CHAPTER 1

Introduction: A Poetics of Interpretation

The *Hyakunin Isshu*, or *One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each* collection, is a sequence of one hundred Japanese poems in the *tanka* form, selected by the famous poet and scholar Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241) and arranged, at least in part, to represent the history of Japanese poetry from the seventh century down to Teika’s own day. The *One Hundred Poets* is, without a doubt, the most popular and most widely known collection of poetry in Japan—a distinction it has maintained for hundreds of years. As such, it has had a tremendous influence on Japanese literature, visual art, and culture, both “high” and “low.” Since at least the sixteenth century it has been the most important primer of classical Japanese poetry in the *tanka* form, and it was this genre that in turn served as the foundation of the other major medieval literary forms, such as linked verse (*renga*) and no theater. By the early modern period (1600–1868), Teika and his *One Hundred Poets* collection had come to define the classical poetic tradition. The *One Hundred Poets* became the subject of ever more popular and widely circulated commentaries, illustrations, adaptations to clothing and furnishings, parodies, and appropriations. For instance, virtually every major woodblock *ukiyo-e* artist at some time or other tried his hand at illustrating the entire set. It also became the basis of a popular card game, which in turn became a regular part of the new year festivities. Today as well, students study the poems of the *One Hundred Poets* in school, and many Japanese still memorize them in the context of the card game. Moreover, the *One Hundred Poets* was one of the earliest complete poetic texts to be translated into English, and since then it has served as a textbook for foreigners as well, leading to at least a dozen complete translations in English alone.

A Question of Historicity

The *One Hundred Poets* collection is a compact history of Japanese poetry from the seventh to the mid-thirteenth century. Yet even when it was first put together, in the 1230s, there was confusion about the meaning of poems written in earlier periods. Not surprisingly, then, Japanese poets and scholars have been writing commentaries on the *One Hundred Poets* since at least the late thir-
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tenry, and Japanese readers have long read the poetry of the *One Hundred Poets* through such commentaries. While an individual poem might take only seconds to recite, readers were used to analyzing and savoring every word and phrase. Despite the number of English translations of the *One Hundred Poets*, however, since the beginning of the twentieth century most have included as little annotation as possible. Apparently this custom can be traced to a belief that poetry should, and should be allowed to, “speak for itself” without pedantic footnotes and commentaries. Regardless of the value of such an idea, no translator since the nineteenth century has provided English readers the chance to read the *One Hundred Poets* as the Japanese do: aided by commentaries, alerted to differing interpretations, or informed about the historical background.

Almost fifty years ago, the Czech scholar F. X. Šalda wrote:

> Literary history very wrongly limits itself to describing only the *genesis* of a work, by which is meant its creation from the first impulses and initiatives up to its material embodiment. A second and often greater and more difficult part of the task awaits it: to describe how the work has changed in the minds of those following generations who have dealt with it, who have lived on it, fed on it, and nourished themselves on it. This is the second part of the biography of a work—and it is frequently, even usually, neglected.¹

It is precisely this kind of reception history of a literary text that is still usually neglected by European and English-speaking scholars of Japanese literature.² And even in more recent studies that do attend to issues of reception, no one has questioned how reception history might influence translation—scholars still seem to see the text as essentially the self-same over time.

In other words, scholars continue to work within an Ingardian phenomenological framework. This approach was ensconced in literary New Criticism in the bible of the same, entitled *Theory of Literature*, by the Czech René Wellek and the American Austin Warren, published originally in 1942. In Part Four, “The Intrinsic Study of Literature,” Wellek and Warren include a chapter on “The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art,” making explicit reference to the “Polish philosopher, Roman Ingarden, [who] in an ingenious, highly technical analysis of the literary work of art, has employed the methods of Husserl’s ‘Phenomenology.’”³ Rather than “reception,” Ingarden and his fellow phenomenologists speak of the “concretization” of a work of art. As Felix Vodička put it: “Ingarden . . . finds the source of the difference in concretizations primarily in the schematic and indefinite nature of some strata of the work, while other strata maintain their identity. . . . He insists that the changing concretizations of the work do not violate its identity in its nonschematic parts, for otherwise the artistic essence of the work would be violated. Ingarden [also] presupposes an ideal concretization that would fully realize all the esthetic qualities of the work” (p. 110). In the same way, Anglo-European scholarship on Japanese literature has, at best, seen posterior interpretations of a work such as the *Genji* as “readings” of a constant, self-same text and, at worst, have cited, for instance, Edo-period interpretations of such works as the *Tales of Ise* only to dismiss them.⁴ I know of no case in which the issue of reception has been con-
Considered relevant to translation or been seen to challenge the essential identity of the literary work.

All this is perfectly consonant with an orientation toward literature that views poetry either as the best thoughts great men have ever thought or as a timeless time machine that always works the same way (when properly operated), no matter in what century its button is pushed. In Archibald MacLeish’s oft-repeated words: “A poem should not mean / But be.” “Being,” of course, excludes interpretation: something simply is, or it isn’t. Accordingly, translations of poems are thought of as either “right” or “wrong,” and the issue of interpretation is often not broached at all. This is not to say that most translators are unaware of interpretive controversy; rather, they seem to believe that their primary obligation, as translators, is to provide a text through which the reader can intuit the unchanging structure of the work.

The poems that Teika anthologized date from at least as early as the seventh century up to his own day: a span of some five hundred years. This collection, as noted, has long been popular as a textbook, and thus the poems can be treated individually and interpreted according to the most recent knowledge of their original contexts. The Hyakunin Isshu Zen Yakuchû, or The One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each Collection, Completely Translated [into Modern Japanese] and Annotated, edited by Ariyoshi Tamotsu, for instance, exemplifies the textbook approach to the One Hundred Poets. Ariyoshi uses as his base text the oldest extant manuscript copy of the One Hundred Poets, copied by Gyôkô (1391–1455), the grandson of the Nijô poetic school adherent Ton’a, and owned by the Imperial Household Agency. But the One Hundred Poets has undergone some changes during its transmission from Teika’s day. For instance, in the case of the poem by Murasaki Shikibu (Poem 57), Ariyoshi gives the poem as it is written in the Gyôkô manuscript but notes that this poem is included in the ShinKokinshû, the Nishidai Shû, and the Murasaki Shikibu Shû, all works edited by Teika; and in each of these, as well as in other copies of the One Hundred Poets such as the Oei Shô of 1406, the wording is slightly but significantly different. In other words, the poem as it appears in the Gyôkô manuscript, while it may reflect the way Gyôkô knew the poem, probably does not reflect either the poem as Murasaki Shikibu, its author, wrote it nor as Teika, the compiler of the One Hundred Poets collection, knew it. Accordingly, some Japanese editors emend their base text. In contrast to Ariyoshi, for instance, Shimazu Tadao offers an edition of the One Hundred Poets that is based on the oldest extant printed version, the Soan-bon, but emended to reflect his conclusions about how Teika designed the work.

Some Anglo-American translators have accepted the necessity for such emendation, presumably because it is also understood to be in accord with the poet’s original intent—that is, what, in the preceding example, Murasaki Shikibu herself meant. Yet they seem unwilling to apply the same principle when Teika’s reading of a poem is no longer accepted as correct by modern scholars. In fact, the most recent American translator of the One Hundred Poets dispenses with any actual text at all but relies on a virtual one: he draws his text of the individual poems from the original imperial anthologies from which Teika collected them, rather than any extant copy of the One Hundred Poets.
itself, and translates them according to the best modern information of their meaning at their time of composition, whether Teika seems to have read them in the same fashion or not. The *One Hundred Poets*, in this case, exists only as an excuse to collect together one hundred particular poems from various imperial anthologies, and the translator’s interpretation of the whole reflects the historical understanding of no period but his own.

In contrast to the standard approach, this book attempts to present, and represent, what Louis Montrose has called “the historicity of texts”—that is, “the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing” and, I would add, all modes of reading. Such an approach, however, still remains within the circle of what I would call “the conceit of the modern,” puns intended. In other words, the reception history I have just outlined remains positivistic albeit plural: we know what Murasaki Shikibu actually intended, and we know that Teika got it wrong. But Montrose also draws our attention to what he calls “the textuality of history,” the idea, “firstly, that we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question—traces whose survival we cannot assume to be merely contingent but must rather presume to be at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement; and secondly, that those textual traces are themselves subject to subsequent textual mediations when they are construed as ‘documents’ upon which historians ground their own texts, called ‘histories’” (p. 20).

In other words, not only should we recognize that the survival of texts such as the *One Hundred Poets* is not “merely contingent” but must be “at least partially consequent upon complex and subtle social processes of preservation and effacement,” which we should try to reveal and explain, but we must also recognize that the very effort to reveal and explain these processes is historically mediated and every bit as much “consequent upon” the very same kind of “complex and subtle social processes” of our own time. Objectivity, in other words, or “the truth,” is not available to us. Our readings and our interpretations remain just that—readings and interpretations—and while we may avail ourselves of the work of our predecessors, that is no reason to believe our results will be any more correct. While many argue the necessity of appreciating the historicity of the past, fewer seem willing to consider the historicity of the present. Such a perspective is, however, essential. To quote Montrose again:

Integral to . . . a . . . project of historical criticism must be a realization and acknowledgement that our analyses and our understandings necessarily proceed from our own historically, socially and institutionally shaped vantage points; that the histories we reconstruct are the textual constructs of critics who are, ourselves, historical subjects. If scholarship actively constructs and delimits its object of study, and if the scholar is historically positioned vis-à-vis that object, it follows that the quest of an older historical criticism to recover meanings that are in any final or absolute sense authentic, correct, and complete is illusory. Thus, the practice of a new historical criticism invites rhetorical strategies by which to foreground the constitutive acts of textuality that traditional modes of literary history [and, I would argue, translation] efface.
or misrecognize. It also necessitates efforts to historicize the present as well as the past, and to historicize the dialectic between them—those reciprocal historical pressures by which the past has shaped the present and the present reshapes the past. [pp. 23–24]

To exemplify this issue, I want to consider a bold and recent reading of the work of Murasaki Shikibu that appears in a book called Murasaki Shikibu no Messeeji by Komashaku Kimi, a scholar of modern Japanese literature and an openly lesbian feminist.¹¹ In one section of this work, Komashaku asserts: “Murasaki Shikibu wa dōsei ni ai o kanjite ita,” which one might provisionally translate as “Murasaki Shikibu experienced love homosexually.” Komashaku’s thesis has been met with stony silence by Japanese scholars of classical literature. One suspects that many of them found Komashaku’s interpretation the most egregious example of the ahistorical and anachronistic application of a new “discourse” and modern concerns to a classical text.

Komashaku draws particular attention to Murasaki Shikibu’s relationship with another lady-in-waiting, her roommate KoShōshō. Here is one exchange of poems between them:

I was writing a reply to a letter sent by Lady Koshōshō from home, when suddenly it clouded over with the autumn rains—the messenger too was in a hurry. “And the sky too looks like it’s unsettled again!” I wrote, and it must have been, because I added some clumsy poem and later, when it had become dark, the messenger returned with this, written on dark purple paper with a graduated cloud-pattern:

\[
\begin{align*}
kumo-ma naku & \quad \text{Like the clouds without a break} \\
nagamuru sora mo & \quad \text{I gaze at the sky that has grown dark—} \\
kaki-kurashi & \quad \text{grown dark—} \\
iki no shinoburu & \quad \text{how should it be the autumn rains} \\
shigure naruramu & \quad \text{that let fall tears of longing?} \\
\end{align*}
\]

Not remembering even what I may have written, I replied:

\[
\begin{align*}
kotowari no & \quad \text{While there may be breaks} \\
shigure no sora ha & \quad \text{in the clouds in the sky of the seasonal autumn rains,} \\
kumo-ma avero & \quad \text{there is never a break to dry} \\
nagamuru sode zo & \quad \text{the sleeves of she who gazes out.} \\
kawaku ma no naki & \quad \text{12} \\
\end{align*}
\]

What is particularly intriguing about the example of Komashaku reading Murasaki Shikibu is that it can be shown to be so clearly a product of its time and place. The best proof of this is the English translation of the Murasaki Shikibu Nikki and Shū published by Richard Bowring. Despite considering in great detail almost every other aspect of this work—whether Murasaki Shikibu had an erotic relationship with Michinaga, her attitude toward religious retirement and life at court, and more—Bowring does not for one minute suggest there might be anything erotic in the exchange of poetry between two women.¹³ This is not to blame Bowring, really—Bonnie Zimmerman complains
of the same blindness among feminists, including earlier work by Elaine Showalter. It is simply to point out how our preconceptions make certain interpretative possibilities invisible to us.

In fact, the case of lesbian criticism is an exemplary instance of what one might call “blindness and insight.” This is because the blindness to lesbian interpretations of texts has also entailed denial—an explaining away of the simplest interpretation of a text in favor of a more complicated, but heterosexually normative, reading. This tendency to explain away can be seen in the following discussion by Edward Kamens about another Heian-period exchange of poetry between two women in “The Collected Poems of the Great Kamo Priestess,” or DaiSai In GyoShû:

The kotobagaki of poem 39 in Daisaiin gyoshû introduces it as one Senshi sent to an absent attendant, “Kodaifu,” on a night when a bright moon was intermittently obscured by clouds (tsuki no kumorimi harezumi suru hodo ni), and hence unable to fulfill its most conventional waka role, that of nocturnal companion:

kumogakure sayaka ni mienu tsuki kage ni machimi matazumi hito zo koishiki

The moon obscured by clouds (kumogakure . . .) sheds a light (tsuki kage) that barely allows the poem-speaker to see into the night (sayaka ni mienu, “I cannot see it [the moon] clearly”); nevertheless, she peers into the darkness, waiting for the reappearance of the moon from behind the clouds, then giving up in impatience, then looking out in hope again (machimi matazumi, “waiting, then not waiting”). Similarly, she waits anxiously for the return of the absent Kodaifu, yearning for her companionship (hito zo koishiki) as much as or perhaps even more than for that of the unhelpful moon. The juxtaposition of a similar construction in the kotobagaki (kumorimi harezumi, “the moon clouding over, and not clearing”) in the setting of the scene accentuates the sense of the discomfiture of the moment and the reflexive relationship between the moon, here a failed companion, and Kodaifu, an absent one.

Let us, in passing, note the similarity of phrasing between this poem and the one by Murasaki Shikibu in the One Hundred Poets, also addressed to a woman, with the shared expressions kumo-gakure and tsuki-kage, as well as the semantic similarity of mishi ya (“did I see it?”) and sayaka ni mienu (“I cannot see it clearly”).

Kamens follows this poem with another example from the DaiSai In GyoShû:

On another night, one on which the full moon shone in all its splendor (tsuki no kumanaki akaki ni), another absent attendant, “Taifu,” was sent this poem by her colleague “Ukon” (Daisain gyoshû no. 121) . . .

kokoro sumu aki no tsuki dani nakariseba nani o ukiyo no nagusame ni semu

Were there not at least this autumn moon that calms the heart, what would be my solace in this sad life?
—a suggestion that, in Taifu’s absence, the luminous moon will serve amply as substitute and solacing companion. . . Taifu’s response (Daisaitin gyoshū no. 122) to Ukon is a claim to the same moon as her own substitute companion:

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{kaze ni sou mugura no toko no hitorine mo} \\
    \text{tsuki yori hoka no nagusame zo naki}
\end{align*}
\]

For one who [also] sleeps alone on a windblown pallet of grass, there is no solace other than the moon. [pp. 33–34]

And it is here that Kamens remarks that “the unmistakably erotic subtext of this exchange is part of its poetic character: the two women are playing with images and sentiments that, in another context, would readily be read as explicit tropes of sexual desire” (p. 34, emphasis added).

As scholars and members of our society, we have of course been trained either to ignore (that is, be blind to) or deny (that is, explain away) what would appear to be homosexuality. Yet there is increasing evidence that female same-sex erotic relationships were hardly unknown at the Kamo Shrine in the Heian period. It is only thanks to our present political and intellectual moment that we are able to “see,” that is, consider, these texts as homoerotic. Indeed, such readings are part of a growing trend to explore the possibility of an erotic interpretation of love poems written between women, a trend that ranges from consideration of poems written to singing girls by the Ming-period “gentry wife” Xu Yuan (1560–1620) to the adaptations of Horace by the seventeenth-century Aphra Behn.

Komashaku’s interpretation comes in no small part from her own sexual identity, and her discussion of Murasaki Shikibu’s dōsei’ai, or “homosexual love,” is punctuated by references to the current state of women’s rights in Japan and the current rights of “sexual minorities” in the rest of the world. In fact, Komashaku’s very conception of “homosexuality” owes much, I suspect, to the definitions of Adrienne Rich and Rich’s idea of a “lesbian continuum” that frees definition from the phallocratic genital fixation. Above all, a “lesbian” interpretation problematizes the very definitions of “lesbian,” “homosexual,” “homosocial,” dōsei’ai, indeed the very terms “sexual” and “erotic” themselves. The issue is really what we—now, today—mean by these terms. Is this erotic poetry, or were the terms of erotic poetry the only ones available to poets, even to express friendship? One does not, then, apply new “critical discourses” to classical texts; rather, one applies them to one’s own understanding of the world. In a way, the “classics” do embody what Nicolai Hartmann has called “das Stehenbleiben des Monumentalen,” or the “standstill of the monumental.” This is not to champion what Vodička labels “aesthetic dogmatism,” which “has sought eternal and constant aesthetic values in a work or has conceived the history of reception as a path toward a definitive and correct understanding” (pp. 107–108). Rather, it is to suggest that the classic serves as an Other by which we measure our own reflection. Classics remain vibrant only if we continue to “deautomatize,” as Šalda puts it, the “concretizations propagated in schools and popular handbooks” (Vodička, p. 128). Šalda contends that boredom with automatized concretizations is the
initiative for new concretizations; Vodička argues that the initiative lies in “the needs of new literary movements” (p. 129), what he calls “the contemporary development of the literary norm” (p. 130). Today we are further away from these art-for-art’s-sake orientations, and there is an increasing tendency to see literature and canonization as part of a system that has helped to perpetuate dominant ideologies, racial, sexual, and colonial. Accepting that all scholarship is ideological, scholars and translators of Japanese literature may find themselves echoing Montrose’s words: “By choosing to foreground in my readings of Shakespeare or Spenser such issues as the politics of gender, the contestation of cultural constraints, the social instrumentality of writing and playing, I am not only engaged in our necessary and continuous re-invention of Elizabethan culture but I am also endeavoring to make that engagement participate in the re-formation of our own” (p. 30).

A New Approach

Writers and artists of Japan’s medieval, early modern, and modern periods too were engaged in a “necessary and continuous re-invention” of the “classical” past of the Heian court, and those engagements were crucial to the reformation of their own culture and time. It is the traces of these engagements, particularly with the canonical text of the canonical genre par excellence—the One Hundred Poets—that I attempt to limn in Part Two of this work. The evidence for such engagements is various, and I have eschewed any totalizing or narrative interpretation of the poems themselves or the commentaries, both verbal and visual, that surround them. Each of the One Hundred Poets poems is presented in a romanization of its historical spelling (kyû-kana-zukai) in the form that the best evidence suggests Teika established for it; this version is paired with a translation into English (the principles of which will be elaborated shortly). Listed too are the imperial collection (chokusen shû) in which the poem was first anthologized, as well as other exemplary collections (shûka shû), by Teika and others, in which it appeared. This strategy allows the reader to see when the poem was first canonized (some poems were selected shortly after they were written, others not for hundreds of years) and how often it was presented as an exemplary composition, especially by Teika in the numerous teaching collections he assembled over his lifetime. This information gives us an idea why a particular poem appealed to readers of a particular time. Moreover, as both imperial and exemplary collections were organized by themes, the placement of the poem in different contexts provides important clues as to how the poem was interpreted by its anthologizer. (For instance, was it read as a love poem or as a seasonal poem? Was it read as a poem of early or late winter?)

The poem is followed by a brief biography of its putative author. While the evidence (discussed in Part One) suggests that Teika chose the poems of the One Hundred Poets for their value as individual poems, and not as representative of a poet’s entire oeuvre, the image of the poet “behind” the verse was always important to Japanese readers. Brief biographies of the poet’s genealogy (that is, aristocratic pedigree), rank achieved, and offices held appear as early as the
Satake-bon Imaginary Portraits of the Thirty-Six Immortal Poets (Sanjûrokkasen-e), produced in Teika’s lifetime. In the Heian and Kamakura periods, court status and poetic accomplishment were understood to be mutually reinforcing and were rarely considered divorced from each other. Likewise in the early modern Edo period, there was a renewed attention to lineage, as those newly come to power attempted to justify and consolidate their position as well as to inhibit the social mobility they themselves had benefited from.

With the biographical sketch of the poets I have also included information on how many of their poems were chosen for imperial anthologies and from what date. Like the information on when and where each One Hundred Poets poem was anthologized, knowing the relative number of poems by a particular poet selected for imperial anthologies can give us some idea of his or her reputation over the years. This in turn indicates whether Teika’s selection of the poet was conventional or must be explained as the result of Teika’s idiosyncratic taste or some particular needs of the One Hundred Poets collection itself.

It is in the commentaries to the One Hundred Poets, of course, that we find the most specific information on how the individual poems have been interpreted over the centuries. The exegetical tradition behind the One Hundred Poets is long and verbose, and an annotated translation could easily run to a thousand pages. Not all this commentary seems of particular interest, however, and even less of it may seem pertinent to someone reading in translation. I have attempted to sharpen the focus of the commentary by concentrating on four points: what modern scholars believe the poem meant when it was first composed; what modern scholars believe Teika thought the poem meant; major interpretive differences that appeared in the Muromachi (1338–1573) and Edo (to 1868) periods; and finally any interpretations that seem to be reflected in extant pictorializations of the poems.

Notice should perhaps be given about what is not provided in the section on the commentaries: the reader will not find what are known as “close readings”—the hallmark of New Criticism, the formalistic critical approach that held sway virtually unchallenged in North American colleges and universities after World War II. As suggested earlier, texts were both dehistoricized and depoliticized, while attention was paid to their intrinsic formal features, which were believed to be primarily responsible for a literary text’s greatness. This critical method was first applied to Japanese poetry in the late 1950s by Earl Miner and the late Robert Brower, most significantly in their landmark Japanese Court Poetry (1961). New Criticism subsequently formed the foundation of most American students’ training in Japanese literature, and especially poetry, continuing up to the present. Much of this work can still be read with great profit, and similar modes of analysis have been adopted by Japanese scholars as well, such as Ariyoshi Tamotsu. Nonetheless, this approach is not at all representative of how Japanese readers themselves have analyzed or evaluated poetry for most of their history, and it is to the more indigenous and traditional modes of interpretation that the present study turns its attention.

It is my contention, and one of the major theses of this book, that one of these traditional modes of interpretation is to be seen in the many pictorializations of the One Hundred Poets that appeared primarily as woodblock prints dur-
ing the Edo period. These, I argue, are not mindless designs but represent specific readings, uses, and appropriations of the classical canon. In the earliest extant example of such pictorializations, the famous *ukiyo-e* artist Hishikawa Moronobu writes that he has “indicated the heart of the poems in pictures.” It is these pictures of the hearts of the poems that have led to the present work. Nonetheless, analysis of this kind is very much in its infancy and can only be presented here in the guise of a preliminary effort. Here, too, hermeneutical issues concerning the constraints of interpretation raise their heads. Robert Graves, for instance, suggests that the misreading of pictures inspired many of the Greek myths. The story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, as an example, “seems to have been invented to account for a series of Thraco-Pelasgian wall-paintings, found by Phocians invaders in a temple at Daulis,” he writes. “The cutting-out of Procne’s tongue misrepresents a scene showing a priestess in a prophetic trance, induced by the chewing of laurel-leaves; her face is contorted with ecstasy, not pain, and the tongue which seems to have been cut out is in fact a laurel-leaf, handed her by the priest who interprets the wild babblings.”

In the same way, we need some sort of evidence when we offer the interpretation of a visual image. Such support may be iconological—that is, it may have an explicit textual basis; or it may only be circumstantial—that is, the meaning of an image or gesture may be extrapolated from its repeated appearance. In any case, such evidence must be offered if we are to avoid completely unsubstantiated “readings.” Accordingly, my interpretations of the pictures may seem tame or obvious, but they are the most that can be responsibly made with the information presently available—there is much that we still do not understand of the Edo visual vocabulary.

The entries on the individual poems, which comprise Part Two of this work, are preceded by the study that makes up Part One. In Chapter 2 I offer a brief examination of the history and function of exemplary collections in the Japanese poetic tradition in general and Teika in particular. This review shows that such collections were always designed for specific purposes and frequently for specific individuals. Consequently, they do not necessarily represent what the compiler thought were the unqualifiedly “best” examples of poetic art—they represent, rather, what the compiler thought would be most appropriate for the person or occasion for which the collection was created.

I then consider the history of the exegetical efforts that surround the *One Hundred Poets*. We see how such commentaries were transmitted along hereditary lines and served to support the claims of these lineages to poetic authority. A consideration of extant commentaries shows some of the differing attitudes among these varying lineages. The history of the exegetical tradition also shows the dramatic changes that occurred in the transmission of knowledge between the medieval and early modern periods, as this cultural expertise was made available to different strata of society. As the *One Hundred Poets* entered these strata, it was adapted to a variety of uses from women’s education to nationalist ideology.

I proceed to an examination of interpretive problems posed by the *One Hundred Poets* as a whole. Included in this discussion are Teika’s principles of selection and organization, as well as the problem of reading the *One Hundred
Poets as an “integrated sequence.” I first argue that the One Hundred Poets represents an extreme instance of decontextualization—that is, the removing of poems from their original context and functions. This decontextualization is counterbalanced by Teika’s emphasis on yòen, or “ethereal beauty,” an aesthetic concept, I argue, that relies on a kind of ur-narrative of a man’s brief meeting with a mysterious and beautiful woman of divine nature. This emphasis in turn influences Teika’s selection of poems and leads us to consider whether the One Hundred Poets should be read as an “integrated sequence” that is structured according to the principles of “association and progression” enunciated by Konishi Jin’ichi and demonstrated by Brower and Miner in the translation of Teika’s Superior Poems of Our Time (Kindai Shûka). I argue that the extrinsic historical evidence does not support a reading of the One Hundred Poets as a sequence “integrated” with the degree of formality and to the extent that Konishi and Brower and Miner would suggest. Yet this is not at all to argue that the choice of poems, or their order, was in any way haphazard, and I end my discussion of the sequence per se with a demonstration of the kinds of linkages that can be made with the evidence available to us.

In Chapter 3 the discussion turns to the ramifications these interpretive decisions have on the translation of the poems, and I use this occasion to trace the fortunes of Japanese poetry in English translation from the late nineteenth-century to the present. This chapter touches briefly on the role of translated Japanese poetry in the mutually fashioned orientalist construct of Japan created by the Japanese and “Westerners” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We see also the role of “culture” and literature in Japan’s new relations with North America and Europe after the Pacific War. Again the discussion insists on the historical nature of poetry, seeing its production and reception as constituted by specific historical forces of which we ourselves are a result and a part.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I examine the poem-picture tradition in Japanese culture and analyze the historical positions of both Teika’s One Hundred Poets and the Edo-period pictorializations in that tradition. It is here that I argue for the concept of pictorialization as interpretation or, put more trendily, “picturing as reading.” In the process I demonstrate some of the uses “classical” culture was put to in the early modern period—including its appropriation by the new military government, as seen in the work of the official Kano artist, Tan’yû, as well as in two different works by the plebeian woodblock artist Moronobu. The discussion considers media as diverse as robe decoration and as recent as the comic-book versions of the classics produced today.

Most of these topics are deserving of full, monograph-length treatment. Here I have simply attempted to lay out some of the problems and issues. Such an approach risks oversimplification, of course, and invites myriad errors of both commission and omission. Nonetheless, it is my hope that the present work will encourage others to refine or extend or challenge the ideas explored here.

This introductory chapter concludes with a brief outline of the basics of Japanese poetics. Those readers already familiar with the essentials of waka may wish to move directly to Part I.
Japanese Poetry and Its Techniques

The One Hundred Poets is a sequence of verses written in the genre known as tanka, also called uta and waka. Waka is the Sino-Japanese pronunciation of two graphs that literally mean “Japanese song.” Waka stood in contrast to kanshi, or “Chinese poetry,” which the Japanese also wrote—much as Europeans before the Renaissance wrote poetry in Latin. The distinction between waka and kanshi was reinforced by the decision, early on, to eliminate from the vocabulary of waka almost all the Chinese loanwords Japan had adopted for use in other contexts, such as government and religion. Poetic diction, therefore, was defined as the indigenous “words of Yamato” (Yamato kotoba), Yamato being an early name for Japan. When the second graph of waka is read as a “Japanese,” rather than Sino-Japanese, word, it is pronounced uta. Uta, however, can refer to any of a number of Japanese poetic forms, the major two of which were chôka (also read naga-uta), or “long poems,” and tanka, or “short poems.” Tanka are, in principle, thirty-one syllables long, divided into five lines, or ku, with an alternating length of 5–7–5–7–7 syllables. Each tanka can be divided into two halves: the upper hemistich, or kami no ku, is comprised of the 5–7–5 lines; the lower hemistich, or shimo no ku, is the final two lines of seven syllables each.

Grammatical Techniques

Taking a cue from Mark Morris, we can think of tanka as an “attempt [at] the transformation, or deformation, of a single Japanese sentence. A good waka was the successful struggle with a virtual line of prose.” At its simplest a tanka can be little more than a single sentence with a subject and predicate divided between the upper and lower halves of the poem, as is seen in Poem 32 of the One Hundred Poets:

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yama-gaha ni Ah, the weir
kaze no kaketaru that the wind has flung
shigarami ha across the mountain stream
nagare mo ahenu is the autumn foliage that
momiji narikeri cannot flow on, even though it would.
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The basic grammatical structure of this poem is shigarami ha . . . momiji nari-keri, or “the weir . . . is the autumn foliage,” a grammatically straightforward construction of a subject followed by a predicate.

To some extent, such a statement is read as a tanka because it fulfills the tanka’s metrical pattern of 5–7–5–7–7. Once this form was accepted as standard, the first stylistic variation possible was a violation in the number of syllables, either too many (ji-amari) or too few (ji-tarazu). While ji-tarazu is almost never seen—there is no example of it in the One Hundred Poets—ji-amari was not infrequent. Such a technique is often interpreted as a case where an excess of emotion has broken free from metrical constraints, as in Poem 21 by Priest Sosei:

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ima komu to It was only because you said
ihishi bakari ni you would come right away
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**Introduction**

**naga-tsuki no**
that I have waited

**ariake no tsuki wo**
these long months, till even

**machi-idetsuru kana**
the wan morning moon has come out.

Here, according to at least one scholar, the extra syllable in the last line “strongly charges it with the feelings of disappointment and bitterness.”

The simplest grammatical technique would, of course, be some kind of inversion—that is, reversing the subject and predicate of a sentence, as if we were to say “the autumn foliage is . . . what the weir is.” This technique is called in Japanese *tōchi-hō*. One of the most frequently anthologized examples of this technique is Poem 23, by Ōe no Chisato:

**tsuki mireba**
When I look at the moon

**chi-jhi ni mono koso**
I am overcome by the sadness

**kanashikere**
of a thousand, thousand things—

**wa ga mi hitori no**
even though it is not fall

**aki ni ha aranedo**
for me alone.

Grammatically speaking, the first half and the second half of the statement have been reversed in this poem, and the concessive *aranedo* (“although”) should start, and not end, the sentence. Such inversion also requires caesuras, or line breaks, in what would otherwise be viewed as an undivided whole. In Chisato’s poem there is a break at the end of the first hemistich, a placement called *san-ku-gire*, or “third line break.” Line breaks can be inserted as well after the first line (*shoku-gire*, as in Poems 12 and 19), second line (*ni-ku-gire*, as in Poems 2 and 9), and fourth line (*shi-ku-gire*, as in Poems 11 and 14).

If the poem ends in its fifth line with an uninflecting word, such as a noun, it is called *taigen-dome* (“noun end-stopping”). Since Japanese sentences grammatically end with verbs, perhaps the simplest way of achieving noun end-stopping is to elide a final copula. This technique appears in Poem 2 of the collection, attributed to Empress Jitō:

**haru sugite**
Spring has passed, and

**natsu kinikerashi**
summer has arrived, it seems.

**shiro-tahe no**
Heavenly Mount Kagu

**koromo hosu tefu**
where, it is said, they dry robes

**ama no kagu-yama**
of the whitest mulberry!

Since in Japanese relative clauses precede the nouns they modify, the second half of this poem actually reads: “where, they say, they dry robes / of the whitest mulberry—Heavenly Mount Kagu (it is)!” This noun end-stopping is considered to give the line a mild exclamatory quality (hence the exclamation point in the translation).

**Lexical Techniques**

Moving beyond the mere rearrangement of words, the most fundamental technique of Japanese poetry at the lexical level is the *uta-makura*, or “poem-pillow.” As its name suggests, this is a word on which the entire poem may depend,
or rest, as on a pillow. Since the twelfth century the term has been used to refer to place-names famous through poetry. Sometimes such place-names are used because of what the place signifies in history or myth. Take, for instance, the *uta-makura* “Kasuga” in Poem 7 by Nakamaro:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ama no hara} & \quad \text{As I gaze out, far} \\
\text{furisiaka-mireba} & \quad \text{across the plain of heaven,} \\
\text{kasuga naru} & \quad \text{ah, at Kasuga,} \\
\text{mikasa no yama ni} & \quad \text{from behind Mount Mikasa,} \\
\text{ideshi tsuki kamo} & \quad \text{it’s the same moon that came out then!}
\end{align*}
\]

Kasuga Shrine at Mount Mikasa was where envoys such as Nakamaro prayed for a safe return home before leaving on their missions. Thus it is not at all strange to see it appear in a poem of homesick longing composed in China. However, *uta-makura* usually functioned in a more complex manner. In fact, a great number of famous place-names have embedded or double meanings that anchor the entire verse. The most famous of these is without a doubt “Afušaka,” (pronounced / ōsaka / and not to be confused with the modern city). *Afu* is the verb “to meet,” and thus “Afušaka,” normally taken as a proper noun about whose meaning one gave no more thought than one would to the name “Oxford,” for instance, in poetry was taken to mean “meeting hill,” just as a poet might remind us that “Oxford” originally meant “a place to ford oxen.”

Another example is Poem 8, by Priest Kisen:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wa ga iho ha} & \quad \text{My hut is to} \\
\text{miyako no tatsu-mi} & \quad \text{the capital’s southeast} \\
\text{shika zo sumu} & \quad \text{and thus I live. But} \\
\text{yo wo ujhi-yama to} & \quad \text{people call it “Uji, hill} \\
\text{hito ha ifu nari} & \quad \text{of one weary of the world,” I hear.}
\end{align*}
\]

Here the lines *yo wo ujhi-yama to / hito ha ifu nari* contain two sentences—*yo wo u* (“the world is bitter”) and *ujhi-yama to hito ha ifu nari* (“I hear people call it Uji Mountain”)—that are joined only by the “pivoting” syllable *u* (which can mean “gloom”), which is part of both sentences. This kind of wordplay (not necessarily thought of as humorous) is called *kake-kotoba*, or “pivot words.” Note that there need be no logical connection between the two phrases—much as if we said in English “I love [you] / yu / [ewe]s run through the forest.”

This technique of pivot words is related to the far broader technique known as *engo*, or “word association.” In *engo*, words are considered to be semantically related to each other, usually based on some pivot word that creates two semantic fields that intersect like a Venn diagram. We can use as an example Poem 55 by Kintō:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{taki no oto ha} & \quad \text{Although the sound of} \\
\text{taete hisashiku} & \quad \text{the waterfall has ceased,} \\
\text{narinuredo} & \quad \text{and that long ago,} \\
\text{na koso nagavete} & \quad \text{its name, indeed, has carried on} \\
\text{naho kikoekeri} & \quad \text{and is still heard!}
\end{align*}
\]
To attempt a formal definition of *engo*, we can say that when A, a word in a poem, and B, another word in the poem with which A does not have a direct grammatical relationship (for instance, as a grammatical subject or modifier), do have a semantic relationship based on an association of ideas or based on convention, then it is possible for A to be B’s *engo*, or its “associated word.” In this case A always carries two meanings, both of which are semantically related to B. In Kintō’s poem, *nagaru* (“to flow, to be carried along”) is an *engo* of *taki* (“waterfall”) because, while it is not grammatically connected to *taki* (the grammatical subject of *nagarete* is *na*, or “name”), it refers to both the idea of the waterfall “flowing” and the idea of the fame of the waterfall being “carried on” to the present. In the same way *oto* (“sound”) and *kikoe* (“to hear”) are *engo*, or “associated words,” because, again while not connected grammatically, together they convey the sense both of hearing the sound of the waterfall and of hearing of its fame.

Some word associations are so conventionalized that they have become frozen. These are called “pillow words” (*makura-kotoba*), usually described as fixed epithets “on” which specific words lay, much as in Homer dawn is always introduced as “rosy-fingered dawn.” In Jitō’s poem we have “robes of the whitest mulberry” (*shiro-tahe* no *koromo*); the expression *shiro-tahe* no typically modifies “cloth (*nuno*),” “robes (*koromo*),” and such. This technique was most productive during the earliest period of Japanese court poetry, represented by the first anthology of *waka*, the *Man’yō Shū* (compiled mid-eighth century). As time went on, however, poets no longer knew exactly what many of these pillow words meant, yet they continued to use them to give a sense of grandeur or antiquity to their verse. Today most pillow words are of uncertain meaning, and some translators ignore them entirely.

Pillow words are typically five syllables, or one line, in length. When a modifying phrase exceeds this length (and is nonformulaic in nature), it is called a *jo*, or “preface.” Prefaces can be based on a metaphoric relationship, as we see in this overly literal translation of Poem 3, attributed to Hitomaro:

```
ashibiki no           (Long like) the tail,
yamadori no wo no     the drooping tail of the pheasant
shidari-wo no         of the foot-dragging mountains,
nagagnagashi yo wo    these long, long autumn nights
hitokamono nemu       must I sleep all alone?
```

Here the phrase “the tail, the drooping tail of the pheasant of the foot-dragging mountains” modifies “long, long night”—and we are meant to understand that the night seems as long as the long, drooping tail of the pheasant. Such prefices can also be introduced by pivot words, as well as by sound reduplication—something we might call “unrealized pivots,” where phrases are linked by sound repetition rather than the semantic double-reading of *kake-kotoba*. We see this use of simple repetition in Poem 18 by Toshiyuki:

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suminoe no           Must you so avoid others’ eyes
kishi ni yoru nami    that not even at night,
yoru sahe ya          along the road of dreams,
```
Here we have the lines kishi ni yoru nami ("the waves that approach the shore") immediately followed by yoru sahe ("even at night"). Yoru can mean both "to approach" and "night," but rather than using it as a pivot word, Toshiyuki has repeated it, as if the sounds of the first meaning have suggested the sounds of the second (something like "the waves have drawn—not even before dawn"). There is also the word reduplication called kasane-kotoba—such as naga-nagashi ("long-long") in Hitomaro’s poem above—thought simply to serve for emphasis.28

The final technique to consider under the lexical rubric is honka-dori, or "allusive variation." This technique involves the explicit borrowing of phrases or concepts from earlier poems. While earlier poets may have based certain verses on yet earlier poems, the term honka-dori is reserved for the ShinKokinshû period (late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries) onward. Hence it should not be surprising that four of the last ten poems in the One Hundred Poets are allusive variations. One of these is Poem 91 by Yoshitsune:

This poem in fact draws on two earlier poems, one of which is the poem by Hitomaro that we examined earlier: from it Yoshitsune has taken his last line, "must I sleep all alone?" The second, anonymous, poem Yoshitsune uses is from the Kokinshû (Love 4): 689:

From this poem Yoshitsune has taken the first two lines, making them his third and fourth lines.

Note that the “foundation poems” (honka) are never explicitly identified—they were presumed to be apparent to an educated audience. As time passed, however, the education of the audience changed. In the case of Yoshitsune’s poem, no fewer than four other poems were averred to be the “foundation poems” by early modern commentators, including one in the Man’yô Shû and one from the Chinese Classic of Poetry (Shih Ching). “Allusive variation,” then, is another matter of interpretive debate among later readers.

**Figural Techniques**

Two rhetorical techniques frequently encountered in the One Hundred Poets transcend the grammatical or lexical and work instead on the figurative
plane. The first of these is *mi-tate*, or “conceit,” sometimes called “elegant confusion” in English discussions of *waka*. This technique is exemplified in Poem 31 by Korenori:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{asaborake} & \quad \text{So that I thought it} \\
\text{ariake no tsuki to} & \quad \text{the light of the lingering moon} \\
\text{miru made ni} & \quad \text{at dawn—} \\
\text{yoshino no sato ni} & \quad \text{the white snow that has fallen} \\
\text{fureru shira-yuki} & \quad \text{on the village of Yoshino.}
\end{align*}
\]

In this poem, the poet wakes to see the bright white snow on the ground shining to the extent that he pretends to have mistaken it for moonlight reflecting off the ground.

The second figural technique is *gijinka*. *Gijinka* is frequently translated as “personification,” but this is not meant in the sense of “personifying Beauty.” Rather, *gijinka* is closer to Ruskin’s concept of “pathetic fallacy,” where the poet gives human thoughts and feelings to objects in the natural world, such as birds or flowers. The most influential poem using this technique is Poem 30 by Tadamine:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ariake no} & \quad \text{Ever since our parting,} \\
\text{tsurenaku mieshi} & \quad \text{when the morning moon looked} \\
\text{wakare yori} & \quad \text{so cold-hearted,} \\
\text{akatsuki bakari} & \quad \text{there is nothing as depressing as} \\
\text{uki mono ha nashi} & \quad \text{the very break of day.}
\end{align*}
\]

There are, of course, a number of other techniques that poets used to make their verses effective—parallelism, assonance, consonance, hyperbole, and sarcasm—but those surveyed here are the ones most often discussed.

**Pragmatics: The Occasions for Poetry**

The nature of *waka* was of course determined by the occasions for which it was typically produced. One of its oldest functions was in courtship, for instance, where a man and woman would exchange poems, called *zōtōka* (“exchanged poems”). Convention typically required that the man initiate the exchange; the woman would then base her reply on the man’s poem, usually playing on its basic conceit or employing some of its imagery in a sarcastic rebuff. Poems not written in response to another poem, or not intended to elicit a response, are called *doku’ei-ka*, which we might translate as “soliloquies.”

In court society, poets were often called upon to compose verses for their masters. Sometimes a poet was required to compose in the place of his or her master; sometimes the lord or lady would set the poet a topic (*dai*) on which to compose. Both these possibilities combined in the case of *byobu-uta*, or “poems for screens,” where poets would typically assume the persona of a human figure depicted in a landscape painting and compose a poem from the viewpoint of that figure. These poems would then be inscribed on decorated poetry paper and affixed to the screens.

“Composition on topics” (*dai’ei*) also occurred when poets pitted their
works against each other in poetry contests (uta-awase). Poets might be required to submit a group of poems during the planning stages of either a poetry contest or the production of a poetry screen. As early as the late eleventh century, poets were composing in hundred-poem sequences, or hyakushu. These sequences might be devoted to one or two specific topics—such as “Hawks” or “The Moon and Cherry Blossoms”—much like the topics used in poetry contests. They might also follow the format of an imperial anthology, as does one of the oldest extant hyakushu, by Minamoto no Shigeyuki (d. 1001?) (see Poem 48), which has twenty poems on each of the four seasons and ten poems each on “Love” and “Miscellaneous.” Hundred-poem sequences became much more common in the twelfth century, a trend signaled by the “Horikawa Hundred-Poem Sequences” (Horikawa Hyakushu) of 1105–1106. Here a number of poets composed on set, detailed topics ordered in the fashion of an imperial anthology—for instance, twenty poems on spring, running from “First Day of Spring” (risshun) to “The End of the Third Month”; fifteen poems on summer topics, starting with “Seasonal Change of Clothing” (koromo-gahe); and so on. In later times this set of topics became a model for poets, who now tended to practice their art by composing in hundred-poem sets.31

The most prestigious place for a poem to appear was in an imperially commissioned anthology, or chokusen shû, twenty-one of which were compiled between the years 905 and 1439. As presented in such an anthology, a poem usually consisted of three parts: a “headnote,” or kotoba-gaki, which described the occasion for which the poem was composed (or the phrase “occasion unknown,” dai shirazu); the name of the poet (or the phrase “poet unknown,” yomi-bito shirazu); and the text of the poem itself. Following the lead of the first imperial anthology, the Collection of Ancient and Modern Japanese Poetry (Kokin Waka Shû, hereafter Kokinshû) of 905, most imperial anthologies comprised twenty books (maki), in the following categories:

1. Spring 11. Love
2. Spring 12. Love
3. Summer 13. Love
5. Autumn 15. Love
7. Felicitations 17. Miscellaneous Topics
8. Parting 18. Miscellaneous Topics
9. Travel 19. Miscellaneous Forms
10. Names of Things 20. Traditional Songs

As can be seen by the number of books dedicated to each category, love poetry by far predominated, followed by poems about spring and autumn. Later imperial anthologies made minor modifications of these categories. The eighth collection, for instance, puts “Grief” after “Felicitations,” includes three books on “Miscellaneous Love” in lieu of the two on the simpler topic “Miscellaneous Topics,” and replaces the “Traditional Songs” category with one book each on “Buddhism” and “Deities.”

Individual poets also made collections of their verse, or that of their rela-
tives, and these were known as “house collections,” or ie no shū. These might follow the same pattern as the imperial anthologies, or the poems might be arranged chronologically, even serving as the framework for a narrative self-representation, or autobiography. It was often from submitted house collections that the editors of imperial anthologies made their selection.