Introduction

The purpose of the present collection of translations is threefold: (1) to explain the development of what is called “diary literature” (nikki bunka) between its putative origins in Ki no Tsurayuki’s Tosa Diary (Tosa nikki) of 935 and the first female autobiography of substantial length, The Kagerō Diary (Kagerō nikki) of Michitsuna’s Mother, finished sometime around 974; (2) to explain the political conditions that allowed for and encouraged the rise of women’s autobiographical writing in the Heian court of the tenth and eleventh centuries; and (3) to argue that it is a thoroughly modern prejudice that sees women’s nikki of this period as solely “confessional” and apolitical. In fact, many of the early instances of this genre were commissioned by men with a political purpose in mind.

The Collected Poems of the Ninth Ward Minister of the Right

Rather than a barren hiatus of almost forty years between Tosa and Kagerō, more recent Japanese scholarship has revealed a genealogy of texts centered on the sekkan-ke, or Regents’ House, of the Fujiwara line, starting with the posthumous Kujō Udaijin shū of Morosuke (908–960), compiled somewhere around 960, immediately after his death.¹ This collection comprises eighty-five poems, the vast majority of which are love poems exchanged with various women—seventeen women, to be precise. Morosuke’s political success was due to his daughter Anshi (927–946), who became the chief consort of Emperor Murakami (926–967, r. 946–967) and mother of emperors Reizei (950–1011, r. 967–969) and En'yū (959–991, r. 969–984). Morosuke’s political advancement, then, was attributable to his principal wife, known as Tsunekuni’s Daughter, by whom he had not only Anshi, but also the future regents Koremasa (924–972; his name is also read “Koretada”), Kanemichi (925–977), and Kane’ie (929–990). Yet the Kujō Udaijin shū includes only three exchanges of poems with Tsunekuni’s Daughter. Instead, the vast majority are exchanges with Imperial Princess Kishi (ca. 905–
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938), who bore him no children, followed by those with Imperial Princess Gashi (909–954) and Imperial Princess Kōshi (920–957). Yamaguchi Hiroshi has argued that the Kujō Udaijin shū was designed to demonstrate Morosuke’s “closeness” to the imperial family, allowing him to acquire some of its aura.

When seen from the vantage of being the person who made the foundation for the establishment of the Regents’ House, Morosuke’s licentiousness (iro-gonomi) must have endowed him with still more splendor and a sense of mystery. When one thinks that the regent system had the prestige of the imperial house behind it, then it is difficult to underestimate to what extent Morosuke’s relationships with three imperial princesses may have heightened his own prestige. If Morosuke’s prestige, which surpassed that of his older brother, Saneyori, and which checked the flow of the Ono no Miya branch and expanded that of the Kujō, was a result of this kind of [licentious] behavior, then for the members of the Kujō branch, mustn’t Morosuke’s licentiousness have been, contrary to the general condemnation of such behavior, something to be proud of?... The editor [of the Morosuke shū], by highlighting the beautiful love affairs, imbued with a mysterious splendor, that Morosuke had with high-ranking women, looked back fondly upon the figure of the ideal nobleman who had constructed the foundation for the prosperity of the Regents’ House (the Kujō branch).²

Moriya Shōgo goes further and shows how the image of Morosuke as ideal nobleman was taken up by others, especially his sons: “The world had already passed beyond the time when poetic composition was the special property of specialist poets, and while what has been called ‘the general poetization of the aristocracy’ continued, the image of the ‘ladies’ man’ (suki-bito)—and proof of intimacy with women gained by means of poetic composition—became one kind of status symbol.”³ Yamaguchi speaks of Morosuke as the one who established the foundation of the Regents’ House, as it was with him that the position of regent became entirely hereditary. In his collected poems, Morosuke is presented as an iro-gonomi, or “man who loves love,” and his poems demonstrate that the appropriate objects of such a high-born lover are imperial princesses. Yamaguchi argues that this is the reason for Tsunekuni’s Daughter’s scant treatment—her family never rose above the Fifth Rank—and “this is not a rank that is appropriate for a love match of the highest nobility”⁴ such as Morosuke.

The term “Regents’ House” refers to the descendants of Fujiwara no Yoshi-fusa (804–872). In 859 Yoshi-fusa was able to install his nine-year-old grandson as Emperor Seiwa (850–880; r. 858–876) and have himself appointed as Seiwa’s regent (sesshō). Yoshi-fusa was succeeded by his adopted son Mototsune (836–
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891), who served as regent for the child-emperor Yôzei (868–949, r. 876–884) and continued ruling (now as kanpaku, also translated as “regent”) after Yôzei reached his majority. Mototsune was regent for the adult emperor Kôkô (830–887, r. 884–887) as well. Mototsune was followed in the regency by his son Tadahira (880–949), and then by Tadahira’s son Saneyori (900–970). Although Saneyori’s brother Morosuke was never named regent, it was his descendants, rather than Saneyori’s, who held a lock on this office for the remainder of its existence. In fact, the Fujiwara clan rebuffed the last challenge to its hegemony under Saneyori, in the infamous Anna Incident (Anna no Hen) of 969. At the time of Emperor Murakami’s death and the accession of Emperor Reizei in 967, it was unclear just who would be the crown prince, though Murakami’s partiality for Prince Tamehira, son-in-law to Taka’akira of the rival Minamoto clan, was apparently well known. Instead, Prince Morihira, who was married to Morosuke’s granddaughter, that is, Koremasa’s daughter Kaishi, was made heir apparent. In 969, Taka’akira was accused of plotting to usurp the throne for Tamehira and was banished to Kyûshû. Morihira was placed on the throne as Emperor En’yû, with Saneyori as regent. At the same time, Koremasa’s grandson, the future Emperor Kazan (968–1008, r. 984–986), was named as crown prince. Koremasa was named regent upon Saneyori’s death in 970.

While the principal political conflicts through Saneyori’s day were between the Fujiwara and other clans, such as the Sugawara, Minamoto, and Ki, from 969 onward the regency was for all practical purposes the permanent and hereditary prerogative of the Fujiwara. Competition was no longer between clans but within the Fujiwara clan itself, and the remainder of the tenth century saw increasingly bitter struggles between Fujiwara brothers, and uncles and nephews, for control of the regency and the court. This competition extended to the cultural realm as well, with regents sponsoring a variety of cultural events (including contests, religious services, and governmental processions). With the increase of such events arose the need to fix and preserve them in more durable form, that is, as written records. Such records often centered on, or at least included, poetry, which was a requisite element of the great majority of cultural events. In turn, a great deal of poetry was occasional in nature and served to commemorate specific events and individuals. As the chart shows, personal poetry collections are extant for three of Regent Tadahira’s five sons, and there are poetry collections associated with each of his regent grandsons: Koremasa, Kanemichi, and Kane’ie—the last being the Kagerô nikki itself, which preserves forty-two of Kane’ie’s poetic compositions and is now seen as one of a series of “records” (kiroku) of the Regents’ House, a series that includes the Murasaki Shikibu Diary (Murasaki Shikibu nikki) and The Pillow Book of Sei Shônagon, or Makura no sôshi.6
The Regents' House and Its Texts

Regents' House Texts

Kōkinchū (905)

Imperial Princess Gasu = Morosuke = Tsunekuni's Daughter

Gosenshū (956)
Kujō Uda no Shū (961)

Takamitsu nikki (962)
Toyokage monogatari (970)
Hon'in no ji'nō shū (972)

Kagerō nikki (974)
Ise nikki (mid-tenth century)

Makura no sōshi (ca. 1000)
Murasaki Shikibu nikki (1010)

Regent Mototsune > regent to > Emperor Yōzei

Tokihiro
Tadahiro
Nakahira
Empress Onshi = Emperor Uda

Empress Anshi = Emperor Murakami

Emperor Kōkō

Emperor Daigo

Morouji (Ama no tokoro shū)
Saneyori > regent to > Emperor Enyu

(Seiunshō shū)

Regent Korematsu

Regent Kanemichi

Emperor Reizō

Kaishō = Emperor Enyu

Regent Kan'yū

Regent Michitaka

Empress Teishi = Emperor Ichijō = Empress Shōshi

Anti-Regents' House Texts

Ise monogatari (tenth century)

Teiji'in uta-awase nikki (913)

Yamato monogatari (950–970)

Heichi monogatari (960–965)
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The Takamitsu Journal

Chronologically, the next work to appear after the Kujō Udaijin shū seems to have been the Tōnomine Shōshō monogatari, also known as the Takamitsu nikki, probably written in 962. This is a collection of letters and poems written around the sudden taking of religious orders by Takamitsu (ca. 939–ca. 977–985), Morosuke’s son by one of his secondary wives. These letters were exchanged between the major actors in the drama: Takamitsu, his wife, and his sister. Consolatory notes are also included from others, including the empress and Kane’ie. This work marks perhaps the first extended poem-tale narrative based on actual events, and I believe it had a direct influence on The Kagerō Diary.

Michitsuna’s Mother, the author of Kagerō nikki, has been credited by Watanabe Minoru with inaugurating “female prose” (onna no bunshō) in Japanese literature. This inaugural event was to a large extent defined by the author’s rejection of the literary romance mode, or monogatari genre, so popular in her day. As she states in the preface to her work: “It is just that in the course of living, lying down, getting up, dawn to dusk, when she looks at the odds and ends of the old tales—of which there are so many, they are just so much fantasy—that she thinks perhaps if she were to make a record of a life like her own, being really nobody, it might actually be novel, and could even serve to answer, should anyone ask, what it is like, the life of a woman married to a highly placed man.”

The term rendered here as “tales” is monogatari in Japanese. The author clearly saw an antithesis between a nikki of her own life, that is, a true account of her actual existence, and monogatari, or “romance,” that is, the fictional and to her misleading tales about fabricated characters. Her plan, then, was to write an anti-romance, in other words, to tell the truth about what really happens when a lower-ranking lady marries a “prince.” Unfortunately, there are very few monogatari extant from the period before the Kagerō nikki. Nonetheless, it would probably not be wrong to imagine this genre of popular fiction to have been along the lines of the Ochikubo monogatari (ca. 986), a Japanese manifestation of the Cinderella motif and its inherent patriarchal ideology.

While we may develop some idea of the kind of works Michitsuna’s Mother was writing against, what of the works that she may have used as positive models? The vernacular diary genre (nikki) is usually considered to have started with Ki no Tsurayuki’s Tosa nikki (ca. 935), but there is no evidence that Michitsuna’s Mother read this early effort. Where, then, did she get the idea for her own work? I believe that a major influence was The Takamitsu Journal (Takamitsu nikki), named after the historical personage the work concerns, Fujiwara no Takamitsu. In what follows, I shall argue that the Takamitsu nikki and the Kagerō nikki share a number of stylistic features as well as a feminine resentment
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of male privilege, all of which suggest that Michitsuna’s Mother looked to the *Takamitsu nikki* when she composed her own work.

Takamitsu was the eighth son of Fujiwara no Morosuke, by his secondary wife Princess Gashi. Takamitsu was, accordingly, half-brother to both Kane’ie (Michitsuna’s Mother’s husband) and Anshi, principal wife to Emperor Murakami and the most influential woman at court for almost twenty years.12

Takamitsu himself was a recognized *waka* poet and was known by the age of fifteen for his skill at Chinese oration and calligraphy. In 960 he was promoted to the position of lesser captain of the right of the Imperial Bodyguards (*takan-e no shōshō*), and in the next year he was promoted to the Fifth Rank and made provisional vice-governor of the province of Bingo. Yet in the Twelfth Month of that same year, at the age of twenty-three, he abandoned his rank and positions at court, and his wife and young daughter at home, took vows, and became a monk on Mt. Hiei.13

According to Buddhist beliefs, of course, this was a wise and laudable deed—the world was a place of suffering and illusion, and the sooner one turned one’s back on it and devoted oneself to religious disciplines, the sooner one might achieve enlightenment and be freed from the endless cycle of death and rebirth. Nonetheless, high-ranking aristocrats such as Takamitsu, who was, after all, the grandson of an emperor, usually did not turn to religion seriously till late in life. Normally they took vows on their deathbeds, or in their declining years, when they would build a small temple for themselves in the suburbs of the Capital and apply themselves to their devotions with varying degrees of rigor.

According to Nagai Yoshinori,14 Takamitsu was one of the first of the higher-ranking aristocrats to take his religion so seriously and to renounce the world at such an early age. Moreover, his form of renunciation was, for the period and his background, extreme: he cloistered himself on Mt. Hiei, barred to members of the female sex, and communicated with his wife and sister only through letters. For his female kinfolk, then, it was as if Takamitsu had not only “left home” (*shukke*), but in a sense “died.”

Takamitsu’s letters and poems to his wife and sister, their answers, and the reactions of other family members and friends, are recorded in the *Takamitsu nikki*. Given the access the compiler/author had to the material incorporated in the *Takamitsu nikki*, it is clear that it was written by someone close to the families involved shortly after the event itself, probably in late 962. Tamai Kōsuke has suggested that it may have been written by the wet nurse of Takamitsu’s wife; whoever it was, it is generally agreed that the author was a woman.15 Nitta Takako has conjectured that the work was commissioned by Koremasa, as head of the Hokke (Northern) branch of the Fujiwara clan.16 His motivation is not clear: perhaps he was inspired by the clear parallel between Takamitsu’s actions
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and those of the historical Buddha, Prince Siddhartha; perhaps he hoped some of the poems would be included in later imperial anthologies and so add to the cultural charisma of his clan. Perhaps he was simply exercising spin control over an event that had caught him by surprise. Or, yet again, perhaps he was using the event to remind others of the blood relation between his immediate family and the imperial household.

The *Takamitsu nikki* has been discussed as an early example of *uta-monogatari*, or “poem-tale,” and the religious background and meaning of Takamitsu’s *shukke* have been explored by earlier scholars. But little has been made of the gender conflict that informs the work. If we think of Takamitsu as “dead” to the secular world, then we should not be surprised to hear some railing against him by his wife and family: as Gary Ebersole notes, “oral laments often include this type of recrimination,” where the dead is reprimanded for dying, in an accusatory fashion. What is unique in the *Takamitsu nikki*, however, is that Takamitsu’s ability to renounce the world as he has is specifically linked to his male gender. Indeed, the *Takamitsu nikki* does not attempt to explain Takamitsu’s action, nor, as Uesaka Nobuo notes, is it really interested in Takamitsu himself. Yet, whatever the reasons it may have been commissioned by male politicians, I think that underneath, in the text itself, we can hear the distinctive voice of the women involved. Indeed, I think the *Takamitsu nikki* is best read as a plaint, expressing the sadness of those female relations who have “lost” Takamitsu. Seen from this perspective, the work can be understood as stemming from the *banka*, or elegaic, tradition. But more than just a lament for the symbolically dead Takamitsu, it is also the complaint of his wife and sister against the gender inequality that allows him to renounce the world and go to Mt. Hiei but prevents them from doing the same. Seen from this perspective, the *Takamitsu nikki* manifests the same fundamental problem as *The Kagero Diary*: a woman not understanding why a man has left her and being powerless to do anything about it.

After learning of Takamitsu’s action, both his wife and his sister express the desire to follow him, both literally and metaphorically, by becoming nuns and joining him in his retreat—unlike him, they apparently see no conflict between religious practice and being together. But Takamitsu’s wife and Aimiya cannot enter “that mountain” because Mt. Hiei was specifically forbidden to members of the female sex. Not all mountains had such a rule, nor did all who renounced the world go to mountains at all. As Donald Keene has written: “Other people of his day (like the mother of the author of *The Sarashina Diary*) remained at home even after taking Buddhist vows, and changed their lives only to the extent of trimming their hair or wearing dark clothes, but Takamitsu was no less resolved than a Trappist monk to isolate himself from the
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world. Note, however, that neither Aimiya nor Takamitsu’s wife (nor the narrator) questions why Takamitsu chose such a place.

The issue of gender discrimination is also voiced by other women in the text. Taka’akira’s wife writes: “If it were a place a woman could go to, how I would wish to go, but though I think this, it is at such times that I am truly sad about being a woman.” As Aimiya herself says: “There is no one as wretched as I. A man can visit there [but a woman can’t]!” Throughout the text there are explicit references to the inequality between genders and explicit complaints by women about this inequality.

Sections 10 through 15 revolve around clothing: the robes Takamitsu left behind, the new clothing that his wife sends him, and the foods he sends her in return. But in section 10 we also see the first appearance of what will become a motif that identifies the absent Takamitsu with his sword: “She [Takamitsu’s wife] cried even when she saw on the pillow the sword that he once wore.” The image of the sword is repeated four more times in the extant text. For example, in section 16 his wife writes to Aimiya: “When I see someone wearing a sword, even if it is painted in a picture, I am sad.” Likewise, in section 25 we read the heart-rending episode in which his daughter mistakes every man she sees wearing a sword for her father. Lest this attention to men’s swords be thought typical, we must note that even though romances of the period are full of dashing young lieutenants and debonair captains of the guard, such as Michiyori, who is also a lesser captain when we first see him in The Tale of the Lady Ochikubo, and despite the many detailed descriptions of handsome men and their clothing in Heian literature, the swords the men apparently wore are almost never mentioned. For instance, while swords are rather prominently depicted in the Kamakura period pictures to the Murasaki Shikibu nikki ekotoba, no mention is made of them in the Heian period text. The matter is even more pronounced in the case of Takamitsu. As one of the “Thirty-Six Poetic Geniuses” (sanjūrokkasen), he is one among thirty-one men, yet he is the only one to be depicted with a sword in the earliest extant Satake version of this work. Yet Takamitsu was not at all known for any kind of martial prowess. The evidence suggests, then, that some strong association between Takamitsu and his sword remained in the popular imagination. But the sword plays an even more important role in the Takamitsu nikki itself: in the Takamitsu nikki the identification of Takamitsu with his sword results in a strong emphasis on his masculine gender and male prerogative, which differentiate and separate him from the female members of his family.

Finally, Takamitsu’s wife’s unhappiness overflows into a chōka, or “long poem.” On the one hand, it has been common practice to see chōka as a genre moving from the public, almost ritualistic, sphere to the lyrical, especially in the
works of Hitomaro, as described in such books as Ian Levy’s *Hitomaro and the Birth of Japanese Lyricism*. This view has been questioned by Gary Ebersole in his book *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan*, where he argues that many *chôka* have a primarily public and political function, even poems of longing by a man for his wife. On the other hand, we are told that *chôka* disappear after the *Man’yôshû*, which is clearly an overstatement. The point I wish to make is that, while the function of *chôka* in the Heian and Kamakura periods changed, the genre almost always retained its character of being a poem of lament or complaint (what by the twelfth century would be called “*jukkai*”), and it continued to be what Ebersole might call a “public rehearsal” of loss. Indeed, such a public rehearsal of loss could explain why Takamitsu’s brother, Regent Koremasa, might have commissioned the work as a whole.

For the female author, however, “public rehearsal” suggests that the author is, or at least thinks herself, representative or, more explicitly, that her complaint is not unique but shared. In such a context, then, Takamitsu’s wife’s *chôka* is written as much for or to other women as it is to Takamitsu. Her poem is also truly argumentative, since, unlike the genre of *banka* from which it derives, Takamitsu really could be “brought back” by her verse, that is, convinced to return to the city. Takamitsu replies, however, with a *chôka* of his own, answering his wife’s objections point by point. The nearly exact replication of this kind of exchange in the *Kagerô Nikki* is one example of the formative influence of the *Takamitsu Nikki*. The *Takamitsu Nikki* is a fragmentary text, with many lacunae. The motivations for its composition, too, were multiple and fragmented: by the end, the text degenerates into sections resembling an *uta-awase Nikki*, dutifully recording poems composed by influential people, or a court diary, listing, item by item, the presents sent to Takamitsu by members of the nobility and imperial family. Nonetheless underneath or beside all this is a very real and distinct cry of complaint by women who feel that they have been wronged not just by a person, or even a family member, but specifically by a man, a man who wore a sword (as only men can) and who, against all human feeling, cut himself off from those who loved him and relied on him. Such an indictment surely served as a model for the author of the *Kagerô Nikki*.

Beyond a similar orientation toward gender relations, there are also familial, textual, and formal connections and similarities that bind these two works together. Michitsuna’s Mother and Takamitsu’s wife were sisters-in-law, and Kane’ie, already married to Michitsuna’s Mother, appears in section 22 of the *Takamitsu Nikki* itself as “the Lesser Councillor.” Takamitsu is also mentioned in the *Kagerô Nikki*. After Minamoto no Taka’akira was exiled in 969, his wife, Kane’ie’s sister, became a nun. On this occasion Michitsuna’s Mother sent her
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a chōka of condolence. Rather than signing her own name to the poem, however, Michitsuna’s Mother used Takamitsu’s name, presumably because Kane’ie belonged to the faction responsible for Taka’akira’s banishment.

As previously noted, the most obvious point of formal similarity between the Takamitsu nikki and the Kagerō nikki is what might be called the zōō chōka, or “exchange of long poems.” In both cases the woman initiates the exchange, writing a lengthy and argumentative brief to convince her man to return; in both cases the man replies, answering the woman’s poem point by point, image by image.

Finally, there is narrative technique: while the Tosa nikki starts by introducing its narrator/protagonist and setting the stage, the Takamitsu nikki starts in medias res, assuming its readers will know its antecedents, both contextual and grammatical: “From the beginning, he had such an intention.” We are not told whose feelings these are or what feelings they are—“such” (kakaru, “like this”) here refers to a nonexistent antecedent. The same complaint has been made about Michitsuna’s Mother’s beginning, as Watanabe Minoru writes:

The very first phrase of the preface, “The time when things were thus is gone,” with its unexpected “thus,” surely suggests not so much a companion empathizing with the author’s predicament, as a process by which the narrative stored up within the author as immediate actor became language in all its immediacy without going through the hands of the author as author. It is probably correct to surmise that the word “thus” refers to the fact that a good deal of the diary had already been written when the preface was added; be that as it may, however, there is no changing the fact that it does come at the beginning. Note that there is not the slightest awareness that a phrase like “the time when things were thus is gone” might demand an antecedent explaining to what “thus” refers.

As can be seen, Watanabe links this style of writing to what he sees as Michitsuna’s Mother’s myopic solipsism, but given that we see exactly the same technique in the Takamitsu nikki, it would appear that such a style was, in fact, a convention and/or was related to the fact that the text was being written for an audience already quite familiar with the story.

Watanabe further connects this style of writing with what he calls “tōjisha-teki hyōgen,” which Bowring translates as “the unmediated voice” and Miyake renders literally as “the on-the-spot, in-the-middle-of-things kind of narrative style.” Miyake describes it as follows:

Perhaps the best example of this orientation is seen in the terms the author uses to refer to other protagonists. Reference is not made by rank or title or
position which is the usual practice, but by expressions which are situation specific. The characters are so completely tied to the time, place and circumstances of the event being described that without totally understanding the situation surrounding their appearance, one is not sure who the author is referring to. When the author’s mother dies for example, her father is referred to as “the only one I can depend on,” while Kaneie is often just “the person I expect to see,” “that shocking person,” “the one who went up to Yokawa on some business.” Thus characters who are important to the well being of the author’s emotional life never appear as autonomous figures but always as reflections of their place in the author’s emotional life at the time they appear in the diary. . . . Since she is also speaking as an “I” to a “you” who should know what is happening the author assumes knowledge of a great many things, leaving much to be inferred by the reader-listener.32

Miyake ends by remarking parenthetically: “A similar process can be seen in the Tônomine Shôshô monogatari.” Yet, the narrator of the Takamitsu nikki does not identify persons in the same egocentric fashion as Michitsuna’s Mother; they are called by their position at court, such as “the Lesser Captain,” except for members of his wife’s family, who are identified by their role in that family, “grandfather” (ohojigimi), for example, or by childhood names. Aside from the use of antecedentless pronouns, then, what distinguishes this tôjisha-teki hyôgen? Let us look at the beginning of the Takamitsu nikki a little more closely:

From the beginning, he had had (arikereedo) such an intention, but his lord father while alive had forbidden him, so he had not been able to carry out his resolution. . . . He felt oppressed by everything, and it was only about this one matter that his heart raced in anticipation. Every time he went out, he would say to Her Ladyship, “I’m going to the Mountain to become a monk.” When he said this, she replied (kikoe-tamahi keru), “As usual,” thinking that it was indeed a joke. . . . He went to the quarters where his younger brother lived and quickly summoned the Lord Master of Meditation, and when he said, “Shave my head,” he is very astonished, and the Lord Master of Meditation weeps (naki-tamafu), saying, “Why do you do such a thing? Are you in your right mind?”

“Shave it,” he says (notamafu). The Holy Teacher too cries and would not undertake it, but when Takamitsu cut off his topknot with a razor with his own hand, the Holy Master thinks, “What can I do?” and at last shaved his head (naho sori-tamahikeru).

As can be seen, the narrative flows back and forth from a narrative perfect or past tense, marked by “-keri,” to a narrative present, with no supplementary
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endings. This narrative present appears especially in the narrative sections between direct speech (note that there is no indirect speech in Japanese). As Amanda Mayer Stinchecum has written:

These shifts in verbal aspect in Japanese narrative works are analogous to the effect of changes in tense in nineteenth-century Russian works pointed out by Boris Uspensky in his detailed examination of point of view, A Poetics of Composition. In his discussion of the alternation of verb tenses in Leskov’s story, “Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District,” he notes,

. . . the present tense is used to fix the point of view from which the narration is carried out. Each time the present is used, the author’s temporal position is synchronic—that is, it coincides with the temporal position of his characters. He is at that moment located in their time. The verbs in the past tense, however, provide a transition between these synchronic sections of the narrative. They describe the conditions which are necessary to the perception of the narrative from the synchronic position.

Stinchecum resumes:

It should be noted that although Uspensky speaks of “temporal position,” this really points to aesthetic distance between narrator and character. . . . The use of verb aspects that may refer to past time—perfective suffixes such as -ki, -tsu, -keri, -kemu—seems to indicate an increase in distance between the narrative voice in the text (and hence the reader) and the characters, while the use of aspects that can be interpreted as referring to the present often appears to effect a decrease in that distance.33

The situation in the Kagerō nikki is more complicated than that of the Takamitsu nikki, since there is less direct speech (other than poems), and the author uses a wider range of verbal inflections. Nonetheless, we do see an alternation between inflected and uninflected verbal endings much as in the Takamitsu nikki.34

The influence of the Takamitsu nikki on the Kagerō nikki can be posited to be due to the familial relationship between the authors’ households, and such influence can also be seen at the formal level in the similarity of narrative technique and the stratagem of what I have called the “exchange of long poems.” Most important, a similarity can be seen in the texts’ response to gender inequality. This similarity of theme, on the one hand, makes the Takamitsu nikki, I think, a more interesting work and, on the other hand, encourages us to view Michitsuna’s Mother as less the egoistic hysteric that critics such as Watanabe Minoru would have us read her as.
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**Tales of Toyokage**

The *Takamitsu nikki* was followed by works related to each of Morosuke’s sons by his principal wife, each of whom, in his turn, became regent. First came the *Toyokage shū* of Koremasa, an *uta-monogatari*, or poem-tale, about the amorous adventures of a fictional Kurahashi no Toyokage. This work is generally acknowledged to comprise poems written originally by Koremasa in his proper persona, which he himself then rewrote as a biography of his fictional alter ego.

Unlike his father’s posthumous collection, however, the logic of class-conscious lust will not explain the *Tales of Toyokage*. Although attributed to the fictitious and low-ranking Toyokage, some of the poems in the *Tales* appear in imperial anthologies under Koremasa’s name, and in fact we can identify most of the women who appear in the *Tales* with real people. Yet most of the poems in the *Tales* are exchanged with ladies-in-waiting—hardly people of exalted rank—in fact, on a par with Tsunekuni’s Daughter.

How we interpret the *Tales of Toyokage* depends to some extent on when we believe it was put together by Koremasa. Several of the poems in the *Tales* are also included in the *Gosenshū*, the second imperial poetry anthology, indicating that at least some of the poems were in circulation before 956, when the *Gosenshū* was completed. Poem 14 is included in the third imperial poetry anthology, the *Shūishū* (compiled 1005–1011), where it is recorded that the poem was composed while Koremasa held the position of gentleman-in-waiting (jijū), that is, between 942 and 946, when he was nineteen to twenty-three years old. In contrast, due to the use of the term “okina,” or “old man,” for Toyokage in the latter half of the *Tales*, Tamagami Takuya suggests that the collection may be the product of Koremasa’s final years, that is, the early 970s.15

Yamaguchi also believes the *Tales* to be the work of Koremasa’s final years. He points to the very beginning of the text: “Treasury clerk Kurahashi no Toyokage was an insignificant man of low rank, but in his youth he kept a collection of the many letters that he sent to various women. Then public matters were in an uproar, and although there had been many things in his correspondence that he had thought were amusing at the time, he forgot all about them. Looking back on them later, there did not seem to be anything particularly remarkable about them.” Yamaguchi suggests that the phrase “public matters were in an uproar” (*ohoyake-goto sawagashii*) refers to the Anna Incident. Certainly, the phrasing of the whole line indicates a retrospective stance, made after some tumult had died down. We might well accept, then, the consensus that Koremasa penned this work after 969, sometime in the remaining few years of his life.

Yamaguchi, however, takes this reading to an extreme: his entire interpretation of the *Tales* rests on seeing the text as the result of Koremasa’s nostalgic
longing for the days of his youth. And, in fact, the first episode ends with what seems to be an appeal to “the good old days.” Although it hardly seems so, the fact that the woman replied at all to his overture represents a victory of sorts for Toyokage, and the narrator applauds him for his persistence.

Yamaguchi points to Toyokage’s extremely low status as well as the narrator’s nostalgic gestures and argues that for Koremasa the Tales represented a literary escape from the brutal realities he experienced at the social pinnacle of the Regents’ House and within its ruthless marriage politics:

This collection was completed in the days after Koremasa had made it through all his political battles, and it takes its significance from the fact that it is something diametrically opposed to political behavior. In the midst of a whirlpool of brutal personal rivalries, surely what would often come to Koremasa’s mind was his way of life in the days of his youth, filled to overflowing with genuine human emotions. Unable to escape from the political system, Koremasa saw before own his eyes Minamoto no Taka’akira become a victim of the pursuit of private profit that established the Fujiwara clan’s autocratic political power. Koremasa too . . . while fixed in his position within the political system, was unable to endure it, and thirsted for some proof of authentic human emotions. We can call [Tales of Toyokage] a literary escape from the real world. 

Inspiring as all this sounds, it is an interpretation based on a serious misreading of the text. Yamaguchi identifies Toyokage’s low social status with that of the protagonists of other tales from the period, specifically Narihira, Takamura, and Heichū. Moreover, he associates these low-ranking men with the provincial (in contrast to the urbane or courtly) and with the motif of “the exile of the young noble” (kishu ryūri-tan). It is while in exile, away from the strictures of court and society, that young heroes find what Yamaguchi calls “true love” (shinjitsu no ai), in contrast to the insincere, politically motivated affairs and marriages of the court. Leaving aside what the meaning of “true love” might be here and whether it is in any way applicable to the affairs of these men, the most important thing to note is that in fact, unlike Narihira, Heichū, and several others, Toyokage does not go into exile and travels hardly at all—indeed, all his amorous adventures take place within the capital and court. While Yamaguchi is correct in using Narihira and Heichū as comparisons to understand Toyokage, it is not their similarities that are important, but their differences.

The Heichū monogatari concerns the largely amorous adventures of its eponymous hero, who is usually identified with the historical Taira no Sadafon (ca. 870–923). Written sometime before 960–965, the image of Heichū in the Heichū
monogatari clearly served as a countermodel to Koremasa’s Toyokage. Unlike either Narihira or Toyokage, Heichū is presented as a comically unsuccessful lover. His lack of social position is a major contributing factor to his lack of success in romance (precluding women from taking sincere interest in him), and both lacks are exacerbated by his competition with scions of the Fujiwara clan (specifically, Koremasa’s great-uncle Tokihira, a competition that results in Heichū’s banishment from court). In fact, Heichū’s failure can be read as criticism of the Fujiwara hegemony; as Susan Videen suggests: “The author of *Tales of Heichū* takes a man of noble birth, who has a reputation as a sensitive poet and lover; of all men, he seems to be saying, this one should be a success in life and love. And yet by painting Heichū as a failure, he conveys the ironic truth that, in his day and age, talent and depth of feeling are not what really matter.”

Space will not allow detailed textual comparisons, but they would be pointed and telling. Koremasa, I would suggest, by casting his own hero as a low-ranking man, seems bent on rebutting Heichū’s thesis: regardless of rank or family connection, the *Toyokage* seems to insist, talent and perseverance will win out.

It is, however, the *Ise monogatari*, not the *Heichū monogatari*, with which the *Toyokage* has the closest relation. The archetypal amorous exile of early Heian literature is the famous poet and lover Ariwara no Narihira (825–880), as presented in the *Tales of Ise*. Throughout the Heian period, the *Ise monogatari* was read as a biography (nikki) of Narihira, who was, accordingly, believed to have had an affair with Fujiwara no Kōshi (Takaiko, 842–910) after she had already been designated a consort to the future emperor Seiwa, a deed that caused Narihira to go into self-imposed exile for a time in the east of Japan, where he became involved with a number of women. As a matter of fact, as Tamagami has pointed out, the first episode of the *Toyokage* provides a number of points of contrast with the *Tales of Ise*. For example, the first episode of the *Toyokage* continues:

Among the women he exchanged letters with, there was one who, although no different from Toyokage in rank, made no reply to his repeated letters even after months and years. Thinking, “I will not be defeated!” he wrote:

1. *ahare to mo ifu-beki hito ha omohoe de mi no itadzura ni narinu-beki kana*  
   Not one person who would call my plight pathetic  
   comes at all to mind,  
   and so it seems my very life  
   must end all in vain!

The woman, at last, replied this one time:

2. *nani-goto mo omohi-shirazu ha*  
   If I had known nothing  
   of love’s sorrows, then, I would, no doubt,
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aru-beki wo
have occasion to call them sad;
mata ha ahare to
but now at this late date,
tare ka isu-beki
who would call them pathetic?

Men in the old days were like this—never admitting defeat. But today’s modern young men are not like this at all and in such a situation would probably just put on airs and give up!

The first episode of the Tales of Ise is as follows:

In the past a man came of age and, having property in the village of Kasuga in the old capital of Nara, he went there to hunt. In that village there lived two very charming sisters. The man spied in on them. Since it was so incongruous for them to be, so unexpectedly, in the old capital, his feelings were thrown into confusion. The man cut off a piece of cloth from the hem of the hunting robe he was wearing, wrote a poem, and sent them in to the women. The man was, in fact, wearing a hunting robe with a fern-pattern print.

kasuga no no
Like the tangled-patterned
waka-murasaki no
printed robe, stained with young
suri-koromo
purple from the fields of Kasuga,
shinobu no midare
the confusion of my secret longing
kagiri shirarezu
can know no limit!

This is indeed what he said, and he sent it in to them on the spot. Mustn’t he have thought it an amusing course of events?

michinoku no
Whose fault is it
shinobu-mojhi-zuri
that my feelings have begun to tangle
tare yuhe ni
like the tangle-patterned prints
midare-somenishi
from the distant north?
ware naranaku ni
Since it is not mine, it must be. . .

His poem is the same sentiment as this poem. Men of the past did indeed perform such impetuous acts of miyabi as this.

In the Tales of Ise episode, a very young man finds two beautiful sisters hidden away in the old abandoned capital of Nara, and he dashes a poem off to them (we are not told if or how they reply). Pointing out the similarity to a poem by the famous aesthete (sukimono) Minamoto no Tôru (822–895), the narrator of the Tales of Ise remarks: “Mukashi hito ha, kaku ichi-hayaki miyabi wo namu shikeru” (Men of the past did indeed perform such impetuous acts of miyabi as this). Katagiri Yôichi interprets this statement to mean that such men acted in
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a free and unrestrained manner, ignoring the conventions and commitments of daily life at court. Because of the difficulty of defining “miyabi,” it is worthwhile quoting Katagiri’s analysis of this episode at length:

It is certain that the word “miyabi” includes such notions as “metropolitan” (miyako-fū) and “urbane” (tokai-teki) in contrast to “provincial” (hinabi) and “rural” (satobi). However, it is also very important that such Heian period Chinese-Japanese dictionaries as the Myōgi shō read the characters “kan” and “ga” as “miyabi.” "Kan“ originally meant “to lock the gate.” To refuse any contact with worldly affairs and live leisurely was “kan.” Likewise, “ga” too in the Six Dynasties was said of standing aloof from all things political and economic and, like the Seven Worthies of the Bamboo Grove, being caught up in nothing, throwing away everything and amusing oneself freely. . . . When we think of the way the word “miyabi” was used in the Heian period and the examples of the Chinese characters used for “miyabi,” it must be seen that it referred to a “mental freedom” . . . passing one’s time freely, and standing aloof from worldly affairs, that is, from the life of the court bureaucracy.40

Katagiri goes on to note that previous interpretations of the word “miyabi” in the Tales of Ise episode divide into two groups. The one believes that the young man’s miyabi is praised for adapting an old poem to new circumstances and using it to communicate his sentiments. The other believes that “miyabi” here simply means “amorousness” (iro-gonomi). Given the political aspects of miyabi as discussed above, however, Katagiri insists that “amorousness” can only be one part of what is entailed: “The hero, who has just come of age and has probably been recently married to a young noblewoman, now stands at the start of his career in the bureaucracy. Unexpectedly, he spies some charming women who are young and fresh and without affectation . . . and he forgets himself entirely, immediately cuts the hem off the hunting garment he is wearing, writes a poem, and sends it to them. It is this behavior, which has burst out of the structures of the court and the daily life of the nobility, that is being called ‘passionately miyabi.’”

In English, “miyabi” has most often been translated as “courtliness,” it being noted that the word comes from the verb “miyabu,” which means “to behave in the manner of the court (miya).”41 Yet actions that are called miyabi, as Katagiri notes, are those that “burst out of the structure of court life,” ignoring just that behavior “appropriate to the palace.” Regardless, we can see how Katagiri’s definition of this term as it appears in the Tales of Ise attends to the same elements discussed by Yamaguchi: a setting away from the capital and behavior unconstrained by political considerations. But does Toyokage really fit this pattern?
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The concept of *miyabi* in the twentieth century has been elevated to the philosophical realm of aesthetics and is a topic of some debate. While the contrasts between the *Ise* and the *Toyokage* can be seen as centering on contending definitions of *miyabi* as “courtliness,” I believe that the politically motivated differences between the two works and their protagonists are sufficiently evident without recourse to philosophical dispute. Let us, then, simply highlight the contrasts between Toyokage and Narihira:

1. Although both Toyokage and Narihira are of low rank, Narihira frequently becomes attracted to women of a higher social status than his own, while Toyokage confines his attentions to his social equals.
2. Since the objects of Narihira’s affections are beyond his reach, he often ends up in resigned dejection, while Toyokage (since the women are not his social superiors), rather than sighing and giving up, vows to himself that he won’t be bested in his quest for their attention, as we see in the first episode, with his declaration “I will not be defeated!” *(makeji).*
3. Accordingly, in the beginning episodes, where the narrator of the *Tales of Ise* praises Narihira for his freedom from convention, Toyokage is held up for his dogged determination: today’s youth, the narrator tells us, *jiyauzu-mekite yaminamu,* “would probably have put on airs and quit,” while Toyokage perseveres no matter what. Thus, while both texts do indeed, as Yamaguchi suggests, share a nostalgia for the past, the qualities they are praising are rather different, that is, determined persistence in contrast to freedom from convention.
4. Finally, while Narihira finds his women away from the Capital, in rural surroundings, Toyokage’s women reside in the Capital. What is important in the *Ise monogatari* is that Narihira continues his “courtly” ways even in exile—as the narrator exclaims at the end of episode 10, after Narihira has acquired yet one more woman: “*Hito no kuni nite mo, kakaru koto namu yamazarikeru*” (Even in the provinces, the man still did not desist from this kind of thing!). As he never leaves the Capital, this can hardly be the point of Toyokage’s actions.

The anti-Fujiwara bias of many tenth-century Japanese literary works has been suggested by a number of Japanese scholars: Mezaki Tokue remarks on the exclusion of Fujiwara from the *Kokinshū* as indicative of resistance to Yoshifusa (see below). Watanabe Minoru has presented a complete interpretation of the
Ise monogatari as an anti-Fujiwara tract. And, although Katagiri does not accept Watanabe’s thesis, as we have seen, even he argues for a political dimension to the concept of *miyabi*. Yamaguchi’s work consistently attempts to place the literature of the period into its political context.

Clearly, the *Toyokage monogatari* was meant to serve as Koremasa’s literary representation, just as the collections of his regent relatives before and after him. Clearly also, the work provides a contrast to both the *Ise monogatari* and the *Heichû monogatari*, works centered on poets not belonging to the Fujiwara clan. It should hardly seem surprising, then, that the behavior of the protagonist of the *Toyokage monogatari* should be entirely consonant with the Fujiwara-dominated status quo: Toyokage demonstrates that even a low-ranking clerk from a minor family can find romance and success by virtue of his poetic abilities and find them without usurping the prerogatives of either the imperial or Fujiwara clans. Unlike Narihira, Toyokage confines his attentions to his social equals; in fact, he restricts his dalliance to precisely that group of women designated for such urbane play: the ladies-in-waiting of the court, that is, the courtesans. Toyokage, then, does not attempt to bed women set aside for the emperor or crown prince (as does Narihira with Kōshi), does not compete with Fujiwara for the affections of courtesans (as does Heichû), does not even seek “hidden flowers” in the suburbs or provinces (as will Prince Genji)—does not, in short, defy the conventions of court society but plays thoroughly by the rules. It was this need to find amorous challenges within the court, I would argue, that led to the increasing prominence of female poets. Sophisticated and urbane female poets made worthy opponents, or amorous sparring partners, while the very bouts themselves provided their own documentation. The majority of Koremasa’s poems in the *Toyokage* are exchanged with the leading female court poets of his day, Hon’in no Jijû and Shôni Menoto. In other words, Koremasa gains cultural prestige by showing that he can, even as an amateur and a busy statesman, match wits and poetic ability with women who are essentially professional poets. Put another way, while Koremasa’s father gained prestige through the social status of his romantic partners, Koremasa’s prestige was enhanced by the poetic reputations of his partners—the very reason that his son Kane’ie will be attracted to Michitsuna’s Mother.

I would like to suggest one more reason to believe that the *Toyokage* was composed with the *Tales of Ise* in mind. At the end of the *Tales of Toyokage*, the Narihira subtext reappears clearly. The penultimate episode begins:

*Toyokage* was very secretly seeing another woman in the area of Nakan-mikado Boulevard, and so he took her to a deserted place to meet. He returned home and the next morning sent:
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[31] kagiri naku
musubi-okitsuru
kusa-makura
kono tabi narazu
omohi wasuru na

The pillow of grass
that we bound like our vows
forever without limit
was not only for this trip:
never forget our promise!

Her reply:

[32] kusa-makura
musubu tabine wo
wasurezu ha
uchi-tokenu-beki
kokochi koso sure

Never forgetting
that brief sleep when we tied
together our grass pillow—
I feel that my heartstrings have
come completely undone for you!

The old man—what kind of things had he said to her?

[33] samenu tote
hito ni kataru na
nenru yo no
yumeyo-yumeyo to
ihishi koto no ha

Even after you awake,
oh, tell them to no one,
those words we said:
“It’s like a dream, like a dream”—
that night we slept together.

Tamagami suggests that Toyokage’s second poem is based on a composition that
“has always been regarded as one of Narihira’s finest”:

There was once a man, most honorable, upright, and faithful, who served the
Fukakusa Emperor. Through some misunderstanding, perhaps, he exchanged
vows with a lady favored by one of the imperial princes. The next morning he
sent her this poem:

Neturu yo no
Yume no hakanami
Madoromeba
Iya hakana ni mo
Narimasaru kana.

Grieved by the insubstantiality
Of last night’s dream,
I seek to recapture it
By dozing off again—
Yet it grows ever more unreal. 44

Here, too, we see the same kind of telling differences: Narihira is competing
with an imperial prince, while Toyokage’s woman is Hon’in no Jijū, who was,
in fact, the lover of his own younger brother, Kanemichi (see below).

However, the last poem given above by Toyokage refers to him as “the old
man,” or “akina,” a term also applied to Narihira in the Tales of Ise. As men-
tioned before, both Tamagami and Yamaguchi point to the use of this term to
suggest that Koremasa actually was an “old man” when he wrote the Toyokage.
However, Koremasa died at what was considered the premature age of forty-
nine—the historical tale The Great Mirror (Ôkagami) says: “He died very young,
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after having prospered as a minister of state for only three years. Moreover, the use of the term “old man” is inconsistent with the beginning of the Tales, which, as we saw, says that all of the protagonist’s amorous adventures occurred in his youth. Instead, it is important to note that this appellation appears first in connection with poem 18, and thus comes at about the midpoint of the collection (eighteen of forty-one poems), just as it does in the *Ise monogatari* (poem 76 of 125). In the *Tales of Ise*, the use of the term “old man” as well as the inclusion of Narihira’s death poem have historically been read as indicating that the *Ise* represents Narihira’s life story, from his coming of age to his death. Rather than referring to Koremasa’s actual age, then, the use of the term “okina” in the *Toyokage* indicates that it too was meant to be read as a literary biography and, moreover, that it was designed as a literary rebuttal to the *Tales of Ise*.

As I have tried to demonstrate, that rebuttal was designed to show that politically safe sex too could be fun. One did not have either to rock the political boat or to be a member of the clique in power to enjoy the career of a man “who loved love.” Koremasa’s text celebrates himself, now regent, and clearly demonstrates that *miyabi* is not the unique possession of those forced into exile—such as Narihira, Heichū, Michizane, or Taka’akira—but that *miyabi* is in fact both “courtliness” and “urbanity” and belongs to those who remain in the capital and function within the Fujiwara-dominated court.

**Collected Poems of Hon’in no Jijū**

The next work, perhaps written in response to Koremasa’s, is the *Hon’in no Jijū shū*. Although the title of this work leads us to expect a personal poetry collection of one Hon’in no Jijū, the text is actually a short thirty-odd-poem poem-tale, telling the story of how Koremasa stole the court lady Hon’in no Jijū from his younger brother Kanemichi. While poems in the *Toyokage shū* can also be found in the earlier *Gosenshū* and under Koremasa’s own name, no poem in the *Hon’in no Jijū shū* seems to have been in circulation before its appearance in this text, suggesting that the narrative and its poems were made out of whole cloth and do not represent a “monogatariization” of previously existing correspondence. In other words, it seems that by the time Kanemichi became regent in 972, it was de rigueur for the regent to have a poem-tale of his amorous exploits in circulation, and Kanemichi, who seems to have had no reputation as a poet, commissioned Hon’in no Jijū to manufacture an amorous biography for him. It is in this context, I believe, that we should first approach a reading of the *Kagerō nikki* as well, though, in fact, Kane’ie was an accomplished poet.

The *Hon’in no Jijū Collection* is a very sympathetic account of Hon’in no
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Jijū’s affair with Kanemichi, from whom she was “stolen” (nusumi) by Koremasa. At the end of this text we read: “Sono koro, otoko-kimi, hiyauwe no suke ni naritamaheri, ima ha Horikaha no Chimanagon to ka ya” (In those days, the young lord [i.e., Kanemichi] was an assistant commander of the guards—today he is the Horikawa Middle Councillor!). Kanemichi was a middle councillor from the twenty-ninth day of the Second Month of 972 to the twenty-ninth day of the Eleventh Month of the same year. Thus, we can conclude that the Hon’in no Jijū shū came into being sometime during this ten-month period. Kanemichi ceased being a middle councillor when he was promoted to palace minister (naidaijin) and regent (kanpaku) after Koremasa’s death on the first day of the Eleventh Month. Thus, there can be little question that the Toyokage monogatari was written before the Hon’in no Jijū shū—but how much before? The events narrated in the latter work occurred in Kanemichi’s youth—he was appointed assistant commander of the guards in 948. Why would Kanemichi wait some twenty-five years to have his romantic tale told? One possible explanation is that it was prompted by Koremasa’s own kiss-and-tell account. One might well imagine that Kanemichi would not waste a great deal of time getting out an account that presented himself in a more sympathetic light. In other words, we might suspect that not much time elapsed between the appearances of the Toyokage monogatari and the Hon’in no Jijū shū. If so, the period from 970, when Koremasa became regent, to the end of 971, when Kanemichi was named middle councillor, seems plausible for the production of the Tales of Toyokage.

Another, more obvious reason why Kanemichi might have commissioned this collection was to create an image of himself as an accomplished lover on the model of his father, Morosuke. As Moriya writes of the tale: “It is not that the poetic compositions of Kanemichi that can be seen in it are particularly excellent, but that through the exchange of love poems, the image of the usual ‘ladies’ man’ can be suggested.”

Ise shū

There is one more work whose relationship to the Kagerō nikki would seem to be of considerable relevance: The Collected Poems of Lady Ise, that is, the Ise shū. As is well known, the first thirty-odd poems of this collection, too, present an extended narrative, focusing on Ise’s life in court during the lifetime of Emperor Uda (867–931, r. 887–897).

But let us return, for a moment, to Fujiwara no Yoshifusa, the first Fujiwara regent. According to Andrew Pekarik: “The return of the waka to court circles is closely linked to the power and taste of Yoshifusa... The reappearance of waka at
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court paralleled Yoshifusa’s rise to power.”47 We should note, however, that Yoshifusa’s involvement with waka was limited to patronage, and he was not himself known as a poet. Moreover, Yoshifusa’s patronage of waka was not a monopoly, and there were several active waka groups outside the court: “One such group included the close associates and sons of Nimmyō, such as Yoshimine no Munesada (816–890, later Archbishop Henjō), Prince Tokiyasu (later Emperor Kōkō), and Prince Tsuneyasu. Another was centered on Prince Koretaka (844–897), Montoku’s son by Ki no Shizuko. (Koretaka lost out in the struggle for succession.) His group included Ki no Aritsune and Ariwara no Narihira.”48 Moreover, Pekarik cites Mezaki Tokue as having “noted the preponderance of outsiders among the mid-ninth-century poets of the Kokāshū and suggesting an initial association of waka with passive resistance against Yoshifusa,”49 a point to which I will return below.

Neither the succeeding regent nor the succeeding emperor—Yoshifusa’s adopted son Mototsune or his grandson Yōzei—showed much interest in waka. Yōzei, moreover, proved unfit mentally, and Mototsune replaced him with Emperor Kōkō, who was himself recognized as a waka poet. It is in Kōkō’s reign that waka reappears in official court records, and the first known poetry contest also dates from this time (though it was not held at court but at the residence of Ariwara no Yukihiro).

But Kōkō’s activities, both as a patron and as a composer of poetry, pale in comparison with those of his son, Uda. Uda was the son of Hanshi, daughter of Prince Nakano, and thus not closely related to Mototsune. He was also fifty-four years old when he ascended the throne, and he clearly hoped to rule directly rather than simply reign in Mototsune’s shadow.

To do this, Uda patronized a number of activities that could serve as power bases against the Fujiwara. The most obvious of these was the university (daigaku) and Chinese learning in general, and Uda promoted such men as Suga-wara no Michizane. Uda also had the very sinophilic example of Emperor Saga (786–842, r. 809–823), who had ceded the throne in 823 to his brother Junna (778–840, r. 823–833), while he himself retired to the Reizei’in subtemple. There, in Pekarik’s words, “he kept an eye on court affairs while continuing to function at the center of his symbolic literary universe.”50 Pekarik argues that in this way poetry moved from taking place chiefly at official banquets at court to being something centered on the presence of the emperor, even after he retired.

This move from official to nonofficial was reinforced under Uda, where, as Yamaguchi Hiroshi has argued, the very distinction between the public and the private (kōkan versus shikan) was dissolved.51 Uda sponsored the Kanpyō no on-toki no kisaki no uta-awase to cull poems for the Shinsen man’yōshū, which, Yamaguchi insists, was originally edited by Michizane, who was also responsible for such kanbun documents as the Sandai jitsuroku52 and the Ruijū kokushi.53
As we know, however, Uda's strategies were to come to nought. First there was the Akō Debate, a tempest in a teapot about the correct phrasing of an official document, which nonetheless resulted in a victory for Mototsune over Uda and his university allies. One result was the installation of Mototsune's daughter, Onshi, as Uda's consort. Ultimately, there was the exile of Michizane. Between these two events Uda abdicated to his twelve-year-old son, Daigo, in 897. In 905, less than two years after Michizane's death, came the order for what we now call the first imperially commissioned *waka* anthology, the *Kokinshū*.

As I mentioned earlier, Mezaki Tokue, noting the preponderance of non-Fujiwara among the mid-ninth-century poets of the *Kokinshū*, suggested “an initial association of *waka* with passive resistance against Yoshifusa.” This theory is consonant with Watanabe Minoru’s reading of the *Tales of Ise* as a form of resistance to Yoshifusa’s hegemony, which I have considered above. A distinction must be drawn, however, between the poets of the *Kokinshū*, in the mid-ninth century, and the compilation of the *Kokinshū* itself in the early tenth. For the young Daigo was completely under the control of Fujiwara no Tokihira, who was regent in all but name and something of a poet himself.

Yet, although Tokihira did write *waka*, his own literary activities were, like Michizane’s, focused on history, and it was he who was, finally, in charge of the completion of the *Sandai jitsuroku*. In fact, the absence of a substantial number of poems in the *Kokinshū* by figures such as Tokihira (he has two: 230 and 1049) is best explained by the fact that at this time poetry was largely a professional activity, carried out by the same kinds of people who were charged with the editing of the *Kokinshū* itself: Ki no Tsurayuki, Ôshikōchi no Mitsune, and so on. Even the personal *waka* anthology of Uda contains only twenty-five poems, while Kōkō’s has a mere fifteen.

But let us return to Uda. Uda abdicates in 897 and takes the tonsure in 899. Michizane is exiled in 901, and not too long after Daigo calls for the compilation of the *Kokinshū*. Some scholars see the *Kokinshū* as really Uda’s project, but given the animosity between Uda and Tokihira, this seems highly unlikely. Instead, Uda seems to have turned his attention to poetry contests and screen poems. And a major contributor to these poetic events was Ise no Go, one of Uda’s lesser consorts, who had apparently borne him a short-lived son sometime around 897. Not only a poet, Ise is also credited with writing the records, or *nikki*, of two of Uda’s poetry contests, the *Teiji’in uta-awase* of 913 and another in 921. In fact, some of Ise’s poems from the former were added to the *Kokinshū*.

One could argue that these *uta-awase nikki* of Ise’s are the oldest extant *wabun nikki* written by either a man or a woman (and thus preceding Tsurayuki’s *Tosa nikki*), and it is not unreasonable to see the *uta-awase nikki* them-
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selves as yet one more venue patronized by Uda in the attempt to build cultural capital, along with the more ephemeral uta-awase themselves—which leads, finally, to what some scholars have called the Ise nikki, that is, the narrative beginning of the extant Ise shū. Was this nikki, like the uta-awase nikki, a new front in the Uda-Fujiwara culture wars?

The treatment accorded the Ise shū by scholars has been very curious. On one hand, there is now virtually unanimous agreement that the collection as we have it today was not produced by Ise herself. On the other hand, almost every scholar uses the Collection for a biographical, indeed autobiographical, treatment of Ise the person. This is even true of such scholars as Katagiri Yôichi (and, following him, Richard Okada), who refer to the first part of the Collection not as a nikki, but as a monogatari.

There was, in fact, an Ise shû at some point in time edited by Ise herself. The following poem appears in both the Ise shû and the Kokinshû (book 18 [Misc. 2]: 1000):

Uta meshikeru toki ni tatematsuru tote yomite oku ni kaki-tsukete tatematsurikeru

Thinking to present [a collection] when poems had been ordered by imperial command, she composed [the following], wrote it at the end, and presented it:

| yama-gaha no | I hear of it |
| oto ni nomi kiku | only in the sounds of the mountain stream |
| momoshiki wo | —the wide palace— |
| miwo hayanagara | Oh, if only there were a way to see it, |
| miru yoshi mogana | like the rushing river channels, when I was young. |

Within the context of the Kokinshû, this poem is usually taken to refer to a collection of her poems that Ise must have submitted for possible inclusion in the Kokinshû itself. If that was the case, however, then that collection differed from the Ise nikki, as the nikki and the Kokinshû have only seven poems in common.

Likewise, in the third imperial anthology, Shû waka shû (book 17 [Misc. Autumn]: 1141), we find the following:

Tenryaku on-toki, Ise ga ie no shû meshitarikereba, mairasu tote

During the reign of Emperor Murakami [946–967], when the house collection of [the poems of her mother], Lady Ise, was ordered, [her daughter, Nakatsukasa] submitting it, [composed]:
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shigure-tsutsu
furinishi yado no
koto no ha ha
kaki-atsumuredo
tomaražanikeri

While I cried with the rains,
I wrote down all her words,
like raking together the leaves
of the old house,
and yet there is no stopping.

This is a poem written by Nakatsukasa when Emperor Murakami had commanded a copy of Ise’s collected poems for use in the compilation of the second imperial anthology, the Gosenshū. Yet here again, although seventy of Ise’s poems appear in the Gosenshū, only four come from the narrative section of the Ise shū. The collection Nakatsukasa submitted, then, must have been closer to the present 483-poem version.

In fact, while we might assume that someone, perhaps Ise herself, put together the first narrative portion and that a later hand added the remaining 450 poems (as seems to have been the case with the Ichijō Sesshō gyoshū of Koremasa), Sekine Yoshiko argues that the fact that no poem from the first part was repeated in the second suggests that the entire collection was organized by one (later) hand. It is also possible that the collection that Ise offered Daigo was not necessarily to be used in the compilation of the Kokinshū and in fact refers to the present narrative section of the text, though no scholar has, to my knowledge, suggested this possibility.

Clearly, the texts that the narrative section of the Ise shū bears the closest connection to are, in chronological order, the Gosenshū (951–956), the Yamato monogatari (951–953), the Heichū monogatari (960–965), and the Toyokage monogatari. The Gosenshū is known for its narrative quality and its emphasis on high-ranking Fujiwara poets. Yamaguchi, on the other hand, argues that Koremasa was a major influence on this collection and that it was the possibilities of the narrativization of waka, learned in the process of compiling the Gosenshū, that led him to construct his own Toyokage monogatari. On the other hand, Richard Bowring has suggested that the Yamato monogatari can be seen as a response to the Gosenshū:

The usual range of dates given for the completion of the Yamato is 950–70, but the world of the work is essentially that of Retired Emperor Uda (r. 887–97; d. 931). . . . The Yamato has its own special and somewhat marginalized constituency. The Fujiwara, for instance, are remarkable by their absence, and it is possible to argue that this work was actually compiled in opposition to the Gosenshū (951), which in turn differs so radically from the Kokinshū in the emphasis on rank and power, sometimes at the expense of poetic ability.
Yamazaki Masanobu has made the suggestion that the Yamato was started by none other than Ise and brought to completion by her daughter Nakatsukasa. The Heichū monogatari, too, as we have seen, has been read as a plain against the sekkan-ke monopoly and the Toyokage as a sort of rebuttal to both the Heichū and, more fundamentally, the Ise monogatari.

We see, then, two lines of texts, those of the Fujiwara line (Gosenshū > Takamitsu > Toyokage) and those of the opposition (Ise monogatari > Yamato > Heichū), with the majority ranging in date from 951 to 970. The question then becomes to which line the narrative section of the Ise shū belongs and when it was compiled (see chart above).

Pleasant as it would be to see Ise no Go as “an early figure of resistance” (as Richard Okada calls her), there is little to support this view. Ise’s father, Tsugukage, was a client of the sekkan-ke. Uda had little reason to feel any affection for Onshi—Mototsune’s fourth daughter, who was imposed on Uda as consort as part of the resolution of the Akō debate—or vice-versa. Likewise, the profligate Uda did not find his way to Ise until some five years after she joined Onshi’s service. And while Ise apparently bore Uda a son (there is no reliable historical record to confirm this), there is little evidence that she was in any way a particular favorite of his.

Things become even clearer if we analyze the content of the narrative section of the Ise shū. The central character is obviously Ise no Go. Her father, hoping for a politically advantageous marriage for her, sends her to court to serve Fujiwara no Onshi (Atsuko). She becomes involved with Onshi’s younger brother, Nakahira. After a few years Nakahira makes a more politically expedient marriage. Nakahira wants the earlier relationship to continue, but Ise is crushed and to avoid him returns to her father in Yamato. There she goes on a pilgrimage to Ryūmonji. She is then ordered back to court, where she is pursued by Nakahira’s older brother, Tokihira. Ise avoids him as well as two other suitors—a son-in-law of Michizane (whose exile is mentioned in the text) and Heichū (the Ise nikki shares some episodes with the Heichū monogatari). Suddenly, she becomes the object of Uda’s attention and bears him a male child. She continues to serve Onshi, who commiserates with her on her separation from her son. Uda abdicates, then takes the tonsure and resides in Ninnaji. On occasion he visits Onshi, and everyone is saddened by his changed appearance. Ise and Onshi continue to exchange poems in an intimate manner, and then suddenly Onshi dies. This brings us to poem 32, which is usually regarded as the end of the nikki or monogatari part of the collection. There follows one poem about a secret love and then a number of poems composed for pictures and screens, some composed during Onshi’s lifetime.

A quick calculation will show that of the first thirty-two poems, seventeen
are by Ise, five by Nakahira, four by Onshi, three by Heichū, two by Tokihira, and two by Minamoto no Toshimi. In other words, eleven poems are by members of the sekkan-ke and not one is by Uda, despite his considerable reputation as a poet. Moreover, the narrative does not recount Ise's entire life but starts with her entrance into Onshi's service and ends with Onshi's death. Therefore, the two clearest functions the narrative serves are to memorialize Onshi and to demonstrate the “Hira” brothers' poetic and amorous skill. As Yamaguchi has suggested, the Ise shū should be grouped together with the Toyokage monogatari, the Hon'in no Jijū shū, and the Takamitsu nikki—all texts designed by the sekkan-ke in their production of cultural capital.

The Ise nikki, then, is a product of the mid–tenth century, not of Retired Emperor Uda's salon of the late ninth to early tenth. To what extent Ise's original kashū was narrative, autobiographical, or even chronological, we cannot say. However, the first section of the extant text is part and parcel of the narrative project of the sekkan-ke that started with the Gosenshū.

When Michitsuna's Mother wrote her Kagerō nikki, she had the “furumonogatari” to write against and, as precedents, the fictionalized biography of the male Taira no Sadabumi (in the Heichū monogatari), the narrativization of the Takamitsu incident (in the Takamitsu nikki), the fictionalized autobiography of the male Fujiwara no Koremasa (in the Toyokage monogatari), and the fictional poem-tale about Kanemichi and Hon'in no Jijū's love affair (in the Hon'in no Jijū shū—told, it should be noted, very much from the man's point of view). I have argued for the importance of the female-centered point of view in the narrative stance of the Takamitsu nikki, and it seems to be that the precedent of the Ise nikki—with its pilgrimage after disappointment in love, its inclusion of real political exile (Michizane’s in the Ise and Taka’akira’s in the Kagerō), and its attention to the mother-son bond—might also have served as an inspiration to Michitsuna's Mother. Yet, the fact that there was no true feminine autobiographical tradition before her makes Michitsuna's Mother's accomplishment all the more remarkable.

Tales of Takamura

The final tale in this collection stands outside of my principal argument. Until recently, this text was probably the best known of all the works included here. It is included alongside the Heichū monogatari and the Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari in the Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei series, and together with the Heichū and the Izumi Shikibu nikki in the Nihon Koten Bungaku Zensho. These combinations alone suggest a certain confusion about the date and/or genre of the
Takamura: as will be recalled, the Heichû is an uta-monogatari, loosely based on the historical Taira no Sadafun, told in the third person and believed to have been completed before 965. The Izumi Shikibu nikki is a mid-Heian work, also about a real person and also narrated in the third person, but believed to be autobiographical. The Hamamatsu Chûnagon monogatari, in contrast, is a late-Heian tsukari-monogatari, or narrative about a fictional character. This confusion persists in the brief discussions of the Takamura monogatari found in the standard literary histories: it is listed with early uta-monogatari of the mid–tenth century, such as the Ise monogatari, the Yamato monogatari, and the Heichû monogatari, by Suzuki Kazuo, while Akiyama Ken discusses it together with the Tônomine Shôshô monogatari.

In fact, four different periods have been suggested as the date of composition for the Takamura monogatari: early Heian, mid-Heian, late Heian, and Kamakura. At first glance, this might seem almost ludicrous, but these dates say at least as much about different scholars' different ideas about the historical development of Japanese literature as they do about the Takamura monogatari itself. Yet a positivistic approach would suggest that before we begin to analyze or interpret the content of the Takamura monogatari, we should attempt to establish a date of composition. For the Takamura monogatari, which is not mentioned in any text or anthology until the late fourteenth century, the evidence is internal and stylistic. Yet, as soon as we accept the possibility that this work is a giko monogatari in the true sense of the word, that is, a pretended or pseudo-classic, then any early stylistic devices may be part of the “hoax,” such as we see in Fujiwara no Teika’s Matsura no Miya monogatari, the poetry of which is written in a Man’yô style and which has a colophon that purports to date from the year 861. In the final analysis, decisions about what was written, that is, what is actually being said in the work, are heavily implicated in decisions about when something was written. In other words, our dating of the Takamura monogatari will be dependent on our understanding of the development of Japanese literature, on the one hand, and our understanding of the content and theme of the Takamura monogatari itself, on the other.

The Takamura monogatari is described as being in two parts: a “lyrical and uta-monogatari-like” part 1 that tells of the tragic love affair between Ono no Takamura (802–852) and his half-sister, and a “utilitarian and setsubu-like” part 2 that relates the story of Takamura winning the hand of the youngest daughter of the Minister of the Right by means of a cleverly written Chinese poem. Several scholars view part 2 as a later accretion, and this is usually used as an excuse for avoiding a discussion of the tale as a whole. Iwashimizu Hisashi, for instance, argues that part 1 was written around the tenth century, while part 2 was added in the eleventh. Endô Yoshimoto believes that the present two-
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part version of the tale dates from the early Kamakura period but argues that the original part 1 was composed near the time of the Makura no sōshi, that is, in the late tenth to early eleventh century. In fact, we can trace the impetus for part 1 back to the Kokinshū (ca. 905), where the following poem and headnote appear (book 16 [Laments]: 829):

Composed when his lover had passed on (imouto no mi makarinikeru toki yomikeru):

naku namida
ame to furanamu
watari-gaha
mizu masarinaba
kaheri-kuru gani

The tears that I cry—
how I wish they’d fall like rain
so that the waters would rise
at the River of Crossings
and she come back to me!

In the headnote, the word used for “lover” is “imôto,” which means “female sibling” (specifically “younger sister” in the modern language), but here it is synonymous with the older word “imo,” meaning “wife.” Such usage was fairly early and fairly unusual, however, and, perhaps not unreasonably, based on the poem the story that Takamura had taken his sister as a lover arose at some unspecified point in time. The story that forms the basis of part 2, however, is found in Fujiwara no Akihara’s Honchô monzû, or Choice Pieces by Japanese Poets, compiled between 1058 and 1064, and, in much abbreviated form, in the later Jikkinshô of 1252.

But such discussions seem to take us inexorably away from discussing the work as a whole, regardless of when its component parts may have first been written or told. Recent scholars have tended to see the two parts of the Takamura monogatari as no more than a marriage of convenience between two essentially unrelated narratives. And yet it is undeniable that the two parts are firmly joined together, no matter how disparate their narrative styles, as a short summary will demonstrate:

“There once was a girl who had been raised by her father with great care. . . .” He wishes to make her a lady-in-waiting at court. Accordingly, he enlists the aid of her half-brother, Takamura (a university scholar), to teach her Chinese. Takamura falls in love with the girl and starts to woo her, but her attention is taken by a young military officer of much higher social standing than Takamura. Nonetheless, Takamura manages to disrupt the budding romance between the two and to place himself instead in his sister's affections. She eventually becomes pregnant by Takamura, and when her mother finds out, she locks the girl in her room, where the girl refuses to eat and so dies. Her family abandons the girl’s corpse and their home, leaving Takamura to arrange the
funeral. The spirit of the dead girl, however, reappears and continues to exchange poems with Takamura. This first section ends: “Even after the Forty-Ninth Day service, her spirit could still be faintly seen. But after three years, he could not see her clearly even in his dreams. Greatly saddened by this, he left everything just as it had been after she died. He took no wife, and lived all by himself.” Although there is not even a line break in the extant manuscripts, what is universally regarded as part 2 starts with an apparent total disregard for the preceding sentence: “He composes a clever letter in Chinese verse, asking the Minister of the Right of the day for his daughter.” The minister accepts Takamura’s letter and, apparently impressed by its skill in Chinese rhetoric, takes it home, where he asks each of his three daughters if they will marry Takamura. The eldest and middle daughters refuse, but the third and youngest daughter agrees to do whatever her father wishes. The minister then invites Takamura to start visiting his daughter.

In contrast to the romance with his half-sister in part 1, which was conducted through no less than twenty-nine Japanese poems, most exchanged between the siblings, the Takamura of part 2 refuses to speak the mutually intelligible language of waka. Instead of the usual exchange of witty vernacular verse, then, the courtship of the third daughter and Takamura is a mute travesty: Takamura dresses in shabby clothes (thus insisting on his status as an impoverished scholar from whom nothing can be expected) and arrives at the lady’s chamber with a sheaf of Chinese poems stuck in a decrepit portfolio. These he silently offers to the girl, who, unable to read Chinese, refuses them. Takamura is about to leave—thereby putting an end to the nuptials—when the resourceful girl, still without a word, restrains him by holding onto his belt. The nuptials then proceed through the Third Night, officially uniting the couple.

However, a little after the Third Night, Takamura goes back to the house of his half-sister, whose spirit upbraids him for forsaking her. When, after a week, Takamura returns to his wife’s house, his father-in-law asks the reason for his absence, whereupon Takamura tells the whole story. His new wife, while admitting the “ideal” nature of this earlier relationship, suggests that perhaps Takamura should put the living ahead of the dead, to which Takamura gallantly responds by reminding her that it was she who held him back when he made to leave on their first night together. He further suggests that if his wife doesn’t like his behavior, they can always get divorced.

The narrative breaks at this dramatic moment and resumes in an even more “utilitarian” mode, as follows:

This man, when he was young, did not meet intimately with his wife and also spent nights away from her elsewhere. He made his way in the world and rose
even higher than the rank of councillor. This was the famous Takamura. Intelligence and scholarship go without saying, but he was accomplished in composing Japanese poems, and there has never been anyone in this country to match him. Even among his descendants, there was not a one who did not compose poetry. The two older sisters, who did not listen to their father, became the wives of very low-ranking men but received benefits from Takamura. Since he was so enormously successful, he took care of the Third Lady like no other. Among today’s men, truly, is there a minister who would take a mere university student as a son-in-law? But he must have recognized the heights of Takamura’s ambition and his talent. Nor is there another, a man who would think like this—to compose a letter in Chinese to win a bride.

One way of dating a work is to find similar works whose dates are more firmly known. Both Yamaguchi Hiroshi and Hirano Yukiko have pointed out the similarities between the character of Takamura in the Tales and the destitute university scholar Fujiwara no Suefusa in a section of the Utsuho monogatari, believed to be written before 967. In that work, Suefusa, an impoverished scholar, is taunted by one of his better-born schoolmates: “I dare say even General Masayori cannot make a fine man like you his son-in-law,” and at one point he attempts to go to the general’s mansion in “a shabby old dress uniform . . . and a shabby hat and worn-out straw sandals.” Yet, as one character explains: “Truly, he wears old clothes, but it is rather becoming [a] student. One who is diligent in his study, wearing a shabby hat and worn-out dress, is a student in the true sense of the term. Those who shelter themselves under their parents’ influence and make use of their families’ power, giving bribes and living in a showy way, are by no means true students.”

Yamaguchi argues that, in fact, more than just a similarity between the dressing habits of two characters, the Utsuho monogatari and the Takamura monogatari share the same theme, criticizing as they both do the “marriage politics” of the day. On one hand, this might be viewed as a criticism likely to come from an impoverished scholar, and this would explain the episode with the rival (mentioned above), an assistant commander of the Military Guards, or hyōe no suke, who is presumably the son of an imperial prince or senior noble and who, with his higher status, threatens to steal Takamura’s half-sister away. Further, if we agree with Yamaguchi that “the author, through Takamura, is criticizing the romantic conduct of men and women of the aristocratic society of his day from which true love is missing,” then Takamura’s criticism of his competition as a sukîmono is similar to Michiyori’s criticism of the new-fangled, marriage à la mode in yet another mid-tenth-century work, the Ochikubo monogatari. For Michiyori marries for love, and when his old nurse reminds him that “it is the
custom nowadays to marry someone whose parents can help one with their favour,” Michiyori replies: “Perhaps it is because my ideas are old-fashioned that I do not like those things which are considered polite and up-to-date. I do not wish for success. I do not want the favour of my wife’s parents. I shall not give up the lady at Nijô whether her name was Ochikubo or Agarikubo.”

Yet such a reading not only pits Takamura’s “true love” (shinjitsu no aijô) against his antagonist’s “recreational romantic behavior” (yûgi-teki ren’ai kô), in Yamaguchi’s words, but also asserts that the end justifies the means, since Takamura’s method of winning his half-sister is hardly honorable. Indeed, the narrator specifically calls it hakari, “trickery” or “deception.” Moreover, the Takamura of part 2 has completely abandoned the principles so nobly enunciated by Michiyori. Thus, although Kikuta Shigeo is one of the few scholars to see that the very point of the structure of the Takamura monogatari lies in the tension between the narrative modes of the two parts, it is very difficult to follow his interpretation further and view Takamura as the “ideal” character who unifies the two parts: “an ideal person—one who succeeds in an actual rags-to-riches story (part 2) but who also has the capacity to love deeply (part 1).”

In fact, however, it is not just the name “Takamura” that links the two sections; it is also “Chinese letters” (fumi) and, more specifically, the use of Chinese in gaining, one way or another, a woman. This is, in itself, a veritable contradiction in terms, since Japanese poetry was the language of love between men and women. Indeed, in part 1, Chinese only serves as the occasion to bring the lovers together, and Takamura’s missives to his half-sister are in the vernacular.

Following the lead of Morioka Tsuneo, Kikuta argues that the two-part structure of the Takamura monogatari is characteristic of monogatari written in the late Heian period:

Many contradictions and ruptures are included . . . in late Heian monogatari. For example, there is the estrangement (kairi) between the ideal and the real. The heart that chases after a distant, beautiful dream—that is the value that adheres to the special character of the monogatari of this period, but at the same time we cannot deny the sensual portrayal of reality. In other words, it is a confrontation between a romantic nature and a realist tendency . . . In every possible sense, the tendency that opposes integration and harmony—in other words, contradiction, rupture, division—becomes the fundamental principle that dominates the tsukuri monogatari of the late Heian period.

Yet, rather than offering the Konjaku or Tsutsumi Chi’nagon monogatari as examples of this trend, as Kikuta does, we should instead look to the Torikaebaya monogatari, which evinces the same kind of brutal reversal—or what Edith Sarra
has called “hyperconventional resolution”—between its beginning and end as we see in the Takamura monogatari. In the Torikaebaya monogatari we have a brother who wishes to be a girl and his half-sister, who wishes to be a boy. They exchange social roles and go happily about their business until the girl’s anatomical sex is discovered by a young consultant (saishō), who then forces his attentions on her and impregnates her. This crisis is resolved by the brother reasserting his role as a man, usurping the social persona constructed by his sister, and then instructing her on the behavior “proper” to a woman. The first two-thirds of the Torikaebaya monogatari focus attention on the sister, while the last third is firmly devoted to the brother’s social success, a division more or less identical to the Takamura monogatari. In both tales, the abruptness of their “happy endings” can be seen to serve as a critique of Heian marriage politics and its trafficking in women.

With this understanding, the Takamura monogatari can be read as a deliberate joining of a feminine-oriented uta-monogatari and a masculine-oriented setsuwa. It is generally held that, in the Heian period, Japanese prose was the domain of women, Chinese in all genres the domain of men, and the only textual meeting ground for the sexes was Japanese poetry. In fact, the situation was far more complicated: men seem to have written some of the earliest monogatari and also some of the latest giko monogatari. Some women, as we have seen, were trained in Chinese, and early Heian women such as the Kamo priestess Princess Uchiko wrote Chinese poetry. Both men and women must have read monogatari, and setsuwa conveyed Buddhist truths applicable to both men and women—indeed, at least one setsuwa collection, the Samböe (984), was written specifically for a woman. Nonetheless, despite many exceptions and qualifications, it is generally true that setsuwa were written in a markedly sinified style of Japanese and can accordingly be considered as a genre more masculine, while the Confucian condemnation of fiction as unworthy of a gentleman allows us to identify monogatari as a predominantly feminine genre. This gender/genre distinction then informs not only our understanding of the narrative styles of the Tales, but also the depiction of Takamura himself, who can thus be understood as every Heian woman’s ideal in part 1, and every scholar’s model in part 2.

The abrupt joining of the two genres can thus be seen as a conscious design on the part of the last redactor/author, serving to criticize a masculine mode of both perception and biography writing that sees people in terms of a litany of unilateral actions, deeds, and results, rather than in terms of a tissuelike context of relationships, desires, and misreadings. In fact, the Tales can now be seen as tripartite in structure, with the feminine world of monogatari at one end, the masculine world of setsuwa at the other, and in the middle the demonstrated
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failure of communication across these paradigms, as typified by the “marriage of convenience” between Takamura and the Third Lady. Read this way, the Takamura monogatari replicates and enacts its own plot at a stylistic and generic level.

What I am suggesting, then, is that the text inscribes a position within itself for a resisting (feminine) reader. Such readers, who made up a substantial part of the audience for tsukuri monogatari and giko monogatari alike, were surely less than impressed by the success of Takamura’s career as described at the end of the Tales. Nor should we believe that the inherent contradictions of the two parts were lost on them. Rather, I would suggest that the author of the final version of the Takamura monogatari has turned the brevity of the setsuwa style into the silence and ellipsis of the monogatari mode. Rather than simply a marriage of convenience created by a copyist short of paper, the final version of the Takamura monogatari is a late Heian–early Kamakura work that enacts a conflict between two “en-gendered” narrative modes, the monogatari and the setsuwa. This montage produces an implicit critique of the Heian trafficking in women, the masculine careerism it supported, and the setsuwa that reproduced it.

Conclusion: Gender and Politics in Tenth-Century Poem-Tales

Above I have argued that there is a lineage of texts that runs from the Kujō Udaïjin shū, through the Ise shū, the Takamitsu nikki, the Toyokage monogatari, and the Hon’in no Jiï shū, up to and including at least the Kagerō nikki. These texts were all produced by or for the Regents’ House of the Fujiwara clan. More particularly, the majority of them were designed to portray a member of that family—a regent—as both an accomplished poet and an irresistible lover. In this sense, then, these were works of and for “public relations,” with a decided political intent.

There has always been a close connection between poetry collections and their political context, especially in Japan. At least as early as the first collection of kanshi, the Kaïfûsô (compiled 751), traits begin to appear that will endure for centuries. This collection serves as a kind of elegy, a “fond recollection,” as the title has it, of Prince Nagaya, a grandson of Emperor Tenmu (r. 673–686), who was accused of treason and forced to commit suicide. Moreover, most of the poems in the collection were composed in the prince’s salon. Imperial anthologies (chokusen shū), too, were largely symbolic events that legitimized the reign of a particular sovereign.

Moreover, as in many cultures, the ability to attract and possess women was a status symbol for Heian aristocratic men. To refine, preserve, and disseminate this image, women were retained to edit (and, in some cases, to create) poetic
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records of the men’s conquests. Knowledge of these earlier works, then, makes it much easier to explain the appearance of The Kagerō Diary. As Moriya has argued, it was her poetic skill that attracted Kane’ie to Michitsuna’s Mother, and it was what kept them together for over twenty years. In fact, it has been generally recognized that Kane’ie’s cooperation, or at least acquiescence, was necessary at some point in the genesis of the Kagerō nikki. In other words, Michitsuna’s Mother was retained (in several senses of the word) by Kane’ie to create his image as a suki-bito. Yet the process itself must have been consciousness-raising for her, and she no doubt derived an even greater sense of herself as a poet, and as a woman, in the process of editing her “Kane’ie shû.”

We might ask why the political nature of joryū nikki bungaku—works such as the Kagerō nikki, the Makura no sōshi, the Ben no Naishi nikki—has been ignored for so long. One simple explanation is simply the obscurity of the texts translated here: the actual manuscript of the Takamitsu nikki was unavailable to scholars till 1954; the sole surviving copy of the Ichijō Sesshō gyoshū was not available until 1937; and the survival of the Takamura monogatarī was not established until 1927. None of these works is part of the canon of joryū nikki bungaku.

Furthermore, the very genres of nikki bungaku, joryū bungaku, and joryū nikki bungaku date from no earlier than the 1920s. Even the better-known Kagerō Diary, Izumi Shikibu Diary, and Sarashina Diary were little read or studied during the Tokugawa period. As Tomi Suzuki has demonstrated, in the first extensive literary history of the Heian period, Fujioka Sakutarō’s 1905 Kokubungaku zenshi: Heian-chō-hen (Complete history of Japanese literature: the Heian court), the Heian and Tokugawa periods are established as the two highpoints of Japanese literary history and put in a complementary relationship: Heian is “classical” like Greece and Rome; Tokugawa is “Renaissance.” Most important for our concerns, Tokugawa is masculine and the “slave of ethical constraints,” whereas Heian is feminine and the “age of passion and natural human feelings.” This emphasis on feminine passion is developed further in Tsuda Sōkichi’s Bungaku ni arawaretaru waga kokumin shisō no kenkyū (A study of the thought of our nation’s people as reflected in literature, 1916–1921), where the female writers of the Heian period are praised for “directly depicting particular scenes or feelings, whether as a sincere confession of their own emotional lives or as a product of fictional imagination.”

The term “nikki bungaku” appears for the first time in Doi Kōchi’s “Nihon bungaku no tenkai” (The evolution of Japanese literature). According to Suzuki, “the notion of ‘lyricism’ or ‘sincere expression of the self’ occupied a central position in Doi’s conception of literature. All of Doi’s literary genres were in fact defined in terms of the development and growth of ‘the self.’” This concern was intimately tied to the rise of what Suzuki calls “I-novel (watakushi shōsetsu) discourse,” the Japanese form of Naturalism that became predominant in what was
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identified as “pure literature” (jun-bungaku) and situated in contrast to the proletarian literary movement and the explosion of popular literature predominantly for women. It is this context that explains the necessarily “apolitical” interpretation of Heian women’s writing, and this interpretation was to reach its apogee in the work of the first scholar to do substantial original research on women’s nikki bungaku, Ikeda Kikan. Ikeda more or less created the genre of joryū nikki bungaku, which he defined as a literature of confession or “self-reflection” (jishô). In his Kyûtei joryû nikki bungaku, published in the second year of Shôwa (1927), he portrayed each work of Heian joryû nikki bungaku as a “sincere confession” of a different aspect of womanhood, revealing the inner development of women. According to Ikeda, if Gossamer Diary [Kagerô nikki] expressed the “painful cry of a woman growing from a virgin into a wife and then a mother,” then Izumi Shikibu Diary revealed the “unbounded passion, coquetry, purity, and courtesan nature of women,” and Murasaki Shikibu Diary unveiled “the self-reflective, self-cultivating, and critical aspects of womanhood.”

There was no room here for any suggestion that a male politician might have sponsored, let alone commissioned, any of these works. In fact, such a romantic conception of these works was formulated specifically against the “artifice” of such poets as Ki no Tsurayuki (whose Tosa Diary and the entire Kokinshû style had served as the main targets for creators of “modern” tanka and haiku, such as Masaoka Shiki), on one hand, and the politics of the proletarian literary movement, on the other. Ikeda and others were in essence creating a canon and genealogy of Japanese literature that was dedicated to a politically disengaged, reactionary, and elitist stance.

While the texts translated here might be “minor” in terms of length and canonical status, they are not of minor importance. They help immeasurably in filling in the seemingly enormous gap from the Tosa nikki to the Kagerô nikki. Rather than an empty span of forty years, the Kagerô was preceded by almost two decades of repeated experiments in what we might call “life-writing.” It is only when we remove the blinding of generic distinctions that put, for instance, the Kagerô nikki in one category and the Hon’in no Jijû shû in another that we can understand the development of what would eventually (in the twentieth century) come to be known as “women’s diary literature.” More important, we see that this trend in life-writing was not restricted to women, either as authors or as subjects. Close examination reveals these works to be, on the one hand, highly diverse in terms of their mode (biographical, autobiographical, epistolary) although they all have the name of a historical person in their titles, while on the other hand they are uniformly definable as nikki despite the generic variety in their present titles (monogatari, shû, nikki).
These texts are important as well for the light they shed on the diary form’s relationship to politics. Only by taking these earlier nikki into consideration can the political role of women’s writings be appreciated. Understanding the competition between political actors that was occurring through these texts in the cultural realm moves us significantly forward in our comprehension of Heian cultural, political, religious, and literary phenomena.

The texts that I have translated here allow us a deeper and much more nuanced understanding and appreciation of works such as the Kagerō nikki. Recognizing the political exigencies that were in some way the prime motivations for these texts adds, rather than detracts, from the accomplishments of these women writers. While Michitsuna’s Mother may have originally been commissioned to produce a Kane’ie shū that presented Kane’ie as so wonderful a poet and lover that the narrator could not resist him, no matter how he neglected her, the final Kagerō nikki clearly exceeds this mandate. Likewise, although the Takamitsu nikki may have been commissioned to show off Morosuke’s family at its most sensitive and heart-wrenching, a clear antipatriarchal subtext is evident. Women such as these, as well as later writers like Sei Shōnagon and Murasaki Shikibu, found ways to write for themselves and other women in the interstices of texts ultimately controlled by men.

On the Translations and Their Style

I have long been uncomfortable with what seems to me the standard, orientalist method of translating classical texts, which consists of the foreign scholar essentially reviewing the “arguments” of native scholars and adjudicating between them like a judge, accepting one’s point here and another’s point there. Under these circumstances, one wonders just what has been translated, as the result represents no reading of the text that ever happened in Japan, but only the translator’s individual interpretation. In principal, I believe that classical texts should be translated to represent one, specific, historical reception, such as Fujiwara no Teika’s interpretations of the poems he included in his Hyaku-nin ishu, whether modern scholarship confirms those interpretations or not.93 Likewise, I believe what we need is a translation of the Ise monogatari, for instance, according to the commentary of Ichijō Kaneyoshi (1402–1481) or the Reizei family tradition, if we are to appreciate the way the text has been read for most of its history and the influence it has had on Japanese culture.94

Unfortunately, this approach has not been possible in the case of the texts
presented here, chiefly because there is little extant commentary on them before the twentieth century. I have, therefore, used another method, closer to that of contemporary Japanese scholarship and represented in English by Richard Bowring’s Murasaki Shikibu: Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs. Using all the major commentaries, I have included almost every scholar’s explanation or paraphrase of almost every one of the many problematic words or phrases in each text. As a translator, I have inevitably had to choose one, but I have tried in the notes to make the other interpretations available.

This approach has obvious ramifications on the style of the translation. It makes little sense to pretend that one is translating the reading experience of the original audience for any of these texts. Instead, I have translated them very much as “texts.” There have been no “native speakers” of these works for over one thousand years, and I do not want to pretend that we can reenact their reading or understanding. Consequently, I have left the texts “strange,” attempting to reproduce as many of their characteristics as possible in grammatical, if not elegant, English. Such an approach follows recent examples by Richard Okada,95 Richard Bowring,96 and, of course, Sonja Arntzen’s translation of The Kagerō Diary.

The quality, both material and literary, of the source texts varies considerably: the Takamitsu Journal stands very much at the inception of kana prose, and its prose style is often awkward and clumsy. Many of its poems, however, are first rate. Tales of Toyokage shows considerable advance, and its poems too are quite accomplished, whereas the poetry of the Collected Poems of Hon’in no Jijû seem relatively mechanical, and the prose is utilitarian at best. Tales of Takamura in its present form is not even a Heian period text but a product of the Kamakura period.

Transliteration of modern Japanese in the notes follows the Hepburn system. For the classical texts, I essentially follow the “historical spelling” (rekishiteki kana-zukai). The classical Japanese quoted in the notes and poems, since it is included primarily for students of classical Japanese, represents a transliteration (not transcription) of the Japanese texts. I have used the Hepburn equivalents for each kana but have kept a distinction between he, we, and e, between wo and o, and between wi and i; and I have added dzu for ～ and jhi for ｮ. I have adopted this unusual system for a number of reasons, but primarily I wish to allow students to look up words in a classical Japanese dictionary: if one does not know that the modern kyō (today) was spelled ke-fu, rather than ki-yo-u or even ki-ya-u (also possible in classical orthography), one will not be able to find it in a classical dictionary. Historical spelling also tends to make both pivot words and line counts more apparent. For a more detailed explanation of the system used, see Mostow, Pictures of the Heart (xvii–xviii).
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12. Lynne K. Miyake, “Tônomine Shôshô Monogatari: A Translation and Critical Study” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1985), 53; hereafter cited as Miyake. The present study is indebted to Miyake’s pioneering work on this text.

13. Takamitsu went first to Yokawa, on Mt. Hiei, as described in the Takamitsu nikki. After the time narrated by the text, he moved to Tônomine, from whence he acquired his subsequent sobriquet. As mentioned below, Takamitsu’s reasons for renouncing the world are unclear. His reasons for choosing Yokawa are more obvious: his younger brother Jinzen was already there. Jinzen succeeded Ryôgen as Tendai head abbot in 985. For a fascinating account of the power relations between Morosuke and Ryôgen, see Neil McMullin, “The Lotus Sutra and Politics in the Mid–Heian Period,” in The Lotus Sutra in Japanese Culture, edited by George J. Tanabe, Jr., and Willa Jane Tanabe (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1989), 119–141.


17. On the relation between Morosuke and the Gosenshû, which he helped produce, see Yamaguchi, Ôchô kadan: Murakami, 36–166.

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24. For instance Man’yôshû 1:5–6 by Prince Ikusa or 2:135–137 by Hitomaro; Ebersole, Ritual Poetry, 5–53.

25. A section for chôka is included in the Shûshû (1005–1011), for instance.


28. The Takamitusû nikki is also credited with influencing the Utsuho monogatari (late tenth century); see Abe Motoko, “Utsuho monogatari ni okeru Tônomine Shôshô monogatari to Kagerô nikki no eikyô,” in Heian Bungaku Ronkyûkai, ed., Kôza Heian bungaku ronkyû, vol. 12 (Tokyo: Kazama Shobô, 1997).


31. Ibid., 372.

32. Miyake, 123–124.


35. Heian Bungaku Rindokukai (Tamagami Takuya et al.), ed., Ichijô Sesshô gyoshû chûshaku (Tokyo: Kôshobô, 1967); hereafter cited as Tamagami. My translation is based on this edition, and I refer to the editors as “Tamagami” for convenience’s sake.


37. Ibid., 130.


41. The best article on the topic in English is Phillip Tudor Harries, “Furyu, a Concept of Elegance in Pre-modern Literature,” in Gorden Daniels, ed., Europe Interprets Japan (Kent: Paul Norbury Publications, 1984), 137–144.

42. See especially Akiyama Ken, “‘Miyabi’ no kôzô,” in Sagara Tôru et al., eds., Kôza Nihon shiô, 5; Bi (Tokyo: Tôkyô Daigaku Shuppankai, 1984), 3–38; Michele Marra, Aesthetics of Discontent: Politics and Reclusion in Medieval Japan (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1991);
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43. Watanabe Minoru, “Minamoto Tôru to Ise monogatari,” Kokugo to kokubungaku, 49 (Nov. 1972), 1–12. In English, see Marra, Aesthetics.

44. Quotation and translation from Helen Craig McCullough, trans., Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), 139–140. I have preserved McCullough’s romanization and typographical conventions. Note that this poem is also included in the Kokinshû (13: 644), where it is immediately followed by Narihira’s morning-after poem to the Ise priestess (episodes 103 and 69 in the Ise monogatari).


48. Ibid., 116.


51. Yamaguchi Hiroshi, Óchô kadan no kenkyû: Uda, Daigo, Suzaku-chô-hen (Tokyo: Ôfûsha, 1973), 62–63. Yamaguchi acknowledges, though, that it was the sekkansei, or “regents’ system,” that was originally responsible for this breakdown.


53. The Ruijû kokushi (Classified national histories) organized the entries of the Six National Histories (Rikkokushi) by categories. See Sakamoto, Six National Histories, 7.


59. Most notably, Sekine Yoshiko and Yamashita Michiyu, Ise shû zenshakku (Tokyo: Kasama Shôbô, 1966); and Katagiri, Ise monogatari, Yamato monogatari. Akiyama Ken, Ise (Tokyo: Shû ei shû, 1985) hedges on the issue considerably; and Yamaguchi’s stance is ambiguous.
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61. Sekine and Yamashita, Ise shū zenshaku, 132. "Miwo hayanagara" means both “while the river channels are swift” and “while my body is young.”

62. Sekine Yoshiko, "Ise shū no bôtô uta-monogatari to kôzoku kashû to no seiritsu kankei: kashû kara uta-monogatari e," Bungaku gogaku (July 1959), cited in Akiyama, Ise, 27. No such argument has been made for Koremasa’s collection.


65. Though she did end up married to Uda’s fourth son, Atsuyoshi (887–930), after the death of Atsuyoshi’s wife and half-sister, Kinshi (890–910). Atsuyoshi was of course considerably younger than Ise, but she bore him a daughter, the renowned poet Nakatsukasa. Uda, Atsuyoshi, and Ise all participated in the Teiji In uta-awase of 913.


69. Citations appear in both Yotsutsuji Yoshinari’s (1326–1402) Kakaishô and the Kachô yojô (also read “yosei”) of Ichijô Kanera (1402–1481). An almost identical situation obtains for the Heichû monogatari (see Videen, Tales, 12–19 and 195–199).


71. For more on the changing definitions of the term “giko monogatari,” see Robert Omar Khan, “’Ariake no Wakare’: Genre, Gender, and Genealogy in a Late 12th Century monogatari (Ph.D. dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1998).


75. For texts, see Hirano Yukiko, Ono no Takamura shū zenshaku (Tokyo: Kazama Shobô, 1988), 141–143. I am indebted to Stephen Forrest for bringing this work to my attention.


77. Kôno, Utsuho monogatari, 432–433; Ziro, Tale, 159.

78. Kôno, Utsuho monogatari, 434; Ziro, Tale, 159–160.

79. Yamaguchi, Ôchô kadan: Murakami, 531.

80. Whitehouse and Yanagisawa, Tale of the Lady Ochikubo, 151, with emendations. It should
be mentioned that both the Ochikubo and the Utsubo are believed to have been written by men, even if we do not accept the traditional attribution to Minamoto no Shitagô.

81. Yamaguchi, Ochô kadan: Murakami, 531. Note that Yamaguchi believes the Takamura to have been composed between the Kokôshû and Genji, that is, between 905 and 1000.

82. The quote is from Lynne K. Miyake, who discusses the Takamura monogatari and Kikuta’s article in her dissertation, “Tônomine Shôshô monogatari,” 161; cf. Kikuta, Takamura monogatari, 153 and 186; Akiyama, Ōshû, 179.


85. See Mostow, “Mother Tongue and Father Script.”


90. Suzuki, “Gender and Genre,” 84.


94. See Okada, Figures of Resistance.

95. Richard Bowring, “Ise monogatari.”