describe Rosalyn. Interestingly, and further bolstering the idea that elite Japanese ideas of American women were characterized by New York moderns, Kafu asks Rosalyn if she believes in staying single like a “typical” American woman. Rosalyn, a self-described tomboy, is offended at being compared to “typical” women, and retorts that if she stays single it will not be because of some depressing pathetic event. She will not be an old maid or some sad widow but will stay strong and youthful in mind and spirit. Kafu shares with her that he “abhors” marriage because he is disappointed in reality. Instead he prays that love fails because true love can only be realized if the love is unattainable. For the next few weeks the two engage in an intellectually-stimulating romantic relationship. Eventually Kafu must leave for France, realizing after boarding the boat that he has finally attained *renai*.

For men in both bohemian New York and kindai Tokyo “the loss of personal liberty in marriage spawned possessiveness and tyranny; for women, marriage ended up in subjection and enslavement.”<sup>16</sup> To many people this appeared to be an inescapable reality. The myth of *renai*, whether actualized or not, allowed Japanese men, unhappy with strict gender roles and “traditional” marriage, to fulfill their duties to their family while being able to imagine a deeper relationship existing outside a hierarchical structure.

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<sup>15</sup> Kafu, 217

<sup>16</sup> Stansell, 276

While tales of renai were spawned by the confusion in modernization and despair in “traditional” marriages that elite Japanese men felt, not all American relationships described in tobei periodicals were “pure.” In New York, prostitution, like other forms of vice, was being attacked by Progressives, but bohemians began to develop a new view of the prostitute. She became a symbol of modern female ambiguity, both subversive, and romantic. “She allowed intellectuals to identify her transgressive desires with their own.”<sup>17</sup> This is captured well in by American urban realist Stephen Crane’s novella *Maggie: A Girl in the Streets* (1893): the story of a young Irish-American woman who is eventually driven to a life of prostitution.

Many of Kafu’s stories deal with prostitutes and have similarly romanticized views. For example: “Chronicle of Chinatown”<sup>18</sup> starts by describing white prostitutes in Chinatown that learn some Chinese so as to market themselves to Chinese bachelors. Later in the story, Kafu introduces a terrifying band of homeless elderly former prostitutes and foreshadows that is the inevitable destination for the women described in the beginning of the story. In “Lodging on a Snowy Night”<sup>19</sup> beginning with a similar image to John Sloan’s *Haymarket* (1907) (Figure 2) Kafu describes meeting a prostitute dressed like a “good” woman outside after leaving the theater. He accompanies her back to her bordello where he learns about Annie, another prostitute at the bordello, originally from upstate New York, who was brought to New York City under false pretenses of seeing the sights with a gentlemen caller and was sold to the bordello. Eventually she learns to embrace being a prostitute and enjoys her hedonistic life in New York.

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<sup>17</sup> Stansell, 287

<sup>18</sup> Kafu, 195-202

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 67-73

However, unlike Stephen Crane's Maggie, who we are led to feel pity for because her inevitable entrance into the horrible underworld of prostitution means she will never lead an good life, Kafu, writing for an audience more optimistic of New York's street life, leaves a more positive image of what lies in Annie's underworld future.

Stephen Crane had a similar background to Nagai Kafu. Both were unhappy with their strict upbringing, both floundered in school, and both eventually found themselves as urban realist reporters in New York City. Both authors' writings bear similarity to that of French naturalist Emile Zola. Stephen Crane, like Nagai Kafu, employs a kind of urban voyeurism by observing the actions of his New York characters with little mention of their thoughts or feelings. Prostitutes are imagined in depressing but romanticized depictions in realist journalist Stephen Crane's *Maggie*, Ashcan artist John Sloan's *Haymarket*, and Nagai Kafu's *Amerika Monogatari*. These images, created for audiences in different regions of the world, are representative of both the far-reaching modernist literary and artistic styles and the importance of daily urban life in New York at the turn-of-the-century to the artists, writers, and their audiences.

At the turn-of-the-century, changing political and social conditions cast both Americans and Japanese into a confusing and tumultuous new era. As both struggled to understand their new worlds, they developed a relationship of ideas aimed at understanding the globalizing world and alleviating the discomfort brought about by modernization. This relationship can be observed through the work of Japanese realist author Nagai Kafu. Using a wide-range of images Nagai Kafu enraptured middle-class and elite educated Tokyojin with his stories about renai, bold New York women, and free American relationships. The characters he created, which were portrayed as typical

Americans, were in fact not very typical, and largely developed through interaction with a modernistic New York counter-culture not representative of the country as a whole. It was not just Japanese audiences that held special interest in New York though. At the same time that stories like “Long Hair” were being published in Japanese, authors in New York were gaining popularity by also writing about relationships between Americans and Japanese.

#### IV. Winnifred Eaton: Orientalism, the New Woman, and Interracial Romance

Taken alone it might be assumed that only Japanese intellectuals, like Kafu, were influenced by New York and that Japan held no similar importance for early twentieth century New Yorkers. This chapter builds on Melani McAlister assertion that “Orientalism was the cultural logic through which American culture symbolized a break from nineteenth century Protestant piety and marked the nation’s entry into modernity.”<sup>1</sup> It seeks to demonstrate that New York modernists who wrote for American audiences also idealized Japan and Tokyo in their exploration of ideal gender roles and social and sexual relationships.

One such writer was Winnifred Eaton who, although born and raised in Montreal, resided in New York from 1901 to 1917 and successfully published dozens of books and stories, under the Japanese penname and persona Onoto Watanna. Her highly Orientalized writing is centered around interracial relationships between Japanese and Americans, often set in Tokyo. Focusing on the writing of Winnifred Eaton, this chapter will explore how Americans, and more specifically New Yorkers, envisioned Japan and the role that imagining played in forming their ideas about gender roles and interracial social and sexual relationships.

The half-Chinese Canadian-born writer, Winnifred Eaton, was the eighth of fourteen surviving children of an English painter and English-raised Chinese mother.<sup>2</sup> While many of the Eaton children grew up to be writers or artists it is Winnifred’s sister, Edith Eaton known by her penname as Sui Sin Far, who is most well known historically.

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<sup>1</sup> Melani McAlister. *Epic Encounters* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 22.

<sup>2</sup> Amy Ling, “Winnifred Eaton: Ethnic Chameleon and Popular Success,” *MELUS* 11 (1984): 6.

Edith has been lauded by academics and activists since the 1970's for writing about the struggles of Chinese in America, under a Chinese penname, during the Chinese Exclusion. She has been referred to as the first Chinese-American fictionist, while her sister Winnifred, who actually published before her, has been lambasted for denying her Chinese ancestry and for the Orientalized nature of her writing.

As Onoto Watanna, Winnifred Eaton passed herself as the half-Japanese daughter of an English father and a Japanese aristocratic mother. She posed for her book covers in luxuriant kimonos and gave many interviews and wrote articles about herself assuming the background of a Japanese aristocrat. Very different than the experience of her sister who wrote as Chinese, passing as both Japanese and aristocratic background allowed Eaton a certain expertise and surrounded her with an accepted exoticism that kindled the romantic ideals of which she wrote.

Winnifred Eaton published her first novel, *Miss Nume of Japan*, in 1899. She soon after, in 1901, moved from her furnished room on the Northside of Chicago to New York City, where for the next decade and a half she wrote and published dozens of stories on Japanese and American romances. During this first decade of the twentieth century Japan commanded a fascination for Americans, New Yorkers especially, that China did not. In part this was because of the wars Japan won against China (1895) and Russia (1905). Further, the Japanese that came to New York tended to be educated and from the upper classes: merchants, diplomats, students, or artists. Chinese were seen as mysterious and evil, while Japanese were romantic and exotic. This image fit in with the turn-of-the-century white American ideals of tough manly men in the wake of crisis of masculinity.

For example, just after General Kuroki won international fame for his role in Japan winning the Russo-Japanese War (1905), the *New York Times* lists a weight lifter using the name “Kuroki”.<sup>3</sup> Kuroki, who toured New York, in 1906 after the Russo-Japanese War, was thus seen by New Yorkers as so manly and tough that white weight-lifters were employing his name to the effect of appearing hyper-masculine.

An editorial the same year entitled “The Japanese Physique” in *The Times* again references Kuroki in its praise of the toughness of the Japanese, especially Japanese soldiers. The editorial discusses how a certain Dr. Takaki lectured in New York on how the Japanese “have not been living on the kind of food which makes muscle.” The editorial writer disagrees, asserting that the Japanese diet must be fine as “Japanese jinrikisha frequently run with passengers a distance of fifty miles a single day and Japanese women bear burdens weighing over 200 pounds. Though small their bodies seem perfectly developed for feats of strength or skill, and in deftness or agility the Japanese are equal to any.”<sup>4</sup> Thus Eaton was depicting Japanese interracial romances and gender roles during a decade when in New York much attention and praise was attributed to the strength of the Japanese, both in character and physique.

While Winnifred Eaton was close with individuals in New York society like Edith Wharton, she was also associated with bohemians who, as we have established, were rethinking sexual norms. In both New York and Chicago’s Northside she mixed with writers, intellectuals, and artists, and lived in a casual, bohemian rooming house atmosphere. According to Joanne Meyerowitz New Women who lived in

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<sup>3</sup> “Sysonby’s Weight Same in All Big Handicaps” *New York Times*, February 1, 1906, 6.

<sup>4</sup> J.W.D. “The Japanese Physique” *New York Times*, March 1, 1906, 8.

boardinghouses in Chicago's Northside "experimented freely with new sexual possibilities learned from Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, and other sexologists."<sup>5</sup>

Her father was an artist educated in late 19<sup>th</sup> century and spent many years studying in Japan as well. Winnifred identified her own family as "Bohemian and unconventional."<sup>6</sup> Her sister Grace married Walter Blackburn Harte, the English Bohemian writer, also friend of Edith Eaton (Sui Sin Far). She was, early in her career, close friends with New York based Japanese poet, Yone Noguchi. Noguchi, like Eaton, capitalized on New York's interest in Japan and gender by writing and publishing the novel *The American Diary of a Japanese Girl* (1902), written under the female penname Miss Morning Glory. The novel detailed Morning Glory's fictional trip to Chicago and New York and her observations of American culture and life, and tried to pass as an authentic account.

Like Nagai Kafu, Stephen Crane, and others, Winnifred began her career as a journalist in Chicago and Jamaica. In fact Kafu himself was one of her readers and is quoted as saying in his diary that Eaton's novel *Heart of Hyacinth* "is hardly to be counted among the best literary works, but the style is exquisite and its pretty sentiment is well displayed."<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising that Eaton, who associated with Bohemian individuals and circles in a time when Orientalism was being employed in an exploration of the modern, conformed her stories to some Orientalist stereotypes while simultaneously challenging gender, sexuality, and relationship norms.

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<sup>5</sup> Joanne Meyerowitz, "Sexual Geography and Gender Economy: The Furnished-Room Districts of Chicago, 1890-1930." *Unequal Sisters* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 190.

<sup>6</sup> Birchall, 5

<sup>7</sup> Nagai Kafu. *Essays on Japanese Literature*, ed. Katsuhiko Takeda (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1963) 66.

As an example, Eaton often cast her Japanese female protagonists in socially inferior positions: geishas, working girls and their American male lovers in positions of power as diplomats, businessmen, priests. Without a deeper analysis one might argue that her books supported white supremacists and Orientalist views. On a closer examination it becomes apparent that her heroines, while often Bohemian and always socially unaccepted, are intelligent, independent, and strong-willed. It is through these qualities and the actions of her heroines that ideal interracial romances are realized in her stories.<sup>8</sup> In the short story “Two Converts” (1901) it is the clever, persistent, independent heroine: Otoyō, an English teacher from Tokyo, who converts an American minister to the benefits of divorce, and more importantly to the rights of women and racial others.<sup>9</sup>

Eaton’s first novel is much more gender role conventional than some of her later short stories. In *Fighting For American Manhood* Kristin Hoganson asserts that the renegotiating of male and female roles at the turn-of-the-century helped push the nation into war by fostering a desire for martial challenges.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, *Miss Nume of Japan*, written in the wake of the Spanish-American War, focuses on gender roles and sexuality in two interracial relationships and is a veiled discussion on anxieties over the New Woman.

The novel centers on the troubled relationships of two couples in Japan: one American and one Japanese. The Japanese couple, Orito Takashima and Miss Nume, have been betrothed since childhood and are not truly in love. The American couple,

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<sup>8</sup> Ling, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Linda Trinh Moser. “Introduction” *A Half-Caste and other Writing* by Onoto Watanna (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), xv.

<sup>10</sup> Kristin L. Hoganson. *Fighting for American Manhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 11.

Arthur Sinclair and Cleo Ballard, likewise have a troubled engagement. Early in the book, the Harvard educated Takashima, is travelling back to Tokyo to wed his betrothed. However, on the ship to Tokyo he meets and is immediately taken with the bold Cleo, who is likewise travelling to marry her engaged, a white American man who lives in Tokyo. Meanwhile in Japan romance is stirring between Sinclair and Miss Nume.

In *Orientalism* Robert Lee asserts that “the relations of desire with the Oriental offered an alternative to the social order represented by the racially exclusive, presumptively heterosexual, nuclear family. Against an emergent heterosexual and dimorphic order, Oriental sexuality was constructed as ambiguous, inscrutable, and hermaphroditic; the Oriental was constructed as the third sex.”<sup>11</sup> In many ways Takashima, the Japanese male protagonist, embodies the “third sex” as described by Robert Lee. Much like Kafu’s Kunio in “Long Hair”, Takashima’s sexuality is feminized and simultaneously portrayed in a way meant to be strongly desirable to the reader. “Orito was a youth of extreme beauty. He was tall and slender...with features as fine as delicate as a girl’s...the face of one with noble blood.”<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Cleo Ballard, the American heroine, is a New Woman. She is portrayed as educated, independent, bold, and a flirt, and it is implied that she has premarital sexual relationships. Her mild sadism and lack of appropriate female role is likewise sexualized by Eaton: “With a laugh she pulled the heart-strings till they ached with pain and pleasure commingled.”<sup>13</sup> In many ways Cleo is similar to the American divorcee, Kunio’s lover that pulls his hair in “Long Hair”. As it has already been

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Lee. *Orientalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999) 85.

<sup>12</sup> Onoto Watanna. *Miss Nume of Japan*. (New York: Rand McNally, 1899) 6

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 15

established that Kafu read Eaton, it is worth pointing out that “Long Hair” (1907) was written after *Miss Nume of Japan*.

When the progressive, sexual Cleo spies Takashima on the ship to Tokyo she is immediately attracted and says to her cousin who criticizes her attraction to a Japanese man: “How ignorant you are, Tom! As if it makes the slightest difference what nationality he belongs to!”<sup>14</sup> She then asserts that she will approach him herself without a proper introduction if her cousin will not introduce them.

Likewise the Japanese heroine, Miss Nume, who is less psychologically developed by Eaton, embodies common oriental stereotypes: she is sensitive and speaks in an almost offensive patois. However, she is also portrayed as strong of character and personality. Both heroines rebel against narrow rules and are outspoken. In Nume’s case her strength of will is what allows Nume to triumph in her relationship with Sinclair by going against her family and traditions.

Though unhappy in her engagement to Sinclair, Cleo ultimately takes the advice of American friends who tell her it would be inappropriate and unwise to marry a Japanese man. She rejects Takashima after he proposes. After he is rejected, in true Orientalized fashion, Takashima commits suicide and Cleo is driven mad by the realization that she has caused the death of her one love by conforming to society’s expectations. The relationship between Takashima and Cleo end tragically, because unlike Nume, Cleo ultimately fails to reject societal norms and expectations.

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<sup>14</sup> Watanna, 11

Many of Eaton's works also combine the issue of American Imperialism with interracial romance. For example in "A Half-Caste" (1899) American businessman Norman Hilton falls desperately in love with a geisha, Kiku. Kiku continuously disobeys the head of the geisha house by disrespecting and insulting Hilton, although Hilton likes this slight reversal of power and becomes infatuated with the outspoken Kiku. He believes her behavior to be playful game. He doesn't realize that she actually does hate him: Hilton is her father, which makes her half-caste, and as a result she endured the discrimination of others while growing up; and because her mother died after her heart was broken by Hilton. The story can be read as a veiled and romantic portrayal of how the imperialistic United States misunderstands the feelings and desires of the Asian nations it has forced trade with or colonized.

Similarly "The Loves of Sakura Jiro and the Three Headed Maid" (1903) is a veiled discussion on Imperialism and exoticism of the Japanese. The story takes place in a New York City sideshow. Sakura Jiro is an adventurous young Japanese man who, despite his family's advice, has moved to New York City. One day he sees a Spanish fire-eater at a sideshow and becomes determined to join the sideshow stating that in Japan "even babies can eat fire."

After being hired and placed on stage next to the "Spaniard" fire-eater, who is actually an Irishman named Kelly, Jiro explains that "it will be East and West side by side exploiting the best characteristics of the civilizations."<sup>15</sup> However, instead of working together, Kelly and Jiro compete for the love of Marva: the sideshow's three headed maid.

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<sup>15</sup> Watanna, 63.

Both try to win her affections with displays of magic and manliness. Jiro's magic tricks, such as pulling a branch of cherry blossoms out of a baby's head, are seen by Marva as "nothin' manly and bold," while Marva believes the white Kelly's fire-eating makes him "a monstrous fine man, bold and brave."<sup>16</sup> The story is in many ways a code for the imperialistic relationship between Japan and the United States. The nations are not truly allies because the United States did not respect Japan and treated it as emasculated. Further, Japan continued to try to prove itself to western nations through military feats like the Russo-Japanese War, much like Jiro's magical feats meant to impress Marva.

Finally, Jiro finds a manly way to win Marva's love. He makes an exotic confectionary by breathing in fire and then cooking it atop his stomach. Marva and the crowd are awed by this exotic Japanese treat. However in actuality Jiro has just made pancakes. In essence, Jiro has capitalized on the ignorance of his American audience by doing something that seems exotic but is simple and common. This speaks to the innovative ways that Asians and other minorities have survived unfair conditions in the United States and to the exaggerated domestic image attributed to Japanese men.

In the end, Jiro's show of cleverness is enough to gain Marva's love. She takes off two of her heads, revealing her own clever deception and the story ends happily with Jiro telling her "I shall love you enough for three."<sup>17</sup>

Historiographically, Winnifred Eaton has been lambasted as a race traitor and Orientalist. Certainly the Japanese patois she imbues her protagonists with and the

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<sup>16</sup> Watanna, 65.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 66.

Orientalist aspects of her writing are distasteful to modern audiences. However, like herself, Winnifred Eaton's protagonists, whether Japanese or Americans, are ambitious, bold, and unconventional and open the eyes of their partners to possibilities outside both American and Japanese socially proscribed norms. In this way, Eaton's writing defined the turn-of-the-century bohemian image of Japan: one that opened the imagined possibilities throwing off Victorian gender roles and of romanticized interracial love, but one that in an age of imperialism, also heavily stereotyped and exoticized the Japanese. Further, Eaton employed her fictional stories about interracial romance and New Women in veiled criticisms of American Imperialism and racism.

As the early twentieth century progressed the image of the Japanese became less of exoticized romance and more fear of a growing Imperial power. By the teens Winnifred Eaton had switched from Japanese romances to Irish female protagonists just as the popular cinema began to portray American-Japanese relationships in a negative light.

## V. *The Cheat: Fears at the Dawn of the Great War*

The decade between 1910 and 1920 witnessed an increased xenophobia, especially with the onset of the First World War. As the United States expanded abroad at home fears of miscegenation and of unbridled Asian immigration swelled. As discussed in the previous chapter, the gender-role renegotiation that began at the turn-of-the-century in part fostered an enthusiasm for war and violence. In other words there were far reaching political implications to the nation's gender convictions.<sup>1</sup>

In the first decade of the twentieth century the racial position of the Japanese was still being meted out. The Japanese were romanticized and idealized by Americans for their perceived masculine warlike qualities as well as their demure feminine qualities. However, as the twentieth century progressed and both the United States and Japan became firmly entrenched as Imperialist nations, interracial love between Japanese and Americans no longer served to open positive alternatives to Victorian normativity. Instead, in popular culture, the prospect of interracial relations between Japanese and Americans was depicted as dangerous to the family structure and thus the nation. In 1915, as these ideas were forming, Jessie Lasky and Cecil B. DeMille produced the film *The Cheat*, a cautionary tale set in New York that demonstrates the connected threats of consumption, female independence, and American-Japanese interracial relationships.

In the past two decades *The Cheat* has been analyzed by many scholars, most notably by Robert Lee, as a means of demonstrating the impact of Imperialism, consumerism, and anti-Asian rhetoric, which casted Asians as sexually deviant in popular culture. Lee asserted the importance of popular culture in this period by defining it as “a process, a set

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<sup>1</sup> Kristin Hoganson. *Fighting for American Manhood*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.

of cultural practices that define American nationality.”<sup>2</sup> This chapter builds on such works and enriches them by demonstrating the link between New York and Japan to the larger, popular, nation-wide neuroses regarding consumption and female independence.

*The Cheat* revolves around three main characters, each of which represents an anxiety: Richard Hardy, Edith Hardy, and Hisuru Tori. Richard Hardy represents the crisis of masculinity. He is a workaholic, New York stockbroker, who is emasculated by his lack of control over his wife and home. He spends all of his time working to afford Edith Hardy’s luxuriant tastes, substituting money for attention in his relationship with his wife and household.

As fears of female consumptive and public power increased, so did commodity Orientalism, which linked with post-Victorian norms “produced a multilayered rhetoric of emancipation linking the New Woman, companionate marriage, modernity, and consumerism.”<sup>3</sup> Edith Hardy is the archetype of independent, consumptive New Woman. She meddles in the public sphere, spends faster than her husband can earn, and cavorts with a wealthy Japanese art dealer: something that a decade earlier was portrayed as liberating for the women in Eaton’s and Kafu’s stories, in 1915 is portrayed as corrupting in *The Cheat*. Although they appear slightly in their thirties, the Hardy’s have no children, more evidence that their domesticity is not “respectable”.

The Hardy’s lives begin to fall apart as Edith becomes more involved with the New York smart set’s “It” boy of the moment: Hisuru Tori. Interestingly the word *tori* in Japanese can be read one of several ways. Most obviously, it means “rooster” and characterizes Tori’s, and thus the Asian male’s hypersexual, preening

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Lee. *Orientalism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999) 6.

<sup>3</sup> McAlister, 22

nature. However, a *torii*, the same symbol Tori has on his brand, represents a gateway into the mythical Shinto afterworld of the gods and the dead. The imagery evokes both exoticism in the East and popular fears of commodity Orientalization.

As a Japanese male, a representative of the feminine and materially-obsessed East as opposed to the rational and masculine West, Tori is portrayed as both hypersexual and childlike, either dressed in playful, boyish clothing when with Edith and the New York smart set or in Japanese kimono when alone with his true passion: his material possessions. According to Lee “s representation of the Oriental as both seductively childlike and threateningly sexual allowed for both sympathy and repulsion.”<sup>4</sup> This sexualized and obscured gender was particularly threatening during a period where the culture of consumption increased and new gender roles threatened to subvert the family and nation.

As the story progresses Edith embezzles and loses \$10,000 of Red Cross funds for the war in Europe. Presumable, though never explicitly stated this money is meant to help white male soldiers in Europe thus blatantly demonstrating the detrimental effects of female independence on the livelihood of not just white manliness, but of white empires and power.

Tori makes Edith an offer she can’t refuse: he will give her \$10,000 if she pays “his price”, which is understood to mean sexual favors. Edith later tries to return the money to Tori, and is assaulted and branded with the same iron he uses to brand his possessions showing the white American idea of the time that Asian men are not truly manly as they do not truly care for or love women, but only see them as sexual possessions.

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<sup>4</sup> Lee, 10

Edith finds a gun and shoots Tori before he can rape her, wounding him in the shoulder. It is Richard not Edith who takes the blame for the crime. Because only white males are controlled enough to handle independence, just as Richard's lack of control and supervision over his wife, Edith, resulted in her embezzlement, branding and near rape, it is American society's lack of control of "Orientals", like Hisuru Tori, that leads to Richard's imprisonment and near conviction. It is at this point in the film DeMille presents us with the 1889 Rudyard Kipling quote "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet." The quote clearly demonstrates the detrimental effects of social miscegenation with "Orientals" to white manhood and womanhood and thus to the nation and empire.

In the end Edith confesses her crimes to the judge and shows him the brand. Richard is set free and Edith is released into his care. We are led to believe that after this brush with criminal justice Richard will now take his proper role as man of the house and Edith will become a dutiful wife and possibly mother. Tori is carried away by the police and a white male lynch mob: white America is again safe. The message of the film is clear: the lack of regulation by white men of the activities of both Japanese male bodies and white female bodies lead to the detriment of white manhood and womanhood and thus to white American nation and empire.

Interestingly, although he played a villain and although the film was a warning about relations between Japanese men and white women, *The Cheat* made Hayakawa a star overnight. Especially popular as a heart-throb with white women, Hayakawa's stardom was entangled with many contradictory issues around gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, and the nation, spread in a complex network of social and cultural

practices in modern life in the United States, Europe, and Japan.<sup>5</sup> The relationship on screen between Hisuru Tori and Edith Hardy allowed both white men and women to fantasize about interracial desires between Japanese men and white women. Because Edith is passed out when Tori kisses her female viewers could imagine and thus indulge their desire for liaisons with non-white males while retaining purity. Tori is portrayed as a master sadist when he brands Edith, allowing viewers to indulge such desires as well. This especially allows white male viewers the pleasure of punishing Edith, and New Women in general, for their refusal to follow the prescribed gender norms. Because the punishment is acted through the Japanese Tori, the white male husband, Richard Hardy, is left pure and moral. Tori's Japanese ethnicity is part of his ability to fulfill a number of erotic desires for both male and female spectators.<sup>6</sup>

*The Cheat* demonstrates the changing nature of the relationship between New York and Japan in the American popular imagine during a period of increased xenophobia. Consumption, female independence, and interracial social and sexual relationships are linked together in the films warning. While Said and others have linked the image and fear of consumption to the Orient, it was also linked to New York and other cities.

In the early twentieth century fears that cities growth of industry in New York and other major cities provided an escape for young individuals, especially young women. Leaving home to work in these cities, which in turn afforded them new levels of autonomy, thus subverted the patriarchal structure of the family and was part of the fear of the crisis of masculinity. By setting a story that evokes fear of the Yellow Peril, with

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<sup>5</sup> Daisuke Miyao. *Sessue Hayakawa: Silent Cinema and Transnational Stardom*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007) 8.

<sup>6</sup> Gina Marchetti. *Romance and the Yellow Peril*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 22.

the negative aspects of commercialism and the crisis of masculinity in New York, *The Cheat* demonstrates that in the popular imagination Japan and New York evoked linked fears, just as for Eaton and Kafu they evoked linked possibilities.

If the fear was simply the Yellow Peril, though, why not San Francisco or a Western city more intimately associated with Asians? As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, while the west coast was associated with working-class Chinese and Japanese laborers, New York specifically was appealing to many educated, upper-class Japanese artists, writers, students and businessmen from the turn-of-the-century. Producer Jesse Lasky and director Cecil B. DeMille both worked and lived in New York among the theater world for many years. Placing the young, social, wealthy Hisuru Tori in New York was no mere coincidence. He could easily have been Yone Noguchi, or Nagai Kafu, or one of Kafu's characters like Kunio.

While possibly alluring in the first decade of the twentieth century when upper-class Japanese in New York did not pose the numerical threat of working-class Asians on the West Coast, by the second decade of the twentieth century the threat of Imperial Japan loomed resulting in a nefarious popular portrayal. Further, as xenophobia increased after World War I Hayakawa lost his popularity. Similarly the network between New York and Tokyo moved from one that idealized interracial relationships centered around fiction, cinema, and art to one focused on birth-control, feminism, and political activism.

## VI. Margaret Sanger and Shizue Ishimoto: Feminism and Neo-Malthusian Doctrine in the 1920's

On January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1920 the Baroness Shizue Ishimoto<sup>1</sup> met Margaret Sanger at a tea party in New York City and was shocked to find that the strong-willed birth-control crusader was not “a big woman of manly proportions.”<sup>2</sup> During the summer of 1919, her husband, Keikichi Ishimoto, a self-described feminist and socialist had convinced Shizue to leave behind her comfortable upper-middle class life in Tokyo and come to New York to live with him in cheap, dirty, bed-bug infested room in Greenwich Village<sup>3</sup>. Following both his desire to be surrounded by the Russia revolution and his belief that for Japan to succeed internationally Japanese women must gain independence and self-sufficiency, soon after Shizue arrived in New York Keikichi left for Russia. Before Keikichi left he put Shizue in contact with his socialist journalist friend, Agnes Smedley who later introduced Shizue to Sanger. Thus, began an international network spanning decades between Shizue Ishimoto, Sanger, and Smedley and other American and Japanese feminists, intellectuals, and activists.

Without further scrutiny it would seem that this relationship was unique. In fact, it came towards the end of a largely historically unexplored circuit of dialogue between moderns in New York and Tokyo. The members of this New York/Tokyo group together

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<sup>1</sup> A note on names: At different times during her life “the Baroness” was known by the surnames Hirota, Ishimoto, and finally Kato. This study will refer to her as Shizue Ishimoto as that was her surname through the 1920's and most of the 1930's. Further to avoid confusion this study will follow the American custom of writing given then surname, as opposed to the Japanese surname followed by given. Thus we will refer her to Shizue Ishimoto, not Ishimoto Shizue.

<sup>2</sup> Shidzue Ishimoto. *Facing Two Ways* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1935), 183.

<sup>3</sup> Helen M. Hopper. *A New Woman of Japan: A Political Biography of Kato Shidzue*. (Boulder: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 10.

explored issues related to changing social ideals including class and race, but especially pertaining to new ideals in gender roles and sexuality. This chapter will analyze the transnational dialogue around issues of gender and sexuality, specifically dialogue related to birth control and Neo-Malthusianism, free-love, and feminism that began just after World War I and extended through the 1920's between two prominent members of this group: Shizue Ishimoto and Margaret Sanger.

In the wake of World War I this previously Japanese middle-class intellectual male-dominated network focused on defining their ideals in terms of gender roles and sexuality within the private sphere. As this network changed to one with more female participation, it became more focused on public feminist and socialist activism. This chapter will explore how the Ishimoto/Sanger relationship in order to illuminate the ways that New York and Tokyo intellectuals helped to create new ideas about gender and sexuality in the early twentieth century.

Through the decade starting in 1910 and ending with the Great War, the Sangers were active socialists. Their home was full of people such as IWW organizer Big Bill Haywood, woman lawyer Jessie Ashley, anarchist Alexander Berkman, and outspoken feminist radical Emma Goldman.<sup>4</sup> It was Goldman who introduced Sanger to neo-Malthusian ideology then fashionable among European socialists. Marxists orthodoxies, that encouraged high proletarian birthrates, condemned birth control as hopelessly bourgeois. However, neo-Malthusians drew parallels between the struggle of workers and the struggle of women and argued instead that women's control over reproduction

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<sup>4</sup> Ellen Chesler. *Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America*. (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1992) 58.

was essential to the goals of revolutionary class struggle.<sup>5</sup> Therefore many of Sanger's central ideas and causes initially came from Goldman, who was never properly credited, thus causing a friction between the two activists that would last through their lives.

The Sangers were also frequent guests at Mabel Dodge's Greenwich Village "salon." Dodge gathered interesting people, political activists, feminists, artists, and intellectuals, in a constellation of rebellious sentiment and bourgeois comfort to discuss the city's political, intellectual, and cultural life.<sup>6</sup> Discussions on free love and woman's emancipation were often topics at the salon, with Sanger as one of the most vociferous supporters. Sanger believed that Victorian sexual attitudes were archaic and ignorant leading to unhealthy sexual outlets such as prostitution that promoted venereal disease.<sup>7</sup> During this time Sanger began to promote birth control through articles written for socialist periodicals such as *The Call*. Both she and Bill Sanger were eventually brought on charges under the Comstock Laws in 1914 for their subversive political activities. M. Sanger fled to Europe which led to her relationship with Havelock Ellis, another Neo-Malthusian who greatly impacted her philosophies on birth control and women's emancipation.

Ellis despised Freud's psychoanalytical and pathologized views of sexuality. Sanger adopted from Ellis the belief that the emphasis on reproduction at the expense of sexual gratification had caused traditional sexuality to become unnatural and repressive, especially for women.<sup>8</sup> Further, liberal social attitudes would breed contentment through setting men and women free from sexual taboos and allowing them to do whatever felt

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<sup>5</sup> Chesler, 86.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 91.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 71

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 115.

natural sexually to them as individuals.<sup>9</sup> Organized feminism was particularly essential as it sought to foster gender equality and heterosociality, the lack of which Ellis attributed to inhibition and misunderstanding between the sexes which led to heterosexual dissatisfaction.<sup>10</sup>

Ellis also furthered Sanger's interest in Neo-Malthusian eugenics. Eugenicism, the regulation of human reproduction to improve the biological characteristics of humanity,<sup>11</sup> was later strongly associated with racial cleansing and used by the Nazi's, which has obscured its earlier association of being responsible for introducing explicitly sexual topics into the boundaries of acceptable scientific discourse.<sup>12</sup> Though its darker potential was always there, Neo-Malthusian moderns such as Ellis, Goldman, Sanger, and Ishimoto believed that eugenics hereditarian principles were compatible with a dedication to egalitarianism. Further, they believed that women were critical agents of civilization's progress as they had the power to produce and nurture fewer, but fitter babies. Through this effort women could reduce the pressure of population which would in turn reduce competition of labor in the marketplace reducing the corruptive abilities of capitalism. Therefore, birth control was a significant tool, in the mind of Neo-Malthusian feminist-socialists, for creating fitter people and a more egalitarian society.<sup>13</sup>

After Sanger returned to New York in 1915 things began to change. Rifts within the socialist community in New York as well as more pointed opposition led to the break-up of many of the organizations and social groups in which the Sangers had been involved. By 1917-1918, the United States had joined the war. Conservative suspicions

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<sup>9</sup> Chesler, 114.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 114.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 122

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 123

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, 123.

of socialists, anarchists, immigrants, feminists, and other subversives escalated with the near lynching of radical Max Eastman, and the enactment of the Espionage Act and Sedition Act. Americans reacted to New York's bohemian counter culture with fear and hatred. Randolph Bourne described the sentiment as "a psychic complex of panic, hatred, rage, class arrogance, and patriotic swagger."<sup>14</sup>

Following this tumult Sanger's ideals also began to change but not break-down entirely. She let go of her earlier radicalism and became slightly more conservative. Also, she became more willing to work broadly with other groups that had similar interests if not the same goals in mind. In 1916 she opened the first birth-control clinic in America. In 1917, she started *The Birth Control Review* a neutral periodical geared towards birth control and feminism, but with obvious radical and socialist roots. It was a few short years later, as Sanger became slightly more conservative but still held on to the radical roots upon which her ideals were founded, that she would meet Shizue Ishimoto.

Shizue Ishimoto was raised in an aristocratic family in Tokyo within the first two decades of the twentieth century. In Japan, Tokyo was beginning to take on special cultural importance, just as New York was in the United States but unlike male writers such as Nagai Kafu and Yone Noguchi, Ishimoto's connection to New York did not therefore begin in 1919 when she moved there with her socialist husband.

Ishimoto's uncle was Yusuke Tsurumi, a Tokyo intellectual, novelist, and unofficial ambassador who lived in New York in 1911 and was a part of the first decade New York-Tokyo discourse outlined earlier in this study. He had become acquainted with modernist historians Charles and Mary Beard, who would later also become friends

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<sup>14</sup> Stansell, 312

of Ishimoto's. As a child in Tokyo, Ishimoto was surrounded by interesting intellectuals, many connected to New York, such as Christian humanist Dr. Inazo Nitobe and his Philadelphian wife, and Japanese feminist Iso Abe, an upper-class man who wrote on the quality of American women at the turn-of-the-century.

On the other hand, Ishimoto was also influenced by her time spent in the Peeresses' School starting in 1902 at the age of five. The Peeresses' School was for girls of the overthrown feudal aristocracy and wealthy, well-connected families and was founded by the Empress of Japan in 1892.<sup>15</sup> It served to educate and indoctrinate these wealthy and noble girl-children into Japan's increasingly conservative views of womanhood and femininity, which were increasingly supported by state policy.

Unlike in the United States, Japan was relatively homogeneous but overtly-rank conscious. Women's historical experience of womanhood had more to do with their social class and age than with race, religion, or ethnicity.<sup>16</sup> Before the Meiji Restoration, women's roles and freedoms varied greatly by social class. However, by the late nineteenth century, virtues once held only for aristocratic women: frugality, courage, modesty, literacy, hardwork, and productivity, described as the Cult of Productivity by Sharon Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings and epitomized by the phrase *ryosai kenbo* (Good wife, wise mother)<sup>17</sup>, applied for all classes of women by law. However, Nolte and Hasting warn not to confuse the Cult of Productivity with Cult of Domesticity. In Japan the home was considered a public place. Public and private distinction blurred as the family was considered building block of the national culture, making woman a sort of

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<sup>15</sup> Hopper, 4

<sup>16</sup> Bernstein, 2-3

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 151

civil servant.<sup>18</sup> Legal support for this ideology came from Meiji Civil Code of 1898, whereby women were legally subordinate to men. The code made it so that a woman needed her husband permission for legal contracts, a wife's adultery but not the husband's was legal grounds for both divorce and criminal prosecution, and fathers had full legal rights over children. It is important to note, however, that opposed to the Victorian ethos it was not innate biology through sex that mandated this legal position, but a state policy that called for efficiency in familial roles.<sup>19</sup>

In 1914, at the age of seventeen, Shizue married the young Baron Keikichi Ishimoto, who was a disciple of Dr. Nitobe, and also a friend of Tsurumi. It is important to note that Christianity in Japan in the early twentieth century was largely connected to socialism and was considered radical. Japan became absorbed into the war in 1914 along with the European powers; however, during the war radicalism in Japan proliferated. A new sense of working-class proletariat pride overran the previous middle-class elite status quo. It was not until the 1920's, after bohemian New York had fallen, that Japanese radicalism began to break apart. The Japanese government began to take steps to subvert radical thought and action, mostly in the form of a propagandist education program that inundated Japanese youth with even stronger notions of *kokutai* (national unity and superiority) than applied in the previous period.

It was after this exposure to radicalism that Keikichi Ishimoto decided to move to New York. Although Christine Stansell and others have posited that World War I signified the end of true modernism in New York<sup>20</sup> and although concurrently

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<sup>18</sup> Bernstein, 8

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 8

<sup>20</sup> Stansell, 313

possibilities in Tokyo became limited this study argues that this is reflective of a change as opposed to a breakdown. According to Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick, World War I was a turning point which signaled changes not a break down in art, activism, and intellectual pursuits. The New Art was accepted even outside the avant-garde, open-ended psychology was institutionalized, and the New Politics fell under even greater fragmentation as radicals fell under greater suppression.<sup>21</sup>

Once considered the center of bohemianism, feminism was changing as well. With the addition of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, feminists moved away from messy definitions gender equality and became more concerned with legal rights.<sup>22</sup> Through analyzing the central role of Neo-Malthusian, feminist, and socialist in dialogue between and about Margaret Sanger and Shizue Ishimoto this study posits that modernism was an essential component of early twentieth century internationalism between New York and Tokyo.

In July of 1919, before Shizue Ishimoto arrived in New York, her husband Keikichi Ishimoto was living in Greenwich Village. He had responded to Agnes Smedley's article "Babies and Imperialism in Japan" by publishing "Young Japan for Birth Control" in *The Birth Control Review*. Smedley had claimed, in her previous article published in June of 1919, that Japanese industrialists and militarists were intent on developing a large population as a source of cheap labor. Ishimoto responded a month later in his article by insisting that it is only the Japanese government that rejects birth control and that "nearly all intelligent young" Japanese are in favor birth control. At the

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<sup>21</sup> Heller and Rudnick, 8

<sup>22</sup> Stansell, 333

end of the editorial he reiterated that he is, as a representative of young Japanese, in favor of birth control, has been sending copies of *The Birth Control Review* back to friends in Japan, and intends to recommend the Neo-Malthusian doctrine of birth control throughout Japan upon his return.<sup>23</sup> In the middle of the article, idealistically invoking the rift between young and old, representative of Japanese modernization versus corrupt pseudo-feudal stagnation Ishimoto writes:

“I think it is my duty to inform Americans that there is a great gap between the ideas of young Japanese and old ones who have prominent positions now. Only the young Japanese can understand the true meaning of democracy, hate militarism, and believe in Birth Control. So I don’t doubt the remarkable change of Japan, especially in spirit, in a few years.”<sup>24</sup>

As a representative in New York of “young” modern Japanese, Ishimoto created his ideal image of young Japan to present to New Yorkers. This image, of course, was not representative of all “intelligent, young” Japanese as the young aristocrat, turned Greenwich Village socialist asserted. Rather it was an essentialized representation of the ideals of a group of mostly educated, middle-class Tokyojin socialists and feminists which Ishimoto used to appeal to the New York socialists and activists with whom he wanted to associate.

Further, in a subsequent paragraph later in the periodical the BCR’s editors confirmed Ishimoto’s statement and representation of Japan that young modern Japanese were socially-conscious, pacifistic, and sexually progressive.<sup>25</sup> This view was thus supported and conveyed in *The Birth Control Review* which was nationally distributed, through the New York publication, to like-minded Americans thus shaping their

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<sup>23</sup> Keikichi Ishimoto. “Young Japan for Birth Control,” *Birth Control Review* 3, No.7 (July, 1919), 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>25</sup> *Birth Control Review*, July 1919, 9

understanding of Japan and the Japanese. The editors continued by listing individual feminists and feminist organizations among “young” Tokyojin and by implying that Americans could learn from their work. The editors of BCR were in part rejecting the Orientalist view of the Japanese that cast Asia as behind the West, especially regarding the progress of women, and simultaneously upholding Orientalism by implying that the older Japanese who represent the government and “official Japan” are backwards. Finally, by universalizing the struggles of the progressive Japanese majority against a small backwards minority in control of the government, the editors’ comments appealed to the socialist and feminist leanings of BCR readers and helped them imagine a universalized “modern” world where people are less divided by national or racial boundaries but by power struggles over class and gender.

As the summer and fall of 1919 passed, Keikichi Ishimoto continued to make connections and inserted himself within radical New York. According to Shizue Ishimoto in an interview conducted in 1985 Keikichi’s radical group included such individuals as Agnes Smedley, William Haywood, and Margaret Sanger.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, although in the BCR editorial Keikichi wrote that he intended to spread the doctrine of birth control through Japan, ultimately it was his wife Shizue Ishimoto who became the “Margaret Sanger of Japan.”

After Keikichi left for Russia, Shizue Ishimoto stayed behind to learn English and stenography. Keikichi had given her Agnes Smedley’s contact information as he wanted to encourage New York socialist friends with whom she could practice English and discourage her from going to the theater or motoring with the Japanese “bourgeoises mesdames” who accompanied their wealthy merchant and bureaucrat husbands in New

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<sup>26</sup> Malia Johnson. In-person Interview with Shizue Kato. Tokyo, 1985)

York.<sup>27</sup> While Keikichi was away Shizue had tea with the Japanese president of the New York branch of the Yokohama Specie Bank. It is important to note that employment in foreign bank branches was a common for the sons of elite Japanese families in the early twentieth century. Like bohemian Japanese writer Nagai Kafu, who was also at one point a banker in New York, these young men were often liberally-minded.

The conversation between the young banker and Shizue Ishimoto quickly shifted to the subject of love and contrasting attitudes of Tokyo and New York women. Echoing sentiment formed by Japanese male intellectuals after the turn-of-the-century, the banker told Ishimoto that New York women were interested in experiencing the freedom to enjoy all aspects of love. It was during this conversation that Ishimoto first heard of Margaret Sanger and her activism to encourage women's control over their own reproductive bodies as well as her views in support of free love.<sup>28</sup>

After the meeting, Ishimoto contacted Smedley and asking if she could be introduced to Sanger. Luckily for Ishimoto, Smedley was in charge of *The Birth Control Review* and the two activists were close friends. Also Sanger had previous interested in both Tokyo and Japan and merging the struggle of American women with that of Japanese women. In her autobiography drawing from her modernistic sentiments for integration she explains that in her early years "I did not agree that East and West could never meet."<sup>29</sup> During Sanger's Mable Dodge salon days, the Sangers lived in an apartment below American sculptor Gertrude Boyle and her Tokyojin poet husband Takeshi Kanno. Through Kanno and Boyle, Sanger met many male Japanese

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<sup>27</sup> Hopper, 9.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 11

<sup>29</sup> Margaret Sanger. *Margaret Sanger: An Autobiography*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1938), 332

intellectuals who espoused similar socialistic, Neo-Malthusian views as Keikichi Ishimoto.

Hearing that Japan was faced with a rising population, while also meeting young educated Tokyo moderns like Keikichi Ishimoto and friends of Kanno/Boyle led Sanger to imagine Japan as an ideal place for Neo-Malthusian practices and birth control. In her autobiography written in the 1930's Sanger explained that "population pressure in Japan would soon create an inevitable explosion." Sanger goes on to explain that, as opposed to the Chinese, the Japanese "reared under German health traditions, were ninety-seven percent literate, and were technically equipped for battle."<sup>30</sup> Thus, Sanger expressed the darker sides of her modern thought, an obvious racial bias towards the strong, healthy, educated "right" type of Asians in line with Sanger's darker aspects Neo-Malthusian doctrine.

It is important to note that Ishimoto's autobiography was not published in Japan. It was published in New York and for American audiences. In the autobiography she did not describe any negative impacts of racism but instead described how well she was treated by Americans in general, New Yorkers specifically. Undoubtedly she would have had negative experiences due to how Asian women were and are still sexualized in American culture. However it is also important to note that Ishimoto was a Japanese Baroness, despite how her husband chose for them to live. Further, several wealthy and aristocratic Japanese did reside in New York in the early twentieth century as ambassadors, students, intellectuals, and businessmen. Ishimoto herself maintained that "many Japanese lived in New York in comfortable apartments enjoying drives, theaters,

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<sup>30</sup> Sanger, 295

and fashionable dresses, but I maintained my simple life.”<sup>31</sup> Therefore, regardless of her “simple life” both Ishimoto’s class and her Greenwich Village socialist/feminist social circle, which we have seen from Sanger’s writing somewhat idealized upper-class Japanese, may have sheltered her from some of the more overt racism experienced Asian women in the United States in the 1920’s.

When Ishimoto and Sanger met over tea on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1920 both already had formed ideas about the other and her respective city and nation. What is curious is that both Ishimoto and Sanger had gender and racial ideas about each other. Ishimoto assumption was that the fierce Margaret Sanger, who had grappled with the law to promote birth control for the betterment of the lives of women and society as a whole, must be a burly mannish woman. This idea was drawn from Western gender ideals popular in Japan at the turn-of-the-century that put innate personality qualities onto physical bodies. She was therefore shocked to find that Sanger had a “delicate little figure with charm of a thoroughly feminine type.”<sup>32</sup> Further invoking Japanese standards of beauty she describes Sanger’s “thick shining hair [that] gave a touch of eternal youth to her appearance.”<sup>33</sup>

Sanger, with obvious eugenics influence, described Ishimoto with an American body ideal. “The Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto [was a] charming, youthful, and gracious matron, tall for her race and equally beautiful by our standards, very smart in American street costume...we quickly became friends and she at once foresaw the possibilities of birth control in bringing Japanese women out of their long suppression in the family

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<sup>31</sup> Baroness Shidzue Ishimoto. *Facing Two Ways: The Story of My Life.* (New York: Farrar & Rhinehart, 1935), 183

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 183

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 183

system. She said she intended to form a league immediately upon her arrival in Tokyo, and did so in 1921.”<sup>34</sup>

We have thus far discussed Ishimoto’s 1919-1920 trip to the New York. The rest of the paper will focus on analyzing dialogue surrounding Sanger’s 1922 trip to Tokyo. First it is important to establish that Sanger and Ishimoto, in addition to both working to advocate birth control and family planning in their respective cities and nations in the 1920’s, were also close friends with immense respect for each other. Ishimoto was on Sanger’s Christmas list almost every year from 1922 through the 1950’s. Further, in letters to other friends Sanger describes Ishimoto with great interest. For example, to Sanger’s “Beloved Havelock”: “Baroness Ishimoto will be over here soon to lecture & I’ll find out more about the scandal.”<sup>35</sup> The “scandal” is in reference to Ishimoto’s love affair with Japanese socialist leader Kanju Kato, whom Ishimoto later married. Then later to “Havelock dearest”: “Yesterday I had fifty people in to tea for Baroness Ishimoto who is visiting me & studying clinics so as to establish them in Japan. She is lovely & in native costume makes a delightful impression. She lectures in English & gets paid too even though it’s the depression. She wants to arrange for the next international conference on birth control to be held in Tokio and it may be possible to do this in 1934.”<sup>36</sup> Although, it is unknown whether Ellis and Ishimoto were formally acquainted, it is telling of the interest of all three in Neo-Malthusianism that Sanger writes to her eugenics mentor and former lover about Ishimoto.

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<sup>34</sup> Sanger, 296

<sup>35</sup> Margaret Sanger to Havelock Ellis, September 30, 1932, box 29, folder 5, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

<sup>36</sup> Margaret Sanger to Havelock Ellis, November 29, 1932, box 29, folder 5, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA.

According to Ishimoto, by the time she returned to Tokyo in 1921, she had “accumulated discontent with the theories and practices surviving from feudalism helped to turn my face towards modernism.”<sup>37</sup> Once back in her own nation she fiercely followed her interest in promoting sexual freedom, birth control, and woman’s rights. She began working with many of Tokyo’s feminist “New Women,” some of whom she was already acquainted to promote birth-control, socialism, and also to overturn Japan’s law against women’s public political demonstration and organization. Most of these women were from the upper-classes, like Ishimoto, and many were also connected to New York. For example, the socialist women’s organization Red Wave Society leader and historian Kikue Yamakawa, celebrated feminist novelist Yuriko Chujo who had also recently returned from New York City, Blue-Stocking Society writer and feminist Yosano Akiko were all companions. With these and other like-minded men and women Ishimoto created their own intellectual and activist circles in Tokyo called *Raishokai* (Coming of Light Society).<sup>38</sup>

Ishimoto also opened a small yarn shop in Tokyo where the group met and whose profits went to aiding Soviet Russia.<sup>39</sup> Further she wrote articles for liberal minded Japanese women’s periodicals like *Shufu no tomo* (House wife’s friend). In 1921 she sent an essay to New York to be published in the *Birth Control Review*.<sup>40</sup> These activities earned her a negative reputation with the conservative Japanese state as “Madame Control” which she did not fail to capitalize on. With feminist historian Kikue Yamakawa, as New York connected socialist friends such as Iso Abe and Kanju Kato, the

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<sup>37</sup> Ishimoto, 369

<sup>38</sup> Hopper, 29

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 19

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 22

Ishimoto's formed the Birth Control Study Society and began a periodical called *Small Family*.<sup>41</sup> Ishimoto was also a supporter of Havelock Ellis' views on sexuality.

Therefore both the Society and its publication were steeped in Neo-Malthusianism. Birth control education based on "scientific study" of family limitation, and its relationship to a more prosperous and healthy society, was key to their views. According to Ishimoto, "young Japan decided that Mrs. Sanger must be interesting and discussed her and her theories exhaustively."<sup>42</sup> Again, it is important to note that the Ishimotos as well as the other members of this society were all educated, upper-class young Japanese.

In 1922, Margaret Sanger came to Tokyo to lecture on birth control and stayed with Shizue Ishimoto. In 1920 the liberal and western-leaning Kaizo publication had established a five year program to host one outstanding world figure a year to lecture in Tokyo. In 1922, Tokyojin sculptor Eitaro Ishigaki, who supported birth control and had previously stayed in New York City and was acquainted with both Sanger and Smedley, forwarded Sanger's name to Kaizo.<sup>43</sup>

In her autobiography, Sanger described her trip by saying that "nothing else in my travels could compare to that month in Tokyo."<sup>44</sup> Initially upon arrival in Tokyo, however, Sanger was denied entry into the country. Later this was sorted out by the Ishimoto and Kaizo although Sanger was permitted entry only on the condition that she would not lecture on birth control, an order which she promptly ignored. Further, according to Ishimoto in her autobiography the Japanese government and media referred

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<sup>41</sup> Hopper, 26

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 227

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, 23.

<sup>44</sup> Sanger, 333

to Margaret Sanger as Sangai-san which means person destructive to production.<sup>45</sup> In Japan, during the 1920's, the state policy was geared towards supporting industrialism and growth, which included promoting high birth rates. Therefore, from the perspective of these conservatives, Sanger's Neo-Malthusian activism made her destructive to the production of not just children but to the growth of Japan.

One of the most interesting encounters, written about by both Sanger and Ishimoto, was Sanger speech at the Peers Club. The Peers Club was a gentleman's club for graduates of the Peers school, a school for wealthy and aristocratic young Tokyojin men. These men were young, educated and liberal minded. Sanger described Japan as the only place where men were more interested in birth-control than women.<sup>46</sup>

Interestingly, Ishimoto in her autobiography again invokes gender ideals and the body to explain that "no woman, foreign or native, had ever been so well received by Japanese men as was Mrs. Sanger. The modest, ladylike tone of her voice was something of a surprise to the Japanese, who had expected to see a huge aggressive-mannered person fussing blatantly with them about their habits."<sup>47</sup>

According to Sanger, the Peers Club's modern men seemed most interested in how birth control could help improve their fulfillment in relationships with women. According to Sanger, they expressed dissatisfaction with the Japanese tradition of prostitution and geishas on one hand and on wives whose place was definitely in the home on the other. "They asked 'Is it not true that American women can be all things to

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<sup>45</sup> Ishimoto, 226

<sup>46</sup> Sanger, 329.

<sup>47</sup> Ishimoto, 228

her husband—his companion, mother of his children, mistress, business manager, and friends?’”<sup>48</sup>

Interestingly, this echoes Christine Simmons sentiment on the sexism inherent in the “New Sexuality.” Simmons explains that “the new morality gestured in the direction of equality for women but effectively sustained the cultural power of men, focusing that power in the arena of sexuality.”<sup>49</sup> A very contentious figure in both New York and in Tokyo, the radical New Woman addressed issues of sexuality openly and believed that a fully democratic society could not exist without sexual equality for men and women.<sup>50</sup> However deviant this freedom was considered by its opponents, it was focused onto heterosexual relationships and new behaviors within heterosexual marriage.

“Heterosexual intimacy and sexual freedom were central to redefining a world in which both women and men could have love and meaningful work while helping to shape a more humane social and economic system.”<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, even though New Men supported New Women’s “freedom”, it was under their control and for their gain.

“Seeking a New Woman who would give them the best of all possible worlds, they wanted a lover who was always available to fulfill their sexual needs; a mother to provide them with emotional security they lost when they abandoned their middle-class roots; a muse to inspire them to world-transforming political and aesthetic feats.”<sup>52</sup>

In 1923, soon after returning from her trip to promote birth control in Japan, Margaret Sanger wrote the never published article “The New Women of Japan.” The article gave insight into what Japan meant to Sanger and other feminists in the network’s

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<sup>48</sup> Sanger, 329.

<sup>49</sup> Simmons, 172

<sup>50</sup> Rudnick, 77

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, 71

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 78

struggle. As with the editorial from *The Birth Control Review*, Sanger's paper rejects Orientalism in a modernistic attempt to universalize the experience of women internationally. "Too long have we been told and shown...how different [the women of Japan] are from our own flappers and feminists... It is my conviction, strengthened by a limited but intensified visit to the 'land of the cherry blossom', that it is our first duty to find out, not how mysteriously Oriental the Japanese are, but how alike fundamentally they are to the rest of us."<sup>53</sup> According to Sanger, it is the Orientalized role of the Japanese woman as an exotic romanticized object, constructed and perpetuated through Western art and theater, that has lead American women not to realize their unity and shared struggle with Japanese women. She goes further in the article to blame industrialism for the difficulties faced by both American and Japanese women.

In "Towards a Definition of American Modernism", Daniel Joseph Singal asserts that American modernism attempted to reconnect what Victorianism had torn asunder through a passion for "superintegration", integrating seemingly disparate people and ideas, as opposed to disintegration that attempted to heal sharp divisions in class, race, and gender.<sup>54</sup> While this might be an overly idealistic view of modernism, certain aspects of Singal's theory can be witnessed in Sanger's unpublished article in her attempt to use class, gender, and race to fuse together the American and Japanese woman's experience through a their complex problems generated by industrialism. Further connecting Tokyo and New York it is interesting that in the article, Sanger cited a somewhat idealized version of Japan's early matriarchal history written by Tokyo's socialist woman historian

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<sup>53</sup> Margaret Sanger. "The New Japanese Women" (unpublished paper) 1923.

<sup>54</sup> Singal, 12

Kikuye Yamakawa, a member of the infamous New Woman's group *Seito* (Bluestockings).

Although Sanger rejected Orientalism outright in this article and sought to integrate the experiences of Japanese women and American women there is still an Orientalist quality to her writing. Both in her autobiography and in the unpublished article Sanger's discussion of Japanese women hinges on the exotic. She eloquently painted an exotic picture of the Japanese woman through her traditional costume and parallels those "native" clothes with the Japanese woman's place in society. In her autobiography she insisted that "the woman of Japan would discard her beautiful costume or sacrifice her esthetic sense upon the altar of Occidental progress and materialism. The kimono was her chrysalis. Outwardly it was often of some thick serviceable goods, dull brown or black...yet underneath were silks of the brightest and most flaming hues. They were symbolic of her present position in society."<sup>55</sup>

It is important to note that these words were published in Sanger's autobiography which was intended for American, not Japanese, audiences. Japan in the 1920's was continuing its efforts on industrial and geographical expansion and promoting self-sacrifice to the greater state as an important ethos. Because Western clothing was cheaper as it uses less fabric, during the 1920's it was largely promoted by the state and adopted by Japanese women.<sup>56</sup> As the state was promoting policies to discourage the use of expensive, luxurious colorful outer kimonos they were less in vogue whereas before the 1920's they were the norm.<sup>57</sup> Therefore the dull kimonos covering more luxuriant slips that Sanger witnessed in the 1920's were reflective of these social and political

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<sup>55</sup> Sanger, 331

<sup>56</sup> Liza Dalby. *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*. (London: Random House, 1993), 142

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 141

changes and not representative of traditional culture as Sanger describes them. However, eloquent the writing, it is important to understand the Orientalizing character of Sanger's misunderstanding of the Japanese kimono and her insistence in using it to create an exotic image of a Japanese woman needing emancipation to appeal to American audiences.

In the wake of World War I socialistically leaning feminists Shizue Ishimoto and Margaret Sanger further shaped the transnational dialogue regarding gender and sexuality, around the issues of birth control and Neo-Malthusianism, free love, and feminism. The previously Japanese middle-class intellectual male-dominated network focused on defining their ideals in terms of gender roles and sexuality within the private sphere. As this network changed to one with more female participation, it became more focused on public feminist and socialist activism.

## VII. Conclusion

In the 1920's and early 1930's the network in New York City and Tokyo still held on to the modernistic roots that had created it at the turn-of-the-century and the two cities still share relevance to each other. However, through the relationships between Margaret Sanger, Shizue Ishimoto and other American and Japanese social activists, that dialogue became less focused on art and literature, as it had been during the peak of bohemianism, and instead focused instead around gender and sexuality through the relevance of birth control and Neo-Malthusianism to feminists in both Tokyo and New York. As World War II approached and passed, changes occurred in both Tokyo and New York politically and culturally that would not alter the Sanger/Ishimoto friendship but that did challenge the centrality of Neo-Malthusianism to their feminist dialogue.

Winnifred Eaton left New York for Calgary during the wake of World War I while Bohemia was being broken apart. While popular in her day for her Orientalized romantic fiction centered on the possibilities interracial love, which contained veiled discussions on both the New Woman and on American imperialism, she was later lambasted in academia for being a race-traitor and Orientalist.

While Kafu was also a popular writer in his day, even receiving the prestigious Imperial Cultural Decoration in 1952,<sup>1</sup> now his short stories are hard to find in print and no longer carry literary weight with Japanese or American scholars. Instead, his urban realist work is demoted to a secondary place in terms of literary scholarship after more Japan-focused romanticist and naturalist authors like Mori Ogai and Natsume Soseki, of

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<sup>1</sup> Seidensticker, 137

the same time period. Unlike the unrestrained, eccentric individualist Kafu, these more conservative authors more often depict the negative, painful side of Western modernism in Japan rather than depicting New York and other American cities as imagined spaces of curiosity. Kafu's fall from grace is illuminating because it demonstrates that with advent of the World Wars, possibilities once realizable in bohemian New York were no longer available and that these changes had implications beyond the United States.

In the early twentieth century both the United States and Japan were going through modernizing changes that would shape the course both nations would take during the decades that followed. While artists and intellectuals in New York and Tokyo handled modernization at times with different expectations and ideals, the importance of the role of women and gender relationships were central to intellectual movements in both urban spaces. Daniel T. Rodgers wrote in *Atlantic Crossings*: "Even the most isolated of nations-states is a semipermeable container, washed over by forces originating far beyond its shores." Thus, through emphasizing the importance of bohemian New York to kindai Tokyo, and Tokyo to modern New York, this study has posited that cities are best understood as not isolated by socially constructed geographical boundaries, but as connected circuits of ideas and possibilities.

Through exploring Nagai Kafu's Occidentalist images of bold and unrestrained New York women and egalitarian American relationships, Winnifred Eaton's Orientalized but individualistic and ambitious Japanese women and idealized interracial relationships between Japanese and Americans, *The Cheat's* linking of luxuriant Japan with consumerist New York, and the feminist struggles of Margaret Sanger and Shizue Ishimoto, the relationship between Tokyo and New York is illuminated and both spaces

can now be viewed as part an evolving transnational exchange. For early twentieth century American and Japanese intellectuals, artists, and social critics, New York and Tokyo were more than just places on a map; they were constructed spaces that opened a set of possibilities seemingly unattainable elsewhere.

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## APPENDIX

Figure 1. John Sloan, *Sunday Afternoon in Union Square*, 1912.



Figure 2. *Haymarket* 1907 (John Sloan)



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