The Other Women's Lib
Julia C. Bullock

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Notes

Introduction


3. By “radical feminism,” I mean attempts to remake social or ideological structures that define normative gender roles, with the intent of altering Japanese society at its core. This distinguishes it from the “housewife feminism” of the same period, which advocated for certain social reforms (such as consumer protection) that would benefit women through an improvement of family life. Housewife-feminist activists tended to work within, rather than against, normative constructions of gender by emphasizing their moral authority as mothers. As this study is devoted to discursive attempts to alter gender roles and identities beyond that of the “good wife, wise mother,” I am obviously more concerned with radical feminist discourse. For a thorough study of the historical development of housewife feminism in prewar Japan, see Akiko Tokuza, The Rise of the Feminist Movement in Japan (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 1999). For the early postwar decades, see chapter 6 of Vera Mackie’s Feminism in Modern Japan: Citizenship, Embodiment, and Sexuality (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).


5. For example, Kurahashi Yumiko, one of the most important and critically acclaimed writers of this generation, wrote scathing critiques of the intellectual paucity of New Left political movements, even as she attempted in her own way to force readers to question reigning common sense about properly masculine and feminine gender identities.

7. Kurahashi debuted in 1960 with the short story “Paritei” (Parutai). Kōno had been writing for some time before this but did not earn much critical attention until the publication of her short story “Toddler-Hunting” (Yōjigari) in 1961. Takahashi first began publishing in 1965 with the story “Glitter” (Kirameki). All three of these stories are available in English translation (see the works cited).


**Chapter 1: Party Crashers and Poison Pens**


2. The United States had begun pressuring Japan to remilitarize even before the Occupation ended, resulting in the creation of a National Police Reserve that evolved into what is currently known as the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in 1954. This U.S. pressure for remilitarization was highly ironic in light of the fact that the new (American-authored) Japanese constitution prominently featured a renunciation of all forms of aggressive military force (Article 9).

3. Socialist Party members who tried to obstruct the vote were physically removed from the Diet building on the orders of Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke, and when the rest of the socialists boycotted the session, the LDP passed the bill anyway over strenuous protests not just from the opposition parties, but also from a large portion of the Japanese citizenry. Large-scale riots ensued, and Kishi was forced to step down as the news media criticized him for precipitating this “crisis for parliamentary democracy.” Takafusa Nakamura, *A History of Shōwa Japan, 1926–1989*, trans. Edwin Whenmouth (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1998), 347.

4. Early postwar victories by organized labor had been undermined first by the Occupation’s “reverse course” and then by increasingly cozy relations between the Japanese government and business interests throughout the 1950s. As Japan transitioned from coal to oil as its primary source of fuel for industry, there was a rash of mine closures and cutbacks. At Miike these included the involuntary “retirement” of selected workers. When it became evident that a disproportionate
number of union leaders had been targeted for retirement, a strike was called, leading to a lockout of unionized workers.

5. Tipton, 166.

6. Gordon, A Modern History of Japan, 279. Ikeda’s plan cannot be solely credited for these changes, as the trend toward high economic growth actually began in 1950, with the onset of the Korean War. Japan’s strategic location, not to mention its role as subordinate nation under the Occupation by the United States (and later as ally under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty), made it the logical choice as a supply base for U.S. troops during that conflict. Japan’s growth should also be seen against a backdrop of global economic growth facilitated by booming international trade. See ibid., 246.

7. Tipton, 169, 177.

8. Ibid., 170, 182.


12. For more on this ideology of femininity, see Uno.

13. For a thorough explanation of this term, see Foucault, The History of Sexuality, 139–145.


17. Ibid., 5–6.

18. See ibid., chapter 5, for an overview of these movements.


20. See Norgren, chapter 7, on the politics surrounding legalization of the pill.

21. The cooperation of the male partner is obviously true of condoms because of the nature of the method. Additionally, a male partner’s consent was legally required before an abortion could be performed.


23. Ryang, 69.

24. Ibid., 88.

26. Ibid., 471.

27. Ibid., 476.

28. See, for example, her reminiscences of this time in Takahashi Kazumi no omoide, discussed below under “Texts and Contexts.”

29. For example, Atsuko Kameda finds that as late as 1975, Japanese school textbooks in various subjects were riddled with portrayals of boys and girls in stereotypically gender-coded behavior, informally indoctrinating students into their future roles as appropriately gendered men and women. See Atsuko Kameda, “Sexism and Gender Stereotyping in Schools,” in Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda, Japanese Women, 112–113.

30. Ibid., 111. As Sally Hastings notes, girls growing up in the United States at this time would have experienced a similarly sex-segregated vocational curriculum (personal communication).

31. Kameda, 112.


34. Ibid., 281.


36. Ibid., 102.


38. Ibid., 447.


40. Ibid., 11–12.


42. “Ichiyō had to rewrite her submissions until they struck [mentor Nakarai] Tōsui as appropriately feminine.” Rebecca Copeland, Lost Leaves: Women Writers of Meiji Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2000), 44.

44. The characterization of Sono’s writing is taken from Sachiko Schierbeck, *Japanese Women Novelists in the 20th Century* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, Museum Tusculanum, 1994), 133.

45. Chieko M. Ariga, “Text Versus Commentary: Struggles over the Cultural Meanings of ‘Woman,’” in Schalow and Walker, *The Woman’s Hand*. Ariga demonstrates that *kaisetsu*, or explanatory essays appended to the paperback editions that were responsible for bringing women’s work to a mass audience, frequently served to neutralize feminist literary challenges to the status quo. She specifically addresses *kaisetsu* that accompanied the publication of the work of Takahashi and Kōno.

46. Chieko M. Ariga, “Who’s Afraid of Amino Kiku? Gender Conflict and the Literary Canon,” in Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda, *Japanese Women*. Ariga demonstrates how such gendered expectations of women’s literary production worked to exclude one popular prewar writer from the canon. According to Ariga, Amino Kiku (1900–1978), a writer of “semi-autobiographical fiction” and a contemporary of more well-known writers like Miyamoto Yuriko, was apparently quite popular with mainstream audiences and was rewarded with literary prizes and critical acclaim. Yet today she is largely unknown because she was almost uniformly excluded from all the major volumes of collected works that have secured the lasting reputations of many of her contemporaries. Ariga attributes this neglect to Amino’s consistent portrayal of female protagonists who are completely independent of relationships with men, as well as her depiction of female bodily experiences in frank, unsentimental, and sometimes grotesque ways that alienated male critics.

47. The term *zenshū* refers to any collection of works by a single author or group of authors, but here I am referring to large anthologies such as *Nihon kindai bungaku taikei*. These collections present themselves as a selection of the best literature published during a period of time (anywhere from specific eras such as “Shōwa literature” to all-inclusive periods like “modern Japan”). As such, they purport to determine for posterity which works of literature survive as “timeless” and which ones are quickly forgotten.


52. Ibid., 92–93.

53. To the End of the Heavens is one obvious example of this type of story.


56. Davinder L. Bhowmik, “Kōno Taeko,” in Modern Japanese Writers, edited by Jay Rubin (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2001), 171. Enemy cultural products were banned during the height of the Pacific War conflict. The work of the Brontë sisters, in particular, would profoundly influence her later development as a writer.

57. The decision to draft young unmarried women was also consistent with government policy to preserve the integrity of the family unit by keeping married women with children at home. See Sandra Buckley, “Altered States: The Body Politics of ‘Being-Woman,’” in Postwar Japan as History, edited by Andrew Gordon (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 365.

58. For a brief account of such disciplinary regimes, see “Japan in Wartime,” chapter 12 of Gordon, A Modern History of Japan.

59. For readers who cannot read Japanese, see “Full Tide” (Michishio, 1964), translated by Lucy North, in Toddler-Hunting and Other Stories (New York: New Directions, 1996). Other stories that treat this topic are “Inside the Fence” (Hei no naka, 1962) and “Distant Summer” (Tōi natsu, 1964). Both are included in volume one of Kōno’s untranslated collected works, Kōno Taeko zenshū (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1994).

60. Indeed, most families saw college attendance for young women as a means of improving their marriage prospects rather than preparing them for any sort of career, and in this sense Kōno’s family may be seen as typical of the mainstream opinion regarding gender-appropriate life choices. See Chizuko Uema, “Resisting Sadomasochism in Kōno Taeko” (PhD dissertation, University of Oregon, 1998), 9–10.

61. In English, see “Crabs” (Kani, 1963), “Toddler-Hunting” (Yōjigari, 1961), and “Ants Swarm” (Ari takaru, 1966) in North. “On the Examining Room Table” (Utena ni noru, 1965) and “The Next Day” (Akuru hi, 1965), in volume two of Kōno’s collected works, also deal with these themes.


64. Several scholars have noted a progression in Kōno’s literature from protagonists who play the masochist role in her early works to those who take up the role of sadist in later stories. Some interpret these themes as a metaphor for women’s subordinate role in Japanese society and see her heroines’ eventual
assumption of roles of power (as opposed to submission) in later works as a kind of literary closure of this theme, illustrating women’s liberation from the bounds of patriarchal oppression. One example of this type of interpretation is Uema.

65. Other prestigious prizes included the Tanizaki Jun’ichirō Award (for Ichinen no bokka, 1980) and the Noma Literary Award (for Miratorī rōkitan, 1991). Kōno’s work has appeared in anthologies such as the Nihon bungaku zenshū (Collection of Japanese Literature, Kawade shobō shinsha, 1971); Gen-dai bungaku taikai (Compendium of Contemporary Literature, Chikuma shobō, 1968, 1977); and Shōwa bungaku zenshū (Shōwa Era Literature Collection, Shōgakukan, 1987).

68. As recalled in Takahashi’s 1975 essay, “Coeducation” (Danjo kyōgaku), in Kioku no kurasa (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 1977). This is echoed in other essays in this volume and in Takahashi Takako, Tamashii no innu (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1975).
69. Takahashi, Takahashi Kazumi no omoide, 92. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in the book are mine.
70. This information is compiled from anecdotal evidence in Takahashi Kazumi no omoide (ibid.), a memoir recounting their married life together until Kazumi’s premature death from cancer in 1971, and from Takahashi’s self-authored personal chronology at the end of her selected works: Takahashi Takako, “Jihitsu nenpu,” in Takahashi Takako jisen shōsetsu shū (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1994).
71. See, for example, “Doll Love” (Ningyōai, 1976), “Secret Rituals” (Higi, 1978), and The House of Rebirth (Yomigaeri no ie, 1980). While the stories that depict Takahashi’s fascination with this particular theme fall temporally outside the parameters of this study, Maryellen Mori has published extensively on this topic; see “The Quest for Jouissance in Takahashi Takako’s Texts,” in Schalow and Walker, The Woman’s Hand, and “The Liminal Male as Liberatory Figure in Japanese Women’s Fiction,” Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies 60, no. 2 (2000).
72. Having completed a graduation thesis on Baudelaire in 1954, which stimulated her interest in philosophical problems of good and evil, Takahashi immersed herself in a study of the works of François Mauriac, which led her to complete a master’s thesis on this author in 1958. Some of her first publications were in fact not works of literature but literary criticism of authors like Mauriac and Endō Shūsaku, who grappled with such questions from a Catholic perspective. She later devoted herself to translation of Mauriac’s story Thérèse Desqueyroux (published in 1963), a tale of a woman who tries to poison her husband and comes face to face with the evil impulses that lurk beneath the surface of her everyday life.
73. Yonaha, 35.

76. NHK, the Japanese national television network, is functionally equivalent to the BBC in the United Kingdom.

77. Sakaki, “Kurahashi Yumiko’s Negotiations with the Fathers,” 311.

78. See, for example, “Like a Witch” (Yōjo no yō ni, 1964), in which “femininity” is explicitly defined as thoroughly subsuming oneself in love for a man. The protagonist’s writing career begins, she says, when she loses the ability to love men and therefore “stops being a woman”; her ability to write originates from the “third eye,” which develops at the site where her “female parts” shrivel away (*Kurahashi Yumiko zensakuhin*, vol. 4, 247–248).

79. A remarkable exception to this trend is “Virginia,” an unusually (for Kurahashi) realistic story loosely based on her stay in the United States, written just after her return to Japan. In this story the author seems to be working through some of her own anxieties regarding her conflicting identities of wife/mother and published author. For more on this work, see Julia C. Bullock, “We’ll Always Have Iowa: Gender and National Identity in Kurahashi Yumiko’s ‘Virginia,’” *Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies* (PAJLS) 7 (2007).


81. Ibid., 93.

82. For a thorough account of the vituperative debates surrounding *Blue Journey* and subsequent works, see Sakaki, “Kurahashi Yumiko’s Negotiations with the Fathers.”


Chapter 2: The Masculine Gaze as Disciplinary Mechanism


2. Ibid., 228.


5. Gordon, A Modern History of Japan, 221.

6. For example, Garon notes the role of home inspections by grassroots New Life Association activists in campaigns to inculcate frugality and resource conservation as late as the 1980s (175). Likewise, in “Managing the Japanese Household,” Gordon notes that such home visits were also integral in the movement’s promotion of birth control (444–445), as well as intervention into family disputes (435–436), demonstrating the degree to which outside surveillance penetrated to the most intimate corners of women’s lives.


9. Kasumigaseki is a neighborhood in Tokyo where the headquarters of Japanese government bureaucracies are located, and the name of the area itself is used metonymically to refer to this seat of administrative power, just as “Wall Street” is used to refer to the center of financial power in the United States.

10. Takahashi Takako, “Getting on the Wrong Train” (Jōsha sakugo), in Hone no shiro (Kyoto: Jinbun shoin, 1972), 221–222. Subsequent page citations will appear parenthetically.


13. This is not to suggest that only women are subordinated to disciplinary mechanisms that produce them as gendered subjects. While a definitive conclusion regarding the production of masculine gender identity is clearly unwarranted.
given the parameters of this study, I hypothesize that men are likewise subjected to a different type of societally inflicted gaze that polices their behavior and crafts them into appropriately “masculine” subjects. Take, for example, the scene in Mishima Yukio’s *Confessions of a Mask*, in which the young male protagonist dresses in his mother’s clothes and performs in drag for an audience of friends and family, only to be made to understand, via the horrified looks in the eyes of his loved ones, that his behavior and desires are “abnormal.”

**Chapter 3: Feminist Misogyny? or How I Learned to Hate My Body**


2. Kōno Taeko, “Bone Meat,” in North, *Toddler-Hunting*, 259. As “Bone Meat” is one of two stories analyzed in this book that exist in English translation and since the translated version of this story is widely used and cited in English-language scholarship, I have opted to quote from this version rather than provide my own translations of the original. Subsequent page citations will appear parenthetically and are from the translation by Lucy Lower so that English readers can easily locate the quoted passages.


4. This notion of being impregnated by his gaze is eerily reminiscent of the denouement of Takahashi’s “Getting on the Wrong Train,” where the eyes of the young boy likewise “take up residence” inside the protagonist in the final lines of the story.

5. While the inclusion of “female Diet members” in this list of abhorrent types may sound far from the Western idea of a feminine stereotype, in the Japanese context, “housewife feminism” gave certain women license to participate in politics on the condition that they did so on the basis of their moral authority as wives and mothers. Many female Diet members in the first few postwar decades ran on such platforms. One example of this “feminine” approach to politics is Ichikawa Fusae; though Ichikawa herself ironically did not marry or have children, she rose to power on a platform that embraced “housewife-feminist” issues as central to social reform. The symbol of her campaign for inclusion in this predominantly male-dominated structure of authority was the rice ladle, evocative of home and hearth, and a mother’s “natural” instinct to nurture. Another example would be Oku Mumeo, who is said to have lobbied male Diet members with a baby on her back even before women were legally granted the right to vote. For more on “housewife feminism,” see Tokuza.

7. For example, Watashi seems to sense the purpose of the man’s “training” without being told (8), and the old man expresses the reason for Watashi’s wandering city streets in exactly the same language she uses to narrate it, even though there is no evidence that she has explained her motivation to him (12).

**Chapter 4: Odd Bodies**


1. Ibid., 72.

2. Kōno Taeko, “Toddler-Hunting,” 45–46. Because this text is available in English, I have chosen to cite from the translation by Lucy North so that English readers can readily locate the passages in question. All page numbers are from the translated version and will henceforth appear parenthetically.


4. This is not to say that boys are not in fact also coercively inscribed with signifiers of masculinity as they develop into young men. I have no doubt that this is true, but it is not recognized by the text, devoted as it is to detailing the restrictive practices of feminine discipline.


6. White and red are fairly conventional signifiers for masculine and feminine respectively in Japanese society.

7. The renewal of ANPO, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, in 1960, the year this story was written, caused the largest mass demonstration in Japanese history as citizens from all sectors of society, led by student activists and left-wing political parties, rioted outside the Diet building while the conservative ruling party forced passage of the ratification of the treaty. (See chapter 1.)

8. “Anti-world” is Kurahashi’s own term for the narrative universe depicted by her literature. Atsuko Sakaki describes it in the following terms: “The relationship between the ‘Anti-world’ and the ‘real’ world is [such that]…the former is not a representation of the latter, and yet it is a deformed version of the latter, and thus subject to it.” Sakaki, “The Intertextual Novel and the Interrelational Self,” 9. See below for more on this term as it applies to Kurahashi’s critique of binary models of gender.


10. Irigaray, 72.
Chapter 5: The Body of the Other Woman

1. Here, the term “Other Woman” is meant to signify that the character in question is “not-self”—that is, a character different from the female protagonist in some fundamental way that prevents complete understanding or intimacy between the two characters, in spite of the fact that they are both women and assumed to be fundamentally similar. The concept of the “Other Woman” thus serves as an ironic critique of theories of gender difference that present Woman as a monolithic category that is sexually Other (and implicitly inferior) to Man.

2. Gregory M. Pflugfelder, “‘S’ Is for Sister: Schoolgirl Intimacy and ‘Same-Sex Love’ in Early Twentieth-Century Japan,” in Molony and Uno, Gendering Modern Japanese History. Pflugfelder notes that usage of the term “S,” used to denote such passionate female friendships, persisted well into the 1960s in Japan (174–175). This would suggest that the phenomenon it described continued roughly up to the time that lesbian activists who emerged from the “women’s lib” movement began to organize in more visible and explicitly politicized ways (see below).

3. Mark McLelland, Queer Japan: From the Pacific War to the Internet Age (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

4. Ibid., 93. In making this statement, I do not mean to suggest that lesbians did not exist in Japan before the 1970s. However, it is clear from the difficulties recounted by Japanese lesbians seeking partners in the decades prior to the “women’s lib” movement that outside of the perverse press described by McLelland, lesbians were virtually invisible to mainstream Japanese society. It appears that it was only with the creation of Wakakusa no Kai, considered to be the first lesbian organization in Japan, in 1971, and subsequent efforts by lesbian women’s lib activists later in the decade to produce publications aimed explicitly at the emerging lesbian community, that information about lesbianism as a distinct form of sexuality and lifestyle choice became more readily available, even to women seeking to build networks of like-minded women. See Sharon Chalmers, Emerging Lesbian Voices from Japan (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), and Mark McLelland, Katsuhiko Suganuma, and James Welker, eds., Queer Voices from Japan: First-Person Narratives from Japan’s Sexual Minorities (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007).

5. I have written about such triangular relationships in Takahashi’s literature at length elsewhere; see Julia C. Bullock, “Fantasizing What Happens ‘When the Goods Get Together’: Female Homoeroticism as Literary Trope,” Positions 14, no. 3 (2006).

7. “Christmas cake” is a rather callous expression for an unmarried woman past the age of twenty-five. Like the sweet for which they are named, such women tended not to “sell” (on the marriage market) after the twenty-fifth. This expression has rapidly fallen out of use in recent years as Japanese women have prolonged the average age of first marriage well into the thirties.

8. For other stories dealing with this theme, see also “Final Moments” (Saigo no toki, 1966) and “Snow” (Yuki, 1962), translated by North in Toddler-Hunting.


10. Ibid., 155. The character for “woman,” used along with kanojo (she) as the only appellations given to the female other in this story, is written accompanied by a phonetic equivalent instructing the reader to pronounce it as hito, which likewise seems to imply an erotic relationship between the women. (Phrases like ano hito, or “that person,” are commonly used as euphemisms for a lover or significant other. Kanojo, of course, can also be used to refer to one’s girlfriend.)

11. This is in marked contrast to the penetrative gesture of Watashi’s carving her initial into the woman’s body at the conclusion of the story. While the diffuse eroticism of these homoerotic encounters acts as a positive expression of intimacy between the women, the phallic act of inscribing her identity upon the other woman—perhaps a parody of the way women’s identities are reassigned upon marriage to a man?—brings the relationship to an untimely end. This is evocative of Luce Irigaray’s argument in This Sex Which Is Not One that women, who possess erogenous zones everywhere and may climax repeatedly, have a fundamentally different sort of sexuality to that of men. It therefore seems possible to read this scene as a conflict between two opposing models of sexuality that concludes with the heteronormative imperative reasserting its authority.

12. In fact, in a number of Takahashi stories, homoerotic relationships between women obtain according to a triangular structure that is mediated by a male, who serves as both an object of rivalry and a medium for intimacy between the women. See Bullock, “Fantasizing What Happens.”

13. The text hints that this may be cancer, but the nature of the illness is never clearly stated.


15. Interpreting fictional literature as a more or less transparently realistic portrayal of the life of the author, a genre known in Japan as the “I-novel” (shishōsetsu), had become the dominant mode of reading by the 1960s, when experimental writing by Kurahashi and other writers influenced by the European anti-novel arose to challenge this paradigm. Kurahashi’s anti-“I-novel” stance is evident within this text, when L scorns the inclination of critics to offer biographical readings of her literature (136). Kurahashi’s propensity for frustrating autobiographical readings
of her texts by simultaneously suggesting and denying their relationship to events in her own life is part of the “postmodern” aesthetic that Atsuko Sakaki details in her study of Kurahashi, “The Intertextual Novel and the Interrelational Self.” For more on the “I-novel” genre, see Tomi Suzuki.

16. This is unclear because nouns in Japanese are typically not designated as to singular or plural, as is the case in this passage, so the “place” from which the blood emanates may in fact be one or many.

Conclusion

1. Foucault, Discipline and Punish. See especially the chapter entitled “Docile Bodies.”
3. Ibid., 170.
4. Shigematsu, 64.
5. Ibid., 75.
6. Ibid., 64, fl16.
8. Shigematsu, 87.
10. Shigematsu, 239.

16. Ibid., 193; see also Buckley’s translation of the preface to the Japanese version of *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, 202–203.


21. Scholars are not in agreement on the degree of connection between the radical ūman ribu (women’s lib) movement and the more “institutionalized” academic and bureaucratic trend that characterized Japanese feminism following the formation of the International Women’s Year Group in 1975. It seems clear that while there were many differences in emphasis and rhetoric (and some antagonism) between the two camps, there were also common goals, and in some cases women affiliated themselves with both. For varying accounts of this transition, see Shigematsu (epilogue), Mackie (chapters 7 and 8), and Kazuko Tanaka, “The New Feminist Movement in Japan, 1970–1990,” in Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda, *Japanese Women*, 343–352. At any rate, it seems difficult to see these two as entirely unconnected either to one another or to the radical literary feminism of the previous decade given their common origin in the social and economic pressures of the gendered division of labor that underwrote the era of high economic growth.

22. Beginning in the late 1960s, Japan was hit with a succession of scandals revealing the harmful effects of industrial pollution on the health and welfare of ordinary Japanese citizens—for example, incidents of mercury poisoning that came to be known as the infamous “Minamata disease.” See chapter 11 in Tipton.