Recent Scholarship on Japan

Recent Scholarship on Japan:

Classical to Contemporary

Edited by

Richard Donovan

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INTRODUCTION: CLASSICAL TO CONTEMPORARY

I had the privilege of editing the *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship* from 2013 to 2018. I was also the Assistant Editor of the *IAFOR Journal of Arts & Humanities* for the 2012 issue. My time working for the journals of the International Academic Forum introduced me to a large number of scholars across a range of disciplines and from around the world. Since IAFOR is based in Japan, many of the papers I chose and edited for the literary journal were related to Japan and Japanese literature. I have selected some of the best of these to be republished in this collection as a 'state of the scholarship' report on Japan in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The contributors come from both East and West, and comprise both established and up-and-coming academics—but what they all have in common is an abiding and deep interest in Japan and its place in the world.

As the name of this anthology suggests, the papers cover a large timespan, from the classical Heian-period centuries, through the mediaeval period that followed it, and on into post-war Japan and the present day. The topics are equally as wide-ranging; yet it is surprising how many links between eras—and, indeed, papers—appear in the course of reading.

The first section of the collection, Classical Literature and Its Reconfiguration, presents Heian-era Japan through a revelatory female lens. Karolina Broma-Smenda focuses on the famous female poet Ono no Komachi, not exploring her poetry but rather considering the wider societal question of how the real woman was fictionalised in various literary genres, and to what ends.

Meanwhile, Ka Yan Lam's paper reframes Enchi Fumiko's 1960s novel *Namamiko monogatari* (*A Tale of False Fortunes*)—which both imitates and alludes to actual Heian-period literary works—as a ground-breaking feminist metafiction.

The second section, Post-war and Contemporary Literature, begins with Mark Williams' ever-relevant consideration of the role of literature in addressing traumatic experiences, with particular reference to the works of two lesser-known Japanese novelists after World War II.

Continuing in a similar thematic and temporal vein, Robert Ono examines the solace, and, beyond that, the potential source of identity, that

a literary form of ancient origins offered one of Japan's most marginalised groups, the patients of its leprosariums, in the form of the *tanka*, or short poems, that they published in the various institutions' journals in the second half of the twentieth century.

Haruki Murakami aficionados will find much of interest in the two papers treating his fiction. Andrew J. Wilson begins by looking back to mediaeval literature, in this case Kamo no Chōmei's Kamakura-period memoir *An Account of My Hut*, for an austere Buddhist counterpoint to Murakami's collection of short fiction *After the Quake*, the latter which, he contends, exhibits a necessarily humanistic turn towards the family and community in our disaster-fraught and complex modern era.

Although Haruki Murakami has sometimes been criticised for his ready appropriation of Western consumerist icons, in her paper Burcu Genç recasts the analysis as a Baudrilliardian power struggle that has implications for all individuals' attempts at living authentically in present-day society.

The third section, the most diverse, presents Japan in the international context. Although focused mainly on linguistic issues, in its fascinating comparison of publishing in eighteenth-century Britain and modern Japan Noriyuki Harada's paper also highlights the significant role of private voices in advocating for and directing linguistic change, in contrast with the slower-moving state itself. He demonstrates how innovative individuals were responsible for initiating many of the standardisations of written language, such as orthography, on which relies the modern civilisation enjoyed in both countries.

Piers M. Smith takes us on to Roland Barthes' travelogues of Japan and China, although the subject of his paper is more correctly the question of objectivity, or lack thereof, in observers' perspectives on foreign destinations, and how the 'neutral view' espoused by Barthes represents a breakthrough in such viewpoints, allowing nonjudgmental analysis and more-legitimate reflection on the 'other'.

Next, Akiyoshi Suzuki addresses the vexed question of how to read the literature of another country or culture, and whether, indeed, this is possible. The implications for international and intercultural communication become evident in this wide-ranging paper, which is at once personal and universal. In particular, with reference to various world literatures and critics, Suzuki provides a nuanced challenge to the largely unquestioned predominance of the Western literary paradigm.

Finally, I have included my own paper, from the *Journal of Arts & Humanities*, to demonstrate the place of translation studies in the critical examination of Japanese literature in translation, drawing on Czech theoretician Jiří Levý's application of game theory to translation studies in

order to consider how the English translator's acts, or 'moves', of disambiguation, may affect the representation of the original Japanese text to the English-speaking world.

I wish to conclude this introduction by thanking the CEO of IAFOR and Executive Editor of its journals, Joseph Haldane, and the IAFOR publications team, for allowing me to compile this anthology. I would also like to thank my father for suggesting the idea in the first place.

Richard Donovan, Kyoto, November 2019

Note on the text:
Citation styles, spelling and punctuation in each paper appear much as in the original, but there has been some harmonisation of formatting across papers and the correction of minor errors that went unnoticed in the initial publication.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Karolina Broma-Smenda is currently an independent researcher. She received her MA in Japanese classical literature and culture in 2010 (MA thesis: *Feminity, Masculinity and Sexuality in Ancient Japan* (in Polish)) in the Department of Japanese and Korean Studies at the University of Warsaw, Poland. Between 2010 and 2016 she conducted dissertation research as a PhD candidate at the University of Warsaw (ABD). Her primary research interests were focused on female poets and writers of the Heian period. She was particularly interested in the analysis of Ono no Komachi's representations in Japanese culture. From 2013–14 she was an Exchange Researcher at Gakushūin Women's College in Tokyo as The Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Fellow.

Ka Yan Lam is a graduate student in the Department of English at the City University of Hong Kong. She is conducting comparative research for her PhD dissertation on the literature of Japanese novelists and late-Victorian writers, including Enchi Fumiko, Ōba Minako, Florence Marryat and Vernon Lee. She taught English in local schools and universities in Hong Kong and spent two years teaching at Ritsumeikan University in Japan. She has published articles in the *Journal of Popular Culture* and *Japanese Language and Literature*. Her research interests include British and Japanese literature, cultural theories, and comparative and world literature.

Mark Williams took his BA in Japanese Studies at the University of Oxford and a PhD in Japanese Literature at the University of California, Berkeley. He spent most of his career at the University of Leeds as Professor of Japanese Studies. He was also President of the British Association for Japanese Studies, 2008–11. He is currently Vice President for International Academic Exchange at International Christian University in Tokyo. He has published extensively, in English and Japanese. His published works include: *Endō Shūsaku: A Literature of Reconciliation* (Routledge); *Christianity and Japan: Impacts and Responses* (Macmillan; co-edited with John Breen), *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach* (Routledge; co-edited with Rachael Hutchinson) and *Imag(in)ing the War in Japan: Representing and Responding to Trauma in Post-war Japanese Literature and Film* (Brill; co-edited with David Stahl).

He is also the translator of *Foreign Studies* and *The Girl I left Behind*, two novels by the Japanese author Endō Shūsaku.

Robert Ono is a senior assistant professor at Japan College of Social Work. Having received his PhD from International Christian University in 2014 with his dissertation on Ki no Tsurayuki, a tenth-century Japanese poet, he continues to explore various Japanese works of literature and culture, especially from a comparative and theoretical perspective. He is also the translator of several academic volumes, including Nosco et al (eds), *Values, Identity, and Equality in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-century Japan* (Brill, 2015). His monograph in Japanese, *Ki no Tsurayuki: Bungaku to bunka no teiryū wo motomete* (Tōkyōdō Shuppan), was published in 2019.

Andrew Wilson earned his PhD in English in 1996 at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. He has spent 24 years as a full-timer at William Rainey Harper College in Palatine, Illinois, where he teaches writing and literature, and where he has served as the college's Honors Program Coordinator and the English Department's Co-Chair. He has published in the *Mississippi Quarterly*, *The Hemingway Review*, the *Encyclopedia of Beat Literature*, and *Thirty Years After: New Essays on Vietnam War, Literature and Film*. He lives in Chicago with his wife Amy and their two young children, Sophie and Sam.

Burcu Genç is a PhD candidate at the University of Tokyo. She is majoring in Comparative Literature and Culture. Her research focuses on Japanese author Haruki Murakami and his fiction in relation to Jean Baudrillard's theory of consumerism. She is also interested in Japanese political economy and post-war history as well as contemporary literature.

Noriyuki Harada, PhD, Professor of English at Keio University, focuses on eighteenth-century English literature and culture. His interest also extends to comparative literary studies and the history of books and print culture. He has published many books and articles both in English and Japanese and translated Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (2004), James Cook's *Voyages* (2006–07), Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the English Poets* (2009), and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (2012) into Japanese. His recent publications include "Translation and Transformation of Jonathan Swift's Works in Japan" in *"The First Wit of the Age": Essays on Swift and His Contemporaries in Honour of Hermann J. Real* (Peter Lang, 2013), and "Teaching Eighteenth-Century English Literature in Japan: Purposes, Curricula, and Syllabi" (*Lit Matters*, 2014).

Piers Smith is an Associate Professor of English Literature at Gulf University for Science and Technology, Kuwait. He has published chiefly in the fields of travel literature and travel writing, with excursions into Shakespeare, Burma, Borneo, Bourdieu, Auschwitz, Conrad, derealisation and the chronotope. Current research focuses on the grotesque in literature and representational art, versions of translated texts and the Gulf War.

Suzuki Akiyoshi, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Intercultural Studies at Nagasaki University in Japan, where he teaches American literature from the standpoint of world literature. He has published articles and books on American, Japanese and comparative literature. His recent books are *WorldCALL: International Perspectives on Computer-Assisted Language Learning* (co-author; New York: Routledge, 2011), *On the Late Life of Writers* (co-author; Kamakura: Minato-no-hito, 2014), and *East-West Studies of American Literature as World Literature & Essays* (Aichi: Hitotsubu Shobō, 2014).

Richard Donovan is an Associate Professor in Comparative Literature and Translation Studies in the Faculty of Letters at Kansai University. He has also worked as a translator at the Kyoto City International Relations Office. He obtained a PhD in literary translation studies at Victoria University of Wellington in 2012. The title of his thesis was *Dances with Words: Issues in the Translation of Japanese Literature into English*. Current research areas include the translation of modern and contemporary Japanese literature, representations of Kazuo Ishiguro's works in Japanese media, and the transmedial resurgence of *Twin Peaks*. His most recent book, also published by Cambridge Scholars, is entitled *Translating Modern Japanese Literature* (2019).

SECTION ONE:

CLASSICAL LITERATURE AND ITS RECONFIGURATION

How to Create a Legend? An Analysis of Constructed Representations of Ono no Komachi in Japanese Medieval Literature[1]

Karolina Broma-Smenda

Abstract

Although the historical figure known to us as Ono no Komachi (ca. 825–ca. 900) is considered to have been a famous and talented female court poet of the Heian Period in Japan, not much is known about her actual life. As a literary figure, however, her fame extended way beyond her own lifetime. Over the centuries she has continued to be an object of legendarization processes. Many literary works pictured her not only as a beautiful and skilled poet but also as *femme fatale*, courtesan, or Buddhist devotee. However, I believe that whom we currently call "Ono no Komachi" should be considered a literary construct significant for Japanese literature rather than a historical figure.

This paper analyzes representations of Ono no Komachi in Japanese medieval literature (nō drama plays, and *otogizōshi* secular tales), since I believe that the process of "creating" such legends has its origin in the specificity of the Japanese medieval period (12–16th centuries). Thus, the aim of this paper is to address the questions as to why this female poet was subject to legendarization processes and how various stages of those processes are responsible for the popularization of Ono no Komachi's historical image.

Keywords: Ono no Komachi, legendarization, classical Japanese literature

[1] This paper originally appeared in the *IAFOR Journal of Literature & Librarianship*, vol. 3, no. 1, November 2014, https://doi.org/10.22492/ijl.3.1.03.

1. Introduction

The historical figure known to us as Ono no Komachi (ca. 825–ca. 900) was a court poet of the Heian period (8–12th centuries),[2] who is frequently defined as a great example of female excellence in the area of poetry (Katagiri 1991, 122). Even today she remains one of the most legendary figures of classical Japanese literature and is pictured in many literary works. Her real name remains unknown: "Komachi" is a nickname—a court name (*nyōbō na*).[3] Ono no Komachi seems to have been a historically insignificant woman, because there is not the briefest mention of her in any of the historical records of her time. Possibly, young Ono no Komachi was sent to the capital Heian Kyō (present-day Kyoto), where she served at Emperor Ninmyō's court.[4] There she was recognized to be a talented poet, and was renowned for her unusual beauty. Indeed, her poetic talent is one of the features attributed to the historical Ono no Komachi that appears credible. She is one of the *rokkasen*—the six best *waka*[5] poets of the early Heian period[6]—who were defined as such by Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 872–945)[7] in the Japanese preface (*kanajo*) to the first Japanese imperial poetic anthology,

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[2] The Heian period is named after the capital city of Heian Kyō (Kyoto). The Heian period is considered to be the peak of the Japanese imperial court and aristocratic culture, noted for its art (especially poetry and literature). Although the imperial house seemed to be very powerful, the real political power was in the hands of the Fujiwara clan, an influential aristocratic family who had intermarried with the imperial family.

[3] In 1926 Sakurai Shū (1885–1942) suggested that Komachi's real name could be Ono no Yoshiko (dates unknown). Ono no Yoshiko appears in the ninth-century chronicle *Shoku nihon kōki* (Continued Late Chronicles of Japan, 869) as one of Emperor Ninmyō's (r. 833–850) consorts. Tsunoda Bun'ei argues that Ono no Komachi and Ono no Yoshiko are the same person (1970, 66–71).

[4] According to the traditional order of succession, Emperor Ninmyō (810–850) was the 54th emperor of Japan.

[5] *Waka* is one of the most representative types of poetry in classical Japanese literature. In contrast to *kanshi* poetry (written in classical Chinese), *waka* poetry was composed in Japanese. The term *waka* encompassed a number of differing forms, principally *tanka* (short poem), *chōka* (long poem), *sedōka* (head-repeated poem) and *bussokusekika* (Buddha's-footprint stone poem) (Hayashi and Andō 2008).

[6] Ono no Komachi is the only woman among the *rokkasen* poets. The other poets are: Ariwara no Narihira (825–880), Ōtomo no Kuronushi (d. 923), Kisen Hōshi (d. 909?), Sōjō Henjō (816–890) and Fun'ya no Yasuhide (d. 885) (*Britannica* 2011).

[7] Ki no Tsurayuki was a poet and courtier in the Heian period. Under the order of Emperor Daigo (r. 897–930), he was one of four poets chosen to compile the *Kokin wakashū* anthology (Yasuda 1975, 59–64).

the *Kokin wakashū* (Collection of Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times, 905). There are currently about 100 poems attributed to Ono no Komachi, but it is believed that she specialized in love poetry expressing a variety of human emotions. Unsurprisingly, her poetry is often interpreted as deeply subjective, passionate and complex (Carter 1991, 84). Her love poetry may have contributed to the flowering of legends and tales presenting her as an amorous woman.

Since little is known about her actual life, Ono no Komachi the historical figure, whose dates of birth and death are uncertain, had very little in common with the legendary Komachi that appears in numerous literary works of many periods. Probably shortly after Komachi's death, stories about her life were being filled with various imaginative guesses. As a result, her fame extended way beyond her own lifetime.[8] The image of Ono no Komachi has lived and grown through centuries of Japanese literature.

In many literary works she is depicted not only as beautiful and skilled poet, but also as old beggar, as in the Buddhist *kanbun* (Sino-Japanese prose) work entitled *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho* (The Rise and Fall of Komachi from Tamatsukuri, ca. 11th–12th century); *femme fatale*—as in nō plays; courtesan (*yūjo*);[9] or Buddhist devotee—as in the medieval secular tales *otogizōshi*.[10] Stories about Ono no Komachi have continued to be told, with variations, until the present day. She appeared in the Edo period's *ukiyo-e* paintings. Her legend inspired famous Japanese modern novelists such as Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (1892–1927), Enchi Fumiko (1905–1986) and Mishima Yukio (1925–1970). Stories of Komachi are even recorded in pop culture: in *manga* comics, *anime* movies and musicals. Thus, in this paper I will demonstrate that literary representations of that poet are great examples of legendarization processes, and that whom we currently call "Ono no Komachi" should be considered a literary construct

[8] In fact, Ono no Komachi is not the only legendary poet in the Japanese canon. Others include: Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (662–710), Semimaru (dates unknown), Ariwara no Narihira, Izumi Shikibu (ca. 970–ca. 1030) and Murasaki Shikibu (ca. 978–c. 1014 or 1025). See Anne Commons's work on Hitomaro (2009), Susan Matisoff's research on Semimaru's legend (2006) and R. Keller Kimbrough's work about reconfiguration of Izumi Shikibu in medieval Japan (2008) for examples.

[9] *Yūjo* or *asobi* were terms used to describe the various groups of courtesan-entertainers plying their trades in the cities, harbors, and highway inns of Kamakura and Muromachi Japan. It seems that in the medieval period the meaning of the term *yūjo* was closer to "wandering entertainer" than to "prostitute," indicating female singers, dancers, storytellers and puppeteers (Kimbrough 2008, 62).

[10] The term *otogizōshi* refers to a group of short secular stories written primarily from the Muromachi period (1392–1573) till the beginning of the Edo period (1600–1867) (Hayashi and Andō 2008).

significant for Japanese literature rather than a historical figure.

Also in this paper I would like to analyze representations of "Ono no Komachi" in some examples of Japanese literature, by asking why this female poet was selected as an object of the legendarization processes. What purpose did such legendarization serve? Here it ought to be emphasized that my analysis is not an attempt to establish any "truth" about her life. According to Joshua Mostow, such literary works were always designed for specific purposes and often for specific individuals. Thus, it is impossible to identify authors' intent, since the reception and production of literature is influenced by specific historical forces (1996, 10–11). Moreover, the aim of this paper is to address the question as to what factors influenced the creation of legends about Ono no Komachi (her passionate and witty poetry? Beauty? Alleged love affairs with courtiers?) and what possible reasons exist for the popularization of "Ono no Komachi" in the Japanese culture and literature of various historical periods.

2. Methodology—Legendarization Processes

The central thesis of this study is that Ono no Komachi is a great example of a constructed image that underwent numerous processes of legendarization over the centuries. Taking into consideration research in Japan and the West on legendarization and mythmaking processes in Japanese literature,[11] three types of legendarization processes can be distinguished: medievalization, marginalization and fictionalization.

Barbara Ruch describes medievalization as the process of legendarization undertaken according to and due to certain notions of characteristics of the Japanese medieval period,[12] comprising popularization of the literature and

[11] E.g. Nishiki Hitoshi's work on the origin of Ono no Komachi's legend (2004); Hamanaka Osamu's research on legendarization through presenting female characters as goddesses or Bodhisattvas (2011); Tsunoda Bunei's attempt to reconstruct Ono no Komachi's life (1970); Katagiri Yōichi's work on *Ise shū* (Ise Collection, date unknown) focusing on its fictive aspects (1985); Barbara Ruch's article about the creation of Japanese national literature in medieval times (1977); Terry Kawashima's publication about the process of marginalization from the late 10th to the early 13th century (2001); and Robert N. Huey's article dealing with the medievalization process in poetry (1990).

[12] The Kamakura period (1183–1333) marks the beginning of the so-called medieval period in Japan. It is a 400-year span from the fall of the Taira clan in 1185 to the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, when Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) unified the country under his control. The three main historical divisions of the medieval period are the Kamakura period, the Northern and Southern Courts period (1336–1392), and the Muromachi period. It was the time in Japan's history when the warrior

culture of the Heian period among lower social classes, the idea of *mappō*,[13] and generally the strong influence of Buddhism (1977, 279–309). In other words, in the medieval period, those from lower classes (merchants, craftsmen, peasants, etc.) "learnt" about culture and people from earlier periods through newly evolved literary genres such as *setsuwa* (didactic tales), *otogizōshi* (secular tales) and nō dramas. Probably some extra information, involving supernatural elements, was added to the stories about famous poets of the Heian period to attract the attention of the audience. The historical figures gain new characteristics, which are mostly unconnected to their possible biographies. The stories about medievalized characters usually center on some repeatable themes. For Ono no Komachi, the stories tend to focus on the idea of impermanence and worldliness (*mujō*), the consequences of karma, and the prospect of women's enlightenment.

Another important process is marginalization. Terry Kawashima defines "margin" as an unstable and negotiable result of textual effects generated by authors and compilers who display a desire to promote certain ideas at the expense of the targets of marginalization (2001, 3). This means that a margin is created by the centers of power to identify the excluded (the "marginal") and then remove the excluded element from the center. Yamaguchi Masao explains that the excluded elements are often what the center fears the most, since they are believed to hold a certain amount of power (ibid., 7). Moreover, Kawashima underlines that gender is a crucial factor in the process of marginalization (ibid., 13); thus, specific kinds of women (*yūjo*, for example) or elements connected with femininity (menstrual blood, women's bodies) are often constructed as marginal. For example, it was a regular Buddhist practice to use women's bodies as symbols of *mujō*, such as in the *kusōshi* scrolls (nine pictures of death) presenting the decomposition of a corpse. At first, the body which was presented on the scrolls was of indeterminate gender. Later, it turned out to be a body of a beautiful woman, as Buddhism considered a female body to be impure (marginal), and scrolls were used to discourage in Buddhist monks sexual desire and attachment to the lust of the world.

The third process is fictionalization, which is a "creation" or "re-creation" of the life and the representation of a poetry or prose author, since we in fact possess very little verifiable information on the real life of the author. One of the most spectacular examples of such tampering is *Ise monogatari* (The Ise Stories, 10th century),[14] in which poems by different poets help to create

society came to the fore (Shirane 2007, 567).

[13] The age in which Buddha's law will degenerate.

[14] *Ise monogatari* is an *uta monogatari* (collection of *waka* poems and associated narratives) dating from the early Heian period. Authorship remains unknown. It

a fictive life of Ariwara no Narihira (Okada 1991, 119–123). Finally in my study, I apply deconstructionist reading practices to demonstrate the difference between the historical figure and literary construct of Ono no Komachi. Deconstruction analysis originated in the works of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004). It is a way of analyzing texts in order to dismantle binary oppositions, which allows the revelation of texts' fundamental undecidability (Bertens 2008, 102).

In this paper I would like to focus on medieval literary works, since I believe that the process of "creating" such legends has its origin in the specificity of the Japanese medieval period. Thus, in this study I analyze the duality of the image of the heroine in the *kanbun* text entitled *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho* and examples of nō dramas and *otogizōshi* where Ono no Komachi appears as protagonist.

3. The First Stage of Legendarization: *Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho*

Tamatsukuri Komachishi sōsuisho (hereafter *Tamatsukuri*) is a work composed of a preface written in *kanbun* and a main text, which is a poem written in Chinese (*kanshi*). *Tamatsukuri* is usually dated in the late Heian period; however, the oldest manuscript is dated to 1219 (Tochio 2009, 12). The authorship was attributed to the monk Kūkai (774–835), the founder of the Shingon Sect.[15] Nowadays this attribution is heavily questioned and mostly rejected (Komine 1995, 47). But there is no doubt that the author could have been a Buddhist monk, because the Buddhist influence is obvious. The whole text is permeated by Pure Land (*jōdo*) ideology and the paradigm of the Four Sufferings (*shiku*). Even the double-narrative structure is a reference to the literary tradition of the Buddhist sutras, where the prose component is supplemented by verses that reiterate and poetically summarize the prose passage. Chinese influence also can be noted in *Tamatsukuri*, especially references to Bai Juyi's (772–846)[16] poems *Qin*

relates 125 episodes involving 209 poems with narratives. The nameless main character is presumed to be modeled on Ariwara no Narihira (*Zen'yaku kogo jiten* 2011). Ariwara no Narihira was a *waka* poet active during the Heian period. He was linked to the imperial family by both maternal and paternal lineage. He is considered to be a *beau homme* in Japanese culture, famous for his numerous love affairs (Hayashi & Andō 2008).

[15] Kūkai is known posthumously as Kōbō Daishi (The Grand Master Who Propagated Buddhist Teaching) (*Britannica* 2011).

[16] Bai Juyi (in Japanese: Haku Kyoi) was a Chinese poet of the Tang dynasty (618–907). His literary works were widely read and highly regarded in Heian Japan. He

zhong yin (Poems Composed at Qin Zhong, ca. 810)[17] and *Chang hen ge* (Song of Everlasting Sorrow, 806) (Tochio 2009, 12).[18] The central figure of the text is an old female beggar. In the preface, she tells the story of her life to a wandering monk (the narrator) she has met. After hearing her history, he retells the woman's tale in verse, which forms the main text.

It seems very likely that *Tamatsukuri* played a significant role in the legendarization process of Ono no Komachi. The name "Komachi" appears only in the title of the work, and never in the text itself. However, late-Heian and early-medieval texts identified the protagonist from *Tamatsukuri* with the figure of Ono no Komachi in her old age.[19] *Tamatsukuri* is a very challenging work, written in difficult language and full of references to Buddhism and Chinese poetry, thus I will not attempt to analyze the whole text here.[20] I would like to focus mainly on the duality of the heroine's image. The contrast between her youth and her old age is a characteristic of the Ono no Komachi legend. This motif is repeated in most of her later representations.

The prose introduction and poem present a marginalized woman. She tells the story of her life, beginning with being born into a wealthy family. She was extremely beautiful, and a lot of men fell in love with her. She did not choose any of them as her husband. With the passing of time she lost her family and financial support, along with her beauty. Her reputation was destroyed, the suitors stopped visiting her, and finally she turned into a fallen woman, marrying a hunter and bearing a son. But she had been living in such poverty that her child died. (Marriage and a son appear only in the poem version of her story.) Alone and homeless she realizes the evanescence of life (neither beauty, nor wealth, nor anything else can last forever) and starts thinking about becoming a nun. Her arrogance is a cause of her decline.

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was also influential in the development of Japanese literature (*Britannica* 2011).

[17] Bai Juyi composed ten poems describing the sadness of the populace in the capital Chang'an (Lin 2012, 54).

[18] *Chang hen ge* is a long narrative poem that tells the story of Yang Guifei (in Japanese: Yōkihi; 719–756), the beloved consort of Emperor Xuanzong (r. 712–756) of the Tang dynasty (*Britannica* 2011).

[19] E.g. *Hōbutsushū* (Collection of Treasures, ca. 1179) and *Jikkinshō* (A Miscellany of Ten Maxims, ca. 1252). The poetry treatise to *Kokin wakashū* entitled *Gyokuden shinpi* (Treatise of Secret Treasure) states that Kōbō Daishi predicted Komachi's old age of pain as a karmic punishment, which moved him to write *Tamatsukuri* (Komine 1995, 47).

[20] See Kawashima 2001, 123–174, and Ryu 1999, 191–240, or Tochio's annotations (2009) for an extended analysis of *Tamatsukuri*.

> I am a child of an entertainer's household, I am from a wealthy and prosperous family. When I was at my peak, my arrogance was extreme; now that I have fallen, my sorrows are deep. (Kawashima 2001, 307)

She herself points to the reason for her miserable state. Even though the woman draws a moral conclusion from her past behavior, I would rather agree with Kawashima's opinion that she is portrayed as a victim of family ambition and misfortune (ibid., 134), as we can read:

> Thus the children of the emperor and courtiers fought day and night to propose marriage to me; the rich and noble guests all competed to set a wedding date. Despite these wishes, my parents did not permit them, and my brothers would not hear of it. Their only ambition was to make me an empress, and they had no intention of letting me be a wife of an ordinary family. (Ibid., 309)

Her parents rejected marriage proposals to fulfill their plan of their daughter becoming the Empress. But after their death, their daughter became impoverished, because there was nobody to support her.

Besides presenting a marginalized female figure, *Tamatsukuri* can also stand as an example of the fictionalization process, since soon after the work appeared, it was established that it represents (recreates) the old age of Ono no Komachi. I consider *Tamatsukuri* a didactic work intended to warn unmarried woman. The heroine, or, it is better to say, her family, arrogantly refused the marriage proposals of her many suitors. As a result, she grew old and ended her life in solitude. The image of an aged, miserable Komachi wandering outside the capital has its origin in the *Tamatsukuri*. This work created the enduring image of Ono no Komachi as beauty turned old beggar. Nevertheless, it ought to be emphasized that the female beggar in *Tamatsukuri* is not Ono no Komachi. The didactic story depicted in the text differs a lot from the common perception of her life.[21]

4. Making a *Femme Fatale*: Ono no Komachi in Nō Plays

Sarah M. Strong points out that the nō version of a particular famous character is often the one that has mattered most over the centuries, supplying the defining characteristics and preoccupations by which that character has been understood and known (1994, 391). Certainly, Ono no Komachi is a great example of one such famous character. In fact, she

[21] See Tsunoda 1976, 63–82, or Katagiri 1991, 122–157, for their attempts to reconstruct the poet's actual life. Moreover, the poetic skills of the protagonist are not mentioned anywhere in *Tamatsukuri*.

became the protagonist of five nō plays: *Sotoba Komachi* (Komachi at the Gravepost, 14th century), *Sekidera Komachi* (Komachi at Sekidera, ca. 15th century), *Ōmu Komachi* (Komachi's Parrot-Answer Poem, ca. 14th–16th century), *Sōshi Arai Komachi* (Komachi Clears Her Name, ca. 14th–15th century) and *Kayoi Komachi* (The Nightly Courting of Komachi, 14th century),[22] which fashioned her not only as a talented poet and beautiful lady-in-waiting, but also as one who behaves haughtily toward suitors and suffers the later consequences.

As aforementioned, *Tamatsukuri* is the first example of the legendarization process of Komachi's image. I believe that nō plays are the second important stage in the creation of Komachi's representation. I would like to examine two plays entitled *Sotoba Komachi* and *Kayoi Komachi*, which, in my opinion, popularized the *femme fatale*-like image of Ono no Komachi.

The theme which is characteristic of both plays is the well-known Hundred-Nights Tale (*Momo yo gayoi*) or the Making the Edge of the Carriage Bench Tale (*Shiji no hashigaki*). The plot of the tale depicts the story of a young man named Fukakusa no Shōshō, who falls in love with Ono no Komachi. When he confesses his feelings, she asks him to come for a hundred nights and sleep on a carriage bench in the garden. At dawn he should make a mark on the edge of the bench. Even amid windy, rainy or snowy weather, Fukakusa comes every night. Unfortunately, on the last night he dies on his way to Ono no Komachi's residence. The Hundred-Nights Tale was popularized by nō plays during medieval times in Japan. Kan'ami Kiyotsugu (1333–1384),[23] the author of *Sotoba Komachi* and *Kayoi Komachi*, created Ono no Komachi as an irresistibly beautiful, but cold-hearted, lady who skillfully deludes her suitor. However, in both plays, Ono no Komachi is also an old beggar looking for a way to gain salvation. The nō theater's rather negative presentation of Ono no Komachi in the Hundred-Nights Tale became the basis for numerous other tales about her and another reason for her legendarization.

The play *Sotoba Komachi* is traditionally classified as a fourth-category

[22] I will discuss the plot of *Sotoba Komachi* and *Kayoi Komachi* later in this paragraph. *Sekidera Komachi* by Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443) tells the story of old Ono no Komachi, living in great poverty. On the evening of the Tanabata Festival she is visited by the abbot of Sekidera Temple, who comes to talk with her about poetry. *Ōmu Komachi,* also by Zeami Motokiyo, depicts Komachi as an old poet living in Sekidera Temple. She receives a poem sent to her by Emperor Yōzei. *Sōshi Arai Komachi* (author unknown) presents Komachi not as a *femme fatale* but the winner of an imperial poetry contest (*uta awase*).

[23] Kan'ami Kiyotsugu was a nō actor and author. He was also a founder of the Kanze school of nō (*Britannica* 2011).

or miscellaneous play (*zō mono*) and performed as an old-woman play (*rōjo mono*) (*Britannica* 2011). The play tells the story of two priests from Mt. Kōya who meet an old beggar woman on their way to the capital. She is resting on a tree stump, not realizing that it is an ancient *stupa*.[24] One of the priests rebukes her, and they start discussing Buddhist doctrine. Impressed by her knowledge of religion, the priests ask the old woman to reveal her name. It turns out that they are talking with Ono no Komachi—a renowned poet of the court. During conversation, Komachi starts to reminisce about how beautiful, talented and haughty she had been in the past. In a fit of madness, she imagines that she is Fukakusa no Shōshō, a suitor whom she had rejected in her youth. In the end, Komachi returns to normal and salvation is promised to her.

Kayoi Komachi is also an example of a miscellaneous play, but is defined as a *mugen* nō play because it deals with ghosts (*Britannica* 2011). The play features a priest during his meditation training in a mountain village. He is visited daily by a woman bringing him food. The woman reveals that she is the ghost of Ono no Komachi, and the priest decides to go to pray for her. But when the priest goes to hold a memorial service for Komachi, suddenly the vengeful spirit of Fukakusa no Shōshō appears. He forbids the priest to pray for Komachi. The priest asks two ghosts to show him the circumstances in which Fukakusa was visiting Ono no Komachi for one hundred nights. Finally, Komachi and Fukakusa are able to attain salvation together.

Sotoba Komachi and *Kayoi Komachi* are filled with Buddhist ideology and are probably the most overtly Buddhist among all Komachi nō plays.[25] It seems that in both, Ono no Komachi's life is subsumed to the purposes of Buddhist doctrine. The events of her life reflect the concept of Four Sufferings (*shiku*): birth, old age, sickness and death. She experiences physical and mental suffering and pain in her life, especially the inevitable woes of illness, aging and death. In *Sotoba Komachi*, Ono no Komachi is an old female beggar, so ashamed of who she became that she is hiding from the eyes of the people.

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[24] The stupa is a spiritual symbol manifesting the Buddha Vairocana and the cosmological belief in the Mahayana. *Māhāyana*, lit. "Great Vehicle," is one of the three main extant branches of Buddhism referring to the path of the Bodhisattva seeking complete enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings (Terasaki 1984, 180).

[25] One of the main functions of nō troupes was to propagate Buddhism and raise funds for the temples or shrines. At the early stages of the development of nō theater, many professional theatrical groups were closely affiliated with powerful Buddhist temples (Terasaki 1984, 155).

KOMACHI: But now I am grown loathsome even to sluts,
Poor girls of the people, and they and all men
Turn scornful from me.
Unhappy months and days pile up their score;
I am old; old by a hundred years.
In the City I fear men's eyes[.]
(Waley 1976, 88)

Komachi's degradation in her old age symbolizes the idea of *mujō*—impermanence. In her youth she was a beautiful and highly intellectual poet, but time changed her into a decrepit old beggar. As mentioned, women's bodies were often used as symbols of *mujō*, presenting the idea that even the most beautiful woman can become repulsive in her old age. Moreover, this tendency can be also determined as a part of the marginalization of old women's sexuality. According to Fujiwara no Akihira (d. 1066), an old woman should rid herself of sexual desires, take Buddhist vows and become a nun (Kawashima 2011, 148). However, in *Sotoba Komachi* it is clear that Komachi's painful old age is a karmic punishment for her being cruel and cold towards her suitors.

KOMACHI (while being possessed by Fukakusa): No, no.…
Komachi was very beautiful.
Many letters came to her, many messages—
Thick as raindrops out of a black summer sky.
But she sent no answer, not even an empty word.
And now in punishment she has grown old:
She has lived a hundred years[.]
(Waley 1976, 96)

In *Kayoi Komachi*, she is a ghost, but even after death she is not released from suffering. When the mystery woman finally introduces herself as the ghost of Ono no Komachi, the priest recollects a story about a skull reciting the poem:

MONK: The woman who was here did not say that her name was Ono-no-Komachi but simply said she was an old woman living near Ichiharano, where silver grasses grow, and then disappeared. Wait. That reminds me of something. When a person tries to go through Ichiharano, from behind a bush of silver grass, a poem is heard as such. "Alas, blowing autumn wind hurts my eyes. I no longer reveal myself as Ono-no-Komachi because silver grasses are growing from the eye-pits of my skull." This is the poem Ono-no-Komachi composed. So, I am certain that that lady must be the phantom of Ono-no-Komachi. I shall go straight to Ichiharano and pray for consoling her soul. (Kayoi-Komachi 2008, 4; errors sic passim: translator unknown)

The skull legend (*komachi dokuro tan*), along with the *momo yo gayoi* tale, is another example of the well-known stories about Ono no Komachi, which turns up in various different versions in medieval literature.[26] Mainly the skull legend presents Komachi as a poem-composing skull left in the middle of a field and calling attention to the pain in her eye socket from a growth of pampas grass (Kawashima 2011, 177). This story appears another attempt to marginalize the figure of Komachi. She is nothing more than skull and bones. Moreover, her past transgressions disrupt her peace even after death. In the skull story, a passerby (usually a man) hears her complaints and after following the voice reciting the poem he discovers a skull. After removing the grass, he gives the skull a burial. In *Kayoi Komachi*, there is a priest who decides to pray for the consolation of Komachi's soul.

The structure of both plays is hence quite similar: a priest comes to a certain place and meets a stranger. During conversation the stranger introduces herself as Ono no Komachi. It turns out that she needs the help of the priest to attain salvation and finish her earthly sufferings. Terasaki notes that the priest and Komachi form an opposing pair. The priest represents the element of the sacred, while Ono no Komachi is the profane (1984, 163). Unfortunately, Komachi is not allowed to gain enlightenment easily. The angry spirit (*onryō*) of Fukakusa no Shōshō appears. In *Sotoba Komachi*, he possesses Komachi, which is also a Buddhist conceit, since it was believed that those who suffered violent deaths became vengeful spirits able to possess the offender (Terasaki 1984, 156–57). In the second play, the ghost of Fukakusa forbids the priest to pray for his ex-lover's soul. Finally, in both plays, after reenacting the past events, Komachi is released from her earthly sufferings by the righteousness of Buddha. The reenactment of one hundred nightly visits is Komachi's act of *sange*—she can confess her sins and express repentance.[27]

> **RECITERS:** At that moment, a thought briefly comes to his mind that even if it is served in a beautiful cup like one made of moonlight, he should observe the Buddha's rule prohibiting drinking alcohol. Thanks to this brief thought, General [Fukakusa no Shōshō] gains the opportunity that leads to enlightenment. He is now able to atone for his various past wrong deeds. Finally, Ono-no-Komachi and General Fukakusa become Buddhas together. They become enlightened together. (Kayoi-Komachi 2008, 11)

[26] See Kawashima 2011, 175–215, for an analysis of different versions of the skull legend.

[27] *Sange* (or *zange*) is a Buddhist practice of revealing past transgression before the Buddha or other person(s) and expressing regret for that transgression (Strong 2001, 80–81).

However, in *Sotoba Komachi*, salvation is only promised to Ono no Komachi, as she decides to devote herself and her "heart flower"—her poetic talent[28]—to the path of Buddha.

> **CHORUS (*Speaking for KOMACHI, who is now no longer possessed by Shōshō's spirit)*:**
> Was it his spirit that possessed me,
> Was it his anger that broke my wits?
> If this be so, let me pray for the life hereafter,
> Where alone is comfort;
> Piling high the sand
> Till I be burnished as gold.
> See, I offer my flower [her heart flower] to Buddha,
> I hold it in both hands.
> Oh may He lead me into the Path of Truth,
> Into the Path of Truth.
> (Waley 1976, 98)

Furthermore, the number one hundred in the Hundred-Nights Tale is also significant. As Terasaki explains, Ono no Komachi is an old woman of nearly one hundred who has been suffering for many years because of her cruel and arrogant behavior in her youth. The number ninety-nine symbolizes the approach, while one hundred represents the achievement: for Fukakusa, it is the fulfillment of his promise to Komachi; for Komachi, it is the final enlightenment (Terasaki 1984, 180–81). In addition to presenting important Buddhist principles such as *mujō* and the karmic consequences of transgression, *Sotoba Komachi* and *Kayoi Komachi* show that literally everybody has an equal opportunity to achieve enlightenment: even the "fallen" Ono no Komachi. Nevertheless, the significance of the Buddhist influence should not be overestimated. Besides being made extremely aged and decrepit, Ono no Komachi is also portrayed as a lady of intellectual power. Her intellect remains sharp and she is brilliant in discussion about Buddhist doctrine, as well as displaying a wide knowledge of *waka* poetry. In *Sotoba Komachi*, when the priest rebukes Komachi for sitting on the stupa, she begins to question his doctrine. In the long disputation between Komachi and the priest, she upholds the concept of non-dualism, while the priest defends the doctrines of the Shingon Sect. Komachi contradicts him on every point, expressing the belief that

[28] Most of *Sotoba Komachi*'s translators and experts agree that "heart flower" (*kokoro no hana*) is a synonym for poetry or poetic talent, which is a reference to the *kanajo* preface to the *Kokin wakashū*, where Ki no Tsurayuki describes Japanese poetry as something that "has the human heart as seed."

everybody has an equal opportunity to achieve salvation.[29] She ends the discussion by reciting a poem:

> **KOMACHI:** I now emboldened
> Recite a riddle, a jesting song.
> "Were I in Heaven
> The Stupa were an ill seat;
> But here, in the world without,
> What harm is done?"
> **CHORUS:** The priests would have rebuked her;
> But they have found their match.
> (Waley 1976, 93)

The riddle depends on the word "stupa." In Japanese the word for stupa is *sotoba* (卒塔婆). However, *sotoba* written in different characters (外場) means "outside," or "without," and it is with this connotation that it is used in the poem. Komachi is saying that since she is outside of the Western Paradise ("in the world without" in Waley's translation), she is not offending the Buddha by sitting on the stupa. Her composition of a riddle or a joking poem (*tawabure*) is proof of her poetic talent and knowledge, since two *tawabure* poems are said to be the father and the mother of poetry in the *kanajo* preface (Murphy 2011, 38).

Finally, I believe that in these plays, Ono no Komachi is presented as a real *femme fatale*, whose charms bond her lovers in irresistible desire, leading them into deadly situations. As was mentioned at the beginning of this section, *Sotoba Komachi* and *Kayoi Komachi* popularized the Hundred-Nights Tale. However, the *momo yo gayoi* tale appears in early medieval works. Fujiwara Kiyosuke (1104–1177) in his work *Ōgishō* (The Secret Teachings) cites the story of one hundred nights based on the earlier, little-known work of poetic criticism entitled *Utarongi* (Poetic Discourse) attributed to Fujiwara Kintō (1056–1128). The plot of the story centers on an unnamed man courting a beautiful woman who wants to test his feelings by requesting him to visit her residence for one hundred nights in succession, and make a mark on a carriage bench in the garden. The last night, he cannot fulfill the woman's request, because one of his parents suddenly dies. In another version of this story, he becomes ill and dies. What is more, the woman feels sad when her lover-to-be does not appear, and she makes the final mark herself (or composes a poem expressing her feelings).[30]

[29] See Waley 1976, 89–93.

[30] See Strong 1994, 401–412, for an analysis of the origins of the Hundred-Nights Tale.

However, the woman from the tale is not identified as Ono no Komachi. It seems that the author of the nō plays was the first to link Komachi with the Hundred-Nights Tale, depicting her as a cruel and cold-hearted lady. The story received a new framework, becoming a didactic work that raises the issues of the evanescence of life, karma, and the opportunity to achieve salvation, the role of female poetry fashioning the image of Ono no Komachi in a rather negative way, which highly influenced her later reconfigurations.

5. A Fallen Lady Able to Enter the Path of Buddha: Reception of Ono no Komachi in *otogizōshi*

The nō plays popularized some attributes for which Ono no Komachi has been known: (1) poetic talent, (2) being an extremely beautiful lady-in-waiting, (3) an amorous nature, (4) haughty behavior toward suitors and (5) an old age of suffering and ostracization. In particular, her image in medieval literary works is often exaggerated. Another example of medieval literature where Ono no Komachi appears as the protagonist is the secular tales *otogizōshi*. Actually, there are four *otogizōshi* stories about Komachi.[31] Here I would like to focus on the *otogizōshi* entitled *Komachi sōshi*, which is the most studied of the medieval Komachi stories (Teele 1993, 39). What distinguishes this tale from the others is that it is not influenced by nō.

Komachi sōshi represents the standard story of flourishing and decline, of a beautiful young woman who becomes an old and suffering wanderer looking for Buddhist enlightenment. At the beginning, the text introduces the past of the courtesan named Ono no Komachi (*komachi to iu irogonomi no yūjo ari*),[32] her beauty and attractiveness to men, her talent as a poet and

[31] *Komachi sōshi* (The story of Komachi) is the main subject of this paragraph. *Komachi Uta Arasoi* (Komachi's Poetry Disputes) comprises three short episodes presented in three different nō plays: the first episode about Komachi's victory in the poetry contest known from *Sōshi Arai Komachi*, the second focused on poetry exchange between an old Komachi and the Emperor, which is a reference to *Ōmu Komachi*, and finally the third, presenting religious discussion between Komachi and a Buddhist monk, based on *Sotoba Komachi*. *Komachi monogatari* (The Tale of Komachi) combines motifs from the Hundred-Nights Tale, Komachi's skull tale, *Sotoba Komachi* and *Sekidera Komachi*. The fourth tale entitled *Kamigawari Komachi* (Komachi Speaks for the Goddess) depicts the story of a young poet who receives teachings about the way of poetry from an old Komachi living outside the capital. In this tale references to the *momo yo gayoi* tale, the skull tale, *Tamatsukuri* and nō plays can also be traced.

[32] Ichiko 2010, 87. This sentence can be translated as: "There was an amorous

her service at court. The text emphasizes how many letters young Komachi received from suitors.[33] Then the action advances, and we find Komachi in her old age living in poverty and loneliness in her house in Ono. Suddenly, she is visited by Ariwara no Narihira. His visit is not only an opportunity to reminisce about the past, but also to express repentance for her transgression (her haughty distance from the suitors). Since Narihira plays a priestly role (Strong 1991, 83), his arrival allows Komachi to begin her *sange*, revealing her sins before him. He urges her to forget the past and to concentrate instead upon Buddha Amida's Pure Land of Western Paradise. Finally, the religious awakening of Ono no Komachi occurs and Narihira disappears. Then she starts wandering around villages and finally expires on a grass field called Tamatsukuri no Ono.

It is obvious that *Komachi sōshi* is an example of a didactic work used by Buddhist evangelists to present possible ways to attain salvation to the lower-class audience. Michele Marra observes that the Japanese middle ages witnessed an explosion of legends of famous female poets of the Heian period (1993, 58). Since female sexuality is often used as a tool to win men's attention (Goodwin 2007, 117), Heian female poets are portrayed in several ways in secular tales. One such representation constructed by Buddhist mythmaking is as courtesans (*yūjo*) obsessed by love and passion. Izumi Shikibu is also considered to be a famous female court poet. She is well known for her relationships with men, especially for her affair with Prince Atsumichi (987–1007), which is described in her alleged diary entitled *Izumi Shikibu nikki* (Diary of Izumi Shikibu, ca. 1007). In the *otogizōshi* tale *Izumi Shikibu* she is also represented as *yūjo*. According to the tale, a courtesan named Izumi Shikibu decided to abandon her new-born baby boy. Time passes and Izumi Shikibu's beautiful appearance awakes great passion in a young monk named Dōmei. Finally, it turns out that he is Izumi's abandoned son. This discovery is so shocking for Izumi Shikibu that she decides to leave the world of human passions by entering the Tendai temple on Mt. Shosha (Ichiko 2005, 131–39).[34]

Both Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu became objects of the medievalization process; their "lives" were translated into Buddhist tales and identified as *yūjo*. Their nature is a cause of their decline. Ono no Komachi's wholesale rejection of her suitors marginalizes her from the capital—she lives a life of isolation. The passionate behavior of Izumi Shikibu brings her pain. As fallen ladies they have only one solution: devote

courtesan named Komachi."

[33] A total number of 44 letters is mentioned (Strong 1991, 83).

[34] This story completely distorts Izumi Shikibu's biography. There are no historical records confirming that she even bore a son, let alone had a love affair with him.

themselves to Buddhist teachings. Then, they will be cleansed of their impurities and will be able to obtain the mercy of Buddha Amida.

> Then Narihira said, "Don't long so for the past. Just as meeting is the beginning of separation, so birth is the beginning of death. In this world that is just the spray of water, what more is there to say? Forget all that you have just said, throw away your longings, and pray 'Let me be drawn to the holy world of the western paradise.' Get rid of your suffering, and help those you know and care for."
>
> Finally opening up her heart, Komachi said, "Ah, what wonderful words! How grateful I am for these words of guidance, signposts along the road of confusion as I wander between life and death. Really, really thinking about it, women do indeed have deep-rooted delusion. I shall put my reliance in you, as in Kannon, and in Jizō."
>
> Hearing her say this, Narihira said, "The Buddha will show you his compassionate mercy as you pursue the Road of Truth."
>
> (Teele 1993, 48)

The moral of such stories is again quite clear: If Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu with their past transgressions and extremely amorous nature could attain salvation and be reborn in the Pure Land, anybody can enter the path of Buddha. It seems that Buddhist propagandists, trying to draw the attention of the common people, created such stories utilizing famous Heian poets as heroines to be comprehensible for the converts.

Finally, while Ono no Komachi's earlier coolness destroyed her reputation, she is not the only lady at court who kept her suitors at a distance. Lady Ise (?875–?938), who was a highly regarded *waka* poet of her time (Okada 1991, 13),[35] consistently refused the advances of men interested in her. Lady Ise is also known from *Ise shū*—her personal collection of narrativized poems (re)presenting, perhaps, a vision of her court life.[36] The reception to Lady Ise's resistance is rather positive: She is even rewarded for such behavior, becoming the mother of Emperor Uda's son.[37] This contrasts strongly with Ono no Komachi's old age of loneliness and suffering.

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[35] The *Kokin wakashū* anthology contains twenty-two of her poems, the largest number for a woman. She also took part as the sole woman in one of the most important poetry contests, "The Poetry Contest of the Empress During the Kampyō Era" (*kampyō no ontoki kisai no miya uta uwase*) in 893 (Okada 1991, 116). Thus it can be concluded that Lady Ise's poetic mastery was appreciated during her lifetime.

[36] In 888, Lady Ise entered the court of Empress Atsuko (872–907), consort of Emperor Uda (r. 887–97).

[37] There are no historical data supporting the existence of this child. In the text of *Ise shū*, we read that the little prince died at the age of five.