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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS
Department of East Asian Languages & Cultures

Autobiography in Disarray:
Setouchi Jakuchō's Use of Biography as Self-Expression in *Beauty in Disarray*
by
Sara Newsome

A thesis presented to the
Graduate School of Arts & Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Master of Arts

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Acknowledgments

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Sara Newsome

Washington University in St. Louis

May 2016

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It may be surprising that a Buddhist nun would be so captivated by the murder of a young anarchist writer. But to anyone who knows Setouchi Jakuchō (born May 15, 1922), such a fascination is not unexpected. Renowned in Japan for her political activism, Setouchi is well known for peacefully expressing her beliefs through acts such as hunger strikes, political rallies and protests, even attending and giving speeches well into her early nineties. Before taking the tonsure, Setouchi's personal life of marriage, divorce and her subsequent affairs, whether rumored or true, filled gossip mills. Although an accomplished and award-winning author, her literary craft has always come second to her personal life in the eye of the public. It was during a time of ostracization and heavy public criticism that she discovered the young anarchist, Itō Noe (1895 –1923.) A writer, Itō was perhaps better known for her various affairs, especially her long relationship with the anarchist Ōsugi Sakae (1885 – 1923), as well as for her untimely murder. Itō's life bears similarities to Setouchi's own torrid one in the years before taking the tonsure, when she was still known to the world as "Setouchi Harumi."

With her biographical novel *Beauty in Disarray* (*Bi wa ranchō ni ari*), published in 1966, Setouchi tells the life story of Itō Noe from her early adolescence until the Hikage Tea House incident of 1916.¹ Itō Noe was a young Japanese woman writer, who wrote vibrant essays on the Japanese New Women and feminism, and later, socialism and anarchism in the early twentieth

¹ On November 8, 1916, Kamichika Ichiko, another *Seitō* contributor, and who had also been in a romantic relationship with Ōsugi, stabbed him in the throat at the Higake Teahouse. He survived and she was sentenced to four years in prison. The event was known as the Hikage Teahouse Incident. (Thomas A. Stanley, *Ōsugi Sakae, Anarchist in Taishō Japan: The Creativity of the Ego* (Cambridge, Mass.: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1982), 104-106.)

century. Although she once took over as editor of the influential feminist literary magazine *Seitō*, she is perhaps best known for her relationships with the dadaist Tsuji Jun (1884 –1944) and the anarchist Ōsugi Sakae, as well as her friendship with the former *Seitō* editor, Hiratsuka Raichō (1886 – 1971), who was herself an accomplished and widely regarded woman writer. By using not only the voice of Itō Noe, but also the many important historical writers who surrounded Itō, Setouchi seeks to change this perception of Itō by highlighting her accomplishments and her vibrant personality. Through writing and chronicling Itō’s dramatic life and relationships, Setouchi is able to explore themes of political activism, feminism, family, and romance in a manner that protected her from the criticism she had become accustomed to prior to her decision to take tonsure. Setouchi Jakuchō uses the genre of biographical fiction in *Beauty in Disarray* to express both her own anti-establishment political views, as well as to express her own personality and personal beliefs.

The Complicated and Long Life of Setouchi Jakuchō

When evaluating a work of biography as a form of self-expression, intimate knowledge of the biographer as well as her biographical subjects is essential. In this section I will offer an over view of Setouchi, to be followed by a similar introduction to Itō Noe. Setouchi Jakuchō was born on May 15th, 1922, just one year before Itō Noe and Ōsugi Sakae’s untimely murders at the hands of the Japanese police. Setouchi attended Tokyo Women’s Christian College beginning in 1940, and married in 1943, whereupon she left with her husband, a government worker, to live in Beijing. After Japan’s surrender in 1945, Setouchi returned with her husband

and child to Tokyo.² The end of the Second World War changed the entire course of Setouchi's life, as it did all Japanese people of the time. Setouchi has written at length about the effect that Emperor Hirohito's declaration of surrender had on her perception of herself as a young housewife who had been raised and schooled under Imperial Japan's militaristic society. In her essay "Memories of a White Glove" (Shiroi tebukuro no kioku, 1957) she writes that the moment she heard the emperor's voice it destroyed the identity that had been built for her by the Japanese government and left her a "shadow."³ Setouchi's contemporary Ōe Kenzaburō (born January 31, 1935) wrote that in this moment, he was left speechless and in disbelief that someone he had been taught to revere had suddenly "become an ordinary human being."⁴ In the post-war era, great strides were made for women. The rhetoric of "Good Wives, Wise Mothers" was removed, and women were given the right to vote.⁵ The Setouchi of today is a creation of the post-war Japanese period; were it not for the radical changes that took place during the Occupation, Setouchi "Jakuchō" may have never left her husband, begun her long and influential literary career, or made the decision to take tonsure and become a Buddhist nun.

After returning to Japan from Beijing following the end of the war, Setouchi fell in love with one of her husband's students and planned to elope with him, although in the end they did not follow through with these plans and decided to go their separate ways. This event is fictionalized in her I-novel *The End of Summer* (Natsu no owari), published in 1963, for which Setouchi won the Women's Literature Prize in 1966.⁶ Although she did not elope with her

² Sanford Goldstein and Kazuji Ninomiya, introduction to *Beauty in Disarray*, by Setouchi Jakuchō (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1993), 13.

³ Masayo Kaneko, *Sexuality and Spirituality: Subjectivity and Resistance in the Works of Setouchi Jakuchō*, dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 2006), 51.

⁴ Ōe Kenzaburō, *A Personal Matter*, trans. John Nathan, (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), vii.

⁵ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa times to the Present*, 2nd edition, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) 233-234.

⁶ *The End of Summer* also fictionalized Setouchi's eight year relationship with Bungakusha's editorial board member Oda Jinjiro. (Kaneko, 55 and Sachiko Shibata Schierbeck, "Setouchi Jakuchō" in *East Asian Institute*

husband's student, she still made the decision to separate from her husband in 1948 and formally divorced him in 1950.⁷ While she has since admitted that such actions were deplorable on her part, she also has written that she views being a bad wife as an essential trait of any woman writer. In an essay titled "Requirements for Becoming a Woman Writer" she posits the question, "A woman who desires from the bottom of her heart to be a good wife—how can she possibly become a writer?"⁸ Indeed, it was not until after her divorce was finalized in 1950 that her career as a writer truly began, and she started to formally publish her works. While writing as part of the *Bungakusha* literary group, she published the novel *Wick of a Flower* (Kashin) in 1958, for which she was heavily criticized. The criticisms she received, particularly from renowned literary critic Hirano Ken (1907 – 1978), centered around her use of the word "uterus" (子宮, shikyū), which was considered unbecoming of a female writer.⁹ It has been suggested that the harshness of the criticism, some of which accused her of writing "pornography," may have also stemmed from the independence of the female characters in her work, who, in owning their own bodies, broke with traditional appearances of "femininity."¹⁰ Due to the criticism she received, she was shunned by the *Bungakusha* literary group, being forced to take a break from writing and was unable to have any of her works published for several years.

In 1960, Setouchi was able to return to the literary scene with a biographical novel about the woman writer Tamura Toshiko (1884 –1945), for which she was awarded the first ever

Occasional Papers, vol. 5, ed. Soren Egerod (Copenhagen, Denmark: University of Copenhagen East Asian Institute, 1989), 111.)

⁷ Kaneko, 53-54.

⁸ Setouchi Harumi, "Requirements for Becoming a Woman Writer" in *Woman Critiqued: Translated Essays on Japanese Women's Writing*, ed. Rebecca L. Copeland, trans. Rebecca L. Copeland. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 65. Setouchi is able to express this opinion in *Beauty in Disarray* when Itō's mother-in-law makes frequent note of Itō's inability to perform expected household chores.

⁹ Along with Hirano Ken, an anonymous critic in *Bungakkai* also referred to the novel "nothing but sensational pornography," despite the fact that there were no explicitly sexual scenes in the novel; it appears that during this time period a woman owning and her acknowledging her own body was enough to have the text considered "pornographic." (Kaneko, 10-12.)

¹⁰ Kaneko, 12-13.

Tamura Toshiko Prize.¹¹ Setouchi enjoyed the heavy research involved in writing about Tamura Toshiko, and began to write more biographical fiction, although her previous themes of divorce and romantic relationships remained constant throughout. For her biographical novels on modern women writers, she often chooses not only to focus on her biographical subject's accomplishments in writing, but also on their romantic lives, because such affairs were usually integral to understanding her subjects and their motivations. The translators of *Beauty in Disarray*, Sanford Goldstein and Kazuji Ninomiya, for example, characterize Setouchi's writing style and common themes as the depiction of "the struggle of women in love, women in politics, and especially the strong ties women have to the men they love."¹² Romance and relationships remain as central to her subject's life narrative as their professional success. Setouchi often uses these themes to strengthen and fortify her characters, whether fictional or based on real people, and her female characters will frequently achieve economic independence and social recognition without having to give up their romantic lives in exchange.

On November 14, 1973, Setouchi shocked the literary world by taking the tonsure and becoming a Tendai Buddhist nun.¹³ It was at this time that she chose the Buddhist name Jakuchō, although she still published works under the name "Harumi." Rather than withdrawing from the earthly world to live a quiet life in a monastery, as is suggested by the conjured image of a "Buddhist nun," Setouchi has remained a prolific writer of novels, essay, and short stories, as well as a prominent social activist and media personage. Her works since taking the tonsure often receive widespread critical acclaim, such as *Ask Flowers* (Hana ni toe), published in 1992, which would go on to win the Tanizaki Prize in 1992, *White Path* (Byakudō), published in 1995, which won the Ministry of Education Arts Prize in 1996, and *Room* (Basho), which was published in

¹¹ Goldstein and Ninomiya, 13.

¹² Goldstein and Ninomiya, 14.

¹³ Goldstein and Ninomiya, 13.

2001 and won the Noma Prize.¹⁴ In 1997, she was awarded the National Cultural Order (*Bunka Kōrōshō*) in acknowledgement of her contributions to Japanese culture.¹⁵

Despite these achievements, she is perhaps most known today in Japan for her role as an activist anti-war and anti-establishment Buddhist nun than as a writer, and her works are not always taken seriously in the Japanese literary scene.¹⁶ Often her activism goes hand in hand with her writing; in 1989, she published a group of essays titled “The Glory of Women Who Gained Independence,” and many of her works feature complex and career-driven female leads who often balance their professional lives with their romantic lives rather than being forced by society to choose one over the other.¹⁷ Setouchi values women who do not compromise their personalities with society’s expectations of them. This interest may have been one of the driving factors in her desire to write about Itō Noe, who often took her children with her to work so that she could be both a working woman and a mother.¹⁸ Although Setouchi had chosen to give up her marriage and even her child in exchange for the freedom to pursue her own literary career, many of her own characters are able to maintain both, and the fact that Itō Noe was also able to may have been a large part of her appeal to Setouchi.¹⁹

Setouchi’s subsequent post-tonsure activism is not just apparent through her writing career. She makes frequent appearances at rallies and protests, even at her current age of 93.

¹⁴ Kaneko, 17.

¹⁵ Kaneko, 17.

¹⁶ Masayo Kaneko theorizes that it is because of Setouchi’s “media spectacle” and frequent use of television appearances that Setouchi’s writing to largely be ignored by literary scholars. Kaneko believes that by being too accessible, Setouchi gives the impression that her work is “popular fiction.” Interestingly, in 2006, Setouchi received the Italian International Nomino Prize, which shows some amount of international recognition for her works. (Kaneko, 9, 16-17.)

¹⁷ Goldstein and Ninomiya, 13.

¹⁸ Jan Bardsley, *The Bluestockings of Japan: New Woman Essays and Fiction from Seitō, 1911-16* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2007), 120.

¹⁹ In the short story “The Pheasant” (Kiji), Setouchi writes about abandoning her family, and in particular, her child: “In a sentimental moment, she once revealed to Kuji that her sense of loyalty to Rie, the daughter she had abandoned, kept her from bearing another child. It was this fidelity to the child she had betrayed that made her so fearless in obtaining abortions.” (Setouchi Harumi, “The Pheasant” in *The End of Summer*, trans. Janine Beichman, (New York: Kodansha International, 1966), 129.

Upon taking tonsure, one of her first acts was to provide support for a woman who had been charged with murdering her husband.²⁰ She has also since built a center for women, where she acts as their spiritual adviser.²¹ In protest of the Persian Gulf Wars, she participated in hunger strikes in 1991 and 2001, and again in 2012 to protest the restarting of the nuclear reactors in Japan following their shutdown after the Fukushima Incident in 2011.²² In November 2015, despite a back injury and illness requiring hospitalization, she attended protests at the Diet building in order to make a stand against Prime Minister Abe Shinzō's attempts to change Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which would allow Japan to go to war. As someone deeply affected by World War II, Setouchi does not want to see Japan repeat the disastrous mistakes of its past.²³ She frequently encourages those around her, especially women and the younger generation, to participate in these protests, and in 2015 it was reported that she would be publishing a romance novel about a group of student protesters titled *Autumn of Goodbye* (Sayonara no aki).²⁴ In April 2016, she announced the founding of an organization called the Wakakusa Project for women suffering from hardships such as poverty, domestic abuse and drug addiction.²⁵ From her numerous appearances at protests and her powerful writings, it is clear that she valorizes standing up for one's beliefs and seeking to make a change a positive change to society. She also emphasizes support women in need. Although she was much less of an activist when she wrote *Beauty in Disarray*, I believe that it was her admiration of these same qualities in

²⁰ Kazuko Watanabe, "Writing as Political Strategy: Asian Women's Writing" in *Feminist Issues* 6, no. 2 (1986): 50.

²¹ Watanabe, 50.

²² Christopher Harding, "How Psychoanalysis Came to Japan and Was Turned on Its Head," Aeon, November 9, 2012, accessed October 27, 2015, <https://aeon.co/essays/how-psychoanalysis-came-to-japan-and-was-turned-on-its-head>.

²³ Okada Takumi, "Buddhist Monk Setouchi: Abe Should Go to War Himself," Asahi Shimbun, September 21, 2015, accessed November 15, 2015, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/social_affairs/AJ201509210056.AJ201509210056

²⁴ Okada, and Ōkata Kusa, "Ontoshi 93-sai, Setouchi Jakuchō ga SEALDs menbaa to no renai shousetsu wo happyou!" *Litera*, October 31, 2015, accessed November 3, 2015. <http://lite-ra.com/i/2015/10/post-1637-entry.html>

²⁵ Okada Takumi, "Buddhist Monk Setouchi Forms Group to Assist Troubled Women," Asahi Shimbun. April 19, 2016, accessed April 19, 2016. <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201604190079.html>

Itō Noe that led to her choosing Itō as a biographical subject. Itō Noe embodies that which Setouchi would later go on to become, even if at the time of publication, she was not yet able to express herself or her politics in such a manner.

Itō Noe: Writer, Feminist, Socialist

Itō Noe was a passionate feminist writer with an insatiable thirst for knowledge. She was born in 1895, when Japan was in the midst of an enormous and fast-paced change, in a small town outside of Fukuoka in northern Kyushu, to a poor, rural family. She was forced by her family to leave school early, against her wishes, and take a job in order to provide more income.²⁶ Eventually, she managed to convince a wealthier uncle in Tokyo to take her in and allow her to continue her education at Ueno Girls' Higher School. Leaving her family meant that her sister was forced to drop out of school in order to replace Itō Noe's lost income.²⁷ Tsuta, Itō Noe's sister, was interviewed by the biographer in the first chapter of *Beauty in Disarray*, and she berated her sister for abandoning the family and never doing "any of the duties a child is supposed to do for a parent."²⁸ Her sister consistently described her as self-centered, and she is characterized as stopping at nothing to pursue her own wishes, regardless of the effects on her family and friends. While in Tokyo, Itō was promised away to the son of a local family in exchange for the family paying the rest of her tuition and allowing her to finish higher school.²⁹ It is at this time in Itō Noe's life that the second chapter of *Beauty in Disarray* begins. The reader is pulled into Setouchi's fictionalized version of Itō Noe's world, learning not only her insights

²⁶ Bardsley, 120.

²⁷ Bardsley, 121.

²⁸ Setouchi Harumi, *Beauty in Disarray*, trans. Sanford Goldstein and Kazuji Ninomiya. (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1993), 48.

²⁹ Bardsley, 122.

and motivations, but also the opinions of Itō Noe from the people that she comes to surround herself with -- Hiratsuka Raichō, Tsuji Jun, and Ōsugi Sakae, among other famous (and infamous) historical figures.

Although not particularly well-regarded as a writer, Itō Noe was a notorious figure on the early modern Japanese literary scene for her contributions as editor of the feminist literary magazine *Seitō*, and for her romantic involvement with Tsuji Jun and Ōsugi Sakae. Of her writing abilities, Jan Bardsley notes in *Bluestockings of Japan* that “the lack of confidence that the other Bluestockings express in Itō Noe’s work raises the question of how this relatively unsophisticated Kyushu teenager came to play so large a role in a group initially comprised of the privileged daughters of the Tokyo elite.”³⁰ Despite the aforementioned lack of confidence in her skills, Itō Noe was eventually given control of *Seitō* in 1915 by Hiratsuka Raichō, who had decided to settle down and have a family.³¹ Itō Noe was only twenty at the time, and there was little confidence that she would be able to handle such pressure as young and inexperienced as she was.³² However, Itō Noe managed to keep *Seitō* up and running for another year, until it finally closed in 1916.³³

The story of *Beauty in Disarray* ends not much later in 1916 with the Hikage Tea House Incident, but Itō Noe’s life as both a writer, activist and a public figure did not end there. Following the Hikage Tea House Incident, Ōsugi Sakae formally divorced his wife in 1917, and Itō Noe divorced her second husband Tsuji Jun, whom she had married shortly after he helped her obtain a divorce from her first husband. Although Ōsugi and Itō Noe never officially registered her name in his family registry, they entered into a common-law marriage and had five

³⁰ Bardsley, 120.

³¹ Bardsley, 119.

³² Bardsley, 125.

³³ Bardsley, 119.

children together.³⁴ Itō Noe and Ōsugi continued to be involved in socialism and anarchism, even going so far as naming their children after influential figures: Ema was named after Emma Goldman, Louis after Louise Michel and Nestor after Nestor Machno.³⁵ Together, they issued the magazine *Comparing and Criticizing Civilization* (Bunmei hihyō), and later the magazine *Labor Movement* (Rōdō undō).³⁶ During this time period, Ōsugi was arrested and imprisoned several times, and also traveled abroad to Europe and China to attend anarchist meetings, leaving Itō Noe to edit and publish the magazines.³⁷

In the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, Itō Noe, Ōsugi Sakae, and Ōsugi's nephew were murdered by the police. While much of the incident remains shrouded in mystery despite its prominence in the Japanese media in the immediate aftermath, it is widely speculated that their murders were a direct result of Itō Noe and Ōsugi Sakae's anarchist political sentiments.³⁸ Despite her many achievements, it is for her murder at the hands of the police, that she is perhaps most known. When the earthquake struck on September 1, 1923, it was the strongest in Japan's recorded history, and the fact that it struck a largely metropolitan area resulted in massive damage to the city and large losses of life. The damage sustained in the quake itself, however, was dwarfed by the fires that resulted from it occurring at noon, just as many families were cooking meals over wood and charcoal fires.³⁹ Due to bands of vigilantes that began roaming the streets to lynch ethnic Koreans living in Tokyo who were falsely blamed for the contaminated water supply, the government declared martial law, which gave the

³⁴ Bardsley, 127.

³⁵ Ilse Lenz and Akiko Terasaki, *Itō Noe: Frauen in der Revolution, Wilde Blume auf unfreiem Feld* (Berlin: Karin Kramer Verlag, 1978), 25.

³⁶ Lenz and Terasaki, 30.

³⁷ Lenz and Terasaki, 31.

³⁸ Lenz and Terasaki, 30.

³⁹ Stanley, 155.

Japanese military police free reign to do as they pleased.⁴⁰ On September 15, 1923, Ōsugi Sakae, Itō Noe, and Ōsugi's six year-old nephew were arrested. Five days later, on September 20th, their bodies were found in an abandoned well.⁴¹ The cause of death was determined to be strangulation, and at some point, Itō Noe and Ōsugi had been severely beaten.⁴² Although the exact reason for their arrest remains unclear, scholars believe that Ōsugi's death had been ordered by high government authorities or the army, and that the Japanese police had taken advantage of the confusion and martial law after the earthquake to eliminate a person that they viewed as a leftist threat.⁴³ If that is the case, Itō Noe, and especially Ōsugi's six year-old nephew, were collateral victims who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. It could be argued that Itō Noe knew what she was getting into when she began a relationship with a known leftist activist, who had already been imprisoned in the past, but she chose to stay with him and support him through her literary works, and this ultimately led to her own demise. Itō was involved in socialism and was known to the government as a leftist. Part of what Setouchi accomplishes in *Beauty in Disarray* is showing that Itō was very much involved with political publications and socialism, and she was not just a shadow behind Ōsugi.

The Infamous Ōsugi Sakae

Although many other characters flit in and out of *Beauty in Disarray*, Ōsugi Sakae is perhaps the closest to the second main character, casting a shadow over the work from the beginning even though he is not formally introduced to Itō Noe until the second half of the novel.

⁴⁰ Stanley, 158.

⁴¹ Stanley, 159.

⁴² Stanley, 160.

⁴³ Stanley, 160.

Setouchi provides a brief biographical narrative for Ōsugi upon his introduction to Itō, but more background on the infamous anarchist is necessary to understand why he drew both Itō Noe and Setouchi's attention. And for that, Ōsugi's autobiography, *Jijouden*, which was published in 1923, serves as a crucial source of valuable insights. In his autobiography, he writes that he was born on January 17, 1885, although other official records, including the Ōsugi family registry, list his birthdate as May 1st.⁴⁴ Although he was born in Marugame, Kagawa, his family moved to Tokyo when he was five months old, and then to Shibata, where he resided until 1898. Despite spending so many years in Shibata, he did not consider it to be his hometown.⁴⁵ Ōsugi had eight siblings, although they are rarely mentioned in his autobiographical work. The young nephew that was murdered alongside Ōsugi and Itō Noe was the son of his youngest sister Ayame.⁴⁶

Ōsugi's father was a prominent and patriotic soldier, who was unaffectionate and generally absent from Ōsugi's life.⁴⁷ His mother, Yutaka, played a larger role, and likely affected his subsequent opinion of women. His biographer Thomas A. Stanley writes of her relationship with Ōsugi: "Yutaka was a model for her son because her openness, tendency to speak her mind, and spontaneity were characteristics that later appeared in Ōsugi too."⁴⁸ However, their relationship was one of a "mixture of love and disappointment."⁴⁹ She spoiled him, but also punished him harshly when he misbehaved, which was often. According to Ōsugi's autobiography, "she would order him to fetch a broom with which to be punished and, when he did, complain that he was a fool for bringing the instrument for a beating he could have easily

⁴⁴ Ōsugi's father was at the time a company-level army officer and he did not have the required 300 yen to register his marriage with his wife until after she was visibly pregnant with Ōsugi. When they finally registered, they altered Ōsugi's birthday in order to maintain an image of respectability (Stanley, 1).

⁴⁵ Stanley, 1.

⁴⁶ Stanley, 2.

⁴⁷ Stanley, 3.

⁴⁸ Stanley, 7.

⁴⁹ Stanley, 7.

escaped.”⁵⁰ Stanley relates this to Ōsugi’s later habit of testing himself against the police, suggesting a preference to participate in a test of wills: “What were the rules for each side? How would each side enforce the rules? How could the rules be changed to his advantage?”⁵¹ Ōsugi would later go on to test these same questions against the Japanese police, leading to his imprisonment on several occasions.

In 1899, Ōsugi entered Nagoya Kadet School, with military aspirations inherited from his father.⁵² He excelled academically, but fought frequently with other students and was expelled in 1901.⁵³ From there, he entered a number of other schools, until he eventually made his way to Tokyo Foreign Language School in 1903, where he began to experiment with socialism, as well as with Christianity.⁵⁴ Religion, specifically Christianity, was heavily tied to socialism in Japan in the early twentieth century.⁵⁵ Initially, Ōsugi still had aspired to join the military as a career; he did participate in left-wing activities, but did not consider himself to be a fully-fledged socialist. Akiyama Kiyoshi traces Ōsugi’s conversion to socialism to the Russo-Japanese War, which Ōsugi strongly opposed and in which Ōsugi’s father was sent to fight.⁵⁶ However, others argue that Ōsugi’s opposition reflects his dedication to pacifism, and that he was not yet a socialist.⁵⁷ A 1906 police report shows that he joined the Japan Socialist Party that year, but Thomas Stanley notes that there is no corroborating evidence, and furthermore, that “Ōsugi joined the Christian church and the Heimin-sha without completely agreeing with either. He

⁵⁰ Stanley, 7.

⁵¹ Stanley, 8.

⁵² Stanley, 19.

⁵³ Stanley, 25.

⁵⁴ Stanley, 30.

⁵⁵ At the time in Japan, Christianity was considered to be very progressive, and the Social Democratic Party (*shakai minshu to*), the first socialist party in Japan, was formed in 1901 by a group of six men, of which five were Christians (Stanley 36-37).

⁵⁶ Stanley, 36.

⁵⁷ Stanley, 40.

probably was equally equivocal in signing himself into the Nihon shakai to.”⁵⁸ Later, Itō Noe’s own involvement with socialism and anarchism will somewhat mirror Ōsugi’s beginnings. By the time that Ōsugi became involved with Itō Noe, he was a fully converted socialist. Within the text and time period of *Beauty in Disarray*, Itō Noe initially did not agree with socialism.⁵⁹ However, in *Beauty in Disarray*, although she does not necessarily agree with all of his politics, she provides him with publishing assistance through *Seitō* out of sympathy for his cause.⁶⁰ Itō Noe’s developing interest in socialism, and later anarchy, developed in a similar vein to Ōsugi’s own interest.

Ōsugi Sakae’s autobiography does not cover his relationship with Itō Noe, although Byron K. Marshall notes that it is likely he intended to continue the work, but was prevented from doing so by his murder.⁶¹ The autobiography provides an insight into Ōsugi’s formative years as he delves further into political activism and socialism. Despite the fact that Ōsugi’s relationship with Itō Noe is not covered in the autobiography, the text stands as a necessity in understanding Ōsugi as a central figure on the early modern Japanese literary scene, and to understand Itō Noe’s attraction to Ōsugi Sakae one must also understand Ōsugi Sakae as a person. Itō Noe’s conflict between choosing Ōsugi Sakae over Tsuji Jun and the attraction that she felt both towards Ōsugi and his politics is a key element in *Beauty in Disarray*, and one that Setouchi seems to have keenly understood completely, insofar as she chooses to not only focus on Ōsugi Sakae’s inner thoughts, but also on Ōsugi’s own background, even as it does not relate to Itō Noe, the main character of *Beauty in Disarray*.

⁵⁸ Stanley, 41.

⁵⁹ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 264.

⁶⁰ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 265.

⁶¹ Byron K. Marshall, introduction to *The Autobiography of Osugi Sakae*, by Osugi Sakae (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992), xv.

The story of *Beauty in Disarray* ends in 1916 when Kamichika Ichiko (1888 - 1981) stabs Ōsugi Sakae in the neck in response to his relationship with Itō Noe. The decision to end here, with Kamichika Ichiko rather than on Itō Noe is interesting. Setouchi could have chosen to write the entire story of Itō Noe's life in *Beauty in Disarray*, but instead ended it on a controversial incident at which Itō Noe was not even present. Itō lived for another six years following the end of the novel, but her infamous murder overshadows much of her later writings. However, in ending *Beauty in Disarray* with the Hikage Teahouse Incident, Setouchi does not allow Itō's murder to overshadow her life. Instead, she focuses on what Itō accomplished while she was still alive. Setouchi did eventually continue Itō Noe's story, publishing a sequel to *Beauty in Disarray* in 1984, under the title *Harmony is Deceptive* (*Kaichō wa itsuwari nari*).⁶² The unnamed biographer and narrator, reappears at the beginning of *Harmony is Deceptive*, when asked by a curious reporter why she decided to write about the death of Osugi Sakae and "others," replies that there are so many political and military secrets related to the incident that she wants to understand.⁶³ The phrasing of the question that she is responding to firmly places Itō Noe as an "other," rather than the primary figure of the Amakusa incident, and this signals that while this is indeed a sequel of *Beauty in Disarray*, its focus is in the life of Ōsugi Sakae rather than Itō Noe. Her reply also suggests that her interest in Ōsugi is based on his intriguing politics.

In *Beauty in Disarray*, Setouchi writes that Tsuji Jun was the first person to introduce Itō Noe to feminist writing and publications like the journal *Seitō*. However, within the narrative of the novel, it was through Ōsugi Sakae that Itō Noe became more involved with social and political activism. As noted above, Ōsugi Sakae was raised under a military ideology by a father

⁶² *Harmony is Deceptive* was initially serialized from 1981 to 1983 before being published in a two-volume set in 1984.

⁶³ Setouchi Harumi, *Kaichō wa itsuwari nari*, (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 1984), 2.

who was a professional soldier. Setouchi has him describe his upbringing as such: “Since I was born into a military family, was raised among soldiers, was taught at a military school, and was quite deeply impressed by the falsehood and stupidity of army life, I want to devote my life to socialism.”⁶⁴ Setouchi’s interest in Ōsugi Sakae seems to extend beyond focusing solely on his relationship to Itō Noe. Both the title of *Beauty in Disarray* (Bi wa ranchō ni ari) and its sequel, *Harmony is Deceptive* (Kaichō wa itsuwari nari) are taken from a well-known Ōsugi Sakae quotation.⁶⁵ Setouchi’s interest in Ōsugi also seems to come from her own anti-establishment stance. Kaneko Masayo suggests that this ideology developed out of Setouchi’s own upbringing under an imperialistic regime and militaristic education and her subsequent identity crisis.⁶⁶ Setouchi’s sympathetic portrayal of the controversial Ōsugi and his “free love” ideology stems from a compassion and respect for his political stances.

Hiratsuka Raichō

There is another key figure among those featured in *Beauty in Disarray* that I would like to provide with a brief biography and that is Hiratsuka Raichō. Strong female characters figure prominently in *Beauty in Disarray*, and after only Itō Noe, Hiratsuka Raichō, is perhaps the most important. Widely regarded as the most famous editor of the literary magazine *Seitō*, Raichō was born Hiratsuka Haruko in 1886 in Tokyo, to a middle-class family.⁶⁷ Jan Bardsley writes that Raichō’s mother had been schooled in traditional arts and especially enjoyed playing music, but that she had been forced by her husband to give this up upon their marriage. Seeing her mother

⁶⁴ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 248.

⁶⁵ 「美はただ乱調にある。諧調は偽りである。」 (“There is beauty only in disarray. Harmony is deceptive.”) Ōsugi Sakae, *Atarashiki sekai no tame no atarashiki geijutsu*, (Aozora Bunko, 1990), 4.

⁶⁶ Kaneko, 55.

⁶⁷ Bardsley, 81.

in this forced position of subservience had an enormous effect on Raichō: “The constraints of gender and class, as evident in her mother’s life, were not lost on the young Raichō.”⁶⁸ Perhaps because of this, Raichō was considered by her family to be something of a tomboy, who, akin to Itō Noe in her own childhood and adolescence, “disliked being made to conform to more feminine behavior.”⁶⁹ However, unlike Itō Noe, Raichō was able to receive the education that Itō longed for without having to agree to a loveless marriage. She attended the prestigious Ochanomizu Girls’ School, and later, Japan Women’s College. While in school, Raichō was rebellious, specifically railing against the “Good Wife, Wise Mother” policy that Setouchi, too, would later oppose. Raichō rebelled by refusing to attend the required *shuushin* (morals) classes.⁷⁰ Instead, she focused on sports, particularly tennis, because she was proud of her physical strength. She later went on to found a group of students called “The Pirates Band.” She “dreamed with them of forging a stimulating life of work and adventure that did not include marriage.”⁷¹ Perhaps most interestingly as it pertains to Setouchi Jakuchō, it is also due to her disdain for the “Good Wife, Wise Mother” dogma that Raichō began to develop an interest in Zen Buddhism.⁷²

Hiratsuka’s interest in Buddhism is particularly relevant to Setouchi, and she highlights it throughout the novel. Disappointed in the Japan Women’s College’s femininity codes, Raichō spent most of her time at the school in the library, immersing herself in classical literature, philosophy, and especially, religion. Her research inspired her to visit the temple at dawn every morning for meditation.⁷³ Hiratsuka would later go on to credit her early embrace of Zen

⁶⁸ Bardsley, 81.

⁶⁹ Bardsley, 81.

⁷⁰ Bardsley, 81.

⁷¹ Bardsley, 81.

⁷² Bardsley, 81.

⁷³ Bardsley, 82.

principles and her youthful advancement to *kensho*, the first stage of enlightenment, for her ongoing creativity and strength even in old age.⁷⁴ Setouchi was not yet a Buddhist nun when she published *Beauty in Disarray*, but as a person whose hometown is Tokushima, a major Buddhist pilgrimage site, as well as being the daughter of a dealer in Buddhist wares and artifacts, she had been closely surrounded by the religion throughout her life.⁷⁵ It is therefore no surprise that after Itō Noe, Hiratsuka Raichō is the second most prominent female protagonist in *Beauty in Disarray*; as editor of *Seitō* she was extremely influential in Itō Noe's life, but also as a person, she led a remarkably interesting life that resonated within Setouchi's own experiences.

Theories of Biography and Self-Expression in Women's Writing

As a novel, *Beauty in Disarray* can be categorized as both biography and biographical fiction, with the line distinguishing the two genres blurred almost to the point of irrelevancy. It appears to be meticulously researched; the first chapter details the efforts of the questing biographer as she travels to Itō Noe's hometown, Hakata, in search of reliable sources for the biography. She interviews several of Itō's relatives, and much of the first chapter consists of their opinions on Itō's character and personality. There is very little supposition or inference on the part of the biographer. Rather, the first chapter aims to be as factual as it can be with sources who have very little memory of Itō. The second chapter, however, marks a shift in narrative: from non-fictional biography to biographical fiction. The biographer as a character disappears and the reader is thrust into the world of early twentieth-century Japan as Itō Noe begins higher

⁷⁴ Bardsley, 82.

⁷⁵ Kaneko, 47-48.

school.⁷⁶ This new narrative features an omniscient third-person narrator, who provides insights into the hearts and minds of not only Itō Noe, but others close to her, such as Tsuji Jun, Ōsugi Sakae, and Hiratsuka Raichō. The third-person narration occasionally digresses upon the lives and the histories of these characters regardless of whether they relate to Itō Noe's story itself, and the reader is treated to the romantic experiences of Hiratsuka Raichō and Otake Kōkichi,⁷⁷ among others. The characters and the aspects of their lives that Setouchi chooses to highlight are revealing of the traits and interests that draw Setouchi's interest: rebellion and drive for economic independence stand out, but passion, both for self-improvement and in terms of romance relationships, is also a key element of all of these characters' stories.

It is also noteworthy when considering Setouchi's use of biography as self-expression to examine her interest in the influential *Seitō* literary magazine as a whole. This novel is not the only work she produced that relates to *Seitō*. She had previously written biographical novels on several members of *Seitō*, not to mention publishing a novel on *Seitō* itself in 1987. She has also written many biographical novels on other young Japanese women writers of early modern Japan.⁷⁸ What exactly is it about these women that drew Setouchi's interest? Many of them were independent at a time when it was difficult for women to be so without public disapproval, and writing about the aforementioned public disapproval of these women's actions often plays a large part in Setouchi's novels, especially in *Beauty in Disarray*. The way in which Setouchi highlights the public disgust at *Seitō* and the supposed actions of its writers and editors

⁷⁶ She began in 1911, which is coincidentally the year that the "Good Wife, Wise Mother" rhetoric was formally added to textbooks, although it was informally taught for some time before that. (Ana Micaela Araújo Nocado, "The "Good Wife and Wise Mother" Pattern: Gender Differences in Today's Japanese Society." *Crítica Contemporánea. Revista De Teoría Política* 2 (Nov 2012) 159).

⁷⁷ Otake Kōkichi (1893-1966) was an artist and member of *Seitō*, who designed several covers for *Seitō*. She was known for being outspoken, and was subsequently criticizing for "acting like a man" (Bardsley 83-85.)

⁷⁸ Among the many figures she has written about: *Tamura Toshiko* (1961), Okamoto Kanoko (*Kanoko no ryōran*, 1965), Kanno Sugako (*Kanno Sugako shō*, 1970), as well as an eight-volume series of biographies on strong historical women, *Onna no issho* (1981). (Schierback, 111).

throughout *Beauty in Disarray* shows that for these women, choosing to write and express themselves through *Seitō* invited risks. Kamichika Ichiko was sent away from Tokyo by Tsuda College when it was discovered that she had written a single article for *Seitō*, despite the fact that she did not actually work for them.⁷⁹ The censure and criticism that these women faced was not unlike the same challenges that Setouchi faced when she first began publishing in the late 1950s. Setouchi has a lengthy history of writing about influential women writers and thinkers, which reflects her own tenacity and admiration of talented, politically minded female writers and activists.

Beauty in Disarray follows in the footsteps of a long history of biography as a novelistic genre. Setouchi Jakuchō was undoubtedly affected by the biographical fiction of celebrated Japanese literary figure Mori Ōgai (1862–1922).⁸⁰ More than Mori Ōgai, however, historical fiction has come to be a genre of choice for women writers in Japan. In “Writing as Political Strategy: Asian Women’s Writing,” Kazuko Watanabe writes of this trend: “[Historical fiction] has to be a record of reality but its writer can still reveal her own thinking and way of living through the way she treats her materials. In this way women writers can free themselves as well as get rid of gender conflicts to express themselves.”⁸¹ In essence, by using the voices of historical figures to express their own beliefs, Japanese women writers are able to avoid criticisms and social restraints placed on them by a patriarchal society. Watanabe goes on to note that, “to break out of a thousand-year-old tradition in which stereotypical images have been preserved and to advance a new alternative through a disruption between gender and genre

⁷⁹ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 160.

⁸⁰ Like Setouchi, Ōgai’s biographies feature a first-person narrator in search for sources on his biographical subject. Because of this, some critics argue that Ōgai used his biographies as a form of veiled autobiographical expression. (Marvin Marcus, *Paragons of the Ordinary: The Biographical Literature of Mori Ōgai* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), 64.)

⁸¹ Watanabe, 50.

represents a workable political strategy for Japanese women writers.”⁸² Setouchi takes advantage of this new political strategy to not only express her sympathy for anti-establishment views, but also, as Watanabe notes, to express her sexuality in a manner free from criticism: “[Setouchi] seemed to identify with these women models and their tragic, erotic lives and deaths. Historical fiction can rediscover women’s lost experiences and passions and recreate them for contemporary readers.”⁸³ By using historical fiction, and in Setouchi’s case in particular, biographical fiction, Setouchi is able to explore her own experiences through a genre which allows her to break away from expectations of her gender. Watanabe then goes on to close by noting that, “In historical writing, the dissolution of the link between genre and gender leads to writing as a political strategy and should make it possible to create a new contest within the traditional genres.”⁸⁴ Setouchi utilizes historical fiction to break gender boundaries while providing herself with a safe outlet for expression of not only her own inner feelings, but also her interest in political activism.

The theory that biography can be used as a means of expression is not a new one. Andre Maurois, perhaps the most influential theorist of biographical fiction as an art form, has described the importance of the form as essentially a veiled autobiography. In “Biography as Means of Expression,” Maurois argues that the biographer chooses one’s subject “in order to respond to a secret need in his own nature.”⁸⁵ In telling the story of the biographical subject’s life, the biographer is creating a narrative in which the personal experiences and ideas of the biographer shape the life events and ideas that the biographer chooses to emphasize. In Maurois’ words: “the feelings and adventures of the hero will be the medium of the biographer’s own

⁸² Watanabe, 51.

⁸³ Watanabe, 51.

⁸⁴ Watanabe, 51.

⁸⁵ Maurois, 125.

feelings; to a certain extent it will be autobiography disguised as biography.”⁸⁶ Maurois recognizes that a writer’s nature will seep into one’s characters whether intentionally or not, and he cites this as a reason to be cautious of biography, because in doing so, the biographer may unintentionally not remain true to his subject’s personality.⁸⁷ Maurois touches on this aspect of biography when he goes on to note that, “if the choice is fortunate and well suited to the author’s temperament, that the biographer may be able to express some of his own feelings without misrepresenting those of his hero.”⁸⁸ He cites his criticism by drawing a line: “To publish a biography, to announce it as biography and not as a novel, is an announcement of authentic facts and the first thing that is due from a biographer to his reader is truth.”⁸⁹ Setouchi avoids this issue by writing her biography in the form of a novel; the reader is able to understand that there is no way Setouchi could have been privy to private conversations between, for example, Tsuji Jun and Itō Noe. For as meticulously researched as the biographical novel is, it is indeed both of those things: a biography and a novel, and as such it has aspects of both. Setouchi can use the guise of biography as a way to express her own ideas safely by putting them into the mind of Itō Noe and those around her, but by marking the work as one of fiction, she is also free to use more creative license than she would be able to in a non-fiction biography.

Marilyn Yalom has also written about the use of biography as self-expression, and she makes the argument that female writers are more likely to use biography as a form of veiled autobiography: “The strategy of inscribing one’s history obliquely-- telling one’s story “slant” in

⁸⁶ Maurois, 125.

⁸⁷ Maurois, 131.

⁸⁸ Maurois, 132.

⁸⁹ Maurois, 131.

the words of Emily Dickinson-- can indeed be characteristic of women writers but as biographers and autobiographers.”⁹⁰ Yalom summarizes her work:

“Perhaps, too, it is characteristic of women to write their stories through the stories of others, as the late Joan Lidoff maintained in her work on women’s autobiographies. In light of the psychological theories of Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan, it is not unreasonable to assume that women’s sense of self – for better or for worse -- is not intimately entwined with their relationships with others and it is not surprising that their autobiographical texts, reflecting more fluid ego boundaries than found in men, are more relational in character.”⁹¹

Through historical and biographical writings, women like Setouchi are able to tell their own stories in a manner that is relational, and therefore obscured and oblique. This method allowed figures like Adele Hugo, the example Marilyn Yalom cites in her article, to enter into history as an active figure.

Yalom ends her article by citing Carolyn Heilbrun in *Writing a Woman’s Life* (1988), who considered the late 1980s a new era of women’s writing, noting that recently women had started to “inscribe their lives with greater honesty.”⁹² Yalom urges the reader to not forget the efforts of women in the past, like Adele Hugo, who could not express themselves honestly and had to turn to other methods, such as biography.⁹³ Setouchi was by no means dishonest about divulging the details of her life, but she was cautious about doing so, using biography, as well as “I”-novels such as *The End of Summer* (Natsu no owari), to reflect her own situation and opinions. As she got older and society has changed, she has become much more fierce and direct, and instead of hiding things under the pretext of biographical fiction, she takes a stand as herself, writing essays, giving lectures, and making appearances at rallies and protests. But that is not to

⁹⁰ Marilyn Yalom, “Biography as Autobiography: Adele Hugo, Witness of Her Husband’s Life” in *Revealing Lives: Autobiography, Biography, and Gender*, edited by Susan Groag Bell and Marilyn Yalom. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 59.

⁹¹ Yalom, 63.

⁹² Yalom, 63 and 216.

⁹³ Yalom, 63.

say that Setouchi does not still use fiction to express herself. Nor should it be forgotten, as Yalom noted, that freedom of expression was not as readily available in the past as it is now. In the near fifty years since this novel's release, Setouchi has been able to emerge from behind the pen and, quite literally, take the stage with a megaphone in hand to express herself more freely. However, her earlier historical and biographical works, are just as relevant in understanding Setouchi and her anti-establishment and feminist political views.

When talking about *Beauty in Disarray* in particular, perhaps the biggest characteristic that separates a nonfiction biography, that presents only verifiable facts and does not attempt to reconstruct things like conversations, from biographical fiction like *Beauty in Disarray*, is the insight it provides into the mind and private life of the subject and the intimate details of those around her, that would not otherwise be available to the biographer. As such, it is things like dialogue and internal monologue that best serve the purpose of analyzing biographical fiction. As a writer, Setouchi is essentially putting words into the mouths of various historical figures. History tells us what happened and provides a basic outline of the event, but how such decisions came to be made often remain a mystery. The writer can look at autobiographies and letters, and she can interview those who were close to the biographical subject, but there is still an amount of artistic license that must be made in order to form a cohesive narrative that can be sold as a novel to a consumer public. In writing this biography in the form of a novel, it is evident that there are fictional aspects, conversations, thoughts and impressions of various historical figures, that have been filled in by Setouchi, and by looking at those in particular, as well as the specific words she chooses to highlight when describing Itō Noe or other character's innermost feelings, one can sense that, just like Maurois suggested, the author's own beliefs have become entwined with the characters that she writes. Because of the similarities that already exist between Setouchi's life

and that of Itō Noe, it is of no surprise that the lines between the author's beliefs and those of the characters of *Beauty in Disarray* are blurred.

In view of the notion of biography as a means of self-expression, I believe that Setouchi Jakuchō uses the act of writing Itō Noe's life as a vehicle for her own veiled autobiography. Itō Noe's passion and activism mirror what Setouchi's life would go on to become after her publication of *Beauty in Disarray*. In "Biography as Means of Expression," Maurois notes that "There too is mimicry, but mimicry in the opposite sense. The biographer makes himself like his hero in order to understand him; the reader, in order to copy his actions. There is no greater influence on men's conduct than the knowledge of conduct of others."⁹⁴ Was Setouchi drawn to Itō Noe because she exhibited qualities that Setouchi wished she herself could express? Or did Setouchi later become an activist because of her work in writing about Itō Noe and the many other young feminist writers of early twentieth century Japan? The answer is most likely that Setouchi felt these things all along, but as scholars like Yalom and Watanabe have suggested, the gender restrictions placed on women, who are often not allowed by society to express their opinions publically, led to writers like Setouchi finding other outlets for their own self-expression.

The First-Person Narrator of Chapter One

Though I had noticed it listed among the names of the Seito staff ... I was not the least bit charmed by Noe Ito's overly subjective impressions, which were composed in a stiff style; by her so-called "short stories," which were cast in a rather immature form; or by her puerile poems published in the magazine...⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Maurois, 134.

⁹⁵ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 19.

The narrative style employed in this novel is fascinating for its use of an unnamed, first-person narrator who acts as biographer only for the narrator to suddenly disappear without a trace in the second chapter. It acts as the beginning of a frame narrative, but lacks any framing at the end as would be typical in a frame story. The biographer reveals, as she collects her sources about Itō Noe's early life, that she first became aware of Itō Noe while researching *Seitō* in order to write biographical novel on Tamura Toshiko.⁹⁶ Whether or not this is true for Setouchi Jakuchō, it is important for the sake of the narrative that it is through the importance of someone else that the biographer discovers Itō. This very much encapsulates an ongoing theme of the novel: Itō Noe's importance to the political and literary scene of early modern Japan is in many ways due to her connections to key figures around her: Ōsugi Sakae, Hiratsuka Raichō, and Tsuji Jun, among the many historical and widely regarded figures who make an appearance in the narrative.

The translators of *Beauty in Disarray*, Sanford Goldstein and Kazuji Ninomiya assert that this unnamed biographer is Setouchi herself, and do not draw any further attention to Setouchi's use of the biographer as an instrumental character in the first chapter. When discussing Setouchi's reasoning for her fascination with and reasons for choosing to write about Itō Noe, they use information provided by the narrator of the first chapter: "the elaborate drama of the lives she was entangled in, the extraordinary intensity of each of the individuals who appeared upon her stage, the bewitching power of the dissonant play of complexity and disharmony performed by all those caught up in these complicated relationships."⁹⁷ It is entirely possible that the biographer is indeed Setouchi and that everything that the biographer writes can be taken as unquestionable fact about Setouchi's own personal opinions on Itō Noe and reasons for choosing

⁹⁶ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 19.

⁹⁷ Goldstein and Ninomiya, 10.

her. There is not anything in the novel that suggests this to be untrue. The biographer even makes reference to writing a novel about Tamura Toshiko, which Setouchi had previously done⁹⁸ However, it is also dangerous to take everything that the biographer says about herself to be completely honest and irrefutable facts about Setouchi herself.

If the biographer is left unnamed within the story, it leads to the larger question of: does it matter who the biographer is, or even what the biographer does? More than anything, this is the story of Itō Noe; the identity of the biographer should come secondary to the treatment of the subject in the narrative. While this is true, I believe that, in line with Andre Maurois' theories of biographer as self-expression and in particular Marilyn Yalom's theories about the importance of biography to female writers, the identity of the biographer is important and central to the themes of the novel. It is for this reason that I have chosen to read the identity of the biographer as a fictionalized version of Setouchi Jakuchō. Therefore, while the reasons that the unnamed biographer lists as being instrumental to her decision to write about Itō Noe may be true, I believe that there are other, unspoken reasons that Setouchi chose Itō Noe as a biographical subject that become clear with a closer reading of the text. In recognizing the ways in which Setouchi has other characters describe Itō Noe, the consistency of their descriptions suggests that these are traits that Setouchi, too, found the most appealing.

As previously stated, the "I"-narrator of the novel disappears after the first chapter, leaving the rest of the novel in the hands of a third-person narrator.⁹⁹ The second chapter chronicles the first meeting of Itō Noe and Tsuji Jun as follows:

Tsuji had paid no attention to the contents of Noe's prosaic remarks, but he had quite agreeably attuned himself to the beauty of her tense penetrating voice.

⁹⁸ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 20.

⁹⁹ In the Japanese version, Setouchi does use the phrase "our country" (我が国 *wagakuni*) in a later chapter. The translators of *Beauty in Disarray* translated this as "Japan," which is not incorrect, but the phrase does indicate some level of a first-person narrator. (Setouchi Harumi, *Bi wa ranchō ni ari* (Tokyo: Bungeishunjū, 1966), 59.

As she sat down, their eyes happened to meet. Noe made her dark eyes widen and, as if astonished, looked Tsuji straight in the face. Her eyes frankly communicated the drift of a mind full of curiosity, Tsuji parrying the lively movement with the vitality of one observing a fresh piece of fruit. The eyes of the girl, which were so voluptuous they reflected the pure childish curiosity and excitable sensitive agitation he had lost long ago, were softly tantalizing Tsuji's breast with a velvet-like touch.¹⁰⁰

From this shift in narration, the question becomes: from whose point of view is the rest of the novel written? Although the above section suggests it is Tsuji Jun, who died in 1944 and was not interviewed by the biographer, this impression does not last, as within the same chapter the reader is also exposed to the third person point of view of Hiratsuka Raichō, as well as to the inner monologues of Itō Noe herself. It is my belief that the narrative maintains the point of view of the biographer, now “acting” as a novelist, who, using the combination of the voices of Itō Noe's family's opinions of her character and personality fills in for Itō Noe's lost voice. The use of these interviews provides the novel with a semblance of academic accuracy, and the biographer presents the first chapter as being meticulously researched, providing a chart of Itō Noe's family tree, as well as excerpts from several publications by Ōsugi Sakae.¹⁰¹ Despite the fictional nature of the rest of the novel, by including the first chapter, in which the biographer interviews Itō's family as sources for her biography, Setouchi presents the novel as being a historically accurate biography with fictional aspects.

The inclusion of the biographer as a character is both interesting as an artistic choice and necessary in the evaluation of the novel as an act of Setouchi's self-expression. What is the reason for a frame narrative, only to have the biographer disappear completely? Leaving out the first chapter, in which the narrator is collecting sources rather than actually writing about Itō Noe's early life, would render the entire work an act of biographical fiction. However, the

¹⁰⁰ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 68.

¹⁰¹ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 22-23, 30.

inclusion of the biographer as a character signals to the reader that, long after the character has departed the story after the first chapter, the biographer as a character still remains in the minds of the reader. We know that the story we are reading has been thoroughly researched by the biographer, and we also know that it is she who is sharing this story with us, and not an unknown third-person entity. Thus, when the biographer gives her reasons for choosing Itō Noe as a biographical subject, those reasons remain with in the mind of the reader as the story begins, and we can see the biographer's own opinion of Itō Noe take further shape in the remainder of the novel.

Passion and Drive

As the biographer travels to Itō Noe's hometown, she stands at the Myoken Cape and looks into the Imazu Sea. It is here that her heart truly begins to sync with Itō Noe's, as she begins to feel that "if anyone stood on this beach every morning and evening, stared at this sleepy tranquil line of coast, and gazed at the approach and return of the tracks of those waves of the sea, that person's heart, be it Noe's or not, would be filled with longing to set out on a journey to some distant world."¹⁰² And so begins Setouchi's own journey into the world of Itō Noe's activism, assisted by figures such as the dadaist Tsuji Jun and well-known anarchist Ōsugi Sakae. The moment when the biographer feels her own self filled with the same desires as Itō Noe, in the same place that Itō Noe may have once stood, serves as an indication of the use of Itō Noe as a stand-in for Setouchi's own feelings. By using Itō Noe's history, Setouchi is able to put her own ideas and words into the mouth of someone similar enough to have likely shared her

¹⁰² Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 44.

views, but who is now dead, and free for Setouchi to manipulate. She is therefore also free from public criticism and scorn.

It is perhaps more accurate to say that rather than solely using Itō Noe as an avatar to express her political interests, Setouchi uses other characters, both major and minor, to express her own values by having them praise Itō Noe's personality. It is through these descriptions of Itō Noe that the reader can better understand the traits that Setouchi values in her own personality. Even through such minor figures such as Nogami Yaeko (1885–1985,) who only appears once in the book, Setouchi misses no opportunity in praising and highlighting Itō Noe's merits: "In the same way that [Hiratsuka] Raichō was attracted to Noe, Yaeko loved the young girl for her enthusiasm, and single-minded aspiration."¹⁰³ Yaeko continues, by describing Itō Noe as someone who is: "like the directness with which bread absorbs milk" because she had "taken into herself all the knowledge she had received from [Yaeko]."¹⁰⁴ Tsuji Jun has a similar first impression:

To Tsuji's eyes, with their taste for Edo culture, especially for the elegance of the downtown quarters, Noe's untidy negligence of dress was a reflection of her rustic and even dirty background. However, as her teacher he could not be indifferent to her avaricious pursuit of knowledge and the delicate susceptibility with which, like litmus paper moistened with water, she revealed a vivid reaction with precision and speed to everything he taught her. He found it interesting that without exception all the women teachers disliked her, saying she was quite assertive and conceited about everything she did and there was nothing pleasant about her. Tsuji rather felt Noe's stubbornness and serious rebellion wild and lovely.¹⁰⁵

Tsuji echoes the biographer's initial negative impression of Itō Noe that is subsequently changed by her desire for knowledge. The word "rebellion" (反抗心 *hankōshin*, literally "rebellious spirit") is also noteworthy, as it is something that Tsuji, and later Ōsugi, comes to admire about

¹⁰³ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 261. Nogami Yaeko was a founding member of Seito, although she withdrew her formal membership of the group after the first issue, subsequently serving as an occasional contributor (Bardsley, 204). She only makes one appearance in *Beauty in Disarray*, as Ito Noe's neighbor.

¹⁰⁴ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 261.

¹⁰⁵ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 71.

her.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the novel, Setouchi consistently places an emphasis, both in major and minor characters' words and their actions, on Itō Noe's pursuit of knowledge.

Itō Noe's drive, thirst and passion for self-improvement through knowledge is perhaps second only to Setouchi's. Setouchi is one of the most prolific writers in Japan, having published over ninety novels and counting, as she is still publishing at the age of ninety-three. It is also not just Setouchi's publications, but also her speeches and appearances that show a desire not only for self-improvement, but for the improvement of Japan as a whole. Perhaps the most noteworthy as it relates to Itō Noe are Setouchi's recent hunger strikes and appearances at rallies, speaking out against Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's attempt to reinterpret the Japanese constitution to allow it to go to war.¹⁰⁷ Although she may not have been able to participate in these type of demonstrations during the time that she wrote *Beauty in Disarray*, the sympathy and compassion for political movements existed. Her desire for continuous improvement, both of herself and of others around her, is evidenced in the emphasis she places on Itō Noe's thirst for knowledge and change.

Passion is a key element to Itō Noe's character: passion for knowledge, passion for a loving relationship, and passion for helping other women to feel inspired and to have an outlet to speak. These passions all culminate in a character who is often torn between following her desires or sacrificing some part of herself to remain safe, protected, secure, and content. Setouchi often draws attention to this passion, even in references to other characters. When the biographer meets Mako, the first daughter of Itō Noe and Ōsugi Sakae, she comments that with "Louise talking about her marriage, and Mako's having referred previously to her second marriage, I

¹⁰⁶ Setouchi, *Bi wa ranchō ni ari*, 52.

¹⁰⁷ Despite a recent hospitalization, Setouchi traveled to Tokyo in June 2015, to protest recent attempts to introduce new security bills that would allow for reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which would allow for Japan to go to war. (Okada, *Asahi Shinbun*).

guess that the unusual passion in the blood of Ōsugi and Noe had been inherited by their daughters.”¹⁰⁸ What strikes the biographer the most there are Louise and Mako’s own complicated relationships, just like their mother’s and father’s. This emphasis further suggests that part of Setouchi’s interest in telling this story stems from the complicated relationships experienced by Itō Noe and the other people who surround her; there is a similarity in the confusion these characters feel and the experiences that Setouchi had in her own extra-marital affair and subsequent divorce.

However, one of the more interesting aspects of Itō Noe’s early life that the reader is learns of is that as a young child, Itō Noe did not bother herself with ideas of love or romance.¹⁰⁹ Itō Noe’s sister Tsuta tells the biographer that, while some men showed affection for Itō while she was in school, “she studied hard when she was young and had no interest at all in young men.”¹¹⁰ This changed after she met Tsuji Jun, but it was true in the time that her family arranged for her to marry a local boy in exchange for the payment of her tuition. Setouchi’s choice to highlight this early aspect of Itō Noe’s personality during the biographer’s interview process may suggest that it was something Setouchi herself had experienced with her marriage, which she chose to end with the intention of chasing her feelings for another man. Throughout *Beauty in Disarray*, the biographer, and by extension Setouchi, chooses to highlight certain aspects of Itō Noe’s history and her personality, which suggests that it was for these reasons that Setouchi felt drawn to her.

¹⁰⁸ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 43.

¹⁰⁹ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 49.

¹¹⁰ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 49.

Throughout the novel, Itō Noe's relationships with several men dominate society's perception of her: Tsuji Jun, Ōsugi Sakae, and Kimura Sota.¹¹¹ A large part of this involves Itō Noe's confusion about what she wants. Does she want out of her loveless first marriage so that she can be with her former teacher, Tsuji Jun? Does she want a divorce to get out of her later marriage to Tsuji so that she can be with Kimura Sota? And how does her complicated feelings for Ōsugi Sakae fit into this? Romance and confusion are recurring themes of the novel, not just for Itō Noe, but also Hiratsuka Raichō and other members of *Seitō*. It was also a theme of Setouchi's early life. At the beginning of Itō Noe's love letter exchange with Kimura Sota, she feels an unshakeable burning pressure, described by Setouchi as her beginning "to feel some outrageous oppression and even terror, as if she were being pressed downward into the arms of a madman."¹¹² Itō is torn between who she wants to be with. She cannot decide if she wants to stay with her current husband Tsuji Jun, who treats her fairly and gives her freedom, or with Kimura Sota, whose passionate letters are filled to the brim with confessions of burning desire to be with her. Itō's confusion is similar to Setouchi's experiences with her marriage and subsequent affair with her husband's student.¹¹³

The affair began in 1946, but was brief, as the family decided to move to Tokyo in an effort to stay together. However, in 1948, Setouchi chose to leave her family and to elope with her husband's student. Before the elopement could take place, however, she again changed her mind, and decided not to go through with it. Her marriage was over, and she did not want to further tie herself down in another one. Instead, she opted to seek a divorce, and remain an

¹¹¹ As described in the novel, the Kimura Sota affair was entirely a love-letter correspondence and never amounted to any physical relationship. Ito Noe felt moved by Kimura's romantic prose, but upon meeting him in person, realized that she felt no attract to him or desire to be with him. In the novel, it is revealed that Kimura is also playing with Noe's feelings in order to gain a sense of superiority among his friends for seducing a member of Seito. (Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 221).

¹¹² Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 214.

¹¹³ Kaneko, 76.

economically independent woman, supporting herself with her writing.¹¹⁴ The fact that two years lapsed between the beginning of the affair in 1946 and her decision to leave her husband and child in 1948 suggests her loyalty to her family despite her confusion. She spent two years unsure of how to proceed before finally taking the plunge and leaving her family, and Itō Noe's own confusion in the face of her relationship problems echoes how Setouchi felt throughout the ordeal.

It could possibly be said that rather than serving as a biography of Itō Noe, *Beauty in Disarray* better serves as a biography of the women's magazine *Seitō*, which Setouchi would later go on to write in the form of her novel *Seitō* (1982 to 1984), some twenty years after the publication of *Beauty in Disarray*. The magazine serves as an undercurrent running throughout the novel, and it is through *Seitō* that the biographer first becomes aware of Itō Noe's writings. In a sense, *Seitō* itself is a major character of the novel, and receives as much attention as do the other members of the group. *Seitō* is first introduced to Itō Noe by Tsuji: "Tsuji felt something fresh and intellectual in the spirit of the women editors who, anticipating the sneers and taunts of the world, had called themselves "bluestockings."¹¹⁵ These women of *Seitō* are subject to extreme criticism and many "sneers and taunts," simply because of their association with the literary magazine. They are thrust into the public eye and come to find that "their slightest actions were so immediately seized upon by the spiteful eyes of the public that malicious gossip and scandal were unexpectedly fabricated, and for the first time these women were forced to realize that the position and power of their sex were not the least bit recognized by society."¹¹⁶ The members of *Seitō* live in the public eye, and their every action is subject to scrutiny, not

¹¹⁴ Kaneko, 54-55.

¹¹⁵ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 81.

¹¹⁶ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 117.

unlike the criticism Setouchi faced following the publication of *Wick of a Flower* (Kashin) in 1958, and the attempts at having her voice suppressed by the media.

Throughout the novel, the reader is exposed to the other characters' opinions of Itō Noe, rather than Itō Noe's own inner thoughts. Within the minds of the other characters, Setouchi's admiration for Itō Noe's rebellious nature, tenacity, and desire for knowledge constantly ring through. The fact that there are many similarities among all of the other characters' impressions of Itō Noe suggests that these are all traits that Setouchi values, and, as a study of Setouchi's autobiographical writings and subsequent political activism suggests, possesses herself. Among these commonly valued traits, Itō Noe's bravery is frequently singled out. Hiratsuka Raichō, like Itō Noe, has many romantic affairs in the course of the novel, and when she looks at Itō Noe, she sees that "the less than twenty-year-old Noe had shown this much courage to frankly expose herself to shame and inconsistency before the public."¹¹⁷ Hiratsuka notes that it is through watching Itō's actions and bravery in the face of public scorn that she feels encouraged to go public with her own affair.¹¹⁸ Within Setouchi's own writing, particularly her essay "What it Takes to be a Woman Writer" (1962), published before *Beauty in Disarray*, this courage is praised and declared to be a necessity. Setouchi writes that "you expose your innermost shame to scrutiny. With that in mind, one has to have what it takes to strip in broad daylight."¹¹⁹ Not only does Setouchi praise these traits of courage and bravery in her fictional narrative about Itō Noe, but it is also apparent in her "I"-novels and other fictional works, particularly *The End of Summer* (Natsu no owari). Setouchi values bravery and, after she took tonsure, frequently displays it in her many public acts of social activism.

¹¹⁷ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 234-235.

¹¹⁸ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 235.

¹¹⁹ Setouchi, *Woman Critiqued*, 65.

Breaking Away from “Good Wife, Wise Mother”

Hiratsuka Raichō is very much a central and influential character in Itō Noe’s early life, as she is the one that decides to hire Itō Noe for *Seitō*, and later, she hands control of *Seitō* over to her. Hiratsuka Raichō, like Itō Noe, is used as a vessel for Setouchi to express her distaste for the “Good Wives, Wise Mothers” rhetoric that she was subjected to as a young student. When reading Itō Noe’s letter about the situation of her unwanted first marriage, Hiratsuka Raichō feels that “the situation Noe was in was not hers alone but the problem of all women in Japan who were still behind the times, the problem of the errors of long-established conventions in social situations and feudalistic morality.”¹²⁰ Years after publishing *Beauty in Disarray* and becoming a Buddhist nun, when the social and political situation in Japan had changed vastly, Setouchi would go on to write that the “Good Wives, Wise Mothers” had been so ingrained into her soul while she was growing up that it was only after the end of the war that she felt like she was able to break away from it.¹²¹ Setouchi’s affair with her husband’s student and subsequent divorce, differs widely from Itō Noe’s loveless marriage, but the feelings of being trapped in a society that views marriage as the extent of a woman’s potential are the same. Women were, and in some places still are, pressured to marry young and have children, throwing away any dreams of freedom or economic independence. Hiratsuka, similar to Setouchi, had many publicized romantic relationships, and Setouchi uses her character as a further voice against the trapping of women in unwanted marriages. In doing this through a historical figure like Hiratsuka, Setouchi is able to avoid the same public criticism that she received for *Wick of a Flower* (Kashin) in 1958, with its economically and sexually liberated female lead.

¹²⁰ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 127.

¹²¹ Kaneko, 51-52, quoted in Kaneko’s work from Setouchi’s essay “Shiroi tebukuro no kioku.”

Hiratsuka's opinion on love and romance seems to mirror Setouchi's experience with her previous marriage. When involved in a romantic affair with Okumura Hiroshi, she finds herself contemplating a woman's role in romantic relationships, thinking that "she could not help but feel that when a woman falls in love and is captivated by the heart of another, especially in a situation in which the other party is a man, the woman becomes his subordinate both spiritually and physically."¹²² Setouchi, too, must have felt the same constrictions within her first marriage, as it was not until after her divorce that her works began to get published. Although she had several romantic relationships following her divorce, she remained unattached and never married again. Perhaps more interesting in the case of Hiratsuka is that this opinion did not seem to last. Eventually, she did settle down with Hiroshi, and it was this time that she decided to hand over control and editing of *Seitō* to Itō Noe.¹²³ Why did Setouchi wish to focus on the life of Hiratsuka Raichō? Although this book is touted as a biographical novel of Itō Noe, the reader spends a great amount of time reading about Hiratsuka's various romances and her history. Perhaps it is that out of the many women present in Itō Noe's life, Setouchi saw Hiratsuka's life as what would have happened if Itō Noe had been even slightly less ambitious: Hiratsuka chose to step down and settle down, and as a result lived and continued to publish until her death in 1971.¹²⁴ She went on to become one of the most highly regarded female figures in Japan, and although she was later criticized for not using *Seitō* as springboard for social activism, she countered this argument by pointing out that self-discovery was a vital step on the road to social activism.¹²⁵ In many ways, Setouchi's use of biography as self-expression in *Beauty in Disarray* reflects this same argument.

¹²² Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 138.

¹²³ Bardsley, 120.

¹²⁴ Bardsley, 80.

¹²⁵ Bardsley, 82.

Setouchi's self-expression becomes more evident as the novel progresses, and as Itō Noe is exposed to *Seitō*, with Hiratsuka Raichō's powerful and iconic declaration that "no longer will Women be the moon."¹²⁶ This work made a lasting impression on Itō Noe, as she begins to imagine "all women linking arms and encircling the earth like a garland."¹²⁷ However, Itō has trouble imagining herself among these other women, because she was "bound by the chains of her old household and fettered to a loveless marriage."¹²⁸ Setouchi, too, had previously been bound by chains of marriage, and her early marriage meant that she could not be economically or financially independent, or even the writer like she wanted to be, even though she had a college education. Despite the fact that she had written in school and continued her studies to the university level, it was not until after her divorce was finalized in 1951 that she joined the literary group Bungakusha and began to publish her writing.¹²⁹ Itō Noe's frustrations with her first, unwanted marriage resonate with Setouchi very clearly, and the majority of the second chapter of *Beauty in Disarray* deals with Itō Noe's inner conflict regarding her marriage; she does not want to be with her husband, but she feels that she does not have any other options. Japanese society of the time pressured women to marry young with little concern for the woman's feelings. Under such circumstances, Itō Noe does not feel that she has the right to petition for a divorce. Although she was already unhappy before being exposed to *Seitō*, Hiratsuka Raichō's powerful words on the freedom of women exacerbate her confusion. It is through literature that Itō Noe finds within herself the passions that drive her.

It is interesting to note that Itō Noe was first introduced to *Seitō* by Tsuji Jun. Itō Noe's second husband and former teacher continued to educate and mentor her in the women's

¹²⁶ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 86.

¹²⁷ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 87.

¹²⁸ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 87.

¹²⁹ Goldstein and Ninomiya, 13. Following her divorce, but prior to joining Bungakusha, Setouchi supported herself by short stories for girls' magazines using the pseudonym "Mitani Harumi." (Kaneko, 55).

liberation movement after their marriage in 1915.¹³⁰ Although she had graduated high school, Itō began to feel that she “realized the extent of her ignorance and even felt desperate about it... she came to feel hopelessly confused in her helpless desire to know more and more.”¹³¹ Setouchi was able to obtain a college education prior to her marriage, and the education of women has since become very important to Setouchi; she served as the president of Tsuruga Women’s College beginning in 1989 and leaving the position in 1992.¹³² Itō Noe’s desire for knowledge can be viewed as a projection of Setouchi’s belief in the importance and value of women receiving an education. It is likely that Itō Noe, who had agreed to enter into an arranged marriage in exchange for the payment of her tuition, felt that women deserved equal access to further education, but the words used in *Beauty in Disarray* also echo Setouchi’s own beliefs. Although it may be a projection, it is through Setouchi’s artistic interpretation of what Itō Noe would have been taught in early twentieth-century Japan that the reader comes to understand her desire for a liberated education, one that teaches her more than just how to be a good wife and mother.

Rebellion, Revolution, and Politics

When the biographer first becomes aware of Itō Noe while reading through old issues of *Seitō*, she is less than impressed. She describes Itō Noe’s works as “juvenile” and Itō Noe herself as “poorly endowed with talent.”¹³³ However, as she continues to read more of Itō Noe’s works, she is struck by a particular feeling of enthrallment:

Noe Itō, the youngest member, spent her youth on the magazine, defended it longer than anyone else did, absorbed from it more than anyone else had, despaired over it more

¹³⁰ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 87.

¹³¹ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 89.

¹³² Goldstein and Ninomiya, 13-14.

¹³³ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 20.

deeply than anyone else, and, finally, using Seitō as a springboard, resolutely sundered herself from her past to fling herself against the bosom of her lover Sakae Ōsugi—all at the risk of her life and for the purpose of love and revolution.¹³⁴

One of the reasons singled out by the biographer, and by extension Setouchi, is “revolution.”

Although more subdued at the time that this book was written, Setouchi has since come to make a name for herself as an activist and a major proponent of encouraging other women and youth to participate in activism.¹³⁵ Setouchi sees the same passion for revolution and activism in Itō Noe’s writing that she feels within herself, and it ignites an interest that leads to her further researching the life of Itō Noe, and eventually, writing this novel about her. As Andre Maurois notes in “Theories of Biography as Self-Expression,” the desire to write a biography stems from “the need for expression which will permeate the subject chosen with the deep-seated passion which alone perhaps has the potentiality of a work of art.”¹³⁶ The affinity that Setouchi feels with Itō Noe’s passions becomes more obvious and pronounced as the novel continues and details Itō Noe’s developing interest in politics, feminism, and activist writing.

Perhaps even more noteworthy in this quotation-- “for the purpose of love and revolution”-- is the idea of sacrificing oneself for love.¹³⁷ Love and relationships are a recurring theme in many of Setouchi’s works, particularly as it relates to what one has to give up, be it a marriage or a career, to be with a loved one. When the biographer goes on to describe the attraction she feels for Itō Noe, she highlights “the extraordinary intensity of each of the individuals who appeared upon her stage, the bewitching power of the dissonant play of complexity and disharmony performed by all those caught up in these complicated

¹³⁴ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 21.

¹³⁵ Takumi, “Buddhist Monk Setouchi: Abe Should Go to War Himself.”

¹³⁶ Maurois, 131.

¹³⁷ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 21.

relationships.”¹³⁸ Setouchi has certainly had her fair experience of complicated relationships prior to writing *Beauty in Disarray*, and through it all she chose her writing career and maintaining her own independence over limiting herself to her relationships. It is therefore particularly noteworthy that she seems to feel so connected to Itō Noe, who did not give up love for economic independence, but instead strove to make the two concepts work together hand and in hand.

Tsuji Jun, in the role of Itō Noe’s mentor, encourages her to write to the editors of *Seitō* about her marriage situation after she runs away from her first husband, and as a result, the editors, Hiratsuka Raichō and Yasumochi Yashiko (1885–1947), offer her a job in order to help finance her independence. After reading Itō Noe’s letters, the two editors are impressed with her “vivid passages full of passion.”¹³⁹ From these passages, Hiratsuka and Yasumochi can sense “the rebellious spirit and anguish of a girl inevitably forced to marry against her will.”¹⁴⁰ Similar to Setouchi’s previous praise of the spirit of “revolution,” it is important that Hiratsuka and Yasumochi use the word “rebellious” to describe positive aspects of Itō’s personality that they admire. The word Setouchi uses in this instance is 反抗心 (hankōshin,) the same word used by Tsuji to describe his early impression of Itō.¹⁴¹ As the novel continues, it becomes apparent that Itō’s “rebellious” nature gets her into trouble more often than not, and that, fostered by Tsuji Jun and her connections at *Seitō*, and later, by Ōsugi Sakae, this rebelliousness will lead to her interest in political activism that eventually contributes to her death at the hands of the Japanese police. Whether or not her rebellious nature is the real reason that Hiratsuka Raichō and Yasumochi Yashiko decided to hire Itō Noe is unknown; however, it is clear that this is a trait

¹³⁸ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 21.

¹³⁹ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 124.

¹⁴⁰ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 124.

¹⁴¹ Setouchi, *Bi wa rancho ni ari*, 97.

that Setouchi values deeply, as is later evidenced by her own rebellious nature with regards to her frequent attendance at protests and rallies after she has taken the tonsure. In writing Hiratsuka and Yasumochi as so moved by Itō Noe's rebellious nature, Setouchi further emphasizes how much she values Itō Noe's spirit that seems to echo in Setouchi's own later political and social activism, although she could not participate in those things at the time she wrote this novel for fear of retribution.

The politics of the novel are evident throughout. As the story transitions away from the biographer's interviews with potential sources to the spring of 1911 and the "novel" aspect of the narrative, the second chapter opens: "It was April in the spring of 1911 that Jun Tsuji met Noe Itō for the first time. The execution of Shusui Kotoku and others for high treason had been carried out on January 25."¹⁴² The time period, as well as the narrative stage of the rest of the novel, is set within the frame of the execution of a prominent early anarchist and socialist.¹⁴³ It is a fitting beginning to the story of a woman whose life would be cut short, and it alerts the reader to its time period by citing the death of a prominent political activist who would pay the ultimate price for his activism. It shows an awareness on Setouchi's part of the wider context of Itō Noe's life and death as well as her relationship to political activism. The political setting of novel did not go unnoticed by critics, either. Noted journalist Ōya Sōichi reviewed *Beauty in Disarray* as it was being serialized, and wrote that it was "not a mere biographical romance."¹⁴⁴ Ōya Sōichi noted that it included Japanese feminist history from the end of the Meiji era into the Taisho era, and he also notes that Setouchi puts much of herself into the female characters, but he does not go so far as to suggest that she is using these characters to express her own politics.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 63.

¹⁴³ Kōtoku Shūsui (1871 – 1911) is credited with introducing anarchism to Japan. Stanley, 161.

¹⁴⁴ Ōya Sōichi, "Itō Noe no ai to shisou," *Yomiuri Shinbun* (Tokyo), March 17, 1966.

¹⁴⁵ Ōya, "Itō Noe no ai to shisou."

The politics of Itō Noe's life and death are central to *Beauty in Disarray*, although they did not have to be. It is widely speculated by historians that Itō Noe was not murdered because of who she was, but because she happened to be with Ōsugi Sakae in the wrong place at the wrong time. However, Itō Noe worked tirelessly in the years after the Hikage Teahouse Incident and the end of *Beauty in Disarray* to publish and maintain several socialist and anarchist magazines alongside Ōsugi Sakae. Perhaps she was taken less seriously because of her own gender, but her contributions to the Japanese socialist and anarchist scene should not be overlooked, and Setouchi works to make sure that her interest in socialism is not forgotten.

Itō Noe published an essay on and a translation of noted feminist and anarchist Emma Goldman, after whom Itō would later go on to name one of her daughters, in *Seitō* in September of 1913. This essay, along with a translation of feminist Ellen Key's "Love and Ethics," was then published in a book in 1914, when Itō Noe was just nineteen years old. Setouchi describes this political publication as something that neither "Tsuji nor Noe could have foreseen that in a sense the event would have more significance for her destiny" than the birth of Tsuji and Noe's first child.¹⁴⁶ The reasoning for this description is both because of its further indication of Itō Noe's growing involvement with feminism and politics, and because it is with this book that Itō Noe fully captures the attention of Ōsugi Sakae. Although the two had attended the same functions and run in similar social circles for a while, this was the beginning of the "fateful encounter" that would eventually lead to their prolonged relationship.¹⁴⁷ Although Ōsugi casts a shadow over the novel, and is in fact introduced earlier on when he attends an event where Itō gives a speech, it is interesting to note that the two do not even meet until late in the book. Tsuji Jun spends more time with Itō Noe over the course of the novel, but perhaps it is because he is less well-known

¹⁴⁶ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 247.

¹⁴⁷ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 247.

that he is so overshadowed by Ōsugi's presence. Tsuji Jun may have helped to push Itō Noe towards politics and social activism, but it was Ōsugi and his circle of colleagues that ultimately led to her to socialism, anarchism, and, eventually, her death.

After his publications were banned by the Japanese government, Itō wrote in *Seitō* to defend Ōsugi, and even berates those members of *Seitō* who do not try to help Ōsugi and his colleagues continue to publish their writings.¹⁴⁸ She takes to publically declaring her dissatisfaction with the other members of the magazine, writing that: “especially from a woman’s point of view do I hope the wives of these men of principle will be more assimilated to their husbands. If these wives knew how much that fusion with their comrades would help the movement, they would desire to become a little more generous.”¹⁴⁹ In his reaction to these strong words, Setouchi writes Ōsugi as considering Itō’s article “too simple, outspoken, and immature.” But despite those things, he believes that it shows Itō Noe’s courage, especially for one so young.¹⁵⁰ Once again, Setouchi draws attention to Itō Noe’s bravery and her courage to stand up for her beliefs. Ōsugi’s thoughts on her courage can be seen as a mirror of Setouchi’s own pervading through her projection onto Ōsugi, especially the praise heaped on Itō for being “unafraid of the censure of the world of the opposition of authority.”¹⁵¹ Setouchi was well aware of the censure of the world, especially in regards to women speaking out for themselves, and in this instance she uses Ōsugi to praise the qualities in Itō that Setouchi, too, desires for herself. Along with this, Setouchi is also known for encouraging women to take a stand through protests, similar to the way that Itō Noe uses *Seitō* as a vehicle for encouraging other women to “help the movement.”

¹⁴⁸ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 267.

¹⁴⁹ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 267.

¹⁵⁰ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 267.

¹⁵¹ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 267.

As Itō Noe becomes more involved with Ōsugi Sakae, the presentation and content of *Seitō* changes, as well. Setouchi remarks on this change as being a result of Ōsugi's encouragement of Itō Noe. When unsure of herself and her plans, he visits her to speak with her: "To Noe, who had been suffering from the world's misgivings and ridicule and who had been troubled by feelings of solitude, Ōsugi's sudden visit and his open and frank encouragement made her so happy she shed tears. She felt anew the courage welling inside her."¹⁵² This courage leads to her decision to publish "On Taking Over *Seitō*," after she has been given the reins of *Seitō* by Hiratsuka Raichō. In this essay, Itō denies being a socialist but admits that she expressed some sympathy for the movement. In the article, she writes that she wishes "to work for the greater emancipation of all women" and that she is doing away with *Seitō*'s membership system in order to encourage more women to participate and publish through the magazine.¹⁵³ Likewise, Setouchi, too, would later go on to strive to do work for the betterment of all women, including founding a center for women, as well as to encourage women to take action and stand up for their rights.

Conclusion

Today, Setouchi Jakuchō is known primarily as a political and social activist Buddhist nun, rather than a prolific writer. However, at the time that she had published *Beauty in Disarray*, she was not widely known for her activism. I strongly believe that by evaluating her fictional biographies of known activists, there is evidence enough to argue that those sentiments that she would later come to express were bubbling under the surface and looking for an

¹⁵² Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 278.

¹⁵³ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 279.

opportunity to come to light. When Setouchi published *Wick of a Flower* (Kashin) in 1958 and was met with harsh criticism for its “pornography” and portrayal of economically independent women, the shunning she received thereafter meant that she had to find a safer means of expressing these opinions and desires. Biographical fiction served her well. These are the lives of real women that she is chronicling, and all the major events that she covered actually happened. Many of her subjects were outspoken feminists and political activists, and many were also economically independent working women who led complicated love lives. By chronicling their stories, Setouchi was able to write about what she wished with less fear of criticism. And, as she has aged and developed a noteworthy reputation, she has been able to step out from behind this veil of fictional biography and further incorporate her own activist sentiments into her own actions. As previously mentioned, in October 2015, it was reported that Setouchi’s next novel would be *Autumn of Goodbye* (Sayonara no aki), a romance involving two student protesters, a story which ties together two of her interests that are also present in *Beauty in Disarray*: romance and political activism. These are both key elements in Itō Noe’s life story, and this fact likely played a part in Setouchi’s decision to chronicle her story.

Setouchi uses this fictional biography of Itō Noe in order to express and reinforce her interest in the activism that Itō Noe would come to embody, but it is not only through Itō Noe herself that she does this. She often uses other characters as her own mouthpiece, and it is telling that Ōsugi Sakae plays such an influential role, despite only being present for about a third of the book, in *Beauty in Disarray*, and especially its sequel *Harmony is Deceptive*. It is interesting to note that when she chose to write about the latter half of Itō Noe’s life, after her relationship with Ōsugi Sakae began and up to her murder alongside Ōsugi and his nephew, she chose to focus on Ōsugi Sakae. Tsuji Jun may have aided in fostering young Itō Noe’s interest in feminism and

literature, but through Ōsugi Sakae, she developed a passion for social and political activism. Soon after meeting Ōsugi, she began to use *Seitō*, which by that point she was in charge of editing, to express sympathy for and support his political ideologies, thus giving *Seitō* a more political bent than it had under its previous editors.¹⁵⁴ Setouchi's fascination with not only the writings and life of Itō Noe, but also the life of Ōsugi Sakae, suggests that her interest in writing this fictional biography stems from a desire to chronicle Itō Noe's growing involvement in political and social activism.

Setouchi Jakuchō holds a special place among modern Japanese writers, especially in regards to how prolifically and passionately she writes in a variety of different genres. There are two areas that Setouchi is most known for: her “I”-novels of economically independent women who are often caught up in tangled love affairs, but who do not falter in strength for a single moment, and her works of historical and biographical fiction centering on feminists and early modern political activists, such as her work Tamura Toshiko, Okamoto Kanoko, Kanno Sugako, and, as discussed here, figures such as Itō Noe, Ōsugi Sakae, Hiratsuka Raichō, and Kamichika Ichiko.¹⁵⁵ Overall, it is Itō Noe who seems to resonate the most with Setouchi, and in chronicling Itō Noe's life, Setouchi found a kindred spirit who matched her own passion for pursuing knowledge and using the power of the pen to stand up for what is right and to express her inner desires. Not only is Setouchi able to use biography and historical fiction as a way to express her own feelings under the veil of someone else's life narrative, but at the same time she is also able to pay homage to these fascinating and influential men and women who paved the way for writers and activists such as herself.

¹⁵⁴ Setouchi, *Beauty in Disarray*, 264.

¹⁵⁵ Schierbeck, 110-111.

Itō Noe possesses the traits that Setouchi seems to value the most: bravery, pursuit of knowledge and doing what she believes is best for society, and especially, the courage to carry on, even in the face of harsh criticism. Itō Noe is described by countless figures throughout the novel, and in nearly every interaction, the opposite party is written by Setouchi to remark upon Itō Noe's ferocity, her bravery, her passion for knowledge and learning, and her courage, traits that Setouchi has always possessed, but that she was not safely able to express in her early years as a public figure. Through her many hunger strikes and appearances at political protests since taking the tonsure in 1973, Setouchi has come a long way in being able to openly express her beliefs in a way that she was unable to in 1958 with the publication and subsequent criticism of *Wick of a Flower* (Kashin), which had prevented her from being able to publish her work for several years. She has made a point in her appearances at rallies and protests to encourage the younger generation to follow in her footsteps. As someone who lived through and lost family in World War II, Setouchi strives to make a better Japan that will not repeat its ill-fated militarist past. In many ways, Setouchi is a quintessential Post-War writer, a woman whose identity was shaped by wartime militarist education and "Good Wife, Wise Mother" rhetoric and then subsequently shattered after Emperor Hirohito's formal surrender and the changes that Japan went through under the occupation. Through writing about historical figures such as Itō Noe and Ōsugi Sakae, Setouchi was able to both build and to steadfastly express a new, post-war identity of courage and political activism.

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