Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies 4
Arts and Literature 1

Writing Behind the Scenes
Stage and Gender in Enchi Fumiko's Works

Daniela Moro

Edizioni
Ca'Foscari

Writing Behind the Scenes

Ca’ Foscari Japanese Studies
Arts and Literature

Collana diretta da | A series directed by
Paolo Calvetti, Massimo Raveri
Bonaventura Ruperti, Guido Samarani

4 | 1

Edizioni
Ca’Foscari

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies
Arts and Literature

Head office

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies

Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
Palazzo Vendramin dei Carmini
Dorsoduro 3462
30123 Venezia

http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/col/dbc/9/JapStuds

Writing Behind the Scenes
Stage and Gender in Enchi Fumiko's Works

Daniela Moro

Venezia
Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing
2015

Writing Behind the Scenes: Stage and Gender in Enchi Fumiko's Works

Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia
Dorsoduro 3246
30123 Venezia
http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/
ecf@unive.it

1a edizione dicembre 2015
ISBN 978-88-6969-056-3 (ebook)
ISBN 978-88-6969-057-0 (stampa)

Progetto grafico di copertina: Studio Girardi, Venezia | Edizioni Ca' Foscari

Certificazione scientifica delle Opere pubblicate da Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing: tutti i saggi pubblicati hanno ottenuto il parere favorevole da parte di valutatori esperti della materia, attraverso un processo di revisione anonima sotto la responsabilità del Comitato scientifico della collana. La valutazione è stata condotta in aderenza ai criteri scientifici ed editoriali di Edizioni Ca' Foscari.
Scientific certification of the works published by Edizioni Ca' Foscari - Digital Publishing: all essays published in this volume have received a favourable opinion by subject-matter experts, through an anonymous peer review process under the responsibility of the Scientific Committee of the series. The evaluations were conducted in adherence to the scientific and editorial criteria established by Edizioni Ca' Foscari.

http://edizionicafoscari.unive.it/col/dbc/9/112/JapStuds/4

Abstract

This is an analysis of some works of fiction by Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986) set in the world of kabuki and noh, of which Enchi was a great expert. By using contemporary theories of gender, queer and ageing and their connections, it is an attempt to throw a new light on Enchi's literature, especially on the works of the last period, which are almost unknown and not translated. The analysis of these works gives a necessary contribution to the research on Enchi because they differ substantially from the better known earlier works of the 1950s such as *Onnazaka* and *Onnamen*. The works analyzed pre-empt some concepts of contemporary theory from the point of view of gender and ageing aspects. Although those aspects have already been partially considered by the critics, their analysis was mainly restricted to the most popular works of the writer. In particular, the fact that these works describe the life of actors, with a continuous and fluid exchange between stage and everyday life acts, represents an opportunity for a further consideration of aspects of contemporary theory such as the concept of performativity. The postmodern idea that identity is constructed and that there is no fixed and abiding self, presupposes a difference between performance, where a supposed reality is imitated on the stage, and performativity *à la* Butler, where the reality is created everyday by assuming a certain set of repeated acts. In the case of an actor, the acts onstage and the acts offstage influence each other, blurring the concept of performance and performativity and embodying a concrete example of the construction of identity. In particular, the works selected have a specific focus on the concept of identity. *Onnagata ichidai* regards the impossibility of fixing identity, *Komachi hensō* is about the human need to create a stable identity, and *Kikujidō* describes the overcoming of the need of identity itself. At the same time two of the works above mentioned represent an intertextual dialogue with Yukio Mishima's literature. Enchi and Mishima through their works shared many interests in Japanese tradition, and also in aspects of human identity like gender and age, even if their visions were quite different. Therefore, Enchi often referred to her colleague's writings while he was alive, but especially after his sudden and violent death.
The works analyzed are precious for their intertextual and critical value together with the possibility of a close reading which both pre-empts and furthers contemporary theories and allows a re-evaluation of Enchi's literature in general.

Keywords Enchi Fumiko. Onnagata. Noh. Mishima Yukio. Performativity. Queer. Gender. Age. Ono no Komachi. Kikujidō.

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to all those who have, in one way or another, helped me to bring this book to completion.
At the outset, I would like to thank my advisors Prof. Bonaventura Ruperti and Prof. Luisa Bienati for their continuous support during the writing of the Ph.D. dissertation upon which this book is based.
A special «thank you» to Prof. Gaye Rowley for her precious advice, and to my MA supervisor Prof. Kanai Keiko, who welcomed me back to her seminar for a period of research after the end of my Master's course at Waseda University. I would also like to thank Prof. Kobayashi Fukuko and all the members of the Waseda University Gender Studies Institute, whose lively discussions inspired me.
I would like to thank all my colleagues from Ca' Foscari University for their moral support, together with their suggestions and stimulating discussions. In particular, I am grateful to Dr. Caterina Mazza for her invaluable counsel, especially given my lack of practical skills, and for helping me to keep on going, and Dr. Pierantonio Zanotti for his advice and help.

Writing Behind the Scenes
Stage and Gender in Enchi Fumiko's Works

Daniela Moro

Summary

To my mother Elda

Writing Behind the Scenes
Stage and Gender in Enchi Fumiko's Works
Daniela Moro

0 Introduction

Enchi Fumiko did something which seems inconsistent: she wrote works deeply inspired by Japanese tradition, which at the same time provide many witty insights into gender themes of modern and sometimes contemporary Japan. The importance of her writing lies precisely in the fact that with her deep knowledge of the classics she could allow herself to play with intertextual structures, themes, and atmospheres, creating a mirror game of quotation and references, which gives her works never-ending reading possibilities.

Nevertheless, the majority of scholars writing about Enchi were concentrated in the 1980s and 1990s and tended to concentrate their observations on the biographical aspects of her writing. In particular, when examining the sex and gender aspects of her works, emphasis is placed on the importance of her hysterectomy or the unhappy relationship with her husband. As for her deep knowledge of Japanese tradition, the influence of her father, who was one of the central figures of 'National Studies' (*Kokugaku* 国学) in the Meiji period, is stressed. Often in such biographical readings the depiction of the figure of a supposed traditional Japanese femininity coming to the fore in her writings is interpreted as a passive act of resistance against male power in the family and in society in general, and compared to Heian women's writing. Needless to say, the emphasis on «female writing» ends in the mere reading of the texts as a form of empowerment of female subjectivity based on an essentialist point of view, and neglects the freshness and the novelty that Enchi's works brought to traditional *topoi* in general. On the other hand, many scholars started looking at her works only for their potential for subverting the androcentric system, exaggerating the possibility of interpretation of her texts, and neglecting the social and intellectual contexts in which she wrote. In both cases, the focus on femininity and the idea that Enchi's texts cannot be enjoyed by a male readership is generally implied. Exceptions are the works of Kurata Yōko, Kobayashi Fukuko, and Nina Cornyetz, which occupy a more neutral position and see through other lenses.

My intention is to attempt to do justice to Enchi's works by exploring the possibilities of her texts, considering the fact that the world of Japanese traditional theatre, with its potential for transformation and deconstruc-

tion of the conventional, is the place *tout court* where the contemporary awareness of the fluidity of gender and in general of personal identity can be clearly seen. In doing this, I do not want to neglect her intellectual formation and the influence of the classics on her writings, but I try to maintain a critical and as much as possible a neutral stance, analyzing where there is a potential for a re-evaluation of her *œuvre*, but also admitting the limits of the vision coming to the fore in her work.

It is undeniable that Enchi's works generally have female characters at their center, and that the male characters in many works remain flat. Nevertheless, particularly in the works analyzed in this dissertation, which are centered on the theatre environment, and focus especially on gender identity, sexuality, or old age, she makes the effort to give her works a broader vision, exploring the self from many aspects. Here I would like to quote the author's own words, taken from a discussion with other female authors (Enchi 2007, pp. 103-104), where Enchi's statement about the act of writing is very clear:

> I wouldn't think they [*shōsetsu* 小説 written by women] are female. It is just because it is a woman who writes them, that they express female states of mind, but those states of mind are human. The things I write are often seen as «female obsession», right? In the end if we remain on the surface, we can interpret my works like that, but I have the impression that I am trying to describe the things that humans have inside and cannot put outside of them. In this way the world sees it as «female obsession». But I think that men also have those feelings.[1]

I hope to demonstrate that, contrary to what is generally thought, despite their formal 'feminine' aspect, Enchi's works can be inserted in the literary environment of her time without needing to specify the gender of the writer as in the often contested categorization *joryū bungaku* 女流文学 (women's literature). And this is not because I agree with the idea of the importance of writing about «human» versus the idea of writing about «woman» (Yoshinaga 2001, p. 84), but because I believe that also in writing about 'woman' there are as many ways as there are women. The work of a researcher in the literary field should be to find out what the specificities of those ways are, and a reader should choose a work of literature not because of the gender of the writer, but because of the interest aroused by a work precisely for its specificities. The concept of *joryū bungaku* has been criticized as restrictive by some of the foremost scholars of Japanese literature, such as Noriko Mizuta Lippit and Kyoko Iriye, but still the stereotypical attitude at the base of this definition survives (Lip-

1 All translations from Japanese in this book are my own, unless otherwise specified.

pit, Selden 1991, p. xiv). In writing a dissertation on an important author who was popular at the time when the distinction between literature and women's literature was still in use, and by demonstrating that her writings have features which surpass the sole 'feminine' interest, I hope to make a contribution, however minor, to bringing definitively to an end the segregation of literature written by female authors as too specific and therefore 'minor' or 'other'.

In her works, Enchi was keen to explore the unique gift bestowed by an artist's life, but at the same time she often conveyed how pain and solitude are essential for an artist to attain ability. In a 1941 essay entitled *Onnagata to onnagokoro* 女形と女心 (*Onnagata* and the Woman's Heart), Enchi describes an interview with a famous *onnagata*, Hanayagi Shōtarō 花柳章太郎 (1894-1965), and discusses the effort which an *onnagata*, who is born male, must make in order to perform a woman's role, as similar to the effort of a woman writer, who must overcome her 'femaleness' in order to write. She also adds that those two individuals are similar, in that once the cultivation (*shūgyō* 終業) period is finished, and they overcome the difficulties of the friction between gender and art, they attain a «particular tranquillity» (*besshu no ochitsuki* 別種の落ち着き), exactly as the women artists usually depicted in Enchi's works (Enchi 1941, pp. 548-549). The particular need to wear a mask for a female author is due also to the general tendency to see their works as 'I novels', as explained by Seiko Yoshinaga (2001, p. 67).

Precisely because a woman writer needs to get to a very high level to be appreciated in the literary world, she needs to overcome and camouflage her femaleness in her writings, as much as an *onnagata* needs to overcome the gender he was born to, in order to achieve a female-like figure. Enchi in her titles often uses the metaphor of the mask as the founding idea at the base of the artistic effort of «becoming» something else. Perhaps because art creates a parallel reality, Enchi was deeply fascinated by the world of the arts. It must be anticipated that in Enchi's works art itself is often the crucial *escamotage* to find a fictional alternative to androcentric discourse.

In Enchi's literature in particular, but also in the general evaluation in the post-gender era of fiction written by women, it is very important to overcome the dichotomy of complicity with versus subversion of the existing gender order. In reading Enchi's work we cannot neglect the context which created the idea of a general 'woman's writing style' that somehow influenced many women writers. But it is much more interesting and fruitful to look at what has been created out of and in spite of the limitations on freedom the system imposed on its authors. They were obliged to write within the frame of an image someone else created for them and needed to find different *escamotages* than men, whose subjectivity, even if restricted by social and cultural constraints as well, was not superimposed by the other gender.

Sharalyn Orbaugh points the way forward when she argues on the

> ways women have behaved or could be imagined to behave in the power contexts in which they have found themselves, the ways they have manipulated the discursive elements they found imposed upon them, the strategies they have used to survive and encode their own subjectivities within even the most restrictive of circumstances. (Orbaugh 1996, pp. 154-155)

In this book, I intend to examine those strategies and how they work in Enchi's fiction, through the analysis of some specific works depicting the world of Japanese classical theatre, the stage *tout court* of gender trouble.

The order I have followed for the analysis of Enchi's works in this monograph is not chronological, but thematic.

In the first chapter, centered on a work written in 1985, *Onnagata ichidai*, I analyze the figure of the protagonist, an actor modeled on the historical *onnagata* Utaemon VI, from the point of view of the interrelationship between gender and sexuality. The narrator, a female dancer secretly attracted to the actor, in my interpretation is clearly unreliable as she goes about trying to fix his homosexuality and 'heterogender'-like behavior,[2] emphasizing his «perversion», which in her opinion is at the base of the «real *onnagata*» art. At the same time, she shows how both the gender acts onstage and the behavior and experiences offstage influence each other, implying with the contradictory concept of «natural», that the actor's androgynous features both come from an inherent core and from repetition and exercise onstage, in a form of second nature. By using Judith Butler, known for her queer theory and studies of gender, as well as psychoanalytic theories, I attempt to discover through the narrative filter, a reading that pre-empts and in a way furthers contemporary concepts of performativity and queer theory.

The second chapter is dedicated to Enchi's interrupted dialogue with Mishima Yukio's *œuvre*. First, I compare the vision of the figure of the *onnagata* that emerges from Enchi's *Onnagata ichidai* with that in the short novel *Onnagata* by Mishima. I continue with an analysis of the modern noh *Sotoba Komachi*, on the bases of the intertextuality with the original noh. In *Onnagata ichidai*, the irony at the base of the character of Sawaki modeled on Mishima, makes it evident Enchi's critical intention towards the last Mishima, whose extreme political stance brought him to a dramatic change of artistic vision. In my view, intertextuality with *Onnagata* makes this critical intent even clearer, since by comparison, the reader is reminded in a subtle net of references, that Mishima's vision of kabuki

2 With the term «heterogender», I mean a kind of homosexual behavior where there are two dinstinct roles, corresponding to the male and female of the heterosexual couple.

has not always been negative, and that he was once as fascinated by the obscure charm of this theatrical art as Enchi herself.

Relating *Sotoba Komachi* to the original noh, I show how memory has a diametrically opposite function in the two works. In the original noh memory, enacted through the possession, has the power to lead Komachi to enlightenment, while in Mishima's work it is the cause of the poet's death, due to his self-deceptive will of exhilaration.

In the third chapter, I analyze how Enchi re-elaborates this concept of self-deception of Mishima's modern noh in her *Komachi hensō* (1965) I examine the meaning of the intertwined essay on the figure of Komachi, which has the function of deconstructing the stereotypes at the base of Komachi's *femme fatale*-like archetype. In my interpretation, Komachi's figure becomes a metaphor of the idea of the impossibility to fix identity in regard to the passage of time, and shows the construction at the base of the self, which the two protagonists bring to the fore in a different but similarly self-deceptive way, depending on their gender.

To explain this idea and link it to the function of memory handled in the second chapter, I use the famous theory of *lieux de mémoire* by Pierre Nora. The vision of ageing at the center of this work is very different from the vision emerging from *Kikujidō* (1984), the last work I analyze. In *Komachi hensō* both the male and female protagonists deceive themselves by submitting to a conventional ageist mindset. In *Kikujidō*, on the contrary, the old protagonists do not interiorize ageism, since they all have experiences which allow them to detach themselves from conventions and to find a way to live deeply. This chance they have is given to them by an intense moment of passion, either due to love or art, which allows them ultimately to reach a sort of awareness similar to Buddhist enlightenment. I examine how in Enchi's re-interpretation of some Zen Buddhist concepts, present also in noh theories, passion can lead to awareness. By analyzing Enchi's personal use of Zeami's theory, I underline how the image of the eternal youth, Kikujidō, connected to the concept in noh of *ran'i*, translated in English as «the rank of great virtuosity» (Hare 2008, p. 486), embodies the possibility of passion to become the way to enlightenment. Indeed, Kikujidō represents the unification of youth and old age, both periods in which the passions are purified, by not having had experience or by having had much of it. It is not by chance that all the protagonists of this work are charmed by 'queer' young characters and that they gain strength from the desire for those androgynous characters.[3] That strength is needed to face all the conventional ageist stances they must overcome to live freely. Also in this work, the stage is again the «queer space» where the conventions

3 I use the umbrella term 'queer' throughout the book with the meaning of sexual minorities as advanced by queer theory, even though this concept was not current when Enchi was active as a writer.

of societal norms are overturned (Halberstam 2005, pp. 5-7). Here the dissolution of personality, which at the end is symbolized by the breaking of the noh mask, demonstrates the pointlessness of fixing a self, either a gendered or an aged one.

The world of the theatre, shifting between fiction and reality, where the exchange between art and life is continuous, shows an unusual handling of gender and age boundaries. We can probably agree that the idea of theatre as the supreme art emerges from Enchi's works. Everyone has the need to fix a core in order to be psychologically balanced and socially acceptable, but there is an ephemeral boundary between core and self-delusion of a fixed identity. Theatre, as the imitation of a supposed reality, renders evident the multifaceted aspects of the self. This is why I think that postmodern theories such as gender, queer theory, critical gerontology, and their interconnections can help us to interpret Enchi's complex *œuvre* in a fresh light.

1 The Fatal Charm of the «Real *Onnagata*» in Enchi's Works
An Analysis of *Onnagata ichidai* from a Gender Perspective

Summary 1.1 Introduction. – 1.2 Watashi's Obvious Unreliability. – 1.3 Kikunojō's 'Heterogender'-like Homosexual Behavior. – 1.3.1 The «Real *Onnagata*» Between Strength and Beauty. – 1.3.2 «Perversion» versus Queer. – 1.4 *Gender Trouble* from Performance to Performativity. – 1.4.1 True Self versus Constructed Self? – 1.4.2 The troubled «Nature» of Kikunojō. – 1.5 The Devoted Wife: A Woman's Spirit in the Actor' Body. – 1.6 Homage to Kabuki. – 1.7 Concluding Remarks.

1.1 Introduction

The novel by Enchi Fumiko 円地文子 (1905-1986) entitled *Onnagata ichidai: Shichisei Segawa Kikunojō-den* 女形一代: 七世瀬川菊之丞伝 (Life as an *Onnagata*: A Biography of Segawa Kikunojō VII) was serialized under a slightly different title in eight issues of the magazine *Gunzō* 群像 between January and August 1985. The original tile was: *Onnagata ichidai: Segawa Kikujirō-den* 女形一代: 瀬川菊次郎伝, where Kikujirō is the stage name of the protagonist before gaining the more prestigious name of Kikunojō. Though the serialization was supposed to continue, the author had a cerebral infarction in June of that year, and the novel was left unfinished. In November 1985, one year before her death, Enchi was decorated with the Order of Culture (*bunka kunshō* 文化勲章), and her serialized work was subsequently published in 1986 in the form of a novel, which I will refer to below as *Onnagata ichidai* (Enchi 1986).

As Enchi's final but uncompleted novel, *Onnagata ichidai* is a significant work in her *œuvre* because it offers a detailed look at the world of kabuki by this author, who had been infatuated with it since childhood. In this novel the narrator, while showing now and then a critical point of view, skillfully constructs a narration that conveys at the same time fascination, sorrow, and defiance around the figure of the *onnagata*. Moreover, since its perspective foreshadows contemporary gender theories, I think it is worth analyzing the *onnagata* figure that emerges in *Onnagata ichidai* from a theoretical point of view.

The novel's protagonist is a kabuki *onnagata* whose life is narrated post-

humously by a female dancer of traditional dance, *nihon buyō*, who had performed with him from childhood. As is *de rigueur* for kabuki actors, the protagonist frequently changes his stage name during his life, becoming Segawa Kikunojō VII only after his art is completely mature.[1]

The name appearing in the original title, being dedicated to Segawa Kikujirō, could have been confusing, as many historical *onnagata* in the course of their lives had been known with exactly the same stage name, while an actor named Segawa Kikunojō VII 七世瀬川菊之丞 had yet to appear in the annals of kabuki when the work was written. Probably, the necessity to make the fictional nature of the work clear, precisely because of the misleading word «biography» appearing in the title, led to the decision to change the title before publishing the work as a hardcover book.

Nevertheless, despite the title, the plot contains more than a few references that enable us to link this figure to an historical *onnagata* named Nakamura Utaemon VI 六世中村歌右衛門 (1917-2001); in addition there are several allusions that link another character, Sawaki Noriyuki 沢木紀之, to the writer Mishima Yukio 三島由紀夫 (1925-1970). And, probably, the narrator herself might be traced back, although less evidently, to the daughter of Nakamura Kichiemon I 初代中村吉衛門, who was Utaemon's master after the death of Utaemon's father. The historical character Fujima Seiko 藤間正子, Kichiemon's daughter, is likely to have been brought up close to Utaemon since childhood, being the daughter of one of his masters. Nonetheless, we do not have evidence that this historical character is the model for the narrator, in the same way that we have for Utaemon and Mishima.

In particular, I find interesting the apparent contradiction between the narrative voice which seeks to reconstruct the events of Kikunojō's life in order to form his identity as a real *onnagata*, and the narrative voice which simultaneously asserts that this identity was inherent in him from the very beginning. The narrator's viewpoint parallels the world view espoused by essentialism, which presupposes an innate being or origin, alongside a view of gender identity as constructed through repetition enacted both in real life and in performance on the stage, producing the possibility of reading the gender of the *onnagata* actor in terms of both performance and performativity, therefore from a slightly different point of view than that analyzed in Judith Butler's writings.

Given that the distinction between fiction and fact in a biography is difficult to determine, in the case of *Onnagata ichidai* there is no doubt about the fictional intent of the text. Intentionality is another complex window to open, but if we follow the general idea that the reader can construct an hypothesis concerning the authorial intention «in light of what is known about the author, the author's background, and the historical and cultural

1 In order to avoid confusion he is referred to as Kikunojō throughout this essay.

conditions under which the work was created», we cannot avoid trying to formulate our own hypothesis about the choice of the topic in *Onnagata ichidai* (Gibbs 2005, p. 249).

I want to underline here that I am not interested in trying to find out how much the author's thought or judgment directly emerges through the narration. I think, indeed, that this would be almost impossible precisely because of the unreliability of the narrative voice which does not allow coherence in the reading. But at the same time in analyzing this work I cannot avoid considering the use made by the author of real facts that take on a completely different meaning from their original one, or are misinterpreted.

It goes without saying that as in many of Enchi's works, especially the ones linked to a theatrical environment like *Onnagata ichidai*, reporting events of actors' lives or quotations from drama pieces, could not have been targeted to a reader who was not already acquainted with all the gossip and news of that environment. To an unacquainted reader it would be almost impossible to distinguish between fiction and reality, and without understanding the quotations, it would not be easy to catch the link between the drama quoted and the event described in the novel. On the other hand, a connoisseur would appreciate the subtle changes in the plot or the references to the gossip of the time, understanding at a deep level the construction at the base of the work. The register itself, being spoken and connoting familiarity with the interlocutor, can suggest familiarity with the implied reader him/herself.

If we use Rabinowitz's concept of «authorial audience» (2005, p. 30), where the ideal reader is supposed to recognize the fictional nature of the work, indeed, this use enhances the effect of estrangement. This is also the reason why between the rhetorical approach or the cognitive approach to unreliability, mine is closer to the rhetorical one for this reading of *Onnagata ichidai*.[2] Indeed, the clear tendency towards an authorial audience target, gives more strength to the choice of the author, who, knowing that the reader knows the extra-textual facts, plays with them and intentionally betrays reality. The implied reader, if taken as authorial audience, recognizes the mystification and appreciates the irony and sometimes even the comical effect produced, in a kind of 'spot the differences' exercise for connoisseurs.

Although I am conscious this investigation is going to be very complex and limited, I would like to analyze the use of the pseudo-biographical structure and especially the discrepancies in it, in order to formulate an hypothesis concerning the intention, but above all concerning the con-

2 For an explanation of the difference between rhetorical and cognitive approach, see Ansgar F. Nünning (2008, pp. 89-107).

struction at the base of this fictional pseudo-biography, which is a continual mingling of real facts, gossip, legends, and pure fiction. It is not my aim to select every event in the plot and confront it with real events, looking for all the biographical analogies and discrepancies, but nevertheless I find it necessary to analyze this novel to a certain extent from the perspective of Utaemon's biography in order to understand the irony at the base of the narration and therefore to deduce the impact of this work while the actor was still alive.

In this chapter, I wish first of all to examine the work from a narrative perspective, focusing on the particular choice of the narrative voice and the remarkable use of intertextuality. Later, I will consider the gender aspects of the *onnagata* actor from the point of view of gender and queer theory, especially taking into consideration Butler's theory, as already anticipated.

1.2 Watashi's Obvious Unreliability

First of all, I want to underline that the construction in the unreliable narration of this work is rather complex, because it is developed on three levels. On the intratextual level the intentional and evident filter applied by the narrator unveils her unreliability. On extratextual level, we find the mystification of the historical facts linked to Utaemon's life which, if recognized, could be appreciated by the reader for the playful effect of mingling reality and fantasy, and for the ironical allusions to Mishima. Moreover, there is a clear unreliability also at the intertextual level, such as the mistaken quotation of an historically written autobiography of an *onnagata* actor, as we will see shortly.

Dan Shen and Dejin Xu (2007, p. 56), in a study on the unreliability in autobiography, affirm:

> Regarding the 'factual' kind of unreliability, while in fiction the markers are usually a matter of intratextual problems (inconsistencies, incongruities, etc.), the case of autobiography is more complicated, since unreliability can occur not only at the intratextual level, but also at the extratextual and intertextual levels. […] In terms of the extratextual level, peculiar to autobiography versus fiction, factual unreliability is usually a matter of discrepancies between the textual and the historical worlds involved.

In the article by Dan Shen and Dejin Xu, they compare in detail unreliability in fiction and autobiography, but they do not deal with biographies. Nevertheless, following their explanation, I would argue that the unreliable narrator in *Onnagata ichidai* reveals some features of both *genres*. In

particular, since it is a biography though clearly fictional, the extratextual level does have an important function, for the fact that many extratextual facts can be detected, differently from fiction *tout court*. Moreover, the two scholars do not consider any other kind of intertextuality apart from the case where two autobiographies are written by the same author (p. 60). Nevertheless, in *Onnagata ichidai* we detect intertextuality with historically written texts that act as another alarm to detect unreliability.

From the narrative point of view, *Onnagata ichidai* is a very significant work, especially for the narrative voice. The novel is written in spoken form (*desu-masu* です・ます) solely from the narrator's point of view. It conveys the perspective of someone who is an insider in the world of kabuki and evinces a heavy personal bias due to her friendship with the protagonist Kikunojō. This register of the narrative voice has a duality that can express familiarity towards the reader, but at the same time emphasizes the fact that the novel constitutes only the narrator's subjective point of view, rather than a historically accurate biography. At the same time the decision to use the *desu-masu* style without mixing it with the so called 'abrupt style' (*da-dearu* だ・である), suggests that it is not an intimate familiarity, which would be expressed in a spoken form but with abrupt (*da-dearu*) style (Maynard 1993). The *da-dearu* style is usually mixed when the narrator inserts a self-reflective sentence, not directly aimed at the reader, such as when speaking to her/himself or when socio-linguistically the circumstances are not clear (p. 153). Here there is no self-reflective tone at all, which shows that the narrator is constantly aware of the audience (pp. 171-172).

The narrative voice frequently relies on end phrases such as «I think» (*to omoimasu* と思います) or «probably» (*kamoshiremasen* かもしれません), «it seems that» (*sōdesu* そうです) which denote limited epistemic authority and emphasize the narrator's personalization. They encourage the reader to feel that the events described might also have another interpretation, since they express a subjective point of view (Margolin 2013). The reader is directly addressed in a familiar way, as if the dancer were telling the facts around Kikunojō's life to someone acquainted with the environment of kabuki, rendering easy to identify the implied reader from a sociolinguistic point of view. For instance we often find expressions of direct appeal to the reader such as «as you might already know» (*gozonji no yōni* ご存知のように) or «I forgot to tell you, but» (*iiwasuremashita keredo* いい忘れましたけれど).

Moreover, the real reader might be an acquaintance of Enchi herself, and one could also think that this work is speaking directly to Utaemon himself, who is supposed to have read this work, though we have no idea of his reaction. Since the novel was inspired by a popular character like Utaemon, who was still alive and performing when *Onnagata ichidai* was written, one of the reasons why Enchi might intentionally have chosen

this spoken register, is to make it clear that the narrator is not reliable and so implying that the novel was not written with a biographical intent. Furthermore, although the narrator refers to herself as «watashi» 私 and writes from within the inner circle of acquaintanceship, she does not interpolate herself directly into the main events of the protagonist's life. Instead, she acts as a filter and shares only what she considers important in the construction of Kikunojō's sexuality, and in his lifework of being or becoming a «real *onnagata*» (*hontō no onnagata* ほんとうの女形).

On the other hand, this partial view which usually coincides with the dancer watashi's perspective, at times appears enlarged, as the narrator from time to time estranges herself and temporarily takes a broader vision, operating intermittently a pseudo-omniscient role, for example by employing an expression of certainty such as «the fact is that» (*no desu* のです) when she is speaking of someone's feelings or inner thoughts. Just after that, watashi goes back to a personalized narration, where she just reports what others have said in the reported speech form, and she is no longer a direct witness to the fact narrated. I use the suffix 'pseudo' before the term omniscient, because as Uri Margolin underlines, only personalized narrators may be recognized as unreliable by readers. And watashi's omniscient traits, indeed, have only the result of enhancing her unreliability, since they are always contradicted by obvious partiality, therefore they seem to be suggesting the exact contrary: an extreme personalization (Margolin 2013).

Another apparent contradiction in watashi's personal narration is to give a pseudo-objective image to the events using vocabulary taken from science, such as «evidence» (*shōko* 証拠, *risshō* 立証), or expressions of deduction such as «it must be that» (*hazu* はず), but only to ultimately confirm watashi's own personal and subjective thoughts, without any foundation in reality.

In order to show better how partial the focalization is in the narration, I want to underline that the narrator watashi tries hard to find excuses for herself being the narrator of all the details in the actor's life, even events which she cannot have been witness to, and that she maybe has just heard from someone else. Towards the end of the work there is one clear example of this attitude. Watashi tells in detail of the encounter in old age between the protagonist and his first lover, Yasu, in a reported speech style as if someone other than the two protagonists (since it is made clear that they both could not have told watashi of this encounter) had spied on them and told the narrator. Then she adds: «It seems strange even to me that I could hear from the elderly Yasu those details, but probably it was my obsession with Kikunojō which borrowed the masculine body of Yasu and created all this» (Enchi 1986, p. 109). I find this complicated passage crucial to the understanding of this work, since the narrator in one sentence gives an explanation for the excessive information she is reporting, while

at the same time she allows a glimpse of the intention at the base of her deliberately deceptive narration,.

The term «obsession» (*shūchaku* 執着), reveals the strong feeling of attachment and jealousy towards Kikunojō that the narrator feels and that explains her partial and temporary pseudo-omniscience through an imaginative process. Watashi indeed, uses the excuse of possession to explain the intrusion with her imagination into episodes of Kikunojō's life. She gives the quite complicated explanation that her fixation with the actor was so strong that her obsessed spirit entered Yasu's body and was actually witness to, or actor in, the encounter. But it is obvious that this is just an excuse to tell something that she cannot actually have seen or heard.

Different from many other works of Enchi, where in the fictional sphere of the text the possession can be believed to have actually happened, in this case the use of possession is too complex and forced, not to allow us to see the clear partiality and unreliability of the narration. The almost metaphorical use of possession here is a direct admission of the strong obsession driving the narrator, which represents one very precious key to the reading of this text. Watashi justifies her intrusion into Kikunojō's life through imagination with the strength of her passion.

In *Fictional Minds*, Alan Palmer affirms: «Generally, third-person narrators never lie […]. The question of the unreliable narrator that was made famous by Wayne C. Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* is a completely separate issue that relates to first-person narrators» (Palmer 2004, p. 33). Now, as Genette doubts in *Narrative Discourse Revised* (1988, pp. 97-98), the definition of first person narration can be very ambiguous, and should be substituted instead by the definition of «homodiegetic», where the narrator participates in the events, even if only partially. In *Onnagata ichidai* the extradiegetic and homodiegetic narration is made in allodiegetic terms, since watashi is in both cases a mere observer of the facts she relates (Vervaeck, Herman 2005, p. 85). Though allodiegetic and therefore coming from a narrator who is not protagonist of the events, the narration can be considered as first person narration, and this is one of the reasons why its unreliability becomes so clear, thanks to the insistence on the personal bias by watashi.

Intertextuality is a technique often used in the text with different functions. In particular here it is useful to introduce one quotation made by watashi at the beginning of the work, when she is presenting Kikunojō's character. In *Onnagata ichidai* the historically written autobiography «Pillow talks on Moon, Snow and Flowers» (*Yukitsukihana nemonogatari* 月雪花寝物語) is quoted without mentioning the title. It is a really existing autobiography, written by the actor 中村仲蔵 Nakamura Nakazō I, an essay which in *Onnagata ichidai* is said to report the life of the protagonist's ancestors (Nakamura 1982, pp. 401-474). In this case, at first the intertextuality undertakes the function of legitimizing the narrator's knowledge of

the family and therefore of Kikunojō's story, giving more initial authority to watashi, and simulating a reliability which later is completely discredited. At the same time by allowing the comparison of the Edo period *onnagata* and the current *onnagata*, the reference to this biography gives the impression of continuity and stresses the aspect of the *onnagata* art as something transmitted from generation to generation, especially because of the honor which it represents for an actor to obtain their ancestor's stage name (Enchi 1986, p. 7).

Nevertheless, once one has noticed the discrepancy with the original text, it is natural to question the necessity of this fictional accent. In the original, indeed, already quoted faithfully by Enchi in the work *Futaomote*, as we will see, the context in which the event happens is different. I would exclude an hypothesis of Enchi's memory fallacy and suggest that the intentionality in the variation of the plot can be explained by the will to show once again the fallacy of the narrative voice to the implicit reader as connoisseur, reporting the document regarding the protagonist's ancestor. This 'error' could be read as another warning to the reader not to trust the narrative when it links Kikunojō's performance skills to a genetic transmission *tout court*.

The narrator selects four events in Kikunojō's life which she interprets as the building blocks of his gender and sexuality. In chronological order these four events are:

1. Kikunojō's homosexual relationship with Yasu 安;
2. the Second World War;
3. his homosexual affair with Sawaki 沢木;
4. his wife Teruko's 照子 suicide.

The narrator implies that all these events are important steps in the perfecting of Kikunojō's *onnagata*, but at the same time represent an escalation in the corruption of his morality, which, she asserts, ultimately brings about the tragic demise of all those who are ensnared by the actor's fatal charm. Finally, I will examine the significance of Kikunojō's affair with his servant Haruko 春子, which can be read as fundamental, precisely because the narrator attempts to minimize it.

In delineating these events of the protagonist's life which dramatically impact Kikunojō's gender identity both on and off stage, I seek to clarify how the narrative filter provides one interpretation, but simultaneously reveals another way of seeing the same event, using gender theories to further this interpretation.

1.3 Kikunojō's 'Heterogender'-like Homosexual Behavior

Kikunojō's first romance unfolds in his youth with Yasu, a man five years his senior. They go on a trip together, where the narrator reports that Kikunojō is serving Yasu «as a woman» (*onna no yō de* 女のようで). I define their relationship as a homosexual one based on 'heterogender' roles, with Yasu as the 'male' and Kikunojō as the 'female'.[3] When their lovers' tryst is discovered, it is a huge scandal for the Segawa family and the relationship ends. We do not know what subsequently happens to Yasu until the last chapter, in which Yasu's widow tells the narrator the whole story.

The widow reveals that Yasu and Kikunojō met in Hokkaidō fifty years after their relationship ended, and that Yasu had never overcome his feelings for Kikunojō even after all that time. Without offering any evidence for her assumptions, the narrator asserts that Kikunojō was more in love with Yasu than with his later paramour Sawaki, who wanted Kikunojō to be more male. The narrator implies that the strong emotional bond between Yasu and Kikunojō occurred because Yasu didn't expect Kikunojō to change or modify his gender. In doing this, she tries to rigidly define the protagonist's gender identity and sexuality. Watashi also suggests that Yasu's love for Kikunojō resulted in Yasu's suicide upon their meeting fifty years later, but this interpretation is one the reader does not necessarily have to agree with. Yasu's suicide becomes the crux of the narrator's belief that Kikunojō is not only a real *onnagata*, but also one who possesses a fatal charm.

Another event that the narrator considers important for the development of the protagonist's gender identity and his performing skills is the advent of the Second World War. As the narrator explains:

> I suppose it was his time wearing that baggy army uniform which really gave birth to his *onnagata*. From childhood he was of that bent, but nothing could easily upset the core to which he held strongly, deep within that frail body of his. One might say that certain incidents, such as the elopement with Yasu, made this original disposition even clearer (Enchi 1986, p. 30).

The narrator attributes the fact that Kikunojō could overcome both the scandal with Yasu and the horrors of war to the strong core inside his delicate body, the core which allowed him to become a talented *onnagata*.

3 In this book, I use the term 'male' and 'female', depending on the context, with two principal meanings. One means the human being whose biological sex, namely male or female, is based on genitalia. The other use, which is more common in this book, is referred to gender identity in everyday life or gender acts on the stage, which have no necessary correspondence with the biological sex.

The narrator reports her father's words after a joint performance of the dance Kakubei 角兵衛, in which she played the male role and Kikunojō the female role:

> «As a dancer, your ability to enter the role of a man is so-so, but when Kikujirō performs the part of Onnadayū, I feel that he is a real *onnagata*, because he is a woman and not a woman at the same time. There's no comparison», he said. At that time I still didn't understand the meaning of my father's words, but it is probably true that the perversion of sexuality that Kikujirō had in him originally was already coming to the fore (Enchi 1986, p. 12).

By using the phrase «real *onnagata*,» watashi is underscoring the fact that the protagonist had attained perfection when compared to later actors, whom she felt had lost the true art of kabuki. But with these words «real *onnagata*», which are used throughout the novel, the narrator also refers to something deeply rooted within the protagonist's identity, something that she deliberately links to his charm and stage presence, and that she calls «perversion» (*tōsaku* 倒錯). From the excerpt above, it is apparent that it is the narrator and not the father who uses the word «perversion» and also that the word has a very ambivalent nuance: it can be pejorative, but we can also argue that it is used with a sense of belonging by a woman who is part of the queer world of traditional performing arts, especially if we consider that it is employed to express Kikunojō's unique charm. [4]

The memory of the Kakubei performance permeates the novel and is recalled at every crucial moment of the protagonist's life. Many pages later watashi recalls:

> Years and years ago, around the time that I danced Kakubei's role and he danced the part of Onnadayū, he had become a woman quite naturally and was perhaps at his most blissful. After that, wearing a baggy army uniform, with a sword at his side, was a time when he was an unnatural man (Enchi 1986, p. 90).

In this passage we come across the narrator's pseudo-essentialism. The

4 In Japan the performing arts, kabuki in particular, started as performances executed in environments considered liminal and marginal, seen as a discursive 'other' space outside regular society, where everything was unconventional and eccentric. The initial term 'kabuki' かぶき, deriving from the verb *kabuku* 傾く, meaning 'to lean', referred to people who were not able to conduct a 'straight' or proper life. In the various unconventional behaviors that actors had, the disruption of gender roles was evident from the beginning. Their world was a special place for gender identity incoherence, and therefore it is interesting to note the affinity in the use of the term 'queer' and 'kabuki' and their gender implications.

protagonist's «inherent sexual perversion» and consequent development into a real *onnagata* is established, since performing as a woman is «natural» (*shizen* 自然) to him, just as living as a man is unnatural.

1.3.1 The «Real *Onnagata*» Between Strength and Beauty

Coming back to *Onnagata ichidai*, after the end of the War, this unnatural man, Kikunojō, marries a woman named Teruko, but we discover that after a while he has a homosexual affair with Sawaki Noriyuki, a painter and playwright who starts writing plays for Kikunojō and ends up loving him, thanks to his «perverted beauty», expressed with the same words used by supporters of *onnagata* in the Meiji period (*tōsakubi* 倒錯美).

Sawaki wants his lover Kikunojō to be more 'manly' both on the stage and in real life, and begins composing plays which would only emphasize Kikunojō's «maleness» in contrast with the «femaleness» of Sawaki's previous plays. The terms used to express femaleness (*taoyameburi* 手弱女振) and maleness (*masuraoburi* 益荒男振), are taken from ancient Japanese, and were traditionally used by scholars of Japanese thought (*kokugakusha* 国学者), to describe different works of Japanese classic literature, taking on positive or negative nuances depending on the scholar's position (Shirane 2000, p. 10). Here, the narrator explains that Kikunojō loves Sawaki, and initially makes an effort to overcome his female-like behavior and lifestyle, but gives up after finding out how unnatural it is for him, and they finally break up. The narrator asserts that Kikunojō is responsible for Sawaki's suicide, which bolsters her exaggerated thesis that Kikunojō's fatal charm leads those around him to commit suicide when the relationship fails. In reality Sawaki commits double-suicide with a woman years later, so it is unlikely that his death was due to his love for Kikunojō.

Kikunojō's relationship with Sawaki brings to the fore his double-gender features, in other words, being both male and female. But this juxtaposition of two genders, which creates the perverted beauty to which Sawaki was attracted, is ultimately seen as an obstacle to reaching full maleness.

After the affair with Sawaki, Kikunojō's splendor on the stage is even enhanced, as expressed by this passage:

> Even after the affair with Sawaki, his lifestyle as an *onnagata* didn't change one bit; and as he moved with such grace on stage as an *onnagata*, it made one wonder where on earth his aspirations to assume the male role during that time had gone. From the point of view of beauty, *onnagata* more flawless than his would later appear, but as for holding a femaleness inside the body, while expressing an un-female-like strength, he appeared to have reached the pinnacle (Enchi 1986, p. 48).

In this excerpt, the narrator stresses the fact that the special quality of Kikunojō's *onnagata* is not due to his beauty, but it is because he maintains an «un-female strength» (*onna de nai tsuyoi mono* 女でない強いもの) at the foundation of his art, while simultaneously adopting female-like gender acts that result in a «graceful *onnagata*» (*taoyakana onnagata* たおやかな女形).

I would like to draw attention to the essentialist worldview – female weakness and its opposite male strength – which was implied also in the first passage of *Onnagata ichidai* I quoted above. Here, the narrator stresses a form of binary categorization which, in the end, confirms a patriarchal agenda. Nevertheless, as I argued above, what makes a real *onnagata*, as far as *Onnagata ichidai* is concerned, is not the beauty or the femininity of the actor, but the specificity of what watashi defines as «both male and female» (*otoko demo aru onna demo aru* 男でもある女でもある); that is, the double-gendered feature of Kikunojō's performance.

In order to clarify the development of the gender perspective on the *onnagata* in Enchi's works, I will next examine the correlations between *Onnagata ichidai* and the short novel *Futaomote* 双面, which was first published in the literary magazine *Gunzō* 群像 in July 1959 (Enchi 1960). Even though these works were composed in two completely different periods, the topic they deal with is strikingly similar, as both are related to the life of an *onnagata*, and both link his gender on the stage with his private sexual and emotional life.

The story of *Futaomote* centers around a fictional protagonist, Segawa Senjo 瀬川仙女, who is a famous and especially talented *onnagata* of the Segawa family, the same family of Kikunojō. First of all, the title *Futaomote* comes from a traditional Japanese dance, which was first performed by Nakamura Nakazō I in 1775 and became part of a longer play, nowadays known as *Sumidagawa Gonichi no omokage* 隅田川五日の面影. This intertextuality is based on the metaphoric affinity between one scene of the play and the gender identity of Senjo. In the play, indeed, the spirits of a dead man and a dead woman possess the body of a single woman at the same time. This fact gives to the female character on the stage both male and female features, and the title suggests that the double gender of Senjo can be compared to this kind of supernatural phenomenon.

The elderly Senjo has been hospitalized for an anal problem and his disciple describes his treatment in grotesque terms that depict the doctor's sadism and Senjo's own apparent masochism, implying homosexual attraction between the two. The narration describes explicitly the «perverted» atmosphere of the hospital room, which a medical staff member compares to the room of a brothel (Enchi 1960, p. 173).

Therefore, well before *Onnagata ichidai*, the use of the quasi-derogatory concept of perversion as an almost intrinsic characteristic of a talented or 'real' *onnagata* was already present in Enchi's works. We will analyze this concept of perversion in the next subchapter.

In *Futaomote* too, the keyword «natural» appears, and is utilized to express the female-likeness of Senjo, as we will see. The description of Senjo is similar to that of Kikunojō as an *onnagata*, who stands out because of his inclination to behave like a woman. The concept of constructed naturalness is therefore also valid even for a much earlier work such as *Futaomote*. In addition, the female protagonist obscures and controls the *onnagata* gender identity and sexual life on a narrative level in *Onnagata ichidai*, and concretely in *Futaomote*. Indeed, in *Futaomote*, the recuperating Senjo meets a young female university student who is writing a thesis on the gender and sexuality of *onnagata*. She explains:

> In the thesis I am going to write, I would like to think about the figure of the man who lives inside an *onnagata*, while he makes the effort of performing the part of a woman. In other words, since the art of the kabuki *onnagata* lies in expressing both femaleness in men and maleness in women, it is a wonderful art, which can't be compared to the performance of an actress, I think… (p. 177).

Even though Senjo had abandoned his interest in women after the painful end of a youthful love affair and had only had homosexual relationships from that time on, the female student succeeds in seducing him and they begin having a romance. Following this, she admits that she is satisfied at having verified that «Segawa Senjo is a man too, just like the others» (p. 180).

Here we can see the intrusion of the female character on the *onnagata*'s gender similar to that in *Onnagata ichidai*, although in *Futaomote* the intrusion occurs not only in the woman's fantasies, but also in concrete reality, because there is a physical relationship between the two. Following a long hiatus due to illness and after the love affair with the student, Senjo then returns to the stage and is said to have gained strength. As a result, he is praised even more than before by his fans. Senjo himself is embarrassed by having his maleness unveiled because of a love relationship with a woman, but he admits there is something different in him.

Here, as in *Onnagata ichidai*, real-life emotions are linked to a shift in sexuality, and therefore in the gender of the *onnagata*, which ultimately influences his gender acts on-stage. The narrator explains Senjo's feelings after the performance: Senjo thought that «even if now a touch of maleness enhanced the vitality and beauty of his performance as an *onnagata*, that secret resounded like harmony breaking within him» (p. 184).

It is interesting to note the episode where the protagonist and the girl, before they start their relationship, read together a biography supposedly written by an ancestor of Senjo, which is the same biography we quoted above speaking of *Onnagata ichidai*. It was written by the historical Nakamura Nakazō, who had first danced the dance *Futaomote*, and is quoted

for the part where he speaks about Nakamura Kikunojō I. This time, differently from the intertextuality in *Onnagata ichidai*, which is inserted on purpose with fictional elements as we saw above, the original text is completely respected, and is used to strengthen the ideas on gender at the base of the *onnagata*'s figure emerging in Enchi's work.

In particular, there is a paragraph where it is underlined how the historical Kikujirō, Kikunojō's younger brother, was extraordinary in his observation of women's feelings and behavior. Kikujirō does not want to be scolded by his older brother Kikunojō for playing around with geisha, so is using Tōjūrō 藤十郎, his hairdresser, to send love letters to a geisha. *Futaomote* reports a part in the original text, where the wife of Tōjūrō discovers a letter that was written by Kikujirō to the geisha, promising to marry her. The wife of the hairdresser thinks that it is her husband who is willing to marry the geisha and betray her, and as soon as she finds the letter, she goes to Kikunojō's house in order to scold her husband. Neither her husband nor Kikujirō tell the truth, and Kikunojō promises her to find out the truth and sends her home. Before going home, the woman asks where her sandals are, since when she arrived she was in such a rush that she lost one outside the door. Even though she is angry and confused, she takes the sandal from outside and brings them inside, placing them both neatly side by side before putting them on and going home. Kikujirō, seeing that scene, comments that now he knows what a woman's anger is like, and his elder brother compliments his diligence as an *onnagata*, always observing women to learn their behavior.

After the paragraph they are reading is finished, Senjo comments saying that the supposedly feminine behavior of placing the sandals side by side before wearing them, is «something which comes spontaneously to him» (*shizen ni jibun no naka ni aru mono* 自然に自分の中にあるもの). This is an explicit admission of the direct link between gender acts onstage and gender acts in private, which according to watashi's interpretation of Kikunojō's real *onnagata*, are apparently supposed to coincide at a certain point of the career of an experienced *onnagata*.

Senjo begins to realize that the love affair with the young girl, which added charm to his performance, has also shattered the balance of the delicate gender identity which he has gained through years of effort on-stage as an *onnagata*. Here, we notice again how Enchi expresses a concept, the one of Senjo's natural female-likeness, which preempts post-gender theories, as this might be considered as a sign of his fluid sexuality. Nevertheless, at the same time the narration reproduces a binary and heteronormative way of seeing gender and sexuality, in which the male gender which emerges in him automatically leads him to be attracted to a woman.

We can conclude that in *Futaomote* as well as in *Onnagata ichidai*, the androgyny of the protagonist is praised as the factor which enhances the beauty of the performance, but at the same time it represents the prob-

lematic consequences due to the lack of a fixed identity and therefore is a cause of pain both for *Futaomote*'s protagonist, or for the people around Kikunojō in *Onnagata ichidai*.

1.3.2 «Perversion» versus Queer

The notion that being eccentric or queer enhances the power of a theatrical performance is also present in Enchi's works linked to the world of noh, as exemplified by the novel *Kikujidō* 菊慈童 (Enchi 1984), that we will analyze in chapter 3.[5] This linking of sexual perversion to success and charm on the stage is not a concept that is unique to Enchi. It was actually one of the main arguments used by theater critics in favor of the *onnagata*, in the debate which arose in the Meiji period, when the theatrical world had to decide whether or not to introduce actresses instead of *onnagata* in *shinpa* and kabuki.[6] The scholar Mitsuishi Ayumi 光石亜由美 (2003, pp. 12-13) suggests that the Meiji intelligentsia, who were morbidly fascinated by *onnagata* because of their «perverted beauty,» would at the same time distance themselves from that perversion. In other words they simultaneously exalted and denigrated the *onnagata*.

Enchi admired the world of kabuki because of its perversion as well as the Meiji intelligentsia who supported the *onnagata* role, but her perspective on kabuki, which emerges throughout her *œuvre*, was fundamentally different from that of the Meiji intellectuals, because she didn't distance herself from that perversion. In a 1960 essay entitled *Kabuki no sekai* 歌舞伎の世界 (The World of Kabuki), Enchi analyzes the charm of the kabuki actors' gap between biological sex and gender acts, which she had had since her childhood, due to her familiarity with the Edo-period tradition:

> Sadanji 左団次 was a completely masculine actor, who conveyed no femininity, and was a man of the heroic type. Now, when I recall my girlhood days, when I saw such a man who was supposed to be strong call out and cry in an effeminate manner, I guess the feeling I used to have was sadistic joy. I bet that was a manifestation of a kind of perversion in my sexual desire (Enchi 1961, p. 207).

5 This work was first published in the magazine *Shinchō* 新潮 between January 1982 and November 1983. In *Kikujidō* a noh actor, disciple of the protagonist Yūsen, says about his master: «It is a little creepy, but I guess that monstrous quality (*bakejimita nōryoku* 化物じみた能力) is stored inside any performing art» (p. 220). This sentence also summarizes the main concept that emerges from *Onnagata ichidai*: that beauty on stage is directly connected to moral perversion.

6 For a detailed analysis of the debate, see Ayako Kano (2001).

As mentioned in the introduction, in the essay entitled *Onnagata to onnagokoro*, Enchi describes the interview with Hanayagi Shōtarō, a famous *shinpa onnagata*. She compares the effort which an *onnagata* must make in order to perform a woman's role, to the effort of being a woman writer. She writes:

> also from the point of view of the conflict of many women writers nowadays, who while living their everyday life as women, make an effort to achieve mastery of literature, I feel a particular empathy with the *onnagata* who has to fight daily this contradiction (Enchi 1941, p. 549).

Enchi's vision of the artist in gender terms comes to the fore here; she is explicit in underlining that not only in society, but also in the field of art, women are part of a minority and thus must struggle more than the heterosexual male. This is understandable in a period where speaking of women's literature as a different category from literature was not in the least questioned and Enchi herself, being part of the Women's Literature Association (*Joryū Bungakukai* 女流文学会), would speak about women writing literature as «women's literature writer» (*joryū sakka* 女流作家). In this context is not surprising that Enchi herself took for granted that 'neutral' thus universal art was produced by men, and that to become successful, women had to cancel or hide their gender in order to be universally recognized.

In another essay, *Onna no himitsu* 女の秘密 (A Woman's Secret), published in 1958, Enchi, in answering a provocation of the critic Takahashi Yoshitaka 高橋義孝 about the difficulty of literature written by women to find a balance, tries to find a reason to explain the difference between literature written by women and by men and replies:

> This is what I personally feel, but when writing a *shōsetsu* 小説, if it is not about something which one has directly experienced, the material is difficult to write about. This does not mean that I am a writer who writes her own experiences directly as a *shishōsetsu* 私小説 writer. […] I create my fiction on the basis of what I have experienced in life, and at the moment I am not yet able to extract those experiences, take a bird's-eye view and gaze at society, people, and personal relations from a broader point of view, observing them with composure and creating from them a completely different world. In that sense it is possible to say that my work falls into the genre of «women's *shōsetsu*». It is not only my personal case, I think that this situation matches many women's literature writers, but there is a big difference between women who, even if belonging to the same gender, have been in contact directly with society in their lives, and women who have lived only in the confined world of family (Enchi 1959b, p. 89).

It is easy to link the above-mentioned concept of cultivation of the *onnagata* to the one of women emerging from their environment and therefore acquiring a 'male' – supposedly universal – point of view. One can read the maleness as a cultural effect acquirable also by those born female, if it is linked to experience in society, concept which goes beyond the clear dichotomy of women associated with home and men with society. In contrast to Meiji critics, who distanced themselves from the beauty of perversion, Enchi also in virtue of the need to assume a different narrative gender, embraces the perverted world of kabuki via her role as an ardent fan: she saw herself as a part of that world. Furthermore, there is correspondence between the use of the term «perverted» in both Enchi's fictional works and her essays, which shifts from defilement to attraction towards the double-gendered characters of the world of kabuki.

Nevertheless, nobody can say with certainty what the word *tōsaku* meant for Enchi, especially because it is applied in different contexts. In particular, if considering the use emerging not only from *Onnagata ichidai*, but also from some essays, we can basically see three different nuances. One is simply the use as synonym of «inverted sexuality» (*hentai seiyoku* 変態性欲), the second is as synonym of homosexual, and the third refers to the spectator's interpretation.

The term *hentai seiyoku* was widespread during the nineteenth century, when studies on sexuality from Europe started using it in a derogatory sense towards people whose sexuality was not considered normative at the time. In Enchi's works it is mostly associated with beauty on the stage, therefore it often refers to the mix of female and male features of the real *onnagata* (Enchi 1986, pp. 12, 35, 37-38).

Nevertheless, it is not very clear how this aspect of perversion of having maleness and femaleness coexisting together, emerges. Kikunojō is defined as being «nothing else then being both male and female» or «a strange beauty derived from being neither male nor female» (Enchi 1986, pp. 83, 90). It goes without saying that assuming both genders or neither is incorrectly considered the same by the narrator, who uses the two concepts indistinctly throughout the text. Following this interpretation of watashi, I use the term 'double gender' to convey both the half and double gender feature, and basically meaning androgyny in general.

In another essay written in 1964, Enchi writes about the *onnagata* Utaemon VI, the model for Kikunojō, and explicitly stresses the fact that, for her, Utaemon's most charming point is his beauty which comes from both genders. Enchi writes: «Whether the beauty of the actor Utaemon's performance, filled with a kind of ghostliness, is of male, or of female, or of a form of both; when it is on stage the genderless beauty from both is pervasive; this to me is miraculous in its charm» (Enchi 1964, p. 327).

This opinion of the acting of Utaemon VI was shared by other kabuki critics, such as Scott, who argued in 1955 that «at the same time there is

strength and virility underlying the finer qualities» (Scott 1955, pp. 172-173). In Enchi's account, not only the refined aspects are stressed, but the «ghostly beauty» emerging from the double-gender of Utaemon can easily be related to the idea of perversion, that she praised so much in kabuki and which became a key concept in her works associated with this performing art (Enchi 1964, p. 327).

In her theoretical account of the *onnagata* from the point of view of gender performativity, the kabuki expert Katherine Mezur defines the gender of the *onnagata* as «female-like», clearly differentiating it from the performance of a feminine role. She declares: «I am describing the *onnagata*'s close approximation to an ideal 'female', which is a constructed kabuki 'female' based on a male body beneath» (Mezur 2005, p. 254). From these words, it is clear that Mezur's definition of androgyny is different from the one which emerges from *Onnagata ichidai* and *Futaomote*, due to the fact that for Mezur the masculinity at the base of the *onnagata* is physical or based on the biological sex, while in *Onnagata ichidai* it is neither completely physical, nor psychological. Kikunojō's frail body, indeed, looks feminine, but at the same time is not, if compared to other *onnagata* with a more feminine body. And the masculinity of Kikunojō is mainly stressed for his internal strength, not for his looks, therefore it is more gender based. Despite this important difference, in this book I borrow from Mezur the term 'female-like' to convey the gender of the *onnagata* onstage emerging from *Onnagata ichidai*, which in itself matches the idea of the androgynous nature of the real *onnagata* emphasized in Enchi's works.

What I do not borrow, instead, is Mezur's vision of the gender of *onnagata* defined as female-like from the very beginning, when it was born as «young man style» (*wakashu* 若衆) kabuki until the present day. Even if the definition could be applicable to Kikunojō's specific case, in my view this synchronic vision is too reductive to apply to *onnagata* in general. It does not take into account the personal style of every actor, and the different historical and social contexts they were performing in, therefore I prefer to adopt the diachronic idea of the *onnagata* gender analyzed by Maki Isaka Morinaga.

Maki Isaka Morinaga (2009, pp. 22-38) explains in her seminal article on the art of *onnagata*, that the vision of the *onnagata* has changed dramatically from the first time male actors started performing women's roles in kabuki. At first in the seventeenth century, the androgyny of the so called *futanarihira* 双業平 was used to compliment *onnagata* on their beauty. While the original term *futanari* 双成り mostly signified intersexuality and therefore had a pathological or negative meaning, *futanarihira* embodied more the criteria of trendy *wakashu*, and implied a dualistic perception, where the gender was not 'half' as in *futanari*, but 'double'. Later on, during eighteenth century, the double-gender aesthetic remained dominant, but gradually the performance of *onnagata* shifted to the presentation of

femininity internalized by training so as to become second nature, though retaining masculinity in one way or another. The third step towards the «*onnagata*-as-we-know-them-today» for Isaka Morinaga is the result of the Meiji debate on the significance of female roles performed by men, which grew with the *debut* of female actresses on the stage. The new concept of *onnagata* was linked to artistic femininity, more than to the imitation of bodily femininity.

It is interesting to note that as far as watashi is concerned, the gender of Kikunojō follows more or less the same steps as the *onnagata* from the historical point of view, illustrated by Maki Isaka Morinaga. When he dances Kakubei with watashi, he is similar to the androgynous *futanarihira*, naturally beautiful and double-gendered. Later on, after the war and after the relationship with Sawaki, he acquires more femininity on the stage thanks to the training, but retains a masculine core that emerges with adulthood. And finally, his modernity is appreciated for the presentation of 'Woman', more artistic than realistic.

Enchi's work preempts a further phase in the *onnagata*'s history, which can be glimpsed through watashi's comments on the end of the real *onnagata* after Kikunojō's death (Enchi 1986, p. 115). In my view, what watashi defines as «particular charm of the *onnagata*» and that in the last sentence she declares «extinguished» with the death of Kikunojō, could be a way to perform even more closely linked to the bodily imitation of women's beauty, and less to the aesthetic of double-gender. This is not the place to analyze this consideration and see if it corresponds to the real situation of the *onnagata* nowadays, but probably a sort of a loss of the ambiguity of *onnagata* gender could be one of the aspect of the actual *onnagata* acting.

As underlined by Masakatsu Gunji 正勝郡司 in an interview by Katherine Mezur, after kabuki actors started performing both male roles (*tachiyaku* 立役) and *onnagata*, their *onnagata* lost «an erotic sensibility which *onnagata* used to effuse onstage. It was not that their stylized forms (*kata* 型) were different, but it was something their bodies had learned from being only *onnagata*» (Mezur 2005, p. 23).

It is curious to note that the stress on 'maleness' at the base of the beauty of the *onnagata* is explained in a very different way in two essays by Enchi. In the above quoted essay dedicated to Utaemon, she stresses the fiction created by the *onnagata* as the only way to perform on the stage a kind of female «calmness» which is no longer real, but which should be at the base of kabuki's women roles, as an ancient art expressing ancient values. She explains that a woman could no longer embody such an ancient female stereotype. On the other hand, in the essay «Onna no himitsu» (1959a, p. 85), she argues that the necessity of having a female role performed by an *onnagata* is not because of a performance of ancient female images similar to that emerging from *Onna daigaku*, but because of the male strength coming to the fore from the *onnagata* performance, which

allows the female character on the stage to express 'her' feelings theatrically, without the cultural mediation of gender, seen as an obstacle for real women to convey their feelings directly and strongly. Again, in a roundtable talk published in the magazine *Ginza hyakuten* 銀座百点 (1973, p. 72), Enchi calls the particular gender of the *onnagata* «complex» (*fukugōtai* 複合体), and she justifies her opinion with the fact that the *onnagata* has more «sexual appeal» (*iroke* 色気) than the actress.

Coming back to the use of the adjective «perverted» in Enchi's writing, the second use we can find is associated with homosexuality. Although in a contemporary context this expression would clearly be used in homophobic terms, we cannot say with certainty to what extent the derogatory nuance was commonly perceived in 1985, as this was still a period of transition for the vision of homosexuality in the global context. The APA American Psychiatric Organization in 1973 had already voted to abolish homosexuality per se as a mental disorder and to substitute it with a new category entitled «sexual orientation disturbance» (The American Psychiatric Organization 1973). Homosexuality had been consequently excluded from the seventh printing of DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). But only in 1990 did WHO (World Health Organization) remove homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases.

Harada Masashi in a survey carried out in 2005 on stereotypes of sexual minorities in Japan, makes reference to a work by Inaba Masaki and Douglas Kimmel, written in 1995, who analyze the view of homosexuality in the field of psychiatry and psychology in Japan, and writes: «It turned out that even after the 1980s, when psychiatrists around the world stopped classifying homosexuality as a 'sexual deviation', Japanese psychiatry still had not broken away from this tendency.» (Harada 2005, p. 148).

A brief look at Japanese dictionaries published between the 1980s and the early 1990s such as *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辞典 (Shōgakukan 小学館), *Kōjien* 広辞苑 (Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店), and *Daijirin* 大辞林 (Sanseidō 三省堂), reveals that there is no reference to homosexuality in the examples given for «sexual perversion» (*seitōsaku* 性倒錯 or *tōsakushō* 倒錯症), but that homosexuality is often seen as synonymous of «inverted sexuality» (*hentai seiyoku* 変態性欲). The dictionaries give no proof of the association between homosexuality and perversion. Nevertheless, there are two articles in the *Mainichi shinbun* 毎日新聞 dated 1993, where it becomes clear that in the early 1990s the association between the two terms and the consequent derogatory meaning was still in evidence.

Occur, a famous NPO for gay and lesbian rights, active in Japan from 1986, denounced several major publishing houses for having used derogatory terms towards homosexuality in their encyclopedic articles. The first article, entitled *Homophobic Expressions in Encyclopedias* (*Hyakkajiten ni Dōseiai Sabetsu Hyōgen* 百科事典に同性愛差別表現, 17 April 1993) reports an accusation by Occur towards Britannica, Shōgakukan, and

Gakushūkenkyūsha 学習研究社. The other article, dated 5 October 1993, reports a similar complaint against Heibonsha 平凡社 and is entitled «Prejudice in the expression *homosexual*» («Dōseiai» hyōgen ni «henken» 「同性愛」表現に「偏見」). In this article, the words which caused the complaint are «abnormal sexuality» (*ijōseiyoku* 異常性欲) and «sexual perversion» (*seitōsaku* 性倒錯).

The fact that in *Onnagata ichidai* the same term is used to mean both double-gender tendency and homosexuality gives a hint of the confusion between the two aspects, which historically started to be distinguished within gender studies during the early 1990s. This rigidity in the perception of the coincidence of gender and sexuality can be noted in both *Onnagata ichidai* and *Futaomote*, where it is implied, for example, that for *onnagata* having sex with a woman enhances his masculinity. Here we have another contradiction, since despite the fluidity of gender and sexuality demonstrated by the *onnagata*'s behavior in the course of the narration, in this case the terminology used by watashi is again pseudo-essentialistic.

Concluding the analysis of the concept of *tōsaku* in Enchi's works, as we saw above in the quotation from «Onna wo ikiru», *tōsaku* generally refers to an ideal, generated by the complex human mind, which in Enchi's perception fits the decadent metropolitan environment of the intelligentsia in Tokyo. After the paragraph on the gap between Sadanji's masculinity and his effeminate behavior, comes speculation on the origin of perversion:

> The so-called sexual inversion is linked to an abstract idea. In other words, it is an artificial creation more than a *natural* one, and if we try to classify it, I would say that this tendency is much stronger amid townsmen, than among country people.
>
> The environment I grew up in was very healthy, but the stimuli coming from literature and theatre I received when I was a child, were influenced by decadent art. Not that we can say that a life dedicated to duty can be said to be always completely healthy, but it is likely that there was also a part of sexual perversion in what was unconsciously growing in myself [emphasis mine] (Enchi 1961, 207).

We have already said that her identity as a woman artist gave Enchi some kind of affinity with the queer members of the performing arts world, who lived between the boundaries of defiance and social respectability. In particular, the idea of the perverse spectator must be taken into consideration when the concept of perversion is linked to that of looking, as in the case of the reception of Sadanji's performance by Enchi in her childhood. As Janet Staiger (2000, p. 37) has argued, «perverse spectators don't do what is expected» and «rehierarchize from expectations». With this concept, Staiger stresses the importance of the spectator's context in the mode of reception, which is at the base of the pleasure given by visual entertain-

ment, in particular by movies. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Tendencies* (1994, p. 4) speaks of a «perverse reader» in similar terms, and she links directly the concept of perversion of the expectation to queer subjectivities, which are not represented by the heteronormative mainstream literature.

Similarly, the fact itself that Enchi (1961, p. 207) declares that it is easier to find sexual inversion among townsmen, means that the fact of feeling a certain «sadistic joy» is not common or natural for every kind of spectator, but only for a highly intellectualized one, as we noted above. In my reading, the third nuance given to the term *tōsaku* in Enchi's works is something similar to the concept of «perverse spectator», where the approach of the spectator is fundamental for the perception of the gap between the gender and the biological sex of the actor, for example, and for the eroticism derived from that very gap.

Summarizing the three nuances given to the concept of perversion in Enchi's writing, this word can be interpreted in various forms, but it always has to do with the interrelation between gender and sexuality and the gap between the two. I want to underline here that the term 'queer' only acquired in recent times the reverse meaning of self-affirmation by sexual minorities, with the spread of the queer theory during the early 1990s. Previously, the same term was typically used as a mechanism of repression, being conceived with a derogatory meaning. In the famous essay «Critically Queer», Butler (1993a, p. 21) writes:

> If identity is a necessary error, then the assertion of 'queer' will be incontrovertibly necessary, but that assertion will constitute only one part of 'politics'. It is equally necessary and perhaps also equally impossible, to affirm the contingency of the term: to let it be vanquished by those who are excluded by the term but who justifiably expect representation by it, to let it take on meanings that cannot now be anticipated by a younger generation whose political vocabulary may well carry a very different set of investments. Indeed, the term 'queer' itself has been precisely the discursive rallying point for younger lesbians and gay men and, in yet other contexts, for lesbian interventions and, in yet other contexts, for bisexuals and straights for whom the term expresses an affiliation with anti-homophobic politics. That it can become such a discursive site whose uses are not fully constrained in advance ought to be safeguarded not only for the purposes of continuing to democratize queer politics, but also to expose, affirm, and rework the specific historicity of the term.

From this point of view, in my reading the concept of queer, in its nuance *à la* Butler, is comparable to the use of the term «perverted» by Enchi, since they both remain controversial, notwithstanding the spread of their new usage in a positive meaning (Beasley 2005, p. 164). This comparison

is not only limited to the fact that the two words have been used with a reverse meaning from their original significance, but also to the meaning of the two words themselves, which though not completely, might overlap in some aspects, especially since they both convey the idea that gender and sexuality are interrelated, although involving different areas of analysis. The fact that the same word, *tōsaku*, is used both to mean double-gender and to mean homosexual behavior, explicitly implies an interrelation between the two, while for example Rubin (2007), when she uses terms like «pervert» or «deviation» in a denotative way, uses them only within the realms of sexuality, separated from gender. In the same essay, «Critically Queer» (1993a, p. 28), Butler faults the initial stance of the queer theory born out of Rubin and Sedgwick's theories, which would «separate radically forms of sexuality from the workings of gender norms», stressing on the contrary the impossibility of denying the interdependence of sexuality and gender, while questioning their causative implication. It seems that this topic has continued to be important in Butler's terms after *Bodies that Matter*, since she writes extensively on the difference between sex, gender, and sexuality in her «Against Proper Objects» but she also makes it clear that «we might accept the irreducibility of sexuality to gender or gender to sexuality, but still insist on the necessity of their interrelationship» (Butler 1994, p. 24).

As for other exponents of the queer theory, one of the greatest differences is that while perversion in Enchi's works refers both to gender – as in the first meaning above – and sexuality as in the second, queer theory – apart from Butler and Spivak – mainly entails sexuality, and apparently this can be considered one of the weak points of some aspects of the queer theory such as in Sedgwick's idea (Beasley 2005, pp. 167-168). The willingness to dismantle gender risks giving emphasis to sexuality, and therefore it fixes it in reverse, precisely because it is considered separately from gender. What the queer theory is aimed at, the dismantling of identity politics, risks ending up by creating a new identity: that of non-specificity, but still, however, an identity (Beasley 2005, p. 167).

Moreover, the fact that Enchi, despite her occasionally openly essentialist stance, compares women writers to *onnagata*, means that she does not distinguish between homosexuality or heterosexuality as the main factor for the construction of identity. The female writer must make an effort to acquire features of the gender opposite to her sex, and must gain a certain naturalness in this, having overcome a period of cultivation through exercise. It could be said that the woman writer after cultivation could see her maleness emerging in the same way as watashi, the female perverted dancer of *nihon buyō*. Going even further, I would argue that Enchi herself as a female writer in her career aspired to acquire maleness, and therefore her part of 'perversion=queerness' *à la* Butler in order to succeed in her art. Many years had passed since she wrote «Onna no kaku shōsetsu»,

the essay quoted above. It might be wondered if, by the time she wrote *Onnagata ichidai*, Enchi felt less constricted by gender roles, thanks to her age, the events of her life, and her experiences as a writer (1959b, p. 89). And yet, even if there is no overt expression of the notion that the similarity between the *onnagata* and the woman writer lies in their perversion, following this reading *Onnagata ichidai* could be also a review of Enchi's own cultivation as a woman writer.

The fact that the narrator is a good tool to convey these controversial concepts, is once again evident if we think of watashi as indeed part of the world of kabuki and traditional performing arts, which is based on a perversion of the generally accepted stereotypes of gender, as expressed by Enchi in many essays, such as «Onna no himitsu» (Enchi 1959a, p. 84). This becomes even clearer when the narrator recalls the above-mentioned scene where she was performing the male role and Kikunojō the female role. The disdain she feels towards Haruko, the earthly woman with whom Kikunojō has a baby in the last part, could be explained even better if we imagine that watashi was born female but with a strong masculine aspect, probably emphasized by the repetition of masculine-like gender acts on the stage parallel to Kikunojō's feminine-like features. This kind of woman does not accept that a man of the perverted world of kabuki is attracted by a 'womanly' woman, and so he seems to belong in the most banal way to the hetero-normative binary category, losing therefore any charm from her point of view.

Nevertheless, here I want to make a distinction between the relative status of the man and the woman artist. Even though both belong to traditionally marginalized groups, male artists still receive more respect than women artists in Enchi's works. In the queer environment of kabuki and *nihon buyō*, the same hierarchical patterns active in the heteronormative environment are reflected. This aspect is similar to one of the tendencies of queer theory to generalize the concept of queer, which is criticized by many scholars, who see it as the potential reiteration of ethnocentric and androcentric power economies (Beasley 2005, p. 170).

The romantic concept of art born out of pain in Enchi's works also takes on a gendered nuance: men are more successful in art and society, as well as in love; they are always depicted as less emotionally involved and therefore in a stronger position than women (Enchi 1954 and Enchi 1957). Indeed, the conflict between art and private life for a woman seems sharper than for a man, not only due to the enormous amount of energy that Enchi's female protagonists pour into their relationships compared to their male counterparts, but also because of societal gender norms which link the women to the family and to child care. We can therefore argue that there are two kinds of gaps between the men and women depicted in Enchi's works: one in love and the other in art, both of which can be interpreted in a broader sense as a reflection of societal disparities.

Returning to *Onnagata ichidai*, the narrator recalls when her father refused to allow her to perform the dance Renjishi 連獅子:

> «Maybe in another year or so, but you are not up to it yet», he said. And I felt even more frustrated that he didn't acknowledge my abilities. From my father's point of view, he was more concerned about Segawa Kikujirō's art and future than about that of a girl of fifteen or sixteen years like me. Compared to fathers nowadays, fathers in the early years of the Taishō era had very different ideas about sons and daughters (Enchi 1986, p. 10).

In this passage, the narrator's feeling of rivalry that results from the artistic gap between her and Kikunojō is clear. Even if he is not part of the dominant heterosexual male-centered society, he was still born a man, and this automatically makes a difference in the world of performing arts, which was (and still is) hierarchical. Moreover, watashi is torn between repulsion and morbid attraction to Kikunojō. In the following emblematic passage, watashi remembers an incident when she met Kikunojō when they were both entertaining the soldiers at a military camp during the war. When she saw his figure in uniform, the narrator thought:

> as I gazed at his figure, at odds with the baggy army uniform he was wearing, that image of him on stage was reflected in my eyes. At the same time, an unbearable emotion seemed to tear my chest in two. If I have ever liked Kikujirō as a man, it was definitely when I saw him – both man and woman – wearing that inappropriate army uniform (p. 25).

In brief, the artistic rivalry towards Kikunojō that watashi feels is combined with a feeling of desire and frustration because of unrequited love. This mix of admiration and defiance might be the reason why she idealizes his androgynous character but tries through her narration to rigidly define his gender and sexuality. By perverting or 'queering' him, she finds a valid excuse not to excel as much as Kikunojō on the stage and at the same time can accept the fact that he, as homosexual in the female role, rejects her as a possible lover.

1.4 *Gender Trouble* from Performance to Performativity

Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* (1990, pp. 43-44) introduces the concept of gender as «the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being».

With the idea of «gender performatives», Butler denies the existence

of a single gender identity, arguing that «if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true or false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity» (pp. 171-174).

Here she suggests as an example of this falseness, the drag performance, which «creates a unified picture of 'woman'» and «reveals the directness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence». Especially she argues that «*In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*» and she specifies that «indeed, the parody is *of* the very notion of an original» (p. 175).

As pointed out by many scholars after the enormous success of *Gender Trouble*, the original intention of this book has been largely misunderstood, so that gender has been interpreted as something completely separate from sex, that we can choose in the morning like we choose a dress from the wardrobe (Shimizu 2008). Apparently, as indicated by several scholars, the above misunderstanding is mostly due to the lack of distinction between the terms performance and performativity, where the first should be used simply to express the acts of the actor on the stage, while the second should indicate the process of creating an identity through the repetition of a set of stylized acts which are associated to that identity (Shimizu 2008, p. 10).

In my reading, the article which contributes the most to confusing the difference between performance and performativity in Butler is «Performative Acts and Gender Constitution» first published in 1989, where the two terms are almost synonyms. Nevertheless, in the same article an implied distinction between performativity and performance is pre-empted, by using the image of a transvestite on a stage. She argues (2003, p. 105):

> Gender performances in non-theatrical context are governed by more clearly punitive and regulatory social conventions. Indeed, the sight of a transvestite onstage can compel pleasure and applause while the site of the same transvestite on the seat next to us on the bus can compel fear, rage, even violence. […] In the theatre, one can say, 'this is just an act', and de-realize the act, make acting into something quite distinct from what is real. […] On the street or in the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act, indeed on the street or in the bus there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality; […] if the 'reality' of gender is constituted by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to an essential or unrealized 'sex' or 'gender' which gender performances ostensibly express.

Here she still uses performance and performativity with the same meaning, but later, after the publication of *Gender Trouble*, Butler realizes that there must be a distinction between the two terms, in order not to create misunderstandings. Although she tries to explain in *Bodies that Matter* that what she meant is not that gender is something we can freely pick up and perform, the notion of gender performance as parody is still present in her theory (1993, p. x). This is probably due, as suggested in the interview with Butler quoted below, partly to a political necessity of the period in the affirmation of queer movement, and partly because of the choice Butler made to take drag as an example of something which exposes the imitative structure of gender itself.

In chapter 3 of *Sexualities and Communication in Everyday Life*, the critic Sarah Salih (2007) explains extensively the importance of distinguishing between performance and performativity and adds that Butler does it eventually during an interview, entitled «Gender as Performance: an Interview with Judith Butler», originally published in *Radical Philosopy* in 1994.

> It is important to distinguish performance from performativity: the former presumes a subject, but the latter contests the very notion of the subject. […] It is at this point that it's useful to turn to the notion of performativity, and performative speech acts in particular – understood as those speech acts that bring into being that which they name. This is the moment in which discourse becomes productive in a fairly specific way. So what I'm trying to do is think about the performativity as *that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names*. Then I take a further step, through the Derridean rewriting of Austin, and suggest that this production actually always happens through a certain kind of repetition and recitation. So if you want the ontology of this, I guess performativity is the vehicle through which ontological effects are established. Performativity is the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed. Something like tha» (Osborne, Segal 1994).

The particular repetition and recitation onstage of gender acts by an actor is clearly distinguished therefore from the repetition in everyday life of gender acts. So what happens if the gender acts in everyday life are repeated by an actor? Butler in the quotation above takes into account the contrary situation, when a transvestite goes onstage performing the same gender acts he/she would repeat in everyday life, when «there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality». But she does not consider the case when an actor is influenced in the gender acts of his everyday life by the repetition of gender acts onstage. In that specific case, the concept of the negation of a reality or an essence of gender becomes even more evident, since there is no longer any distinction between stage as 'fake' and life as 'real'. Fiction and reality become the same and

performance becomes performativity. Here I want to add that Jill Dolan, feminist and theatre studies scholar, in her article *Geographies of Learning* published in 1993, after quoting the above paragraph of Butler's *Gender Trouble*, wonders if theatre itself might become an «equally dangerous site of anxious incongruity» as much as everyday life, arguing that the specific context of theatre should on the contrary help «working through some of these gender troubles» (Dolan 1993, pp. 434-435). Nevertheless, in her proposal of the role of theatre in breaking gender stereotypes and a fixed idea of identity, she mainly presents the metaphorical use of the stage. Similarly, in her study quoted above on the gender of *onnagata*, Mezur comes to the same conclusion, that «*onnagata* gender performance not only demonstrates the construction of gender acts and the performativity of gender roles, but also disrupts the hegemony of binary and oppositional gender roles» (Mezur 2005, p. 15). Both Dolan and Mezur remain in line with the first theories of Butler, focusing only on the theoretical aspect of performativity, therefore they limit their analysis to the metaphorical use of the theatre as a stage of gender trouble.

1.4.1 True Self versus Constructed Self?

The postmodern feminist academic Susan Hekman faults Butler's theory of identity, arguing that: «In her zeal to deconstruct the modernist subject, Butler embraces its polar opposite: the subject as fiction, fantasy, play. I argue that this is a false antithesis and that a middle ground on identity is both possible and necessary» (Hekman 2000, p. 290). She adds:

> Many have advocated a more stable concept of gender than that defined by Butler, but exactly how could this be accomplished without returning to an essentialist subject is not clear. The quasi-essentialist subjects of identity politics are a symptom of this unease. One is tempted to conclude that feminism has reached an impasse in which we must declare […] that we can neither defend nor dispense with identity (p. 298).

As a proof of her argument, Hekman quotes Lynne Layton in *Who's that Girl, Who's that Boy?* (2004). Layton attempts to cover the gap between the theoretical postmodern rejection of an abiding identity and the practical need of human beings of having an identity core in order to have psychological stability. Layton argues:

> In the relational paradigm, *core* does not mean *innate*, nor does it imply a true self. And it is not incompatible with cultural construction. Perhaps the relational and the postmodern camps have been falsely polarized […]. Because of what they see in practice, psychoanalytic relational

> theorists assert that gender and other identity elements are culturally constructed pieces of an internal relational world that both evolves and is relatively coherent and stable (2004, p. 25).

Layton, through «object relations theory» looks at the identity formation not as an inherent condition, but as something developing in relation to the environment. In this theory, there is no negation of a core as in the case of postmodern subjects, but that core is not an essence, it is rather constituted through relational experience. Layton, critical of Butler's theoretical stance in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*, underlines Butler's change of attitude towards the subject after 1995, when her position becomes closer to relational analytic feminists, even if Layton still criticizes the approach of Butler for not taking into account «how norms compete for place in the psyche and how they are embedded in relationship». She argues ultimately that «what is missing from Butler's account, even in its most psychoanalytic form, is an understanding of what motivates people's relation to norms», not giving space to «mediating power of relationships, for longing for love, approval, and recognition» (2004, p. 235).

Only after *Bodies that Matter*, in her article *Melancholy Gender-Refused Identification*, Butler (1995) considers a combination of psychoanalytic (object relations) theory and performativity theory. In this article Butler analyzes Freud's melancholia theory from the point of view of the gender formation. This theory sees compulsory heterosexuality as the product of a negation of desire towards the same gender and a prohibition of the grievance for the loss of that potential homosexual desire. It is based on the forced disavowal in early age of the possibility of homosexuality, which leads to the incorporation of the gender of the object, instead of the desire for the object her/himself. This links inextricably gender and sexuality in the sense that «In opposition to a conception of sexuality that is said to 'express' a gender, gender itself is here understood to be composed of precisely what remains inarticulate in sexuality» (Butler 1995, p. 172), so that the excluded status of homosexual love becomes the status which «never was» and «never was lost» (p. 165). Butler argues that: «the site where homosexuality is preserved will be precisely in the prohibition of homosexuality», which ends up with melancholia in the heterosexual subject (p. 174).

In *Melancholy Gender-Refused Identification*, Butler (1945) regrets having chosen drag as an example of gender performativity in earlier works since she has been largely misunderstood because of this choice. Butler adds that drag not only shows the imitative structure of gender, but:

> [drag] allegorizes a loss it cannot grieve, allegorizes the incorporative fantasy of melancholia […] by which a masculine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love; a feminine gender is formed (taken on, assumed) through the incorporative fantasy

> by which the feminine is excluded as a possible object of love, an exclusion never grieved but «preserved» through the heightening of feminine identification itself. In this sense the «truest» lesbian melancholic is the strictly straight woman, and the «truest» gay male melancholic is the strictly straight man (p. 177).

Later in the article, Butler explains:

> there is no necessary reason for identification to oppose desire, or for desire to be fueled through repudiation. And this remains true for heterosexuality and homosexuality alike, and for forms of bisexuality that take themselves to be composite forms of each. Indeed we are made all the more fragile under the pressure of such rules, and all the more mobile when ambivalence and loss are given a dramatic language in which to do their acting out (p. 179).

She therefore is critical towards compulsory heterosexuality which ends up fixing gender identity, but at the same time admits in her later works that incoherence of identity is a risk for psychological stability. In this sense, Butler is critical of the fact that in contemporary society the grief of the loss of homosexuality is still unspeakable and the rage over this ends up with dramatic events, often of suicidal proportion. Therefore she states that this loss should be given political and public relevance (p. 179).

1.4.2 The troubled «Nature» of Kikunojō

Returning to *Onnagata ichidai*, as for Kikunojō's gender, in light of this development of Butler's performativity theory linked to the idea of melancholia towards homosexuality, the fluidity of his sexuality goes together with a gender which is just as fluid, since he is not a «true» melancholic, not being a straight man, but at the same time he cannot be defined by a gay identity, showing as we will see, straight behavior as well.

In *Onnagata ichidai* the insistence by the narrator on the tragedy provoked by gender identity incoherence – being neither gay nor heterosexual – is clear, but it is transposed to the object, not to the subject. Since Kikunojō is the embodiment of the above mentioned idea that «there is no necessary reason for identification to oppose desire», melancholia in Kikunojō is solved thanks to his gender fluidity, the tragic suicidal act is taken by people in love with him who suffer precisely for his gender fluidity, and hence his fatal charm.

The insistence of Lynn on the fact that an excessively theoretical stance as in postmodern thought about gender, which exalts the fluidity of identity, finds no correspondence in reality and should therefore be more re-

lational, is linked to this problem of incoherence which in practice ends up with a painful psychological fragmentation, either of the subject or, as in our case, of the object.

It goes without saying that the case of an actor depicted through literature is so specific that it cannot become a general example, but it can be the embodiment of the impasse into which postmodern thinkers have fallen after *Gender Trouble*. It shows, indeed, the gap between the deconstruction of the concept of identity and the actual need of an identity in everyday life. Watashi insists on the responsibility of Kikunojō for the suicide of his lovers. This interpretation is probably an exaggeration, but it conveys clearly the risks of psychological destabilization in the fluidity between gender and sexuality. I think that under this light, *Onnagata ichidai* can represent a material example of the possibility of disrupting the idea of an abiding identity of the subject, precisely by recognizing a non-essential core in the subject identity itself, and overcoming in this way the dichotomy between inherent nature and construction, which risks confirming the rigid position which it was ultimately supposed to dismantle (Hekman 2000, p. 301).

It seems that in *Onnagata ichidai*, the term «natural» can be read in two ways which exist simultaneously but also seem to contradict each other. One is a form of pseudo-essentialist reading which describes something the narrator perceives as original or genetically inherited, whereas another reading refers to acquired nature, in the sense of habit and repetition, and might be seen therefore as something constructed.

In the narrative it is elaborated that the role of an *onnagata* is inherited «through genetic lineage» (*daidai no chi* 代々の血), wherein «men change into women» (*otoko ga onna ni tenkan suru* 男が女に転換する) (Enchi 1986, p. 41). The narrator asserts that this pattern is natural for the protagonist, ingrained, and therefore not easily altered. The pseudo-essentialistic stance of watashi implies that real *onnagata* already coming out of the Kakubei performance when Kikunojō and watashi were young, is due to a supposed inherent perversion of the actor at birth.

The fact that watashi would easily perform the male role and Kikunojō would perform the female role, is again defined as natural and therefore «at his most blissful», as we noted before. At the same time and contrarily to his supposedly inherent tendency, while becoming an adult and living various events in life, Kikunojō's gender identity took a more masculine tone, therefore the natural femininity coming out of the stage in adulthood is the result of cultivation, disguised as genetic transmission (pp. 12, 90). Here, the narrator's use of the term «natural» to describe Kikunojō's female-like gender after entering adulthood can be read as an acquired nature, and so something which feels (but is not) natural.

Moreover, the narrator herself contradicts the possibility of a genetic transmission as a reason for *onnagata*'s gender acts on stage, by stating

that «the link by blood is not always trustable», willing to justify the fact the Kikunojō's son was born without the genetic inheritance of the *onnagata* art (p. 95). Kikunojō himself, having been adopted, is the demonstration that this idea of genetics brings with it the opposite concept of second nature derived from construction, even if watashi tries to enforce genetic theory form the beginning, asserting without any proof that «probably» (*kamoshiremasen*) Kikunojō must be a child born from his allegedly adoptive father and a woman who is not his mother (p. 5). Here the gap between the real biography of Utaemon and the fiction gives a further hint on the interpretation of this concept of genetic transmission. If watashi uses the term «blood», we must not forget that the real model Utaemon was indeed adopted. In the latest biography on the life of Utaemon, Nakagawa Yūsuke explicitly states that it was well known in the 1950s that Utaemon was adopted because Utaemon V could not have children. Later, explains Nakagawa, the adoption became a taboo, especially in the 1980s, when many biographies of the actor were written, omitting the truth about his birth.

Even though in the 1980s this fact was no longer well known, it must have been known by fans, since it was written in some 1950s' biographies (Nakagawa 2009, pp. 332-334). If we always take as correct the hypothesis that *Onnagata ichidai* was written for a few connoisseurs of the theatrical world, the above hint of the biographical fact of the adoption, while giving an ironical tone to the generational transmission hypothesis through the overt fictional hypothesis of the illegitimate son of the *onnagata*, ends by confirming the opposite idea, and therefore the construction theory *à la* Butler, or perhaps goes even a step further.

In the essay entitled *Onnagata to onnagokoro* I mentioned above, Enchi describes the figure of the famous *onnagata* Hayanagi as follows: «he was all soft lines in a kimono with a neckband and with his rounded shoulders he naturally exuded the female-like glamour of a person who has spent a long time on the stage as a woman» (Enchi 1941, p. 550). Not only in her fictional works, but also in her essays, we see Enchi using the word «natural» to describe something constructed with effort and time.

It is interesting to note that Maki Isaka Morinaga, the previously quoted scholar who has analyzed the gender formation of *onnagata* from a historical point of view, speaks of the concept of «cultivation» (*shūgyō* 修業), the following of a religious or artistic path, which culminates after long training in an «internalization of the technique in question as second nature» (2002, pp. 268-269). In this sense, while maintaining an essentialist vocabulary, the narrative of *Onnagata ichidai* can be given a constructionist perspective, since these traditional concepts are very similar to Judith Butler's theory of gender as «a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame» (1990, pp. 43-44).

At the same time, Enchi's work shows a substantial difference from Butler's theory. For Butler the social fiction of a natural sex or of a natu-

ral woman is the product of a set of stylized gender acts repeated over time to produce subjects with a gender coherent to their sex (p. 174). In *Onnagata ichidai*, contrary to the performative construction of a supposedly natural coherence of sex and gender, we said that naturalness must be understood for the *onnagata* precisely in the incoherence of sex and gender acts. Here it is evident that *Onnagata ichidai*, by focusing on the gender of an actor, explores the limits of the distinction between nature and construction, putting them on the same level.

The perversion given by the coexistence of female and male aspects in the same person is indeed the cause and at the same time the result of this naturalness shown not in the coherently gendered person, but in the person whose sex and gender do not match. It is the cause, since the actor's ability is said to come partly from his inherent perversion, but it is also the result, to the extent that Kikunojō's supposedly perverted gendered acts onstage influence his everyday identity. Ultimately, it is the perversion itself which allows the overcoming of the dichotomy between nature and construction, and the fact that Utaemon is the model for this particular aspect of the *onnagata* gender, must be taken into account.

If we consider the performing style of Utaemon, indeed, we can deepen our understanding of the concept of performance as performativity emerging from *Onnagata ichidai*, which in my view adds color to Butler argument. Utaemon's performance was and is still considered by many critics the icon of «modern *onnagata*». In particular, Watanabe Tamotsu 渡辺保 (2002, p. 287) affirms that, compared to contemporaries like Baikō 梅幸 and Tamasaburō 玉三郎, Utaemon's body didn't allow him a traditional *onnagata* style, since his looks were not as female-like as theirs. It is interesting to note that watashi affirms of Kikunojō more or less the same thing, comparing him with later *onnagata* with more beautiful and «feminine» looks (Enchi 1986, p. 48). Therefore it was not possible for Utaemon to give a realistic performance of a woman just with his looks. It was easier instead to perform an idealized image of Woman. Watanabe continues:

> For Utaemon his looks were not good for a traditional *onnagata* actor. Not only did his looks not suit, but he also chose to live his life as an *onnagata* respecting the criteria of kabuki tradition. On the basis of this, he always had to face doubts about the reason for his existence as an *onnagata* actor. In trying to overcome the doubts, he didn't have any other way than to incarnate in himself a beauty which exists only in the imagination. That's why it seems to me that what Utaemon was trying to perform was not a single and material woman, but the concept itself of Beauty. But a concept is something which is not possible to concretize. Is it possible to perform something like that? Of course not (Watanabe 2002, p. 290).

The contradiction born out of this clash between modernity and tradition in

the performance of Utaemon, is explained by the critic Hashimoto Osamu (2002, p. 364) in a book dedicated to Yukio Mishima in terms of «trial and error» or «check»:

> With a tense excitement he is continuing checking: «Am I really acting the woman I must act in the proper way like this?». And his style is that of an actor who is performing as if he were insisting with the audience and as if he were saying: «Is it right like this? I believe that I am performing correctly and this is why I am performing like this. Do you agree? Am I becoming her? Am I becoming her? Please, look at me». And therefore there were people who said that his style was «heavy». But the greatness of Utaemon was precisely in that checking of every action, which was an «art worthy to be seen».

Utaemon, making a clear imitation of a woman-like performance, would not expect his public to think that he was a woman, and he would suggest femininity while overtly taking distance from that precise femininity in a form of estrangement. This is probably the aspect of Utaemon's performance which contributes most to rendering his performance 'modern', as argued by many critics. And it is perhaps also the reason why Enchi emphasizes Utaemon's suitability for interpreting roles of women of the past in Kabuki nowadays; women who are not 'real' and who do not have a specific character, but who are the embodiment of an idealized femininity (Enchi 1964, p. 326).

It is significant, then, that the model of Kikunojō in *Onnagata ichidai*, who embodies the particular conditions for the unification of performance and performativity, is Utaemon, an actor who did not aim at a realistic performance of femininity, and therefore the gender act on stage becomes a clear creation during the performance itself. The performance becomes a meta-performance, a performance of the performance – or of the performativity – representative of gender creation in general.

The above explained object relation theory, in my opinion can be the theoretical explanation of the concept of nature emerging from *Onnagata ichidai* which is both, as we said, original and constructed.

The female-like gender acts which are naturally performed in the scene of the dance Kakubei, when Kikunojō is young, can be seen as an imitation of the gender acts of his father, who was an affirmed *onnagata*. In this case the extremely essentialist explanation of transmission through blood could hide instead an influence which is not genetic, but relational. Following the gender acts both on stage and in the private life of the father, Kikunojō supposedly acquires both femininity and masculinity, and hence his pseudo-inherent perversion. Therefore we can suppose that he does not need to face the melancholy, necessary to form a masculine gender, by refusing to grieve the loss of desire towards the masculine.

Later on in Kikunojō's life, even after a few 'straightening' experiences,

with the cultivation of gender acts in his career as *onnagata*, he acquires again a femininity, which is not only a product of the relationship with the father in early age, but it is constructed through repetition and personal training, as in the first of Butler's theories. This time it is the result of an effort, where «with the progressive success of his *onnagata* roles, the original man inside him (*honrai non otoko* 本来の男), was obliged to stand in the shadows» (Enchi 1986, p. 90).

Matching a core identity of the subject and a performative gender identity, the specific case of Kikunojō represents a case outside the theoretical dichotomy modern-postmodern or essential-fluid subject *à la* Butler of the first works, but is instead closer to her later position.

1.5 The Devoted Wife: A Woman's Spirit in the Actor' Body

Returning to the plot of *Onnagata ichidai* once more, here I must introduce the fourth important event presented by watashi of Kikunojō's life. Kikunojō's wife, Teruko, tries to be a devoted wife, but she cannot have his heart, and she commits suicide.[7] According to the narrator, Kikunojō is devastated, even if he does not show it. Nevertheless, from that moment on, Kikunojō's talent is even more enhanced.

It is interesting to note that in the very moment of Teruko's suicide, Kikunojō is performing the role of Oiwa, the unlucky female protagonist of the drama *Yotsuya kaidan* who dies of anger towards her husband who betrayed her. This play is exemplary of the taste for grotesque which characterized kabuki, especially in the late Edo period. For the violence of the death scenes and the bad omen they are supposed to bring, it is usual for actors before the first performance of *Yotsuya kaidan* 四谷怪談 to go to a temple connected to the story, and put incense on the grave of the woman who was Oiwa's お岩 model, so as not to have bad luck during the performance. In *Onnagata ichidai*, watashi reports a dialogue with Kinkunojō, where he confesses that he does not like to perform Oiwa's role because he is scared of her curse, and his wife too (Enchi 1986, p. 57). And, as said, ultimately Teruko commits suicide out of despair over her marital life precisely during the performance of Oiwa. This detail adds eeriness to the scene of suicide, because of the possible superstitious interpreta-

7 It is curious that also in *Kikujidō* the wife of Yūsen commits suicide because she cannot bear their «unnatural marital life» (*fushizen na fūfu seikatsu* 不自然な夫婦生活), referring explicitly to their sexless relationship. She strangles herself just as Teruko does, with the same light blue undersash *shigoki* しごき, and her husband keeps it in the *tokonoma* 床の間 as a memento exactly like Kikunojō (Enchi 1984, p. 226 and Enchi 1986, pp. 63-68). It is as if both protagonists, involved in homosexual extramarital activities, want to remember their negligence as husbands in order never to forget the so-called «monstrous» source of their art, which brings pain and death with it.

tion that it is the curse by Oiwa which caused Teruko to take this extreme decision. On the other hand, it provides the occasion for the narration to use an intertextual quotation of *Yotsuya kaidan*.

A strong intertextuality between the plot of Enchi's work and a noh or kabuki play, is often used as a technique to convey continuity with the history of female suffering in married life. And, by the way, the intertextuality with this specific play, significant from the point of view of female abandonment, is not unique in Enchi's works. A clear example is the performance of *Yotsuya kaidan* in *Onnazaka*, where the female protagonist, Tomo 倫, while looking at Oiwa's desperation, remembers her private life thinking «it was all too easy and too convincing to draw a parallel between Oume お梅, who stole Iemon 伊右衛門 away, and Suga 須賀; between the cold but attractive Iemon and Shirakawa 白川; between Oiwa, whose resentment at her cruel betrayal finally transformed her into a monstrous spirit of revenge, and herself» (Enchi 1980, p. 44). This could be seen, in turn, as an homage to the notorious scene from*Tade kuu mushi* 蓼食う虫 (Some prefer nettles), by Tanizaki Jun'ichirō 谷崎潤一郎, where the courtesan Koharu 小春 of the bunraku play *Shinju Ten no Amijima* 心中天の網島 reminds the protagonist of his father-in-law's mistress, the young mild-mannered Ohisa お久. Needless to say, in the case of Tanizaki's work, the comparison between the theatrical scene and real life is seen from the point of view of the male protagonist, taking an opposite nuance, more of longing for the traditional image of docile femininity than of protest against it.

This kind of intertextuality in most of the works by Enchi depicting the world of theatre often follows a precise pattern. The male protagonist performs the role of a woman suffering from unrequited love, being in a relationship whose dynamics are akin to the relationship in real life between the actor and his female partner. In this ironic situation the cross-gendered performance ends up by stressing gender disparity. Usually, as for example in the short novel *Ano ie* あの家 (The House), the fact that the male actor performs with mastery the female role and the female actress does not perform the male role so skillfully, represents a double loss for the woman. The fact that she is deeply involved in a love relationship often becomes an obstacle for her performing skills, especially if performing a male role. The male actor, on the contrary, being less sentimentally involved and more neutral, maintains the faculty to observe and learn from his female partner, beating the female counterpart in both love and artistic career, again. Being himself the cause of the female partner's despair, he adds insult to injury, by skillfully observing the pain in the woman's behavior and performing it on the stage.

In the case of *Onnagata ichidai*'s protagonist, we cannot find this cold detachment, since in Kikunojō's words he feels deeply guilty about the wife's suicide, confessing in a dialogue with watashi that his gender is at the base of the problems in his marriage: «The old times when we per-

formed *Kakubei* were great, weren't they? You were like a real man, and I was just like as Onnadayū 女太夫 in my true nature (*ji no mama* 地のまま). If only I had remained that way, I wouldn't have ended up causing Teruko's death» (Enchi 1986, p. 73).

As we said above, the supposedly true nature of the young Kikunojō was more feminine before the events of adulthood would enhance his masculinity, which ended up becoming simultaneously the reason for both success and desperation in his life.Watashi stresses even more the direct responsibility of the actor for Teruko's suicide, declaring almost theatrically that «He killed his wife with his own hands» (p. 72). Moreover returning to the intertextual level, there is a dialogue between watashi and Kikunojō after Teruko's death, where the comparison with the death of Oiwa, caused by Iemon's cruelty, is explicit. Here, the comparison of Kikunojō with Iemon makes them both laugh, since they find comical the image of the delicate *onnagata* in the role of the heartless man (p. 71). In Kikunojō's case, indeed, since the gender identity question is central to his sexual and consequently affective life, we find a different motivation in the male exploitation of the woman's suffering, which is not cruelty or indifference, but a non-heteronormative sexuality.

Moreover, in this case the cliché *à la* Enchi of the male actor reflecting the partner's suffering on the stage, is brought to extreme consequences with the death of the female and her spirit's possession of the actor on the stage. The narrator adopts a supernatural excuse, a device which in Enchi's works is used with various valences, which the author herself refers to as «shamanism» (*miko-tekina mono* 巫女的なもの), and which represents a traditional motif used throughout Japanese literature from the Heian period on (Enchi 1978, p. 4). This motif is used by Enchi to convey supernatural phenomena and spiritual possessions in general in her works. Anyway, although in this work the narrator interprets the success of the actor's performance with the supernatural phenomenon of possession, it is always an explanation about the male skill enhanced by his woman's pain. Watashi qualifies the fact that Kikunojō's performances became even more charming and female-like with the explanation that the spirit of Teruko, a «real woman,» possesses him. After Kikunojō's skillful performance, she observes that:

> It could have been due to the fact that a real woman, Teruko, hovered in the shadows of his *onnagata*. As far as I could see, as long as that real woman's shadow didn't leave him, Kikunojō's *onnagata* could be nothing other than both man and woman. This dramatic reflection remained with Kikunojō until he turned sixty. Perhaps it was precisely this which lent the *onnagata* his particular charm (Enchi 1986, p. 104).

Moreover, later in the novel, Kikunojō has sexual intercourse with his

servant Haruko, whom the narrator describes as an earthy woman, who in her view shouldn't even be seen as a woman by the actor. From that intercourse a child was born, and this provoked a scandal. In the narrator's interpretation, this event, being outside her conception of Kikunojō's sexuality, cannot be other than the consequence of another act of Teruko's spirit after death. By 'forcing' Kikunojō to have a baby with an «earthy» young country woman, to whom, watashi arbitrarily asserts, he would never have been attracted before, Teruko carries out her duty as the perfect wife by sacrificing her life to make him happy (p. 84). As for what the narrator implies, Teruko's spirit, by possessing Kikunojō, brings him perfection as an *onnagata* and at the same time gives him a child, which she couldn't do while alive since it is implied that they had a sexless marriage (pp. 85-86).

The motivation at the base of this insistence by the narrator on Teruko's devotion, could be not only the will to stress the role of victim of the persons around Kikunojō and the deadliness of his perverted charm, but also the will to explain his ability on the stage becoming everyday more refined and his male-like behavior, being attracted by a common femininity. In other words, it is very likely that watashi, jealous of the talent and the love of Kikunojō, uses the excuse of Teruko's spirit to make herself feel better. Thus, in order to justify a gender shift which 'straightens out' the protagonist, the narrator adopts again the supernatural excuse of possession. In *Onnagata ichidai*, it allows the narrator to continue to assert Kikunojō's essential heterogender-like homosexuality whilst externalizing his heterosexual drives.

Generally speaking, the specific use of the phenomenon of possession in Enchi's works is often linked to socially prescribed feelings, including prohibited sexuality or sexual desire.[8] However, in the case of *Onnagata ichidai*, I would say it is linked more to a sexual taboo imposed on Kikunojō by the narrator, rather than by society. If in many of Enchi's works it is common to interpret possession as a device to express a submerged sexuality, or aspects of the personality in general, here, in the context of *Onnagata ichidai*, it becomes more a method for the narrator to find 'proofs' of her interpretation of the facts, which ultimately confirms her unreliability. In other works by Enchi the reader is left with a doubt about the distinction of reality and dream or illusion in the framework of the novel. Susan Napier defines *Onnamen* 女面 (Masks), one of the best known novels by Enchi, as «conforming to Todorov's definition of the fantastic in that the events depicted, including a seance, can have either a supernatural or a rational

8 Two of the first scholars to write in English about Enchi's linking of eroticism and the so-called shamanism were Yoko McClain (1980) and Saeki (1972). For the broader link in Enchi's works between social repression and possession, see: Nina Cornyetz (1999); Pammy Yue Eddinger (1999); Doris G. Bargen (1996); Wayne Pounds (1990); and Eileen B. Mikals-Adachi (1988).

explanation, and this ambiguity intensifies the novel's eerie atmosphere» (Napier 2005, p. 81). In *Onnagata ichidai* the supernatural element enhances the unreliability, because it is clearly exploited by the narrator to impose her idea on the protagonist's sexuality. Before we saw a case where watashi uses the excuse of possession to explain the imaginary journey into Kikunojō's life episodes, when she says that her living spirit was possessing Yasu during his encounter with Kikunojō. On the contrary, the case I just tackled is a case of possession by Teruko after her death, but in any case we see that this phenomenon is exploited by watashi to legitimize her narration, and it is important to notice that it is always a cross-gendered possession, which ultimately enhances the fluidity of gender vision.

1.6 Homage to Kabuki

In my reading, the choice of an openly unreliable narrator has a double function in *Onnagata ichidai*. From one point of view, the unreliability gives more freedom to investigate the *onnagata* gender identity, since precisely by giving an apparently narrow-minded interpretation, the implied author suggests a more complex and fluid vision of the gender and sexual aspects in the actor's life, but at the same time avoiding the responsibility of expressing that vision directly. On the other hand, unreliability gives freedom to the narrator to tell a story in clearly exaggerated and unrealistic terms. The last work by Enchi is, in my opinion, a last *homage* to her beloved eerie world of kabuki through a literary effort.

In particular, the fact of mingling real facts with fiction was typical of the *sewamono* 世話物 kabuki, and especially the 生世話物 *kizewamono*, popular in the late Edo period, with the character of *nama* 生 meaning that «its ingredients are left exactly as found with no extraneous additions made» where the brutality of a real event would be enhanced by violent and supernatural scenes, giving kabuki its most grotesque accent (Kawatake 2004, pp. 227-248). In *Onnagata ichidai*, as a literary work, the possibility of mixing reality with fantasy and even supernatural phenomena, is provided precisely by the unreliability of the narration.

Enchi has written many theatrical pieces and some kabuki plays as well, but the idea of translating the passions of the kabuki stage into a literary work on the life of a kabuki actor, is a much more effective way to suggest all the charm of this theatrical art. This is not the first time in which Enchi manifests a tendency to mingle different genres in her works, but usually it is the case of critical essays or personal research results intertwined in her literary works. As a last example of Enchi's excellent use of interdisciplinarity and intertextuality, we have in *Onnagata ichidai* a literary work becoming the medium to convey the grotesque and dramatic atmosphere of the kabuki stage. In *Onnagata ichidai* not only the intertextuality with

the plays – used in many other works such as *Onnazaka*, *Matsukaze bakari*, *Ano ie*, *Onnamen*, *Komachi hensō* – enriches the plot of the novel, but also the plot somehow creates a dramatic scene in the reader's mind comparable to a kabuki drama for the strength and the impression left to the reader/spectator. This is made possible by the exaggerated narration of an unreliable narrator.

In my view, Enchi's lifelong interest in the interrelation between life and art in an artist's life led to the writing of *Onnagata ichidai*, which is focused on the lives of two artists very close to Enchi's environment: Utaemon VI and Mishima Yukio. In both cases, *Onnagata ichidai* represents a quest for the link between art and life through the investigation of the relationship of gender identity and sexuality. Utaemon and Mishima both lived two lives and two different artistic expressions concentrated on and influenced by their gender and sexuality. While the discourse on Mishima will be at the center of next chapter, I would like to consider here the figure of Utaemon, model for the protagonist.

This was not the first time a work in Enchi's career was dedicated to the exploration of the link between stage life and sexuality in an *onnagata*, as we showed already through the analysis of the work *Futaomote*. Some critics, such as Nakagawa Yūsuke (2009, p. 202), even say that *Futaomote* as well used Utaemon as a model. I do not agree with this hypothesis, but I do agree with the fact that Enchi was especially inspired in her eternal investigation of the relation between gender identity and sexuality by the figure of the *onnagata*. In particular, in *Onnagata ichidai* the aspects of sexuality and love are so frequent that one cannot but think that this work is an investigation of the *onnagata*'s gender on the stage and its implications in private life, even though this does not allow us to perceive which aspects are coming from Enchi's thought and which are part of the purely fictional construction.

As we saw above, Enchi's admiration for Utaemon is made very explicit in her essays and must have been one stimulus for her to dedicate this work to him, as a chance to convey the fascination and the feeling of decadence and fear around the character of Utaemon, which are part of his uncanny beauty. These dark and partly derogatory aspects emerging from Kikunojō's character, are strictly intertwined in the work as part of his charm, even though through the words of an unreliable, jealous and openly mystifying narrator. As I anticipated at the beginning, my interest was not in trying to find out how much the author's thought emerges through the narration. It is also very difficult to consider the extent to which a word such as «perversion», which nowadays is considered politically incorrect, could have had the same nuance in 1985. Nevertheless we can say that also this derogatory potential is part of the game of evoking a kabuki-like atmosphere, where kabuki means 'deviant' or 'grotesque' as in its original use.

To the best of my knowledge, Utaemon, who was still alive and even

still performing at the time when *Onnagata ichidai* was published, didn't leave any comment about it. But one may imagine that he probably was not completely happy with the description of Kikunojō's character.[9] I suppose that the clear inventions at the base of the work, the use of supernatural phenomena, as well as the mystifications of the biographical reality, made the actor accept the work as a matter of fiction, and perhaps also made him enjoy the legend that this work inevitably constructed around him precisely because of the darker aspect emerging from it. The actor was all too familiar with those kinds of unreal events and passions and if he had had a good sense of humor, after all he must have appreciated the irony and the skillful use of real events to construct a glamorous story, not possible in reality. Even if not always positively, the construction of a kabuki-like story on the base of one's life events must have been for Enchi a real *homage* to that person. And especially if that person is a kabuki actor so keen on his art, this in my interpretation must be seen as the best present to that person. After all, she gave him the possibility to read his life's emotions in a book and therefore feel just as strongly as he would have done by watching himself as a protagonist in a kabuki drama.

1.7 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have discussed the specific concepts surrounding gender which the narrator reveals through the protagonist's story in *Onnagata ichidai*. The narrative voice that Enchi skillfully constructs, assumes the inherent sexual perversion of the male-sexed protagonist due to his female-likeness based on an ambivalent concept of nature and on his androgynous qualities. She turns the hetero-normative fixity of sex, gender and sexuality upside-down, but then maintains them as equally fixed in reverse. Instead of adorning heterosexual desire with naturalness, she insists on using the term «nature» to describe homosexuality linked to Kikunojō's desire based on heterogender roles. This perception, which is consistent with the narrator's agenda of fixing the gender identity of the protagonist, stresses the binary ideals of a hetero-normative power economy, while applying these within a homosexual context.

We can also read the construction of gender and sexuality in a different way. The narrator's construction posits the protagonist's identity and its development both on and off stage as consistent with an essential or inherent nature. If we question the validity of this narrative, however, and regard it as overly contrived, we begin to doubt the essential identity of

9 Nakagawa (2009, p. 352) uses the term «taboo» to describe the scandalous biographical references to Utaemon's life appearing in *Onnagata ichidai*.

the protagonist as a heterogender-like homosexual, and instead are able to perceive it as something fluid, with a greater potential for change than the narrator's interpretation allows. Moreover, the narrator's explanation of Kikunojō's «male's transformation into a female» (*otoko ga onna ni tenkan suru* 男が女に転換する) as a legacy passed «through genetic lineage» (Enchi 1986, p. 41), is a pseudo-essentialist way of explaining that which is obviously constructed as the art of the *onnagata*. It is easy to link this concept to the theory of the construction of gender maintained by Judith Butler.

These two apparently contrasting readings are possible if seen through the lenses of psychoanalytical object relations theory. The stances of watashi, indeed, can be read in a deeper way if not considering her pseudo-essentialist terminology. This reading would take into consideration the existence of a core for gender identity, but a core which is not inherent, but formed through relations with family members in early age. In that sense, the constructionist theory and the idea of a core formed in childhood can be considered together, such as in the case of the gender formation of Kikunojō. This allows a further step in Butler's theory, by concretizing the theoretical idea of performativity. Since the gender acts during training and performance influence everyday gender and vice versa, *onnagata* do not have any 'reality' to imitate, but only a set of gender acts which, born out of imitation in early age, are continually constructed and influenced by other relations. In this case true self and construction become indistinct.

I want to propose that in Enchi's works, there is a further role of theatre, in the specific case of kabuki, where in virtue of the fact that the gender acts on the stage influence the actor's life, theatre becomes an equally dangerous site for gender trouble not only as a metaphor, but as a site which has a practical role in the repetition of acts which form the actor's gender.

I argued that the very concept of perversion in *Onnagata ichidai*, even if ambiguous and at times falling into derogatory meaning, is precisely the keyword for the overcoming of the distinction between natural, supposedly non-existent for Butler, and constructed gender acts, because in *Onnagata ichidai* they are not distinct. The naturalness is indeed not referred to a coherent match of sex and gender, but to a female-gendered set of acts in a male body. The concept of perversion, as a keyword in kabuki's world, embodies a vision of gender which represents a way to overcome the dichotomies inevitably created by Butler in *Gender Trouble*.

In order to analyze the figure of the *onnagata* in *Onnagata ichidai*, I compared it to the figure of another *onnagata* described by Enchi in a much earlier work, *Futaomote*. First of all, the female-likeness of the *onnagata* is already described as natural, in contrast to a maleness acquired by having a love affair with a woman. Together with the dichotomy which fixes sexual desire only towards the opposite gender, in *Futaomote* it is already apparent that after a long stage career as an *onnagata*, the actor's male-

ness is almost contrived, embarrassing, and finally, painful. Nevertheless, the androgyny derived from the re-acquisition of a male consciousness in real life was already emerging in *Futaomote* as a way to achieve greater charm, linking the gender and the sexuality of the *onnagata* in life and on the stage. The supposedly inherent perversion of the protagonist, described in both *Futaomote* and *Onnagata ichidai*, in my view is the keyword also to the dialogue performed in *Onnagata ichidai* with Mishima's works, which is the subject of the next chapter.

I think that *Onnagata ichidai*, even though it is a still little-known work, is representative of Enchi's late period, in which she shifts from female-focused writing, to the queer environment of Japanese traditional performing arts. Nobody knows for certain why Enchi chose to focus on this world at the end of her life. From our present perspective, however, her works not only depict the figure of the *onnagata* in a fascinating manner, but also allow us to rethink the world of Japanese traditional performing arts as a place of «gender trouble.»

2 Enchi's Intertextual Dialogue with the «Actor without a Changing Room»: *Onnagata* and *Sotoba Komachi*

Summary 2.1 Introduction. – 2.2 A Bouquet of Irony: *Fuyu no tabi*. – 2.3 *Masurao-Taoyame* in *Onnagata ichidai*. – 2.3.1 Mishima's *Onnagata*. – 2.3.2 Mishima's Shift of Vision towards Kabuki's 'Queerness'. – 2.3.3 From «Cruel Beauty» to *Masurao*-like Beauty. – 2.3.4 Enchi's Intertextual Vengeance. – 2.4 *Sotoba Komachi* versus «Sotoba Komachi». – 1.5 Concluding Remarks.

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyze the connection between Enchi's work *Onnagata ichidai*, analyzed in chapter 1, and the novella *Onnagata* 女方 by Mishima Yukio, as well as the intertextuality of Mishima's *Sotoba Komachi* 卒塔婆小町 (Ono no Komachi on the *Stupa*) with the original noh.

The choice of Mishima as model is something one cannot avoid when analyzing *Onnagata ichidai*. Enchi was very clear about how fond she was of Mishima's artistic production before he embraced extreme political opinions, which strongly influenced his later work. In particular, the two shared a passion for kabuki theatre and they both believed that Utaemon's performance style as an *onnagata* was exquisite, as we will see. Enchi's direct comments in essays written after Mishima's suicide on 25 November 1970, such as «Hibiki» (1971, pp. 26-29) published in the magazine *Shinchō* 新潮, give more than a clue to understanding Enchi's reasons for creating a character modeled on the writer.

Enchi was only one of many intellectuals who never forgave Mishima for wasting his unique talent by committing suicide.[1] Nonetheless, few of those intellectuals expended as much time as Enchi in expressing outspoken disappointment at Mishima's extreme act, nor did many try to continue the interrupted dialogue with him through works dedicated to him. In my

1 For example in the discussion after his death, Yamamoto, Saeki, and Enchi (Yamamoto, Enchi, Saeki 1971, p. 135) agree on the fact that Mishima should have continued writing instead of choosing death, and hypothesize that with old age his works would have gained depth and that he could have overcome the fear of taking off the mask he was metaphorically wearing while writing.

opinion this is not only because Enchi was particularly upset by the news of his death; probably it is more the effect of the fact that she esteemed his previous works, and because her works were also highly regarded by Mishima. In the above-mentioned essay «Hibiki», written a few months after Mishima's death, Enchi clearly declares:

> There are many things I would like to think and write about Mishima. But I cannot do that properly through an essay, a *genre* I am not keen on. Someday, I want to try conveying, though hesitatingly, what I have in my heart in the form of a vagrant *shōsetsu*; maybe this is the only modest bouquet I can offer in front of Mishima's tomb (Yamamoto, Enchi, Saeki 1971, pp. 28-29).

2.2 A Bouquet of Irony: *Fuyu no tabi*

Soon after this essay, Enchi (1974) wrote the short novel *Fuyu no tabi* 冬の旅 (A Winter's Trip) published in the same magazine in November 1971, a work completely dedicated to Mishima in highly ironic and disappointed tones.

The intellectual dialogue between Enchi and Mishima, whom even though younger in age, she considered «senior (*senpai* 先輩) of the post-war period» (Yamamoto, Enchi, Saeki 1971, p. 131), was due to a shared sensitivity towards some particular topics, as pointed out by the famous critic and scholar Saeki Shōichi 佐伯彰一 (1987, pp. 286-288). In particular, I am referring to the insistence on intertextuality with Japanese literary and theatrical tradition, the investigation of the relation between gender and sexuality, the interest in the topic of ageing versus youth, or the use of spiritual possession in modern terms, especially with sensual implications. This harmonious and rich intellectual exchange was interrupted when Mishima began to hold politically based, nationalistic, and extreme opinions.

In *Fuyu no tabi*, Enchi's alter ego speaks to Mishima's phantom in an extremely direct way, and imagines what might be his reaction in reply. In my view, this work is the explicit expression of the will to continue a dialogue with Mishima through the intertextuality with his works.

Similarly, even though *Onnagata ichidai* was written fifteen years later than *Fuyu no tabi*, the critical imprint of Mishima's last ideological stance is still present. As argued by the scholar Kobayashi Fukuko (2005, p. 241) in her 2005 monograph on Enchi Fumiko, *Onnagata ichidai* can be read as a continuation of the expression of the frustration emerging from *Fuyu no tabi*. Sawaki's character in *Onnagata ichidai* and his behavior assume an important role in *Onnagata ichidai* as an act of protest. *Fuyu no tabi* could almost be read as a sort of essay on Enchi's interpretation and criticism

of Mishima's art and life, expressed through a fictional dialogue between the implied author and the spirit of the dead Mishima. On the other hand, *Onnagata ichidai*'s characters are fictional and the narrator does not despise Mishima's conceptions directly, but she distorts Mishima's theories through the fictional character of Sawaki, producing a comical and therefore critical effect.

Mishima's spirit in *Fuyu no tabi* (1974, p. 289) replies to a provocation by the narrator, an elderly female writer, the alter ego of Enchi: «well, 'dead men tell no tales' is a way of saying that I am almost sick of experiencing. Let's see what happens later». It is as if he regrets not being able to reply to her provocation, but rather must count on living people to do it for him («let's see what happens later»). Sometimes the ironic tone reaches a tragi-comic level. For example, Enchi's alter ego argues that «even you, after becoming a phantom, can speak roughly» because he is speaking openly of the price of a painting, showing a vulgarity which did not characterize him during his life (p. 288).

The overall tone is of bitter laughter, an open expression of the disappointment at his death, and at the same time a criticism of the ideological beliefs of his last years. In particular, I would argue that Enchi's deep interest in gender issues and the personal implication in the stereotype of female writers resulted in the emphasis on the *taoyame-masurao* dichotomy we explained in the first chapter. This dichotomy plays a central role in Enchi's criticism of Mishima's ideological stance, both in *Fuyu no tabi* and in *Onnagata ichidai*.

The personal reason for Enchi to comment sharply on the tendency of Mishima to disdain anything female is made clear in *Fuyu no tabi*, where there is an explicit reference to Mishima's commentary on the fifth award of the Tanizaki Prize for Literature. On this occasion, Enchi's semi-autobiographical novel *Ake wo ubau mono* 朱を奪うもの (What spoils red, 1956) with a woman writer as protagonist was selected. Enchi's alter ego says: « I remember that when it was your turn to comment, you said: 'Also Ms. Enchi is a woman, in the end', despising the fact that in my work, when her partner criticizes the protagonist's novel, she replies: 'I will think about it'» (1974, p. 289).

Right after that, the narrator of *Fuyu no tabi* stresses the fact that Mishima despises femaleness, quoting Higuchi Ichiyō's 樋口一葉 diary where Ichiyō writes about the difficulty of being a female writer, and ironically the narrator links Mishima's seppuku with the *taoyame* frailness inside him, while exalting the choice of facing age and not committing suicide despite pain in life, which many female artists like her make every day: «the action of a man cutting his belly is the only one she [=Higuchi Ichiyō] would never take; isn't it true that even a *taoyame*-like person, whom you dislike, thinks that what should be done should be done until the end?» (p. 289). In an auto-ironic act, Enchi's need for vengeance towards her

colleague's cowardly act and towards his dislike of femaleness, is shown in Mishima's reply: «Are you giving me tit for tat?» And then Enchi's alter ego continues explaining: «I mean that the period in which you were most dedicated to *masuraoburi* was precisely the period when the *taoyameburi* inside you was rebelling» (p. 289).

As is clear from above, the insistence on the stereotype linked to gender perpetrated by Mishima especially in his last work, the massive tetralogy *Hōjō no Umi* 豊饒の海 (The Sea of Fertility), is taken as an example of the inconsistency of Mishima's stance. Enchi's alter ego is also explicit in speaking about Mishima's frustration with his own «androgynous charm» (*chūseitekina miryoku* 中性的な魅力), which made him try to repress the softness of the female part of himself and caused him to go to work out to build a masculine body which he did not have from the beginning, as he was a child with a frail constitution from birth (p. 292).

2.3 *Masurao-Taoyame* in *Onnagata ichidai*

As we have briefly seen in chapter 1, the *taoyame-masurao* dichotomy is also at the base of the character of Sawaki in *Onnagata ichidai*, and ultimately it plays a crucial role in the development of Kikunojō's gender identity. The narrator of *Onnagata ichidai* says something very similar to what Enchi's alter ego says in *Fuyu no tabi* about the fact that Sawaki starts doing bodybuilding to become closer to the ideal of *masuraoburi*. And then watashi adds: «In reality, Sawaki's works had a strong feature that, using his own words, could be defined *taoyameburi*, and in the late *masuraoburi* there was a constriction. In that sense Sawaki would have better dedicated himself completely to *taoyameburi*» (Enchi 1986, p. 42).

In *Onnagata ichidai*, watashi's explicit reference to the ideal dichotomy *masuraoburi –taoyameburi* implies a direct link between the relationship of the two characters who embody Utaemon and Mishima, and the writer's suicide. In other words, watashi, with her partial interpretation of Kikunojō's life events and gender identity, stresses the fact that the relationship between Sawaki and Kikunojō ended in tragedy because Sawaki wanted to force the actor's gender identity into an «inverse transformation» (*gyakutenkan* 逆転換), gradually enhancing his maleness until he could perform well also roles of *tachiyaku*, actor performing the male character in kabuki.

> What Sawaki wanted from Kikujirō, was that kind of *onnagata*, who enchants the male public as a male, but the blood which circulated in Kikujirō's veins from generations was so inclined towards males changing into females, that apparently, despite Sawaki's talent, the inverse transformation did not go as he expected. Kikujirō in the end succumbed

> more to lineage and education than to his fervent fan, the talented Sawaki (pp. 41-42).

It is true that Mishima was an ardent admirer of Utaemon as he confessed in many essays, such as *Utaemon-jō no koto* 歌右衛門丈のこと (On the Great Utaemon) (1952a, p. 495), therefore it is not so unlikely that there was some gossip about their relationship surpassing that of playwright/actor while they were collaborating, as provocatively implied in Nakagawa's biography (2009, p. 171), by saying that it might be not only as an actor that Utaemon was jealous of the actress Sugimura Haruko 杉村春子, when he got to know that Mishima chose her as the protagonist of his play *Rokumeikan* 鹿鳴館 in 1956. However, love relations are often very difficult to prove, especially homosexual ones, because it goes without saying that they are usually secret. Whether we believe that Mishima and Utaemon's relationship was more than a working one or not, it is obvious that watashi's explanation of the split in the working partnership between Sawaki and Kikunojō is fictional. She attributes this to the end of their affair, which is clearly a contrived interpretation.

Apart from the supposed love relationship, the events in *Onnagata ichidai* could lead to the interpretation that in Enchi's mind the end of Mishima's collaboration with Utaemon had its reason in Utaemon's *onnagata* style, supposedly too feminine. And yet I doubt Enchi herself would have really interpreted events in this way. More likely, she used the love relationship – which is fictional until proven otherwise – to make an outspoken criticism of Mishima's decline into gender-based nationalistic ideas, while forcibly linking the real event of Mishima's ideological development to the fictional event of the love story between Sawaki and Kikunojō. Take, for example, the scene where watashi describes the play – the cause for the break-up – written by Sawaki for Kikunojō as a play based on Racine's *Phèdre*. We can easily trace it back to the real play *Fuyō no tsuyu Ōuchi jikki* 芙蓉の露大実記 (The Blush on the White Hibiscus Blossom: Lady Fuyō and the True Account of the Ōuchi Clan), which Mishima wrote for Utaemon in 1955. Nevertheless, the plot of the play described in *Onnagata ichidai* does not correspond to the plot of *Fuyō no tsuyu Ōuchi jikki*. In particular, in narrating the plot of the play, watashi insists on the gender aspects, where the female protagonist, a princess, «changes into a young samurai», explaining that Kikunojō was especially not satisfied with the point where «the gender exchange takes place», whereas there is no gender exchange whatsoever in the original play (Enchi 1986, p. 41).

In this way it becomes very evident to connoisseurs that the disappointment with Sawaki on Kikunojō's gender does not reflect the 'real' events between Mishima and Utaemon, but it is pure fiction, and they can appreciate a specific use of intertextuality, where the gap between what the implied reader is supposed to know and what it is narrated, gives a

sense of estrangement. Moreover, the explicitly fictional transformation of Mishima's suicide into a double suicide with a foreign woman in France, makes the invention around Sawaki's character even more explicit, as well as transforming the ritual *seppuku* performed by Mishima into an almost comical ending.

In *Onnagata ichidai* the critical intent developed through the character of Sawaki emerges from the absurdity and incoherence of the character himself. By linking the real Mishima's exaltation of *masuraoburi* to the disappointment of Sawaki with the failed attempt to 'masculinize' Kikunojō, is evidently a forced interpretation by the narrator, which could be seen as a distorted interpretation of the real vision of Mishima. By implying that only a delusion in a relationship could make someone radically change his attitude like that, Mishima's concentration in his last period on ideological aspects is visibly trivialized.

2.3.1 Mishima's *Onnagata*

In this subchapter, I will analyze the relation between *Onnagata ichidai* and the famous short fiction *Onnagata* (1957b, by Mishima), published in 1957 in the magazine *Sekai* 世界.

The short story is told in third person, focalized through a male character, Masuyama 増山, a student of literature, who obtains a position as stage assistant. One of the stars is the *onnagata*, Sanogawa Mangiku 佐野側万菊, whom Masuyama adores both on stage and off. The story develops around the love triangle among Masuyama who falls in love with Mangiku, and Mangiku who falls in love with Kawasaki 川崎, a director hired for a special production.

In both *Onnagata ichidai* and *Onnagata*, the story is created around an *onnagata* actor, modeled on the figure of Utaemon VI. It is very well known that both Enchi and Mishima shared a common admiration for Utaemon, and that they thought that Utaemon had given new life to kabuki, an art which was about to lose its charm with modernization. Enchi herself in the essay on the actor (1964, p. 324) tackled in chapter one, quoting the words of Masamune Hakuchō 正宗白鳥 on Utaemon, agrees with the fact that «kabuki's life has been extended by the birth of an *onnagata* actor of that charm», expressing towards the actor the same enthusiasm of her male colleague who, in his introduction to a photographic collection dedicated to Utaemon, argues that with the actor «the life of kabuki has been extended for dozens of years» (Mishima 1959, p. 386). Therefore it is not surprising that Enchi decided to dedicate a work to his figure, but this choice has a deeper meaning if we read it as a dialogue with the well-known short novel by Mishima.

Both works have at their center the investigation of the link between

gender identity on the stage and gender identity connected to sexuality in real life. But, while in Mishima's work (1957b, p. 336), the «female expression» (*joseiteki hyōgen* 女性的表現) emerging from the roles that Mangiku performs is emphasized, in *Onnagata ichidai* the performance of the *onnagata* results in a mix between female-like acts and a male core. And Mishima's ideas of Utaemon's gender onstage coincide with the above description of Magiku's gender onstage. He thinks that: «The star of the natural woman who illuminated him completely when he was Fukusuke 福助, in Shikan is still shining» (Mishima 1959, p. 386).

At the same time, also Masuyama, despite his homosexuality, as a male-gendered person, seems to be attracted to Mangiku's femaleness on the stage, showing in appearance a consistent heteronormative tendency. Masuyama looks for a job as assistant of Mangiku precisely because he consciously wants to be disappointed by his offstage maleness, in order to detach himself from the obsession with the actor. But unfortunately this attraction does not cease when he sees Mangiku's backstage figure, even if he shows a male body and at the beginning it feels «weird» (*kimi ga warui* 気味が悪い) even for a kabuki admirer like Masuyama (Mishima 1957b, p. 339).

This fact is explained by the narrator of *Onnagata* as follows: «Masuyama was a man, and definitely the attraction that he felt for Mangiku when he was on the stage, was due to his female beauty. Nevertheless, it is strange (*fushigi* ふしぎ) that this attraction didn't disappear even after having seen clearly his figure backstage». On the contrary, Masuyama admits that the fact of feeling still attracted by Mangiku after having seen his naked body, made him feel relieved. This «strange» reaction is explained with the fact that «Mangiku even after having taken off his robe, under the naked body still seemed to wear many transparent layers of a luscious robe. That naked body was just a temporary figure (*kari no sugata* 仮りの姿)» (pp. 339-340).

When Mangiku is on the stage in a completely female gender identity, his love as a 'woman' for the male protagonist, is charming for Masuyama. And backstage, Masuyama enjoys looking at Mangiku coming back in the heroine role and slowly by slowly returning to his male body, which anyway does not match with a male gender identity still, since the «transparent layers» he seems to wear are the layers of his many female roles onstage, whose gender acts he tries to bring on in everyday life as well.

Mangiku is said by the narrator to lead a life on the model of the Edo period actor Yoshizawa Ayame 芳澤あやめ, who was famous for living exactly like a woman also offstage. But the example that the narrator, whose partial point of view is coincident with Masuyama's, uses to explain this supposed femaleness offstage, does not speak of Mangiku's every day private life. It is again an example of his behavior in the changing room (*gakuya* 楽屋). The narrator explains that Mangiku respected to the letter Ayame's rule that he would never let people see him eating in a rude – sup-

posedly male – way in the changing room. In other words, the biological male sex of Mangiku, clashing with his gender onstage, is not an obstacle for Masuyama to believe in Mangiku's femaleness if the gender performed in the changing room is still female-like, as much as onstage.

This example is meaningful for it represents the important role given to the changing room in Mishima's own vision, as explained in a lesson he gave at the National Theatre to kabuki trainees (1988, pp. 280-281). Mishima declared that he had decided not to go to any kabuki actor's changing room any more, since as he gained access to their privacy, it was inevitable to become friends, and once a personal relation was installed, it was difficult as a playwright not to be influenced by their request to give them «a nice role».

There is an important paragraph in *Onnagata* which explains the point of view of Masuyama on Mangiku's gender. It comes after a quotation from the words of Ayame, which emphasize the importance of living as a woman every day in order to reach perfection in the *onnagata* role. The narrator comments:

> «The key to success is in everyday life»… that's true! Mangiku's routine as well, went through a feminine language and posture. There would come a moment in which the warmth stemming from the *onnagata* role onstage, would gradually melt as on the shore into the everyday femininity which was an extension of the same fiction. If Mangiku lived his everyday life as a man, that shore would cease to exist, and dream and reality would be separated by a bare door. The fictional everyday life [*kakō no nichijō* 仮構の日常] was supporting the fiction on the stage. For Masuyama that was the meaning of the *onnagata*. For him the *onnagata* was the child born out of the illicit relationship between dream and reality (Mishima 1957b, p. 341).

The shore, the place in-between stage and life which sees this gradual transformation from fiction on the stage and fiction in real life, is indeed, the changing room. This concept and the importance given to the changing room is similar to the mirror room (*kagami no ma* 鏡の間) in the world of noh. Konparu Kunio (1983, pp. 126-127) defines the mirror room as space of transformation, and explains:

> Here the actor, already dressed in many layers of robes and a wig, puts on the mask and sits before a large mirror to study the figure he makes; this is where he undergoes the process of becoming the character. […] The transformation of the performer in Noh – that is, the process of recognizing the other as the self – is here shown turned inside out. The actor awakens the awareness of himself as other and then goes a step further to develop this awareness into a consciousness of that other (the

> character) as himself. This transformation is the magic of recognizing on two levels the externalized self. The mirror in the mirror room is not there for the actor's last-minute grooming: using the mirror as an instrument of transformation brings life to and function to a space, and thus the true meaning of the term *kagami no ma* kagami-space, a place of god, of self and other, of reflection, and of truth.

Konparu makes reference to the transformation happening before the performance, but in *Onnagata* the transformation in front of the mirror is described for the opposite process, from the role on the stage, to the everyday self. Mangiku after coming back to the changing room, looks at his figure in the mirror, still in the passionate role of some heroine, and gradually comes back to himself, even though as we said, «under the naked body he still seemed to wear many transparent layers of a luscious robe». In my opinion this is a metaphor of the female-like gender acts that Mangiku tries to bring on in real life. It is not by chance that the transformation in front of the mirror described in *Onnagata* is at the end of the performance. In Mangiku's case, the fiction of the feminine-like gender acts somehow continues in real life, consequently the stage is the main reference. In this case the stage role is maintained also in real life, and after gradually coming back from the character to self, it could be said that two levels of externalized self coexist in everyday life.

But Masuyama in the last scene realizes that Mangiku's gender transformation is not between femaleness onstage and femaleness offstage, but between femaleness and maleness. Masuyama's dream is completely destroyed when he sees Mangiku outside the changing room, dressed in a male overcoat *mojiri* モジリ, walking side by side with Kawasaki, both male-gendered. Ultimately Mangiku's masculinity cannot be hidden, despite his fictional efforts to behave like a woman in everyday life. No matter what manners and vocabulary he chooses, Mangiku does not feel like a woman. His identity is openly male. Perhaps effeminate, but still a male gendered person.

Stressing the gap between the identity on the stage and that in the changing room, Earl Jackson (1989, p. 469) argues:

> In Mishima's text, the barrier between stage and dressing room is absolute and metaphysical and the figure of the absent woman, woman as absence demarcates and delimits the boundaries of these spaces. Male seduction occurs through a mirror emblazoned with the face of a woman who is the ghost of someone who never existed. The men in this network are mirrors for each other, mirrors enclosed upon their own sterile creativity, radiating a brilliance that blinds rather than illuminate.

Hashimoto (2002, pp. 360-362), too, argues that the disappointment felt

by Masuyama is with the maleness of Mangiku, as a lack of femaleness. But I do not fully agree with the two interpretations. First it is not between stage and changing room, but between stage and everyday life that Mangiku's gender shifts despite his formal efforts to hide his masculinity. The changing room is a borderline space where both masculinity and femininity coexist.

Second, the delusion is not due to the fact that Mangiku is not 'really' female, since Masuyama accepts the actor's male body, but with the fact that he is a male-gendered person attracted to a male, which destroys Masuyama's beliefs of Mangiku's heterogender-likeness. The delusion Masuyama feels at the end of the story is for Mangiku being completely male and nevertheless attracted to a person who is male-gendered too, therefore he is disappointed with the gender identity connected to sexuality of Mangiku in real life.

When Masuyama understands the feelings of Mangiku for Kawasaki his attraction remains, despite his disappointment and jealousy. When Mangiku invites the director Kawasaki to a restaurant for dinner, Masuyama feels that this is proof of the fact that Mangiku's intention is to try to express his love for Kawasaki, in a positive and go-ahead masculine attitude, no longer limited to dreaming of him in a romantic female-like way. Therefore the delusion felt by Masuyama is caused by the same mental process that for example brings the protagonist of Mishima's famous novel *Confessions of a Mask* (1949) (*Kamen no kokuhaku* 仮面の告白) to hide to himself his emotional involvement with a male-gendered person.

In *Onnagata*, Mangiku's attraction for Kawasaki is a homosexual attraction *tout court*, for a man as a man, without any interference of feminine gender. On the contrary, the protagonist of *Confessions of a Mask* has no courage to really take consciousness of his attraction to men as linked to identity. Nevertheless, he tries to justify his homoerotic desire scientifically and quotes Hirschfeld seeking «comrades in Western cultures», as argued by Saeki Junko (1998, pp. 133-134). He tries to maintain his heterosexual identity, by justifying his desire to men as a purely sexual attraction, which is not connected to love in the romantic sense. As Saeki Junko points out, Mishima in *Confessions of a Mask* uses the term *ai* 愛, the direct translation of the English term «love» towards Sonoko 園子, his girlfriend, and «infatuation» *koi* 恋 towards Ōmi 近江, his male love (p. 130). This difference is justified by the protagonist, through the dichotomy of mind and soul: while he is convinced that in his heart he loves Sonoko, his body is attracted by men (p. 136). This in Saeki's theory recalls the practice of *nanshoku*, in early modern Japan, which unlike homosexuality in modern European terms, coexisted with marriage and was considered simply a practice, which therefore didn't characterize sexual identity.

Similarly, Masuyama is disappointed by Mangiku's homosexual choice, because it reveals his own full homosexuality. If there was some hetero-

like behavior in Mangiku as a woman-gendered, Masuyama was justified to be attracted by Mangiku, but he no longer accepts this attraction, when he finds out that Mangiku is completely 'homosexual', as a man in love with another man. In other words, Masuyama does not accept to enter the status of homosexual himself.

Later, there is a shift in Mishima's vision of homoerotic desire, which can be metaphorically seen as the resolution of the above gap between Mangiku's mature homosexual consciousness and Masuyama's immature vision of his own homoerotic desire, which are in my opinion reflected in the conflict between body and soul of the protagonist of *Confessions of a Mask* as well. Mishima aims at emphasizing the idea of virility, and he takes distance from the *nanshoku*-like homoerotic desire, where there is a heterogender roleplay to accept, between a man with the passive-feminine role and another with the active-masculine role. He cuts every bond to femininity and starts exalting a full masculinity and the purely homosexual desire. Probably it is not by chance that in the same period Mishima himself had undertaken a change in his looks, after starting to do body building in order to resemble the image of the masculine 'Man' that his protagonist in *Confessions of a Mask* is attracted to.

2.3.2 Mishima's Shift of Vision towards Kabuki's 'Queerness'

Mishima's words to describe the tendency of kabuki and the reason why he started despising it, while praising *bunraku* 文楽, are mainly gender-based expressions.

In an interesting article written after Mishima's death by the stage director and theatre critic Takechi Tetsuji 武智鉄二 (1979, pp. 460-461), the change of vision towards kabuki of the last Mishima is analyzed in depth. Takechi quotes a talk he had with Mishima on their disappointment with contemporary kabuki, entitled «On the state of divorce from contemporary kabuki» (*gendai kabuki he no zetsuenjō* 現代歌舞伎への絶縁状), published in the magazine *geijutsu seikatsu* 芸術生活. Through this article, it becomes clear that in later years, Mishima started openly praising the «virility» of *bunraku* and despised the tendency towards «queer kabuki».

In Takechi's article Mishima's vision of the relation of gender and sexuality in kabuki is expressed with the following words:

> This tendency towards jōruri 浄瑠璃 plays, due to the fact that they are compact (*kanketsu* 簡潔), vigorous (*yūkon* 雄渾) and masculine (*danseiteki* 男性的) in the sense that they are sung by a male reciter, is reflected necessarily in the style of *Geki* 檄, the speech declaimed on the day of his suicide. Even during our talk, Mishima pointed out the emotionality (*jōchoshugi* 情緒主義), psychologism (*shinrishugi* 心理主義) and the

> sluggish movements (*ma ga nobiru ten* 間がのびる点) of the «queer art» (*okama gei* おかま芸) of kabuki, and adduced in comparison the bloodless, cruel and vigorous artistic tradition of *bunraku*, which he defined as «homosex». […] Mishima defined the term «homosexual» as «when a man loves another man completely as a man» (男がぜったいに男を男として愛すること), a concept which came out during a debate on the possibility of homosexuality being at the base of the training principles of performing arts themselves (pp. 430-431).

But I argue that this was a broad vision, definitely not focused on the gender of the *onnagata* only, as in Sawaki's vision. And especially, if Mishima at a certain point in his life felt disappointment towards the *onnagata* performing style, it was not towards Utaemeon's style, differently from what apparently Kikunojō thought of Sawaki.

In the talk with Takechi on the figure of the contemporary *onnagata*, Mishima laments: «they think that women should be without any backbone (*gunya gunya shiteiru* グニャグニャしている), but this is a stereotype» (p. 462). In this sense, it is true that Mishima did not like the idea of a weak *onnagata* performance, but this does not mean that he disliked the femininity emerging from the *onnagata*. Therefore in my opinion, the interpretation of watashi towards Sawaki's ideas on the *onnagata* does not correspond to the stance of Mishima, even if it is inspired by his male-centered vision of the last period.

That the association of weakness and femaleness is indeed just a stereotype for Mishima is shown well through the *onnagata* character of Mangiku in the short novel *Onnagata*. The gender acts of the actor in this work are described as very feminine, as we shall see later, while conveying an incredible strength on the stage, defined as «a strength which emanated from Magiku's body, but which surpassed his body itself» (Mishima 1957b, pp. 337-338). This feature of strength and femininity together is actually emphasized, though differently, by both the works *Onnagata ichidai* and *Onnagata*, dedicated to the figure of Utaemon. And this strength at the base of the two protagonists' performance coincides with Utaemon's strength, since in the above mentioned dialogue with Mishima, Takechi (1979, p. 462) too, refers to (Utaemon) «The VI» (Rokudaime 六代目), as an exception to the tendency to queer kabuki.

In *Onnagata ichidai*, according to watashi's reading, Sawaki starts doing body building and emphasizing his own maleness because he couldn't have the satisfaction of watching Kikunojō as a male onstage, no matter how «effeminate» he was (*onna rashii otoko* 女らしい男) (Enchi 1986, pp. 41-42). By expressing this interpretation through a clearly unreliable narrator, the implied author has freedom to play with Mishima's theories without the risk that the narrator's interpretations are considered the author's interpretations by the implied reader. All of this has the effect of criticizing

the beliefs that Mishima held in his last period and admonishing his loss of interest in the beloved art of kabuki, which is lamented by Utaemon himself in a late interview (Nakamura U. 1991, p. 198). Metaphorically, the fact of forcing a great *onnagata* to play *tachiyaku* roles shows a loss of interest in kabuki itself; it is like forcing kabuki to become something else. In particular, this becomes evident if we know that Mishima argued that the core of kabuki were not *tachiyaku*, but *onnagata* roles (as quoted in Mezur 2005, p. 34).

In *Onnagata ichidai*, Kikunojō's sexual desire is towards both male and female, even if the narration tries to depict the latter as an incident. In *Onnagata*, on the other hand, Mangiku's sexual orientation can be defined as completely homosexual. Moreover, the emphasis on the male core of Kikunojō's performance together with the insistence on his female-likeness, is opposite from the *onnagata* stage depicted by Mishima. The gender acts onstage of the protagonist of *Onnagata ichidai* are influenced by his everyday experiences as a male, while the acts onstage of Mangiku are neatly separated from his everyday life, despite his effort to behave like a woman offstage. In other words, the difference is that Mangiku onstage is completely female gendered, while Kikunojō keeps a male core. Therefore offstage, while Mangiku tries to lead a «fictional everyday life», which is forced, Kikunojō is just living his natural gender and sexuality as fluid as they are, without trying to fix them (Mishima 1957b, p. 341). The two protagonists cannot be considered similar from the gender-sexuality relation point of view, even if they are inspired by the same model. The result is that Masuyama, with his desire for a fixed image of the femaleness of Mangiku, is disappointed by his real life figure, and watashi, willing to justify the fact the Kikunojō refuses her love, fixes his desire as homoerotic. Both the narrations are based on a vision which ultimately does not accept the protagonist's sexual orientation.

2.3.3 From «Cruel Beauty» to *Masurao*-like Beauty

Another key concept to analyze by studying Mishima and kabuki is the concept of «cruel beauty» (*aku no bi* 悪の美), praised in many essays on Utaemon written by Mishima, such as the above mentioned *Rokusei Nakamura Utaemon josetsu* (Mishima 1959, p. 382), introduction to a photography book dedicated to Utaemon. A few months before dying, Mishima gave a talk at the National Theatre in front of some trainees who were about to enter the world of kabuki as actors. The speech, as suggested by the title, «The Flower of Evil» (*aku no hana* 悪の華) was focused on Mishima's vision of kabuki as an art based on evil. As a former lover of kabuki, and the director of the Theatre, Mishima did not illuminate only the negative aspects of kabuki as he did during the discussion with Tetsuji we analyzed before.

But although he exalted the beauty of this theatrical art and did explain how he used to be infatuated with it, on the other hand he expressed a detached, severe vision, considering that he was speaking to people who had chosen to dedicate a large part of their lives to kabuki. After having described how his love for kabuki was born, he explained:

> I used to think like this. I thought that kabuki is an extremely beautiful flower. And somewhere this beautiful flower has poison in it. It is creepy. Still, if it was as beautiful as a tulip or a rose, but it is like a strange peony, or an eerie insectivore flower. I had the impression that it is similar to an eerie flower you can find in the basin of the Amazon in South America (Mishima 1988, p. 277).

In this speech, Mishima tries to explain what the essence of kabuki is for him, and stresses the profound «sensual excitement» (*kannōteki na shigeki* 官能的な刺激) and «irrationality» (*higōrishugi* 非合理主義) at the base of this art (pp. 274, 281).

In Mishima's vision, the beauty of Kabuki is profoundly linked to the fact that its origins are based on an environment of outsiders, living at the borders of society, which makes it a «nest of aberrance» (*akutoku no su* 悪徳の巣):

> To speak clearly, kabuki is evil itself. Kabuki used to be called «hotbed of evil» (*akusho* 悪所). From the Edo period until the prewar period, kabuki and pleasure quarters were considered a similar «hotbed of evil». […] Kabuki is what has made this kind of «knot of human evil» (*ningen no aku no katamari* 人間の悪の固まり) blooming a beautiful flower (p. 278).

The idea of «cruelty» (zankoku 残酷), derived from the same semantic area of evil, is significant in Mishima's theory on Utaemon, as well. And the same concept emerges clearly also from *Onnagata ichidai*. After watching Kikunojō's performance of *Chūjōhime* 中将姫, watashi replies to Sawaki's affirmation about people finding *Chūjōhime* a boring play, saying: «it's not boring at all. But I would have preferred him to be a little crueler». Sawaki agrees with her and replies affirmatively: «Yes, crueler, I agree with you» (Enchi 1986, pp. 36-37). Just after citing Sawaki's words, watashi continues:

> replied Sawaki, as he seriously accepted my idea and shared his feeling with me. I felt that the obsession Sawaki had for the beauty of perversion, was completely in accordance with my words. I felt that in that moment the fascination with the beauty of perversion in kabuki which I was born with, was the same as Sawaki's (p. 37).

Watashi is exalted by having found a person who shares her feelings about the need for cruelty in kabuki. This is not the only place where this scene is depicted. The same encounter with almost the same words is reported regarding Mishima in the above discussed short novel *Fuyu no tabi* (Enchi 1974, p. 294). Therefore even if it is very difficult to affirm with certainty whether this episode coincides with a real dialogue between Enchi and Mishima, this double quotation must at least demonstrate that in Enchi's mind her praise of Utaemon's cruelty in the performance was shared by Mishima, probably because of his affirmation on the relationship of beauty and evil.

It is significant that the dialogue in *Fuyu no tabi*, while facing many themes Enchi and Mishima were interested in, is dedicated in large part to kabuki, the art which best expressed the cruel beauty. In *Fuyu no tabi*, just before linking cruelty to Utaemon, Enchi explicitly links «bloody scenes» in kabuki with sexuality and beauty (p. 293).

The reference in *Fuyu no tabi* to the famous St. Sebastian scene in Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask* is a way to underline his passion for the «sexual beauty» (*sekkusharu na bi* セクシャルな美) and link it to his love for kabuki (p. 239). Obviously, this passion was something Enchi had in common with Mishima, so as Sunami Toshiko 須浪敏子 (1998, p. 34) affirms, *Fuyu no tabi* becomes a confession of Enchi's own «perverted eroticism» (*tōsakuteki erotishizumu* 倒錯的エロティシズム) through an exaltation of Mishima's perversion. It even traces directly Mishima's last theatrical act back to the influence of the many *seppuku* scenes on kabuki stage. Enchi's alter ego in *Fuyu no tabi* metaphorically argues that the writer's «homeland» was the stage and indeed Mishima's close relation to theatre is undeniable, as much as Enchi's. Saeki Shōichi describes both Enchi and Mishima's works as «haunted by a theatrical smell» (Saeki S. 1987, p. 287). In the same work (1974, p. 291), Enchi expresses the idea that Mishima embraced the ideological trend for the sake of acting a part, arriving at the point of arguing that he was an «actor without a changing room». This affirmation explains in literary terms the obsession Mishima had with the concept of living and writing with a mask; which is explicit in *Confessions of a Mask*. Since Mishima gave great importance to the changing room as a place of transition between real life and the fictional world of the stage, it is meaningful that Enchi metaphorically implied that Mishima had no such transitional space. Not having a changing room means not having a place where to return to 'reality'. It probably means that, in Enchi's opinion, Mishima's everyday life itself was fictional. And this would better explain the theatrical ending of Mishima's life as well.

The depiction of Sawaki's frustration towards Kikunojō's performance, in my reading might refer to Mishima's sense of inadequacy towards his own *œuvre*, which in Hashimoto's thought resulted into the envy of Mishima towards Utaemon's «modernity» in his performance. Hashimoto (2002,

pp. 366-367) argues that from the point of view of the «satisfaction of the public», Utaemon triumphed over Mishima, using his body more than his mind.

Mishima himself is explicit in admiring Utaemon's modernity when in occasion of the new stage name of the actor, he writes an article entitled *The newly named Utaemon* (*shin Utaemon no koto* 新歌右衛門のこと) (1951b, pp. 433-434):

> In reality, what makes us feel the real modernity in kabuki is what «Shikan» 芝翫 is destined to become from now on. Shikan is the antithesis of Kikugorō VI, who introduced modernity into kabuki. It must be said that the modernity of Kikugorō VI六代目菊五郎, was a realism which was not deeply rooted, a kind of rationality, a naturalism, which seemed more the introduction to modernity. It was the modernity which one can read about in a manual. Moreover, the VI's real greatness was the fact that he structured the traditional techniques of kabuki. The novelty of Kikugorō was a novelty in method, not an intrinsic one. Shikan's modernity – the newly named Utaemon – is the contrary. He dared to use an old method. And in the midst of the struggle to adhere to that method, even by applying an old style, you can catch a glimpse of a newness which cannot be concealed, just as you see the blossom of the plum breaking through the frost.

Later in this paragraph, Mishima uses the expression «cold sensuality» (*tsumetai kan'nōsei* 冷たい官能性), combining the image of frost and fire, coldness and passion as he often did in his essays, to convey the particularity of Utaemon's performance and modernity. Then Mishima expresses his wish that Utaemon's art be known around the world, admitting with this the importance of Utaemon's contribution to Japanese theatre. Watanabe Tamotsu's view of Utaemon's improvement of his art is that it was due to a skillful use of «realism» in an art such as kabuki which is born out of «stylization». Watanabe (2002, pp. 192-193) argues that Utaemon was able to do this specifically because of having lived through the war period, after which even the world of kabuki evolved towards individualism and psychological insight. He also adds that the turning point for Utaemon was embodied in the smile of Yatsuhashi 八ッ橋, the protagonist of the play *Kagotsurube* 籠釣瓶, which role Utaemon played in a personalized style, conveying a new idea of femininity: until that time no *onnagata* had ever smiled on stage (p. 290). It is not by chance, I think, that in *Onnagata ichidai* the same role of Yatsuhashi is seen as the major attainment of Kikunojō.

Hashimoto, speaking of Mishima and Utaemon's collaboration, writes that he read the sentence «Only Utaemon triumphed over Mishima» somewhere, but that he does not remember who was the author of that sentence (Hashimoto 2002, p. 366). I cannot say with confidence if he got

confused between Sawaki and the real Mishima and therefore whether the quotation is from *Onnagata ichidai* or not. It might also be that this idea of Utaemon «winning» comes from the statement by Mishima himself on Utaemon's «invincibility» due to his «negative narcissism», which was written in the introduction to the above mentioned photographic collection (Mishima 1959, p. 384). Anyway, it cannot be by chance that watashi uses the verbs «win» and «lose» more than once in the narration when she speaks of the end of the relationship between Sawaki and Kikunojo. Of course, the two ideas of losing and winning are referred to totally different aspects of life, since Hashimoto refers to an artistic one, and watashi to a sentimental one. But this creates an even greater critical effect of arguing something about Mishima through the character of Sawaki using a completely different context so that the effect is again ironic for the connoisseur.

It seems as if Mishima, by embracing a nationalistic and male-centered attitude, had betrayed the complicity which Enchi had felt from the beginning with him. That complicity was based on many common passions, as we said, but it was founded especially on the love for kabuki's eerie atmosphere. The fascination with evil coming out of kabuki, inextricable from its beauty, was for Enchi completely linked to its perversion, centered on the *onnagata* actor, who would be a real *onnagata* only by suggesting and arousing perversion itself, as we conjectured in chapter 1. For Enchi perhaps, this was the idea that Mishima betrayed most. The last exaltation of samurai moral values did not at all match the perverted beauty of kabuki.

Even if in Mishima's last vision kabuki was praised for its flower of evil, at the same time we could say that the evil itself in that last period was refused and hidden by Mishima, by emphasizing only beauty. In the same talk at the National Theatre, Mishima argued:

> In my very selfish way, I do love kabuki, but as a spectator and as a playwright, I want to love only the blossomed flower. My feeling is that I know there is something dusky at the other side of the flower, but I want to leave that dusk be, since it is an important fertilizer (Mishima 1988, p. 280).

The ideal of 'Man' dedicated to martial arts and loyal to the code of the samurai, which he had been aspiring to, in the last period, was a distant concept from the one of a «compound» of maleness and femaleness, as Enchi described the beauty of Utaemon.

2.3.4 Enchi's Intertextual Vengeance

As far as intertextuality with *Onnagata* and comparison with extratextual facts are concerned, another point must be underlined here. The above mentioned drama, inspired by Racine's *Phèdre*, which Kikunojō is forced to play as a *tachiyaku* in *Onnagata ichidai*, has a completely different plot from the real plot of the work *Fuyō no tsuyu Ōuchi jikki*, the only one that could be traced back to the play described in Enchi's work. The plot described has a cross-gender scene where the «princess changes into the young audacious samurai», which clearly recalls the plot of Mishima's story, where a brother pretends to be the sister and vice versa, inspired by *Torikaebaya Monogatari* とりかえばや物語, popular during the late Heian period (Enchi 1986, p. 41). It cannot be a coincidence that the plot in Enchi's work, instead of reflecting the real story performed by Utaemon, reflects the plot described in Mishima's work. In *Onnagata*, before the performance of the play inspired by *Torikaebaya Mongatari*, Kawasaki declares that he does not want to obstruct the «femininity» of Mangiku. Even when the brother who pretended to be the sister, manifests his biological sex in the last scene, the dramatist declares that he wants Mangiku to «play only the female role, even if the Counsellor's son will appear a little effeminate» (Mishima 1957b, p. 348). This is contrary to the attitude of Sawaki in *Onnagata ichidai*, who as we said, forces Kikunojō into playing the *tachiyaku* when the princess changes (or goes back) to the samurai role.

In my reading this is a straightforward and provocative reference to *Onnagata* on Enchi's part, as if to continue a forcedly interrupted dialogue with Mishima's works, by depicting a similar situation in a diametrical opposite way. In *Rokusei Nakamura Utaemon josetsu*, Mishima (1959, p. 390) argues in dichotomist terms that there are no times that make Utaemon shine like when he borrows all the «female forces», converting the «thoughtful» male aspects into «passion on the stage». The feminine aspect therefore does not co-exist with the masculine one, as in the case of Kikunojō, but the masculine is converted into the female principle, synonym of passion in an essentialist vision (p. 390).

Moreover, this confirms the idea expressed above that the *onnagata* in Mishima's vision did not have to be weak in order to appear feminine. Indeed it is clear that the character of Mangiku was inspired by Utaemon also for his femaleness, admired by *Onnagata*'s protagonist and by Mishima himself. Therefore it is likely that Mishima would hardly force his favorite *onnagata*, Utaemon, to play *tachiyaku* roles. It is true that in one of his essays written in 1951 on the actor, entitled like the actor's name at that time, «Shikan», 芝翫, Mishima suggests that the beloved *onnagata* could try to perform some *tachiyaku* roles, but he is very careful to add that it should be a specific role, to which Utaemon's decadent cruel beauty could add some modernity:

> If he feels like playing the *tachiyaku* role, instead of ending up in the wrong role like Hangan 判官or Katsuyori 勝頼, he might play a role like Goemon 五右衛門in *Yamamon* 山門 or Matsunaga Daizen 松永大膳 in *Kinkakuji* 金閣寺, where to the real cruel beauty, he might add a new modern meaning (Mishima 1951a, p. 430).

It is difficult to grasp completely the meaning of this affirmation, but Mishima seems to imply by these words that in the case where Utaemon played any *tachiyaku* role, it had to be a clever, evil character, rather than a heroic and strong one.

Anyway, as a matter of fact, Mishima never wrote, at least never published, any kabuki play for Utaemon where he was supposed to play the *onnagata* in a more masculine way or the *tachiyaku*, and therefore this fact of Sawaki forcing Kikunojō to enhance his *masurao*, crucial in the plot of this work, is clearly a fictional element.

The set of gender stereotypes linked to the concept of *masurao* is maybe the main point which Enchi aimed at attacking with her narration. In Mishima's vision, Utaemon was an exception to the tendency of the time to perform weak *onnagata* roles. Therefore, it seems to me that it would be too naïve to think that Enchi herself interpreted the *masurao* concept exalted by Mishima in his last period, as opposed to the role of the *onnagata* itself as *taoyame*. This is why it is evident that in *Onnagata ichidai* the insistence of Sawaki in enhancing Kikunojō's maleness in order to transform him into «that kind of *onnagata*, who enchants the male public as a male» is not likely to correspond to Mishima's real vision about Utaemon, but to Mishima's general ideal of homosexuality which refuses the supposedly weak essence of femininity.

My point here is that the insistence on linking the *masuraoburi* exaltation – operated by Mishima through his works and behavior in the last part of his life – to the loss of interest in kabuki is a simplification of Mishima's ideas through the character of Sawaki, in order to cast a critical light on Mishima's stance. It goes without saying that Enchi was the first to understand that the *masurao* was not the cause, but the effect of a whole set of ideologies which had caused Mishima to start his change of thought. Remaining on the focus of gender aspect, important for the consideration of the *onnagata*, the dichotomy maleness-femaleness was just an easy tool to trivialize Mishima's change of vision. Therefore an unreliable narrator, as found in chapter 1, is useful to link the two things.

Onnagata ichidai is much more readable as a dialogue with Yukio Mishima's *Onnagata*, than *Futaomote*, even though *Futaomote* should be more influenced by Mishima's work, at least because it was written earlier, therefore closer to the time when Mishima was still writing. My idea is that at the time Enchi wrote *Futaomote*, there was no intention of replying to Mishima's work, first because *Futaomote*'s model was not necessarily

Utaemon, and second but more importantly, because Mishima had not yet begun his ideological escape and was still alive.

It seems as though Mishima forced his own tastes in the last period in order to be coherent with his idealistic tendency, by trying to emphasize the samurai-likeness of traditional performing arts. As we saw above, in this period he preferred *bunraku* to kabuki, probably because it was less related to evil in the sense of abjection and impurity, one important aspect of kabuki, as stressed by Mishima himself.[2]

But Enchi did not accept this change, since the passion for kabuki she used to share with Mishima, was based on a similar attraction to the queer aspect of it, and therefore she felt betrayed. She replies with *Onnagata ichidai*, which conveys the 'queerness' of kabuki as strength, even if it is a dark strength. And Enchi replies to Mishima's shift of vision by intertextually quoting *Onnagata*, which, having been written when he was still fascinated by kabuki, in a way denies his personal last shift of vision. The femininity of the protagonist of *Onnagata* on the stage does not clash with his mature homosexuality, and a theatre like kabuki, even if giving space to emotions and psychological insight is not queer as synonym of weak. On the contrary, it is queer as a synonym of strong and fascinating.

I find it a complex but witty way to pay homage to the art of kabuki by depicting the life of an actor himself as a kabuki-like story, becoming grotesque and exaggerated at many crucial points. At the same time, this work in my reading is a posthumous unconventional gift to Mishima Yukio, because while lamenting his last act and his ideological stance, at the same time it focuses on the great influence he had in the world of kabuki and on his talent. As Saeki Shōichi (1987, p. 288) affirms speaking about Enchi, «it seems that the brightly clear-cut active behavior of Mishima was for her the target of an unfulfilled dream; even by opposing him, she never could throw her attachment to that tempting young hero image».

2.4 *Sotoba Komachi* versus «Sotoba Komachi»

After *Onnagata*, I would like to refer to another famous work by Mishima, *Sotoba Komachi*, which is a *pièce* published in 1956 in the collection of modern noh *Kindai nōgaku shū*. I am introducing this noh play here because it is intertextually connected to the novel *Komachi hensō* by Enchi Fumiko, which we will discuss in chapter 3.

In the afterword to his collection of modern noh, Mishima Yukio used the term «polemic» to define the tone of the medieval noh play «Sotoba

2 See also David Goodman (2010, pp. 229-247).

Komachi».[3] Presumably with this word «polemic» Mishima referred to the argumentative and slightly ironical tone of this play.

In this subchapter I will analyze how in their different narratives, Mishima and Enchi preserve and develop the «polemic», or in contemporary terms *deconstructive*, tone of the original noh. I will concentrate above all on the aspect of memory and on its connection with the perception of identity, since it is deeply linked to the topic of self-delusion, a theme of all three works. I will start by comparing the two noh plays, and then in chapter 3 I will present Enchi's literary interpretation of the figure of Komachi through an analysis of the novel *Komachi hensō*, published in 1965.

The plot of the original noh is as follows: on their way to the capital, a group of monks of Mount Kōya 高野山 come across an old beggar woman sitting on a wooden grave marker (*sotoba* 卒塔婆). They try to chase her away from the holy *stupa*, admonishing her with scriptures, but she reproaches them with even more learned quotations from scriptures and they are surprised. She reveals that she is Ono no Komachi 小野小町, the once beautiful and famous poetess. Suddenly she is seized by the ghost of Fukakusa 深草, the suitor who she had forced to visit her one hundred nights to gain her love. She reenacts his miserable visits and subsequent death, in a dance. The ghost finally leaves her, and she becomes calm once more, reaching nirvana (Koyama, Satō 1998, pp. 112-127).

The deconstructive action in the original «Sotoba Komachi» is developed first of all through the *mondō* 問答, the dialogical encounter between the main actor (*shite* シテ) in the role of the beggar Komachi, and the counterpart (*waki* ワキ), who is one of the monks. Komachi upsets the monks who scorned her for sitting on a holy *stupa*, demonstrating by means of rhetoric that sitting on the *stupa* is not a bad action in Buddhist terms, because of the concept of non-dualism which is at the center of Mahayana thought. This *mondō* is interpreted as the triumph of Zen Buddhism over esoteric Buddhism, which did not consider women able to enter nirvana, because of their karma. This non-duality of bad and good, is based on the idea of *gyakuen* 逆縁, which emphasizes the possibility of sinners to enter nirvana precisely thanks to their bad behavior. Although Zen Buddhism, too, had restrictions towards women, it is generally considered more egalitarian, as explained by noh scholar Wakita Haruko (2005, pp. 213-214). After listening to Komachi's wise utterance, the monks bow to her, apparently indicating that they have been defeated by the old woman's knowledge. But despite the theoretical superiority Komachi demonstrates, she has not yet gained enlightenment. Wakita's explanation is that the monks' bow is not an expression of admiration, but an ironical act in order to make fun

3 By «Sotoba Komachi» I mean the original play written by Kan'ami in fourteenth century, while the modern noh in this book is *Sotoba Komachi* (Mishima 2002).

of her. And perhaps this is also the reason why she needs to pass through a higher step of consciousness before reaching enlightenment (pp. 212-213). The scholar adds the motivation that Kan'ami 観阿弥 and Zeami 世阿弥, who respectively wrote and edited the text, were esteemed by society and could not express countervailing ideas. such as allowing a woman to enter nirvana without the intervention of the monks (p. 219).

After the *mondō*, Komachi is possessed by the spirit of Fukakusa 深草, her old lover. In her body, the spirit of Fukakusa manifests his longing, and reenacts the pain he suffered for her in life because of the promise she extracted from him to visit her for a hundred consecutive nights. Fukakusa died of exhaustion on the very last night before obtaining Komachi's love. By reenacting the memory of these painful visits in front of the monks, Fukakusa's spirit is liberated from the frustration of unrequited love, and Komachi is freed from her sense of guilt. As mentioned before, in the original noh, both Fukakusa's spirit and Komachi herself need the monks to rid themselves of their burden of attachment to the past. Compared to the strength of memory, Komachi's deep knowledge of Buddhist principles is of no use until she meets the monks.

In Mishima's rewriting of the play, the religious discussion that challenges the theoretical stereotypes of the monks is transformed into a dialogue between the beggar Komachi and a young and unskilled poet. The poet is infatuated with the heady atmosphere of the park where the play is set: couples embrace on benches, transported into another dimension by their romantic feelings. At the core of the dialogue between the poet and the beggar is the deconstruction by Komachi of his idealistic vision of life. She denies the value of intoxicating feelings like love, seen as an obstacle to understanding real life, and a delusion which ultimately leads to symbolical death. On the contrary, Komachi's cynical vision exalts the boredom of real life, which apparently keeps her «alive».

In «Notes on Sotoba Komachi» (*Sotoba Komachi oboegaki* 卒塔婆小町覚書) (1952b, p. 742), Mishima explains his «trivial thoughts» (as he puts it) on the opposing artistic visions of Komachi and the poet. Mishima thinks that every artist should go beyond «adolescence» and kill it, in order to reach in him/herself the eternal youth of Komachi's vision.

He enlarges on the explanation of his particular theory in another essay, «Notes on the performance of Sotoba Komachi», (*Sotoba Komachi enshutsu oboegaki* 卒塔婆小町演出覚書) (1953, p. 742) by explaining that the woman embodies a «being which has surpassed life, or metaphysical being», while the poet, who has a «romantic aspiration to tragedy», incarnates a «sensual being», and therefore, I shall argue, is destined to artistic death.

The young poet whom Komachi meets when she is ninety-nine is initially disgusted by her wretched appearance, but later in the play there is a sort of reenactment of her memory, where the poet takes the part of

Fukakusa. This scene is set in the middle of a ball in the Rokumeikan 鹿鳴館, the «Deer-Cry Pavilion» completed in 1883, but in reality everything is happening in the poet's mind. From that moment, in his sight, the Komachi in his arms is as fascinating as she was in her youth and he says she is «beautiful», although he knows the word will be fatal for him, as all men who said it before, then died.

Apparently, the old woman's realistic stance is stronger than the thought of her romantic male counterpart, since just before dying, the poet realizes painfully that for the sake of a fleeting instant of exhilaration, he will lose his life. Nevertheless, he decides to say that she is beautiful and consciously chooses death, just to live a full moment of intoxication. In my reading this is because this intoxication is what he has been looking for, it is in a way his *raison d'être* and he cannot hold back.

But the poet is not the only victim of self-deception. In the modern version, Komachi struggles to make the poet wake up from the illusion of his romantic vision of life, but her words are inconsistent with her own behavior. In my reading, the fact that the old Komachi re-enacts her personal memory with the poet, even if she knows that it will be fatal for him, is because the will to keep her own identity is stronger. Moreover, Komachi argues that there is no other meaning in life apart from living itself, therefore she seems to be free from any preconception or link to the past, but she cannot consider the discomfort of not recognizing herself as a beauty. It is evident that she is perfectly aware of her present physical aspect, since she invokes her wrinkles and her bad smell to make the poet desist from saying the fatal words. On the other hand, she arrives at the point of describing herself with the oxymoron «ugly beautiful woman» (*minikui bijin* 醜い美人), just because she does not want to find another identity for herself after losing her charm (Mishima 1956, p. 94). The poet, before entering the trance which will lead him to say that she is beautiful, takes for granted that the old Komachi is ugly because she is ninety-nine years old. Komachi replies to that provocation, and there follows a crucial dialogue:

> Old woman: […] idiots like you think that no matter how beautiful, any woman after growing old becomes ugly. Ahaha! It's a big mistake! Beautiful women remain always beautiful! If you think I am ugly now, it is because I am just an ugly beautiful woman. I have always been told that I am good looking, it has been seventy-eight years already. I can't be bothered (*kotomendō* 事面倒) thinking that I am not beautiful, or even thinking that I am something other than a beautiful woman.
>
> Young poet (aside): oh, no! It must be a big burden for women when once they were a beauty. (Speaking to the woman): I understand that. Even men, once they have been to war, speak all their lives of the memories of war. Of course, you must have been beautiful…

> Old woman (stamping her feet): It's not that I «have been»! I *am* still beautiful! [emphasis mine]
> Young poet: Well, then tell me your past stories. Maybe eighty years ago or ninety (counting with his fingers). No, please tell me about eighty years ago (p. 94).

With these words the poet's journey into Komachi's past starts. In the same way that the poet is enticed into her past by the charm of intoxication, Komachi is driven by the will to keep her glorious memory alive, effect of a mix of gender and age stereotypes together. The close connection between women and beauty as identity is indeed the result of the common acceptance of the fact that the woman is the passive object of the male gaze, and therefore her own identity is based on the male point of view, whose preference is for beautiful and young women. Moreover, the interconnection of gender and age here comes to the fore, since aging for a woman means losing beauty, which is connected to losing desirability, therefore her 'womanliness'. In a seminal article published in *Saturday Review* in 1972, Susan Sontag (1972, pp. 31-32) explains very clearly how the «double standard of aging» is what makes ageing for women much more painful than for men.

> A man, even an ugly man, can remain eligible well into old age. He is an acceptable mate for a young, attractive woman. Women, even good-looking women, become ineligible (except as partners of vey old men) at a much younger age. Thus, for most women, aging means a humiliating process of gradual sexual disqualification. […] What makes men desirable to women is by no means tied to youth. On the contrary, getting old tends (for several decades) to operate in men's favor, since their value as lovers and husbands is set more by what they do than how they look.

Komachi, by losing her identity as beauty, loses at the same time her identity of woman as object of desire, and she cannot cope with such a great change. Her self-deceptive attitude recalls the need of modern man to create the *lieux de mémoire* theorized by Pierre Nora, which is provoked by the «will to remember». Nora explains:

> The moment of *lieux de mémoire* occurs at the same time that an immense and intimate fund of memory disappears, surviving only as a reconstituted object beneath the gaze of critical history. […] These *lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it. They make their appearance by virtue of the deritualization of our world producing, manifesting, establishing, constructing, decreeing, and maintaining by

> artifice and by will a society deeply absorbed in its own transformation and renewal, one that inherently values the new over the ancient, the young over the old, the future over the past. Museums, archives, cemeteries, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, fraternal orders – these are the boundary stones of another age, illusions of eternity (Nora 1989, pp. 11-12).

As a reconstituted object, the *lieux de mémoire* have the feature of being adaptable, depending on the necessity of memory itself. Nora explains: «*lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications» (p. 19).

The comparison by the poet of Komachi's memory with the stories tirelessly told by men who have survived war in *Sotoba komachi* is meaningful, because it clarifies the fact that it is a memory based on a historically finished situation, but that still has a strong personal impact on the construction of subjectivity. Nora explains that: «The transformation of memory implies a decisive shift from the historical to the psychological, from the social to the individual, from the objective message to its subjective reception, from repetition to rememoration» (p. 15).

Similarly, Komachi adapts her own *lieu de mémoire*, not by simply saying that she is a beauty, but an *ugly* beauty, creating an illusion of reality through this oxymoron. But ultimately, this ironically only confirms the need of every human being for a fixed core identity. I would argue that what the old woman apparently despises and denies throughout the whole play – the necessity for delusion – is finally seen as intrinsic to human nature.

Since as Hewitt (1989, p. 153) argues, the feeling of continuity is fundamental for identity, the concept of successful ageing, born in the 1980s among the so called 'new gerontologists' as a method to subvert stereotypes of age as decline and weakness, is based on the idea of considering as positive whatever allows the person not to change their activities and lifestyle despite ageing.[4] For example, maintaining an active social life or keeping fit are the central tenets of this concept. In the end, even if she is not good-looking or sociable or fit, Komachi in Mishima's work shows a similar attitude to that of the successful ageing movement in the fact that with her own definition of «ugly beauty» she tries to find a way, even if illusory, not to change identity with age, to prove to herself that «beautiful women remain always beautiful».

Critical gerontology and the latest theories of ageing argue that on the contrary to successful ageing principles, the idea of positivity is not useful

4 For a critique of 'successful ageing', see for example Neal King and Toni Clasanti (2006, pp. 139-157).

to overcome the stereotypes linked to age. Trying to hide or minimize the changes which are an inevitable part of ageing, does not help to face it positively. Linn Sandberg (2011, p. 51), a scholar specializing in age and gender relations, explains that what critical gerontology seeks is rather the «conceptualization and acceptance of old age in all its diversity, from active to sedentary, from sexually vibrant to sexually indifferent.»

The subtle irony which pervades the whole narrative of *Sotoba komachi* preserves the tone that emerges from the *mondō* in the original play and effectively conveys the inconsistency of human behavior at the base of Mishima's play.

In the possession scene of the original play, for both Fukakusa and Komachi memory becomes a means of salvation from delusion through Buddhist faith. By contrast, in the modern play, for both characters memory becomes a source of self-delusion, the only way to find the strength to continue with a boring life.

Another important aspect to consider while speaking of memory is time. Noh, being distant from the Aristotelian dramatic unities, uses memory to explain past events, in the same way as novels use flashback. Kunio Konparu calls this technique «reversed time» and Mishima Yukio himself writes that the «drama» (*gekitekina mono* 劇的なもの) in noh finishes before noh starts (Mishima 1957a, p. 460). This is exactly what happens in «Sotoba Komachi», where in the possession scene the memory of Fukakusa is acted out in Komachi's body. Konparu (1983, p. 61) declares that this phenomenal noh is the reenactment of an experience from the past in the form of reversal of self and other. He argues that in general possession scenes in noh provoke a phenomenon of «split time» when two characters live in two different dramatic times (past and present), even if they are speaking from the same mouth (pp. 87-88).

As for the original «Sotoba Komachi» play, I would suggest that the dramatic time of the possession scene is blurred rather than split. Together with the memory which becomes one, mingling the painful past of Fukakusa, and the miserable present of Komachi, – as Peter Thornton (2003, p. 224) explains – the binary division of female-male gender and of subject-object mingles in one.

At the same time, in the reenactment of the hundred nights, we have not only «condensed time» during the act of recollection shared by both the characters and provoked by possession, but also «shift of space» (in the eternal wandering to Komachi's house) accompanying Fukakusa-Komachi's inner space perception.

In Mishima's modern *Sotoba Komachi* too, even if *in lieu* of possession the reversion of time is due to the capacity for self-illusion of the male protagonist, the perception of memory is fundamental in order to develop the story and create the character of Komachi. The first part of the play, when Komachi is still seen by the poet as an old beggar, is set in the space

and time of reality – the park – and is shared by the two characters. The second part starts when Komachi begins narrating her past to the poet and they pretend to be dancing at a ball in the Rokumeikan. While Komachi can remember her own personal facts without blurring the glorious past and the miserable present, the poet confuses her narration of the past with the present. Here the time and space perceptions of the two characters are divided; seen from the poet's point of view, the second part is set in the space and time of Komachi's memory – the Rokumeikan – while Komachi's point of view is still focused on time and space of the present. Following the instructions in the libretto by Mishima, the ball at the Rokumeikan is materially set in the same scenario as the park, with the exception of the backcloth, and the appearance of the beggar remains the same, also when she is in the arms of the poet. In this way, the audience can see both the internal times and spaces of the two characters represented on the stage, while the gap between the two perceptions emerges. The young man is «intoxicated» and romantic, whereas the old woman appears lucid and cynical. The reenactment of the past is not only a means to operate a flashback, but it is above all a way to emphasize the contrast in perceptions of reality between the characters, as they differ in gender and age.

2.5 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have considered several works by Mishima and Enchi which in my view are closely connected. I have shown that in *Onnagata ichidai* the connection to Mishima's figure took many forms, but ended showing the same critical point. The intertextuality with Mishima's *Onnagata* results in a virtual discussion of the vision of the connection between gender and sexuality in the *onnagata*, through the figure of Utaemon rendered in a fictional context. The two visions that are foregrounded, though different, share a common fascination mingled with a sense of defiance towards the androgynous or perverted beauty of the *onnagata* performance. In *Onnagata ichidai*, the gender acts onstage and those offstage are connected and influence each other, while in *Onnagata* they do not. The point is that, due to this split between gender and sexuality onstage and offstage, in *Onnagata* only the defiance is stressed in the end, whereas in *Onnagata ichidai* the feeling emerging ultimately is fascination. In my reading, this difference is the main point of criticism towards Mishima's stance that Enchi indirectly conveys through her text. The feeling of defiance, indeed, is what Enchi and the first Mishima both exalted as a positive feature of kabuki, being the basis of beauty in this theatrical art. What Enchi shows even more clearly through the character of Sawaki, is the change of vision of her colleague, which after embracing an extreme ideological stance, starts refusing the beauty of kabuki's perversion.

As for *Sotoba Komachi* and *Komachi hensō* which we will analyze in chapter 3, I shall concentrate on their connection, because despite the clear differences between narration in drama and in fiction, these two modern works are similar in their depiction of the human will to self-deception, traceable to the delusion of worldly passions in the Buddhist tones of the original play, as we shall see. I anticipate here that if in *Onnagata ichidai* the main intent is critical, in my reading the intertextuality with Mishima's work in *Komachi hensō* 小町変相 (Transformations of Ono no Komachi), is not. Enchi takes inspiration from the figures of the old Komachi and the young poet that Mishima skilfully created in his modern noh, in order to deepen the insight into the process of ageing and its consequences for the perception of the self.

Even though, as we will see, the problem of ageism linked to social changes in Japan started to be acknowledged in the 1980s, surely the identity crisis personally felt by people as they age is not an issue which began that period; rather, it is one of the main human anxieties that has existed since time immemorial. Enchi has always been very sensitive to this problem, but we shall see that depending on the work and the period in which she was writing, she gave a totally different nuance to ageing, becoming much more positive towards the end of her life, as we shall see in chapter 3.

3 *Komachi Hensō* and *Kikujidō* Ageing Between Self-delusion and Passion

Summary 3.1 Introduction. – 3.2 Komachi's Legend as *Lieu de Mémoire*. – 3.2.1 Dangerous Alliances and «Komachi shiken». – 3.2.2 Reiko as a Transformed Komachi. – 3.2.3 Reiko and Shigaraki's Gendered Perception of Age. – 1.2.4 Mishima' s Heritage. – 3.3 *Kikujidō*. – 3.3.1 Love versus Gender and Age Trouble. – 3.3.2 The Beauty of Perversion versus the Beauty of Androgyny. – 3.3.3 Queer and Old Age Abjections Allied. – 3.3.4 Passion as Path to Enlightenment versus Attachment. – 3.3.5 *Ran'i*, the Art which Leads back to Youth. – 3.3.6 *Kikujidō*: Empowering Senility versus Successful Ageing. – 3.4 Concluding remarks.

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will take into consideration two works by Enchi which are focused on the theme of ageing. One is *Komachi hensō* (Enchi 1965a), published in 1965 in the magazine *Gunzō* 群像, and the other is *Kikujidō* 菊慈童 (Enchi 1984), the last complete long work of fiction by Enchi Fumiko.[1] It was serialized for the first time between January 1982 and December 1983 in the literary magazine Shinchō 新潮, and was published in book form in 1984 by the same publishing house.

In *Komachi hensō* the protagonist is not the historical Komachi, but a beautiful, mature actress, Reiko, who is often compared to Komachi in the narrative. She is selected to perform Komachi's role in a modern play written by her old admirer and playwright Shigaraki. He had always been in love with Reiko, but since she refused him in their youth, he moved far away and ended up marrying a woman he did not love. For all those years, he thought of Reiko and built around her an idealized image, which gave him the strength to live a life he disliked. When he is asked in old age to write a play for Reiko, he is afraid that by meeting her that image of an «artisticized Reiko» (*geijutsuka sareta Reiko* 芸術化された麗子) will be shattered (1965a, p. 67). When they meet, his idea of a «sterile»

1 The term here has different meanings, depending on the choice of the character and on the use of inverted commas. With «Kikujidō» I mean the work by Enchi Fumiko analyzed in this chapter. «Kikujidō» is the title of the noh play at the center of the work. And Kikujidō refers to the figure of eternal youth, the protagonist of the Chinese legend which inspired the noh play.

and sexless Reiko is dismantled in Shigaraki's mind, because Reiko has a young lover, Natsuhiko 夏彦, who is Shigaraki's disciple. The story ends with Reiko stoically performing the Komachi role Shigaraki has written for her, while knowing that the late-stage uterine cancer she has will kill her just after the performance. The narrative perspective shifts between Reiko, Natsuhiko, and Shigaraki, so that the reader comes to understand the mind of each protagonist and to compare the different visions.

The title of *Kikujidō* is inspired by a Chinese legend centered on the figure of a *chigo* 稚児 that was adapted in Japan for the noh stage. The *chigo* were young boys who in the past fulfilled the role of servant and lover of a powerful man. Kikujidō was the favourite of Emperor Zhou 周, but he has been sent to the mountains for having slighted his master. During his exile, he drinks the dewdrops falling from a chrysanthemum which had touched the words of a sutra which had been given to him. For this reason, the dewdrops are imbued with a supernatural power, becoming the elixir of life.

This work is not one of the most popular among Enchi's writings, but nevertheless it is fundamental to understanding the particular vision of the world of performing arts emerging from her works. By analysing the artistic perception of the different characters from the point of view of gender and ageing studies, I shall attempt to illuminate the overall vision of the relation between art and life foregrounded in *Kikujidō*. The presence of a stereotyped conception of gender and sexuality clearly coexists in this work with an evident dissatisfaction with the dominant system of thought, especially the ageist approach to old age.

First I will analyze the intertextuality of *Komachi hensō* with Mishima's play *Sotoba Komachi* which was at the centre of chapter 2. Then I will compare the vision of age emerging in it to the one foregrounded in *Kikujidō*.

3.2 Komachi's Legend as *Lieu de Mémoire*

In Enchi's *Komachi hensō*, there is an essay intertwined in the narration about the figure of Komachi, entitled «A Personal Vision of Komachi» (*Komachi shiken* 小町私見). At the end of *Komachi hensō*, Enchi writes that for the image of Komachi, she borrowed many ideas from an existing book by Maeda Yoshiko 前田善子 entitled *Ono no Komachi* (Maeda 1943). In fact, comparing the essay and the work by Maeda, one can notice many common points. In this essay and also in another almost identical article which she published as a critical work ten years later, Enchi (1977) provides evidence of the process of construction in Komachi's image.

As Noguchi Hiroko (2000) observes, the stress on the fact that the canon is male-centered and that the stereotype around Komachi has been created from a gender-based point of view, is specific to Enchi's theory, even if the main points are taken from Maeda's study. By comparing the core of

the essay «Chronicles of Nonomiya» (Nonomiya ki 野々宮記) at the center of the famous work *Onnamen* (Enchi 1958), and the core of «Komachi shiken», it is easy to find similarities, which are indeed at the base of the personal theory added to Maeda's. The device, used in both *Onnamen* and *Komachi hensō*, of intertwining in her fiction an essay with her own ideas is a skillful way by which Enchi revisits characters of the past and gives them a new reading in the light of modern sociological and psychological issues.. Suganami Toshiko (1998, pp. 159-160) is the first to compare the two essays, and demonstrates that in both *Onnamen* and *Komachi hensō* the basic idea around the «dangerous woman» myth is the same.

Here I borrow the expression «dangerous woman» from Nina Cornyetz (1998), who wrote extensively about the modern and contemporary transformation of the *femme fatale*-like archetype of Japanese tradition born out of men's fear of the independence and power of self-expression of women. In this inspiring book she dedicates a chapter to Enchi Fumiko's works, especially focusing on the concept of female karma originating in medieval Buddhism and skillfully re-elaborated in *Onnamen*.

«Komachi shiken» is based on the analysis of various texts written by Ono no Komachi herself, or centered on her figure, such as the noh play «Sotoba Komachi» analyzed in the second chapter. It demonstrates that even if all the stereotypes of Komachi's character are negative, they are all different and sometimes contrasting, depending on which text is analyzed. They were created by men out of both fear of and longing for women who choose a role different from the one they were supposed to, such as to marry or to have children.

Here the link between the archetype of Komachi, created by the canon throughout the centuries, and the character of Reiko becomes clear. Reiko, too, chose a life without a partner, renouncing for the sake of her career the man she loved, who ultimately married another actress who left the stage for him. The fact that Reiko, often compared to «sterile» Komachi in the narration, renounces her private life because of the obligations that marriage implied – and still implies in Japan – for a woman, adds a modern touch to the analysis of the myth of the dangerous woman.

At the end of the essay, as further proof of her theory of the creation of the Komachi myth, the author describes the impressions she had visiting two main temples (Zuishin-in 随心院 and Komachidera 小町寺) supposedly connected to Komachi's life. The author argues that they are unlikely to have really been involved in Komachi's life, and implies that the monuments dedicated to her were built in later years (Enchi 1965a, pp 48-49). At those sites, the inconsistency of the various images of Komachi comes to the fore and underlines the «capacity of metamorphosis» of the memory around her character, which Pierre Nora identified as prerogative of every *lieu de mémoire*. In chapter 2, I mentioned this concept in relation to Komachi's figure emerging from Mishima's modern noh *Sotoba Komachi*.

It is precisely the fact that no certain history is at the base of the image of Komachi, but only her poems, that the legends around her have developed. At the beginning of his article Nora tries to explain the difference between history and memory that characterizes modern times:

> Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, born by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer (Nora 1989, p. 8).

Even if later in the article Nora himself calls into doubt the existence of a pure history, and underlines the difficulty of separating history from memory, the temples visited by the narrator are clearly distinct from what Nora defines *milieux de mémoire*, or archaeological locations, real environments of memory which are significant without being preserved on the basis of a «will to remember» (pp. 7, 19-21). They are, on the contrary, places which preserve the myth of Komachi born out of the lack of actual historical places linked to her character.

3.2.1 Dangerous Alliances and «Komachi shiken»

The author of «Komachi shiken», the essay central to *Komachi hensō*, is not explicitly revealed throughout the work. We only know that the author's pen name is Morinari Atsuko 森成敦子, and that it was published in the magazine *Ōchō* 王朝. The mystery around the identity of the author opens many possible interpretations, since the meaning of the article itself inside the work changes completely, depending on who supposedly wrote the article.

What we know from the text is the declaration of Shigaraki that it is a «collaboration between my wife and myself» (*boku to tsuma no gassaku* 僕と妻の合作). Shigaraki confessed that he «added the last part» (*oshimai no tokoro ha boku ga kakikuwaeta no da* お終いのところは僕が書き加えたのだ) (Enchi 1965a, p. 83). But in the first version of the novel, published in the magazine *Gunzō*, while this sentence appears, the previous one on the collaboration does not (1965b, p. 90). This is a clear sign that the idea of a collaboration was not present in Enchi's original conception of the novel, therefore the interpretation that in reality the essay was written by the wife of Shigaraki and he just added the last sentence, is plausible. Moreover, the very last sentence is not in line with the apologetic tone of the rest of the essay, and sounds very much like a forced justification by

a man for the critical tone of the essay. It is very possible that Shigaraki, before publishing it, decided to add a sentence in order not to admit his own errors to the public. The sentence is: «In the end if you wonder why as a woman, I have this kind of attachment to the figure of Komachi, the answer is that it seems that I have the same blood of Komachi in my veins, having inside of me the same sterility».

Despite the belief of many critics such as Nogami Hiroko; that the essay is mostly or entirely written by Shigaraki, in my understanding this essay is entirely written by Shigaraki's wife as a way to explain to herself and the others how much male fantasies and the tendency to idealization can be hurtful to women. This interpretation affords us deeper insight into this gendered vision, through the correspondence to the theory emerging from *Onnamen*, as mentioned above.

At the heart of the novel *Onnamen*, which is generally regarded as one of Enchi's most representative works, there is the essay «Nonomiya ki» that analyzes the phenomenon of spirit possession in *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, eleventh century) (Tyler 2002), which depicts life at court through the amorous adventures of the protagonist Genji.

The essay in *Onnamen* stresses male responsibility for the vengeance of Genji's lover Lady Rokujō's 'living spirit' (*ikiryō* 生霊) towards Genji's wife Aoi.[2] Despite the male-centered canonical interpretation of female jealousy and *karma*, Aoi's possession by the living spirit of Rokujō is seen as a possible effect of an unconscious reaction resulting from her suppression of a strong ego in an androcentric society. This is depicted indeed as the consequence of female karma, but in *Onnamen* it functions as a sort of female alliance between the possessor and the possessed: «an obsession that becomes an endless river of blood, flowing on from generation to generation» (Enchi 1983, p. 127). This definition ultimately confirms the stereotype of the dangerous woman, but it gives a sense of rebellion towards male subjugation to the spirit possession.[3]

Many critics have not interpreted the sentence of Shigaraki – that «Komachi shiken» is a creation of himself and his wife together – as truthful. Without taking into consideration the above intertextual context, the wife of Shigaraki, as a woman whose husband was never in love with

2 In the literary works of the Heian period (794-1185 A.D.) it was common to depict the spirit of a living person (*ikiryō*) which would unconsciously leave his/her body driven by will of self-expression or repressed anger and possess the rival's body. See Doris G. Bargen, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in The Tale of Genji*. University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.

3 *Onnamen* became so popular that even if after publishing it Enchi attempted to distance herself from the concept of «female evil», she could never really shake off that reputation from her works. Despite her frequent assertions of the fact that she did not like her works to be considered expressions of «female karma», I make bold to use this concept here, in the hope that the reader will understand later in the text that the female image in Enchi's works is various and multifaceted, far from being the sole expression of evil.

her because of his love for Reiko, was indeed supposed to have been jealous of her counterpart and therefore not supportive of her image. Natsuhiko, Shigaraki's disciple and Reiko's young lover, notices that the wife of Shigaraki, who is married and has children, is not the embodiment of sterility. Therefore she should not have been writing a justification for Komachi, who is the archetype of the independent and dangerous woman (Enchi 1965a, p. 83).

In my view, the attitude of Shigaraki's wife, in writing an essay in defense of Komachi and indirectly of Rieko herself, is consistent with concept of female alliance outlined above. Even though Shigaraki's wife is the victim of his negligence, at the same time she recognizes that it is not Reiko's fault that Shigaraki does not love her. She goes a step further, and by analyzing the canonization of the Komachi archetype, she shows the process of the idealization by men of women in the time, and therefore she also finds indirectly an explanation of the problems of her husband's married life, which is the idealization of Reiko.

Shigaraki, by reading his wife's theories on the figure of Komachi, understands and becomes conscious of his own process of idealization. On the basis of this new awareness, he intentionally writes the play «Komachi hensō,» which ultimately creates an even worse image of Komachi than the the canonical one: in his hands, she becomes a woman who cannot achieve salvation.

3.2.2 Reiko as a Transformed Komachi

Returning to Shigaraki's character, when meeting Reiko after many years and therefore breaking his ideal of a sterile and sexless woman, Shigaraki is obliged to create another ideal in himself in order to write the play.

Before meeting with Reiko in old age, Shigaraki had consciously idealized her image for dozens of years in order to survive the severe environment of Hokkaidō and life with a woman he did not love, his wife. As rightly supposed by Natsuhiko, that image was based on the fact that Reiko had undergone an operation for uterine cancer and therefore was easily idealized «because she is not a woman» (p. 67). In Shigaraki's words, that image of Reiko was an «illusion that I have created myself» (*boku jishin no tsukuriageta maboroshi* 僕自身のつくり上げた幻) (p. 66).

After that encounter which «cancelled the artisticized Reiko», during which Shigaraki is forced to see the real Reiko, who is moreover sexually active with Natsuhiko, he looks for the sexual aspect of femininity which he had avoided in all those years of illusion. Shigaraki goes to watch some striptease performances as well as natural phenomena like waterfalls, which he considers the highest expression of femininity, as a symbol of eternal motherhood and female sexuality at the same time. The play

which Shigaraki writes on the base of this new image of Komachi-Reiko is entitled «Komachi hensō» (Transformations of Komachi) and gives the title to Enchi's work.

In the end Shigaraki dies before seeing his play performed, but he leaves this world satisfied, having consciously deceived himself with a newly constructed image of Reiko in his mind, and acting like the male critics, who in past centuries shaped Komachi's figure to suit their own purposes. This awareness he has of his tendency to idealize Reiko, probably gained through the essay written by his unhappy wife, does not prevent him from continuing to idealize Reiko. On the contrary, by doing this consciously, he admits his frailty and the fact that without an ideal female image he cannot live.

This new image he creates is completely different from the one he had before, which gave him the strength to live his life until he met her again. While the previous image was of a sexless woman, this time he takes inspiration from the relationship Reiko has with Natsuhiko, and in voyeur style, while imagining their intercourse, he creates a new sexually active image of Reiko. And yet, while taking inspiration from reality, this is again a *lieu de mèmoire*, a memory which changes according to what we want to remember, embodied in the figure of Komachi in the play «Komachi hensō» he writes before dying. Shigaraki explains that this time he wants to depict «the karma of a woman who cannot achieve salvation» (Enchi 1977-1978, p. 72). It is even more derogatory than the vision of Komachi coming out of «Sotoba Komachi,» for example, since the possibility of salvation is denied her even after the encounter with the monks.

Natsuhiko explains that he had felt the gaze of the «eyes full of eye discharge» of Shigaraki while being with Reiko (p. 73). The gaze here assumes the features of a metaphoric control of man over woman in an effort of idealization. With the term «gaze» I mean the concept which spread in the field of cinema in the 1970s among feminist thinkers like Laura Mulvey (1975) and has been discussed by many scholars and critics from various fields. The act of looking at the «Other» to objectify and subjugate him/her has been theorized as «masculine» in the first place, and has never been really questioned by later thinkers (Mulvey 1975). Indeed it is still mainly seen as an act of domination of the subject to the object of the gaze, regardless of the biological sex of the subject of the scopic action.

If in the above theory the gaze is the embodiment of male subjugation of women, here it is more the attempt to compensate for an unrequited love. It is more the sign of the frailty of man, instead of the force. Shigaraki is not trying to conquer Reiko's heart, he is simply resigned to her refusal in reality, therefore he lives in the illusion of having her heart, and to support this illusion he imposes his 'stalking' gaze on her and eventually on Natsuhiko.

3.2.3 Reiko and Shigaraki's Gendered Perception of Age

Reiko is perfectly conscious of the limits that patriarchal society and sickness impose on her, and despite – and thanks to – them she succeeds in going on with her life productively until the end, even at the cost of renouncing her private happiness. Shigaraki, however, instead of acknowledging reality, creates for himself a dream-like world with Reiko's idealized image at its center.

Reiko and Shigaraki's artistic and life visions differ as do the ways they deal with memory, which affects their perception of age. This is made clear by the fact that Shigaraki, who interiorizes a kind of positive ageism, not only accepts the tendency of old age to blur «the things one experiences in life and the things one's mind makes up», but even encourages it, trying to recall sexual intercourse between him and Reiko which never happened (Enchi 1965a, p. 80).

The ageism exploited and self-inflicted by the male protagonist is in contrast to the woman's attitude: she fights against age and weak health in order to perform until the end. Nevertheless, if the self-illusion of Shigaraki recalls the quest for intoxication of the poet in Mishima's *Sotoba Komachi*, the attitude of Reiko, who is taking refuge in her art from the pain of real life, is also similar to the apparent lucidity of old Komachi, hiding a strong desire to protect her identity as a beauty.

After having an affair in old age with Natsuhiko – the son of her former lover – Reiko comes to understand the illusionary nature of all the emotions she felt on the stage while she was in that relationship. However, she overcomes this feeling when she breaks up with Natsuhiko and just before her performance of the play written by Shigaraki, she reverts to the refuge of her art, declaring:

> «I have things left to do much more important than affairs between men and women. After starting the relationship with him, I felt myself to be inferior, a feeling that I had never had before and my heart was tainted by this… During those one or two months, on the stage I was like a skeleton dancing in a cemetery, but finally this week I have reached a point of resolution…» (p. 111).

In Reiko's mind, this image of the skeleton is a metaphor for illusion, but she deceives herself so well that she attributes the illusion of the stage to her love affair, not to the fictional nature of theater itself. Reiko takes the cynicism of the Komachi of Mishima's play to its extreme: renouncing life for Reiko means believing that the reality on the stage is more real than life off the stage.

It goes without saying that the discomfort felt by Reiko is partly due to the mingling of sexism and ageism which are often at the base of the

socially constructed stereotypes towards the kind of love relationship she has enjoyed. A couple consisting of an older man and a younger woman is more acceptable in terms of heteronormative thought, because it is believed that men are sexually active until later age, thanks to their reproductive capacity. When the woman is older than the man and therefore not capable of reproduction, the love relationship is stigmatized. Nevertheless, the sense of inferiority Reiko felt in having an affair with a much younger man was caused by Reiko herself. Before starting the relationship with Natsuhiko, Reiko asks him: «Can you please make me feel like a woman again? I want to meet one more time the part of your father you have in yourself.» And later on, when Natsuhiko hugs her, she asks: «Does it feel creepy?» (Enchi 1977-1978, p. 60).

It is evident from these words that she herself is not sure of her sex appeal, and that she does not consider the possibility that Natsuhiko could be attracted by her despite the difference in their ages. Moreover, the idea that sex with a young man can make her «feel like a woman again» perfectly matches the conventional ageist and sexist view of old women as sexually unattractive, and recalls the concept of sexual activity as part of the successful ageing agenda. Because of the interiorization of ageism, her feelings towards Natsuhiko remain ambivalent from the beginning of the relationship. Reiko, before ending the relationship, thinks:

> «For what reason am I performing on a stage, casting myself in the forms of an art which idealizes real feelings, moving, shouting, crying? Why should I give myself to a much younger man whom I don't love, why should I have to wait for him until I dry up, hating him all the while?» Reiko, who was asking herself these kinds of questions without answer, was naturally losing the expressivity of her performance (Enchi 1977-1978, p. 93).

On the other hand, Natsuhiko seems perfectly willing to have this relationship with her, and despite his young age he thinks that «trees are beautiful, and humans could become beautiful as trees when they age» (p. 73). After Reiko refuses to continue the relationship with him, Natsuhiko ponders the relation that has just ended. The attraction he felt for Reiko, defined with expressions which indicate a strong amorous passion such as «mad» (s*uikyō*), becomes clear (Enchi 1977-1978, p. 100). Natsuhiko even thinks that «he probably would never taste again in life a density of feeling like the one felt in the relation with Reiko, and he wanted to immerse himself avidly in the eerie delicious taste of the climax of obsolescence» (p. 102).

In the other work, I will soon analyze, *Kikujidō*, Enchi depicts the affair between an elderly woman and a young man in a totally different manner. As we shall see, the relationship between the old Seki and Nojima, is the only positive example of love between two persons in the work.

If Reiko could have fought the interiorization of ageism which ultimately

led to their separation, probably she would have died as happily as Seki in *Kikujidō*, surrounded by Natsuhiko's warmth. But she chose to deny love, which was making her face the reality of age and bodily frailty, in order to continue until the end to create for herself an unchanging image of success and beauty as an actress on the illusionary space of the stage.

3.2.4 Mishima' s Heritage

Ultimately, then, Reiko is not very different from Shigaraki, consciously blurring reality and fantasy, nor from the intoxicated poet, nor from the ugly beautiful woman, Komachi. All of them, depending on their gender and age, attempt in different ways to avoid seeing reality

In *Komachi hensō* the concept of self-delusion inherent in every human being, which is connected to memory in both Mishima and Enchi's works, is deeply pursued and made more concrete. It is shown how not only personal, but also collective memory, like the one created by the canon, can often be substituted for reality, especially when reality is unknown, such as with the figure of Ono no Komachi.

I chose to tackle two different works like the modern noh play *Sotoba Komachi* by Mishima and the novel by Enchi, *Komachi hensō* because despite the clear differences between narration in drama and in fiction, I find these two modern works similar in their depiction of the human tendency to self-deception, traceable to the delusion of worldly passions in the Buddhist tones of the original play. The Buddhist idea of attachment in «Sotoba Komachi», which is overcome by the blurring of Komachi and Fukakusa's identity and the trip into memory during the possession scene, in the modern noh by Mishima becomes attachment to identity for Komachi and self-deception in the poet which on the contrary, memory enhances. In Enchi's re-elaboration, the same attachment to identity and self-delusion is shown through the creation of a *lieu de memoire* around the image of Ono no Komachi.

Fluidity of identity is at the centre of noh, thanks to the Zen principles at the base of the art. Lamarque (1989, pp. 165-166), introducing the «dissolution of personality» in noh argues: «there is a widely held view in Buddhism, the *Anatta* docrine, which rejects any enduring «self» over and above the flow of consciousness; and, more radically, a view in Zen Buddhism which seems even to reject the condition of coherence.» In the re-elaborations of the original play, the dissolution of personality does not occur, but by revealing the necessity for human beings to recognize identity, the ultimate effect is to deconstruct the concept of identity itself.

3.3 *Kikujidō*

In *Kikujidō* the narration is mostly focused on the dialogue between a few characters who are part of the artistic environment of noh, literature and painting. All of them are waiting for the noh performance of the play «Kikujidō», by the actor and protagonist of the novel Yūsen 遊仙, who has been engaged by Tamae 珠江, a woman who manages an art gallery. In exchange for the performance, Tamae has promised Yūsen the painting made by his former disciple Shūji 修二, whom the old actor had forced many years before to a kind of master-*chigo* relationship. Shūji, traumatized by the homosexual relationship with the old man, left the world of noh, escaping abroad and becoming a painter. Yūsen accepts to perform «Kikujidō» because he sees in a painting of peonies made by Shūji a representation of the past relationship between the young Shūji and himself, which he still remembers with nostalgia. Tamae is willing to give him the painting if he performs «Kikujidō», because Ōmiya 大宮, a former noh actor, wants to see the magic atmosphere created by the actor performance depicted in a painting, in an attempt to keep it forever. Ōmiya owns the painting, so he is the one who proposed the exchange via Tamae. Yūsen, while still loving Shūji within himself, in later years was the master of a young aspiring *onnagata*, Shijaku 紫若. Yūsen at the time wanted to create a relationship as he had with Shūji before he went abroad, but Shijaku was warned by Shūji himself, and escaped to India before being corrupted. The story ends when Yūsen performs «Kikujidō» just a few days before dying of a late-stage stomach cancer. The old noh amateur actress Seki せき has a role of co-protagonist even if she dies at the beginning of the story, because her figure is always present in the narration even after death through the words of the narrator. In her later years she starts a relationship with a young lawyer named Nojima 野島, and apparently because of this, there are some troubles in her family after her death. Kōduki Shigeno 香月滋乃, an older writer, is neither narrator, nor a protagonist *tout court*, since she is an observer of the facts and does not really contribute to the development of the main events. Her role is fundamental first of all because it is a half-narrative role. The narration, although performed by a narrator distinct from her, is carried on mainly from Shigeno's point of view, although it sometimes shifts. The shift of perspective is mainly concentrated on Yūsen, who is the real protagonist together with Seki, even if Seki's life is told only from the point of view of Shigeno. Moreover, Shigeno has a tendency to travel through time and space while lying in her bed. Her trips can be considered visionary dreams due probably to her trans-natural sensitivity, but maybe partly also to age, in a positive use of senility as a gate to another dimension. In her dreams she re-lives events of Yūsen's life and his ancestors and she meets the fantastic character of the eternal androgynous Adonis, Kikujidō. At the same time, Shigeno keeps her sharp

gaze on reality, fundamental for the development of the narration. Kitsuko きつ, her assistant, supports Shigeno not only in her daily activities, but also in the role of pseudo-narrator, as auditor of Shigeno's interpretation of facts or stories of the protagonist's past.

Speaking of old people who are «sitting at home like an old piece of furniture» Kitsuko defines Shigeno as «special», implying that since she is a writer, she has a different life from «common» elderly people, who are home alone and sad all day (Enchi 1984, p. 68). Apart from the strong ageism at the base of this sentence, we must underline that Shigeno herself considers her work as salvific. The narrator, from Shigeno's point of view, explains:

> for Shigeno the idea itself that she could not avoid letting go out what she had inside, was the proof itself that she was alive. She knew that she would probably go on writing even after becoming completely blind. Her only belief was that. For the rest she was pondering the meaning of life itself without writing.

Shigeno, thinking of Seki's life of sufferance, at the end of which she had been driven out of the house by her daughter «like a broken old piece of furniture» (p. 36), compares it to her own life and considers:

> In a way, we should admit that she had a successful life. Anyway, the fact of being able to create with her own hands a world on a different dimension, was clearly saving for her. Seki did not have that kind of world. In her old age, after parting with her daughter, she discovered the joy of noh, and supposed that it was a true feeling, she had been loved by someone like Nojima. Perhaps, those satisfactions gave her a different dimension, as well.

This sentence anticipates the concept which will be explicit at the end of the novel. The idea that if lived intensely, both love and art have the salvific power of allowing humans to take consciousness of their here and now. The main idea coming to the fore from *Kikujidō* is that an instant of real passion can give humans a glimpse of eternity and therefore is a powerful tool in resisting the fears of old age and death.

In this work, it is not a series of particular events developing and creating a plot which gives the backbone, but the interpersonal net of relationships between characters mainly created in the past. In particular, love relationships and desire orientation are fundamental in order to interpret the particular vision emerging from this work. In this chapter, I will analyze mainly the aspects related to gender and ageism, which are pertinent to the main theme of this book.

3.3.1 Love versus Gender and Age Trouble

The elderly noh actress Seki, and the young lawyer Nojima, get involved in a love relationship in spite of their big difference in age. The narration leaves the reader in doubt about the truthfulness of Nojima's feelings, especially if considering the point of view of Shimako 島子, Seki's adoptive daughter, and Kitsuko, Shigeno's assistant. Their thought is indeed based on common sense, in which ageism stereotypes cannot admit that a young and successful man can fall in love with an elderly woman. In reality, there is no proof that Nojima was taking advantage of Seki, as Shimako and Kitsuko think. In particular, Shimako argues that Nojima was in a relationship with Seki in order to inherit her properties after her death. Kitsuko, who normally has a strong influence on Shigeno's opinion, cannot ultimately convince Shigeno of Nojima's guilt. Probably as an effect of Kitsuko's opinion, she does not trust Nojima, but at the same time it seems that in a way she believes his feelings, as an elderly woman herself who sees Seki as an example to follow in order to live fully her last days. Nevertheless, Shigeno's vision of Seki and of her relationship with Nojima is not clear, and she seems to alternate between esteem, envy and defiance. Nojima's ambiguous figure – contrarily to appearance – at the moment of deposition of Seki's ashes, reveals his bona fides and that he was always sincerely in love with her and deeply hurt by her death (Enchi 1984, pp. 212-215).

The other relationships described are all unhappy for different reasons. One is the homosexual relationship between Yūsen and Shūji, which is not spontaneous for Shūji, and therefore cannot be considered a happy story. Another is the turbulent lesbian triangle centred around Tamae, which cannot be seen as a working love story. Seki's daughter's family ends in disaster when the husband is killed by the child, and Tamae's parents' marriage is obviously unloving, since Tamae's mother had an affair with Yūsen before her death. We also know that Seki's marriage was characterized by an intrusive mother-in-law who ruined it.

In my view, the relationship between Seki and Nojima is the only one emerging from the work which can be defined as a happy one, although it is interrupted by Seki's death. This is a big strike against the common vision which considers love and sex appeal as something which vanishes with age, especially for women, in a mix of gender and ageist stereotypes.

As we saw for *Komachi hensō* above, not every love story between an old woman and a young man is lived in the same way in Enchi's works. Reiko for example, cannot avoid subjugation to those societal stereotypes that want the old woman not to be attractive for a young man, and ends by terminating the relationship, preferring love on the stage, which is less risky, to real love. On the contrary, Seki is not a victim of interiorization of ageism, and seems to believe in Nojima's unselfish love despite the mistrustful opinions of all the people around, so that Shigeno has the

impression that Seki «trusted Nojima to the core» (p. 126). In his youth, Yūsen had had a relationship with a married woman, Tamae's mother, who died young from a disease. He was so much in love that after his lover's death, he never fell in love with another woman. He started to feel physically attracted to young males, but decided to marry in order to keep an apparent respectability as a noh master. The sexless and probably unloving marriage did not work well, and ended in tragedy, with the suicide of his wife, who suffered from unrequited love. Here it is curious to notice that the suicidal circumstances are exactly the same as in *Onnagata ichidai*, as we said in the first chapter: The motivation of unrequited love from an actor husband, who neglects her because he prefers male partners, the light blue silk obi used to hang herself, the fact that the husband keeps that very *obi* as a memento of the wife and probably of his guilt in the *tokonoma* of the backstage.

The relationship between Yūsen and Shūji is clearly born out of constraint based on the master's influence on his disciple. Nevertheless, when Shūji finally succeeds in going abroad, putting an end to this relationship which was consuming him, upon his return he cannot avoid getting into contact again with his old master, even if the romance is ended. Shūji, indeed, feels for his old master a deep sentiment, so that the narrator reveals: «The wild part inside Yūsen and his softness and smoothness were hateful to him and at the same time of an unsurpassed beauty. He never felt for anybody such a deep feeling of hatred and love together» (p. 240). The peonies depicted in the picture which is said to represent Yūsen and which is the reward for his performance, from my point of view are the embodiment of this evil part of Yūsen's love for Shūji. In chapter 2 we saw how Mishima used the metaphor of the flower to express the eerie beauty of kabuki. It is interesting to note that the flowers chosen to represent the ambivalent feelings towards his master, are the same flowers representing evil for Mishima, peonies, indeed. This magnetism is probably the main reason why Shūji decides to warn Yūsen's new disciple Shijaku of the risk he is taking as pupil of Yūsen. Shijaku listens to Shūj's advice and in order to avoid the risk of sexual intercourse with his master, escapes to India, and starts a spiritual retreat on the mountains.

3.3.2 The Beauty of Perversion versus the Beauty of Androgyny

The complicated relation between Yūsen e Shūji is described in terms of cruelty and egoism, but is also alternated with tones of tenderness and connivance. A very complex vision of male homosexuality comes to the fore from this relationship, since it is mingled with the traditional practice of the 'love of boys', shudō 衆道, popular in the past in all-male environments like temples, the military, or performing arts. Enchi in this work stresses

the abuse of power and sexuality at the base of those relations between disciple and *chigo* or *wakashu* 若衆 of the past.

The discourse of homosexuality and gender identity, already largely tackled in the first chapter for *Onnagata ichidai*, is examined from a completely different point of view here. While in *Onnagata ichidai* gender is seen as naturally incoherent with biological sex and consequently sexuality is naturally fluid, the vision of homosexual behaviour emerging from *Kikujidō* is quite different. In *Kikujidō*, Yūsen becomes attracted by the same sex as a consequence of a trauma caused by the death of the woman he loved, Tamae's mother. Shūji, instead, becomes involved in a homosexual relationship with the master by constriction. Male homosexuality is presented as something either born out of pain or coercion. It is not considered as a possible expression of the sexuality of an individual, but only as a consequence of an external event. We already analyzed in the first chapter the ambivalent use of the term «perversion» in some of Enchi's works of fiction and essays. Briefly speaking, this term in all its nuances, is used in Enchi's works to describe the attitude of persons whose sexuality and gender are not in line, or who appreciate incoherence in sexuality and gender. In the first chapter I argued that for some aspects the reverse use of the term is similar to the half derogatory, half apologetic term, 'queer'. I compared the use of this term by Enchi and by the Meiji intellectuals who supported the figure of the onnagata against the female actresses, stressing the onnagata's beauty of perversion only as external observers of that perversion. In particular, as I said, the difference is on the fact that Enchi puts herself within that precise category, as a perverse spectator.

In this context, it is appropriate to recall the concept of androgynous (or gynandrous) beauty, which Shirasu Masako 白洲正子 (1910-1998), another well-known figure in the field of Japanese traditional performing arts, defines in an essay entitled «The beauty of the androgynous» (*ryōsei guyū no bi* 両性具有の美) (Shirasu 1997). As an example of androgynous beauty, Shirasu quotes the scrolls called *Chigo zōshi* 稚児草紙 (p. 64), which are stored at the Buddhist temple 醍醐寺 Daigoji in Kyōto. The subject of the pictures on the scrolls is the intercourse between monks and the young boys at service at the temple. In *Koten Yawa: Keriko to Kamoko no Taidan-shū* 古典夜話ーけり子とかも子の対談集 (Night Dialogues on the Classics: a Collection of Conversations between Keriko and Komoko), a dialogue co-written by Shirasu and Enchi, Shirasu stresses the idea that the beauty of the androgynous *chigo* suggested sanctity to the monks, and the intercourse was used as an experience of unity with Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. This holy presence which in Japan was called Kannon, was indeed famous for the fact of being represented as a male character with female characteristics (Enchi, Shirasu 1975, pp. 144-146).

I would like to underline here the difference of vision of the *Chigo zōshi* which emerges from *Kikujidō*, where they represent for Shigeno the stimu-

lus for her to imagine in one of her mental trips, the crude experiences of intercourse to which Shūji had been forced by Yūsen when he was younger (Enchi 1984, pp. 131-132). Shirasu, on the other hand, underlines twice in a few lines the fact that it is not possible to interpret the relationship between master and *chigo* by applying the modern category of sexual perversion to it. Under this point of view, the two almost contemporary writers, though coming from the same metropolitan environment and having a similar background and artistic formation, have a clearly distinct approach.

Another example of this difference of vision could be the fictional work *Hanamitsu Monogatari* 花光物語 (The story of Hanamitsu) (1959c), which started to be serialized in 1954 in the magazine *Bessatsu shōsetsu Shinchō* 別冊小説新潮. In this short novel, the protagonist, a young *chigo* serving at a temple, is obliged to bow to sexual pressure by his master in order to escape from home, where his stepmother wants to kill him. The most interesting part, for us, is that the monk is depicted as an egoist who exploits the fragility of the *chigo*, and then abandons him (1959c, p. 189).

On one hand, we have Shirasu idealizing and justifying the abuse of *chigo* with the simple motivation that morality at the time was different that today. And then we have Enchi, who in Kikujidō while creating an aura of fascination around androgynous figures, sets the story in a contemporary period with the *escamotage* of Shigeno's overlapping of past and present. Therefore one is obliged to think of the morality of a habit in the past, due to the legacy of that habit in the present. In *Kikujidō* and *Hanamitsu Monogatari*, the reader has the occasion to rethink the custom of *shudō*, not taking for granted its acceptability as a sacred ritual. The idea itself of accepting any kind of behaviour simply in virtue of its 'past times morals' is shown as problematic, since though inevitable on one hand, it risks hiding many aspects, and 'orientalizing' the past, avoiding the obligation of taking a position in the present.

Even if the modern setting of the phenomenon in *Kikujidō* has the effect of sensitizing the reader to the topic of *shudō*, which nowadays would be completely unacceptable, on the other hand it can also be seen as symptom of a homophobic vision, in particular towards male homosexual behaviour. Moreover, in *Kikujidō*, female homosexuality is not seen as the effect of external constriction, but is just considered as a personal choice. Nevertheless, the homosexual women described in the work are involved in a troublesome love triangle with Tamae at its centre, which cannot be seen as an ideal of romantic love. The negative aspect of lesbian love, is historically justified in a dialogue between Yūsen ans Shūji. Yūsen starts commenting on the fights always happening between the designer and the bar attendant who compete for Tamae's love. And he continues, trying to despise female homosexuality. Shūji helps him, arguing that in the Edo period it is known that many homosexual female couples had an op-

portunistic aspect, in which one part was in love and the other would stay with her only to use her money (Enchi 1984, p. 230). As we said, the only couple which is partly idealized in the novel is the one of Seki and Nojima.

In this work we can often find a confusion of gender and sexuality, even in the words of Shūji himself, who ends up discriminating people who manifest a gender not matching with biological sex or who show same-sex desire, in one word, people of the queer environment. Shūji, discussing with Yūsen about his determination to grow Shijaku's ability as *onnagata* actor, affirms:

> Do you think so? I just think that he would conduct an unhappy life. He has no need to become a famous *onnagata*. And moreover I hope that young people grow up as normal men and women. Especially, if the number of gay men and lesbian women continues growing as it is lately, I think that it will become even more frequent to meet feminine men and masculine women» (pp. 206-207).

In these words there is a clear disappointment towards Shūji's own homosexuality and his condition as outsider in a heteronormative-oriented society, as a manifestation of interiorized homophobia. Probably it is the same disappointment which makes him react in astonishment when Tamae says: «I say that you don't understand women. Probably because even if you are a man, you have been training to become a woman [on the stage]. Somewhere there is something perverted in you» (p. 61). Shūji reacts at the term «perverted» widening his eyes in amazement, showing a particular sensitivity towards this word, which is very common among Enchi's fictional and non-fictional works, as we already said.

In my interpretation, Shūji's role in the narration, as much as Kitsuko's, is to report common people's thoughts, in a *waki*-like counterpart position towards the old protagonists' alternative thought. Not only speaking about homosexuality, but also speaking about age or class, Shūji always approaches ideas in a stereotypical way. It is Shūji who uses derogatory terms towards elderly people's supposed hallucinations (*mōsō* 妄想) due to senility, or towards the idea of noh and kabuki coming from the humble class of street performers (pp. 114-116). At the same time, Kitsuko does the same while speaking with Shigeno, for example when she accuses Nojima of being interested only in Seki's money (p. 137).

In both *Kikujidō* and *Onnagata ichidai*, Enchi's last works, together with a discriminatory tendency, we can perceive a deep fascination for the depiction of androgyny, and it is always stressed as a necessary feature in the performance of female roles on the stage. Yūsen, speaking to Shūji, admits:

> Both in noh and kabuki, the skeletal frame is at the point where the man becomes a woman…It's obvious that the feeling of love towards beauti-

> ful young boys impregnates your body. When we met yesterday, and we spoke of the *Chigo zōshi* of Daigoji, I was startled, because I thought that Ms. Kōduki had found out of our relationship (p. 114).

The so-called perversion, in the sense of non-coherence with traditional gender stereotypes, is at the base of the charm of those characters, whose double-gender is perceived as something very special, almost as mystic.[4]

In *Kikujidō* this attraction towards the effeminate young men embodied by the figure of the eternal boy Kikujidō, is not only explicitly felt by the two protagonists, but also by Shigeno. Shigeno, as we said already, has a half-narrator role, since most of the narration is focalized through her and therefore the narration itself is full of expressions of fascination for those *chigo*-like characters.

Seki loves Nojima, who is often compared in the narration to an *onnagata* actor, in virtue of his effeminate manners. Yūsen is in love with Shūji and Shijaku, who have both feminine looks. Shigeno, too, feels a strong desire for Shūji when she hears his voice, reaching both female-like and male-like tonalities. Through their desire for those androgynous characters, the three protagonists realize how even in old age it is possible to feel sensual desire for someone. Yūsen and Shigeno, but probably also Seki –if considered that there is no reference to intimacy between the two – have in common the lack of a need for sexual intercourse in order to obtain satisfaction from their desire. Desire itself, awakened by the charm of the androgynous, functions as proof of being alive, and ultimately supplies them with vital energy. Precisely this kind of desire, without an attachment to any goal, embodies a kind of passion purified from attachment that is not an obstacle to awareness, but a vehicle to it.

As far as I know, the few studies conducted by far on sexuality in old age, are not comprehensive and do not handle the role of desire detached to sensual satisfaction. Nevertheless there is an interesting survey on sexuality in old age in Sweden by Linn Sandberg (2011), which shows that while desire in old age resulting in touching without intercourse is taken into account by some of those interviewed, the theme of desire per se is almost not taken into consideration. The self-perception of being old is clearly an obstacle to feeling desire, as desire is only seen as necessarily linked to the target of sexual satisfaction, even if without intercourse (Sandberg 2011, pp. 229-235). In another study focused on the psychological aspects of sexual fantasy by Brett Kahr (2008), desire without the need of any kind of fulfilment is not taken into consideration, because the sexual fantasy is always associated with masturbation. Nevertheless, in Enchi's work desire towards young men is stressed, but it is clearly just a feeling which at first

4 For the fascination with androgynous figures, see also: Miyauchi (1989).

is disconcerting, and later is accepted as something bringing enthusiasm, without any hope or expectation to fulfil it (Enchi 1984, pp. 152-155).

The desire becomes salvation for the protagonists, giving them the strength to live thanks to a single moment of intense passion. This passion stems out of an evil and 'impure' source, similar to that of kabuki in the vision of Mishima, as presented in chapter 2. Precisely because it is an obscure force, it can empower the old protagonists towards societal taboos.

3.3.3 Queer and Old Age Abjections Allied

In *Kikujidō* the fact that not only kabuki, but also the supposedly noble art of noh comes from a world of outsiders, is particularly stressed.

There is an explicit reference to this fact in a dialogue between Yūsen and Shūji.

> Although noh pretends to be refined after being adopted by nobles, and appears as if it comes from a different source than kabuki, it is said to originate from *sangaku*, and therefore its actors were common people. Among the people coming from the Sung Dynasty, there were many with a special ability to dance and sing, and the big temples of Nara and Kyoto started giving them donations to be under their patronage. They were people of extremely humble classes (p. 116).

The connection between beauty emanating from the stage and moral turpitude is clear from Shūji's words, when he admits: «It is kind of ominous, but I believe that at the base of every performing art there is an ability which has something of the monstrous in it» (p. 253).

Not only in Shūji's words, the idea that human passions and desires – no matter how abject – constitute the essence of life, is often stressed throughout the work. In this sense, Yūsen's moral turpitude and the nobility of his performance «stem out of the same interior passion», as writes the scholar Pammy Yue Eddinger (1999, p. 349).

In an inspiring article, Linn Sandberg analyzes the connection between queer and ageing studies, and discovers many points in common. She stresses the fact that by comparing the two approaches, one has to take into account the basic difference between old and queer identity. She admits that age is something almost everyone must experience, but the fact of being outside heteronormativity involves only a part of the population. Nevertheless, both queer and ageing studies «critically inquire into normativities and power», and they also aim at deconstructing identity politics. In contrast to the concept already explained in chapter 2 of successful ageing, she uses the concept of «embracing shame» by Bond Stockton,

which emphasizes the idea of negativity and abject at the base of queer, as a way to resist heteronormativity. She explains:

> I would suggest that the embracement of shame and the turn to negativity has a lot to offer the theorising of old age. The neo-liberal discourses on how to become a successful, independent and autonomous retiree has evident parallels to an assimilationist and neo-liberal strand acknowledging gay and lesbian existences as long as they adhere to heteronormative ideals of non-promiscuity, coupledom etc. The main reason why «embracing shame» and employing the concept of abject in relation to older people is that ageism cannot be challenged with positive discourses of successful ageing (Sandberg 2008, pp. 126-127).

Instead of challenging ageism through the superficial negation of age, which ends up strengthening stereotypes, Sandberg suggests that by not denying the partly derogatory aspect of old age, exactly like in the queer idea of reverse discourse we mentioned in chapter 1, there is a higher potential for resistance. By emphasizing the aspect of failure instead of that of success, in the ageing process, she suggests that the 'old' can be empowered similarly to the 'queer'. Failure here is intended in the sense of failing to enter normativity, as well as failing to «perform one's own age».

Ten years before Linn, Cheryl Laz (1998) was already considering the importance of taking into account the connection between gender and ageing theories. Her point is based on the fact that age is subjected to be commonly thought to be an «objective chronological fact». Similarly, sex in the 1970s used to be separated from gender because it was considered as «objective» as age. Later on, the theories of gender started seeing the impossibility of such neat biological and cultural divisions. In the same way, sociological studies started demonstrating the «reciprocal relationship between 'objective facts' and cultural meanings» of age. Laz explains that the latest studies arrived at the point of refusing to take chronology for granted, assuming that we give meaning to chronology by using it. She argues:

> Although age often feels like something we simply are, it feels this way because we enact age in all interactions. Since we usually act our age in predictable ways – predictable given the particular context – we make age invisible. We make age *seem* natural (Laz 1998, p. 100).

This concept of «seeming natural», and the one of «acting» clearly recall the idea of gender performativity, which we spoke about in chapter 1. In the conclusions, Laz argues:

> In sum, the metaphor of acting and the idea of age-as-accomplished, can

> make explicit what often goes unrecognized in the sociology of age: the performative, interactive work of accomplishing age, the emotion work involved in «becoming» and «being» an age, and the strategies people develop and use as they create and display themselves as aged (p. 110).

The concept of performativity of age is important to understand also time perception towards old age, which in Sandberg's thought if not faced in a so-called successful way, can be compared to queer temporality as defined by Judith Halberstam (Sandberg 2008, p. 133; Halberstam 2005). Old age remains, indeed, outside the «paradigmatic markers of life experience», which for Halberstam, are based on the heteronormative framework of marriage and reproduction. Halberstam defines the concept of «queer time» as: «a term for those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frame of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance» (Halberstam 2005, pp. 5-7).

In my understanding, the attraction that the old protagonists of Kikujidō feel towards queer characters, is salvific precisely for the fact of being outside the societal frameworks of marriage and reproduction. Their failure to perform their age, by desiring younger people, moreover, enhances their abjection, which can be seen, as we understood above, as a tool for resistance to the concept of successful ageing, and ultimately to ageism.

3.3.4 Passion as Path to Enlightenment versus Attachment

«Passion» (*jōnetsu* 情熱) is precisely the keyword of the second part of the work.

While speaking with his former disciple Shūji, before the performance of «Kikujidō», Yūsen quotes a famous sentence by the ancient Greek philosopher Hippocrates. The quotation is known for its incipit, which in Latin is: «Vita brevis, ars longa» (Enchi 1984, p. 297).[5] Life is short and it is not enough to reach perfection in art, which must be handed down from one generation to the next. Yūsen quotes this sentence to argue the contrary, since in his opinion art in itself does not have a long life, if compared to eternity. Yūsen thinks that: «Life is like a spark, consumed in an instant». Shūji, after hearing his former master's words, comments:

> If you are enlightened (*soko made satotte ireba* そこまで悟っていれば) like this, you will surely perform a successful Jidō. After all, the idea that

5 It is the incipit of a Latin expression, translated from an aphorism by Hippocrates. The aphorism is quoted by Seneca in his *De brevitate vitae* (1,1) in abbreviated form.

> eight hundred years are long is just in the human mind. If you compare it to the movements of the stars, it's not very different from one instant.

And Yūsen replies:

> It is you the enlightened, if you speak like this! It does not matter whether I dance or not the Jidō. The only important thing to me, is the instant of ardour (*sono shunkan shunkan no nenshō* その瞬間瞬間の燃焼). The point is not how much artistic success you obtained in life. It's like when you embrace a glamorous woman.

Yūsen concludes by summarizing his theory very briefly, but clearly: «every instant can become eternal» (pp. 297-298). The eternity of the «instant of ardour» in Yūsen's words strongly recalls the powerful instant of Zen enlightenment. Winston L. King (1970, p. 314) calls the enlightenment moment a «breakthrough in which the conventional mode of subject-object awareness is permanently transcended». The concept itself of passion in this work cannot be understood without considering the Buddhist tones at the base of it. The passion that Yūsen praises is indeed a passion already purified by negative and attachment tones, a passion stemming out of self-consciousness, after experiencing many obsessive and painful attachments in life.

This vision of Yūsen takes form when he is on the stage for the last time. Here the narrator completely adopts Yūsen's point of view, and explains that in that precise moment he realizes for the first time that his identity is not limited to the character he is performing, it is not embedded in the mask he is wearing. He takes on the role, while remaining himself at the same time, which denotes a superior level of consciousness. Moreover, he has the sensation of seeing the faces of the spectators, but not being able to distinguish them, because they seem to look all the same (Enchi 1984, p. 304). In that very moment, as in Buddhist enlightenment, Yūsen overcomes the barriers of the ego, and becomes aware of the fact that the essence of human beings is their universality, because in front of the Absolute every human being is the same. He reaches the awareness that human beings during their lives can find their own way to fight the anxiety of death and elevate their own life thanks to a few brief but intense moments which become eternal. On the stage there is a mortal Yūsen performing with his fragile aspects and his attachments to life, but also another Yūsen who is universal and eternal: the Yūsen who has understood the nature of Kikujidō.

It goes without saying that noh theatre is the theatrical form *tout court* that is considered a vehicle of self-awareness for the actor himself, thanks to the estrangement from oneself that performing this art allows and to the strong link to Buddhism that it took with time. There are many studies

on the various religious and non-religious considerations about this effect of noh on the actor, but this is not the place to analyze them. I would like to stress how in her works Enchi skilfully interprets the principles of this art in order to enlarge its redeeming vision not only for the actor, but also for everybody who has the ability to live life fully, without the obstacles of attachments.

In this sense, the moment of full happiness that Seki – satisfied by Nojima's love – lives while she is admiring plum flowers in the garden, is comparable to the moment when Yūsen is on the stage dancing the Jidō 慈童, which is his last full moment of passion. Shigeno, during her last visionary trip that coincides with the end of the novel, relives the sensations proved as spectator of Yūsen's performance (even if she did not go to see his performance) and the ones of Yūsen himself on the stage. At the end of the vision, the mask breaks in two, ultimately revealing Seki's wrinkled face underneath. Shigeno, as an observer, can feel what Yūsen has felt on the stage thanks to the power of art, and Seki, thanks to the power of love. Art and love are the same vehicle of passion, a passion which lasts one instant, which Shigeno herself feels, and which in a way renders human existence somehow eternal, as much as the one of Jidō (pp. 320-321).

Even though she does not speak of the role of androgyny in the process towards awareness nor does she compare art and love in their similar importance as a path to freedom from attachments, the above mentioned scholar, Pammy Yue Eddinger, in her Ph.D. dissertation reached conclusions about Yūsen's enlightenment that have influenced my view. But Eddinger failed to consider Seki's role as a protagonist and as a person who finds a way to resist stereotype, probably because she is not present for the majority of the novel. After quoting the scene where Shigeno meets Kikujidō, the legendary youth who lived eight hundred years in the mountains, she argues:

> Trascendence cannot be achieved through the illusion of detaching oneself from the stream of time and history as proposed in the religious dogma, but rather, by acknowledging the fleeting yet vital place of humanity in the order of the universe. To savor the passion despite the sorrow, to reach for beauty and freedom despite oppression, and capture a spirit that defies death is the true state of transcendence (Eddinger 1999, p. 357).

From my point of view, the stance emerging from *Kikujidō* is not a completely different one from Buddhist thought, as Eddinger implies. In the state of transcendence attained by the protagonists, I do find some similarities to Buddhist theory, especially in the end of the novel. Nevertheless, as is typical of Enchi's way of approaching concepts in literature, it is not completely adherent to the pre-existing concept. The enlightenment at-

tained by the protagonists at the end of the story is a nirvana which has been reached through the complete immanent focus on life passions, but purified from attachments to the self, similar to the abstract passions on the noh stage. The self is first known and affirmed through the passions, and later on can be dismantled.

Lamarque explains:

> The aim of Zen is to attain a state of awareness, *Satori* (or Enlightenment), where the need for connectedness in life is perceived as superfluous, and the most fundamental distinctions relating to personality, self and other, subject and object, inner and outer, are abandoned (Lamarque 1989, pp. 165-166).

In an article which shows the affinity of noh with some Buddhist principles, Lamarque argues that the dissolution of personality is the dramatic aim of noh (p. 166). The broken mask in Kikujidō is a precise metaphor of the attainment of this aim of noh, where the self and the «artistic success you obtained in life» loses its importance, and the only important thing is the «instant of ardour», no matter whose the experience is. Lamarque argues: «In Noh the dramatic aim is to present emotion, as far as possible, in a pure abstracted form: abstracted both from the personality of its subject (character or actor) and also from its conventional behavioural manifestations (i.e. it is not portrayed realistically)» (p. 166).

The portrayal of emotions on the stage, therefore, can be purely abstracted, because they are based on no one's real experience. Here Shigeno's visionary trips obtain an important position, because no matter if they are real visions or just dreams or even hallucinations due to senility, her capacity to share the experiences of other people is indeed a sign of a high stage of consciousness, in a state already close to nirvana.

3.3.5 *Ran'i*, the Art which Leads back to Youth

Shūji's expectations towards Yūsen's ability are satisfied during the performance and, in order to describe the excellent execution, he uses the concept of *ran'i* 闌位, which comes from Zeami's theorical writings.[6] Shūji, in explaining the concept to Kitsuko, erroneously affirms that this term appears in *Kadensho* 花伝書 (the book of the transmission of the

6 Zeami (1363?-1443?), the greatest theorist and playwright of noh, together with his father Kan'amifixed a canon for noh theatre and contributed the most to its stabilization.

Flower)[7], while in reality it appears with these characters only in a subtitle in *Shikadōsho* 至花道書 (The book of the way to the Flower).[8] In the rest of the writings the same concept is expressed through the characters of *take* 長 (闌け) or *taketaru kurai* 闌けたる位. Moreover, the treatise which is mostly dedicated to this concept is without any doubt *Shikadōsho*, and not *Kadensho*.

In ancient Japanese the term *takeru* 長ける (闌ける), which uses the same root of the word *ran'i* of Zeami's treatises, means to excel or to be in an «advanced stage», either referring to the seasons of the year, or to age (Kitahara 2002-2006). In this sense we can argue that in ancient Japan, when Zeami wrote his treatises, the concepts of maturity and ability were overlapping. In those texts – especially in *Shikadōsho* – it is clear that *ran'i* is possible only after many years of intense training.

It is nevertheless difficult to understand what Zeami really meant with the term *ran'i*, since the same term took on different nuances also in the treatises written by Zeami during the time, as shown for example by Yashima Masaharu in *Zeami no nō to geiron* 世阿弥の能と芸論 (Zeami's Noh and His Theories on Art) (Yashima 1985, pp. 200-213). Moreover, in order to understand the term in a broader sense, we should compare the various interpretations of actors, scholars and critics, but this is not the right place to undertake such a complex analysis.

I will indicate, therefore, only the interpretations of Zeami's theories which are closer to the artistic vision from *Kikujidō*. First of all the definition of *ran'i* given by Shūji is:

> In a performance characterized by an extreme ability, the actor at a certain point deliberately inserts an action which is estranged from the rest. This gives a special taste, which is not easy to put into words. They say it is not possible during a common performance. During *Gaku no mai* 楽の舞, today, there have been two moments like that. It creates a little trouble, but it is that very moment which arouses an ineffable sensation» (Enchi 1984, p. 313).

In the commentary by Nose Asaji (1894-1955) to the collection of treatises *Zeami Jūrokubushū* 世阿弥十六部集 (Collection of Sixteen Treatises by Zeami) (Nose 1987),[9] speaking about *taketaru kurai*, he affirms that in *Shikadō*, the word *ran'i* is principally defined as «an execution which

7 Written by Zeami around the year 1400, it is better known by another title: *Fūshi Kaden* 風姿花伝.

8 Supposedly written by Zeami in 1420.

9 *Zeami Jūrokubushū Hyōshaku* was originally constituted by 16 treatises by Zeami, first written and printed in 1909, to which other treatises were added later.

inserts a little of the wrong way which we used to avoid, to the appropriate way» (p. 450). Moreover, in *Shikadōsho*, Zeami insists on the concept that *ran'i* can be inserted in a performance only after having accumulated adequate experience.[10] Konishi Jin'ichi (1915-2007), Yokomichi Mario (n. 1916) and Kanze Hisao (1925-1978), during a round table discussion, agree on the fact that *ran'i* is a way of acting which needs a particular ability, and that it does not represent a mandatory step for every high level actor (Kanze 1980, pp. 122-124).

Shūji, nonetheless, thinks that only an elderly actor is able to express the ambiguity of a figure like Kikujidō, who is both young and old, and links this ability to *ran'i no gei* 闌位の芸, or «the art of *ran'i*». Shūji, in order to support his theory, quotes a sentence supposedly pronounced by a famous Kanze 観世 actor, who affirms: «Jidō is a role not suitable to a young actor. It is a role for an elderly actor, who has already experienced love and hatred, and goes back to a teenager's heart» (Enchi 1984, p. 112). It is irrelevant to know if this is a sentence really pronounced by a Kanze actor in the past or if it is just fiction. The relevant theme here is the effort to link Kikujidō's figure and *ran'i*. Kikujidō is a boy with an elderly heart, while *ran'i* is the art of an elderly actor returning to youth, exactly like Yūsen. In the sentence quoted above we find the explicit contact between Kikujidō and *ran'i*. In this interpretation, the hearts of the boy and the elderly person are similar in the fact that they are estranged by life's negative attachments, one because he still has to experience them, the other because he or she has already experienced and overcome them in life. It goes without saying that we are talking in Buddhist terms of attachments, which are negative because they are an obstacle to awakening. Therefore, in this context love has the meaning of obsession for another person, or of carnal desire which needs to be materially satisfied to allow the detachment from desire itself. In the case of the three old protagonists desire is not aimed at a satisfaction, therefore it is a detached desire, which does not cause pain and obsession, but on the contrary leads to a higher awareness of the self.

We know that Shijaku went on a spiritual retreat in the mountains, in order to be closer to nature. For this reason, just after his definition of *ran'i*, Shūji adds that Shijaku would probably have better appreciated the world of traditional performing arts, if he had seen that performance, where image (*shōchō* 象徴) and embodiment (*gushō* 具象) were unified. He also affirms that Yūsen's performance would have demonstrated that nature and art are the same thing.

This concept is similar to the affirmation by Kanze Hisao in the article entitled: *Nō no chūshōsei to shizen* 能の抽象性と自然 (Abstraction and Na-

10 See Nose (1987) and Konishi (2004).

ture in Noh), where he argues that in the initial phase of noh training, the actor must use a strong abstraction in all the techniques, music, movement and then ultimately aspire to body-mind naturalness (Kanze 1980, pp. 84-85).

It is difficult to interpret what Shūji means with this expression, but perhaps he wants to insist on the fact that even if traditional performing arts became very abstract in order to satisfy the tastes of the warrior classes, they originated among common people, who lived closer to nature. And he renders explicit the fact that noh stage, if performed in a truly conscious way, can have effects on the human mind similar to a spiritual retreat, which aims at reaching awareness through meditation in contact with nature. Here at the base of Shūji's words we find the same search for a *raison d'etre* that we read in Yūsen's words. For the disciple, too, love for someone or something in general is the only way to find a reason in life. Love – for art, nature or for a human being – is the only way to fight the fear of pain and death. And probably he means that it is love itself that is at the base of Buddhist detachment, though it is commonly thought that a Buddhist should live completely detached from any kind of feeling.

In Shūji's opinion, the art of *ran'i*, with its «moments of trouble», is closer to nature than commonly thought, since it is not only concentrated in reaching perfection of the abstract form, but is aimed at inspiring the spectator thanks to the insertion of an uncommonly rough element, and therefore is more material than abstract. It is an original interpretation of this concept, which has many readings, but it is difficult to explain it in simple terms for a noh critic or actor.

Considering that *ran'i* appears frequently in the text and often in contexts for which this complex and specific concept does not seem appropriate, we can affirm that the use of this term by Shūji is indeed exaggerated. Even the mistake which he makes above – when he declares that the term *ran'i* is in Kadenshō – and his personal theory of the link between *ran'i* and Jidō, cannot be casual. It seems that through the words of Shūji, Enchi – an expert of performing arts – has taken some liberties and transformed the meaning of the term in order to suggest an artistic personal vision, different from those at the base of canonic essays and scholarly articles; a vision which becomes the expression of a quest for an alternative to the common stereotypes of ageism.

In chapter 1, I argued that *Onnagata ichidai* can be considered as a homage to the art of kabuki, despite the semi-derogatory tones of some concepts which emerge. Similarly, I find *Kikujidō* a work which conveys Enchi's love for this art, despite the defilement of its protagonists, the actors. The tones are very different from *Onnagata ichidai*, though the two works were written almost in the same period. The Buddhist tones themselves coming to the fore in this work, even if re-elaborated, reflect the sober but calm and positive atmosphere of noh. Lamarque argues that

in noh time is «fragmented» and «the sense of coherence threatened, by the juxtaposition of dreams, distant memories and ghostly apparitions» (Lamarque 1989, p. 166).

The fragmentation of the plot due to Shigeno's trips in time and space is also comparable to noh drama's fragmentation: for example in the case mentioned in chapter 2 of shift of space and condensed time in a scene of spiritual possession.

3.3.6 *Kikujidō*: Empowering Senility versus Successful Ageing

For Zeami *makoto no hana* 真の花, the true flower, could also disappear with age, so the actor who maintains the flower within in old age is considered very skilled (Kawase 2001, p. 114). In *Kikujidō* it is precisely senility which bears a new flower: the flower of freedom from negative attachments and pain. After having suffered all her life from the patriarchal family system, which obliged her to take care of all her family, in old age Seki is finally freed from duties and pain and can live a serene love story. After having overcome many delusions in life, Yūsen is free from the artistic point of view, and can perform the eternal Jidō in an effective way, without erasing himself on the stage. Shigeno was influenced by Kitsuko's opinion of Nojima's opportunism at the beginning of the work, and blamed Seki for being too naively involved with him, at the risk of being used for money. Later on, even Shigeno changes her mind, freed from the conformist opinion that an elderly woman cannot be loved by a young and attractive man. Little by little Shigeno starts giving credence to Nojima's feelings and esteems Seki for her courage in going against common thought and societal unspoken norms with unconventional behaviour. Shigeno starts thinking that Seki could experience this deep fulfilled feeling before death thanks to her «female essence» (*onna no shinzui* 女の真髄) – as defined by Nojima – interpretable as the ability to let herself go to loving passion also in old age, when the potential of sexual attraction is commonly thought to decrease, as we said in chapter 2 quoting Sontag (Enchi 1984, p. 215).

In her book entitled «*Kataru rōjo, katararereru rōjo*» 語る老女語られる老女 (Old Women Narrating, Old Women Being Narrated), scholar Kurata Yōko makes an interesting analysis of the work *Kikujidō*, locating it in its socio-historical context. In *Kikujidō*, the narrator gives her interpretation of the tendency not to take for granted care and respect for the old, saying that it is mainly due to «americanism». After quoting this sentence, Kurata explains that in the 1980s, when the work was written, the problem of the care of the elderly was a growing phenomenon in Japan, especially compared to the 1970s, when the care of old people was still usually managed in the family. Kurata adds that this phenomenon, not only linked to the influence of American culture, but to a confluence of many societal

changes such as the dramatic increase of life expectancy and the nuclear family, contributed to the growth of ageism, while just ten years before the image of the elderly was more respected. The scholar mainly distinguishes Seki's broken furniture-like ageing process distinct from the process of Shigeno and Yūsen, having the special tool of art at their side. Nevertheless, she argues that Shigeno, as an «old woman» (*oita onna* 老いた女) herself, empathizes with Seki because in a way they share the fact of being victims of ageism, neglected by their daughters and society in general (Kurata 2010, p. 298). In Kurata's interpretation, Seki has been deceived by Nojima, and Shigeno does not approve their relationship. Nevertheless, Kurata argues that Shigeno promotes Seki's behaviour, which was freely driven by the desire (*yokubō* 欲望) of some satisfaction in life, as a way for self-affirmation and resistance to the bondage of stereotype; the same stereotype that in the narration is represented through young people's words, like Shūji and Kitsuko.

In *Kikujidō* many stereotypes are discredited, together with the stigma towards Enchi's works itself. Many critics think that Enchi's works convey a negative vision of male-female relationships, where the female always succumbs to male egoism or hegemony. Though I cannot deny that this stereotype comes partly from a real tendency in her early *ouvre*, it must be said that in this work it is not valid. It is more appropriate to say that in *Kikujidō* it is not the male-female relationship which is negatively connoted, but any kind of relationship which brings oppression to one partner. For example I am referring to the coercion of homosexual love in the master-disciple relation, or the ties coming from the old household system of the *ie* 家, which obliged Seki to annihilate herself to take care of all the members of the family.

Another aspect in this work is the overcoming of the normative thought on gender, sexuality and age and above all on the interrelation of those aspects of the human being. The theories of old age, as we saw above, have much in common with gender and queer studies, but those similarities have been shown only recently. The interconnections between the scholarship on old age and other disciplines which critically inquire into normativities and power, have been neglected for a long time also in the American environment, which was the first to start considering ageing as a subject of academic interest. For example, Toni Clasanti, one of the main figures of the scholarship on old age, laments in the introduction to *Age Matters*, that feminists have focused mainly on middle age, while neglecting later stages of life (Clasanti, Slevin 2006, p. 2).

Perhaps *Kikujidō* does not represent a complete success in the analysis of normativity schemes, compared to *Onnagata ichidai*, where in particular for sexuality and gender we find a destabilizing context. Nevertheless, *Kikujidō* offers an occasion to rethink a point of view on gender and ageism which at the time – in the mid-1980s – was meaningful because still unex-

plored both in Japan and abroad. Queer studies still had to appear, and the myth of successful ageing was at the centre of the American scholarship on senescence, as already mentioned in chapter 2.

Emotions do not extinguish with old age, like the attraction to the young protagonists or the love for art that Yūsen and Shigeno feel and that keep them alive. It is just the way of living them which changes. It is not an attachment to existence per se, but it is the enjoyment of every instant, it is a *jouissance* of life which can be lived better in old age. In a way, thanks to its purified passions, old age becomes the highlight of life. Ultimately the elderly protagonists are all freed also from the fear of death, thanks to their awareness of transitoriness.

3.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have analyzed two works by Enchi that deal most explicitly with the theme of old age. Perhaps it is important to underline that the historical period they were written in is quite different, since *Komachi hensō* is dated 1965 and *Kikujidō* 1982-1983. The period could have been influential, both from the sociological and the biographical point of view. The vision of old age during the 1970s changed greatly, as we mentioned above, and Enchi herself when she wrote *Kikujidō* had a more detached point of view which probably was due to her own advanced age.

In the analysis of *Komachi hensō*, we saw how fears of old age are faced by the two protagonists, according to their gender. They face their last period before death in a diametrically opposite way, which ultimately is similar in the fact that it is an escape from reality. Shigaraki consciously idealizes his eternal love, Reiko, and dies happily, while Reiko idealizes her life on the stage and refuses the risks of love in real life. Love and art are the way to escape from the dimension of reality, by submission to the attachment to a past, therefore fictional, identity. This identity is a second dimension, created in the end by the interiorization of ageism.

From the point of view of the theories of ageing which I mentioned when speaking of *Kikujidō*, we can say that the figure of Reiko has the potential to resist ageism, but in the end she does not. At the beginning, Reiko is involved in a love story which allows her to avoid the constriction of performativity of old age. But in the end she refuses that potential of resistance, and she submits to the conventional ageist idea that love between an old woman and a young man cannot be real.

In *Kikujidō* we have the opposite tendency. The identity of 'the elderly', abandoned as old broken furniture, is a reality which the protagonists resist. They do not refuse their identity as old people, but precisely by accepting that identity, they refuse to match the stereotype of being weak, lonely, and sad. And they find a way to escape this formula with the creation of

a second dimension which is not due to interiorization of ageism. Art and love are again the solution, but in the here and now. Obviously, Shigeno's trips are not here and now, and they are probably due to senility as much as Shigaraki's fantasies, but they are not used on purpose to avoid life's pain. On the contrary, they become an instrument for Shigeno to deepen consciousness of the events around her. Also, literature for Shigeno and the stage for Yūsen, are not an escape into the fictional world of art as they are for Reiko. They are a special tool to enhance the awareness of life and to appreciate at a deeper level the moments of passion that still remain. Seki herself does not have the special tool of art, but she has the one of love, which, despite all the obstacles of societal unspoken norms, gives her the strength to face reality and death in a serene way. The lucid gaze on their situation and on their state as old people ultimately leads to a higher level of consciousness which reveals the oneness of human experience.

Not only does this work convey very well the suggestions of noh atmosphere, but also it undertakes a research on noh theory and re-elaborates it in the typical highly intellectual and refined intertwining of fiction, criticism, and theory which Enchi often employs in her literary works. For example, the specific concept of *ran'i* is interpreted in a personal way through the point of view of Shūji, and conveys a specific view of the oneness of youth and old age. The very idea of passion as a vehicle to awareness and ultimately to escape from the fears of old age is an apparently contradictory re-elaboration of the Buddhist concept of detachment from objects of desire, but puts art and love on the same plane as sources of (positive) passion. The final part itself, when Shigeno sees in her trip Yūsen while he is performing the Jidō, recalls Buddhist enlightenment for the dissolution of personality, and is also an explanation of noh principles.

Shigeno seems to reach enlightenment at the end of her visionary trip, exactly like Komachi and the various female protagonists of the noh stage, but in *Kikujidō* the differences due to gender seem to disappear, as in Zen Buddhist enlightenment, where all dualities and gender limitations are transcended.[11] While in *Komachi hensō* the gender of the protagonists is central to their different manifestations of interiorization of ageism, in *Kikujidō*, not only ageism is resisted, but also the difference of life vision due to gender is shattered, as in the blurring of Komachi and Fukakusa's selves in the original noh «Sotoba Komachi», or like the mask of Jidō in Shigeno's trip.

11 See for example Bernard Faure (2003, p. 129).

4 Afterword

While I was researching the figure of Komachi in order to write my third chapter, I happened to access the website of Zuishin-in, one of the temples which is connected to the figure of Komachi. On the website I found an advertisement for the «Miss Komachi Competition». To be considered for selection, contestants had to have the following characteristics:

> Manners and behavior, such as sensitivity and kindness, which spontaneously stem from polishing beauty from the inside and surpass physical qualities. The judgment for the selection of participants is focused on the concept that by cultivating a beautiful heart, you can meet a more beautiful self.[1]

I found this casual discovery particularly inspiring, since the image of the woman who represents the modern version of Komachi, does not fit at all with the stereotypes emerging from the essay intertwined in *Komachi hensō* discussed in chapter 3. On the contrary, the Miss Komachi of the website perfectly fits the image of a calm, understanding, caring, and kind woman, in a word, a 'well-behaved woman'. Komachi has undergone a further 'transformation'. The stereotype, born out of fear and longing, of the strong and self-confident woman created around Komachi over the centuries is apparently now completely gone. It has left in its place a diametrically opposite woman, who has been at the center of idealization and the excuse for female suppression over the centuries. The same caring woman, indeed, has been over the centuries just another image of the abnegation and self-sacrifice expected from a woman much more than from a man.

Obviously, a negative example is as useful to maintain the status quo as a positive one, perhaps even more. So why should a model, which has been seen as negative and wretched for so long, suddenly be turned upside down and idealized? I suppose that at the base of this radical change of vision there must be a change in modern Japanese society. Data show that

1 http://www.zuishinin.or.jp/misskomachi_web/index.html (retrieved: 2015-02-13).

the number of working Japanese women who choose not to marry or bear children is growing. Perhaps this is one reason for the new tendency on the part of public opinion to accept a self-made or independent woman.

It goes without saying that if the commonly accepted societal mores change, the perception of archetypes changes as well, as I mentioned in my discussion of Nora's theory of *lieux de mémoire*. The *lieu de mémoire* around Komachi has been adapted again, probably in an attempt to fit the image of the poetess to the times. Perhaps Komachi's strong and self-assertive image does not fit a negative stereotype any longer. Or at least, it is not generally accepted any longer that «a woman who becomes strong, starts having nothing to eat» as it used to be in the past, where women who showed strength were penalized and had difficulty finding a partner (Wakita 2005, p. 219). Therefore, even if the majority have not changed their opinion yet, the undeniable fact that a part of the public does not see a strong woman as lacking in femininity any longer is enough to call into question the negativity of the Komachi stereotype. My point is that if the stereotype is not easily distinguishable as negative, it is risky to continue emphasizing it. On the other hand, by erasing the negative and exalting the contrary characteristics, the image can continue being used as a point of reference. Transforming Komachi into an attentive, kind woman, allows society to avoid the subversive potential of her long-lasting negative and strongly independent image, which in contemporary Japan might go against the government's well known focus on the family, which has continued unchanged throughout the postwar period.

It is not by chance that the majority of people visiting sites associated with Komachi in the 1970s were women, who while reading books on her legend, walked through the *lieux de mémoire* said to be full of hints of Komachi, probably trying to better understand her mysterious figure (Wakamori, Yamamoto 1974, p. 22). I would argue that these women, who were trying to grasp a fragment of Komachi's character, were not refusing the negativity of Komachi's image. They were probably attracted to it, and perhaps their own identity as women was starting to change, together with the gradual change in societal mores, which had begun to accept and desire different ideas of femininity.

As exemplified by this recent 'transformation of Komachi', I hope that by focusing on several of Enchi's works, this book can be the occasion to encourage further consideration of the construction of femininity, masculinity, and identity in general.

5 References

Bargen, Doris G. (1996). «Translation and Reproduction in Enchi Fumiko's 'A Bond for Two Lifetimes: Gleanings'». In: Schalow, Paul Gordon; Walker, Janet (eds.), *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 165-204.

Bargen, Doris G. (1997). *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Beasley, Chris (2005). *Gender & Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. London; Thousand Oaks; New Delhi: Sage.

Butler, Judith (1993a). «Critically Queer». *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1 (1), pp. 17-32.

Butler, Judith (1993b). *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of «Sex»*. New York; London: Routledge.

Butler, Judith [1990] (1999). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith (1994). «Against Proper Objects». *Differences: A Journal of Feminst Cultural Studies*, 6 (2-3), pp. 1-27.

Butler, Judith (1995). «Melancholy Gender – Refused Identification». *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, 5 (2), pp. 165-80.

Butler, Judith (2003). «Performative Acts and Gender Constitution». In: Auslander; Philip (ed.), *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. London: Routledge, vol. 4, pp. 97-110.

Clasanti, Toni; Slevin, Kathleen F. (2006). «Introduction: Age Matters». In: Calsanti, Toni M.; Slevin, Kathlees F. (eds.), *Age Matters: Realigning Feminst Thinking*. New York; London: Routledge, pp. 1-17.

Cornyetz, Nina (1999). *Dangerous Women, Deadly Words: Phallic Fantasy and Modernity in Three Japanese Writers*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Dolan, Jill (1993). «Geographies of Learning: Theatre Studies, Performance, and the Performative». *Theatre Journal*, 45 (4), pp. 417-441.

Eddinger, Pammy Yue (1999). *From Obsession to Deliverance: The Evolving Landscape of the Feminine Psyche in the Works of Enchi Fumiko* [Doctoral dissertation]. Columbia University.

Enchi Fumiko [1941] (1977-1978). «Onnagata to onnagokoro». *Nanshi no haru*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 1. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 548-53.
Enchi Fumiko [1954] (1977-1978). «Ano ie». In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 2. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 63-73.
Enchi Fumiko[1957] (1977-1978). *Matsukaze bakari*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 2. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 190-200.
Enchi Fumiko [1958] (1967). *Onnamen*. *Nihon bungaku zenshū*, vol. 75. Tōkyō: Shūeisha, pp. 130-234.
Enchi Fumiko [1959a] (1977-1978). «Onna no himitsu». *Onna no himitsu*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 15. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 81-86.
Enchi Fumiko [1959b] (1977-1978). «Onna no kaku shōsetsu». *Onna no himitsu*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 15. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 87-93.
Enchi Fumiko[1959c] (1977-1978). *Hanamitsu Monogatari*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 14. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 183-195.
Enchi Fumiko [1960] (1977-1978). *Futaomote*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 3. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, 167-84.
Enchi Fumiko [1961] (1977-1978). «Kabuki sekai». *Onna wo ikiru*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 15. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 202-207.
Enchi Fumiko [1964] (1977-1978). «Onnagata no miryoku: Utaemon». *Tabi yosoi*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 15. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha,pp. 323-27.
Enchi Fumiko [1965a] (1977-1978). *Komachi hensō*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 13. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 7-114.
Enchi Fumiko (1965b). «Komachi hensō». *Gunzō* (January), pp. 6-112.
Enchi Fumiko (1971). «Hibiki». *Shinchō* (February), pp. 26-29.
Enchi Fumiko (1973). «Onna ni nai onna no iroke». *Ginza hyakuten*, 219 (February), pp. 67-75.
Enchi Fumiko [1974] (1977-1978). *Fuyu no tabi: Shisha to no taiwa*. In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 5. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 285-300.
Enchi Fumiko; Shirasu Masako (1975). *Koten Yawa: Keriko to Kamoko no Taidan-shū*. Tōkyō: Heibonsha.
Enchi Fumiko (1977). «Komachi no shussei». In: *Karei naru Kyūtei saijo: Jinbutsu Nihon no josei shi*, vol. 1. Tōkyō: Shūeisha, pp. 113-34.
Enchi Fumiko [1978] (1977-1978). *Mikoteki na mono* (3). In: *Enchi Fumiko zenshū* (Complete works of Enchi Fumiko), vol. 11, *geppō* (monthly report) 13. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 1-4.

Enchi Fumiko (1980). *The Waiting Years*. Trans. by John Bester. Tōkyō: Kodansha International. Transl. Of: *Onnazaka*, 1957.
Enchi Fumiko (1983). *Masks*. Trans. by Juliet Winters Carpenter. New York: Knopf. Transl. of: *Onnamen*, 1958.
Enchi Fumiko (1984). *Kikujidō*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha.
Enchi Fumiko (1986). *Onnagata Ichidai: Shichisei Segawa Kikunojō-den*. Tōkyō: Kōdansha.
Enchi Fumiko (2007). *Joryūbungakushakai: kiroku*, ed. Hayakawa Jun'ichi. Tōkyō: Chūo Kōron Shinsha.
Faure, Bernard (2003). *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity and Gender*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Genette, Gérard [1988] (1990). *Narrative Discourse Revisited*. Trans. By Jane E. Lewin. New York: Cornell University Press. Transl. of: *Nouveau discours du récit*, 1983.
Gibbs, Raymond W. Jr. (2005). «Intentionality». In: Herman, David; Jahn, Manfred; Ryan, Marie-Laure (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. New York: Routledge, pp. 247-249.
Goodman, David (2010). «Aku no waikyoku: Mishima Yukio no engeki». In: *Mishima! Mishima Yukio no chiteki rūtsu to kokusaiteki inpakuto*, Irmela Hijiya-Kirschnereit (ed.), Kyōto: Shōwadō, pp. 229-247.
Halberstam, Judith (2005). *In a Queer Time and Space: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.
Harada Masashi (2005). «Sekkusharu mainoritī to heterosekkushisumu: sabetsu to tōjisha no shinriteki kon'nan wo megutte » [online]. Teapot: Ochanomizu University Web Library, pp. 145-57. Available at `http://teapot.lib.ocha.ac.jp/ocha/bitstream/10083/35610/1/09_145-157df` (retrieved: 2015-02-05).
Hare, Tom (ed.) (2008). Zeami Motokiyo: *Zeami: Performance Notes*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Hashimoto Osamu (2002). *«Mishima Yukio» to wa nani mono datta no ka*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha.
Hekman, Susan (2000). «Beyond Identity: Feminism, Identity and Identity politics». *Feminist Theory*, 1(3), pp. 289-308.
Hewitt, John P. (1989). *Dilemmas of the American Self*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
Hobsbawm, Eric; Ranger, Terence (eds.) [1983] (2010). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Isaka Morinaga, Maki (2002). «The Gender of Onnagata as the Imitating Imitated: Its Historicity, Performativity, and Involvement in the Circulation of Femininity». *Positions: east asia cultures critique*. Duke University Press, 10 (2), Fall, pp. 245-284.
Isaka Morinaga, Maki (2009). «Images of *Onnagata*: Complicating the Binarisms, Unraveling the Labyrinth». In: Zohar, Ayelet (ed.),

PostGender: Gender, Sexuality and Performativity in Japanese Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 22-38.
Jackson, Earl Jr. (1989). «Kabuki Narratives of Male Homoerotic Desire in Saikaku and Mishima». *Theatre Journal*, 41 (4), «Theatre and Hegemony» (December), pp. 459-477.
Kahr, Brett (2008). *Who's Been Sleeping in Your Head? The Secret World of Sexual Fantasies*. New York: Basic Books.
Kano Ayako (2001). *Acting Like a Woman in Modern Japan: Theatre, Gender, and Nationalism*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
Kanze Hisao (1980). *Kanze Hisao Chosakushū: Zeami no sekai*. Tōkyō: Heibonsha.
Kawase Kazuma (ed) (2001). Zeami Motokiyo: *Kadensho*. Tōkyō: Kōdansha.
Kawatake Toshio (2004). *Kabuki: Baroque Fusion of the Arts*. Trans. by Frank and Jean Connell Hoff. Tokyo: LTCB International Library. Transl. of: *Kabuki*, 2001.
King, Neal; Clasanti, Toni (2006). «Empowering the Old: Critical Gerontology and Anti-Aging in a Global Context». In: Baars, Jan; Dannefer, Dale; Phillipson, Chris and Walker, Alan (ed.), *Aging, Globalization and Inequality: The New Critical Gerontology*. New York: Baywood Publishing, pp. 139-157.
King, Winston L. (1970). «A Comparison of Theravada and Zen Buddhist Meditational Methods and Goals». *History of Religions*, 9 (4), pp. 304-315.
Kitahara Yasuo (2002-2006). *Meikyō Kokugo Jiten* [digital version]. Tōkyō: Taishūkan Shoten.
Kobayashi Fukuko (2005). *Enchi Fumiko: Jendā de yomu sakka no sei to sakuhin*. Tōkyō: Shintensha.
Konishi Jin'ichi (2004). *Zeami nōgaku ronshū*. Tōkyō: Tachibana Shuppan.
Konparu, Kunio (1983). *The Noh Theatre: Principles and Perspectives*. New York; Tokyo; Kyōto: Weatherhill/Tankōsha.
Koyama Hiroshi; Satō Ken'ichirō (1998). «Sotoba Komachi». In *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū*, vol. 59. Tōkyō: Shōgakukan, pp. 112-127.
Kurata Yōko (2010). *Kataru rōjo, katarareru rōjo*. Tōkyō: Gakugei Shorin.
Lamarque, Peter (1989). «Expression and the Mask: The Dissolution of Personality in Noh». *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 47 (2), Spring, pp. 157-168.
Layton, Lynne (2004). *Who's That Girl? Who's That Boy?: Clinical Practice Meets Postmodern Gender Theory*. Hillsdale NJ: The Analytic Press.
Laz, Cheryl (1998). «Act Your Age», *Sociological Forum*, 13 (1), March, pp. 85-113.
Lippit Mizuta Noriko (1991); Selden Iriye Kyoko. «Introduction». In: *Japanese Women Writers: Twentieth Century Short Fiction*. New York: Sharpe, viii-xxiv.
Maeda Yoshiko (1943). *Ono no Komachi*. Tōkyō: Sanseidō.

Margolin, Uri (2013). «Narrator». In: *The Living Handbook of Narratology* [online]. Hühn, Peter et al. (eds.). Hamburg: Hamburg University Press. Available at `http://wikis.sub.uni-hamburg.de/lhn/index.php/Narrator` (retrieved: 2015-02-12).

Maynard, Senko K. (1993). *Discourse Modality: Subjectivity, Emotion, and Voice in the Japanese Language*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

McClain,Yoko (1980). «Eroticism and the Writings of Enchi Fumiko». *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 15 (1), April, pp. 32-46.

Mezur, Katherine (2005). *Beautiful Boys/ Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-likeness*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mikals-Adachi Eileen B. (1988). «Enchi Bungaku ni okeru 'Reiteki-na mono'». *Kokusai Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū Shūkai kaigiroku*, 11, pp. 103-114.

Mishima Yukio [1951a] (1973-1976). *Shikan*. In: *Mishima Yukio zenshū* (Complete works of Mishima Yukio), vol. 25. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 426-430.

Mishima Yukio [1951b] (1973-1976). *Shin Utaemon no koto*. In: *Mishima Yukio zenshū* (Complete works of Mishima Yukio), vol. 25. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 433-435.

Mishima Yukio [1952a] (1973-1976). «Utaemon-jō no koto». In: *Mishima Yukio zenshū* (Complete works of Mishima Yukio), vol. 25. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, p. 495.

Mishima Yukio [1952b] (1989). *Sotoba Komachi oboegaki*, Mishima Yukio hyōron zenshū (Mishima Yukio essays collection), vol. 3. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 741-742.

Mishima Yukio [1953] (1989). *Sotoba Komachi enshutsu oboegaki*, Mishima Yukio hyōron zenshū (Mishima Yukio essays collection), vol. 3. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 742-743.

Mishima Yukio [1957a] (1973-1976). «*Chiekoshō» ni kitai suru*. In: *Mishima Yukio zenshū* (Complete works of Mishima Yukio), vol. 27. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 460-461.

Mishima Yukio [1957b] *Onnagata*, In: *Mishima Yukio zenshū* (Complete works of Mishima Yukio), vol. 10. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 335-61.

Mishima Yukio [1959] (1973-1976). *Rokusei Nakamura Utaemon josetsu*». In: *Mishima Yukio zenshū* (Complete works of Mishima Yukio), vol. 29. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha, pp. 378-391.

Mishima Yukio (1988). «Aku no hana: kabuki». *Shinchō*, 85.1 (January), pp. 266-281.

Mishima Yukio [1956] (2002). *Kindai nōgakushū*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha.

Mishima Yukio [1949] (2010). *Kamen no kokuhaku*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha.

Mitsuishi Ayumi (2003). «Onnagata, shizenshugi, seiyokugaku: 'shikaku' to jendā wo megutte no ichikōsatsu». *Nagoya Kindai Bungaku Kenkyū*, 20 (March), pp. 1-22.

Miyauchi Junko (1989). «Enchi Fumiko Kikujidō ron: chūseitekina sonzai no imi suru mono». *Ningen bunka kenkyū nenpō*, 9, pp. 25-36.
Mulvey, Laura (1975). «Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema», *Screen*, 16 (3), pp. 6-18.
Nakagawa Yūsuke (2009). *Jūichidaime Danjurō to Rokudaime Utaemon: Higeki no «kami» to kokō no «jotei»*. Tōkyō: Gentōsha.
Nakamura Nakazō (1982). «Yukitsukihana nemonogatari». In: Shimonaka Kunihiko (ed.), *Nihonjin no jiden*. Tōkyō: Heibonsha, pp. 401-474.
Nakamura Utaemon (1991). «Mishima kabuki no sekai». In: Shimanaka Hōji (ed.), *Mishima Yukio: Shibai nikki*. Tōkyō: Chūo Kōronsha, pp. 186-199.
Napier, Susan J. (2005). *The Fantastic in Modern Japanese literature: The subversion of modernity*. London: Routledge.
Noguchi Hiroko (2000). «Enchi Fumiko *Komachi hensō* no sōchi». *Nihon bungeigaku*, 36 (March), pp. 120-33.
Nora, Pierre (1989). «Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire». *Representations*, 26, «Memory and Counter-Memory» (Spring), pp. 7-24.
Nose Asaji (1987). *Zeami Jūrokubushū Hyōshaku*, vol. 1. Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.
Nünning, Ansgar F. (2008). «Reconceptualizing Unreliable Narration». In: Phelan, James; Rabinowitz, Peter J. (eds.), *A Companion to Narrative Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 89-107.
Orbaugh, Sharalyn (1996). «The Body in Contemporary Women's Japanese Fiction». In Schalow, Paul Gordon; Walker, Janet A. (eds.), *The Woman's Hand. Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, pp. 119-164.
Osborne, Peter; Segal Lynne (1994). «Extracts from *Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler*» [online], *Radical Philosophy*, 67, Summer. Available at `http://www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm` (retrieved: 2015-02-11).
Palmer, Alan (2004). *Fictional Minds*. Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska Press.
Pounds,Wayne (1990).«Enchi Fumiko and the Hidden Energy of the Supernatural». *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese*, 24 (2), November, pp. 167-183.
Rabinowitz, Peter J. (2005). «Audience». In: Herman, David; Jahn, Manfred and Ryan, Marie-Laure (eds.), *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*. New York: Routledge, pp. 29-30.
Rubin, Gayle S. (2007). «Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality». In Aggleton, Peter (ed.), *Culture Society and Sexuality: a Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 150-187.
Saeki Junko (1998). «From Nanshoku to Homosexuality: a Comparative Study of Mishima Yukio *Confessions of a Mask*». *Japan Review*, 8, pp. 127-142.

Saeki Shōichi (1972). «Genkei no saisei: Nihon no watashi wo motomete, VIII». *Bungei*, 11 (9), pp. 204-214.
Saeki Shōichi (1987). «Futari no monogatari sakka: Enchi-san no Mishima han'nō». *Bungakukai*, 41(1-2), pp. 286-288.
Salih, Sara (2007). «On Judith Butler and Performativity». In: Lovaas, Karen E.; Jenkins, Mercilee M. (eds.), *Sexualities and Communication in everyday life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 55-68.
Sandberg, Linn (2008). «The Old, the Ugly and the Queer: Thinking Old Age in Relation to Queer Theory». *Graduate Journal of Social Science*, 5 (2), pp. 117-139.
Sandberg, Linn (2011). *Getting intimate: a Feminist Analysis of Old Age, Masculinity and Sexuality* [Doctoral dissertation]. Linköping: Linköping University.
Scott, Adolphe Clarence [1955] (1999). *The Kabuki Theatre of Japan*. Mineola, New York: Dover.
Sedgwick Kosofsky, Eve (1994). *Tendencies*. London: Routledge.
Shen, Dan; Xu, Dejin (2007). «Intratextuality, Extratextuality, Intertextuality: Unreliability in Autobiography versus Fiction». *Poetics Today*, 28 (1), pp. 43-87.
Shimizu, Akiko (2008). *Lying Bodies: Survival and Subversion in the Field of Vision*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
Shirane, Haruo (2000). Shirane, Haruo; Tomi Suzuki (ed.), *Inventing the Classics: Modernity, National Identity, and Japanese Literature*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Shirasu Masako (1997). *Ryōsei guyū no bi*. Tōkyō: Shinchōsha.
Sontag, Susan (1972). «The Double Standard of Aging», *Saturday Review*, 55, pp. 29-38.
Staiger, Janet (2000). *Perverse Spectator: the Practices of Film Reception*. New York: New York University Press.
Sunami Toshiko (1998). *Enchi Fumiko Ron*. Tōkyō: Oufū.
Takechi Tetsuji (1979). «Mishima Yukio: Shi to sono kabuki». *Takechi Tetsuji zenshū*, vol 1. Tōkyō: San Ichi Shobō, pp. 423-466.
The American Psychiatric Association (1973). «Homosexuality and Sexual Orientation Disturbance: Proposed Change in DSM-II, 6th Printing, page 44». Document Reference No. 730008
Thornton, Peter (2003). «Monomane, Yūgen, and Gender in Izutsu and Sotoba Komachi». *Asian Theatre Journal*, 20 (2), pp. 218-225.
Tyler, Royall (ed.) (2002). Murasaki Shikibu: *The Tale of Genji*. New York: Penguin Classics.
Vervaeck, Bart; Herman, Luc (2005). *Handbook of Narrative Analysis*. Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska.
Wakamori Tarō; Yamamoto Fujie (1974). *Nihon no josei shi – Heian saijo no airaku*, vol. 2. Tōkyō: Shūeisha.

Wakita Haruko (2005). *Nōgaku no naka no onnatachi: onnamai no fūshi*. Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.
Watanabe Tamotsu (2002). *Onnagata no unmei*. Tōkyō: Iwanami Shoten.
Yamamoto Kenkichi; Enchi Fumiko; Saeki Shōichi (1971). «Mishima geijutsu no naka no Nihon to Seiyō». *Gunzō*, (February), pp. 124-150.
Yashima Masaharu (1985). *Zeami no nō to geiron*. Tōkyō: Miyai Shoten.
Yoshinaga, Seiko (2001). *Enchi Fumiko and Rewriting Postwar Japan: Translating Classics, Women, and Nation* [Doctoral dissertation]. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

The book focuses on the work of the Japanese writer Enchi Fumiko (1905-1986) and in particular on a selection of her late novels and novellas which are set in the world of traditional performing arts. The author analyzes the numerous intertextual references in Enchi's works, not only to *kabuki* and *noh* – in particular through her reinterpretation of central figures such as *Ono no Komachi* and *Kikujidō* – but also to the theatrical production of Mishima Yukio. Through a lively dialogue with gender studies, queer studies, theories of performativity and memory, Enchi's works reveal a strategic and expert use of the expressive potential of the stage. As a place *par excellence* where the fluidity of gender and more generally of identity are explored, in Enchi's works theatre becomes an efficacious tool to deconstruct discourses and subvert conventions.

Daniela Moro (PhD) teaches Japanese language at Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Japanese language and literature at the University of Turin.

Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia