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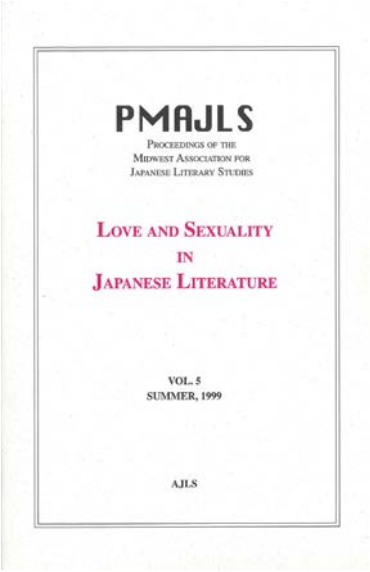

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LOVE AS LITERARY CONSTRUCT: EROTIC TROPES IN THE POETRY OF AKIKO, TEKKAN, AND TOMIKO

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~ 1 ~

Hito no ko no	Autumn when I
Na aru uta nomi	Think I will make a collection
Sumihika de	Just of worthy poems alone
Shū ni sebaya to	By that child
Omou aki ka na	Without striking out a single line.

(*Myōjō* 8:75)

This poem was first published by Yosano Hiroshi (1873–1935) or, as he was better known, Tekkan, in volume eight of the *Myōjō* journal (later banned because of the inclusion of nude drawings) in November 1900, and was later republished in his own collection of poetry *Murasaki* (Purple), which appeared in April 1901. It seems clear that "the child" referred to in the poem was Hō Akiko (1878–1942), the poet who, not long after, became his wife, and that the volume that Hiroshi intended to create from her poems was *Midaregami* (Tangled Hair), published only four months after his own, and which has become the most celebrated single volume of verse published by a Japanese woman poet this century. However, as the poem makes abundantly clear, the construction of Akiko's famous collection was very much in the hands of her lover and intellectual mentor.

I have previously argued that the "various complexities, discontinuities and contradictions embodied" in the verse of Hiroshi, Akiko and another poet-collaborator, Yamakawa Tomiko (1879–1909), were "subsequently broken-up, re-edited and re-assembled in the later collections of poetry published by the[se] poets individually".[1] My purpose in this paper is to focus on the body of verse produced by these three poets (primarily between July and November 1900) before the individual volumes they produced had the effect of rewriting and re-patterning their original poetic endeavours. Specifically, to examine the construction of a rhetorical nar-

[1] Morton, Leith "Akiko, Tomiko and Hiroshi: Tanka as Conversation in Fin-de-siecle Japan," *Japanese Studies: Bulletin of the Japanese Studies Association of Australia*'14:3 (Nov. 1994): 35–49.

rative of love in a series of intertextual exchanges that they produced during this period and, furthermore, to isolate and analyse various erotic tropes developed in the course of their poetic exchanges. In other words, I intend to concentrate on the earliest form of intertext created by these three poets, not merely seeing this a precursor to later, more elaborate verse-narratives but, rather, reading it in an attempt to decode the complex poetics developed (primarily in the *Myōjō* journal) by these writers and their associates. The *Myōjō* poetics represented a revolutionary attack upon older models of "waka," as Tekkan wrote in volume seven of *Myōjō*, published a month before the poem quoted earlier: "Our poetry should be called "new-style" verse (shintaishi) irrespective of whether it is short or long."[2] With this announcement, Tekkan declared his allegiance to a new model of poetic expressiveness which, in the case of the verse we shall presently examine, arose almost entirely out of poetry written on the much older theme of love.

First, I wish to briefly clarify some points about the methodology and terminology I shall use in my inquiry. By the use of the word intertext, I mean Julia Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin that sees the "literary word" as a "dialogue among several writings:..the writer, the addressee (or the character) and the contemporary or earlier cultural context" (from *Séméiotiké*, 1969).[3] In this paper the intertext refers to an almost private language of metonymic codes, allusions and tropes arising out of the personal bricolage of the poets' lives and their complex amatory relationships. In his 1997 book, *Utamakura, Allusion and Intertextuality in Traditional Japanese Poetry*, Edward Kamens refers to a dispute between the critic Robert Alter and Julia Kristeva over the use of the word intertextuality. In brief, Alter prefers "allusion" on the grounds that it includes "intention" whereas, in his view, Kristeva's definition of intertextuality does not.[4] The poets we are discussing here certainly intended the tropes that grow, seemingly, at times, almost completely out of control, in their ever more complicated poetic exchanges and which end up taking on the character of intra-lingual commentaries on each other, and on eros as rhetoric and as experience. But, without wishing to enter too deeply into the theoretical debate, it also seems clear that Kristeva's understanding of intertextuality can easily encompass such complex intentionality. As she

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[2] *Myōjō* 7:76 (Oct 1900).

[3] Quoted by Judith Still and Michael Worton (eds), "Introduction," *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1990) p.16.

[4] Kamens, Edward *Utamakura, Allusion and Intertextuality in Traditional Japanese Poetry* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997) p.36.

writes in her 1974 book, *La révolution du langage poétique* (translated as *Revolution in Poetic Language*): "Poetic mimesis . . . pluralizes signification or denotation. . . . Mimesis and poetic language do not therefore disavow the thetic [the thesis of signification], instead they go through its truth (signification, denotation) to tell the "truth" about it."[5] This seems to me a subtler point than Kamens' paraphrase of Alter's objection can deal with. I mention Kamens because, in his stimulating study, he treats some of the same problems I intend to work through here, but at much greater length, and with much more detail than is possible in this paper. His use of "toponym" or place name as an essential element of the poem's figural scheme, for instance, parallels the use of metonymic objects like the koto, which acquires a large accretion of erotic power in the *Myōjō* poets' writings.[6] On the one hand, one can carry parallels too far, and also, on the other hand, not far enough; in the sense that Akiko, Tomiko and Tekkan have set out to create a new context for love poetry, one that does not rely upon traditional waka figuration, and also that all poetry (so far as I am aware) relies upon context, allusion, cross-association, in however loose a form, for its particular resonance.

Finally, to conclude this brief introductory discussion, my analysis of love as rhetorical construct owes much to Julia Kristeva's 1983 study *Histoires d'amour* (translated as *Tales of Love*) for her argument that narcissism and idealisation are two of the major constituents of amatory discourse. As Kristeva noted: "the experience of love indissolubly ties together the *symbolic* (what is forbidden, distinguishable, thinkable), the *imaginary* (what the self imagines in order to sustain and expand itself), and the *real* (that impossible domain where affects aspire to everything and where there is no one to take into account the fact that *I* am only a part)"[7]. Actually, that last assertion is an excellent starting point for our investigation of tropes, since it may seem that in the verse of Yamakawa Tomiko, the fact that she was only a "part" was taken into account by just about everybody.

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The metonymic figuring built around the humble koto, a common musical instrument of the day, unfolds a subtle narrative of idealized de-

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[5] Kristeva, Julia *Revolution in Poetic Language* trans Waller, Margaret (New York : Columbia University Press, 1984), p.60.

[6] Kamens, Edward *Utamakura*, p.25.

[7] Kristeva, Julia *Tales of Love* translated by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) P.7.

sire.[8] This trope was a particular favourite of Yamakawa Tomiko who uses it to some effect in the following poem published in volume 2 (September 1900) of the journal *Kansai Bungaku.*

Kono nami ni	No reason whatever
Shirabe awasen	Why it should
Yoshi mo nashi	Match the rhythm of the waves
Mune no ogoto no	Too gentle the rhythm
Amari yasashiku	Of the koto in my bosom
	(*Kansai Bungaku* 2:54)

This issue of *Kansai Bungaku* featured an essay by Nakayama Kyōan (1877–1960), a poet prominent in the *Myōjō* circle, entitled "Takashi no Hama" (Takashi Beach), about the many tanka composed at a poem-party held on 6 August to welcome the young lion of letters, the poet-reformer Yosano Tekkan to Sakai. Tomiko is here contrasting the rhythm of her persona's heart, using the metaphor of a koto, to the waves, implicitly suggesting that her excitement at meeting the founder of the *Myōjō* circle in the flesh for the first time is belied by her maidenly heart, the reality of her emotions being reflected by the waves instead.

Akiko uses the same metaphor to express her excitement at meeting Tekkan in the same issue a few pages on but with even more explicitly romantic rhetoric.

Wakaki ko no	Do you know of the
Mune no ogoto no	Throbbing of the koto
Ne wo shiru ya	In my maiden's breast?
Tabine no kimi yo	O traveller!
Tamakura kasamu	I will make my arm your pillow
	(*Kansai Bungaku* 2:69)

Here Akiko takes on the guise of a lover promising an assignation to a traveller. Tekkan, in the view of the distinguished commentator Itsumi

[8] The *koto* does not feature prominently in classical poetry with, for instance, only 20 occurrences of the word in the famous *Hachidaishū*, the first eight imperial collections of waka. See Kubota, Jun (ed.) *Hachidaishū Sō Sakuin* [Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei Bekkan] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995) p. 465.

Kumi, "replies" to this poem with the following verse (published in the same issue).[9]

Waga koi wo	To the person who declares
Tabi yuku hito no	My love is but
Nasake yo to	A traveller's passion
Iu hito ika ni	How bitter is
Tsuraki kokoro zo	My heart!
	(*Kansai Bungaku* 2:68)

By assuming the persona of a courtesan who plies her trade at inns, Akiko accentuates the brief nature of the assignation, but Tekkan's rhetoric pledges a more constant ardour. The fact that Akiko first met Tekkan at an inn in Osaka (these poems were probably composed soon after) adds to the romantic resonance, and to the wit of these conceits.

Tomiko has a further use for the koto, not as a metonym for the beating of a heart but as the recipient of a woman's scarifying passion, in other works, as a metonym for man. First, Tekkan following another intricate thread in the verse exchanged among the three poets, links the deliberate pink colour of the Hibiscus mutabilis, a flower-name he bestowed upon Tomiko, to the burning crimson of lip-rouge:

Tamakura ni	Your head cradled in my arms
Kimi sasayakite	You whispered to me,
Kuchi beni no	The scent of your rouge:
Kaoru to mishi ka	Did I dream all this
Fuyō fuku kaze	In the hibiscus-caressing breeze?
	(*Myōjō* 7:49)

Tomiko's fierce rejoinder:

Waga iki wo	Do not compare
Fuyō no kaze ni	My breath
Tatoemasu na	To the hibiscus-caressing breeze!
Jūsangen wo	With one breath I can break
Hito iki ni kiru	All thirteen strings of the koto
	(*Myōjō* 8:57)

[9] Itsumi, Kumi *Shin Midaregami Zenshaku* (Tokyo: Yagi Shoten, 1996) p. 289.

These two tanka appeared in the October and November editions of *Myōjō* respectively.

To borrow Roland Barthes' vocabulary, we have traced here a rhetorical journey from ravishment to reverberation. "Ravishment" denoting an "initial episode (though it may be reconstructed after the fact) during which the amorous subject is "ravished" (captured and enchanted) by the image of the loved object."[10] And "reverberation" signaling "a fundamental mode of amorous subjectivity: a work, an image reverberates painfully in the subject's affective consciousness."[11]

In these poems arranged around the subject as koto, and finally the object as koto, we may speculate on the possible symbolic meanings of koto as fetish. Edward Kamens, in his chapter on waka fetishes, argues that objects with a deep resonance in the waka tradition are treated by classical poets in a "mix of seriousness and light-heartedness." as fetishized objects simultaneously evoking other waka and real objects.[12] Tomiko and Akiko's use of the koto as fetish is different, perhaps radically different. In the poems cited here the koto evokes the closed circle of the *Myōjō* poets: it's meanings are essentially private, deriving their force from an enclosed concatenation of metonymic association. Here, fetishized objects refer to writing in a closed circle, and only infrequently, in this particular instance, to the classical literary tradition. Thus the koto here reminds us of what comes later, of the sobbing violins in Ueda Bin's translations of Verlaine or Hagiwara Sakutarō's Chinese fiddles. But, above all, it recalls Shimazaki Tōson. The commentator Satake Kazuhiko cites the following lines from Tōson's 1894 collection of new-style verse Wakanashū (Young Herbs Collection) as clear evidence that the *Myōjō* poets' romanticism, their troping derived from the new Western concept of eros as mediated through Tōson's poetry, rather than any older models.[13]

Mada hiki mo minu otomego no	Do you know of the koto hidden
Mune hi hisomeru koto no	Within the breast of the maiden who
Ne wo shiru ya kimi?	Has never played it?

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[10] Barthes, Roland *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* trans. Richard Howard (Hammonsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1990) p. 188.

[11] Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 200

[12] Kamens, *Utamakura*, p. 140.

[13] Satake, Kazuhiko *Zenshaku Midaregami Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Yūhōdō, 1957 rep. 1969) p. 327.

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The second and final sample of erotic troping I am able to trace in this short paper centres on flowers. Tekkan created a private code consisting of flower names for the female *Myōjō* poets, and much of the verse of Tekkan, Akiko and Tomiko weaves an intricate daisy-chain of metonymic association based on flower imagery. "Lily" was associated with Tomiko, and "Lotus" with Akiko, and this interplay between two flowers deeply rooted in the tradition of classical poetry played an important role not only in revealing the characteristic nature of *Myōjō* poetics but also in disclosing the complexity of the relationship between the two poets.[14] Both women, even before their very first meeting with Tekkan, seemed infatuated, intoxicated even, by this handsome young poet; an attraction based no doubt upon his poetry, as Barthes puts it, "by the image of the loved object". Tomiko's poem was written in anticipation of this first meeting and confirms Barthes' conjecture:

Shiru ya kimi?	Do you know this?
Yuri no tsuyu fuku	The evening breeze
Yū kaze wa	That touches the lily's dew
Kami no mikoe wo	Carries to this flower
Hana ni tsutaenu	Your god's voice
	(*Myōjō* 4:12)

"God" was commonly used by Akiko and Tomiko to refer to Tekkan. But this poem was written at least two months before Tomiko met Tekkan, and so the verse may not have been quite so specific as to the object of its adoration. The rhetorical nature of erotic troping employed by Akiko and Tomiko is clearly demonstrated by the following two poems published on the same page in the August issue of *Myōjō*, before Tekkan had actually met either poet, although as editor of the journal, he had corresponded with them and, on occasion, corrected Tomiko's poetry.[15] First, Akiko's poem about the white lotus and dew.

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[14] See Yamamoto, Kenkichi *Kihon Kigo 500 Sen* (Tokyo: Kōdansha Bunko, 1989 [Gakujutsu Bunko 868]) for a selection of the classical troping associated with "Lily" (yuri) pp. 376–8, and "Lotus" (hasu) pp. 387–90.

[15] See Sakamoto, Masachika (ed.) *Yamakawa Tomiko Zenshū* (Tokyo: Kōsaisha, 1972) vol.2 p. 70 for details of Tekkan's corrections of Tomiko's verse.

Kokoromi ni	As a test
Wakaki kuchibiru	If I touch with
Furete mireba	My young lips
Hiyayaka naru yo	Dew on a white lotus
Shirahasu no tsuyu	How cold it feels!

(*Myōjō* 5:13)

Then, a few lines later, Tomiko's poem about lily and dew appeared.

No ni idete	Stepping onto the moor
Sayuri no tsuyu wo	I sucked
Suite minu	At the dew of the lily
Kareshi chi no ke no	Wondering if hot blood
Mune ni waku ya to	Will rise in my tired heart?

(*Myōjō* 5:13)

It was in the next issue of *Myōjō* that the flower names of the various female *Myōjō* poets were published so these two poems may well have been pivotal in deciding the choice of name for the poets. The meanings of the poems are difficult to precisely decode. Is Akiko's persona testing the limits of her youthful desire? Or is this simply a contrast between youthful passion and the cold purity of morality? The latter reading relies upon the traditional association of the lotus with Buddhism. Tomiko's poem is, perhaps, also a test of passion. In the next month's issue of *Kansai Bungaku*, Tomiko passes her own test with a strikingly sensual poem that "replies" to her own question.

Mizu ya kimi	Do you not see?
Moyuru kuchibiru	As soon as I pressed
Tsukete yori	My burning lips
Sono shirahasu ni	Against the white lotus
Tsuyu no waki denu	Dew began to ooze.

(*Kansai Bungaku* 2:69)

Tomiko's answer, while quite erotic, is nonetheless ambiguous about the implied object of affection. We see here how the interconnecting tropes of lips, touch, dew, blood and heat mesh and weave a highly-charged narrative of eros that escapes exact definition, or, perhaps, transcends biography. Michael Riffaterre assigns such a poetics to the category of intertext, and, while investigating an analogous poem, argues: "that the intertextual drive, therefore, is tropological rather than psycho-

analytical, a reader response directed by the tantalising combination within each connective of the enigma and the answer, of the text as Sphinx and the intertext as Oedipus."[16]

The critic Nishio Norihito argues that the next poem by Akiko published in the same issue of *Kansai Bungaku* as the previous poem is transparent in its devotion to Tekkan, implicitly here a Japanese Goethe:[17]

Waimaru no	I assume the shape
No ni saku yuri ni	Of the lilies
Sugata kari	That blossom in the Weimar fields
Kimi ga mimune ni	I want to touch your chest
Furete kudaken	And be crushed!

(*Kansai Bungaku* 2:70)

This last poem also brings to mind another, similar verse by Tomiko, first published in Tomiko's "White Lily" chapter of the volume *Koigoromo* (The Cloak of Love, 1905), consisting of three chapters of verse by Akiko, Tomiko and Masuda Masako. Sakamato Masachika, Tomiko's biographer, thinks that it was composed around August 1900, which would make the poem another link in the chain of metonymic figuration.[18]

Kami nagaki	With my hair long
Otome to umare	I was born a maiden
Shiro yuri ni	Into the white lilies
Nuka wa fusetsutsu	I plunge my face
Kimi wo koso omoe[19]	Thinking only of you

In this verse, we glimpse a hint of the narcissism associated with the trope of "hair" that so distinguishes Akiko's poetry of this period. By this time, the literary romance had become a real-life romance, and what had been prefigured in verse was actually occurring in reality. Naturally, private codes became even more important among the three star-struck lover-poets as erotic trysts begin to dominate over erotic tropes.

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[16] Riffaterre, Michael "Compulsory reader response: the intertextual drive" p.77 in Worton and Still (eds) *Intertextuality*.
[17] Nishio, Norihito *Akiko - Tomiko - Meiji no Atarashii Onna - Ai to Bungaku* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku, 1986) p. 53–4.
[18] Sakamoto, *Yamakawa Tomiko Zenshū* vol. 2 p. 264.
[19] Ibid. vol. 1 p. 3.

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The distinguished scholar of archaic Japanese poetry, Furuhashi Nobuyoshi, has argued that ritual plays in key role in the evolution of exchange poetry written on the theme of love (sōmonka). Lovers in ancient Japan, he argues, utilized poems as incantatory spells or charms to bewitch their beloved.[20] Later, as several scholars point out, the ritualistic elements became absorbed into convention with Edward Kamens even suggesting that most of Fujiwara Teika's (1162–1241) love poetry in his own private collection, while ostensibly communications between Teika and various women, were actually all his own invention.[21] When the poet plays both the parts, both lover and beloved, then there is no doubt that convention has come to dominate over all other considerations.

In the small sampling of poetry exchanged between Akiko, Tekkan and Tomiko that we have examined here, clearly, ritual is not involved. On the other hand, convention plays an important role in defining the erotic identities our agents choose to adopt in their exchange verses. The patterns of imagery, in my analysis, focusing on the koto and flowers, are equally constructed between all three participants, rather like the weaving of a linked-verse sequence by several poets. This interweaving of verse also folds into itself a narrative of sorts. The narrative has all the elements of a romantic melodrama and as reality begins to intrude and shape the narrative so the melodrama increases in intensity.

This rhetorical movement, while not uniform, and as much a matter of troping as narrative, confirms the truth of Julia Kristeva's basic argument about love: "The triumph of the self in this total identification with the other is the hallmark of idealized and omnipresent narcissism."[22] Kristeva locates the means of expression of the self in amatory discourse, in the metaphor, as she notes: "I shall interpret metaphorical dynamics as established not by the designation of a reference inevitably reducible to being, but by the relationship the speaking subject has with the other during the utterance act."[23] In fact, as in this quotation, Kristeva locates the subjective experience of love itself in amatory discourse. That is why

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[20] See Furuhashi, Nobuyoshu *Kodai Toshi no Bungei Seikatsu* (Tokyo: Taishūkan Shoten, 1994) p. 228 and *Kodai no Ren'ai Seikatsu - Man'yōshū no Koiuta wo Yomu* (Tokyo: Nihon Hōsō Shuppan Kyōkai [NHK Bukkusu No. 536], 1987 p. 224–5. See also my article "Courtly Love in Japan and France: An Introductory Study" forthcoming in Ramsland, Marie (ed.) *Variété : Perspectives in French Literature, Society and Culture* (Frankfurt am Main : Peter Lang, 1999) pp. 307–324.

[21] Kamens, *Utamakura*, p. 23

[22] Kristeva, *Tales of Love* p. 180

[23] Ibid, p. 274

the earlier notion of intertext that we adopted from Kristeva is vital to analysis of this particular amatory discourse.

The self-construction of subject, again, to quote Kristeva: "The subject is not simply an inside facing the referential outside," is predicated upon its relationships, is realized in its relationships with others.[24] So the erotic troping that all three poets invent, explore and develop is not merely a shadow-play hiding a deeper and more complex reality but is itself the basic scaffolding of this reality. In this broad sense, the verse-exchanges participated in by the three poets in the period under discussion constitutes a complex and self-shaping intertext. But it is as much shaped by rhetorical rules, as any other phenomenon. Later, Tekkan reshaped this intertext into a different narrative for his volume *Murasaki*, and he assisted Akiko to do the same with her collection *Midaregami*. Love, in this instance, is inseparable from the intertextual exchanges that first constitute it. And, for us, as for all later investigators of the phenomenon, it is knowable primarily only through these exchanges. But our re-shaping of the poetry in our commentaries, histories and analyses inevitably contributes to another kind of re-shaping. Thus the intertext endures, as love endures. Its complexity comforts us, as we find that the figurations woven by the three poets may come to enfold (if not represent) our own private amatory discourses and so we may well sympathise with the state that Akiko finds herself in by March 1901 when Tomiko's flower-name and her own become inseparably intertwined:

Omoi omou	I think and think of you
Ima no kokoro ni	Now in my heart
Wakachi wakazu	I cannot tell
Ware ya shiroyuri	If you are the white bush clover
Kimi ya shirahagi [25]	Or I am the white lily

(*Myōjō* 11:3)

[24] Kristeva, Ibid., p. 274.

[25] This version of the poem is the version published in *Midaregami* (No. 178). I concur with Akiko that it works better as poetry than the *Myōjō* original where the order of the last two romanized lines are