“Gendering the Seasons in the *Kokinshū*”

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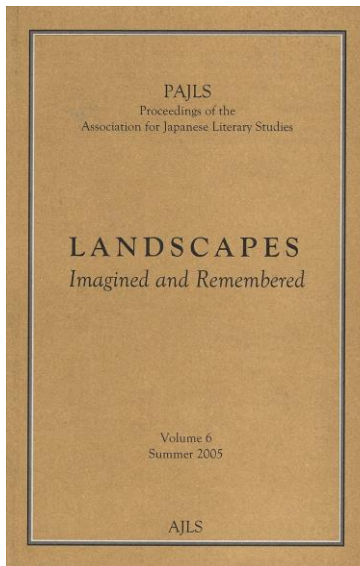

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Gendering the Seasons in the *Kokinshū*

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I would like to focus here on the gendering of nature and the four seasons in waka (Japanese classical poetry). This gendering begins with seasonal poetry in the *Man'yōshū*, in the early eighth century, and comes to the fore in Heian (794-1192) poetry, represented most prominently by the *Kokinshū* (early tenth century). Generally speaking, the flowers and trees tend to be gendered female while the animals and birds become male. This gendering of nature and landscape is closely linked with the other major topic of classical poetry: *koi* (love), in which the positions of the man and woman are often represented by nature and motifs from the four seasons. The purpose of this paper is to historicize this gendering process and to explore the implications of the cultural gendering of nature in Japanese poetry.

Early courtship and banquet poetry

The gendering of nature can be traced back to the origins of Japanese poetry, to the so-called *utagaki* (literally, "fence songs") in which, at an appropriate time in the spring and the fall, young men and women who had come of age would gather on the hills or along the water, sing to one another, dance, drink, and engage in sexual activity. In the *utagaki*, which is one of the earliest song genres, dating prior to the eighth century, a young man and woman faced each other and called out (the male is referred to as *se* or *waga se* and the female as *imo*) in a mating ritual. The poetry exchanges were based on the belief in *kotodama* (spirits lodged in words), and in the belief that if one called to another person with skillfully expressed words, the word spirits would be activated and the listener would yield, allowing one's wishes to be realized. The *utagaki* were also carried out as a prayer for and in expectation of a rich harvest, in a ritual intended to make nature follow the courtship or mating process implicit in the *utagaki*. The male/female exchange of songs found today in rice-planting (*taue*) songs and Bon Festival dances (*bon-odori*) are considered to be remnants of the *utagaki* tradition.[1] These *utagaki* led to the love-exchange poems (*sōmon*), which used nature and seasonal motifs as metaphors to express the emotions of love and courtship.

The *utagaki* also established the fundamental form of Japanese poetry for the next thousand years. Initially the male/female song exchanges were not

[1] Ogata Tsutomu, *Za no bungaku* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1973).

fixed in form, but gradually they settled into a 5/7/5 and 7/7 syllabic question-and-answer format. When the question and answer were folded into one solo poem, with the 5/7/5 question as the top half (*kami no ku*) and the 7/7 answer as the bottom half (*shimo no ku*), it became the thirty-one-syllable waka (5/7/5/7/7), which became the main form of traditional Japanese poetry. The 5/7/5 and 7/7 dialogic form continued to be practiced, alongside waka, as a kind of social art. From around the thirteenth century, multiple participants would alternately link a 5/7/5 long verse to a 7/7 short verse, transforming the earlier dialogic form into an extended poetry sequence (the standard length being a hundred verses). This was renga (linked verse) with a 5/7/5 verse as the hokku (opening verse), which eventually, in the early modern and modern periods, broke off to become what is now called haiku.

The gendering of nature can also be traced to another major poetic genre: miscellaneous poetry (*zōka*), which was originally public, celebratory poetry that praised and honored gods and high royalty, above all the sovereign (*tennō*). Miscellaneous poetry was originally composed at imperial residences or on imperial excursions, particularly to detached palaces at Yoshino and Naniwa. In the early Nara period, during the Jinki (724-29) and Tenpyō (729-47) eras, a new kind of miscellaneous poetry emerged in the form of private banquet poetry, which were poems composed at the private residences of aristocrats to celebrate key seasonal points in the year (such as the first blossoms of the plum trees, Tanabata [Star Festival], and so forth). This private banquet poetry, which turned its focus on nature in the context of the four seasons, welcomed and praised seasonal objects, such as the plum blossom, instead of the gods or high royalty that had been the object of celebration in earlier miscellaneous poetry. In the following example (vol. 5, no. 831) from the *Man'yōshū*, composed at a banquet held at Dazaifu (Kyushu) on the thirteenth of the First Month of Tenpyō 2 (730) and part of a series of the earliest recorded seasonal banquet poems, the plum is treated as the main guest and is honored by the participants in a manner that distantly echoes the honor paid to gods and high royalty in earlier miscellaneous poetry. The flower of the plum tree is a motif for early spring, which begins at the beginning of the First Month:

Haru nareba	With the arrival of spring
ube mo sakitaru	you have truly bloomed,
ume no hana	flower of the plum tree.
kimi o omou to	When I think of you
yoi mo nenaku ni	I cannot sleep at night.

Hanji no Yasumaro,
Governor of Iki

This kind of private (as opposed to court or imperial) banquet poetry first emerges in volumes five and six of the *Man'yōshū* and then comes to the fore in volumes eight and ten, which categorize poems entirely by the seasons.

One of the major characteristics of this kind of seasonal banquet poetry is the gendering of nature and seasonal motifs, as in the following poem (no. 1541) in the "miscellaneous autumn poetry" section of volume eight of the *Man'yōshū*:

Waga oka ni	On my hill
saoshika kinaku	the buck comes crying,
hatsuhagi no	the buck that comes crying
hanazuma toi ni	seeking a flower wife
kinaku saoshika	in the first bush clover.

The flower of the bush clover (*hagi*) is referred to here as the flower wife (*hanazuma*), and the deer is referred to as a stag (*saoshika*), making the genders unmistakable. The male deer visits the bush clover, which blooms at the beginning of autumn. (For the next thousand years, the deer and the bush clover would become major motifs of autumn in Japanese poetry, from waka through renga to haikai.) In the seasonal poems (primarily volumes eight and ten) in the *Man'yōshū* and in the seasonal volumes of subsequent imperial waka anthologies, nature frequently appears in combinations (*toriawase*) of an animal or bird and a flower, both of which belong to the same season. Other examples are the bush warbler (*uguisu*) and the plum blossom (*ume*), which are another early spring combination. Typically, the seasonal flower blooms first and waits for the visit of the bird or deer, or the bird or deer seeks the flower, which has already bloomed. In either event, the relationship between the animal and the plant frequently becomes an allegory (or set of fixed symbols) for the relationship between a man and a woman or between the guest and the host at the banquet.

Mori Asao, a noted *Man'yōshū* scholar who has written on this subject, has pointed out that in ancient rituals (*matsuri*) that honored the gods, the flower was a symbolic place where a visiting god could be transferred or temporarily lodged.[2] In this regard, the flower had an implicit shamanistic function, and the visiting bird or animal implicitly represents the spirit of the god. In the stag/bush clover poem cited above, for example, the flower evokes the role of the shaman (often a virgin maiden) who awaits the arrival of the god, whom she "entertains," while the visiting buck resembles the visiting god. According to Mori, this particular religious function had faded by the time private banquet poetry came to the fore, but this ritualistic origin, if true, does help to explain the subsequent gendering of nature in Japanese poetry, that is

[2] Mori Asao, "Shikiuta no hyōgen ronri," in *Kokugo to kokubungaku* 68:5 (1951), 91-101; and Mori Asao, "Zōka kara shiki e," in *Kodai bungaku*, March 1991.

to say, that the gendering of nature is closely related not only to the pairing of the opposite sexes but to the relationship between host and guest. In everyday social situations, where poetry became a form of elevated dialogue, the poem (whether waka or the later hokku or haiku) frequently served as an address (*aisatsu*) to the guest or visitor.

The narrative of love

The seasonal volumes of the *Manyōshū*, volumes eight and ten, are not only ordered by the cycle of the four seasons, but also are divided between miscellaneous poems on a particular season and love-exchange poems on a particular season, a division that foreshadows the fate of Japanese poetry for the next one thousand years. The "miscellaneous seasonal poems" describe some aspect of the seasons directly while the "love-exchange seasonal poems" use some aspect of the seasons to express emotions of love or courtship. In the *Kokinshū* (early tenth century), the first imperial anthology of Japanese poetry, these two major topics – seasons and love – become the main categories for the anthology as a whole. The notion of love as it appears in the *Man'yōshū* and then in later Heian anthologies such as the *Kokinshū* differs significantly from the modern English idea of "love," which generally implies being passionately involved with someone. In ancient and classical poetry, love usually meant yearning to be with someone who was absent or beyond reach. The graphs that are used in the *Man'yōshū* for love are *ko-hi* 孤悲 (literally, "lonely sorrow"). To compose on love was to compose on being sorrowfully lonely. *Koi* (love) is about the pain of being apart or separated from the object of desire; it is never about the joy of being together.

The 361 love poems in the *Kokinshū* are arranged chronologically to form a narrative of love. In the first love volume, the poet or speaker has fallen in love with someone after having only heard about that person or after having had only a very brief glimpse of that person. The love that torments the speaker is unknown to the object of longing, which makes it all the more painful. The following anonymous poem (no. 469) is from the first love volume:

Hototogisu	Like the cuckoo
naku ya satsuki no	crying and the blue flag
ayamegusa	wildly blooming in the Fifth Month,
ayame mo shiranu	I fall madly in love
koi mo suru kana	not knowing why.

The second love volume in the *Kokinshū* develops the theme of unrequited love, with the poet expressing resentment that the other party is so unfeeling or unresponsive:

Omoitsutsu	Was it because I fell asleep
nureba ya hito no	thinking of him
mietsuramu	that he appeared?
yume to shiriseba	Had I known it was a dream
samezaramashi wo	I would never have awakened.

In the above example (Love 2, no. 552) by Ono no Komachi, a noted and legendary female poet, the longing is so strong that the other person appears in her dreams.

In the third love volume, the speaker finally meets the other party, but instead of focusing on the meeting, which is never described, the *Kokinshū* dwells on the painful parting, the subsequent inability to meet, and the fear of scandal and rumor:

After he had secretly spoken to her on the first of the Third Month, it rained continuously; and he wrote this poem and sent it to her:

Oki mo sezu	I do not get up,
ne mo sede yoru wo	I do not sleep,
akashite wa	I stay up until dawn,
haru no mono tote	spending the entire day
nagame kurashitsu	gazing at the long rains of spring.

In the above example (Love 3, no. 616) by Ariwara no Narihira, the speaker has just met the person and remains wildly in love.

In the fourth love volume, the relationship is collapsing, with doubts and uncertainty coming to the fore. The partner rarely visits or has faded away, leaving only mementoes of the former relationship:

Michinoku no	Like the *katsumi* flowers
Asaka no numa no	in a swamp in Asaka
hanakatsumi	of the Deep North, so far away,
katsu miru hito ni	I continue to long for that distant
koi ya wataramu	person whom I once saw.

In the above example (Love 4, no. 677) by an anonymous poet, the partner is already gone.

In the fifth love volume of the *Kokinshū*, the relationship has ended; the poet looks back nostalgically or waits in vain. The speaker resents the fickle heart of the partner, wonders what has happened, and finally becomes resigned to the circumstances. This is *Kokinshū* no. 770 by Priest Henjō:

Waga yado wa	My yard has been
michi mo naki made	overrun with weeds
arenikeri	hiding even the road,
tsurenaki hito wo	as I waited
matsu to seshi ma ni	for that cold-hearted one.

The speaker in these love poems is implicitly gendered. Reflecting the duolocal marital system of the time, the conventions of the love narrative assume that the man is the visitor who commutes to the residence of the woman and who returns home after a night at the woman's house. The cessation of visits implies a cessation of the relationship. In a typical exchange of poems, the man initiates the relationship and the woman rejects his advances. Since it is the man who takes the initiative in the poetic exchange, most of the love poems in the first and second love volumes of the *Kokinshū* are implicitly from the perspective of the pursuing man. In the first and second volumes, it is primarily the man – or rather, the male persona – who suffers, and must suppress his longing. In the third, fourth, and fifth love volumes, by contrast, the woman's perspective or female persona dominates; it is the woman who is neglected and who waits in vain for the man to visit.

In other words, the first half of the love narrative is dominated by so-called men's poems (*otoko-uta*) and the second half by women's poems (*onna-uta*).[3] Since most of the poems in the *Kokinshū*, including those in the love volumes, are written by men, in the third, fourth, and fifth love volumes, the male poet often takes the position of the woman. In a relatively limited number of cases, a woman poet takes the position of the man, writing a "man poem." From the tenth century onward, poets composed increasingly at poetry parties (*kakai*), poetry contests (*utaawase*), and for hundred-poem sequences (*hyakushu-uta*) on pre-established topics (*dai*) in which the poet was required to compose on the established associations of a specific topic. In a topic such as "waiting in love" (*matsu koi*), the poet had to compose from the point of view of the woman who waits impatiently for the man to visit or return. In these instances, the male poet took the persona of a woman. To return to the example from the fifth love volume, the poet is a male poet, Priest Henjō (816-90). He is composing a "woman" poem on "waiting in love."

Gendering the seasons

The *Kokinshū* has six seasonal volumes, two for spring, one for summer, two for autumn, and one for winter. The primary subtopics are listed below in the order of their appearance:

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[3] See Suzuki Hideo, *Kodai waka shiron* (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1990) on the conventions of *otoko-uta* versus *onna-uta*.

SPRING, two volumes (134 poems)

Beginning of spring, remaining snow, spring mist, *uguisu*, young herbs (*wakana*), green fields, willow, returning wild geese, plum blossoms, cherry blossoms, scattering flowers, wisteria, mountain rose (*yamabuki*), passing spring.

SUMMER, one volume (34 poems)

Beginning of summer, deutzia flower (*unohana*), *hototogisu* (cuckoo*)*, orange blossoms (*hanatachibana*), summer rains (*samidare*), end of summer.

AUTUMN, two volumes (145 poems)

Beginning of autumn, autumn wind, Tanabata, autumn sadness, autumn moon, insects, wild geese, deer, bush clover, dew, morning glory (*asagao*), maidenflower (*ominaeshi*), boneset (*fujibakama*), pampas grass (*hanasusuki*), pink (*nadeshiko*), autumn grass, bright tree leaves (*momiji*), chrysanthemum, fallen leaves (*ochiba*), autumn field, end of autumn.

WINTER, one volume (29)

Beginning of winter, ice, snow, plum blossoms in snow, end of year.

The seasonal subtopics in each of these seasons appear in a very specific order, with very specific associations. The beginning of spring is marked by the arrival of mist. Even as the snow remains on the ground, the *uguisu* begins singing, announcing the arrival of spring. People gather young herbs in the wild green fields, the spring rain falls, and buds appear on the willow. The wild geese return north, the plum blossoms appear and scatter. The cherry blossoms bloom and then fade away. The wisteria and the mountain rose mark the end of the spring season, and there is regret over the end of spring. Similar narratives of the seasons occur for summer, autumn, and winter.

Of particular interest here is that the topoi of *koi* found in the love volumes of the *Kokinshū* have a direct parallel to those of the four seasons. In the seasonal volumes, the poet, much like the man longing for the woman in the first love volume, longs for the arrival of a particular bird (such as the *uguisu* in the spring or the *hototogisu* in the summer) or waits impatiently for the flowering of a tree or plant (such as the plum or cherry tree in the spring, or the deutzia flower in the summer). Of the four seasons, spring is the most awaited season: its arrival marks not only the arrival of a season but the arrival of the new year and with that the time of renewal and rebirth. The fundamental position of the spring poem is waiting for the arrival of spring, as in the following *Man'yōshū* poem (no. 1431) in the "miscellaneous spring poems" section of volume eight.

Kudarano no	The bush warbler staying
hagi no furue ni	on the old branch of the bush clover
haru matsu to	at Kudara Field
orishi uguisu	waiting for the spring
nakinikemu ka mo	has probably begun to sing!

The *uguisu*, which stands in for the poet, has been waiting for the arrival of spring.

The longing for the arrival of a season, particularly that of spring, parallels the longing found in the first and second love volumes of the *Kokinshū*. Equally important is the regret and resentment over the unexpectedly quick departure of a season or a seasonal visitor. For example, the focus is not on the cherry blossoms at their peak so much as on the anticipation of the cherry blossoms and then the regret at their quick departure. This parallels the narrative of love in the *Kokinshū* where the focus is not on the meeting or union but on the anticipation of love and then the regret at its quick demise. Longing takes two forms: anticipation (or suppressed desire) and regret (or nostalgia for what is lost). The ubiquitous verb *shinobu*, which has two meanings, embodies these two sides of love. *Shinobu* can mean to suppress desire *and* to be nostalgic, to look back on the past with regret. Both attitudes are central to the seasonal poems.

Perhaps the best example of the profound correspondence in the *Kokinshū* between the seasons and love is the parallel between late autumn and the fading of love. If spring corresponds with the beginnings of love, then autumn corresponds to the end of love, to the sorrow and loneliness that follow the meeting. In the *Man'yōshū*, the word for "autumn" (*aki*) was homophonous with the words for "bright" (*aki* 明) *and* "to tire of" (*aku* 飽く), which eventually become two major motifs of autumn: *momiji* (bright tree leaves), which were bright, *and* weariness. In the ancient period, autumn is the season in which the tree leaves turn color and the five grains (*gokoku*) are harvested. But in the Heian period and in the *Kokinshū* in particular, autumnal topics become imbued with the overtone of sorrow and loneliness:

Ko no ma yori	When I look
morikuru tsuki no	at the light of the moon
kage mireba	pouring through the branches
kokorozukushi no	the heart-wrenching autumn
aki wa kinikeri	has come.

As the above *Kokinshū* poem (Anonymous, Autumn 1, no. 184) suggests, autumn becomes personified as a reflection of the human heart at its heaviest. The key word here is *aku* (to become weary of someone), or *aki* (weariness),

which is a homonym for the Japanese word for autumn, *aki*. The following poem in the fifth love volume reveals the "autumnal" nature of love:

Waga sode ni	Cold showers
madaki shigure no	are falling on my sleeves
furinuru wa	before their time.
kimi ga kokoro ni	Has autumn already arrived
aki ya kinuramu	in your heart?

In the above *Kokinshū* poem (Love 5, no. 763) by Priest Henjō, autumn (the weariness of love) has come unexpectedly early to the heart of the loved one, a change that brings tears (*shigure*, or cold showers) to the poet.

Another major parallel between the narrative of the seasons and that of love as they appear in the *Kokinshū* and many subsequent imperial waka anthologies is that the plants and animals are heavily gendered in both the seasonal poetry and the love poetry. Most of the flowers in the seasonal volumes in the *Kokinshū* are associated with women, particularly *ominaeshi* (literally, "woman flowers"; translated here as "maidenflowers"), willows (associated with arching eyebrows and long hair), plum blossoms, cherry blossoms, wisteria, mountain roses, deutzia flowers, morning glories, and pinks. Likewise, the birds and animals in the seasonal volumes of the *Kokinshū* tend to be gendered as male. The *uguisu* is the male trying to find the female (represented by the plum blossoms). The marsh hen (*kuina*, a summer topic), which makes a knocking sound, is the visitor who knocks on the door. The deer, a major autumn topic, is a buck yearning for its mate, often represented by the bush clover or the maidenflower. The frog, a spring topic, is a male frog longing for its lover. In short, the flowers are largely gendered as women, and the birds or animals tend to be men.

In addition to the possible ritualistic origins for the gendering given earlier, such as the *utagaki*, in which men and women called out to each other in song, or the festivals in which visiting gods were welcomed by female shamans, the gendering of plants and animals in classical poetry appears to come from two sources. First, it reflects the courtship and marital customs of the ancient and Heian periods, in which the man (often in a polygamous situation) visited the residence of the woman (who lived with her family) and returned home in the morning (to his parents' residence). Given the mobility required in duolocal marriage and courtship, the mobile birds and animals were apt figures for the male lover, while the immobile flowers and trees were suitable figures for the female lover, who is waiting and often feels neglected or abandoned. The gendering in poetry also comes from the phonic associations. For example, *ominaeshi* is written with the characters for woman and flower; *asagao* (literally, "morning faces") is associated with the face of a woman lover in the morning; and *nadeshiko* (literally, "the child that I

stroke") is a girl or young woman who has been raised by a man. A good example is the *ominaeshi*, one of the so-called seven autumn grasses:

Na ni medete	I was drawn to the name
oreru bakari zo	and only broke off a branch.
ominaeshi	Maidenflower,
ware ochiniki to	don't tell anyone that
hito ni kataru na	I've fallen this far!

The above *ominaeshi* poem (*Kokinshū,* Autumn 1, no. 226) by Priest Henjō turns on the notion that the poet priest was seduced by the name of the *ominaeshi*. The verb "fall" (*otsu*) implies that the priest has broken his vow of celibacy. In the following *ominaeshi* poem (*Kokinshū*, Autumn 1, no. 233), the speaker tries to point out to the deer that the woman he is longing for is already in the field where he lives:

Tsuma kouru	The deer that longs for its wife
shika zo nakunaru	is crying!
ominaeshi	Doesn't it know that
ono ga sumu no no	the flower in the field where it lives
hana to shirazu ya	is the maidenflower?

The association of *ominaeshi* with women and with the erotic continues over the centuries, into renga and haikai. The next poem is a hokku by Tan Taigi (d. 1771), a friend of Buson and a haikai poet:

Uete dani	Trying to stay slim,
yasen to suramu	she probably starved to death,
ominaeshi	the maidenflower

Tan Taigi (d. 1771)

The commentators note that Taigi may be describing a courtesan (*yūjo*) in the licensed quarters at Shimabara in Kyoto who suffered from anorexia as she tried to please her clients.

Not only is nature highly gendered in the seasonal poetry of the *Kokinshū*, but the animals, birds, insects, and flowers express the same emotions as those found in the love volumes: frustration, a sense of betrayal, loss, resentment, and loneliness. In the love volumes of the *Kokinshū*, the most important of these emotions is unfulfilled longing, which lies at the heart of the topic of love. A good example is the *hototogisu* (small cuckoo), the most important topic of summer. The *hototogisu* developed various associations, with night, the singing voice, with memory, the spirit of the dead, but one of its most important associations was with unrequited love, an

association that appears from as early as the *Man'yōshū* (Vol. 8, Summer, no. 1473):

Tachibana no	Many are the days
hana chiru sato no	when the small cuckoo
hototogisu	cries in the village
katakoishitsutsu	of scattered orange blossoms
naku hi shi so ōki	out of unrequited love.

In the above summer poem by Ōtomo no Tabito, the *hototogisu* is personified, seen as a bird that cries out of unrequited love. So strong does this association become that in the next example by Sosei from the *Kokinshū* (Summer, no. 143) the voice of the *hototogisu* causes the speaker to feel longing for some unknown person:

Upon hearing the first singing of the small cuckoo:

Hototogisu	When I heard
hatsukoe kikeba	the first sound of the small cuckoo,
ajikinaku	I could not help
nushi sadamaranu	but feel longing
koiseraru hata	without knowing for whom!

The *hototogisu* also became associated with death and love. According to a Chinese legend, a Chinese emperor had an affair with the wife of one of his subjects, resigned from the throne, and was disgraced. When the fallen emperor passed away, a *hototogisu* came to cry, and it was believed that this bird was the incarnation of the emperor's spirit. For this and other reasons, the *hototogisu* came to be regarded as a bird that traveled between the land of the dead and that of the living. In the following poem (Lament, no. 1307) by Lady Ise in the *Shūishū*, the third imperial waka anthology, edited around 1005-07, the poet has lost a child and composes the following poem:

Upon hearing a small cuckoo, a year after the prince whom I had given birth to had passed away:

Shide no yama	Small cuckoo,
koete kitsuran	you who have come here,
hototogisu	crossing over the mountain of death,
koishiki hito no	tell me of the one
ue kataran	for whom I long!

The poet hopes that the *hototogisu* can bring a message from the spirit of her dead son.

The *hototogisu* was not the only seasonal animal or bird associated with unrequited love, frustration, or neglect. The autumn deer was admired for its mournful cries and is found longing for its wife (represented by bush clover). The voice of the wild duck (*kamo*), a major seasonal topic for winter, was thought to express its lonely, homesick, and uncertain state. The sound of the insects, particularly the *matsumushi* (literally, "waiting insect"), an autumnal topic, is that of a lonely woman waiting for the visit of the man.

Emergence of landscape poetry

In the long evolution of Japanese poetry from the late Heian (eleventh century) through the early modern period (seventeenth century), there is a gradual but discernible shift in seasonal poetry from personified or anthropomorphized nature to a more descriptive landscape. There is also a corresponding shift from focus on the voice to non-voice. This shift is most dramatically demonstrated in haikai (popular linked verse), which came to the fore in the seventeenth century and which focused on everyday life of commoners. As I noted earlier, in the *Kokinshū* and in the classical poetry, the *hototogisu* was closely associated with longing and with the spirit of the dead. By the seventeenth century, however, haikai poets had turned their attention to the rapid flight of the *hototogisu*, which became one of its new poetic associations. A noted example by Matsuo Bashō, the late seventeenth-century haikai master, in *Oi no kobumi* (Backpack Notes, 1688) was the following:

Hototogisu	The cuckoo—
kieyuku kata ya	where it disappears
shima hitotsu	a single island

This poem was composed near Suma, near present-day Kobe, looking across the Inland Sea to Awaji Island (Awajishima). The speaker implicitly hears the voice of the *hototogisu*, but by the time he looks up, its flight is so fast that it has disappeared from sight, merging with a single island, the island of Awaji:

Hototogisu	The cuckoo
naku ya hibari to	cries – forming a cross
jūmonji	with the skylark

In the above hokku by Kyorai (Bashō's disciple), the *hototogisu* cuts horizontally across the sky, while the *hibari* (skylark) flies straight up, vertically, forming a cross in the air. The *hototogisu* is a summer bird and the *hibari* is a spring bird, implying the intersection of the two seasons, the transition from spring to summer.

This shift from a highly personified, anthropomorphic seasonal landscape to a more descriptive landscape applies to a broad range of canonized seasonal topics and reflects the emergence of the *keiki* (landscape) style, first in waka, and then in late seventeenth-century haikai. But this shift from love to non-love did not mean, for example, that the earlier associations of *hototogisu* with love or the afterworld had disappeared. The following hokku is by a courtesan called Ōshū. Her hokku was included in the summer section of *Sarumino* (Monkey's Straw Coat), an anthology of haikai edited by Bashō and his disciples in 1691:

Koi shinaba	If I die from love
waga tsuka de nake	cry at my grave –
hototogisu	Small cuckoo!

Ōshū draws on the classical association of *hototogisu* with love and with death, and asks the *hototogisu* to come cry at her grave if she dies of love. She implicitly asks the *hototogisu*, a messenger between the worlds of the dead and the living, to bring to her in the afterworld a letter from her lover. The haikai twist here is that the perspective of the poet is from that of the dead rather than the living.

Conclusion

As I have argued here, the two major topics of Japanese poetry, love and the four seasons, have had, over their long history, a mutual impact on each other, resulting in the gendering of nature and the seasons. From as early as the eighth and tenth volumes of the *Man'yōshū*, there were two kinds of seasonal poetry: first, the miscellaneous poems in the form of banquet poetry at private residences, which depicted a seasonal moment directly, in effect praising some aspect of the season (and often by implication the host or guest); and second, the love-exchange poems, whose roots can be traced to the *utagaki* (early mating songs), which used some aspect of nature in the context of the seasons to express the emotions of love or courtship. These two types of seasonal poetry then became the twin pillars of the *Kokinshū* in the early tenth century, with six volumes devoted to the four seasons and five volumes devoted to love. In both types of seasonal poetry, the *zōka* and the *sōmon*, there was a strong tendency to depict aspects of seasonal nature in combinations, usually a bird or animal paired with a flower or plant, thereby projecting a male position and a female position onto nature.

These seasonal combinations, which first appeared in late *Man'yōshū* poetry, became prominent in the *Kokinshū*, and continued on through subsequent centuries and genres. Gradually, however, as the main poetic genre shifted from waka (in the Heian period) to renga (in the medieval period) and then to haikai (in the Edo period), the role of *koi* diminished in comparison to

that of the four seasons, and the gendering of nature tended to fade. The hokku, which came to the fore in the seventeenth century, was a dialogic form, but it was no longer an integral part of social mating or courtship, and the form became more purely descriptive. Certain seasonal topics such as Tanabata (autumn) and cats' love (spring), however, meant that the topic of love continued to be active within seasonal poetry. The four seasons take on a larger and larger role in the history of Japanese poetry until, in modern haiku, they almost totally eclipse love. In the modern period, however, love remains central to the thirty-one-syllable *tanka*, which does not depend on the seasons and which was newly inspired, as Yosano Akiko was, by the modern and Western notion of romantic love, where the focus was on being together rather than being separated. Last but not least, beginning no later than the late medieval period, the topic of love becomes increasingly associated in medieval renga and Edo-period haikai with Heian court culture, particularly the fictional female characters in *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji), contributing to and reflecting the larger cultural gendering of historical periods, with the medieval period (particularly samurai culture) being generally gendered male and the Heian period (especially court culture) cast as female.