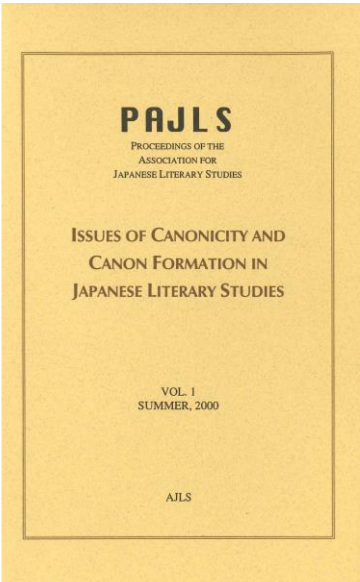
“In His Footsteps: Shokyū-ni and the Canonization of Bashō”

Roger K. Thomas

Proceedings of the Association for Japanese Literary Studies 1 (2000): 287–304.



PAJLS 1:
Issues of Canonicity and Canon Formation in Japanese Literary Studies.
Ed. Stephen D. Miller.

In His Footsteps: Shokyū-ni and the Canonization of Bashō

Roger K. Thomas
Illinois State University

Arguing that texts do not assume canonical status in an exegetical vacuum, Frank Kermode once noted that "commentary is what gives the text its inexhaustibility of reference and self reference."[1] In the context of traditional Japanese literature, one might go further and say that a work is not truly canonical until it becomes a part of an intertextual matrix, in turn drawing from and recycling images and motifs from an earlier canon. The present study attempts to offer an alternative perspective on the canonization of Matsuo Bashō's (1644-1694) work—particularly his *Oku no hosomichi* (Narrow Road to the Interior)—by examining one of its early imitations, the *Akikaze no ki* (Autumn Wind Account) by the eighteenth-century poet/nun Shokyū and by noting important changes in how the "common literary fund" was used. Bashō's account of his journey to the Northeast is of utmost importance in this analysis, for it—and the imitations it eventually engendered—played an essential role in his canonization.[2]

Bashō's name now looms so large in literary history that it is easy to forget that his lofty status was achieved only posthumously and through a canonization process that continued over a very long time. At the time of his death, his school competed with many others and was dominant only in certain regions. There have been two competing views of *haikai* after his death. According to the most widely accepted of these, Bashō's work and ideals marked the high point of the art, after which the only brief reprieves from a steady descent were provided by Yosa Buson (1716-1783) and Kobayashi

---

[1] *An Appetite for Poetry* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1989), 17.

[2] Horikiri Minoru traces the role of *Oku no hosomichi* in the elevation of Bashō's status through the early editions of that work, its annotations, imitations, eventual inclusion in the Meiji *kokugo* curriculum, and tourist appeal in the present. See his "Haisei Bashō-zō no tanjō to sono suii," *Sōzō sareta koten*, ed. Haruo Shirane and Suzuki Tomi (Tokyo: Shin'yōsha, 1999), 386-89.

Issa (1763-1827). The other sees Bashō as the beginning of a genuinely populist art, one that, while often falling short of his standards, nevertheless avoided both the iconoclastic excesses of the Danrin School and the tendency toward sentimentality seen in the works of many of his contemporaries. And yet, to echo a rhetorical question posed by Yamashita Kazumi regarding the *haikai* revival of the An'ei-Tenmei eras (1770s-80s): "Is it not essential that we listen to the voices of those occasional poets of the Revival who were neither given over to adulation of Bashō nor perverted his style (*Shōfū*)?"[3] Shokyū is without question one such poet.

Three ways of drawing on literary heritage will be important in this analysis: intertextuality, allusion, and *mitate*. Citing a variety of sources, Edward Kamens discusses the dynamics of the first two of these.[4] While an "allusion" is most often consciously made, usually aiming at a premeditated effect, "intertextuality" draws from a common rhetorical fund with far less—or even no—consciousness; that is, it tends toward an intuitive rather than a deliberate dependence on other texts. It will be argued that Shokyū's writing is representative of its age to the extent that it is marked by a shift from intertextuality toward allusion and *mitate*, a term whose meaning will be discussed later.

Most commentators on Bashō's *haikai* poetics have noted that his ideal for the art lay in the intersection of two axes that are at once temporal and topological. The vertical axis bears imagery of the timeless—also described in terms of "cultural memory"[5]—while the horizontal axis represents the timely, with imagery from the unmediated present. If Mikhail Bakhtin was correct in his assertion that "in literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another . . ."—that is, they are "chronotopic"[6]—then a promising comparative approach lies in examining

---

[3] Yamashita Kazumi, "Meiwa-ki hairon no seikaku: chūkō haikai o michibiku mono," *Buson, Issa*, Nihon bungaku kenkyū shiryō sōsho (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1975), 79.

[4] Edward Kamens, *Utamakura, Allusion, and Intertextuality in Traditional Japanese Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 6-7.

[5] See especially Haruo Shirane's use of this term in his *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashō* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[6] *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 243.

their respective privileging of time (*chronos*) or place (*topos*), of the cultural past (*fueki*) or of the immediate present (*ryūkō*). When held against Bashō's travel accounts, it can be demonstrated that Shokyū's recreation is a relatively more horizontal reflection not only of her own immediate experience but of many artistic and intellectual trends typical of late eighteenth-century Japan.

Shokyū's account was also colored by emerging scholarship, whose contributions to the early canonization of Bashō were enormous. The eighteenth century had witnessed the growth of a positivist spirit in both Confucian and nativist scholarship, and this spirit spread first to *waka* theory and then made itself felt in *haikai* poetics. Shokyū was on close terms with and deeply influenced by two poets who were also pioneering researchers: Chōmu (1732-1795) and Ryōta (1718-1787). Their studies contributed to the objectification of Bashō's work as "classic," a status that allowed Shokyū the distance to create an imitation far more detached than was typical of the manner in which the common literary fund was used in earlier times.

Shokyū: Biographical Sketch

Shokyū's life is divided by significant events into three major periods: her early years and married life until she ran away from her home village in Kyushu in the third year of Kanpō (1743); her life in the Kyoto-Osaka area until the death of her teacher and second husband in Hōreki 12 (1762); her later years, many of which were spent traveling. The last of these was her most prolific in terms of literary activity, but many aspects of her writing can be fully appreciated only in view of the events that shaped her life.

Little is known of Shokyū's childhood aside from the fact that she was born in Shōtoku 4 (1714) as Nami, the fourth daughter of Nagamatsu Jūgorō, headman (*shōya*) of Karashima Village in the district of Takeno in Chikugo Province. Although contemporary records for the area chronicle numerous natural and agricultural disasters in Northern Kyushu during her early years (including such things as drought, flood, famine, locusts, etc.),[7] no evidence leads us to suppose that Nami's early years were anything but

---

[7] Some of these are cited by Kanamori Atsuko, *Edo no onna-haikaishi "Oku no hosomichi" o iku: Shokyū-ni no shōgai* (Tokyo: Shōbunsha, 1998), 19-21. Much of this biographical sketch is indebted to Kanamori.

typical for the daughter of a village headman's household, whose relative status allowed for basic education and some grounding in the polite arts.

Also typical was the way her childhood and youth ended: with marriage to a cousin, Nagamatsu Man'emon (?-1786), while she was yet in her teens. While few documents survive, one can infer from the events that followed that her marriage to Man'emon was not a happy one. One possible source of strain between herself and Man'emon was the fact that she bore no children, for the birth of a male heir was of great importance in the household of a village headman.

The unmistakable evidence of her unhappiness was her decision, in her thirtieth year (1743), to elope with Arii Kohaku (1702-1762, later known as Fufū), an itinerant physician and *haikai* master in Shida Yaba's (1662-1740) school, who was in the area recruiting students. The circumstances under which Nami and Kohaku met are unknown. No evidence survives that Nami practiced or had any interest in *haikai* prior to that time. Nor is it easy to imagine what induced her to abandon the relative security of her position and run away with a man who had no permanent home or stable income, who had suffered from consumption since youth, and who had barely managed to support himself by practicing medicine and teaching *haikai*.

Nami and Kohaku traveled first to Kyoto, then to Osaka, where Kohaku, having taken the name Fufū, came to be recognized as a major figure in Yaba's school and no longer relied on practicing medicine to make a living. Apparently it was after the move to Osaka that Nami began to compose verses and became involved in poetry meetings, taking the name "Shokyū," which was based on the opening lines of the *Shih ching*. Her first published verse appeared in an anthology in 1746:

> Spring breezes! Pines on the burial mound,
> where I see the first moss.
> *Harukaze ya koke o misomuru tsuka no matsu*[8]

Like most *haikai* masters, Fufū often found it necessary to travel in order to recruit new students, correct the compositions of old ones, and solicit contributions for anthologies. After Fufū's health had deteriorated to the point that

[8] *Kohakuan Shokyū-ni zenshū*, ed. uchi Hatsuo, Iino Matsuko, Abe ju (Osaka: Izumi Shoin, 1986), 245. Hereafter cited as *Zenshū*.

he was not able to do the necessary travel toward a projected anthology, the *Shuhakushū*, Shokyū went on the journey in his stead in 1761. Barely a year later, Fufū died.

Fufū's demise left Shokyū with no means of support; it is unlikely that he left her any sort of liquid assets, and the very house they occupied belonged to a student. His only legacy to her was a profound appreciation for *haikai* and some substantive training in it. He left behind many disciples whose correction fees (*tensakuryō*) had been sufficient to support the couple's immediate needs, but it is doubtful that many of them would have accepted her instruction just because she happened to be the wife of their late teacher. On the 100th day after Fufū's death, Shokyū shaved her head and determined to make her living through *haikai*.

Having cut my topknot on the hundredth day . . .
Examining the sweepings of rubbish—Autumn frost.
Hyakkanichi ni motodori o haraite
Hakisutete mireba akuta ya aki no shimo[9]

In the fall of 1762, six months after Fufū's death, Shokyū set out in for the western provinces in the company of Shishi, one of her late husband's disciples, for the purpose of establishing her own body of students. The fact that she did not visit family members in spite of the proximity to them—and that she left no record of having visited the graves of her two sisters, with whom she had corresponded and who had passed away in the meantime—indicates that she had not achieved reconciliation with her family. She returned to Kyoto in the spring of 1764, fully a year and a half after her departure.

Fufū and Shokyū had long been on close terms with the aforementioned scholar/poet Chōmu, whose *Bashō-ō ekotoba den* (1770) would play a significant role in the elevation of Bashō to canonical status.[10] It appears to have been after Shokyū's return from Kyushu that Chōmu assisted her and ad-

---

[9] *Zenshū*, 97. The "autumn frost" refers to the white strands of hair.

[10] Horikiri (377-78) describes the influence of Chōmu's work, noting that it provided the first carefully researched and documented biography of Bashō and that the prevailing image of Bashō's life as one spent in travel, with its metaphysical overtones, owes in large part to Chōmu.

vised her in many ways that shaped the development of her career as a poetry teacher. Shokyū soon gained wider fame than Fufū had enjoyed. While he had been known only in the Yaba school, she contributed verses to anthologies of other schools. This also appears to have owed in some measure to Chōmu, who had no school affiliations and through whose introduction her verses appeared in such collections as Kihaku's *Shōmon mukashigatari* (1766, preface by Chōmu). Another indication of the extent of her reputation is the fact that the *Kohakuanshū*, which she herself compiled, contains contributions from as far away as Sendai. The following samples illustrate her mature style:

It spills a drop, then stretches and grows: a leaf bud.
  Hitoshizuku koboshite nobiru konome kana[11]
Passing under a misty moonlit night—cries of geese.
  Oboroyo no soko o yuku nari kari no koe[12]
The passing spring—looking out over the sea: a young crow.
  Yuku haru ya umi o mite oru karasu no ko[13]
Hydrangeas—by rain or by shine, madness.
  Ajisai ya ame ni mo hi ni mo mono-gurui[14]
The moonflower! It blooms, waiting for the horses return.
  Yūgao ya uma no modori o machite saku[15]

Shokyū's Journey to the Interior

In 1768, Chōmu left his position as chief priest at Kihakuin and moved to a hut next door to Shokyū. Not long thereafter, he went to Iga to conduct further research on Bashō and returned with a manuscript of *Oku no hosomichi* in Kyorai's (1651-1704) hand. Chōmu added an epilogue and notes

---

[11] *Zenshū*, 183.
[12] *Zenshū*, 184.
[13] *Zenshū*, 189. This is one of Shokyū's most frequently cited verses. The black of the crow's feathers suggests a nun/s habit, referring to herself.
[14] *Zenshū*, 197. Here, a human quality (madness) is compared to a flower (or the other way around). The conceit employed suggests that beauty is a sort of madness (or, again, the other way around).
[15] *Zenshū*, 200.

and did further editing. He had, moreover, written an account of his own journey to the Northeast, *Matsushima michi no ki*, and his work appears to have stimulated Shokyū's interest in Bashō's famous journey. She opened her own travel account with the following description:

> From the time I first read *Narrow Road to the Interior*, I longed to trace the same path, but no definite plan came to mind. I thought of it each year as the spring mists arrived, but as an aged nun, I let the time pass in vain, uncertain of a distant journey and doubtful about obtaining permission to pass through barriers.

This desire was finally realized in the eighth year of Meiwa (1771). She continued her opening lines:

> This spring, perhaps a guardian deity of travelers took pity on me: quite unexpectedly, at the urging of Priest Shigen, it has turned out that I am crossing the Meeting-Hill Barrier. Thoughts of when I might again see the old familiar door of my hut—not to mention the skies over the capital—create a sadness at parting that seems to distill along with the morning dew.
>
> Kerria blossoms! No mention, though, of sorrow at parting.
> *Yamabuki ya nagori wa kuchi ni iwanedomo.*[16]

---

[16] *Zenshū*, 5. Bashō refers in the beginning of *Narrow Road to the Interior* to the same "guardian deity of the road" (*dōsojin*) who enticed him on his journey. The verse possibly draws on Priest Sosei's (d. 909?) eccentric verse (*haikaika*) from the *Kokinshū* (#1012):

Yamabuki no	Oh robe
hanairo koromo	of kerria blossom hue,
nushi ya tare	whose are you?
toedo kotaezu	I ask, but no reply—
kuchinashi ni shite	your hue, rather the silent jasmine.

Kuchinashi ("jasmine" but also "wordless") is a flower similar in form and color to the *yamabuki*.

Though *Narrow Road to the Interior* was her chief model, it was not her only one. A number of considerations necessitated alteration or abridgement of the route: her age and health, likely sources of support along the way, and the fact that her journey would have different beginning and ending points from Bashō's travel to the Northeast. In general, *Nozarashi kikō* (Exposure in the Fields) appears to have been her model from Kyoto to Edo, *Kashima mōde* (Pilgrimage to Kashima) from the Tone River to Kashima Shrine, and *Narrow Road to the Interior* for the rest of the journey, with the exception of some reference to *Sarashina kikō* (Sarashina Journey) on her return. She was accompanied by an elderly servant named Motojirō and a priest named Shigen, apparently one of Fufū's disciples. Chōmu wrote letters of introduction for her to present to friends and poets along the way.

The predominantly horizontal axis in Shokyū's recreation becomes obvious when certain passages are compared with their models. Her allusions seldom reach back further than to Bashō himself, and she shows little interest in landmarks or references that do not also inform Bashō's imagery. Her poetic vision was much more grounded in the present, in an experiential dimension not mediated to the same degree by "cultural memory." Compared to Bashō, her writing decidedly privileged place (*topos*) over time or season (*chronos*). Bashō's consciousness of toponyms was inextricably linked to a determined "chronicity," and he seldom left a composition on a literary landmark (*uta-makura*) if he was unable to do so in the "proper" season. Moreover, as we know from Sora's (1649-1710) account, he sometimes edited events to better fit the seasonal or temporal imagery dictated by the canon. This underscores the relative verticality of the chronotope he employs. Shokyū shared no such concerns.

For the most part, Shokyū is faithful to the meanings traditionally associated with the *uta-makura* on her itinerary but, as Abo Hiroshi points out, she focuses rather on "a lively description of the realities of her journey, with little regard for *ga-zoku* [distinctions]." For her, it is an interesting manner of expression that is more important. Her unrestrained creative stance, which allows her "at times boldly to step outside the received meaning of the *uta-makura* and express what the reality of the scene inspires, has an originality different from women's travel accounts [in general], whose fundamental stance was one of choosing appropriate material within a set framework and feeling emotion according to schedule . . ."[17]

This contrast appears in Bashō's and Shokyū's respective treatments of the Fuwa Barrier, which had been immortalized as an *uta-makura* by Fujiwara no Yoshitsune (d. 1206) in has verse (*Shin kokinshū* #1599):

Hito sumanu	Uninhabited,
Fuwa no sekiya no	the barrier house at Fuwa—
itabisashi	its shingled eaves
arenishi nochi wa	decayed, leaving . . .
tada aki no kaze	only the autumn wind.

Shokyū did not hesitate to recast the imagery into the early summer setting of her experience:

> We proceeded further until we came to the ruins of the Fuwa Barrier. Now not even the dilapidated eaves are to be seen; only a few piled-up stones remain, and on them a thatched hut but partially visible.
>
> Eaves leaning to the deutzia blossoms! The Fuwa Barrier.
> *Unohana ni katabuku noki ya Fuwa no seki*[18]

Bashō, in *Nozarashi kikō*, had preserved the image of the "autumn wind":

> The autumn wind! Thickets and fields at Fuwa Barrier.
> *Akikaze ya yabu mo hatake mo Fuwa no seki*[19]

Another contrast is provided by the descriptions of both poets of the i River, famous as the most perilous passage on the Tōkaidō and an *uta-*

[17] Abo Hiroshi, "Shokyū-ni: *Akikaze no ki* no sekai," *Tsukushi koten bungaku no sekai: Chūsei, kinsei*, ed. Hayashida Masao (Tokyo: fū, 1997), 214-16.

[18] *Zenshū*, 7-8.

[19] *Bashō zenhokku*, Yamamoto Kenkichi ed (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1974), I:160.

makura since the time of the *Man'yōshū*. In his *Oi nikki*, Bashō had written of the raging stream:

> Blow down the clouds of the early summer rains!— i River.
> *Samidare no kumo fukiotose i-gawa*[20]

It is as if Bashō were exulting in the raging of the river, which he mentions by name, drawing on images long associated with this *uta-makura*. In the Shōfū manner, he "neutralizes" his own fears and frustrations through diminution of the self compared both to nature and to cultural memory.[21] Shokyū, on the other hand, makes no attempt to conceal the terror she feels. Her detailed description of the crossing highlights her own fright and is capped with a verse bearing reference only to the present:

> Coolness changing to heat—depths and rapids!
> *Suzushisa no atsusa ni kawaru fuchise kana*[22]

At length Shokyū arrived in Edo and was received by Ryōta, who is remembered in *haikai* history as one of the "Five Great Men of the Revival" (*chūkō goketsu*); he had over 2,000 students and had edited over 200 collections and anthologies.[23] His success allowed for a comparatively opulent lifestyle, and he spared no pains or expenses entertaining the aged nun from Kyoto and showing her the sights of Edo. More importantly for the present discussion, he was a leading Bashō scholar at the time; indeed, insofar as people in the latter years of Meiwa were aware of such a thing as a "Bashō Revival" at all, they would likely have seen Ryōta as one of its main spiri-

---

[20] *Bashō zenhokku*, II:306. In the posthumous anthology *Arisoumi*, the same verse begins: *Samidare no sora ...* The command is obviously directed at the wind.

[21] See Makoto Ueda's classic essay "Impersonality in Poetry," in his *Literary and Art Theories in Japan*, Michigan Classics in Japanese Studies (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, 1991), 145-72.

[22] *Zenshū*, 12-13.

[23] Nakamura Toshisada, " shima Ryōta," in *Haiku kōza*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1959), 306.

tual leaders. Shokyū records a verse she composed for the newly reconstructed Bashō-dō in Fukagawa:

> Rethatched—now, the same sweet flag as before.
> *Fukikaete ima ya mukashi no ayame-gusa*[24]

Perhaps it was her modesty that prevented her from mentioning in her account that this verse was the *hokku* of a 100-verse sequence memorializing the reconstruction of the hall. That Ryōta accorded her such an unusual honor bespeaks his high esteem for her.

Even routes not shared by the two writers produced descriptions that invite comparison. One such passage in Shokyū's work, though rather lengthy, is worth citing in full:

> On the fourth [of the sixth month] we crossed into Mutsu Province (shū) and came to a castle town called Tanakura. Under clear skies the sun had been blazing for over thirty days. The heat, increasing day by day, was so oppressive that I remember nothing from along the way. At about four p.m., we found lodging. The proprietress, an elderly woman, was assisted by two young women, one about twenty and the other fourteen or fifteen. There was a veranda adjoining the parlor, where some sweet flag, arranged in what looked like an earthenware mortar, was exuding its fragrance. A narrow stream that appeared to flow from the thicket lent its coolness. As the moon was setting, the light of flitting fireflies was charming, and the breeze from the partly opened *shōji* was refreshing. Just as I was peering outside, a man, appearing from nowhere and wearing a long sword at his side, crept up silently from the garden to the edge of the veranda. I was frightened, supposing that he must be a thief from the thicket upstream, and sat watching motionlessly. A side door opened and a woman slipped out quietly, making her way along the veranda. I listened to their conversation, but was only able to hear him say: "The reed-parting boat met many obstacles . . . (*ashiwake*

---

[24] *Zenshū*, 19. The entry is dated the fifth day of the fifth month: *Tango no sekku*, when it was customary to hang leaves of sweet flag from the eaves.

> *obune sawari ōkute* . . .)." The woman replied in a reproachful tone: "The 'boat' never seems to come by anymore. I suppose it has found other ports. You're not being honest with me." The man stammered: "Don't say such spiteful things! The mosquito bites I got that night we spent together turned into a nasty rash. I didn't feel quite myself, and didn't get around." Just then the old woman's scolding voice came from the kitchen: "The cat has gotten into the basket of fish! Bring a light!" The young woman replied in an affected voice, as if to herself: "The heat was so unbearable, I was cooling myself by the back door." With that, she went inside. The man, failing to get what he had come for, disappeared somewhere. I found it both touching and sweet (*aware ni yasashiku*) that even here on the easternmost fringes [of civilization], the ways of love are the same.[25]

The only allusion in this passage is offered by the would-be suitor, whose excuse employs a line from the *Man'yōshū*. This episode brings to mind Bashō's account of overhearing the two prostitutes from Niigata in the adjacent room of the inn, who on the following day requested his and Sora's guidance. This passage is familiar enough that it need not be repeated here. Compared to the realism of Shokyū's overheard conversation, Ogiwara Seisensui's argument that this scene in Bashō's account is either largely or entirely fictional becomes all the more cogent.[26] Of the five reasons Ogiwara cites, two are particularly compelling. Both the overheard conversation of the two prostitutes ("As if cast up on the beach by white waves, living lowly lives like those of fishermen's children, forced to have faithless relationships, we are, to our great misfortune, committing sinful deeds day after day

---

[25] *Zenshū*, 25-27. The man's first lines are an allusion to a verse (#2998) in the *Man'yōshū*:

Minato iri no	Hindrances are many,
ashiwake obune	like those of the reed-parting boat
sawari ōmi	entering the harbor—
ima komu ware o	I shall come anon,
yodomu to omou na	do not think that I tarry.

[26] His *Oku no hosomichi nōto*, rev. ed. (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1970), 124-29.

. . .") and their request to two men in priestly garb simply do not sound natural.[27] More importantly, from beginning to end Bashō's travel account has a *kasen*-like structure, necessitating an entry that would satisfy the category of "love (*koi*)." Since other parts of Bashō's account were demonstrably fictitious, it is not unreasonable to think that this was also. Shokyū's overheard conversation, on the other hand, rings true. She did not otherwise attempt a *kasen*-like structure, and even if she had, this would not have occurred in the right sequence.

One of Shokyū's greatest wishes in making this journey was a visit to Matsushima, which was to be the crowning experience. Although she fell ill shortly before arriving at the celebrated scenic area and was forced to spend some time convalescing before continuing her journey, at length she was able to proceed to the famous sight. Her description provides ample evidence of the importance to her of this experience:

> From about the twentieth, I was feeling much better, and thought of proceeding on the Narrow Road to the Interior [*Oku no hosomichi*]. The doctor gave his permission, and so on the twenty-fifth I was helped into a litter made of woven bamboo and set out for Matsushima. We crossed the bridge over the waves to the rocky shore of Male Island [Oshima], where our eyes met a scene of myriad islands, so extensive that the eye could scarcely take it all in. I was so overjoyed to have lived long enough in this fleeting world [to see such a sight] that my cares born over the years and the hardships of the long journey were all forgotten. At length we took lodging in a rush-thatched cottage nearby. Not wanting to miss any of the moonless evening, I rolled up the blinds to see lights from the fishing fires moving in and out of sight among the islands, their destinations uncertain. I was unable to sleep. The moon began to rise, its bright glow outlining the pines covering the islands and reflecting on the surface of the sea, adding to [the beauty of] the scene.

---

[27] *Matsuo Bashō shū*, Imoto Nōichi et al., eds., Nihon koten bungaku zenshū 41 (Tokyo: Shōgakkan, 1972), pp. 375-76. I have used Hiroaki Sato's translation here. See his *Bashō's Narrow Road: Spring & Autumn Passages* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 1996), 109-11.

> In Matsushima—moonlight shifting among the myriad islands.
> *Matsushima ya chishima ni kawaru tsuki no kage*[28]

This is certainly one of the most appealing sections of Shokyū's account, and it shows her writing at its very best. It is significant, however, that it contains not a single identifiable literary allusion. In marked contrast, in *Narrow Road to the Interior* Bashō's description of Matsushima is a case study in intertextuality, drawing from both the Chinese and Japanese classics, comparisons to famous scenes in China (which, of course, he had never visited), and cosmogonic speculation about how the Shinto deities must have gone about creating such a place ("All this may have been the doing of the Great Mountain God in the Days of the rock-smashing deities").[29] Though he was too overcome by the scene to produce a verse, he managed to describe it using chronotopic imagery very vertical in nature.

Continuing on from Matsushima, Shokyū journeyed on to Taga Castle, the final part of the Narrow Road to the Interior, which she described as follows:

> Roughly speaking, it is this area that is called the Narrow Road to the Interior. It is described in detail in the Master's writings, and when I think about and compare [what I have read and what I now see], it is extraordinarily alluring. We passed onto the Miyagi Plain, where plants were blooming in a profusion of colors. It felt as if even the fatigue of the journey had been wrapped in brocade ...
> On Miyagi Plain! Traveling until dark, still in bush clover.
> *Miyagino ya yukikurashite mo hagi ga moto*[30]

For Bashō, the Narrow Road to the Interior had signified more than just a path traversing many *uta-makura*, more than just a way once traveled by Saigyō (1118-1190) whom he so admired; it represented, as Donald Keene

---

[28] *Zenshū*, 32-33.

[29] *Matsuo Bashō shū*, 361-62; Sato, 79-81.

[30] *Zenshū*, 34.

has so aptly noted, a journey into the inner depths of poetry.[31] It was for him a pilgrimage, one in quest of communion with poets of the past. For Shokyū, the "past" was represented more than anyone else by Bashō, whom she appears to have objectified beyond the reach of "communion."

Due to illness, Shokyū left only sparse entries describing her return trip. She needed to complete her journey before cold weather set in and spent little time visiting *uta-makura*. One entry is worth noting here. Although the site is not mentioned in Bashō's account, it invites useful comparisons.

> The twenty-second [of the eighth month] . . . This place, called Kawanakajima, was once a battlefield for such great generals as Takeda [Shingen] and Nagao [i.e., Uesugi Kenshin]. I thought of tales I once heard from old books about martial valor and the things I picked up here and there, and it occurred to me how truly fortunate we are to live in such a peaceful reign in which Buddha's law can flourish, and aged nuns and priests can visit such a place.[32]

Here again, the subject is prominent. Bashō's description of an ancient battlefield, on the other hand, chronicles the history of the place, citing lines from the classics including Tu Fu's famous poem, and ends with the verse:

> The summer grasses: of brave warriors, traces of dreams.
> *Natsukusa ya tsuwamono-domo ga yume no ato*[33]

In Bashō's treatment, the subject is small against the towering vertical shadow of cultural memory.

Shokyū returned to Kyoto in poor health on the fourth day of the ninth month, closing her account with the verse:

---

[31] *World Within Walls: Japanese Literature of the Pre-Modern Era, 1600-1867* (New York: Yolt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 99.

[32] *Zenshū*, 39.

[33] *Matsuo Bashō shū*, 364.

Lightly, the breeze rustles through the reeds—Lake Biwa.
Harariharari ogi fuku oto ya Biwa no umi[34]

After editing her *Akikaze no ki*, the last half of which consists of an anthology of *hokku* collected during her journey, she again began to travel. At the urging of disciples in Northern Kyushu, she returned to a warm reception and became a leading figure in poetry circles there. By then, her siblings had died, but her three nephews made every effort to see to her needs, which suggests full rapprochement with her family. She died on the tenth day of the ninth month, Tenmei 1 (1781).

Conclusion

The differences between Bashō's travel accounts and Shokyū's recreation nearly a century later can be accounted for on many levels. There were the obvious differences of personal circumstances. For Shokyū, an elderly woman who faced many more difficulties in making such a journey, it was much more of an adventure, and this is probably not unrelated to her focus on the immediate. For her, the journey also served a dual purpose: she was much more compelled by economic necessity to recruit students and to solicit verses and monetary contributions toward anthologies, as the second half of her account unapologetically attests. Although well versed in Japan's poetic tradition, she obviously did not possess the erudition for the kind of intertextuality that characterizes Bashō's writing. Her tendency to *waka*-esque lyricism no doubt owes both to her training in the Yaba school, which was noted for its "subjective" ideal, and to poetic styles and training that were then regarded as more proper for women.

Beyond such obvious differences in personal background and predilection, there are cultural factors that account for the rather "flatter" chronotope that marks Shokyū's poetic vision. Bashō has been described as the last major writer in the classical tradition.[35] That is to say, he was the last writer to successfully achieve the sort of organic intertextuality that goes beyond

---

[34] *Zenshū*, 43.

[35] Helen Craig McCullough, "Introduction," *Classical Japanese Prose: An Anthology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 1.

mere allusion and that marks so much of the classical canon. Tradition and a very broad cultural memory loom large in his travel accounts. We know now that the level of intertextuality he achieved was much more deliberate than was earlier supposed; the publication of Sora's journal in 1943 and the revelation that, prior to their departure, Bashō had assigned Sora the task of researching *uta-makura* in the *Ruiji meisho wakashū* provide evidence of this.[36] In spite of this, however, Bashō was able to write "as though [he] believed that, through contact made through texts, its terrains remained familiar and accessible and could be traversed again and again in search of resources for the making of new texts."[37]

Such elaborate appeals to the earlier canon had become much more difficult a century later. The increasing sophistication of literary studies had objectified and ensconced the classics in a more remote realm, unavailable except for the more self-conscious "allusion." Bashō's travel accounts were elevated to the status of "classics" in the century following his death—much of this canonization occurring during Shokyū's lifetime and through the activities of personal acquaintances.

The increasing objectification of the classics made possible—one might say demanded—a new type of *mitate*. Now *mitate* in the broad sense of "imaginative comparison" had been a part of the Japanese literary tradition since poets first likened cherry blossoms to clouds or the moon to ice. In the Edo period, however, it took on a new, much more specific meaning. Sumie Jones differentiates Edo *mitate* from "metaphor," arguing that while in the latter a third element is clearly implied by the combination of the object and its referent, ". . . in a *mitate*, the third element is either missing or obscured by multiple possibilities for interpretation."[38] Considered singly, most *hokku* of Bashō's mature style, with their juxtaposition of two seemingly disparate

---

[36] See Ōuchi Hatsuo, *Hairin shōyō: Bashō, Kyorai, Shokyū-ni* (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1984), 139-40.

[37] Kamens, 50.

[38] Sumie Jones, "Poetics, *Mitate*, and Edo Literature," *Poetics of Japanese Literature*, Proceedings of "Poetics of Japanese Literature: Midwest Seminar on the Teaching of Japanese Literature" (Lafayette: Purdue University, 1992), 53. Edo-style *mitate* has also been described in terms of its "novelty (*kibatsusa*)" and "surprisingness (*igaisei*)." Suwa Haruo, *Edo bungaku no hōhō* (Tokyo: Benseisha, 1997), 73.

images, are arguably examples of such *mitate*. I would maintain, however, that in the *hokku* of the travel accounts, a third element *is* clearly implied: *fūga*, or "refinement," the most sublime quality of cultural memory. For Shokyū and most of her contemporaries, cultural memory was weaker. As a result, *mitate* in her travel account—and in late eighteenth-century literature in general—relied much more on subjective imagination with no implication of *fūga*.