

# Percorsi in Civiltà dell'Asia e dell'Africa I

Quaderni di studi dottorali alla Sapienza

a cura di

Federica Casalin, Marina Miranda





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## 2. Cross-Gender Female Same-Sex Love as Women's Solidarity in *Torikaebaya monogatari* and *Ariake no wakare*

Daniele Durante

### 2.1. Introduction

*Torikaebaya monogatari* とりかへばや物語 (trans. *The Tale of If Only I Could Exchange Them*, hereafter *Torikaebaya*, written by an anonymous author approximately between 1100 and 1170 in four volumes) and *Ariake no wakare* 有明の別れ (trans. *Partings at Dawn*, composed by an unknown writer presumably during the 1190s in three books) are two literary sources that show a striking textual and narrative similarity. Indeed, both works belong to the genre of *ōchō monogatari* 王朝物語, “court tales”, the literary corpus produced between approximately the ninth and the fourteenth centuries within the elite environment revolving around the figures of the Japanese Emperors and Empresses, and to the subgenres of *tsukuri monogatari* 作り物語, “prose fictional tales”, and *giko monogatari* 擬古物語, “pseudo-classical tales”, a designation indicating texts created in the late Heian (794-1185), Kamakura (1185-1333), and early Muromachi or Ashikaga (1333-1573) periods and highly imitative of mid-Heian œuvres as regards content and style.

Furthermore, in both *Torikaebaya* and volume I of *Ariake no wakare* the protagonist is a biological woman who, under a supernatural influence, performs the male gender role<sup>1</sup>. In the course of the two sto-

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<sup>1</sup> During the dissertation, the protagonists will be referred to by using the pronouns “he/him” as a way to imitate the original narrations which address them by using male epithets such as *wakagimi* 若君, “the young lord”, and *otokogimi* 男君, “His Lordship”, in *Torikaebaya* (Imai *et al.* 1997: 106-109, 111, 113-114, 121) and *otoko* 男, “man”, in *Ariake no wakare* (Aizawa, Nakamura 1958: 89). All translations are mine

ries Chūnagon 中納言, “the Middle Counselor”, the main character of *Torikaebaya*, and Udaishō 右大将, “the Major Captain of the Right”, the main character of book I of *Ariake no wakare*, establish an intense relationship of romantic love with the women they marry, respectively known as Yon no kimi 四の君, “the Fourth Lady”<sup>2</sup>, and Tai no ue 対の上, “Her Ladyship of the wing of the manor”. However, for the duration of their marriage the brides are convinced to be wedded with a cisgender man, since Chūnagon and Udaishō hide their biological sex from them as well as from the rest of the court society<sup>3</sup>. Eventually, though, two male suitors, Saishō 宰相, “the Auditor”, in the first case and Mikado 帝, “the Emperor”, in the second one, discover the anatomical sex Chūnagon and Udaishō have been concealing and persuade them to assume the female gender role so that they can settle down as their conventional spouses.

As researchers have interpreted the tales as a complex and compelling exploration of the constructedness of the notion of gender in twelfth century Japan, *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* have attracted in the last three decades a great deal of academic attention. In particular, a vast amount of research has selected the texts as primary sources for works of gender studies. According to this critical paradigm, gender does not appear to constitute a universally fixed category but rather a phenomenon shaped by its historical, social, and cultural context. Consequently, gender scholars have analysed *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* under a variety of historical, sociological, cultural, and literary perspectives in an attempt to uncover how gender was supposedly conceptualised in contemporary Japan<sup>4</sup>.

This essay applies a similar critical approach to the topic of romantic love. Analogously to the notion of gender, emotional history has argued that the conception of fondness may not be identical in every age and country, but rather it seems to be historically, socially,

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unless where otherwise credited.

2 Her name can alternatively be read Shi no kimi.

3 An exception to this occurs toward the conclusion of volume I of *Ariake no wakare*, where Udaishō retrospectively discloses to Tai no ue his secret (*ibidem*: 110-114).

4 On the depiction of gender and cross-gendering in *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare*, see Pflugfelder (1992), Yasuda (1997), Khan (1998, 2002, 2010), Kitada (2004), Caswell (2009), Imai (2020), and Kumagai (2021).

and culturally determined, in that being part of a culture, society, and time period appears to affect societal mores, norms, and traditions as well as people's experiences and expressions of affection (Reddy 2012: 16-38; Karandashev 2019). Thus, romantic love can be examined under a historical, sociological, and cultural lens in an aim to understand how a given society in a specific epoch views it.

The current study applies this series of theoretical premises to *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare*. More specifically, the research takes for its object the bond that the anatomically female protagonists establish with their brides, which is here labelled as cross-gender female same-sex love, its single components defined as follows:

- love: in the field of emotions history, the fondness between two individuals is generally expressed through the notion of romantic love considered as a cross-cultural concept; however, to better contextualise the disquisition within the literary corpus of Japanese court narrative, the article adapts the conception of romantic love to the notions utilised in the primary sources; particularly, in *Torikaebaya* a woman conventionally known as the Reikeiden 麗景殿 Lady expresses her admiration for Chūnagon as “reverential love” or *aigyō* 愛敬 (Imai *et al.* 1997: 130): etymologically, *aigyō* describes the gentle and endearing feelings of affection and respect a worshipper develops towards the dignified beauty of the face of a buddha or a *bodhisattva*, then in a second acception the word becomes secularised indicating the analogous sentiments that tie two people (Ōtsu 2013: 3-6); in *Ariake no wakare*, Udaishō calls instead his feelings for Tai no ue as *koi* 恋 (Aizawa, Nakamura 1958: 110), a term that refers to the sentiments a person evokes in the speaker (Matsuda 1998: 2-5) and thereby, according to Saeki Junko (2008: 33-47), possesses an abstract connotation that focuses the attention of the reader on the emotional and rational side of said feeling; consequently, the paper regards the concept of romantic love as coincidental with the native ideals of *aigyō* and *koi*;
- female same-sex: in this concern, the dissertation follows the precedents set by the researches on romantic love according to which the culturally situated notions of affection are commonly articulated on the basis of the anatomical sex(es) and gender(s) of the partners, thus these elements should be examined when conducting a study on the topic (Murray 2002); nonetheless, in the specific

case of *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* it is not easy to determine which or what biological sex(es) to ascribe to the couples given the different perceptions between the protagonists and their spouses, since the same relationship would be deemed female same-sex from the point of view of the main characters, the narrators, and the reader, three poles that know about the protagonists' biological sex, but it would be considered male-female from the point of view of the brides, since they ignore their husbands' anatomical sex; to break this impasse, the article follows the example set by the scholars who have previously dealt with this subject concerning the texts at issue, in particular accepting the antecedents of Gregory Pflugfelder (1992: 362) who uses the expression same-sex and Abe Keiko (2015) who similarly calls this rapport in Japanese a «relationship between young women» (*shōjo dōshi no kankei* 少女同士の關係); by resorting to such denominations, the essayists focus on the anatomical sex of the protagonists observed from the vantage point of view of the main characters, the narrators, and the reader, a choice made on the assumption that their point of view might be the most accurate to the events that occur in the tales and the richest in data;

- cross-gender: «the procedure or trend of presuming the part of the opposite gender by way of taking on their appearance through hair style, garments worn, and the way they talk and move about in ways that others deem symptomatic of the opposite gender» (Markham 2013), since the biologically female Chūnagon and Udaishō assume the male gender role by wearing male clothes and headgear and by having a male body language; in this manner, the article prioritises the point of view of the protagonists on the aspect of gender as well coherently with what has been said above.

As for its method, the paper will consist in a series of close readings centering on sections of *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* relevant to the chosen topic which are then subjected to a historical and literary analysis. As per its objective, the study aims to reconstruct and understand the historically, socially, and culturally contextualised conception about cross-gender female same-sex love as depicted in the primary sources.

## 2.2. *Torikaebaya*

As anticipated in the introduction, Chūnagon is a biological woman who, under the influence of a *tengu* 天狗, a supernatural entity of the Japanese folklore, performs the male gender role (Pflugfelder 1992: 353; Fuji 1994: 25-26; Date 2012: 40-41). Hiding his anatomical sex, Chūnagon integrates inside the royal court as a cisgender man. However, unlike most other noblemen, he shows an intense disinterest in romance. In a pivotal scene where he reveals his attitude in this regard, a group of ladies-in-waiting attempt to catch his attention, but Chūnagon doesn't flirt back. From their point of view, the women interpret his aloofness as a sign of him mastering his feelings «with seriousness» (*mameyakani* まめやかに; Imai *et al.* 1997: 116).

The use of adverb *mameyakani* to describe Chūnagon's behaviour qualifies him as the type of fictional character recurrent in Japanese classical literature known as the "stalwart man" or *mamebito* 真目人. Etymologically, the term derives from the combination of the words *hito* 人, "person", and *mame* 真目, union of *ma* 真, "truth", and *me* 目, "eyes", to denote the ability to observe things and grasp their true essence (Ōno 2011: 1129-1130). As a kind of literary protagonist, according to Heungsook Lee (2008: 193-196), the *mamebito* finds its origin in Confucianism. In the *Analects* (Chinese: *Lunyu* 論語, Japanese: *Rongo*, c. third-fifth century B.C.E.), philosopher Confucius (Chinese: Kong Fuzi 孔子, Japanese: Kōshi, 551-479 B.C.E.) defines the serious man as a wise individual who draws his profound morality from his vast knowledge and comprehension of human nature and is suited to administering the government, thereby he enjoys a high reputation among his citizens.

*The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari* 源氏物語, c. 1008) articulates an original formulation of the positive qualities of the *mamebito* applied to romance in the character of Kaoru 薫 (Karashima 2006: 281-288). In many descriptions Kaoru presents the following attributes: he is often defined as «reliable» (*tanomi* 頼み; Fujii *et al.* 1996: 361), he doesn't conduct himself in a «peremptory/manly manner» (*ooshi* 雄々し/男々し; *ibidem*, 361), and he has «depth of heart» (*kokoro fukaku* 心深く; Fujii *et al.* 1997: 217). In other words, Kaoru's characterization as a *mamebito* combines the attractions of someone trustworthy, accommodating, and considerate. As will be shown below, Chūnagon pos-

sesses the same points of charm as Kaoru.

As the story of *Torikaebaya* unfolds, Chūnagon accepts an arranged marriage with Yon no kimi. The narrator dedicates ample space to delineating the relation the spouses establish. In particular, Chūnagon proves himself a devoted husband: «He never behaved frivolously»<sup>5</sup>, but instead «he always spent the night by his bride»<sup>6</sup>. With him, Yon no kimi is «used to conversing in a calm and deferential way»<sup>7</sup>, he «watched over her in a very gentle and graceful manner»<sup>8</sup>, and «he didn't have a manly or crude attitude»<sup>9</sup>. To summarise, Chūnagon conducts himself as an exemplary husband thanks to his *mamebito* qualities of faithfulness, a gentlemanly behaviour, and a great communication with Yon no kimi.

The extraordinary care Chūnagon takes in conducting his marriage results in a perfect accord between the spouses. The author illustrates this concept by saying that they share «the same feelings» (*onaji kokoro* 同じ心), as in the following sentence: «always in harmony (*onaji kokoro*), they spent their time exchanging their views»<sup>10</sup>. Literally, this expression means “the same heart” and, by extension with the emotive dimension metaphorically indicated by *kokoro*, it means feeling the same sentiments as another person (Inomoto 2001: 16). In this way, *Torikaebaya* constructs the tie between the characters through this romantic ideal that emphasises the syntony between the partners.

Nevertheless, Chūnagon and Yon no kimi do not meet all the societal expectations about the married life considered normative at the time in that they don't erotically consummate their union. As the narrative voice explains: «In the eyes of the world, they shared their night robe [*yoru no koromo* 夜の衣], but still an undergown put a dis-

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5 «あだあだしく [...] 事あるべきならねば» (Imai *et al.* 1997: 118-119).

6 «夜離れなどし給はぬ» (*ibidem*: 121).

7 «女君は中納言にならひて、人はただのどやかに恥づかしうち語らふ» (*ibidem*: 136).

8 «いとなごやかにあてはかに見るあつかひ» (*ibidem*: 137).

9 «男々しくあらあらしきはひもなく» (*ibidem*: 140).

10 «同じ心に聞こえの給はせて過ぐしつるにこそ、いつまでと心細くおぼゆる道のほだしにも» (*ibidem*: 139).

tance [*hedate* 隔て] between them»<sup>11</sup>. The expression “sharing a night garment” refers to the nighttime arrangement and sexual practice known as *kinuginu* 衣々 (Garde 2009: 45 note 41). Etymologically, this expression derives from the repetition of the word *kinu*, “garb”, and indicates the custom for the spouses to undress and use their clothes as a blanket under which to spend the night. By extension, it denotes the habit of the so-called “morning after” when the lovers part at dawn as well as, euphemistically, having sex (Kurata 2014: 1). In *Torikaebaya*, however, while everyone else is convinced that Chūnagon and Yon no kimi pass the night naked under the same robe and engage in erotic activities, on the contrary they wear an undergown and this creates a “distance” (*hedate*) between them. In episode 95 of *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 (trans. *The Tales of Ise*, late ninth century), a woman doesn't want to meet a man any longer because of an argument, so when he visits her she puts up a screen between them that he defines as a «barrier that maintains a distance» (*hedatsuru seki* 隔つる関). When the man vows his devotion to her, the woman removes the partition and they spend the night together (Fukui *et al.* 1972: 215). In this way, *hedate* can be defined as a physical object, a screen in *Ise monogatari* and a piece of clothing in *Torikaebaya*, that creates a physical as well as an emotional distance.

The absence of eroticism in Chūnagon and Yon no kimi's relation is puzzling, since the author mentions it but does not give a proper explanation to account for it. An a priori reasoning would presume that Chūnagon may not know how to practice female on female sexuality. Nonetheless, as we can deduce from the later *monogatari* entitled *Wagami ni tadoru himegimi* 我身にたどる姫君 (trans. *The Princess in Search of Herself*, written possibly between 1259 and 1278 by an anonymous author), female-female eroticism ostensibly occurred in Kamakura Japan:

[A female character conventionally known as Maejingū 前神宮, “the Former Ise Priestess”, and one of her ladies-in-waiting] were lying covered under a thin garment and, apparently holding their breath indefinitely, wrapped their arms around their necks. Whatever way one might call it, now they cried and then they were passionate again.

<sup>11</sup> «夜の衣も人目にはうち交しながら、かたみにひとへの隔てはみなありて» (*ibidem*: 121).

They didn't look as if they were feeling disconsolately lonely, but still they laughed as if they couldn't tolerate it. [...] It wasn't calm beneath the robe and, whatever they were doing, it looked extremely bizarre<sup>12</sup>.

However much the narrator may feign ignorance about what is going on underneath the quilt, this seeming description of female on female orgasm appears to testify that female same-sex eroticism might not have been unknown to contemporary Japanese women.

Therefore, the reason why Chūnagon and Yon no kimi do not erotically consummate their marriage may lie elsewhere. An alternative explanation might be that, later in the story, Saishō raises a hem of Chūnagon's clothing and hence understands his hidden anatomical sex (Imai *et al.* 1997: 184). The same happens in *Ariake no wakare* between Udaishō and the Emperor (Aizawa, Nakamura 1958: 79). In other words, Saishō and Mikado see the protagonists' genitalia and associate them with the female anatomical sex. Their behaviour seems consistent with an anecdote found in the twelfth century *Yamai no sōshi* 病の草紙 (trans. *A Book about Illnesses*), where a person is said to have not only the face of a «man» (*otoko*) but also other traits that remind of a «woman» (*onna* 女), so another person secretly lifts their robes to see their genitalia and thus ascertain their anatomical sex (Pflugfelder 1992: 359). If this suggestion is correct, Chūnagon may want to keep his garb on and not to engage in erotic activities with Yon no kimi in order not to reveal his biological sex.

The intervention of Saishō disrupts the delicate balance of Chūnagon and Yon no kimi's conjugal life for good. Saishō is first described as well versed in «romantic adventures» (*konomashiku* 好ましく; Imai *et al.* 1997: 117). Moreover, when he tried to court Yon no kimi before she had been promised to Chūnagon, she decided against answering the many letters he had sent her because of his «very frivolous [*ada* あだ] nature»<sup>13</sup>. As opposed to Chūnagon, Saishō can thus be qualified as a charmer who is well known for his shallow character.

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12 «薄き衣を引きかづきたるうちに、かぎりもなく息もせざらんと見ゆるほどに、首を抱きてぞ臥したる。さるは何と言ふにか、うち泣き、はなうちかみなどもす。あはれにかなしきことやあらんと見るほどもなく、またたへがたげに笑ふ。[...]衣の下も静かならず、何とするにか、むつかしうものぐるほしげなる» (Tokumitsu 1980: 367-368).

13 «人柄のいとあだなる» (Imai *et al.* 1997: 117).



This set of qualities and the use of adverb *konomashiku* associate Saishō with a second type of a recurrent character in court literature known as the *irogonomi* 色好み. The term derives from the combination of *iro* 色, "attraction to beauty", and *konomi* 好み, indicating a person who has a great interest in something and makes an effort to pursue it. As Rajyashree Pandey (1992: 300; 1995: 226) explains, the *irogonomi* can be defined as someone who has a strong penchant for gallant adventures which they pursue with an absolute zeal and unconcerned about any possible negative outcomes or consequences.

At the same time, the *irogonomi* has a crucial shortcoming. As we can read in anecdote 61 of *Ise monogatari*, a woman says that a certain man is a famed *irogonomi* and, when he tries to defend his reputation with a poem, she answers in kind by saying that he is *ada*, "frivolous" (Fukui *et al.* 1972: 182). Etymologically, *ada* indicates a blossoming flower which doesn't bear fruit. By extension, it can mean something fleeting, like the dew, the flowers, and even human life, or, when applied to interpersonal relationships, the inconstancy of a seducer who always craves new sentimental conquests (Ōno 2011: 32-33). We can thus synthetically define the *irogonomi* as a passionate charmer who is, nevertheless, flippant and unfaithful.

True to his *irogonomi* character, Saishō entertains an adulterous affair with Yon no kimi. When he first meets her, he enters the woman's quarters pretending to be Chūnagon. Once she realises the deception she reacts in a frightened and repulsed way, but Saishō finds her «attractive for her frailty» (*rōtage* ろうたげ; Imai *et al.* 1997: 136). The etymology of this adjective is usually reconstructed from the expression *rōtaishi* ろうたいし, the combination of *rō* 勞, "difficulty", and the adjectival ending *-itashi* いたし plus the *-ge* げ ending that indicates an impression based on a visual clue. As Ijūin and Yoshikai (2007: 57-58) and Fukutome (2017: 78-82) argue, *rōtage* indicates the feeling of affection and protection a person from a position of superiority develops towards an individual in a situation of weakness as well as an appreciation of the beauty of the latter's fragility.

Aroused by such sentiments, Saishō sexually imposes on Yon no kimi. To describe this, the text uses the word *oshitachi* をしたち, combination of *oshi* をし, meaning "to push", and *tachi* たち, "rise, stand up", and thus presumably allusive to an erection and subsequent penetration (Imai *et al.* 1997: 136 note 8; Garde 2009: 66 note 68).

While he forces himself on her, though, Saishō attempts to console her by rationalising his behaviour as a consequence of her previous rebuttal.

In this scene, Saishō acts according to an emotional dynamics recurrent in much of Japanese classical literature that Margaret Childs has famously named the value of vulnerability. With this denomination, Childs refers to the fact that in the *ōchō monogatari* genre:

romantic love is frequently associated with the impulse to nurture someone who is weak or frail or in distress in some way. Both men and women often inspire love by first arousing someone's compassion or pity [...]. [As a corollary,] when this attractive vulnerability was not a preexisting condition, men could cause distress by temporarily resorting to aggression, creating an immediate need for consolation, and thus simultaneously further enflame themselves and assume the nurturing posture in which they might best win the hearts of women (Childs 1999: 1059-1060, 1062).

Saishō's attitude finds an explanation in light of such high-priced vulnerability. As we have seen, he imposes himself on Yon no kimi and finding her «frail» (*rōtage*), an adjective that not surprisingly Childs uses as evidence to support her notion (*ibidem*: 1061), he is so intoxicated he tries to console her while simultaneously proceeding with his aggressive courtship.

Saishō's intervention produces a rift in Chūnagon and Yon no kimi's marriage. While in the past «they would lie and rise together with familiarity, their hearts as one»<sup>14</sup>, now they grow colder and colder toward each other with every passing day. As a result, the harmony the spouses enjoyed is no more: «in their hearts, [Saishō's intrusion] created a feeling that put a distance [*hedataru*] between them»<sup>15</sup>. In this manner, the writer subverts the original syntony between Chūnagon and Yon no kimi.

### 2.3. *Ariake no wakare*

Toward the beginning of the tale, the narrator introduces the main

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<sup>14</sup> «起き臥しもなつかしう、ひとつ心にて» (*ibidem*: 148).

<sup>15</sup> «心の内は隔たる心地» (*ibidem*, 11).

character and briefly explains his cross-gender experience. After he was born a biological woman, his parents receive a «divine revelation» (*kami no oshirube* 神の御するべ; Aizawa, Nakamura 1958: 11) that instructs them to bring the child up by socialising him as a man. Furthermore, the gods provide him with a means of hiding himself that the text obliquely describes with a reference to a lost Heian tale titled *Kakuremino* 隠れ蓑, “The Invisibility Cloak”, a magical robe the protagonist uses to secretly enter any manor (*ibidem*). In this way, Udaishō is offered, as is the reader who observes through his eyes, a cross section of the upper echelons of contemporary Japanese society.

On one of his excursions, Udaishō witnesses a step-father harassing his step-daughter, the girl who will later marry Udaishō and assume the sobriquet *Tai no ue*. The man, known as *Sadaishō* 左大将, “the Major Captain of the Left”, tries to win the resistance of the young woman. He resents her for not complying to his wishes and, angered at her unresponsiveness, threatens her to yield to his requests by saying he wouldn't hesitate to expose their immoral relationship so as to ridicule the woman and her mother (*ibidem*: 14). Since he pursues his goal while not caring about the negative repercussions, *Sadaishō* might be considered an *irogonomi* man who tries to use the girl's vulnerability to make her capitulate.

For her part, *Tai no ue* suffers greatly. Despite her step-father's pressure and menaces, she «didn't share his feelings» (*onaji kokoro naran* 同じ心ならん; *ibidem*: 13) and carries on a firm opposition against him. She only answers his threat to cause rumors to harm her and her mother. In this way, the girl appears to be grieving and especially worried about a possible scandal that would soil her and her mother's names.

Udaishō's reaction is quite telling of his opinions on men and sexual coercion. While he passively watches the scene, he finds it «all so hateful and distasteful he broke down in tears»<sup>16</sup>. He blames *Sadaishō*'s outrageous behaviour on the nature of men saying: «The hearts of men are wretched»<sup>17</sup>. On the contrary, he admires the young woman's discretion and empathises with her by saying that «he felt

<sup>16</sup> «うたて心つきなきに、そろろになみだそこほるる» (Aizawa, Nakamura 1958: 13).

<sup>17</sup> «をとこの心はうき物なりけり» (*ibidem*: 12).

sympathy for her»<sup>18</sup>. In this way, *Ariake no wakare* constructs the relationship between the sexes as a polarised war where *irogonomi* men conduct despicably to reach their ends while women are seen as helpless but virtuous victims.

During a second outing, Udaishō sees a similar situation. Having visited his lover, a man soon takes his leave to go to a different woman he now favours. Pained at his *irogonomi* inconstancy, Udaishō deplores men and their brutality: «Men and women may have the same bodies, but it is always men who deceive women»<sup>19</sup> and sympathises with the girl: «'Although he is unfaithful, she can't stop loving him' he thought and continued to stay close by and listen, and now and then he cried beside her»<sup>20</sup>. Analogously to the previous scene, Udaishō considers men as unreliable and dishonest traitors and women as victims of their falsehoods and of their own caring sentiments.

In this occasion, though, Udaishō acts differently from before: now, enraptured with the young woman's vulnerability, he shows himself to her and courts her. In his soothing words, Udaishō exposes the man's fabrication and labels him a «frivolous [*ada*] person»<sup>21</sup>. He tries to win the girl over by opposing the other's disloyalty to his unwavering dedication: «If he were like me, he would not forsake you when you so grieve»<sup>22</sup>. In this way, Udaishō behaves as a *mamebito* appeasing the sorrow caused by an *irogonomi* with his seriousness and dependability.

Udaishō takes the courtship one step forward with Tai no ue, who is now in even greater distress because she is pregnant with Sadaishō's child against her will. Udaishō reveals himself to her as a «guide» (*shirube*; *ibidem*: 36) and confesses his undying affection for her. Presenting himself as a lover who had kept a close eye on her

18 «そそろにそあはれなる» (*ibidem*: 13).

19 «ただおなじ身の、なを女こそくちをし、人にあざむかれんとなれるものにはありけれ» (*ibidem*: 19).

20 «心もとめさんめる物を、さても、え思はなれぬよと、ならびきならびきしくみ給にも、かたつかたば、まつうちなかれ給ふ» (*ibidem*: 20).

21 «あだ人» (*ibidem*: 21).

22 «おなじ御心ならましかば、かく心くるしき御さまをみすてきこえさらましと» (*ibidem*, 21).

and knows what has been happening, he asks her to trust him with a poem: «Give yourself / to me / whom you can rely on (*tanomi*), / you'll find out / my honesty is not shallow at all»<sup>23</sup>. He proposes, «if she returns his feelings» (*onaji kokoro naraba* おなじ心ならば; *ibidem*: 37), to bring her to his home, to which she consents. In this manner, Udaishō physically removes her from harm's way.

When they reach his villa, Udaishō takes great care of her accommodation. He settles her into his father's residence and they officially marry (Khan 2002: 80). In the description of their first wedding night, the author specifies that theirs seems to be a «bad relationship» (*yoshinaki onnakarai* よしなき御なからひ; Aizawa, Nakamura 1958: 40). The writer is elusive on the subject and does not elaborate further, but since this remark occurs while the newly wedded are passing their first night together perhaps it may refer to a lack of erotic activity, since the sexual consummation was generally considered an integral part of the marriage ceremony. If such interpretation should prove correct, then *Ariake no wakare* would draw a parallel with *Tori-kaebaya* as regards the lack of eroticism in cross-gender female same-sex love.

Nonetheless, in the following pages the tale exhaustively describes the strong relationship the spouses establish between them. The narrative voice explains Udaishō's sentiments for Tai no ue as «love» (*koishiku omō* 恋しく思ふ; *ibidem*: 110) and their connection as deriving from a «deep bond born in a previous life»<sup>24</sup>. In a specific scene soon after the wedding, they are shown «being intimate from morning till dusk»<sup>25</sup> and Tai no ue finds that Udaishō treats her «with deference»<sup>26</sup> in comparison to the cruel Sadaishō. Moreover, Udaishō doesn't have any secondary wives, so she can «rely» (*tanomi*; *ibidem*: 48) on him. Thus, *Ariake no wakare* constructs Udaishō's admirable husbandry on the basis of the following *mamebito* qualities: sustained communication, an important emotional link, and trust.

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23 «たのみみよ思ふおもひの身をすてて人のまことはけにやあさぎと» (*ibidem*: 38).

24 «昔の世、ゆかしき契り» (*ibidem*: 113).

25 «朝夕なれ聞こえ給ふまに» (*ibidem*: 48).

26 «すくよかに» (*ibidem*, 48).

## 2.4. Conclusion

In the present research, we have noticed that the depiction of romantic love between women appears alongside the representation of male-female love and sexuality. As regards the latter, in *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* cisgender biological men are portrayed according to a type of character known as the *irogonomi*. As we saw, *irogonomi* commonly have a strong propensity for gallant adventures which they pursue with an absolute zeal and unconcerned about any possible outcomes or consequences. In particular, *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* problematise the *irogonomi* man's resort to sexual coercion. In both narrations, Saishō and Sadaishō use women's relatively weaker physical, social, and economic status in the light of a romantic ideal that Childs has called the value of vulnerability. In this way, in *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* *irogonomi* men exploit their partners' fragility in order to make women yield to their desires and expectations.

Cross-gender female same-sex love is depicted in direct opposition to this portrayal of male-female sexuality and love. In fact, both Chūnagon and Udaishō are written as a second type of character named *mamebito*. In opposition to *irogonomi*, *mamebito* is generally described as a suitor who simultaneously possesses the many qualities of being trustworthy, accommodating, and considerate. As we can observe, the *mamebito* forms a direct antithesis to the *irogonomi*: while the latter generally acts passionately and takes a great interest in romance but, on the other hand, he often behaves aggressively and reveals himself to be frivolous and unreliable in his affection, the former conducts himself with rationality, which makes him constant in his love and thus dependable and trustworthy. Such attributes readily apply to the relationship Chūnagon and Udaishō establish with Yon no kimi and Tai no ue. In fact, the cross-gender husbands behave commendably thanks to their *mamebito* characteristics of faithfulness, a gentlemanly conduct, and a great communication with their brides.

The care Chūnagon and Udaishō take in conducting their wedded lives results in an exquisite harmony between the partners. Both *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* illustrate this concept by saying that the same-sex couples share «the same feelings» (*onaji kokoro*). Thereby, *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* construct the relationship between

the anatomically female characters through this romantic ideal that emphasises the accord between the spouses.

An absence in Chūnagon and Udaishō's conjugal life concerns the lack of erotic activity. To sum up what has already been stated in this regard, in *Ariake no wakare* we read that the rapport between Udaishō and Tai no ue might «not be good», a remark that may refer to the relation not being sexually consummated. In *Torikaebaya*, the narrator writes that Chūnagon and Yon no kimi always wear an undergown at night and don't practice erotic activities, presumably as a way for Chūnagon to hide his anatomical sex. In this manner, cross-gender female same-sex love allegedly excludes an erotic component.

Broadly speaking, cross-gender female same-sex love seems to be depicted in the primary sources as an emotional dynamics that is completely at odds with male-female love. The former, in fact, is represented as a caring attachment based on sustained communication, an important emotional link, trust, and an absence of erotic activity, while the latter is portrayed as an unequal relation where men occupy a position of social and economic superiority and therefore exploit, in a psychological, economic, social, and sexual way, the relative vulnerability of certain women. *Ariake no wakare* in particular highlights the opposition between male-female affection and cross-gender female same-sex love when the narrative voice explicitly states that Tai no ue «does not share [Sadaishō's] sentiments» (*onaji kokoro naran*), while, on the contrary, it describes the bliss of Udaishō and Tai no ue's married life by writing that they do «share the same feelings» (*onaji kokoro*). Seen under this point of view, cross-gender female same-sex love might perhaps constitute a corrective to the unequal dynamics of male-female fondness.

As the reader will probably have noticed by now, *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* contain a representation of female same-sex love that would be essentially identical if not for a crucial difference. On the one hand, both works share a common trait in that they depict female same-sex love as a nurturing rapport based on an important emotional connection between the spouses, communication, and dependability. Nevertheless, in *Torikaebaya* the coercive intervention of Saishō disrupts the delicate balance of Chūnagon and Yon no kimi's conjugal life. In this way, *Torikaebaya* portrays the happy marriage of the cross-gender female same-sex couple as destined to end because

of the *irogonomi* man's involvement.

In this concern, *Ariake no wakare* draws a dissimilar trajectory for cross-gender female same-sex love. As the story unfolds, Udaishō witnesses a woman being ill-treated by an *irogonomi* man. As a way to improve Tai no ue's living standard, he courts her by promising reliability and understanding, he moves her to his mansion, he marries her as a way to rescue her from her step-father, and then they live happily. Thus, in *Torikaebaya* male-female love destroys the conjugal life of the cross-gender female same-sex couple, whereas in *Ariake no wakare*, on the opposite, romantic love between anatomical women serves as a way to protect the category from the agony inflicted by *irogonomi* men.

Despite such discrepancy, though, the representation of cross-gender female same-sex love appears highly consistent in both texts. Should we propose a synthetic definition, we could say that the primary sources depict romantic love between a cross-gender woman and a cisgender woman as a strong emotional link based on shared feelings, reciprocal understanding, and sustained communication, all qualities that oppose the unequal dynamics of male-female love, to which, especially in *Ariake no wakare*, romantic liaison between women seems to be a solution. It is under this perspective that we may deem cross-gender female same-sex love in *Torikaebaya* and *Ariake no wakare* as women's solidarity.



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