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https://doi.org/10.5109/7419033

出版情報：Journal of Asian Humanities at Kyushu University. 11, pp.17-32, 2026-04. 九州大学文学部大学院人文科学府大学院人文科学研究院
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DOREEN MUELLER

The Buddhist nun Ōtagaki Rengetsu 大田垣蓮月 (1791–1875) is known for the intriguing combination of her own *waka* 和歌 poetry, distinctive calligraphy, and pottery in nineteenth-century Kyoto. Her pottery appealed to afficionados of tea, including *matcha* 抹茶 (powdered tea) and *sencha* 煎茶 (steeped tea).[1] Among wares produced for drinking tea or sake, Rengetsu's stood out for featuring her own poetry and distinctive calligraphy. She collected the clay for her pottery herself and formed her vessels by hand before inscribing them with her poems. The style of her calligraphy, which has been called wiry, threadlike, or free flowing[2] was partly a consequence of her technique of incising the clay body before it was fired in kilns in Kyoto, often repeating the same poem on different vessels.

Existing research has discussed the intricacies of Rengetsu's calligraphy, pottery, and poetry.[3] This article shifts the focus to the construction of her posthumous image. It argues that her artistic persona was as influential as her art in shaping her image. Already during her lifetime, Rengetsu forged a strong artistic persona that was registered by her friends, artistic collaborators, and admirers of her poetry-pottery. By claiming disinterest in her growing reputation as a *waka* poet and potter, and by practicing periodic reclusion, Rengetsu used the powerful tool of disengagement to perform her artistic persona. This was neither an act of resistance against social or artistic norms nor was it a strategy of coping with the supposedly marginalized position of female artists. On the contrary, in doing so, she forged a liminal position for herself, simultaneously engaging and disengaging with contemporary cultural networks.

Rengetsu had a wide circle of friends and artistic collaborators including fellow *waka* poets, local Shijō 四条 school painters, and Sinophile literati (*bunjin* 文人) painters and scholars. She collaborated with literati painters like Tomioka Tessai 富岡鉄斎 (1837–1924), while Confucian scholars such as Nukina Kaioku 貫名海屋 (1778–1863) appreciated her poetry. In her youth, she had studied *waka* poetry with the Confucian scholar Ueda Akinari 上田秋成 (1734–1809).[4] In 1839,

1 Graham, *Tea of the Sages*, p. 138.

2 Tokuda, "Tokushū Rengetsuni," p. 41.

3 For a recent discussion of her pottery, see Corbett, "Crafting Identity as a Tea Practitioner." For a recent discussion of her poetry, see McCormick, "Ōtagaki Rengetsu's Waka Poetics." For a discussion of her calligraphy, see Tokuda, "Tokushū Rengetsuni," pp. 41–49.

4 Sugimoto, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, p. 111.

when she was in her late forties, she became a student of *waka* poet Kagawa Kageki 香川景樹 (1768–1843).[5] She was one among several celebrated female *waka* poets in nineteenth-century Kyoto, such as Ueda Chikajo 上田ちか女 (1824–1894, also called Chikako or Chika Onna), who was a geisha performer in Kyoto's Gion neighborhood; the *waka* poet Takabatake Shikibu 高畠式部 (1785–1881), and the courtesan Sakuragi 桜木 (mid-nineteenth–early twentieth centuries) of Kyoto's Shimabara entertainment district. These female *waka* poets maintained an informal cultural salon.[6]

Rengetsu's circle of collaborators demonstrates the eclectic nature of cultural networks in nineteenth-century Kyoto. They included Sinophile literati pursuing *kanshi* 漢詩 (Sino-Japanese) poetry, *bunjin* (literati) painters as well as painters working in local traditions such as the Shijō school of painting, and *waka* poets. Members of these networks regularly got together to pursue poetry and other cultural accomplishments. They often commemorated their gatherings with collaborative works (*gassaku* 合作) featuring painting and poetry by several members.[7] Women were active participants in these networks.[8] An outstanding example is the prominent female *kanshi* poet Ema Saikō 江馬細香 (1787–1861), who was a student of Rai San'yō 頼山陽 (1780–1832) and who participated in poetry gatherings with male scholars.[9] Rengetsu, on the other hand, chose not to participate in large poetry gatherings.[10] She produced numerous *gassaku* but they were the result of collaborations with close friends such as Tessai.[11] She preferred to live a quiet life including periods of travel and reclusion.[12]

At the same time, Rengetsu's reputation as a poet-potter grew in the late Edo 江戸 period (1603–1868). Following the death of her adoptive father Ōtagaki Teruhisa 大田垣光古 in 1832, she took up pottery to earn a living. In 1838, she was included as a poet and calligrapher in the *Heian jinbutsushi* 平安人物志 (Record of Heian Notables), a list of prominent artists in Kyoto.[13] A decade later, in 1847, Yoshida Enzan 吉田猿山 (active 1840s) noted in his *Kōto shoga jinmeiroku* 皇都書画人名録 (Record of Painters and Calligraphers from the Old Capital) that Rengetsu sold high-fired pottery that was inscribed with her own poetry. He also remarked that it was cheap and popular.[14] At the same time, she was also noted for her *waka* poetry. The *Kinsei kajin ryakkei* 近世歌人略系 (Abbreviated List of Recent Waka Poets) by the poet Nakagawa Naganobu 中川長延 (1804–1868), first issued in 1860 and reprinted in 1889, lists Rengetsu as a student of Kagawa Kageki, highlighting her combination of poetry and pottery.[15]

In 1867, a printed flyer issued by the shop Gyōundō 暁雲堂, which sold her pottery in the Washiochō neighborhood in Kyoto, reproduced her distinctive calligraphy and poetry as distinguishing features of her pottery. It emphasized the elegant aesthetics of *waka* poetry and the material authenticity of her pottery which she formed by hand using the water and clay of the Kamo 鴨 River:

> Among the many kinds of Japanese and Chinese ceramics, the most tasteful are those made by hand. Now, the nun Rengetsu makes her pottery with the clay from the Eastern Hills [of Kyoto] and soaks them in chrysanthemum mountain streams. Her [pottery] helps those drinking *sencha* tea to feel like the elegant gentleman [Bai Juyi 白居易, 772–846] who enjoyed the sights of the moon, snow and flowers and to savor the elegant spirit of the imperial flower capital [Kyoto] forever in the shade of the chrysanthemums.[16]

5 Rengetsu is thought to have started composing *waka* poetry in her thirties, according to Ōmi, *Rengetsuni*, p. 48. She started studying poetry under Kageki in 1839 at the age of forty-eight; Sugimoto, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, p. 117. Kageki is discussed in Bentley, *Anthology of Kokugaku Scholars*, p. 19.

6 Ōmi, *Rengetsuni*, p. 71.

7 Yano, *Salon Culture in Japan*, pp. 23–28.

8 Fister, *Japanese Women Artists of the Kinsei Era*, p. 21.

9 Hayashi, *Josei no kinsei*, pp. 270–73; Fister, *Japanese Women Artists of the Kinsei Era*, p. 22.

10 Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, p. 84.

11 Discussed in National Gallery of Australia, *Black Robe White Mist*, pp. 44–45.

12 For a discussion of Rengetsu's peripatetic lifestyle, see Ōmi, *Rengetsuni*, pp. 181–83.

13 According to Tessai's recollections, she had studied painting in the style of the Shijō school in Kyoto under Matsumura Keibun 松村景文 (1779–1843). For a discussion of her painting style, see Sugimoto, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, pp. 133–36.

14 Yoshida, *Kōto shoga jinmeiroku*, p. 89. Translated in Berry, "Reinventing Oneself," p. 48.

15 The 1860 edition is no longer extant, only the 1889 reprint. For a detailed discussion, see Yamamoto, "Kakitani Bunkozō." Rengetsu's name appears in the bottom left section of the list; see Nakagawa, *Kinsei kajin ryakkei*.

16 Transcription and translation of the flyer text by the author. The flyer is reproduced in Berry, "Reinventing Oneself," p. 49, and in Kyoto Furitsu Sōgō Shiryōkan, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, illustration 148.

The flyer uses the metaphor of "chrysanthemum water" to address the pure quality of the water of Kamo River and presents Rengetsu's poetry and pottery as resonating with the elegant spirit of the capital.[17] Such an advertisement appealed to both local afficionados of *sencha* tea as well as visitors to Kyoto.

In the early Meiji 明治 period (1868–1912), the ways in which printed media engaged with Rengetsu's artistic persona changed. They ceased to focus solely on her art and instead foregrounded her artistic persona and her biography as contexts for her art and as sources of her authenticity as a cultural figure of the recent past. In addition, this shift in focus was orchestrated by members of her circle of friends and artistic collaborators such as national learning (*kokugaku* 国学) scholar Kondō Yoshiki 近藤芳樹 (1801–1880). Kondō had known Rengetsu for several years, as did other contributors such as Tomioka Tessai and Ueda Chikajo; Chikajo was also a student of Kondō. In response to Rengetsu's apparent disinterest in her artistic legacy, they published a printed collection of her poetry, *Ama no karumo* 海人の苅藻 (A Sea Diver's Harvest), in 1870.[18] They did this to preserve her memory and to produce an archive of her poetry.

This article argues that in so doing they participated in the performance of her artistic persona. Past research has not considered the collaborative and transtemporal nature of Rengetsu's artistic persona that connected her with her friends, artistic collaborators, and the mass medium of print in modern Japan. To demonstrate these connections, this article will first explore the collaborative performance of Rengetsu's artistic persona during her lifetime in the late Edo period before discussing the preface and postface of *Ama no karumo* and the afterlives of her image in printed media in modern Japan. It will focus on Tomioka Tessai and his father Tomioka Korenobu 富岡維叙 (d. 1856) who, among others, facilitated her artistic and religious practices. Tessai had known Rengetsu since he was twelve or thirteen years old and had lived with her for several years following the death of his father. He painted several portraits of her and communicated his recollections of her to the Sōtō Zen master Murakami Sodō 村上素道 (1875–1964) who edited the *Rengetsuni zenshū* 蓮月尼全集 (Collection of the Entire Works by the Nun Rengetsu), published in 1926.

Performing Liminality

During her lifetime, Rengetsu's friends and artistic collaborators facilitated her artistic and religious practices. This section focuses on the contribution of Tomioka Tessai and his associates in the construction of her artistic persona during and beyond her lifetime. Tessai's father, Tomioka Korenobu, was a merchant who was in the business of selling clerical robes in Kyoto. Through his work, he had connections to various Buddhist temples in and around Kyoto. Rengetsu was of slightly higher social status than the Tomioka family. Her adoptive father, Ōtagaki Teruhisa, was a low-ranking samurai in the service of Chion'in 知恩院 Temple in Kyoto, which was the head temple of the Pure Land sect in Japan and the Tokugawa 徳川 family's mortuary temple in Kyoto. After being widowed in 1823, she took the tonsure and lived with her adoptive father on the grounds of Chion'in Temple. Following his death in 1832, she moved to a hermitage in Shōgoin 聖護院 Village in Okazaki 岡崎 where she produced pottery inscribed with her own poetry for a living.

In Shōgoin Village, Rengetsu was a neighbor of Tessai's father. Tessai produced a sketch of the neighborhood of her hermitage from memory, which was reproduced in Tokuda Kōen's 徳田光円 (dates unknown) *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū* 蓮月尼乃新研究 (New Research on the Nun Rengetsu), published in 1959.[19] Tokuda published his new research based on records and artworks in the collection of Jinkōin 神光院 Temple where Rengetsu had spent the last decade of her life. Tessai's sketch reads like a map of contemporary cultural circles. It shows that Rengetsu's hermitage was situated nearby the residences of literati and Shijō school painters, *waka* and *kanshi* poets, and Confucian scholars. Among others, Tessai highlighted the residences of the Shijō and literati painter Oda Kaisen

17 The chrysanthemum was used to designate water of exceptional purity for brewing tea in *sencha* circles. The *sencha* practitioner, literatus, and brewer Tanaka Kakuō 田中鶴翁 (1782–1848) used his knowledge of water derived from his profession to improve the quality of *sencha* tea. The pure water he used came from the "chrysanthemum well" in his garden; see Graham, *Tea of the Sages*, p. 148.

18 *Ama no karumo* has been transcribed by Shiraishi Teizō and Yamada Hirotsugu in "'Ama no karumo' kaidai."

19 The sketch is reproduced in Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, p. 81.

小田海僊 (1785–1862), the female *waka* poet Takabatake Shikibu, Tessai's father-in-law Nakajima Kayō 中島華陽 (1813–1877), the Confucian scholar Nukina Kaioku, literati painter Nakajima Sōin 中島棕隠 (1779–1856), and the female *kanshi* poet and Confucian scholar Saisho Atsuko 税所敦子 (1825–1900).

Rengetsu's reclusion in her hermitage in Shōgoin Village was not just religious but also cultural and to some extent commercial since she made poetry-pottery for a living there. As her reputation grew, she became inundated with visitors which, according to Tessai's recollections, she found a nuisance. He wrote to Murakami Sodō that she had asked his father to help her find a quieter place to live.[20] Through his connections to the resident monk, Hara Tanzan 原坦山 (1819–1892), of the Sōtō Zen Buddhist temple Shinjōji 心性寺 in the village of Shirakawa 白川, Korenobu was able to find her a quieter hermitage.[21] Since Hara travelled frequently, she was often alone in her new hermitage. Being worried about this and considering her advanced age—she was in her sixties—Tessai's father asked him to stay with her and to help her carry her pottery to be fired in kilns in Kyoto.[22] Whether entirely accurate or not, this anecdote highlights the contributions Rengetsu's associates made to facilitating her practice of cultural and religious reclusion. Through his recollections, Tessai participated in the collaborative and transtemporal construction of Rengetsu's artistic persona that oscillated between engagement and disengagement with contemporary cultural circles.

At this point, it is important to note that combining religious reclusion and cultural production had a long history in Kyoto. In the Kamakura 鎌倉 period (1185–1333), the Buddhist monk and *waka* poet Kamo no Chōmei 鴨長明 (1155–1216) authored *Hōjōki* 方丈記 (An Account of my Ten-Foot-Square Hut, dated 1212) while living in a hermitage away from Kyoto, which had been ravaged by the Genpei 源平 War (1180–1185), natural disasters, and famine. In the eighteenth century, reclusion became a shared cultural ideal among the Sinophile literati community. The literati painter Ike Taiga 池大雅 (1723–1776) and his wife, Tokuyama Gyokuran 徳山玉瀾 (1727–1784), are exemplary for this cultural trend. In Ban Kōkei's 伴蒿蹊 (1733–1806) *Kinsei kijinden* 近世畸人伝 (Recent Eccentrics of Our Time, 1790), they are depicted enjoying literati cultural pursuits in their studio-come-hermitage near Gion in Kyoto.[23] While earning their living with literati painting, they entertained the ideal of cultural reclusion through their art and lifestyle.

In contrast to them, Rengetsu was solitary in her cultural reclusion. She composed many poems on the pleasures and challenges of solitary reclusion. One of these poems appealed to the Confucian scholar Nukina Kaioku, who lived in her neighborhood in Shōgoin Village. He particularly enjoyed a poem in which she linked her retreat to the lyrical theme of wind-in-the-pines. He liked it so much that he gave her the name "Matsukaze Rengetsu 松風蓮月," literally, "Wind-in-the-pines-Rengetsu":[24]

Yamazato ha
matsu no koe nomi
kikinarete
kaze fukanu hi ha
sabishikarikeri

In the mountain village
I am used to hearing
only the sound of the pine.
On days when the wind does not blow
I shall be lonely.

As she did with other poems that she particularly liked, Rengetsu brushed this poem repeatedly on different items of pottery and paper. In 1867, when she was seventy-six years old and living in reclusion in the northern hills of Kyoto in Jinkōin Temple, she paired the poem with an idealized painting of her hermitage.[25] Nestled in the comforting shade of a single large pine tree, her hut gives a peaceful and solitary impression. In reality, Rengetsu lived in successive hermitages that were not as solitary as her poetry made them out to be. Her hermitage in Jinkōin where she spent the last decade of her life was a tea hut surrounded by maple trees and facing a garden composed of stones, a plum tree, and several smaller cedar trees.[26] In her poetry,

20 Ibid., p. 74.
21 Ibid., pp. 73–75.
22 Sugimoto, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, pp. 189–90.
23 Discussed in detail in Brecher, *The Aesthetics of Strangeness*.
24 Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, p. 87.
25 The painting is reproduced in National Gallery of Australia, *Black Robe White Mist: Art of the Japanese Nun Rengetsu*, p. 45.
26 Ibid., p. 127.

she never described her surroundings, focusing instead on selected motifs such as the autumn moon, which engendered an affective response.[27]

While living in Jinkōin, she continued to collaborate with close friends such as Wada Gesshin 和田月心 (1800–1870), also called Gozan. Gesshin became a priest in 1854 following the death of his wife and father and revived this once defunct Shingon Buddhist temple. Like Rengetsu, he had been trained in the style of the local Shijō school of painting.[28] A collaborative work dating to this period features an autumnal poem by Rengetsu and a painting of a deer by Gesshin (figure 1):

Tabigoromo
usui ga take no
akikaze ni
shika sae nakite
i koso nerarene

My travel clothes
are thin, but through the bamboo
in the autumn wind
even a deer cries—
I cannot sleep.

The poem picks up the recurring themes of loneliness and being unable to sleep during a bitterly cold night in autumn or winter in Rengetsu's poetry. Loneliness was probably a shared sentiment between Rengetsu and Gesshin. Both had taken the tonsure following familial loss. One can imagine Rengetsu and Gesshin producing the work together on a cold autumn night, possibly in her hut in Jinkōin. The melancholy nature of the poem and its combination with Gesshin's lone deer can be considered a shared performance of cultural reclusion and of Rengetsu's artistic persona.

Her artistic persona provided a shared discursive space that evolved over time and that is closely tied to her biography. Both in scholarly and public discourse, selected moments in her biography have been used to demonstrate her outlier status. These include the tragic circumstances of her family life (she lost two husbands and five children before becoming a nun) and the education she received. Rengetsu served as a lady-in-waiting at Kameoka 亀岡 Castle in Tanba 丹波 Province before marriage. There, she received an education in cultural accomplishments such as *waka* poetry, painting, calligraphy, and some martial arts.[29] Her life as a wife and mother ended when her second husband and all her children died in 1823. She responded by becoming a nun, and when her adoptive father died in 1832, she had to start supporting herself. She was not particularly special in turning her cultural talents to commercial use and in continuing to be culturally active as a nun.[30]

To some extent, Rengetsu herself was the source of this biographical approach which has foregrounded her tragic family circumstances as incentives for taking up a

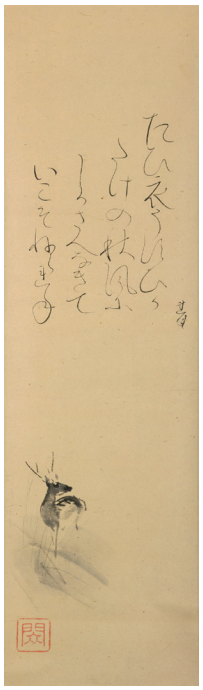

Figure 1. Calligraphy by Ōtagaki Rengetsu and Painting by Wada Gesshin, Stag and Poem, 1865–70. Denver Art Museum: Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.245. Photograph courtesy of the Denver Art Museum.

27 For a detailed discussion of Rengetsu's poetry, see McCormick, "Ōtagaki Rengetsu's Waka Poetics."

28 For a discussion of Gesshin's painting style, see Graham, *Faith and Power in Japanese Buddhist Art*, pp. 160–61. According to Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, p. 129, *gassaku* by Rengetsu and Gesshin are kept at Jinkōin.

29 According to Tessai's recollections, she had studied Shijō school painting under Matsumura Keibun 松村景文 (1779–1843). For a discussion of her painting style, see Sugimoto, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, pp. 133–36; Berry, "Reinventing Oneself," p. 34.

30 Fister, *Japanese Women Artists of the Kinsei Era*, pp. 98–106.

career as a potter. In 1874, the year before she died, she summarized her life and career in a letter to Tessai, interspersed with some of her poems.[31] In the letter, she positioned herself in relation to her duties as a daughter, wife, and mother, and in relation to her growing reputation and professional career as a poet-potter. She claimed to have no interest in her reputation as an artist. In her own words, she made pottery to earn a living and inscribed it with poems that she liked. This statement should not be read as a rejection of her artistic persona but as her attempt to negotiate a liminal position within the cultural world of nineteenth-century Kyoto:

> My father[32] was a retainer of Inaba Province. He was called Ōtagaki Mitsuhiki [Teruhisa]. He lived in Higashiyama in the capital [Kyoto]. I was born in the third year of Kansei [1791]. My birth name was Nobu. My mother soon left me, and I grew up supported by my father. Around the age of thirty, I was no longer a wife and my children died. . . . Eventually, I only had my father left. That was in my forties. Then, my father passed: "Longing for my father, I spend my days crying at his gravesite." I wanted to stay closeby but since [his grave was on] the mountain, I could not live there. Shedding tears, I moved to Okazaki. Since I have always been poor, I had to find a way [to support myself]. I gathered clay and made things called *kibisho* [急焼, small tea pots]. Being very clumsy, their shape was unrefined. I composed poetry because I liked the poems I inscribed on [the tea pots]. However, I had less time [to compose poetry] than before. Being an ordinary person, I had not studied [poetry] with a great master. Hence, my poems are crude because they only mimic people's speech."[33]

The letter presents her as a filial daughter to her adoptive father Teruhisa and belittles her career as a poet-potter. She paints an image of a hard life marked by familial loss and economic necessity. Her emphasis on her close relationship with her adoptive father suggests that she was deeply concerned with the moral and social obligations of the family. When Teruhisa died, she was in her forties and left without family. She could not continue Teruhisa's post at Chion'in Temple since he had an adopted son, Ōtagaki Hisaatsu 太田垣古敦 (dates unknown), who took over his position at the temple.[34] Although she does not explicitly say so in her letter, being without family meant that she had lost her source of livelihood. She thus had to find a way to support herself.

She might have harbored hopes of starting her own family business through her poetry-pottery. Tessai recounted that she had wanted to adopt him as a son.[35] As such, he would have been expected to continue her poetry-pottery business and her family name, securing it for future generations. Tessai rejected the offer, arguing that he did not wish to continue another family's name.[36] Rengetsu's wish to adopt Tessai reflected contemporary thought in which the purpose of one's life was to work to maintain the fortunes of one's family and to secure them for the next generation.[37] Since Rengetsu had no family left, she had no descendants to pass her skills onto. Hence, she did not feel the need to concern herself with her reputation as a poet-potter.

Against this background, her letter to Tessai becomes a performance of her artistic persona. Having no descendants, she contended herself by practicing pottery as an economic necessity to sustain herself and compose poetry as an indulgent pastime. Had Tessai accepted the adoption, she might not have grounded her artistic persona in the motifs of familial loss, self-sufficiency, and disengagement with her artistic reputation. She might have had a reason to frame her work as a potter as a serious endeavor that would secure the fortunes of her lineage for future generations to come. As this was not the case, she saw no reason to critically engage with the quality of her poetry or pottery. Instead, she claimed to have no authority in either. In her poetry, she framed her pottery as an integral part of her religious exercise. Repeatedly gathering clay on the banks of the Kamo River or inscribing the same poem multiple times onto pottery helped her detach herself from her worries:

Ake tateba
hani mote susabi
kure yukeba
hotoke orogami
omou koto nashi

31 Tokuda Kōen,"Tokushū Rengetsuni," p. 35.
32 She meant her adoptive father.
33 The letter is reproduced in Tokuda, "Tokushū Rengetsuni," pp. 34–35.
34 Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, pp. 76–77.
35 Ibid., p. 77.
36 Ibid.
37 Watanabe, *A History of Japanese Political Thought*, pp. 68–73.

As dawn breaks
I go out to gather clay.
As evening falls,
I pray to Buddha—
Nothing concerns me.[38]

In contrast to her activities as a poet-potter, in the letter, she took her obligations as a filial daughter to her adoptive father seriously. This explains why she felt conflicted at having to leave his gravesite to make pottery for a living. The letter thus presents her artistic career as a self-indulgence that clashed with her familial obligations. This conflict probably lay at the heart of her disengagement with her growing artistic reputation.

Fabricating Rengetsu in *Ama no karumo*

In the early Meiji period, three years before Rengetsu wrote her letter to Tessai, her disinterest in her reputation started to be presented as a defining feature of her artistic persona in *Ama no karumo*. This publication was the first to foreground her artistic persona and her biography as important contexts for understanding her poetry. Its editor, Kondō Yoshiki, intended it to serve as a comprehensive repository of her poetry. In so doing, he elevated her poetry from the status of an unprofessional pastime to a serious endeavor, exposing it to the specialist scrutiny of established *waka* poets. Two years earlier, in 1868, selected poems by her had been published together with poems by another female *waka* poet, Takabatake Shikibu.[39] By contrast, *Ama no karumo* focused solely on Rengetsu's poetry to showcase her as an outstanding *waka* poet and to preserve her literary legacy.

At first glance, this goal contradicted Rengetsu's own view of her poetry and pottery as minor pursuits in a life that was otherwise guided by familial obligations and religious practice. Indeed, she objected to the publication, noting that some of the poems were not hers.[40] She remained firm even when Tessai tried to reason with her, saying that her opposition inconvenienced the publisher who had already produced more than half the woodblocks for publication.[41] Tessai recounted this anecdote to the novelist and chief editor of *Ōsaka asahi shinbun* 大阪朝日新聞, Nishimura Tenshū 西村天囚 (1865–1924).[42]

However, Rengetsu's objections to the publication can be interpreted as a performance of modesty befitting her liminal status as a poet who was popular but lacked the authority of master poets like Kagawa Kageki who ran their own school of poetry in nineteenth-century Kyoto. Considering this, her opposition to the publication was to some extent appropriate and expected. Moreover, as will be demonstrated, her objections and Kondō's response to them in the preface to *Ama no karumo* can be seen as a shared performance of Rengetsu's liminal artistic persona. Both in the preface and in the postface, the contributors to *Ama no karumo* seriously engaged with recurring motifs in Rengetsu's artistic persona, including economic necessity, solitude, and familial loss, and they reinterpreted these to justify the publication.

Past research has understood Rengetsu's opposition to *Ama no karumo* primarily as an issue of the reproduction of her art in the modern mass medium of print. From the perspective of material culture studies, Sayumi Takahashi demonstrates how *Ama no karumo* changed the meanings of Rengetsu's poetry by separating it from its material basis in pottery.[43] Except for one poem quoted in the preface, the publication failed to reproduce Rengetsu's distinctive calligraphy which resulted from her technique of repeatedly incising her poems into clay. Takahashi argues that this severed the material and aesthetic integrity of Rengetsu's poetry-pottery.[44] On the basis of this, she positioned Rengetsu in opposition to the kind of patriarchal modernity that the print medium represented.[45]

The deep historical links between modern print and the ideologies of the modern nation-state are well acknowledged facts.[46] Yet, it is useful to bear in mind that the use of print for mass reproductions of original artworks was not an exclusively modern phenomenon. In addition, although *Ama no karumo* was published in the early Meiji period, it was printed using traditional

38 The poem is quoted in National Gallery of Australia, *Black Robe White Mist*, p. 29.
39 Ōtagaki and Takabatake, *Rengetsu Shikibu nijo wakashū*.
40 Yamamoto, *Shoga kanshō no shiori*, p. 82.
41 Ōmi, *Rengetsuni*, pp. 193–95.
42 Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, pp. 188–89.
43 Takahashi, *Beyond Our Grasp?*
44 Ibid., pp. 269–70.
45 Ibid., p. 270.
46 Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1936)."

woodblock prints.[47] Furthermore, the preface includes a reproduction of her distinctive hand in the quote of this poem:

Awaretomo
dare ka ha miramu
moshiogusa
kakioku ama no
ko dani nakereba
Rengetsu nanajūkyū sai

Who will look at
these fleeting poems
and be moved by them,
since the nun who wrote them
does not even have a child?
Rengetsu, aged seventy-nine[48]

The poem expresses Rengetsu's conflicting emotions toward her career as a poet. Since she had no descendants, she found it futile to seriously pursue poetry. In the poem, she appears to have accepted the inevitability of her poetry sinking into oblivion. In not caring for her artistic legacy, she differed from other female artists. For example, her contemporary, Ema Saikō, thought that her *kanshi* poems constituted a worthy legacy of her in lieu of having children.[49] Saikō never married and had no children, yet she framed her legacy in familial terms—her poems would continue her memory in place of her children. In contrast to Saikō, Rengetsu had been married twice and had had at least four children, none of whom survived. Regardless of the tragic circumstances of her family life, her refusal to seriously consider her poetry as her legacy appears to have been a personal idiosyncrasy.

Kondō was aware of the potential consequences of this refusal as can be seen from his preface to *Ama no karumo*:

> Turning her heart the green of Mt. Hiei, rinsing its dust in the flow of the Kamo River, sometimes hiding in the folds of the mountains, sometimes escaping to the pure water's edge, there is a nun who loves *waka* poetry and makes pottery to support herself. Her name is Rengetsu. For a long time, many people desired her elegant pottery and graceful *waka* poetry. Eventually, she grew weary of it and moved to a place away from Kyoto. Now that I see all her *waka* poems carved into wooden blocks, I find their number less than expected. Perhaps, as a professional potter, her poetry has become a pastime, and though she composes poems from time to time, she doesn't always care to keep them. Hence, as editor of this collection I have gathered her *waka* poetry here and there. . . . These days I visit her hut in Nishigamo. She is an old nun who has lost weight and cannot straighten her back. Counting the years by bending my fingers, forty years have passed since we first met first. I realize that I too have become very old. As we are both getting on in years and have been friends in poetry, I didn't want to miss this chance to write this forward.[50]

Kondō presents his collection as a direct response to Rengetsu's lack of concern for keeping an archive of her poetry. He used her disinterest in her artistic reputation to justify the publication of *Ama no karumo*. Rengetsu was too modest to acknowledge the quality of her poetry. At the same time, she was in no position to do so as she was no master poet. It was thus up to the wider community of *waka* poets and national learning scholars like Kondō to assess and record her poetry. Kondō's preface performs a dialogue with Rengetsu's "objections" by insisting on the excellence of her poetry and by emphasizing her advancing age and frailty as well as his own. This dialogue can be read as a shared performance of Rengetsu's artistic persona.

In addition, this performance was supported by the ability of the print medium to function as a lasting archive of her poetry. In doing so, it was more efficient than her pottery or album leaves which scattered like falling leaves, failing to produce a comprehensive overview of her work. Kondō indirectly relied on the disciplining capacities of the print medium to present an archive of Rengetsu's poetry. In line with his wishes, *Ama no karumo* did become a trusted source for subsequent collections of her poetry such as Murakami Sodō's *Rengetsuni zenshū*. Kondō had collected three hundred twenty poems, but Murakami brought the total to five hundred poems.[51] The printed collection

47 Yamamoto, *Shoga kanshō no shiori*, p. 82.

48 The poem is digitally reproduced in a copy of *Ama no karumo* owned by Tottori Prefectural Library, frame 6, retrieved from the Union Catalogue Database of Japanese Texts (https://doi.org/10.20730/100295753).

49 Fister, *Japanese Women Artists of the Kinsei Era*, p. 63.

50 Kondō, *Ama no karumo*, preface.

thus entailed the possibility of extensions and modifications, a feat that her pottery was not able to accomplish.

At the same time, the contributors to *Ama no karumo* remained attentive to Rengetsu's performance of her liminal artistic persona. The national learning scholar Watari Tadaaki 渡忠秋 (1811–1881) who wrote the second preface to *Ama no karumo* and who contributed to collecting her poems from various sources, also noted her performance of modesty:

> Though she has lived through nigh on eighty springs and autumns, she possesses not a trace of vanity or pride and is living in a manner embodying the very essence of humility and restraint. Surely, her example should be something to aspire to for many. . . . A publisher of poetry wanted to collect her poems in a woodblock-printed book. However much he begged her, she skillfully refused under the pretext that this would spread her poor poetry in the world. She did not see his reasoning that her poetry was very good.[52]

Watari continued Kondō's dialogue with Rengetsu's performance of her artistic persona, pitching her modesty against the wishes of her discerning public of *waka* poets to appreciate her excellent poetry.

In the postface, national learning scholar Miyazaki Tamao 宮崎玉緒 (1828–1896) went further in his engagement with the liminal position of Rengetsu. He argued that recognizing the quality of Rengetsu's poetry required an open mind. He also drew analogies derived from nature and Shinto mythology:

> Only people in this world believe that all things that look clean must sound pure and all things that look dirty must have an impure voice. They are like freshwater clams that keep their mouths closed [in the brackish water] at the shore. Considering this, a masculine man behaving softly like a girl or an elegant woman acting boldly—neither of them are necessarily bad. Leading scholars of national learning have, for a long time, attributed poems by such men to amorous poets, complaining that their effeminate bearing did not fit the way of the refined warrior. Yet, their [poetry] was appropriate for the way of women. To start with, in the age of the gods,[53] an impure child was born because the woman [Izanami] had spoken first [during her union with Izanagi], which was inappropriate. In the end, she went to the underworld. Her son, Hiruko, was unable to stand on his feet. Since his weakness made him unsuited to a land of strong and masculine gods, he was sent to a foreign land. Probably nothing is as strange and miraculous as the ways of antiquity.[54]

In Miyazaki's view, the unfeminine and inappropriate behavior of Izanami had caused the birth of a child that was unsuited to living in a land of masculine gods. Yet, it thrived in a different environment, the sea. Rengetsu's performance of excessive modesty may have been appropriate female behavior, but it prevented the dissemination of her poetry among the appreciative readers of *Ama no karumo*. These readers were different from the hierarchic world of *waka* poetry in nineteenth-century Kyoto. Thus, by behaving with excessive modesty, Rengetsu failed to see the potential of her offspring, meaning her poetry, to overcome the limitations of the cultural circles and the commercial contexts that had framed her career as a poet-potter. Like Izanami's son Hiruko, Rengetsu's poetry, too, had the potential to be appreciated anew in different environments. From this perspective, the printed collection would continue her legacy and take it in new directions. The poet herself may have been content to spread her poetry through pottery and other handmade items, but these failed to produce a comprehensive archive of her work. They were meaningful to their individual owners but did not give a sense of her entire work. Only the print medium was able to accomplish this and to secure a legacy for her poetry.

Miyazaki's explanation justifies the reproduction of Rengetsu's poetry in print and continues the dialogue with Rengetsu's performance of her artistic persona. He also emphasized the genuine appreciation that the readers of *Ama no karumo* had for her poetry:

> This book shall bear the title *Ama no karumo*. Mr. Tadaaki, having swiftly grasped its meaning, recognized that the words, like pearls among seaweed at the bottom of the sea, could not be concealed by the sacred rope. Thus, the children of fishermen, casting their nets upon the shores of a thousand miles, each draw them near, not

51 Murakami, *Rengetsuni zenshū*, p. 2.
52 Kondō, *Ama no karumo*, preface.
53 I am grateful to Marc Buijnsters for providing the translation of "age of the gods."
54 Kondō, *Ama no karumo*, postface.

> with the feeble voices of the young, but lifting them out [of the water] one by one, and valuing them as treasures unmatched in the world.[55]

Like the children of fishermen, the readers of *Ama no karumo* truly appreciated her poetry that shone like pearls appearing unexpectedly in a bed of seaweed.

In the popular imagination of the Edo period, *ama* 海女 had conjured eroticised visions of female sea divers, for example, in the 1814 book illustration by Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎 (1760–1849) depicting a sexual encounter between a female sea diver and an octopus.[56] In the title *Ama no karumo*, *ama* denoted both fishermen and women. It also conveniently punned with nun (*ama* 尼). The title also addressed Rengetsu's intended reading audience—the community of *waka* poets. The final postface was authored by the female poet Ueda Chikajo who had collaborated with Rengetsu and who held her in high regard. She was also Kondō's student. Ueda represents the voice of a younger generation of appreciative readers who resembled the hard-working fisherfolk that went to great lengths to carefully pick out the pearls of Rengetsu's poetry from among the seaweed:

> When the eminent Kondō Yoshiki went up to the capital to visit [Rengetsu] in her hermitage in Nishigamo, he found her placid existence precious: Untouched by the dust of this world, she would recite the Buddha's name in the morning and in the evening. Apart from that, she would sit at her writing desk beneath the window [of her hermitage] and watch the changing mists of time go by.[57]

In her postface, Ueda conjured an image of a detached and solitary Rengetsu pursuing cultural and religious reclusion in her final hermitage in Jinkōin in the northern hills of Kyoto. This vision of Rengetsu was repeated in subsequent publications and in portraits, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

The publication of *Ama no karumo* is important in several respects as it attempted to reconcile Rengetsu's poetry and artistic persona with the print medium, and in doing so, it entered a dialogue with her own performance of her artistic persona. It highlighted her modesty and contrasted it with the perceived quality of her poetry, emphasizing the concerns of the anticipated readers of her poetry, which transcended the familiar world of her existing cultural and commercial networks. At the same time, the contributors to *Ama no karumo* paid attention to Rengetsu's liminal position as a poet-potter and as a female artist in nineteenth-century Kyoto. They succeeded in transferring Rengetsu's artistic persona to the print medium where it underwent diverse afterlives. Her persona was not just liminal but also malleable depending on the concerns of her emerging publics in modern Japan. As a comprehensive overview of this is beyond the scope of this article, I will focus on the portrayal of her work in her hermitage in Jinkōin in the final decade of her life.

Envisioning Rengetsu in her Hermitage

Tessai was probably the first painter to portray Rengetsu in the early Meiji period. In doing so, he must have been aware of her conflicting emotions regarding her artistic reputation. In a portrait that was copied by other painters such as Suzuki Hyakunen 鈴木百年 (1828–1891), he addressed her liminal artistic persona, depicting her at once as a poet and a potter. She appears as an elderly nun seated in her hermitage brushing a poem onto a poetry slip (*tanzaku* 短冊; figure 2). In the portrait, Tessai foregrounded her poetry and positioned her pottery in the background, symbolized by a pottery stand which she used to form her vessels by hand. This was probably an emphatic statement to demonstrate the importance of poetry for her artistic persona. After all, she had only started making pottery out of economic necessity. By contrast, she had studied *waka* poetry since her upbringing at Kameoka Castle. At the same time, her pottery, which was immensely popular, became an important vehicle for spreading her poetry to a wide audience.

It is also possible that Tessai's portrait partially reflects a child's view of Rengetsu based on his memory of assisting her with her pottery in his childhood. He had started living with her when he was aged twelve or thirteen.[58] At that time, she was already in her sixties.

55 Ibid., postface.

56 The illustration is from the *shunpon* 春本 book *Kinoe no komatsu* 喜能会之故真通 (Pine Seedlings on the First Rat Day), published in 1814 in Edo. The book is in the collection of the British Museum: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/A_OA-0-109. For a discussion of the print, see Talerico, "Interpreting Sexual Imagery in Japanese Prints."

57 Kondō, *Ama no karumo*, postface.

Figure 2. Tomioka Tessai. "Posthumous Portrait of Rengetsu." Hanging scroll (detail), ink and colors on paper, dated seventh month of 1897. Ōtagaki Family Collection. Source: Tokuda, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, n.p.

She is said to have adored the young Tessai[59] but she was unhappy with the portrait, complaining that she looked frail and elderly. What she probably had in mind was an ancestral portrait of her that would be venerated by her descendants. For that purpose, Tessai's portrait of her was too unflattering. She reportedly said, "Tomioka, what have you done? This portrait of an old woman with a wrinkled mouth will be a humiliation for generations to come. This is a bad joke."[60] Tessai, for his part, saw himself as a Confucian scholar first and a painter second. In addition, he had refused her offer to adopt him. Considering these circumstances, it is likely that his portrait was not intended to venerate Rengetsu as a past master.

Moreover, Rengetsu herself had claimed in her letter to Tessai that she took no interest in her status as a poet-potter. Although her reasons for rejecting the portrait cannot be known, it is certain that her liminal artistic persona, which she had constructed herself and with the support of associates like Tessai and his father, made it difficult to portray her as a venerated master of poetry or pottery. The matter of portraying Rengetsu was further complicated by her gender. Being a female artist, her physical appearance as a woman was directly linked to her personal character and qualities as an artist.

In some accounts, she was described as a haggard-looking nun who was unrecognizable as a renowned poet. Ōmi Mitsuko recounts an episode in which a farmer refused Rengetsu lodgings for the night when she got lost on her way to Lake Biwa 琵琶湖 because her ragged clothes made her look like a beggar.[61] Tessai's portrait of Rengetsu, which shows her as a frail and elderly nun amid the poor surroundings of her hermitage, is close to this account. In other accounts, however, she became an exemplary woman (*retsujo* 列女) endowed with moral character and physical beauty (*bijin* 美人). When the restoration woman, poet, and nun Nomura Bōtō 野村望東 (1806–1867) visited Rengetsu in 1861, she noted her surprise to see how young she looked despite her age.[62] Her recollections contrast Tessai's memory of Rengetsu in the 1860s. This is understandable considering that there was an age gap of almost fifty years between him and Rengetsu. From his perspective, as a twelve-year-old boy helping Rengetsu transport her pottery, she must have appeared extremely elderly.

At the same time, Tessai depicted Rengetsu through the lens of the literati imagination, describing her hermitage in Jinkōin as a place of artistic creation. Another portrait by him shows Rengetsu seated at her writing desk overlooking rice fields and Mt. Hiei 比叡 in the distance (figure 3). Tessai's portrait shows her in a moment of creative thought at her writing desk instead of pursuing the repetitive production of pottery that ensured her livelihood. He also evoked the literati motif of cultural reclusion by depicting her hermitage and her writing desk. Rengetsu's desk overlooks natural scenery, suggesting the solitary nature of her artistic creation. Considering the contributions that Tessai and others

58 Ōmi, *Rengetsuni*, p. 199.
59 Sugimoto, *Ōtagaki Rengetsu*, p. 189.
60 Quoted in Murata, *Rengetsu to Komachi to naichingēru joshi*, p. 32; Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, p. 193; Murakami, *Rengetsuni zenshū*, p. 192.
61 The farmer would not believe that the person standing before him was the famous nun and poet Rengetsu because of her appearance. The anecdote is recounted in Ōmi, *Rengetsuni*, pp. 191–92.
62 Murata, *Rengetsu to Komachi to naichingēru joshi*, p. 8.

had made to the performance of Rengetsu's artistic persona, this vision was a careful fabrication which suited the publication of *Ama no karumo*. The solitary vision of Rengetsu is close to how she had envisioned herself in her poetry.

In her letter to Tessai, Rengetsu suggested that she had moved to her hermitage in Jinkōin to escape the troubling conditions in Kyoto in the late 1860s, hinting at the events of the Boshin 戊辰 War that unfolded in 1868 and 1869. She described her anxiety in this poem in which she discusses remaining sleepless at night in fear of her life:

> When the world became too scary, I hid in the northern hills [of Kyoto] in a place called Nishigamo: "Though I think the world a dream, the feeling of nights spent with my hand pressed on my chest lingers."[63]

Tessai's portrait started a trend of envisioning Rengetsu's hermitage in Jinkōin as a symbol of her last decade when she was living in cultural reclusion away from the center of Kyoto. In 1935, *Nihonga* 日本画 painter Suganuma Ōhō 菅沼大鳳 (1891–1966) took up Tessai's vision of Rengetsu in cultural reclusion and combined it with a close-up of her brushing a poem onto one of her cups (figure 4). In contrast to Tessai's portrait of her, she is dressed impeccably, wearing formal *hakama* 袴 trousers and directly facing the viewer. Her polished appearance and her youthful looks clash with her dilapidated surroundings, giving a sense of her ageless inner beauty despite her advanced age.

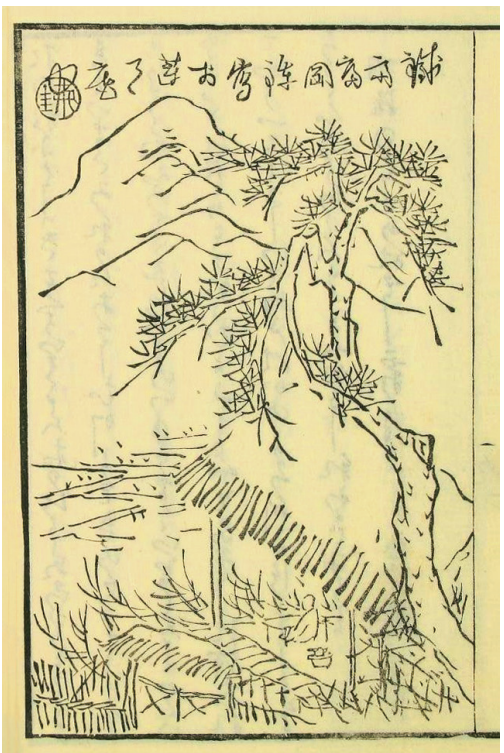

Figure 3. Tomioka Tessai. "Portrait of Rengetsu Seated in Her Hut in Jinkōin." 1870. *Ama no karumo*. Collection of Waseda University Library: http://archive.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kosho/bunko03a/bunko03a_00123/.

Suganuma's portrait linked two traditions of envisioning Rengetsu in modern Japan—Tessai's depiction of her hermitage as a symbol of cultural reclusion, which suited the literati imagination, and her portrayal as an exemplary woman and a beauty possessing moral character and physical attractiveness. The latter originated in educational books for young women in the Meiji period. In *Kokon retsujoden* 古今列女伝 (Biographies of Exemplary Women of the Past and Present), published in 1885, the headmaster of Tokyo Women's Normal School, Yamataka Ikunojō 山高幾之丞 (1864–1908), described Rengetsu as a former woman of the pleasure quarters (*yūjo* 遊女) of old Kyoto who redeemed herself by practicing *waka* poetry.[64] The accompanying illustration depicts her as a nun wearing Buddhist robes and as a cultured woman seated in front of her writing desk (figure 5). Yamataka's depiction of Rengetsu harks back to the tradition of moral instruction books for women in China and Japan in the Edo period.[65] These educational biographies increasingly included exemplary women who had had a career in the pleasure quarters.[66]

In Meiji- and Taishō 大正-period (1912–1926) Japan, historical courtesans were presented as poets, constituting their own genre of "courtesan literature" (*yūjo bungaku* 遊女文学).[67] The 1908 publication *Sekai no bijinkoku* 世界の美人国 (Beauties of the Countries of the World) features a portrait of the courtesan and *waka* poet Takao 高尾 from the Kanbun 寛文 era (1661–1673). It shows her attentively reading a book by the flickering light of an oil lamp.[68] A 1913 collection of *waka* poetry

63 Excerpt from Rengetsu's letter to Tessai, reproduced in Tokuda, "Tokushū Rengetsuni," pp. 34–35.
64 Yamataka, *Kokon retsujoden*, pp. 14–15.
65 Lillehoj, "Properly Female."
66 Ibid.
67 Ibuchi, *Yūjo no bungaku*.
68 Kurushima, *Sekai no bijinkoku*, title illustration, https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/798957/1/3.

by historical courtesans highlighted the moral and cultivating value of *waka* poetry. It includes the courtesan Karumo 苅藻 who lived in Gion in Kyoto in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Out of grief, she took the tonsure in response to her customer-lover being killed in the Ako Incident 阿衡事件 of 1703. Karumo is described as a beauty and an exemplary woman who showed compassion toward the sick mother of her lover and who renounced the world after his death.[69]

Narratives of courtesans who expressed their moral character through *waka* poetry suited the educational narrative of producing disciplined modern subjects in modern Japan. Considering this background, it is understandable that some accounts linked Rengetsu to a career in the pleasure quarters, although this was probably a misrepresentation. According to Tokuda, this misrepresentation was caused by associating Rengetsu with the profession of her birth mother who had been a courtesan of Sanbongi in Kyoto.[70]

Figure 4. Suganuma Ōhō, Rengetsu Working in Her Hut, 1934. Denver Art Museum: Gift of Drs. John Fong and Colin Johnstone, 2018.165. © Estate of Suganuma Ōhō. Photograph courtesy of the Denver Art Museum.

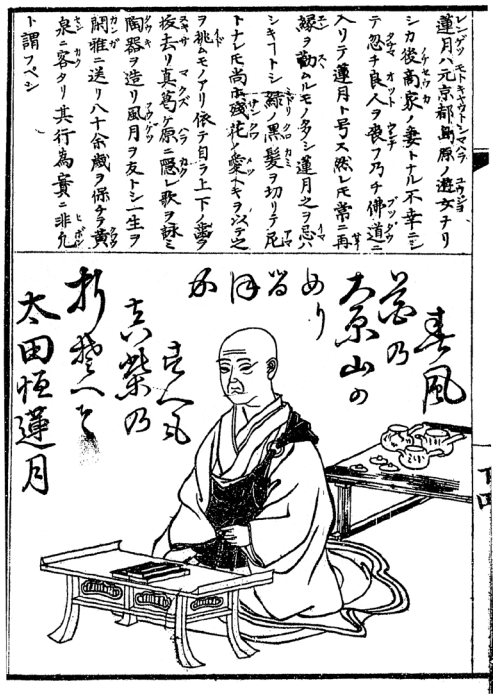

Figure 5. "Portrait of Rengetsu Seated at Her Desk." 1885. Illustration in Yamataka, *Kokon retsujoden*, pp. 14–15. NDL Digital Collections. https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/777894.

Furthermore, some people overinterpreted the symbolic meanings of her Buddhist name, Lotus Moon, particularly the association of the lotus flower with purity emerging out of the muddy pond (of sex work).[71]

Accounts of Rengetsu as an exemplary beauty who had ties to the pleasure quarters continued to shape her image well into the twentieth century. For example, the anecdote of Nomura Bōtō describing Rengetsu as elderly yet beautiful was recounted in an educational book by Murata Taihei 村田太平 (1888–1976), published in 1931.[72] It contains short biographies of three examplary historical women: Ōtagaki Rengetsu, Ono no Komachi 小野小町 (ca. 825–ca. 900), and Florence Nightingale (1820–1910).[73] Murata described Rengetsu as a beauty endowed with sincerity and a hardworking ethic.[74] Although "her pottery was neither elegant nor

69 Ibuchi, *Yūjo no bungaku*, pp. 185–86.
70 Berry, "Reinventing Oneself," pp. 28, 57.
71 Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, p. 63.
72 Murata, *Rengetsu to Komachi to naichingēru joshi*, p. 8.
73 Murata followed in a tradition of presenting Rengetsu as an examplary woman alongside Western women such as Nightingale; for an example, see Kaitakusha, *Tōzai meifu no omokage*, p. 227.
74 Murata, *Rengetsu to Komachi to naichingēru joshi*, p. 2.

refined, her character was superior and she was a beautiful person and a beautiful nun."[75] He implied that many people, including court and samurai nobility, visited Rengetsu in her hermitage as they were attracted by her beautiful looks. Their persistence drove her to frequently change her hermitage, as much as thirty-four times.[76] In Murata's view, she attempted to escape her admirers because she wanted to concentrate on her work, which would have been a valuable lesson for young girls in education.[77]

Portraits of Rengetsu as an exemplary woman (figures 4, 5) in modern Japan exhibit a tendency to depict her concentrating on practicing poetry and pottery. By contrast, Tessai's vision of Rengetsu in Jinkōin (figure 3) shows her in a moment of creative contemplation rather than in the repetitive pursuit of inscribing her poetry onto items of pottery. As he did not envision her as an exemplary woman, he had no need to emphasize the cultivating nature of the arts she practiced. Ultimately, his fabrication of Rengetsu's artistic persona closely aligned with her own as a solitary and liminal cultural figure. His focus on her hermitage as a symbol of solitariness and cultural reclusion reverberated in subsequent public and scholarly discourse.

For example, in *Fujin no kagami* 婦人のかゞみ (Mirror of Women), published in 1893, Matsumura Kaiseki 松村介石 (1859–1939) included a photograph of her hut to demonstrate how Rengetsu sought refuge from the chaos of the final years of the Tokugawa shogunate.[78] Hasunuma Fuminori's 蓮沼文範 (1894–1955) *Eien no josei Rengetsuni* 永遠の女性蓮月尼 (An Eternal Woman: The Nun Rengetsu), published in 1936, used a photograph of Rengetsu's hut in Jinkōin on the title page. He, too, saw the hut as a sanctuary and a symbol of her closeness to nature and as a place that allowed her to express her heightened aesthetic sensibility.[79]

Murakami Sodō's *Rengetsuni zenshū* from 1926 included a reproduction of Tessai's painting depicting Rengetsu seated in her hermitage in Jinkōin. Thirty years later, Tokuda Kōen desribed Rengetsu's hermitage in more detail in his *New Research on the Nun Rengetsu*. He carefully mapped its interior and the surrounding tea garden, including its maple and plum trees which inspired her poetry, prompting readers to imagine her composing poetry while seated at her writing desk overlooking the garden.[80] Tokuda also likened her hermitage to the retreat of the seventeenth-century *haiku* poet Matsuo Bashō 松尾芭蕉 (1644–1694).[81] Her hermitage thus became a nexus linking Rengetsu's performance of her artistic persona with the memory of her close associates and the historical imagination of later scholars and writers. Like Rengetsu's repetitive practice of inscribing the same poem on different items of pottery, in their printed publications, they continuously reiterated Rengetsu's vision of her own liminal position: escaping to nature from the ravages of the civil war at the end of the Tokugawa shogunate and using her hermitage as a productive place of cultural creation and reflection.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated the collaborative and transtemporal nature of Rengetsu's artistic persona. It has revealed that the solitary nature of Rengetsu's cultural reclusion was a fabrication and a shared performance between Rengetsu and her close associates, which was perpetuated in subsequent popular and scholarly printed publications. While this article cannot cover this process in its entirety, it has shown that Rengetsu assumed some degree of agency over it. Rather than positioning Rengetsu in an adversarial position vis-a-vis printed media, this article demonstrated that they produced a shared discursive space that has facilitated the continued performance of her artistic persona. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the discursive possibilities of Rengetsu's artistic persona in print media in modern Japan, more research is required into records and artworks in the Ōtagaki and Tomioka family archives, as well as those of Jinkōin Temple.

75 Ibid., p. 5.
76 Ibid., pp. 6–8.
77 Ibid., p. 33.
78 Matsumura, *Fujin no kagami*, p. 152. This is arguably one of the earliest publications featuring a photograph of Rengetsu's hut in Jinkōin.
79 Hasunuma, *Eien no josei Rengetsuni*, pp. 208–209.
80 Tokuda, *Rengetsuni no shinkenkyū*, pp. 127–29.
81 During the Genroku 元禄 era (1688–1704), the poet had stayed in Genjūan 幻住庵, literally, "Phantom Hut."

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