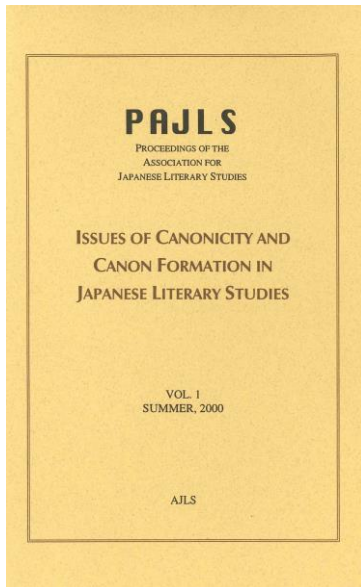


“The Canonicity of Yosano Akiko’s *Midaregami*”

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## THE CANONICITY OF YOSANO AKIKO'S *MIDAREGAMI*

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### 1

The data base that I have used to construct a case study of the historical reception of the poetry collection *Midaregami* (Tangled Hair, 1901) is, firstly and most importantly, a comprehensive selection of 102 documents consisting of articles, newspaper reviews, and extracts from books compiled by the Yosano Akiko authority Itsumi Kumi, collected in a photo-reprint format in three large volumes which, in her view, include all the major responses to *Midaregami* from the time of its publication to 1997.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this three-volume set, I have consulted additional critical studies published in monograph or book form both during this period and after.

I will not enumerate all the responses catalogued by Itsumi; rather I will concentrate upon those critical responses that record divergences from a normative view or help establish such a view. By this methodology, I hope to trace a genealogy of influence—recording the way in which *Midaregami* becomes accepted into the canon, and under what conditions—and thus take the first step towards establishing an anatomy of canonicity for twentieth-century Japan. Through such an anatomy, we may begin to answer larger questions like those raised by various theories of canonicity constructed by scholars such as Harold Bloom, George Steiner, Frank Kermode, and John Guillory.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kumi Itsumi, ed., *Yosano Akiko "Midaregami" sakuin ronshū sei* (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1997), 3 vols. (hereafter referred to as *YAMSR*; volume numbers are indicated by the numerals 1, 2, or 3).

<sup>2</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and Schools of the Ages* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1994); Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1973); George Steiner, *Real Presences* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber, 1989); Frank Kermode, *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of*

Itsumi reprints sixteen separate reviews and articles on *Midaregami* published in the year in which the volume was issued. As Yosano Akiko's first collection of poetry was published on 15 August 1901, this amounts to an average of over three reviews per month. Considering that only one review was published in August and seven were published in September 1901 (the largest number in a single month), and considering that a number of the reviews were multi-author collections of responses, then we can see just how great an impact this first collection of poetry by a young, obscure Sakai poet made upon society at large. However, as the vast bulk of reviews during 1901 did appear in coterie literary journals, there is no doubt the major impression made by the collection was upon the small but influential audience of intellectuals who were avid readers of such journals. Extra-literary factors also played a part in the book's reception.

On 10 March 1901, a 128-page pamphlet entitled *Bundan shōma kyō* (A Mirror Illuminating a Demon in Literary Society) was published by the Dai Nippon Kakusei Kai (Greater Japan Society for Reforming Red Light Districts). The booklet was written under pseudonymous names but some think this attack upon the poet Yosano Tekkan (1873-1935) was orchestrated by Ichijō Narumi (1877-1910), an artist who belonged to Tekkan's *Myōjō* circle but who had had a falling out with Tekkan.<sup>3</sup> The booklet took an axe to Tekkan's reputation, accusing him of various counts of fraud and immorality. By the time *Midaregami* was published, some six months later,

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*Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> See Kyōko Hirako, ed., *Nenpyō sakka tokuhon: Yosano Akiko* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1995), 49-50. Yosano Hiroshi is his correct name, but as "Tekkan" was the pen-name he adopted at the time, in this article I shall refer to him by it rather than his actual name. For details of his and Akiko's early life together, see Janine Beichman, "Yosano Akiko: The Early Years," *Japan Quarterly* 37.1 (Apr.-June, 1990): 37-54; Edwin A. Cranston, "Young Akiko: The Literary Debut of Yosano Akiko (1878-1942)," *Literature East and West* 18.1 (March, 1974): 19-43 and Leith Morton, "The Clash of Traditions: New Style Poetry (Shintaishi) and the Waka Tradition in Yosano Akiko's *Midaregami* (1901)," *The Renewal of Song: Renovation in Lyric Conception and Practice*, ed. Earl Miner and Amiya Dev (Intercultural Studies Committee of the International Comparative Literature Association, forthcoming).

Tekkan and Akiko were living together as an unmarried couple in Tokyo (although they were to marry soon after), so, as Tekkan's latest inamorata, Akiko's volume of passionate love-poetry aroused considerable interest amongst readers for reasons other than literary merit alone.

It appears the first outbreak of what was to become a ferocious attack on Akiko and *Midaregami* occurred less than a month after the volume's publication, in number 3, volume 18 of the literary journal *Bunko*, published on 1 September. The critic and poet Takizawa Shūgyō (1875-1957) wrote a review describing Akiko as "The worst type of modern tart, a bitch whose work does not deserve serious consideration." He added that Akiko was "an audacious person . . . with no poetic conscience . . . insane to the point of being a madwoman."<sup>4</sup> We can find, perhaps, a markedly less extreme version of this viewpoint in an anonymous review published in the *Shinbungei* magazine the same month, where the critic notes: "We are forced to acknowledge an exceedingly large number of subjective fantasies."<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, that there was an element of personal animus in the wave of negative reaction resulting from Akiko's relationship with Tekkan can be easily discerned in the collection of anonymous reviews printed in the *tanka* journal *Kokoro no hana* (Flowers of the Heart) edited by Sasaki Nobutsuna (1872-1963), one of the major *tanka* poets of the day. These comments, written by several hands, raised the level of vitriol to such an extent that they have become a standard feature of literary histories, which never fail to cite them as emblematic of the ire *Midaregami* aroused: "*Tangled Hair* vomits obscenities found in the mouths of streetwalkers and whores, and promotes licentiousness . . . Many parts of this book record immoral and foul acts; I have no hesitation in judging this book to be harmful to the mind and a danger to morality."<sup>6</sup>

Perceptive critics praised the work immediately. The famous critic Takayama Chōgyū (1871-1902) stated in the mass-circulation journal *Taiyō* the same month: "I recognise the supreme excellence of her talent and passion: her poetry in *Midaregami* is lofty in poetic style and rich in emotion. But, because of its difficulty, you can only glimpse the meaning faintly."<sup>7</sup> This

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<sup>4</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 46.

<sup>5</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 47.

<sup>6</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 49.

<sup>7</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 54.

latter thread became a common complaint among even sympathetic critics, which again invites the suspicion that the notoriety of the collection arose, if only in the short term, from the scandal of Akiko's relationship with Tekkan.

That the obscurity of Akiko's verse could lead to different interpretations was clear from the beginning. Her husband, Tekkan, published a series of interpretations of the *Midaregami* poems almost as soon as the volume came out. In his regular discussion of *tanka* in *Myōjō*, the magazine he edited, in October 1901, Tekkan produced a reading of the first poem in the book that contrasted sharply with the interpretation of the distinguished poet and critic Hiraide Shū (1878-1914) published in his book *Shinpa waka hyōron* (A Critique of New-Style Waka) at about the same time.<sup>8</sup> Tekkan's own book on new-style *waka*, the revolutionary new poetry movement symbolized by *Midaregami*, published less than a year later in June 1902, confirmed his own interpretation of *Midaregami*.<sup>9</sup> Here is concrete evidence of what Frank Kermode calls a "surplus of signifier."<sup>10</sup>

A landmark critique firmly locating the collection in the context of the new wave of *tanka* sweeping poetry circles at the time is the poet and critic Ueda Bin's (1874-1916) article "*Midaregami wo yomu*" (Reading *Midaregami*), which appeared in the *Myōjō* journal in October 1901, the same issue in which Tekkan's reading of the first poem in the book appeared. Bin wrote that the collection "is to be welcomed as the vanguard of the revolution in poetry" and stresses its importance for women's poetry.<sup>11</sup>

By 1910, almost a decade after the book's publication, the wider impact of Akiko's verse-experiments on poetry can be seen vividly in the comments of Maeda Yūgure (1883-1951) and Wakayama Bokusui (1885-1928), who later became poets of the highest calibre, in the first issue of the magazine *Sōsaku*, published in March that year. Maeda stated of *Midaregami*, "I've become a great fan!" and Bokusui noted that: "I read every word . . . carefully but did not understand. Yet in the heart [of this collection] there is

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the different readings, see Kumi Itsumi, *Shin Midaregami zenshaku* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1996), 16-18, and for the texts of Tekkan and Hiraide's critiques, see *YAMSR* 1, 60-80.

<sup>9</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 68.

<sup>10</sup> Kermode, *The Classic*, 140.

<sup>11</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 3.

something mysterious, so hiding it from my teacher, I opened it again and again."<sup>12</sup>

These youthful impressions from the budding poets-to-be were confirmed by the poet Kawai Suimei (1874-1965), the acknowledged leader of the Kansai *tanka* world, in the May 1911 edition of the *Joshi bundan* journal, where he compared the impact of *Midaregami* on *tanka* to the famous poet Shimazaki Tōson's (1872-1942) impact on free-style verse. Suimei's comments are worth quoting at length, for they summarize the importance of *Midaregami* for Meiji *tanka* generally:

It is now many years since *Midaregami* was published and literature . . . has taken a sudden turn: it has changed. The literary world has come to know romanticism and naturalism; looking back, we need to attend to the enormous degree to which *Midaregami* realized the ideal of this new world of thought.<sup>13</sup>

Here, for the first time, *Midaregami* is explicitly linked with the two new great literary currents of the Meiji era: romanticism and naturalism.

We can see that, as time passed, attacks upon *Midaregami* as immoral gradually diminished and its significance as representative of a revolutionary new type of verse gradually grew more apparent. But the frequency of comments about the collection's difficulty also increased. I have discussed only a few of the 26 articles and reviews published in the Meiji era, but such comments can be taken as typical of most. However, there is a stark contrast between the Meiji and Taishō eras; in the latter, Itsumi Kumi could find only two books dealing only in part with *Midaregami*. She writes that, after searching every issue of *Araragi*, the leading *tanka* journal of the time, from its beginning in 1908 to its last issue published during World War II, she could find no articles at all referring to the collection.<sup>14</sup>

There is no doubt that the conservative diction and less dramatic style of the verse favoured by the poet Saitō Mokichi (1882-1953), the leader of the *Araragi* group, led to a decline in interest in *Midaregami* on the part of *tanka* poets generally. Saitō's own dislike of Akiko's style is apparent in his

<sup>12</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 165.

<sup>13</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 170.

<sup>14</sup> *YAMSR* 1, 170.

famous remarks on *Midaregami* published in September 1929: "A poetic style like that of a precocious, young girl's chattering."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Itsumi's research suggests there was active hostility to the romantic, impassioned, but at times complex mode of writing developed by Akiko. The poet herself changed her style, and in her re-writing of *Midaregami* she eliminated much of the difficulty from the original volume. Moreover, the re-written versions of *Midaregami* replaced the original for the majority of pre-war Japanese readers.<sup>16</sup>

Undoubtedly censorship (the original volume fell afoul of the censors) or its fear played a role in Akiko's rewriting of her maiden volume; as the times grew more conservative, poetry that advocated a rebellious role for women found a less appreciative audience.

## 2

Surprisingly perhaps, the decade before the Second World War did not merely witness the professionalization of *Midaregami* criticism—from critiques to studies—but also saw the canonization (in the popular sense) of Yosano Akiko herself, who became a symbol of the movement for women's emancipation, not only because of her role as a major writer on women's issues but also because of the new image of womanhood she constructed in *Midaregami*.<sup>17</sup> The first trend of professionalization is exemplified in the long, detailed study of the collection made by the scholar Kojima Yoshio in his article "*Midaregami kōkei ron*" (A Study of the Context of *Midaregami*), published in the scholarly journal *Kokugo kokubun* in 1934. This is a pioneering work of scholarship which outlines the historical, cultural, literary, and social background of the work, including a biography of Akiko. As a

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<sup>15</sup> For a study of Saitō's poetry, see Amy Vladeck Heinrich, *Fragments of Rainbows: The Life and Poetry of Saitō Mokichi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983). His remarks are quoted by Irie Haruyuki, *Gunzō Nihon no sakka 6: Yosano Akiko*, ed. Ōsaki Saeko et al. (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1992), 275.

<sup>16</sup> For a direct comparison of some different reviews, see "*Midaregami*" in *Gunzō Yosano Akiko*, 165-72.

<sup>17</sup> For details of Akiko's role in this movement, see Phyllis Hyland Larson, "Yosano Akiko and the re-creation of the Female Self: An Autogynography," *Journal of the Association of Teachers of Japanese* 25.1 (1991): 11-29.

sign of the times—and of the collection's canonical status—there is no real critique of the poetry.<sup>18</sup>

Yoshida Seiichi, who was to become the leading scholar of Japanese naturalism, wrote an even more extravagant article in the journal *Nihon tanka* in May 1935, claiming that *Midaregami* “moved a generation”; he argued that the collection shone much brighter than volumes by Akiko's *Araragi* rivals. Through this book, he declared, “an anonymous woman was raised to a lofty seat in the heavens”—this when Akiko was still alive and active in literary circles.<sup>19</sup> If a premature, hagiographic obituary is evidence of literary sainthood, then here is proof that Akiko was well and truly canonized.

In hindsight, it seems evident that this singular moment of canonization rests very much upon the construction of Akiko as an apostle of romance, the creator of a new image for Japanese womanhood. In October 1939, four years after Yoshida's article, the scholar Tojō Ken wrote two articles for the scholarly journal *Koten kenkyū* which drew attention to the re-writing of *Midaregami*. It appears that “Tojō Ken” was a pseudonym of Odagiri Hideo, who was to become, in the postwar years, one of the leading critics writing from a leftist perspective. When Odagiri writes under this name, I shall refer to him as Tōjō/Odagiri. Tōjō/Odagiri compared the 1939 paperback edition of the collection to the original, noting that some 200 poems had been deleted in an act of self-censorship, and emphasized how different Akiko's rewritten versions were from the originals.<sup>20</sup> The very next year, Odagiri Hideo, writing under his own name, claimed Akiko's *Midaregami* “as one of our literary inheritances,” again emphasizing how by this time *Midaregami* had been elevated (in the eyes of scholars and critics at least) to the literary pantheon of great Japanese works.<sup>21</sup>

Itsumi Kumi could find virtually nothing written on *Midaregami* during the war years, but this hardly comes as a surprise, given the wartime censorship of works like Tanizaki Jun'ichirō's great novel *Sasameyuki* (The Makioka Sisters), which committed the sin of not being sufficiently martial

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<sup>18</sup> *YAMSR I*, 203-42.

<sup>19</sup> *YAMSR I*, 271-74.

<sup>20</sup> *YAMSR I*, 293-98.

<sup>21</sup> *YAMSR I*, 332, 321-36.



in tone.<sup>22</sup> However, after the war, there was a massive explosion of writing about Akiko and *Midaregami*.

Of the 74 significant books, articles and reviews collated in photo-print form by Itsumi to represent the Shōwa-Heisei eras, well over ninety percent were published in the postwar era. In the postscript to his 1959 essay-study *Midaregami wo yomu* (Reading *Midaregami*), the acclaimed author Satō Haruo refers to a “postwar Akiko boom” and links this with the *après-guerre* generation, commonly called the “Taiyō-zoku” (sun-tribe) after the popular novel of the same name about the rootless, restless postwar generation.<sup>23</sup> In the novelist Tanabe Seiko’s 1972 novel-memoir *Chisuji no kurokami: Waga ai no Yosano Akiko* (A Thousand Strands of Black Hair: The Yosano Akiko I Love), the author comments that “Akiko’s poetry was publicized far more after the war; riding on the popular wave of sexual liberation, notorious poems from *Midaregami* became known to most readers for the first time.”<sup>24</sup> Satake Kazuhiko’s monumental edition of *Midaregami*, published in 1957, in which Satake provided copious annotations to every one of the 399 *tanka* in the collection, has the scholar Shioda Ryōhei writing in the preface that such an edition of the volume was possible only in the postwar era, when Akiko’s verse was able to be included in school texts for the first time and permission from relatives enabled the original poems to be republished.<sup>25</sup>

That there was censorship of this kind—self-censorship as well as, clearly, censorship on the part of the authorities—is confirmed in the poet Hinatsu Kōnōsuke’s (1890-1971) pioneering history of Meiji-Taishō poetry first published in July 1950, where he argues that by late in her life Akiko’s name had been expunged from literary history by her contemporaries due to the supposed inferiority of her verse.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *YAMSR* 2, 15. Also, for wartime censorship, see Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals: Writers and the Meiji State* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984).

<sup>23</sup> *YAMSR* 2, 359-60.

<sup>24</sup> Tanabe quoted in *Gunzō Yosano Akiko*, 17.

<sup>25</sup> Shioda Ryōhei “Jo” in Kazuhiko Satake, *Zenshaku Midaregami kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yūhōdō, 1957; repr. 1969), iv-v.

<sup>26</sup> *YAMSR* 2, 25-48.

As we have seen in Tōjō/Odagiri's 1939 article, in scholarly circles the heavy hand of censorship appeared to be absent, but the fact that the original edition of *Midaregami* was virtually inaccessible to ordinary readers only a few years after its publication proves that there was, in de facto terms at the very least, an atmosphere of bowdlerization. In fact, Akiko's continued re-writings (nine re-written impressions of the original) caused the edition published in Akiko's *Collected Poetry* in 1919 to be substantially different from the original and the 1933 edition of the work, which appeared in her *Collected Works*, incorporated further corrections, and was presumably the basis for the paperback edition referred to by Tōjō/Odagiri.<sup>27</sup> However, in the postwar era, because the original could be reprinted, not only could a new readership emerge, but also new critical and scholarly paradigms could be advanced on the basis of comparisons between the original and later versions.

In fact, a new edition of *Midaregami*, a reprint of the original, appeared in March 1947. This was the first time since 1901 that readers had had the opportunity to read the original poems in the form in which they first appeared since by 1904, when the third reprint was published, several deletions and rewritten poems made it a very different creature from the original.<sup>28</sup>

Apart from the republication of the original *Midaregami*, the biggest impact upon postwar Akiko scholarship was made by the gradual release of letters that Akiko had written to intimate friends and to Tekkan. These secret letters were made public in a piecemeal fashion, directly or indirectly, in various magazines, newspapers, and books from 1948 to 1954. The majority of the letters had fallen into the possession of the poet Masatomi Ōyō (1881-1967), the husband of Tekkan's second wife (who was married to Tekkan when he began his relationship with Akiko) Takino, and in the postwar climate of press freedom their contents proved a major boost to Akiko

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<sup>27</sup> See the notes to *Midaregami* in *Gunzō Yosano Akiko*, 165; Sukeo Satō, *Midaregami kō* (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Senta, 1990), 294; and *Teihon Yosano Akiko zenshū*, ed. Osamu Kimata et al. (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1979), Vol. 1.

<sup>28</sup> Satō, *Midaregami kō*, 294-98, notes the changes but also mentions that he cannot confirm the existence of some of the many impressions/re-prints of the original mentioned by Akiko.

scholarship.<sup>29</sup> More importantly, they played a significant role in helping to establish in the public eye the image of Akiko as a star-struck lover. The letters revealed that Akiko had had an adulterous liaison with Tekkan, and various *tanka* in *Midaregami* could be read in quite a different way as a result.<sup>30</sup> This stimulated a veritable flood of biographical studies, memoirs, and novels based on Akiko and Tekkan's life together.

In her postscript to the 1990 reprint of Satō Sukeo's famous 1956 study *Midaregami kō* (A Study of *Midaregami*), Kan Reiko notes that this volume is the third in a major series of book-length studies of *Midaregami* published in the postwar era. By far the most advanced study of the collection to be published to that time, Satō's emphasis on biography (Satō was an old acquaintance of Masatomi Ōyō and thus made extensive use of his cache of letters) confirmed the popular trend and helped contribute to the development of an Akiko legend which was growing at an ever more rapid pace. This phenomenon had already been verified by the appearance of Satō Haruo's novel *Akiko mandara* (Akiko Mandala), which was serialized in the Mainichi newspaper during 1954. Satō Haruo drew upon the burgeoning field of Akiko scholarship for his book, which included detailed biographical studies in article form by authorities like Shinma Shin'ichi and Itsumi Kumi herself, who began her scholarly career immediately after the war.<sup>31</sup>

However, the major contribution to *Midaregami* scholarship during the 1950's was Satake Kazuhiko's definitive annotated edition of the collection—his *Zenshaku Midaregami kenkyū* (A Study and Complete Annotations of *Midaregami*)—published in 1957. This volume is still used by specialists and has extensive annotations, including extracts from letters and large numbers of *tanka* by other Myōjō poets. The work is so detailed that it is not unusual to have several pages of commentary—including copious citations from other sources—on one single *tanka*. This book undoubtedly created a model that a number of other scholars, especially Itsumi Kumi, were to follow. For the first time, the most intractable and difficult of Akiko's *Midaregami* verses were explained, sometimes in excruciating detail—and if scholars disagreed with Satake's interpretations (and several

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<sup>29</sup> See Itsumi Kumi's comments, *YAMSR I*, 16-18.

<sup>30</sup> *YAMSR I*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> *YAMSR 2*, 359-84; *YAMSR I*, 18.

did), then his meticulous exegeses provided stable grounds upon which to propose arguments.<sup>32</sup>

### 3

Itsumi Kumi lists approximately 20 studies published on *Midaregami*, mostly in article form, from 1959 to 1979, when the 20-volume definitive collected works of Yosano Akiko (*Teihan Yosano Akiko zenshū*) was published.<sup>33</sup> But the vast majority of these studies falls squarely into the category of established scholarship which by the 1980s covered a large range of modes of inquiry—from the traditional philological approach to modern linguistic analyses, from literary-historical to thematic studies. One landmark of *Midaregami* scholarship is undoubtedly Itsumi Kumi's *Hyōden Yosano Tekkan Akiko* (A Critical Biography of Yosano Tekkan and Akiko), published in 1975. This book, Itsumi's doctoral thesis, chronicles in 673 pages in meticulous detail the facts of Tekkan and Akiko's life until 1910.<sup>34</sup> In a sense, it represents the apotheosis of the biographical tradition of Akiko scholarship, and it has been used as a basic source by numerous novelists, for instance Nagahata Michiko in 1989, with her biographical novel *Yūkoku no shi* (Poetry of the Homeland), and also Watanabe Jun'ichi, with his award-winning two-volume biographical novel on Tekkan and Akiko, *Kimi mo kokuriko, ware mo kokuriko* (You a Coquelicot, I a Coquelicot), published in 1996.<sup>35</sup>

The Akiko legend, where the poet is portrayed as akin to a saint, has been disturbed by the occasional odd publication, like Nagahata Michiko's two books—*Yume no kakehashi* (The Bridge of Dreams) and *Hana no ran* (A Confusion of Blossoms), published in 1985 and 1987 respectively—which purport to document an affair Akiko is supposed to have conducted

<sup>32</sup> Satake, *Zenshaku*.

<sup>33</sup> *YAMSR* 2.

<sup>34</sup> Kumi Itsumi, *Hyōden Yosano Tekkan Akiko* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1975).

<sup>35</sup> Jun'ichi Watanabe, *Kimi mo kokuriko, Ware mo kokuriko* (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjū, 1996), 2 vols; Michiko Nagahata, *Yūkoku ni shi - Akiko to Tekkan - sono jidai* (Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 1989).

with the leading novelist Arishima Takeo (1878-1923).<sup>36</sup> However, as can be seen in the 1987 movie *Hana no ran*, based on the earlier Nagahata book, Akiko emerges as a shining, motherly heroine, an image reinforced by the casting of Japan's all-time mother-icon Yoshinaga Sayuri as Akiko. Nor is this movie alone in creating such an impression; other movies and TV specials on Akiko recreate the same image.

The intense interest in Akiko and Tekkan's relationship and the role it played in the formation of *Midaregami* also prompted Itsumi Kumi to write an annotated edition of *Midaregami* entitled *Midaregami zenshaku* (A Complete Annotated *Midaregami*) in 1978. This edition of what one may describe as a text which had by then had become part of the secular canon of Japan focused on biographical readings of the poems, drawing upon Itsumi's massive biography published three years earlier. Kimata Osamu, co-editor of the definitive collected works with Itsumi, stated in the introduction to the biography: "today an astonishing number of graduation theses from famous universities on Yosano Akiko's *Midaregami* are every year increasing."<sup>37</sup> This is clear testimony to the classic status of the text. At the beginning of the decade in 1971, the scholar Sakamoto Masachika had published a smaller annotated edition of *Midaregami* in a 60-volume annotated series of canonical texts of modern Japanese literature.<sup>38</sup> In 1977, the year before Itsumi's annotated edition, the Akiko authority Ōtomo Hideto published the culmination of two decades of scholarship on *Midaregami* with his *Midaregami goji sōsakuin* (A Complete Word-Index to *Midaregami*), a meticulous concordance to the vocabulary of the poetry. Ōtomo provides not merely an index to individual vocabulary items but also indexes to poems and characters and other indispensable scholarly tools.<sup>39</sup>

Undoubtedly the two defining events in *Midaregami* scholarship in the 1990s have been Itsumi Kumi's new complete annotated edition of the col-

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<sup>36</sup> Michiko Nagahata, *Yume no kakehashi: Akiko to Takeo yūjō* (Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 1985); Michiko Nagahata, *Hana no Ran* (Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 1987).

<sup>37</sup> Kumi Itsumi, *Midaregami Zenshaku* (Tokyo: Ōfusha, 1978); Kimata is quoted in Itsumi, *Hyōden*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Masachika Sakamoto, "Midaregami zenchū" *Yosano Akiko Wakayama Bokusui Kubota Utsubo* [*Nihon kindai bungaku taikai* 17] (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1971).

<sup>39</sup> Hideto Ōtomo, *Yosano Akiko Midaregami goji sōsakuin* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 1977).

lection published in 1996 and the two-volume complete translation into modern Japanese in 1998 by Tawara Machi, the *tanka* poet acclaimed as the “Akiko of the Shōwa era.” Itsumi has explained that she believed the 1957 Satake edition, which has long been regarded by scholars as the definitive edition, had virtually created a second text through Satake’s predilection for creating fabulous stories and tales out of his imaginative readings of the poems. Itsumi declared that she would return to the original words of the texts and eschew readings that rely heavily on extra-textual data. She also, indirectly, criticised her earlier 1978 annotated edition, which resulted in a heavily biographical reading of the poems.<sup>40</sup> As seen in Ōtomo’s concordance, this may signal a trend towards a more rigorously text-based approach to *Midaregami* scholarship in the future. On the other hand, Tawara Machi, in her postscript to the first volume of her modern-language versions of the collections, citing comments made by her mentor, the scholar and poet Sasaki Yukitsuna, on the difficulty and ambiguity of the original text, wrote that she would “abandon the feeling that I understood them all, and by listening to the music of the language, found that *Midaregami* had changed to a quite wonderful world.”<sup>41</sup> In other words, Machi approaches the original as a creative artist re-interpreting the poems in the light of her own abilities.

The increasing professionalization and specialization of *Midaregami* and Akiko scholarship can be recognised in the emergence of journals specializing in Akiko. Finally, in a not unfamiliar development in Japanese literature, a number of Akiko museums have sprung up in recent years which compete with the large, mostly state-funded libraries of Japanese literature to purchase original materials and manuscripts relating to Akiko.

Two general conclusions or patterns are suggested by this necessarily brief and limited overview of *Midaregami* scholarship. Frank Kermode argued that canonicity entails a surplus of signifier stemming from the canonical text providing new meanings, new readings, and interpretations for new audiences. Kermode also linked this capacity to generate new meanings to the intrinsic ambiguity or difficulty of the text. John Guillory sug-

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<sup>40</sup> Kumi Itsumi, *Shin Midaregami zenshaku* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1996); for Itsumi’s explanation, see *YAMSR* 1, 24; for her criticism of her earlier book, see *Shin Midaregami*, 2.

<sup>41</sup> Machi Tawara, *Chokoreeto Goyaku Midaregami* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō Shinsha, 1998), 2 vols.

gests something similar in his endorsement of the notion of cultural capital.<sup>42</sup> *Midaregami* fits such a paradigm of canonicity perfectly, as Itsumi Kumi's re-readings as expressed in her two annotated editions of the text follow this logic exactly. When in the 1950s there was an explosion of biographical data and the original text became publicly accessible for the first time in nearly half a century, biographical interpretations of the collection grew rapidly in number, culminating in Satō Sukeo and Satake Kazuhiko's books, which established a strong biographical base to scholarship. This base was built upon by Itsumi to construct the grand edifice of her critical biography in 1975 and her 1978 annotated edition, which drew heavily on the biography. At the same time, commencing from the 1950s, there is an avalanche of popular readings of the text in the form of novels. This trend also accelerates into the 1970s to the point where one can speak of an Akiko industry.

But the same prurient sense of moral outrage which led to Akiko's denunciation immediately following the publication of the collection also played a role in the postwar Akiko boom. Love and sex, the two indispensable ingredients of popular best-sellers, became the keynote of much of the non-fiction, which focused so exclusively on *Midaregami* that Akiko's later career is almost entirely neglected.

The second pattern which emerges from this overview is that identified by Suzuki Sadami as characterizing much of postwar literature. This is the tendency to what he calls "media mix," a mixing of genres where various types of writing overlap as a result of the collapse of the traditional market for highbrow literature from the late 1950s onward.<sup>43</sup> Suzuki also highlights the revival of biographical or, more properly, autobiographical writing after the war, which he links to the trauma of the war itself.<sup>44</sup> This reading of literary history goes a long way towards explaining the strong biographical element in writings on *Midaregami* in the two or more decades after World War II. And, as we have seen, canonicity arises easily out of a strong focus on the author rather than the texts.

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<sup>42</sup> Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 339.

<sup>43</sup> Sadami Suzuki, *Nihon no bungaku wo kangaeru* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Sensho 255, 1994), 246, 274-79.

<sup>44</sup> Sadami Suzuki, *Nihon no bungaku wo kangaeru*, 270-71.