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Japanese Gender Trouble in Revolutionary France: Ikeda Riyoko's Shōjo Manga The Rose of Versailles

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Japanese Gender Trouble in Revolutionary France:

Ikeda Riyoko's Shōjo Manga *The Rose of Versailles*

by

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Abstract

Although traditional gender norms are reinforced by pop-culture media in Japan, some comics aimed primarily at female readers fight against those same gender norms. Shōjo manga (Japanese girls' comics) are no exception and have done so since their "revolution" in the 1970s. In the 1970s, a new wave of young female shōjo manga artists pioneered a different kind of girls' manga because they created new perspectives for their young female readers.

Ikeda Riyoko's *Rose of Versailles* (*Berusaiyu no bara,* 1972-73), set in Revolutionary-Era France, changed how Japanese women could see themselves in the 1970s. In *Rose of Versailles*, Ikeda created a new form of shōjo manga and her work has been one of the most significant shōjo manga of the 1970s and even today. Although both Ikeda and shōjo manga scholars argue that *Rose* has an influence of both the second-wave feminism movement and the Japanese women's liberation movement, it is quite possible to apply Judith Butler's performative gender theory to *Rose of Versailles*, even though she published it decades later. In other words, gender trouble existed in literature and other art forms long before the 1990s when Judith Butler invented the term "gender trouble." Ikeda presents something very much like it in her artistic masterpiece in the 1970s.

As Judith Butler explains that gender trouble needs to be made and repeated from existing possibilities, I too argue that this is exactly what Ikeda tried to create in *Rose* through the visual depictions and re-depictions her fictional character, Oscar, in the

context and on every page of her shōjo manga. Through Oscar, Ikeda visually portrays new possibilities for Japanese women to understand themselves and how they could perform gender and achieve a new kind of agency in Japanese society in the 1970s. Some of the existing narrative patterns of shōjo manga, such as cross-dressing heroines and its aesthetic of sameness should be considered as already existing gender trouble in shōjo manga before Ikeda drew her *Rose*. Significantly, Ikeda repeats and recreates this kind of comic-book gender trouble in the context of shōjo manga by re-adapting these existing rules of the manga genre and even from girls' magazines, such as cross-dressing heroines, and the aesthetic of sameness, and even the love trap. The revolutions happening in shōjo manga—not just the historical French revolution happening in *Rose*— created an environment for a Japanese artist like Ikeda to imagine new possibilities—new "trouble" —for Japanese society even though she dressed them in 18th-century French clothes.

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Introduction

As Japanese comics (manga) are written based on age and gender, the genre of manga is clearly associated with the gender binary. When it comes to the gender binary, society has an expectation that one should behave in a certain way and be in heterosexual relationships based on sex. Japan's pop-culture media contributed to this idea that reinforces such gender norms. It is true that shōjo manga 少女漫画 (Japanese girls' comics) are no exception. Shōjo manga is one of the strongest media which reinforces gender norms. However, I argue that some shōjo manga aimed primarily at female readers fight against those same gender norms.

Shōjo manga had its roots in the girls' culture of prewar girls' magazines, which flourished from the Meiji Era (1868-1912) to the Taishō Era (1912-1926) in Japan. According to Takeuchi Kayo (2010), story-oriented shōjo manga had begun to appear in the 1950s, but at this time, male writers, including Tezuka Osamu, Ishinomori Shōtarō, Chiba Tetsuya, Matsumoto Reiji, and Umezu Kazuo, led the field of shōjo manga. Starting from the mid-1960s, most shōjo manga came to be written and drawn by female writers (Takeuchi, 2010). In the 1970s, a group of young female shōjo manga writers started to experiment with the genre and re-invented it. These female writers are often referred to as the "Flower [Shōwa] 24-Year Group" (花の二十四年組 *Hana no nijūyonen gumi*), or the "Magnificent 49ers" (the year 1949 corresponding to the 24th reign year of the Shōwa Era). These female writers, including Ōshima Yumiko, Hagio

Moto, Ikeda Riyoko and Takemiya Keiko began to write psychologically complex stories with mature content.

Fujimoto Yukari (2009), shōjo manga scholar, suggests that it is better to connect shōjo manga and gender. Fujimoto writes that shōjo manga was considered insignificant before the 1970s because only with its development in the 1970s did shōjo manga's value become recognized by male critics. Fujimoto points out that this is because what society considers general and valuable was based on male opinions, not female opinions. Given these problematic social norms before the 1970s, it is possible to consider that shōjo manga in the 1970s are one of the unique forms of mass media to promote feminism in Japan. As Fujimoto suggests, it is important to connect shōjo manga and gender because shōjo manga gives Japanese audiences a new way to appreciate women's power and agency. "All feminist activity," Lois Tyson writes, "including feminist theory and literary criticism, has the ultimate goal to change the world by promoting women's equality" (Tyson, 2006, p. 92). Considering Tyson's statement, especially with these new critics now available to us from Japanese Comics Studies and Gender Studies, it is possible to formally examine shōjo manga from feminist perspectives and reveal how shōjo manga destabilizes norms—or, what Judith Butler would call "gender trouble"—encouraging women and even teenage girls to question gender norms and possibly the social construction of gender itself.

By the 1970s, the "Magnificent 49ers," this new wave of young female shōjo manga artists, pioneered a different kind of girls' manga, because they brought new perspectives for their young female readers through their radically new stories, their bold characters, and their imaginatively constructed page layouts. With her *Rose of Versailles*

(ベルサイユのばら *Berusaiyu no bara*, 1972-1973), Ikeda Riyoko 池田理代子 was one of the most outstanding trailblazers of this new form of shōjo manga. Her work has become one of the most significant shōjo manga of the 1970s. Anan Nobuko writes that her manga promoted "the inner revolution of the Japanese women" (Anan, 2014, p. 13). Ikeda'*s Rose of Versailles* was originally serialized in weekly *Margaret* (*Māgaretto*) magazine from 1972 through 1973. Then, since its serialization, it has been adapted into an all-female musical in Japan at the Takarazuka Kagekidan (The Takarazuka Revue). According to Baraniak-Hirata (2018), the musical adaptation of *Rose of Versailles* was first performed in Takarazuka in 1974, directed by Ueda Shinji and Kabuki actor, Hasegawa Kazuo. Since then, it has been performed numerous times. This huge impact of Takarazuka's adaptation of *Rose* is often called "Berubara Boom." Because of the Berubara Boom, Takarazuka's adaptation of *Rose* was able to significantly increase audience numbers for Takarazuka. In addition, the number of applicants to Takarazuka Music School then increased accordingly with the manga's boom in popularity (Baraniak-Hirata, 2018). *Rose of Versailles* has long been known as a masterpiece of shōjo manga and has had a huge impact on Japanese people, especially its female audiences.

Ikeda's *Rose* is set in France before and during the French Revolution. There are four main characters: Marie Antoinette, the young Queen of France; Oscar Francois de Jarjayes, a woman cross-dressing as a male royal guard; Axel von Fersen, a Swedish count, and the queen's secret lover; and, Oscar's main love interest, fellow guardsman Andre Grenadier. The narrative follows real historical events including love, friendships,

and political and social changes. Yonezawa Yoshihiro (2007), the great manga genre historian, writes that Ikeda's manga signaled the end of shōjo manga based on quotidian "daily life" (*seikatsu*) stories and the start of bold, new narratives that took on events and characters in Japanese and even world history.

The most revolutionary element of *Rose of Versailles* is its fictional character, Lady Oscar, who was raised as a boy by her father and serves as a royal guard of Marie Antoinette. Although Oscar was raised as a boy and is happy about living as a cross-dressing royal guard, she identifies herself as a woman and desires heterosexual relationships for the entire manga. According to Deborah Shamoon (2012), Oscar displays masculine strength and agency and finds true love without sacrificing her beauty and identity for her male lover, Andre Grandier. I agree with Shamoon and argue that *Rose of Versailles* was an early important text in Japanese culture because, even as a manga, it destabilized conservative Japanese social norms. Ikeda, through her Oscar, promoted new possibilities for women to understand themselves and how they could perform gender in order to achieve a new kind of agency in Japanese society.

Although both Ikeda and shōjo manga scholars mentioned that *Rose of Versailles* was influenced by the second-wave feminism movement and the Japanese women's liberation movement, I argue that Ikeda, through her Oscar, precociously promoted an idea later seen in the third-wave feminism movement. In my work here, I apply to my reading of *Rose of Versailles* ideas from Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and her performative gender theory, which is one of the most well-known feminist theories in third-wave feminism. In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler argues that society reinforces the gender binary in which humans are categorized either as men or women. She writes that

"the feminist 'we' is always and only a phantasmatic construction" (Butler, 1990, p. 194). In her book, Butler rigorously questions what constitutes the category of women. She states that it is problematic to try to define "women" when we discuss feminism since the subject is not stable. Butler writes that "feminist theory has assumed that there is some existing identity, understood through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interests and goals within discourse but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued" (Butler, 1990, p. 2). Therefore, earlier feminism actually had closed down those options for women. Those options include homosexual women, cross-dressing women, and so on. In summary, Butler asserts that only by performing gender repetitively can we—all people—make "gender trouble" in order to challenge gender norms and the ideology behind them.

All of this is a part of her larger critique of ontology, the philosophical branch of the science of the self, which has been long dominated by male philosophers who operated from a position of male privilege. Butler writes, "Gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed" (Butler, 1990, p. 34). She adds that "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1990, p. 34). For Butler, gender is a performance that is culturally constructed by society in the process of our actions every day. As a result, gender norms are established and normative gender behaviors make society members think they must be natural. Butler prefers to use the terms "performing" or "doing" gender rather than "being" gender. Therefore, it can be considered that the

gender norms "provide the 'script' for what Butler describes as the performance of gender" (Morgenroth and Ryan, 2018, p. 2). In Butler's view, society creates the view of sex and gender. Therefore, she also questions that the feminists distinguished sex as a biological variable and gender as a product of culture. "If the immutable character of sex is contested," Butler writes, "perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender, indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (Butler, 1990, pp. 9-10). In other words, since the definition of sex is also culturally constructed as gender, both gender and sex are not something we are born with. Moreover, we are not born into them--and we can therefore reposition ourselves. In this way, Butler suggests how a person can both fight social norms and also challenge underlying philosophical thinking that constrains us in society (Butler calls these hegemonic forces the "phallocentric signifying economy").

In sum, it is necessary to think about how people can choose to perform their own individual identities instead of categorizing men and women as something natural and unchangeable. In order to destabilize gender norms, Butler writes that "the task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself" (Butler, 1990, p. 202-203). In conclusion, it is necessary to continue to make "gender trouble" because a performance destroys gender norms and opens up a multidimensional space of freedom—both social and ontological. Butler succinctly explains the stakes of her argument— "gender trouble" is

an effort to think through the possibility of subverting and displacing those naturalized and refined notions of gender that support masculine hegemony and heterosexist power, to make gender trouble, not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond, but through the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of precisely hose constitutive categories that seek to keep gender in its place by posturing as the foundational illusions of identity. (Butler, 1990, p. 46)

In sum, "gender trouble" means disturbing the binary view of gender, sex and sexuality. It is possible to apply Butler's approach to the consideration of gender to a shōjo manga like *Rose of Versailles*. Instead of figuring out the strategies of fighting against the law and creating a utopia, Lady Oscar's cross-dressing and her heterosexual relationship with Andre in *Rose of Versailles* point to a gender which seems to be unnatural according to the naturalized notions of gender. Additionally, considering the history of the shōjo manga genre, Oscar and Andre's relationship as well as Oscar's gender performance break the genre rules of shōjo manga by deconstructing the notion of gender roles seen in the earlier manga form.

Moreover, Butler defines gender as "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1990, p. 45). These "repeated stylization[s] of the body" and the "set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework" that Butler promotes are indeed the very features that constitute the Magnificent '49ers' new shōjo manga—and the better the shōjo manga, the more visible and articulated are these acts on the page. Therefore, it is possible for us to understand how gender norms are being described and how characters perform gender through shōjo manga by applying Butler's definition of gender to the revolutionary *Rose*.

It is important to note that gender trouble existed in literature and other art forms long before the 1990s when Judith Butler invented the term "gender trouble." Ikeda presents it in her artistic masterpiece in the 1970s. In my thesis, I argue that Ikeda Riyoko's *Rose of Versailles* challenges not only naturalized notions of gender but also naturalized notions of the shōjo manga genre. Ōtsuka Eiji (1994) argues that shōjo manga usually manifests emotional interiority to create the characters' psychological depth. Additionally, Fujimoto Yukari (1998) asserts that a shōjo manga heroine asks this question to herself : "Where is my place in the world? (*Watashi no ibasho wa doko ni aru no*?)" In my view, Ikeda developed these basic themes and questions of shōjo manga. Ikeda continues to question "what is normal?" or "what is the subject?" in *Rose* just like Butler does in *Gender Trouble*. Ikeda, through *Rose of Versailles,* made her audience ask themselves questions like "What is wrong with me?"—certainly a rhetorical question because there is an obvious follow-up answer: "There is nothing wrong with you, because you are you."

> Or, other questions, like: "Why can't I be different?"
>
> Or: "How can I be different?
>
> And: "Is it okay to be different and make gender trouble?"

I examine how a gender-based focus on identity challenges conservative sex-based identity in *Rose of Versailles* by applying Judith Butler's performative gender theory. Although both Ikeda and many shōjo manga scholars mentioned that *Rose of Versailles* was influenced by the second-wave feminism movement and Japanese women's liberation movement, I assert that Ikeda enhances Japanese women's agency

through *Rose of Versailles* and precociously depicts a kind of "gender trouble" by encouraging teenage girl readers not to fall into the same love trap that the Queen of France did. Ikeda does this by showing her readers alternative sexual relationships in *Rose of Versailles*, specifically the relationship between Oscar and Andre.

In the following chapters, I also apply the theory of one of the most prominent shōjo manga scholars, Fujimoto Yukari, to *Rose of Versailles* in order to understand how these characters' gender performances (albeit in 18th-century France) can help bring about a new kind of agency in contemporary (1970s) Japanese society. I will examine not only how Oscar is portrayed but also how her relationship with other characters is depicted in the manga by applying Judith Butler's performative gender theory to Oscar. I also analyze how Oscar identifies herself in her heterosexual relationship with her lover, Andre Grandier, and compares it with other heterosexual relationships in the manga, including the one between Marie Antoinette and Fersen.

To explore the gender performativity of the characters in *Rose of Versailles*, I borrow the technical analysis approaches of Deborah Shamoon and Natsume Fusanosuke for how they dissect panel layering and panel configurations in shōjo manga. Shōjo manga artists use layering techniques to help emphasize characters' interiority (*naimen*). Depiction of the interiority of the characters is one of the important components in shōjo manga because shōjo manga focus on depicting characters' psychological development. Shamoon writes that "shōjo manga emphasizes the closed world for girls and the exploration of the interiority of shōjo" (Shamoon, 2008, p. 137). In order to explore the interiority of young girls, shōjo manga artists use a three-dimensional effect on the page through layering speech, full-body portraits, close-ups, and emotive backgrounds

(Shamoon, 2012). In *Rose of Versailles*, Ikeda Riyoko uses such layering techniques to depict the psychologically complex themes of the story, such as identity and sexuality.

In addition to layering techniques, panel configuration also plays an important role in emphasizing characters' interiority. The classic shōjo manga artists use techniques, such as panel encapsulation (*naihō*), panel layering (*jūsō*), and the use of white-space break (*mahaku*) (Natsume, Holt and Fukuda, 2020). This type of technique can be found in *Rose of Versailles* as well. Ikeda uses these techniques to emphasize the characters' feelings and moods of the scenes. Therefore, these techniques help readers better understand the subjectivity of a character and identify with her. Both Shamoon's and Natsume's theories support such close readings of *Rose of Versailles*, so one can use them to accurately analyze how Ikeda explores a kind of gender performativity in her manga.

In conclusion, I assert that Japanese comics (manga) can be a disruptive form of media that challenges the conservative norms and tries to promote a society where diversity is valued. Although many shōjo manga scholars have already studied gender in *Rose of Versailles*, the previous studies have not applied Judith Butler's Western feminist theory to it. In my thesis, I will use Butler's feminist theory to integrate existing manga scholarship to conduct a formal analysis of gender in *Rose of Versailles*. *Rose* and the "Berubara" boom created such a watershed moment in Japanese manga and it needs to be better understood for why it was such a game-changing phenomenon in manga and Japanese culture.

Chapter 1: The Genre of Shōjo Manga

In this chapter, I will outline the history of the genre of shōjo manga and explore how shōjo manga in the 1970s, including *Rose of Versailles,* established a new aesthetic. I will also consider gender representation in shōjo manga, especially the ones from the 1970s. Before I examine the historical context of shōjo manga, it is important to note the differences between boys (shōnen) and girls (shōjo) manga. Shōnen manga originally is marketed toward teenage boys, and shōjo manga is marketed toward teenage girls. Shōnen manga is action-oriented, and the narrative typically focuses on friendship, heroism, and teamwork. In contrast, shōjo manga focuses on romance and human relationships in general. Many scholars describe shōjo manga stories as possessing a main feature: an exploration of interiority. Deborah Shamoon explains that "this narrative emphasis on the deep self also found expression in the visual style, which used a layered panel arrangement to create the illusion of depth" (Shamoon, 2008, p. 144). In addition, Fujimoto Yukari (1998) writes that shōjo manga characters look for a place (*ibasho*) to fit in the world. Shōjo manga characters also tend to attempt to find their own place (*ibasho*) through romantic relationships—usually heterosexual but not necessarily so.

Even so, these basic categories of shōnen and shōjo are not strictly kept, especially in terms of the audience. Ingulsrud and Allen write that "although manga are written for specific age groups and gender, these categories have become increasingly blurred" (Ingulsrud and Allen, 2009, p. 7). For instance, it is common that shōnen manga (boys comics) are read by larger age groups regardless of gender although shōnen manga is traditionally marketed towards teenage boys. Natsume Fusanosuke (2020) points out

that at the end that later male artists started to adapt shōjo manga techniques. In addition,

Natsume explains that "once these techniques were refined by later shōjo manga artists,

they became common features in manga overall and we can now say that they make a

significant contribution to manga, making Japanese comics truly unique in the world"

(Natsume, Holt and Fukuda, 2020, p. 72). Although the genre of manga is categorized

based on gender and age groups, shōjo manga techniques, such as the depiction of

character's emotional interiority, can be found in today's shōnen manga as well.

Significantly, however, Ingulsrud and Allen states "these basic categories of age and

gender remain stable, in spite of the continual fluctuations in stylistic representation

(Ingulsrud and Allen, 2009, p. 8). It is especially true when it comes to shōjo manga, as

Fujimoto writes that "shōjo manga is a unique media that is written about women, by

women, and for women" (Fujimoto, 2009, p. 168).

When it comes to shōjo manga, it is necessary to take the definition of shōjo into

consideration first because the definition of shōjo is clearly associated with the image of

shōjo manga heroines. Hiromi Tsuchiya Dollase claims that the term "shōjo" became a

cultural concept rather than a physical concept of prepubescent girls in the early 1900s"

(Dollase, 2019, p. 19). This is the time when girls' magazines started to be published in

Japan. These definitions of shōjo, which critics of shōjo manga often discuss, emphasize

the purity and innocence of virginity. For example, according to Dollase, "shōjo existed

in a period of moratorium, which temporarily released schoolgirls from social obligations

such as marriage and reproduction" (Dollase, 2019, p. 19). Moreover, Shamoon (2008)

identifies shōjo as an identity premised on beauty, innocence, and purity, separated from

the world of adults. These definitions also involve social expectations of Japanese girls to

an extent and have been gender and cultural norms in Japan. This norm for shōjo is associated with shōjo manga and even the cultural phenomenon of *kawaii* (cute) culture in Japan today.

As *shōjo bunka* ("shōjo culture") emerged from prewar shōjo magazines in the early 1900s, it was developed as a private space for young Japanese girls. Shamoon (2008) asserts that the tradition of shōjo manga and shōjo culture developed from the prewar shōjo magazines, such as *Shōjo sekai* (Girls' World), *Shin shōjo* (New Girls) and *Shōjo no tomo* (The Girls' Friend). Although Dollase (2019) points out that only two percent of girls were able to go to school in the early 1900s, the emergence of the shōjo magazine and shōjo bunka helped create a safe space for all Japanese girls, including those who were not fully enfranchised in the middle class and a part of the developing Japanese economy. Providing a safe space for girls is one of the most important roles of shōjo manga ay that time and that is true, even today. Significantly, before "shōjo" as a cultural term began to be used, the word "shōnen" was used for both boys and girls and simply to describe young children, which indicates gender-neutrality (Dollase, 2019, p. 19). Dollase writes that "the separation of [these] magazines based on gender helped girls create their own cultural space, shōjo bunka (girl's culture), for the first time" (Dollase, 2019, p. 19). This separation of magazines based on gender also allowed the development of cultural media for women for the first time in modern Japan. In the Edo period, and in the Heian period, there had been cultural media for women.

The exploration of interiority is one of the main features of shōjo manga. Interiority, or *naimen,* is a term that encompasses both subjectivity as well as the feelings, emotions, and thoughts of a character–it is a term often used in shōjo manga discourse. It

is important to note that the depiction of characters' interiority is the biggest theme of modern Japanese literature starting in the Meiji era as well, as what a critic of modern Japanese literature, Karatani Kōjin (1980) called the "discovery of interiority" (Karatani 1980, pp. 75-94). Otsuka Eiji (1994) points out that shōjo manga artists in the middle of 1970s, discovered interiority and used similar techniques of describing characters' interiority in the manga. In addition to the direct, seemingly-transparent connection to those feelings (in terms of access), it is also important to note that these feelings are often associated with ideal states, such as purity, innocence, and so on. As shōjo culture emerged from shōjo magazines and it was developed as a private, safe space for young Japanese girls, Shamoon elaborates the further connection between prewar girls' magazines and shōjo manga by demonstrating how shōjo magazines express girls' culture. In other words, shōjo prose and poetry in the early 20th century skillfully generated reader identification with the female characters through an emphasis on thoughts and feelings as a way to create a private, shared space for its relationship. The "discovery of interiority" means not only what such a shōjo culture character herself might feel or learn about herself in the story, but also what discovery the young girl reading these stories and poems learns about herself through identification with such a pure, noble, and innocent girl.

Shōjo manga's description of characters' interiority not only helps readers to learn about themselves through identification with shōjo manga characters, but also allows them to empathize with the characters, the author and other readers. Fujimoto (1998) writes that the audience of shōjo manga calls for empathy, or *kyōkan*, with the author and other female audiences through shōjo manga. Fujimoto (1998) adds that interiority

assuages the daily anxieties that teenage girls' readers have. I argue that exploration of

the emotional interiority of the shōjo manga characters also helps readers to empathize

with the characters as well as other readers and the author. This is one of the ways for

female readers to reduce their anxiety as Fujimoto writes that interiority has a function of

therapy. For example, shōjo manga helps teenage female readers reduce the anxiety of

feeling pressured to follow social norms. Shamoon (2008) explains that shōjo manga

inherited from prewar girls' magazines a narrative style that emphasized emotional

interiority. For example, in the poetic style of girl's prose and poetry from these early

shōjo culture magazines, such as repetition of words and use of dangling phrases, has

been used in both prewar girls' magazines and shōjo manga as a means of expressing

interiority of the characters (Shamoon, 2008). A good visual example of this from *Rose of*

Versailles is found on page 49 of Volume 6 (Figure 1). In this page, Oscar is narrating

her inner monologue after she has been told by her father to get married and have a child.

She repeats some words, such as "*kuru haru mo, kuru haru mo* (coming spring, coming

spring)" in a poetic way. Shamoon (2008) says this kind of monologue or dialogue has a

"breathless" and intense quality. This kind of narrative expression was inherited from the

earlier shōjo culture magazines to depict the character's inner monologue in the later

shōjo manga. By having this repetitive inner dialogue, the readers can feel Oscar's pain

that she was only able to be around Fersen as a man, although she always desires to have

a mature relationship as a woman together with a man.

　　　Furthermore, on this page, Ikeda explores Oscar's interiority in a visual language

by layering imaginary flowers (evocative of "spring"), her close-up face, and Fersen

himself when she is talking about her feelings toward Fersen. Shamoon (2008) writes that this narrative style not only visually depicts the emotional lives of characters but also encourages the reader to identify with the characters. Therefore, both Oscar's inner monologue and layering allows readers to sympathize with Oscar in this scene. What girl hasn't felt the pangs of love? What girl hasn't wondered what those pangs of love must mean?

Figure 1. Oscar having an inner monologue. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 6, p. 49).
Notice how bodies are layered on faces, flowers (decorative, non-diegetic elements) are layered on faces, panels are layered on panels, and narration or dialogue are layered over panels.

Another main feature that shōjo manga inherited from prewar girls' magazines is the depiction of close friendships between girls. Shamoon also defines shōjo culture as "a discrete discourse premised on a private closed world of girls that embraced not only close female friendship but also uniformity, sameness, and same-gender romance" (Shamoon, 2008, p. 139). According to Shamoon (2008), prewar girls' magazines, which helped spur shōjo manga, depicted close friendships and even romances between girls who have a similar appearance as substitutes for heterosexual romances. Shamoon calls this feature the "aesthetic of sameness" (Shamoon, 2008, p.137). This aesthetic of sameness helps create its own private space for Japanese girls and allows each teenage female reader to have a mirror of herself and prepare her for heterosexual relationships without losing one's purity. Shamoon (2008) calls this female-female romance in girls' magazines a *dōseiai* relationship (same-sex love) rather than a lesbian one. Another term for this type of close female relationship is *S-kankei* (S-relationships), in which the "S" refers to a "sister" in English. Significantly, Shamoon clearly distinguishes *dōseiai* relationships from a twenty-first-century Western construction of homosexuality. In prewar Japan, same-sex behaviors or desires among girls are considered a normal part of female development at all-girl schools. Through the 1920s and 1930s, it was common to depict female-female romance in shōjo magazines they were typically set within girls' schools. Therefore, the depiction of female-female romantic relationships in prewar girls' magazines did not imply rebelling against a society where heterosexuality is the norm. In Japan, the female-female romantic relationship was accepted because it safely delayed the experience of heterosexual relationships until girls were old enough for marriage. In other words, the depiction of *dōseiai* relationships in those girls' magazines was a way

for readers to intuit those intimacy skills without risking one's virginity and innocence, which were required of shōjo (girls) until marriage. Most importantly, the depiction of the close friendship and even romance between girls was the dominant narrative in prewar and postwar girls' magazines because the readers feel secure and builds confidence in themselves through loving someone who looks just like oneself without losing one's purity. Shamoon explains that "the ideal of *dōseiai* encouraged sameness, loving the one who looks just like the self" (Shamoon, 2008, p. 141). What this means for later manga is that the comic characters often look alike.

One of the examples of *S-kankei* from *Rose* is the relationship of Marie Antoinette and Marie's best friend and a singer of the Palace of Versailles, Duchess of Polignac. Marie sees her as an older sister and wants to become close to her even though Polignac secretly tried to manipulate Marie for her own benefit. It is not unnatural to see this kind of S-relationship in Japanese culture because it is understandable that Marie feels secure through S-relationship with Polignac especially because Marie came to France by herself at the age of thirteen from Austria in an arranged marriage, making her very lonely and desperate for companionship. Of course, it is doubtful whether this was actually the case for the real Marie Antoinette, but as she appears in the shōjo manga, this kind of relationship is tacitly understood and a foregone conclusion.

While the narrative of heterosexual romance was taboo in girls' magazines, many shōjo manga tends to have dominant narratives of heterosexual relationships, in which heroines fall into a love trap. The most prominent shōjo manga scholar, Fujimoto Yukari (1998) argues that shōjo manga heroines see themselves as ugly and unattractive and they seek to find a place (*ibasho*) for themselves through love. The narrative allows her to find

a safe place in the relationship with an ideal boy. For her boy, the shōjo manga heroine tends to sacrifice her agency in order to find self-worth and happiness, what Fujimoto calls the "love trap". Shamoon points out that "the girl protagonists that emerge are relentlessly passive; even characters who seem energetic or self-aware can never escape the love trap" (Shamoon, 2008, p. 144). Given this problematic narrative of shōjo manga, it is clear that the concept of love trap, where a female character can find love only by sacrificing her agency, has been dominant in shōjo manga in the 1970s and manga even today.

Although some scholars of shōjo culture argue that shōjo manga has its roots in the girls' culture of prewar girls' magazines, some of the other scholars explain that the god of manga, Tezuka Osamu (1928-1989), invented shōjo manga as it is today. Takeuchi Kayo argues that "the starting point of genius story-oriented shōjo manga is given as the 1953 appearance of Tezuka Osamu's *Princess Knight* (*Ribon no kishi*)" (Takeuchi, 2010, p. 82). Additionally, Tezuka created the first cross-dressing female characters in the history of shōjo manga in his *Princess Knight*. Besides Tezuka, in the 1950s, male shōjo manga artists, such as Ishinomori Shōtarō, Chiba Tetsuya, Matsumoto Reiji, and Umezu Kazuo, led the field of shōjo manga (Takeuchi, 2010).

From the mid-1960s, shōjo manga gradually started to be written by women. These female shōjo manga artists started to depict the daily life of Japanese women to allow female readers to have a safe community to share their own experiences of their daily life. Takeuchi explains that "during that process of change, shōjo manga in the 1959s and 1960s came in mainly two forms of publication" (Takeuchi, 2010, p. 82). One of the main forms of the publication was called *kashihon manga* (rental-market comics),

which could be rented at a cheaper price. The other was manga magazines (Takeuchi, 2010). Yonezawa Yoshihiro (2007) points out that most of the readers of *kashihon* manga were more mature and tended to be low-income women. Importantly, *kashihon manga* emphasizes friendship and daily life (*seikatsu*) of girls rather than the romance between girls and even heterosexual relationships. This is because *kashihon manga* aimed to create a community for female audiences to sympathize with what they have been experiencing in their daily lives. According to Yonezawa (2007), *kashihon manga* helped to develop the depiction of the daily life (*seikatsu*) of Japanese women. For example, Kiuchi Chizuko, one of the artists of *kashihon* magazines, collected voices from the young female audiences to create the realistic narrative of daily life of Japanese women. Kiuchi attempted to express the inner conflicts of girls, such as sadness, joy, suffering, love, and hatred (Yonezawa, 2007). This narrative style of *kashihon magazines* clearly helped develop the community for female readers to keep providing safe space for Japanese women. Incidentally, Ikeda Riyoko began her career as a rental-manga artist (Yonezawa, 2007).

In the 1970s, a new wave of young female shōjo manga artists pioneered a different kind of girls' manga because they created new perspectives for their young female readers. One of the main factors of the development of shōjo manga was that they started to be created by young female artists of the Flower [Shōwa] 24-Year Group" (花の二十四年組 *Hana no nijūyonen gumi*), or the "Magnificent 49ers" (the year 1949 corresponding to the 24th reign year of the Shōwa Era). It is significant that they are all women, not male artists. According to Shamoon (2012), a new generation of female

shōjo manga artists in the 1970s began to write psychologically complex stories and openly explore sexuality. Ogi et al. (2018) also points out that "the big change of the 1970s was that artists began to speak shōjo as shōjo themselves, from their own hearts" (Ogi et al., 2018, p. 89). These developments allowed young female readers to explore their gender identity and sexuality more openly.

Significantly, in many ways, shōjo manga mirrors the feminism movement in Japan in the 1970s. Ogi et al. (2018) argues that shōjo manga has become focused on girls and started developing girls' agency, receiving the influence of the second-wave feminism movement in the 1970s. Moreover, according to Ogi et al., "the feminist approach is connected to the growth of the genre of shōjo manga, which incorporates a diverse representation of sexual love that transcends national borders, and at the same time, forms a critique of the notion of women from those undifferentiated women" (Ogi et al., 2018, p. 92). With these young female writers armed with female subjectivity, the second-wave feminism movement took off around the world, including Japan.

Emerging from this fertile period of shōjo manga and feminist movement in Japan, *Rose of Versailles* soon became known as a masterpiece of its time and a landmark shōjo manga that challenges traditional gender norms. Anan Nobuko (2014) points out that *Rose of Versailles* was clearly influenced by the Japanese women's liberation movement (*ūman libu*), which had been developing since the late 1960s, as women activists began to fight for social equality, specifically that of gender and sex. In the study of shōjo manga, it is important to take social movements of the time in Japan into consideration. It allows a better understanding of how Japanese society saw Japanese women during the 1970s. In the early 1970s, Tanaka Mitsu led the women's liberation

movement in Japan to fight for women's self-expression, self-affirmation, self-realization, self-determination, and self-emancipation (Matsui, 1990). According to Matsui Machiko (1990), the Japanese women's liberation movement in the early 1970s was different from the radical feminists who came later. Tanaka Mitsu, the leader of the Japanese women's liberation movement, stated that "Libbers are not simply cross with the general man society. What I want is not a man or a child. I want to have a stronger soul with which I can burn myself out either in heartlessness or in tenderness. Yes, I want a stronger soul" (Matsui, 1990, p. 435). Having a stronger soul can be interpreted as having more strength and agency, which is exactly what some shōjo manga artists in the 1970s attempted to achieve in their work. Furthermore, the Japanese women's liberation movement fought for women's liberation of sex (Matsui, 1990, p. 436). This movement is also linked with the development in the 1970s of shōjo manga, which started to depict the sexuality of women more openly. As Anan points out, it was Ikeda Riyoko who also integrated political awareness of Japanese society, especially for Japanese women in the 1970s, into her *Rose of Versailles* through her character Oscar. Furthermore, Shamoon argues that

> While in prewar girls' magazines political content, along with sexual content, had been forbidden, in the liberal atmosphere of the 1970s, authors had the freedom to address these topics. Oscar's search for personal meaning through political action and her gradual awakening to social injustice echo the student movements of the New Left that galvanized Japanese youth through the 1960s. (Shamoon, 2012, p. 121).

Having mature content, such as political and sexual content was an important step for the development of the genre of shōjo manga. In my view, many shōjo manga writers in the 1970s started to question what constituted the category of women as they depict the

gender and sexuality of women more openly than what was seen in the conservative

seikatsu shōjo manga of the 1950s and 1960s. And, *Rose of Versailles* led this charge and

openly revolted with its revolutionary take on sexuality and gender.

Chapter 2: Lady Oscar's Gender Trouble

If Ikeda Riyoko in *Rose of Versailles* (1972-1973) was able to anticipate the ideas in Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990), certainly a bit of time travel must have been involved as Butler's critical text was published some twenty years after the Japanese manga. Moreover, another time discrepancy is the setting of *Rose*: not only was the manga produced in the 1970s, just as the women's lib movement was starting to gain ground, but the manga was set far in the past in 18th-century France, hardly a setting or world that was brimming with the possibilities for sexual and gender rebellion, although France at that time was certainly revolutionary in other ways. The revolutions happening in shōjo manga—not just the historical French revolution happening in *Rose*—created an environment for a Japanese artist like Ikeda to imagine new possibilities—new "trouble" —for Japanese society even though she dressed them in 18th-century French clothes. In this chapter, I will describe how it was possible for Ikeda to describe new social possibilities ahead of her time through my visual analysis of the genre conventions Ikeda exploited and then pioneered in her art form.

It is important to remember that any kind of "gender trouble" must be carried out working within and against prevailing cultural restrictions. Nothing takes place in a cultural vacuum. Given the genre conventions of girls' manga were being re-written in the 1970s, it is possible to understand what kind of constraints or avenues of freedom were available to Ikeda to plot her own gender revolution in *Rose*. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that "the task here is not to celebrate each and every new possibility, but to redescribe those possibilities that already exist, but which exist within cultural domains

designated as culturally unintelligible and impossible" (Butler, 1990, p. 203). Given the highly gendered nature of shōjo manga, one can use these Japanese comics to understand Butler by seeing those "cultural domains," because, in some cases, we are talking about visual elements that become liberated or enclosed on the page before one's eyes. Therefore, just as Butler explains that gender trouble needs to be made and repeated from the existing possibilities, I too argue that this is exactly what Ikeda tried to create in *Rose* through the visual depictions and re-depictions her fictional character, Oscar, in the context and on every page of her shōjo manga. Through *Rose* and its non-titular but central character, Oscar, Ikeda visually portrays new possibilities for Japanese women to understand themselves and how they could perform gender and achieve a new kind of agency in Japanese society in the 1970s. It is important to note that such "new possibilities" do not imply that Ikeda completely changed the rules of the genre of shōjo manga. Ikeda still explored and respected the aesthetics of shōjo manga and the precursor shōjo culture. Some of the existing narrative patterns of shōjo manga, such as cross-dressing heroines and its aesthetic of sameness should be considered as already existing gender trouble in shōjo manga before Ikeda drew her *Rose*. Significantly, Ikeda repeats and recreates this kind of comic-book gender trouble in the context of shōjo manga by re-adapting these existing rules of the manga genre and even from girls' magazines, such as cross-dressing heroines, and the aesthetic of sameness, and even the love trap. Perhaps every revolution is already determined by history—or in this case, perhaps comic-book history.

Butler questions in *Gender Trouble*, "what constitutes a category of a woman in the first place?" As Butler argues in her book, the meaning of gender and the category of

women can change as its norms are recreated from the existing possibilities. In *Rose*,

Ikeda also questions the category of natural women which expects that women should

only get married and have children. Yonezawa Yoshihiro says of *Rose of Versailles* that

"the real love drama of this manga is the love between Oscar and Andre at the same time

it is also the drama that describes in that way the birth of a woman, where the drama

replicates the destruction of social hierarchies" (Yonezawa, 2007, p. 234). As Yonezawa

describes *Rose* as "the real love drama as well as the birth of woman," Ikeda illustrates

how her Oscar finds true love without sacrificing her agency. "The birth of woman"

indicates the birth of the new category of women like Oscar who do not fit in the

category of natural women. In other words, the narrative of *Rose* challenges the norms

that women have to raise children and be good mothers. These kinds of normative

activities and choices are considered the natural women's role in society, both when

Queen Marie Antoinette was actually alive and when *Rose of Versailles* was first

published in Japan. In the early 1970s, when *Rose of Versailles* was first published,

Japanese society was becoming increasingly aware of gender equality and women's

agency as Japanese women's liberation took off. Most importantly, Oscar is always true

to herself although she once dresses up as a noblewoman in front of Fersen. Towards the

end of the manga, Oscar chooses to live as a woman who is a cross-dressing solder

without losing her feminine beauty and giving up on her romance.

Butler argues that identity needs to be constructed in and through the other, and

this can be applicable to the narrative of shōjo manga as well. Butler writes:

> My argument is that there need not be a "doer behind the deed," but that the
> "doer" is variably constructed in and through the deed. This is not a return to an
> existential theory of the self as constituted through its acts, for the existential

theory maintains a prediscursive structure for both the self and its acts. It is precisely the discursively variable construction of each in and through the other that has interested me here (Butler, 1990, p. 195).

Historically, the depiction of romantic relationships or close friendships is one of the most important parts of shōjo manga and prewar magazines allowing both female characters in manga and readers to explore their place to fit in society. Through this kind of narrative pattern, they learn intimacy skills and build confidence in themselves. Looking back at the prewar girls' magazines, it was common to depict close friendships and even romances between teenage girls who look the same, what Shamoon calls the "aesthetics of sameness" or "S-relationships" (S-*kankei*, or: "sister-relationships"). This is because girls feel more secure and can build confidence in themselves through loving someone who looks just like oneself without risking losing one's purity. And if this is true for shōjo manga characters, it is all more true for shōjo manga readers.

On the other hand, when it comes to shōjo manga, heroines often identify themselves within a heterosexual relationship, too. Fujimoto Yukari (1998) argues that shōjo manga heroines look for their "place (*ibasho*)" to be. They tend to find their *ibasho* and self-worth through their ideal boyfriend. When finding a boyfriend, shōjo manga heroines have to sacrifice their agency for their romantic relationship. Although their boyfriends do not look like themselves, heroines build confidence in themselves through the male other but they then fall into the love trap. However, some of the female shōjo manga artists in the 1970s, including Ikeda, attempted to avoid this type of dominant narrative of heterosexual relationships although they explore women's sexuality openly.

To describe how Ikeda suggests new possibilities for Japanese women to perform gender from existing rules of the genre, I will formally examine Oscar's gender

performance by comparing two different romantic relationships in *Rose of Versailles*: one is Queen Marie Antoinette's relationship with Hans Axel von Fersen; the other is that of Oscar Francois de Jarjayes with Andre Grandier. In *Rose of Versailles*, the narrative follows Marie Antoinette's biography, but Ikeda also explores those two main romantic relationships as well as the political movements as the story approaches its finale. Marie Antoinette, a queen of France, is married to Louis XVI and had children with him. However, she falls in love with Swedish courtier Fersen even though she feels guilty about her affair. This is all well documented fact. Another main heroine, Lady Oscar has been raised as a man in a noble family and becomes a cross-dressing royal guard. Because of her masculine strength and dress, and her feminine beauty, Oscar is often mistaken as a beautiful man. However, she identifies herself as a woman and is interested in being in a mature relationship with a man. She hates being mistaken for a man or assumed to be lesbian. Oscar's first love is Fersen, but Oscar soon realizes that Fersen is not interested in her romantically. Oscar also becomes best friends with Rosalie Lamorliere, an adopted daughter of a commoner named Nicole Lamorliere, but Ikeda avoids pairing Rosalie and Oscar in a "S-relationship." Rosalie is depicted as a typical heroine of shōjo manga who is sweet and vulnerable. Rosalie has romantic feelings toward Oscar, but Oscar clearly says that she is only interested in a mature relationship with a man. As the manga approaches the finale, Oscar finally acknowledges her feelings with her main love interest, Andre Grandier. However, both Oscar and Andre die young in the middle of the French revolution. Oscar identifies herself within a heterosexual relationship with her main love interest, Andre, but other heterosexual relationships in the manga, including the one between Queen Marie Antoinette and Axel Fersen, are highly

revealing of what Fujimoto describes as the love trap. Through these different relationships, Ikeda destabilizes norms with "gender trouble," encouraging teenage girl readers not to fall into the same love trap as that of the Queen of France.

Marie Antoinette is portrayed as a typical heroine of the highly gendered nature of shōjo manga and representative of a woman who falls into "the love trap." Fujimoto Yukari defines this aspect of shōjo manga as when the female character sacrifices her agency, thinking "His happiness is my happiness" (quoted in Shamoon, 2008, p. 144). Although she is married to Louis XVI and has children, one might see her obtaining some agency by loving Fersen, her true soulmate, but by placing all her hope in Fersen, she loses her power as a woman and as a queen. Ikeda visually depicts Marie's loss of power whenever she is with Fersen. And even though Marie is drawn as a young and cheerful queen of France, she is depicted as a vulnerable heroine who can only find her self-worth through her man when she is with Fersen. Certainly, Ikeda allows Marie a kind of self-confidence and self-esteem for her not thinking of herself as ugly and unattractive, but she is a classic shōjo manga character as she seeks her happiness through true love throughout the manga. Compulsory heterosexuality is usually the downfall of even the greatest shōjo manga protagonists. Moreover, Anan Nobuko writes that "Marie's love for her children is presented as respectable, but other than this, she is depicted as an unwise woman. She has no concern for those outside of her small world. All she does is to idle away her time by wasting the national expenditure on luxuries and thinking of her love, Hans Axel von Fersen" (Anan, 2014, p. 4). Thus, Ikeda describes Marie as an unwise woman compared to Oscar even though Marie feels guilty about her affair with Fersen. Ikeda encourages teenage girl readers not to fall into the same love trap that Marie did.

While Oscar has become aware of terrible changes of outside of her world, Marie cares about nothing except her life in Versailles and her heartthrob Fersen. Through these different women, Ikeda tries to challenge the kind of dominant narrative of heterosexual relationships often seen in the shōjo manga genre, which always pointed to heteronormative gender roles and the lack of women's agency.

Figure 2. The binary view of gender. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 9, p. 19).

Ikeda describes the clear gender binary visually by using layering techniques in the depiction of Marie and Fersen's heterosexual relationship. As seen in Butler's notion of gender as a performative task, this image indicates that Marie and Fersen are performing scripted gender roles. A good visual example of this can be found in Figure 2. This is one of the most melodramatic scenes from *Rose*. In this scene, Fersen has secretly come back to France to meet Marie to die together after the French revolution began and Marie becomes so hated by the French citizens. In Figure 2, Marie and Fersen are facing each other in front of some trees, but the trees are also shaped as a heart: this image illustrates the gender binary as they are facing each other. This gorgeous layering of trees behind Marie and Fersen also creates a melodramatic mood which fits perfectly in this scene.

This scene also demonstrates how Marie has fallen into the love trap with Fersen. In Butler's writing, the notion of the natural women leads to women experiencing the love trap. This takes place in shōjo manga as well. Returning to *Rose*, at the time of the scene above, French citizens blame Marie's irresponsible behavior for their poverty and she does not have a place (*ibasho*) anymore besides the affair with Fersen. To emphasize this, Ikeda uses the technique to also make Fersen's face front so that readers can see him from Marie's point of view (Figure 2). With Fersen's close-up face and his line, "*tomoni shinutame ni modotte mairimashita….* (I have returned so that we might die together.)" in the middle of Marie and Fersen, Ikeda creates an intensely melodramatic effect in this scene.

フェルゼン…
あの人にあって
あの人と
愛しあうために
わたしの青春は
ありました…

はじめての
恋です！

このからだじゅう
の血が
あの人にむかって
ほとばしり
真紅に花ひらくの
を
神でさえとめる
ことはできない

国王陛下は
りっぱな方です…
いつくしみ深く
質素で勉強家で

心から尊敬して
います…
けれど…
それは
愛ではありません！
形だけは
夫婦であって
も…

あ…あ！！
そのむなしさを
忘れていたい
ために
わたくしは……

休むひまもなく
このからだが
くたくたになるまで
踊り
歌い
着かざり
遊び歩かずには
いられなかった…！！

おおおおお……

Figure 3. Ikeda shows how Antoinette falls into the love trap. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 3, p. 112).

Ikeda describes the differences between Marie and Oscar in the way they identify themselves within a heterosexual relationship with their main love interests by depicting Marie falling into the love trap. In Figure 3, Oscar warns Marie that having an affair with Fersen puts her in a socially dangerous situation. Ikeda depicts how Marie falls into the love trap and how her agency is taken away in a melodramatic way by using layering

techniques. In Figure 3, Marie confessed her feelings about Fersen to Oscar after Oscar warned her as her royal guard. At the top of the page when Marie explains to Oscar about her romantic feelings for Fersen, Ikeda layers Marie's close-up beside emotive elements, such as Fersen's shadow and imaginary flowers. In this scene, Ikeda uses flowers as a metaphor to describe Marie's love toward Fersen in her dialogue. Ikeda also layered both Fersen's shadow and imaginary flowers beside Marie to reflect her emotions. Shamoon points out that "the flowers have become symbolic and are understood to be purely emotive, not representational, and hence there is no need to place the characters in an actual flower garden" (Shamoon, 2012, p. 116). She adds that "the symbolism of flowers has deep roots in girls'culture" (Shamoon, 2012, p. 116). In Figure 3, the layering of flowers not only reflects Marie's romantic feelings and passionate love but also represents her feminine beauty. This layering technique helps define Marie's feelings as a woman, which is to be in love with someone like how flowers must bloom and no one can restrain true love.

Ikeda shows how Marie cannot help falling into the love trap in the most melodramatic way. On the bottom of the panel in Figure 3, Marie's speech bubbles are depicted in a very emotive way, as is Marie herself. Shamoon (2012) states that shōjo manga artists use this kind of visual grammar in order to explore a character's interiority and to create a mood. These techniques include interior monologue, open frames, layering, symbolic imagery, and emotive backgrounds. Although Shamoon does not mention the shape of the speech and thought bubbles, the use of jagged speech bubbles in Figure 3 helps both emphasize Marie's feelings and enrich the dramatic mood. In addition, in this panel, her hair is blowing as it reflects her emotions. No actual wind is

there. The reader can tell that this is an emotive image of Marie rather than a real one because her hair is supposed to be coiffed. This kind of semi-realistic element plays an important role in creating melodramatic moods on the page and emphasizes that Marie has finally fallen and fallen deeply into the love trap.

Furthermore, Ikeda also uses the technique of making both Marie and Oscar face the reader in order to emphasize Oscar's reactions to Marie falling into the love trap. The manga scholar Natsume Fusanosuke (2020) argues that shōjo manga artists often have the observing characters face front to allow the readers to be able to have the same point of view as the main character. According to Natsume,

> In shōjo manga, we often have the character we are meant to pay attention to draw large and in the foreground of a panel. Plus, artists use this method to reposition other characters so they are made to look at that character. The artist does this simultaneously to show their awe of the lead character. Even so, those observing characters will be placed in the background (sometimes in the same panel) and made to face front so we can see them as they see that same character. (Natsume, Holt and Fukuda, 2020, pp. 68-69).

In this scene, Oscar is the one who is observing the character. Ikeda made her face front so the readers can see her reaction just as Marie sees her. Oscar's reaction is important in the plot because it clearly shows the contrast between Marie and Oscar. In Figure 3, Oscar looks like she is shocked or confused by what Marie is talking about. In the next couple of pages, Ikeda depicts Oscar's reflections on Marie's words as well as on the naturalized notions of the category of women.

Figure 4. Marie Antoinette and Oscar. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 3, p. 111).

As Fujimoto argues that shōjo manga heroines look for their place (*ibasho*) to fit in society, this is one of the several important scenes which demonstrate the differences between Marie and Oscar when it comes to how they find their place to exist. Marie falls into the love trap and sacrifices her agency. On the other hand, although Oscar finds her true love with Andre toward the end of the manga, she avoids the love trap, which indicates that she is emotionally independent. On the next page (Figure 4), after Oscar

warns Marie that having an affair with Fersen puts her in a dangerous situation, Marie

explains her sense of "a woman's heart" (*onna no kokoro*), which is a desire to love and

to be loved by someone. This definition of women's feelings implies the love trap, which

promotes the idea of heteronormative gender roles. Moreover, Marie explains that she

was made to forget about and give up being "a woman" because she has to perform her

duty as a queen (Figure 4). Finally, Marie tells Oscar that she wanted her to understand

how she feels, essentially saying that she seeks her happiness through true love with

Fersen. Marie expects Oscar to relate to her women's feelings because Oscar is also a

woman, which can be interpreted as a natural category of woman. How could Oscar not

feel the same way?

Figure 5. Oscar and a woman's heart. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 3, p. 113).

Significantly, however, Oscar was not able to understand Marie's feelings up to this moment and now questions Marie's sense of women's feelings. On the next page (Figure 5), Ikeda depicts how Oscar reacts to Marie by using visual grammar. Oscar first feels disappointed with herself because she has not been able to understand how Marie feels. In Figure 5, Ikeda layers Oscar's close-up, a symbolic full-body portrait, and Marie's repeated dialogue, in order to explore Oscar's interiority. Both Oscar's close-up

and her small full-body portrait contrast with the symbolic element of lightness as if it were Marie's words attacking Oscar. This layering helps readers to understand how much Oscar was shocked that she was not able to relate to Marie as she is a female royal guard. On the other hand, the bottom part of Oscar's close-up does not seem to depict the exact same emotions. In this part, the panel of Marie's repeated dialogue: "*Anata ni onna no kokoro wo motomerunowa murina kotodattanodeshooka….?* (Was it an impossible thing for me to seek in you a woman's heart?)" is layered behind Oscar while Oscar says "*Onna no kokoro….*? (A woman's ...h-heart…?)". More importantly, in this scene, Oscar is shocked that she has not been able to relate to Marie's women's feelings at first, but soon after, she starts to question what women's feelings are.

Through these pages, it can be argued that Ikeda, though Marie's sense of women's feelings, brings up the same questions as Butler does in *Gender Trouble:* "what constitutes a category of a woman in the first place?" In other words, "a woman" or "women's feelings" which Marie refers to in this scene implies a category of natural women and what they think. In Butler's view, there is no single idea that constitutes a category of natural women in the first place. This is because gender is made by an act and what we consider to be natural is constructed by society. Different society might define "natural women" differently. Normative modern Japanese society defines Japanese women as heterosexual but another society might define women as lesbian.

Butler writes that "as the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an 'act,' as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural' that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status" (Butler, 1990, p. 200). In the

world of *Rose of Versailles* and Japanese society in the 1970s, the natural category of a

woman was considered to be a good wife and mother. This idea comes from the ideology

of "good wife, wise mother (*ryōsai kenbo*)" in the Meiji period (1868-1912). In Butler's

notion, it is obvious that this ideology is illusional, and it is a social construct. Therefore,

Marie's sense of women's feelings describes the naturalized idea of what women feel

about their romantic relationships in *Rose*.

Figure 6. Oscar meets her mother. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 6, p. 113).

Figure 7. Oscar and her father. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 6, p. 141).

Through Oscar, Ikeda destabilizes heteronormative gender roles by questioning the natural category of women. It is possible to interpret that Ikeda tries to make her female readers think the same question as Oscar does: "What is wrong what if I don't feel like other women?" Ikeda, through this scene's Oscar, made her audience ask themselves questions like "What is wrong with me?" or "Is it ok if I don't understand Marie's

feelings?" Toward the end of the manga, Oscar finds both her answers to these questions and her true love without falling into the love trap and losing her agency and masculine strength although she struggled to understand Marie's sense of women's feelings when she was a teenage girl.

Ultimately, both Oscar and readers find the obvious follow-up answer: "There is nothing wrong with you because you are you." There is an obvious scene when Oscar finds this answer before the French revolution begins. Oscar is told by her father, General de Jarjayes, to get married and live a life as "a woman" because he was worried about her safety. When Oscar asks her mother about her father's intention, Oscar says "*Watashi wa chichiue no ningyoo dewa arimasen! Otoko demonaku… Onna demonaku…* (I am not father's puppet! Not man, not woman….)." This dialogue indicates that Oscar questions this kind of heteronormative gender role. Later in this scene, Oscar refused to get married to a man whom her father arranged for her. Oscar tells her father that she feels appreciated that he gives her life as an individual human although she is a woman and she decides to choose to live as a soldier. In the top panel of Figure 7, Oscar says that "*Kansha itashimasu. Konoyoona jinsei o ataetekudasatta kotoo. …Onna de arinagara…. Korehodonimo hiroisekai o…Ningen to shite ikiru michi o….numenume toshita ningen no orokashisa no naka de ikiru koto o..* (I'm grateful to you. For the fact that you gave me this life….Although I am a woman, I travel a path through such a wide world, living as a human being, floundering in the midst of all this raw human foolishness.)" As Oscar uses the words *"Ningen to shite* (as a human being)," this dialogue demonstrates that Oscar chooses to live as "a woman" but a woman who does not follow the natural category of women. Moreover, Oscar is portrayed as a myth figure both visually and literally

(Figure 7). The same kind of myth figure is also portrayed on the page when Oscar is shot and dies.

Oscar's tragic death implies that Ikeda destabilizes heteronormative gender roles by subverting the existing possibilities instead of having a utopian view of gender. After Oscar becomes aware of the outside world of Versailles, she started realizing the unfair lifestyle and tax system. She decides to resign from the royal guard and leads the anti-royalist soldiers in storming the Bastille. However, both Oscar and Andre die after the fall of the Bastille. Oshiyama Michiko (2018) argues that Oscar is freed from the existing system, such as marriage by becoming a mythical figure like a god through her death. However, in Butler's view of gender, escaping from the law or system is not an ultimate solution to destabilize gender norms. Butler suggests making gender trouble "not through the strategies that figure a utopian beyond" (Butler, 1990, p. 46). In this sense, Oscar's death means that it is not possible to escape from the existing system or history since there is no utopia, but it is possible to suggest new possibilities for women to live or change the binary view of gender from the existing possibilities to make gender trouble. Yonezawa Yoshihiro (2007) argues that the way Oscar dies in French Revolution makes the narrative tragic yet beautiful. He writes that

> The keywords that came out of the French Revolution were those ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. And those are the very experiences in this mythic romance that are pursued by Oscar. Over the course of the story, Oscar undergoes a discovery of her subjectivity as an individual and as a human being—first appearing as a puppet of the court as a guard for Marie Antoinette and then finding herself in the midst of the chaos of the Revolution. Oscar holds onto her intention to try to remain loyal to herself, even as she faces the determined facts of history, so this romance is very much the stuff of tragic beauty, a tragedy that is gets carried out as Oscar comes into being in her own inevitable way (Yonezawa, 2007, p. 234).

As Yonezawa points out, Oscar's death and how she accepts the determined facts of history makes her romance tragic yet beautiful. It can be interpreted that Ikeda does not have a utopian view, and she truly depicts the historical facts of France during the time of the French revolution although Oscar is a fictional character. Furthermore, the key phrase, "remaining loyal to herself" is an obvious answer to the questions like "What is wrong with me?" In the process of joining the anti-royalist soldiers and being shot, Oscar's death emphasizes that she will not live within a category of natural women, but as an individual soldier—a human being fighting for equality.

In my view, Ikeda found a creative way to describe something like Butler's notion of "gender trouble" in the context of shōjo manga, especially in terms of the depiction of romantic relationships. Butler suggests a strategy of "repetition" of gender trouble is part of a critical task to challenge categories of culturally constructed identity and the trap of ontology. She explains that "the critical task is, rather, to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them" (Butler, 1990, p. 201). In order to repeat gender trouble to destroy gender norms, she emphasizes that it is necessary to consider how to repeat gender trouble rather than whether to repeat it as Butler writes that "the task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself" (Butler, 1990, p. 202).

The cross-dressing heroine is one of the existing possibilities that Ikeda repeats gender trouble in the context of shōjo manga. Looking back to the shōjo manga in 1953,

Tezuka Osamu created the very first cross-dressing heroine, Sapphire, in his first shōjo

manga, *Princess Knight* (*Ribon no Kishi*). Some scholars consider that Princess Knight is

the first true shōjo manga in history although shōjo manga had its roots in the girls'

culture of prewar girls' magazines. As Fujimoto Yukari points out "history of shōjo

manga begins with cross-dressing heroines" (Fujimoto, 1998, p. 178), it can be argued

that the cross-dressing heroine is repeating gender trouble in the context of shōjo manga,

and Tezuka brought this kind of gender trouble to the world of shōjo manga in the 1950s.

The concept of the cross-dressing heroine is originally from the Takarazuka

Revue, and it is closely related to the ideas of the aesthetic of sameness from prewar

girls' magazines. Hori Hikari writes that "the Takarazuka Revue, founded in 1913 by

Kobayashi Ichizo (1873-1957), has long been popular for its many Western-style

musicals" (Hori, 2013, p. 300). Takarazuka is an all-female musical that aims at female

audiences and children in Japan, and female actors play men (*otokoyaku*). According to

Fujimoto (1998), Tezuka Osamu, who was born and raised in Takarazuka and was a fan

of Takarazuka Revue, was inspired to bring Takarazuka's concept to the world of shōjo

manga. It is possible to argue that the view of transgender and non-binary gender

emerged from Takarazuka in Japanese culture. However, according to Fujimoto,

"Takarazuka shaped the genderless world that is only for women so that female audience

can learn how to love themselves safely through the women who dress up as a male"

(Fujimoto, 1998, p. 180). In the Western view, the idea of the aesthetic of sameness as

well as cross-dressing is considered to be "gender trouble", but the depiction of female-

female romantic relationships among girls who look alike in prewar girls' magazines did

not imply rebelling against a society where heterosexuality is the norm. Among

Takarazuka trainees and actresses, S-kankei is practiced and accepted by supervisor, parents and women themselves (Yamanashi, 2012). In Japanese culture, as Yamanashi (2012) and Shamoon (2008) state, S-kankei is a way for young women to experiment with intimacy skills without risking one's virginity and innocence. Young women can build confidence in themselves through loving a woman who looks just like themselves. Hori (2013) argues that "the Revue introduces ambiguity into existing social norms of sexuality." She writes:

> Are female fans who are in love with the male impersonator (*otokoyaku*) in love with the female actor or with the male character? Should we understand the romantic interaction between the female and male characters as heterosexual or homoerotic? The distinction is blurred, which creates an androgynous gender and sexual identity in the space of reception that undermines compulsory heterosexuality (Hori, 2013, pp. 302-303).

Such non-binary views of gender existed in pre-modern Japan and were repeated in modern Japanese culture. Therefore, the cross-dressing heroine, as well as the idea of aesthetic of sameness, were often repeated normative and non-troubling "gender trouble" in the context of the shōjo manga before Ikeda's *Rose of Versailles* was published. However, it is important to note that the Takarazuka's founder Kobayashi intended to reinforce the idea of heteronormative gender roles, which is made from the ideology of "good wife, wise mother (*ryōsai kenbo*)" through the cross-dressing females (*otokoyaku*). Jennifer Robertson points out that "by performing as men, females learned to understand and appreciate males and masculine psyche. Consequently, when they eventually retired from the stage and married, which Kobayashi urged them to do, they would be better able to perform as Good Wives, Wise Mothers, knowing exactly what their husbands expected of them" (Robertson, 1998, p. 67). Therefore, *otokoyaku* plays male roles in the play, but

Kobayashi never asked them to act or speak like men outside of the play (Robertson, 1998, p. 73).

Rose of Versailles has been adapted into the musical by Takarazuka, and it was become a turning point for both Takarazuka and Takarasiennes (actresses of Takarazuka). Takarazuka *Beru bara* not only has become the most successful play in company history but also destabilizes gender norms of Takarazuka theater, which implies destabilizing gender norms in the society. From the mid-1930s, the term "dansō no reijin (a beautiful woman dressed as a man)" was used to refer to Takarazuka *otokoyaku* and masculinized females in which means a female in masculine attire (Robertson, 1998, p. 72). Oscar follows the same features as *otokoyaku* in Takarazuka's *Rose*. Most significantly, Takarazuka's Oscar "undercuts the ideological fixity and essentialism of conventional femininity and masculinity" (Robertson, 1998, p. 87). For women to play "masculine" men is normative in Takarazuka *otokoyaku*, but to play a cross-dressing woman character like Oscar in story is new and different. This is the main reason why Takarazuka *Beru bara* has become popular. Even though Kobayashi's real intentions were opposite from making gender trouble, the concept of cross-dressing heroine has validated the non-binary view of gender.

Although both Oscar and Tezuka's Sapphire are well-known cross-dressing heroines in the history of shōjo manga, Tezuka's cross-dressing heroine, Sapphire in *Princess Knight* is quite different from Ikeda's Oscar. Sapphire is born as a woman but raised as a man like Oscar. Although Sapphire's body is female, Sapphire shifts between female and male roles because of the medicine. Oshiyama Michiko (2018) argues that the

main difference between Tezuka's cross-dressing heroine, Sapphire, and Oscar is that Oscar has the autonomy to choose how to live and perform gender while Sapphire does not. While Sapphire's gender shifted without her control, Oscar chooses to live as a woman who does not fit in into the category of natural women. Instead, she is raised as a royal guard, and she remains masculine all of her life. Oscar is a cross-dressing heroine who shows female audiences a new way for women to perform gender. Unlike Tezuka's *Princess Knight*, Oscar's gender choices are entirely volitional after she becomes an adult. Significantly, the cross-dressing heroine has become one of the categories of the shōjo manga genre, which helped repeat gender trouble in the context of shōjo manga since the 1970s and even today.

Ikeda describes the aesthetic of sameness as another possibility of re-describe gender in her manga. In addition, Ikeda describes the problematic narrative of the love trap in the shōjo manga genre in a different way to encourage her teenage girls' readers not to fall into the love trap. Ikeda enhances Japanese women's agency through Oscar because Oscar finds her true love without falling into the love trap and sacrificing her agency. Therefore, the romantic relationship between Oscar and her main love interest, Andre, is depicted quite differently from the one between Marie and Fersen. Shamoon summarizes Oscar and Andre's relationship in that "Oscar can give herself to Andre without fear of losing her independence to him because he not only admires her masculine qualities, he is emotionally and socially dependent on her. Ikeda avoids the 'love trap' by inverting it" (Shamoon, 2012, p. 136). Shamoon's argument points to how Ikeda refashions the love trap to make gender trouble in her shōjo manga. It is important

to note that Ikeda does not create a completely new narrative pattern to create gender trouble in the context of shōjo manga. Ikeda repeats and recreates gender trouble by presenting the appeal of the aesthetic of sameness and by subverting the love trap.

Figure 8. Oscar and Andre's images resemble each other. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 8, p. 100).

In *Rose*, Ikeda visually represents this aesthetic of sameness in Oscar and Andre's relationship while she still emphasizes that their relationship is a heterosexual one. It is one of the most remarkable deformations of this trope in the history of shōjo manga. Later in the story, Oscar acknowledges that Andre is the one with whom she wants to have a mature romantic relationship while Andre has always been in love with her. Shamoon points out that "Andre begins to emerge as a love interest after Oscar cuts his hair, which alters his appearance to more closely resemble her own. As the story progresses, they increasingly resemble each other, in the shape of the hair and eyes, and in the clothes they wear, usually military uniforms" (Shamoon, 2007, p. 11). For instance, when Oscar first admits her love for Andre, as Shamoon points out, Oscar and Andre are depicted as twins (Figure 8). It can be argued that Oscar and Andre's relationship challenges heteronormative gender roles since their relationships do not visually match heteronormative ones like Marie and Fersen in Figure 2. Shamoon explains that "in this case, the relationship is heterosexual but homogendered; the similarity of the characters enables them to enter into a romantic relationship as equals" (Shamoon, 2008, p. 143). The depiction of the aesthetic of sameness in a heterosexual relationship makes theirs an equal and spiritual love, which challenges heteronormative gender roles.

The depiction of the aesthetic of sameness in heterosexual relationships helps free their characters from the binary view of sex. Unlike Marie and Fersen, Ikeda does not depict the heteronormative roles of Oscar and Andre. This is because Oscar and Andre look alike which makes them look non-binary. Shamoon (2012) notes that shōjo manga *chūsei*, the neutrality of gender, allows for spiritual love although Oscar and Andre are in

a heterosexual relationship. Butler argues that the category of gender can be a free-floating artifice, and it can be argued that Ikeda made Oscar and Andre's gender free-floating. Butler explains that "when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one" (Butler, 1990, p. 9). It is quite possible then to apply Butler's argument to Ikeda's *chūsei* characters, like Oscar and Andre's. Although Oscar has a female body and is defined as biologically female, the ways she behaves, dresses up, and speaks are all masculine. In many scenes, Oscar is misunderstood as a beautiful man or lesbian based on how she looked and behaves. She bristles at being perceived either as a man or as a lesbian. Significantly, however, Ikeda emphasizes that Oscar identifies herself as a woman and desires a mature heterosexual relationship in many scenes. Oscar's gender is independent of the binary view of sex.

Figure 9. Imaginary flowery images are layered beside powerful images of Oscar. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 1, p. 176).

Despite her masculine dress and speech, Oscar retains her femininity to help female readers feel relatable to her. Shamoon notes "while Oscar seems to challenge traditional gender roles, she is still firmly embedded in a discourse of girls' culture" (Shamoon, 2012, p. 131). Although Oscar's dress, behavior, and speech are all masculine, Ikeda keeps the feminine features of her appearance, such as long hair and big, starry eyes. Ikeda still enhances Oscar's feminine beauty by layering flower motifs

as well as exploring shōjo culture tropes through her so her teenage female readers would relate more to Oscar. For example, when Oscar was visiting Paris as Marie Antoinette's royal guard for the first time, although some random women in Paris think that Oscar is a man and they are attracted to her, Ikeda describes her femininity by layering flower motifs in the scene (Figure 9). On this page, Ikeda layers imaginary flowers beside Oscar and women in Paris to emphasize Oscar's feminine beauty and shōjo culture. The flowery images are closely rooted in girls' culture, and shōjo manga artists often layer imaginary flowers to describe characters' feminine beauty or to make a melodramatic effect on the page.

While these imaginary flowers reflect the feminine beauty of Oscar, Ikeda also emphasizes Oscar's power by layering big and powerful images of her as a royal guard on the same page (Figure 9). Butler suggests a strategy of repetition in order to challenge norms and the trap of phallocentric ontology. Butler writes that "Paradoxically, the reconceptualization of identity as an effect, that is, as *produced or generated*, opens up possibilities of 'agency' that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed" (Butler, 1990, p. 201). She adds that "the critical task is, rather, to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them" (Butler, 1990, p. 201). In the context of shōjo manga, this critical task means subverting existing norms of shōjo manga, as a way of expressing femininity. Ikeda is "locating the strategies of subversive repetition" by layering the powerful and masculine images of Oscar with flower images.

Figure 10. Ikeda layers flowery images beside Andre. (Ikeda Riyoko, *Berusaiyu no bara* 2006, Vol. 7, p. 157).

Ikeda challenges not only a category of natural women through Oscar but also a category of natural men through Andre. For instance, in Figure 10, Andre also has feminine visual images, such as long hair and round and starry eyes. Ikeda also layers flowery images, which are rooted in shōjo culture, next to Andre just like she does for her female characters (Figure 10). In addition, Andre becomes blind toward the end of the manga, which is a sign that he loses his masculinity (Shamoon, 2012). His losing his

masculine quality happens at the same time when Oscar acknowledges her feelings toward Andre. It can be also argued that Ikeda creates gender trouble for the masculine image through Andre to reduce the binary view of gender in the context of shōjo manga.

Although Oscar and Andre's relationship is heterosexual, many shōjo manga scholars, including Oshiyama Michiko (2018) and Anan Nobuko (2014), point out that Oscar and Andre's relationship is similar to the boys' love stories. Yoshinaga Fumi, an author of *Ōoku* (The Inner Chambers) and a fan of Ikeda's *Rose of Versailles*, comments that the relationship between Oscar and Andre remains "yaoi" (the genre of fictional media of boys love), and their relationship can be seen as boys' love romance (Oshiyama, 2018). Oshiyama points out that this is because Oscar, who is a female character, displays more initiative than Andre. Significantly, the depiction of this kind of spiritual love is repeated in the context of shōjo manga in the 1970s by other significant female shōjo manga writers as well. Another great shōjo manga artist in the 1970s, Hagio Moto, for example, depicted the spiritual love between two beautiful boys in her well-known manga, *The Heart of Thomas* (*Tōma no Shinzō*). The trend of boys' love has become a subgenre of shōjo manga in the 1970s, and it became popular among female readers. Shamoon suggests why these female shōjo manga authors describe boys' love stories:

> Boys' love stories allowed shōjo manga artists to portray sexuality and eroticism in a safe, nonthreatening way. Because the characters are boys, they are not only distanced from the girl readers' own bodies, but also from the possibilities of marriage and childbirth. Moreover, in the 1970s, it was easier for readers to imagine sexually active boys than girls (Shamoon, 2012, p. 104).

These boy characters are typically depicted as feminine, or *bishōnen* ("beautiful boys"). Shamoon elaborates that they are portrayed with "ectomorphic bodies, long flowing hair, and huge eyes" (Shamoon, 2012, p. 104). This effect helps female readers feel relatable

to beautiful boy characters and allows them to explore sexual subjects without worrying about losing their purity, similar to prewar girls' magazines' S-relationships. In sum, not only Ikeda Riyoko but also other female writers of shōjo manga during the golden age of shōjo manga in the 1970s created a new form of shōjo manga and gender trouble by depicting romantic relationships in a new way and exploring new possibilities. Ikeda inspires female readers to express themselves beyond normative gender roles in Japanese society, in area such as dress, speech, and career choices.

Oscar and Andre's heterosexual relationships open up the new possibilities to describe romantic relationships in shōjo manga. As Shamoon writes, Ikeda "attempted a compromise between adolescent world of S relationships and the adult world of heterosexual romance" (Shamoon, 2012, p. 120). As seen in Butler, we also see Ikeda suggesting the new possibilities to repeat gender trouble in a new way in the genre of shōjo manga. The depiction of relationships in shōjo manga historically does not follow the heterosexual relationship. This is because the shōjo manga has developed as an intimate and shared space only for girls and the depiction of heterosexual relationships is historically taboo. In sum, it could be interpreted that Ikeda's *Rose of Versailles* describes the existing possibilities in the 1970s to make gender trouble in the context of shōjo manga in order to encourage her teenage female readers to achieve a new kind of agency in Japanese society. Ikeda romanticized the French Revolution populating it with beautiful and heady heroines and heroes, and in this way Ikeda contributed to social and gender change in postwar Japan.

Conclusion

"Gender Trouble" did not begin in 1990 when Butler coined the term in her book.

It has been going on everywhere for a long time. In the 1970s, Ikeda Riyoko recognized

discrepancies of normative gender practice and non-normative gender practice in her own

society and resituated them in her fictionalized French society. In a final note to *Gender*

Trouble, Butler writes that

> Cultural configurations of sex and gender might then proliferate or, rather, their
> present proliferation might then become articulable within the discourses that
> establish intelligible cultural life, confounding the very binarism of sex, and
> exposing its fundamental unnaturalness. What other local strategies for engaging
> the "unnatural" might lead to the denaturalization of gender as such? (Butler,
> 1990, p. 203)

Butler leaves her readers of *Gender Trouble* the task of making and repeating gender

trouble from the existing cultural configuration of sex and gender. Lady Oscar's cross-

dressing and her heterosexual relationship with Andre in *Rose of Versailles* point to a

gender that seems to be unnatural due to the naturalized notions of gender. Additionally,

considering the history of the shōjo manga genre, Oscar and Andre's relationship, if not

Oscar's gender performance break the genre rules of shōjo manga. Ikeda creates gender

trouble in the context of her shōjo manga by redescribing the aesthetic of shōjo manga's

genre. In sum, Ikeda Riyoko's *Rose of Versailles* suggested new possibilities for Japanese

women to understand themselves and learn how they can express themselves beyond

constructed normative gender roles in Japanese society.

Shōjo manga have become one of the significant and popular pop-culture media

in the world. Ikeda Riyoko helped to establish new developments in the genre of shōjo

manga during 1970s, a golden period of the shōjo manga when the many female writers of the Magnificent 49ers' generation (*24 nen gumi*) created new forms to express women's power. Today, shōjo manga writers continuously repeat and recreate gender trouble in their shōjo manga. What Ikeda pioneered in making gender trouble in her historical shōjo manga is repeated by younger artists with their new efforts in today's shōjo manga. Examples of such newer gender-trouble shōjo manga can be found in works like Yoshinaga Fumi's *Ōoku*, and Higashimura Akiko's *Princess Jellyfish*.

After three decades, the goals of what Butler envisioned in making gender trouble have been achieved in many ways in society. The pop-culture media, such as comics, contributed to destabilizing norms with layered images of beautiful characters—whether or not they are "men" or "women." The industry of manga has developed worldwide today. Even before Butler called for making gender trouble, Japanese comics, specifically shōjo manga, continuously questioned "the category of women" or "the category of men" and pushed for the voices of diversity in Japanese society.

In my view, Ikeda's recent interview sums up what Butler wanted her readers to consider when she first published *Gender Trouble* in 1990. Ikeda suggested to her readers in a 2019 interview, many years after her manga was first published, to be true to themselves like Oscar and even Andre without worrying about feeling pressured to follow the gender roles. Ikeda says that

> フェミニンなファッションを求められる時代はベルばらの頃に通り過ぎたと思って
> います。"脱ロザリー" してオスカルのように生きていいのだと、思っていただけた
> んじゃないかと。だから、ジェンダーレスでいいし、自分が着たくて、似合ってい
> ればどんな服装でもいい。女性が社会で働く本物の人間として進化している証
> 拠だと思います。"女性的"であることにとわられず、男とか女とか関係なく、自分

の信念にしたがって働けるようになった。男性がスキンケアやネイルを気にする
ようになるという傾向もいいと思いますよ。(Ikeda, 2019, para. 3)

The time when women are required to wear feminine fashion has already passed
in the time of *Rose of Versailles*. I think the readers thought that [women] can be
"de-Rosalied" [*datsu-Rosalie*] and live like Oscar. It is fine to dress like the
genderless and wear whatever you want to and fits you well. I think it is evidence
that women are evolving as real human beings who work in society. Without
being constrained by "feminine", regardless of men or women, they became able
to work following their own beliefs. I think that it is also good that men care
about their skincare and doing their nails. (Ikeda, 2019, para. 3)

Rosalie is a typical female character who is sweet but weak. She is considered a

traditional shōjo character who does not have power. Ikeda, by using the term "de-

Rosalied," implies that Rosalie is a typical female character who reflects restrictive

gender norms for Japanese women. In her interview, "de-Rosalie (*Datsu-Rosalie*) and

live like Oscar " means that Japanese women do not need to feel pressured to follow the

traditional gender norms and they have the freedom to choose how they can express their

femininity in their own personal ways. In addition, Ikeda mentions how society has

shifted into the one where people can work following their own choices and beliefs

regardless of gender. This reminds the readers of how Oscar chooses to live a life as a

commander of the royal guard and soldier rather than getting married and raising children

when her father tries to arrange her marriage. At the same time, Oscar does not give up

on either her true love or her agency. Ikeda's *Rose of Versailles* has made an impact on

female audiences since the 1970s and even today because Ikeda promotes the idea that

women can achieve new kinds of agency in society, and shōjo manga can inspire them to

do it. Her interview in 2019 proves that Butler's call for making gender trouble has been

achieved at a certain level in Japan.

This thesis leaves another possibility to continue making gender trouble as part of the academic field in Japanese studies. In the field of Japanese studies, for example, James Dorsey (2016) establishes the curriculum of blending language acquisition and Judith Butler's performative gender theory through an engagement with Japanese popular culture for learners to speak culturally appropriate Japanese. Dorsey believes that "students are simultaneously socialized as gendered subjectivities in a new linguistic and cultural environment" (Dorsey, 2016, p. 212). With these new critiques now available to us from Japanese Comics Studies and Gender Studies, there are many new possibilities to promote the ideas of gender trouble and consider how to repeat these gender trouble in a larger context. Manga can allow new possibilities to destabilize the norms with by presenting gender trouble and contribute to promoting a society where real diversity is a norm.

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