

Introduction

In a 1903 work titled *The Evolution of the Japanese*, American missionary Sidney Gulick (1860–1945) praises Japan as a model nation that is making dynamic progress. His sentiments reflect the early twentieth-century worldview in which evolutionary progress and development were key notions. From a Social Darwinist perspective, both individual and nation were to follow a trajectory of maturation, moving toward a better future and a higher state of existence. Gulick writes:

New Japan is in a state of rapid growth. She is in a critical period, resembling a youth, just coming to manhood, when all the powers of growth are most vigorous. . . . In the course of four or five short years the green boy develops into a refined and noble man; the thoughtless girl ripens into the full maturity of womanhood and of motherhood. These are the years of special interest to those who would observe nature in her time of most critical activity.

Not otherwise is it in the life of nations. There are times when their growth is phenomenally rapid; when their latent qualities are developed; when their growth can be watched with special ease and delight, because so rapid. . . . Such, I take it, is the condition of Japan to-day. . . . Her intellect, hitherto largely dormant, is but now awaking. Her ambition is equaled only

by her self-reliance. . . . The growth of the past half-century is only the beginning of what we may expect to see.

Gulick, who later became an important Japan specialist, highlights the nation's rapid development by emphasizing the advancement of Japanese women. In "Old Japan," he notes, a woman was not given "such liberty as is essential to the full development of her powers." He suggests that the condition and position of Japanese women have improved, and that this change can be considered one exemplary feature of progress for "New Japan."¹ This close association of woman and nation is typical of civilization discourse; the woman's status reflects the level of the nation's enlightenment and becomes a gauge for assessing its process of growth.² Ultimately, however, even though it invokes Japanese women as an important means for measuring national progress, Gulick's work does not present the women's own perspectives, self-reflections, or narratives.

When I set out to write *Becoming Modern Women*, I began with the desire to understand how Japanese women imagined their growth and changing identities within modernity. How did they negotiate their national and gendered identities and strategize in creating narratives of self-representation? In the early to mid-twentieth century, which was shaped by visions of progress and faith in evolutionary transformation, how did Japanese women articulate themselves as mirroring modernity, as dynamic sites of coming-into-being in time and space? In the Western literary context, the *bildungsroman*, a fictional narrative of self-development and self-discovery, is often described as the "symbolic form" of modernity.³ Yet even when writing in the dominant genre of the semiautobiographical I-novel (*watakushi shōsetsu*, *shishōsetsu*), Japanese women writers did not always use straightforward coming-of-age narratives to explore the connection of modernity and gender. Instead, they often used a particular concept—love—to talk about woman as modern process. Regardless of its representation—as success, failure, promise, or disillusionment—the experience of love led to the attainment of an identity resonant with a changing Japan. Although it was not the only notion through which women explored their evolving, modern identities, love was a critical concept within the cultural imaginary and vital for the construction of both woman and nation.

With this in mind, *Becoming Modern Women* examines narratives by women in conjunction with various discourses about love in order to interrogate the process of becoming a modern female in Japan from the

1910s through the 1930s, the “prewar period” that preceded the Pacific War (1941–1945).⁴ Since the mid-nineteenth century, love had been viewed as a Western ideal with which to measure individual and national advancements. This is not to say that in Japan there were no expressions of physical and emotional attachment in human relationships prior to its opening to the West, but this new understanding of love, associated with Christianity, was a radical departure from the Confucian ideals of traditional Japanese society. Heterosexual romantic love in particular quickly became valued, in secular terms, as a necessary experience for the modern Japanese self. The nation and its people were to progress not only through modernization in the public sphere but also in their private emotions and personal experiences. Notions of modernity and progress were thus embedded in discussions of love, literary and otherwise, from the very beginning of Japan’s modern period.

During the first half of the twentieth century in Japan, I suggest, various ideas about love coalesced to create a modern image of the process of growth and development for women. This ideal process was conceptualized as an evolutionary trajectory. The girl would first experience “innocent” same-sex love romance; then, as she matured, she would move on to “real” (heterosexual) love, to be consummated in a love-based marriage; finally, she would become a mother and attain maternal love, the highest love of all. Although traditional idealized identities for women, such as “Good Wife, Wise Mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*), had been promulgated before, they were set, distinct identities. It was only after the early feminist movement of the 1910s and the blossoming of media culture that female identity came to be widely understood as a dynamic *process* reflecting the progress of modernity and shaped by experiences of love.

The narratives I examine in this book use contemporary ideas about love and womanhood but at the same time criticize and challenge such normative trajectories of female development. Understandably, not all women accepted or praised this concept of love’s “evolution”; ideas about love were treated in a variety of ways. In my analyses, I consider the rich and complex texts by women as part of the broader publication boom of the 1910s through 1930s. These narratives were shaped by early feminist writing as well as by discourses about love from a wide range of media—popular magazines, sexuality books, newspapers, bestselling love treatises, and new academic fields such as native ethnology and women’s history. Although I do not suggest

that love was the only means by which actual or fictional women became modern in prewar Japan, it was a critical idea and practice in the articulation of such a process. By investigating the interplay of women's writing and love discourses within the contexts of their production, *Becoming Modern Women* shows the ways in which modern Japanese female identity was constructed, questioned, and rewritten during the prewar period. This exploration illuminates the intersection of gender and modernity and opens a new window into Japanese culture in the seminal years before World War II.

Becoming Female in Modernity

How do we understand the woman in modernity? In both the West and Japan, the woman is a flexible symbol, malleable within the context of her representation. She is often depicted as the embodiment of modernity, but she is also used to signify its Other. She is a "modern" figure that mirrors seismic shifts in values and technologies; at the same time she is a "premodern" figure of innocence and nostalgia, providing stability in an unpredictable world. Often she is a representation of gendered "sites" that produce or interrogate the meaning of modernity, such as the non-West, popular culture, the everyday, the spectacle, language, the city or country, and consumption.⁵

In Japan, the woman became important as a sign of such ambivalent simultaneity during the Meiji period (1868–1912). It was, however, during the prewar decades of the 1910s through 1930s, the Taishō (1912–1926) and early Shōwa (1926–1989) periods, that the most dramatic changes occurred and the relationship between modernity and gender became increasingly complex. Indeed, the eclipse of Meiji civilization (*bunmei*) by Taishō culture (*bunka*) has been discussed as the emergence of a feminized culture; the idea of modernism (*modanizumu*) or the modern (*modan*) has also been gendered female, evoking the ephemerality of *modernité*, the fragmentary aspects of modernist art, the spread of mass culture, the disruptions of individualism, and the fantasy of consumerism.⁶

Such emphasis on the relationship between woman and the prewar period has been productive for feminist inquiry; scholars have illuminated the significant presence of female images and voices and the dramatic transformations of women in Japanese society and culture. These studies have often evoked modern female identity as representing change, a radical shift or decentering that challenges the social landscape. Although my own inquiry

emerges from such validations of the prewar woman, I focus on change that is directional and cumulative. The modern female I pursue inscribes herself as an intrinsic part of modernity, becoming a modern Japanese woman through progress and growth.

This becoming can be understood in relation to Miriam Silverberg's concept of Japanese modernity as "constructionist."⁷ In my view, the awareness of modernity as a dynamic process of being-in-construction was an important part of female identity; prewar women fashioned themselves as active participants in modernity by taking part in the process of continual progress and change. This self-image is clearly articulated by Hiratsuka Raichō (1886–1971), one of the most influential feminists in Japan. In 1911 she wrote in *Seitō* (Bluestocking, 1911–1916), the first Japanese feminist journal:

The flow of life progresses moment by moment. Now the people of the world have finally burst forth beyond known human boundaries and are making an intense effort day and night . . . to evolve beyond the humanity of today. We are no longer the set, unchanging beings conceived of by people of past ages. We are rich in changes, full of promise with the ability to evolve endlessly into the future, to become more beautiful, stronger, larger and superior day by day. The laws of nature cannot be so unfair as to say that only women are an exception to this rule of evolution, and are unable even now to become a part of humanity. It is clear that we must use our will to accelerate and strengthen the power of our progress.⁸

Hiratsuka describes "the women of today" as barely sentient beings "just newly awakened from a state . . . of infancy," who need to "move forward" resolutely with "an attitude that focuses on the self" (*shugateki taïdo*). She comments that she does not think the insistence on the "self" should always be the ultimate goal for a woman's journey forward, but she is convinced that for now it is a crucial stage in human life and a step that must be taken for "becoming a true person" (*honto no mono ni naru koto*).⁹ Although "men" (*danshi*) are considered "human beings" (*hito*), "women" (*onna*) are still considered inferior. It is thus of the utmost importance for women to achieve true personhood.¹⁰

In Hiratsuka's words, Japanese women have awakened and are evolving "endlessly into the future." This reframing of female identity as process highlights the hope that women will "catch up" to the state of normative (male) personhood—a desire for progress articulated through the notion of equality and later refined through the idea of difference. This identity is also

shaped by the time and space of nationhood. Progress is a goal not only for the nonnormative (female) sex but also for nations and races that need to evolve—the nonnormative (non-Western) spaces considered inferior to the West. Although we no longer conceive of it in this way, during the early twentieth century Japanese modernity was commonly seen as “spatially peripheral to, and temporally lagging behind, the West.”¹¹ This perspective contributed to Japanese women’s desire to progress, to mature and develop in tandem with Japanese men, but also with their more advanced sisters around the world. The goal and directionality of female progress were integral to prewar sexual politics and the contested meaning of a modern, developing Japan.

Woman, Selfhood, and Love

By rejecting the idea that women are inferior and unchanging, Hiratsuka validates demands for both external social progress (women’s rights) and internal progress (realization of selfhood). Unable to participate in the political process and being without full legal rights, women under the 1898 Civil Code were subject to the authority of their fathers, husbands, and sons, but even with their lower status codified in this way, Japanese women were transforming themselves in the public sphere throughout the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, not only in their writing but also in labor, in popular and consumer cultures, and in feminist and proletarian movements. Scholars of this period have shown that female identities such as New Woman (*atarashii onna*), Modern Girl (*modan gaaru*, *moga*), working woman (*shokugyō fujin*), factory worker (*jokō*), housewife (*shufu*), and café waitress (*jokyū*) rose to cultural prominence, thus highlighting the radical changes that were taking place in society.¹²

Along with the advent of such distinct identities for women, female identity itself was also changing, being reconfigured as a trajectory “continually in process, an identity that is performed and actualized over time within given social constraints.”¹³ Newly emergent discourses and social changes from the 1910s made concrete the idea of female identity as a developmental trajectory. Instead of a simple two-stage shift from girlhood to adulthood, the female lifecycle became more complex as a result of the new educational system, ideas of sexual development, delayed age for entry into marriage, and even the emergence of age-specific media such as magazines for adolescents.¹⁴

Most important for Hiratsuka's view of female progress, however, was the cultivation of interiority, the completion of true "self" (*jiga*).¹⁵ As Karatani Kōjin has argued, the "discovery of the self" was made possible through *genbun itchi* (unification of written and spoken language), which created the idea of the "inner self."¹⁶ Beginning in the Taishō period, "selfhood," as both a place of departure and a coveted goal, was increasingly emphasized as integral to the modern experience along with the rise of democracy, liberal humanism, and key concepts such as culturalism (*kyōyō shugi*), personalism (*jinkaku shugi*), and self-cultivation (*shūyō*).¹⁷ The prominent literary group *Shirakaba ha* (White Birch School) is representative of this cultural milieu; it placed a premium value on selfhood, and believed that "the goal of life was to pursue, to develop, and to express one's self."¹⁸

For women, as for men, the discovery of a true self and the fulfillment of its potential was a significant way of constructing a modern identity. In creating the feminist journal *Bluestocking*, Hiratsuka Raichō used the White Birch School's publication, *Shirakaba* (White birch, 1910–1923), as a model and stressed the importance of self in becoming a legitimate part of modernity and the greater human race.¹⁹ Despite, or perhaps because of, women's lack of political or legal authority, internal transformation was highly valued. Hiratsuka's 1911 statement about female agency and evolution is significant because it represents wide-ranging changes taking place in everyday life and thought. Women were recreating themselves, using what Foucault calls "technologies of the self," transforming their "bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being" through "their own means or with the help of others" in order to attain a higher state of existence.²⁰ This notion of self-development remained crucial throughout the prewar period; even after the allure of liberal individualism waned and many turned to Marxism and later nationalism, the pursuit and establishment of true self continued to define the idea of the modern man and woman.²¹

During this time, love was considered an important "technology of the self" that enabled women to grow and attain their true selves. From a twenty-first-century perspective, the idea of love itself may seem clichéd, vague, or too subjective to be conceptualized as a critical means of identity formation. Yet during the prewar period, the extent to which discourses about different forms of love pervaded society was truly remarkable; they shaped ideas about the modern self, about sex and gender differences, and even about national identity. Although not always manifest as a "class discourse" per se, love in this context can be viewed as what Fredric Jameson

calls an *ideologeme*, a minimal unit that shapes ideology, a “pseudoidea—a conceptual or belief system, an abstract value, an opinion or prejudice.”²² A range of ideologies about modernity, gender, and progress were produced and reproduced around the concept of love.

For women, love was particularly important, not only because it allowed them to express agency separate from the dictates of the family system (*ie seido*) and social convention, but also because it enabled them to visualize a new process of becoming female. In Hiratsuka Raichō’s letter entitled “Dokuritsu suru ni tsuite ryōshin ni” (“To My Parents on Becoming Independent,” 1914), published in *Bluestocking*, she explains to her parents why she is leaving home to start a new life with Okumura Hiroshi (1891–1964), her lover and future husband:

I have been faced with this choice—to nurture our love, or to destroy it, one or the other. And this time I have decided to boldly explore the former path, with all the power available to me. Due to my predisposition and character, there is much contradiction and anxiety in affirming love, but I have chosen to vanquish such fears, and to nurture and sustain the love that has taken root between us. I am determined to pursue this, to see how this love will develop, where it will take me, what unknown world will unfold in front of my eyes, how my thought and life will change.²³

The reverence that Hiratsuka expresses toward the love she shares with Okumura, described here with the terms “*ai*” and “*ren’ai*,” may seem melodramatic and excessive at first glance. Yet love was a critical means of articulating identity, a crucial catalyst for female development and self-discovery. During the early part of the twentieth century, love—its dreams and disillusionments, its various forms and expressions—was a vital concept for female writers as they explored the notion of becoming women both modern and Japanese.

A Brief History of Love

Love had been considered a gauge for measuring both individual and national advancement since the early Meiji period. Initially introduced as *rabu*, a new, Western ideal rooted in Christianity, it was juxtaposed as superior to *iro* and *koi*, traditional notions that emphasized sensuality and carnal desire. Saeki Junko notes that this new love, “born of a true and upright spirit,” was associated with progress and viewed as a vehicle for the development and

enlightenment of the Japanese people.²⁴ In the words of missionary Sidney Gulick, love is “that which to Western ears is the sweetest word in the English language, the foundation of happiness in the home, the only true bond between husband and wife, parents and children.”²⁵ The Christian-humanist journal *Jogaku zasshi* (Journal of female learning, 1885–1904), published by Iwamoto Yoshiharu (1863–1942), played a central role in promoting such love as an ideal.²⁶

Love was soon to become valued, however, within a broader, secular context, not so much for its Christian qualities but as the foundation for male-female romance. In the late nineteenth century, the word *ai* was already used to signify various kinds of love beyond the narrowly defined Christian or spiritual love.²⁷ *Ai* is embedded in the compound *ren'ai* (romantic love), a word popularized during the late 1880s and 1890s to refer to heterosexual love; *ai* and *ren'ai* from this point on were (and are) often used interchangeably.²⁸ We also find *ai* in terms such as *dōsciai* (same-sex love) and *boseiai* (maternal love), both compound words created during the prewar period and now a part of the standard Japanese lexicon.²⁹ Throughout the 1910s to 1930s, writers explored modern identity using such different concepts of love as these, treating them as central to their own lives as well as to their literary creations.

The pivotal text that presents love as a modern experience is the 1892 essay “Ensei shika to josei” (Disillusioned poets and women) by writer Kitamura Tōkoku (1868–1894), published in the *Journal of Female Learning*. Often cited as a seminal text in the history of modern Japanese literature, Kitamura’s essay articulates for the first time the idea that *ren'ai* is the most important aspect of human existence. He opens with the now famous lines, “*Love is the key to life’s secrets. Love exists first, then there is life. If one takes away love, what is the meaning of life?*” Such thinking is a radical departure from the traditional Confucian worldview, and it inspired a whole generation of writers and thinkers with its shocking new perspective. Although Kitamura’s essay goes on to cover a range of ideas, it clearly establishes love as central to human identity and as enabling the individual to attain selfhood and place in society:

Love leads to self-sacrifice, but at the same time, it is a clear mirror that reveals one’s “true self” [ware naru “onore”]. It is only once a man and a woman experience mutual love that the truth about society can be known. Even minute insects cannot function when they are isolated from each other. Society is

made up of humans coming together, and only by relying on and embracing each other can it be built and sustained. This fact can be understood only by taking the first step of experiencing mutual love. *When a person lives alone in isolation, there is nothing that makes him a part of society. It is only when a partnership is created that this unit becomes a part of society, and one is able to see oneself clearly in relation to society.*³⁰

Although Kitamura's discussion here is rendered in gender-neutral terms, it is evident from the context that he is thinking specifically of male identity. Love as a "clear mirror" establishes a man's "true self" and reveals to him his place within the world; because love embodies an idealized relationship, its pursuit leads to the advancement of individual and society. At the same time, in the essay this encomium is juxtaposed with a sense of the difficulty of attaining love, especially within the institution of marriage. The articulation of love as the key for self-discovery, expressed simultaneously with doubt about love's ability to be realized in the real world, can be found in numerous works of Meiji literature.

Women writers of the Meiji period also responded to the concepts of *ai* and *ren'ai*. Even an early story such as "Koware yubiwa" ("The Broken Ring," 1891) by Shimizu Shikin (1868–1933), published in the *Journal of Female Learning*, already explores the literary possibilities for a resistant female voice that emerges through disillusionment in love.³¹ A more optimistic view of love is presented in *Midaregami* (Tangled hair, 1901), the romantic poetry collection by Yosano Akiko (1878–1942), recognized for invoking love and sensuality to celebrate female identity.³² It was not until the 1911 publication of *Bluestocking*, however, that the experience of love was explicitly theorized as a vital component of the development, growth, and discovery of a woman's true self. This publication not only was important for the feminist movement, but it also established a foundation for understanding woman, identity, and love in the prewar period.

Bluestocking and Hiratsuka Raichō

Bluestocking was published by Seitōsha (Bluestocking Society), a literary group founded by Hiratsuka Raichō and others who saw the need to further women's literature and achieve female liberation through writing. Featuring stories, poems, and essays as well as translations of famous foreign works, *Bluestocking* was the first Japanese journal written and published by

women. In the inaugural issue, Hiratsuka articulates the group's objective to restore dignity and power to women:

In the beginning, woman was indeed the sun. She was the true person.
 Now woman is the moon. She is the moon with a sickly, pale face, who
 relies on others to live, and shines by others' light.
 Now we must regain our sun that has been hidden from us.³³

Although at its peak the publication sold only three thousand copies per month, the *Bluestocking* women were by no means an obscure group.³⁴ These New Women (*atarashii onna*) received a great deal of attention for their writings, debates, and public appearances, and they enjoyed a prevalent place within the cultural imaginary.³⁵

In recent years a great deal of critical work on *Bluestocking* has been published, prompted by the growing interest in Japanese women's literature, history, and women's studies. Through detailed study of *Bluestocking* writers, literature, and debates, as well as of the concept of the New Woman, scholars have reassessed the journal's role in the early feminist movement as well as in the later rise of nationalism.³⁶ We are now able to see that this multivalent journal reflects a range of ideological positions and that its critical ramifications extend beyond the limited period of its publication history. The writings about love and female identity presented in this journal, however, have not yet been fully recognized as an integral part of prewar discourse despite their wide-reaching influence throughout the period.

Arguably the most famous feminist of twentieth-century Japan, Hiratsuka was the leader responsible for publishing *Bluestocking* from its inception until 1915.³⁷ Unlike Kitamura Tōkoku, she did not produce a single essay that prompted a paradigm shift; rather, her works played a profound and continuous role in the discursive formation of the modern female self. She published in *Bluestocking* as well as in other venues, and her ideas about love and women evolved with the times and with her experiences. Because her ideas were in flux during the 1910s through the 1930s, it has perhaps been easy for critics to dismiss them as being too subjective or inconsequential. Yet these shifts in her thinking actually offer valuable insight not only into Hiratsuka's personal convictions but also into vital trends within the larger sociohistorical conversation. Kitamura's thoughts on love can be read in terms of both the private and the public—on the one hand expressing dismay at the failure of his own love-based marriage while on the other hand simultaneously articulating a central concern of the Meiji literati regarding

the modern man and love. Hiratsuka's texts document a woman's search for her own identity through love while at the same time illuminating the broader relationship between modernity and gender in prewar culture.

Because of her watershed conceptualization of love and female progress, as well as the way her writings reflect and shape contemporary discourses about women, the figure of Hiratsuka Raichō serves as a touchstone and guide through the various discourses in *Becoming Modern Women*. A graduate of Nihon joshi daigaku (Japan Women's University), Hiratsuka first gained public notoriety in 1908 when she ran away with writer Morita Sōhei (1881–1949), supposedly to attempt a double suicide; this incident was fictionalized by Morita in his successful newspaper serial entitled *Baien* (Cinder and smoke, 1909).³⁸ Hiratsuka furthered her reputation as a radical New Woman by establishing the Bluestocking Society in 1911, and in 1912 she openly discussed a same-sex love affair with Otake Kōkichi (or Tomimoto Kazue, 1893–1966), a fellow Bluestocking member. After meeting artist Okumura Hiroshi, the younger man who would eventually become her lifelong partner, however, Hiratsuka prioritized heterosexual love. Her ideas about love and marriage that emerged from this time were published in *Bluestocking* as well as in other journals and newspapers. Subsequently, she wrote vociferously about maternal love, particularly after experiencing childbirth in 1915; this form of love became central to her thought throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Strongly influenced by Western feminist texts and her own experiences, Hiratsuka's ideas established a foundation for discussions of heterosexual love and love-based marriage. In addition, her writings about female same-sex love are intricately related to the rise of sexology discourse during the 1910s and 1920s, and her praise of maternal love from the mid-1920s to 1930s is shaped by discourses of nationalism. Although no single individual can completely embody a historical era, I agree with Rita Felski that “accounts of the modern age . . . typically achieve some kind of formal coherence by dramatizing and personifying historical processes; individual or collective human subjects are endowed with symbolic importance as exemplary bearers of temporal meaning.”³⁹ I do not claim that Hiratsuka is a representative voice for all women in prewar Japan, but the female authors and their writings about love that I examine are clearly in profound conversation with the discourses produced by or around this prominent writer and theorist. Her varied writing about love provides a useful optic through which to view other women writers' works and the larger historical context.

Modern Love Ideology

In *Bluestocking*, Hiratsuka established the notion that love (*ai*, *ren'ai*) is intrinsic to female self-development and the discovery of a woman's true self.⁴⁰ This love is considered a fusion of both spiritual and sexual love. Throughout this book I call these critical ideas *modern love ideology*. Although Japanese critics sometimes use this term (*kindai ren'ai ideorogii*) to refer to either the emphasis on love as an ideal or the promotion of marrying for love, I use it specifically to refer to the notion that true love is an amalgamation of spiritual and sexual love, and that this love is the basis for female development.⁴¹ This highly influential idea was adapted from the works of Swedish feminist Ellen Key (1849–1926), specifically, *Ren'ai to kekkon* (*Love and Marriage*, English edition 1911). An important text for early twentieth-century feminist movements in Japan and the West, it was the basis for Hiratsuka's ideas on love, marriage, and motherhood.⁴² She read *Love and Marriage* in the English edition, then translated several chapters into Japanese and published them in *Bluestocking* from 1913 to 1914. Although male critics had already introduced some ideas from *Love and Marriage* in other journals by this time, Hiratsuka was the first to translate this influential work.⁴³

Hiratsuka notes in her memoirs that her own process of growth as a person through her romance with Okumura was framed and illuminated by the ideas found in *Love and Marriage*. In fact, by treating Key's work as a kind of primer on love, Hiratsuka seems to have transposed the "correct" reading of love onto her relationship with Okumura, even as she explored this new experience. She writes:

While my own experience of love [*ren'ai*] moved rapidly forward, I was simultaneously translating Ellen Key. This fact, I believe, had a greater meaning for me than simply introducing Key's writing. At a time when love and marriage were becoming real, inescapable, pressing issues, coming across Key was in fact like finding a light that shone brightly on a world of love unknown to me and could be described as a revelation from heaven. . . . It [Key's work] looked at love in terms of development and taught me an endless number of things at a time when I was completely ignorant about love—about the different stages of the process and the differences between male and female love—it could be described as a treasury of issues about love.⁴⁴

Hiratsuka's translations of *Love and Marriage* are recognized as important *Bluestocking* texts, but critics have not fully addressed their content and their

impact on the broader Japanese culture. Through Hiratsuka's introduction and elucidation of Key's work, love was presented as the ideal means to progress as an individual and as a society. Key criticizes the traditional marriage system arranged by families on the basis of class, and praises unions founded on true love. Although this view is very similar to the Japanese Christian humanists' idea of love as a sign of progress, Key refutes the notion that this love needs to be sanctioned by religious authority or the legal framework of marriage. Love—that is, this new male-female relationship—takes the individual to a new, evolved state of self-awareness. Key asserts that “a woman's essential ego must be brought out by love before she can do anything great for others or for herself.”⁴⁵ She further notes that “in moving forward, step by step on the path of selfhood, the first consideration is love and its proper way.”⁴⁶

The two central aspects of modern love ideology, as articulated in the work of Key and Hiratsuka, can be delineated as follows. First, love is integral to female selfhood, a process of self-development ultimately leading to one's true identity. This focus on the individual and the project of aiming for a higher state or better future, or both, reflects Key's fundamental position as an evolutionist-humanist; the underlying assumption is that both individuals and society are progressing toward betterment.⁴⁷ In her view, both the individual and the human race can become whole and attain completion through love.⁴⁸ This combination of the ideas of progress, love, and selfhood appealed to Hiratsuka as she attempted to articulate a strategy for Japanese women and girls to express and realize their true modern identity.

Second, love is both a spiritual and a sexual experience that completes the individual (*rei-niku itchi*; unification of spirit and flesh). Key's point is that true love, rather than following a hierarchical framework in which spiritual or platonic love is superior to sexual love, must combine both elements. This idea of love became an ideal that helped to define and shape sex/gender difference and equality, although men were understood to experience love first through sexual desires and women were perceived to feel spiritual love before awakening to sexual love, both men and women had to experience spiritual *and* sexual love in order to progress and attain a modern self.⁴⁹ Strongly promoted by Hiratsuka, the unification of spirit and flesh in love became fundamental to the understanding of ideal modern love and an important part of the prewar cultural consciousness.⁵⁰

Organization of Becoming Modern Women

Becoming Modern Women examines narratives by three important women writers: Yoshiya Nobuko (1896–1973), Miyamoto Yuriko (1899–1951), and Okamoto Kanoko (1889–1939). It explores how their works engage with modern love ideology and other discourses on love. By investigating their texts in this way, I attempt to negotiate two different approaches to women's writing. On the one hand, I highlight these authors' shared interest in feminist thought, illustrating their overlapping concerns and questions about modern female identity. My goal is to remap lost connections and recover common discursive fields in works by and about women. On the other hand, however, I also demonstrate that women's writing is not a hermetically closed genre, limited in scope or topic, influenced only by other women's texts and employing set literary styles and strategies.⁵¹ Literature is a heterogeneous and porous site that is in conversation with a range of ideologies, texts, and discourses. I analyze, therefore, how these authors employ a wide array of contemporaneous discourses and media events in order to challenge, criticize, and rewrite modern love ideology and the normative process of development. I approach women's literature as part of a broader realm of cultural production in which meaning is created through contestation and hybridization.

The authors examined here work within very different genres. Yoshiya is considered a writer of popular fiction (*tsūzoku shōsetsu*) and girls' fiction (*shōjo shōsetsu*); Miyamoto is seen as a serious writer of proletarian literature (*puroritaria bungaku*); Okamoto is known as a *tanka* poet and Buddhist scholar, and her fiction is often associated with the nationalistic Japan Romantic School (*Nihon roman ha*). My analyses of these authors do not rely on the unifying trope of the semiautobiographical I-novel; on the contrary, I particularly avoid interpreting their works from this perspective. It is true that these authors often use what Tomi Suzuki calls the "literary and ideological paradigm" of the I-novel; that is, although not necessarily categorized as I-novels in the narrow or formal sense of the term, many of these works are part of a literary mode in which texts are considered a reflection of authorial reality. Although some works are clearly "self-conscious I-novels" that presuppose "autobiographical assumptions on the part of the reader," my interpretations do not focus on whether or not the texts articulate "real" female experience.⁵² The relationship between the woman writer's own self-image and the textual representation of female identity is not a simple one

and has broad implications for interrogating the tension between womanhood and the idea of authorship; this is not my area of inquiry.⁵³ I do, to an extent, discuss the lives of women—the authors as well as Hiratsuka and other feminists—but my goal is not to unearth the exact relationship between fictional protagonist and real author. Rather, my project here is to explore how these texts use ideas about love to construct discursively a modern, developing female identity.

Becoming Modern Women analyzes these writers' works in relation to discourses that pertain to same-sex love, love marriage, and maternal love. The three sections of the book discuss each of these forms of love respectively and are loosely framed by the decades of the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s. The first section looks at same-sex love discourses that emerged from the 1910s and at how Yoshiya Nobuko strategically employed these ideas during her prewar writing career. The second section examines love marriage discourses and their prominence during the 1920s, using them to reread Miyamoto Yuriko's famous "Nobuko" texts and in turn garner insight into broader social concerns of the day. The third section interrogates the idea of maternal love and its significance during the 1930s and explores how Okamoto Kanoko rewrites this idea in her texts about motherhood. By highlighting each form of love in correspondence with the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s I am not suggesting that only one type of love was the subject of discussion in each of these decades. Rather, by pairing each type of love with the historical and discursive context in which it resonated most significantly, I show how ideas about love changed and interacted with each other throughout the period. Although I recognize that decades and even markers such as Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa go only so far in delineating the tenor of cultural trends and historical shifts, the organization here is intended to be a useful map with which to revisit the prewar landscape.

Part One, "Girls and Virgins," is composed of two chapters. Chapter Two, "Same-Sex Love," looks at this love in the context of the 1910s: the rise of sexology discourse, media discussions of female-female love, *Bluestocking* writing, and young girls' culture (*shōjo bunka*). Same-sex love was construed in dualistic terms, as a pure, platonic attachment common between young schoolgirls or as a sexual deviance practiced between women (perverse experimentation, congenital inversion, or both). These divergent ways of understanding same-sex love enabled a flexible interpretation of its role within the female developmental process. Although it is impossible to delineate completely what *same-sex love* means within any given context, I use this

term in keeping with early to mid-twentieth-century usage. It is also now standard practice to use this term as opposed to *lesbianism* or *homosexuality*, because these latter terms carry with them their own meanings and nuances that have been shaped within current discourse. Also, I should note that although sexuality is not an explicit focus of this book, it is certainly relevant to a number of the same-sex discourses I explore.

In Chapter Three, “Yoshiya Nobuko and the Romance of Sisterhood,” I argue that Yoshiya’s prewar fiction validates same-sex love through an engagement with modern love ideology. Exploring a number of her novels and stories from girls’ magazines, private pamphlets, and popular women’s magazines, I illuminate her use of female-female love. Yoshiya published in the last two issues of *Bluestocking* and had direct contact with Hiratsuka Raichō, having studied the English edition of *Love and Marriage* in the same reading group. Rather than interpreting Yoshiya’s fiction as a commentary on her own life with her female partner, I show how she co-opts sexological and feminist discourses to rewrite ideas about female identity, inscribing same-sex love into mainstream notions of female development. Her works, such as the bestselling girls’ fiction *Hanamonoogatari* (Flower tales, 1916–1924), transformed society’s view of girlhood as well as of same-sex romance and sexuality.

Part Two is titled “The Wife’s Progress.” Chapter Four, “Love Marriage Ideology,” explains how love marriage (*ren’ai kekkon*, a marriage based on mutual love and initiated by the partners themselves) became an important means by which to attain a modern identity within the 1920s cultural imaginary. Stemming from modern love ideology, this idea, often called “(modern) love marriage ideology” (*[kindai] ren’ai kekkon ideogoo*), stressed the importance not so much of love itself but of *marrying for love*. This ideology posits that love attains its fullest potential within marriage, so the love marriage rather than the traditional arranged marriage is the best way for men and women to complete their selves.³⁴ Although traditional forms of wedlock continued to be the most prevalent in actual practice throughout the prewar period, an astounding number of texts about love marriage—from fiction and essays to explicatory love treatises—were published and consumed during this time. The 1920s were marked by the popularization of love marriage discourse through landmark works such as Kuriyagawa Hakuson’s (1880–1923) *Kindai no ren’ai kan* (Views of love in the modern era, 1921), and by a number of public scandals, ranging from love suicides to high-profile extramarital romances.

Chapter Five, “Miyamoto Yuriko and the Nobuko Narratives,” focuses on Miyamoto’s canonical work, *Nobuko*. I offer a new way to approach this text, by examining both the 1924–1926 serialization and the standard 1928 book edition in light of contemporary ideas about love, marriage, and divorce. I also discuss the two sequels that feature the same protagonist, which are set during the 1920s and 1930s but written in the postwar period. Miyamoto was not a member of the Bluestocking Society—she was only twelve years old when the society was formed—but she read works by both Hiratsuka and Key, and commentary on their ideas is found in her diaries and critical work on literary history. *Nobuko* has been read primarily as an I-novel mirroring Miyamoto’s disillusionment with her own love marriage to her first husband, but it has never been fully analyzed within the discursive and historical context of the time. Her rejection and reinscription of modern love ideology is part of the broader intellectual shift from liberal humanism to socialism as the ideal means of national advancement.

Part Three is “Reinventing Motherhood.” Chapter Six, “Maternal Love,” looks at how feminist and nationalist discourses converged during the 1930s to articulate a new model of female self rooted in motherhood and maternal love. These topics were of considerable interest for the general public. A few months before the beginning of the China War in 1937, writer Sata Ineko (1904–1998) noted that there was a publishing boom for works theorizing about motherhood, a trend reminiscent of earlier demand for books about romantic love and theories on youth.⁵⁵ Within modern love ideology, the attainment of maternal love and the identity of a mother had always been crucial for the fruition of romantic love, but during the mid-1920s to 1930s there was a profound shift in Hiratsuka’s understanding of love and womanhood, as well as in the thought of feminist Takamure Itsue (1894–1964), who considered herself Hiratsuka’s disciple. Maternal love became a mystical notion, an intrinsic part of female identity, it was no longer something gained through the physical experience of motherhood but rather a natural instinct that existed *a priori* in all females. The idea that the pursuit of modern identity as a process would ultimately lead to the superceding of linearity, to the discovery of a mythic self existing outside of time, radically altered the understanding of both women and nation, and indeed the very concept of progress, in the years immediately preceding the Pacific War.

In Chapter Seven, “Okamoto Kanoko and the Mythic Mother,” I examine Okamoto’s works through notions of maternal love and modern love ideology. I particularly focus on *Shōjō ruten* (Wheel of life, 1939), one of her

longest novels, as a validation of woman as an integral part of Japanese history and national identity. Okamoto met Hiratsuka in 1907, when they were both studying Western literature at the home of writer and translator Baba Kochō (1869–1940).³⁶ Okamoto began her career as a *tanka* poet and joined the Bluestocking Society in 1911; she wrote poetry and letters for *Bluestocking* and her first poetry collection was published by the Society in 1912. Although her poems, written during the 1910s and 1920s, are known for their focus on heterosexual love, Okamoto's fictional narratives, a genre she began publishing only in the last few years of her life, are remembered for their exploration of maternal love and female identity. Rather than reading these works as reflecting her love for her son, Okamoto Tarō (1911–1996), I demonstrate that Okamoto's construction of a modern female self, a figure far more powerful than men, emerges as a result of her engagement with contemporaneous writings on maternal love, native ethnology (*minzokugaku*), and historiography. In particular, I examine the idea of transcendence in her interpretation of maternal love, and her subversive rewriting of nationalism. Okamoto makes use of various discourses that endorse maternal love while offering a new vision of motherhood as the goal for female maturity.

By examining how love, shaped within specific sociohistorical contexts, plays a pivotal role in productions of the modern female self, *Becoming Modern Women* introduces a new way of viewing the complex relationship between gender and modernity. The processes of love, woman, and nation intersect in a variety of unexpected yet vital ways. By critically exploring such connections, I hope to illuminate both literary and cultural discourses and, by extension, the changing landscape of prewar Japan.