Yoshiya Nobuko's *Yaneura no Nishojo* as part of Taishō era discourses on sexuality

Thea Johanne Prytz Hammarqvist

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Summary

Drawing on queer theory and new historicism, this thesis analyses the 1919 novel *Yaneura no Nishojo* by Yoshiya Nobuko in an attempt to answer the research question of to what extent and in which way Yoshiya engaged with contemporary discourses on sexuality when writing this novel. First, the theory and methodological approach behind the thesis is briefly explained. Then, based on the insight that sexualities are discursively created social categories that are contingent on time and space, the thesis first investigates the various discourses surrounding female same-sex sexuality that existed in Taishō era Japan, before it embarks on an analysis of the novel. The resulting discussion will argue that Yoshiya Nobuko did indeed engage strongly with the discourses that existed at the time she was writing *Yaneura no Nishojo*, and that she used concepts from sexological and feminist debates to legitimise the same-sex romantic relationship between the novel's two main characters, and that she additionally used the novel to counter certain specific negative conceptions of same-sex relationships that were presented by sexologists at the time. While *Yaneura no Nishojo* has often been termed a lesbian novel by modern critics, this thesis will show that the same-sex relationship depicted in the book does not conform to our view of lesbian relationships. As such, the novel serves an example of how the interpretations of same-sex love and desire are discursively created, rather than based on inherent biologically factors.

Foreword

I would like to sincerely thank to my supervisor, professor Reiko Abe Auestad. Her insightful comments and suggestions have been invaluable while writing this thesis, and throughout the entire process she has been a lot more patient with me than I could possibly deserve. Thank you!

The professors and lecturers in the Japanese studies department at Oslo University have all spent the last two years being nothing but immensely helpful, inspiring, kind, knowledgeable, and just generally pretty awesome. My fellow students are a strange bunch who get passionate about the weirdest things, and I have been very lucky to be able to work with and learn from all of you.

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1: Introduction

In this thesis, I will analyse the 1919 novel *Yaneura no Nishojo* (屋根裏の二處女, Two Virgins in the Attic) by Yoshiya Nobuko 吉屋信子. Yoshiya Nobuko (1896-1973) began her writing career by submitting stories to various girls' magazines while still in her teens, and continued on to become one of Japan's most famous and well-paid authors. While Yoshiya's work has commonly been dismissed by literary critics, she has garnered a lot of scholarly interest in the last decades, partly due to her fiction and partly due to her private life.

The question I will attempt to answer in this thesis is to what extent and in which way Yoshiya engaged with contemporary discourses on sexuality when writing *Yaneura no Nishojo*. In order to do this, I will draw on the theoretical and methodological approaches of queer theory, which I will discuss in the next chapter of the thesis. Chapter 3 will look then look at how sexuality, in particular same-sex sexuality, was understood and constructed in Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century. I will then give a brief summary of the plot in *Yaneura no Nishojo*, before I move on to the discussion part of the thesis. There, I will argue that through this novel, Yoshiya was presenting her view that same-sex romantic relationships were equally as acceptable and healthy as cross-sex ones, and should be recognized as such by society.

2: Methodology

My methodological approach will be based on new historicism and queer theory. Both of these theoretical approaches emphasize the way what people consider to be "true" or "natural" changes throughout history and in different societies. Queer theory provides a solid background for looking at issues concerning sexuality and gender in particular, whereas new historicism provides a methodological approach for analysing literature as a part of a historical context. As such, a combination of the two should provide a solid background for looking at this often-termed lesbian novel from 1919.

New historicism and queer theory have in common that they are both a loose set of shared values and beliefs, rather than a strict theory or methodology as such. Gallagher and Greenblatt (2000, p. 19) have written that new historicism is a loose set of commonly held values and interests that influence how new historicists practice their work, whereas

Brannigan (1998, p. 71) states that "its variety and relative indeterminacy ought to caution us about regarding new historicism as a uniform, coherent body of criticism". Likewise, queer theory is hard to define precisely (Sullivan, 2003, p. 43). Yet there must be something that new historicists and queer theorists have in common with each other, respectively, otherwise no one would identify themselves with either group. On queer theory, Carla Freccero (2011, p. 17) has written that "queer, to me, is the name of a certain unsettling in relation to heteronormativity," which might be a good way to sum up the most common attitude among queer theorists. Likewise, Sullivan (2003, p. vi) has defined the act of "queering" as "to make strange, to frustrate, to counteract, to delegitimise, to camp up." While in theory there is no limit to the social conventions one might "make strange," queer theory is at its most powerful and meaningful when it concerns itself with social norms that serve to back up heteronormative institutions. Ford (2011, p, 122) writes that "queer theory embraces, even celebrates transgression; it seeks the sublime […] in blithe and gleeful disregard for social convention." On new historicism, Brannigan (1998, p. 6) writes that "[new historicists] are busy interpreting the significance of the past for the present, paying particular attention to the forms of power which operated in the past and how they are replicated in the present. […] New historicism […] can be seen therefore using the past as an impetus for political struggle in the present, and making it clear that the discipline of literary studies is not removed from the sphere of politics."

As we can see, then, both queer theory and new historicism tends to be political, but it is difficult to come up with a clear definition of either. For this thesis, I will pick aspects from both theoretical directions that are relevant to the specific work I am doing, with queer theory providing insight on the changing constructions of sexuality in history, and new historicism outlining a method for how to study these constructions. While there are common criticisms and cautions levelled at both theoretical approaches, I will not be engaging with these in any particular detail, as they are not necessarily relevant for the work I am doing in this thesis.

Sullivan (2003, p. 1) writes that "sexuality is not natural, but rather, is discursively constructed. Moreover, sexuality […] is constructed, experienced, and understood in culturally and historically specific ways." The following paragraphs will explore what is meant by this. In terms of Western[1] societies today, Padgug (1979, p. 7) has noted that "individuals are encouraged to see themselves in terms of their sexuality." If we heard that a

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[1] The concept of one single "Western" culture is, famously, problematic. Throughout this thesis I will use the term "Western" as an easy way to refer to European and North American societies, although this is of course a generalization of the multiple cultures that exist in these areas of the world.

woman had had a romantic or sexual attraction to another woman at one point in her life, for example, most people would probably label her as lesbian or bisexual. In addition, some people would want to ask follow-up questions, such as whether this woman has short hair, or an otherwise "masculine" appearance. Whether their assumptions were then confirmed or denied, they would usually still be related back to the woman's interest in other women ("she likes women, so she has short hair" versus "she likes women, but she looks so feminine!"). Notably, making assumptions based on sexual preference does not always have to carry negative connotations. But whether it is in a positive, negative, or neutral sense, the fact that inherent sexualities exist and perhaps even influence other aspect about us is something that is generally taken as fact in our current society.

However, in recent decades, scholars have shown that these specific sexual categories that we operate with today are not necessarily "natural" or inherent at all, but rather came into being in the Western world during the nineteenth century, whence it spread to the rest of the world. Only in the West during the nineteenth century did sexual preferences come to be seen as something that concerned your entire identity. Foucault (quoted in Sullivan, 2003, p. 4) noted that "nothing that went into [the homosexual's] total composition was unaffected by his sexuality" – in other words, if someone were sexually attracted to their own sex, they would also act a certain way, dress a certain way, and generally behave differently from those that were attracted to the opposite sex. Many sexologists in the late 1800s, for example, noted that female inverts, or women who liked other women, were in possession of "masculine" qualities (Sullivan, 2003, pp. 10-13). To put it differently, having sex went from being something you *did* to becoming a sign of who you *were*, and sexual acts became "evidence of inclinations of a certain kind of subject" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 3). Or, to quote Duggan (1993, p. 791, my emphasis), at this time "[the lesbian] came to see herself as an erotic subject – as a woman whose desire for women was felt as a *fundamental component* of her sense of self, marking her as erotically different from most women." Only at this point did it become possible to talk about someone being a homosexual, a heterosexual, a lesbian, and so on, because only now was sexual attraction seen to equal a social identity.

It is important to note that this does not mean that we are not born with preferences in who we are romantically and sexually attracted to. Rather, for queer theorists, who want to question the things we see as "natural," the important question is how this desire is *interpreted* in a specific group of people. Padgug (1979, p. 14, emphasis in the original) writes that "to 'commit' a homosexual act is one thing; to *be* a homosexual is something entirely different." Writing on how sexual preferences were constructed in ancient Greece, for

example, Halperin (1989, p. 270) draws a comparison between preferences in sexual partners and dietary preferences. For the most part, we do not categorize people into different "types" based on dietary preferences; whether you like your eggs scrambled or sunny side up is not felt as a "fundamental component" of your sense of self . That is not, of course, to say that people in ancient Greece did not have preferences or tastes in terms of which gender(s) they were attracted to, just as someone may or may not appreciate the taste of cilantro. This way of seeing sex more as isolated acts, rather than a fundamental part of someone's identity, was common in many places of the world, including Japan (Pflugfelder, 2007, pp. 25-29).

The insight that modern sexual identities are not an inherent human quality vastly impacts the way in which we study sexuality in history. If it were true that sexual categories were inherent and have always existed (albeit under different names), researching sexuality in history might start with questions like "have homosexuals always been discriminated against?" or "has bisexuality, rather than heterosexuality, at one point been the 'natural' choice?". With the realisation that perceptions of sexuality changes, however, these kinds of questions do not make sense. Rather, researching sexuality in history is about trying to understand the systems people in other time periods and societies had for categorising and understanding people's sexual acts. While it would of course be possible to claim that all men in ancient Greece or in Edo period Japan were bisexual or pansexual, that would not make for particularly interesting research, as this approach only serves to obscure the way they themselves understood their sexual activities and how they conceived themselves. Or as Padgug (1979, p. 5) put it, "in any approach that takes as predetermined and universal the categories of sexuality, real history disappears."

Some might question why, then, we should occupy ourselves with researching historical sexualities – unless it is possible to trace a direct line from conceptions of sexuality in history to conceptions of sexuality today, past views of sexuality constitute "historical dead end" (Walthall, 2009, p. 16). Here it is possible to argue that understanding history is, in and of itself, a worthwhile pursuit. But in addition, it is also true that understanding sexualities in the past might help us understand more of our own times. Schultz (2015, p. 18) writes that research into sexuality in the past will help us understand our own time better, "by drawing attention to those things about which we are silent." Or to put it differently, by noticing what people from the past were saying, and, equally important, what they were *not* saying, we might start to question the facts we take for granted when we notice that they are not necessarily universal truths at all.

But, on a practical level, how do we research sexualities in history if they are nothing like our own conceptions of sexuality? It is, after all, extremely difficult to know for certain what people actually did with each other in private. What we can know, however, is the discourses that existed surrounding sexuality, which is why much research is concentrated around that. Pflugfelder (2007, p. 8) describes discourse as how people "wrote and spoke about [certain] acts and the meaning that they attached to them." In any society, several discourses can and usually do exist at the same time. For example, you can have people saying that masturbation is sinful or even unhealthy and as such should be discouraged, and people who say that masturbation is healthy and a good way to get to know one's own body and should be encouraged. These are examples of two coexisting discourses. In addition, discourse does not have to be negative or an attempt to correct people's behaviour. Nead (1988, p. 3) notes that "the history of sexuality […] is not simply the history of prohibitions and the constraint of individuals, but is also the history of the positive production of definitions and meanings." A final thing to note about discourse is that is shows up even in media that does not specifically seek to comment on society or to spark debate, as this will still contain worldviews, beliefs, and things taken for granted in the society it was produced in. The fact that Jane Austen, for example, does not feel the need to explain to her readers about the existence of two genders, men and women, means that we can safely assume that this was a completely uncontroversial statement at the time she was writing her novels, and something she probably did not even consider questioning.

In terms of methodology, for the actual analysis part of this thesis I have drawn most of my inspiration from new historicism. To put it very, very simply, new historicism attempts to learn more about a society by reading texts from it. Lynn (2008, p. 184) points out that, in specific moments in specific communities, "all documents [participate] in certain common assumptions" – see Jane Austen from above. New historicists recognise that social norms change throughout time and wish to learn about the norms of a specific time period, often by reading texts from this period and drawing out the "common assumptions" that are to be found in these. For this thesis, due to time constraints, I will only be reading one Taishō era novel, and rely on secondary literature for information about discourses of the time the novel was written. However, something to take away from new historicism that is relevant for me is the emphasis on reading texts through a contemporary lens, rather than based on attitudes that we hold today. At its best, new historicism is about being "open to different differences and not only the same ones with which we might ourselves identify" (Landry, 2011, p. 153). Since Yoshiya was clearly romantically interested in women, it is tempting to think of her as a

lesbian writing lesbian fiction; Suzuki (2006, p. 575) has noted that Yoshiya's fiction has often been considered an extension of her life, or "just a non-Western example in the genre of lesbian literature." It is not necessarily without value to analyse Yoshiya's fiction as lesbian fiction, but for this thesis, I am interested in looking at it through the lens of the social norms that existed in her contemporary time. By doing so, I will be able to read *Yaneura no Nishojo* as a part of the debates that took place in Taishō Japan concerning sexuality and, to a lesser extent, gender.

To make this clearer, I want to briefly describe new historicism's attitude towards literature and history. Brannigan (1998, pp. 8-9) has described new historicism as being "literary criticism turned on history, reading history as text." In other words, new historicism sees no distinction between literature and history; in their opinion, the fact that literature necessarily is a part of a society's discourse means that literature is *part of* history, both influenced by and influencing the society it exists in. As Lynn (2008, p. 166) puts it, literature cannot be separated and studied by itself in clinical conditions; rather, "literature is part of life." In other words, literature and history are one and the same, as literature is "an active part of a particular historical moment" (Brannigan, 1998, p. 3). This affects the way I read *Yaneura no Nishojo*, as I see it just not as a work of fiction, but also as a window to Taishō Japan.

Finally, I want to bring up the fact that, as new historicism recognises that all texts are part of a society's discourse and participate in certain "common assumptions," there is no limit to which texts are considered worthy of study. Regardless of literary quality, or even if it is not a literary text at all, any text can tell us something of its time; in addition, judging which texts are "bad" or "good" is a highly political action, and our criteria for judging a text's quality is also something that changes over time (Lynn, 2008, p. 152). This is relevant because even though Yoshiya Nobuko's writing was incredibly popular in her day, it was usually dismissed by critics as too sentimental and inconsequential, and not particularly worthy of scholarly interest. Yet Pflugfelder (2007, p. 9) makes the point that popular or commercial literature was likely read by a broad audience "to whom the terms of their discourse were, if not already familiar, at least readily intelligible," meaning that popular literature is an excellent window into the discourses that would have been familiar to the general public, and not just to experts.

There is, of course, an important debate to be had when it comes to which criteria we should use to define "good" literature. Many feminist writers would argue that Yoshiya's works have been dismissed not because they are bad per se, but because they do not conform

to traditional (male) standards for good writing, and that the standards for what we consider to be "good" and "bad" writing should be revised and expanded (Dollase, 2001, touches upon this). While this is an interesting and important debate, it is ultimately of no consequence to this particular thesis, because regardless of whether one considers Yoshiya Nobuko's fiction to be good, it is an undeniable fact that it was widely read. Yoshiya's works, as a consequence of the topics she chose to write about, constituted a part of the discourse that surrounded sexuality and gender in Taishō Japan, and one that was accessible to a great number of people. New historicism shows us that, even though the quality of her works can be debated, that is necessarily important. Regardless of whether or not one considers Yoshiya worthy of being read as literature, she is definitely worthy of being read as history.

The question that needs to be answered before we can move on to the discussion part of the thesis, then, is: how was same-sex love and sex between women interpreted and understood at the time *Yaneura no Nishojo* was published? The next chapter will explore this question by looking at the contemporary debates regarding female same-sex relationships that were happening in Japan in the early twentieth century. By using understandings from queer theory that sexuality and gender are constructed social categories, I will then use new historicist methods, aka placing the work in its contemporary context, to analyse *Yaneura no Nishojo*. The resulting conclusion will show that in *Yaneura no Nishojo*, Yoshiya Nobuko actively engages with the contemporary discourses surrounding sexuality, and that this is important to keep in mind when analysing this novel in order to gain a full understanding of it.

3: Context: Sexuality in Taishō Japan

3.1: Sex, but make it modern

In this part, I will discuss how the view of sexuality, same-sex or otherwise, changed between the Edo and Meiji periods, and how sexologists and sexological knowledge came to have the influence that it did in early twentieth century Japan. It is common knowledge that Japan underwent a lot of drastic changes in the late nineteenth century. The Meiji Restoration

brought massive changes in terms of politics, infrastructure, science, culture, and so on, as the Meiji government tried to implement policies that would bring them closer to "civilization" and acceptance in the eyes of Western countries (Pflugfelder, 2007, p. 146). Another aspect of Japanese culture that changed drastically in this period was the way in which sex and sexuality was viewed.

During the Edo period, sex was very much a prominent part of the Japanese cultural life. Prostitution flourished in the pleasure quarters of the largest cities, and depictions of their inhabitants and customers had a great impact on popular culture. In terms of sexuality, the discourses were largely focused on the male perspective, and centred around a twin concept of household and play. Auestad (1998, p. 33) describes that it was not uncommon for men to have sexual relations outside of marriage, in the form of concubines or visits to sex workers, and writes that "a man's supposed need for both a wife and a lover was widely accepted regardless of his class." Pflugfelder (2007, p. 243) explains that sex for the purpose of reproduction and furthering the household did not disqualify sexual practices for other purposes, which received legitimation from what has been called the "culture of play." In short, it was perfectly normal and not the least frowned upon for men to have sex with their wives in order to uphold the moral responsibility of "begetting descendants for the household" (Pflugfelder, 2007, p. 243), and then also have sex with sex workers, female or male, for the purpose of pleasure or "play."

Female sexuality was mainly talked about in relation to the purposes it served for men. Lindsey (2007) describes how female sexuality was mainly constructed around the dichotomy of fertility and pleasure, where the purpose of married women's sexuality was to have children (or to be fertile), and the purpose of sex workers' sexuality was to "serve the commercial sex industry and its paying clients through nonreproductive pleasure" (Lindsey, 2007, p. 4); in both instances, female sexuality served male interests, and women were categorized according to their "sexual function" (Walthall, 2009, p. 1).

There was also a strong connection drawn between sexual activity and health. For both sexes, having an appropriate amount of sex – i.e., not too much and not too little – was seen as being important for one's health. Koch (2013, p. 145) writes that it was thought that "intercourse, or more specifically ejaculation, directly influences one's physical state of well-being." As such, men were encouraged to have an appropriate amount of sex, and occupied themselves with discussions on what exactly constituted an "appropriate" amount of sex to have (Koch, 2013). When it came to women, too, sex manuals claimed that "sexual satisfaction promoted women's mental and physical health" (Walthall, 2009, p. 11), so much

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so that women were encouraged to masturbate for the sake of their health if they lacked access to "the real thing" – meaning, a man with a penis (Walthall, 2009, p. 5). Famously, sexual activity between men was not in itself something that was remarked upon in the Edo period; however, Pflugfelder (2007, p. 23) cautions that male-male and female-female sexuality were not considered to be the same phenomenon, and there was no sense of a "same-sex" sexuality across genders. In other words, what was seen as acceptable when it came to sex between men does not necessarily tell us anything about what was acceptable when it came to sex between women. As the discourses on sexuality were centred around the needs of men, female same-sex activities were not talked about a lot, although they were sometimes depicted in manuals as an extension of female masturbation (Walthall, 2009, p. 9).

Whereas there was a variety of discourses that claimed authoritative knowledge of sexuality during the Edo period, the Meiji era saw sexuality coming increasingly under the purview of medical experts that had been trained in Western scientific principles and taxonomies (Pflugfelder, 2005, p. 140). Whereas Western science or "Dutch knowledge" was known in Japan during the Edo period, the Meiji period brought with it a "restructuring of medical institutions and knowledge" which meant that it "came to enjoy a degree of cultural authority that would allow many Japanese of later times to regard them as 'medicine' and 'science' plain and simple" (Pflugfelder, 2007, p. 12). When it came to sexuality, the Meiji period was the first time a conceptual link that was drawn between sexuality and reproduction for the sake of *species survival*, rather than the good of the household (Pflugfelder, 2007, p. 244). Sexual activities between men and women for the purpose of reproduction was seen as a consequence of evolution, and a biological imperative that could be fully explained by science.

With such a strong conceptual link drawn between sexuality and reproduction, it made somewhat sense that sexual activity that was *not* for the purpose of reproduction became pathologized and stigmatised as "unnatural"; Pflugfelder (2007, p. 246) writes that "since 'nature' had supposedly designed [the sexual organs] for the purpose of procreation, it stood to reason that other uses should have a deleterious impact on human health." In other words, the "culture of play" that had been so prominent in Edo period culture now ceased to exist. In terms of same-sex relationships, Pflugfelder (2007, p. 252) writes that the Meiji period was the first time in Japanese history that male-male and female-female sexuality was grouped together under the new rubric of "same-sex love," which implied that the two had more in common than they were different. What they had in common, of course, was that neither of them constituted love between the sexes, or "cross-sex love"; "in this way, the notion of

'same-sex love' was built upon the expectation that male-female interaction represented the sexual norm" (Pflugfelder 2007, p. 252). And since sex was for the purpose of reproduction, anything that fell outside this norm of "cross-sex" love could be seen as a real threat to the survival of the human species (Pflugfelder, 2007, p. 247).

Sexology, a pseudo-science with the purpose of researching, understanding, and categorizing human sexuality and to determine what is and is not healthy sexual behaviour, became influential at this time, both in the Western world and in Japan. One reason why sexological knowledge gained such a prominent position was the connection that, at the time, was believed to exist between the state and the health of its individual citizens. In the Meiji period, according to Frühstück (2000, p. 334), the state itself was seen as a body or an organism, with its citizens constituting the different bits and pieces of that organism. In order for the state to be healthy, then, it was essential that these individual components were also healthy. Major threats to state health included such things as mental illnesses, which were believed to be contagious (Frühstück, 2000, pp. 335-6) and likely caused by deviant sexual behaviour like masturbation, homosexuality (which Frühstück, 2000, p. 342, claims were "not clearly distinguished"), and prostitution (Frühstück, 2000, p. 336). As such, from the 1890s onwards state bureaucracy became highly concerned with controlling people's sex life and deterring them from engaging in this sort of harmful behaviour. With strong conceptual links drawn between the sexual activities of the individual, the health of the state, and the notion of species survival, the Meiji government developed a strong desire to "understand, document, and regulate the sex lives of the Japanese populace" (Frühstück, 2000, p. 333).

To sum up, then, in the Meiji period heterosexuality[2] became a matter of "healthy" sexuality (Wu, 2002, p. 69), both for the state and society at large and for the individual. Conversely, anything that involved people *not* engaging in cross-sex activity was constructed as "unhealthy," which in turn made it a matter of national concern. According to Wu (2002, p. 70), European sexologists often described the lesbian using these exact terms; she was seen as "ill" or as a "sexual invert." And this way of thinking about sexuality did not end together with the Meiji period; Robertson (1999, p. 11) states that even as late as the 1930s, gender ambivalence and sexual confusion were associated with social disorder. Sexuality, then, was a dualistic concept, with a "right" or healthy way and a "wrong" or unhealthy way of doing it.

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[2] Again, there are inherent problems in using labels like "heterosexuality" to talk about historic sexualities, as should be clear from the methodology chapter. For the sake of ease, however, I will use the terms hetero- and homosexuality in this thesis to refer to sexual activity between people of different sexes and of the same sex, respectively, otherwise disregarding modern connotations these words hold.

Engaging in sexual activities in the "wrong" way could be dangerous, both for the individual in question and for the state.

Up until now I have explained that "cross-sex" relationships, or relationships that involved a man and a woman, were constructed as the healthy way of having sex during the Meiji period and afterwards. Having said that, not all forms same-sex relationships were viewed in a solely negative light. There were also other factors than the sex of the participants to consider when deciding whether a relationship was healthy or not, which I will discuss below. One of the areas where female same-sex relationships were surrounded by the most ambiguity was in school.

3.2: Taishō discourses on female same-sex relationships

In this part, I will give a quick overview of the various discourses that surrounded female same-sex relationships in Taishō era Japan, and try to make clear the many different factors sexologists and other experts had to consider when deciding where a particular relationship fell on the binary of healthy/natural and unhealthy/unnatural. The most famous form of same-sex love in the Taishō period was that of schoolgirl relationships. As such, I will start this section by talking about those and how they became so well known.

Along with the many changes to Japanese society that took place during the Meiji period, there was also an increase in the amount of schooling received by girls. Women's secondary education was incorporated in the public education system for the first time in 1899, when the Directive on Girls' High Schools was issued (Inoue, 2002, p. 397, p. 408). With this, a new type of woman, the "schoolgirl," came into existence. Inoue (2002, p. 406) writes that "'schoolgirls' referred to the daughters of elite families who could afford to go to secondary schools." Before, women had grown out of the category of "child" and straight into the category of "adult"; the schoolgirl represented something in between these, someone who was not a child but also not yet an adult. As she was from "elite" or middle- and upper-class families, who were the ones that could afford to send their daughters to school, she also became surrounded with a certain air of glamour.

These female-only schools provided something that had not existed before: a female-centred space for upper- and middle-class women outside the home. Speaking on the conditions in the United States, which saw a similar development in girls' schooling roughly at the same time, Faderman (1992, p. 13) writes that "more than any other phenomenon,

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education may be said to have been responsible for the spread among middle-class women of what eventually came to be called lesbianism"; here, the women were free from the controlling forces of their families, leaving room for intense, emotional relationships to develop between the students instead. In Japan, these relationships quickly became a common trope in the public imagination, and Suzuki (2006, p. 577) writes that "from the 1910s through the 1930s, same-sex love was particularly associated with young women receiving post-primary school education, most often students attending higher girls' schools." It became a recognized, and much talked about, "fact" that relationships between in girls in schools were a frequent occurrence.

Of course, as noted by Pflugfelder (2005, p. 134), we have to be careful to distinguish between what was said in the public discussions on schoolgirl relationships, and what actually happened between schoolgirls. We have relatively few sources or testimonies from schoolgirls that can verify what these relationships were actually like and how frequent they were, and just because various media gave the impression that they were a common part of schoolgirl life does not mean that this reflected what really happened. In reality, it is difficult to say anything certain about how frequent these relationships were, and whether they commonly took the form of intense friendships or of romantic relationships that may or may not have included sexual encounters. However, even though we cannot extrapolate practice from discourse, the discourses that existed in Taishō Japan are still valuable because they "bear testimony to the changing significances of female love and sexuality within the larger social landscape of early twentieth-century Japan" (Pflugfelder, 2005, p. 134); we cannot know for sure what people did, but we can, to a certain extent, know what they thought and what they said. When analysing the discourses surrounding same-sex relationships between schoolgirls, then, it is less important whether the relationships were actually romantic and/or sexual, and more important that various commentators recognized the possibility that they might be so.

So, what were the common discourses on schoolgirl relationships? As we have seen, heterosexual relationships were thought seen as the sexual norm, and the most important thing when considering relationships between schoolgirls was that neither of the girls grew up to break this norm. Robertson (1999, p. 21) writes that "provided sexual practices neither interfered with nor challenged the legitimacy of the twinned institutions of marriage and household, nor competed with heterosexist conventions in the public sphere, Japanese society accommodated […] a diversity of sexual behaviours." The ideal for women's sexuality was

ryōsai kenbo (Good Wife, Wise Mother), which stated that women should marry and raise children.

Ryōsai kenbo, however, is only applicable to adult women. As such, many sexologists did not view relationships between schoolgirls in a negative light, providing it was left behind as the girls graduated from school and entered the world of adults. Perhaps surprisingly, several sexologists actually thought these relationships might even be beneficial for the girls involved, and saw them as an important part of the girls' emotional development. Essentially, they thought the relationships functioned as a sort of practice for caring for and looking after a partner (Suzuki, 2006, p. 580). This viewed was expressed by among others Edward Carpenter, an influential sexologist who was "seemingly known to all the major prewar Japanese feminists" (Frederick, 2018, p. 187), and in a 1923 essay Yoshiya herself also referenced Carpenter in order to argue for the importance of "innocent, preheterosexual love" in order for girls to develop emotionally (Suzuki, 2006, p. 582). In other words, schoolgirl relationships were thought by many to be a good way to develop the girls' emotions and nurturing nature before they entered adulthood and marriage. However, relationships between girls still had the potential to challenge the institution of cross-sex marriage, and the important job of the sexologists was to determine at exactly what point they started to do so. Here, they had various factors to consider.

The most important one, as stated, was that same-sex relationships could not continue into adulthood. Naturally, if schoolgirls continued to stay in same-sex relationships after graduation, this would definitely "interfere and challenge" the institution of *ryōsai kenbo*. But even relationships that took place exclusively during the girls' time in school could turn out to be unhealthy for them and, by extension, for society. According to Suzuki (2006, p. 578), same-sex love was constructed through a dualistic continuum, where on the one end of the continuum there were healthy relationships that fit into the end-goal of adult heterosexuality, and on the other end were inverted, dangerous relationships that challenged this goal. The task of sexologists was to determine where specific cases of schoolgirl relationships fell on this continuum, and figure out ways to separate the healthy ones from the unhealthy ones. Luckily for them, there were many signs that might reveal whether a girl was "normal" and thus likely to grow up and marry, or "inverted" and likely to have her same-sex preference continue into adult age.

Although sexologists differed among themselves as to what exactly made schoolgirl relationships healthy or unhealthy, there were several topics that were brought up regularly in their discussions. First of all was the issue of to what extent sex was involved in the

relationships. Many Japanese sexologists theorized that schoolgirl relationships, as a general rule, were largely platonic. Suzuki (2006, p. 579) writes that women were believed to not be sexually awakened until they became so by a man; as such, relationships between young women could naturally not contain any sexual elements, and were merely an expression of the girls' "affectionate, emotive nature" (Suzuki, 2006, p. 579). Frühstück (2000, p. 342) is in agreement with this, stating that many sexologists argued that homosexuality between girls would not be "animal-like" as it was thought to be with boys, but rather purely platonic.

Of course, the idea that relationships between girls were harmless because they were platonic meant that in the event that the girls' relationships *should* turn sexual, this served to immediately place their relationship firmly towards the "inverted" end of the aforementioned continuum. Suzuki (2006, pp. 578-79) has described the strong conceptual link that existed between sexual same-sex relationship and abnormality. Pflugfelder (2005, p. 144) writes that sexologists were worried about the consequences of schoolgirl relationships being taken "too far"; and while, again, there were disagreements about what exactly was meant by "too far", several sexologists, including Habuto Eiji and Komine Shigeyuki, believed this point was reached with "the initiation of physical relations" (Pflugfelder, 2005, p. 144). The extent to which schoolgirl relationships were or were not sexual, then, became an important marker for sexologists to determine where they fell on the healthy-unhealthy continuum.

However, the sexual element was not the only aspect of female same-sex relationships that was acknowledged to have the potential to be dangerous. Another big red flag for sexologists, both in schoolgirls and in adult women, was a "masculine" appearance. Perceived masculinity in women had been closely connected to same-sex desire even from the earliest days of sexology. Faderman (1992, p. 41) writes that many early sexologists conflated "inappropriate gender behaviour", i.e. dressing or otherwise behaving in ways that were perceived as masculine, with "inappropriate sexual object choice" – i.e., preferring relationships with other women to those with men. For American sexologists, this meant that women who dressed in male clothing in order to, for example, secure employment were often seen as lesbian, regardless of their actual sexual preferences, whereas it was possible for women to have passionate relationships with each other and still have them fall under the label of "romantic friendship" rather than lesbianism, as long as both partners presented in a traditionally feminine way (Faderman 1992, p. 45). This strong connection between sexual interest in other women and masculinity also existed in Japan, with at least some sexologists considering the dangerous point of a relationship to be reached if the girls adopted masculine and feminine roles (Pflugfelder, 2005, p. 144). Girls who presented in a masculine way were

thought more likely to be truly inverted, and as such more likely to have relationships that involved sexual elements (Suzuki, 2006, p. 578).

We have seen that both the presence of sex as well as masculine appearance or behaviour were cause for concern in female same-sex relationships. It was generally believed that relationships between women that were done in the "wrong" way or that "went too far" could have serious consequences. Pflugfelder (2005, p. 144) lists several negative effects that sexologists attributed to same-sex relationships gone too far, which included "vaginal cramps, frigidity, 'withering of the genitals,' sterility, neurasthenia, insanity, masculinization of muscular and cell structure, suicide, murder, and other types of criminal behaviour." Out of these, perhaps the most well-known possible consequence of a relationship gone too far was that of suicide. An incident in 1911, where two higher girls' school graduates from upper middle-class families in Niigata Prefecture committed suicide together because they realised their love could not be sustained once they had graduated from school, was widely reported on in the newspapers and propelled the matter of lesbian double suicide to national attention (Suzuki, 2010, p. 24). Relationships between schoolgirls were now seen in a much more sinister light in the popular press than it had been up until this point, as it was realised that they could have a potentially deadly outcome. Again, this was particularly seen to be the case if one of the women presented in a masculine way – it was a common belief that masculine women had the power to corrupt and transmit same-sex desire to non-masculine, or "normal", women (Suzuki, 2006, p. 579). Yet after 1911, even relationships between "feminine" schoolgirls were treated with suspicion because they had the potential to lead to love suicide (Suzuki, 2006, p. 579), and many started to caution against schoolgirl relationships.

Finally, all of the above was also connected to the ongoing debate on the extent to which same-sex sexuality was congenital or acquired. Here, there were several different viewpoints among sexologists. For example, German sexologist Krafft-Ebing believed that homosexuality was congenital, and that homosexuals were "less developed" than heterosexuals and "exemplified a more primitive state of being" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 7), whereas Shimada Hiroshi leaned toward inversion being acquired (Pflugfelder, 2005, p. 143). On the other hand, Havelock Ellis thought that inversion was both congenital *and* acquired, meaning that all human beings were born with a predisposition towards one form of sexual practice, but that there was a sexual "narrowing" in puberty where environmental influences make one select one way over the other (Sullivan, 2003, pp. 8-9). For those who were born with a predisposition to sexual practices involving their own sex, these influences would likely make them chose that way for life. Whether one believed inversion was something one

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was born with or something one acquired mattered greatly when deciding what to do to "solve" the problem of same-sex love, something I will elaborate on in the discussion part of the thesis.

As we have seen, sexologists and other self-proclaimed experts had a lot of factors to consider when deciding whether a particular relationship was "healthy" or not, and while many of the same ones often appeared in discussions, sexologists did not necessarily agree with each other when it came to how to treat these various factors. As such, Suzuki (2006, p. 580) cautions against over-simplifying the debates that were happening at the time. It is true, for example, that a majority of sexologists treated the presence of a masculine appearance with the utmost suspicion; at the same time, however, some also pointed out that even "masculine" schoolgirls often grew up into perfectly normal wives and mothers once they graduated. Masculinity, age, the presence of sexual contact, as well as other factors, were all taken into consideration when sexologists tried to determine the "truth" about same-sex love (Suzuki, 2006, p. 580). Pflugfelder (2005, p. 144) also points out that although the vast majority agreed that same-sex love could reach a point where it turned dangerous, opinions wildly differed on when exactly this point was reached, with some pointing to physical contact, some to gendered roles, and some to other things entirely.

So, to answer the question asked earlier of how female same-sex relationships were viewed in Japan in the early twentieth century, we see that there were many coexisting discourses and as well many different actors offering their opinions. With that being said, it seems clear that romantic relationships between women were viewed differently in Taishō era Japan than it is today. As discussed in the methodology chapter, today it is common to assume that a woman who has been romantically or sexually involved with another woman is probably bisexual or lesbian. In Taishō Japan, however, romantic relationships between schoolgirls were seen by many as simply a step in the developmental path to heterosexual adulthood. As long as a girl grew up to marry a man, her sexuality did not fall outside the bonds of "normal," regardless of the same-sex experiences she may or may not have had in her youth. Furthermore, while same-sex love was often treated with suspicion, especially after the double suicide of 1911, there were few who wholly discounted the possibility of healthy same-sex relationships between schoolgirls. Unlike today, same-sex romantic activity did not necessarily mark the participants as other than heterosexual; rather, certain same-sex activities were a *part of* heterosexuality. Suzuki (2006, p. 580) writes that sexologists and sexological knowledge were actually able to "legitimize adolescent same-sex love as a kind of rehearsal for entry into 'real' sexuality – that is, heterosexual maturity and motherhood." In short,

same-sex relationships between women in early twentieth century Japan were constructed and understood quite differently from the way they are commonly constructed and understood today.

3.3: Feminists as producers of discourse

Earlier in this chapter I have discussed the important role of sexologists in constructing the different discourses surrounding sexuality. Whereas the debate surrounding same-sex relationships was based on sexological concepts and notions, this did not mean that sexologists were the only or even the main speakers in the public debate. The mass media was important for distributing sexological knowledge to the public, although often in connection with scandals and using a sensationalised language. Frühstück (2000, pp. 350-53) describes how sexological knowledge, through the mass media, quickly became popular knowledge, and by the time of the infamous 1911 suicide, sexologist terms like "inverted sexual desire," "unnatural love" and "same-sex love" were used by the newspapers to describe women's relationships with each other (Pflugfelder, 2005, p. 157). Eventually, people like journalists, social critics, experts without any actual medical background, and feminists overtook sexologists as the primary producers of discourses on sex in popular media (Frühstück, 2000, pp. 350-53).

This section will concern itself with feminists, who as a group provided important and influential voices in the debates surrounding sexuality. The most famous feminist community at the time was the one surrounding the *Seitō* magazine. *Seitō*, which translates to "Bluestocking", was a magazine that was published between 1911 and 1916. Despite its relatively short run, it was extremely controversial, with three of its issues being outright banned (Bardsley, 2003, p. 93). The personal lives of the contributors and members of the *Seitō* group were also highly unconventional and surrounded by much controversy. Several members openly had love affairs with both men and women (Wu, 2002), and in the magazine itself they wrote on controversial topics such as abortion, prostitution, sexual purity, and the meaning of New Woman. The *Seitō* community often looked to the US and Europe when constructing their arguments (Bardsley, 2003, p. 96), and they were responsible for translating many Western works – including those of sexologists, which meant they were important agents in spreading and debating sexological knowledge in Japan. Frederick (2018, p. 192) notes that the translation of foreign works provided a way for Japanese women to participate

in international activist movements, even if they were prevented from participating in other ways by such things as lacking financial resources to travel.

It might seem strange that *Seitō* members did not question sexological teachings more, considering the prescriptive and restrictive gender image generally held forth by sexologists. Most feminists today will probably see sexological teachings as outdated, ridiculous, and possibly even dangerous; speaking of American conditions, Faderman (1992, p. 48) writes that "a top item on [sexologists'] hidden agenda, whether they were conscious of it or not, finally came to be to discourage feminism and maintain traditional sex roles by connecting the women's movement to sexual abnormality." In the case of Japan, Robertson (1999, pp. 2-6) has written about the public scepticism that surrounded New Women, masculine women, and lesbians, all of which were seen as somehow connected through sexological teachings. However, Pflugfelder (2005, p. 174) explains that at the time, science was seen as synonymous with progress, and that many Japanese feminists were attracted to sexology because "it promised to cast the ostensibly objective light of science upon the realm of gender relations, and thereby to delegitimize the various cultural and moral traditions that stood in the way of social change." If it was possible to figure out a scientifically backed "truth" about gender that would allow women to cast of discriminating traditions, this would surely have been an attractive prospect for feminists.

This did not, however, mean that the feminist community was necessarily in agreement about what this "truth" would look like. As we have seen, there was much debate among sexologists about what constituted "normal" and "abnormal" same-sex relationships between women, and the *Seitō* community vigorously debated these same topics, as they debated most topics. For example, in a 1921 article in a "prominent literary journal" (Pflugfelder, 2005, p. 163) Kamichika Ichiko argued that sexual involvement between girls brought "spiritual and physical corruption" – though she did not condemn purely emotional attachments (Pflugfelder, 2005, p. 163). On the other end of the spectrum, several (adult) *Seitō* members had relationships with other women (Wu, 2002). While the extent to which sexual relations were present in these relationships, they would at least seem to suggest that some *Seitō* community members were positive towards same-sex relationships at one point or another.

3.4: Cultural girls

So far, we have seen that female same-sex love was a topic that was much written about by sexologists, the media, feminists, and various other experts and "experts" of Taishō era Japan. I want to close this chapter off by talking briefly about another form of media where female same-sex relationships also appeared frequently as a topic, namely that of girls' magazines. Schoolgirl relationships or passionate friendships was an extremely common trope in fiction and magazines that catered directly to schoolgirls (Shamoon, 2012, p. 38), so it is worth examining this culture in some detail when considering the topic of same-sex love in Taishō era fiction. In addition, Yoshiya Nobuko first made her breakthrough as an author with the short story collection *Hanamonogatari*, which was serialized in the *shōjo* (girl) magazine *Shōjo Gahō*, and her unique style of writing in this collection in particular is seen as having played an instrumental part in shaping the aesthetics of *shōjo* culture (see Shamoon, 2012, chapter 3, pp. 58-81). Due to this, and due to the fact that *Yaneura no Nishojo* was published early in Yoshiya's career when she was still mainly famous for her writings for young girls, I will end this chapter by taking a quick look at *shōjo* culture.

As we have seen, with the passing of the Directive on Girls' High Schools in 1899 a new category of person, the schoolgirl, was created. Inoue (2002, p. 406) writes that the schoolgirl represented a "new social category of female", as "these females were neither producers (workers) nor reproducers (mothers)." With the appearance of schoolgirls a particular (school)girl culture or *shōjo* culture also started to develop among them, and magazines aimed directly at *shōjo* became an important part of this culture. Girls' magazines became massively popular in the early 1900s, with a number of publications being released starting from after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5 in particular (Frederick, 2018a, p. 46). Frederick (2018a, p. 47) writes that, unlike earlier publications aimed at girls and women, which had had as their primary goal the education of their readers, the primary goal of *shōjo* magazines was commercial success achieved through popularity and high circulation among readers. While they still wanted to provide moral guidance and information to the girls, there was also a shift in focus towards more commercial publication goals.

For many girls, the *shōjo* magazines became quite literal companions. Kanno (2011, p. 17) writes that many readers "anthropomorphized the magazine, treating it as a virtual friend." The rich visual appearance of the magazines was a big part of the attraction for many readers (Frederick, 2018a, p. 48), and Frederick (2018a, p. 49) also notes that several of the writers who contributed their fiction to the magazines tied their desire to contribute with the "intense

pleasure" of the visual experience of the magazines. Shamoon (2012, p. 54) writes that for many girls, the magazines functioned as a "portal to a more beautiful, refined world." In addition to the magazines' pleasing visual expression, an important part of their appeal was the sense of community that they provided. A large part of each issue was usually reserved for reader contributions (Frederick, 2018a, p. 48; Shamoon, 2012, pp. 49-50), where girls from all around Japan, as well as Japanese colonies, sent in letters, poems, etc. in which they expressed their thoughts and opinions. Dollase (2001, p. 154) notes that the "upper middle class", from which schoolgirls usually came, represented only 2.3 percent of the entire Japanese population around the year 1913, meaning that schoolgirl life was indeed an exclusive reality inaccessible to most Japanese girls. But even those who could not directly access the *shōjo* lifestyle due to living in rural areas or having little money could get a taste of it through these magazines and feel connected to other girls. The particular language used, which was unique to *shōjo*, was an important element in creating this sense of a shared community that felt largely inaccessible to outsiders. On the extremely emotional and sentimental language and content of *shōjo* fiction, Dollase (2010, p. 81) writes that "since a girl knows that the period during which she can pretend to be a *shōjo* will not last forever, she indulgently rhapsodizes the emotive feelings that characterize this time of her life." The readers of *shōjo* magazines came from all over the Japanese empire and spoke various dialects in real life, but through the language of *shōjo*, they were able to connect to each other and find a sense of community.

Yoshiya Nobuko first made her breakthrough in this community with *Hanamonogatari*. With this collection she was responsible for shaping a lot of the aesthetics of *shōjo* culture, particularly through her stories' florid language, sentimentality, and lush, detailed descriptions that allowed readers to vividly picture the beautiful girls and their surroundings. As mentioned above, the visual appearance of *shōjo* magazines held a large art of their appeal, and on a similar note Dollase (2019, p. 33) notes that Yoshiya "always detailed the characters' appearance to help her audience visualize a shōjo image." However, while Yoshiya's work was hugely popular in the *shōjo* community, it was often poorly received by critics. *Yaneura no Nishojo* represented an effort on Yoshiya's part to move on from her *shōjo* image and enter the world of "real" literature. Dollase (2001, p. 157) writes that Yoshiya was frustrated by her dismissal by critics and suffered from an "inferiority complex", and that *Yaneura no Nishojo* "demonstrates her aspiration to grow as an author", as it blends Yoshiya's use of girls' language and narrative form with political issues "to heighten

[Yoshiya's] story and empower her audience." With that in mind, let us go over to discuss the novel itself. To start, I will give a summary of it.

4: Summary of *Yaneura no Nishojo*

Yaneura no Nishojo is told from the perspective of Takimoto Akiko 滝本章子, a young female student. In the novel's opening scene, she is standing outside the door of the head of the dorm she is currently residing in, miss L. Akiko is nervous about entering miss L's office, as her reason for doing so is to inform her that Akiko will be leaving the dorm the next morning. She eventually does enter, however, and give this information to miss L. In a flashback scene, we learn that Akiko's reason for wanting to leave is that before the summer holiday, miss L had pulled Akiko aside and told her that she was a lazy student and a faithless Christian, and thus inadequate as a dorm resident, and if she did not improve over the summer holiday, miss L would ask her to leave the dorm. Now, however, it seems that miss L has forgotten that this conversation ever happened, which saddens Akiko.

The next day, Akiko goes to the house of professor Hatanaka 畑中先生 and his wife, who have acted as her sponsors and supporters, to tell them that she will be leaving miss L's dorm. She is extremely shameful and feels like she has failed them, and in her thoughts she refers to herself as "the shallow, lazy, worthless country girl who betrayed the Hatanakas[3]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 365). While leaving the Hatanakas' house, Akiko laments that soon she will be forgotten by both miss L and the Hatanaka couple, and she will be truly alone in this world.

Akiko then leaves miss L's dorm for the YWA Tokyo dorm. On the way there, she stops at an intersection to look at the people walking past her, reflecting that they look bright and happy, and she feels alone and disconnected from the rest of the world. At the YWA dorm she is met by the dorm's dean, who follows Akiko to her room. Because there are no other vacancies, the dean explains that they had to put Akiko in a room in the fourth-floor

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[3] 畑中氏夫婦を裏切った軽薄な懶惰な取柄のない田舎娘。見込みのない娘。Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Japanese are mine. All ellipses, unless bracketed, are included in the original text.

attic, which is "strange[4]" and smaller than the other rooms, but quieter and cheaper compared to other rooms in the dorm. Akiko does not mind the attic, and is quickly enchanted with the strange room. She spends the rest of the afternoon daydreaming in the attic, before the dean returns and collects her to go to the dining hall. There, the dean introduces her to her fourth-floor neighbour, Akitsu Tamaki 秋津環殿 (hereafter referred to as Akitsu-san), who is the only other person living in the attic. Akiko is struck by how coldly and silently beautiful Akitsu-san is.

We then are told about Akiko's life up until this point. She grew up with only her mother and grandmother, as her father was living abroad and then later passed away. Both her mother and grandmother were Christians, and Akiko's upbringing was influenced by their faith. When her mother became ill and had to leave her home in order to get treatment, Akiko and her grandmother moved in with Akiko's uncle's family in the Kantō countryside. Akiko lived there until her graduation, before which both her mother and grandmother passed away. Akiko then went to miss L's dorm in Tokyo to prepare for entrance exams in order to be able to start studying, but she failed her exams twice, despite the Hatanakas' support and remonstrations. Akiko does not feel like she has a purpose in life and has no motivation for her studies, and feels lost and like a failure. She says about herself that "[she], who could not find any faith or desire or happiness in this life in this world, simply lived in a fog without understanding anything [about her own wants or desires] [5]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 407). Eventually Akiko hears about a school that educates kindergarten teachers and that does not have an entrance exam, so she is able to go there. The school is different and more difficult than she expected, and she is again ashamed for not being able to perform very well, and can still find no motivation for her studies. She then moves from miss L's dorm to the YWA dorm, which brings us back to the story's present.

A couple of incidents then happen that illustrates Akiko's state of mind. At one point, she sees sparrows sitting outside her small attic window and runs outside to buy some rice to feed them, but by the time she gets back to her room they are gone. Akiko climbs onto her desk to look out the window for them, and for the first time she sees the view from her attic window and realises how far above the rest of the world she is. Feeling lonely because the sparrows left without her being able to feed them, Akiko cries. Another time, she goes to play

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[4] 変です (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 376)

[5] 世の中に人の生になんの信頼も望みも喜びもかけ得ない章子は、ただ何もわからずに、もやもやとして暮らしていた。

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a piano that stands in the common area of the YWA dorm. As she plays Beethoven's sonata no. 15, she dramatically imagines herself to be a world-famous pianist, surrounded by adoring fans. As she is returning to the attic, however, she catches sight of her own reflection, which shatters her fantasies and returns her to the lonely, ordinary girl that she is.

One day when Akiko returns home from school she finds Akitsu-san standing in the YWA entrance hall with a large box of apples that she has received from her family in Hokkaido. Akitsu-san asks Akiko to help her carry the box up to the attic, but it is too heavy for the two of them to lift. It is only with the arrival of another friend of Akitsu-san's, Kudō-san 工藤さん, that the three of them manage to drag the box upstairs with a lot of painful effort. Kudō-san is incredibly enthusiastic about the box of apples, and the three of them decide to invite some more people over one day so they can all eat apples together.

There is then a scene where Akiko and Akitsu-san washes their hair in the bathroom shared by all the dorm's residents. Afterwards, Akitsu-san take Akiko to the balcony so they can dry their hair. Akiko is entranced by the foreignness of the word "balcony," and by the beautiful night-time outside with Akitsu-san. Akiko cannot stop thinking of this night afterwards. She realises that she has developed some sort of feelings for Akitsu-san, and ruminates on what it means to love another person of the same sex[6] (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 431). Akiko feels a lot of shame over this realisation, and is terrified of Akitsu-san finding out about her feelings. Whenever she runs into Akitsu-san, she finds herself acting awkward and being unable to say anything.

Akiko regularly goes to church with the other YWA residents, but is surprised that she never sees Akitsu-san there. One Sunday morning as Akiko is leaving for church, she is amazed to see Akitsu-san doing laundry, rather than joining the other residents for church. At a later prayer meeting in the YWA dorm, held while a violent storm rages outside, the residents are asked to share a confession or observation relating to their faith. Akiko blurts out that she is struggling in her faith and wishes that God would appear before her so that she could believe, making the other residents laugh. On the way back to the attic, however, Akitsu-san catches up to Akiko and tells her that she is a "pure and honest" person[7] (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 448). After this incident, Akiko and Akitsu-san start to share their two attic rooms with each other, and their lives "become joined[8]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 449).

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[6]: 同じ性のひとを恋う

[7] 「貴女は……貴女は……なんという……純な正直な……方でしょう……」

[8] 章子と秋津さんの、おたがいの生活は、いつとははなしに、いっしょになった。

The girls they were planning on inviting over earlier to eat apples together now arrive in the attic, and they all eat apples and have a good time together. The participants consist of 8 women, including Akiko, Akitsu-san, and Kudō-san. One day before Christmas, Akitsu-san buys several pairs of black silk gloves to give out as Christmas presents. All the women who were in the apple eating group receive a pair, and Kudō-san jokingly starts referring to the eight of them as the Black Hand Women's Society[9]. The group meet and hang out with each other on several occasions. On Kudō-san's insistence, they go to visit a painter friend of hers, N. They also have a Christmas party together.

On the day of the Christmas party, a beautiful woman arrives at the YWA dorm with a present for Akitsu-san. Since she is out at the moment, Akiko is the one to receive the present, but she neglects to ask the woman's name. The package turns out to contain a doll, and during the Christmas party there is a lot of speculation among the society members about who the giver could be. While Akitsu-san eventually seems to realise who the woman is, she does not share her realisation with the others. Akitsu-san behaves strangely all evening, and seems sad.

Over the holidays Akiko returns home to her uncle's house. There, she realises that she is in love with Akitsu-san[10] (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 479, p. 480), and she is nervous and eager to go back to Tokyo and see her again. When Akiko arrives at their shared rooms in the dorm, however, Akitsu-san is not there. Akiko learns she has gone to visit the beautiful person from Christmas, and is crushed by this information. Kudō-san stops by the attic and tells Akiko that the beautiful person is called Kinu, is an old friend of Akitsu-san's, and has recently become a married woman. Akitsu-san eventually comes back home, ending Akiko's despair.

Kudō-san then contracts pneumonia and dies. All the members of the Black Glove society go to her funeral together, wearing their gloves.

Akitsu-san starts receiving letters every day from Kinu. As she reads them, she seems to become more melancholic and distant every day. Akiko despairs and feels like there is a wall separating her from this part of Akitsu-san's life. One day, her despair overtakes her, and in a fit of anger she destroys the doll Akitsu-san received from Kinu on Christmas. Akiko and Akitsu-san grow distant, and start living in their separate rooms again.

Akiko falls into despair and spends all her time sitting catatonically in a corner of the attic being sad. One day, she hears one of the girls from the Black Glove society enter Akitsu-san's room. In a fit of jealousy and irrational anger, Akiko storms into the room and slaps her.

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[9] "Black Hand" の女結社
[10] 章子はどんなに秋津さんが恋しかったろう and [秋津さん]を愛します, respectively

Due to this incident, the dean asks Akiko to leave the dorm. As Akiko is packing her things and preparing to leave, Akitsu-san enters the room and says that she will leave the dorm with her. Akitsu-san explains to Akiko what has been going on between her and Kinu. She explains that Kinu was unhappy in her marriage, and felt like her only escape was suicide. However, because she did not want to die by herself, she asked Akitsu-san, her former lover, to die with her. Akitsu-san, however, decided not to, as she was thinking of Akiko and realised that she would rather go together with her. The two women decide to leave the dorm together and find their own path in life. The last scene in the novel is the two of them saying goodbye to the attic, as they leave it behind to search for their fate in the world.

5: Discussion

In *Yaneura no Nishojo*, we are told about the fates of four young women: Akiko, Akitsu, Kudō, and Kinu. These all have different experiences in their love lives, and meet different outcomes because of it. As I will argue below, I believe that Yoshiya Nobuko wrote *Yaneura no Nishojo* partly as a way to present her views on the topics of same-sex love and heterosexual marriage. By comparing the lives of these four different characters, we gain an understand of her opinions surrounding these topics. As such, the discussion section of this thesis will analyse the characters' different situations, compare them, and draw conclusions based on this. I will start by describing the relationship between Akiko and Akitsu-san, and show that through it, Yoshiya makes the argument that female same-sex love was equal to heterosexual love. I will also discuss the political side of women having relationships with each other and supporting each other, and examine how same-sex relationships between women do not have to be exclusively about romance. Next, I will discuss the fate of Kudō-san, and through it examine what Yoshiya says about romantic relationships between men and women. Lastly, I will talk about the circumstances of Kinu, and explain how through her story, Yoshiya was directly answering claims made by sexologists as to the negative effects of female same-sex relationships, and dismissing the measures sexologists wanted to take to stop these effects from occurring. In conclusion, we will see that through *Yaneura no Nishojo*, Yoshiya is arguing for female same-sex relationships as an equal or more beneficial alternative to heterosexual marriage.

One of the questions that is frequently raised in scholarship on Yoshiya Nobuko is to what extent her works can be said to have a political message. Yukiko Tanaka (2000, p. 153, *my emphasis*) has written that Yoshiya's "female characters' opinions and choices are often so new and revolutionary that one *must* consider her a feminist writer," whereas on the opposite end of the spectrum, Shamoon (2012, p. 70) writes that "the attempt to resurrect Yoshiya as a feminist or even as a lesbian author is deeply problematic." *Yaneura no Nishojo* is arguably the most outspoken of Yoshiya's works when it comes to politics. Through an analysis of this novel, we may gain an understanding of her political stance towards marriage and same-sex relationships, which in turn provides context for reading her other works as well.

5.1: Growing out of the attic: The relationship between Akiko and Akitsu-san

The main relationship in *Yaneura no Nishojo* is that of Akiko and Akitsu-san, the two *shojo* of the novel's title. These two are the residents of the YWA fourth floor attic, and from the very start of the novel they are both withdrawn, melancholic persons. The first time Akiko sees Akitsu-san, she is struck by how coldly and silently beautiful she is. Akiko thinks that "her features and posture both held the cold, effortless silence of a crystal[11]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 387), while her eyes are described as "perfectly clear eyes[12]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 388). Apart from a short, perfunctory greeting, Akitsu-san does not say much the first time the two meet, much to Akiko's relief. Similar to Akiko herself, Akitsu-san seems to be somehow weary of and distanced from the rest of the world. When Akiko first sees her in the dining hall, she notes that Akitsu-san, just like herself, does not have much of an appetite, and is contenting herself a cup of tea.

As the story progresses, however, Akiko and Akitsu-san start to grow closer, eventually sharing their rooms together. Their relationship is then threatened by the arrival of Kinu, which drives a wedge between them as Akitsu-san grows ever more distant and sad. Akiko feels like Kinu and Akitsu-san are in their own world that Akiko cannot know, and that she and Kinu are completely separated from each other's worlds[13] (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 496).

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[11] その人の顔容、姿勢はと共に水晶のように冷たい静かさをなんの努力なしに保ち得ていた。
[12] 澄み渡った眼―ずいぶん澄み切った眼だった。
[13]章子と伴夫人 [きぬ] との間は、あらゆる城壁や濠でへだてられている。

Akiko and Akitsu-san's relationship eventually reaches its crisis when Akiko is overcome by a fit of jealousy which leads her to destroy the doll, after which the two women again return to living in their separate. Eventually Akiko's jealousy and emotions get the best of her yet again, and she slaps their friend when this person tries to enter Akitsu-san's room. As a consequence, Akiko has to leave the YWA dorm, and is in complete despair; but in the last scene of the novel, Akitsu-san comes to her and says that they will leave the dorm together. As they are both people without any sense of purpose in their life[14], they will forge a way together and find a purpose. The novel ends with the two of them saying farewell to the attic and entering the world outside.

The space of the attic plays an important part in highlighting the two girls' reclusive personalities. As she enters the attic initially, Akiko feels liberated and relieved at being alone, and thinks to herself that "now finally [she] could completely and utterly know the happiness of this craving she had had for a long, long time[15]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 377). Akiko has longed for a room to be alone in since she began living with her uncle, and all through living in a big room shared with many other girls in miss L's dorm. The attic is also a strange and mysterious space, physically. When the dean first takes Akiko up there, Akiko feels like she might get lost if she is separated from the dean, and walking through the YWA dorm it feels like she is inside an enormous cathedral[16] (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 373). Akiko then states that walking up the stairs to the attic feels like being separated from reality (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 375) and that "as [Akiko] stood at the entrance to the fourth floor, it felt like she was entering a different world[17]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 390). The attic room itself is small and shaped like a triangle, and has blue walls. Inside it, the air and daylight dance around the room (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 377). Even the name of the room is wonderful to Akiko: the English word "attic" evokes images of people living in a distant, foreign land, whereas for the Japanese word *yaneura* 屋根裏 Akiko feels that the word contains an "unusual charm[18]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 380). All in all, the attic is a place that fuels Akiko's imagination and a place where she feels she can be herself. She spends her first hours there mostly just sitting on the floor, daydreaming as the dusk fills the attic with a strange, smoky light.

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[14] 「私はなんにも目的を持たずに生きてゆくのです……」章子がこう言った。「私も……同じです、私のこの自分の生涯に目的がないのです」秋津さんがこう言うー（Yoshiya, 1975, p. 507）

[15] この長い長い渇望の喜びを今ようやく全く完全に章子は得ることが出来た。

[16] 大きい大きい高い高い広い立派な御堂の内部に章子は進んで入るような気にすらなった。

[17] 四階の入口へ立ったとき、これからが違う世界に入るのだと感じられた。

[18] 非常に魅力ある

However, Yoshiya makes it clear that with this longed-for solitude, there is also loneliness. When Akiko looks out from her attic window, she is high above the rest of the world and completely separated from everything that goes on in it. While the attic functions as a refuge for people who long for solitude and wish to withdraw from the world, it also increases the feeling of isolation. After attempting to feed the sparrows outside her window only to have them fly away before she can make it back to her room with the rice she went out and bought to give them, Akiko stands on her desk and properly looks out of the attic window for the first time, trying to see where the birds went. She sees a wide sky, and underneath it the earth and its people far, far below. Looking up at the sky, she is filled with a "limitless loneliness[19]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 414).

Her feelings relating to the attic make it clear that Akiko is stuck in a strange world where she is not necessarily unhappy, but lonely and wanting human connection as she feels separated from other people. Something that shows up repeatedly throughout the novel is how Akiko longs for connections with other humans, almost regardless of who they might be. As she leaves the life in miss L's dorm behind, Akiko laments the fact that soon she will be forgotten by miss L, the Hatanakas, and the other residents in miss L's dorm (Yoshiya, 1975, pp. 367-68). Both when she leaves for the YWA dorm at the beginning of the novel and as she walks home to the dorm after school towards the end of the novel, Akiko looks at the people around her and feel like she is not connected to them in any way whatsoever, and she wishes she could form some kind of lasting connection with anyone, no matter who (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 369 and p. 503, respectively). Before Akiko and Akitsu-san moves in together, Akiko lies in her own room and thinks of Akitsu-san on the other side of the blue wall, and is sad because one day they will have to part and Akitsu-san, like everyone else, will forget her too (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 436). Clearly, a great tragedy of Akiko's life is that she feels like she is completely unable to make lasting, meaningful connections with other people.

It is her relationship with Akitsu-san that is eventually able to bring Akiko out of the attic, at first metaphorically and finally physically. It is through Akitsu-san that she meets the people of the Black Hand Women's Society, all of whom are earlier acquaintances of Akitsu-san. She starts to go out into the city streets at night and take in the sights and experiences they have to offer. In the last scenes of the book, Akiko's growth and self-realisation reaches a new point, as Akitsu-san introduces the concept of "self" (*jiga* 自我) to Akiko and makes her

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[19] 無限の寂寥の流れを身に浴びた。

realise that Akiko also has a "self", as Akitsu-san states that the same "silver flame[20]" burns in both her and Akiko, and Akiko wonders whether it is really possible that she has a "self" inside her (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 511). Throughout the conversation, Akiko realises that she in facts wants to protect and nurture her "self" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 511). While Akiko is still not sure of what she wants to do with her life at the end of the novel, she is at the very least determined to find out, together with Akitsu-san.

For readers today, Akiko's heavy reliance on her relationship with Akitsu-san for her own self-development might not make much sense. At the time Yoshiya was writing *Yaneura no Nishojo*, however, she had good reason to include this particular storyline. Suzuki (2010, p. 7) writes that, from the beginning of the Taishō period, the "self" (*jiga*) was increasingly emphasized as "integral to the modern experience," and that "the discovery of a true self and the fulfillment of its potential was a significant way of constructing a modern identity." She argues that particularly through the writings of Hiratsuka Raichō, in this instance greatly inspired by Ellen Key, love (*ai* or *ren'ai*) came to be seen as intrinsic to self-development and the discovery of one's true self for the women of the feminist Seitō environment (Suzuki, 2010, pp. 13-14). According to this particular philosophy, which Suzuki (2010, p. 13) terms "modern love ideology," "love […] takes the individual to a new, evolved state of self-awareness" (Suzuki, 2010, p. 14). Finding one's true self, then, became important in the Taishō era, and for women in particular this was achieved through finding true love.

It should be noted that while many Seitō members believed the path to self-discovery lay through true love, they meant this specifically in the context of love between men and women. Suzuki (2010, pp. 29-32) writes that same-sex love was rarely written about in *Seitō*, and when it was, the author usually took a negative stance, expressing their "anxiety about the difference between innocent friendships and abnormal relationships" (Suzuki, 2010, p. 29). In fact, while Hiratsuka Raichō (in)famously was in a relationship with another woman by the name of Otake Kōkichi, she later dismissed this relationship as a one-sided infatuation from the inverted Otake, and after the relationship ended she portrayed same-sex love "in extremely negative terms" (Suzuki, 2010, p. 30) in the *Seitō* magazine. Yoshiya, however, who was tangentially involved in the Seitō environment (Suzuki, 2010, p. 32), seems to have absorbed this discourse on the connection between true love and self-development, and in *Yaneura no Nishojo* she shows how it is possible to achieve the same kind of self-realisation through same-sex love as it is through heterosexual love. Dollase (2001, p. 168) has stated

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[20] 銀絃の焔

that in the last scenes of *Yaneura no Nishojo* Akitsu-san "suddenly changes into a benevolent redeemer for Akiko […] Akiko's soul is saved and elevated by [Akitsu-san]." Dollase (2001, p. 169) then judges that due to her depiction as a redeemer, Akitsu-san can no longer be considered Akiko's lover, and the novel thus fails to deliver a "lesbian feminist message" and is instead "detached from both lesbianism and feminism." However, by recognizing the importance held by romantic love in female self-development in Taishō Japan, it becomes clear that Akitsu-san's role in helping Akiko grow into her "self" is not detracting from their relationship being a serious one, but in fact confirms it to be so.

We have seen earlier that same-sex love between schoolgirls was, under certain conditions, accepted in Taishō Japan. The main part of *Yaneura no Nishojo*, where Akiko and Akitsu-san live together in the dorm as students and develop a relationship, does not necessarily go against what was accepted in society and common in girls' fiction. However, the novel's ending where the pair decide to live their lives together and forge a new path for themselves is more unusual. As discussed above, there were few acceptable life paths to choose from for women in Taishō era Japan. The dominant ideology for women at the time was that of *ryōsai kenbo* ('Good Wife, Wise Mother'), which dictated that women should marry and then have children which they should raise to be good citizens. As such it was essential that same-sex relationships ended with graduation, and that the girls went on to marry a man and have children. Yoshiya Nobuko's earliest work, *Hanamonogatari*, is often considered a work of queer or lesbian literature and even seen by many as criticism of the strict roles for adult women (see for example Dollase, 2003, pp. 736-40), but even in these stories Yoshiya does not give her characters what one would consider a happy ending; same-sex love is consigned to school only. Yet, when Yoshiya has Akitsu-san say that "let us live strongly from now on, let us release ourselves to from the rules and turn our backs on the path of humans[21]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 511), this means that Akiko and Akitsu-san do not intend to comply with what society asks of them.

Despite sexologists' insistence that same-sex love should be consigned to school, there were of course adult women in real life who both wanted and actually managed to spend their lives with a female partner – Yoshiya Nobuko herself was one of these. Since the most controversial aspect of *Yaneura no Nishojo* is without a doubt Akiko and Akitsu-san's final

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[21] これからふたりはここを出発点にして強く生きてゆきましょう、世の掟にはずれようと人の道に逆こう

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decision to live their adult lives together, I want to briefly discuss how we should understand female same-sex relationships and their implications in a strict patriarchal society.

Adult female same-sex relationships and politics were intricately connected back during the early 1900s. Faderman (1992, pp. 20-22) says that for many women during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, deciding to spend their lives together was not necessarily a question of romantic or sexual attachments, it could also be a purely practical matter. At the time, financial and employment opportunities were limited for women. Whereas more women than before were receiving a higher education, the options they had to use this education in their adult lives were limited, as it was expected that most of them would marry once they graduated school. For women who did not want to marry, however, it would bring extra security to their life if they set up a household with another woman who also intended to remain single, so that they could support each other both practically and emotionally. As Faderman (1992, p. 21) puts it, "sex solidarity became to them necessary armour against a hostile environment," with many women entering into non-romantic, life-long partnerships with each other as a way to be safer in this hostile environment. This is not, of course, to say that all or even most of such partnerships between women were devoid of romantic and sexual attachments. To take Yoshiya Nobuko as an example again, she and Monma Chiyo were undoubtedly attracted to each other both romantic and sexually (see Robertson, 2002, pp. 162-64 for excerpts of some of the letters they wrote to each other). But while lifelong same-sex relationships would surely be attractive to those women we would now identify as lesbians, it could also be a simple matter of surviving without marrying, and unless the women left clear written records, it is impossible to say for certain which category any specific relationship fell under.

Blurring the line between relationships founded on romance and relationships founded on friendship in this way does come with the danger of implying that women can "choose" whether or not to be lesbians, which is not the case. However, throughout her authorship, and even in *Yaneura no Nishojo*, as I will discuss later, Yoshiya presents the argument that women should prioritize relations with other women over those with men. This does not necessarily mean that she thinks that everyone should be romantically or sexually involved with other women. Adrienne Rich has proposed the idea of a "lesbian continuum", which might be helpful in order to understand Yoshiya Nobuko's views on gender relations. Rich (2003, p. 27) writes that the term is meant to include a range of "women-identified experience," and that instead of limiting the qualifications for belonging on the continuum to only those women who have had sexual or romantic relations with other women, Rich (2003,

p. 27) also includes "the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of practical and political support," etc. as experiences that fall on this "lesbian continuum." Whereas Akiko and Akitsu-san's relationship is an obvious example of something that belongs on the continuum, by Rich's definition the relationship between, for example, Akiko and Kudō-san could also be argued to belong to the same category. Following this argument, that same-sex friendship and romance are not necessarily clearly distinguished but rather parts of the same phenomenon, the romantic elements in Yoshiya's writings are not necessarily to be read "just" as an example of queer or lesbian literature, but also as a strong political statement that encourages women to support and rely on each other to overcome the hardships they experience in a patriarchal society.

Suzuki (2006, p. 594) notes that Yoshiya's authorship might be criticized for "diffusing the meaning of same-sex love". Whereas the characters in Yoshiya's early writings were often explicitly romantically involved, her later works usually deal with the friendship between married women. It is important to realise that while Yoshiya absolutely does deal with topics related to romantic same-sex relationships in her works, as when she is showing how Akitsu-san helps Akiko grow and achieve her true self, this is also closely intertwined with her protest against the limited roles available for adult women. In Yoshiya's world, the most important thing is the relationships that exist between women; she acknowledges that these might take the shape of romantic love or of friendship, but it is not essential for her to differentiate these clearly. Rather, she argues for the prioritisation of female-female relationships, regardless of what form they take, over female-male relationships. For Yoshiya, then, friendship and romance between women are not distinct phenomena, but two aspects of the same thing. They can both equip women to find a way in life that is independent from male interference and control.

5.2: Die, die, die, my darling: Kudō-san's story

Whereas, as we have seen, romantic or pure love became an important part of Taishō era feminist debate on women's self-discovery, it was by no means the first time the concept of love had been given significance in Japanese history. Yokota-Murakami (1998) describes how the way people viewed heterosexual relationships shifted in the Meiji period, as the Japanese literati was exposed to a mass of European literature. During the Edo period, he writes, there had been no sense of there being a necessity for mutual respect in romantic heterosexual

relationships; rather, "the premodern regime of Japanese male sexuality […] entailed condescending patronage on the part of a man and humble servitude on that of a woman" (Yokota-Murakami, 1998, p. 37). While this particular phrasing may or may not be somewhat exaggerated, it is true that Edo period marriages were conducted for the good of the household and not typically based on any mutual affection between the couple, whereas relations between sex workers and clients revolved around pleasure and playfulness, not love. In the Meiji period, however, Edo-period ideals were replaced by the ideal of romantic love (*ai* 愛 or *ren'ai* 恋愛). The physical, sexual aspect, which had been such a prominent part of Edo cultural life, was downplayed, and love came to be regarded as a form of equal companionship. Yokota-Murakami (1998, p. 38) uses a quote from Futabatei's 1888 novel *Drifting Clouds* to demonstrate his point, translated thus: "[The hero Bunzō] was certain that love went hand in hand with respect and that no woman could love a man she did not respect."

This new ideal of love based on equality and respect between two partners was originally deeply rooted in Christianity (Suzuki, 2010, p. 8) and carried a strong Western flavour with it. As we remember, throughout *Yaneura no Nishojo* Akiko struggles with deep feelings of shame and inadequacy related to her Christian faith. Her whole life, both at home with her family and in miss L's dorm, she has been living a strict life with many limitations – in miss L's dorm, for example, the residents were not allowed to do any sort of activity on Sundays, as that day was for praying and reflecting (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 438). Christianity also affected Akiko's childhood; she talks at length about a picture of Christ her mother and grandmother had hanging on the wall, that she disliked and found scary and depressing. Akiko can only believe in what she sees before her, stating that "[Akiko's] faith was like a fortress constructed from a sand dune, the black waves of doubt moment by moment tearing the sand dune down and carrying it away[22]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 444).

On the night when Akiko admits during the prayer meeting to being uncertain in her faith and needing proof to believe in God, she is finally able to reject this form of Christianity that has caused her so much shame, and as a result deepen her relationship with Akitsu-san. Just as Akiko eventually ends up rejecting the grim, restrictive Christianity that has been imposed upon her throughout her upbringing, Yoshiya similarly rejects the idea of Western/Christian love matches between men and women. Men, as a group, are depicted negatively throughout the novel, with the most pointed example of this being the scene where

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[22] 彼女の信仰は常に砂丘の塔であった、懐疑の黒波が刻々に砂丘をくずして流し去った。

Akiko is talking about taking the train home from school during the afternoon rush hours (Yoshiya, 1975, pp. 433-34). Because the train is so packed, it is almost impossible to enter, so the men on the crowded platform brutally push women, children, and old people to the side so that they can be the first to board. Akiko despairs of the attitude of these men, especially that of the young ones, who she notes is behaving in the exact same manner as their fathers and grandfathers; in this case, there has clearly been no change between the generations.

Akiko then notices all the beautiful young women around her that are being ignored and pushed aside by the young men, and as she thinks about how the women are bound to eventually have to choose one among them to marry, tears well in her eyes (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 434). Dollase (2001, p. 164) has criticised Yoshiya's depiction of men in *Yaneura no Nishojo*, writing that her feminist voice is "simplistic, judgmental, and emotional: she victimizes girls and women, depicting men as social villains." These descriptions of Yoshiya's, however, while admittedly lacking in nuance, may also be her way of arguing that it is impossible for women to find the equality or self-realisation that was so craved at the time in relationships with men. The way Yoshiya presents it, the ideal of love might have changed in the last decades, but the behaviour of men certainly had not. This attitude also shows up in how she handles the character of Kudō-san.

From her very first appearance, Kudō-san comes across as an unconventional and extraordinary girl. When Akiko first meets her, Akiko and Akitsu-san are trying to carry the box of apples from the YWA entrance up to the attic, but with only the two of them they are unable to lift it. However, they are saved from failure by the appearance of Kudō-san. Kudō-san is described as having an unconventional appearance that is different from that of other women (Yoshiya, 1975, pp. 421-22). She wears a dull-colour *hakama*, and has huge glasses with shining lenses that obscure most of her face. While Kudō-san's style is neat, clean, and tidy, the first time Akiko sees her she still finds her quite strange (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 422). Her language is also curious, rough compared to normal women's speech but not vulgar, giving off "the bright feeling of the clean, light sound of young bamboo shivering and dripping in an autumn rain shower[23]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 422). Above all else, Kudō-san is characterised by her unquenchable enthusiasm, and when she hears that the box Akiko and Akitsu-san are trying to lift is filled with apples, she immediately exclaims in excitement and happiness, and then starts lifting together them. Together, with a lot of painful struggle, the three of them

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[23] むしろすっきりした淡泊な若竹の時雨に濡れたさっとゆれたようなさやかな感じを与える

manage to get the box up to the attic, with Kudō-san shouting encouragements and keeping everyone from giving up along the way.

There have been suggestions that Yoshiya based the character of Kudō-san on the aforementioned famous feminist writer and Seitō founding member Hiratsuka Raichō (Dollase, 2001, p. 164), as their appearance and style of clothing is somewhat similar and as they are both characterised by their outrageous behaviour. In fact, Seitō members in general were heavily criticized for "outrageous behaviour" such as visiting prostitutes or drinking with other women in bars (Wu, 2002, p. 72), and the scene in *Yaneura no Nishojo* where Akiko, Akitsu-san and Kudō-san visit an entertainment hall[24] at the latter's suggestion can probably be taken as a reference to these real-life events. In addition to her appearance and unconventional behaviour, Kudō-san also plays an important role of bringing the other women together in *Yaneura no Nishojo*. It is she who takes the initiative to get everyone together to eat apples, and she is the one who starts referring to the Black Hand Women's Society. The name of "Black Hand," based on the girls' black gloves, is another nod to Seitō, which is a direct translation of the English expression "bluestocking." On the whole, Kudō-san is an unconventional, self-assured young woman who does exactly as she pleases without much regard for what others think. The first time the women get together to eat apples, Kudō-san shocks the others when she admits that she has been to the cinema that morning instead of the church, where she would just have nodded off anyway (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 454). During their visit to the entertainment hall Akiko is upset by the behaviour of the men around her, and in contrast she notes that Kudō-san looks "sturdy and reliable – the strong image of a woman whose feelings could not be violated by the people around her[25]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 459).

All of this is threatened, however, by Kudō-san's feelings for the painter N, whom she takes the rest of the Black Hand Women's Society to visit. Akiko notes that when speaking with N, Kudō-san acts in a girlish, infatuated way that is completely unlike her usual behaviour (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 467). Despite Kudō-san's high praise for him and his talent as a painter, N lives in poverty. His so-called atelier, which is in reality just his home, is in a poor part of town in a room at the back of a store, with water damaged walls, old furniture, and tatami that is starting to go black (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 469). After they leave the atelier, Kudō-san again launches into a praise of N's work, and states that while he is not appreciated by

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[24] 寄席

[25] 強そうで頼もしい―周囲の人々によってけっして自分の気持を犯されない強い女の像である

critics, this is in fact to be seen as a mark of his talent and artistic vision: N walks his own road, and though it might be narrow, he is being true to himself by following it[26] (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 469). The other women also join in the praising of N, either out of respect for Kudō-san or because they genuinely enjoyed his work. Mori-san, one of the members of the group, notes that "to feel all the effort and pain in the same way as him, and silently with kind eyes watch over his work is one of the jobs for the women walking this earth[27]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 469). Kudō-san seems extremely happy with everyone's positive reactions to and praise of N, and as the women say goodbye to each other afterwards she cries and shakes everyone's hands.

In reference to *Hanamonogatari*, Dollase (2019, p. 36) writes that "growing up is not simply a physical change for girls, but is a loss of self-identity". *Yaneura no Nishojo* makes it clear that through her feelings for N, Kudō-san is at risk of exactly losing her self-identity. If she were to marry N, she would be delegated to the role of his supporter, living in the poverty that Yoshiya so eloquently describes while helping him "find his own road." The ideal of *ryōsai kenbo* is for women to give up their sense of self, and exist instead as wives and mothers. Yoshiya draws strong lines between Kudō-san's relationship with N, her eventual death, and her loss of self. After leaving Kudō-san's funeral, the girls see a man at the train station whom they believe to be N (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 494). At the end of the novel, Akiko thinks this: "Kudō-san too was a person who to her heart's content showed her 'self' – but at the ceremony after her death that person's 'self' was just gone, she was a woman who only in life could strongly spread her wings of 'self' – [28]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 511). Even if Kudō-san had not died, but had instead married N, she would still have had to give up her strong sense of self.

Earlier, I discussed how Yoshiya's works as a whole present the view that women should prioritize relationships between themselves, rather than romantic relationships with men. Feminist communities are not really discussed in her work, but in *Yaneura no Nishojo*, Yoshiya does make a brief nod to them by introducing the Black Hand Women's Society. I described the resemblances between this group and the real life Seitō community above.

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[26] N さん自身の路をどんなに小さくとも見出そうとするのです [...] N さんはともあれほんものを作りあげる覚悟で生きて行くのです

[27] 「ああした方達の努力と焦心と苦悩とに十分な同情をもって、静かに優しい眼であの方達の行く手を見守ってあげることは地球の上の女性の一つの仕事ですわね」

[28] 工藤さんも「自我」を心ゆくばかり現わし通して逝ったひとであったーただ死後の儀式においてあの人の「自我」を消したばかりで生きているかぎり「自我」の翅を力強く打った娘であったー

In the novel, the Black Hand Women's Society have a strong visual presence as a group. When they leave N's atelier, Yoshiya describes how all their gloved hands are lined up as they grip the straps on the train (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 470); this scene is mirrored on the train home from Kudō-san's funeral, where there is one pair of gloves that is obviously missing (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 494). In the end, however, Yoshiya seems to disregard, or at the very least consider it not worth the effort to raise the topic of, feminist groups as a real place for women's growth. After Kudō-san's death, the Black Hand Women's Society begins to drift apart. If we see Kudō-san as being based on Hiratsuka Raichō, this might be Yoshiya's way of commenting on the choices of real-life Taishō era feminists. As we remember, Hiratsuka Raichō eventually disregarded her same-sex relationship for a heterosexual one. Yoshiya may be trying to demonstrate that doing so inevitably will lead to a loss of self for the woman, regardless of the feminist ideals she initially enters the partnership with. At the very least, it seems to at least be clear that Yoshiya believed self-fulfillment will ultimately not be found in feminist communities, nor equality in romantic relationships with men.

5.3: Harold, she's a congenital invert: The case of Kinu

Kudō-san is not the only character in *Yaneura no Nishojo* who is involved with death. In the final scenes of the novel Akitsu-san reveals that Kinu, the mysterious, beautiful woman who came visited the dorm and has since written to Akitsu-san extensively, asked her to die together with her. As we have seen, lesbian suicide was a much-discussed topic in the media at the time Yoshiya was writing *Yaneura no Nishojo*, and was something that was surrounded with much anxiety from sexologists and others. As stated earlier, it was a generally held belief that female same-sex relationships could be harmless or even beneficial as long as they were limited to schoolgirls, but that it was important that the relationships did not become too intense or extend into adult age. Same-sex relationships taken too far could have a number of dire consequences, including the participants' suicide.

In reality, there could of course have been a variety of different reasons why a lesbian couple would want to kill themselves together. For many, the despair over not being able to live with the person they loved, but being forced into a heterosexual marriage by their parents or others, would be reason enough. In addition, Robertson (1999, pp. 30-31) points out that suicide in Japan traditionally has been recognized as "an empowering act that illuminated the purity and sincerity of one's position and intentions" (Robertson, 1999, p. 30). In fact, love

suicides have a long tradition in Japan and are often present in Edo plays and literature as a solution for couples who had no realistic way of being together in life. Pflugfelder (2005, p. 154, my emphasis) writes that "*Shinjū* [love suicide] served in Tokugawa literature and drama as a conventional recourse for ill-fated lovers, whose fatal act gave *visible and permanent expression to otherwise illicit ties and emotions*." As pointed out by Robertson (1999, p. 30), due to the massive media attention on lesbian double suicides, they could also function as a way to get otherwise controversial ideas into print, either through suicide notes that were printed by the media or through interviews with those who survived their attempt. According to Robertson, suicides committed by same-sex couples were not merely acts of despair, but also a way to revolt against the norm of *ryōsai kenbo* in a way that would be seen and recognized by society. This context is important to keep in mind when considering what Yoshiya wrote on suicide in *Yaneura no Nishojo*.

In the novel Kinu does not leave a suicide note for us to read, but the reader is still acquainted with her thoughts and emotions through Akitsu-san's retelling of their relationship and of the things Kinu had said to her. By describing the unhappiness Kinu experiences in marriage, Yoshiya is quite directly answering the claims made by sexologists that the best course of action for women in same-sex relationships was to marry when they entered adulthood, and that failure to do so it might have disastrous consequences in the form of, among other things, suicide. Just as women sometimes used their suicide notes to explain their thoughts in real life, Yoshiya is able through her novel to make the claim directly that pressuring young women to marry against their will is something that will make them unhappy. She writes that Kinu "is a wretched soul who thinks she has no other option but to die[29]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 509), and that the life she has been living in her husband's house does not at all agree with Kinu's personality, so she has decided that her only escape is death (Yoshiya, 1975, pp. 509-10). Whereas sexologists and popular press pointed to same-sex love, lesbianism, and inversion as the cause of suicides, Yoshiya instead points to forced heterosexual marriage, and the unhappiness that comes with it, as the reason why some young women decided to kill themselves.

Additionally, through showing the different fates of Kinu and Akitsu-san Yoshiya is not only pointing out the cause of the suicides, she is also suggesting a solution to the problem. Kinu is unhappy in her married life and wants to kill herself, but she cannot bear the loneliness of doing it alone. Therefore, she asks Akitsu-san to die with her, and writing in her

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[29] 死ぬよりほかに仕方がないと思いつめた気の毒な方

letter to Akitsu-san: "Let us die […] After all this would be the best….. But it is too lonely by myself….. If I had my wish I would die together with Tamaki-san…[30]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 509). Then Akitsu-san recounts that, on the night she received the letter from Kinu and went to see her, Kinu had said that "if only you said we could die together, I would go to the sea right now[31]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 510). Notably, this is *exactly* what sexologists at the time were afraid would happen: that lesbian suicides would spread from woman to woman. Same-sex love was believed by many to be to some extent transmissible (Suzuki, 2006, p. 579), meaning that true inverts could corrupt and lure otherwise normal women into suicide. It is not unreasonable to assume that Akitsu-san, who feels she has no purpose in life and is generally a somewhat depressed person, might have agreed to follow Kinu into death. However, she has one thing holding her back: her relationship with Akiko. Akitsu-san states quite directly that she did not want to die because she thought of Akiko: "Takimoto-san – I could not stop thinking of you – […] now tonight – I understood, I am someone who will go together with you no matter what –[32]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 510). Contrary to claims that lesbian relationships drove women to suicide, Yoshiya shows us here a case of a woman being *saved* from that tragic fate as a direct consequence of her same-sex love.

As was briefly mentioned in chapter 3, there was some debate in the early twentieth century on the extent to which same-sex love was congenital or acquired. Perhaps contrary to expectation, many women actually embraced the sexologists' theories labelling them as congenital inverts. Faderman (1992, pp. 57-8) explains that, in these women's view, if they were born inverts there was nothing they could reasonably do to change it, so their best course of action would be to live as nature intended them to and pursue relationships with other women. On the other hand, if it was indeed true that inversion was an acquired trait, women who decided to follow the path of same-sex love could be held morally at fault for not doing anything to change their feelings. In this way, sexologists' branding of women who loved other women as congenital inverts could actually provide justification for these women to live the way they wanted to. While Yoshiya does not directly raise the issue of same-sex love as acquired versus congenital in *Yaneura no Nishojo*, she seems to share similar feelings to those described here. Throughout the novel, Akiko struggles with her feelings of shame and

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[30] 死にましょう[…]やっぱりこれが一番いいことでした……けれどひとりであんまり寂しすぎる……私かなうことならたまきさんといっしょに死にたい……. Tamaki = Akitsu.

[31] もしたまきさんさえいっしょに死ぬと一言いうたなら今でもあの海へ

[32] 滝本さんー私は貴女を思い切れなかったのー[...]今晩という今ー私はわかりました、私はどうしても貴女といっしょにゆく者でしたー. Takimoto = Akiko.

inadequacy and is unable to figure out what she wants from life. Once she is able to accept her love for Akitsu-san and decide to pursue a life together with her, however, she is able to find happiness as she and Akitsu-san leave the attic "to seek their new fate! To search for the road they should walk![33]" (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 512). On the other hand, Kinu, who tried to supress her true nature and marry a man as society expected her to do, ends up unhappy to the point of suicide. It seems that both Akiko and Kinu are in fact meant to be in a romantic relationship with another woman, and the choices the two of them make or are pressured into making when it comes to the choice of romantic partner has a direct consequence on whether or not they are able to find purpose and happiness in life.

5.4: Acceptable unacceptable opinions

So far, I have argued that *Yaneura no Nishojo* presents Yoshiya's views that women could benefit from discarding relationships with men and instead develop their "self" through romantic relationships with other women. In the closing paragraphs of this chapter, I will discuss how Yoshiya made her views more palatable to the general public by making her fiction appear to conform to sexological standards for same-sex relationships. While these tactics serve to obscure Yoshiya's opinions from a current audience, they were effective in that they allowed Yoshiya to keep writing and present her views to audiences without being censored by the government.

First and most obvious, Yoshiya writes a story where the main characters are students for the majority of the book. As previously discussed, relationships between girls were seen as relatively unproblematic as long as they were confined to the time before graduation, and the girls married men and had children upon reaching adulthood. In *Yaneura no Nishojo*, it is only in the last few pages that Akiko and Akitsu-san determine that they want to live their life together. Furthermore, sex was a big taboo in schoolgirl relationships. Although some critics have read certain scenes in the novel as erotic, namely the one where Akiko and Akitsu-san are using the showers at the same time as well as a description of them sleeping in the same room together, any eroticism that may or may be present in these scenes is never clearly spelled out and could easily be attributed to the florid and dramatic language Yoshiya uses throughout the novel, as well as to common conventions from *shōjo* fiction. Shamoon (2012,

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[33] 彼等の新しき運命を求めて！彼等の行くべき路を探して！

p. 73) has noted that "the presence or absence of sexual touching is immaterial to [schoolgirl] relationships." In other words, although it is possible to argue that Yoshiya intended to hint at a sexual component in Akiko and Akitsu-san's relationship, *Yaneura no Nishojo* is, on the surface at least, platonic in content.

In addition to keeping her characters of appropriate age and respectably non-sexual, Yoshiya also makes sure to present them appropriately gender-wise. As discussed above, masculinity and lesbianism were thought to be closely intertwined. Whereas opinions were most assuredly varied, there was a general sense that girls and women who had a traditional feminine appearance were the ones most likely to outgrow their same-sex tendencies, whereas women with a masculine appearance had a higher chance of being true inverts. Accordingly, Yoshiya takes great pains to make sure we understand that her characters who are interested in other women are also highly feminine. Akitsu-san is described as dainty and beautiful, with black hair, pale skin, red lips, and white, even teeth, with Yoshiya talking about "the beauty of Akitsu-san's face[34]" in the moonlight when she and Akiko are on the balcony (Yoshiya, 1975, p. 430). Dollase (2001, p. 160) has noted that the description of Akitsu-san's appearance is reminiscent of magazine illustrations of *shōjo*, and that "it is a portrayal of a heroine typical of Yoshiya's girls' stories." Kinu is a quite unusually beautiful woman; before Akiko learns her name, she keeps thinking of her as "the beautiful visitor." She is so beautiful, in fact, that the dorm caretaker forgets to ask Kinu's name during her visit to the dorm. The only character who has an untraditional or even masculine appearance is Kudō-san, with her clean, tidy style and big glasses. Notably, Kudō-san is also the only one of the main characters who falls in love with a man, and shows no interest whatsoever in romantic relations with other women.

6: Conclusion

In *Yaneura no Nishojo*, Yoshiya Nobuko uses images and plot lines that readers would be familiar with and that would not necessarily have gained negative attention. Like in many of the stories in *Hanamonogatari*, the main story of *Yaneura no Nishojo* is that of two female students falling in love. However, I have argued in this thesis that despite the innocent presentation, Yoshiya is in fact presenting quite radical views for her time through this novel.

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[34] 秋津さんの俤のうつくしさ

Through the fates of the different characters of her novel, she shows us that, firstly, same-sex relationships constitute true love in the same way that cross-sex ones do and provide opportunities for one's "self" to be realised in exactly the same way. Secondly, Yoshiya criticizes the institution of *ryōsai kenbo* and the ideal of true love as an equal partnership between a man and a woman, by showing how the behaviour of Taishō era Japanese men had not changed significantly from how men behaved in the previous decades, and by demonstrating how heterosexual relationships required the woman to put aside her sense of "self" in order to support the man. Finally, Yoshiya counters sexological claims that female same-sex relationships constituted a danger to women by claiming instead that preventing women from being in these relationships was what actually caused unhappiness and presented a danger to these women.

By placing *Yaneura no Nishojo* in its contemporary context, we gain a deeper understanding of the novel. More than that, however, we also gain an understanding of Taishō era discourses on sexuality, as this novel shows Yoshiya engaged with these discourses. Throughout the novel, she is not arguing for acceptance of same-sex love in terms that would be natural for us today. Rather, Yoshiya uses contemporary notions of self-development through true love and recognition of schoolgirl relationships as potentially beneficial to argue that same-sex relationships between adult women, too, were healthy for the women involved.

Understanding how sexuality has been constructed at different times in history allows us to appreciate the "purely conventional and arbitrary character" (Halperin, 1989, p. 258) of our own social experiences. As such, reading and analysing *Yaneura no Nishojo* from a contemporary perspective not only teaches us about Taishō era Japan, but by extension also about ourselves. The discourses surrounding female same-sex sexuality in early twentieth century Japan are interesting precisely because they so clearly show that, while people have been attracted to their own sex for a long time, the way this attraction we interpret this attraction is not grounded in biology, but rather in social constructions and conventions.

Yaneura no Nishojo is arguably the most openly political of Yoshiya's novels. Shortly after its publication, she entered into a relationship with Monma Chiyo which would continue until Yoshiya's death in 1973. This fact which might go some way to explain why Yoshiya was more careful about writing controversially on the topic of same-sex love in her later works, as it was important for her to avoid close public scrutiny of her private life. Having said that, this does not mean that political opinions are entirely absent from her later works; they might just be more carefully concealed beneath a cover of apparent acceptability. *Yaneura no Nishojo* introduces Yoshiya's own thoughts on sexuality and same-sex

relationships, and understanding this novel well will also presumably grant us a different understanding of her other work as well.

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