

The Cross-Cultural Power of Yuri: Riyoko Ikeda's Queer Rhetorics of Place-Making in *The Rose of Versailles*

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Abstract: *This article analyzes the first four episodes of the adapted Japanese animation of Riyoko Ikeda's The Rose of Versailles to illustrate the value of examining queer rhetorical practices of place-making in transnational texts. Set in the late eighteenth century, The Rose of Versailles provides viewers a glimpse of the French Revolution through the main character Lady Oscar, the gender-bending bodyguard and advisor of Marie Antoinette. By queering place and space, Ikeda develops an alternative narrative of eighteenth century France that illuminates queer possibilities of being.*

Keywords: *queer and feminist place and space, queer and feminist place-making, queer and feminist rhetorics, Japanese animation and manga, Riyoko Ikeda, The Rose of Versailles, French Revolution, Yuri texts, Shōjo texts, transnational texts.*

Riyoko Ikeda's manga *The Rose of Versailles* has, since its first publication in April 1972, captivated Eastern and Western audiences with its adventurous main character, Lady Oscar, a gender-bending (female to male) French guard who exudes masculinity. Set in the late eighteenth century, the manga tells the story of Lady Oscar, who, although born a woman, performs as a man, donning masculine clothing, engaging in fist and sword fights, participating in several romantic relationships and friendships, and dying at the storming of the Bastille fighting for her beliefs. Reflecting its popularity since its publication, *The Rose of Versailles* is currently 14th on the list of all-time best-selling shōjo manga, having sold a grand total of 15 million volumes worldwide (Napier 92 and "Learn French"). In addition, *The Rose of Versailles'* adaptation as a screenplay for the Takarazuka (an all-female Japanese acting troupe) was extremely successful. First performed in 1974, the adapted screenplay continues to be performed today with thousands of Japanese women loyally attending and watching the play. In 2011, the Takarazuka brought in revenue of 25.7 billion yen, thanks in part to the continuous performance of *The Rose*

of *Versailles* ("Takarazuka"). Finally, to celebrate Ikeda's prolific influence in shaping Japanese manga and animation, Right Stuff!, a US Japanese animation and manga publisher, released in 2013 the adapted animation of *The Rose of Versailles* for the first time in North America, and in 2016, Udon Entertainment, another US Japanese animation and manga publisher, published a press release on their website stating their intention in publishing an English version of the manga ("The Rose" and "New Title").

Although *The Rose of Versailles* is often identified in popular and scholarly sources as a shōjo manga, or a manga intended for a young, female audience, the manga can also be classified as a "Yuri" manga. Yuri (meaning "lily" in Japanese) texts—short stories, manga, animation, and poems—explore sexual and non-sexual relationships between women. Yuri texts such as *The Rose of Versailles* provide fantastical worlds for young readers to explore queer female subjectivities. With the advancement of various technologies, the circulation of Yuri texts has gone global. Readers and viewers can access Yuri texts on the internet and can read and view them on multiple devices, making these texts cross-cultural and transnational forces that shape both Eastern and Western perspectives of gender and sexuality.

As a result, feminist rhetoricians have much to gain in examining Yuri texts. A Yuri text, such as *The Rose of Versailles*, can be a site where feminist rhetoricians move beyond the "elite, white, male, European-based habits and measures" that serve as what Jacqueline Royster and Gesa Kirsch call the "boundaries of locally defined assumptions, values, and expectations regarding how rhetorical performance is constituted and valued" (112). Feminist scholars can push against these boundaries by illuminating the efforts of manga artists to challenge dominant ideologies of gender and sexuality and valuing their works by including them in feminist rhetorical canons.

Most importantly, valuing the rhetorical efforts of manga artists who explore gender and sexuality also validates and makes visible LGBTQ lives that use such works to socially and culturally survive. To provide but one example of the implications of examining Yuri rhetorical works in feminist rhetorical studies, I here discuss the first four episodes of the adapted animation of Ikeda's *The Rose of Versailles* as venues for queer rhetorical practices of place-making. To provide readers a better understanding of the theoretical perspectives that underpin my analysis of *The Rose of Versailles*, I first offer an interdisciplinary review of traditional and contemporary notions of place. At the end of the analysis, I consider the social and political possibilities of examining rhetorical texts like *The Rose of Versailles* in feminist rhetorical studies.

Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives of Place

Aristotle's notion of place, which he examines in *Physics*, still shapes the way individuals think about the concept of place. Aristotle defines place as "the innermost motionless boundary of what contains." He then uses several examples, such as a vessel in water, to explain this definition:

Just, in fact, as the vessel is transportable place, so place is a non-portable vessel. So when what is within a thing which is moved, is moved and changes its place, as a boat on a river, what contains plays the part of a vessel rather than that of place. Place on the other hand is rather what is motionless: so it is rather the whole river that is place, because as a whole it is motionless. (Aristotle)

Many philosophers, theorists, and scientists have since challenged Aristotle's perspective of a motionless place. Today, many scholars think of place as being pliable, encompassing multiple trajectories, multiplicities, and interactions (Massey, *For Space*, 59). Yet, one only has to look at the most popular dictionaries, such as *Merriam-Webster*, *Cambridge*, and *Oxford*, to see that Aristotle's motionless place still informs common understandings of place as a static location or an inanimate container. *Merriam-Webster* defines "place" as a "specific area or region of the world" and/or "building, part of a building, or area that is used for shelter" and *Oxford* considers "place" to be a "particular position or point in space." The common, dictionary definitions of place shape the way larger publics think of place and (re)circulate these definitions in larger rhetorical arenas.

In her reconsideration of Aristotle's notion of place, however, Gayle Salamon suggests that place is closely connected to the relation of intelligible things: "Contrary to the hope that place will be sufficient to give things a solid anchor in existence, we find that place is reckoned only through relation. The place of things, and thus the 'thing' of place, is only found through other things" (134). An individual can only identify and recognize a place through its relation to other kinds of socially and materially intelligible things, for example, objects and subjects (bodies). Not all social and material things are intelligible to all or even most individuals, however. For example, bodies that blur or break regulatory norms of gender and sexuality are often not socially intelligible. To Salamon, these kinds of bodies cannot produce place because their lack of intelligibility prevents it (139). Bodies that are intelligible in a location can shape space because they expand into space and saturate space (Ahmed 11).

In contrast, bodies that are not intelligible in a place cannot take up space because they lack social, cultural, and political power to influence space and cannot be read in terms of the same social, cultural, and political power. Doreen Massey calls this connection between power and "space power"

geometry—the connective hierarchy of social groups across space-time (*Space, Place, and Gender*, 149). Some social groups, because of their social, political, and cultural positions, have power to change space and time, whereas other social groups are “effectively imprisoned by it” (Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, 149). Since there is a privileging of normative sexualities and genders in the West, bodies that break these norms do not have social power to make, shape, and change spaces. As a result, individuals, especially queer individuals, might find that they cannot orientate (extend, take up, and saturate space) in a place to be intelligible to others. Without locations where they can extend into various kinds of spaces, queer beings become cultural, social, material, and geographical castaways, drifting in and out of places where they are unrecognizable and invisible to the things in those locations.

Places can also prevent the extension or visibility of certain bodies and lives because those places cannot be separated from the histories that have shaped them. Ahmed illustrates this connection between histories and places through an analysis of “home” as a place: “homes are effects of the histories of arrival” (9). An individual arriving to a home makes the home a place by extending and saturating the space. The repeated (and possibly different) histories of coming home also shape the place of “home.” Places remember, as Halberstam notes, in that a place not only contains memories but is the product of those memories (*The Queer Art of Failure*, 65). Additionally, memories further reinforce the making of a place by repetitive performances in a place, for example, the culinary practices in a kitchen (Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 65). Such performances become a way of producing a history about a place. In other words, knowingly or unknowingly, bodies, through certain kinds of repeated performances in a place, produce a history of that place.

The histories produced in certain places can also determine the kinds of things bodies can do (take up space or not take up space) in a place. Especially in the West, history, according to Michel Foucault, categorizes, arranges, and distributes knowledge to make sense of things, and through this epistemology, “beings emerge into their precarious, glittering existence,” or bodies can very well not emerge at all (219). As Foucault has explored in many of his texts, from the confessional to the panopticon, Western civilization desires to put things (objects and subjects) in order and in their place. The arrangement of certain things can make some things more transparent or apparent than others. In fact, the arrangement of knowledges, bodies, and objects can be used to alienate, isolate, and discriminate against various different kinds of bodies. To Ralph Cintrón, one of the main purposes of Western order and arrangement is to separate the West from non-Western cultures:

Unconsciousness eventually becomes associated with those cultures that do not leave a record of themselves, while consciousness becomes associated with high culture, particularly Western civilization and its ability to create a historical record by which the present becomes consciously aware of its relationship to the past. (33)

While Cintrón discusses recording and documenting from a larger systematic perspective (West vs. Other), the West also has no qualms in othering its own inhabitants: queers, transgender people, intersex people, women, people of color, people with disabilities, sick people, and the elderly. One only has to look at the privileging of certain kinds of histories and the lack of different kinds of histories regarding various kinds of communities in the West.

Not all hope is lost though for unintelligible beings. Just as much as there are devices to keep beings in order and in place, there are also devices that produce other kinds of orders and places. Such devices, for example, shape and make queer orientations. Ahmed defines and explains the implications of queer orientations:

Queer orientations are those that put within reach bodies that have been made unreachable by the lines of conventional genealogy. Queer orientations might be those that don't line up, which by seeing the world "slantwise" allow other objects to come into view. (107)

In the interest of supporting such orientations, queer rhetorical devices can be employed to help individuals move in the world slantwise. To produce queer orientations and make queer space, queer individuals engage in rhetorical practices of queer place-making. These are, according to Halberstam, "place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage" to oppose dominant ideologies of heterosexuality, family, and reproduction (*In A Queer Place*, 1, 6). Queer place-making practices come in a variety of forms, but all of them rely upon the participation of members in queer counterpublics. As Michael Warner notes, a queer counterpublic not only "represents the interests" of its queer members but also produces "new worlds of culture and social relations in which gender and sexuality can be lived" (57). One way to create alternative social worlds and relations is through the production and circulation of different kinds of bodily practices, discursive practices, and visual practices. Ikeda's *Rose of Versailles* provides an excellent example of this kind of production and circulation.

Queer Places and Spaces in Japan

A lack of discursive and visual queer spaces for Japanese females to explore gender and sexuality was, in fact, the catalyst that led to not only Ikeda's publication of *The Rose of Versailles* but the publication of other manga (mostly

written and illustrated by women) in the 1970s. While some mediums and writers during the Meiji era (1868-1912) and Taisho era (1912-1926) provided alternative spaces for women to explore sexuality, many of these spaces and mediums disappeared because of changing social and political ideologies that shaped various public spheres during the early period of the Showa era (1926-1989). In the Showa era, Japan shifted across the political spectrum, moving from a democratic nation to a totalitarian nation, where the government censored any communicative texts, especially women's journals and magazines of gender and sexuality, that challenged the political system explicitly or implicitly (Robertson, "The Politics," 426). Additionally, the government further reinforced old policies (most produced before or during the Meiji period) and produced new policies that limited and constricted economic, political, and social possibilities for Japanese women. Even though the majority of these policies have since been repealed or are not enforced in Japan's current political system, many still shape the economic, political, and social realities for Japanese women (see, for example, Wantanabe's discussion of the Japanese notion of motherhood). As a consequence of these policies, male artists dominated the manga industry up until the 1970s, with most of them producing manga for male (shōnen) and female (shōjo) audiences (Ito 471). This climate did not mean that women were completely absent from the production of manga, however. In the 1960s, readers began to read manga written and illustrated by Japanese women (Ito 470). Aimed towards a shōjo audience, female manga artists explored girls growing up under harsh circumstances, fighting challenges, and obtaining happiness (Toku 23). Yet in spite of the manga being "for women, by women, and about women," the narratives in such manga did not (re)explore alternative genders and sexualities like its predecessors in the Meiji and Taisho era (Ogi 784). As a result of the marginalizing social context before the 1970s, feminist and queer audiences, manga artists, and illustrators desired texts and sites that provided feminist and queer social spaces to explore current and past social, political, and historical issues. Manga, such as Ikeda's *The Rose of Versailles*, became rhetorical arenas for feminist and queer individuals to challenge and contest past and present social and political power structures.

The Rose of Versailles: Synopsis

The Rose of Versailles creates queer rhetorical places that challenge traditional histories of the French Revolution and that enable queer viewers to reorient and extend their bodies into fantastical visual spaces of eighteenth-century France. Before exploring some of the specific strategies Ikeda uses to accomplish this, a brief summary of *The Rose of Versailles* is in order. The text challenges many social, political, and historical concerns through the

main character Lady Oscar during a time of upheaval in eighteenth century France. In 1755, Oscar François de Jarjayes, anatomically a woman, is born into a royal military family. Her father, Count Jarjayes, decides to raise Oscar as a man to continue the military lineage. At 14 years old, Lady Oscar becomes Commander of the Royal Guard, an esteemed position in which she becomes Marie Antoinette's bodyguard. Her anatomical sex is no secret to the royal family and courtiers. In many ways Oscar's androgyny reflects the extravagance and the lavishness of the court. Female and male courtiers erotically view her as an exotic being. Oscar explores many types of relationships with women and men, but she ultimately falls in love with her companion since childhood, André Grandier. As she becomes more acquainted with the royal family, Oscar begins to question the growing excess and decadence of the royal court, which later leads her to forsake the royal family. She and her men join the revolutionaries, taking part in the storming of the Bastille where she dies.

Queer Place-Making in the Palace of Versailles

The first (and most dominant) place where queer-place making activities take place is at the Palace of Versailles. While the characters move among several different settings in the animation, they often congregate at the Palace of Versailles. Originally built during the seventeenth century by King Louis XIV and later extended by subsequent monarchs, the Palace of



Fig. 1 Hallway in the Palace of Versailles (Ikeda)

Versailles was the political center for the royal family and courtiers. The adapted animation of *The Rose of Versailles* realistically portrays the palace's massive halls, ballrooms, bedrooms, and expansive gardens (Fig. 1). Even the animation illustrates the opulent furniture and décor of the time period with highly detailed realism. In deploying this kind of detail, Ikeda follows a trend among manga artists, who often pay particular attention to small details, creating meticulous and realistic environments (McCloud 216).

While the Palace of Versailles is realistically depicted in all of its splendor and glory, the characters (or bodies) within the palace appear in fantastical

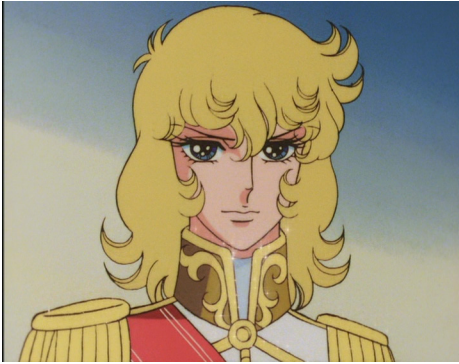


Fig. 2 Young Lady Oscar (Ikeda)

forms, thus producing a queer orientation. Ikeda contrasts the realism of the Palace of Versailles with fantastical shōjo bodies. Although most Western and Eastern audiences think of the term shōjo as one that categorizes and defines a particular genre, the term shōjo originally meant something entirely different: a “not-quite-female” female (Robertson, “The Politics,” 426). Originating during the Meiji pe-

riod, the term shaped the discursive and visual practices of early manga artists and illustrators in depicting the female body. Hiromi Dollase speculates on the meaning of this illustrative tradition:

Big and unrealistic eyes look only at dreams. A slim body is not made for reproduction. A small mouth is not for consuming food. The girl's bodies do not need to have realistic functions: Shōjo are created only to be admired and gazed at by girls. They are so unrealistic that their nationality is blurred; they exist just as Shōjo. (733)

Lady Oscar and Marie Antoinette's bodies follow the shōjo bodily tradition of being “not quite” female. Both are slender, lacking hips, breasts, and voluptuous lips, and have massive and starry eyes (Fig. 2). In fact, at times, Lady Oscar appears gaunt which only further accentuates her androgyny and masculinity (Fig. 3). Drawing on Lingis, Deleuze, and Foucault, theorists who explore the body as inscriptive surface, Elizabeth Grosz points out that the incisions or markings of the body do not create a map of the body; instead, the body itself becomes the map (139). What coordinates, in thinking of Aristotle's perspective of place, does a bodily map tell its geographers or travelers? A bodily map, according to Grosz, indicates a “subject's social, sexual, familial,



Fig. 3 Lady Oscar's Androgynous Body (Ikeda)

marital, economic position or identity within a social hierarchy" (140). In other words, physical and non-physical markings on bodies can be *read*. Markings (or perhaps the lack of markings) tell individuals who are gazing at these bodies how to engage and interact not only with marked bodies but also how to interact and engage in the space around those marked bodies. Grosz uses the example of tattoos to explain how this reading occurs. In certain cultural spaces, such as some Polynesian cultures, tattoos can represent particular social positions and can not only tell the individuals who bear those tattoos to perform in certain ways but can also cue others to interact with those marked individuals in certain ways. In a similar way, the stylized, marked bodies of Lady Oscar and Marie Antoinette help viewers navigate towards, as Ahmed calls it, a "queer moment," where the "world no longer appears 'the right way up' (65). Lady Oscar and Marie Antoinette's bodies are not Western or Eastern. They are *shōjo*: the not-quite-female human being. They are queer. Their bodies become coordinates to help readers reach a queer moment and a queer place.

At the same time that viewers read the queer markings of Lady Oscar's body, they experience her performance of masculinity as an anatomical woman, a performance that further queers the Palace of Versailles. When entering the Palace of Versailles in episode three ("Sparks Fly at Versailles"), three female courtiers comment to each other that Oscar is "dashing," "stunning," "cold," and "irresistible." Tall, slender, muscular, and agile, the handsome, blonde-haired Oscar makes female courtiers swoon with ecstasy and eroticism. One even makes the comment: "If only she were a man... I'd never leave her alone!" (Fig. 4). Lady Oscar is quite the masculine fellow. Oscar walks, talks, and presents herself with an air of confidence and cockiness (at times Oscar's cockiness gets the best of her). In thinking about the theoretical implications of Butler's notion of performativity and its connection to place and space, Minelle Mahtani points out that "instead of thinking about space and place as pre-existing sites that occur," Butler's notion of performativity suggests that bodily performances can (re) produce and shape places and spaces (68). Bodies produce and shape places



Fig. 4 Female courtiers gazing upon Lady Oscar (Ikeda)

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and spaces not only through their shapes and sizes but also through their performances and practices (McDowell 34). As Lady Oscar performs masculinity within the palace, she disrupts the realistic illustration of the palace, thus producing a queer place that allows queer viewers a way to extend into space.

Oscar's performance also engages another queer place-making rhetorical practice: the production of gender dysphoria—a disruptive mode of traveling to a queer place as a result of the body and the mind not aligning to one particular gender. Although Salamon explores gender dysphoria when thinking through the lived experiences of trans individuals, Salamon's notion of gender dysphoria is useful when unpacking the ways in which Oscar's performance shapes the (dis)orientations of viewers. She defines "gender dysphoria" as a sense of identity that brings forth feelings of alienness and otherness, feelings that shape certain kinds of trajectories (Salamon 93). A trajectory can be defined as a path an object (or subject) takes when moving, physically and mentally, through space and time. Trajectories, or lines, according to Ahmed, can "function as forms of 'alignment,' or as ways of being in line with others" (15). As such, trajectories and lines can produce pressure upon individuals to follow certain lines over other lines (Ahmed 17). Although there are many different kinds of lines and trajectories, a line or trajectory that everyone feels, perhaps some more than others, is a line of "straightness" (Ahmed 16). Ahmed notes that lines and trajectories, for example, a line of straightness, emerge or come into view through the repeated performances of individuals who have followed those trajectories before:

Lines are both created by being followed and are followed by being created. The lines that direct us, as lines of thought as well as lines of motion, are in this way performative: they depend on the repetition of norms and conventions, of routes and paths taken, but they are also created as an effect of this repetition. (16)

To put it in the words of Butler, "one does not 'do' one's gender alone" (*Undoing Gender*, 1). The previous passengers of the line of which one is on shapes the gender, or genders, and sexuality, or sexualities, one performs and practices in one's life. Oscar's repetitive masculine acts and gestures, "a stylized repetition of acts," in juxtaposition with Oscar's contrasting anatomical body brings into view a line or trajectory of gender disorientation, a path that has emerged through the repetition of other real life or fantastical figures (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 191). If viewers continue to follow Oscar by continuing to watch the animation, they are pressured into following the path that Oscar lays out for them. Viewers, therefore, may begin to experience gender dysphoria that could be liberating and exciting for some viewers and distressing and upsetting for other viewers. Oscar provides a trajectory (or passage) for audiences

among genders that, according to Butler, are “not reducible to the normative insistence on one or two” (*Undoing Gender*, 43). Oscar brings into view a trajectory to a queer place.

The animation of *The Rose of Versailles* also uses variations in lighting—lightness and darkness—to create queer locations within spaces in *The Rose of Versailles* but most especially at, around, and inside the Palace of Versailles.



Fig. 5 Sparkling Lights on Ceiling of Palace (Ikeda)

Dazzling and sparkling lights surround certain objects and beings, for example, flowers, chandeliers, and fountains (Fig. 5). These sparkling lights also surround certain characters such as Oscar and Marie Antoinette when they enter certain scenes or feel certain emotions. In contrast, antagonists, such as Madame du Barry, mistress of Louis XV, and

Duke Orleans, the cousin of Louis XVI, are surrounded by ominous and dark shadows and magical and ethereal lightening when angered by their failed attempts to take the throne. While the dazzling and sparkling displays may seem hyper-fantastical and excessive (a person does not physically sparkle or dazzle when entering a room although a person may in a figurative sense), it is precisely this fantastical excess that allows audiences of the animation to imagine different queer places, producing queer spaces, beings, and becomings. Butler states that fantasy is “part of the articulation of the possible; it moves us beyond what is merely actual” and “into a realm of possibility, the not yet actualized or the not actualizable” (*Undoing Gender*, 28). Fantasy, therefore, is a location of possibilities of becomings and beings: a location, Ahmed notes, of subjectivity itself (35-36). The dazzling displays (because they are fantastical) at the Palace of the Versailles suggest possibilities of being and becoming to viewers in ways that make many different kinds of subjectivities available. According to Halberstam, “what has made queerness compelling as a form of self-description in the past decade or so has to do with the way it has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space” (*In a Queer Time*, 1-2). Ikeda’s queer French Revolution opens up new narratives about eighteenth century France and opens up alternative spaces for audience members to explore their queer desires and queer possibilities.

Queer Place-Making in the Family Home

In contrast to the place and space of the Palace of Versailles, the family home, the second most prominent place in the animation, violently confines and constricts bodies, most particularly Lady Oscar. Oscar illustrates the experiences of queer bodies tenuously navigating in a heteronormative world that can be discriminatory, marginalizing, and violent. A home is often thought of as a place of comfort. Ahmed notes that the term “comfort” often suggests “well-being and satisfaction, but it also suggests an ease and easiness” (425). Therefore, to be comfortable means that one is so at ease in one’s environment that it is difficult to differentiate between where one’s body ends and the rest of the world begins (Ahmed 425). Home is considered to be one of those places where one becomes one with the space. One can think of normative genders and sexualities, too, as comfortable places to reside in. Heteronormativity is a comfortable place where one feels the warmth and love of a world “one has already taken in,” and many benefit from this warmth and love by not feeling alienated or displaced (Ahmed 425). Queer lives, however, are quite the opposite. Queers feel discomfort: “one’s body feels out of place, awkward, and unsettled,” constricted, and restricted (Ahmed 425). If one feels out of place and constricted, one cannot extend in space—making space one’s own. Domestic trauma and violence because of one’s queer feelings and desires in a home constrict space to the extent that one cannot make that place one’s home. In short, a family home for a queer individual is sometimes not livable at all.

Lady Oscar’s home attests to such discomfort and constriction. Her father Count Jarjayes physically and verbally abuses her due to his own fear of losing social standing with the king and the nobility. Although Count Jarjayes treats Oscar like a son and even calls her his son, especially outside the home, he still views her as woman, a second-class citizen at best, who must respect and abide by the will of the patriarch. Ikeda introduces viewers to the oppressive atmosphere and discriminatory practices in the home in the first episode, “Oscar! The Destiny of the Rose,” when Oscar,

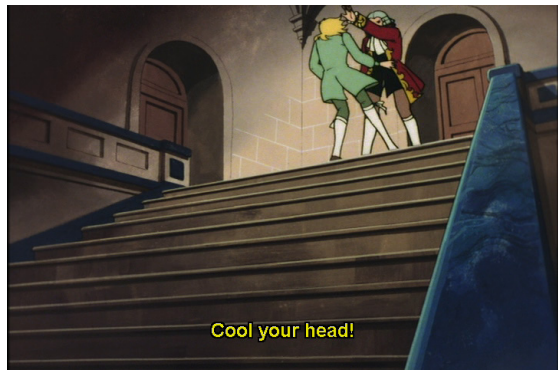


Fig. 6 Count Jarjayes pushing Oscar down a flight of stairs (Ikeda)

at the age of 14, refuses to compete for the Commander of the Royal Guard position, the official position of being Marie Antoinette's bodyguard and advisor. Young Lady Oscar declares to her father, "I do not wish to babysit a girl [Marie Antoinette]." There are three reasons why Lady Oscar does not want to be Marie Antoinette's bodyguard and advisor: 1) Already at the age of 14, Lady Oscar is becoming resistant to political authority; 2) She is a young adolescent, who, like most adolescents, would rather spend her day enjoying the company

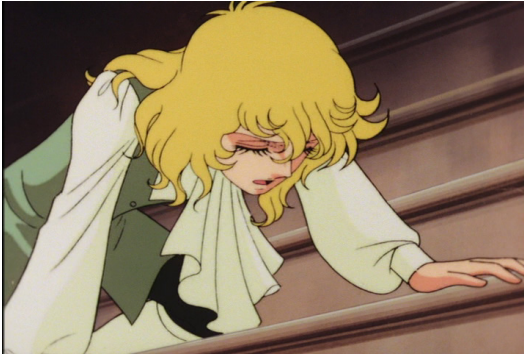


Fig. 7 Lady Oscar catching breath after fall (Ikeda)

of friends, such as spending time with her best friend and servant André; and 3) She, reminiscent of *shōjo*, does not perceive herself as male or female at this point in her life. In response to Oscar's declaration, Count Jarjayes grabs Oscar and yells at her, "Don't be a fool! Cool your head!" (Fig. 6). He then pushes Lady Oscar down a large and long flight of stairs. Although visibly shaken, Oscar rises after her fall and says to her father, "If you'll excuse me." She then removes herself from the family home.

Oscar rhetorically symbolizes the trauma and violence that many queer individuals endure physically, emotionally, and sexually, especially when the trauma and violence come from family in familial places. In many cases, domestic abuse from family members is often disguised as discipline in the form of corporal punishment (Fig. 7). Yet, queers know that corporal punishment in familial places often stems from the failure of not doing one's gender or sexuality right (Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 96). The purpose of using physical punishment, according to Grosz, is to (re)produce and (re)inforce memory: "Civilization instills its basic requirements only by branding law on bodies through a mnemonics of pain, a memory fashioned out of the suffering and pain of the body" (131). Physical punishment not only produces physical pain but also psychic pain via memory. Additionally, the body (physical markings as a result of punishment) constantly reminds the person of the psychic inscription, the memory of enduring the physical punishment. Systematically, the memory then has the potential to inform not only the person who has been punished but also individuals who engage or interact with the punished individual. Punished (or inscribed) bodies produce, reinforce, and circulate

knowledge(s) (Grosz 136). Although cultural, social, and political perspectives have certainly evolved and changed since Ikeda's *The Rose of Versailles*, many adult queer individuals still remember trauma and violence as children and teenagers in domestic places, mostly because such punishment and pain, as Grosz explains, can never be forgotten. There cannot only be physical tracings on the body but also psychic tracings on the body. Oscar's violent experiences remind viewers of their own possible memories connected to violence in domestic spheres because of their queer feelings. These memories also connect Oscar to such viewers because they *read* the physical and psychic tracings on Oscar's body, further providing a link (through Oscar) to travel slantwise.

Ikeda's exploration of violence in the home is also important because, as Ann Cvetkovich notes, trauma that happens in domestic or private spheres is often invisible to those outside of those spheres (3). For viewers of the animation who have also experienced trauma within domestic locations, Oscar's violent experiences make traumatic, violent memories and experiences transparent, which can finally bring LGBTQ viewers validation of their own traumatic pasts in domestic places. Oscar desires to be an intelligible being outside the traditional notions of gender and sexuality and is willing to endure violence and trauma for visibility not only for herself but also for the people that surround her, including readers and viewers. Ikeda, therefore, incorporates violence in the animation to help her queer viewers find validation of their own experiences and let them know that they are not alone.

Queer Place-Making in Queer Spaces

In addition to specific locations, such as the Palace and the home, Ikeda



Fig. 8 Globe of Europe on fire (Ikeda)

also produces queer spaces to encourage queer place-making activities. A European map on fire is an example of such a space (Fig. 8). In episodes one ("Oscar! The Destiny of the Rose") and four ("Roses, Wine, and the Conspiracy..."), viewers watch as a globe, which turns into a larger map of Europe, and another regional map of France, Austria, and Switzerland, are engulfed in flames. These images challenge dominant, cis-gendered

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narratives of the French Revolution by representing a map—a manifestation of dominant place-making activities—on fire. Cintrón suggests that “a map is an abstraction or representation, a kind of text” (29). He further explains that maps are a certain type of “optical knowledge that comes into being after real space overwhelms the eye” (29). Cintrón connects maps and histories as being a discourse of measurement, an attempt of “ordering, and understanding, a fixing of protean and complex conditions” (42). However, like any other type of text, a map can be “both a lie” and an “important revelation” (29). Kress and Van Leeuwen’s articulation of maps further clarifies Cintrón’s claim. Maps are often interpreted through an “objective attitude,” but depending upon the angle of any given map, the map can be read or interpreted much differently (Kress and Van Leeuwen 149). A frontal angle of a map, such as the maps in *The Rose of Versailles*, actually elicit “maximum involvement” and action (Kress and Van Leeuwen 149).

What kind of involvement and action? The fire in the foreground provides a possible answer

(Fig. 9). Fire, or the color red, as a signifier in Japan and in the West, often denotes passion, anger, spirit, intensity, vigor, renewal, energy, and power. With this understanding in mind, the fire, coupled with the frontal angle maps, challenges or resists the current discourse of measurement of the French Revolution: the current historical record, which



Fig. 9 Map of Europe on Fire (Ikeda)

fails at documenting and archiving the emotional experiences and lives of the individuals of the French Revolution, individuals such as queer women like Lady Oscar. Because the map asks audiences to become involved and take action, it compels audiences to take part in changing the larger narrative of the French Revolution by creating a queer counternarrative.

Conclusion

Because of Ikeda and her fans’ efforts, *The Rose of Versailles* became a pivotal manga that fostered queer rhetorical place-making practices in the East and now in the West. Royster and Kirsch might suggest that such practices

unite “women not just across sociopolitical and cultural contexts, settings, and communities” but also “across generations, across time,” and, most importantly for my purposes, “across space” (Royster and Kirsch 101). Today, female manga artists, such as Shimura Takako and Milk Morinaga, are passing down these queer rhetorical place-making practices with intense examination of queer female experiences. In Takako’s *Sweet Blue Flowers* and *Wandering Son*, readers and viewers explore coming out of the closet, staying in the closet, passing in modern Japanese settings, physical and psychic trauma (such as incest), the feelings related to such trauma (such as shame), and gender dysphoria. In *Kisses, Sighs, and Cherry Blossoms*, Morinaga explores the affective consequences (good or bad) of queer practices and desires, such as becoming aware of one’s queer feelings for the first time, engaging in queer practices for the first time, and having to hide one’s queer feelings and desires from family members, friends, and crushes. Because both Takako’s and Morinaga’s works explore middle and high school individuals understanding and practicing queer feelings and desires, many of the settings take place in schools or school clubs, such as Literature and Drama clubs where main characters read Western Victorian novels or perform Western Victorian plays. The clubs provide spaces for queer place-making activities with Western texts, such as *Wuthering Heights*, becoming a vehicle to explore queer feelings and desires. Undoubtedly, works like Takako’s and Morinaga’s would not have been possible without pioneering predecessors such as Riyoko Ikeda.

Queer places and spaces are integral to the lives of queer individuals because, as Ahmed poignantly notes, it is queer desire that produces such places and spaces: queer desire is what “makes things happen” (106-107). If this is the case, there are certainly more stories, like *The Rose of Versailles*, that make things happen, and as rhetoricians, we should encourage these stories to make things happen not only for our own further understanding of feminist rhetorical practices in transnational texts, such as Yuri texts, but for a more pressing reason. Countless children, teenagers, and young adults suffer at the hands of people they love because of identifying as LGBTQ. In *Tendencies*, the late Eve Sedgwick makes note of this particular kind of trauma and violence:

I’d heard of many people who claim they’d as soon as their children were dead as gay. What it took me a long time to believe is that these people are saying no more than the truth. They even speak for others too delicate to use the cruel words. For there is all the evidence. (Sedgwick 2)

Although Sedgwick’s statement comes from a work published in 1993, her words, like the majority of her words, still ring true today. Many LGBTQ youth experience physical, sexual, and emotional harassment and abuse by

family members, friends, mentors, and lovers in public and personal places. For many of these young LGBTQ individuals, Japanese manga and animation has become a way for them not only to explore gender and sexuality but also to escape the violent and traumatic realities of their lives and to find validation of their identities through the characters and their stories.

Many LGBTQ scholars (who in some shape or form have also experienced harassment and abuse) have made promises to themselves or to family members, friends, and mentors to not only make LGBTQ lives visible but also to make LGBTQ lives livable. Sedgwick made such a promise:

I think many adults (and I am among them) are trying, in our work, to keep faith with vividly remembered promises made to ourselves in our childhood: promises to make invisible possibilities and desires visible; to make the tacit things explicit, to smuggle queer representation in where it must be smuggled and, with the relative freedom of adulthood, to challenge queer-eradicating impulses frontally where they are to be so challenged. (5)

Ikeda (and many other Yuri and Shōjo manga artists and illustrators) produces queer places, queer spaces, queer bodies, and queer stories to uphold promises and to honor memories; to make possibilities and desires visible for audiences; to smuggle queer representations to viewers who might need them to survive. We should answer Sedgwick's and Ikeda's calls, and uphold our promises to our past selves. We need to read and produce texts with a queer slant, sneaking in queer interpretations and representations when we can, in as many professional and personal spaces as we can. We need to help make stories, like Ikeda's texts, make things happen because the survival of our own past, present, and future queer selves and the survival of current and future queer youth depends upon it.

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