INTERPRETING

TANGLED HAIR
The world of *Tangled Hair*—its settings, characters, and voices—is the subject of this chapter. In addition to settings both imaginary and realistic, there are a multitude of voices and characters, so many that a single chapter cannot encompass them all.

**THE LAND OF SPRING**

Many of the poems of *Tangled Hair* are set in an imaginary world whose implicit setting is the “land of spring.” Akiko’s earliest use of the expression was in:

Drops from  
the young one’s hair  
piled up in the grass  
then were born as a butterfly  
This is the land of spring

*Wakaki ko ga / kami no shizuku no / kusa ni korite / chō to umareshi /
Koko haru no kuni* (no. 360; Myōjō, July 1901)¹

Here, water, that protean medium, drips down as a young woman wrings out her hair; as the drops reach the grass, they gradually collect into a mass, which then metamorphoses into a butterfly. Butterflies, in other words, need not come from cocoons: in this magical place, they have other, more beautiful ways of being born.

Akiko borrowed the verb *korite* (translated as “piled up,” but literally “congealed”) from the creation myth of Japan. There, after the universe had been formed, the gods Izanagi and Izanami dipped the Heavenly Spear into the primeval soup and stirred and stirred. Then they raised the spear, and the drops it shed congealed (*korite*) and turned into the first island of Japan² (a little like separating curds from whey). So it is fitting to regard this poem as a kind of creation myth, too, though for the butterfly.³ This, then, is the first
butterfly, and the land of spring is a land of beginnings, where everything is happening for the first time. The sense that the girl projects of being both of and not of the real world—**wakaki ko** describes a human being, but what is going on is a sort of divine miracle—is basic to it, too, for in the land of spring, youth is holy and the young are gods.

The butterfly was also envisioned as a work of celestial stitchery:

> About to send  
> a little butterfly from heaven  
> off to the lilies  
> a god picks out the basting  
> thread from its pale blue wings

**Yuri ni yaru /ame no kuchô no /mizu-iro no /hane ni shitsuke no /ito wo toru kami** (no. 225; Myôjô, July 1901)

The god here, like the young woman in the previous poem, is silent, observed from outside; but in another poem, the subject speaks:

> Drops from a purple rainbow  
> came running down, spilled over  
> flowers and became my arms  
> Do not doubt the dream  
> you saw in their embrace

**Murasaki no /niji no shitatari /hana ni ochite /naribi kaina no /yume utagau na** (no. 65; Myôjô, July 1901)

Through the image of the rainbow coming down from the sky, melting to water, and then metamorphosing into the arms of a magical girl, this poem makes explicit what the first one only implies: in the land of spring, there is no distinction between the human and the divine. Heaven and earth are simply two poles of one continuum. Furthermore, all things are young, even the flowers and trees; nothing dies. Most strikingly of all, liminality, rather than being the exception, is the rule: everything is always on the verge of becoming something else, or has just done so; there are no firm or fixed boundaries or identities.

In the second of the two poems that use the phrase “land of spring,” what we could have guessed all along becomes clear: the land of spring is a metaphor for the perfect happiness of love:

**Land of spring  
country of love  
in the half-light of dawn  
That clarity—is it hair?  
Oil of the flowering plum**
The fragrant clarity of the woman’s hair oil breaks through the dimness of the dawn, bringing a reminder, through its name, of the world of nature outside.\(^4\)

Tekkan interpreted this poem as a woman after a night of love: “On the morning after her proud joy, a woman in love feels the whole world is her own ‘land of spring, country of love.’ Enraptured by her own beautiful hair at dawn, the fragrance of plum blossom oil seems to fill the world.”\(^5\)

In a sense, this is a variation on what classical Japanese poetry calls the “morning-after poem” or *kinuginu no uta*, but there is one crucial difference. The conventional morning-after poem lamented the coming of dawn, because it meant the lovers had to part. A typical example, from the eleventh-century *Goshibishû*, one of the imperial anthologies of waka, is: “When daylight breaks, / although I know the dark / will come again, / still I harbor bitterness / toward the dawn!” (Akenureba / kururu mono to wa / shirinagara / nao urameshiki / asaborake kana).\(^6\)

In *Tangled Hair*, though, dawn only brings another kind of bliss. The man might be there, or he might not, but for the moment the woman’s pleasure is so full that she is complete without him. Unlike most classical Japanese love poetry, which wove its narrative around moments of longing, a brief period of union, and the woman’s abandonment, many of the love poems of *Tangled Hair* are constructed around the peak of satisfaction: its forecast, its memory, or its actuality. We might call them, in a sense, orgasmic poetry.

This poem is a particularly good example of the effects that the anonymous reviewer in *Bunko* said Akiko achieved through the use of the possessive particle *no*, repeated here four times. The poem in fact is nothing but a string of nouns held together by *no*, broken only by one instance each of the subject particle *wa* and the question marker *ka*; there are no verbs at all. The terseness and fragmentation suggest that we are overhearing the thoughts of someone slowly awakening. It is a liminal, half-conscious moment, and a subtle mingling of the senses of smell and sight, as awareness of the world slowly returns through the scent of the woman’s own hair.

In “Spring Thoughts,” clearly addressing Akiko, Tekkan had sketched a scene of lapis-colored mist, pale white flowers, and a rainbow, and asked, “Is that what you call mystery (shinpi)?” Tekkan’s question is evidence that the sense of mystery this poem evokes was no accident, but part of the way Akiko, as a poet, experienced the world. She shared this sensibility with some of the greatest poets of the medieval period, who elaborated on it in their concept of *yûgen*, “mystery and depth.” The poet Shôtetsu (1381–1459) seems almost uncannily like her in this respect. To him, *yûgen*’s effect was like “mist that partly conceals the bare meanings of words, lending them mysterious ambiguity.” He “deliberately defied normal syntax in order to achieve a richness of
meaning” and sometimes omitted words, purposely making his poem difficult, in order to achieve “the elusive depths hinted at by the ambiguity.” I am not suggesting that Akiko was specifically influenced by Shòtetsu, for yûgen has a long history in Japanese aesthetics, as does ambiguity in Western aesthetics. The point is that the “land of spring” poem, in spite of its reversal of the convention of regret at the coming of dawn, its stress on the pleasures of love, and its modern vocabulary (baika no abura, literally, “plum blossom oil,” does not appear in classical poetry) shows a continuity with at least one strand of the classical tradition, not only in the most obvious way—it is thirty-one syllables—but in the aesthetic effect that it achieves.

THE NUDE
Critics at the time, both hostile and friendly, noted the nudes in Tangled Hair, and we have seen several already, such as “This hot tide of blood” (Yatubada no), “Spring is short” (Haru mijikashi), and “Pressing my breasts” (Chibusa oae). Viewed against the backdrop of events in the world of art, they are part of what made the collection seem avant-garde and exotic, for while naked figures had been depicted in ukiyoe erotic art, the nude body itself was not an aesthetic object in traditional Japanese art. The moment when this began to change can be pinpointed with some precision: it was when Kuroda Seiki (1866–1924), who had lived in France for several years and studied painting with Raphaël Collin in Paris, exhibited his nude portrait Chòshò (Morning toilette, 1893) in 1895. Kuroda went on to found the White Horse Society, with which Myòjò had close ties, and of which Ichijò Narumi and Fujishima Takeji, Myòjò’s two cover illustrators, as well as Nagahara Shisui (Kòtarò), illustrator of its back cover, were all members. Takeji, it will be remembered, was also the illustrator for Tangled Hair. In this way, Myòjò was in the forefront of the debate about the propriety of the nude in art.

In September 1900, when Myòjò changed from newspaper style to magazine format, it acquired a cover, and from then until the issue of January 1901, Ichijò Narumi’s drawing of a nude woman, shown from the waist up, was used as the illustration. Like Tangled Hair’s cover, it was pure art nouveau: the woman, sitting on one hip, with the long strands of her loose hair looped over a naked thigh, held a lily to her lips, as if about to kiss it; four stars shone in the background, three on one side, one on the other (see Figure 17). For the back cover Nagahara drew a winged and airborne cupid, crowned with a five-pointed star within which was the symbol for Venus. From March 1901, Fujishima Takeji became the illustrator. Nagahara’s cupid continued to grace the back cover, but now the front cover became the face of a woman; her head was crowned with a small six-pointed star, within which was the same astrological sign for Venus that Nagahara’s cupid wore, and a white lily brushed her cheek.
From the time of Takeji’s first cover, painters joined the cast of characters in Akiko’s poems: *Tangled Hair* has twelve poems about painting or painters, and all but two were first published between March and August 1901. One of the earliest was this:

And so ends the spring—
The painter who lives next door is beautiful
This morning his voice among
the yellow roses was so young

*Kure no haru / tonari sumu eshi / utskushiki / Kesa yamabuki ni /
 koe wakarishi* (no. 72; *Myòjò*, July 1901)\(^1\)

Satake speculates that the pictorial quality of the nude poems was indebted to what were often introduced as “famous Western paintings” in many newspapers and magazines of the time.\(^2\) This would account for the impression they give of being inscriptions for an imaginary painting. But another important element must have been the covers, both front and back, of *Myòjò*. Kimata Satoshi demonstrates that the name of the magazine probably originally meant only a star that would illumine the chaotic world of new-style poetry, but the cover images by Narumi and then Fujishima drew out the meanings of the word as love and the goddess Venus herself.\(^3\) It is hard to say which came first, Akiko’s poetry or the artists’ conceptions, or if they both fed on other sources. But in July 1901, when Akiko wrote most of the nude poems discussed here, the female nude as an image of the goddess of love and beauty was definitely part of her imagination.

In *Outline of the New Waka*, Tekkan defended the nude in poetry in these words:

The fact that there are people who criticize putting nudes into poetry is in fact a confession on their part of their own lack of good taste and is an absurd argument for interpreting aesthetic matters in terms of their own pitiful feelings. In art we categorically reject such specious arguments as well as hypocritical blather about oriental morality (*tòyòryû no dòtoku wo unnasaru izenteki ronpô*).

Then he quoted this poem by Akiko:

**Drawn by**
the smell of paint she comes to the
room of night:
Lovesick child, are you not like a
god at the Great Beginning in spring?**
and commented:

On an evening in spring, distracted in body and soul, a child of love, a nude (koi no ko, ragyō no ko), is drawn to the smell of paints—she is the very image of an ancient Greek goddess. . . . Here “love” is compared to “the fragrance of paints on a spring night.”

To be more precise, the other person in the room of night—the lover—is compared to the paints. And with the question “are you not like . . . ?” the image of this young lovesick child appears in the room of night.14

Tekkan, as though reading himself into the poem (and perhaps he had reason to), takes the last two lines as an admiring question the lover poses to the lovesick girl: aren't you like a goddess at the beginning of the world? One can also read the lines as a question the girl poses to herself (like the concluding nakarazu ya of “Child of beauty,” Katachi no ko); struck by the power that pulls her down that corridor to her lover’s room, she feels as if the force of life itself were moving in her, as if in this moment itself she is reliving the beginning of the world.

Another nude poem:

Bathed and warm
she rose up from the spring
and tender flesh
was touched by pain:
robe for the human world

Yuami shite / izumi wo ideshi / yawahada ni / fururu wa tsuraki / hito no yo no kinu (no. 77; Myōjō, October 1900)

In her own explanation of this poem in The Making of Poems, Akiko wrote: “When I gaze on my pure maiden body (shōjo no kiyoraka na karada) after having bathed in a hot spring, in spite of myself I feel the same pride as if I were a heavenly maiden (tenjō no otome). Even the touch of human clothes on this skin pains my heart, as though it defiled me.”15

In her comment, Akiko used the word kokorogurushii, which is a psychological pain, not a physical one. In the poem, however, the word used for pain is tsuraki, which suggests a pain not only psychological but also physical, and objectively based. Her commentary describes the feeling that inspired the poem, but the poem itself goes further, suggesting that her skin is truly too tender for human clothes, that she is not human at all. For the space of the
poem, that is, Akiko speaks in the voice of a heavenly being, or at the least a human being who was once divine and who retains the sensitivity of her original form. 16 Again, water and nudity are paired with magical transformation, this time from the world of heavenly bliss to that of human pain. Such moments of transition from the supernatural to the natural are a leitmotif in the collection, beginning from the first poem (“A star who once,” Yo no chō ni Yo no cbō ni), with its memory of descent from the world of the stars to the human world below. Ueda Bin, in fact, read the first poem and this one as being in the same voice. 17

The two poems above appeal to our sense of a golden age in the past, or a present which reminds us of that ideal past; the next poem also included the future:

Purple dawn of
love’s dominion, the fragrance
of my hands
A scented breeze rises in
my wake, streams long behind

Murasaki no / waga yo no koi no / asaborake / Morode no kaori /
oikaze nagaki (no. 273; Shōenchi, August 1901)

A pagan nymph or goddess of spring, says Satake, is running nude or half-nude through the fields. 18 Her hair is flowing behind, her hands are fragrant—perhaps she has been picking flowers, or is strewing them as she goes. Her speeding body creates a breeze, which carries the fragrance on behind her.

The word oikaze, translated as “a scented breeze . . . in my wake,” was used in The Tale of Genji (the Japanese Text Initiative data base lists twelve occurrences), 19 usually to describe the fragrant breeze created when its noble heroes and heroines moved about in their incense-scented robes. The word can also simply mean the breeze that trails behind a quickly moving object, especially a boat, and was used in that sense in classical contexts as well. Here, it is hands, not clothes, that are fragrant, and the breeze is stirred up by the subject’s swift motion; but the afterimage of the Heian court lingers, imbuing the picture with a kind of distant familiarity. Two ideal worlds, one Japanese and one European, are delicately layered; one has the sense of looking at a palimpsest.

Several of the poems in Tangled Hair are explicitly phrased as meditations on the course of the poet’s own life; one discussed already was “Here, now, I stand / and turn to look behind / and see my passion then / was like one blind who does not fear / the dark” (Ima koko ni / kaerimi sureba / waga nasake / yami wo osorenu / meshii ni nitari; Chapter 5). Another, in which Akiko compared herself at twenty to a peony, will be discussed later. But “Purple dawn” (Murasaki no) differs from both in that it includes not only the past but also the future. What
that future will be is left vague, but that it will be beautiful is clear, and that it will change the world for those who come after her is clear too. In that sense, this poem, in expressing her feeling that the great love of her life had dawned, and that it had a meaning for others besides herself, places itself in history, for Tangled Hair became a major chapter in the formation of the idea of love in twentieth-century Japan.

**QUASI-HISTORICAL SETTINGS**

Another group of women in Tangled Hair, rather than seeming suspended somewhere between the human and the divine, could be characters in fictional tales, sometimes set in the present, more often in an indeterminate past. Often they are presented in juxtaposition to the flowering crab-apple, their double, or the peony, their antagonist.

Pointless to have
mixed the rouge—out it goes
to the crab-apple tree
those eyes that look up at
the evening rain so weary!

*Kaidō ni yō naku tokisibi / beni sutete / yūsame miyaru / hitomi yo tayuki*

(no. 13; Myōjō, July 1901)

Damp with spring rain
he came though her gate lay
hidden in grass!

The crab-apple blossoms
flushed with pleasure that evening

*Harusame ni nurete kimi koshi / kusa no kado yo / Omowaregao no / kaidō no yūbe* (no. 31; Myōjō, July 1901)

At evening
as she called the birds back home
my younger sister's
toes were wet in the
crab-apple blossom rain

*Yūgure wo kago e tori yobu / imōto no / tsumasaki nurasu / kaidō no ame*

(no. 115; Myōjō, May 1901)

The crab-apple blossom, a very light-red, almost white, flower, was unknown in the classical tanka. In Chinese poetry, a weary Yang Kuei-fei had been compared to it, and it was also used as a figure for a woman pining so deeply that she could not be bothered to apply makeup; because of this second thread of
imagery, the flower is also called *danchōka*, “flower of misery.” Buson used the flower with the color but minus the emotion, comparing it to a woman’s white face powder with a few drops of rouge mistakenly dropped in: “Crab-apple blossoms: / rouge by mistake / in the white face powder” (*Kaidō ya /Oshiroi ni beni wo /ayamateru*). 21

Akiko’s first poem is about a miserable woman, waiting for a lover who did not come; but the doubled red, as the rouge hits the flowering tree, adds intensity and strength. It is almost as though she is saying, “I’ve waited for him long enough, I’m through!” The other two poems use the flower as a figure for happiness, going against the classical associations in another way, but the visual stress continues: in the second poem, the woman’s face outshines the flower; and in the third, the sister’s toes seem to take on color by being wet with the same rain that falls over the crab-apple blossoms.

Tekkan filled in the background for the second poem, “Damp with spring rain,” in his usual vivid way, adding a detail (the forgotten rain hat and coat) that suggests the poem reminded him of an episode from the early Heian period *Ise Monogatari* (*The Tales of Ise*, trans. Helen Craig McCullough): “Urging his horse on with a whip made of a willow branch, he gallops up to the door, too eager to have bothered with rain hat or coat. The pride in her flushed face outshines even the flowering crab-apple tree, which has just put forth its first branch.” 22

Surely Tekkan is right that the man is on a horse, and that there is an air of medieval Japan about the picture; but the crab-apple tree was only introduced into Japan from China in the Tokugawa period, so this poem is set in a quasi-historical setting, not an actual historical one. This leaves us free to follow our own associations. Influenced by Tekkan’s white horse, I like to imagine the setting as somewhere in the Caucasus Mountains, whose long-lived people are traditionally known for both their beautiful horses and their riding skill. They may or may not have crab-apple trees, but I plant one by the doorstep in my mind. The woman is a young girl, bashful but proud, perhaps from a poor family (kusa no kado, “grass door”); perhaps the man, wealthy enough to have a fine horse, is about to ask her father for her hand, and this was the day designated for the proposal, but because of the rain she was worried he would not come, and when he did, galloping up so eagerly, she felt so proud . . . we go further and further away from the original characters, but their outlines were dim to begin with, so that is all right. The clarity comes from the crab-apple blossoms’ color and the girl’s face, which can survive transplanting to any region. And if we want to let the Caucasus characters go, they can slip out of the frame easily, leaving behind only the overgrown front door, the spring rain, and the girl’s pleasure reflected in the flowers’ color. Fill in the outline if you like, or leave it bare.
Another flower unknown in the classical tanka was the peony. But whereas the crab-apple blossom seems the woman’s double or mirror in the poems above, the peony—redder and bolder—is her antagonist. Here two women are serving a guest who is a poet. The garden is lit up to show off the peonies, which are in full bloom, and the women feel they are outshone by that natural beauty. If the poet would only sing of what is indoors, including themselves, they might feel a little better.

Poet, sing of the night, alive with lights and the wine we serve you We sisters are brought to disgrace, eclipsed by the peony

Mairu sake ni hi akaki yoi wo uta tamae Onna harakara botan ni na naki (no. 12; Myōjō, July 1901)

Two other poems give a glimpse of a court lady-in-waiting reduced to silence by this flower:

Is it love, is it blood? The peony flames with all spring’s passion— Of those on watch here tonight there is one who has no poem

Koi ka Chi ka Botan ni tsukishi haru no omoi Tonoi no yoi no hitori uta naki (no. 88; Myōjō, July 1901)

Give us a long poem on the peony they ordered that night and I, about to marry found myself sneaking off

Nagaki uta wo botan ni are no yoi no otodo Tsuma to naru ni no ware nukeideshi (no. 89; Myōjō, July 1901)

These poems were next to each other when originally published in Myōjō, and the fact that Akiko kept this order and proximity even in Tangled Hair, which was so unusual for her to do, suggests that she felt a strong narrative connection between them. We can think of the woman, then, as the same in both poems, and the first as an explanation of the thoughts behind her action in the second.
Both poems are set at the imperial court and depict a woman attendant (or lady-in-waiting) on night duty at the palace. It was customary to compose poems to pass the time, but the peony’s flaming red reminds the woman of her own passionate love and she is tongue-tied by emotion; thus, she “has no poems.” In the second poem, her silence is challenged as she is asked to compose a poem on the very peony that has stilled her tongue, and she quietly retreats. In this poem part of the reason for her shyness is suggested: she is “about to marry.”

The peony is mentioned in Sei Shònagon’s _Makura no Sòshi_ (The Pillow Book of Sei Shònagon, trans. Ivan Morris), and the young women so intimidated by the peony would fit well into her book, or perhaps even more easily into the diary of Murasaki Shikibu. But no commentator has suggested a source. “Kôbai Niki” (Red plum blossom diary, 1902), Akiko’s own comments on sixteen poems from _Tangled Hair_, suggests why. Although her explanation of “Give us a / long poem on the peony” (Nagaki uta wo / botan ni are wo), partly because it is written in the ornate style called _bibunchö_, is as enigmatic or more so than the poems themselves, it is clear that it consists of a kind of short-story, made up by her to explain the poem.24 The narrative might have existed in her mind, half-verbalized, when she wrote the poem, but it seems more likely to me that she made it up later for “Plum Blossom Diary,” by embroidering on what the poem suggested to her. In any case, it is clear that Akiko realized the poem’s few syllables represented a longer narrative.

One is reminded of the fact that Akiko once said she had originally wanted to be a novelist.25 Once she had chosen the tanka, however, the fragmentary style of this brushstroke of a poem became her method of choice. Both poems have _Tangled Hair’s_ characteristic combination of narrative incompleteness and terse, strong phrases—Koi ka Chi ka, uta naki, literally, “Love? Blood?” “No poems”—and definite actions—ware nukeideshi, “I snuck off”—whose meanings and motivations are unclear. But what we are left with is enough: the peony’s red is the red of blood, of the very life force, and before that power, a young court lady-poet is reduced to muteness—all the more so for a young woman about to marry, who finds herself suddenly shy as she thinks of love.

Another example of Akiko’s use of quasi-historical settings is an imaginary description of a doctrinal dispute in a Zen monastery of the fourteenth or fifteenth century. This was the time when the Literature of the Five Mountains (Gozan bungaku, Chinese prose and poetry written by priests of the great Zen monasteries of Kyoto and Kamakura) flourished. The disputants in Akiko’s poem might include some who had written about the very peonies that their words make scatter, for there are a few Five Mountain poems that include the image, and the peony also appeared in Chinese poetry of the Tang period:
Whiteness—scattered
Redness—crumbled to pieces, peonies
on the floor
The mouths of the Five Mountain priests
are savage and cruel!

Shiroki chiri / akaki kuzurenu / yuka no botan / Gozan no sō no /
 kuchi osorashiki (no. 281; Myōjū, July 1901)

At their peak, peonies scatter at the slightest touch; here, it is the priests’ loud voices, disputing doctrine, that make both kinds of peonies, the pure white and the impure red, scatter. If we take the flowers symbolically, as purity and passion, then the disputants’ rancor destroys both.

Akiko’s use of historical settings as seen in the poems quoted explains why some of the poems in the collection, while creating a vague sense of déja vu, leave one unable to pinpoint the specific source: most often there was none, except Akiko’s own imagination, fed by multiple streams, for she had read broadly and well in a multitude of traditions and genres. The butterfly in the first poem discussed, “Drops from / the young one’s hair” (Wakaki ko ga / kami no shizuku), needs to be seen in this light: it suggests a Pre-Raphaelite or art nouveau image more than anything in Japanese tradition, but again, one can not say exactly which one; and even though the provenance of korite, literally “congealed,” is probably the Nihongi, in reading the poem, one does not feel that the setting belongs to primeval Japan, while the butterfly wafted out of a Pre-Raphaelite painting: the two have been seamlessly fused into a new world, the objective correlative of Akiko’s own emotion. And the scene, in turn, is illuminated by reference to a painting by Titian, the Venus Anadyomene. Commentators have assumed that the girl’s hair is dripping wet because she has just washed it, but Titian’s painting shows a Venus arisen from the sea wringing out her hair. One glance at it arouses the same frisson that seeing the Magdalene’s portrait does: oh, so that’s what she’s talking about, one thinks. But of this more later.

As for the red peony, it grew and grew in Akiko’s poetry until it became one of her most radiant images, no longer woman’s antagonist but her symbol. Here, in Tangled Hair, we can see the beginnings.

CHARACTERS
A quick tally of the figures in the poems discussed shows women who seem to partake of both the natural and the supernatural, not quite human and not quite gods; a god, or kami; a woman drawn (as Blake wrote) in “the lineaments of gratified desire”; as well as vaguely medieval women, a painter, Zen priests, and so on. Various as these are, there are yet more: young virgins, their
latent sensuality a potent force; also acolyte priests, the traveler, the woman of the inn; and last, an unidentified couple, who, like the ladies speaking of Michelangelo, come and go, speaking of love and sometimes making love, too. Unlike most of those in the poems presented above, who exist in a timeless setting or else a past quasi-historical one, these figures tend to exist in the here and now. And not all of them are human: some are animal or, as here, vegetable:

The small grass
spoke: “I’ll bloom in the color
of drunken tears—
Virgin,
sleep till then”

Ogusa iinu /(Yoeru namida no /iro ni sakamu /Sore made kakute /
samezare na otome) (no. 32; Myōjō, March 1901) 28

The maiden, inexperienced and still dreaming of ideal love, is yet to know real love and its pain. The grass knows what awaits her, though, and how in some spring to come she will awake into that reality. Though it would like to protect her, it cannot; but at least, it says, sleep peacefully in your innocence until then, and when you awake, I will bloom for you, reflecting the color of your love-drunk tears. Having been addressed like this by the grass, in another poem the girl speaks for herself, announcing her lack of “enlightenment” to the Buddhas in a tone which implies that she prefers delusion. It is as though she has awakened, but into love, not enlightenment:

Do you look at me
and think I’m chanting sutras
with enlightened heart?
You Buddhas of the upper
levels and of the lower!

Madoinakute /kyō zusuru ware to /mitamau ka /Gebon no botoke /
jōbon no botoke (no. 150; Myōjō, March 1901)

In one of the most famous poems of Tangled Hair, poems are offered to the gods instead of prayers, as if daring the Buddhas to deny the supreme importance of art. Here the speaker was no longer a virgin maiden but a poet—perhaps the poet Akiko herself:

Sutras are bitter—
This lovely night of spring
accept my poems,
you twenty-five
Bodhisattvas of the Inner Cloister
Poems of a spring night are of course about love, so what we have here is a glorious conflation of love, art, and religion. Poetry and love are, in fact, the religion of *Tangled Hair*, a book that was both the expression of an ideal and at the same time its realization.

Young Buddhist priests also played a role in the poems, primarily as figures who deny the passions and whose chastity acts as a goad to female desire. The paradox of their suppressed sexuality provided fertile ground for poetry. In this poem, the priest is juxtaposed to a flowering crab-apple tree; we do not need to be told that "a figure" is a young woman, though we may wonder who the speaker is:

**Priest with your pale forehead, don’t you see? At dusk by a flowering crab-apple tree a figure stands, spinning spring dreams**

Characteristically, Akiko deletes connecting particles, so the last line is just a string of nouns: spring, seeing dream(s), figure. “Pale (literally, ‘white’) forehead” is a trope for handsome: this studious acolyte never gets outside, and his pale skin is aristocratic and refined. The contrast of white and red, as elsewhere in *Tangled Hair*, is that between passion and its denial, life and anti-life.

The virgin and the young priest appear together in four poems. Here are three (the fourth, “Shoulder-sliding,” *Kata o-bi te*, is discussed in the next chapter). A girl is moved to tears by a young priest staying at the same inn, but she is too much in awe to approach him:

**An inn for travelers—
There you sat by the water’s edge
o priest, so pure and
so forbidding that I wept
beneath the summer moon**

Another girl is less timid:

**Another girl is less timid:**
She calls out
to awaken the tender young priest:

a window in spring
Touched by a long trailing sleeve
the sutras topple

_Urawakaki / sō yohisamasu / haru no mado / furisode farete / kyū kuzurekinu_ (no. 229; Myōjō, May 1901)

Perhaps this girl (as Satake suggests) is a daughter of one of the families who supports the temple, on a visit with her parents, and has known the young priest since they were both children.29 Now she is almost grown up (thus the long decorative sleeves of her kimono, worn by girls of marriageable age), and he for his part has begun the serious studies that are necessary to become a priest. Yet he is too young to be very studious, and the warm spring day has put him to sleep. She, for her part, still has a childish eagerness, and as she impulsively leans in the window, too eager to go in by the door, she carelessly lets her sleeve fall over the pile of books. The girl is innocence itself: her sinuous sleeve, with its heavy silk, her unconscious sensuality, can topple the holy texts, but she is unaware of her own powers.

Defiance of conventional morality in the name of passion was a dominant value in _Tangled Hair_’s scheme of things, and eroticizing the supposedly pure priest fit in quite naturally. In another poem, a girl meets a young priest at twilight. The temple bell, calling him to the evening service, rings in the distance, but she commands him to worship another god:

_The temple bell_
_is ringing low this evening_
_Come now and_
chant your sutras for the
budding peach blossoms in my hair_

_Dō no kane no / hikuki yōbe wo / maegami no / momo no tsubomi ni / kyū tamae kimi_ (no. 7; first published in _Midaregami_)

Spring and love should be our religion. Worship me, she says, not the Buddhas.

Western readers who think of Buddhism as one of the most spiritual of religions may find it hard to understand Akiko’s defiance of the Buddhas. But it was not they so much as conventional, institutionalized religion that was her target. Buddhism for Akiko was not the mystical Zen that Jack Kerouac and the Beats read about in D. T. Suzuki, or that is practiced by many non-Japanese today—or even the Zen Buddhist austerities that Gary Snyder underwent during the years he lived in Japan. It was the boring sermons she had to listen
to as a child, the incense that made her feel queasy, the scoldings she endured when her intellectual curiosity made her ask sacrilegious questions. It was also the "enlightened heart" of her platonic friend Tetsunan, of course, and of other contemporaries who grew up in Buddhist temples, like her girls’ school friend Kusunoki Masue. Even the man who became her own husband, though he never lived as a priest, had been formally ordained. Thus the world of Buddhism was a familiar one to Akiko, in some ways too familiar, and there were autobiographical underpinnings for the young Buddhist priests who appeared in *Tangled Hair*. At the same time, though, there were literary roots. Priests, virgins, and nuns were familiar figures in the poetry of Tōson and Kyūkin. Even before them, the dyad of the passionate virgin and the acolyte priest had a long lineage in Japanese legend, literature, and theater, notable examples being the medieval tale of *Anchin Kiyohime*, its offshoots in Noh (Dōjōji) and Kabuki (*Musume Dōjōji* and other dances), and the puppet play *Yaoya Oshichi*. But all these figures were foreign to the classical poetic tradition. By reincarnating them in her poetry, Akiko added another element to the multifaceted world of *Tangled Hair* and, at the same time, broadened the imaginative world of the tanka itself.30

So much of *Tangled Hair* can be rearranged as dyads and diptychs that it is not surprising to find a sexually experienced pair to complement the sexually innocent young priest and virgin. They are the traveler and the young woman. The earliest poem in which they appear is the September 1900 "O sleeping traveler" (*Wakaki ko ga*), where Akiko was clearly addressing Tekkan as the traveler (he replied in the same spirit). The poems on this theme published in March and May of 1901, soar, as might be expected, to heights of passion, reaching that peak where love and the divine seem to be one and from which what Satō Haruo called Akiko’s oracular (ofudesaki) tone was born. Dialogue left behind, the poet’s voice takes on a shamanic power:

What falls tonight is the rain
of love’s desire
Dear traveler
do not ask the shorter way
but make your lodging here

*Yū furu wa / nasake no ame yo / Tabi no kimi / chika michi towade / yado toritamae* (no. 145; *Myōjō*, March 1901)

Here, the speaker must be the goddess of love herself, whispering in the traveler’s ear, or else she is the goddess speaking through a woman of the inn. Love is raining down on the world, she says, and instead of rushing on your way, you should stop and savor it. Or: the rain as the moisture of desire, which seems, in
the expansiveness of her love, to come from the heavens, to be everywhere, as though her body were the world—not the poem’s first meaning, of course, but there somewhere in between the words, begetting its strange power.

My blood’s on fire
Let me give you a night and a dream
at the inn of dreams—
Traveler through spring
do not spurn the god

Chi zo moyuru / Kasamu hitoyo no / yume no yado / Haru wo yuku hito /
kami otoshime na (no. 4; Myōji, May 1901)

Hitoyo no yume no yado, literally “an inn for a single night’s dream,” is an unusual phrase, which recalls both the Buddhist idea of this world as a dream and, because the poem’s first words are about fire, the Lotus Sutra’s image of the world as “a burning house” (of passions) from which we seek release. Memories are called up of such legendary medieval courtesans as Eguchi no Kimi (the Lady of Eguchi), who exchanged poems with the famous poet-priest Saigyō and was said to be an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Fugen. As the woman in this poem transcends the human, so does the traveler. In fact, he is not called a traveler at all, but “you who go through spring,” which in turn changes the setting from a realistic roadside inn to time itself, specifically youth, the brief “spring” of human life.

The only one of this group that was published first in Tangled Hair is a much quieter poem. The woman addresses the traveler, but only to turn him aside. Passion is purple, red, or peach color in Tangled Hair; the green here means its absence:

What I dreamt was
a green dream, a thin dream
Forgive me traveler
I have no tales
to tell you

Mishi wa sore / midori no yume no / bosoki yume / Yuruse tabibito /
katari kusa naki (no. 235; first published in Midaregami)

VOICES AND DIALOGUES

Previously, in Chapter 4, we saw how Akiko experimented with voice even when she was still an old-fashioned kyōha-style poet, attempting a few poems in the relatively ungendered person of the hermit and using powerful images of nature, like waves breaking on the shore. A little later, in Yoshibaishigusa, she published what she called “an objective love poem,” a slightly more original
attempt to escape the fetters of gender by speaking as an omniscient narrator. By 1900, though, under the pressure of a passionate love that, as she later said, “burned my body,” she began to find a new voice, as female as, in a traditional sense, it was unfeminine; this was the voice of the three poems above (and others discussed earlier), and it was unique to Tangled Hair: oracular, majestic, shamanic. Having reached this peak, in which it almost seemed as if another voice spoke through her, Akiko became as it were an empty vessel, able to take on many voices. If she could speak as an avatar of the goddess of love, she could also become a dove or a koto and, without losing a beat, turn herself back into a poet or an ordinary woman. As though the invention of one speaker led to another, characters now multiplied. The poems Akiko published in July 1901 included two fantasy dialogues, one between a woman pining away from love and her koto, the other between a poet and a dove (a bird that frequents temples and shrines in Japan).

The first poem of the dialogue between the neglected woman and her koto was titled “To the koto” and the second, “The koto replies”:

Untouched strings that sound each night: the habit of your mad delirium
Little koto, I’ll lend you my sleeve, come sleep with me!

Soranari no / yogoto no kuse zo / kuruboshiki / Nare yo ogoto yo /
katasode kasamu (Koto ni) (no. 276; Myōjō, July 1901)

Think me a little koto that in the passing spring serves anyone who lets it rest upon their heart—
Your eyebrows are so soft!

Nashi erabazu / mune ni furenu no / yuku baru no / ogoto to obose /
Mayu yawaki kimi (Koto no iraete) (no. 277; Myōjō, July 1901)

The koto sounds each night even though no one plays it; the music arises spontaneously from its own mad longings, longings that reflect those of the woman who, in response, offers her own embrace as consolation. The koto gratefully accepts, praising the woman’s beauty as it does so. Both voices of the dialogue are best read as female, for the poet has split a lovesick woman in two: the koto is the exteriorized voice of the woman’s own mad longings. There are also playful same-sex overtones: a man might be preferable, but for a koto willing to serve “anyone / who lets it rest upon their heart,” a woman is quite acceptable, in fact in this case quite nice, for “Your eyebrows are so soft!”
after all, the land of spring, where passion is more important than its object and
gender is sometimes dissolved in the general excitement.

Here is the dialogue between the dove and the poet:

Cherry blossoms
drifting on the spring breeze
around the pagoda
at twilight I will paint the wings
of the dove with a poem

_Harukaze ni / sakurabana chiru / sōtō no / yūbe wo hato no / ha ni uta somenu_
(no. 171; Myōjō, July 1901)

Listen, poet!
It's spring and what are these
ragged letters
you've scribbled on the underside
of my pure white wings?

_Kike na Haru wo / masshiro no ware no / ha no ura ni / midareshi moji no /
 nakarazu ya kimi (TYAZ, 1:337; Myōjō, July 1901. Ware is furigana
next to character for hato; kimi for shijin)_

Some of Akiko's poems about Tekkan, as we have seen, showed him inscribing
his poems on various surfaces, from lotus leaves to kimono linings; the idea of
writing on a dove’s white wings might have been suggested by his habits. But
here the poem inscribed on the wings of the dove could very well be the first
one of the pair we are reading. Why only that one made it into _Tangled Hair_,
while the second one, the dove’s reply, did not, is a mystery. _Ware_ (I) and _kimi_
(you) were the pronunciations indicated for the characters usually pronounced
_hato_ (dove) and _shijin_ (poet), but this double meaning could only be understood
if one saw the poem. Perhaps it came to seem an unsuccessful experiment.
Whatever the reason, both poems seem better off for having the other, and the
bantering tone of the exchange shows the playfulness familiar to Akiko’s
friends and relatives but not often seen in print.

Although not dialogues, there were several other poems in the dove’s voice,
including one first published in June 1901, as part of a group of ten called
“Shirahato” (White dove):

_The young one’s
breast milk scents the rain
and in that spring brew
I will dye my outer feathers
I, the white dove!_
Like the “young one” in the first poem discussed in this chapter, “Drops from / the young one’s hair” (Wakaki ko ga / kami no shizuku), the “young one” in this poem is an adult, a young woman. Here she is breast-feeding in a heaven of Akiko’s own imagining; her breast milk scents and colors the falling rain. The setting, of course, is again the land of spring—the beginning of the world—and transformation is the business at hand, as the white dove prepares to “dye” itself with the milky-white rain and so renew its own color.34

This poem has puzzled (or, in the case of Hiraide Shū, disgusted)35 the commentators, but, again, a painting by Titian seems to explain it. This is his Venus and Cupid, which shows a nude, reclining Venus with a little cupid behind her, his left hand resting just above her breast. The mother’s head is turned slightly back, and she and the child, who looks about two or three years old, are looking into each other’s eyes.36 To anyone who has observed a nursing couple, or been part of one, it seems obvious that this cupid is a nursing toddler, perhaps asking to nurse or just affectionately patting his mother’s breast. Akiko, of course, had seen her own younger brother nursing until he was seven years old, and her younger sister nursing until she was four, so a scene like this would not have surprised her. Her poem may be the first one about breast feeding in Japanese literature.

Here we must stop to consider at more length the Titian connection, for this is the third poem that seems to be explained by one of his paintings. Mary Magdalene, her hand pressed to breast in emotion, clarifies the gesture of the speaker in “Pressing my breast” (Chibusa osae); Venus Anadyomene, wringing out her wet hair, clarifies the setting of “Drops from /the young one’s hair” (Wakaki ko ga / kami no shizuku); and Venus and Cupid, the nursing couple, suggests that the heavenly breast milk of “The young one’s / breast milk” (Wakaki ko ga / chiichi no ka) comes from an avatar of the goddess of love herself. The paintings and the poems cast mutual reflections.

Furthermore, there is a poem which suggests that Akiko and Tekkan had a reproduction of a Titian painting on the wall of their modest home in Shibuya and that its beauty aroused complex feelings of envy and admiration in her. Perhaps it was of Flora, which had appeared in the March 1901 issue of Myōjō, introduced by Ueda Bin, or perhaps it was one of the three paintings mentioned above:

Against the shabby wall
Titian’s glory pains me
On such a night
hide not
our brimming sake jug
Satake takes the brimming sake jug (more of a Chinese image than a traditional tanka one) as a metaphor for their overflowing love and poetic talent; Itsumi follows him. That Akiko herself did not think the poem completely successful is suggested by the fact that she removed it from the 1903 edition of *Tangled Hair* and substituted another.

There is no firm evidence that Akiko saw the three nude paintings mentioned above, but circumstances suggest strongly that she did. After the banning of *Myöjö*’s November 1900 issue, with its nude line drawing by Ichijō Narumi (imitated from a typical French one of the time), Tekkan, in spite of his withering attack on the government in the December issue, decided to retrench: the banning had cost him too much in terms of circulation, and if he persisted he might have to close down altogether. Thus his editor’s letter in the January 1901 issue: “In this issue, I had planned to publish reproductions of ten nude paintings by famous Western artists (seiō meika no rataiga), but because of that sudden banning, in the end I gave up the idea, and that is one reason why this issue is not well laid out. With feelings of regret, I have also refused the kind offer of nude paintings made by Mr. Roseki of Osaka.”

Tekkan had mentioned Roseki’s offer to show him reproductions of “famous European paintings” in the November 1900 issue of *Myöjö* (p. 91); if these were the same as the nude paintings Tekkan refers to here, then he meant reproductions of classical works. Since Titian’s nudes are among the most celebrated of European art, and the three mentioned above are among the most famous of them all, it is more than likely that Akiko had had the reproductions available to look at in her and Tekkan’s own home.

But Akiko’s acquaintance with Titian as the supreme painter of the nude in classical European art goes even further back, for *Bungakukai*, which we know she read while still in Sakai, carried reproductions of *The Head of Venus* (a detail of *Sleeping Venus*) and of Titian’s *Daughter Lavinia*, as well as a long article on Titian. The pseudonymous author (most likely a man) of the article, which appeared in the issue of July 1896, devoted almost three pages of his total of six to Titian’s nudes, disagreeing strongly with the eminent English critic John Ruskin’s criticism of them. In describing *Sleeping Venus*, he emphasized two things: first, its vivid beauty and, second, the sense it projected that “this is not a figure of the ordinary world (zokukai jinken no sugata ni arazu), but . . . the essence of love and beauty (ai to bi to no honshò).” Then he outlined the argument of “the Ruskinites” (*Ruskin ippa*), who thought Titian’s nudes immoral, and concluded with an impassioned defense: “If there are those who think this figure of a goddess of love and beauty is simply a pretty woman, and call it a pernicious imitation of physical attractiveness, I have no hesitation in calling...
such people cold-hearted sinners who do not understand the truth of beauty and love.”

Here the critic put his finger on the distinctive quality of Titian’s nudes: their combination of human sensuality with a sense of divinity, the same quality one feels in many of the poems of Tangled Hair. As Kenneth Clark puts it, Titian was “one of the two supreme masters of Natural Venus,” but he also had a special “admiration for an expanse of soft skin,” and was “an absolute master of flesh painting.”

In their combination of divinity and sensuality, Akiko’s verbal nudes and Titian’s pictorial ones resembled one another; both express natural supernaturalism—in this case, “the Venus Naturalis.” Titian in Venus Anadyomene shows an unmistakably human woman wringing out her wet hair but names her after a goddess; in “The young one’s/breast milk” (Wakaki ko ga/chichi no ka) and “Drops from/the young one’s hair” (Wakaki ko ga/kami no shizuku), Akiko describes a creature who is clearly more than human but gives her a human name, “the young one” (wakaki ko). Perhaps the humanity of the supernatural has to be preserved for its artistic depiction to affect us. Each artist does this in the way for which the medium allows: the visual artist depicts the human body and names it for a divinity; the verbal artist describes the divinity and names it for a human being. In Titian’s nudes, Akiko must have seen that combination of sensuality and divinity that she herself felt in the heady early days of her great love.

It would be a mistake, of course, to take any of the Titian-connected poems as no more than poetic renderings of the medieval Venetian’s paintings. Following the thread of the dove poems shows how much Akiko’s imaginative landscape was totally her own. The speaker in another poem first published in the “White Dove” group is attracted by the rain that washes over the swallow’s feathers and thinks of using it to smooth her own black hair:

Spring rain spills
over the swallows’ wings
Shall I gather it
to smooth the tangles of
my morning hair?

Tsubakura no/hane ni shitataru/harusame wo/nkete nademu ka/
waga asanegami (no. 168)

In terms of color, this poem and “The young one’s/breast milk” form a diptych of white and black: just as the white-feathered dove takes to the “milk-scented” rain, so the black-haired woman is drawn to rain that has passed over
the swallow’s glossy blue-black feathers. In both poems, rain is impregnated with other identities (the scent and color of breast milk, the color of the swallow) and then, a creature on earth (the dove, the woman) applies that rain to itself. As the dove becomes whiter and the woman’s hair blacker, heaven and earth mingle, sky and earth come together, each an echo or mirror of the other. There is perfect union and yet neither loses its identity.

In “The young one’s breast milk,” the nursling is only a background presence, but he is foregrounded in one of the famous illustrations by Fujishima Takeji from Tangled Hair, where a cupid is shown aiming an arrow, and also in these two poems:

A boy with
golden wings and an azalea
between his teeth
comes rowing down
a beautiful river in a little boat

Konjiki no /hane aru warawa /tsutsuii kuwae /obane kogikuru /
atsukashiiki kawa (no. 381; Myōjō, July 1901)

How far do you have
to go before you’re home, he said
tugging my sleeve
It was a field at evening
and he a boy with wings

Izuko made /kimi wa kaeru to /yûbe no ni /waga sode hikinu /
bane aru warawa (no. 91; Myōjō, December 1900)

In all of Tangled Hair, the word warawa (literally “child,” but translated “boy”) appears only in these two poems. In her gloss on no. 91 in The Making of Poems, Akiko made it clear that to her the word meant a cupid: “As I cross a field at twilight, something tugs at my sleeve, saying, ‘Why are you going home, when there’s a pleasant world here?’ It is a beautiful child god with wings, a god of love.”

But there is no need to think of the boys in both poems above as the same god. There were many winged cupids in Tangled Hair’s cosmogony, just as there were in the European paintings that either directly or indirectly inspired Akiko’s conception. (Titian’s The Worship of Venus, for example, shows a multitude of small, rambunctious cupids gathered before Venus.) The last line of one of the earliest poems to be included in Tangled Hair used the plural, koi no kamigami, “the gods of love”:

And yet again
I was led astray by a visage
that resembled his—
How you like to toy
with us, you gods of love!

*Omozashi no /nitaru ni mata no /maduikeri /Tawaburemasu yo /
ko ni kamigami* (no. 166; *Myōō*, July 1900)

In the polytheistic world of *Tangled Hair*, there was not one god of love but
many, and they came in both genders.

**REAL WORLDS AND PEOPLE**

The ideal worlds described above, where elements of the natural and supernat-
ural, the real and unreal, mingled unself-consciously, as if in a dream, bracketed
more realistic settings. There we find many of the autobiographical poems
already introduced in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, as well as apprentice geisha (in the
“Dancing Girls” section) and young adolescent girls shown in the rounds of
daily life (nos. 106 through 109, Chapter 11). But perhaps the most surprising,
in terms of the hint they give of other directions that Akiko developed later,
are an early poem on childbirth and another about her older half sister. Here a
young father listens to the birth cry of his first child:

From the inner
room a baby’s first fresh cry—
at that sound
blood rises on the cheeks
of a face still so young!

*Oku no ma no /uramezurashiki /ubugoe ni /chi no ke noborishi /
ono mada wakaki* (no. 152; *Kansai Bungaku*, November 1900)

The wife gives birth in a back room of the house, and as the tensely waiting
father hears the wail that tells him the baby has been born alive, excitement
makes the blood rush to his cheeks. The observer is struck by how young the
red-cheeked man looks, how vulnerable, just at this moment when he is
becoming a parent himself. This is a typical *Tangled Hair* poem in that it is
concerned with transitions, but it is atypical in what Satō Haruo rightly called
“its direct relation to human life.” At the same time, as always in that col-
collection, we find love for youth so all-pervasive that even a potentially objective
word like “young” carries overtones of sensuality and beauty.

The word *uramezurashiki*, “fresh,” had been used in poetry from the *Man’yō-
shū* on to describe natural phenomena such as the first breeze of autumn or the
first flowers of spring, but no classical poet had ever used the word to describe
a baby’s birth cry. Birth, in fact, was not one of the subjects permitted in the
classical tanka. Akiko’s nonchalant daring in combining the classical word with innovative subject matter creates an impression at once elegant and down-to-earth.  

An autobiographical poem about Akiko’s half-sister Hana expressed sympathy for the cousin who had loved her before her marriage to another man and her early death:

A year it was
since my older sister went
when he stood
in the twilit door and called her
name, and I felt his sorrow as my own

_Autumn Wind_ /_Ane no na yobite /yûgure no /to ni tatsu hito wo /aware to omoinu_
(no. 278; _Myojo_, August 1900)

The dates of first publication for most of the realistic poems show that they represented a direction that Akiko had turned away from, at least temporarily, by early 1901. However, readers of _Tangled Hair_ did not read in the order of first publication, but in the radically rearranged order of the collection itself; thus, these obviously realistic poems served the important function of creating an alternation between the fantastic and the real, between intense passion and a quieter, more expansive mood.

Besides the various women above, who appear in relatively specific settings—whether the land of spring, a quasi-historical Heian court, or one contemporary to Akiko—there is an almost disembodied female voice, its setting difficult to pinpoint. In one example, the speaker recalls earlier experiences of love, which seem unreal in comparison to the true love she has lately found:

I wouldn’t call them
love,
those illusory sweet dreams
There was a poet and then
there was an artist too

_In Spring_, _I and my dream_ /_Shijin no ariki /Edakumi no ariki_ (no. 355; _Myojo_, March 1901)

In another, she looks back on herself as she was before she knew love:

It was me
as I was in my spring’s
twentieth year
A pale peony, crimson
in its inward depths
INTERPRETING TANGLED HAIR

Waga haru no batachi sugata to / uchi zo minu / Soko-kurenai no / usuiro botan
(no. 134; Myōjō, July 1901)

In still another, she describes her present pastoral happiness in words that may reflect what it was like to live in what was then the countryside of Shibuya:

Taking a small parasol, I’m off to fetch the morning water
The wheat is greenest green
and a drizzle wets the village

Ogasa torite / asa no mizu kumu / ware to koso / Homugi aoao / kosame furu sato
(no. 86; Myōjō, July 1901)

What a cast of characters! Gods and goddesses of love (koi no kamigami), cupids (warawa), nymphs, painters (edakumi, eshi), poets (shijin), the revered teacher (shi), virgins (otome), women passionately in love, Heian courtiers, argumentative Zen priests (sō), young acolyte priests, young geisha (maihime), talking kotos, doves, and grass; as well as a few others not introduced yet, including a cowherd (ushikai) and the god of night (yoru no kami). The one character who does not appear is the daughter of a merchant family desperate to leave home and make poetry her life. But of course, in a sense, this entire cast is that young woman—the dreams, fantasies, and memories that filled her.

Where did Akiko speak directly in her own unmediated voice? Aside from the autobiographical poems treated in earlier chapters and some of the realistic poems about young girls, there is a small group of elliptical poems whose settings tend to be dreams and darkness. For all their opacity, these poems sound deeply personal: we have only feeling, the motions of the heart, with almost no outward gesture or image, no words that identify the speaker’s age, occupation, or station in life. Often they seem to be obscure remarks made during a conversation of which we know neither the beginning nor the end. And yet, though enigmatic at first, once the situation is grasped, the remark fits so perfectly into the setting that the poem becomes transparent. Such poems, few though they are, are not about an imaginary country of love, that other world that seemed to exist in parallel to or intertwined with our human one; rather, they evoke the reality of earthly love with an allusive sensuality, as here:

Is it something that fades away? If a poet’s dream then it might be—could be—a passing dream—Yet can it be a thing that vanishes?

Kiemu mono ka / Uta yomu hito no / yume to so wa / so wa yume naramu /  
Sate kiemu mono ka (no. 354; Myōjō, March 1901)

Like “Land of spring” (Haru no kuni), this is stream of consciousness, and the fragmentation serves the same purpose of catching thought on the wing. Since it was written after the first nights Akiko spent together with Tekkan, Satake interprets it as being about their love: will it last? Since he is a poet, he might take it as unreal, a fleeting dream... but how can it be so frail when it seems eternal to me? And then, in the next poem, he does, after all, seem to be denying it (although it could also be, as Satake and Itsumi suggest, that he is talking about some episode in the relationship): 51

“It never happened”  
That was what his later self murmured  
To me  
it was  
an eternally beautiful dream

[Arazariki] / So wa ato no hito no / tsukuyakishi / Ware ni wa tose no /  
utsukushi no yume (no. 263 [tose is a printer’s error for towa]; Myōjō, July 1901)

Then there is:

Tempting me in, you  
say farewell and sweep away  
my hand  
The scent of your clothing  
How soft the darkness is

Sasoi-irete / saraha to waga te / haraimasu / Mikeshi no nioi / Yami yawarakaki
(no. 284; Myōjō, July 1901)

The first three lines are baffling until one remembers the double message of Tekkan’s first letter to Akiko of August 1900, how with one hand he seemed to be inviting her into a relationship and with the other warning her away. The same ambivalence in his letters continued from March until she came to Tokyo, and apparently even afterward for some time. Those letters make it tempting to imagine the kind of situation the poem might describe. But once this biographical information has served its purpose, we can discard it, and listen to the poem. At that point, whether the poem is a metaphorical description of the general situation of Akiko’s first months in Tokyo, as Satake thinks, or a depiction of some particular instance of conjugal relations (as Itsumi speculates), or whether it was inspired by real life at all, ceases to matter. 52
This poem, like “It never happened” (Arazzoiki), recalls “Land of spring” (Haru no kuni), but not because of any resemblance. Rather, it is because “Tempting me in” (Sasoi-irete) and “Land of spring” are mirror opposites. In “Land of spring,” the woman awoke to the scent of hair oil in the dimness of dawn; in “Tempting me in,” enfolded by a soft darkness, she falls asleep to the scent of her lover’s clothing. Both poems emphasize the intensity of a scent within the surrounding dimness or dark, but “Land of spring” is a morning-after poem of mutual love, while “Tempting me in” is a night-before poem of rejected love (a category that Akiko makes it necessary to invent). As we have seen with other widely separated poems in the collection, these two poems form a kind of diptych.

In the 1903 third printing of Tangled Hair, “Tempting me in” was replaced by the following poem, which seems to take place at an earlier and less complicated stage of the relationship:

Tell me the truth—
A rainbow in seven colors
this beautiful
love—is it something I
will see forever?

Oshie tanas / Niji no nana iro / utsukushiki / koi to wa towa ni / mite aru
mono ka (TYAZ, 1: 332; Myōjō, March 1901) 55

Utsukushiki, “beautiful,” is a pivot word; placed between niji no nana iro, “rainbow’s seven colors,” and koi, “love,” it describes both: love is a seven-colored rainbow. The phrase to wa is short for to in koto wa, “the thing which is called,” but is also a near-homonym for towa ni, “forever,” which it precedes, so “forever” seems to be said twice, with increasing emotion. This poem is as much about the visions one sees while making love as it is about love itself. One can not help liking a woman who could write such a bold yet delicate love poem so many years ago.
Today, *Tangled Hair*’s sensuality and beauty still have the power to delight, but after a century dominated by the ideas on sexuality of Akiko’s contemporaries Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), even Akiko’s boldest love poems cannot shock us as they did those first readers. There is another way in which our reading differs from theirs, too: we do it with the benefit of scholarly commentary.

Early readers of *Tangled Hair* had only their own instincts and a few reviews and commentaries as guides, and even those dealt with only a fraction of the poems, omitting many that demand biographical knowledge for clarity. Today, the situation is quite different. Biographical facts that were known only to Tekkan, Akiko, and a few others at the time have been available to a wide audience since the pioneering studies of Satō Ryōyū (1956) and Satake Kazuhiko (1957), and their work has been popularized and supplemented by a host of other scholars. Thanks to the splendid variorum collected works issued by the publisher Kōdansha (1979–1981), it is now possible to read every poem in its earliest version, whether that appeared in a magazine, newspaper, or in *Tangled Hair* itself, and then compare the main additions, deletions, and revisions that Akiko later made. Moreover, the publication in recent years of facsimile editions of the magazines *Myōjō*, *Yushingusa*, and *Kansai Bungaku* has made available the many poems and articles by Tekkan and others that were never published in book form, thus enabling us to reconstruct the communal matrix of Akiko’s early poetry. No matter how thorough the first readers of *Tangled Hair* were, they could never have discovered as much about the original context and meaning of the poems as we can now. Our experience of reading *Tangled Hair* is so different from that of readers in 1901 that it is almost as if we were dealing with a different work.

Nor is it only the addition of biographical knowledge that makes the difference. The connections of every poem in *Tangled Hair* to Akiko’s other poems...
and to poems of other poets before and contemporary with her—that is, the intertextual aspects of *Tangled Hair*—have been mined with the loving thoroughness of a biblical scholar. Satake Kazuhiko’s and Itsumi Kumi’s commentaries on *Tangled Hair* give the poems as they were in the first edition,1 interlarded with commentary, but reading either of these works is not a straightforward linear process. Akiko disregarded the original order of publication when she arranged the poems for *Tangled Hair*, so commentary on any single poem usually has to refer to other poems with the same theme or biographical background. If you follow the directions in which the cross-references lead, then you read in circles, skipping back and forth through the collection as you read each poem by itself and then together with all its thematic echoes and relations. In effect, one undoes *Tangled Hair* as one reads. Even if one need not step out of the commentary on a particular poem to pursue the cross-references, one may still make a small pirouette within the commentary’s bounds as one returns to the poem after reading the supplemental material the commentator thoughtfully provides: such material may be the poem’s later version or its replacement in one of the later editions, or else a work by another poet to whom Akiko was either indebted (usually Tōson or Kyūkin) or whom she was obliquely addressing (usually Tekkan, sometimes Tomiko). In short, we are fortunate to have perspectives on *Tangled Hair* which those first readers could never have had—not even Tekkan, its most perceptive commentator, or Akiko herself. Whereas most readers in 1901, or even in 1950 (before Satō Ryōyū stepped on the scene), saw only a flat, two-dimensional picture, our *Tangled Hair* is a three-dimensional revolving mobile, almost a Jean Tinguely kinetic sculpture.

And yet, something is missing: no one, so far as I know, has inquired into the principles on which Akiko chose and organized the poems for *Tangled Hair*, the formal integrity and coherence of the work itself. Having discussed the poems in biographical and thematic terms in previous chapters, I shall now move on to this terra incognita, the shape of *Tangled Hair* itself.

In the year and a half from April 1900 to August 1901, Akiko published or included in letters 640 poems; she also wrote another 106 that were first published in *Tangled Hair*. How was this mass sifted and rearranged to arrive at the 399 poems and six sections of *Tangled Hair*? Unfortunately, we do not know; there are only a few clues.

In her letter of February 22, 1901, Akiko playfully warned Tekkan not to “scold” her for sending “doll poems” and thus showing that she had not “learned my lesson from the dancing girl” ones.2 Sixteen poems about the Dolls’ Festival, a holiday for girls, were enclosed; none were included in *Tangled Hair*.

The other reference was to nineteen poems on apprentice geisha (“danc-
ing girls,” maibime) that she had published in the January 1901 Myōjō; fourteen were included in Tangled Hair. Presumably Tekkan thought poems about dolls, even the elegant ones of the Dolls’ Festival, were too childish and must have convinced Akiko that he was right: only two poems in the collection (nos. 109 and 350) mention them. Other than this tantalizing piece of evidence, the record stops short just as the process of culling and reordering begins. We have the 640 poems, and we have the collection, but there is a gap in the record between.

Now that Akiko was in Tokyo, there was no need for letters between her and Tekkan. Myōjō also lost its role as a virtual post office where they could pick up those hermetic poems that had had the efficacy of love letters. The records of Akiko’s personal life at this time are almost all in the form of a few pieces of autobiographical fiction with no available corroborating evidence. It was a hot summer, with little going on; mostly, it seems, they hunkered down, Akiko working on the book, Tekkan on his various projects, though there is a possibility that they spent a few days at Saga, near Kyoto. This poem, first published in Tangled Hair, must be a portrait of Akiko at work, Tekkan nearby:

Shut up indoors,
the jealous wife culls poems
for her book—
At home in June
the two are beautiful

Komori-i ni /shû no uta nuku /netamizuma /Satsuki no yado no /futari
utsukushiki (no. 297) 5

Thus, we have to reconstruct as best we can. In a few cases, changes or omissions seem understandable, and were clearly made for the sake of discretion, consistency with the collection’s overall theme, or else poetic quality. In “Farewell my love” (Kimi saraba), the setting was changed to the legendary Fuzan, almost certainly to conceal the scandalous fact of the lovers’ tryst at Awata. “In robes of black” (Kinu kuroki) was omitted, probably because its theme was death. (Both poems are discussed in Chapter 9.) Quality is a more subjective matter, but in certain cases poems that were dropped were clearly inferior. For example, in the letter to Tekkan of February 2, 1901, which included the original version of “Farewell my love,” Akiko also included three other poems. Like “Farewell my love,” they grew out of her fear that her brief encounter with Tekkan would not lead to a lasting relationship, but, unlike the speaker of “Farewell my love,” who even in her grief is strong, daring, and half-divine, the speaker in the other poems is clinging, desperate, and close to incoherent. There is nothing attractive about these poems and one is glad Akiko omitted them.
In other cases, formal considerations were probably paramount. There are a large number of poems in *Tangled Hair* with more than thirty-one syllables (*ji-amari*), but the following poem has two successive lines of equal length, which seems especially awkward, even though the ungrammatical *kiku taezu* is probably a printer’s error for *kiku ni taezu*:

His words too much to hear, unbearable
I cover my young ears—
he is too tender

*Sono kotoba / kiku taezu to / wakaki mimi wo / ou ni amari / hito no yasashiki* (*TYAZ*, 1:334)

Finally, there was the matter of tone. Lovely as the following poem is, Akiko may have felt its tone was too timid, not passionate enough for a love poem (like the poem above, it was in the March 1901 issue of *Myōjō*):

He embraced me—
not harshly
This night
the stars are small
they stay in the sky

*Unaji daku / hito tsurakaranu / Kono yûbe / hoshi wa chiisaki / sora no mono nari* (*TYAZ*, 1:331)

Most of the omissions could probably be accounted for by the standards exemplified above, but we still have to account for the most drastic change the remaining poems underwent: the rearrangement of their original order, for the date of original publication bears almost no relation to a poem’s placement in *Tangled Hair*. Even when poems of the same date appear side by side, their order is almost always different from what it was in the original place of publication. On what principles, then, were the poems ordered and arranged?

*Tangled Hair* is divided into six sections—“Scarlet Purple,” “The Lotus Boat,” “White Lily,” “The Wife at Twenty,” “The Dancing Girl,” and “Spring Feelings”—and one’s first instinct is to see if those divisions can shed some light on the problem. But in fact, except for the poems in “The Dancing Girl,” which are mostly about apprentice geisha, and those in “White Lily,” which are mostly about Yamakawa Tomiko, the connections between section headings and poems are quite loose. The headings do fit some of the poems, usually the ones near the beginning, but by no means all. Even a cursory reading makes it clear that the headings were no more than convenient dividers.
The truth of the matter is that it would have been impossible to set up truly distinct sections in *Tangled Hair*, because in a broad sense the themes are too repetitive—it is in the details of voice, speaker, and imagery that the variety lies. That is why the sections that are most consistent (“White Lily” and “The Dancing Girl”) are also the shortest. A way had to be found to disperse all those similar poems so that they would complement rather than detract from each other. The problem was one that editors of poetry collections in Japan had been coping with for centuries, so perhaps it is not surprising that the solution found owes a great deal to a traditional form of Japanese poetry, linked verse.

In a word, the poems in *Tangled Hair* were recontextualized using methods Akiko could only have learned from linked verse. The most noticeable is the use of imagistic connections between the poems rather than narrative ones. Other traces of linked verse appear as well. Sometimes the connections between poems are loose, sometimes tight, which medieval poets called *shinku-soku*, “closely and remotely linked verses”; sometimes a poem can be construed in two different ways, depending on whether it is read with the preceding poem or the succeeding one (called *torinaishî*); and poems that present striking and vivid images alternate with plainer ones (*mon-ji*, pattern-ground). Often it is *engo*, or related words, that make the bridge, but it can also be a shift in setting or time—from outer world to inner, real to fantastic, contemporary to literary or historical, nature to human, day to night, or vice versa. Sometimes the connection is established by a move from one voice to another, related one; at other times, it is a change in perspective, as the focus changes from small details to a larger vista. Such subtle transitions seem particularly apt for Akiko’s style of fragmentary, visionary poetry, and the pleasure of reading *Tangled Hair* comes in part from catching them on the wing.

Of course, *Tangled Hair* is also different from linked verse in many ways. No one could ever read the collection and mistake it for either a medieval *renga* or a Tokugawa period *haikai* sequence. It is much longer than most *renga* or *haikai*; nor does it follow their typical *jo-ha-kyû* rhythm, which begins quietly and gradually grows more complex and striking. Other differences could easily be cited. Nevertheless, the subtle ways in which transitions are made from poem to poem are too close to linked verse for the similarity to be ignored, or for it to be mere coincidence.

How well did Akiko know linked verse? Clearly, she did not sit down with a *renga* rule book and try to follow it, nor did she ever, so far as I know, mention reading *renga* or *haikai*. The poet-painter Yosa Buson, a master of *haikai* linked verse, was one of her favorite poets, but it seems more likely that she knew him as a haiku poet, which was the way Masaoka Shiki presented him in *The Haiku Poet Buson*. Besides, Shiki had dismissed linked verse as outside the bounds of literature in his *Bashô Zoden* (Musings on Bashô, 1893), with the pithy “*Hokku*
[haiku] is literature. *Renga* and *haikai* are not literature. Therefore, I have not discussed them.*

Literature or not, however, poets in the Meiji period still enjoyed linking verses, and this included Shiki himself, who composed several *haikai* with his disciples. As we have seen, the tanka poets with whom Akiko associated also showed interest in linking. The exchange between Tekkan, Akiko, and Kyōan at the Takashi Beach workshop of August 1900 (see Chapter 5) was a variation on a kind of *haikai* game called *kutsuzake*, “adding to the last line,” that had been practiced in the late Tokugawa period. Akiko and Tomiko’s joint letter of October 1900 (Chapter 6) began as a tanka sequence, then ended with four links. Then there were the two links that Tekkan and Kyōan composed jointly later that month (Chapter 7) as they walked around Kōrakuen. In addition, the November 1900 issue of *Myōjō* recorded a linked-verse session held by sixteen poets (including Tekkan, Ochiai Naobumi, and Kawai Suimei) on October 21, and the December 1900 issue of *Kansai Bungaku* had two pages of more double links by Tekkan, Kyōan, and other poets.

The fact that the linked-verse composition at Takashi Beach took place after the serious tanka session was over, and that Tekkan began by offering a cup of sake to Kyōan, shows that it was considered a game of wits or lighthearted repartee rather than serious literature. But “Hitoyo monogatari: sokkyōshi” [A tale of one night: Improvised poetry], which appeared in the September 1901 issue of *Myōjō*, was more ambitious. This thirty-eight-verse-long tanka sequence was composed on the night of August 23, 1901 (less than ten days after *Tangled Hair* went on sale) by Akiko, Tekkan, and the New Poetry Society member Hiratsuka Shishū (Atsushi). The three took turns composing complete tanka, with each verse introduced by a title telling who the fictional speaker was. Most of them were familiar from the poetry of Tōson and Kyūkin, and many from *Tangled Hair* as well: a painter, a young Buddhist priest, a young Buddhist nun, a maiden, a poet, a cowherd, a woman, and a ruined man. Once these voices were established, and a poem assigned to each, they began to address each other in tanka titled: “Nun to poet,” “Woman to priest,” “Painter to young girl,” “Priest to woman,” “Ruined man to nun,” “Cowherd to young girl,” “Young girl to painter,” and so on. The sequence resolved with two poems titled with the speaker’s name only, “Young girl,” and “The innkeeper.”

Although it was a tanka sequence, “A Tale of One Night” had at least three characteristics that resembled *haikai* and *renga* linked verse: first, it was of multiple authorship; second, its title indicates that it was composed at one sitting; and third, several fictional figures appear in it. And yet the figures themselves are quite different from those found in *haikai* or *renga*: most of them could have wandered in from the world of new-style verse. As if this mélange of different poetic genres were not enough, the sequence also brings to mind the
dialogue poems examined in Chapter 7, with their chorus of voices—principally Akiko, Tekkan, Tomiko, but others, as we have seen, as well. All these forms—*renga*, *haikai*, the multiple-authored tanka sequence, jointly authored tanka, “capping” verses, dialogue poems—are alike in one sense: they occur within a communal context. With such activities occurring around her and as a participant in some of them herself, it would have been natural for Akiko to organize her collection along similar lines. In this sense, *Tangled Hair*, though an expression of the new respect for the individual that characterized the Meiji period, may also be the finest fruit of the New Poetry Society’s ancient practice of poetry as a communal art.

Given below are translations and readings for two groups of poems: the first, poems 24 through 26, is three poems long; the other, poems 99 through 111, is thirteen. Since Akiko created one seamless flow, these lengths were not dictated by any natural breaks in the text. Rather, the shorter group is where I first noticed how the poems were connected. The longer one was purposely chosen at random in order to demonstrate that *renga*-like transitions are found consistently throughout the collection.

In poems 24 to 26, related words form the links:

The god of night
rides home at dawn upon
a sheep—I’ll catch it as
it comes and hide it
underneath a little pillow!

*Yo no kami no/asanori kaeru/hitsuji torae/chisaki makura no/
shita ni kakasamu* (no. 24)

Cowherd, as you
come along the shore
give us a song
The waters of the autumn
lake lie dark with loneliness

*Migiwa kuru/ushikai otoko/uta are na/Aki no mizuumi/amari sabishiki* (no. 25)

This hot tide of blood
beneath soft skin and you don’t
even brush it with a fingertip
Aren’t you lonely then
you who preach the Way?
In “The god of night,” the speaker, reluctant to part from her lover, plots to hide the little sheep that the god of night rides home on; that way, dawn will never come. The setting of “Cowherd” is a lonely lakeside, where a cowherd silently leads his charges along the shore. The autumnal lake mirrors the speaker’s melancholy, and she begs the cowherd to sing a cheerful song. In “This hot tide of blood,” the speaker is a passionate woman taunting an ascetic moralist—or all the moralists of the world, whatever doctrine they preach—to taste the pleasures of the flesh.

The speakers, themes, and settings of the three poems are different. First, we have two happy lovers in a fantasy bedroom, the female speaker (“little” is a female marker, as is “soft skin” in the third poem) reluctant for the happy night to end; then we have a melancholy speaker at an autumn lake, of indeterminate sex; then a passionate young woman taunting some kind of moralist or young priest without any setting at all. We could fashion the poems into a narrative by saying the first is satisfied love; then somehow the affair is over and the woman is sad; and then she is trying to induce the lover, who was perhaps a priest, to come back, or else is tempting someone new. But these connections feel forced, and would become harder and harder to sustain as we read on. Much better to look elsewhere. It is now that the verbal connections, the engo or related words, become apparent: the first and second poems are linked by domestic animals—a sheep and cows—while the second and third are linked by liquid things—waters and tides. But the first and third poem have no link at all beyond the always pervasive theme of passion. This method of proceeding by overlap, with a poem linked to the one before and the one afterward in two different ways, is basic to renga and haikai linked verse, and in the taxonomy of images for renga there is a category for “animals” (ugokimono) and also one for “water-related things” (suihen).

In the next group of poems (the first thirteen of “The Lotus Flower Boat” section), the readings of individual poems are presented first, and then, with the poems repeated in two-line form, the transitions.

“THE LOTUS FLOWER BOAT,” POEM NOS. 99–111

Slowly your boat
rows home so late at night—
O priest, did you
count more of the flame-red
lotuses, or of the white ones?
Kogikaeru / yûbune osoki / sō no kimi / guren ya ōki / sbirabasu ya ōki
(no. 99)  
A young priest is returning from an expedition to see the lotuses on the lake, which are just coming into bloom. Guren, “flame-red lotuses,” is a Buddhist word for the red lotus, and red is a color associated with passion in Tangled Hair. The lotus on which the enlightened sit after being reborn in the Buddhist paradise is, on the other hand, white. The question about the flowers is thus a veiled inquiry into the state of the young priest’s heart: were you thinking of love, or was your mind on enlightenment? The speaker—whoever s/he is—has been waiting impatiently for the young priest’s return. “A poem of fantasy, all like a dream, but as beautiful as a painting; the elliptical language . . . provokes the reader’s imagination,” wrote Satō Haruo, evoking both the ambiguity and the visual presence of this poem. The tone is too strong, too elevated, to think of the speaker as a young girl, an otome. Taking a hint from Tekkan’s reading of another poem, we can read her as an avatar of the goddess of love or, better still, as a poet possessed by that goddess and speaking in tongues, a female counterpart to the priest.

In a summerhouse
we hear the water’s sound
through the wisteria night
Don’t, please don’t
leave that low pillow!

Azumaya ni / mizu no oto kiku / fuji no yū / hazushimasuna no /
hikuki makura yo (no. 100)

Lovers are relaxing in a summerhouse, the man reclining on a thin pillow. From outside comes “the sound of water” from a spring or a brook, and the faint scent of wisteria on the night air. Suddenly the woman (hazushimasuna is a feminine form of the imperative) realizes that the moment reproduces one in an ancient Chinese poem, “The Mountain Hut,” by Po Chü-i. Her companion might be tempted to get up—after all, the pillow isn’t high enough to do much good—but if he does, he will ruin the mood. So she orders him fondly, “Stay right where you are!” In other words, please don’t break this magic moment—and also, perhaps, I’m about to lie down next to you.

It is not her sleeve
but the length of her hair that
they spoke of
Seven feet—which would
that be among the white wisteria?
A man fantasizes about a woman whom he has never seen. She is a court lady, sequestered from the sight of men behind screens. Court women of course prided themselves on their long hair, but this lady has extraordinarily long hair—seven shaku long, he has heard. He gazes at the wisteria’s cascades, trying to see which one could match her hair in length.

The summer flowers’
wasted shapes are vivid red
under the midday sun—
they will to live and so
too shall live this love, this child!

The speaker, who has undergone trials in satisfying her love, takes inspiration from the summer flowers, which look thin and wasted but bloom bright-red, as though they mean to live. This poem was written after Akiko came to Tokyo, and we who know the troubles she had during those first months can hardly help reading it biographically, as a personal manifesto that she would survive come what may, live on (as in fact she did) holding fast to her love. (Kono ko here, as elsewhere in Akiko’s poems of this period, is the first-person “I”; it does not mean child.)

Shoulder-sliding, then
wavering over the sutra:
restless hair
One virgin—One heart alive—
Spring’s clouds are close, are deep

On a spring afternoon, as a girl pores over a sutra, her loose hair, sliding over her shoulders, wavers over the scroll—“a breath-taking moment,” says Satake. The long, loose hair suggests youth, or a young woman of the Heian court, or both. Akiko, as seen already in “Land of spring” (Haru no kuni, Chapter 10), often wrote highly sensual poems whose heart is the woman’s intoxication with her own female sexuality; surely this is one of them, though the intoxication is unconscious, expressed only in the wavering of the hair.
Yuragi no sozorogami, literally “waverings unquiet hair,” would be easy to grasp if it were expanded to the more grammatically conventional sozorogokoro no yō ni yurete iru kami, “hair which wavers like an unquiet heart,” but Akiko’s coinage, sozorogami, fuses the motion of the heart and the motion of the hair, so that we seem to be reading the girl’s feeling, her wavering between religion and worldly delights, in her hair. This is another of those poems which consist almost entirely of nouns connected by the semantically prolific particle no. The effect is that everything—the girl, her heart, the spring, the clouds, the sutra—merges into one liquid stream of sound. The girl is human, but in the background one feels the magical “land of spring, country of love” where nymphs dwell with speaking birds and plants. Once she turns away from the sutras, one thinks, the girl may notice them, and her own heart’s desires as well.

The wind loops her unbound hair around a fresh green branch and there—
to the west! not two feet long
a beautiful rainbow arcs

Tokikami wo / wakae ni karamu / kaze no nishi yo / Nishaku taranu / utsukushiki niji (no. 104; nishaku was corrected to nishaku ni in the September 1901 Myōjō)

The scene is sylvan, and the hair’s owner must be one of those nymphs that Hinatsu Kōnosuke said often appear in Tangled Hair. Perhaps she is sitting in a tree, enjoying the breeze ruffling her unbound hair. As a specially strong gust catches her hair and loops it around a branch, she looks toward the west, in the direction the wind is blowing (the spring wind, which comes from the east, blows toward the west). There, through the branches, she suddenly sees a beautiful small rainbow in the distance.

Urged out, I stepped down from the carriage to the darkness at the water’s edge
On the arched bridge
the faint purple of wisteria

Unagasarete / migiwa no yami ni / kuruma orinu / Hono murasaki no / sorihashi no faji (no. 105)

It is night, and a pair of lovers are on their way home in a carriage, when they come to an arched bridge over a pond surrounded by wisteria. The man urges the woman to get out and look at the beautiful sight, so she does, and is moved
by the beauty of the sight. Or so runs the conventional reading. But look at the poem again: there is nothing that specifies the two figures as a man and a woman. Only the flowers and the actions taken concerning them (being urged, stepping down) are specific and clear.

There was a famous arched bridge at Sumiyoshi Shrine, near Akiko’s home in Sakai, and in My Childhood she described a summer trip to that very shrine, made in a convoy of carriages, and her unforgettable delight at the beauty of the shrine lights at dawn. This suggests another story to attach to this brushstroke of a poem: a sleepy child on the way home from the shrine at night, awakened to see the famous bridge and its beautiful wisteria. But if we imagine the vehicle as a medieval ox-carriage, then the occupants change again, becoming medieval courtiers who, as custodians of the poetic tradition, are especially sensitive to natural beauty, and perhaps, by the same token, lovers, too.

Without thinking
I lifted my hand from the loom:
the song at the gate!
My older sister smiled
and I, I blushed within

Two sisters are weaving. (Weaving was still an everyday household activity in turn-of-the-century Japan, and some people in Sakai, including Akiko’s cousin Osa-yan, did it commercially too.) Then the voice of a boy or young man with whom the younger sister is in love is heard singing just outside the house, at the gate. The girl unconsciously stops the motion of her hand, the better to hear him. Her older sister smiles, and although the girl pretends not to notice that her heart has been so quickly read, she is overcome with secret embarrassment.

Freshly bathed and dressed
and rouged, I’ve smiled at myself
in a full-length mirror
on more than one of
the yesterdays of my life

A young woman remembers herself as she was before she had awakened to love, when she could still innocently enjoy her own prettiness.
In front of
some boys my sleeve let slip
a silken hand-ball
What do I know, I said and
cradling it in my arms, I fled

Hitomae wo / tamoto suberishi / kinudemari / shirazu to iite / kakaete nigenu
(no. 108)

A girl drops a silken ball in front of some young men, and when they tease her,
she quickly picks it up and runs off saying, shirazu (the modern shiranai). (This incident,
Akiko wrote in The Making of Poems, was a real memory of her girlhood days.)
Shiranai is a coy phrase, a kind of flirtatious riposte hardly used anymore, but it meant something like “What would a silly girl like me know?”
This kind of male–female dialogue must have been what Satake had in mind when he said that such scenes often took place on the sidewalks of towns and cities, and that though the poem seems slight, the theme and conception have a popular, common (shominteki) touch that had not been seen before in the tanka form.

I shut the two dolls
away in a single box and
closed the lid
Somehow, not knowing why, a sigh . . .
What would the peach blossoms think?

Hitotsu bako ni / hiina osamete / futa tojite / nan to naki iki / momo ni habakaru
(no. 109)

The dolls are the male and female dolls displayed once a year during the Dolls’ Festival in March. The image of their owner, a girl putting the two dolls away after the festival, is erotically charged: the dark shared box suggests the marital bed, and at the sight she sighs, then is overcome with self-consciousness. With this, a whisper of longing is added to the embarrassment, pleasure, and coy flight of the previous three poems. Peach blossoms (the Dolls’ Festival flower) are always a reminder of innocent sexuality in Tangled Hair (for example, as in the famous fifth poem of the collection: “The camellia / and so too the plum / are thus, are white / The color that does not ask my sin / I see in the peach blossom” Tsubaki sore mo / ume mo sanariki / shirokariki / Waga tsumi towanu / iro mono ni miru, no. 5; Miyōji, May 1901), so the sigh and the peach blossoms mirror each other, the blossoms being witness to the longing. The physical placement of the words iki momo—literally, “sigh peach”—right next to each other, with nothing between, replicates this relationship. Ueda Bin, who apparently
liked this poem too, said it reminded him of "a girl boarder at a French convent school." 24

Faintly seen—
at an inn outside Nara, among
the young leaves—
Thinly drawn eyebrows
how I missed you!

Honō mishi wa / Nara no hazure no / wakaba yado / usumayuzumi no /
Natsukashikarishi (no. 110)

Who was seen, and who was seeing? The poem does not tell us. Satake feels that the speaker is an Edo period girl of the merchant class who is remembering an attractive man she saw from a distance when she was staying at an inn. As was customary among the nobility at that time, his eyebrows were shaven and he had lightly drawn in a second pair higher up on his forehead. So the scene is rendered as the commoner girl pining for the aristocratic gentleman. Itsumi, on the other hand, taking the eyebrows as those natural to a young girl and unmade-up, reads the poem’s speaker as a male traveler who is fondly remembering a pretty young girl whom he saw at the inn. 25 Different as their readings are, both commentators assume that the person looking and the person seen are of opposite sexes, and past puberty. Akiko herself, however, gave ample grounds for reading both figures as female children.

In "Red Plum Blossom Diary," brief commentaries on several of the poems of Tangled Hair, Akiko wrote that "the unadorned diary truth" behind this poem was that at Wakamiya in Kasugayama, she had been "captivated by one of" the bugaku dancers, who carried a red fan and a bell with lavender strips hanging from it; and that later—"did we have a relation from a previous life?"—she saw those "painted eyebrows" (mayuzumi, not the "thinly drawn eyebrows," or usumayuzumi of the poem) again, among young leaves "on the road to Kyoto," and "for a second time felt the sorrow of leaving" them. 26

Akiko did not specify the gender of the person to whom she was attracted. However, according to the present shrine authorities at Kasuga Taisha Shrine in Nara, the costumes and makeup she describes—particularly the eyebrows, drawn on after the natural ones had been shaved off, as the nobility did—are those of the mikanko or child shrine maidens who performed (and still perform) kagura, or sacred dances at the shrine. In the Meiji period, they were only allowed to perform until menarche, since after that they would be "impure." 27 Thus, the person Akiko saw was undoubtedly a young girl, and Akiko herself was probably around the same age. Perhaps it was that time in her life when...
(as discussed in Chapter 3) she was attracted to the imperial virgins of Ise and Kamo, and "wanted to stay a pure, undefiled virgin all my life."

If we carry Akiko's true experience over to the poem, much that is puzzling begins to make sense. First of all, there is the poem's blurring of gender—an ambiguity that Satake's and Itsumi's opposing interpretations only serve to emphasize, and which hints that sexuality is not germane here. The temptation to eroticize the poem comes partly from the desire for the predictable narrativity of a love poem, and partly from the fact that we tend not to think of children as having a response to beauty this intense; most adults probably associate such strong responses only with erotic feelings. Akiko's commentary leaves room for several readings of the poem, but surely it suggests that the place to begin is by reading the poem as a child's response to human beauty. It is, to rephrase Joyce, a portrait of the artist as a young girl.

Second, there is the setting and the time. Satake and Itsumi both assume that the speaker's first sight of the "thinly drawn eyebrows" was at "an inn outside Nara," and that s/he, having moved on or returned home, is now recollecting someone seen there. Akiko's commentary, however, suggests another reading, for it states that the poem's "faintly seen" sight "outside Nara" (geographically equivalent to the commentary's "on the road to Kyoto") was the second sight, and that the first one was when she saw the dancer in the precincts of the shrine at Nara itself. In other words, what the poem celebrates is the second sight; the first sight takes place before the time of the poem, outside its frame.

The commentary differs from the poem in another way, too: it emphasizes the sadness she felt at losing sight of those beautiful eyebrows for a second time (nagori oshima-seibi), whereas the poem is about her joy on seeing them again. Natsukashikarishi (natsukashikatta is the modern form) has three possible meanings: first, "wanted to be near someone, was fond of them"; second, "missed someone, remembered them nostalgically"; third, a greeting to a person one has not seen for some time, meaning "Good to see you again! How I missed you!" Itsumi takes the word in the first sense and Satake in the second. However, Akiko's commentary suggests that the third sense is also possible, and it is that which I have used in my translation: oh, here you are again, she whispers in her heart to those beautiful eyebrows, how good to see you! The sad farewell that Akiko spoke of in her commentary, the moment afterward, is deleted. The poem begins in the middle of the experience that inspired it and breaks off before the end. Even without knowing this, it gives an impression of fragmentary incompleteness, and yet, as we have seen before, a sense of visual completion. As the two conflicting impressions resonate against each other, the fric-
tion produces that sense of mystery and overtones which characterizes many of
the best poems in *Tangled Hair*.

Red flowers in bloom
and you don’t even know their name
Why rush through the fields
on that narrow path
you with your little parasol?

*Ake ni na no /shiranu hana saku /no no komin /isogitamana /ogasa no hitori* (no. 111)

Who is speaking to the girl? Perhaps it is “the winged child” (*izuko made*,
“How far do you have,” Chapter 10). In both poems, we can read the speaker
as Akiko’s version of Cupid, suggesting that the girl slow down and enjoy the
spring, open her eyes to the beauty that surrounds her, perhaps even fall in
love. What was cause for shame in the poem about the girl who is weaving here
becomes a virtue, as if the values have shifted to those of that supernatural
world where the gods of love dwell.

Now on to the transitions.

Slowly your boat rows home so late at night—O priest, did
you count more of the flame-red lotuses, or of the white ones?

*Kogikaeru /yûbune osoki /sō no kimi /guren ya ōki /shirahasu ya ōki* (no. 99)

This poem’s central images are water, a young priest, lotuses; its colors, red
and white. The season is summer, the time night. The speaker asks the priest
about the lotuses, which she has not seen: thus, the priest stands between the
speaker and the flowers, a kind of medial figure.

In a summerhouse we hear the water’s sound through
the wisteria night—Don’t, please don’t leave that low pillow!

*Azumaya ni /nizu no oto kiku /fuji no yū /hazushimasuna no /
hikuki makura yo* (no. 100)

Whereas the first poem hinted in riddling form at the superiority of passion to
asceticism, this poem, in the same enigmatic way, assumes that life is lived for
the sake of poetry. Taken together, they restate *Tangled Hair’s* two great themes:
the supremacy of love and the supremacy of art. The imagery of water, flowers,
and color continues, but within those broad categories, there is change: from
a lake to running water; from lotuses to wisteria; from the extremes of red and
white to light purple. It is, however, still night, and the season, early summer,
is nearly the same. As in the preceding poem, something in nature is removed and invisible. There it was the lotuses, here it is the water and the wisteria: the water is heard, the wisteria sensed as a slight scent on the night air. Also as in the preceding poem, an attractive but slightly mysterious male figure—there the priest, here the lover, who is subtly conflated with the Chinese poet whose poem he is unconsciously reenacting—stands between the speaker and nature, mediating and somehow providing access, greater closeness to it. Darkness obscures the water and the flowers; that, and the enigmatic command to the lover—don’t move the pillow—create a veil and a question, again avoiding closure.

The modern meaning of *azumaya* is a summerhouse or garden bower, but Akiko would have known its earlier meaning of a secluded, unpretentious cottage or hut from its use as the title of the fiftieth chapter (“The Eastern Cottage” in Edward Seidensticker’s translation) of her beloved *The Tale of Genji*. With this echo of the *Genji*, the poem leads us back to the world of ancient court literature.

It is not her sleeve but the length of her hair that they spoke of:

Seven feet—which would that be among the white wisteria?

*Misode narazu / migushi no take to / kikoetari / Nanashaku izure / shirafuji
no hana (no. 101)*

In terms of imagery, the season is maintained, and so is the wisteria, although its color is changed to white. One image thread of water breaks off, and in its place a new one appears: articles of daily life, like *makura*, “pillow,” and *sode*, “sleeve.” In the background, as an association, is the compound word *sode-makura*, “sleeve-pillow.” While unrelated to the meaning of the poem, the existence of the word intensifies the reader’s sense of connection between the two poems. It is as if two notes of a simple chord were played one after the other instead of concurrently. Again, the unseen is juxtaposed to the seen, but in reverse: now it is the human (the lady of the hair) that is invisible, and the natural (the wisteria) that is seen. Ending with a question, the poem again avoids closure.

The next poem, still continuing the flower imagery, returns to a female speaker. The season, however, changes abruptly: now it is the height of summer. With all revealed under the midday sun, there is no gap between the seen and the unseen. In color, mood, and tone—the flowers’ bright red, the intense heat of the midday sun, the bold declaration of love—all has changed. This poem is as explicit, extreme, and emotional as the previous poem, with its quietly musing courtier, is muted and relaxed. The contrast works well, like *ji* and *mon*, ground and pattern, in *renga*. 
The summer flowers’ wasted shapes are vivid red under the midday sun—they will to live and so too shall live this love, this child!

*Natsubana no / sugata wa buuki / kurenai ni / mabiru ikimu no / koi yo kono / ko yo (no. 102)*

Now the split between the human and the natural of the previous poems is also dissolved. The *jokotoba* prefatory phrase (*natsubana no / sugata wa buuki / kurenai ni / mabiru ikimu*, from “The summer flowers” to “will to live”) allows *ikimu*, “will to live,” to do double duty as the verb, not only for the flowers, but also for the woman and her love (unable to replicate the concision of the Japanese, my translation repeats “live”). Instead of comparing the natural to the human, as the preceding poem did, this poem fuses them: the flowers are the woman is the flowers. At the same time, again unlike the previous poem, this one has strong closure, due to the intense affirmation, emphasized by the thrice-repeated *ko* and twice-repeated *yo* at the end. From this fully expressed passion, we move backward to desire still in embryo, waiting to find its object, yet in its own way, equally intense.

Shoulder-sliding, then wavering over the sutra: restless hair
One virgin—One heart alive—Spring’s clouds are close, are deep

*Kata ochite / kyō ni yuragi no / sozorokami / otome ushinja / Haru no kumo koki (no. 103)*

The thread of flower imagery breaks off, and the season shifts to spring. This poem is tactile: hair touches shoulder, then lingers above the page, or perhaps lightly brushes it; the clouds are “deep,” implying thickness, heaviness, depths of color. One feels no division between seen and unseen, because everything is touching everything else, the entire image framed by the low-hanging clouds. In its merging of the human and the natural, this resembles the previous poem, but in opposite hue: that was bright, this is dark. This poem and the one before it both express female desire, but one is open and forthright, the other still virginal, hardly knowing itself.

Such complementary opposites create links just as much as likeness does. At the same time, auditory echoes tie the poems together: repeated “k” sounds begin near the end of the previous poem—*koi, kono, ko*—and are carried over to this one—*kata, kyō, (sozoro) kami, knmu, koki*. Entire syllables are echoed as well: *sugata-kata, koi-koki*. But this poem, with its indoor setting and downward focus on a book and the swaying hair, is a little claustrophobic. One is glad when the next poem, though maintaining the imagery of hair, moves to the outdoors. The spring clouds melt away, and suddenly we are liberated, the line of sight moving far off into the distance, toward a small, colorful rainbow.
The wind loops her unbound hair around a fresh green branch
and there—to the west! not two feet long a beautiful rainbow arcs

*Tokikami wo / wakae ni karamu / kaze no nishi yo / Nishaku taranu /
atsukasabiki niji* (no. 104)

There is juxtaposition of near and far, in the hair-looped branch and the distant
rainbow, but there is no barrier between; on the contrary, the rainbow appears
clearly. This is a poem of completion, but also of mystery—for throwing a
glance into the distance, toward the horizon, does extend the line of sight but
also raises a new question: where does the view end? Sight could travel to the
rainbow, then down to where the bow meets earth, and there discover this
vignette, whose arched bridge echoes the rainbow’s shape:

Urged out, I stepped down from the carriage to the darkness
at the water’s edge: On the arched bridge the faint purple of wisteria

*Unagasarete / migiwa no yami ni / kuruma orinu / Hono murasaki no / soribashi
no fuji* (no. 105)

The green branch links to the wisteria, both being plants, and wisteria is pur-
ple, as rainbows tend to be in *Tangled Hair.*\(^{28}\) This poem moves from the
unseen (the interior of the carriage and the darkness) to the dimly seen (the
wisteria); the next four explore different kinds and degrees of being seen: self-
revelation under the gazes, respectively, of sister, mirror, boys, and peach blos-
soms. The sudden transition is smoothed by what I call the mutable speaker—
in this case, now an ancient court lady, now a child, depending on how you
read. To harmonize with the preceding poem, with its timeless, unreal setting
in the “land of spring,” read the carriage’s occupants as figures in another kind
of unreal setting, the medieval courtly romance. Then, delight in natural
beauty is common to both poems, though shown in different contexts, one
pagan, the other courtly. But to harmonize with the succeeding poem, with its
Meiji period, realistic setting, read the carriage’s occupants as adult and child,
and the poem as a childhood memory of someone of Akiko’s own age, perhaps
even Akiko herself. This eases the transition away from nature and into an
exclusively human world—a world of real young girls, doing everyday things,
without flowers or other manifestations of nature, and very little color.

Without thinking I lifted my hand from the loom: the song
at the gate! My older sister smiled and I, I blushed within

*Ware to naku / osa no te toneshi / kado no uta / Ane ga emai no /
soko hazukashiki* (no. 106)

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As we move from the outdoors to the indoors, the human/nature juxtaposition is replaced by that of present/past: a woman remembering her younger self as she was on the verge of womanhood. As the girl’s inward aspect or heart, soko, is seen into in this poem, so a girl sees her outward aspect, mijima, in the mirror in the next poem, where it brings pleasure instead of embarrassment. The imagery is of everyday objects: osa, “loom,” and sugatami, “mirror.” The memory could belong to the same speaker, yet the mood is almost opposite, and time is grasped not as a discrete moment but in one long block:

Freshly bathed and dressed and rouged, I’ve smiled at myself in a full-length mirror on more than one of the yesterdays of my life

Yuagari no mijimai narite sugatami ni emishi kinō no naki ni shi mo arazu
(no. 107)

In the preceding poem, someone smiles at her; here she smiles at herself. There she blushes within, here she smiles outside; there she feels shame, here pride. A good link, one might think, for the actions are complementary opposites; the linking words, however, are almost too alike for comfort: emai–emishi, literally, “smile,” “smiled.” Yet if this poem were omitted, we would have two poems about being embarrassed right next to each other, and that would be even worse. Perhaps Akiko chose the lesser of two evils in deciding on the order here.

Looking forward to the next poem, we see that by speaking of “more than one” of the yesterdays of her life, the speaker raises a question—what about the other yesterdays? The next poem begins to complete the thought: if there were some yesterdays like that, there were other ones like this. And so we return to discrete-moment mode, a single incident:

In front of some boys my sleeve let slip a silken hand-ball
What do I know, I said and cradling it in my arms, I fled

Hitomae wo tamoto suberishi kinudemari shirazu to itte kakaete nigen (no. 108)

Again, the imagery—a silken hand-ball, a common toy—is of the everyday, the person in the poem is a pubescent girl, and the action of the poem revolves around a memory of being seen. The boys are a mirror just as surely as the glass one at home is: sugatami, “full-length mirror,” and hitomae, “in front of,” are the linking words. Two poems back, a girl, self revealed to her sister, was embarrassed; one poem back, revealed to herself in the mirror, a girl was pleased; in this poem, female helplessness is revealed to the male gaze, and, resisting that gaze, the girl flees, as if breaking out of the frame of the poem. So naturally the next poem takes place at home, amid the safety of a world exclusive to girls,
the Dolls’ Festival. Yet even that apple has a worm, the sense of the imminent complications of love as childhood innocence is outgrown.

I shut the two dolls away in a single box and closed the lid
Somehow, not knowing why, a sigh . . . What would the peach blossoms think?

Hitotsu hako ni / hiina osamete / fiuta tojite / nan to naki iki / mono ni babakaru
(no. 109)

The silken hand-ball, the dolls, their box are all domestic objects. The peach blossoms gaze on the girl (or so she feels: mono ni babakaru, more literally, “shy before the peach”), like the sister, the mirror, the boys. Yet, unlike them, they are also a part of nature. This double identity smooths the transition between two poems that would otherwise be difficult to relate. Like “Urged out” (unagasarete), this is a bridging poem. The return to imagery that juxtaposes human beings and nature, the seen and the unseen, coincides with a gradual move back to sensuality and passion, beginning with another evocation of childhood passion that is as pure as the young girl’s sigh:

Faintly seen, at an inn outside Nara, among the young leaves thinly drawn eyebrows—how I missed you!

Hono mishi wa / Nara no hazure no / wakaba yado / usumayuzumi no / natsukashikarishi (no. 110)

Peach blossoms link to young leaves, the elegant Dolls’ Festival dolls to the elegant eyebrows. A less embarrassed speaker, more concerned with seeing than being seen. Rather than being gazed at, the speaker gazes, but with a pure longing that is sensual without being overtly erotic, moved by the faint apparition and without a desire to make it clearer. The girls in the four preceding poems were caught up in daily activities, but this girl is aware of a more mysterious world (prefigured by the peach blossoms’ gaze).

I leave the pleasure of finding the next transition for readers to discover on their own:

Red flowers in bloom and you don’t even know their name—Why rush through the fields on that narrow path, you with your little parasol?

Ake ni na no / shiranu hana saku / no no komichi / isogihamaana / ogasa no hitori
(no. 111)

The transitions from one poem to the next in Tangled Hair are made using a variety of methods, as I have demonstrated, but the most important ones are those which negate closure. These include ending the poem with a question or
an enigmatic imperative; the use of imagery that leads the eye out of the frame of the poem; nonspecific, inconclusive adjectives like “faint,” “dim,” “dark”; and what I call the bridging poem, made so by the use of a mutable human speaker or else a personified flower that belongs to both the natural and the human worlds. The few poems that do have definite closure stand out like islands in the stream of images and associations, brilliantly colored, often in red, in comparison to the weaker colors of the others. The overall effect is of a kind of visual music, the “symphony of images” to which Konishi Jin’ichi compares renga. At the same time, there is also, to borrow Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen’s words (again about renga), the creation of a “mute but eloquent space” between poems, where the fragmentary, enigmatic words of the poems resonate. Japanese music has a word for this place of silence between sounds: ma, literally, “the between.” It is usually considered an esoteric concept, but Didier Boyet, a contemporary critic and musician who lives in Japan, evokes it vividly in his description of the playing of the jazz musician Paul Bley:

In a vein similar to that of Thelonious Monk, Bley indeed always seems to cut off what he deems useless in his musical language. Again and again, he stresses the space which separates two consecutive sounds. He allows the last sound to resonate until the very end, rather than filling the space that separates it from the next with meaningless notes.

Music, like nature, is unafraid of emptiness, and this blank, duly annotated on the music score, is thus treated as another element of the music. In the music that he plays, this void, this absence of sound, or rather, this space of time between two sounds, is in reality full of life. It is the time when the listener suddenly realizes that he has entered the world of the musician, and that the moments between notes become opportunities to enter the music and travel along. At those moments, the meaning of sound becomes crystal clear.

Bley’s playing as described here has a deliberate simplicity that on the surface seems quite different from Akiko’s poetry. Yet the brevity of the tanka is in itself a kind of simplicity and minimalization, and Akiko’s brushstroke poems allow the space between to annotate silence.

Enough, though, about transitions; we need to pick ourselves up out of that space between poems before we lose our way, and float upward in order to scan the overall shape of the collection. An aerial view confirms that the connections between poems are not narrative; therefore (since there is no overarching jo-ba-kyû), one can begin anywhere, go backward as easily as forward, and once at the end, begin all over again. In this sense, the shape of the collec-
tion is circular. Indeed, the last poem seems to encourage just this kind of reading:

It was mine
    alone, a little spring night’s
dream, and then
    it wandered off, pulled by
    those thirteen strings

Soto himeshi / hann no yûbe no / chisaki yume / hagaresasetsuru / jûsan gen yo
(no. 399)

What, one asks, was the dream? Tekkan, assuming that this is a love poem, suggests it is a faint memory of a transient attraction in the past; Satake adds that it might also be a more recent fleeting encounter that came to naught. Itsumi does not define the dream but simply observes that the dreamer must be a woman playing the koto. But whatever else it is, surely the dream must also be the book of poems we have just read, those fragmentary visions of a multitude of worlds and beings, some human, some not. Saying good-bye to the dream is a way of saying good-bye to the book and to us, its readers. Having entered so boldly in that first poem, “A star who once” (Yo no chô ni), the poet’s voice now fades away. It seems fitting that poems so musical should end by being dissolved in music. But from the music will arise new feelings, and from the feelings will come new poems, new dreams. Closure is resisted and we are left with nothing but beginnings.
The two pervasive themes of *Tangled Hair* are love and poetry, but these are expressed by a variety of speakers and settings, so that the overall impression the collection makes, once understood, is polyphonic. There is another way in which *Tangled Hair* is diverse as well, and that is in the number of poets whose presence one feels in it. This is not solely a question of influence in the usual sense of an immature poet borrowing from or imitating an older one. There is a more intimate, almost physical connection between the authorial voice and the poets Akiko invokes, alludes to, or lovingly cannibalizes. Sometimes one has the impression that the poets themselves are present in Akiko’s mind: she almost seems to be addressing them as if they were alive, just as surely as she addressed her fellow poets of the New Poetry Society in the pages of *Kansai Bungaku* and *Myòjö*. Thus, after reading the tanka collection of Kaji-jo (or Kaji, fl. 1704–1710), the poet came to her, says Akiko, in a dream:

Fell asleep among poems

last night and saw the author

of *The Mulberry Leaf*—

Beautiful, the color

of her long black hair

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*Kaji-jo, or the Lady of the Mulberry Leaf, owned a teahouse near Gion Shrine in Kyoto that was noted as a gathering place for lovers of the arts and poetry. Bashö’s disciple Takarai Kikaku (1661–1707), who was her contemporary, celebrated her in a haiku: “The Star Festival—off to hear good poetry/at Kaji’s tea-house” (*Tanabata ya/Yoki uta kiki ni/Kajigachaya*), and she was still remembered a generation later, as Yosa Buson’s haiku attests: “The Gion Festival—a priest drops in/at Kaji’s place” (*Gion-e ya/Sō no toiyoru/Kajigamoto*).* 

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Besides poems on love, the 120 tanka of Kaji’s only collection, Kaji no Ha (The mulberry leaf, 1707), also included some on everyday themes not treated in the traditional tanka, such as a farm woman too busy transplanting the rice plants to see her own reflection in the rice paddy’s water, or a traveler staying at an isolated country inn. Akiko may have found these intriguing, but unfortunately there is no record of her interest in Kaji beyond the poem above and one other (in the March 1901 Myōjō) that was omitted from Tangled Hair. Of Akiko’s relation to Buson, another Tokugawa period poet, we can say more. That she read him with devotion is evident from this post-Tangled Hair poem, in which she addressed him as her “older brother,” thus drawing her own family tree as a poet:

She takes up
your collection to underline
in red—
Allow your younger sister this
pleasure, my older brother of Tenmei

Shū torite wa / shufude suji hiku / imōto ga / kyō yurushimase / Tenmei no ani
(Dokugusa [Poison grass], 1904; TYAZ, 1:112)

Buson flourished in the years known as Tenmei (1781–1788). Here she asks him to allow her the pleasure of marking up a volume of his poems by drawing lines next to the ones she likes best. Numerous examples of Buson-inspired themes and turns of phrase in Tangled Hair have been noticed by Satake Kazuhiko and other scholars, including Haga Tòru, who suggested that Akiko’s use of the wordmidaregami for the title of her own collection owed much to this haiku by Buson:

I pillow my head
on the spring’s flowing current—
This tangled hair

Makura suru / haru no nagare ya / Midaregami

Akiko was also indebted to Buson for the unusual phraseyoi no haru, “evening’s spring,” instead of the straightforwardharu no yoi, “spring evening.” She used it in a poem that describes a kimono lying in a shallow uncovered box: its luminous red silk lining, carelessly exposed, is turned purple by the evening shadows:

Like purple
the red silk lining glows
from the lacquer box—
half-hidden by the god of
evening’s spring
In an article on Buson she wrote in 1932, Akiko quoted a poem by him that used the identical phrase:

They lay out
the bedding diagonally—
evening’s spring

Sujikai ni/futon shikitari/Yoi no haru

She then commented: “He says yoi no haru instead of haru no yoi, one of the distinctive usages already commented on. Making spring [haru] the last word brings out the feeling of the season strongly.” In 1932, in other words, Akiko was obliquely explaining what she had done in 1901.

More than Buson, though, the poets whose presence is felt most strongly in Tangled Hair—besides Tekkan, whose importance went beyond poetry—were her contemporaries Shimazaki Tòson and Susukida Kyûkin. Reviewers at the time (chiefly Ueda Bin and “Jibunshi,” the anonymous reviewer in Bunko) noticed Akiko’s indebtedness to both poets, and decades later, in 1938, Akiko herself, thoroughly tired of the way her public seemed unable to forget that first collection, flatly dismissed it as nothing but a pastiche that “borrowed the diction of Kyûkin and went no further than an imitation of Tòson.” How right was she? The answer is critical to our concluding judgment of her accomplishment.

When one reads Tòson, Kyûkin, and Tangled Hair side by side, the similarities in vocabulary, imagery, and theme are indeed astonishing. First, of course, is the exaltation of romantic love. But then there is the similarity of vocabulary and images. Tòson’s Seedlings uses “young life” (wakaki inochi), “long black hair” (kurokami nagaki), “long entangled locks of hair” (midarete nagaki bin no ke), “which is long, which is short?” (izure ka nagaki izure mijikaki), “lotus boat” (hasshanabune), “breasts” (chibusa), “grapes” (budò), the figure of the priest (sò), the phrase “do you know?” in its characteristic inverted form (shiru ya kimi).

In Kyûkin’s The Twilight Flute, one finds “powerful” (chikara aru), “child of earth” (hito no ko, “child of man”), “hot tide of blood” (atsuki chishio), “one with heart” (ushinja), “rain of love’s desire” (nusake no ame, literally “rain of compassion”), “tender flesh” (yawahada, literally “soft skin”). Nevertheless, and in spite of what Akiko herself said, something far more subtle and interesting than mere imitation or pastiche was going on. Take this poem (discussed in terms of linking in Chapter 11): “Cowherd / as you come along the shore / give us a song— / The waters of the autumn lake / lie dark with loneliness” (Migiwa kuru / ushiotoko / uta are na / Aki no mizuumi / amari sabishiki).
The cowherd in Akiko’s tanka probably came from Kyūkin’s new-style poem “Ihogaka ni te” (At Iho River), a charming poem about the hidden sadness of a cheerful-seeming cowherd who leads his flock by the Iho River.10 Kyūkin’s first verse was:

Who would think him sad,  
the village child who leads his cows  
along the green grass that colors  
the shore of Iho, river of white waters?

Akiko uses the same word—usikai, “cowherd”—as Kyūkin; both cowherds are by the shore, or migiwa; and both are romantic figures in a beautiful landscape. But there is a basic difference: Akiko’s background is unreal, a symbol of the mind; the dark lake is her own gloom, which she hopes the cowherd’s song will reflect and console. Kyūkin’s background, in contrast, is a real river with a name, located on the map (now pronounced as “Ibogawa,” it is in Hyōgo Prefecture).

Akiko’s cowherd, however, is not merely an abstract fantasy borrowed from Kyūkin and stripped of everything concrete. As always, Akiko minimalizes, then uses the resulting emptiness to multiply meaning. In this case, she takes advantage of the double meaning of uta as poem and song, and of the fact that usikai, “cowherd,” and bokudō, “herd-boy,” are virtual synonyms (bokudō is a Chinese-derived compound, usikai has the softer native sounds). In the epigraph at the beginning of his collection, Kyūkin wrote: “I am a herd-boy [bokudō], and at evening I blow my flute, though no one listens; but there is no disgrace in it and so I just do it for my own pleasure.” 11 In all likelihood the only “herd-boys” Akiko was familiar with were the one described in Kyūkin’s poem and Kyūkin the poet/herd-boy himself.12 It is natural to imagine the two half-consciously fusing in her mind, so that the poem-song she requests could be one the “herd-boy” Kyūkin might “sing”—perhaps one of those she knew so well from The Twilight Flute, or a new one altogether. On one level, the poem is fantasy. On another, it is rooted in reality—the reality of the inward vision inspired by Akiko’s reading of Kyūkin.

Here is a poem that owes much to Tōson:

Not into words  
nor into poems will I make  
my feelings  
That day, that time  
straight from soul to soul
The last line of Akiko’s tanka was the title of Tōson’s 108-line poem sequence “Mune yori mune ni,” (From soul to soul), and her tanka itself expressed the same thought as Tōson’s twenty-second stanza:

Even were there words upon my lips,  
what could they reflect of this heart?  
Let it simply be conveyed from one heated soul  
to the lyre of another soul!

Kuchibiru ni kotoba ari tomo /kono kokoro nani ka utsusan /Tada atsuki mune yori mune no /koto ni koto tsutaubeki nare

Short as Tōson’s forty-eight-syllable stanza is, Akiko’s tanka is even shorter. She took advantage of the tanka’s brevity to pare down Tōson’s wordiness and intellectualization; then she added an intensity and passion his lines lack. The rhetorical question that occupies the whole of Tōson’s first two lines is left behind as she leaps, like a pole-vaulter, over its vagueness and lands on the daring negative affirmation “Not into words / nor into poems will I make / my feelings” (Kotoba ni mo /uta ni mo nasaji /Waga onoi). Then she reduces all of his last two lines (“Let it simply . . . another soul!” Tada atsuki . . . nare) to the elliptical mune yori mune ni, “from soul to soul.” And finally, by adding the simple yet enigmatic words “That day, that time” (Sono hi sono toki), at once concrete and suggestive, she opens the poem up, to be filled with the reader’s own experience. To call this influence or imitation does not do justice to the inventive energy such acts express.

In Akiko’s two tanka above, the speaker could be either male or female. When the speaker is unmistakably female, the same verbal brilliance is also in evidence. Akiko’s chikara aru chi in “Spring is short / what is there has eternal life / I said and / made his hands seek out / my powerful breasts” (Haru mijikashi /Nan ni fumetsu no /inochi zo to /chikara aru chi wo /te ni sagurasenu, discussed in Chapter 8) is indebted to two lines in the fifteenth verse of Kyūkin’s enormously long (for Japanese, that is; it is 420 lines) poem “Ama ga beni” (The nun’s scarlet, 1898). There a young woman was the speaker:

“Touching my breasts, I grow excited  
at my bosom’s powerful blood”

Chibusa sawarite waga mune no /chikara aru chi ni ki wa tachinu

Both poets use the phrase chikara aru chi, but there is one crucial difference: Kyūkin’s chi is the character for blood, while Akiko’s chi is the homonymous character for breast or breasts. Thus, the meaning of chikara aru chi changes
from “my powerful blood” to “my powerful breasts.” At the same time, Akiko also condenses, paring Kyûkin’s six words (waga mune no chikara aru chi) down to three (chikara aru chi). But there is something more extreme than mere reduction or even inspired substitution going on here. One has the sensation of discrete drops coalescing, like the clotted cream that gathers on the top of milk, thicker and richer than the liquid left behind. Or perhaps a better comparison is to the process Akiko described in “Drops from /the young one’s hair /piled up in the grass /then were born as a butterfly /This is the land of spring” (Wakaki ko ga /kami no shizuku no /kusa ni korite /chò to umareshi /koko haru no kuni, Chapter 10). There the drops of water a girl wrung out of her hair piled up in the grass, then turned into a butterfly. Akiko’s poem, like the butterfly, has a buoyancy, a soaring quality, that Kyûkin’s poem, for all its good nature and charm, lacks. Kyûkin’s speaker is earthly; Akiko’s, for all the talk of breasts, is closer to the sky.

Akiko’s “This hot tide of blood/beneath soft skin and you don’t /even brush it with a fingertip /Aren’t you lonely then /you who preach the Way?” (Yawahada no /atsuki chishio ni /fure mo mide /sabishikarazu ya /michi wo toku kimi, Chapter 4) also borrowed from “The Nun’s Scarlet,” this time two lines from verse 71. The two similar phrases here are fure mo mide, literally “you don’t even try to touch,” and te wo furete, “touch with your hand”:

“If you touch your hands to that soft skin, 
and seek the spring beneath . . .”

Kano yawahada ni te wo furete, /soko no izumi wo sugorimiba

“If . . . you . . . seek” says Kyûkin’s speaker, a woman. But there is no “if” for Akiko’s speakers. It is as though she has lived through Kyûkin and that stage is past; now we are in the future that Kyûkin’s poem supposed. No longer waiting for the man to make up his mind, in haste to live, she presses his hands to her breasts, or else dares him to touch her soft skin. Instead of a passionate novice nun, very small and very mortal, we are in the presence of a being who seems almost more than human.

As Akiko said, it was diction that she borrowed from Kyûkin; this was probably because his women were, on the whole, too weak. If we want to see women who are a little closer to those of Tangled Hair, we must look to Tôson, particularly “Rokunin no otome” (Six maidens), the sequence of six long poems, each in the voice of a different woman, which opens Seedlings. Through the different circumstances and experiences of these women, Tôson gives a panorama of love from a woman’s point of view. Four must have made an especially strong impression on Akiko.

The blind Okinu, with her “long black hair” (kurokami nagaki), descends from the skies and longs for them even now:
“A wild eagle who soared through the skies
fell into the body of a maiden
formed like a flower:
I thirst for wind and rain, am starved for clouds
but have no way to soar to the heavens.”

Misora wo kakeru arawashi no / hito no otome no mi ni ochite / hana no sugata
ni yadokareba / arashi ni kawaki kumo ni ne / amakakerubeki sube wo nomi

She is doomed to be torn between heaven and earth, belonging to neither:

“My heart in love is like
a bird in the shape of a maiden’s heart
Though a maiden, I am a bird of the sky
Though a wild eagle, I am human
And I wander between heaven and earth
My fate so sad”

Koi ni kokoro wo ataireba / tori no sugata wa otome ni te / otome nagara no
sora no tori / arawashi nagara bito no ni no / ake to tsubi to ni mayoi-ru / mi
no sadame koso kanashikere

Passionate Okume abandons her home and parents, and swims across a river to
reach her lover. Standing on the bank before diving in, “my heart is on fire,
and the river breeze blows through my hair” (mune no hi ya / bin no ke wo fuku
kawakaze yo).

For her, love is the only religion and her lover the only god:

“Love is my shrine
and you are the shrine’s god:
without your altar
to what can I offer my life?”

Koi wa wagami no yashiro ni te / kimi wa yashiro no kami nareba / kimo no
tsukue no ni narade / nani ni inochi wo sasagemashi

The imagery of flames connects to that of tangled hair:

“Not my heart alone, but my hands, my feet too,
all of me is aflame
My thoughts a tangle, ah! love’s
thousand strands, a thousand strands of hair flowing on the waves!”

Kokoro nomi ka wa te no ashi no / wagami wa subete hono nari / Onoimidarete
aa koi no / chisui no kami no / nami ni nagarura

Then there is Otsuta, an orphan rescued by a “young saint” (wakaki bijiri) who
tries to teach her his own asceticism but fails dismally. In the autumn, he shows her a persimmon, telling her it is not yet time for her to enjoy it, but,

“In delight that he spoke,
I said ‘this year’s autumn is almost gone
let us try it!’
And I offered a persimmon to the saint
He touched it to his lips and said
‘This lovely colored persimmon:
why did you not tell me before?’”

The same process of interdiction on the one side, then innocent seduction on the other is repeated with wine (sake), and then with poetry itself (uta):

“The young saint said ‘If you wish Enlightenment
do not heed the poetry that leads you astray’
and in my delight that he spoke
I said ‘Poetry is the heart’s outer form
Let us listen to its voice’
And when I sang a line for him
his saintly soul grew drunk and
he said ‘If poetry is so joyous
why did you not tell me before?’”

The dialogue between the priest and Otsuta goes on:

“‘I am a seeker of the Truth
Do not become a distraction to me on the Way’
In my delight that he spoke
I said ‘Love is a Way too
Let us try those feelings’
and I made him put his finger on my heart
The saint at once felt love and
said ‘If love is this kind of joy
why did you not tell me sooner?’”
Like Kyûkin, Tôson seems to take up a stance not only in favor of love but in favor of women. Thus, Okiku, a woman with “long black hair /and a soft /woman’s heart” (kurokami nagaku/yawarakaki/onnagokoro wo) declares that no man ever died for love but only for reputation and honor, and that only women are capable of true love. She ends with the command: “Maiden /do not love!” (Koisuru nakare/otomego yo). Most of the men and women she gives as examples in her taxonomy of love are from Chikamatsu’s love-suicide plays, in which both the hero and heroine are usually interpreted as having died for love; but Okiku contradicts this, case by case, saying that each hero died for honor, while only the woman died for love.

The examples above suffice to suggest why reading some of the poems in Tangled Hair reminds one of the world of Tôson and Kyûkin. The most important aspect of Tangled Hair’s relation to Tôson and Kyûkin, however, does not lie in the similarities between Akiko’s work and theirs but in the basic differences. The first of course is form: Akiko wrote poems of thirty-one syllables or thereabouts, in the traditional tanka form; Tôson and Kyûkin wrote new-style poems whose length was unrestricted and which ranged from the short to the very long. Related to this is the textural density of Akiko’s poems, an effect made possible (though obviously not guaranteed) by the minimalist tanka form she chose. There are two other salient differences: one is passion, and the other is the power of women.

The women in Tôson and Kyûkin are never as bold or daring as Akiko’s speakers, and they are never as powerful, either. The world they inhabit is inherently androcentric. In Kyûkin’s “The Village Maid,” for example, the maiden is totally passive, a victim of her fate, and must wait for the traveler to return to her. Tôson’s Okiku may seem strong when she argues that only women die for love and that men are concerned only with honor and reputation, but in fact she offers no solution other than a refusal to love, so the resolution has to be tragic. Otsuta, the innocent seductress, has to deal with an insufferably priggish young man who orders her not to tempt him from the Way of wisdom, and her own retort intellectualizes the matter in a way foreign to Tangled Hair, arguing that love is a Way, too.

The speaker in Tangled Hair does not stoop to such abstractions: when faced with a seeker of the Way, she simply issues a command: “Pray to the peach blossoms in my hair”; or else she marches right up to the Buddhas and says,
“Here, take my poems, it’s too beautiful a spring night for sutras!” Tōson’s
Otsuta is content for love to exist on a plane of equality with religion, but in
*Tangled Hair*, love boldly ousts religion and then occupies its erstwhile place.
Okume says, “Love is my shrine /and you are the shrine’s god: /without your
altar /to what can I offer my life?” but *Tangled Hair* puts this idea into prac-
tice. What Tōson’s heroines declare as an ideal, many of the women in *Tangled
Hair* are actually living.

Then there is that delicious moment when Otsuta “pointed to her bosom,”
and “The holy one at once fell in love.” Even in his delight, though, he still can
not resist reproaching her: “If love is this delight why did you not tell me of
it before?” When one compares Akiko’s “This soft skin” (*Yawahada no*), which
also uses the image of touching flesh (or, rather, not touching flesh) one notices
again how having to fit the long narrative into the narrow confines of the tanka
has yielded a greater concentration, intensity, and allusiveness. One also notices
that the man has disappeared. He is there but offstage, in the wings, so to
speak; the woman is stage-center.

In sum, the use Akiko made of Tōson’s and Kyūkin’s new-style poetry can-
not be captured by words like “influence,” or the “imitation” and “borrowing”
of which Akiko later accused herself. On the contrary, *Tangled Hair* is a brilliant
moment in the long and venerable tradition of literary hybridization that is
essential to the periodic renewal of Japanese poetry (and perhaps to all artistic
renewals everywhere). Like a wolf in sheep’s clothing, the early Akiko was an
innovative new-style poet clad in the delicate modesty of the tanka form, its
colors heightened by infusions from several other genres and arts, including, as
earlier chapters have shown, Chinese poetry, Greek myth, Western painting,
Heian fiction, and Tokugawa period linked verse. From within that hybrid
world, the female for whom Tōson and Kyūkin had been singing stepped forth
and sang in her own voice, her words more defiant but also more tender and, at
times, more sublime than anything her erstwhile poetic mentors could have
imagined.
mism for a prostitute in the inns along the highways that ran from the provinces to Edo) to a traveler with whom she had spent the night. Itsumi takes hitoyozuma to mean geigi—that is, a geisha. Hitoyozuma, however, can also mean simply a woman with whom one has spent the night out of love, so I see no need to define the speaker in such specific terms of time and place.


10. THE VARIETY OF TANGLED HAIR

1. Here and elsewhere in Midaregami, ko, literally “child,” is used in a figurative sense and does not mean a person below the age of puberty. Similar English usages (mediated through new-style verse) probably influenced this, for example “child” as a term of affectionate address, as in Tennyson, In Memoriam, vi, vii: “Poor child, that waitest for thy love!” The word is also used in English phrases like “children of the East, . . . of light, of darkness . . . of sin . . . of fancy . . . of nature,” etc. (s.v. OED2 on CD-ROM, Version 1.10, 1994). Thus, Akiko’s “child of sin” (tsumi no ko), “child of the stars” (hoshi no ko), “child of madness” (kurui no ko).

Wakaki ko, literally “young child,” is used five times (nos. 126, 233, 324, 360, and 385), and ko, “child,” over fifty times (Ôtomo, Yosano Akiko Midaregami goji sòsakuin, pp. 42–43, lists each occurrence) in Midaregami, with both words most often indicating a young, nubile woman or, more rarely, a man. Tekkan and most of the New Society poets also used the words, especially ko, in this way. In a sense, it was often a synonym for otome, or shòjo (for more on which see note 28). In the translation of this poem, I use “young one” instead of the literal “young child.”

2. Sono boko no saki yori shitadaru shio, korite hitotsu no shima ni nareru (Sakamoto et al., eds., Nihon Shoki, p. 22): “The brine which dripped from the point of the spear coagulated and became an island. . . .” (Aston, trans., Nihongi, pp. 11–12). In Akiko’s poem, the literal “coagulate” sounds out of place, so I used “piled up” (kasanari tsumoreru), the word the Kojiki uses in its telling of the same myth (Nishimiya, ed., Kojiki, p. 28; Donald L. Philippi, trans., Kojiki, p. 49).

3. Neither Satake nor Itsumi notes the use of korite, but at least Satake’s instinct was right, because he described this poem as “a beautiful fantasy, with something of the mythic about it.”

4. Made from sesame seed oil scented to smell like plum blossoms, baika no abura was widely used by women, and sometimes men, as a hair dressing.


8. The first nude illustration (other than ukiyo-e erotica) was 1889, for a story by Yamada Bimyö in the magazine Kokumin no tomo. This gave rise to controversy, but it was the artistic excellence of Kuroda’s painting that made the strongest case for the nude as art, in spite of attempts to suppress nudes by various kinds of government censorship. Nihon bijutsukan, p. 905, outlines the controversy. Valuable points are also made by Rubin, Injuries to Public Morals, pp. 44–45, and Rimer, in his discussion of Kuroda Seiki in “Tokyo in Paris /Paris in Tokyo,” pp. 55–58.

9. Ikumi Hideo, Kindai Nihon no bijutsu to bungaku, p. 56.

10. Kimara, “Myòjö to bijutsu,” pp. 170–171, points out the association of this sign with Venus in Western art.
11. The poem as it appeared in Myōji and then in Midaregami was actually a slightly revised version of one in a letter to Kawai Suimei of March 2, 1901; there the first five-syllable segment was haru asaki, “early spring,” the opposite of the Myōji and Midaregami version’s kure no haru.


14. Yosano Tekkan, Shiina waaka tazō, p. 57. Also in “Tekkan kawa 2,” Myōji, September 1901 (reprinted in YAMS, 1:57), and quoted in Satake, Zenshaku, p. 325, and Itsumi, Shin, 287. Satake (pp. 324–325) considers this a metaphorical depiction of the old custom of yobai, “night-crawling,” whereby a man secretly entered a woman’s room at night (it should be said that, by modern standards, this often amounted to rape). Itsumi also reads the poem as depicting a man going to a woman and speculates that, by enogu, “paints,” the poet really means the woman’s makeup. Perhaps both commentators resist Tekkan’s clear explanation because they cannot imagine a woman who takes on the active role and defies the gender stereotype like the one in this poem; Tekkan, though, evidently had no trouble doing so.

15. Uta no tsukuriyō, pp. 34–35.

16. Satake (Zenshaku, pp. 89–90) and Itsumi (Shin, pp. 98–99) both read this poem as a parable of Akiko leaving the protection of her parents’ home for the harshness of the world outside.


18. On the model of waaga yo no haru, which means “a time or period when everything is going as one wishes” (jirō ni notte, nan de mo omu no maena ni dekiru tokui no jiki, Zetchō no jiki, Kōren), I take waaga yo no koi to mean “a time when our love is at its peak, perfect, going exactly as we wish,” and the whole first three lines as the dawn of such a time, hence of “love’s dominion” over the speaker’s life—and, in the context of the poem as a whole, over all those who come after her as well. Although Satake does not gloss this phrase, which Akiko apparently coined, he arrives at the same meaning for the poem as I do, and my interpretation is inspired by his (Satake, Zenshaku, p. 282). Itsumi (Shin, p. 252), on the other hand, who also leaves the phrase unglossed, apparently takes the poem as a realistic description of the pleasure of letting the spring breeze pass through one’s hands at dawn, with the breeze bringing “the fragrance of youth.”


20. Kimi can mean “you,” “she,” or “he.” Here Tekkan, Itsumi, and Satake all take it in the third person.


23. Satake (Zenshaku, pp. 18–19) takes na naki to describe onna harakara (we sisters); na means “honor,” and na naki “without honor, or fame,” thus “disgraced,” by the fact that the poet is only admiring and writing poems about the peony, while ignoring the sisters and the sake they bring. Na is also used in other poems, by both Akiko and Tekkan at this period, to mean “reputation, honor.”


25. Satake, Zenshaku, p. 12 (of “Kaidai,” which is paginated independently from the main text).


27. Quoted (without further source) in Clark, The Nude, p. 124.

28. In Midaregami, otome (also read sbōjo) almost always means a physically developed
young woman, in the upper teens or early twenties, who is unmarried and still inexperienced in love; this is true of Akiko’s and Tekkan’s longer poems of the time, too (as in Tekkan’s Ai-omoi, “Mutual Feelings,” quoted in Chapter 8). The dictionary definition of otome corresponds roughly to the English “girl.” Thus, Kenkyūsha shin wa-ei chûjiten (Shisutemu Sofuto Denshi Ban) defines otome as “a maiden; a (young) girl; a virgin” while the OED defines “girl” as “a female child; commonly applied to all young unmarried women” (s.v., OED2 on CD-ROM, Version 1.10, 1994). It takes a second reading of the OED’s definition to see that it really consists of two different definitions: one, of “girl” as a child only; the other, of “girl” as up to and including a physically developed woman. The Japanese otome covers a similarly wide range of ages; for example, Nakamura Tsune’s (1887–1924) nude portrait of a rather voluptuous young woman is titled “Shōjo (or otome) razo” (Nude girl, 1914 [Mobo moga ten 1910–1935, p. 21; also in Takashina and Rimer, with Gerald D. Bolas, Paris in Japan, pp. 204–205]). Today, however, the word shōjo, much like the English “girl,” has almost ceased to be applied to young women; it almost always means a girl child below the age of puberty. For examples of usage of this word in contemporary Japanese popular culture, see Napier, “Vampires, Psychic Girls, Flying Women and Sailor Scouts,” especially p. 94.


30. Satake (p. 12) comments on the same phenomenon from a slightly different point of view. The figure that I call “the passionate virgin” he terms “the village girl” (satomusume) or “the town girl” (machimusume).


32. Satake (Zenshaku, p. 284) and Itsumi (Shin, p. 255) both try to make these poems fit their assumption that one voice must be female and the other male, but they do not agree on which is which, Satake taking the koto as male and Itsumi taking it as female. In his centuries’ earlier dialogue between a koto and a human being (Manyōshū, Book 5, nos. 810 and 811; quoted in Satake, p. 285, commentary in Takagi et al., eds., Manyōshū Ni, pp. 68–69), Ōtomo Tabito, influenced by an earlier Chinese poem, had clearly taken the koto as a woman and its player as a man. Itsumi’s assertion that, in Akiko’s poem, the koto should also be read as female, is convincing not only because of Tabito’s precedent, but even more (since, as we know, Akiko did not always follow precedent) because kurohoshiki, the mad delirium of frustrated love, is a female trait in her poetry of this period.

However, even if the koto is clearly female, Itsumi’s further assertion that the human being is male is unconvincing: the seductive katasode kasamu, “I’ll lend you my sleeve,” of the first poem and mayu yawaki, “soft eyebrows,” in the second are most naturally phrases spoken by or about women, not men. Here, then, Satake, with his insistence on the human speaker being female, is, I think, on solid ground. In short, it seems clear that both the koto and its owner must be taken as female. I read this poem as one of the many poems of inner dialogue, perhaps the earliest, that Akiko wrote throughout her life.

33. Mune is an ungendered noun in Japanese; it can be used to mean a man’s chest or a woman’s bosom, or even someone’s heart in the emotional sense. Akiko had used the ambiguity to advantage before, when, as related in Chapter 5, she “capped” a verse by Tekkan at the Takashi Beach poetry workshop in August, making his invitation to a woman to lean on his chest into an invitation by a woman made to a man to rest on her bosom.

34. Both Itsumi (Shin, pp. 220–221) and Satake (Zenshaku, p. 246) take the “young child” as a nurpling. From there, however, their interpretations diverge. Itsumi asserts that the nurpling is a virginal young girl who is the object of the male dove’s amatory interest, and she reads the scent of breast milk as a metaphorical way of expressing the “distinctive sweet-sour body scent of a young girl.” Satake, in contrast, states that the “young child” is a young dove who has just left the nest. He imagines a flock of fledglings flying back and...
forth in the sky, still carrying the scent of breast milk (he overcomes possible objections to the idea of birds nursing by saying this is a poem of fantasy). He does not touch on the gender of the dove.

35. “Shinpa waka hyōron,” reprinted in YAMŠ, 1:102. The phrase he used is iyami no uta de aru.


38. _The Head of Venus_ was in the same issue, no. 43 (July 1896), as the article. The title was the engraver’s. It is a detail, the head only, of _Sleeping Venus_ which at the time was attributed to Titian. The March 1901 issue of _Myōjō_ reproduced the same painting, but with a bolder (though still incomplete) view down to the waist, and the information that it was now attributed to Giorgione. Today, art historians consider it to have been begun by Giorgione and finished by Titian (Goffen, _Titian’s Women_, p. 72). _Titian’s Daughter Lavinia_ was in issue no. 38 (January 1898). Again, the title was the engraver’s; today art historians, no longer certain that it is really of Titian’s daughter, call it “Woman with a Tray of Fruit” (Goffen, _Titian’s Women_, p. 105). Reproductions of both paintings are in ibid., pp. 72 and 105.

39. Fumi Shizu [pseud.], “Chichiano Betsuerio (Chichian),” p. 4. The name is female, but the Chinese-laden style of the article suggests a man.

40. Ibid., p. 5.


42. Ibid., pp. 71, 118. _Natural Supernaturalism is the main title of M. H. Abrams’s classic work on romantic literature._

43. Clark, _The Nude_, p. 126.

44. The swallow here is probably the House Martin, or _iwa-tsubame_: “glossy bluish-black upperparts with white rump; pure white underparts” (Wild Bird Society of Japan, _A Field Guide to the Birds of Japan_, pp. 220). In his discussion of _Wakaki ko ga chichi no ka majiru_, Satake points out that these two poems arise from the same conception; his remark is the seed of my discussion.

45. There is no doubt that Akiko’s image of the figure was male; Cupid, of course, is traditionally so, and Fujishima Takeji’s illustration of the blindfolded cupid in _Midaregami_ is too.

46. _Uta no tsukuryō_, p. 35. Also partly quoted in Satake, _Zenshaku_, p. 105.


48. Quoted in Isumi, _Shin_, p. 158.

49. Satake, _Zenshaku_, p. 161, points out the classical provenance of uramezarashi. Isumi ( _Shin_, pp. 157–158), on the other hand, takes the word in its modern meaning, as “rare, unusual.” For usage of the word in classical poetry, see Matsushita and Watanabe, eds., _Kokke Taikan_; Matsushita, _Zoku Kokke Taikan_; Japanese Text Initiative.

50. Both Satake and Isumi take _yukishi_ to mean “died,” and the person in the poem as Hana’s young husband. Satake, however, points out that _yukishi_ could also mean “went,” not in the sense of dying, but in the sense of going somewhere else. I would add that it could...
also be derived from the expression yome ni iku, to be married (literally, to go off as a bride). Neither Satake nor Itsumi refers to Akiko’s uncollected essay “Kokyò to fubo.” According to this, Grandmother Shizu wanted Hana to marry her (Hana’s) own cousin, the boy who had returned with his father (Shizu’s eldest son and older brother of Akiko’s father, Sòshichi) from Osaka when Akiko was a child; this was the boy who, Akiko said in “Yosano Akiko,” had first awakened her interest in reading. He and Hana fell in love according to Shizu’s plan, but Sòshichi opposed the marriage and made Hana marry a rich landowner from the town of Òtori instead. The marriage went badly, Hana became very ill, and, after returning home so weakened that she had to be carried by stretcher, died within a month, still in her late twenties. It is very unlikely that the husband who had sent her home under those conditions would have visited the Òtori home and called her name, and also very unlikely that Akiko would have felt pity for anyone who had treated her beloved older sister so cruelly. Rather, it seems much more likely that the person in the poem is the cousin who loved Hana and who lived down the street from Akiko and her parents.

Akiko wrote two other poems that are clearly about Hana: the new-style “Tsutsumi idakeba” (When I hold a hand drum, 1905, Koigoromo; in TYAZ 9:322), which describes the love between Hana and the cousin, and refers to her as “born of a different mother” (kimi wa, kotobara ni umaretamaeba); and a tanka in Saògi (TYAZ, 1:106), whose headnote is “Remembering my departed older sister,” and which refers to her life as being “two years short of thirty” (misoji ni nokosu / futatose wa). Both of these poems stick closely to the facts that we know about Hana from Akiko’s “Kokyò to fubo,” which is all the more reason to believe that the Midaregami tanka would as well. Hirako, Nenpyò sakka, pp. 17 and 24, brings the essay and the poems together in her discussion of Hana’s life.

53. The poem is not included in Midaregami as read today, because the modern edition is based on that of 1901.

I. THE SHAPE OF TANGLED HAIR

1. I am referring to Itsumi’s Shin Midaregami zenshaku. In her first commentary, Midaregami zenshaku (1978), she arranged the poems in the order of original publication.
2. Satò Ryòyû, Midaregami kò, p. 159.
3. Ibid., pp. 159–162, gives the poems, which are not included in TYAZ, apparently because they were never published; Satò was shown them by Masatomi Òyò, who owned the letter.
5. The poem says “the fifth month,” satsuki, but that is the lunar month, hence June, soon after Akiko arrived in Tokyo. Komori-i reinforces this, for it indicates that the weather is inclement, the rainy season. Itsumi, Shin, p. 271; Satake, Zenshaku, p. 303.
6. The Japanese section titles and number of poems in each are as follows: “Enji-murasaki” (98 poems), “Hasu no hanabune” (76 poems), “Shirayuri” (36 poems), “Hatachizuma” (87 poems), “Maihime” (22 poems), and “Haruomoi” (80 poems).
7. There are important differences between renga and haikai linked verse in regard to permissible theme, diction, and overall length; but in formal terms, both consist of alternating verses of 5–7–5 and 7–7 syllables, and their linking techniques are similar too. Whether Akiko was influenced directly by either or whether the influence came indirectly—since the linking tradition, albeit in somewhat debased form, was still very much
alive in her time—is impossible, at this stage of research, to know. It may be that she simply took the lighthearted linked verse that Tekkan practiced, which was closer to Tokugawa period games of linking verses than it was to serious linked haikai or renga, and refined it.


9. But the fact that renga and haikai were usually written in groups while Midaregami was by a single author is not one of them, for there were solo sequences too, and in them, as Akiko does in Midaregami, the author took on more than one voice. It might be argued that a better model is the tanka sequence, but the tanka sequence often has a chronological and narrative framework, and Midaregami does not. For translation of a classical tanka sequence, see Brower, trans., *Fujisawa Teika’s Superior Poems of Our Time*; for translations of modern ones, see Beichman, *Masaoke Shiki*, pp. 117–121; and Heinrich, *Fragments of Rainbows*, pp. 158–166.


11. Higginson, *The Haiku Seasons*, pp. 54–60, translates a haikai sequence that Shiki composed with his disciples Takahama Kyoshi (1874–1959) and Kawahigashi Hekigotô (1873–1937). It was published in 1896 in Mori Ōgai’s magazine *Mezamashigusa*, during the same period that *Sokkyō Shijin*, which we know Akiko read, was also being serialized there.

Another serious effort was *haitaishi*, “haikai-style poetry,” created on the basis of haikai linked verse in 1904 by Kyoshi, who by then had succeeded to leadership of Shiki’s haiku group Hototogisu, and the novelist Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916). Ōoka, *Otori no uta: Poems for All Seasons*, trans. Beichman, pp. 228–229, has a brief discussion of “*Haitaishi: Ama*” [Haikai-style poetry: The Nun], a 24-verse *haitaishi* by Kyoshi and Sōseki, and translation of two of its links.

For the larger context of such efforts, see Ōoka, *Utage to koshin*, which traces the interplay between the communal and the private as the central dynamic of Japanese poetry from earliest times to the present day. (A brief English summary of this work may be found in Ōoka, “Sitting in a Circle.”)

12. No. 24 was originally published in the January 1901 issue of *Myōji*. Nos. 25 and 26 were published three months earlier, in the October 1900 issue of *Myōji*, but were widely separated, the former near the beginning and the latter almost at the end of the twenty-eight poems Akiko published there that month. The biographical context of no. 26 is discussed in Chapter 5.

13. The dates of first publication of these poems range from August 1900 to August 1901. Four of them (nos. 99, 102, 103, and 109) were first published in *Midaregami*, that is, in August 1901. Dates of first publication for the others are as follows: No. 100, July 1901; No. 101, June 1901; No. 104, July 1901; No. 105, July 1901; No. 106, January 1901; No. 107, August 1900; No. 108, January 1901; No. 110, July 1901.

Even the fact that two poems first published in the same month are contiguous in *Midaregami* does not reflect their original order: thus, poems no. 104 and 105 were both among the seventy-five poems of “Golden Wings” in the July 1901 *Myōji*, but no. 104 was the seventy-third poem there, and no. 105 was the fifty-second; the fifty-first became no. 100, and the sixty-fourth became no. 110. This degree of reordering is typical of *Midaregami* as a whole.

In working out how to present the links between verses (a problem that is quite different from perceiving what they are), three commentaries on classic linked verse which I found encouraging were Cranston, “Shinkei’s 1467 *Dokugin Hyakunin*”; Drake, “*Saikaku’s Haikai Requiem*”; and Konishi, *Sōgi*.

14. *Kimi*, like *ko*, was a word that Akiko and Tekkan and some of the other New Poetry
Society poets used frequently, and with what seems unusual freedom. Here, *kimi* is the second-person "you," but in other contexts it can be third-person "him" or "her." For example, Satake, in his comments on no. 165, wonders aloud whether *kimi* in that poem should be taken as "you" or "he": "‘Kimi’ wo nininshô to kaisuru ka, sanninshô to kaisuru ka ni yotte, hono uta wa kaeiru mo to no, shîryô to no naru" (Zenshaku, p. 170).


16. Itsumi (*Shin*, p. 121) points out the allusion, but gives the text of the poem as in *Wakan rôei shû*, no. 554 (English translation in J. Thomas Rimer and Jonathan Chaves, trans. and eds., *Japanese and Chinese Poems to Sing*, pp. 167, 299). In that version, the poet is listening to a bell; but, according to Kawaguchi, ed., *Wakan rôei shû zenyaku chû*, p. 417, there is a variant text in which the poet says he is listening to a stream. This fits Akiko’s poem better, so may well have been the version that she knew. In any case, the title of the poem in both versions mentions the *azuma-kabe*, "eastern wall," of the poet’s cottage; this is another reason for thinking it may have been in Akiko’s mind, since she speaks of the *azuma-ya*.

17. Satake, Zenshaku, p. 119. Satake, following Tekkan, glosses *ushinja* as *dôshin wo motsu hito*, one whose heart is seeking the Way, that is, an acolyte priest; thus, he sees two people in the poem, the girl (*otome*) and an acolyte (*ushinja*), with the girl’s hair falling over the latter’s shoulder. Itsumi (*Shin*, pp. 123–124), however, glosses *ushinja* as "a person with feelings" and maintains that the word cannot describe a priest, who is supposed to have overcome human attachments. Thus, she takes both *otome* and *ushinja* as referring to a young woman who is reading the sutras alone. Ichikawa Chihiro ("Yosano Akiko and *The Tale of Genji*", pp. 170–172) goes even further and specifies the girl as Ukifune in *The Tale of Genji*, in the scene where she is poring over a sutra scroll after having been rescued from her attempted suicide. Although I resist Ichikawa’s specificity, my suggestion that the *otome* might be a Heian court lady is inspired by her. In any case, the theme of the poem remains the same in all these interpretations: a religious heart troubled by thoughts of earthly delight.

18. Tekkan, in *Tekkan kawa*, said the word was Akiko’s invention (quoted in Satake, Zenshaku, p. 119). *Nihon Kokugo Daijiten* (lst ed., vol. 12, 1974, q.v.) lists *sozorogami*, with the meaning of loose, unbound hair. In the poem, though, it carries an emotional meaning as well.

19. Hinatsu, "Yosano Akiko *Midaregami* no romanteki kankaku," p. 35. He uses the English word “nymph,” writing it in katakana as *nimufu*, and says that in some of the poems of *Midaregami* Akiko was “a nymph extending her hand to the god Pan as he runs wild in sunny Grecian glades.” I have borrowed his idea and applied it to this poem. Tekkan, Satake, and Itsumi (Satake, Zenshaku, p. 120; Itsumi, *Shin*, pp. 125–126), in contrast, all read the female figure as a real girl or young woman. Tekkan and Satake also assume that her hair is unbound because she has washed it, although Itsumi argues convincingly that this is unlikely. There is nothing odd about a nymph with long unbound hair, so Hinatsu’s hint solves the puzzle neatly.

20. Satake, Zenshaku, p. 121, and Itsumi, *Shin*, p. 126, are in basic agreement except that Satake, as he sometimes does, goes further in specifying things that the original leaves indeterminate. Here, he takes the *kuruma* as a jinricksha, a mode of transportation not invented until 1869 and so contemporaneous with Akiko.

21. [O]sa no te tomeshi is, literally, "I [or she] stopped the hand that held the reed." The girl is combing the threads of fabric as she weaves, using a tool called *osa*, reed.

23. Ibid., p. 124.
24. Quoted in ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 125; Itsumi, Shin, p. 129.
26. Niki kazaranu makoto wa Kasugayama, W akamiya no bugakudô ni, kôbai no kasane-ôji, suzu no nagao no wakamurasaki, makkyô ni nattakaisi to mishibi hito, mishibi nari ya. Kyôgaidô wo Kizu e no yamami tsukuru tokoro, shirafuji chirinokoru wakabagaki, futatabi mayuzumi no nagori oshimaseshi. ("Kôbai Niki," p. 5; underlinings mine, to show which parts are quoted in my text.) Also reprinted in YAMS 1 and quoted in Itsumi, Shin, pp. 129–130, though without the furigana provided in Myôjô, which show that Akiko used the classical reading niki, rather than the modern nikki.

27. Kawase Yoshihiro of the Kasuga Taisha Shrine in Nara kindly provided this information by telephone on August 17, 2000, and later sent a copy of a photograph of the mikanko dating from the late Tokugawa or early Meiji period, which clearly shows their shaved eyebrows.

28. Out of ten occurrences of the word niji, “rainbow,” in Midaregami, five (poems no. 104, 154, 256, 394, 398) do not specify the color; one is “seven-colored” (no. 365); one is white (no. 19); and three are purple (no. 10, 65, 211). Ôtomo, Yošano Akiko Midaregami goji sòsakuin, p. 82.


12. THE ORIGINALITY OF TANGLED HAIR
3. Satake, Zenshaku, p. 12, quotes this poem in his discussion of Akiko’s debt to Buson.
4. Haga, Midaregami no keifu, p. 15.
5. Akiko used the image of red silk that looks purple in the dark in several earlier poems. Four appeared in the November 1900 Myôjô (p. 60), but only this one was included in Tangled Hair. The omitted poems differ in being more concrete and realistic. Two are:
   Deep and dark is the scarlet
   of my silken sash—the darkness of the night
   shows it in purple
   Koku fukaki / waga obiage no / kurenai wo / sono yo no yami wa / murasaki to miseshi (TYAZ, 1:318; Satake, Zenshaku, pp. 12–13, also discusses this.)
   It is not purple, nor is it
   scarlet—Blood burning with passion
   is what the obiage’s color shows
   Murasaki ka / kurenai ka arazu / Nasake moyuru / ichissho wo misuru / obiage wo iro (TYAZ, 1:318)
   (The obiage is an ornamental piece of silk tied around the knot at the back of an elaborate obi, in order to keep the knot in place. The dictionary translation is “obi bustle,” which only shows how untranslatable words for articles of clothing can be.)


8. Töson shishû, pp. 54, 55, 69, 72, 105, 107, 109, 153, and 164, in that order.

9. Susukida, Botekishû, pp. 1, 6, 11, 12, and 15, in that order.

10. Satake, Zenshaku, pp. 31–32, citing Kojima Yoshio. The complete text of the poem is in Susukida, Botekishû, pp. 156–158, with an illustration of the cowherd leading one of his herd.

11. Susukida, front matter (unpaginated).

12. The commentator in Midaregami: Shinchô Bunko 20 seiki no 100 satsu suggests that the cowherd was Shiki’s disciple Itô Sachio, citing the fact that in the famous first poem of his collected tanka Sachio speaks of himself as a cowherd (he owned a dairy). Although Sachio’s poem was composed in early 1900, ten months before Akiko published hers, it was apparently not published until the first book-length compilation of Sachio’s tanka, in 1920 (Tanaka, Kindai tanka kanshôshû, p. 126). Furthermore, Sachio belonged to Shiki’s school of tanka, with which there is no record of Akiko having any contact at this time, so it is unlikely that she knew of the poem in 1900.

13. Töson shishû, p. 469. Satake, Zenshaku, p. 255, points out the identity of Akiko’s last line and Töson’s title. Töson’s poem is from his collection Rakubaishû (Fallen plum blossoms, 1901), which was published the same month as Midaregami; however, the poem’s first publication was earlier, in the May 1900 issue of the magazine Shin shôsetsu. At that time, Akiko was then still in Sakai, but subscribed to several magazines and was sent others by her older brother and by Kawai Suimei, so she must have seen it then.

14. Susukida, p. 81. The use of the homonyms chi, “blood,” and chi, “breast” was pointed out by Hasegawa Izumi in his “Yosano Akiko.”


17. Ibid.

18. Ibid., pp. 56–57.

19. Ibid., p. 61.

20. Ibid., p. 63. Akiko’s first published new-style verse, “Shungetsu” (Spring moon, Chapter 4), borrowed this theme.

21. Ibid., p. 63.

22. Ibid., pp. 64–65.

23. In Töson’s poetry, it is often hard to know if a word denotes something specifically Japanese or is the translation of an English word for something Western. For example, by ogoto, literally “small koto,” Töson actually meant something close to a stringed Western instrument like the violin, rather than the small thirteen-stringed koto (Seki Ryôichi in Töson shishû, p. 56, n. 3). By the same token, sake here probably means wine, and hijiri might mean a Buddhist priest, a Western ascetic, or a composite figure existing only in Töson’s imagination.


26. Ibid., p. 67.

27. Ibid., p. 71.
28. The poetry of Töson and Kyûkin is itself hybrid, but my point here is that in *Midaregami* the impression of mélange is essential to the aesthetic effect in a way that is not true in Töson and Kyûkin. Morton, “The Clash of Traditions,” discusses the relative weight of new-style poetry and classical waka in *Midaregami* from a somewhat different perspective. On varieties of hybridization in earlier Japanese poetry, see Beichman, “Dentô wo megutte,” which uses the term *nazoraeru bungaku*; Òoka, *Shijin Sugawara Michizane*, pp. 1–37, which uses the term *utsushi bungaku*; and Shirane, *Traces of Dreams*, pp. 7–12. Hybridization is not limited to Japan, of course: the sonnet wending its way from Italy to France to England, picking up and discarding bits as it went along, is a familiar example; and Ted Hughes, in his introduction to *The Essential Shakespeare*, demonstrates that “hybridization and cross-breeding” of “the high language and low language” were essential to Shakespeare’s poetic style (p. 27 for the quotes; pp. 21–37 for examples).

EPILOGUE: BIOGRAPHY AND THE POET’S BIRTH

1. *Uta no tsukuriyô*, pp. 31–32. In the first two sentences, ages in original are the traditional count *kazoedoshi*, thus “twenty” and “ten,” respectively.
3. Ibid., pp. 254–255. The New Poetry Society was actually formed at the end of 1899, and Myôjô began in the spring of 1900.
5. “Kyôshin rôgo,” p. 438. Age in the original is the traditional count *kazoedoshi*, “past twenty.”