Stefan Würrer

Transcending the gendered body? Transphobia and the construction of the self in the writing of Shōno Yoriko

In July 2022, Japanese writer Shōno Yoriko (2022a) declared in a blog post that she would vote for Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politician Yamatani Eriko in the upcoming upper house election. This came as a surprise to many, as Shōno is considered one of Japan's leading feminist writers, who in the past has publicly supported the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) (Shōno, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, 2019, 2022a), and Yamatani is a right-wing social conservative with a long-standing record of opposing feminist activism and gender equality legislation (A. Shimizu, 2022, p. 381). Why this sudden declaration of support? And was it really out of character?

In the first section of this paper, I examine this alliance between Shōno and Yamatani in light of the similarities between their trans-exclusionary discourses. Since 2020, Shōno (2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2021, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, 2022d) has published numerous blog posts and essays, in which, similar to Yamatani, she framed trans[1] women as a potential threat to women's safety, denying them the right to self-identification and bodily autonomy based on a biological essentialist understanding of assigned sex as gender. Shōno, in other words, has come out as a trans-exclusionary radical feminist (TERF).[2] I argue that this transphobic alliance is both part of a global phenomenon and symptomatic of historical problems within Japanese feminism.

In the latter sections of this paper, I revisit Shōno's fiction. I show that despite her recent insistence on biological sex as a natural and inescapable foundation of

1 "Trans" refers to people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. While for some trans people, transitioning – that is, aligning their gender presentation, expression, and/or physical attributes with their gender identity – is essential, not all can or do undergo medical or surgical procedures as part of their transition, or transition at all, for financial, medical, ideological, or other reasons. In addition, I use the term "cross-gender" to refer to instances where gender presentation or expression does not match gender identity or assigned sex more generally.

2 According to Christen Williams (2016), this term started being used in online feminist communities around 2008 to distinguish between feminists who take an exclusionary stance toward trans women and those who do not (p. 254). "Radical" refers to the genealogical connection of this exclusionary stance with certain factions of 1970s radical feminism. While Shōno (2020c) has criticized the use of TERF as derogatory, in this paper I follow Williams' (2016) use of the term to refer to contemporary feminists who are opposed to recognizing trans women as women (p. 255).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110767995-011

gender identity, her novels actually are inundated with characters who are struggling with their assigned sex and gender identity, and attempting to move beyond their gendered body and the gender binary. However, this is not necessarily a contradiction. As I will argue, Shōno's trans-exclusionary writing, as a manifestation of transphobia, similar to misogyny and homophobia, can be understood as the performative process of reestablishing a coherent and fixed female identity through the abjection of trans women as the Other of feminism. Shōno's fictional representation of the female body, which oscillates between identification and rejection, can be read as another facet of this process.

1 Unholy alliances: Trans-exclusionary discourse as symbolic "superglue"

Shōno Yoriko made her literary debut in 1981 with the novel *Gokuraku* (*Paradise*), for which she received literary magazine *Gunzō*'s New Writer Award. She has since accumulated numerous other awards, including the *Noma Prize for New Writers* in 1991 for *Nanimo shitenai* (*Doing Nothing*), the prestigious Akutagawa Prize for *Taimusurippu kombināto* (*Timeslip Complex*) in 1994, and the Itō Sei Award for *Kompīra* (*Kompira*) in 2005, making her one of the most decorated Japanese authors of the Heisei period (1989–2019). Her novels have been lauded for their feminist interrogations of the interplay between neoliberalism, sexism, patriarchy, and cultural representation in postindustrial, post-bubble Japan (e. g. Asano, 2018; Bouterey, 1996; Ebihara, 2012; Kotani, 2002; Naikai, 2006; Nakamura, 1999; Nitta, 2007; Noguchi-Amann, 2005; Noya, 1997; Tierney, 2010). These interrogations tend to be performed from the perspective of a socioeconomically marginalized female "I," whose attempts at opening up utopian pockets of self-affirmation and belonging in hostile environments – often through a dense and fantastic interweaving of embodied experience, memory, dreams, history, and religious and mythological motifs – form the core narrative movement of Shōno's otherwise rather plotless, experimental writing.

Yamatani, conversely, was a prominent figure during the so-called "gender-free" (*jendā furī*) backlash of the early 2000s, which targeted efforts by feminists, educators, and governmental agencies to free education from gender stereotypes as a scheme to destroy the traditional Japanese family through "the total erasure of cultural and biological differences between the sexes" (Yamaguchi, 2014, p. 559; see also A. Shimizu, 2020, pp. 90–92; Yamada, 2022, p. 502). More recently, she was at the center of a group of LDP politicians who opposed their party's plans for an alternative to the Draft Bill on the Elimination of Discrimination based on SOGI

(LGBT Sabetsu Kaishōhōan), which had been submitted by four opposition parties to the Diet in 2016. The LDP rejected the opposition's bill, which asked for the legal protection of LGBT people from human rights violations. Instead, it announced in 2018 that it would submit the Draft Bill to Promote Understanding for LGBT People (LGBT Rikai Zōshin Hōan), which aims only to cultivate acceptance toward LGBT people and a more tolerant society but lacks any concrete sanctions for failures to abide by its vague guidelines (Carland-Ecchavaria, 2022, p. 5).

The opposition of Yamatani and other social conservative LDP politicians to the Draft Bill to Promote Understanding for LGBT People centered on the phrase "discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is unacceptable" (*seiteki shikō ya seijinin o riyū to suru sabetsu wa yurusarenai*).[3] Owing to their concern that it would open the door for "legal action to punish or prohibit any speech deemed 'discriminatory'" (Carland-Ecchavaria, 2022, p. 17; see also Nikaidō, 2021, p. 14), the amended draft that was finally submitted to the Diet in 2023 stated, "there should be no unjust discrimination" (*futōna sabetsu wa atte wa naranai*), thereby implying the existence of "just discrimination" (Matsuoka, 2023a).

Yamatani and other LDP politicians also rejected the term *seijinin* to express the concept of "gender identity" because, as Japanese studies scholar Patrick Carland-Ecchavaria (2022) summarized, "it sought to legitimize transgender identities they deemed 'threats' to women" (p. 17). As noted by activist writer Matsuoka Sōshi (2023a), *seijinin* has long been used in Japanese judiciary and governmental documents to translate "gender identity." However, in recent years it has become a symbolic term that represents a shift from the medicalized and pathologizing understanding of trans people codified in the 2003 Law for the Handling of Gender in the Special Cases of People with Gender Identity Disorder (Seidōitsusei Shōgaisha no Seibetsu no Atsukai no Tokurei ni Kansuru Hō; hereafter "GID Law"), to a focus on the lived experiences, self-identification, and human rights of trans people. This reflects a broader global movement toward depathologization that can be seen, for instance, in the removal of "gender identity disorder" from the World Health Organization's manual of diagnoses in 2020 and the Science Council of Japan's (2020) subsequent recommendation to replace the GID Law with legislation that allows trans people to change their legal gender without having to undergo invasive medical procedures.

It is this shift that moral conservatives such as Yamatani oppose. Their rejection of the term *seijinin* is, in fact, an attempt to exclude all traces of depathologization terminology from official discourse. Under their pressure, the wording in the proposed Law to Promote Understanding for LGBT People has been changed

3 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Japanese into English in this paper are my own.

to *seidōitsusei* (Matsuoka, 2023b), which mirrors the pathologizing language of the GID Law.[4] The GID Law, as queer and trans studies scholar Yamada Hidenobu (2022) emphasized, was "acceptable for moral conservatives" (p. 502) because it stipulates requirements for the legal change of one's gender that effectively prevent the de facto legal recognition of same-sex marriage and the emergence of "male mothers" and "female fathers" who, through their potential gender ambiguity, could expose the gender binary as the normative fantasy that it is: Trans people need to be diagnosed with "gender identity disorder" by two medical practitioners; are not allowed to be married or to have underage children; and have to undergo expensive gender reassignment surgery and sterilization (see also Norton, 2013, p. 597). The official use of terminology such as *seijinin*, therefore, does not pose a threat to cis women through a sudden increase in self-identified trans women using public bathrooms, as Yamatani wants the public to believe (Ibuki, 2021; "Jimin Yamatani-shi," 2021; Nikaidō, 2021, p. 12; Okuno, 2021); in fact, self-identified trans women have always been using public bathrooms with great caution because of the long history of violence *toward* them (Halberstam, 1998, pp. 20–29; Komiya, 2019, p. 137). What is threatened, rather, is the deterministic and essentialist understanding of assigned sex as gender that lies at the core of Yamatani's conservative worldview.

This worldview is shared by Shōno. Ignoring more than half a century of feminist theory that followed Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Shōno (2022d, p. 7) has rejected the concept of a socially constructed gender identity as unscientific "idealism" (*yuishinron*), in her attempt to exclude trans women from the category of "women." For Shōno, there is no "becoming" in being a woman. You are either born one or you aren't one. Only in the "extremely rare" cases of people suffering from "gender identity disorder" should they be allowed to live as women, given that they fulfill the conditions stipulated by the GID Law (Shōno, 2022b, p. 31). Those assigned male at birth who, for financial, medical, ideological, or other reasons do not undergo gender-affirming surgery but identify and live as women, as well as nonbinary persons, are potentially criminal usurpers of women's spaces (Shōno, 2022b, pp. 33–34). Hence her opposition to the term *seijinin:* it would legitimize their existence, which in turn would threaten the social order of Japan (Shōno, 2022b, p. 37). Comparing the inclusion of the expression *sei-*

4 The draft bill has since been amended several times and now uses the transliterated term *jendā aidentitī* for "gender identity." It also states that any efforts made to promote understanding toward LGBT people must consider the comfort (*anshin*) of all citizens based on guidelines the government will provide. This has been criticized as effectively hindering the bill's objective, since any action deemed too radical could be rejected for fear of offending the majority (Matsuoka, 2023b; Satō, 2023).

jinin in the aforementioned draft bill to serving someone a "poisoned bun" (*dokumanjū*), Shōno (2022b) argued that recognizing trans women's rights to self-identification would lead to the disappearance of such concepts as "the female body" or "women's rights," in addition to "women's sports, women's changing rooms, women's toilets and, of course, in the case of Japan, women's baths" (pp. 31–34). She decided to vote for Yamatani, because she was the only politician "who told the truth" about this "erasure of women" (Shōno, 2022a).

Fellow writer Li Kotomi (2022) and literary critic Mizugami Aya (2022) have pointed out the manifold factual errors and inconsistencies in, as well as the discriminatory nature of, Shōno's trans-exclusionary feminist writing. Here, I will further scrutinize Shōno's transphobic views, as well as her alliance with Yamatani, in light of how they point to issues within Japanese feminism and call for a critical re-examination of her fiction.

As queer studies scholar Shimizu Akiko (2022) has pointed out, the framing of trans people and trans-inclusive discourse as a threat to society has become a symbolic "super glue" in recent years. Similar to the threat perceived in so-called "gender ideology," this framing enables broad alliances that unite people across political lines by redirecting their discontent with the socioeconomic and political status quo to what they see as the global libertarian elite's prioritization of peripheral and ultimately dangerous identity politics over local people's material needs (Grzebalska et al., 2017; A. Shimizu, 2022, pp. 384–385). The difference between the anti-gender ideology and trans-exclusionary discourses is that the former has mostly targeted feminists and their agenda, while the latter increasingly includes and is included by feminists. Shōno's transphobic writing and her support of Yamatani, as Shimizu Akiko (2022) argued, is a local variant of this global trend (pp. 386–388).

This global "superglue" dimension is also evident in Shōno's (2022b) conspiracy-theory-like framing of trans depathologization as an international "movement to annihilate women's voices and bodies" (*nyotai josei no zanmetsu undō*) (p. 38), which is supported by the likes of George Soros and forced upon the unknowing "common people" (*shomin*) of Japan (Shōno, 2022d, p. 5). This claim, which has antisemitic undertones (Center for Extremism, 2023; Joaquina, 2021; Joyce, 2021, p. 227; Moore, 2020; Rabinowitz, 2022; Yudelson, 2021), has been circulated among conservatives and TERFs since at least the 2010s (see, e.g., Riddell, 2016). Further, Shōno (2022d) has cited Women's Declaration International, a feminist organization founded by leading TERF Sheila Jeffreys, as one of the main sources of her transphobic arguments (pp. 16–7). She has also openly expressed solidarity with fellow TERF writer J. K. Rowling (Shōno, 2022b, p. 28; 2020c). Both Rowling and Jeffreys have been criticized for their direct and indirect support of far-right conservatives (Burns, 2019; Michaelson, 2018; Urquhart, 2023).

At the same time, the figure of Yamatani connects Shōno's transphobic writing with the heteronormative, cisgenderist discourse that dominated the "gender free" backlash in Japan and facilitated the passing of the GID Law in 2003. Those at the center of the backlash claimed that feminists were out to destroy the traditional Japanese family, and ultimately the nation, by erasing biological differences between the sexes and turning underage girls and boys into homosexuals or "genderless beings" (*chūsei ningen*) (Kazama, 2007, p. 26; Yamada, 2022, p. 502). Preventing the emergence of the latter is what the conditions stipulated for the legal change of one's gender in the GID Law effectively do. It is also the reason for Shōno's support of Yamatani. Importantly, feminist rebuttals dismissed the *chūsei ningen* rhetoric as mere fiction. That is, they negated the existence of trans and nonbinary persons, and effectively excluded them from feminist discourse (Kazama, 2007, pp. 28–31; A. Shimizu, 2007, p. 504; Yamaguchi, 2014, p. 570).

It is in this history of transphobic rhetoric on both sides of the backlash that we find, as Yamada (2022, p. 503) argued, the local roots of the recent trans-exclusionary (feminist) discourse in Japan. In other words, feminist discourse in Japan has been complicit in the exclusion of trans people since at least the early 2000s. Shōno's recent writing is symptomatic of this. It is the consequence of the indifference toward this history by the majority of feminist activists and academics in Japan, who continue to ignore, in Shimizu Akiko's (2020) words, the current attacks on trans people "as peripheral events not worth their passing comments" (p. 102). This historical dimension of Shōno's transphobic writing demonstrates, if anything, that in order for Japanese feminism not to become complicit again with social conservative rhetoric and undermine its long-lasting efforts to interrogate and liberate women from precisely the biologically essentialist notions of gender that are now employed to exclude trans women, it is time to build intersectional alliances and to rethink, as feminist scholar Iino Yuriko (2020) put it, "the strategy adopted in the fight against the backlash" of the early 2000s (p. 88).

2 The ambivalent portrayal of the gendered body in Shōno Yoriko's fiction

This problem of undermining one's own efforts to interrogate gender norms can also be discerned in Shōno's fiction. Her novels are full of ambivalent and ambiguous portrayals of the female body. They feature a number of characters who distance themselves from, reject, and at times transcend, the gendered body or the gender binary. How are we to understand these seemingly non-normative charac-

ters in light of Shōno's (2022d, pp. 7, 10; 2022b, pp. 35–36) biological essentialism and transphobia?

As literary scholar Shimizu Yoshinori (2003, pp. 10–12) pointed out, Shōno's novels of the 1980s feature a male third-person protagonist – such as in the abovementioned *Gokuraku* (1981), as well as *Taisai* (*The Festival*, 1981) and *Kōtei* (*The Emperor*, 1984) – or a gender-ambiguous third-person narrator – such as in *Kaijū* (*The Sea Monster*, 1984) and *Yume no shitai* (*Dreaming of Dead Bodies*, 1990). Only in *Ise-shi, Haruchi* (*Ise City, Haruchi*, 1991) does Shōno begin to use a female first-person narrator, which has since become the dominant modus operandi of her fiction. He argued that the early male protagonists can be understood as Shōno's dis-identification with, or her rejection of, her female gender, which she then gradually overcame during the late 1980s (Y. Shimizu, 2003, pp. 69–70).

This seems to echo Shōno's own understanding of her early work. In a series of conversations with fellow writer Matsu'ura Rieko in 1994, she characterized her use of male protagonists as a kind of cross-gender performance to liberate herself from stereotypical expectations toward women's writing, such as a focus on the female body or portrayals of romantic relationship with men. A male protagonist, she said, allowed her to freely explore more abstract issues (Matsu'ura & Shōno, 1994a, pp. 63–64; 1994b, pp. 123–125). Shōno (2022d, pp. 13–14) reiterated this interpretation over twenty years later in one of her recent trans-related essays, explaining her use of male protagonists in the early 1980s as the result of the double-bind of experiencing discrimination as a woman writer not only when rejecting, but also when complying, with these expectations.

Yet this dis-identification seems unresolved. Shōno's novels after the 1990s repeatedly feature characters who struggle with their gender identity. Moreover, the reason for this struggle might not just be societal gender norms in the context of literature, but the complicated relation with their gendered body. In *Kōtei*, the unnamed male protagonist dresses as a woman when outside of his apartment (Shōno, 1984, pp. 222, 250, 256). More precisely, he dresses in clothes similar to that of an old woman that he supposedly killed and robbed earlier (Würrer, 2019, pp. 112–114). While one could, as Shimizu Yoshinori (2003) did, interpret his cross-dressing as a sign of Shōno's "return" (*fukki*) to her "original" female self (p. 70), which Shōno had to kill off in order to survive as a writer, there remains one issue. Even if we accept Shimizu's biographical reading of the cross-dressing in *Kōtei* as a sign for Shōno's newfound acceptance of her female self, there are *two* bodies: that of the dead woman and that of the male protagonist. It is over his *male* body, that *Kōtei*'s protagonist wears women's clothes. That is, the performance of femininity that Shimizu reads as a sign of her renewed identification as a woman is performed on a male body. What implications does this split have for Shōno's supposed identification as a woman later?

3 *Nanimo shitenai* (1991): Talking bodies and the desire for national belonging

In *Nanimo shitenai* we can find traces of this bodily duality. This novel is set during a period of national holidays following the death of the Shōwa emperor and the subsequent ascension to the throne of the Heisei emperor in 1989. It portrays, as literary scholar Asano Urara (2018) showed, how the process of watching the media spectacle surrounding the enthronement becomes the trigger for a reconnection with Japanese society for the socially withdrawn female protagonist (pp. 191–192). Seeing the enthronement festivities on television, the novel's protagonist, who up until then had retreated from society and lived secluded in her apartment, suddenly feels "the oddly palpable sensation of being a citizen of this country" (Shōno, 2007, p. 156), and the wish to go outside and see for herself what she saw on television, to "thoroughly watch in utmost normalcy the things that ordinary people watch" (*futsū no hito ga futsū ni miru mono o futsūsa o tettei shite mitsukusu*) (Shōno, 2007, pp. 168–169). It incites a renewed interest in the world outside of her apartment, a reconnection that she hopes will lead to her own "total [social] acceptance" (*nanimo kamo ga kōtei sarete shimau*) (Shōno, 2007, p. 168). However, the expression "citizen" (*kokumin*) is rendered not in *kanji* (Chinese characters), but in the phonetic script *katakana* used, among other things, for non-Japanese words, which hints, as Asano (2018) argued, at a simultaneous distancing from this newfound feeling of national belonging (pp. 177–178).

Subsequent events mirror this ambivalence. When boarding a train to visit her parents in the city of Ise, the protagonist realizes that some of the royal family are on the same train in order to participate in the new emperor's first visit to Ise Shrine. She refrains from standing up to catch a glimpse of them and disavows her excitement by emphasizing that in contrast to the other starstruck travelers, she already knew that this train connects via Nagoya to Ise (Shōno, 2007, p. 211). This attempt to differentiate herself fails, however, as soon as she reaches Nagoya, where the excessive police presence at the train station makes her feel like a "powerless commoner" (*muryokuna shōshimin*).

Later that day, when watching the news at her parents' house, she worries about the foreign press not accurately reporting about the historical roots and intricate details of this ceremonial visit (Shōno, 2007, p. 222), a fear she had already shown while watching the enthronement festivities (Shōno, 2007, p. 158). As Asano (2018) emphasized, both this knowledge and fear of the protagonist indicate an interest in, if not an identification with, these events and the royal family (p. 186). Similar to the scene on the train, however, the protagonist immediately adds

that what really fascinates her are simply the shoes and clothes of the royals, as if to gloss over and disavow this interest. She does realize that she is "absent-mindedly [*boketa kokoro de*] looking at nothing but fabrics," "despite not knowing the first thing about sewing" (Shōno, 2007, p. 234), but can't help watching. *Nanimo shitenai*'s protagonist continues to be thoroughly, if not always consciously, obsessed with royal events. The novel then follows her back home to Tokyo, where it ends with her realization that she will have to move out of her apartment because the building is being made accessible to students only.

Asano (2018) contrasted the ambivalent obsession of *Nanimo shitenai*'s protagonist with post-WWII discourses on the irrelevance of the Japanese emperor. She argued that whereas these discourses see indifference as the proper reaction of the modern Japanese citizen toward this merely symbolic figure, the protagonist's self-contradictory obsession with the enthronement and the subsequent festivities exposes the limitations of such a view (Asano, 2018, pp. 191–192). Asano did not specify what kind of limitations these are, but if we take into account the reason why this ambivalent reconnection was necessary in the first place, they become clear.

As Asano (2018, pp. 174–175) has pointed out, the protagonist has withdrawn from society because of her mother constantly negating her efforts to become a writer by lambasting her for "doing nothing" – not marrying, not having children, or earning enough money (Shōno, 2007, pp. 149–150, 161–2, 172). Given the protagonist's somewhat sarcastic characterization of her mother as a "proper citizen" (*seijōna shimin*) (Shōno, 2007, p. 160), this rejection is not simply an issue of a complicated mother–daughter relationship but can be understood as representative of the protagonist's experience of Japanese society at large. By extension, her ambivalent reconnection with society via the enthronement festivities can then be read as the manifestation of her desire to belong to, and simultaneously keep a cautious distance from, a society whose continuous rejection has driven her into isolation. If anything, it exposes the display of indifference toward the symbolic emperor as a potential privilege: a rejection possible for those who already feel a certain form of social belonging, which the protagonist lacks because of her outsider status as a young aspiring woman writer.

This gendered aspect of national belonging is further emphasized during a scene on the train from Tokyo to Ise. Having realized that the royal family might be on the same train, the protagonist is suddenly reminded of Mishima Yukio's novel *Kamen no kokuhaku* (*Confessions of a Mask*, 1949), which she had read as a teenager in an anthology of Japanese literature. The association is, of course, not that far-fetched, considering Mishima's nationalistic attempt to overthrow the post-WWII constitution and reinstall the emperor as a living god, which famously ended with his ritual suicide in 1970. While the protagonist of *Nanimo shitenai* mentions Mishima's suicide, the reference to the anthology suggests that Mishima

here functions not only as a political figure, but also as a representative of Japanese literature. As if to reject this status, the protagonist goes on to say that Mishima was a writer whom she barely read (Shōno, 2007, 208). There is only one scene in *Kamen no kokuhaku* that she remembers: the beginning. There, the narrator – whom she sees as an alter ego of Mishima (Shōno, 2007, p. 209) – remembers his younger self dressing up as the female magician Shōkyokusai Tenkatsu (1886–1944) (Mishima, 2017, pp. 19–21).[5]

Nanimo shitenai's protagonist compares this scene with her own experience of wearing a petticoat and dressing up as a queen with her female cousins. She concludes that both performances of femininity are rather different and that she found the cross-dressing in *Kamen no kokuhaku* "sickening, cool, and horrifying" (*kimochi waruku kakkoyoku osoroshī*) (Shōno, 2007, p. 209). The reason for them being different, she emphasizes, is not necessarily the gender (*seibetsu*) of the performer. What she finds problematic is not that the narrator of *Kamen no kokuhaku* was a boy and she a girl, but rather the "distance between matter [*busshitsu*] and the human . . . the way I perceive my body [*jibun no nikutai*]" (Shōno, 2007, p. 210). What does she mean by this?

In the eyes of *Nanimo shitenai*'s protagonist, this scene from *Kamen no kokuhaku* is not simply the portrayal of an innocent act of a child playing dress-ups. It is the memory of a man who retrospectively draws focus away from the act of cross-dressing to the peripheral phallic objects with which he armed himself before appearing in front of his family – "a rod-shaped silver flashlight" and an "old-fashioned engraved fountain pen" (Mishima, 2017, p. 29) – in the attempt to disavow his "aversion toward dressing up as a woman" and foreground his masculinity (Shōno, 2007, p. 209). That is, what she finds "sickening … and horrifying" is that he brings up this episode of cross-dressing only to then fetishistically distance himself from it.[6] Femininity, in other words, is shown as something to be rejected. One feels tempted to agree, given that Mishima (2017, pp. 10–16) not only places this episode right after an almost erotic explanation about the roots of the narrator's fas-

5 In fact, it is only through the name Tenkatsu that the reader can discern that the novel in question is *Kamen no kokuhaku*, for the title is not explicitly mentioned in *Nanimo shitenai*.

6 This is an argument similar to that of feminist theoretician Carol-Ann Tyler (2003), who argued that not every performance of cross-dressing necessarily questions or subverts the gender binary. Tyler pointed out that, similar to parody and pastiche, cross-dressing is context dependent and in certain cases simply re-emphasizes the ground – the body – as the "original" onto which the "fake" figure – the cross-gender performance – is added, thus reproducing the idea of non-normative gender expressions as an "inferior" copy. In addition, it can function fetishistically, as it highlights the mastery of the performer who flexibly puts on and off the masquerade as if they were not subject to, but rather exist in the beyond of the gender binary (Tyler, 2003, pp. 94–95).

cination and identification with underclass masculinity and his disgust with cross-dressing women, but also portrays it as a source of feelings of shame and guilt.

If this fetishistic distancing is indeed why she rejects that scene, then the protagonist of *Nanimo shitenai* is arguably trying to point out, via the comparison with her own memory of playing dress-up, that the narrator of *Kamen no kokuhaku* can retrospectively reject femininity, whereas she would like to but cannot. This is suggested by her referring to his cross-gender performance as not just "sickening" and "horrifying," but also "cool" (Shōno, 2007, p. 209). She rejects *and* desires it. But why can't she?

The text does not provide us with a conclusive answer to this question, but two hints hidden elsewhere in the text suggest that the reason might be the aforementioned "distance between matter and the human," her own perception of "her physical body" (Shōno, 2007, p. 210). Thinking about the difficulties she had of fitting into society, she remembers taking a walk one day and being mistaken for an older man (*ojisan*) by elementary school girls, complaining: "I don't know why, but children sometimes perceive me as an older man. My clothes might be a factor, but my physique [*taikei*] clearly is that of a woman!" (Shōno, 2007, p. 137). While her gender expression might be ambiguous and she does only speak of a womanly "physique," not explicitly of a female body (*karada, shintai*), her frustration with being misgendered indicates that she understands herself as a woman and desires to be perceived as such.

This seems to be confirmed by another scene in which she talks about the physical discomfort she feels in her arms because of her allergies (Shōno, 2007, p. 213). Later in the novel she compares this ache to an "evil spirit" (*akurei*) running rampage in her elbow (Shōno, 2007, p. 217). The first time she mentions it, however, she calls this "evil spirit" a "male voice she is hearing from inside her elbow" and jokingly interprets it as the manifestation of her childhood desire to have been a man in her past life (*zensei wa otoko da to iu, kochira no yōji no ganbō*) (Shōno, 2007, p. 145). Her body's voice, so to speak, seems to be at least partially male. However, by framing this ambiguity as a child's dream about a previous life, the protagonist defines her present adult self, including the body that is speaking to her in this scene, as female.

Hence, on the one hand she identifies as a woman and wants to be seen as such, and on the other she desires, as the adjective "cool" suggests, – if not to be male, *not anymore* – a distance from the performance of femininity similar to that in *Kamen no kokuhaku.* However, whereas such a distancing for Mishima does not jeopardize his inclusion in the Japanese literary canon (i. e., the anthology), it is more complicated for her. As she has repeatedly experienced, distance from the performance of femininity, deviating from what society considers feminine, means being rejected as "doing nothing." In that way, *Nanimo shitenai*

hints at something similar to Shōno's use of a male protagonist in the early 1980s: the difficulty of carving out an epistemological niche of existence for a female identity beyond societal gender norms.

But the bodily ambiguity remains. While the male body beneath the cross-gender performance in *Kōtei* seems to have transformed into a female one in *Nanimo shitenai*, it still makes itself heard. One might even argue that the protagonist of *Nanimo shitenai* is performing a disavowal similar to that which she accuses the narrator of *Kamen no kokuhaku* of: hinting toward the potential experience of her body as (partially) male, while simultaneously disavowing it as a childhood fantasy of a previous life.

4 The strange temporalities of "gender dysphoria"

In fact, Shōno herself has repeatedly stated that during her childhood and early adolescence she believed herself to be male (Matsu'ura & Shōno, 1994b, p. 177; Shiraishi & Shōno, 2008, p. 191; Shōno, 2008, p. 6). Most recently, in her trans-related essays, she wrote about this experience of "a male soul" (*otoko no tamashi*) trapped in a "female body" (*onna no karada*) (Shōno, 2022d, p. 13) in two different ways.

First, she explains it as a "fiction" (*fikushon*) that she clung to during her youth, because she thought "being a woman in itself is some sort of misfortune [*fugū*]" (Shōno, 2022d, p. 13). She felt it difficult to accept being a woman and to keep a distance from societal expectations about her gender. Thus, she escaped into the fantasy of being a man, using the masculine first-person pronoun *ore* and wearing male clothes (Shōno, 2022d, p. 13). She then suggests that the use of a male protagonist in her early novels can be understood as a literary manifestation of this escapist fantasy (Shōno, 2022d, pp. 13–14).

Later on, however, Shōno (2022b) describes this experience within the context of "gender dysphoria" (*seibetsu iwa*) (p. 37). She argues that the use of the term *seijinin* and the depathologization of trans people that it represents would lead to minors getting unnecessary and invasive gender-affirming medical treatments such as mastectomies. Speaking of "more and more children being sacrificed for the profits of big pharma" (p. 37), Shōno points out that she, too, has "struggled with her gender," but that she "has come to terms with [her] *body* without pursuing medical treatment" (p. 37, emphasis mine). In her eyes, "gender dysphoria during adolescence in most cases resolves itself on its own" (p. 37).

The term "gender dysphoria" is commonly defined as the "psychological distress that results from an incongruence between one's sex assigned at birth and

one's gender identity" (American Psychiatric Association, 2022, p. 511) and tends to be used in medical contexts to explain the experience of being trans (Nihon Seishin Shinkei Gakkai Seidōitsusei-shōgai ni Kansuru Iinkai, 2018, pp. 9–10, 19, 21). Shōno's use of this expression and her substitution of "gender" with "body" as the cause of her struggles suggest that what she is describing here might not (just) be a struggle with societal expectations, but (also) stems from the *physical* sensation of her gender identity not matching her assigned sex. Nevertheless, she says she overcame it on her own. Thus, minors need no gender-affirming healthcare.

The common argument by TERFs that gender-affirming healthcare is unnecessary and harmful to minors[7] is reminiscent of homophobic discourses about gay people being a threat to children and the negation of non-normative sexual desires as "just a phase." Moreover, by focusing almost exclusively on mastectomies or gender-affirming surgeries (Shōno, 2022b, pp. 34–36), Shōno reduces trans people's transitioning process to invasive surgical procedures, which in Japan are not available to people under the age of eighteen in the first place (The Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology, 2017; Nihon Seishin Shinkei Gakkai Seidōitsusei-shōgai ni Kansuru Iinkai, 2012, pp. 1262–1263). She also ignores the fact that in Japan hormonal treatment for minors is available over the age of fifteen only with parental consent and after a minimum of one year of medical observation (The Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology, 2017). Besides, several studies have shown that access to gender-affirming healthcare can reduce the risk of suicides for trans and nonbinary youth and should not be dismissed if the well-being of minors is of primary concern (Adams et al., 2017; Allen, 2019; Bustos et al., 2021; Herman et al., 2019; Herman & O'Neill, 2021; Rafferty, 2018, p. 3; Tordoff et al., 2022; Turban et al. 2020).

In addition to these factual inconsistencies, there is another internal contradiction in Shōno's arguments. Though arguing that gender dysphoria resolves itself during adolescence, citing her own experience as proof, she also implies that her novels of the 1980s were in part an attempt to come to terms with precisely what she retrospectively (also) calls "gender dysphoria": her struggle with her gender and body. Born in 1956, Shōno was 25 years old when she published her first novel in 1981, and 35 when she published *Nanimo shitenai*, that is, far beyond adolescence. What should have just been a phase during her youth, according to Shōno's own logic, seems to have continued well into her twenties and thirties, or at least it occupied her thinking to the extent that it repeatedly manifested itself in her writing for years after that. This is further indicated by Shōno (2022d) herself stating that she dealt with the experience of a male soul trapped in a female body,

7 The feminist sociologist Senda Yūki (2023) recently made a similar claim.

her "soul's gender" (*kokoro no seibetsu*), also in later novels such as *Suishōnai seido* (*The World Within the Crystal*, 2003) and the aforementioned *Kompīra* (2005) (p. 14).

In *Suishōnai seido* the female protagonist Hieda awakens in a hospital of the all-female nation of Uramizumo, where she seems to have fled to escape the misogyny of her native Nihhon, a dystopian version of Japan. However, she doesn't quite feel at home in Uramizumo either. As I noted elsewhere: "She experiences herself harboring two contradictory minds. . . . one part of her is content with her new life, whereas the other rejects it and urges her to flee" (Würrer, 2022, p. 64). Among the various reasons the text offers for this ambivalent feeling of (non-)belonging, is her potential identification as male (Würrer, 2022, pp. 65–69). "In the worst case" she states, "I might have to say 'I am a man'" (Shōno, 2003, p. 114).

Since in the all-female Uramizumo being a man means being subject to incarceration, enslavement, and state-sanctioned murder (Shōno, 2003, pp. 25, 189–192, 207–232, 248), Hieda "had to hide" her "soul's truth" (Shōno, 2003, p. 114). But, instead of leaving Uramizumo or confronting the authorities, she ultimately buries that part of her:

> Having finished her feminist adaptation of Japanese creation myths, Hieda rewrites it one final time, this time not to justify the existence of a nation but to affirm her male self, "to write 'him' down, this man existing nowhere" (238). Expressing both the desire to become "him" and the impossibility of . . . living as a man in Uramizumo, Hieda writes: "This part of me, him, I place him there, on the shores of the underworld. In death I will become a man . . . [b]ut at that point, I won't be me any longer (248)" (Würrer, 2022, p. 68).

Suishōnai seido, in other words, can be read as an elegy: a burial song the protagonist writes for this part of her, for "him," for her male self.

Kompīra, then, can be understood as the attempt to overcome this split between life and death, female and male. It is also the first-person narrative of a female writer. Unlike *Suishōnai seido,* however, Shōno intentionally foregrounds the autobiographical nature of the narrator–protagonist, giving her the exact same birthday and birth city as herself: March 16, 1956, in Yokkaichi, Mie Prefecture (Shōno, 2010, pp. 9–10). In addition, she experiences continuous difficulties adapting to life in Japanese society. Like Shōno, the protagonist of *Kompīra* believed herself to be male, was treated as such by her family (Shōno, 2010, pp. 75–80), and until adolescence expected that "eventually these breasts would fall off and reveal a magnificent masculine physique" (Shōno, 2010, pp. 185). She started working out and engaged with girls in a courteous manner because she thought that this is what is expected of an "accomplished man" (*deki no ii otoko*) (Shōno, 2010, p. 125). Her body, however, continued to develop into that of a woman, leading

the people around her to increasingly treat her according to societal norms about what a woman is supposed to be, which resulted in a fundamental sense of (non) belonging (Shōno, 2010, pp. 185–189)

Kompīra tells this story of (non-)belonging retrospectively. It portrays the process of how the protagonist ultimately came to realize at the age of 47 (Shōno, 2010, pp. 10, 27, 319) that the reason for the difficulties she had accepting her female body and fitting into society was that she was not human, but the "genderless" (*seibetsu wa fumei*) deity Kompīra, who happened to decide "out of an impulse inexplicable even to themselves," to leave behind the bottom of the sea where they had originally resided and take possession of the body of a girl who had died shortly after birth (Shōno, 2010, p. 9). This mirrors the development of Shōno's fiction: from the killing of the old woman in *Kōtei*, via the genderless protagonist of the ocean-themed *Kaijū*, to the female protagonist of *Nanimo shitenai* and her ambivalent desire for social belonging.

Importantly, it is not just the original state of the protagonist that is non-binary. Kompīra happens to reside within a female body, but it is through the process of hearing the voice, and finally merging (*shūgō suru*) with the spirit of a man who was buried as a woman in a tomb near their home, that they complete their self-realization and exclaim: "I am Kompīra! I have become Kompīra!" (Shōno, 2010, p. 334). Almost as a sequel to *Nanimo shitenai,* the protagonist's male self makes itself heard from beyond the grave. But whereas in *Suishōnai seido* it was ceremoniously laid to rest there, in *Kompīra* it is brought back to life.

How should we understand this ongoing fictional struggle with the body and gender, and this seeming affirmation of a nonbinary gender identity in the context of Shōno's trans-exclusionary writing? In Shōno's view (2022b), "gender dysphoria in most cases resolves itself on its own" (p. 37), and those who continue to experience it into their adulthood may be allowed to live as women, if they seek medical treatment (p. 31), but any other trans or non-binary adult is a potential threat to women (pp. 33–34). But doesn't her fiction place her in the periphery of precisely this last category of threat?

Before thinking about this question in the final section of this paper, I would like to take a brief look at another novel by Shōno, *Uramizumo dorei senkyo* (*The Uramizumo Slave Election*, 2018) to demonstrate two things: First, that this struggle with the gendered body continued to be central to Shōno's fiction until shortly before the time she began writing about trans women; and second, that whereas in *Kompīra* – mirroring the arguments in her trans-related essays – the female body is presented as an inescapable destiny (onto which then the transcendence of the gender binary, the merging of the female and male souls is performed), in *Uramizumo dorei senkyo* the transcendence of both the gender binary *and* the gendered body is shown as a utopian ideal.

5 *Uramizumo dorei senkyo* (2018): Utopian transcendence

Uramizumo Dorei Senkyō is the sequel to two of Shōno's earlier novels: *Hyōsube no kuni* (*The Land of Hyōsube*, 2016) and *Suishōnai seido.* It takes its main political agenda from the former, a cautionary tale on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which was ratified in Japan in a modified form in March 2018 and, more generally, neoliberal politics and the neoliberal cultural climate in Japan (Shōno, 2018, p. 12). From the latter it takes the setting of the eponymous Uramizumo, a country populated only by women, which has separated from the deeply misogynist society of a dystopian future Japan called Nihhon.

There are two main protagonists: First, the ca. 2000-year-old deity Himemiya (Shōno, 2018, p. 36), who in 2068, the present time of the novel (Shōno, 2018, p. 53), appears in the form of a middle-aged woman in the city of S-kura. She is searching for an arrowhead that she suspects is a clue to her lost husband's whereabouts (Shōno 2018, pp. 30, 83–84). He has disappeared after the people of S-kura decided in a referendum – the eponymous *dorei senkyo* – to join Uramizumo. She believes it to be at what once was the National Museum of Japanese History, which has become the Historical Museum of the Men's Farm Sanctuary: an educational institution dedicated to the history of women and sexual harassment, where alongside historical objects, living examples of sexual harassers and rapists are kept and exhibited, and their sperm extracted for procreation.

The second protagonist, Ichikawa Fusayo, grew up in Nihhon, where women are slaves by birth (Shōno, 2018, p.136). She immigrated to Uramizumo in her twenties and worked her way up to become the chief curator of this museum. At the end of the novel, Himemiya meets Ichikawa there and, with her help, retrieves the lost arrowhead and finds her husband. Himemiya's quest for the lost object is the frame that holds this novel together, which through the polyphonic collage of Himemiya and Ichikawa's alternating narration, and several letters by people from Nihhon and Uramizumo inserted throughout the text, introduces the reader to the history of the two lands.

Nihhon is depicted as a country that – as a result of ratifying the TPP – has turned into a "colony" of global companies where corporate interests have become the ideological foundation of national policy, with everything from water, forests, and rice fields to healthcare, education, and state media completely privatized (Shōno, 2018, p. 30). The people work for a minimal wage, and, with no unions left, die young due to harsh working conditions (Shōno, 2018, pp. 31, 85–86). Foreign workers who are brought into the country under the pretext of "globalization" to increase the workforce face the same fate. Land left behind by dead workers is

monetized as storage space for radioactive waste, leading to more deaths (Shōno, 2018, pp. 30–33).

This recalls past and present government projects of privatization such as that of Japan Railways and Japan Post in the early 2000s, or the revisions to the Water Supply Act (Suidōhō) in 2018 that enabled private companies to operate the water supply ("Revisions," 2018). It also brings to mind the government-run Technical Intern Training Program (Ginō Jisshū Seido), which aimed at giving people from developing countries opportunities to acquire skills, but has repeatedly been criticized for the resultant exploitation and abuse of low-skilled workers from overseas (Chaigne, 2022; Iwamoto, 2016; Jozuka, 2018; Nara, 2022; Sieg & Miyazaki, 2019).

Shōno combines this sinister critique of neoliberal politics with a critique of patriarchy. In Nihhon, women are first the property of their fathers and then of their husbands. They can become quasi-citizens upon marriage (Shōno, 2018, p. 140), but nevertheless have to pay back the debt they have accumulated through their very existence, that is, the costs for their birth and upbringing. While domestic work is the duty of a slave, it does nothing toward repaying these debts (Shōno, 2018, p. 153). Nihhon is an absolute patriarchy, where women are the commodified property of men and made responsible for all kinds of social issues, from low birthrates to their own sexual harassment (Shōno, 2018, p. 34).

This hierarchy is explained as the result of men being "enslaved themselves" by global companies, that is, men's internalized denial of their own position as subordinates to global capital (Shōno, 2018, p. 71). Accordingly, discourses on "gender equality" are hijacked by men who pervert them into justifications for mistreating women, arguing that having to wear condoms during sex or being kept from entering women-only cars on trains is "sexual discrimination of men" (Shōno, 2018, p. 43). Feminists are portrayed as conspirators in such polemics. They rush to the aid of men, fighting against this "sexual discrimination," arguing, among other things, that "molesting women on trains" should be legalized in order "to prevent false accusations by women" (Shōno, 2018, p. 112). In other words, Nihhon is a sinister, dystopian extrapolation of political, economic, cultural, and social developments in present-day Japan.

However, the question I want to raise here is: What options does *Uramizumo dorei senkyo* suggest for resistance? That is, what is the utopian alternative to Nihhon? At first glance it seems to be Uramizumo. As Himemiya says, "the only thing that might save [us] is something like this all-female nation, which [we] can really only see in our dreams" (Shōno, 2018, p. 31). But is it really?

As we learn at the end of the novel, in 2086, all but two prefectures of Nihhon have become part of Uramizumo. However, similar to *Suishōnai seido,* Uramizumo is repeatedly referred to as a "police state … where democracy has died" (Shōno,

2018, pp. 22, 58), a fascist totalitarian state where "one gets shot for ridiculing the country" (Shōno, 2018, p. 38; Würrer, 2022, pp. 64–65). The exclusionary violence the country is founded upon, the internment of men in the ghetto-like "farm sanctuary," and the most obvious display of state violence, the ritual killing of men during the annual ostracism (Shōno, 2018, p. 176), are portrayed as reasons for feelings of uneasiness among its people. As Ichikawa remarks, Uramizumo is "quite a dystopian paradise" (Shōno, 2018, p. 188).

This ambivalence is further emphasized by the contrasting voices of women from both lands, praising Uramizumo for providing a home to the maltreated women of Nihhon and also criticizing its exclusionary violence (Shōno, 2018, pp. 196–197, 206–223, 241–242, 243–249). No, it is not an all-female world, not separatism, that *Uramizumo dorei senkyo* suggests as an alternative. Its utopian horizon is the dystopian imagination represented by Himemiya's metafictional border crossing. As narrated by Himemiya:

> To put it in a nutshell, [Nihhon] is a parallel world, where as early as 2016, as originally planned, the TPP was ratified. But now, here, in the present – it is the Japan that is still called Japan, which has begun to gradually resemble this fictitious country. (Shōno, 2018, p. 32)

Himemiya, the main narrative authority, hovers between three worlds, or rather, three levels: (a) extra-diegetic narration ("to put it in a nutshell"); (b) diegesis, that is, the two fictitious worlds ("parallel world"); and (c) the extratextual reality ("the Japan that is still called Japan"). In literary terms, we could call this an example of *metalepsis*, a transgression of the boundaries between narrative levels. Himemiya is always one foot across the border to the reality of present-day Japan, linking the reader with the fictitious Nihhon.

Important to note here is that (1), the "all-female country" is qualified as a "dream"; (2) it is a dystopian dream; and (3) this is first and foremost Himemiya's dream. Thus, what *Uramizumo dorei senkyo* posits as the utopian alternative – "that which might save us" – rather than Uramizumo itself, is the process of dreaming, that is, the juxtapositions of contemporary Japanese society, dystopian Nihhon, and the also rather dystopian "all-female country" of Uramizumo. Himemiya's movement between these three worlds, the dystopian imagination embodied by Himemiya, is what *Uramizumo dorei senkyo* posits as a strategy of resistance.

Given that all three of these worlds take the form of a nation-state, Himemiya's hovering between them without belonging to any one of them fully, similar to Hieda's ambivalent status of (non)belonging in *Suishōnai seido*, could be read as a critique of the nation-state and the gendered mechanisms of exclusion it is founded upon (Würrer, 2022, p.69). That Himemiya's shrine is located in the borderlands be-

tween patriarchal Nihhon and the all-female Uramizumo would further suggest such a reading (Shōno, 2018, pp. 251–253).

But, Himemiya, in addition to metafictionally transgressing the borders between the narrative levels of *Uramizumo dorei senkyo*, also seems to transcend the gendered body. For one, Himemiya lacks a physical body. This is suggested by her portrayal as immortal (Shōno, 2018, p. 96), but also when she visits the cafeteria at the Historical Museum of the Men's Farm Sanctuary and states that she can only enjoy food through its smells (Shōno, 2018, p. 105), implying that – while seemingly having some sort of olfactory receptors – she lacks a digestive system and the need for nutrition. Consequently, her gender identity, which generally is given as female, is not defined by a physical body. It is her appearance and behavior that convey the impression of an older woman, but not always: when wandering around the borderlands at the beginning of the novel, she is mistaken for a man by Uramizumo's border patrol and almost shot (Shōno, 2018, p. 22). This is reminiscent of the aforementioned misgendering in *Nanimo shitenai.*

This ambiguity is mirrored at the end of the novel when she is reunited with her husband, for their reunification is portrayed as a fusion, a merging together of female and male. Moreover, Himemiya states that her husband later became the guardian deity of the cross-dressing men that started to appear in the borderlands after most of Nihhon joined Uramizumo, and as for herself: "Similarly, my shrine, at least from the outside, looks like that of a goddess" (Shōno, 2018, p. 253). Lacking further details, we are left to wonder what might lie beneath the surface. Here one might draw a parallel to the cross-gender performance of *Kōtei*'s protagonist.

This transgressive nature of Himemiya both in terms of gender and textual positions becomes more obvious when seen in contrast with *Uramizumo dorei senkyo*'s second protagonist, Ichikawa Fusayo. Unlike Himemiya, she had to experience the full force of misogyny and gender discrimination in Nihhon. Ichikawa is not in the privileged position of being able to freely move between worlds. She saw no other way than to move to Uramizumo, which she sees rather ambivalently as the lesser of two evils. In addition, she has a physical, female body whose aging is repeatedly addressed throughout the novel (Shōno, 2018, pp. 189, 195, 249).

So, on the one hand, we have the figure of a somewhat nonbinary, bodyless deity who upon reuniting with her male half becomes the guardian deity of cross-dressing individuals in the borderlands between Uramizumo and Nihhon. She embodies the metafictional omniscience and border-crossing, that is, the utopian horizon of *Uramizumo dorei senkyō.* On the other hand, there is the diegetic reality of Ichikawa Fusayo, who has an ageing, female body and is unable to float freely between worlds. She is also associated with feminism through her name: except for the very last syllable/character, the spelling is identical with that of Japa-

nese feminist, politician, and leader of the women's suffrage movement, Ichikawa Fusae (1893–1981).

By virtue of Himemiya's metafictional position, Ichikawa Fusayo could be understood to be in part Himemiya. After all, Nihhon and Uramizumo with all its inhabitants are first and foremost Himemiya's narrative. Together they could be read as the manifestation of a desire to transcend or leave behind, not just the gendered nation-state and its exclusionary violence, but also the gendered body and the gender binary exemplified in the figure of Ichikawa Fusayo. At the same time, however, the fact that the gender-ambiguous, bodyless Himemiya inhabits the virtual space of metafiction, besides the fact that Himemiya is a supernatural being, can be said to emphasize the opposite: the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of transcending the gendered body and the gender binary as seen in the diegetic reality of Ichikawa Fusayo. Moreover, Ichikawa Fusayo's name connects her aging, female body with social change in the form of feminism.

6 Transphobia as abjection, or the impossible desire for a stable identity

This ambivalence is a common thread in Shōno's fiction. While many of the protagonists ultimately seem to embrace a female identity, traces remain in the text that complicate such an identification: the male body beneath the cross-gender performance of *Kōtei*'s protagonist; the male voice of the protagonist's elbow and her experience of misgendering in *Nanimo shitenai*; the burial and resuscitation of the male self in *Suishōnai seido* and *Kompira*, respectively; and the juxtaposition of the nonbinary, bodiless deity, Himemiya, with the embodied female character Ichikawa Fusayo in *Uramizumo dorei senkyo.*

At first sight the biological essentialism of Shōno's trans-exclusionary essays might seem to contradict this fictional oscillation between an affirmation of and a distancing from an embodied female identity. However, if we consider transphobia as a form of abjection, then her attempt to exclude trans women from the category of woman can be understood as another facet of this ambivalence.

The transphobic nature of Shōno's recent essays becomes most obvious when she argues that the GID Law should be amended, so that it allows for forcibly changing back the legal gender of trans women who have undergone gender-affirming surgery if they commit a crime; or to make it a prerequisite to test trans women for "misogynist tendencies" (*josei ken'o-tekina keikō*) prior to their gender-affirming surgery and prevent them from undergoing it if they are found to be "hating women" (*josei o nikundeiru*) (Shōno, 2022d, p. 35). This claim is

based on the unfounded and fearmongering suspicion that all trans women are potential criminals and not to be trusted. Besides, the measures Shōno is asking for are inhumane and most likely unconstitutional. The policing of thought crimes is prohibited under article 19 of the Japanese Constitution; legally treating trans women differently from trans men would be discrimination based on gender, which is prohibited under article 14; and revoking the legal change of gender in case a trans woman commits a crime arguably constitutes double punishment and, thus, would be in violation of article 31.[8]

As Christopher Shelley (2008) has argued, referencing Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1980), such a display of transphobia is not simply the repudiation of a feared object. It has to be understood as abjection, that is, repudiation as an attempt to (re-)establish the boundaries of the self through demarcating and distancing oneself from what is not me (pp. 38–39). Summarizing Kristeva's theory of abjection, Judith Butler (1999) wrote in *Gender Trouble:*

> The "abject" designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered "Other." This appears as an expulsion of alien elements, but the alien is effectively established through this expulsion. The construction of the "not-me" as the abject establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject. (p. 170)

Since what is rejected as "not-me" is always also part of the self, abjection never fully succeeds. The coherence of the self is constantly threatened by the abject. Hence, abjection needs to be repeated, if the self is to maintain its idealized boundaries. Butler (1999) emphasized that this process of abjection, the repulsion of the "not me," underpins the social reproduction of "hegemonic identities":

> As Iris Young has suggested in her use of Kristeva to understand sexism, homophobia, and racism, the repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality, and/or color is an "expulsion" followed by a "repulsion" that founds and consolidates culturally hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality axes of differentiation. Young's appropriation of Kristeva shows how the operation of repulsion can consolidate "identities" founded on the instituting of the "Other" or a set of Others through exclusion and domination. What constitutes through division the "inner" and "outer" worlds of the subject is a border and boundary tenuously maintained for the purposes of social regulation and control. (p. 170)

Abjection, in other words, is the manifestation of the desire for the impossibility of a coherent and stable identity. It is an ambivalent and precarious process of subjectification, where what was once "me" is transfigured into an external threat and

8 I would like to thank attorney Satō Maiko from the Tokyo Taiju Law Office for clarifying this point.

fought off. Only through the fight with this disavowed part of the self can it keep up the porous and vulnerable boundaries of its idealized identity.

As queer theorist Eve K. Sedgwick demonstrated in *Between Men* (1985) and *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), homophobia functions in such a way. Heteronormative societies establish the heterosexual man as the norm through instilling fear in the individual. It is consolidated through keeping the boundaries between socially appropriate and inappropriate relationships between men – the border between homosocial and homosexual bonds – "invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed" (Sedgwick, 1985, p. 89), so that "not only must homosexual men be unable to ascertain whether they are to be objects of 'random' homophobic violence, but no man must be able to ascertain that he is not (that his bonds are not) homosexual" (Sedgwick, 1990, pp. 88–89). The "progromlike" "randomness of violence" against homosexual people (Sedgwick, 1985, p. 88) and "the historically shifting, and precisely the arbitrary and self-contradictory, nature of the way *homosexuality* (along with its predecessor terms) has been defined in relation to the rest of the homosocial spectrum" (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 185; emphasis in the original) has resulted in the "blackmailability," a fundamental vulnerability, of not just homosexual men, but all men. Displays of homophobia, thus, are a defense mechanism: a preemptive abjection of homosexual desire to ensure one's always threatened social status as a proper male subject.

But all gender identities are vulnerable and unstable. As Butler (1999) has argued, if coherence and continuity are basic conditions of identity and if having a gender is the prerequisite for social acceptance, then for individuals to become socially "intelligible," they need to present coherent gender identities, that is, "those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire" (p. 23). While the very definition of "biological sex" is an ongoing cultural process and there is no universal way in which biological sex translates into social behavior (gender) and desire (sexuality) (Butler, 1999, pp. 10–11), in heteronormative, cis-genderist societies, social recognition hinges on the performative display of continuity between these three dimensions. "Discontinuity" and incoherence" are punished:

> Inasmuch as "identity" is assured through the stabilizing concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality, the very notion of "the person" is called into question by the cultural emergence of those "incoherent" or "discontinuous" gendered beings who appear to be persons but who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility by which persons are defined. (Butler, 1999, p. 23)

That is, the foundational "flaw" of "discontinuity" and "incoherence", while being at the very heart of any gender identity, is transfigured into gender and sexual "deviants" – the abjection of homosexual people, transgender and nonbinary people,

among others – whose social policing then becomes the way through which the normative fantasy, the naturalization of sex as gender is consolidated. When biologist and transgender activist Julia Serano (2016) wrote that "transphobia is first and foremost an expression of one's own insecurity about having to live up to cultural gender ideals" (p. 12), she was describing this projection of "discontinuity" and "incoherence" onto trans people that allows for cis people – despite their own "insecurities" – to remain the norm.

In her critique of trans-exclusionary feminism, Sarah Ahmed (2016) argued that we can understand gender as "places in which we dwell," and gender norms as the walls that surround them (p. 32). Some feel "more at home than others . . . walls that are experienced as hard and tangible by some do not even exist for others" (Ahmed, 2016, p. 32). Cis women and trans women may share some of the rooms; others are accessible only to cis people. But while we might not share the experience of being in a certain room, or being hindered by a certain wall – perceived as "incoherent" or "discontinuous" different than others – we share the experience of being put into these rooms, and the need to, as Ahmed (2016) put it, "chip away at those walls" (p. 32), if we want to tear down not just a few walls, but the whole structure, that is, the binary gender norms and the oppression they create. Transphobia is the rejection of this potential for intersectional alliances and radical change in favor of pushing trans women into the darkest corner of this structure, effectively reproducing, reinforcing the walls of essentialism that surround both cis and trans women.

7 Conclusion

Through her trans-related essays, Shōno does precisely that. Whatever the ambivalent and ambiguous portrayal of gender in her novels signifies – a struggle with societal norms, gender dysphoria, or both – they demonstrate the restrictive nature of essentialist and binary gender norms. Even if we understand Shōno's fiction not as an *ongoing* struggle with her gender and body, with what it means to have a gendered body that transgresses binary norms, but, as Shimizu Yoshinori and Shōno herself have suggested, an affirmation of her identity as woman – and I hope to have shown that her texts allow for doubt about such a teleological reading – this does not foreclose, as Ahmed emphasized, solidarity with trans women. Similar to the framing of the male voice in *Nanimo shitenai* as a child's dream of a previous life, or the burial of Hieda's male self in *Suishōnai seido,* however, Shōno opted for exclusion, for framing trans women as a threat to women as such, for locking them away in the darkest, smallest room in the back of the giant normative

structure that is the gender binary. This ultimately bespeaks both the desire for and the impossibility of a stable, normative female identity.

Shōno's repudiation of trans women as potential criminals seems like an attempt to rid herself of the "incoherence" and "discontinuity" that lies at the core of her fiction and threatens such an identity from within, by construing it as an external threat to her and other "proper" women. The boundary-defying ambiguity and ambivalence of the gendered body in her fiction could have had the potential to inspire radical feminist interrogations of the gender binary and biological essentialism. With her recent essays, however, Shōno, pushes herself, and the interpretation, of her fiction back into the confines of precisely these norms.

References

Adams, N., Hitomi, M., & Moody, C. (2017). Varied reports of adult transgender suicidality: Synthesizing and describing the peer-reviewed and gray literature. *Transgender Health*, *2*(1), 60–75. https://doi.org/10.1089/trgh.2016.0036.

Ahmed, S. (2016). An affinity of hammers. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, *3*(1–2), 22–34.

Allen, L. (2019). *Well-being and suicidality among transgender youth after gender-affirming medical interventions* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Missouri-Kansas.

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostical and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). American Psychiatric Association.

Asano, U. (2018). Shōno Yoriko "Nanimo shitenai" ron: "Chūtō hanpa" no rikigaku" [On Shōno Yoriko's "Doing nothing": The dynamics of "not this nor that"]. In H. Tsuboi (Ed.), *Baburu to ushinawareta 20-nen: Hontō ni "sengo" wa owatta no ka?* [The bubble and the lost 20 years: Is the "post-war" period really over?] (pp. 165–194). Rinsen Shoten.

Bouterey, S. (1996). Shōno Yoriko "Nōnai no tatakai": "Ise-shi, Haruchi" kara "Taiyō no Miko" made [Shōno Yoriko's "Mental battles": From "Ise City, Haruchi" to "The Shrine Maiden of the Sun"]. *Seijō bungei*, *155*, 112–122.

Burns, K. (2019, September 5). *The rise of anti-trans "radical" feminists, explained.* Vox. https://www.vox.com/identities/2019/9/5/20840101/terfs-radical-feminists-gender-critical.

Bustos, V. P., Bustos, S. S., Mascaro, A., Del Corral, G., Forte, A. J., Ciudad, P., Kim, E. A., Langstein, H. N., & Manrique, O. J. (2021). Regret after gender-affirmation surgery: A systematic review and meta-analysis of prevalence. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery – Global Open*, *9*(3), Article 3477. https://doi.org/10.1097/GOX.0000000000003477.

Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity.* Routledge. (Original work published 1990)

Carland-Echavarria, P. (2022). We do not live to be productive: LGBT activism and the politics of productivity in contemporary Japan. *The Asia-Pacific Journal 20*(2), Article 5669. https://apjjf.org/2022/2/Carland.html.

Center for Extremism. (2023). *Antisemitism & anti-LGBTQ+ hate converge in extremist and conspiratorial beliefs.* Anti-Defamation League. https://www.adl.org/resources/blog/antisemitism-anti-lgbtq-hate-converge-extremist-and-conspiratorial-beliefs.

Chaigne, T. (2022, April 15). *Unbearable hours, threats of being fired: The abuse of migrant interns in Japan.* France 24. https://observers.france24.com/en/asia-pacific/20220419-unbearable-hours-threats-of-being-fired-the-abuse-of-migrant-interns-in-japan.

Ebihara Akiko. (2012). *Naze otoko wa Shōno Yoriko o osorerunoka* [Why do men fear Shōno Yoriko?]. Shunpūsha.

Grzebalska, W., Kováts E., & Pető. (2017, January 13). *Gender as symbolic glue: How "gender" became an umbrella term for the rejection of the (neo)liberal order.* Political Critique. https://politicalcritique.org/long-read/2017/gender-as-symbolic-glue-how-gender-became-an-umbrella-term-for-the-rejection-of-the-neoliberal-order.

Ibuki, S. (2021, May 31). *"Inochi o mamoru hōritsu o tsukutte kudasai": Jimintō gi'in no sabetsu hatsugen, ima tōjishatachi ga tsutaetai omoi* ["Please create laws that protect lives": What those affected think of the discriminatory remarks made by members of the Liberal Democratic Party]. Buzzfeed. https://www.buzzfeed.com/jp/saoriibuki/ldp-lgbt-protest.

Iino, Y. (2020). Feminizumu wa bakkurasshu to no tatakai no naka de saiyō shita mizukara no "senryaku" o minaosu jiki ni kiteiru" [It is time for feminists to rethink their strategy adopted in the fight against the backlash]. *Etosetora*, *4*, 85–88.

Iwamoto, K. (2016, August 18). Abuses rampant in foreign trainee program, Japan labor ministry finds. *Nikkei Asia.* https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Abuses-rampant-in-foreign-trainee-program-Japan-labor-ministry-finds.

Jimin Yamatani-shi "bakageta koto okiteiru": Sei jinin meguri [LDP's Yamatani speaking of "ridiculous developments" regarding gender identity]. (2021, May 19). *Asahi shinbun.* https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASP5M52GTP5MUTFK004.html.

Jozuka, E. (2018, December 7). *Japan needs immigrants, but do immigrants need Japan?* CNN. https://edition.cnn.com/2018/12/06/asia/japan-immigration-bill-foreign-workers/index.html.

Kotani, M. (2002). Space, body, and aliens in Japanese women's science fiction. *Science Fiction Studies*, *29*(3), 397–417.

Halberstam, J. (1998). *Female masculinities.* Duke University Press.

Herman, J. L., Brown, T. N. T., & Haas, A. P. (2019). *Suicide thoughts and attempts among transgender adults: Findings from the 2015 US transgender survey.* The Williams Institute.

Herman, J. L., & O'Neill K. (2021). *Suicide risk and prevention for transgender people: Summary of research findings.* UCLA School of Law Williams Institute. https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Trans-Suicide-Summary-Sep-2021.pdf.

The Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology. (2017, May 20). *"Sei dōitsusei shōgai ni kansuru shindan to chiryō no gaidorain" (dai-yon han): Ichibu kaitei no oshirase* [Notice of a partial revision of the *Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of gender dysphoria* (4th ed.)]. https://www.jspn.or.jp/modules/advocacy/index.php?content_id=32.

Joaquina. (2021, January 2). *Transphobia and antisemitism.* The social review. https://www.thesocialreview.co.uk/2021/01/02/transphobia-and-antisemitism.

Joyce, H. (2021). *Trans: Gender identity and the new battle for women's rights.* Oneworld Publications.

Kazama, T. (2007). "Chūsei ningen" to wa dare ka? Seiteki mainoritī e no "fobia" o fumaeta teikō e [Who are those "genderless people"? Toward a resistance that's aware of the phobia against sexual minorities]. *Joseigaku*, *15*, 23–33.

Komiya, T. (2019). "Feminizumu no naka no toransu haijo" [Trans exclusion within feminism]. *Waseda Bungaku 10*(21), Winter, 132–142.

Li, K. [Lǐ, Q.] (2022). Sabetsu ni katan shinai tame no intānetto riterashī [Internet literacy to avoid contributing to discrimination]. *Shimōnu*, *6*, 110–121.

Matsuoka, S. (2023a, May 11). *LGBT hōan "ōkiku kōtai": Shūseian no mondaiten o kaisetsu* [The LGBT draft bill: "A big step backward" – The problems of the revised draft]. Yahoo Japan. https://news.yahoo.co.jp/byline/matsuokasoshi/20230511-00349138.

Matsuoka, S. (2023b, June 6). *Mohaya "LGBT rikai yokusei hō": Yotō to ishin no saishūseian ga shūin naikaku iinkai de kaketsu* [This is actually an "LGBT understanding suppression bill": The House of Representatives Cabinet Committee passes the amended bill of the LDP and the Japan Innovation Party]. Yahoo Japan. https://news.yahoo.co.jp/byline/matsuokasoshi/20230610-00353187.

Matsu'ura, R. & Shōno, Y. (1994a, April 28). "Dankon shugi" o koete! [Moving beyond "phallocentrism"!]. *Sapio*, *6*(7), 62–68.

Matsu'ura, R., & Shōno, Y. (1994b). *O-karuto o-dokumi teishoku* [Cultist, poisonous delicacies]. Kawade Bunko.

Michaelson, J. (2018, April 23). *Radical feminists and conservative Christians team up against transgender people.* Daily Beast. https://www.thedailybeast.com/radical-feminists-and-conservative-christians-team-up-against-transgender-people.

Mishima, Y. (2017). *Kamen no kokuhaku* [Confessions of a mask]. Shinchōsha Bunko. (Original work published 1949)

Mizugami, A. (2022). Tatta hitori, watashi dake no heya de [Just me, in my own room]. *Bungei*, Spring, 410–419.

Moore, M. (2020, August 5). *J. K. Rowling, "Gender ideology" and antisemitism: Getting to grips with the fuzzy coalition of scapegoating.* Medium. https://chican3ry.medium.com/jk-rowling-gender-ideology-and-antisemitism-7dd043bad37b.

Naikai, K. (2006). Tekusuto ni okeru kurosu jendā pafōmansu (2): Shōno Yoriko "Kompīra" o chūshin ni [Cross-gender performances in literary texts (2): Shōno Yoriko's "Kompira"]. *Frontiers of Gender Studies*, *5*, 386–392.

Nakamura, M. (1999). Tatakau sekushuariti: Shōno no resutoresu wārudo. *Bungakukai*, *44*(1), 108–114.

Nara, R. (2022, July 26). *Focus: Abuse of foreign trainees continues under technical internship.* Kyodo News. https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/07/c5e9af8e7f16-focus-abuse-of-foreign-trainees-continues-under-technical-internship-program.html.

Nihon Seishin Shinkei Gakkai Seidōitsusei-shōgai ni Kansuru Iinkai. (2012). Seidōitsusei shōgai ni kansuru shindan to chiryō no gaidorain [Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of gender dysphoria]. *Seishin shinkeigaku zasshi*, *114*(11), 1250–1266.

Nihon Seishin Shinkei Gakkai Seidōitsusei-shōgai ni Kansuru Iinkai. (2018). *Seidōitsusei shōgai ni kansuru shindan to chiryō no gaidorain (dai-yon han)* [Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of gender dysphoria, 4th ed.]. The Japanese Society of Psychiatry and Neurology. https://www.jspn.or.jp/uploads/uploads/files/activity/gid_guideline_no4_20180120.pdf.

Nikaidō, Y. (2021). "Korewa sensō dewanai": LGBT rikai zōshin hōan miokuri ["This is not a war": The Law to Promote Understanding for LGBT People]. *Sekai*, 947, 10–1.

Nitta, K. (2007). Uramizumo ga kokka de aru koto no kyōkun [The meaning of Uramizumo being a state]. *Gendai shisō*, *35*(4), 169–177.

Noguchi-Amann, K. (2005). Japan wahrnehmen. Zum Zusammenhang zwischen Sprache und Wirklichkeitskonzeption in Shono Yorikos Erzählungen [Perceiving Japan: On the connections between language and concepts of reality in Shōno Yoriko's prose]. In R. Domenig, S. Formanek, & W. Manzenreiter (Ed.), *Über Japan denken: Japan überdenken* [Thinking about Japan: Rethinking Japan] (pp. 303–322). LIT Verlag.

Norton, L. (2013). Neutering the transgendered: Human rights and Japan's law no. 111. In S. Stryker & A. Z. Aizura (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader 2* (pp. 591–603). Routledge.

Noya, F. (1997). Shōno Yoriko ron: Majikku to riarizumu no hazama de [An analysis of Shōno Yoriko: In between magic and realism]. *Bungakukai*, *51*(6), 270–280.

Okuno, A. (2021, May 21). Yamatani Eriko-shi no LGBT sabetsu hatsugen wa "muchi": "Akiraka na gorin kenshō ihan" tekkai motome shomei mo [Yamatani Eriko's discriminatory remarks about LGBT people criticized as "ignorance" and "a clear violation of the Olympic Charter": Demands for a retraction and a petition]. *Tōkyō shinbun.* https://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/article/105806.

Rabinowitz, A. (2022, February 25). *Fears of creeping transhumanism give space for overt conspiracism in gender critical communities.* The Skeptic. https://www.skeptic.org.uk/2022/02/fears-of-creeping-transhumanism-give-space-for-overt-conspiracism-in-gender-critical-communities.

Revisions that allow private firms to run water supply services draw mixed reviews. (2018, December 7). *The Mainichi.* https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20181207/p2a/00m/0na/023000c.

Riddell, K. (2016, August 11). George Soros: The money behind the transgender movement. *The Washington Times.* https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/aug/11/george-soros-the-money-behind-the-transgender-move.

Satō, T. (2023, June 13). *LGBT "sabetsu" zōshinhō ni NO: Puraido parēdo sura, dekinakunaru kiki. "Konna hō o tōsu kuni wa, hontō ni saitei desu"* [No to the Law for LGBT discrimination: Even pride parades are now at risk. "A country that passes such a law is truly despicable"]. HuffPost News. https://www.huffingtonpost.jp/entry/story_jp_6487b4b5e4b048eb9110f7bb.

Science Council of Japan. (2020). *Teigen "Sei-teki mainoriti no kenri hoshō o mezashite (II): Toransujendā no songen o hoshō suru tame no hōseibi ni mukete" no pointo* [The essential points of our recommendation "Toward ensuring the rights of sexual minorities (part II). Toward legal measures to guarantee the dignity of transgender individuals]. https://www.scj.go.jp/ja/info/kohyo/kohyo-24-t297-4-abstract.html.

Sedgwick, E. K. (1985). *Between men: English literature and male homosocial desire.* Columbia University Press.

Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *The epistemology of the closet.* University of California Press.

Senda, Y. (2023, June 6). *LGBT hōan no mō hitotsu no shōten: Gakkō kara iryō ni okurareru kodomotachi* [Another focus of the LGBT draft: Schools sending children to medical care]. Yahoo Japan. https://news.yahoo.co.jp/byline/matsuokasoshi/20230511-00349138.

Serano, J. (2016). *Whipping girl. A transsexual woman on sexism and the scapegoating of femininity.* Basic Books.

Shelley, C. (2008). *Transpeople. Repudiation, trauma, healing.* University of Toronto Press.

Shimizu, A. (2007). Scandalous equivocation: A note on the politics of queer self-naming. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, *8*(4), 503–516.

Shimizu, A. (2020). "Imported" feminism and "Indigenous" queerness: From backlash to transphobic feminism in transnational Japanese context. *Ochanomizu University Journal of Gender Studies*, *23*, 89–104.

Shimizu, A. (2022). Sūpāgurū ni yoru itten kyōto: Han-jendā undō to toransujendā haijo [Single-issue alliances via superglue: The anti-gender movement and the exclusion of transgender people] [Commentary]. In S. Faye, *Toransujendā mondai* [The transgender issue] (Y. Takai, Trans.) (pp. 381–389). Meiseki Shoten.

Shimizu, Y. (2003). *Shōno Yoriko: Kokū no senshi* [Shōno Yoriko: Warrior of the void]. Kawadeshobō Shinsha.

Shiraishi, Y., & Shōno Y. (2008). Gokushi kara ōkiku furikaette yomu “Dainihhon” sanbusaku [Taking an extensive look back at the *Dainihhon* triology from the perspective of the ultrapersonal]. *Ronza*, *157*, 184–199.

Shōno, Y. (2001). Kōtei [The emperor]. In Y. Shōno, *Shōno Yoriko shoki sakuhin-shū* [Shōno Yoriko’s early novels] (pp.113–258). Kōdansha Bungei Bunko. (Original work published 1984)

Shōno, Y. (2007). Nanimo shitenai. In Y. Shōno, *Shōno Yoriko sankan shōsetsu-shū* [Shōno Yoriko’s triple crown novels] (pp. 135–244). Kawade Bunko. (Original work published 1991)

Shōno, Y. (2008, March 16). Shōno Yoriko intabyū [An interview with Shōno Yoriko]. *Kyōto Daigaku shinbun*, 5–7.

Shōno, Y. (2018). *Uramizumo dorei senkyo* [The Uramizumo slave election]. Kawade Shobō Shinsha.

Shōno, Y. (2019, July 21). *Kinkyō gohōkoku_2019 nen 07 gatsu 21 nichi (nichi)* [Status update_21 July 2019 (Sunday)]. *Shōno Yoriko shiryōshitsu* [Resources on Shōno Yoriko]. https://restless.adrgm.com/text/kinkyo20190721.html.

Shōno, Y. (2020a, September 24). Ohenji kimashita jidōteki ni shōmetsu suru kinkyō hōkoku [I got an answer; this status update will delete itself]. *Shōno Yoriko shiryōshitsu* [Resources on Shōno Yoriko]. https://restless.adrgm.com/text/kinkyo202009.html.

Shōno, Y. (2020b). “Daidokorona nō de? Died corona no day [With a kitchenesque brain? Died corona no day].” Kawade Shobō Henshūbu (Ed.), *Shisō toshite no “Shingata korona uirusu-ka”* [COVID-19 as a new way of thinking] (pp. 89–100). Kawade Shobō Shinsha.

Shōno, Y. (2020c, October 18). *Kyōsantō no kenkai* [The Communist Party’s viewpoint]. Female Liberation Japan. https://femalelibjp.org/nf/?p=225.

Shōno, Y. (2020d, November 7). *FLJ dokusha no mina-sama e* [To the readers of FLJ]. Female Liberation Japan. https://femalelibjp.org/nf/?p=333.

Shōno, Y. (2021, October 20). *Gobusatashite orimasu. (Shōno Yoriko-san yori)* [It’s been a while. (From Shōno Yoriko)]. Female Liberation Japan. https://femalelibjp.org/nf/?p=621.

Shōno, Y. (2022a, July 16). *Ogenki desuka mata shite mo, … (2)* [How are you? Here we go again… (2)]. Female Liberation Japan. https://femalelibjp.org/nf/?p=815.

Shōno, Y. (2022b). Josei bungaku wa hakkin bungaku nanoka? [Is women’s literature forbidden literature?]. In Y. Shōno, *Shōno Yoriko hakkin shōsetsu-shū* [A collection of Shōno Yoriko’s banned novels] (pp. 25–38). Kawade Shobō Shinsha.

Shōno, Y. (2022c, January 22). *Kaidai futatsu, essei to shōsetsu ni tsuite dai-ikkai* [Two analyses, about an essay and a novel, part 1]. Female Liberation Japan. https://femalelibjp.org/nf/?p=668.

Shōno, Y. (2022d). Hakkin sakka ni natta riyū?: Kenpō nijū-ichi jō ni nottori genkō hō ni shitagai, josei no seizon to hyōgen no jiyū no kiki o uttaeta kara [Why did I become a banned author? Because I brought to attention women’s right to live and the crisis of free speech in accordance with article 21 of the constitution]. In Y. Shōno, *Shōno Yoriko hakkin shōsetsu-shū* [A collection of Shōno Yoriko’s banned novels] (pp. 1–19). Kawade Shobō Shinsha.

Sieg, L., & Miyazaki, A. (2019, March 20). Vietnamese blue-collar workers in Japan seen facing risks as labor system opens up. *The Japan Times.* https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/03/20/national/social-issues/vietnamese-blue-collar-workers-japan-seen-facing-risks-labor-system-opens.

Tierney, R. (2010). *Japanese literature as world literature: Visceral engagement in the writings of Tawada Yoko and Shono Yoriko* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation], University of Iowa.

Tordoff, D., Wanta, J. W, Collin, A., Stepney, C., Inwards-Breland, D. J., & Ahrens, K. (2022). Mental health outcomes in transgender and nonbinary youths receiving gender-affirming care. *JAMA Network Open*, *5*(2): e220978. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.0978.

Turban, J. L., King, D., Carswell, J. M., & Keuroghlian, A. S. (2020). Pubertal suppression for transgender youth and risk of suicidal ideation. *Pediatrics 145*(2), 68–76. https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-1725.

Tyler, C. (2003). *Female impersonation.* Routledge.

Urquhart, E. (2023, March 25). *J. K. Rowling tweets support for activist embroiled in Nazi controversy.* Assigned. https://www.assignedmedia.org/breaking-news/j-k-rowling-tweets-support-for-activist-embroiled-in-nazi-controversy.

Williams, C. (2016). Radical inclusion. Recounting the trans inclusive history of radical feminism. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, *3*(1–2), 254–258.

Würrer, S. [Vyūra, S.] (2019). *"Watashi wa watashi de wa nai" to wa dare ni ieru kotoka? Hiteisei hihan toshite Shōno Yoriko "Kōtei" o yomu"* [Who is able to say "I am not me"? Reading Shōno Yoriko's *The emperor* as a critique of negativity]. In Chūō Daigaku Jinbungaku Kenkyūjo (Ed.), *Yomukoto no kuia: Zoku ai no gihō* [The queerness of reading: Practices of love, part 2] (pp. 101–131). Chūō Daigaku Shuppanbu.

Würrer, S. (2022). A short history of ambivalence toward the feminist utopia in Japanese science fiction. *Science Fiction Studies*, *49*(1), 53–80. https://doi.org/10.1353/sfs.2022.0005.

Yamada, H. (2022). GID as an acceptable minority; or, the alliance between moral conservatives and "gender critical" feminists in Japan. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, *9*(3), 501–506. https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-9836162.

Yamaguchi, T. (2014). "Gender free" feminism in Japan: A story of mainstreaming and backlash. *Feminist Studies*, *40*(4), 541–72.

Yudelson, L. (2021, September 29). "Are you Jewish?" Assault in Teaneck brings up questions of hatred and propaganda. *Jewish Standard.* https://jewishstandard.timesofisrael.com/are-you-jewish.