Torikaebaya unravelled: the modern adaptations of *Torikaebaya monogatari*

1. Introduction: *Torikaebaya monogatari,* space and time

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Interesado en la traducción y adaptación (tanto literaria como audiovisual) de textos clásicos japoneses, especialmente en las mutaciones que se producen en las áreas de género y sexualidad, y su recepción en Occidente.

Japanese fiction in its various forms occupies a peculiar position within the global cultural landscape. In the West, this takes the form of a continued tradition of appropriation and hybridisation that pop culture scholar Susan J. Napier (2007) discusses as having its first boom during the 19th century, when the Tokugawa shogunate and its successor state, the Meiji regime, opened their doors to the Western powers. Since then, millenary text corpora have been integrated into the Western-dominated global flux of creativity in numerous ways through the decades: Japonisme in late 19th century plastic arts, the golden age of Japanese cinema in the 50s or the ongoing boom of manga and anime that started in the 90s are some examples. The numerous agents involved in the accessibility of these texts (most obviously translators and publishers, but also academics, writers and other artists) manipulate the texts in ways both perceivable and unperceivable, conditioning our relationship with them. By producing new derivative texts, these agents create actualised readings and perspectives on the original, which can be used to better understand contemporary society.

For understanding this, the *Torikaebaya monogatari* is a perfect case of study. This Heian-era (794-1185 AD) tale is often categorised as a *giko monogatari* (lit. pseudo-classical tale), a term created in the 19th century to designate imitative *monogatari* from the late Heian period onwards[1]. Beginning in the 70s, it has been translated into German, English, Russian, French and Spanish, and has been adapted into several manga series and two Takarazuka Revue plays. Furthermore, echoes of its narrative and cultural impact can be noticed in the work of cult authors such as Yukio Mishima as well as in big-budget anime studio productions, namely the 2016 blockbuster *Your Name.* (*Kimi no na wa*, dir. Makoto Shinkai). This coexistence of multiple interpretations of a single source text allows us to contrast the differences in style and treatment of the source text that the derived products present, which, in turn, leads us to question why these changes take place and what objectives they pursue.

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1 While its affiliation to this category has been disputed by some scholars, contemporary English, French and Spanish translations dub it as such, as does supporting literature. In any case, it must be considered that *Torikaebaya monogatari* does indeed borrow from *Genji monogatari* and preexisting Heian literary tradition to a high degree.

Written at some point during the 12th century, the tale was well-received by its contemporary audiences, as judged by its critique found in the *Mumyōzōshi*. Coincidentally, the *Mumyōzōshi* critique also reveals that the *Torikaebaya monogatari* we know today, or *Ima torikaebaya*, is actually a rework of an older text now lost written several decades before, referred to as *Furu torikaebaya*. While not nearly as ubiquitous as its partial source of inspiration *Genji monogatari*, the *Torikaebaya* has intrigued and amused scholars and general public alike for its peculiar depiction of gender, sex and courtship in the Heian period well enough to survive to this day and experience a recent spike in popularity.

After a period of limited discussion and circulation marked by a censorship campaign led by Meiji scholar Fujioka Sakutarō (1870-1910), discussion on the *Torikaebaya* resurged with newfound vigour after the Second World War. A translation into modern Japanese by Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972) in 1948 was followed by new critical re-evaluations by scholars such as Tsuneo Morioka or Hiromichi Suzuki, who came up with new readings in an attempt to counter and dilute the clogged aura of indecency and perversion the work had carried since the Meiji era yet did not stray from moralistic commentary. With the second wave of feminism and the birth of gender studies in the 1960-70s, the work began to be assessed for its own merits. A translation into English by Rosette F. Willig in 1983, titled *The Changelings*, and an article on the tale's gender depiction by Gregory M. Pflugfelder in 1992 marked a turning point in the study of the *Torikaebaya* in the West. More recently, the research by Kazuhiko Imai, published in 2020, has shed light and dispelled some misconceptions about the *Torikaebaya*'s supposed subversiveness or particularism, as well as serving as a conciliation of several conflicting viewpoints on the work.

So far, most studies have focused primarily on the work itself and its linguistic, literary and anthropological value. There are indeed exciting conclusions in these fields to be extracted from a careful reading of *Torikaebaya monogatari*. While this paper benefits enormously from their research and will take them into account, its focus lies not so much on the tale itself, but rather on the mutations it has gone through as a cultural commodity; from printed media to audio-visual media, from *past* to *present*. In doing so, one hopes to better understand how classical Japanese texts are adapted and reincorporated into the global cultural flow.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Translation vs Adaptation

Recently emerged as a separate field of study, adaptation studies diverge from the tradition of translation studies, comprising two separate disciplines, each interested in different subjects. Milton (2009) describes the practise of adaptation as one that usually deals with inter-semiotic and intralingual communication, rather than interlingual (which would be translation's field of operation), and mentions how adaptation studies could benefit from translation studies. Milton cites Venuti (2007) pointing to Toury's input in matter of *acceptability* and *adequacy*, the two opposing approaches to translation, wherein acceptability represents a submission to the target culture's norms and adequacy a submission to the source culture's norms[2]. These two concepts prove useful to define equivalence, a key concept in both translation and adaptation studies.

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2 Toury (1980), as defined by Hurtado Albir (2011).

Under Toury's vision, and in the context of literary translation, equivalence is not defined by the criteria of fidelity, neither by concepts such as adaptation nor recreation. Instead, it is defined by the function the text serves in the target culture and its literary system, which determines the norms that rule its acceptation in a given historical moment. There is, thus, no standard for translation: a translation is anything considered as such by the target culture. Therefore, all translated text is equivalent to the original, but norms ruling that translation may vary depending on the target culture, purpose or intended audience, among others. His is a flexible definition of equivalence, which enables the critical examination of a multiplicity of texts without discriminating or excluding on basis of 'unacceptability' or 'inequivalence'. Of course, this can be stretched to include adaptations as kindred to translations, and is especially relevant in cases where the separation between translation and adaptation is not made explicit or both occur simultaneously, such as in interlingual and inter-semiotic renditions. The concept of what is *equivalent* remains a constant in all these cases, becoming a powerful tool for the interpretation and interrogation of source and translated texts[3].

These criteria of analysis also apply to adaptation studies. As early as in 1948, in "Adaptation, or Cinema as Digest", film theorist André Bazin privileged equivalence against "faithfulness to form, literary or otherwise". Milton (2009) points specifically to target audience, as well as commercial and historical factors, as common figures to both adapters and translators. In this type of research, adaptations and translations do not compete for validity, each being objects of study in a void, but work together to reveal the complexities of contemporary cultural production, as an intertextuality studies superordinate, proposed by Cattrysse (2018), would have it.

2.2. Recreations and Beyond

In order to comprehensively examine a translation or adaptation, we must look into the cultural and ideological context in which it was translated and/or adapted, approaching it as a cultural product of the target system. According to Lefevere (1992), translation itself constitutes an act of *rewriting*, an activity performed under constraints of patronage, poetics and ideology initiated by the target systems. He also points out that rewriting is at work in adaptations for film and television, and that of the different forms of rewriting commonly engaged in, including criticism, editing, historiography and anthologies, translation is the most obviously recognisable and the most influential in projecting and disseminating the image of original authors and their works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin.

Similarly, not all texts are equally susceptible to the manipulative processes of *rewriting*; those that have entered the canon in a particular literary circuit are the texts which manipulative processes tend affect the most. Lefevere (1992) notes in *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* that there is a clear conservative bias of the system itself and of the power of rewriting. Canonised literature, most notably that of more than five centuries ago, remains secure through the power of new interpretations, which are often employed to bring the canonised work in line with contemporary poetics. But, as Susan Bassnett and Lefevere (1992) explain, rewriting also has the potential to introduce new concepts, genres, and devices, becoming a force of innovation and renovation (Even-Zohar's primary function). Conversely, rewriting can repress innovation and

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3 Venuti (2007) depicted the relation between translations, adaptations and source materials as "not only interpretative, fixing the form and meaning of the source materials, but as interrogative, exposing the cultural and social conditions of those materials and of the translation or adaptation that has processed them".

deformation (Even-Zohar's secondary function) as well. This double potential of rewriting is clearly made manifest in the multiple iterations older and canonised texts, prone to actualisation and academic scrutiny, go through. According to Bassnett and Lefevere, the study of the manipulative processes of literary rewriting can help us to better understand the world in which we live.

When applying these notions –unequivocally formulated in the context of written literature– to a broader set of textual products, such as inter-semiotic adaptations, extracting knowledge from translation studies and pouring it into adaptation studies, the possibility of analysis in common areas of criticism arises. Perhaps, as Cattrysse (2018) suggests, under the wider lens of intertextuality studies: finding the overlapping areas between the manifold incarnations (interlingual or inter-semiotic, written or audio-visual) of an original text.

2.3. Why *Torikaebaya monogatari*?

The choice of *Torikaebaya monogatari* as object of study responds to the preoccupations outlined in this chapter and the introduction. It is a highly dynamic text that has circulated in drastically different areas of various literary systems; it has been a 'novel' tale in the late Heian period, heavily censored after the Meiji Restoration, re-evaluated again into classical status after WWII and repurposed by contemporary writers and artists with their own artistic intentions. Moreover, it also answers a call to keep investigating Japanese fiction in the West, especially in a context of increasing globalisation and popularisation of East Asian media and culture. In her 2012 book *Bungakuryoku no chōsen* ('The Challenge of the Power of Literature'), feminist and literary scholar Takemura Kazuko wrote:

> As readings multiply and we move further and further away from the original, the text only becomes richer, reproducing itself in ever more productive ways, as these manifold readings circle back into the text, enabling the production of new texts. Therefore there is absolutely nothing unproductive about discussing American literature in Japan, in Japanese, to an audience made up exclusively of Japanese people. (Translated by Keith Vincent, 2017)

Takemura (2012) formulated this in regard to American and British literary studies in Japan, but Vincent (2017) extended her reflections to Japanese literary studies in America. Both scenarios, Vincent argues, involve complex notions of politics and identity, and raise important questions (i.e., what does it mean to study a country's texts outside their linguistic and geographical boundaries? Why do scholars feel 'attracted' to the study of foreign texts?), all of which remit to findings in feminism and queer theory. In the context of translated mass media productions, the same inquires hold true when thinking about the global flow of texts between distinct cultures (needless to say, not only those of Japan and the Anglosphere) that characterises not just translation, but also manga, cinema or video games. Literary studies, Japanese studies and queer studies have a long-shared history. So do translation studies, established in 1972 by its (gay) foundational father James Holmes and, by extension, adaptation studies. Naturally, all this shared fortune converges on occasion, as in comparative literature scholar Noriko Mizuta's 1991 *Hon'yaku to jendā: Trans/gender/lation*. Although defeated by the obsolescence of her terminology usage, Mizuta cleverly blurs the barrier between translations and original works, noting how Arthur Waley's translation of *Genji monogatari*, "a rendition that is very free and has numerous omissions" remains canonised as the *Genji monogatari* English-language translation, because its significance and relationship with other authors (Mizuta singles out Virginia Woolf) stands now for its own. All *Genji monogatari*'s interlingual translations, along with the original and intralingual translations (such as Akiko Yosano

or Fumiko Enchi's gynocentric renditions), remain separated versions, infinite *rewritings* of the same text. When added inter-semiotic adaptations and other derivative products, the "images" which Michael Emmerich (2008) argues participate in the canonisation of the *Genji* (actually any text), they become an interlinked web of *recreations*, intertextually communicating with each other. For this, I will use Sarah E. Davis (2015) proposed model of *textus*, a fabric woven by multiple *threads* (the individual texts) of various colours and textures to create a magnificent tapestry. What is perhaps even more exciting of her essay, is how Mizuta (1991) evidences the ties between translation, gender and sexuality, recklessly linking the figure of the translator (or rewriter) to the bilingual, the bicultural and, more strikingly, the bisexual (a word she seems to conflate with transgender, and even hermaphrodite, as relating to both manhood and womanhood).

The choice of a classical Japanese text whose biggest point of contention among translators and adapters is the issue of gender and sexuality, expressed linguistically and narratively, seemed only appropiate. *Torikaebaya monogatari* is, to this day, a text accessible in catalogues of Japanese studies, LGBT bookstores, online manga communities and multiplex cinemas. It has mutated multiple times owing not only to its nature as text and cultural product, but also specifically for its resonance with the act of translation/rewriting and adaptation/recreation. Mizuta (1991) ends her essay with the following words:

> That text, where creation = translation, as a wake (a vigil for the dead and an awakening) that watches over its life, and death. A tale of eternal self-transformation interposed between birth, life and death, from heterogeneous to homogeneous, homogeneous to heterogeneous, homosexual to heterosexual, man to woman, woman to man. If translation is a tale of transformation (metamorphosis/metaphor), then translation into and from entities other than human beings is the very destiny of translation and the "task" it fulfills. (Translated by Judy Wakabayashi, 2006)

How she seems to be foreshadowing our heroes' journey through time, space, and gender theory.

3. An Overview on *Torikaebaya monogatari*

Torikaebaya monogatari is the story of a pair of half-siblings who, since early childhood, exhibit a behaviour typically associated with that of the opposite gender. Their powerless father, a high-ranking aristocrat, decides to present them to society with their genders swapped: his extremely social and proactive daughter (Himegimi) becomes thus his son, and his shy and delicate son (Wakagimi) becomes his daughter. The title word, *Torikaebaya*, which can be translated to 'If I could change them', reflects the father's desire to bring his children back in line to their initially assigned genders.

Contrary to this, the siblings grow up and become paragons of their newly acquired genders, with Himegimi (now a male-presenting aristocrat) escalating in the court ranks due to his radiant appearance and skill in playing music and composing Chinese-style poetry. Meanwhile, Wakagimi becomes the ward to the imperial princess and remains secluded, refusing even the highest-ranking suitors. During the first half of the novel, Himegimi is the focus of the story as well as the hero, with Wakagimi given little importance in comparison. Eventually, Himegimi acquires the position of Chūnagon (Middle Counsellor) and later Taishō (General)[4], while simultaneously growing

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4 For the sake of clarity and harmony with other research, plot and character references to Himegimi prior to adopting a female identity are as Chūnagon or female Chūnagon regardless of her actually held title.

dissatisfied from his wife, who has been cheating on him, and his position in court. It is important to note that, from this point onwards, the whole tale is plagued by numerous sexual encounters, some sanctioned by the customs of the Heian court and some illegit, such as the liaison between Chūnagon's wife Shi no Kimi and Saishō.

Finding solace in the company of a hermit prince and his two daughters (the Yoshino princesses), Chūnagon's plans of retiring and becoming a monk are discarded when he is raped by his friend and rival Saishō. After this incident, Saishō becomes enamoured of the hero and, because Chūnagon gets pregnant, he is secretly moved to a secluded dwelling in Uji. There, during the pregnancy and later delivery, Chūnagon is pressured to give up his male identity and re-acquires a female persona. Parallelly, Wakagimi hears of her brother's unknown whereabouts, and tears her female identity to go out in the search of Chūnagon. Now presenting as male, Wakagimi finds out about the events and decides to exchange lives with her brother, effectively becoming Chūnagon, while Himegimi adopts the role of retainer to the imperial princess and goes now by his former sister's name, Naishi no Kami.

Eventually, both siblings climb even further the social ladder, with Himegimi (now Naishi no Kami) marrying the emperor and bearing him children, and Wakagimi (now Taishō) being appointed Sadaijin (Minister of the Left) and regent, and successfully maintaining three spouses. Their father retires to become a monk, and his perpetual worry for his children peculiar condition is replaced with joy and unabashed pride.

The authorship of *Torikaebaya monogatari* remains a mystery. In any case, it must be noted that the extant version of the tale is a reworking of an older one (the *Furu torikaebaya*), whose authorship is likely different to that of the later version. During the Meiji period, the work was assumed to be of male authorship, as the physical and erotic content of the tale was deemed impossible for a woman to pen. This was refuted by Suzuki in 1973, presenting other texts of similar tone penned by female authors that discredited this preconception. While proof of female authorship does not exist, Willig (1983) points to the possibility of a female author rewriting the work of a man imitating woman's style of writing[5]. Other scholars, such as Robert Khan (1998), hint to a male author working in parodic mode.

While today the tale stands out for its interesting depiction of gender, it is paramount to consider its coetaneous reception to better understand its function as a cultural artefact. For this, the work of Imai (2020) in analysing the *Mumyōzōshi* is of tremendous value. The *Mumyōzōshi* ('Untitled Book') is a compilation of literary critiques on different *monogatari* and poetical anthologies. It is dated 1196-1202, around thirty years after the estimated composition of the *Ima torikaebaya*. While the author of the *Mumyōzōshi* is still unknown, the most commonly proposed candidate is Shunzei no Musume (1171?-1252?), the granddaughter of poet Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114-1204). The author dedicates some insightful discussion to the two versions of the tale. Of the two, the *Furu torikaebaya* is, to their judgement, significantly inferior, and was exceptionally improved by the revision of *Ima torikaebaya*. The main points of divergence between the two tales seem to be, according to Imai, a difference in treatment of Himegimi's gender identity. As a novel idea (*mezurashiki koto*), the gender 'transition' was more drastic and not elaborated upon in the older text, whereas the updated version justifies it through the Buddhist rhetoric of karmic retribution. Of the commentary on both versions, it is extracted that coetaneous audiences did empathise with Himegimi-as-Chūnagon's

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5 Willig (1983), p. 4. She supports her theory citing Sen'ichi Hisamatsu (1971). Such cases were not uncommon during the Heian period. The early extant literary diary, the *Tosa Diaries*, is one example.

struggles to conceal his condition and Shi no Kimi's cheating on him. But this empathy, Imai argues, stems from the unconditional understanding of Himegimi as a woman, even when in the persona of Chūnagon, which the *Ima torikaebaya* strengthens in order to avoid the "mistakes" of the older version, which is considered "terrifying" and "exaggerated" instead.

As pointed out by Pflugfelder (1992) and Garde (2009), the tale is plagued by verbs of transience and mutability –*naru* (become), *kawaru* (change into), *manebu* (imitate) and even *onnabu*, a verb which derives from the noun for woman (*onna*) and translates as 'to appear feminine'– that reinforce a narrative of change. Clothing and costume play a crucial functional and symbolic role, oftentimes being the main indicator of the character's current gender persona. Despite this focus on transformation, modern scholarship remains torn between the identification of its main theme as a vehicle for parody and burlesque, as Garde, Khan (1998) and research on other Heian tales such as *Taketori monogatari* indicates, or an empathetic drama possibly rooted in personal experience, to which Willig (1983), Gatten (1984), Pflugfelder and the *Mumyōzōshi* hint at. Of course, these two viewpoints may not be irreconcilable at all, as future renditions of the tale, combining comedy and drama, will prove a thousand years later.

All of this allows us to better understand the *Torikaebaya* not as a mere mediocre imitative tale, a radically subversive piece of literature or a threatening manifesto, but as a cultural artefact that amused and entertained readership for centuries before falling back into relative obscurity. Needless to say, it was not contemplated as a proof of decadence as the Meiji intelligentsia noted, even if its nostalgic tone and the time period framing its writing could indicate such thing. This is interesting not in order to demerit modern interpretations of its gender portrayal or its role in the compilation of a possible gender-transgressive Japanese literary canon[6], but to form a consistent point of departure for the different reincarnations the text has gone through in the last century, whose biggest point of contention is precisely the heavily gendered nature of the text.

4. The Ancient Echoes:
Recreations in Modern Literature, Stage, Manga and Animation

The understanding of a text across languages, time and space is not limited to a binary comprised of the original work and its rewritings (interlingual or intralingual). In her 2015 doctoral dissertation, adaptation and film studies scholar Sarah E. Davis states that "using adaptation as a map, one is able to use the knowledge extracted from all forms of representational expression in an attempt to understand the world", in a similar vein to how Lefevere argued that the studying of the translation process "can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live" (Bassnett & Lefevere, 1992). Davis then proposes the concept of *textus* as a tool to analyse the complete textual fabric woven by individual threads –or the individual representations that stem from a source text; a tapestry made of different objects that may or may not intersect in colour, shape or texture, but create together something grander whose mastery depends on a clever use of that exact difference in colour, shape or texture. "These variances permit a greater image to be produced, since if the tapestry were woven all in one solid colour, no dimension or narrative would emerge" (Davis, 2015).

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6 Hasegawa (2006) and Matsushita (2015) positively defend the *Torikaebaya* adherence to transgender or gender-neutral literature, opposed to earlier cataloguing and terminology employed by scholars such as Suzuki, who focused on pathologising vocabulary.

The textus is the tapestry, and the different texts, original included, its threads[7]. As we know, the impact of classic works of literature, or any artistic work for that matter, reaches beyond themselves or their translations; it replicates through numerous adaptations in film, theatre, comic, animation and video game, among others, and its waves splash onto other seemingly unrelated artefacts, creating an intertextual web, a family of texts with no clear beginning (especially in already highly derivative works such as *Torikaebaya monogatari*) and no end in sight. And if for Lefevere and Bassnett the act of *rewriting* replaces translation as object of study in translation studies, introducing concepts such as ideology and manipulation, then the act of *recreation* may replace adaptation as object of study in adaptation studies, a field especially aware of the deformation texts go through in the process of changing media. This tentative framework may develop in the context of the intertextuality studies or influence studies proposed by Cattrysse (2018) too, where the two aforementioned schools are combined for a much-needed strategy in approaching the *textus*, a tapestry consisting of original works, translations and adaptations.

With this approach in mind, we can look into the fabric of the *Torikaebaya* in multiple ways. We could have a tapestry with the *Torikaebaya monogatari* at its core, with its translations and manga and theatre adaptations stemming from there. We could also consider certain Japanese animation series and films featuring gender-bending or an identity swap between a male and a female as highly derivative of the *Torikaebaya*, and thus eligible for joining the tapestry, as it is the case of *Your Name.*, which at one point was tentatively titled *Yume to shiriseba – danjo Torikaebaya monogatari* ('If I knew it was a dream – male and female Torikaebaya monogatari')[8]. Even other non-adaptation texts such as Yukio Mishima's 'Onnagata', which precisely builds on the intertextuality afforded by the *Torikaebaya*, can be understood as segments of the larger fabric. But a strong case can be made for removing the *Torikaebaya monogatari* from the centre of the tapestry altogether. As already discussed, the tale we know today (the *Ima torikaeabaya*) is itself a rewriting, part of the *Furu torikaebaya*'s own fabric. And even the *Furu torikaebaya* is a derivative work owing in large part to the influential *Genji monogatari*, whose tapestry stretches throughout centuries of imitative *giko monogatari*, parodies and countless adaptations.

There are two additional considerations that make of *Torikaebaya monogatari* a wonderful case of study for its adaptations. The first is the continuation or amplification of the original's commentaries on sex, gender and sexuality. The different *Torikaebaya* adaptations benefit from the original's peculiar depiction of gender and sexual identity for making their own assertions on those themes, often to a more radical degree. The temporal and geographical circumstances of these adaptations (modern Japan) as well as the varying advantages of the chosen media allowed for more creative interpretations of the classic. This, coupled with a well-documented proliferation of LGBT literature and manga during the 70-80s and a growing acceptance of transgender individuals in Japan, created the perfect conditions for a native pop culture reappropriation of the *Torikaebaya*[9]. It is hardly a coincidence that two of its earliest derivative works rely on the figure of professional theatrical crossdressers, the *onnagata* (men specialising in female roles in kabuki theatre) and the *otokoyaku*

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7 We can attempt to distribute space in the tapestry according to its relationship with the source text (located at the center), with intralingual translations, interlingual translations, adaptations and homages (among others) in progressively more peripheric positions.

8 *Eiga "Kimi no Na wa." kōshiki saito* ["Your Name." official film site] (2016).

9 For more about the origins of *shōnen-ai*, *yaoi*, *bara* and *yuri*, some of the labels given to Japanese contemporary LGBT literature and manga, and their interconnectedness with Heian classics such as the *Torikaebaya*, see Magera's *Origins of the Shōnen-ai and Yaoi Manga Genres* (2019).

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(women specialising in male roles in Takarazuka plays). Secondly, they ditch the interpretation debate that marks its written translations. Instead of vying for a serious or comedic interpretation, the existence of some of the adaptations demonstrates that both readings and modes can coexist in a single *Torikaebaya* recreation, at least to the extent that a given medium has to offer. They also benefit from existing further away from the centre of the tapestry and thus are allowed more self-reliant and innovative approaches. For the purpose of this article, whose focus lies on the iterations the *Torikaebaya* has gone through across time and space, four texts, each in a different media, have been selected. These are:

a) Yukio Mishima's short story 'Onnagata'

b) Takarazuka Revue's stage play *Yukariko*

c) Chiho Saitō's manga *Torikae baya*

d) Makoto Shinkai's animated film *Your Name.*

4.1. Queer Flowers and Revelations: The Torikaebaya in Yukio Mishima's 'Onnagata'

If the extant *Ima torikaebaya* is to occupy the centre of the *Torikaebaya textus*, then the short story 'Onnagata' by Yukio Mishima (1925-1970) would be the most distant and barely woven thread of the fabric. Originally published in 1957, the story has been translated into several languages and included in updated versions of the 1953 anthology *Manatsu no shi* (*Death in Midsummer*), the first being the North American *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories* in 1966[10]. It centres on a spiralling love triangle between young kabuki stage assistant Masuyama, veteran *onnagata* performer Mangiku and up-and-coming contemporary theatre director Kawasaki, as they work on a stage play adaptation of non-other than *Torikaebaya monogatari*.

For some decades prior to Willig's translation, 'Onnagata' was the main entry point to the *Torikaebaya monogatari* in the West, and despite the two texts existing firmly rooted in different literary traditions, elements of the Heian classic echo in Mishima's story, who gives his own anticipative take on the *performativity* of gender and its ramifications in art, filtered by multiple layers: authorship, fiction and fiction within fiction. Moreover, these layers are not only narrative; they are equally performative (in both its traditional and Butlerian meanings). The characters in 'Onnagata' rarely act instinctively, and are instead bound to duty and craftmanship, as it is the case of Mangiku's curated feminine demeanour even outside his female roles. And, as he plays the role of Wakagimi as a female courtesan, his biggest challenge is performing a double-layered character; Mangiku is a female impersonator performing another female impersonator. *Performativity* becomes an extremely useful word for studying both the *Torikaebaya* and 'Onnagata', texts in which the characters take the meaning of performance to the full through tangible elements (costume and make-up), measurable skills (acting and 'passing') and metaphysical notions of gender. Finally, much has been written about Mishima's own homoerotic literary output and private life –often marked by contrasts between his heterosexual marriage and status as a gay icon, furthering 'Onnagata' as a testament to the performativity and symbolic nature of gender and sexuality[11].

10 This is the edition that has been consulted for analysis. The translation of 'Onnagata' is penned by Donald Keene. Additionally, the Spanish edition (*La perla y otros cuentos*, retranslated from English by Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazu) has also been consulted.

11 For Mishima's 'Onnagata' own relationship with queer theory and performativity, see chapter 2 of Moro's 2013 doctoral thesis, *Writing Behind the Scenes: Visions of Gender and Age in Enchi Fumiko's World of Performing Arts*.

While the performance of the *Torikaebaya* (*If Only I Could Change Them!* in Keene's pre-*The Changelings* translation) acquires an incidental function in the text, there is a continuation and radicalisation of *Torikaebaya monogatari*'s complex gender identity play, for which Mishima creates narrative parallels between it and his text, as well as innovations of his own. Some parallels exist as plot devices, such as the quintessence of femininity residing in a male *performer* (Mangiku, who tries to bring his *onnagata* expertise into his real-life behaviour, and Wakagimi, who socialises as a female courtesan until Himegimi's disappearance), or the transferring of the many verbs of mutability present in the original into the symbolic transformations Mangiku goes through as he leaves the stage and changes back into his private self while still wearing "several layers of splendid costume behind his skin", his nakedness being a "passing manifestation"[12].

The main areas of innovation in Mishima's 'Onnagata' lie in what Moro (2013) describes as its "investigation of the link between gender identity on the stage and gender identity connected to sexuality in real life." Sexuality and sexual orientation are elements often overlooked in *Torikaebaya monogatari*'s modern scholarship and marketing, which tends to favour an outwardly more fruitful examination of gender identity and performance. However, Mishima's concern with homosexual desire, traceable in most of his oeuvre, impacts his approach to the *Torikaeabaya*'s own gender and sexuality commentary. This is rapidly noticeable in the character of Masuyama, who is infatuated with Mangiku to the point of rejecting other female staff, which he likens to a zoologic, for not matching Mangiku's ideal femineity. By presenting a homosexual attraction in a heteroerotic framework, Mishima mirrors what, in Pflugfelder's vocabulary, were the same-sex but cross-gender relationships of the *Torikaebaya*. These mainly involved Himegimi-as-Chūnagon in his liaisons with Shi no Kimi and the Yoshino princesses, but as a result of one party ignoring the other's actual sex, they were not integrally same-sex, at least not reciprocally so. It also mirrors (albeit invertedly) what Imai labels as a "heterosexual with a homosocial guise"[13] relationship, such as Chūnagon's intimacy with Saishō. Pflugfelder (1992) judges, quite sensibly, the complexity of these dynamics as beyond "a simple 'homosexual'/'heterosexual' dichotomy". Of course, this recalls the validity of Sedgwick's 'homosocial continuum'[14] in premodern patriarchal societies and its disruption, partial according to Vincent (2012), in modern Japan.

As a result of that rupture, Mishima's work stems from a radically different tradition that eschews that complexity and replaces it with a different ruleset. In his prologue to the translation of Ihara Saikaku's 17th century *Nanshoku ōkagami* (*The Great Mirror of Male Love*), Paul G. Schalow (1991) describes it as "a Western literary idiom characterized by a strategy of masking (hiding the fact of homosexual love) and then signalling (revealing it)"[15]. Precisely because Mishima is aware of homosexuality existing in non-dominant position, he is able to articulate a way for the trio of protagonists to interact with the *Torikaebaya*'s premodern same-sex and same-gender eroticism.

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12 Keene (1966), p. 144. Moro (2013) translates this expression, *kari no sugata* (仮の姿) as "temporary figure". Both translations and original coincide with the *Torikaebaya*'s insistence on transience and mutability.

13 Imai (2020), p. 34. Imai argues throughout his dissertation that Chūnagon's cultural intelligibility as a woman makes his intimacy with Saishō essentially heterosexual, conforming to observed patterns of heterosexual romance in other Heian *monogatari*. Mishima, however, creates an ultimately masculine identity for Mangiku, whose relationship with Masuyama could be interpreted as "homosexual with a heterosocial guise".

14 As Vincent (2012) explains in *Two-timing modernity: homosocial narrative in modern Japanese fiction*, the 'homosocial continuum' is a concept theorised by feminist scholar Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick that "connects 'men-loving-men' on the one hand with 'men-promoting-the-interests-of-men' on the other".

15 Schalow (1991), p.5.

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For this, he contrasts the attraction dynamics between Mangiku and Kawasaki, and Mangiku and Masuyama.

In the first pairing, the one that succeeds at the very end, the relationship is unequivocally homosexual, acknowledged by both sides as a male-male romance, and coincides with Mishima's own vision of homosexuality as "when a man loves another man completely as a man"[16], which he associated to *bunraku* (a form of traditional puppet theatre). On the contrary, Masuyama desire for Mangiku is dominated by heteronormative notions of femaleness, and much like the *Torikaebaya* protagonists, exists in perpetual angst and regret for not conforming to the predicated standards of sex, gender and sexuality of the period. Masuyama and Mangiku's relationship presents an atavism of premodern Japan's homosocial continuum; it encapsulates what Mishima deemed as *queer* (as opposed to *homosexual*): the "emotional" and "psychologist" kabuki theatre and, by extension, the heterogender (or cross-gender)-like roles of *nanshoku* and other premodern same-sex institutions, as well as, quite possibly, the *Torikaebaya* itself, given the close metatextual relationship it has with the other listed objects. Like the evil *tengu* presumedly responsible for Himegimi and Wakagimi's misfortunes, a flower of evil (*aku no hana*), as Mishima describes it, blossoms from kabuki, the in-text chosen medium for the performance of *Torikaebaya monogatari*, furthering its association with 'incorrectness' and 'queerness'. It was made clear that, for Mishima during his later years, kabuki was "queer" (*okama*)[17]. And in 'Onnagata', the *Torikaebaya*, masterfully channelled by Mangiku, is too. Onstage, Mangiku is prompted "not to make any special attempt even in the last scene to suggest that he [Wakagimi] was in fact a man"[18]. Offstage, Mangiku ends up shedding his feminine manners and embracing his identity as a homosexual man, delineating the two differing instances of homoerotic desire that the *Torikaebaya* and contemporaneity may represent.

This vision of *Torikaebaya monogatari* as a queer text, however cynical, is perhaps Mishima's most significant contribution to the *Torikaebaya textus*. The radical difference in the reception of its themes among coetaneous, Meiji-era and contemporary audiences can be attributed to the partial rupture of premodern Japan's homosocial continuum and, with it in mind, a reconstruction of the *Torikaebaya*'s ancient discourse can be manipulated and incorporated in the present. Unlike other adaptations and translations (especially Jesús Carlos Álvarez Crespo's 2018 Spanish translation, which severed homosexuality form *Si pudiera cambiarlos* in the very introduction), the intertextual play in 'Onnagata' highlights the *Torikaebaya*'s possible insights on contemporary sexuality identities, their construction and their performativity.

4.2. Dressed to Impress: *Yukariko*, two plays by Takarazuka Revue

Though a superficial comparison, a parallel equivalent to the figure of the *onnagata* exists in contemporary Japan in the *otokoyaku*, the female performers specialised in male roles in Takarazuka Revue plays. Takarazuka itself is a product of modern Japan, first established in 1913 by the Hankyu Railway Corporation, whose major attraction is its all-female cast for both female and male roles. Unlike traditional forms of kabuki, *bunraku* and noh theatre, Takarazuka specialises in the musical

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16 Takechi Tetsuji (1979), "Mishima Yukio: Shi to sono kabuki" quoted in Moro (2013), p. 79.

17 Mishima was not alone among the Shōwa era writers that related kabuki to queerness. Another one was Fumiko Enchi, as pointed out by Moro's (2013) investigation on Enchi's *Onnagata ichidai* (1985), a work also in conversation with Mishima's 'Onnagata' and, ultimately, the *Torikaebaya textus*.

18 Keene (1966), p. 151.

adaptation of popular Western works of fiction like *The Great Gatsby* or *Gone with the Wind*, in addition to classical Japanese plays (e.g., Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *The Courier of Hell*) and *monogatari* (e.g., *Genji monogatari*), sometimes mediated by other adaptations, like manga or films.

Such is the case of the two *Torikaebaya monogatari* adaptations produced by the company, both titled *Yukariko – Torikaebaya ibun* and based on Toshie Kihara loose manga recreation of the Heian original, *Torikaebaya ibun* ('The curious tale of Torikaebaya'). The first of the two plays was performed in 1987, while the latter happened in 2010. Kihara, herself a member of the influential *shōjo* manga Year 24 Group, included her adaptation of the *Torikaebaya*[19] in a series named *Yume no ishibumi* ('Monument of dreams', 1984-1998), marking one of the precedents for the exploration of Japan's premodern past in the otherwise modern and westbound *shōjo* genre[20]. In her adaptation, or rather inspired retelling, the *Torikaebaya* is chronologically transported to the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1568-1600), a leap in time away from the idealised and aristocratic late Heian period of the original and into the feudal and militaristic imagery of the Sengoku (lit. warrying states) era. The space of action consequentially moves from the capital, Heian-kyō, to the provinces, specifically the domains of a Saeki clan in Aki province (modern-day Hiroshima prefecture). Kihara's setting and drastic plot changes are maintained in both *Yukariko* plays, which nonetheless offer an interesting example of artistic manipulation and contribute with new perspectives to the *Torikaebaya* family *textus*, especially in regard to the nuances of gender portrayal, sexuality, and performance.

The issue of layered performance from 'Onnagata' reoccurs in *Yukariko* as a result of a number of actresses performing opposite gender roles while enacting an already highly performative tale, as pointed out by Pflugfelder[21]. In her pioneering monograph on Takarazuka theatre, Jennifer Robertson (1998) argued that, as attested by kabuki and Takarazuka, "neither femininity nor masculinity has been deemed the exclusive province of either female or male bodies"[22]. Femininity in male bodies can be found in *onnagata* such as Mangiku and his ever-womanly Wakagimi. With masculinity as the province of female bodies, Robertson is of course talking about the *otokoyaku*, traceable to Himegimi's male persona in *Torikaebaya monogatari*. Notably, in both *Yukariko* plays, the equivalent character to Himegimi (the titular Yukariko) is played by an *otokoyaku* (Saori Mine in the 1987 version and Hiromu Kiriya in the 2010 one), initially suggesting it is an essentially male role. Indeed, Yukariko's actresses perform their papers in a complete *otokoyaku* fashion, practically never changing register. But as *Yukariko*'s plot moves forward, it is made increasingly clear that the heroine's gender is invariably female, and the outcome is an actress playing the role of a masculine woman who temporarily disguises as a male (and briefly, as Yukariko's brother, a masculine man posing as a feminine woman), yet never completely installing in the province of neither femaleness or maleness when considering the layer of iconography that Takarazuka incorporates (i.e., the fact

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19 Hers was the second ever manga adaptation of the tale. The first one was Naomi Yamauchi's *The Change!* (ざ·ちぇんじ！, serialised between 1983-1985 and compiled into four volumes between 1987-1988), based on a homonymous short story by Saeko Himuro.

20 This shift towards premodern (especially Heian) Japanese fiction by female *shōjo* authors is noted by Magera (2019), who also points to Ryoko Yamagishi's *The Emperor of the Land of the Rising Sun* (1980-1984) and Chiho Saitō's *Torikae baya* (2012-2018).

21 Pflugfelder (1992), p. 354-355: "More appropriate, perhaps, for understanding the sex/gender system of Torikaebaya than the nature/nurture debate is a perspective that emphasises the performative aspects of gender. Wakagimi's decision to become a man may be likened to a stage actor who tackles a difficult part and knows that it will take some time to learn all the lines."

22 Robertson (1998), p. 51.

that *otokoyaku* are meant to perform male roles and do so in a stereotypically mannish way). However, Robertson also reminds us of a crucial difference between the kabuki and Takarazuka practises: while the *onnagata* metamorphoses entirely into a woman (at least insofar as Mishima is concerned), the *otokoyaku* is only allowed to *look* like a man, and only before marriage and motherhood, in a strikingly similar vein to Himegimi's own career as Chūnagon. That difference may be key to conciliate the *otokoyaku* status of the lead actresses and the gender of the role they play (Yukariko, not Himegimi), as in both cases their gender is female and their temporary guise male[23].

Since in *Torikaebaya ibun* Yukariko is the secret twin of the daimyo of Aki, no direct equivalent to Wakagimi exists, and the male twin (Midorio), barely seen on-stage, is also played by lead actresses Mine and Kiriya. Yukariko is therefore the sole protagonist, swapping between the personae of Yukariko and Midorio (roughly equivalent to Chūnagon in the original), as part of a single role. The two other major roles are Fubuki, a ninja sent on a quest to kill Midorio and love interest for Yukariko, and Maizuru, a princess of the powerful Mōri clan and Midorio's betrothed, played by an *otokoyaku* and *musumeyaku* (actress of female roles) respectively.

Recalling Davis' (2015) greatly useful tool offering for adaptation analysis, her concepts of *interstices* and *traces* become especially relevant for tackling many aspects of Takarazuka's *Torikaebaya*. Davis defines *interstices* as "particular dramatic moments or other key locations that appear within each of the threads, where analysis will likely bear most fruit", and *traces* as "basic categories of aesthetic creativity, such as author and voice, modified as appropriate for the medium in question". Her method prompts us to look for commonalities in adaptations that may not present them at first glance, and ask why they manifest differently in each thread (or individual recreation). For instance, one of the most prominent *Torikaebaya* interstices is the pivotal gender-swap between the siblings. As it happens in *Yukariko*, though, its raison d'être is not so much a forced transition for the safeguard of their family's reputation as it is an improvised political ploy, and Midorio's minor part in the script and early death sways the main tone from a comprehensive gender study/critique to a political drama that *happens* to feature a female protagonist capable of passing as a man. Yukariko's identity throughout the story is consistently self-described as female[24] and, since most of the cast is well aware of her situation, her male guise is only relevant to minor characters, most major male characters interacting with her in a cross-gender manner. Additionally, as in *Torikaebaya monogatari*, Yukariko's identity swap also represents a change in status and power, as she advances from a financially constrained, naive prostitute to the *de facto* ruler of the Saeki domain, although Yukariko's sex-gender configuration does not revert her social climb like it happens with Himegimi[25].

As Tyger notes in her 2020 thesis on the themes of gender and motherhood in the Torikaebaya, in Japan's theatrical crossdressing tradition "clothes are the main tools with which these performers express gender"[26]. The importance of clothes, costume and make-up for the gender performativity

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23 A point must be made for many *otokoyaku*, including the late Saori Mine, nuanced approach their gender identity. A poem by Mine quoted and translated by Robertson says: "Today is my farewell party / To Love? / N-O. / **Inside** am I a man? A woman? / I strike a **pose** as one / and **the other** grows bored. / Well, / when the next page is turned / another me. (Robertson [1998], p. 47, emphasis my own)

24 She insists in this matter in almost all scenes of the play, such as in an early dialogue in the brothel, in which she replies to Fubuki's surprise at Yukariko showing up as a prostitute with "I am a woman" (わたしは女だ, *watashi wa onna da*). Translations are my own.

25 A case can be made for Himegimi's resumed career as Shi no Kimi as continued social climbing into the imperial family itself, but the accompanying sorrow and regret makes this social success bittersweet at the very least.

26 Tyger (2020), p. 41. She is of course referring to the crossdressing tradition of the Takarazuka Revue.

in the *Torikaebaya* is evidenced in the Takarazuka performances. Just as "when Himegimi secludes herself at Uji, adopting feminine garb, blackening her teeth, and drinking a hair-growing potion, the resulting transformation is not merely one of appearance but of attitude as well" (Pflugfelder, 1992), a change in hairstyle is sufficient for the apparently male Midorio to reveal herself as actually Yukariko. It must be noted, though, that Yukariko's mannerisms do not alter significantly after the reveal, demonstrated by the fact that Mine and Kiriya never actually give up their *otokoyaku* 'femaleness', manly enough to allow Yukariko perform Midorio's duties without arousing suspicion. Yukariko's boyish femininity is never deprecated but praised, and only occasionally does it result in an intentionally comic effect, as when she tries to court Fubuki with masculine assertiveness.

However, unlike Himegimi's, we must remember that Yukariko's journey is not from man to woman, but from (manly) woman to man. Himegimi was born a girl but socialised from early age as a boy, and her narrated transition is that towards a female identity unknown to her, which causes grief and sorrow. Yukariko's transformation is a much more painless one. Her transition from womanhood, albeit a mannish one, towards a male identity is completely voluntary, and she makes her actual gender clear to her allies and close friends whenever possible. When she is publicly exposed, a traumatic prospect for Himegimi, Yukariko proudly embraces her womanhood and, more importantly, does not renounce the power she was conferred with while in male disguise. She is not punished for her temporary transgression but rewarded. Upon the inevitable loss of her small clan against the combined forces of the Oda and Mōri clans, she is offered amnesty for her female condition, but she refuses and commits double suicide along her lover. Yukariko, confident in her identity and ideals, denies the fragility of the femininity as it is imposed on her, instead combining it with the 'male-gendered virtues' of courage and leadership. She creates a new *otokoyaku* femininity in her own terms, a possibility denied to Himegimi now made possible in the Takarazuka plays. Much like the original itself, *Yukariko*'s gender dynamics escape traditional notions of what constitutes femaleness, and while playing it safe and relying on a simplistic pink-blue binary system[27], the way gender is performed on-stage with the help of costume, make-up and skilful acting works in communion with the *Torikaebaya textus* to reveal the claustrophobic limitedness of traditional gender roles.

Another observable interstice is the heroes' liaisons, another of *Yukariko*'s most relevant departures from *Torikaebaya monogatari*. Whereas Chūnagon, however intelligible a woman, demonstrates erotic interest and mingles with female characters (e.g., the Yoshino princesses) as well as male characters (e.g., Saishō), Yukariko entirely avoids erotic interaction with women, reserving all her amatory capabilities for Fubuki's character. There is courtship and intimacy between Yukariko and Maizuru, albeit always with the goal of securing Midorio's own welfare and ultimately sublimating into solidarity for their equally tragic heterosexual relationships. While this may initially appear as a missed opportunity to play with the consequences of Yukariko's appropriation of Midorio's powerful, male-gendered position, we must not forget the medium in which this manipulated script is being enacted; an all-female troupe consisting of male impersonators and exaggeratedly feminine actresses. The potential for a lesbian or queer reading of the heroine's romantic interests does not disappear as much as it is transported from script to stage. Even so, one must not interpret any Takarazuka play as merely a lesbian fantasia, for which Robertson (1998) points of Takarazuka fans (overwhelmingly female) that "the style may be 'femme - butch', but the identity is as a Takarazuka fan and not necessarily as a 'lesbian', much less a 'lesbian feminist'". It must also be noted that even

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27 One of the opening sequences features a mixed-gender fan dance in which the fans reveal a pink-coloured side and a blue-coloured side as they are rotated, anticipating *Yukariko*'s central gimmick.

though Fubuki shows interest in Yukariko before ascertaining her gender, similarly to how Saishō comes to admire Chūnagon[28], any homoerotic tension is resolved immediately as Fubuki recovers from his 'gay panic' and comes to terms with the fact that his beloved's gender aligns with what is expected of his amorous habits when he meets her at the brothel (never mind the extended and well documented practise of male homosexual prostitution in medieval Japan)[29]. With the comfort of Yukariko's immutable gender identity, Fubuki stays by her side as she carries on as Midorio. His biggest character development occurs as he is asked to substitute for Yukariko-as-Midorio and lie in bed with Maizuru, which pains both lovers and arouses inevitable feelings of jealousy, a recurrent motif for the original Saishō. In this notion, *Yukariko* not only transforms *Torikaebaya monogatari*'s text, but also contributes to its tapestry in a very explicit way, creating a completely new rendition of what the *Torikaeabaya* can mean to a given audience, and which themes it is allowed to convey. In this case, Takarazuka offers to its overwhelmingly female public a tailored historical fantasy that makes the most of its medium and particular theatrical tradition, tapping into *Torikaebaya*'s emancipatory potential in the form of a resolute Yukariko that never gives up her identity as a (heterosexual) woman and, by extension, her ideals.

In a scene where the villain, Geki, prepares a murderous plot with his *shinobu* agents, he says that "women are tools"[30]. Given the recurrence of the gender-status articulation in *Yukariko*, it would not be farfetched to consider his stance as partially applicable: gender, expressed performatively, is in fact a tool that characters use for survival. A female costume allows Midorio to convalesce in his castle without causing alarm, and a male guise for Yukariko allows the Saeki clan to prolong its survival. Not only costumes, but identity itself becomes a tool: Yukariko's female identity allows her to enter the sex industry and alleviate her mother's illness, and later the option to be spared from death. In broader terms, performativity also guarantees *Yukariko*'s own existence (textually and metatextually) throughout a tradition of texts and genres exploiting the cavities of gender. In a wonderful display of intertextual tribute, Fubuki devises his plan for Midorio's swap with Yukariko inspired by a familiar tale of old, the *Torikaebaya monogatari*, extracting from its subversion of gender norms yet another tool for survival, as well as the origins of the Takarazuka recreations themselves. These, like the rest of its manga and anime adaptations, represent an attempt to recontextualise and translate a classic tale into a pop culture idiom, simultaneously raising questions relevant for contemporary audiences (what does it mean to be masculine or feminine? Who are masculine women allowed to be attracted by?) in modern language, furbished with ancient iconography and intertextuality.

4.3. After the Revolution: Chiho Saitō's *Torikae baya*

That Takarazuka Revue had a deep impact on the development of modern anime and manga is a well-known fact among enthusiasts and scholars of the three fields. Their connection can be traced

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28 Interestingly, Saishō's homoerotic interest in Chūnagon concludes in a sexual assault to what he understands to be a man. Pflugfelder (1992) likens this encounter to Genji's affair with the boy Kogimi, one of Heian Japan's most notable homosexual recounts, in which the male partner acts as an emotional substitute (*katami*) for another (for Saishō, Wakagimi-as-Naishi no Kami). Imai's research, however, may prove that Chūnagon's intelligibility as a female renders Saisho's attraction for him as fundamentally heterosexual.

29 Gary Leupp's 1997 classic monograph on male homosexuality in premodern Japan, *Male Colors: The Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan*, centres on the early modern period, but nevertheless provides a chronological overview to its development until that point.

30 "女は道具だ" (*onna wa dougu da*).

back to the childhood of Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989), whose manga series *Astroboy* 1952-1968) was adapted into Japan's first animated television series in 1963. Tezuka grew up in the city of Takarazuka and frequently attended the troupe's lavish stage performances accompanied by his mother. Along with Western productions such as Disney, Takarazuka's make-up and costumery contributed to building the bases for modern anime aesthetics. Of course, its influence did not stop at Tezuka's output. Its striking all-female cast and modern imagery, partially derived from Nobuko Yoshiya's literature and the post-World War I modern girl (*modan gāru*), especially impacted the *shōjo* genre, hints of which may also be found in Osamu Tezuka's *Princess Knight* manga series, "where a 'girl dressed as boy' character appears for the first time" (Magera, 2019). The link between crossdressing, the breaking of gender boundaries and girls' manga is a profound one, naturally leading the pioneering group of female *shōjo* authors, the 'Year 24 Group', to borrow from Takarazuka's particularisms, including not only its tropes and narratives but also the spirit of the *otokoyaku* performer as a woman confident in her female identity that does not give up on traits perceived as 'masculine'. Perhaps the character in anime and manga that best embodies this spirit is Utena, the titular heroine of *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, a 1996 manga created by Year 24 Group member Chiho Saitō (1967-) and elevated into canonical status as an anime directed in 1997 by Kunihiko Ikuhara (1964-). Its baroque world of labyrinthic academies, romance and gender-bending, where Utena and her 'rose braid' Anthy renounce to an idealised prince and quite literally open the gates to a world of possibility once gender constraints are shattered[31], was equal parts indebted to *Sailor Moon*'s success and the grandiosity of Takarazuka Revue, especially their iconic adaptation of *The Rose of Versailles* and Lady Oscar's androgenic beauty. It was quickly adapted into its first musical play under the title of *Comédie Musicale Utena la fillette révolutionnaire* in 1997, barely one year after the manga was first released. While not a Takarazuka production and far from its proportions and scope, it similarly featured an all-female cast for male and female characters, completing the feedback loop of influences[32].

With this much circling around themes and genres, it seems only natural that *Torikaebaya monogatari*'s third manga adaptation came from the hand of *Utena*'s author Chiho Saitō. Even though she failed to produce another work of such sophisticated monumentality as *Utena*, Saitō continued working on distinctive *shōjo* manga with a focus on gender and complex interpersonal relationship; *Torikae baya* (2012-2018)[33] is one of these works. Her adaptation adheres closer to the Heian tale than previous adaptations, and at the same time redefines basic notions of the *Torikaebaya* owing to its intended audience, firm artistic vision and commitment to the social changes taking place at the time. Two interstices have been selected and contrasted against original and previous versions for showcasing major divergences and their possible motivations.

The first of these major changes relates to the treatment of the protagonists' gender identity and inner speech. Like in the original, Sarasōjū and Suiren, Saitō's personal and unexchangeable names for Himegimi and Wakagimi respectively, are a pair of half-siblings who demonstrate interests and skills opposite to those of their assigned genders. Their father insists on correcting their behaviour until one day the carriage in which the siblings travel is attacked by bandits with *tengu* masks. Thanks

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31 For an in-depth analysis of *Revolutionary Girl Utena*'s themes and symbolisms, see chapter 9 in Napier (2005).

32 On the musical programme brochure handed by the theatre venue, Hakuhinkan Gekijō (1997), Saitō writes about her childhood dream of entering the Takarazuka.

33 Original untranslated title: とりかえ·ばや. The series was first published in *Monthly Flowers* (月刊フラワーズ) *jōsei* magazine in 2012, and the first compilatory volume was released in 2013 by Shōgakukan. The series ended in 2017 (thirteenth and last volume in 2018).

to her expertise in archery, Sarasōjū's is able to fend them off, but for Sarasōjū to adopt a masculine role in defending her brother she first needs to get rid of her girly robes and don Suiren's attire, else she would not be able to move freely and protect him. After this dramatic episode, the father concedes and Sarasōjū and Suiren go through the male and female coming of age ceremonies, respectively. Once adult, Sarasōjū begins to have dreams involving one of the bandits that attacked them, now morphed into an actual *tengu*, in which he is informed that by exchanging clothes and roles the siblings have made a *decision against nature*, and it is because of this decision that their life will be filled with adversity and difficulties. According to the bandit, the curse will only end when he eats the emperor.

For readers of the original or the translated versions, the appearance of a *tengu* in this sequence will naturally remit to the *tengu*'s ('goblin' in Willig's translation) curse behind Himegimi and Wakagimi's condition. However, as Tyger (2020) cleverly points out, the curse in *Torikae baya* is not a karmic retribution for past misdoings, but a logical result of their *choice* (*erabu*). Choice is a key concept in this version of the tale as, unlike in the original, gender becomes a matter of volition rather than a supernatural (or pathological) phenomenon. The heroes' conscious decision to play their strengths in a way that matches the genders they exhibit from early age is fundamentally linked to their hardships (lack of parental support, fear of being exposed, rape) not as isolated events (i.e., they exchange genders and go through hardships) but in a cause-effect relation (i.e., they exchange genders, so they go through hardships). Tyger comments on the possibility of this change of paradigm mirroring a raise in awareness of transgender people in Japan, still harshly discriminated against[34]. In her opinion, "the *tengu* in this dream represents contemporary society with traditional societal norms and the constant looming problems that trans-gendered (sic) individuals face in a rigid gendered society that does not accept the choices of the siblings' gender identities". But, as much as the *tengu* may symbolise a hostile exterior force harassing the protagonists, their inner speech also reveals interiorised conceptions of inferiority stemming from their own gender self-perception. After all, the manga starts with an unidentified sibling[35] murmuring "I am not a man, and I am not a woman. What on earth am I?"[36], pointing to their choice not being as resolute and firm as previously considered. This recurrent inner monologue, also present in the original and its translations, usually conveys the siblings lack of clear identity and dissatisfaction with their gender experience not matching their peers', as well as, in Saitō's version, their genders locking them out of certain possibilities (such as Sarasōjū's postpartum nostalgia for sports activities). In any case, their childhood decision, if voluntary at all, is compromised by both external and internal factors. Furthermore, Saitō's decision to have both siblings use genderless first-person pronoun *watashi* (in lieu of more gendered ones like *atashi*, *boku* or *ore*) contributes to the sense that, metatextually, Sarasōjū and Suiren do not reproduce gender as most juvenile manga characters do, although this particularity in speech extends to most of the cast regardless of gender self-perception. Given the still open debate in interpretation that the *Torikaebaya* posits among readers and scholars, and

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34 In 2021, a Human Rights Watch report condemned Japan's Gender Identity Disorder Special Cases Act, which requires transgender people not to have underage children and undergo surgical intervention if they wish to secure legal recognition of their gender identity. Retrieved from: https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/05/25/law-undermines-dignity/momentum-revise-japans-legal-gender-recognition-process

35 Tyger (2020) identifies them as Sarasōjū, which would coincide with her role as protagonist and main narrator of the story. However, given the nature of the statement and only the face and back of the character showing, a case could be made for Suiren giving the speech, or even an abstracted representation of both.

36 Saitō (2013), vol. 1: "男でもなく、女でもなく、私はいつたい何者なのかな" (*otoko de mo naku, onna de mo naku. Watashi wa ittai nani mono na no ka*).

Saitō's historical preference for ambiguity in matters of gender and sexuality[37], it would be accurate not to only think of *Torikae baya* as the "exploration of gender and trans-gender individuals who may not be comfortable with gendered social expectations" Tyger and major anime news outlets seem to qualify it as[38], but rather as an updated rendition of the original's themes of gender performativity and critique reflecting relevant social developments.

Moreover, the sibling's experience with gender, quite like in the original and in *Yukariko*, is asymmetrical. Just as it was Sarasōjū who chose to adopt a masculine role in driving away the bandits, the way they transition back to their originally assigned genders could not be more disparate, as are the psychological consequences. Tyger (2020) notes that while Sarasōjū's reasons to transition are physiology and unwanted pregnancy, Suiren's is sexual desire. Like Chūnagon, Sarasōjū's motherhood experience originates from rape, equally elliptical in both versions and a second interstice up for examination. Whereas in the original the action cuts abruptly from Saishō's assault on Chūnagon to the discovery of his female genitals, the manga features panels in which Tsuwabuki, the equivalent of Saishō, initiates sexual intercourse with a sleeping Sarasōjū. Tsuwabuki had previously become aware of Sarasōjū's anatomy when he accidentally touched his breasts, and confirms his suspicions taking advantage of Sarasōjū's unconscious state. After regaining consciousness, the two have sex, although Sarasōjū is shown on the brink of crying and emotionally distressed, mostly avoiding eye contact. He mourns his compromised manhood: "what will happen now with my life as a man?"[39]. Not even delivering a stillborn child, fruit of the aforementioned encounter, settles her identity as a woman, and after starting to perform as one, she attempts suicide by drowning in the Uji River, a scene highly evocative of Ukifune's equally frustrated attempt in *Genji monogatari*. She is rescued by Suiren, upon whose now masculine face Sarasōjū sees a reflection of her previous self. Like an *otokoyaku*, Sarasōjū is denied motherhood while living as a man, and she must renounce to that identity (which Tyger correctly classifies as not a choice)[40] to become a woman instead.

In contrast, Suiren's change from woman into man is far less traumatic, much like Sarasōjū's original transition into manhood was less problematic than Suiren's transition into woman adulthood[41]. This may suggest that becoming a man is regarded as a promotion of sorts (recalling Yukariko's raise to power), as it comes with better advantages. And while also rooted in corporeal matters, it is not motherhood but libido which ignites Suiren's more proactive desire to change genders. In order to pursuit a romance with the imperial princess, Suiren reverts to manhood, a decision equally revealing of not only Heian customs but also well-established *shōjo* tropes. Citing manga scholar

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37 Saitō's conflicting stance on *Utena*'s homoerotic tones, which she allegedly contained in order to give the audience a more ambiguous and marketable work, is recurrently discussed among fans of the show. In contrast, Kunihiko Ikuhara's original *Adolescence of Utena* stand-alone film is much more overt and explicit.

38 Major anime news site *Anime News Network* labeled the manga as a "'Trans-sexual story' about masculine princess, feminine prince swapping roles". Retrieved from: https://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2012-06-28/utena-creator-chiho-saito-to-launch-torikae-baya-manga

39 Saitō (2014), vol. 4: "男としての私の人生は? これからどうなってしまうんだ?" (*otoko to shite no watashi no jinsei wa? Kore kara dou natte shimaunda?*)

40 Tyger (2020) concludes her analysis of Sarasōjū with a poignant question that comments on our socially constructed understanding of motherhood: "Because Sarasōjū had not made the choice to become a woman was she unable to give birth to a living child as motherhood has been a rigid and fixed feminine experience? Is motherhood a choice?" (p. 46).

41 While Sarasōjū's coming of age is celebrated with resolution, Suiren's is marked by regret.

Yukari Fujimoto (2015), Tyger interprets this as a result of the fact that "women are exploring their sexuality in masculine guise because it is socially acceptable to have sexual desire as a male and not as a female".

In this sense, both siblings become *vanishing shōjo*, a concept coined by Susan J. Napier (2005) and inspired by a long line of disappearing –literally or figuratively– young girls in Japanese literature[42]. Suiren dissolves an impeding girlhood and trades it for a male identity that will allow him to pursuit his personal objectives. Sarasōjū, although in a male persona right until labour, gives away the *ideals* of girlhood that Saitō had previously conferred Utena with, those represented by *Yukariko*'s heroine: Sarasōjū ceases to enjoy his physically demanding hobbies and socialise in public, and is relegated to the confines not of a *shōjo*, but a *josei* (adult woman, the target audience of *Torikae baya*'s publisher) identity, with maternity acting as the point of no return. Saitō knows very well the medium in which she manipulates the *Torikaebaya*, and is an informed reader of its *textus* (Heian *monogatari*, modern literature, manga and Takarazuka adaptations), whose connections to *shōjo* iconography are now materialised in a work that combines the authorial voice of one of the genre's main exponents and the relevancy of the classics to comment on topics old and new alike. *Torikae baya* puts to use the reflective qualities of the original to re-evaluate the meanings we can extract from it, such the place transgender identities have in popular art and how these adjust to transgender realities, as well as the social gaps between men and women, young and adult.

4.4. Straightening the Torikaebaya: Makoto Shinkai's *Your Name.*

Animation has always been a privileged medium for the representation of the fantastical and supernatural. Its plasticity, relatively cheap production costs and target audience have allowed major and independent studios to explore visuals and narratives otherwise costly or unprofitable in live-action film or television with great success. Japanese animation (henceforward anime) has particularly excelled in this regard, producing since the early 60s countless animated series and films that have circulated globally as cultural markers of generations. A re-evaluation of anime as an art form in the late 90s and early 00s, and its growing acceptance as mainstream media in the West resulted in popular anime films such as *Perfect Blue* (1997) and *Spirited Away* (2001) screening in prestigious festivals and earning international awards. Complex and mature series such as *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (1995-1996) and the previously discussed *Revolutionary Girl Utena*'s enduring multimedia success have secured a cult following, propelled multiple careers and paved the way for anime to explore new topics and reconsider old ones in a new light, enormously influencing other anime such as *Devilman Crybaby* (2018; one of the few non-*yaoi* series featuring overtly gay characters and sex scenes) or *Promare* (2019; a big studio production notable for its homoerotic subtext and explicit gay kiss).

Since the turn of the millennium, mainstream anime film conversation in the West has been dominated by the colossal Studio Ghibli (*Spirited Away*), focusing on family-friendly and traditionally animated films and built around the reputation of director Hayao Miyazaki, and other majors like Madhouse (*Perfect Blue*) or Production I.G. (*Ghost in the Shell*, 1995), featuring more mature and speculative storylines. A recent addition to the pantheon has been CoMix Wave Films, fuelled by Makoto Shinkai's record-breaking *Your Name.*, released in Japan and overseas in 2016. The film

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42 Napier (2005) connects the concept to the drowning of Ukifune in *Genji monogatari*. Arguably, the line can be stretched to include Princess Kaguya's ascension into the moon in *Taketori monogatari* or the missing young lady in the fourth chapter of *Ise monogatari*.

quickly became the highest-grossing film of the year in its home country and, as of 2022, it is the third highest-grossing Japanese animated film ever, behind *Demon Slayer – Kimetsu no Yaiba – The Movie: Mugen Train* (2021), part of popular *Demon Slayer* manga franchise, and Academy Award for Best Animated Film winner *Spirited Away*. Its triumphs followed *5 Centimeters per Second* (2007) and *The Garden of Words* (2013) moderate box-office numbers, and guaranteed success for 2019 follow-up *Weathering with You*, albeit in minor proportions.

Your Name. revolves around two teenagers, a boy (Taki) and a girl (Mitsuha) both aged 17, that exchange bodies as an apparent result of Mitsuha's wish to be reborn as a Tokyo boy in her next life. The film starts as a low fantasy comedy, flirting with romance until eventually giving to its melodramatic and purely fantastical inclinations as it is revealed that the exchange actually took place due to time travel shenanigans. The two eventually save Mitsuha's village from a comet impact and part ways (geographical and temporally) after confessing their love, and encounter each other five years later in the epilogue, when they finally ask each other's name (summing up the film title). *Your Name.*'s commercial dimensions were unparalleled, but its plot and tropes are not without precedent in anime or film, much less in Japanese fiction. Many popular *shōnen* (lit. young boy) manga and anime series feature some form of body exchange gag, often between a male and a female character (*Fairy Tail*, 2006-2017), while others revolve entirely around the concept with more nuance (*Ranma ½*, 1987-1996). Notable live-action films featuring this trope include Nobuhiko Obayashi's *I Are You, You Am Me* (1982), a coming-of-age comedy which similarly involves two adolescents exchanging bodies and learning to navigate their newly acquired lives, and commented to have directly influenced *Your Name.* in some measure[43].

What separates Shinkai's production from other similar works, however, is its disengagement from the currents of 'statelessness' (*mukokuseki*) that used to characterise most major anime productions. Napier (2005) explains that "anime is indeed 'exotic' to the West in that it is made in Japan, but the world of anime itself occupies its own space that is not necessarily coincident with that of Japan". Contrary to this, *Your Name.* draws from live-action film its "inherently more representational space", which has to "convey already-existing objects within a preexisting context". Many of the locations, backgrounds and objects depicted in the film are 1:1 representations of real-life spaces and objects, with most of them specifically remitting to Japanese habits and customs (i.e., food, clothes). Moreover, the choice of Tokyo and a rural village in Gifu prefecture as main scenarios directly contradicts Mamoru Oshii's (director of *Ghost in the Shell* and main apologist for anime's statelessness) idea of animators generally not having a hometown (*furusato*), an "emotionally and ideologically charged word" with a "lyric evocation of a quintessentially Japanese originary village and landscape" (Napier, 2005). Shinkai operates diametrically opposed to this notion, instead striving to connect anime to a nationalistic canon of fiction through the incorporation of ancient vernacular traditions, institutions (Shinto religion) and, of course, texts.

In this respect, *Your Name.* deliberately continues not only with the tradition of animated film, but also a Japanese artistic legacy that includes the Heian classics and modern works. This is evidenced by the director's declarations on the influence of *Torikaebaya monogatari* on the film (especially during production phase), as well as the several interstices found across *Your Name.* which are shared with the original and its adaptations. While other anime texts may conversate with the *Torikaebaya* when recurring to the body-swap trope, *Your Name.* does it in a more explicit way,

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43 Stables' (2020) article for BFI: "Though he admits the influence of Japanese body-swap classics such as the 12th-century tale Torikaebaya Monogatari and the 1982 high-school comedy Tenkosei, Shinkai's story uses the switching sensitively to examine teenage identity and isolation".

closer to its sources or, following Davis' analogy, closer to the epicentre of the tapestry (even if relatively undercover compared to 'proper' adaptations). Despite its plot following a very different path to the *Torikaebaya*, there are two notorious interstices useful to determine the contribution of *Your Name.* (and to some degree, mainstream anime) to the family *textus*.

The first of these is the patterns of socialisation of the protagonists while in each other's bodies. As previously discussed, Himegimi's romantic interactions are roughly defined in terms of same-sex / cross-gender asymmetrical relationships (perceived by one member as such and by the other as cross-sex and cross-gender), but always beyond "a simple 'homosexual'/'heterosexual' dichotomy" (Pflugfelder, 1992). Taki and Mitsuha's interactions, on the other hand, are straight-forward and straight-oriented; they exist and reproduce heteronormativity, a concept "not simply applicable to Heian court society" (Imai, 2020) that is now procured through tropes and motifs helping the film easily convey its vision of sexuality even if in a "homosocial guise", as Imai would put it. This turn may obey two factors: one is the centrality of change to *Torikaebaya monogatari*, which, be it for critique or pathos, revolves entirely around the difficulties faced by the protagonists due to their unusual situation. In *Your Name.*, the body-swap exists as plot device but is eventually abandoned in favour of thematic heterosexual romance and time travel. The other is the scope and target spectator of *Your Name.*, a hit phenomenon intended from production stage to appeal to a broad audience, which requires an accommodation between all sectors of the populace and the film's themes (it must be remembered that while gaining traction, *yaoi* and other non-heterosexual narratives remain overshadowed by heterosexual ones, especially in theatrical releases). These factors encourage *Your Name.* to stray from the complexity of interpersonal relationships *Torikaebaya monogatari* offers a window to and instead focus on the comedic potential of the swap and the elaboration of a conventional romance between the protagonists. In fact, the closest parallel between the romantic interactions in the two works can be found in the date between Mitsuha (in Taki's body) and Miki, a female co-worker of Taki, and Saishō's attraction for Chūnagon. In both cases, these profit from a homoerotic or homosocial guise or some form of gender-bending (i.e., Himegimi's male persona and Mitsuha's control over Taki's body) but read as a heterosexual relationship (i.e., Chūnagon's cultural intelligibility as a woman and Miki's understanding of Mitsuha as Taki). Moreover, both relationships, regardless of their possible homosexual implications, build on and towards a pre-existing heterosexual relation; Saishō's attraction to Chūnagon stems from his heterosexual desires for Shi no Kimi and Naishi no Kami, both connected to Chūnagon, who acts as *katami*, while Mitsuha has no personal interest in Miki and is merely setting up a relationship favourable to Taki. This selection and abandonment of *Torikaebaya monogatari*'s challenging gender portrayal cements Shinkai's rendering of source materials as stepping stones for their heterosexual reconstruction, mirroring the discrimination of the *Torikaebaya*'s 'perversion' by Meiji scholars and subsequent censoring.

A second interstice is the source of the protagonists' transformations. We have seen that in the original it is karmic retribution (part of an imported Buddhist tradition), and a more modern interpretation such as *Torikae baya* replaces it with choice (or lack thereof). Unlike Saitō's progressive vision of gender, Shinkai opts for a regression and shy approximation to the original through time travel, which *Your Name.* employs to explain the exchange in highly fantastical terms linked to the native Shinto religion (Mitsuha's family line runs a Shinto shrine and, as it turns out, has been passing down supernatural powers throughout generations). It is crucial to note that while the transformations studied thus far deal with and reflect on gender performance in some form (e.g., the theatrical worlds of kabuki and Takarazuka, Saitō's postmodern *shōjo* conception of gender), *Your Name.* takes a simplistic turn by limiting the scope of the transformations. These occur in small

doses and do not provoke any major changes in the behaviour of the protagonists, who carry their gender identity as part of their metaphysical 'selves' when exchanging bodies[44]. *Your Name.* not only erodes any trace of *statelessness*, unequivocally locating Taki and Mitsuha's experience in an idealised/*furusato* nativist Japan, but also simplifies the gender dynamics of the original while avoiding the problematisation that associating gender-swapping with karma would imply.

Lastly, throughout the multiple incarnations of *Torikaebaya monogatari*, authors and translators have incorporated artistic, theoretical and social developments in their productions, manipulating the text and illuminating different faces, pulling the *textus* towards different directions according to dissimilar objectives. Doubly so, Shinkai's version, notable for a lack of incorporation of the Butlerian thought that informs to some degree all post-*Gender Trouble Torikaebaya* translations, adaptations and research, incorporates a clearly partisan reading of the Heian classic. By leaving behind its most complex aspects (those which make of the tale an intriguing cultural commodity in the first place), *Torikaebaya monogatari* becomes but an abstract and barely distinguishable source of inspiration; a justification that, along with pervasive patriotic motifs, pushes a national and heteronormative narration, serving as an excellent example of Even-Zohar's secondary function of translation (applied to adaptations in the tentative framework of intertextuality studies) in consolidating the Japanese literary polysystem status quo. *Your Name.* employs a classical text which is, as Lefevere (1992) explains, "rewritten to bring it in line with the 'new' dominant poetics", in this case mainstream anime. In the process, Shinkai irons out intrusive elements (what Meiji scholars may call the 'perversion' of the *Torikaebaya*, or what Spanish publisher Satori Ediciones and *Anime News Network* labeled as "transsexual story") that could disrupt the desired, literally projected image of Japan's literary heritage on a straight screen[45].

5. Conclusion: *Torikaebaya* Unravelled

There is text: *Genji monogatari*, *Torikaebaya monogatari* –the *Furu* and the *Ima*–, 'Onnagata', *Yukariko*, *Torikae baya*, *Your Name.* There is genre: literature, theatre, *shōjo*, *shōnen*. There is media: printed, recorded, animated. There is time: the late Heian period, the vague antiquity of *Torikaebaya*, the Meiji period, today; and there is space: Japan, the *furusato*, a kabuki backstage. There is gender and there is sex, not necessarily in sync. There is homosexuality and also there is not. There is an original, its translations, adaptations, and recreations. There is an original behind the original. And there is a tapestry, the *Torikaebaya textus*, weaving together all of this, its threads composed of text, genre, media, time, space, gender, sex, homosexuality and its absence.

We can pluck one of these threads from the tapestry and study it in isolation, but the further we pull it out, the more it unravels and tears the tapestry apart. Similarly, we can study the *Torikaebaya monogatari*, but its meaning as a cultural artefact will be permanently tainted by numerous other texts, be they adaptations, translations or even academic research. Like Bassnett and Lefevere

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44 In this sense, *Your Name.* may represent the antipodes to *Torikaebaya monogatari*'s gender performance. In the original, a change of appearance denotes a radical change in behaviour and identity (internal and projected), whereas in *Your Name.* the exchange of bodies does not alter the way the characters think of themselves or relate to others, with gender as a fixed and unalterable experience.

45 For more on the ties between *Your Name.*, self-orientalisation and restorative nostalgia, see Noh (2017). Internet blog *ATMA & Funomena*'s online essay, "Post-Disaster 'Cool Japan' | Kimi no Na wa: Cultural Identity, Modernity & Restorative Nostalgia" also sheds some insight on the role of *Your Name.* in Japanese soft power and branding.

advanced in 1992, and Davis reprised in 2015, with the study of translations and adaptations we can gain a better understanding of our world. And if both sets of tools are combined for the examination of classical texts in order to pursue their common goal, then we must apply them extensively to understand –to unravel– the *Torikaebaya monogatari* and its meaning in today's world. How are classical texts adapted, manipulated and presented to contemporary audiences? What can we extract from these new products?

This essay has aimed to provide a sample answer to these questions by presenting the textual and ideological divergences between different texts of the *Torikaebaya* family, broadening its scope to include not only adaptations recognised as such but other texts in direct conversation with the *Torikaebaya textus*, as is the case of Mishima's intertextual play in 'Onnagata' or anime blockbuster *Your Name.* To this purpose, tools from the disciplines of translation studies and adaptation studies have been combined and applied to the selected texts, as part of a larger and tentative intertextuality studies superordinate. Still, different text typologies require different approaches, and thus knowledge and tools from related fields of studies such as animation studies have helped to expose the ways derivative works in literature, theatre, manga and animation exploit the complex themes of *Torikaebaya monogatari* to assert their own statements.

Another consideration in this study has been the act of *rewriting* –or its speculative extrapolation, the recreation–, of crucial importance in keeping the canon status of a work, dynamic as it is, in line with contemporary standards. In this regard, the *Torikaebaya monogatari* represents a fascinating case of study, with its canon status having been displaced over the centuries and its current re-evaluation owing in great measure to its various recreations, negotiating their very nature with multiple agents and fluctuating between a progressivist continuation of its themes or a regression to the traditionalist values its canon status may reinforce, as Saitō and Shinkai's adaptations each represent.

The main area of contention, where analysed texts have shown greatest variation, is in the *Torikaebaya*'s particular depiction of sex, gender and sexuality. In the original and recreations alike, these topics permeate not only narratively, but also metatextually, constantly redirecting conversation towards these very same themes, as proved by the Mumyōzōshi and modern research. Adapters have manipulated the original according to their own perceptions and ideologies, not always harmoniously with that of the patrons, resulting in a diverse array of works. These range from Mishima's homosocial world of kabuki to Shinkai's heteronationalist appropriation of Japan's ancient past, passing through Takarazuka's women-only performance and Saitō's post-*Gender Trouble* apology.

Yet, at the same time, these texts have contributed to the investigation and elaboration of a larger product, the Torikaebaya *textus*. Each unique perspective on the *Torikaebaya* weaves a portion of the tapestry, conferring it with new colours and textures. Whether the reported increase in productions revolving around the *Torikaebaya* and its subversive potential signifies a genuine interest in giving marginal identities a space in the vast menu of Japanese fiction requires further investigation, as do most of the intertextual connections introduced in this essay, admittedly limited in scope. In any case, one hopes that these old and new colours (female colours, *shōjo* colours, male colours, transgender colours, gay colours) will, without a doubt, paint a map on human –and artistic– diversity across borders, and help to navigate an increasingly grey canvas. For such is the power of translation and adaptation; the communication between different people, cultures, eras and worlds.

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