

LOVE IN THE FOUR SEASONS,  
THE FOUR SEASONS IN LOVE  
FROM *KOKINSHŪ* TO MODERN HAIKU

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The four seasons and love are probably the two most important topics in Japanese poetry, if not of all classical Japanese literature. Love and the four seasons form the central pillars of the imperial anthologies of classical poetry (*chokusenshū*), which lay at the heart of the *waka* tradition, as well as such major prose classics such as *The Tales of Ise* and *The Tale of Genji*. How then are these two major topics, the four seasons and love, related to each other? What impact has the topic of love had on the formation of seasonal landscape in Japanese poetry? How has the relationship between love and the four seasons evolved historically? Is gender an issue in the four seasons?

In the *Manyōshū*, the earliest major anthology, love (appearing as what was referred to as *sōmonka*, or exchanged poetry) was one of the most important topics, and the four seasons were just beginning to be formulated as poetic topics, particularly in volumes eight and ten of the *Manyōshū*. By the early tenth century, in the *Kokinshū*, the four seasons had become a major topic equal to that of love. In subsequent centuries, the four seasons continued to grow in importance, becoming the most important poetic topic for Japanese *waka* poets. In the imperial *waka* anthologies, the love volumes grew smaller as the seasonal volumes increased. By the time of the rise of *haikai*, or popular linked verse, in the seventeenth century the four seasons had become so important that they dwarfed the topic of love. Love in fact disappears from Matsuo Bashō's *hokku* or haiku in the late seventeenth century.

Of particular interest here is the mutual interdependence of these two major topics, love and the four seasons, particularly in the *Kokinshū*, where love has a large impact on the formation of seasonal topics. From as early as the *Manyōshū*, the seasons are critical to love poetry as the primary metaphors for expressing love. As I point out here, the reverse is also true: love also has a profound impact on the formation of seasonal poetry and seasonal associations, particularly in the seasonal volumes of the *Kokinshū*. Gradually, however, with the transition from Heian to medieval and then from medieval to the Edo period, as the main poetic genre shifts from *waka* to *renga* and then to *haikai*, the role of love diminishes in comparison to that of the four seasons. As poetic topics, the four seasons take on a larger and larger role until, in modern haiku, they almost totally eclipse love. However, in the modern period, love remains central to the thirty-one syllable *tanka*, which does not depend on the seasons.

## GENDERING THE SEASONS IN THE *KOKINSHŪ*

The *Kokinshū* (c. 905) has six seasonal volumes, two for spring, one for summer, two for autumn, and one for winter. The primary subtopics are listed below in the order of their appearance:

### SPRING, two volumes (134 poems)

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

### SUMMER, one volume (34 poems)

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

### AUTUMN, two volumes (145 poems)

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

### WINTER, one volume (29)

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

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

One characteristic of this narrative of the four seasons is that it is heavily gendered. Most of the flowers in the seasonal volumes are associated with women: *ominaeshi* (literally “woman flower”), willow (associated with arching eyebrows and long hair), plum blossoms, cherry blossoms, wisteria, mountain rose (*yamabuki*), deutzia flower (*unohana*), morning glory (*asagao*), and pink (*nadeshiko*). The *asagao* (literally, “morning faces”), for example, is associated with the face of a woman lover in the morning. *Nadeshiko* (literally, the “child that I stroke”) is a girl or young woman who has been raised by man.

A good example of this gendering is the *ominaeshi* (translated here as “maidenflower”), one of the so-called seven autumn grasses.

*Na ni medete  
oreru bakari zo  
ominaeshi  
ware ochiniki to  
hito ni kataru na*

I was drawn to the name  
and only broke off a branch.  
Maidenflower,  
don't tell anyone that  
I've fallen this far!

This *ominaeshi* poem by Priest Henjō *Kokinshū* (Autumn 1, No. 226) turns on the notion that the poet priest was seduced by the name of the *ominaeshi*, or maidenflower. The phrase “to fall” (*otsu*) implies that the priest has broken his vow of celibacy. In the next *ominaeshi* poem (*Kokinshū*, Autumn 1, No. 233), the speaker tries to point out to the deer that the woman it is longing for is already in the field where he lives.

*Tsuma kouru  
shika zo naku naru  
ominaeshi  
ono ga sumu no no  
hana to shirazu ya*

The deer that longs for its wife  
is crying!  
Doesn't it know that  
the flower in the field where it lives  
is the maidenflower?

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

*Uete dani  
yasen to su ramu  
ominaeshi*

Trying to stay slim,  
she probably starved to death,  
the maidenflower  
Tan Taigi (d. 1771)

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

The birds and animals in the seasonal volumes of the *Kokinshū* likewise tend to be gendered as male. The bush warbler (*uguisu*) is the male trying to find the female (represented by the plum blossoms). The *kuina* (marsh hen), which makes a knocking sound, is the visitor who knocks on the door. The deer, a major autumn topic, is a buck yearning for its mate, often represented by the bush clover (*hagi*) or the maidenflower (*ominaeshi*). The frog, a spring topic, is a male frog longing for its lover. In short, the flowers are women, and the birds or animals are men.

Another key characteristic of the four seasons found in the *Kokinshū* is that the animals and insects express the same emotions as those found in love: frustration, a sense of betrayal, loss, resentment, and loneliness. The most important of these emotions is unfulfilled longing, which lies at the heart of the topic of love. A good example is the *hototogisu*, or small cuckoo, the most important topic of summer. The *hototogisu* developed various associations, with night, the singing voice, with memory, the spirit of the dead, but one of its most important associations was with unrequited love, an association that appears from as early as the *Manyōshū* (Vol. 8, Summer, No. 1473).

*Tachibana no  
hanachirusato no  
hototogisu  
katakoishitsutsu  
naku hi shi so ooki*

Many are the days  
when the small cuckoo  
cries in the village  
of scattered orange blossoms  
out of unrequited love.

In this summer poem by Ōtomo no Tabito, the *hototogisu* is personified, seen as a bird that cries out of unrequited love. So strong does this association become that in

the next example by Sosei from the *Kokinshū* (Summer, No. 143) the voice of the *hototogisu* causes the speaker to feel longing for some unknown person.

Upon hearing the first singing of the small cuckoo

<i>Hototogisu</i>	When I heard
<i>hatsukoe kikeba</i>	the first sound of the small cuckoo,
<i>ajikinaku</i>	I couldn't help
<i>nushi sadamaranu</i>	but feel longing
<i>koiseraru hata</i>	without knowing for whom!

The *hototogisu* also became associated with death and love. According to a Chinese legend, a Chinese emperor had an affair with the wife of one of his subjects, resigned from the throne, and was disgraced. When the fallen emperor passed away, a *hototogisu* came to cry, and it was believed that this bird was the incarnation of the emperor's spirit. For this and other reasons, the *hototogisu* came to be regarded as a bird that traveled between the land of the dead and that of the living. In the following poem by Lady Ise in the *Shūishū* (Lament, No. 1307), the third imperial *waka* anthology, edited around 1005–1007, the poet has lost a child and composes the following poem.

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

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

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

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

#### LOVE IN THE *KOKINSHŪ*

The notion of love as it appears in the *Kokinshū* differs significantly from the modern English idea of "love," which implies being passionately involved with someone. In classical poetry love meant yearning to be with someone of the opposite sex who is absent or beyond reach. The graphs that are used in the *Manyōshū* for love are *ko-hi* 孤悲, literally, "lonely sorrow." To compose on love, then, was to compose on being sorrowfully lonely. *Koi* (love) is about the pain of being apart or separated from the object of desire; it is never about the joy of being together.

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

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

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

<i>Omohitsutsu</i>	Was it because I fell asleep
<i>nureba ya hito no</i>	thinking of him
<i>mietsuramu</i>	that he appeared?
<i>yume to shiriseba</i>	Had I know it was a dream
<i>samezaramashi wo</i>	I would never have awakened

In this example by Ono no Komachi from the second love volume (No. 552), the longing is so strong that the other person appears in one's dreams.

In the third love volume, the speaker finally meets the other party, but instead of focusing on the meeting, which is never described, the *Kokinshū* dwells on the painful parting, the subsequent inability to meet, and the fear of scandal and rumor. Here is No. 616 by Ariwara no Narihira.

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

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

In this example, the speaker has just met the person and remains wildly in love.

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

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

In this example from the fourth love volume (Anonymous, No. 677), the partner is already gone.

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

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

These love poems are implicitly gendered. In a typical exchange of poems, the man initiates the relationship and the woman rejects his advances. Since it is the man who takes the initiative in the poetic exchange, most of the love poems in the first and second love volumes of the *Kokinshū* are implicitly from the perspective of the pursuing man. In the first and second volumes, it is primarily the man, or rather male persona, who suffers, who must suppress his longing. In the third, fourth, and fifth love volumes, by contrast, the woman's perspective or female persona dominates; it is the woman who is neglected and who waits in vain for the man to visit.

In other words, the first half of the love narrative is dominated by so-called men's poems (*otoko-uta*) and the second half by "women poems" (*onna-uta*). Since most of the poems in the *Kokinshū*, including those in the love volumes, are written by men, in the third, fourth, and fifth love volumes, the male poet often takes the position of the woman. In a relatively limited number of cases, a woman poet takes the position of the man, writing a "man poem."

From the tenth century onward, poets composed increasingly at poetry parties, poetry contests, and for hundred-poem sequences (*hyakushu-uta*) on pre-established topics (*dai*). The poet was required to compose on the established associations of the poetic topic. In a topic such as "waiting in love" (*matsu koi*), the poet had to compose from the point of view of the woman who waits impatiently for the man to visit or return. In these instances, the male poet took the persona of a woman. To return to the example from the fifth love volume, the poet is a male priest, Priest Henjō. He is composing a "woman" poem on "waiting in love" (*matsu koi*).

#### LOVE IN THE FOUR SEASONS

The narrative of love found in the love volumes of the *Kokinshū* has a direct parallel in the narrative of the four seasons. In the seasonal volumes, the poet, much like the man longing for the woman in the first love volume, longs for the arrival of a particular bird (such as the *uguisu* in the spring or the *hototogisu* in the summer) or waits impatiently for the flowering of a tree or plant (such as the plum or cherry tree in the spring, or the *unohana* or *deutzia* in the summer). The longing for the arrival of a seasonal phenomenon parallels the longing found in the first and second love volumes.

Equally important is the regret and resentment over the unexpectedly quick departure of a seasonal object such as the cherry blossoms. The focus is not on the cherry

blossoms at their peak so much as on the anticipation of the cherry blossoms and then the regret at their quick departure. As Kenkō notes in *Tsurezuregusa*, what is most interesting is the beginnings and the endings of things. This parallels the narrative of love in the *Kokinshū* where the focus is not on the meeting or union but on the anticipation of love and then the regret at its quick demise. Longing takes two forms: anticipation (or suppressed desire) and regret (or nostalgia for what is lost). The verb *shinobu*, which has two meanings, embodies these two sides of love. *Shinobu* can mean to suppress desire and to be nostalgic, to look back on the past with regret. Both attitudes are central to the seasonal poems.

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

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

As this *Kokinshū* (Anonymous, Autumn 1, No. 184) poem suggests, autumn becomes personified as a reflection of the human heart at its heaviest. The key word here is *aku*, "to become weary of someone," or *aki*, weariness, which is a homonym for the Japanese word for autumn, *aki*. The following poem in the fifth love volume reveals the "autumnal" nature of love.

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

In this *Kokinshū* poem (Love 5, No. 771) by Henjō, autumn (the weariness of love) has come unexpectedly early to the heart of the loved one, a change that brings tears (*shigure*, or cold showers) to the poet.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF TANABATA

The impact of love on the four seasons is also evident in Tanabata, or Star Festival, the second most popular autumn topic in the *Kokinshū* after *momiji*, or bright autumn leaves. According to the Chinese legend, the two constellations, the Herdsboy

(Kengyū, Altair) and the Weaver Woman (Shokujo, Vega), were lovers but were punished for a transgression and were left separated by the Milky Way (*Ama no gawa*). On Kikōden, a festival held on the Seventh of the Seventh Month, the two constellations were allowed to meet for one night only.

In the ancient period, in the *Manyōshū*, the poet usually takes the position of either the Weaver Woman or the Herdsboy and expresses passionate feelings of love.

<i>Ama no gawa aimukitachite aga koishi kimi kimasu nari himo tokimakena</i>	Facing each other across the River of Heaven – it sounds as if the person whom I love is coming. I shall undo my sash and wait.
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In this example (*Manyōshū*, Vol. 8, No. 1518) the Weaver Woman cannot see the Herdsboy but hears the sound of the boat oar through the river mist and passionately anticipates her lover's arrival. This stance continues into the Heian period, with the brevity of the meeting between the lovers making the meeting all the more poignant, as in this *Kokinshū* (Anonymous, Autumn 1, No. 176) poem.

<i>Koikoite au yo wa koyoi ama no kawa kiri tachiwatari akezu mo aranan</i>	After so much longing we meet tonight. If only the mist of the Milky Way would hide us and dawn never break!
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Significantly, the emphasis gradually shifts, particularly in the last Heian period, from the focus on physical love and contact found in the *Man'yōshū* to the *Kokinshū* notion of love, in which the focus is not on the meeting itself but on the pained state of the two lovers before and after the meeting. The following is a poem by Ki no Tsurayuki from the *Gosenshū* (Autumn 2, No. 249).

<i>Asato akete nagameyasuran Tanabata wa akanu wakare no sora wo koitsutsu</i>	Is the Weaver Woman opening the morning door and gazing out, longing, unsatisfied, for the departed skies?
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Tanabata continues to be a major topic in the modern period. The next haiku is by Hashimoto Takako (1899–1963), one of the modern pioneers of women's haiku.

<i>Tanabata ya kami nureshi mama hito ni au</i>	Star Festival – with my hair still wet I meet him
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Hashimoto, in an implicitly erotic poem, establishes a parallel between the celestial meeting and her meeting with a lover.

## FROM LOVE TO NON-LOVE

The impact of love on the four seasons is probably greatest in the mid-Heian period, in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, with the *Kokinshū* and its two successors, the *Gosenshū* (951) and *Shūishū* (1005-7). From the latter half of the eleventh century, from the *Goshūishū* (1086) onward, there is a gradual shift in seasonal poetry from love to non-love, from personified or anthropomorphized nature to a more descriptive landscape. There is also a corresponding shift from focus on the voice to non-voice. This shift is most dramatically demonstrated in *haikai*, or popular linked verse, which emerges in the seventeenth century. As I noted earlier, in the *Kokinshū* and in the classical poetry, the *hototogisu* was closely associated with longing and with the spirit of the dead. By the seventeenth century, however, *haikai* poets had turned their attention to the rapid flight of the *hototogisu*, which became one of its new poetic associations. A noted example by Matsuo Bashō, the late 17<sup>th</sup> century *haikai* master, in *Oi no kobumi* (Backpack Notes, 1688) was the following.

<i>Hototogisu kieyuku kata ya shima hitotsu</i>	The cuckoo – where it disappears a single island
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This poem was composed near Suma, near present-day Kobe, looking across the Inland Sea to Awajishima (Awaji Island). The speaker implicitly hears the voice of the *hototogisu*, but by the time he looks up, its flight is so fast that it has disappeared from sight, merging with a single island, the island of Awaji.

<i>Hototogisu naku ya hibari to jūmonji</i>	The cuckoo cries – forming a cross with the skylark
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In his *hokku* by Kyorai (Bashō's disciple), the *hototogisu* cuts horizontally across the sky, while the *hibari* (or skylark) flies straight up, vertically, forming a cross in the air. The *hototogisu* is a summer bird and the *hibari* is a spring bird, implying the intersection of the two seasons, the transition from spring to summer.

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

<i>Koi shinaba waga tsuka de nake hototogisu</i>	If I die from love cry at my grave – Small cuckoo!
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Ōshū draws on the classical association of *hototogisu* with love and with death, and asks the *hototogisu* to come cry at her grave if she dies of love, she asks the cuckoo to bring to her in the afterworld a letter from her lover.

Bashō did not compose *hokku* or haiku on love, but he wrote many love verses in linked verse sequences. The following sequence (no. 11–13) appears in the middle of one such sequence, the “Karigane kasen” (a thirty-six verse sequence), composed by Bashō and his disciple Etsujin at Fukagawa, in 1688.

<i>Ashida hakasenu ame no akebono</i>	Not letting him wear the high clogs, early dawn in the rain	Etsujin
<i>Kinuginu ya amari kabosoku ateyaka ni</i>	Morning after love – Ever so fragile and elegant	Bashō
<i>Kaze hikitamau koe no utsukushi</i>	The beauty of a voice that has caught a cold –	Etsujin

In the first verse by Etsujin, the owner of the house will not allow the visitor to wear high wooden clogs (*ashida*) even though it is raining. The next verse, by Bashō, which combines with Etsujin’s verse to form a single poem, turns the previous verse into a “morning after love” (*kinuginu*) verse. The owner of the house has become a fragile and elegant woman, restraining the male lover from leaving at dawn. The next verse by Etsujin, which combines with Bashō’s verse, uses the classical supplementary honorific verb *tamau*, transforming the setting into a scene from a Heian *monogatari* or romance. The woman has caught a cold during the night, but the raspy voice is attractive. The love that unfolds here is very different from the vulgar humor found in earlier Muromachi *haikai*. Instead, it attempts to find subtle overtones in the life of commoners. It is seeking to make love a refined topic for *haikai*, which had hitherto been considered lowly entertainment.

#### CAT’S LOVE, A SPRING TOPIC

Generally speaking, Bashō did not compose haiku on love. Love did, however, appear in the haiku when it becomes a seasonal topic. A good example of a seasonal topic on love was “cat’s love” (*neko no koi*), which was a spring topic and one of the most popular *haikai* topics in Edo period. “Cat’s love” was a commoner’s version of love. Cats apparently go into heat twice a year, in the spring and autumn, but the poetic focus of *haikai* fell on early spring, when the male cat chased after the female cat, making cries like a baby. Bashō composed the following *hokku* in 1691 (Genroku 4) and included it in *Sarumino*.

At a farmhouse

<i>Mugimeshi ni yatsururu koi ka neko no tsuma</i>	A cat’s wife – grown thin from love and barley?
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Bashō humorously describes a female cat that has grown emaciated from not only eating barley – indicative of a poor farmhouse – but from intense love-making. The next *hokku*, composed by Bashō in 1692, juxtaposes the loud caterwauling with

the subsequent quiet of the misty spring moonlight (*oborozuki*), a classical topic associated with love, causing the two erotic moods to interfuse.

<i>Neko no koi yamu toki neya no oborozuki</i>	Cats making love – when it’s over, misty moonlight in the bedroom
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If the buck’s longing for its mate (*tsuma kou shika*) – expressed by its mournful cries – was the archetypal embodiment of love in classical Heian *waka*, then cat’s love – with the baby-like crying of the male as it chased the female – embodied the down-to-earth, humorous character of Edo *haikai*.

#### LOVE IN BUSON

In contrast to Bashō, Buson wrote a large number of haiku on the topic of love. By the late late eighteenth century, *haikai* linked verse had become a minor form, leaving the *hokku* as the main genre. Probably even more important was the fact that Buson composed on fixed topics, which were fictional. (In contrast to Bashō’s *hokku*, which were based on actual experience and were rarely composed on fixed topics, eighty or ninety percent of Buson’s *hokku* were on fixed topics.) Buson usually composed on topics that were decided in advance of a poetry gathering. His poems are often imaginary, drawn from other historical periods or from China. A good example is the following haiku:

<i>Kaya no uchi ni oborozukiyo no Naishi kana</i>	Inside the mosquito net the lady-in-waiting to Oborozukiyo, Lady of the Misty Spring Moon!
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The mosquito net is an Edo period seasonal word for summer. Lady of the Misty Spring Moon (Oborozukiyo) is a female character who appears in the “Hana no en” (Flower Banquet) chapter of *The Tale of Genji* and who was one of Genji’s lovers. Buson transforms the woman in the mosquito net, an Edo period woman, into a court lady from the Heian period. In composing on fixed topics, Buson was like classical *waka* poets in the late Heian and medieval periods who wrote a poetry contests and poetry parties.

#### SENRYŪ AND HAIKAI

In considering the topic of love, it is useful to compare haiku to *senryū*, a form almost identical to haiku, which emerged in the late eighteenth century, at the same time as Buson was writing. Both haiku and *senryū* consist of seventeen syllables, 5/7/5, but in contrast to haiku, which began as the *hokku*, or opening verse, as the beginning of a linked verse sequence, the *senryū* emerged from *zappai* 雑俳, the kind of *haikai* found in the Muromachi period, in which a seventeen syllable verse was added to a fourteen syllable topic. This added verse became independent, resulting in *senryū*. One result is that, in contrast to haiku, *senryū* requires neither a cutting word nor a seasonal word. Here are some examples.

*Nete tokeba  
obi hodo nagaki  
mono wa nashi*

How long it seems  
when you undo a woman's sash  
while lying in bed

*Chōnai de  
shiranu wa teishu  
bakari nari*

The whole town  
knows of it except  
the husband

*Wakadanna  
yoru wa ogande  
hiru shikari*

The young master  
who scolds the maid in the daytime  
worships her at night

*Yoshiwara e  
otoko no chie wo  
sute ni yuki*

Yoshiwara –  
that's where a man goes to dump  
all his better judgment

These *senryū* deal with a wide range of subject matter, from married life to infidelity, and male visits to the licensed quarters. In contrast to haiku, which approaches human affairs through the seasonal word, *senryū* deal with human affairs directly and often satirically, with no attempt to elevate the tone or subject matter. One of the subgenres of *senryū* is *bareku*, which is pornographic haiku, the poetic counterpart to *shunga*, or erotic woodblock prints. By contrast, haiku moves in the opposite direction, trying to create subtle or elegant overtones, which it often generated through the seasonal word.

## MODERN HAIKU AND LOVE

The main difference between Edo period *haikai* and modern haiku was that linked verse disappeared totally in the modern period, leaving only the seventeen syllable haiku, which required a seasonal word. One consequence was that modern haiku, at least in its early stages, was seasonal poetry first, and social poetry second. There are in fact very few haiku on love in the Meiji period. Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902), the pioneer of modern haiku, wrote almost no love poems. It was not until the Taishō period, with the appearance of haiku poets such as Sugita Hisajo (1890–1946), one of the pioneer women haiku poets, that we find notable love poetry in haiku.

*Hanagoromo  
nugu ya matsuwaru  
himo iroiro*

Taking off the cherry blossom  
robe – left tangled in strings  
of all sorts

The seasonal word in this haiku is *hanagoromo*, cherry-patterned robe, which is a spring word. *Hanagoromo* were worn by court women in the Heian period, and in the modern period women wore them when they went cherry blossom viewing. The haiku suggests that the speaker has just come back from cherry flower viewing, and perhaps intoxicated by the flowers and by wine, attempts to fling off her bright kimono which remain attached to her body by various strings. There is a sense of physical and erotic release.

*Kaze ni otsu  
yōkihi-zakura  
fusa no mama*

Falling in the wind –  
Yang-Kuei Fei cherry blossoms,  
a whole cluster

The seasonal word in the second haiku is *yōkihizakura*, or Yang-kuei Fei cherry blossoms, a spring word. Hisajo uses seasonal words that evoke other worlds particularly the romantic world of *The Tale of Genji*. In this haiku, she uses the word *yōkihizakura*, a multi-petaled cherry blossom with a flamboyant, crimson flower. A large cluster of flowers “falls” at once, suggesting the tragic fall of the beautiful Yang-Kuei Fei, a Chinese courtesan who helped to bring about the downfall of a Chinese emperor. She also evokes the tragedy of Genji's mother in *The Tale of Genji*. There is a strong resemblance between Buson and Hisajo in that both draw on the classical world. Hisajo differs, however, from Buson in that she becomes the heroine of her classical world. She becomes Yang-Kuei Fei. The classical world becomes a means of asserting her own position.

In Meiji 6 (1873), the Meiji government, under influence from the West, changed the calendar from a lunar calendar, which had been used for over a thousand years, to a solar or Gregorian calendar, which moved spring from the First Month to the Second Month (February) and disjointed almost all the traditional seasonal associations. The seasonal words and their traditional associations were so important to haiku poets, however, that they rearranged seasonal words to fit the new calendar. In the lunar calendar, the beginning of spring and the beginning of the year had been the same, but with the solar calendar they were separated, with spring coming one month after New Year's Day. In order to maintain the seasonal associations, haiku poets created a fifth season: New Year's (*shinnen*), which today has almost as many seasonal words as the other four seasons. The new Meiji government also abandoned traditional annual observances such as Tanabata. Under the new calendar Tanabata, which had been an autumn topic, moved to summer, to the seventh of July (Seventh Month). Modern haiku poets, however, kept Tanabata as an autumn topic in the *saijiki* or seasonal almanacs since its poetic and cultural associations with autumn were so strong and important.

In short, haiku depended on the seasonal associations for its survival. Significantly, however, the seasonal associations were not necessary for *tanka*, or modern version of the thirty-one syllable *waka* or classical poem. Let me give a few examples of love in modern *tanka*. The first is by Yosano Akiko (1878–1942), one of the pioneers of love poetry in the Meiji period.

*Yawahada no  
atsuki chishio ni  
fure mo mide  
sabishikarazu ya  
michi o toku kimi*

Won't you be lonely,  
not touching  
the hot blood  
under my soft skin?  
You who philosophize.

This *tanka* in *Tangled Hair* (Midaregami, 1901) is a very different approach to love, with the woman taking on the position of the aggressor. Another example is by a young living poet, Tawara Machi, whose *tanka* collection *Salad Anniversary* (Sarada kinenbi, 1987) became a pop phenomenon and sold over a million copies.

Ochite kita  
ame wo miagete  
sōno mama no  
katachi de fui ni  
kuchibiru ga hoshi

Looking up  
at the rain that falls down,  
suddenly,  
in this position,  
I want your lips.

Yosano Akiko's poem could occur in any season. The same is true of Tawara Machi. Here the topic of love does not have to go through the seasons as it does in modern haiku. *Tanka* may draw on seasonal associations, but it does not depend on them for its survival. This is a far cry from the symbiotic relationship between love and the four seasons that we found in the *Kokinshū*.

In contrast to Heian classical *waka*, which had been highly restrictive with regard to vocabulary, limiting words to refined topics, Muromachi and, later, Edo era *haikai* allowed for any kind of language and any kind of topic, particularly the vulgar and the erotic. In the Meiji period *tanka* became the modern thirty-one syllable successor to *waka*, and modern haiku became successor to Edo period *haikai*. But there was a dramatic reversal of roles. It was the thirty-one syllable modern *tanka* that now had no restrictions on diction and content, while modern haiku required a seasonal word, which anchored the poem in the poetic tradition. In other words, the thirty-one syllable *waka*, which had been the classical genre for over a thousand years, became, in the modern period, the vehicle for the avant-garde, while the descendent of *haikai*, which had begun as an anti-establishment genre, became the guardian of the poetic tradition, particularly with regard to the seasons.

Today, some poets compose haiku without seasonal words (called *muki haiku*) but these are in the minority, constituting something less than five percent of the total population of haiku poets. Haiku with seasonal words continues to be the mainstream probably because haiku as a form is very short. The seasonal word adds depth and complexity and links the poem to the larger poetic tradition. *Tanka*, at thirty-one syllables, is much longer than haiku, and is able to flourish without depending on a seasonal word. This in turn had a major impact on the orientation of *tanka*, which continued to embrace the topic of love.

## CONCLUSION

Historically, over a thirteen hundred year span, there was broad movement from the physical to the non-physical and then back again. In the *Manyōshū*, love is often portrayed very physically, with references to the body and to sexuality. However, by the mid-Heian period, particularly in the *Kokinshū*, love has become almost entirely non-physical. The actual meeting is never described. The closest description that we get is of black hair (*kurokami*) of the woman, and even here it is black hair as a reminder of the man who touched it. The physicality of love appears in non-canonical genres such as *imayō* (contemporary song), in the late Heian and Kamakura periods, and in *haikai*, in the late medieval period, a popular, parodic genre that basically worked against classical norms. A similar movement appears in the late eighteenth century, with *senryū*. *Haikai* gradually elevated itself in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, through the achievements of poets such as Bashō and then Buson, and it approached classical *waka* in being elegant and refined. The late eighteenth century emergence of *senryū*, which embraced the erotic and the vulgar, is thus not accidental.

Like Muromachi *haikai*, *senryū* represents the vulgar side that had been eliminated from a once popular genre of *haikai*. A similar relationship exists between modern haiku and modern *senryū* today. To the extent that modern haiku eliminates the erotic from its poetry, that function is taken over by *senryū*.

## AFTERWORD: THE CASE OF ENGLISH HAIKU

There is an interesting parallel, if not inverse, relationship between love and the four seasons to be found in English haiku. Japanese haiku were translated into English as early as the end of the nineteenth century and had an impact on Ezra Pound and the Imagists in the early twentieth century. By the post-war period, the Beats and other American poets began composing their own English haiku, which turned into a popular movement that continues to this day. English haiku does not follow the seventeen syllable count found in Japanese haiku. Nor does it require a seasonal word, since no such tradition exists in the English language. This lack of a seasonal word was to have a profound impact on the fate of English haiku.

The post-war American haiku poets, who were very heavily influenced by Suzuki Daisetsu and Zen Buddhism, conceived haiku as nature poetry and were often conscious of the seasons. A good example is the following by the American poet, Nicholas Virgilio, who wrote the following in 1988.

Viet Nam Monument  
Darkened by the autumn rain:  
My dead brother's name

Autumn rain functions as a seasonal word, perfectly matching the dark memory of the lost brother. The haiku is effective in that Viet Nam Monument functions like an *utamakura*, or poetic place, with specific historical and cultural resonance.

English haiku started off in the 1950s and 1960s as poetry of nature, particularly under the influence of Zen Buddhism, but because English haiku did not require a seasonal word, once it had gotten over its obsession with Zen Buddhism, it gravitated toward more social topics, including that of love. That is what is happening now. A good example of more recent haiku is this one by Valerie Woerdehoff (1996).

From my lover's lips  
a phrase  
my ex-husband used

In Japanese, this would probably be considered a *senryū*, since it is humorous and has no seasonal word. The point here is that English haiku has evolved into a unique genre that mixes haiku and *senryū*. The divide that exists in Japan between haiku and *senryū* does not exist in the English haiku since English haiku does not require a seasonal word and does not depend on the kind of highly codified seasonal associations found in Japanese haiku. In this regard, English haiku has become what *haikai* originally was, a popular, humorous form with few restrictions on content. In both the Japanese and the English cases, there is a profound dialectic between the four seasons and love that is critical to understanding the history of each.

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