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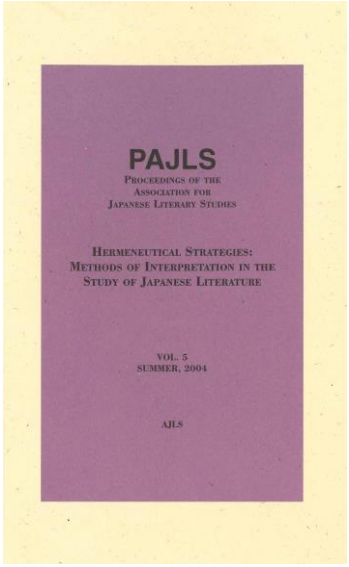

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DRAMATIZING FIGURES: THE REVITALIZATION AND EXPANSION OF METAPHORS IN NŌ

Akiko Takeuchi

Nō plays are famous for their rhetorical richness because of their ample use of pivot words (*kakekotoba*), associated words (*engo*), metaphors, and metonymies as well as their intertextual weaving of classical citations and allusions. This rhetorical wealth culminates in the plays by Zeami (1363?-1443?) and in those of his successor, Zenchiku (1405-c.1470). At the same time, in a number of plays—especially in Zeami's—metaphors function not only as rhetorical figures but also as plot devices within the narrative.

Such plays can be grouped into two types: one in which a scene, or a whole play, is created in order to revitalize a dead metaphor; another in which a narrative is constructed around the interpretations of a poem (*waka*) containing a metaphor. Interestingly, the former type bears a striking resemblance to the process of linked poetry (*renga*) composition since, in both, the conventional link between a signifier and a signified is brought into question. The latter type, which extends a poem's central metaphor into a narrative, reveals close parallels to medieval commentaries on waka, which provided elaborate and often far-fetched narratives to explain a given poem. In this paper I will present examples of both types in order to shed new light on the influence that renga and waka commentaries, the two major literary activities of medieval Japan, exerted on nō.[1]

When composing renga, a poet adds a new verse to a previous one so that its original meaning is poetically reinterpreted. The poet chooses "one" of the various possible meanings that the previous verse offers, often altering in the process what that verse had signified. In daily language usage, we tend to speak as if there were a fixed, absolute bond between signifier and signified that can be taken for granted. Renga composition exposes the fragility of this link, revealing its hidden arbitrariness.

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[1] I discussed the former type of nō plays in more detail in "Nō to renga no tekisuto kūkan: Imino zurashi, hiyu no saisei," *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū* (Dec. 1998): 57-63. In particular, I presented an analysis of *Hanjo* in much greater detail in "Sakuhin kenkyū *Hanjo*," *Kanze* (Apr. 1999): 24-31. Part of my argument regarding the latter type of nō plays will be presented in "Zenchiku to hiyu: *Yuya* wo tegakari ni," *Zeami* 3 (in print).

As Zeami deals with cliched metaphors, he also criticizes the habitual usage of language. According to Max Black's method, which he called the "interaction view of metaphor," metaphors transform our perception by inviting us to look at the tenor through the "filter" ("a system of associated implications") afforded by a given vehicle.[2] For example, when we express the concept of descending to hell by saying "sinking" (*shuzumu*), we perceive the spiritual shift to hell through the analogous state of physical sinking into water, which conveys a sense of darkness, suffocation, and pressure. By the same logic, when we express the concept of ascending to heaven by metaphorically saying "rising to the surface" (*ukabu*), we imagine this spiritual movement through a sense of being physically relieved from the water's darkness and pressure and moving toward light and air. However, these metaphorical expressions, "*shizumu*" and "*ukabu*," have been in common use for so long that they have become mere idioms. Many dictionaries, such as *Kōjien*, list the meaning of going to hell or to heaven among possible meanings for the words "*shizumu*" and "*ukabu*," respectively. In other words, a widely recognized link has been established between the two elements of each metaphor, such that the vehicle has become a transparent container for the tenor—just as the daily usage of language creates automatic, customary linkages. The tenor—the concept of a spiritual shift to hell or to heaven—is now immediately evident, without the need of conjuring up a physical sense of sinking or rising.

The conventional links of these two words are nevertheless altered in Zeami's play *Funabashi*. Here, the ghost of a man, who died by falling into a river from a pontoon bridge (*funabashi*) while going to see his lover, appears in front of a monk alongside his beloved's spirit. Together they reenact his death scene and show the monk how they are tortured in hell. There are numerous nō plays that deal with drowned persons, but *Funabashi* is the only case among these in which hell is literally set under water: the ghosts of two lovers are now tortured while bound to the posts of a bridge at the bottom of the same river where the man drowned. In this context, descending to hell is literally the same as sinking into water. Conversely, gaining enlightenment means physically emerging to the surface. The cliched metaphors "*ukabu*" and "*shizumu*" thus regain their original ability to express the concept of spiritual shift through the sense of physical movement through water.

Actually, the play *Funabashi* is Zeami's reconstruction of another play, the so-called *Proto-Funabashi*. Since this *Proto-Funabashi* is now lost, we can never be sure whether this hell scene at the bottom of the river

[2] Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (New York: Cornell UP, 1962), pp. 25-47.

was Zeami's invention or was already included in the original. Judging from the fact that Zeami included this play in the list of his own works in *Conversations on Sarugaku* (*Sarugakudangi*), this current *Funabashi* must have at least undergone considerable revision at his hand. Furthermore, the "hell in the river" scene cannot be found in any versions of the original *funabashi* legend, from which *Proto-Funabashi* must have been drawn.[3] Consequently, it is very likely that the setting of hell in the riverbed was Zeamis' invention. Even if this is not so, however, we should notice that not only the story itself but also the elaborate narration and wording enables the resuscitation of two clichéd metaphors. The man's death by "falling into a river" and the subsequent torture at the bottom of the river are each depicted twice, with the words "ukabu" and "shizumu" appearing repeatedly. And since *Funabashi*'s rhetoric strongly resembles Zeamis', especially in the repetition of a key word ("bridge") and the frequent use of *kakekotoba* and *engo*,[4] it is likely that these verbal and narrative devices are also Zeami's contributions.

Instances of a plot being created to revitalize a dead metaphor abound in Zeami's plays. *Nishikigi,* another example, is based on an ancient Michinoku custom, well-known to scholars and poets in medieval Japan, in which a man presents a decorated wand (*nishikigi*) to a woman as a sign of courtship. This "decorated wand" was commonly used in poems to suggest a rustic, unrequited love. Additionally, nishikigi was often used as a metaphor for red maple leaves (*momiji*).[5] In the manner described by Black, this metaphor portrays the autumn mountain scenery through the vehicle "*nishikigi*," thus creating a new perception of the autumn mountain mingled with the pathos of an unrequited love. This metaphor, however,

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[3] The *funabashi* legend developed as a commentary on the following poem in *Manyōshū*:
上毛の佐野の船橋取り放し親は離くれど我は離かるがへ
Removing a pontoon bridge of Sano in Kamitsuke, parents try to separate us, but how can I be separated from you?
For a discussion of the various extant versions of this legend, see Oda Sachiko, "Sakuhin kenkyū *Funabashi*," *Kanze* (Nov. 1977): 3-10. and Itō Masayoshi, "Kakkyoku kaidai *Funabashi*," *Yōkyokushū* 3, Shinchō nihon koten shūsei 79, (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1977), pp. 467-468.

[4] Itō Masayoshi, ibid.

[5] Although today spindle trees (Euonymus alatus) are called "nishikigi," it seems that they were not known (at least by the current name) to the literary circle in the capital during the medieval period. As Hirata Yoshinobu and Misaki Hisashi argue in *Waka shokubutsu hyōgen jiten* (Tokyo: Tōkyōdō, 1994), pp. 247-249, there is no poem from the medieval period in which the word "*nishikigi*" seems to refer to this specific plant.

was part of common parlance by Zeami's time, for the word "*nishikigi*" had become closely associated with momiji. For example, in *Renjugappekishū*, a code of word associations (*yoriai*) compiled by Ichijō Kaneyoshi (1402-1481), *momiji* is listed as one of *nishikigi*'s fixed associations. As a result, when "*nishikigi*" was used as a metaphor for red maple leaves, it worked as a transparent "vehicle," that automatically transmitted its tenor without the connotation of unrequited love and its pathos.

While the nō play *Nishikigi* is set in autumn mountains, nishikigi is never connected to momiji during the play. Futhermore, the maple tree itself is refered to only once, in the description of the man's tomb at the end of the first act. The play adds a totally new scene not found in any former literary accounts of this custom. In this scene two ghosts, a man and a woman, reenact the events of one autumn night during their lifetimes: the man stands still in front of the woman's gate with a nishikigi in hand, while she weaves hosonuno (a narrow cloth) inside the house without at all responding to him. This "*hosonuno*" is also a well-known literary symbol of unrequited love in Michinoku, but, unlike nishikigi, it has almost no specific association with autumn.[6] By contrast, in the play *Nishikigi* the sound of hosonuno being woven becomes one with the sound of autumn insects through the onomatopoeia of the phrase "kiri hatari chou chou."

シテ：夫は錦木取り持ちて　鎖したる門をたたけども
ツレ：内より答ふることもなく　ひそかに音するものとては
シテ：機物の音
ツレ：秋の虫の音
シテ：聞けば夜声も
ツレ：きり
シテ：はたり
ツレ：ちゃう
シテ：ちゃう
地：きりはたりちゃうちゃう　きりはたりちゃうちゃう
機織松虫きりぎりす　つづりさせよと鳴く虫の　衣のた

[6] To be more precise, certain poems relate hosonuno to the Star Festival in early autumn (ex., *Tamenorishū,* "Autumn," no. 116). However, hosonuno is also often connected to summer, especially to the seasonal change of clothing in early summer (ex., *Naranohawakashū,* "Summer II," no. 114, and *Shōkashū,* no. 274).

めかなわびそ　己が住む野のちぐさの糸の　細布織りて
とらせん。

MAN: The man holds a nishikigi and knocks at the locked gate, but —
WOMAN: There is no answer from inside. The only faint sound he can hear is —
MAN: The sound of weaving,
WOMAN: The sound of autumn insects,
MAN: Truly, the voices of night, they are sounding —
WOMAN: kiri
MAN: hatari
WOMAN: chou
MAN: chou
CHORUS: kiri hatari chou chou, kiri hatari chou chou, grasshoppers and crickets, are you crying "please patch" for your clothes? Do not be grieved, then. I will weave hosonuno for you from the threads of flowering plants in the field where you dwell. [7]

The same onomatopoeic "*kiri hatari chou chou*" is used for the sound of insects in the nō play *Matsumushi,* and in *Kureha,* for the sound of weaving. In this beautiful scene in *Nishikigi,* it is used to indicate both sounds simultaneously. The fusion of an autumn mountain scene with rustic love, which the conventional link between *momiji* and *nishikigi* no longer evoked, is here vividly and acoustically recreated by an entirely new conjoining of the insect voices and the weaving sound of *hosonuno.*

In *Hanjo*, Zeami creates a whole plot line, the story of a woman's descent into insanity, in order to resuscitate another conventional metaphor, "autumn fan" (*aki no oogi*), that alludes to a forlorn woman. This metaphor originates in *Yuan ge xing* from *Wenxuan.* In this famous poem, Ban Yieyu (J. Han Shōyo), a consort who has lost the emperor's favor, compares herself to an autumn fan, a fragile plaything that is abandoned with the coming of chilly autumn winds. The title of the play refers not only to this Chinese consort but also to the nickname given to its protagonist Hanago, a courtesan in Nogami. Hanago longs for her lover, who parted from her in spring after exchanging his fan with hers as a love token and promising to return in the fall. Always firmly holding his fan,

[7] All the citations of original nō plays are from Itō Masayoshi ed., *Yōkyokushū,* 3 vols. Shinchō nihon koten shūsei, 57, 73, 79 (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1983, 1986, 1988). Translations are all by the author.

she is banteringly called "Hanjo" by surrounding people. Moreover, the lovers' spring parting is repeatedly emphasized at the opening of the play. Thus when autumn winds blow, they signify to her that half a year has passed without any contact from him; the season of the promised encounter has arrived, yet there is no sign of him. In other words, autumn winds represent for her an actual sign of his change of heart, as clearly shown in the following passages.

> シテ：春日野の雪間を分けて生ひ出でくる　草のはつかに見えし君かも　由なき人に馴れ衣の　日を重ね月は行けども　世を秋風の便りならでは、縁りを知らする人もなし
>
> Hanago: My love, I saw a little of you as of a young sprout peeping from under the snow in Kasuga field. Since I have devoted myself to an unfaithful man, though days and months have passed by, I have nothing to bring me news of him but this autumn wind which tells of his decreasing love for me.

Since the story concerns a woman who is literally forlorn in autumn, the play reinforces the link between woman and fan and gives a logical reason for regarding her as a fan-like being. By the same token, the recurring idiom "autumn wind" (*aki kaze*) also undergoes similar revitalization. In Japanese, *aki* means both "autumn" (秋) and "change of heart" (飽き). Puns based on this homophony are a conventional rhetorical device and indeed recur throughout the play. The conventional link between "autumn" and "change of heart," however, is given concrete realization by the plot. The word "*aki kaze* (autumn wind)" also means "wind that tells the change of a man's heart," primarily because the play's plot lends its own logic to this semantic duality.

Another idiomatic usage of "fan" is also treated with special attention in this play. In Japan, a fan, "*oogi*" (扇), was traditionally used as a parting gift, since it is a homonym of reunion, "*oogi*" (逢ふ義). For example, lovers used to exchange their fans when parting in the morning, and it was also customary to make gifts of fans when saying farewell. As a matter of fact, this act of exchanging fans has become a custom of parting and lost most of its original significance, namely, its promise of reunion, much as Japanese say "*gochisou sama*" (ご馳走様) after every meal without specifically intending gratitude for the hospitality, "*chisou*" (馳走), of the host. In the nō play *Hanjo*, by contrast, the exchanged fans literally bring about the reunion of the lovers; they meet each other at last

because they recognize the fans in each other's hand. The long forgotten significance of a fan as a promise of reunion is revived here because the conventional link between the act of exchanging fans and its signified is actualized.[8]

While renga plays on the link between signifier and signified, revealing its arbitrariness by altering the signified, Zeami, in drawing on cliched metaphors, does not simply accept the established link between vehicle and tenor. He lends this conventional link a concrete realization through the logic of his plot lines, thus resuscitating the original power of the metaphor, which was initially created by seeing the tenor through the vehicle. In other words, *renga* and Zeami share a fundamental distrust in the conventional link between signifier and signified, which daily language seems to take for granted. Although Zeami was not the only playwright who participated in renga, his childhood experiences with this literary pastime among the social elite is quite exceptional and surely had a lasting influence on his understanding of linguistic meaning. His characteristic way of regenerating cliched metaphors, to the point of even creating new scenes and stories for that purpose, arguably reflects his intimate familiarity with the practice of *renga*.

I will now proceed to the second type of nō plays, which expands a metaphor in a poem to create whole narratives. As mentioned above, this process resembles the way in which medieval commentaries produce stories and allegorical interpretations to account for waka. As recent studies of the medieval period have shown, people acquired knowledge of the classics mostly through commentaries. In a similar manner, Zeami and Zenchiku used such commentaries of poems as sourcebooks for their plays. It must have been quite natural for these playwrights, infused as they were with narratives deriving from various readings of a given poem, to adapt the techniques of medieval commentators when they themselves created story lines from existing poetry. At this point, I would like to discuss two examples of this second type of nō play, Zeami's *Tadanori* and Zenchiku's *Yuya*,[9] both based upon episodes from *The Tale of the Heike*.

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[8] Precisely speaking, the latter two examples (two sets of homophonies) of the idiomatic expressions revitalized in *Hanjo* should be categorizes as metonymies rather than metaphors. However, when two homophonic concepts are juxtaposed as tenor and vehicle of a metonymy, the dynamic potential to transform one's perception of tenor, which Black attributed to metaphors, also seems to be at work.

[9] Although there is no documented evidence about the authorship of *Yuya*, it is generally attributed to Zenchiku, as its rhetoric and allusions to specific texts bear the characteristics common to his works (Miyake Akiko, *Kabunō no seiritsu to*

The basic structure of *Tadanori* is that of a two-act dream play (*mugen nō*). In the first act, the ghost of Tadanori, in the guise of a local man, shows a traveling monk a cherry tree, which actually serves as the burial marker of his own tomb. This cherry tree as Tadanori's burial marker seems to be Zeami's invention. The ghost proposes that the monk stay one night under the tree. In the second act, the ghost appears in its true form and requests that the monk find a way to have his name added to *Senzaishū*, an imperial anthology of Japanese poetry that in fact contained a poem of Tadanori's. This poem remained anonymous because of its author's status as a "rebel." In a familiar fashion, the ghost reenacts his own past and disappears.

In the mean time, the play incorporates the actualization of three different interpretations of Tadanori's last poem. According to one episode in *The Tale of the Heike*, which is also retold by the ghost in the nō play, Tadanori had prepared his "farewell poem" before his final battle. When he is finally killed, his enemy finds this poem written on a slip of paper attached to Tadanori's quiver and is deeply moved by its author's refinement and poetic sensibility. This poem reads as follows:

行き暮れて木の下陰を宿とせば花や今宵の主ならまし

> Should I make the shade of a tree my inn as dust falls on this traveling of mine, then cherry blossoms will be my host this night.

The poem is repeated in its entirety three times in the play, twice in the scene where the ghost reveals to the monk that Tadanori is buried under the cherry tree. In this manner the parallel between the poem and the fate of the poet, now literally under flowers, is highlighted. Moreover, fragments of the poem are scattered throughout the play, such as "inn in the shade of this cherry tree," "sleeping in the shelter of flowers," and "sleeping with night flowers while on my way traveling." Since most of these fragments appear especially during the descriptions of the travelling monk's repose under the cherry tree, the allusions also reinforce the parallel between the poem and the monk's act.

Furthermore, as Tashiro Keiichiro argues,[10] Tadanori's past life is presented in Zeami's play as an actualization of the metaphorical meaning of the same poem. In retelling his past, Tadanori's spirit summarizes his

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tenkai (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2001), pp. 417-458, and Itō Masayoshi, "Kakkyoku kaidai: *Yuya*," in *Yōkyokushū* 3.

[10] Tashiro Keiichirō, *Mugen nō*, (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1994), pp. 287-311.

whole life as a poet: "I was born in a family famous for versification, practiced and absorbed in this art" (げにや和歌の家に生まれ　その道を嗜み). Poetry itself is also repeatedly represented in the play through the metaphor of flowers. The monk expresses his detachment from his former literary activities with the words "I abandoned flowers as wretched things" (花をも憂しと捨つる身の), whereas Tadanori's ghost refers to poetry as his "heart's flower" (心の花). At the play's climax, after Tadanori has recounted his death, he recites his final poem one last time as sort of personal testament; "poetry" is his "host," the purpose of his life.

In sum, the sleep of the travelling monk, the location of Tadanori's body under cherry flowers, and his past love for poetry are all depicted in the play as different actualizations of his farewell poem. In fact, all three fuse at the end of the play, as the ghost finishes his story:

> 地：今は疑ひよもあらじ　花は根に帰るなり　わが跡弔ひてたび給へ　木陰を旅の宿とせば　花こそ主なりけれ
>
> Chorus: Now, you shall have no doubt. Flowers come back to their roots, and so do I. Please pray for me from this point forth—should we make the shade of the tree our travel dwelling, then the cherry blossoms shall be our host!

Here, I tentatively translate the final line using the first person plural (our host). Yet in the original, there is no indication of person, so that this line can also be translated as "my host" and "your host," simultaneously referring to the monk, Tadanori's life in the past, and his buried body. This final line lays bare the play's structure as an assemblage of three actualized interpretations of Tadanori's farewell poem.

Zenchiku's *Yuya* is also a narrative expansion of a single metaphor. The episode from *The Tale of the Heike* upon which the play is based[11] relates that a mistress of Taira Munemori, named Yuya, received his permission to return home in the East so that she could see her aging mother. Munemori granted Yuya's request because he was impressed by a poem she had composed, which reads as follows:

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[11] Numerous versions of *The Tale of the Heike* present this episode in variant forms, but the differences are mostly between characters' names. All of these variants retain the same plot that develops around the same poem. Tashiro points out that among these versions, Hyakunijukku-bon version narrates the episode in the closest way to the nō play (*Yōkyoku wo yomu*, Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1987, p. 62).

如何にせん都の春も惜しけれど慣れし東の花や散るらん

"What shall I do? The spring of the capital is dear to me, yet the familiar flowers of the East may now be scattering."

Based on this episode, or rather, on this specific poem, the nō play appears to be set in spring. The season is important, for Munemori initially refuses Yuya's request out of a wish to have her accompany to the Kiyomizu temple where the cherry blossoms are blooming. The play constructs an opposition between Munemori's wish to see the cherry trees in full blossom and Yuya's desire to see her mother. At the same time, Yuya's concern for her mother is almost always expressed through allusions to flowers. When she first appears on stage, Yuya compares her mother to benevolent rain and dews that bring forth flowers. The mother, in a letter to Yuya, compares herself to a "withering cherry tree," which might die before blooming this spring. When entertaining Munemori and his retainers at Kiyomizu temple, Yuya praises the surrounding cherry blossoms as a sign of the mercy of Kannon Boddhisattva, whose vow to save all beings that trust him has just inspired Yuya to pray to him for her mother's longevity.

When she, near the end, sees the shower scattering the flowers and composes the aforementioned poem, its vehicle is cherry blossoms and the tenor, her old mother: this association compels Munemori to perceive Yuya's wish to see her mother through the "filter" of his own yearning for cherry blossoms. In other words, this metaphor is constructed so as that the more one appreciates cherry blossoms, the more intensely he can realize Yuya's concern about her mother. Inevitably, upon reading this poem, Munemori, who has so far not been in the least affected by Yuya's desperate entreaties, suddenly displays great sympathy for her and immediately allows her to return home.

ワキ：よしありげなる言葉の種と取り上げ見れば　いかにせん　都の春も惜しけれど
シテ：慣れし東の花や散るらん
ワキ：げに道理なりあはれなり　はやはや暇とらするぞ東に下り候へ

Munemori: I take up a poem, with which she seems to mean something. "What shall I do? The spring of the capital is dear to me, yet—"

> Yuya: "the familiar flowers of the East may now be scattering."
> Munemori: Indeed, your wish is natural and most touching. I will give you the permission to leave immediately; return home in the East quickly.

The play thus expands a very brief and simple episode from *The Tale of the Heike* into a finely textured plot line which fully manifests the power of the poem's metaphor to change perception. Almost all the new elements introduced in the play's rendition of the narrative—the spring setting, Munemori's attachment to flower viewing, and Yuya's recurring allusions to flowers—are put together for the sole purpose of realizing metaphor's power to filter its tenor in as dramatic a manner as possible.

As previous studies have pointed out, nō developed in a cultural milieu dominated by the literary forms of *renga* and *waka* commentaries. Renga and nō often share the same lexicon and the same aesthetic concepts, and medieval poetic commentaries served as sourcebooks for nō plays. Aside from such influences, a number of nō plays, as the present analysis has shown, are centered around the revival and the expansion of existing metaphors. These functions must also be regarded as further manifestations of the deep influence that renga and commentaries exerted on the linguistic strategies of *nō* playwrights.

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