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Cover picture From the photograph-album of Rewi Alley: "After tiffin, Henli, August 1930," Kathleen Wright Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand

LIBERATION AND LIGHT: THE LANGUAGE OF OPPOSITION IN IMPERIAL JAPAN

 Vera Mackie

Liberalism, Feminism and Socialism in Japan

The study of social movements must consider not only theories and organizational strategies, but also the process of imagining new political possibilities.¹ In this article I concentrate on representations of liberation in selected writings from oppositional movements in Japan in the first part of the twentieth century, and argue that writing was crucial in the construction of a new political subjectivity for women in the feminist and socialist movements, and that this process of imagining was carried out through various genres: both polemical writings on politics in the narrow sense, and fictional and poetic writings. I consider some features of the language—vocabulary and metaphors—of selected socialist and feminist writings, organizing this discussion around some common tropes: imprisonment and escape, natural imagery, light and darkness, and women's maternal capacity. I also refer to some visual representations which make use of similar tropes, as visual representations may also be involved in the production of meanings in particular social contexts.

My analysis is informed by a methodology that locates representations "within the contested field of discursive formations."² Discourse may be understood as "a particular form of language with its own rules and conventions and the institutions within which the discourse is produced and circulated,"³ and I will argue that even oppositional texts were shaped by prevailing discourses of masculinity and femininity, which are revealed through an analysis of metaphor and imagery as well as propositional content.

The texts under analysis mainly come from the years 1900 to 1935, but to understand the context in which they were produced, it is necessary to sketch out the political institutions, conventions, and practices which were

¹ A preliminary version of this article appeared as *Imagining liberation: feminism and socialism in early twentieth century Japan*, Working Papers in Women's Studies, Feminist Cultural Studies Series, no.1 (Sydney: University of Western Sydney, Nepean, 1995).

² Cf. Griselda Pollock, "Feminism/Foucault—surveillance/sexuality," in Norman Bryson, Michael Ann Holly and Keith Moxey, eds, *Visual culture: images and interpretations* (Hanover & London: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), p.13, and p.3: "While investigating the possible ways to theorize about the inevitable relations that exist between the social formation and specific representations that are our domain of study in art history, for instance, we could do well to consider the 'cultural' as a space of representation, shaped by social forces that are specifically articulated in modes peculiar to the cultural sphere. Instead, therefore, of deriving meaning for culture from some other source—from the social or the economic—we attend to the ways in which such forces are enacted, performed, staged, and articulated in these specific practices of representation, to how these forces effectively constitute the relations they articulate. There is thus no prior place in which the meanings of cultural forms are made, which art then expresses, /OVER

/replicates, defers to. The cultural is actively producing meaning by its own social, semiotic, and symbolic procedures and imperatives. These meanings are materially constituted in discourses and practices—the technologies of class, to borrow a phrase from Foucault ...”

³ Lynda Nead, *Myths of sexuality: representations of women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p.4.

⁴ There was a variety of matrilineal, patrilineal, wife-visiting, and duolocal marriage systems in pre-modern Japan. Practices varied according to region and social class. The Tokugawa Shogunate did not manage to unify marriage customs, for laws varied from domain to domain. By the end of the feudal period two contradictory trends were transforming the family system. In wealthy warrior and merchant families, increased centralization of property and authority led to a privileging of a patriarchal, extended family with inheritance based on primogeniture. In rural areas, changes in farming methods and the spread of capitalist market relations meant that the nuclear family was becoming the most efficient unit of production. Joyce Ackroyd, “Women in feudal Japan,” *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 7.3 (1959); Wakita Haruko, “Marriage and property in pre-modern Japan from the perspective of women’s history,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* (Winter 1984); Tonomura Hitomi, “Women and inheritance in Japan’s early warrior society,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1990): 592–623.

⁵ Watanabe Yōzō, “The family and the law: the individualistic premise in modern Japanese family law,” in *Law in Japan*, ed. Arthur Taylor von Mehren (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963); Ishii Ryosuke, *Japanese legislation in the Meiji era* (Tokyo: Pan-Pacific Press, Centenary Culture Council, 1958); Tanaka Hideo and Malcolm Smith, *The Japanese legal system* (Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1976).

⁶ Takamura Itsue has traced the development of *ryōsai kenbo* ideology, a curious amalgam of Confucian and European ideas: Takamura Itsue, *Josei no rekishi* [The history of women], 2 vols (Tokyo: Kōdansha Bunko, 1972), 2: 79–83.

⁷ For discussion of these early disputes see E. P. Tsurumi, *Factory girls: women in the thread mills of Meiji Japan* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp.50–8, 112–20.

established in the late nineteenth century and which provided the context for political activity up to the end of World War II.

Between 1868 and 1898, Japan created all of the machinery of a modern nation-state—a Constitution, a new legal code, capitalist industry, and a modern army and navy. As part of this process, there was extensive discussion of the family, which came to form a crucial link in the chain of loyalty from subject to emperor. Despite the diversity of marriage and inheritance practices prevalent in pre-Meiji Japan,⁴ and intellectual discussion of egalitarian family forms in the 1870s and 1880s, it was the most conservative form of patriarchal family based on primogeniture that was privileged in the Civil Code of 1898.⁵ This literally patriarchal form of the family was dressed up in the ideology of ‘good wives and wise mothers’ (*ryōsai kenbo* 良妻賢母) which idealized women’s contribution to the family,⁶ in a society where patriarchal authority was linked to imperial authority. While intellectuals discussed ‘good wives and wise mothers’, women comprised at least sixty per cent of the industrial labour force until well into the twentieth century, and other women were engaged in agricultural, domestic or sexual labour. The major export industries—silk, and later cotton—were dependent on the labour of young women from rural areas. Given that numbers of women were engaged in factory labour in conditions of extreme exploitation, it is hardly surprising that labour disputes erupted as early as 1886, just fourteen years after the establishment of the first textile mill in 1872.⁷

The late nineteenth century is often presented as a period of intense interest in “foreign” ideologies, as both the élites of the new society and their opponents seized on the theories of social Darwinism, liberalism and natural rights theory in order to justify a variety of political positions and decisions. It is also true of the early days of socialism and feminism in Japan that European works were eagerly read and discussed, interpreted and translated into the Japanese context.⁸

The first socialist groups were established in the late 1890s, and the roots of this movement can be traced back to the liberal movement of the 1880s. The members of these socialist organizations were to become leaders in the socialist, anarchist, and labour movements of the twentieth century. An

⁸ On socialism in Japan before World War II see George Totten, *The social democratic movement in prewar Japan* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966); John Crump, *The origins of socialist thought in Japan* (London: Croom Helm, 1983). Studies of the labour movement include: Stephen S. Large, *The rise of labour in Japan: The Yūaikai 1912–1919* (Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1972); Stephen S. Large, *Organized workers and socialist politics in interwar Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Andrew Gordon, *The evolution of labour relations in*

Japan: heavy industry 1853–1955 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985); Andrew Gordon, *Labour and imperial democracy in prewar Japan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991); Sheldon Garon, *The state and labour in modern Japan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1987). Biographies of male individuals involved in the early development of labour and socialist politics in Japan include: Hyman Kublin, *Asian revolutionary: the life of Sen Kata yama* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964); F. G. Notehelfer, *Kōtoku Shūsui: portrait of a Japanese*

interest in labour issues was also promoted in journalistic works which documented conditions in the new factories.⁹ The Commoners' Society (Heiminsha 平民社) was established in 1903, and disseminated socialist and pacifist ideas through the *Heimin Shinbun* 平民新聞 (Commoners' News).

Women were active in such socialist groups as the Commoners' Society from its inception.¹⁰ Women discussed their situation in forums provided by these organizations, and through separate groups and journals directed at socialist women. The first of the major labour organizations, the Yūaikai 友愛会 (Friendly Society) was established in 1912, and was transformed into the Sōdōmei 総同盟 (General Federation of Labour) in 1919, subsequently splitting into a range of organizations which espoused either social democracy or more radical forms of labour politics. In the 1920s, socialist women tried to reach working women through the women's departments of union federations and the women's leagues affiliated with the left-wing political parties which were established after the enactment of Universal Manhood Suffrage in 1925. In Japan, the relationship between women and the socialist parties was somewhat distinctive. These women's divisions and women's leagues were necessary because Article Five of the Public Peace Police Law (*chian keisatsu hō* 治安警察法) of 1900 prevented women from becoming full members of political parties.¹¹

In practice, the women's leagues were often subordinated to the factionalism of the 'malestream' parties and union federations, but they also provided women with a forum for the discussion of specifically feminist issues. These women's divisions often took a pragmatic approach, and the policy platforms of all of these groups included specific short-term reformist goals, some of which were included in the policy statements of the mainstream social democratic parties.¹² In the 1920s and 1930s, some socialist women co-operated with liberal feminist groups on a joint committee for women's suffrage, and in campaigns for state assistance for mothers supporting children.¹³ It is difficult to follow the progress of socialist and feminist thought through the political repression of the 1930s, but we can say that there was a tradition of socialist activity by women for at least the first three decades of this century. The texts I will be discussing here come from the participants in some of the

Vera Mackie, *Creating socialist women in Japan: 1900-1937* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). On feminism see Sharon L. Sievers, *Flowers in salt: the beginnings of feminist consciousness in Meiji Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983); Vera Mackie, "Feminist critiques of modern Japanese politics," in Monica Threlfall, ed., *Mapping the women's movement: feminism and social transformation in the north* (London: Verso, 1996).

⁹ Yokoyama Gennosuke, *Nihon no kasō shakai* [The lower social strata of Japan] (1899; reprint ed., Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1980). Japanese names follow the order of family name before given name, and I have observed this convention in the text and in citations of Japanese-language materials.

¹⁰ On the participation of women in the *Heiminsha* see Suzuki Yūko, ed., *Shiryō: Heiminsha no onnatachi* [Documents: women of the Heiminsha] (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1986); Nishikawa Fumiko, *Heiminsha no onna: Nishikawa Fumiko jiden* [Woman of the Heiminsha: the autobiography of Nishikawa Fumiko], ed. Amano Shigeru (Tokyo: Aoyama-kan, 1984), pp.56-75; Murata Shizuko, *Fukuda Hideko* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1959), pp.100-7; Ōki Motoko, "Meiji shakai shugi undō to josei" [The Meiji socialism movement and women], in Joseishi Sōgō Kenkyūkai, eds, *Nihon josei shi 4: Kindai* [The history of women in Japan, vol.4: The modern period] (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990), pp.115-48; Sievers, *Flowers in salt*, pp.114-38; Mackie, *Creating socialist women*, ch.3.

¹¹ In communist-influenced movements in other countries, it was often recommended that men and women should ideally belong to the same organization, although these organizations could undertake what was called 'work among women'. Cf. Joyce Stevens, *Taking the revolution home: work among women in the Communist Party of Australia: 1920-1945* (Melbourne: Sybylla Press, 1987); Joy Damousi, "The woman comrade: equal or different?" *Women's History Review* 2,3 (1993): 387-94.

¹² Mackie, *Creating socialist women*, chs 5 and 6.

¹³ Vera Mackie, "Socialist women and the state in Taishō and early Shōwa Japan," *Japanese Studies* (May 1994): 76-80.

/eseradical (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Gail Lee Bernstein, *Japanese Marxist: a portrait of Kawakami Hajime 1879-1946* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978). On women in the socialist and labour movements see Stephen S. Large, "The romance of revolution in Japanese anarchism and communism during the Taishō period," *Modern Asian Studies* 2,3 (July 1977); Sharley Conroy Ushioda, "Women and war in Meiji Japan: the case of Fukuda Hideko, 1865-1927," *Peace and Change: Journal of Peace Research* 4 (Fall 1977); Sharley Conroy Ushioda, "Fukuda Hideko and the women's

world of Meiji Japan," in Hilary Conroy et al, eds, *Japan in transition: thought and action in the Meiji era* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1984), pp.276-93; E. P. Tsurumi, "Female textile workers and the failure of early trade unionism in Japan," *History Workshop Journal* 18 (Autumn 1984): 3-27; Hane Mikiso, ed., *Reflections on the way to the gallows: rebel women in prewar Japan* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1988); Jennifer Shapcott, "The red chrysanthemum: Yamakawa Kikue and the socialist women's movement in pre-war Japan," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 35 (March 1987): 1-30;

¹⁴ Maruoka Hideko, *Fujin shisō keisei shi nōto* [Notes on the development of feminist thought in Japan], 2 vols (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1985), 1: 34–5; Sievers, *Flowers in salt*, pp.29–30.

¹⁵ Kishida Toshiko toured the country making speeches demanding political rights for women and contributed articles to the liberal newspaper *Jiyū no tomoshibi* [The torch of freedom]; Tomii Oto 富意於菟 was inspired by Kishida's example to go to Tokyo and work in journalism and women's education. Fukuda Hideko also became involved in the liberal movement after hearing a speech by Kishida — Fukuda was involved in the Ōsaka Incident with Ōi Kentarō 大井憲太郎 and others, and embraced socialism after her release from prison. Maruoka Hideko, *Fujin shisō keisei shi nōto*, vol.1, pp.35–41; Itoya Toshio, *Josei kaibō no senkusbatachi* [Pioneers of women's liberation] (Tokyo: Shimizu Shoin, 1975); Sharon L. Sievers, "Feminist criticism in Japanese politics in the 1880s: the experience of Kishida Toshiko," *Signs* 6.4 (Summer 1981).

¹⁶ Sievers, *Flowers in salt*, p.41.

organizations I have mentioned above and from the journals of feminist groups. The limitations on women's political activities in public meant that such publications were an important forum for the discussion of 'the woman question'.

Another strand of thought which developed from the liberal movement of the late nineteenth century was feminism. Given the currency of notions of "natural rights" in nineteenth-century Japan, it is not surprising that many women also seized on this concept in order to demand "women's rights" (*joken* 女権). As early as 1878 Kusunose Kita 楠瀬喜多 demanded the right to vote for the local assembly on the grounds that she held the family property on the death of her husband and was thus liable for taxation (in an argument implicitly based on the logic of "no taxation without representation").¹⁴ Some women also participated in the Freedom and Popular Rights Movement.¹⁵ The early liberal feminist discussion of rights often focused on the family as the site of women's oppression. Given that the family came to be crucial in the structures of authority delineated in the constitutional system, criticism of the family could be said to question the very basis of power under the Meiji system. Discussion of the family was taken so seriously that the liberal feminist Kishida Toshiko 岸田俊子 was imprisoned in 1884 for her attack on the family system.¹⁶ It could also be argued, however, that the attention paid to issues of family and gender relations in the formation of the modern Japanese nation-state had the paradoxical effect of opening up a discursive space for the discussion of feminist ideas. The contradictions of capitalist development also provided the conditions for political mobilization on the basis of class or gender. The development of early Japanese capitalism was accompanied by the cultural forms of modernity—the psychological novel, the autobiography, the newspaper and the political journal. This was the context for the participation of women in the socialist and feminist movements, and for their writings in the publications of these movements.

Imprisonment and Escape

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.34.

¹⁸ Itoya, *Josei kaibō no senkusbatachi*, p.42.

From the late nineteenth century in Japan, writings lamenting the oppressed state of women used the metaphor of imprisonment to describe the situation of women. Kishida Toshiko employed the conventional phrase used to describe the cossetted upbringing of young ladies, *bakoiri musume* 函入り娘 ('daughters raised in boxes') but turned it into an image of deprivation.¹⁷ Girls who had been brought up in this fashion were like plants whose growth had been stunted, in comparison with flowers growing wild in the mountains and valleys.¹⁸ While Kishida's use of the image of imprisonment was mainly metaphorical, referring to the overprotective upbringing of the young ladies of the middle class, it was graphically accurate for working women of the Meiji period. The socialist writer Nishikawa Fumiko described the women of

the Yoshiwara licensed districts as looking like “animals in cages,”¹⁹ while similar language was used to characterize the conditions of factory workers.

Young women were engaged in factory labour from the 1870s on. These women often worked fourteen-hour days in dark and steamy conditions, spending the remaining part of the day in cramped dormitories, their freedom severely restricted, and running the risk of tuberculosis and other diseases. This situation was described in numerous songs figuring them as caged birds:

Factory work is prison work,
All it lacks are iron chains.

More than a caged bird, more than a prison,
Dormitory life is hateful.

... I want wings to escape from here,
To fly as far as those distant shores.²⁰

It seems that the commonest way of imagining liberation from this situation was to dream of escape. Workers sang of flying away, breaking the bars, or even burning the factory down. Indeed, the fantasy of escape in these songs matches the workers' preferred way of changing their situation in the early days of industrialization.²¹

Such songs provided solidarity and comfort during the long working day. We could perhaps see them as forms of resistance,²² as one of the “weapons of the weak.”²³ What happens, however, when they are taken away from the immediate context of the working day and transformed into texts? The songs were collected by labour historians and became part of the cultural resources available to represent women workers. Labour organizers recycled the imagery of workers' songs in union journals directed at women in the textile mills. They reproduced the songs about caged birds and this trope was reinforced by visual imagery. The metaphor is constantly referred to in the songs, illustrations and articles in these publications. The comparison with caged birds was also used to describe another group of workers: those who had been indentured into prostitution.²⁴ The freedom of such women was severely restricted, and they were displayed to customers from behind wooden grilles.²⁵

It is possible to argue, as Patricia Tsurumi has done, that the factory workers' songs reflect a consciousness of these women's identity as *jokō* 女工 (factory girls).²⁶ It might also be maintained that by recycling these workers' songs, the union journals were showing respect for women's own self-representations. However, I am interested not only in the description of oppression, but in the linguistic and cultural resources available to imagine the possibility of liberation. Could these images of fragility and pathos be used to imagine the possibility of shared political action, as the basis for a political movement? As bell hooks has pointed out, “Literature emerging from marginalised groups that is only a chronicle of pain can easily act to keep in place existing structures of domination.”²⁷

¹⁹ Nishikawa [Matsuoka] Fumiko, “Yoshiwara kenbutsu no ki” [Record of sightseeing in Yoshiwara], *Chokugen*, 11 June 1905, also reprinted in *Nishikawa Fumiko jiden*, pp.210–11.

²⁰ Yamamoto Shigemi, *Ā Nomugi tōge* [Ah, Nomugi Pass] (Tokyo, 1977), pp.388–9; transl. in Tsurumi, *Factory girls*, pp.98–9.

²¹ In 1897, it was estimated that 45 per cent of female workers, and 42 per cent of male workers in cotton factories left their jobs before a year was up. Tsurumi, *Factory girls*, p.154.

²² On songs as weapons of resistance see Mariko Asano Tamanoi, “Songs as weapons: the culture and history of *komori* (nurse-maids) in modern Japan,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 50.4 (Nov. 1991): 793–817.

²³ Cf. James C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak. everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New-haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

²⁴ Nishikawa Fumiko, “Yoshiwara kenbutsu no ki.” See also Iwauchi Tomie's account of women from the licensed quarters who came to the Christian socialist charitable institution, the Airindan 愛隣団, for help after the earthquake of 1923. They were described in the press as “caged birds who had been set free” (*banatareta kago no tori*). The Airindan, located in the Nippori region of Tokyo, was managed by Iwauchi Zensaku and Iwauchi Tomie. Watanabe Etsuji and Suzuki Yūko, eds, *Tataikai ni ikite: senzen fujin rōdō undō e no sbōgen* [Living in struggle: testimonies of the pre-war women's labour movement] (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1980), pp.127–8.

²⁵ See the photograph of such women in Sheldon Garon, “The world's oldest debate? prostitution and the state in imperial Japan,” *American Historical Review* (June 1993): 718.

²⁶ Tsurumi, *Factory girls*, pp.194–7.

²⁷ bell hooks, “Narratives of struggle,” in Philomena Mariani, ed., *Critical fictions: the politics of imaginative writing* (Seattle, Wash.: Bay Press, 1991), p.59.

²⁸ Asō Hisashi, “Nijū no kusari” [Double chains], *Seigi no hikari* 3 (1926): 4–6. See also Kamijō Aiichi’s article on Japan’s working women, where, in discussing the problem posed for the union movement by the relative inaccessibility of women in dormitories, he quite naturally uses the caged bird metaphor to describe these women. Kamijō Aiichi, “Nihon no fujin rōdōsha” [Japan’s women workers], *Seigi no hikari* 4 (1926): 4.

²⁹ Tōkyō Gōdō Rōdō Kumiai Nankatsu Shibu (Itō Manabu), “Kishukusha seido teppai undō ni kansuru ketsugian” [Draft resolution on the movement for the abolition of the dormitory system] (April 1926), in *Nihon fujin mondai shiryō shūsei* 8: 295–6.

³⁰ Kamijō Aiichi, “Nihon no fujin rōdōsha,” p.6.

³¹ Makise Kikue, *Kikigaki: hitamuki no onnatachi—musan undō no kage ni* [Oral history: dedicated women in the shadows of the proletarian movement] (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1976), p.54.

³² Makise, *Hitamuki no onnatachi*, p.55.

³³ Suzuki Yūko, *Jokō to rōdō sōgi* [Factory women and labour disputes] (Tokyo: Renga Shobō, 1989), p.28; Gordon, *Labour and imperial democracy*, p.225.

³⁴ Suzuki, *Jokō to rōdō sōgi*, p.27.

In the writings of at least some activists, there were attempts to appropriate the imagery of these songs for political ends. Male union leader Asō Hisashi 麻生久 argued that all workers were in the position of “caged birds.” In the case of women workers, however, they were seen to suffer double imprisonment by the twin cages of class and sex. In the case of women, even if “with their feeble strength” they were able to break out of the cage of class exploitation, they would still be subject to exploitation as women. Asō’s article laments the seriousness of women’s oppression, rather than providing a means to imagine the transformation of that situation.²⁸

However, the trope of imprisonment was more than a mere metaphor. Women workers were literally prevented from leaving dormitories outside working hours, and this was one focus of union writings on their situation.²⁹ The abolition of the dormitory system was a standard item in union policies on womenworkers, and often featured as a demand in labour disputes. It was also argued that the reform or abolition of the dormitory system was a necessary condition for the development of the union movement.³⁰

One dispute, which occurred in Hodogaya in November 1925, was referred to as the “caged birds” strike.³¹ Several of the strikers’ demands concerned restrictions on the freedom of women in dormitories. In addition to calling for a reduction in working hours, they demanded the freedom to leave the dormitory and to meet visitors, and the right to withdraw their own savings at will. The demand that “workers should be allowed to return home immediately on receipt of a telegram reporting a family illness or other problem” suggests how severely their freedom was curtailed.³² Eventually, in a dispute at the Tōyō Muslin 東洋モスリン factory in the Kameido region of Tokyo in May 1927, women workers did gain the right to leave the dormitory at will.³³ Suzuki Yūko has described this victory as having had the force of a “declaration of human rights” (*jinken sengen* 人權宣言) for women workers.³⁴ It seems, then, that the metaphor of the caged bird could be useful in focusing attention on the exploitation of women workers, but only when linked to strategies for the transformation of their situation.

Flowers, Fragility and Femininity

³⁵ For a discussion of the use of flowers to represent women in European iconography see Bram Dijkstra, *Idols of perversity: fantasies of feminine evil in fin-de-siècle culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.14–17, 53–8, 240–2.

In Japan, as in other cultural traditions, natural imagery could be used to represent women. Flowers, or other natural features, could serve as signifiers of femininity. Such imagery, however, often reinforced a view of women as fragile, passive and decorative.³⁵ Even quite progressive writers at times employed these conventional emblems of femininity. Socialist journalist Sakai Toshihiko 境利彦, in a description of the atmosphere of the early socialist organization, the Commoners’ Society, described the women of the organization as flowers. The Commoners’ Society women are the plum and cherry blossoms, the wisteria and peony, the chrysanthemum and Chinese bellflower. Women are said to enliven the place like birds or like butterflies.

(Presumably male) comrades come and go, “some to enjoy the fragrance, some to gain courage for new political campaigns, some to gain relief from the fatigue of long campaigns.”³⁶ The supportive role of women in this early socialist organization is thus reinforced by Sakai’s choice of the imagery of passive and decorative femininity; and there is perhaps a hint of sexualization in the reference to the “fragrance” of the floral comrades.³⁷

Mainstream women’s magazines often bore covers decorated with flowers, and this convention was also used in the early union publications directed at women. The cover of the first edition of *Yūai Fujin* 友愛婦人 (Yūai woman), the journal of the Yūaikai Women’s Division, for example, was entirely taken up with a graphic representation of a lily, overlaid with the title of the journal. This illustration was used on the cover of several subsequent editions of the Friendly Society’s women’s journal. The use of such imagery, emphasizing femininity rather than class consciousness, provided graphic evidence of how women workers were viewed by the early labour movement—as women first, and as workers second (Figure 1).

The imagery of nature could also, however, be used to describe what was felt to be the very *unnatural* situation of women in present-day society. For the early liberal feminist, Kishida Toshiko, as mentioned above, middle-class women were not able to develop naturally. Their upbringing was like the cultivation of bonsai trees, whose shape is created by the trimming of roots and leaves.³⁸ In other writings, Kishida described married women as slaves.³⁹ Other participants in the liberal movement also used the imagery of nature to give metaphorical force to the notion that the rights being demanded were the natural inheritance of men and women. The use of such metaphors is particularly striking in Ueki Emori’s 植木枝盛 song on the theme of freedom, “A Country Song of Civil Rights”:

³⁶ Sakai Toshihiko, “Heiminsha yori” [From the Heiminsha], *Chokugen* 12 (23 Apr. 1905), in Nishikawa Fumiko, *Heiminsha no onna: Nishikawa Fumiko jiden*, pp.321–2. Translations from Japanese are my own unless stated otherwise.

³⁷ I am indebted to Lynnette Parker (pers. comm.) for alerting me to the sexualised meanings attached to the representations of women as flowers. See also: Lynette Parker, “Flowers and witches in Bali: representations and everyday life of Balinese women,” in Freda Freiberg and Vera Mackie, eds, “ReOrienting the Body,” forthcoming.

³⁸ Itoya Toshio, *Josei kaibō no senkusbatashi*, p.44.

³⁹ Kishida Toshiko, *Hakoiri Musume, Kon'in no fukanzen* [Daughters raised in boxes (and) The imperfection of marriage] (Tokyo, 1883), reprinted in Suzuki Yūko, ed., *Kishida Toshiko Hyōronshū* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1985).

Figure 1

Cover of the Yūaikai women’s journal *Yūai Fujin* 1 (Aug. 1916), the floral imagery illustrating the union’s attitude to women workers: as women first, and workers second (All illustrations courtesy of the Ōhara Social Research Institute, Hōsei University, Tokyo)



⁴⁰ Ueki Emori also wrote his own draft constitution—based on popular sovereignty, democratic principles, and equality between men and women, and said to be the most liberal of the thirty-odd drafts circulating at the time. Ueki Emori, “Minken inaka uta” [A country song of civil rights], in Ienaga Saburō, ed., *Meijibungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō), vol.12, pp.128–9, transl. in Bowen, *Rebellion and democracy*, pp.206–8; see also G. T. Shea, *Leftwing literature in Japan: a brief history of the proletarian literary movement* (Tokyo: Hōsei University Press, 1964), p.6. I have modified Bowen’s translation slightly as he uses ‘man’ and ‘men’ for the gender-neutral ‘*bito*’ and ‘*ningen*’. In Shea’s translation he has used feminine pronouns for the caged bird.

⁴¹ *Seigi no hikari* 2 (18 May 1926), p.25.

⁴² Yamamoto Shigemi, *Ā Nomugi tōge*, p.395, transl. in Tsurumi, *Factory girls*, p.97.

⁴³ The Bluestocking Society (Seitōsha 青踏社) was a liberal feminist organization which was formed in support of the women’s arts journal *Bluestocking* which appeared between 1911 and 1916. Ide Fumiko, *Seitō no onnatachi* [The women of the Bluestocking Society] (Tokyo: Kaien Shobō, 1975); Horiba Kiyoko, *Seitō no jidai* [The age of the blue-stockings] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988); Nancy Andrew, “The Seitōsha—an early Japanese women’s organisation 1911–1916,” in A. M. Craig, ed., *Papers on Japan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); Noriko Mizuta Lippit, “Seitō and the literary roots of Japanese feminism,” *International Journal of Women’s Studies* 2.2 (1975): 155–63; Pauline Reich and Atsuko Fukuda, “Japan’s literary feminists—the Seitō Group,” *Signs* 2.1 (1976); Sharon H. Nolte, *Liberalism in modern Japan: Ishibashi Tanzan and his teachers, 1905–1960* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1987), pp.97–105; Sievers, *Flowers in salt*, ch.8; Mackie, “Feminist politics in Japan,” pp.56–7.

... Though the birds have wings they cannot fly;
The caged bird can see the outside.

Though the fish have fins they cannot swim;
The netted fish sees the sea beyond.

Though the horses have hooves they cannot run;
The tethered horse sees the grass out of reach.

[We] are endowed with arms and legs;
We have hearts and minds.

But today we have no liberty or rights.
If we call ourselves [human]

The each person must ... stand up and say
“[Humans] have rights.”⁴⁰

The textile workers also contrasted their un-natural state of oppression and exploitation with a more innocent state. In the following song, the mill girl is a bird who can not fly away, a spoiled bud that will never bloom:

When will the sky clear?
My pillow is wet with endless tears.

I am a mill girl: a frail bird.
Even though I have wings I can’t fly away.
Even though I can see the sky I’m stuck inside a cage—
A tiny bird with broken wings

I am a mill girl: a fragile flower,
A bud spoiled by frost.
Even though spring is here I won’t bloom—
A tiny, tiny bud

I am a mill girl: a lonely star,
Far away from my family.
Twinkling in the dark, night sky—
A tiny star brimming with tears.⁴¹

The images of fragile flowers, tiny birds, and lonely stars, however, merely served to reinforce the connections between femininity and passivity. Another textile workers’ song, although failing to challenge notions of feminine passivity, catalogued the difference between factory workers and the new professional women (*shokugyō fujin* 職業婦人), perhaps displaying a nascent class consciousness:

If a woman working in an office is a willow,
A poetess is a violet,
And a female teacher is an orchid,
Then a factory woman is a vegetable gourd.⁴²

Other kinds of natural imagery, however, presented a more dynamic picture. For the contributors to the feminist arts journal *Seitō* 青踏 (Bluestocking), the imagery of nature was a means of imagining liberation.⁴³ This

is most striking in Yosano Akiko's 与謝野晶子 often-cited poem, "Mountain Moving Day":

The day the mountains move has come.
I speak but no one believes me.
For a time the mountains have been asleep,
But long ago they all danced with fire.
It doesn't matter if you believe this,
My friends, as long as you believe:
All the sleeping women
Are now awake and moving.⁴⁴

Yosano also, however, aspired to the world of culture—not only through the conventional poetic imagery of femininity, but by using writing to assert an individualist identity.

I would like to write only in the first person
I am a woman!
I would like to write only in the first person
I am! I am!⁴⁵

This assertion of linguistic freedom seems to encapsulate the liberal aspirations of early twentieth-century Japanese feminism. The development of early Japanese capitalism was accompanied by the appearance of literary genres which could express the aspirations of liberal individualism—the modern novel and the autobiography. The contradictions of capitalist development also, as we have seen, provided the conditions for political mobilization on the basis of class or gender. Yosano, however, was searching for the very vocabulary in which to describe the aspirations of the modern, female individual.⁴⁶

The Sun and the Moon

Bluestocking editor Hiratsuka Raichō's 平塚らいてう use of natural imagery in her well-known manifesto "In the beginning, woman was the sun," which also appeared in the first edition of the journal *Bluestocking*, is in some ways similar to Yosano's poem:

In the beginning, woman was the sun.
An authentic person.
Today, she is the moon.
Living through others.
Reflecting the brilliance of others ...⁴⁷

Where Yosano had used the metaphor of the dormant volcano to describe the hidden power of women, Hiratsuka uses the metaphors of the sun and the moon. Women's present situation is analogous to the "moon which shines by reflected light," while Hiratsuka wishes to see women reclaim their former energy and shine, like the sun, "with their own light."

⁴⁴ Yosano Akiko, "Sozorogoto," *Seitō* 1.1 (1911): 1, transl. in Laurel Rasplica Rodd, "Yosano Akiko and the Taishō debate over the 'New Women'," in Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese women: 1600-1945* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1991), p.180.

⁴⁵ Yosano Akiko, "Sozorogoto," p.2: "Ichinshō nite nomi monokakabaya / ware wa onago zo / ichinshō nite nomi monokakabaya / ware wa ware wa."

⁴⁶ As Aoyama Tomoko has reminded me, Yosano's writing should also be placed in the context of the Naturalist school of writers.

⁴⁷ Hiratsuka Raichō, "Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta," *Seitō* 1.1, transl. in Sievers, *Flowers in salt*, p.163.

⁴⁸ Dijkstra, *Idols of perversity*, p.122.

⁴⁹ Several writers have suggested the influence of Nietzsche's *Thus spake Zarathustra*. Hiratsuka does not acknowledge any conscious influence from this work, but she was familiar with the work by the time of the founding of *Seitō*. Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta* [In the beginning, woman was the sun], 4 vols (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1971), 1: 331–7.

⁵⁰ Fukuda Hideko, "Fujin mondai no kai-ketsu" [The solution to the woman problem], *Seitō* 3.2 (1913), Supplement, p.1. For further comments on Fukuda's article and translated excerpts see Sievers, *Flowers in salt*, p.178; Hane, *Reflections on the way to the gallows*, p.33.

⁵¹ Cf. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors we live by* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1980), p.48, p.104.

This poetic manifesto draws on several cultural traditions, where the sun and the moon have been used to represent the masculine and the feminine. In the Chinese Daoist cosmology, the sun, along with the masculine, represents the principle of *yang*, while the moon (the feminine) is *yin*. Similar polarities appear in European thought. The sun may also be used as a metaphor for individual creativity and transcendence, while the moon's reflected light has been linked with women's imitative nature. Bram Dijkstra has outlined the use of these images in *fin-de-siècle* European culture:

... the moon had come to stand for everything that was truly feminine in the world. The moon, too, after all, existed only as a 'reflected entity'. It had no light of its own, just as woman, in her proper function had existence only as the passive reflection of male creativity. The sun was Apollo, the god of light, the moon, Diana, his pale echo in the night.⁴⁸

Hiratsuka's use of the sun as a metaphor for the feminine, however, is not simply a reversal of the polarities of *yin* and *yang*, or the masculine and feminine figures of Apollo and Diana. Hiratsuka could also draw on the mythology of the Japanese Shintō tradition. According to the Japanese creation myths, the sun was a feminine figure. Amaterasu, the sun goddess, was the ultimate ancestor of the Japanese nation and of the mythical forebears of the imperial family. Thus, the sun could have multiple meanings in the Japanese cultural tradition, whether drawing on Shintō mythology or Daoist cosmology. The metaphor had further resonance for a 'new woman' educated in the European cultural tradition.⁴⁹

What I am most interested in, however, is the use of the imagery of light to represent liberation. In Hiratsuka's case, light could be said to represent individual liberation, the ultimate expression of individual creativity. Like Yosano's emphatic use of the first-person pronoun, Hiratsuka's use of the imagery of the sun is basically an assertion of individualism, and it was this individualism which was criticised by other writers. In her contribution to the *Bluestocking* journal, socialist pioneer Fukuda (Kageyama) Hideko 福田 景山 英子 refers to Hiratsuka's manifesto, agreeing that it would be fine if everyone could have the feeling that "I am the sun" (*jibun wa taiyō de aru* 自分は太陽である). Liberation, Fukuda points out, must be for both men and women, and she believes that the establishment of a "communal system" (*kyōsansai* 共産制) will bring liberation for both men and women. Implicit in Fukuda's criticism is a recognition that individual liberation can not be achieved without social transformation. In Fukuda's case this implies transformation along socialist lines.⁵⁰

The imagery of light and darkness, however, could also be used to dramatise other political struggles. In Anglophone culture, light often represents knowledge.⁵¹ The period of European history where science and rationality were said to have triumphed over religion and superstition was, of course, described as the 'Enlightenment'. Ruth Salvaggio has explored the "long-standing association of light and order" in Enlightenment thought. As she

explains, “Things are confused and often threatening in darkness, but in light, they can be clarified, defined, and controlled.” Salvaggio explores the gendered meanings of the dichotomy of darkness and light, arguing that when Enlightenment thinkers wrote about light, “darkness, shade and colour assumed a feminine configuration.”⁵²

The period in the late nineteenth century when Japan’s political and social institutions were renovated bears a similar name. The Japanese enlightenment is referred to as *Keimōki* 啓蒙期. *Keimō* literally means ‘enlightening the darkness’.⁵³ The metaphors of light and darkness were employed in various political contexts. As a simple illustration, we could look at the titles of some political journals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, several of which included the image of light. *Jiyū no Tomoshibi* 自由燈 (The Torch of Freedom) was a major newspaper of the liberal movement, while an early socialist publication was simply called *Hikari* 光 (Light). A textile workers’ journal of the early twentieth century bore the name *Seigi no Hikari* 正義の光 (The Light of Justice), while anarchist feminists chose the name *Kagayaku* 輝く (To Shine). Important literary and intellectual journals were *Myōjō* 明星 (Venus) and *Taiyō* 太陽 (The Sun). Two progressive organizations of the early twentieth century were the Reimeikai 黎明会 and the Gyōminkai 曉民会, names which referred to the image of the dawn, and a short-lived feminist journal was called *Kakusei Fujin* 覚醒婦人 (The Awakened Lady).⁵⁴

In Kishida Toshiko’s contribution to the first issue of *Jiyū no Tomoshibi*, she used the occasion to underline the lack of freedom for women in Japan at the time. In this article, Kishida at first appears to take the meaning of *tomoshibi* (torch) quite literally, as she enumerates the dangers awaiting a woman who walks alone at night without a light, but then turns to a more metaphorical interpretation, as she describes the lack of rights of women, who cannot escape a situation of enslavement. She hopes that the light of freedom will illumine the way for women for ages to come.⁵⁵ In other words, Kishida hoped that the ideals of the enlightenment could be seen to be equally applicable to women. Her use of light to represent freedom and darkness to represent its lack was an early example of a recurrent image in the writings of oppositional movements.

The imagery of light and darkness could also represent the quest for political understanding. Sakai Toshihiko, a socialist writer of the 1900s, used the language of enlightenment to describe his conversion to socialism. The parallel with religious conversion will be immediately apparent, and this is not surprising, as many of the early Japanese reformers were led to socialism through a connection with Christian reform movements. Sakai had suffered understandable confusion after trying to reconcile Mencius and Confucius with French philosophy; liberalism with patriotism; Christianity with the theory of evolution and utilitarianism. But socialism provided him with a “ray of light” which he could use to shed light on all of these philosophies. Finally, he felt relief when he was able to put all of these ideas in order, leaving “no shadows and no darkness.”⁵⁶ Thus, it can be seen that light was an important

⁵² Ruth Salvaggio, *Enlightened absence: neoclassical configurations of the feminine* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp.5, 53–9. I am indebted to Amanda Whiting for this reference.

⁵³ Carmen Blacker, *The Japanese enlightenment: a study of the writings of Fukuzawa Yukichi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p.32.

⁵⁴ Benedict Anderson has noted a similar use of the imagery of light in the publications of the Indonesian nationalist movement. Benedict Anderson, “A time of darkness and a time of light: transposition in early Indonesian nationalist thought,” in Anthony Reid and David Marr, eds, *Perceptions of the past in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Heinemann, 1979), p.221. I am indebted to Charles Coppel for this reference.

⁵⁵ Kishida Toshiko, “Jiyū no tomoshibi no hikari o koite kokoro o nobu” [Thoughts on the light of the torch of freedom], *Jiyū no tomoshibi*, 1 (1 May 1884), reprinted in Suzuki, *Kishida Toshiko hyōronshū*, pp.53–4.

⁵⁶ Sakai Toshihiko, “Yo wa ika ni shite sha-kaishugisha to narishi ka” [How I became a socialist], *Shūkan Heimin Shinbun*8; reproduced in Odagiri Susumu, ed., *Meiji bungaku zenshū 84: Meiji shakai shugi bungaku shū 2* [Collection of Meiji literature, vol.84, Meiji socialist literature, pt 2] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1965), pp.389–90.

⁵⁷ Cf. Wolfgang Holz's discussion of the use of conventions of religious iconography in Soviet Socialist Realism in his "Allegory and iconography in Socialist Realist painting," in *Art of the Soviets: painting, sculpture and architecture in a one-party state, 1917–1992*, ed. Matthew Cullerne Brown and Brandon Taylor (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p.76: "Apart from the obvious religious signification of the many Stalin and Lenin portraits, especially in the 1940s when the Stalin cult was at its peak, Socialist Realist Art was generally rich in religious symbols and allegories. For example, both light and movement, as well as various socialist 'key symbols' became prominent methods of allegorising a quasi-religious meaning. We find that many characters depicted on the canvas are illuminated by a mysterious sunny light In terms of the political meaning of Socialist Realism, this overabundant 'heavenly light' which falls on the faces of the figures has to be brought into semantic alignment with the projected utopia of the five-year plans. Light then symbolises both the final state of socialist ecstasy, or the progress of socialist man towards this condition, [and] an image of 'progress' associated with the very goals of the five year plan. They should also be related to those classical utopias of European cultural history such as Campanella's *City of the Sun*, written in Italy in the sixteenth century." On the links between the vocabulary of religious conversion and that of socialism see Stephen Yeo, "A new life: the religion of socialism in Britain, 1883–1896," *History Workshop* 4 (Autumn 1977): 11–12.

⁵⁸ Nakamoto Takako, "Tōmosu daini kōjō" [The No.2 Tokyo Muslin factory], *Nyonin Geijutsu* (Jan.–June 1932), reproduced in part in Ogata Akiko and Nagahara Kazuko, eds, *Feminism ryōran: fuyu no jidai e no bōka* [Feminism: flowering in the winter years] (Tokyo: Shakai Hyōronsha, 1990), pp.154–72. Kubokawa [Sata] Ineko, "Biramaki" [Distributing pamphlets], *Hi no tori* (May 1929), reprinted in Ogata and Nagahata, *Feminism ryōran*, p.135.

⁵⁹ On the proletarian literary movement see Shea, *Leftwing literature in Japan*; Chitosis Yanaga, *Japan since Perry* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1949), pp.484–8; Victoria Vernon, *Daughters of the moon: wish, will and social constraint in the fiction of Japanese women* (Berkeley, Calif.: Institute of East

metaphor for political understanding, whether in the vernacular of liberalism, socialism or feminism. Such imagery appears both in political writings, and in the works of the proletarian literary movement of the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁷

The conventions of socialist realism became apparent in various socialist publications, in poems, plays, and stories which depicted the lives of factory workers, or the activities of meetings, strikes, and pamphleteering.⁵⁸ Fiction and poetry were part of the process of presenting new possibilities for political activism to the men and women of the labour and socialist movements.⁵⁹ In addition to fictionalised accounts, some women contributed journalistic accounts of their first experience of selling journals in public, their first speech,⁶⁰ their experiences of surveillance and arrest, their own imprisonment or their experiences of visiting comrades in prison, thus helping other women imagine these possibilities.⁶¹

Liberation and Light

In the European tradition at least, light and darkness have been said to represent the so-called war of the sexes, drawing on a longer tradition of identifying light and darkness with other polarities such as good and evil.⁶² However, in the Japanese labour-movement writings of the 1920s and 1930s, light and darkness also came to take on class connotations. For example, the imagery of light and darkness appears in descriptions of the conditions of factory workers, whether in poetry, fiction, or political writings. Tokunaga Sunao's 徳永直 socialist realist novel of 1928 describes a working-class district as *taiyō no nai machi* 太陽のない街, "a town without sun."⁶³

In a contribution to the textile workers' journal, *Seigi no Hikari*, a female labour organiser plays on the imagery of light and darkness in the journal's title. Tajima Hide 田島ひで begins her article with an evocation of the actual conditions of working women, who leave home before sunrise and return from the factory after dark. These conditions are contrasted with the "young ladies" who attend "ladies' colleges," wear beautiful clothes, eat good foods, and are said to "grow up bathed in light."⁶⁴

Such imagery was often linked with what Carolyn Steedman has called a "politics of envy" where the situation of working-class women was contrasted with that of middle-class women.⁶⁵ A common rhetorical move was to link the labour of factory women with the silk kimonos of privileged women. The juxtaposition of the figure of the well-dressed middle-class woman with the

/Asian Studies, University of California, 1988), pp.87–8.

⁶⁰ Nishikawa Fumiko, "Shinbun uri no ki" [Selling newspapers], *Chokugen* 2.5 (5 Mar. 1905), reproduced in Suzuki, *Shiryō: heminsha no onnatachi*, pp.61–3; Kubokawa [Sata] Ineko, "Biramaki"; idem, "Kanojōra no kaiwa" [Their conversation], *Senki* (July 1928), pp. 100–7.

⁶¹ Nobuoka Tameko, "Tantei-san to ohana-mi" [Flower-viewing with the detective], *Chokugen* 2.12 (23/4/1905), reproduced in Suzuki, *Shiryō: heminsha no onnatachi*, pp.66–7; Nakasone Sadayo, *Fujin mondai* [The woman question] (Tokyo: Musansha, 8 June 1921); Tanno Setsu, "Gokuchū yori hahani kisu" [To my mother, from prison], *Fujin*

figure of the working woman made visible the exploitative class relations that linked the two groups.

My eyes have been opened—
The clothes worn by that young lady
Have been produced by the sweat of my labour.⁶⁶

A sentiment similar to that expressed in the above aphorism may be found in Sata Ineko's 佐多稲子 story, "From the Caramel Factory," in a scene where a thirteen-year-old factory worker admires the silk kimono of the factory owner's wife.⁶⁷ The trope of light and darkness is elaborated in this story, describing the life of Hiroko, the factory worker, who leaves home before dawn and arrives home from work after dark. Again the darkness of the factory is contrasted with the light from outside. While the factory girls work in semi-darkness, billboards for soap and cigarettes outside the factory window are bathed in sunlight.⁶⁸ Hiroko returns home to a house where her family are engaged in piece-work under an electric light. They are painting decorative covers on notebooks. The only images of nature in the story are the birds and flowers on the covers of these notebooks.⁶⁹

The imagery of light also appeared in a popular representation of class politics. Everything that shines, sparkles, or glistens is connected with the representatives of class privilege—the rich man, the general, and the rich man's mistress; while the bodies of the farmer, the factory worker and the soldier bear the marks of class exploitation:

What is it that sparkles in the glasses of the rich?
—Champagne?? No, no, it's the sweat of the poor farmer.

What is it that glistens on the face of the rich man's mistress?
—Diamonds?? No, no, it's the bloody tears of the poor female factory worker.

What is it that shines on the chest of the Minister and the General?
—A medal?? No, no, it's the bones of the poor soldier.⁷⁰

The imagery of deprivation and envy, however, was a first step in the recognition of exploitation and oppression. This consciousness could also be transformed into an image of strength, and the imagery of light and darkness could be used to describe the possibility of political transformation. While Yosano Akiko and Hiratsuka Raichō had written about individual liberation, labour organiser Tajima Hide wrote about liberation through class struggle. Through solidarity, women workers would be able to leave the darkness of oppression behind:

It is factory girls who are doing the most important work. If all of the 730,000 factory girls were to stop working, we would find out how much power we have. Until now we have been unaware of our power. It will be easy to drive away the clouds if we use the power of unity. Until now we had forgotten about our own power. The people have chosen not to see us. Now is the time for us to show our power. Let us show our strength, to ourselves, and to the world. Let us be proud of our strength. Only then will the light which has been hidden for so long emerge from the clouds. And then let us bring this light to all of the people.⁷¹

/kōron, cited in Watashitachi no Rekishi o Tsuzuru Kai, ed., *Fujin zasshi kara mita 1930 nendai* [The 1930s as seen in women's magazines] (Tokyo: Dōjidaisha, 1987), p.40; "Ryūchijō no modan gāru" [The modern girl on remand], *Nyōnin geijutsu* 2.12: 77–81, cited in Silverberg, "The modern girl as militant," p.255.

⁶² Dijkstra, *Idols of perversity*, p.127.

⁶³ Tokunaga Sunao, *Taiyō no nai machi* [The town without sun] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1950).

⁶⁴ Tajima Hide, "Hikari ni mukaite" [Facing the light], *Seigi no hikari* 2 (18 May 1926).

⁶⁵ Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a good woman: a story of two lives* (London: Virago, 1986), p.7.

⁶⁶ *Seigi no hikari* 1 (20 Apr. 1926).

⁶⁷ Sata Ineko (Kubokawa Ineko 窪川稲子), "Kyarameru kōjō kara" [From the caramel factory], *Puroretaria Bungaku* (Mar. 1928), in Itō Tadashi et al., eds, *Nihon gendai bungaku zenshū*, vol.83, pp.206–12. For discussion of this story see Vernon, *Daughters of the moon*, pp.74–86; Gordon, *Labour and imperial democracy*, p.226.

⁶⁸ Sata Ineko, "Kyarameru kōjō kara," p.209.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.211–12.

⁷⁰ This song has been attributed to Takatsu Tayoko and her husband Takatsu Seidō. Kondō Magara, *Watashi no kaisō* [My recollections], 2 vols (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1981), 2: 39–40. There is, however, an earlier citation of the song in Kinoshita Naoto's novel *Ryōjin no jibaku* [Confessions of a husband], which was serialized in the *Mainichi Shinbun* between 1904 and 1906. The song also appeared in a collection of socialist poetry in 1906. See Matsumoto Katsuhira, *Nihon sbakai shugi engeki shi: Meiji Taishō ben* [A history of socialist theatre in Japan: Meiji and Taishō] (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō: 1975), pp.156–7.

⁷¹ Tajima Hide, "Hikari ni mukaite," p.6. This is also reminiscent of conventional visual imagery in Soviet iconography. See several posters where the sun signifies the new society in Stephen White, *The Bolshevik poster* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1988), in particular Figure 2.27, a lithograph of 1921 captioned "Long Live the Sun! May the Darkness be Hidden!"

⁷² Nakamoto Takako, "Tōmosu daini kōjō," pp.161–2.

⁷³ Eric Hobsbawm discusses the image of the dawn of socialism in "Man and woman: images on the left," in *Worlds of labour: further studies in the history of labour* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1984), pp.74, 89.

⁷⁴ Anderson, "A time of darkness and a time of light," p.221.

Tajima still employs the conventional images of pathos in her writing, but she has attempted to transform an image of deprivation into one of power and solidarity.

In Nakamoto Takako's 中本たか子 story "The No. 2 Tōkyō Muslin Factory," a shaft of light through the factory window marks a shift in the women workers' subjectivity, from feelings of uncertainty to militancy. The women are deep in thought about their situation:

We often complain privately. And we think seriously about getting our conditions improved. However, we crumple when we have to come forward, because we have had no experience of disputes until now. We just whispered in the shadows. If we don't solve our situation, who will do it for us? It's no use waiting for the person next to you. When has anyone else ever done the slightest little thing to help us? No one has!

The women were silent, deep in thought. Outside, the sky suddenly cleared, and a warm shaft of light came through a gap in the paper blinds.

Ushiyama broke the silence ...⁷²

A related set of imagery refers to the "dawning" of socialism or feminism.⁷³ As Anderson explains, "dawn marks the passage from darkness to light, from sleep to wakefulness."⁷⁴ An image of the dawn of socialism in the early socialist women's paper, *Sekai Fujin* 世界婦人 (Women of the World), owes much to European socialist and feminist iconography. The illustration portrays a female figure bearing a flaming sword, heading a procession of men and women who carry banners with the words "freedom" (*jiyū* 自由) and "community" (*kyōsan* 共産) in Chinese characters, as they march towards a Utopian future.⁷⁵ The scene is illuminated by light emanating from the woman, and the illustration is framed by quotes from William Morris, Peter Kropotkin, and Robert Blatchford (Figure 2—borders not shown).⁷⁶

The image of the dawn of socialism was constantly reworked in labour-movement publications, in illus-

Figure 2

Sekai Fujin 32 (5 Jan. 1909), p.1. This illustration draws on several conventions of socialist iconography: the woman is an allegorical figure standing for the qualities of liberty and community, the rising sun signifies the socialist future, while the marching procession symbolizes progress towards an ideal society. Other figures hold a wreath of victory and the hammer of socialism. While most of the allegorical figures are in European dress, the banners place the procession in Japan



⁷⁵ See the discussion of the idea of 'marching forwards' in Soviet Socialist Realist paintings in Holz, "Allegory and iconography in Socialist Realist painting," p.74.

⁷⁶ Cf. Lisa Tickner's discussion of Caroline Watts' poster "The Bugler Girl": "The Artists' Suffrage League primed the Manchester Guardian to explain to its readers how 'the Amazon who stands on the battlements of the fort' may be said to be heralding the new day of which the sun is just seen rising." Lisa Tickner, *The spectacle of women: imagery of the suffrage campaign 1907–1914* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987), p.211.

trations of the sun rising over the factory chimneys, for example (Figure 3).⁷⁷ The ‘dawn’ of socialism was also a common linguistic trope, with a pedigree dating back to the composition of the *The Internationale*. Yamakawa Kikuei’s 山川菊栄 manifesto, “Fujin ni gekisu” (婦人に檄す—Appeal to Women), composed as a pamphlet to be distributed by Sekirankai 赤満会 members on May Day 1921, the first time Japanese women participated in May Day, refers to the dawn of socialism:

May Day is the day for the proletarians, for us workers who are oppressed. For centuries and centuries, women and workers have endured together a history of oppression and ignorance. But the dawn is approaching. The morning gong that was struck in Russia signals the first step in the victory that will minute by minute banish the darkness of capitalism from the face of the earth. Sisters, listen to the power of women that is embodied in the sound of the gong. Let us exert our strength to the utmost and, together with our brothers, strike the gong that will signal the liberation of the proletariat of Japan. Women who have been awakened, join the May Day march!⁷⁸

In early twentieth-century Japan, political enlightenment is described as awakening, and we can identify the use of similar imagery in European political and feminist writings, where women were often enjoined to awaken or to arise.⁷⁹ Yosano Akiko also referred to women’s awakening in her contribution to the first edition of the *Bluestocking* journal.

Once again, however, Tajima Hide was able to transform an image which often had individualistic connotations, into an image of solidarity: In the following poem written for the occasion of the formation of the Women’s Work Research Bureau, Tajime Hide once again attempts to transform the conventional imagery of women’s situation into the imagery of solidarity and agency:

Just opening your eyes is not enough—
Stretch out your hand,
Spread your wings.

⁷⁷ Another conventional image appropriated by the Japanese socialists was the sower of seeds, for example, in the name of the proletarian arts journal *Tane maku bito* [The sower]. Cf. Hobsbawm, “Man and woman on the left.”

⁷⁸ Sekirankai Manifesto, quoted in Ezashi Akiko, *Sameyo onnatachi—Sekirankai no hitobito* [Women awake!—the people of the Sekirankai] (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1980), pp.23–4; also translated in Shapcott, “Red chrysanthemum.”

Figure 3

Detail from the cover of the textile workers’ journal Seigi no Hikari, showing dawn over the factory chimneys—a conventional trope of socialist iconography which has here been adapted to the Japanese context. The woman is clearly Japanese, and is in an assertive position, calling her fellow workers to action



⁷⁹ Indeed, Orlando Patterson has identified a literary connection between the concepts of freedom and light as far back as the Greek tragedies: “And you, who keep, magnificent, the hallowed and huge / cavern, ● grant that the man’s house lift up its head / and look on the shining daylight / and liberty [eleutheria] / with eyes made / glad with gazing out from the helm of darkness.” Aeschylus, “The libation bearers,” cited in Orlando Patterson, *Freedom in the making of Western culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), p.114.

⁸⁰ Fujin Rōdō Chōsajō, “Kantōgen” [Foreword], in Maruoka Hideko, *Fujin shisō keisei shi nōto*, vol.1, pp.141–2.

⁸¹ *Minsbū fu jin* 1.

⁸² Matsuoka [Nishikawa] Fumiko, “Fujin no honsei to shakai shugi” [Women’s nature and socialism], *Shūkan Heimin Shinbun*, 20 Nov. 1904, reprinted in *Nishikawa Fumiko jiden*, p.206. This was the content of Nishikawa’s speech to the Socialist Women’s Seminar (*Shakaishugi fu jin kōen*) 6 Nov. 1904, as reported in “Shakaishugi fu jin (honsha)” [The socialists women’s seminar (at head office)], *Shūkan Heimin Shinbun* 54, 10 Nov. 1904.

⁸³ Barbara Taylor explains the consequences of this tendency in the writings of the Utopian socialists: “[There was] an unresolved tension between the desire to minimize sexual difference and the need to re-assert it in women’s favour. This tension was particularly acute within socialist rhetoric, since the very qualities which were considered quintessentially female were also those which the Owenites wished to see generalized across the population: love, compassion, generosity, charity. A good woman, it was implied, was a born communist.” Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the new Jerusalem* (London: Virago, 1984), pp.30–1.

⁸⁴ Compare this view of socialism with Sugi Sakae’s autobiographical account, where he relates his understanding that it was necessary to renounce pacifism in order to embrace socialism: “Simultaneously [with my disillusion with Christianity] I came to doubt the principle of nonresistance, the ‘turn the other cheek’ that is an essential quality of religion and that I had begun unconsciously to embrace. Thus I could now embrace pure socialism and the class struggle.” Byron K. Marshall, transl. and ed., *The autobiography of Sugi Sakae* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1992), p.125. Arahata Kanson, in his autobiography, also reflects on the contradiction between belief in the class struggle and the statement of pacifist principles. Arahata Kanson, *Kanson jiden* [The autobiography of Kanson], 2 vols (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1975), 1: 99–107.

⁸⁵ Aims of the Shinshin Fujin Kai, *Nishikawa Fumiko jiden*, p.137.

⁸⁶ Nishikawa Fumiko, *Atarashiki onna no yukubeki michi* [The way of the new woman], quoted in *Nishikawa Fumiko jiden*, pp.377–8.

Use that hand ... to open the eyes of the person next to you.
Oh! How many people have been forced to cover their eyes!
It has been this hand ... which has restrained us.

We will break the chains of oppression and submission
It is inaction that is a crime!⁸⁰

Occasionally, however, the imagery of light had to fit in with the necessity to follow the correct political line. The Social Democratic Women’s Federation declared that “[We] will march under the banner of realism (*genjitsushugi* 現実主義) and the light of legality will shine on the road which the proletarian working women will follow.”⁸¹ The banner of realism and the light of legality distinguished the social democratic women from the illegal communist party and the more radical sections of the socialist movement.

The Maternal Metaphor

A further class of imagery involved the representation of women as mothers. Early socialists used maternity as an image that encapsulated the ‘feminine’, caring values of a socialist society. This ‘gendering’ of socialist philosophy is explained in the text of a speech by Nishikawa (Matsuoka) Fumiko 西川(松岡) 文子 which appeared in the *Commoners’ News*:

When you mention socialism, there are many people who understand it as something violent, but socialism is in fact a set of ideas (*shugi*) deep in mercy. Thus, I believe that women, who are naturally gentle and full of sympathy must agree with socialism, and women’s (voices) will be heard on certain points. I think that the power of women is stronger than has been supposed, and women should give up being shy and reticent, and devote all their energies to socialism.⁸²

According to Nishikawa’s (Matsuoka’s) account, socialism as a humane and caring philosophy is implicitly contrasted with the masculine and aggressive values of capitalism. Such a linking of socialist philosophy and ‘feminine’ values could also be found in the writings of the British Utopian socialists,⁸³ and contrasts with the language of ‘class war’ to be found in Marxist socialism.⁸⁴ Thus, while the early socialist women challenged expectations of suitable feminine behaviour by their decision to participate in oppositional political activity, the form of their participation was often understood in gendered terms, through the metaphors of maternity and feminine compassion.

In her later writings, Nishikawa explicitly linked family and State, calling for a “democratization” of the family, and a “maternalization” (*boseika* 母性化) of society. Unfortunately she did not elaborate on what this ‘maternalization’ would involve,⁸⁵ but it seems that ‘maternal’ was a metaphor for the kind of caring society she envisaged. Nishikawa’s vision of a compassionate society was linked with pacifism; she questioned the sexual division of labour in society, and predicted an end to the “male-centred” ideologies which limit

women's activities.⁸⁶ Nishikawa, in her advocacy of the “maternalization” of society and the “democratization” of the family, tried to reconceptualize the relationship between family and State and tried to rethink the sexual division of labour.

The Bluestockings used the maternal as a specifically feminine trope of genius and creativity. In Hiratsuka Raichō's poetic manifesto, “In the beginning, woman was the sun,” the emergence of the journal *Bluestocking* is described as the cry of a newborn baby (*ubugoe*産声), and this metaphor is elaborated upon, as Hiratsuka wonders how her child will develop.⁸⁷ For other women, the capacity for motherhood represented feminine qualities of compassion and nurturance, which could be opposed to the masculine qualities of militarism. This is apparent in Saika Kotoko's comment on World War I, an event which otherwise received little attention in the pages of the journal:⁸⁸

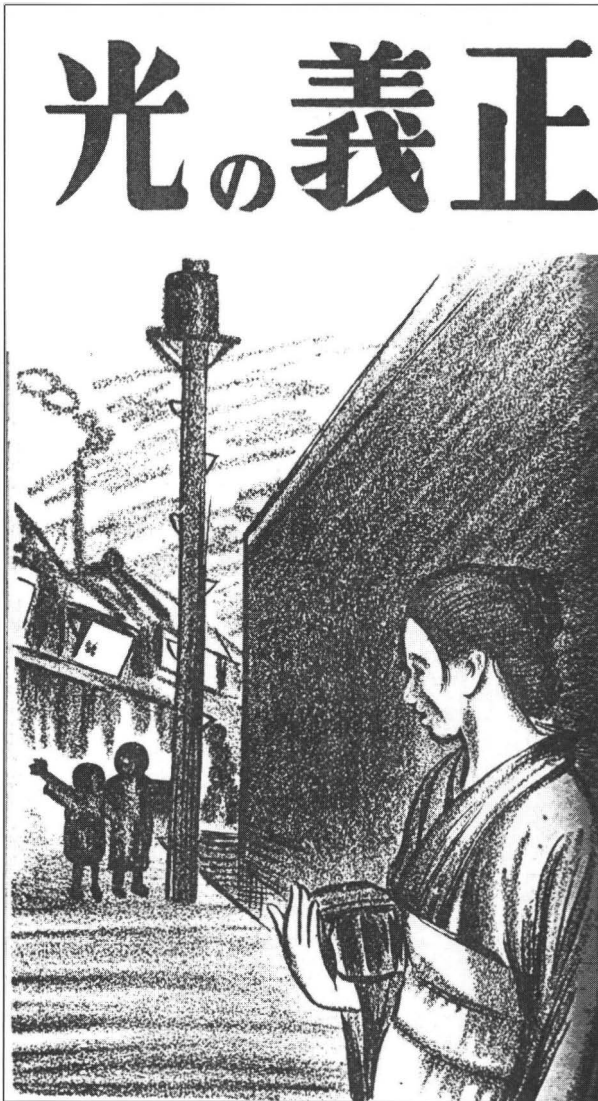
Who was it who said that if it were women who stood on the battlefield, then war would surely stop—no woman could bear to watch the cruelty of war. That is absolutely true! How could women, who live for love and mercy, be able to kill? I believe that women, who have the ability to be mothers, would never be able to line up on the battlefield and witness the spilling of blood.⁸⁹

Saika, like several other *Seitō* writers, links maternity with an essentialist view of women's compassionate nature. The social meaning of motherhood was also explored, however, and it was in this context that the Bluestockings drew on the writings of Swedish maternalist-feminist Ellen Key, eventually linking an interest in women's reproductive capacity with discussions of the forms of social policy necessary to deal with this capacity.⁹⁰

In labour-movement writings, however, the maternal image often involves conflict. The potential contradiction involved in being both mother and worker is dramatised in the cover of an edition of *Seigi no Hikari*, which depicts a mother leaving her children behind as she

Figure 4

Cover of Seigi no Hikari 2 (1926). The mother, leaving her children behind as she departs for the factory, dramatizes the conflict involved in the contradictory position of the woman worker who is also a mother



⁸⁷ Hiratsuka Raichō, “Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta,” p.38.

⁸⁸ Although the period of publication of *Seitō* (1911 to 1916) includes the beginnings of World War I, the *Seitō* group was distinguished by an almost complete lack of interest in issues of war and peace. Hiratsuka herself notes this lack in her autobiography. Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta*, vol.2, pp.568–70.

⁸⁹ Saika Kotoko, “Senka” [The turmoil of war], *Seitō* 5.10, quoted in Hiratsuka Raichō, *Genshi josei wa taiyō de atta*, vol.2, pp.568–70.

⁹⁰ Kaneko Sachiko, “Taishōki ni okeru seiyo josei kaihō ron juyō no hōhō—Ellen Key *Ren'ai to kekkon o tegakari ni*” [The reception of Western feminist thought in the Taisho period—a case study of Ellen Key's *Love and marriage*], *Shakai kagaku jūnaru* 24 (Oct. 1985). /OVER

/I use the word 'maternalist' to refer to a strand of feminism which emphasizes women's reproductive capacity and the social importance of the role of mother. In other contexts 'maternalist' has been used to describe a protective attitude displayed by white feminists with respect to women of colour, particularly in colonial situations. See Margaret Jolly, "Colonizing women: the maternal body and empire," in Sneja Gunew and Anna Yeatman, eds, *Feminism and the politics of difference* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp.103–27.

⁹¹ Gotō Miyoko, *I am alive* (Oakland, Calif.: Oakland University, Katydid Books, 1988), p.34.

⁹² Iwauchi Zensaku in *Seigi no hikari*.

⁹³ See the discussion of maternal imagery in European socialist publications in Hobsbawm, "Man and woman: images on the left," p.97.

⁹⁴ This phrase is used by Griselda Pollock in a discussion of some nineteenth-century Western European representations of working women. Griselda Pollock, "Feminism/Foucault—surveillance/sexuality," p.17.

departs for the factory (Figure 4). A similar sense of conflict is expressed in Gotō Miyoko's 後藤美代子 poetry from the late 1920s:

A haggard mother runs to the factory,
her child racing after her; no time to wipe his nose.

At last the baby sucks firmly, but the afternoon work-siren snatches away
the breast.

Children clinging left and right, the mother washes rice.
The western sun shines on her breasts.

Do not leave those women behind.

Their steps are slow because they carry those who will build tomorrow's
world.⁹¹

In the journal *Seigi no Hikari*, labour organizer Iwauchi Zensaku 岩内善作 employs rather extravagant imagery to show that he values the contribution of women workers. However, the allegorical meaning of the "mothers of humanity" overshadows the conflicts involved in being a mother and a worker.

Factory sisters! How fine you look!
You should realise you are the mother [goddesses] of humanity.
What would happen to the world if you were to stop working!
You are responsible for producing beautiful fabrics, weaving, and
spinning—the products which make up a large part of our country's
wealth.

And that is not all—goddess sisters!

If you were to refuse to bear and bring up children, the human race would
disappear from the face of the earth.

What a frightening responsibility!

You should be proud of being women and of being mill girls!

You, who have the pride of being workers, and the important job of being
mothers, should be worshipped as goddesses!⁹²

Visual imagery from labour-movement publications also portrays an uneasy amalgam of socialist realism and allegory. It is difficult to decide whether illustrations of working women suckling their babies represent actual working-class mothers, or the abstract values of compassion which were thought to be part of the socialist movement (Figure 5).⁹³ Perhaps these images gain power by making explicit what is lacking in mainstream representations of women. Mainstream discourses of "good wives and wise mothers" evoked middle-class ideals of bourgeois domesticity, which rendered working women invisible. Representations of working-class mothers forced a collision between the ideal of bourgeois motherhood and the reality of the lives of working-class women, in a representational system where "labour and women are antagonistic terms."⁹⁴

The Language of Liberation

In this survey of the imagery of liberation in Japanese socialism and feminism, I have first of all been interested in categorizing the types of metaphors employed to portray concepts of oppression and exploitation, and the imagery used to imagine the possibility of liberation and transformation. Much of the conventional imagery of femininity reinforces notions of passivity and decorativeness, particularly the use of floral imagery. Other metaphors contrast the deformations of capitalist and patriarchal society with what is seen as a more natural state. This is the function of the images of the stunted flowers, the bud which will not bloom, the tiny bird who cannot fly. The imagery of imprisonment performs a similar function in depicting an exploitative situation, and becomes linked with fantasies of escape. Verbal and visual imagery of workers who go to work and come home in darkness suggest a life alienated from nature, while the ideal society is a Utopia bathed in light.

It would be simplistic to argue for a simple congruence between a political position and a set of rhetorical imageries. At times, rhetoric and political strategy were mutually reinforcing. The liberal individualism of the Bluestockings was indeed expressed through the assertiveness of the first-person pronoun, and images of individual genius, albeit initially divorced from a consciousness of the social context for the production of individual identities. The use of maternal imagery provided a specifically feminine trope of creativity and empowerment, although such imagery could also be co-opted for nationalist purposes, when women were addressed as “mothers of the nation” in the 1930s and 1940s.

When socialist Sakai Toshihiko described the women of the Commoners’ Society as flowers, this was at odds with the actions of a man who devoted more attention to an understanding of the ‘woman question’ than most of his male comrades. On the other hand, there seems to be a congruence between the pathetic imagery of fragility and imprisonment employed by early labour organisers, and the lack of a clear strategy for mobilizing the women workers whom they viewed as objects of pity and compassion, rather than as comrades in a common struggle. The politics of envy, expressed in comparisons between middle-class privilege and working-class deprivation, were useful in dramatizing the inequalities of society. It was, however, necessary to link this envy with a clear understanding of the explanations for this inequality, and strategies for transforming a society based on such inequalities.

Figure 5

Cover of the Sōdōmei union women’s journal Rōdō Fujin, showing a woman suckling her baby in the foreground, with factory chimneys in the background. The figure is both representative of a working mother and allegorical, embodying the abstract values of compassion espoused by the socialist movement. The darkness of this illustration is in contrast with the sun-drenched representation of the socialist future. Note the chains framing the illustration, another conventional symbol of the oppression of capitalist society



⁹⁵ Strike pamphlets held in Ōhara Social Research Institute, reproduced in Suzuki Yūko, *Jokō to rōdō sōgi*.

⁹⁶ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of struggle," in Chandra Talpade Mohanty et al., eds, *Third world women and the politics of feminism* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1991), p.34.



Light and darkness were most often linked with the possibility of transformation. In the case of the Bluestockings, this referred to individual liberation, and the development of individual creativity. In labour-movement writings, light and darkness expressed the contrast between middle-class privilege and working-class deprivation. The ideal society to be created through shared political action would be bathed in light.

By the late 1920s, the world depression which also affected the Japanese textile industry meant that women workers in the downtown region of Tokyo were in the vanguard of struggles between labour and capital. Strike pamphlets of the time make little use of poetic imagery. Rather, the workers' struggle is expressed in simple language. An appeal to "the proletarian women of Nankatsu" described the participation of women in the Tōyō Muslin strike of May 1930:

Over 3000 of our brothers and sisters at Tōyō Muslin have ... embarked on a strike to save themselves from starvation, and are fighting against the high-handedness of the company and indescribable suppression by the police.

The enemy which has forced the factory women into such an extreme situation, and the enemy which has caused the increasingly sorry state of our pantries are one and the same—the finance capitalists.

So, the victory of the factory women of Tōyō Muslin, will, in the end, be a victory for all proletarian women ...

Another pamphlet from the same strike referred to the militancy of the striking women and men:

Our 3000 brothers and sisters are paying a sacrifice in blood!

Do not give them up to the enemy!

Bring down a torrent of contributions to our fighting fund!⁹⁵

This leads me to what is perhaps the most important question to be asked in this study. What is the relationship between the study of the language of political movements, and the study of other aspects of the mobilization of individuals under the banners of feminism, socialism, or other political ideologies? In this article, I have been interested in the metaphors employed in writings on the situation of women and in representations of the liberation of women from patriarchal and capitalist exploitation. In many of the texts analysed so far, depth has come from intertextuality, from the use of metaphors which have shared meanings in a particular cultural context, and the creation of metaphors which attempt to transform those shared cultural meanings. Another kind of depth, however, comes from the relationship between representation and political action.

In the strike pamphlets of the depression period there is a close relationship between representation and political activism. The reality of women's participation in strikes at this time made possible the representation of strong and active women, and these representations made possible the imagining of future activism by women. In the labour-movement writings, there is a

depth which comes from references to the lived struggles of women workers. Visual representations of women from the journals of the 1920s and 1930s show militant and active women rather than the fragile flowers depicted in the early days of the Yūaikai (Figure 6).

Writing was part of a process of forging “new political identities” for women, and these texts provide a space for “struggle and contestation about reality itself.”⁹⁶ From this perspective, a concentration on textual analysis need not suggest a neglect of the description of more conventional forms of political struggle. Rather, I would agree with Mohanty that “political struggles ... are waged on at least two simultaneous, interconnected levels: an ideological, discursive level which addresses questions of representation (womanhood/femininity), and a material, experiential, daily-life level which focuses on the micropolitics of work, home, family, sexuality, etc.”⁹⁷

In analysing these representations, it is thus necessary to link them with specific political struggles, while being sensitive to the generic constraints and possibilities of particular types of political writing.⁹⁸ These constraints and possibilities include the valorization of individual selfhood in liberal feminist writings, the imagination of other realities in fiction, the hortative tone of the political manifesto or strike pamphlet, and the pathos of the workers' songs recirculated in labour-movement publications. By analyzing the representational and rhetorical strategies of these different genres, it can also be shown that similar imagery appears across genres, and that there may be a link between the speaking positions available to feminist and socialist women in early twentieth-century Japan, the discursive strategies employed in their writings, and the political strategies they envisaged for changing their society and their own situation.

We should also, however, consider the relationship between these marginal representations and mainstream discourses on gender and politics. Even groups and individuals who take an oppositional stance must frame their opposition in the language available to them. As E. Ann Kaplan has argued, “women, like everybody else, can function only within the linguistic, semiotic constraints of their historical moment—within, that is, the discourses available to them.”⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁹⁸ Cf. Helen Carr, ed., *From my guy to sci-fi: genre and women's writing in the post-modern world* (London, Pandora, 1989); Anne Cranny-Francis, *Feminist fiction: feminist uses of generic fiction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp.15–22.

⁹⁹ E. Ann Kaplan, *Motherhood and representation: the mother in popular culture and melodrama* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.16.

Figure 6

Cover of *Rōdō Fujin* 26 (Jan. 1930), showing women workers marching forward in solidarity to a “new struggle” (*Atarashiki toso e!*)



¹⁰⁰ Once again, Pollock's explication of the notion of discourse is instructive: "The efficacy of representation, furthermore, relies on a ceaseless exchange with other representations. Across the social formation there are diverse assemblages of representations, called discourses, some of which are specifically but never exclusively visual. These combinations interact and cross refer with other discourses, accumulating around certain points to create so dense a texture of mutual reference that some statements, and some visions, acquire the authority of the obvious. At this point, the very fact of representation is occluded and what Foucault has named a régime of truth is established by the constant play and production of this relay of signs. What is at stake in representation is not so much a matter of what is shown as it is who

Socialists and feminists in the early twentieth century had attempted to expand the representations of women, and by the 1930s women were starting to be recognised as fellow workers and comrades within the socialist and labour movements. The strikes of the depression years brought representations of women engaged in militant labour activism out of the socialist press and into the mass media. These texts at times drew on mainstream discourses of femininity, and at times attempted to challenge these discourses, drawing on a range of tropes and conventions which had been built up over decades of writing and activism.¹⁰⁰

/is authorised to look at whom and with what effects. Such a frankly Foucauldian account, however, locates representation exclusively on the side of power. Precisely because it operates in the field of power, however, representation as a process is flawed, balked, disrupted,

/and often overwhelmed by the material it attempts to manage. While representation is an attempt to manage social forces, it induces and then is shaped by resistance" Pollock, "Feminism/Foucault—surveillance/sexuality," pp.14–15.

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