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THE LITERARY IMAGE OF LOVE IN JAPANESE COURT CULTURE

Introduction

Love as a source of inspiration and leitmotif has wound through Japanese literature since the dawn of its history. Feelings of love held an important place in the very first forms of verbal expression during the preliterate period. Love quickly came to be recognized by the first creators of literature to be a significant aspect of court life and dominated the subject matter of most writers.

The main questions to which I seek answers in this article pertain primarily to the functioning of courtly love as a leitmotif in Heian period (8th-12th centuries) *belles-lettres*. In the first part I shall examine the definition of love in lexical-semiotic terms; in the second part I shall present the image of love in the most ancient lyric and epic works. Because love constitutes the main criterion governing selection of literary topics and toposes, I need to precisely define my understanding of the following terms: literary motif, topic and topos. The precise distinction proposed by Raymond Trousson (1997) is useful for this purpose. In accordance with his conception, a “motif” is an element of extra-literary reality which defines basic situations and attitudes in literature. A motif is a kind of generalization, a broad conception of important ideas, phenomena and feelings – for instance, love, death, hate etc. In a concrete work, motifs undergo particularization and become literary topics. According to this definition, we can speak about love as a certain inventive motif around which specific topics or compositional schemes are created. Sometimes all these literary units are repeated in successive works in an orderly way. Then we can speak about – to use Ernst R. Curtius’s terminology – “received toposes”, or certain constant means of expression¹.

¹ Ernst R. Curtius initiated the contemporary understanding of the Greek term *tópos* or *tópoi* (set of toposes). In his opinion, toposes that originated in ancient rhetoric became clichés exploited in literature. The “topic repertoire” is a set of motifs, topics, plots or received symbols recurring in many works over the space of centuries which have become fixed in the literary tradition. Curtius, to be sure, referred the *tópoi* phenomenon to European literature, but Japanese literature offers numerous toposes as determinants of the cultural community of courtly society. See Curtius 1997: 86–110.

In courtly literature, the set of toposes that form the “thematic repertoire” of the concept “love” assumed the form of distinctly conventionalized or fictionally specified units. The most frequently occurring toposes include: “courtship” (*kyūkon* 求婚), “concealed love” (*shinobu koi* 忍ぶ恋), “love of wife” (*tsumagoi* 妻恋) and “fight for a wife” (*tsumaaarasoi* 妻争い).

“Lexicographic portrait” of the concept of love

The lexical material concerning love that appears in courtly literature is very rich. Presentation and discussion of the equivalents of the word “love” in classical Japanese requires some preliminary explanation. Contemporary linguistic theories, especially conceptions about semantic-cognitive origin inspired by Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language², hold that feelings by their very nature are indefinable. Anna Wierzbicka states that “feelings are something that is felt – not something that is experienced in words”³. In her opinion, feelings are devoid of internal structure; they can be described only in an indirect manner, by presenting external states, situations or thoughts associated with them. A similar position is taken by the cognitivists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson⁴, who posit that feelings are hard to show in the form of a conceptual structure, but can be described by providing their semantic representation, or linguistic manifestation. The linguistic manifestation of feelings forms a “lexicographic portrait”⁵, which consists of: the nouns for feelings, verbal descriptions of relations, adjectival definition of the object of love and idiomatic phrases⁶. Thus, using certain symbolic – otherwise known as cognitive – models⁷ built on basis of the etymology of names for love, we can impose order on these words and the expressions associated with them⁸. In classical Japanese, etymological-semantic analysis of the most frequently appearing nouns for

² Zdzisław Krasnodębski calls the philosophical inquiries of Ludwik Wittgenstein the „phenomenology of speech”, as the central subject of Wittgenstein’s philosophic analysis is language. For Wittgenstein, language understood as a game constitutes an entirety together with other non-linguistic activities, and is an element of what he called a „life form” (*Lebensform*) common to all people. See Krasnodębski 1986: 211–49.

³ Wierzbicka 1971: 31. All translations by this autor, unless otherwise indicated.

⁴ Lakoff & Johnson 1988: 142.

⁵ The concept of a „lexicographic portrait” should be credited to Yuri Apresyan. It presents the full semantic structure of a feeling, also taking into account its definition by stating its metaphorical understanding. See Iwona Nowakowska-Kempna 2000: 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁷ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson define the conceptual metaphore as a metaphoric method for apprehending phenomena and objects of human comprehension. The ontological metaphore shows certain abstract constructs, notions or feelings as concrete substantial things. See Lakoff & Johnson 1988: 147.

⁸ Jakubowicz 2000: 27, 233.

the notion “love” (*ai* 愛, *nasake* 情け, *aware* あはれ, *koi* 恋, *omoi* 思ひ, *shinobi* 忍び, *suki* 好き and *irogonomi* 色好み), indicate the existence of three basic symbolic models – namely, “love as care”, “love as sorrow” and “love as desire”.

The first conceptual model, “love as care”, reflects a benefactor-caregiver relationship. In this sense, to love primarily means to care for and watch over one’s beloved. The second model, “love as sorrow”, describes a state of unfulfilled love, lack of contact with one’s beloved. This feeling of love is experienced the most fully when one contemplates it alone. The third model, “love as desire”, focuses on the sensual aspect of love. This is mainly the posture taken by the recipient of love and is manifested by the desire to possess the object of one’s love.

The first model, “love as care”, is represented by the noun *ai* (devotion, protectiveness), which is the word most frequently used to describe the feeling of love in contemporary Japanese. However, it appeared relatively rarely in Heian period romantic literature. Also in use was its verbal form *aisu* 愛す (to bestow affection upon, pamper). The noun *ai* originated in Buddhist terminology, which explains its presence in sutra texts and Buddhist *setsuwa* parables, in which it indicated a feeling of love with maternal or parental underpinnings⁹. The semantic field of the noun *ai* primarily emphasizes a sense of devotion and care – for instance, by a ruler in relation to his subjects, parents to their children, or people to animals¹⁰. In the sense of parental love, *ai* appears in *Man’yōshū* (*Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*, or, for *Ten Thousand Generations*), an anthology of poetry; in the tale *Mushi mezuru Himegimi* (*The Princess Who Loved Insects*)¹¹, *ai* is used in the context of a princess’s strange fondness for various insects. In romantic literature, however, *ai* is not used to describe the feelings between a woman and a man¹².

The noun *nasake* (feelings, emotions)¹³ can also be classified under the first model. The Japanese noun lexeme *nasake* indicated all feelings that stemmed from the emotional nature of man. Its field of meaning encompassed such feelings and emotions as: friendship, feeling of closeness, fondness, sympathy and love. The expression *nasake aru hito* 情けある人 meant a man distinguished by his sensitivity and tenderness who is able to bestow his affection upon others. One of the heroines in *Ise monogatari* (*Tales of Ise*) wishes to meet the ideal man with a “sensitive heart”, expressed in Japanese as *kokoro nasake aramu* 心情けあらむ¹⁴. Sei Shōnagon counts emotionality and sensitivity (*nasake aru koto* 情け

⁹ Shibusawa Tatsuhiko performs a thorough analysis of the meaning of *ai* in his article *Ai to iu kotoba*, See Shibusawa 1981.

¹⁰ *Kogo daijiten* 1996.

¹¹ *The Princess Who Loved Insects* belongs to a collection of tales entitled *Tsutsumi chūnagon monogatari* (*The Tales of the Middle Counsellor*).

¹² Shibusawa 1981: 36.

¹³ Akiyama 2000: 312.

¹⁴ *Ise monogatari* 1971: tales 63 and 184.

あること) among the most desirable traits of a person (*medetaku oboyure* めでたくおぼゆれ)¹⁵.

Other variants of *nasake* used in literature were: the verbal form *nasakebu* 情けぶ (to be sincere, honest in one's emotions), the adjectival form *nasakenasakeshi* 情け情けし (sensitive, emotional) and the idioms *nasakemichi* 情け道 (literally: "path of love", or romantic relationship) and *nasakebumi* 情け文 (love letter).

The first cognitive model also encompassed words that, in the context of a male-female relationship, primarily meant care and protectiveness toward one's beloved. They include the noun *tokimeki* 時めき (granting of special favor to someone) and its verbal forms *tokimeku* 時めく (to receive special favor) and *tokimekasu* 時めかす (to grant special favor); also the noun *ushiromi* 後見 (watching over someone secretly) and the verb *ushiromiru* 後見る (to take care of someone secretly), which illustrate situations when a man financially and spiritually cared for a woman who was not his officially wedded wife.

The second model, "love as sorrow", is represented by the noun *koi*¹⁶. This word appears 800 times in the first anthology of poetry, *Man'yōshū*¹⁷. It frequently was written as *kohi* 孤悲, in which the first ideograph *ko* 孤 meant loneliness, and the second *hi* 悲 meant longing and sorrow. Semantic analysis of these ideographs indicates they conveyed a particular kind of romantic rapture dominated not so much by euphoria and ecstasy as an all-encompassing sorrow and nostalgia caused by loneliness, thus absence of one's beloved. The word *koi* contained the sense of a painful and bitter yearning for a person who has left forever (died or ended the relationship), left on a trip for a long time, or simply is not present.

The frequency of the word *koi* is likewise very high in later anthologies of Heian period poetry, also in the romantic verses appearing in court tales¹⁸. This is because it is one of the most frequently used words for feelings of love between a man and woman. The love poems in *Kokinwakashū* were called *koi no uta*. Five volumes were devoted to them, the same as poems about the seasons, which attests to the importance attached to the topic of love in poetry.

¹⁵ Sei Shōnagon 1996: 134.

¹⁶ Origuchi Shinobu traces the etymology of the word *koi* to the compound *tamagoi* ('inviting the soul'). In accordance with ancient religious beliefs, *tamagoi* symbolized a magical act performed by two persons close to each other. Origuchi sees the source of *tamagoi* in the *tamayobai* (spirit calling) ritual. After a person dies, his/her soul separates from the body and is lost, wandering around the fields, forests or mountains. A person close to the deceased would go to the places where the lost soul could be, calling it. When the soul was found, it penetrated into the body of the living person, thereby finding solace. In the *tamagoi* ritual, two persons in love invite each other's souls and, thanks to their mutual penetration, can thus unite their bodies. The invitation was a signal of readiness to experience love. See Origuchi 1966: 348–9.

¹⁷ See Aoki 1969: 11.

¹⁸ Akiyama 2000: 178.

In addition to its noun form, *koi* was also frequently used in other forms: the verb *kou* 恋ふ (to be lovesick), the adjective *koishi* 恋し (beloved, longed-for) and compound forms such as *koishinobu* 恋ひ忍ぶ (to long for one's beloved), *koinaku* 恋ひ泣く (to weep out of love), *koiwabu* 恋ひわぶ (to suffer because of love), *koishinu* 恋ひ死ぬ (to die of love) and *koiwataru* 恋ひ渡る (to love faithful love). All these forms express feelings of romantic longing and love that remains unfulfilled.

*Omoi*¹⁹ is another word that belongs to the semantic field of the “love as sorrow” model. In contemporary Japanese, its meaning is bound up with the functioning of the human intellect and primarily indicates pensiveness and reflection. In classical Japanese, however, *omoi* did not connote activity of the mind, but manifestations of the working of the heart (*kokoro* 心). The phrase *kokoro ni omou* 心に思ふ²⁰ expressed a lofty emotional state, a natural reflex of longing for one's beloved. In lyric romantic poetry, the word *omoi* reflected feelings experienced in solitude due to the long-lasting absence of one's beloved, which causes one to be lost in thought about this person. In classical notation using the syllabic *kana* alphabet, the noun *omoi* had the ending *hi* (*omohi* 思ひ), which on the basis of phonetic association was replaced by the character *hi* 火, or “fire”. The meaning of this ideograph emphasized the heat of emotion experienced in *omoi* love. The dominant experience became hot, strong passion. Next to the noun form of this word, the verbal form *omou* (to think about one's beloved) was also often used, together with the expanded form *monoomou* もの思ふ, which meant approximately the same thing.

The second model also includes the word *aware*, which occurred in several variants in classical literature²¹. The oldest, original form was the exclamatory use of *aware* to mean “ooh!”, “aah!” – a reaction to all emotional experiences. This exclamatory form probably gave rise to other forms: the noun *aware* (strong romantic emotion, agitation, also sympathy and romantic nostalgia), the noun *awareisa* あはれさ (strong romantic emotion and nostalgia), the verb *awaregaru* あはれがる (to experience, feel deeply) and the adjective *awarenari* あはれなり (moving, pathos-filled, nostalgic, working on the senses, beautiful). The word *aware* can also be found in the concept *mono no aware* もののあはれ, which is most often translated as “the deep feelings inherent in” and expresses the unique emotionality and emotional approach to ephemeral beauty of the material as well as spiritual world.

¹⁹ Ibid., 96.

²⁰ The expression used in *Kanajo, Kokinshū* (*Collection of Ancient and Modern Poems*) to signify feelings and experiences seated in the human heart which, when expressed in words, turn into verse.

²¹ A thorough analysis of the term *aware* is performed by Shigematsu Nobuhiro. See Shigematsu 1971: 12–41.

Of all the words mentioned above, the noun lexeme *aware*²² was used the most often to express the pathos of unhappy love. Prince Genji, mourning the death of his wife Murasaki no Ue, comes to the conclusion that it's not worth loving someone with too great and strong a love because if the beloved is lost, the love will yield only pain and suffering²³. The meaning of *aware* here is close to the feelings of sorrow and despair. The description of the feelings experienced by Genji's father, the emperor, for his wife Kiritsubo assumes the same tone. After her death, the emperor unceasingly felt the great sorrow of love²⁴.

Thus, in the description of love between a man and woman, *aware* most often expressed a feeling of romantic nostalgia and sympathy.

The next noun whose meaning fits within the semantic field of the "love as sorrow" model is *shinobi*²⁵. This word expressed the emotional confusion and longing that arise when one spends the night alone and does not meet one's beloved. *Shinobi* was also one of the more frequently used poetic devices known as *kakekotoba* 掛詞 (pivot word)²⁶. It had two broad complimentary meanings. The first was "romantic longing" and "pain of parting"; the second suggested "suffering from love" as well as "secret, concealed love", often forbidden and adulterous, passionate and difficult to control.

The third model, "love as desire", embraces a group of nouns expressing sensual love, desire and the longing to have one's beloved. The noun lexeme that represents this model the most fully is *suki*. It primarily denotes intense sensual attraction as well as deep romantic infatuation²⁷. In addition to the noun form of *suki* (physical love, infatuation) there existed other forms: the verb *suku* 好く (to love, adore) and the adjective *sukizukishi* 好き好きし (loving, amorous)²⁸. The adjective

²² The word *aware* denoted a broadly conceived emotionality and sensitivity. It expressed all feelings ranging from friendship, love and sympathy to sorrow and despair. It appears about 364 times in *Genji monogatari* (according to a count performed by the author using a program to search *Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan dētabēsu* 2000).

²³ Murasaki Shikibu 1971: 519.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

²⁵ Akiyama 2000: 208.

²⁶ *Kakekotoba* – a figure of speech in Japanese *waka* poetry commonly used in *Kokinshū*. This word has a double meaning, which performs a double function in verse.

²⁷ *Kogo daijiten* gives two basic meanings for the word *suki*: 1. Infatuation with a person of the opposite sex, sexual attraction; 2. Deep interest in the arts: poetry, calligraphy, tea ceremony, flower arrangement. The second meaning of *suki* evolved only in the Medieval period of knightly culture. See *Kogo daijiten* 1996.

²⁸ The adjective *sukizukishi* has close semantic ties to the adjective *adaadashi* あだあだし, which indicated a person with fickle feelings who frequently changes his/her object of interest. The adjective *adaadashi* originated from the noun *ada* あだ, which meant "lack of trust, changeability, fickleness". The expression *ada naru otoko* あだなる男 thus described an amorous man, much like the noun *adabito* あだ人. In turn, the noun *adagokoro* あだ心 or *adashigokoro* あだし心 meant a fickle and amorous heart. It should be noted that all the derivatives of the lexeme *ada* had solely negative connotations.

sukizukishi also meant fickle and ephemeral affection. The term *sukizukishiki migokoro* 好き好きし御心 (fickle heart) appears frequently in descriptions of Prince Genji's amorousness. The compound *sukigokoro* 好き心 has a similar meaning – i.e. excessive amorousness and sensual sensitivity. A person distinguished by excessive amorousness was called *sukimono* 好き物, and indulging in love was called *sukigoto* 好き事.

Suki has close semantic links and a shared ideographic notation with the word *irogonomi* (sensual love). This word is a compound consisting of *iro* 色 (color, sensual beauty, love) and *konomi* 好み (passion, fondness, desire). *Irogonomi* expresses desire directed toward the entire image of human beauty perceived by the senses. The noun *irogonomi* and its verbal form *irogonomu* reflected a rich and varied love life, above-average activeness and passion in love. Literary characters associated with *irogonomi* – e.g. Prince Genji and Ariwara Narihira, the hero of *Ise monogatari* – were endowed with emotional sensitivity as well as an insatiable desire to make new amorous conquests.

The third cognitive model is also represented by the noun *kesō* 懸想 (desire, loving) and the verb *kesōbu* 懸想ぶ (to be in love, to desire, to wish to marry). A person in love was called *kesōbito* 懸想人, which most often indicated a man courting a woman.

As we can see from the descriptions above, the erotic aspect was an important semantic component of the words *suki*, *irogonomi* and *kesō*.

Love was also expressed with the help of a broad array of symbols and metaphors. Japanese romantic literature referred to an existing literary tradition which constituted a frame of reference not only for writers, but also for the tastes and preferences of the literary public at the time. This tradition included a particular set of conventions such as: choice of topics and motifs, figures of speech, words or expressions. These devices were mainly background elements in descriptions of moods and emotions which had been conventionalized, as they were all connected with specific and previously used stylistic instruments – *kakekotoba* (pivot word), *engo* 縁語 (verbal association)²⁹ and *jokotoba* or *joshi* 序詞 (preface)³⁰.

One of the main elements of literary expression, especially in poetry, imposed upon authors by convention was the special relationship between the natural world and human emotions. The majority of poetic devices indicating love – metaphors (*hiyu* 比喩), symbols, similes – referred to the beauty of nature, changing seasons and rich world of fauna and flora. These symbols included: firefly *hotaru* 蛍 (hot passion), chrysanthemum *kiku* 菊 (emotional fickleness), forget-me-not *wasuregusa*

²⁹ *Engo* – one of the main poetic devices popular during the Heian period. An *engo* is a group of two or three words appearing in verse and remaining within strictly specified semantic relations with each other based on associations.

³⁰ *Jokotoba* or *joshi* – a poetic device consisting of a group of words (five syllables together) appearing before a specified key word in order to properly introduce and embellish this word.

忘草 (transitoriness), autumn *aki* 秋, 飽き (melancholy, boredom), tears *namida* 涙 (suffering in love), cuckoo *hototogisu* 時鳥 (romantic sorrow).

In summing up the analysis above, it should be emphasized that the “lexicographic portrait” of the concept of love reconstructed from Japanese courtly literature enables us to learn the main feelings and states of mind associated with experiencing passion during this era. The lexical wealth characterizing descriptions of loving feelings attests to the broad conception of love, ranging over parental, promised, unhappy and sensual variants of love. All the aforementioned direct names for love as well as the symbols and metaphors used in romantic poetry shape a sophisticated means of expressing feelings.

Lyrical poetry as the main mode of romantic communication

The first Japanese works portraying the experience of love come from ancient songs (*kayō* 歌謡)³¹ passed on orally. Many examples of such songs can be found in the oldest Japanese chronicles – *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters, 712) and *Nihonshoki* (*Chronicles of Japan from the earliest times to A.D. 697, 720*) – as well as in the first anthology of poetry, *Man'yōshū*. *Kayō* belong to the earliest poetic forms, whose structure was shaped by the need for vocal-musical presentation. Its sound layer was characterized by irregular syllabic construction and a division into stanzas; its content layer, by numerous parallelisms, repetitions and refrains. Love *kayō* told about loving feelings and sensual desire that arose in a spontaneous and natural manner. In the oldest Japanese poetry, eroticism was understood to be a basic human need and manifested in the desire for physical union between man and woman in the sexual act.

One of the most important toposes appearing in the majority of love *kayō* is “searching for a wife or candidate for a wife” (*tsumadoi* 妻問), which was distinctly bound up with the polygamous character of relationships between the sexes. The man is presented as a traveler who traverses the various lands of Japan in search of new wives and lovers. The woman is a passive figure who patiently waits until her longed-for man shows up and discovers her. Below is an example of these songs, taken from the *Kojiki*:

The god
Tatipoko
Unable to find a wife

³¹ The subject matter of *kayō* songs was diverse. Mikołaj Melanowicz mentions urban and rural songs; work, play and convivial songs; religious and lay songs. He states that their subject matter as well as form continually changed. See Melanowicz 1994: 36.

In the land of the eight islands
 Hearing that
 In the far-away
 Land of Kosi
 There was a wise maiden,
 Hearing that
 There was a fair maiden,
 Set out
 To woo her,
 Went out
 To win her³².

The hero of this story is the god Tatipoko, who travels to the distant land of Koshi in search of a new beloved. There he meets the beautiful Nunakapa hime. In accordance with custom, he stands in front of her home and woos her by declaiming or singing his poem. He proudly presents himself to the object of his affection and declares how long he has had to travel to find her. The girl's response to his advances is both charming and inviting:

As soon as the sun
 Hides behind the verdant mountains,
 Then jet-black
 Night will come.
 Smiling radiantly
 Like the Morning Sun,
 With your arms
 White as the rope of Taku fibers,
 You will embrace
 My breast, alive with youth,
 Soft as the light snow;
 We shall embrace and entwine our bodies³³.

The man, in accordance with prevailing custom, should visit his beloved after nightfall and leave her home at dawn. The woman impatiently awaits his evening visit. In her poem, she promises the man delights of the flesh and fulfillment of his love, as she desires to fall asleep in his arms. Yet, being fully aware of the established division of roles and duties in love relationships, she does not expect an assurance of fidelity on his part.

³² *Kojiki* 1968: 104.

³³ *Ibid.*, 106-7.

The man is therefore the conqueror, while the woman is the “conqueree” awaiting his visits. Her poem is a profession of fidelity and love to one man.

Another interesting example of love in *kayō* is the song at the beginning of the *Man'yōshū* anthology, attributed to Emperor Yūryaku (456–479):

Your basket, with your pretty basket,
 your trowel, with your little trowel
 maiden, picking herbs on this hill –
 I would ask you: Where is your
 home?
 Will you not tell me your name?
 Over the spacious land of Yamato
 it is I who reign so wide and far,
 it is I who rule so wide and far.
 I myself, as your lord, will tell you
 of my home and my name³⁴.

This poem is an illustration of a second popular topos: “telling each other’s names” (*nanori* 名乗り)³⁵. It shows the efforts made by the young ruler who by chance meets a beautiful girl picking herbs and decides to wed her. He desires that his beloved reveal her name to him. In ancient Japan, the custom of “telling each other’s names”, or introducing each other, was among the basic elements of the nuptial ritual. The man introduced himself first, mentioning his name and social status. In this manner he expressed his desire to marry. Then he inquired about his beloved’s name. By answering his question, the woman expressed her agreement to his proposal of marriage.

Lyrical forms thus became the basic mode of romantic conversation and correspondence in Japanese literary tradition. Courtiers considered lyrical poetry, performing primarily a phatic function, to be the most appropriate form of expressing deeply moving experiences. Ki-no Tsurayuki views the source of poetry to lie in the human heart (*kokoro*), understood as the abode of all feelings and emotions.

³⁴ The first poem in the *Man'yōshū* anthology of poetry, translated by Donald Keene. See Keene 1993: 93.

³⁵ Sometimes partners did not reveal their names to each other (*nakakushi* 名隠し – „hiding names”), remaining unaware of whom they were meeting to the end. An example is the liaison between Prince Genji and Yūgao, who kept their real names secret from each other. *Genji monogatari* contains other examples of relationships in which the partners do not know each other’s real names. The mysterious Oborozukiyo, with whom the Prince has a passionate affair, carefully avoids revealing her real name. She turns out to be the younger sister of Kokiden – the greatest rival of the Prince’s mother. Ukifune, too, resists giving her name when she meets Prince Niou.

Japanese poetry has its seeds in the human heart and burgeons into many different kinds of leaves of words. We who live in this world are constantly affected by different experiences, and we express our thoughts in words, in terms of what we have seen and heard³⁶.

Poetry thus understood is an expression and presentation of desires and feelings concealed in the heart. romantic experiences are undoubtedly among the profound emotions that naturally inspire the need to be expressed in poetic form.

In *Man'yōshū*, the first anthology of Japanese poetry, we find many such verses – love letters appearing under the name “questions and answers” (*sōmonka* 相聞歌). This form, borrowed from Chinese poetry, consisted of private poetic letters in question-and-answer format. Sometimes these love poems included “explanations” (*kotobagaki* 詞書) stating the place and circumstances in which they were written. They presented love in the context of married and family life, thus were very often sent to a particular partner, expressly indicated with the help of appropriate pronouns or nouns³⁷. *Sōmonka* letter-poems also conveyed the feelings of a particular sender identified with the author appearing as the lyrical subject *ware* (I). The leading poets in this genre – Kakimoto Hitomaro (660–710), Ōtomo Tabito (665–731), Ōtomo Yakamochi (716–785) and Nukada Ōkimi (660–690) – strove to depict the intensity and authenticity of their feelings, to show love as great passion, in keeping with the “truth of things” concept (*makoto* まこと)³⁸.

The following poem by Ōtomo Yakamochi is an exemplary profession of passionate love to a beautiful woman.

How I waste and waste away
With love forlorn–
I who have thought myself
A strong man!³⁹

This is an excerpt from a poem about unrequited love. In the depths of his heart, the poet experiences the bitterness of concealed passion, which he describes as madness. Even a tough guy proved to be weak and defenseless in the grip of so strong an emotion.

³⁶ Excerpt from *Kanajo* (Preface). See *Kokinshū* 1984: 387–400.

³⁷ The most frequently mentioned pronouns included the personal pronouns *kimi* 君 (“you” – indicates a man), *imo* いも (“you” – indicates a woman), *se* (“you” – indicates one’s husband), *imashi* いまし (“you” – indicates one’s wife) and the noun *tsuma* 妻 (indicates, depending on ideographic notation, a wife or husband).

³⁸ The term *makoto* denotes authenticity of experiences and feelings presented in literature.

³⁹ Poem by Ōtomo Yakamochi, translated by Donald Keene. See Keene 1993: 151.

A comparison of the image of love that emerges from the *Man'yōshū* anthology to that which emerges from the second anthology of poetry, *Kokinshū*, reveals that not only have the means of expression and style changed, but above all the poets' approach to the role of love in poetry. As Ariyoshi Tamotsu has emphasized (1981: 96), love as a literary topic – much as nature in the poetry of the courtly period – served to build poetic conventions whose main purpose became not so much re-creating the authenticity of feelings (*makoto*) as searching for beauty and elegance (*miyabi* みやび). This was manifested in the stylization of love and more intellectual approach to the topic. Poets ceased to describe solely their experiences relating to love and began to convey their own reflections on the subject of love, or what could be called the philosophy of love. The poetic portrait of love in *Kokinshū* sharply diverges from the spontaneous, natural and often physical love described in *Man'yōshū*. The new, intellectual approach to love entailed the subduing and refinement of feelings or even imposition of a contemplative-philosophical character on them. Many poems were devoted to attempts to define the phenomenon of love. They often began with the words “love is...” (*koishi to wa* 恋しとは). Consequently, poets stopped addressing their poems to a particular recipient. This led to the disappearance of the convention – ubiquitous in *Man'yōshū* – of using personal pronouns, which were replaced in *Kokinshū* by the noun “person” (*hito* 人) in the sense of “someone in general”. *Hito* was used by a man to denote a woman, as well as by a woman to denote a man. This word was often preceded by schematic, established designations such as: “darling” (*koishiki hito* 恋しき人) or “cold, heartless person” (*tsurenaki hito* つれなき人).

An anonymous author addressed his poem to a mysterious woman indifferent to his advances (*tsurenaki hito*).

Loving a heartless
unmerciful creature [*tsurenaki hito*] I
justly breathe laments
until the mountain echo
answers my piteous plaints⁴⁰

The expression *tsurenaki hito* (heartless, unmerciful creature) symbolizes a beloved person in a fairly general way. The word *hito* (person) introduces a certain ambiguity and mystery, because it could mean a specific woman or it could suggest a beautiful woman in general.

The topic of a poem by the poetess Ono Komachi (? 834–900) was the transitoriness of feelings.

⁴⁰ Poem no. 521 *Tsure mo naki* (in *Kokinshū*), translated by Laurel Rasplica Rodd and Mary Catherine Henkenius, See *Kokinshū* 1984: 198.

That which fades within
 Without changing its color
 Is the concealed bloom
 Of the heart of man in
 This world of disillusion⁴¹.

This poem is an intellectual game that refers to Buddhist conceptions about the illusory nature of the world and human emotions. The unfaithful and fickle heart of man is compared to a flower whose color changes, though we do not perceive the change.

Ariwara Narihira experienced similar doubts rooted in the illusory nature of feelings.

Did you come to me,
 Or did I go to you?
 I have no idea
 A dream or reality?
 Was I asleep or awake?⁴²

The poet, lost in the turmoil of his own emotions, wonders whether the love he feels for his beloved is a manifestation of the real world (*utsutsu* 現) or merely the dream world (*yume* 夢). The murkiness in his heart symbolizes his sense of being lost.

Love poetry sprang from the authentic experiences of its authors, occupying an important place in romantic conversation and correspondence. While it began as the main form used to express feelings of love, it came to be an artistic endeavor that provided its own aesthetic pleasures. Love and poetry were inseparably linked in the Heian period, as love spoke the language of poetry in everyday life as well as the literary world.

The topic of love in epic works

In *monogatari* (courtly tales) and *nikki* (diaries) of the Heian period, love is the predominant motif. In contrast to the first epic works from the VIII century (i.e. the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* chronicles), courtly literature rarely contains images of the naked body and descriptions of sexual pleasure; it's not sex acts and their

⁴¹ Poem no. 797 *Iro miede* (in *Kokinshū*), translated by Laurel Rasplica Rodd and Mary Catherine Henkenius, See *Kokinshū* 1984: 277–8.

⁴² *Kokinshū* 1984: 133.

circumstances that are described in these works, but the internal experiences and emotional doubts and dilemmas of its heroes. The selection of romantic plots and toposes is subordinated primarily to the principles of courtly elegance (*miyabi*). Instead of erotic scenes, readers find highly sophisticated romantic rapture, emotion and longing. They are conveyed through lyric poetry, which is also present in narrative works. Heroes often speak about love in the language of poetry. Love is professed, described and conveyed in romantic verse, which assumes the short – 31 syllable – *tanka* form. Thus, in courtly tales⁴³ as well as diaries, the lyrical passages take the form of a romantic monologue or dialogue. While the narrative sections serve to describe feelings and emotions viewed through the eyes of an external narrator, the lyric forms express the heroes' feelings directly from their point of view.

The “topic repertoire” of love that appears in Heian period epic works is fairly uniform. It is mainly related to the age-old desire to win the heart of one's beloved. The most important literary toposes refer to this topic – namely, “courtship” (*kyūkon*), “marriage to a deity” (*shinkon* 神婚), “fighting for a wife” (*tumaarasoi*) and “concealed love” (*shinobu koi*).

The topos “courtship” is a continuation and development of the ancient topos “wife searching” (*tsumadoi*), known from *kayō* love songs. The man-conqueror who set off on a journey to distant provinces in search of the ideal wife often had to struggle with adversity of various kinds. In *kigi* chronicles, most journeys undertaken by ancient rulers or heroes were motivated by the desire to find a new wife. The most amorous rulers, about whose erotic travels much has been written, were the emperors Nintoku (V c.) and Yūryaku. A special variant of the topos “wife searching” is the topos “marriage to a deity” (*shinkon*). Tales of people marrying divine beings represented by spirits, deities or holy animals frequently appear in *kigi* and in *fudoki* (descriptions of lands). For example, *Kojiki* contains a description of a romance between the mountain spirit Miwa and the beautiful girl Ikutamayoribime⁴⁴. The spirit, in the form of a handsome young man, visits his beloved in her home. *Kojiki* presented their love as follows: “They fell in love, united and soon the girl became pregnant”⁴⁵.

The “marriage to a deity” topos can also be found in the legend of Urashimako (*Tango fudoki*, Records of customs and land of Tango, 8th c.)⁴⁶. The hero

⁴³ The most expansive form of lyric professions of love are *uta monogatari* (poem tales), in which the narrative-descriptive parts perform a secondary role and serve only to explain and illustrate the main part, which consists of lyric poetry. The best-known examples of this genre are: *Ise monogatari* (*The Tales of Ise*, 10th c.), *Yamato monogatari* (*Tales of Yamato*, 10th c.) and *Heichū monogatari* (*Tales of Heichū*, 10th c.).

⁴⁴ *Kojiki* 1968: 150–1.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴⁶ The oldest version of the tale comes from *Tango Fudoki* (Records of customs and land of Tango). In later versions of this legend, e.g. *Nihonshoki*, the hero's name is Urashima Tarō.

of the legend, the young man Urashimako, fell in love with the beautiful goddess Kamehime, whose feelings were reciprocal. He wed her and they lived in the Land of Eternal Existence. After some time had passed he grew homesick and decided to visit his family and friends. Upon parting, he received a small chest from his beloved, which he swore not to open under any circumstances. Unfortunately, he forgot about his pledge and opened it. Then he understood he would never return to Kamehime, and that he had lost her forever⁴⁷.

Elements of the “marriage to a deity” topos are also evident in the construction of the Princess Kaguyahime character – the heroine of *Taketori monogatari* (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, 10th c.), who was presented as an other-worldly being who came to Earth from the Moon. In contrast to other such tales, none of the princess’s suitors succeeded in winning her hand in marriage.

In the Heian period, the man-conqueror no longer had to voyage to distant lands in search of the perfect consort, as the majority of amorous intrigues unfolded in the capital. But this does not mean that he ceased to woo women. A very popular topos in the literature of this period is “fight for a wife” (*tsumaaarasoi*), in which many men competed with each other for the favor of a particular woman they desired. The oldest example is a story in *Kojiki* which tells of the rivalry between the deity Ōkuninushi and his 18 brothers for the hand of a beautiful woman. Thanks to his courage and kindness, Ōkuninushi defeats all his rivals and wins his beloved Inaba no Yagamihime.

In *Taketori monogatari*, male rivals battle for the hand of Princess Kaguyahime. All the candidates were guided solely by their desire to win the Princess, who was renowned for her beauty. They behaved like mad men ready to risk anything for love. In the end, however, only five of them had the mettle to face true danger in the name of love. The Princess assigned them perilous tasks (*nandai* 難題) to perform⁴⁸. The one who demonstrated his courage and obtained the thing she desired would win her hand. Unfortunately, none of them succeed, because the deceit and dishonesty they use in pursuit of their goals doom them to failure.

In *Utsubo monogatari* (*The Tale of the Hollow Tree*, circ. 970), the object of the “fight for a wife” (*tsumaaarasoi*) was Princess Atemiya. Over a dozen suitors of the highest aristocratic rank vie with each other for her hand. They do not, however, have to overcome dangers as their counterparts did in *Taketori monogatari*. Instead, they shower the princess with love letters assuring her of their serious intentions

⁴⁷ Section of *Tango fudoki* entitled *Urashimako – Shimako from the beside the Bay*, translated into Polish by Wiesław Kotański, (cf. 1961: 58–63).

⁴⁸ The tasks the Princess assigned the suitors were as follows: Prince Ishizukuri was to bring her the stone cup of the Great Buddha; Prince Kuramochi, a pearl branch from the tree growing on holy Mount Hōrai; Minister Abe Miushi, the skin of a fire-rat living in China; Great Counselor Ōtomo, a jewel inside a dragon’s throat sparkling in five colors; and Counselor Isonokami, a swallow’s egg.

and give her magnificent gifts. One of them, an official in the ministry of war, builds her a richly furnished home and provides her with numerous servants. Outraged by Princess Atemiya's indifference toward him, he lodges an official complaint against her in the emperor's palace⁴⁹. In the end, the princess rejects the advances of all the suitors, choosing service in the court and the love of the heir to the throne.

The "fight for a wife" topos can also be found in *Genji monogatari*. The woman fought over is Princess Tamakazura, daughter of Tō no Chūjō and the late Yūgao. Tamakazura, raised in the provinces as a child, comes to the capital thanks to the efforts of Prince Genji. The Prince decides to adopt the young princess and behaves as an exemplary stepfather at first. But when the little girl matures, Genji begins to view her as a beautiful woman who reminds him of his former lover, Yūgao. Sensual passion wins out over fatherly love, and Genji becomes one of her many suitors⁵⁰.

„But tell me: is there in any of your old stores a proper, upright fool like myself?” He came closer. „I doubt that even among the most unworldly of your heroines there is one who manages to be as distant and unnoticing as you are. Suppose the two of us set down our story and give the world a really interesting one.”

“I think it very likely that the world will take notice of our curious story even if we do not go to the trouble.” She hid her face in her sleeves.

„Our curious story? Yes, incomparably curious, I should think.”

Smiling and playful, he pressed nearer.

“Beside myself, I search through all the books,

And come upon no daughter so unfilial.

“You are breaking one of the commandments.”

He stroked her hair as he spoke, but she refused to look up. Presently, however, she managed a reply:

“So too it is with me. I too have searched,

And found no cases quite so unparental.”

Somewhat chastened, he pursued the matter no further. Yet one worried. What was to become of her?⁵¹

In the excerpt above, Prince Genji communicates his true intentions to Princess Tamakazura very clearly. Tamakazura is surprised, even shocked, by his bold advances.

⁴⁹ Excerpt from *Utsubo monogatari*, translated into Polish by Wiesław Kotański (cf. 1961: 176–81).

⁵⁰ The plot element of romance between stepfather and stepdaughter is frequently used in *Genji monogatari*. The classic example is the marriage of Prince Genji and Murasaki-no Ue, who was raised by the prince as a daughter until she reached adulthood.

⁵¹ Murasaki Shikibu 1981: 436.

Other men in addition to Prince Genji compete for the princess's hand: her half-brother Kashiwagi, who is unaware of their kinship; Yūgiri, Prince Genji's son; Prince Hotaru, who is Prince Genji's half-brother; and Minister Hige-kuro. All the rivals shower the princess with love letters and gifts. In the end Tamakazura's father, Tō no Chūjō, decides to give his daughter to Minister Hige-kuro.

The topos "concealed love" (*shinobu koi*), which is most often "love for someone else's wife" (*hitozuma koi* 人妻恋), can be found in many courtly tales. The scheme in this case is: a man, unhappily in love, is unable to resist his deep desire and imprudently initiates a secret romance with a woman meant for another man.

An example of this topos can be found in *Genji monogatari* – namely, Prince Genji's love for his stepmother Fujitsubo. Like his late mother, Fujitsubo was for Prince Genji the embodiment of absolute beauty and kindness. The Prince has to break through the apparent indifference of his stepmother, who adroitly conceals her feelings for him. In the end they meet to consummate their mutual passion. The Prince takes advantage of the opportunity that arises when Fujitsubo, due to illness, moves back to her family home, where he visits her at night. This one tryst weighs heavily on the rest of their lives. Fujitsubo gets pregnant and gives birth to a son whose resemblance to Prince Genji is undeniable. Nevertheless, her husband – the emperor – publically recognizes the baby as his child.

The lovers' next meeting proved to be unforgettable for both of them.

Determined that there would not be another meeting, she was shocked to find him in her presence again. She did not seek to hide her distress, and her efforts to turn him away delighted him even as they put him to shame. There was no one else quite like her. In that fact was his undoing: He would be less a prey to longing if he could find in her even a trace of the ordinary. And the tumult of thoughts and feelings that now assailed him – he would have liked to consign it to the Mountain of Obscurity. It might have been better, he sighed, so short was the night, if he had not come at all.

"So few and scattered the nights, so few the dreams.

Would that the dream tonight might take me with it."

He was in tears, and she did, after all, have to feel sorry for him.

"Were I to disappear in the last of dreams

Would yet my name live on in infamy?"

She had every right to be unhappy, and he was sad for her⁵².

Fujitsubo worries the whole time that her relationship with her stepson will be revealed and fears the reactions and obloquy of her milieu. Following the death of her husband, the emperor, she decides to enter a convent – not for religious

⁵² Murasaki Shikibu 1981: 98–9.

reasons, but as a way to find peace in hiding from her unhappy love for her stepson and to atone for the sin she had committed.

Fujitsubo was tormented by feelings of guilt and apprehension. Surely everyone who saw the child could guess the awful truth and damn her for it. People were always happy to seek out the smallest and most trivial of misdeeds. Hers had not been trivial, and dreadful rumors must surely be going the rounds. Had ever a woman been more sorely tried?⁵³

Several years later, Prince Genji finds himself in the same situation as his father. The pattern of adulterous love repeats itself – only the characters change. This time, Prince Genji must face up to the infidelity of his second wife, Princess Nyosan. The princess and her stepson's friend, Kashiwagi, fall madly in love. She gets pregnant and gives birth to a son, Kaoru, whom Prince Genji – just as his father before him – recognizes as his own.

In addition to adulterous liaisons, the topos “concealed love” (*shinobu koi*) also reflected romantic relationships whose unacceptability stemmed from the difference in social rank between the lovers. An example of such a romance was that between Ariwara Narihira and Fujiwara Takaiko⁵⁴ (the future Empress Nijō – wife of Emperor Seiwa (858–876)). The two had felt the flame of passion for each other for many years. Their relationship developed in secret, but became the object of rumors and suspicions very quickly. Ariwara visited his beloved contrary to the wishes of her family, who, with their own interests in mind, considered Takaiko an excellent candidate to become the future empress. The secret romance carried on by the two mainly yielded suffering due to the barriers that separated them – the difference in social rank between them and the opposition of Takaiko's parents. External factors kept the lovers apart while simultaneously stoking the flames of desire between them. Blinded by passion, Ariwara resorted to committing a crime. He kidnapped Takaiko, but her two brothers – Mototsune (836–891) and Kunit-sune (?–?) – gave chase. It is they who are portrayed in the sixth story as horrible demons (*oni*) who devour a woman. The kidnapping fails. Ariwara, realizing that his passion had driven him to evil, strives to atone⁵⁵.

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⁵³ Ibid., 398.

⁵⁴ Fujiwara Takaiko (842–910) – daughter of Fujiwara Nagara (dates of birth and death unknown). Her father wanted her to become the empress, thereby helping him advance his court career. In 865 Takaiko entered the court of Emperor Seiwa and became his wife. She soon gave birth to a son, the heir to the throne and future Emperor Yōzeia (876–884). As the empress, she assumed the sobriquet Nijō.

⁵⁵ *Ise monogatari* 1972: 137–8.

As the tales presented above show, passionate love demanded great determination and sacrifice from both partners in the pursuit of its fulfillment. Lovers severed ties with family members, abandoned the moral norms they had professed and even grew oblivious to common sense. The greater their mutual inaccessibility, the stronger their passion for each other. Attempts to cure their inflamed hearts merely led them to sink into internal confusion, suffering and longing.

The episodes cited above primarily show difficult love, which – particularly in the toposes “fight for a wife” (*tsumaarasoi*) and “concealed love” (*shinobu koi*) – was an unhappy and complicated feeling. The reasons for the emotional complications could be social barriers (i.e. differences in social rank) or moral difficulties stemming from involvement in other people’s relationships (love triangles). Love was a difficult long-term feeling and often slipped out of control.

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論文の日本語レジュメ

Iwona Kordzińska-Nawrocka

日本の宮廷文化における愛の文学的印象表象

愛は日本の歴史が始まって以来、インスピレーションとライトモチーフの源として日本文学の中で脈々と受け継がれてきた。愛の感情は、文字使用以前の時代に言語表現の最初の諸形式の中で重要な位置を占めていた。愛は宮廷生活の重要な側面であると日本文学を最初に築き上げた者たちによってすぐさま認識されるようになり、ほとんどの作家の主題として用いられた。本論文は主に平安時代(8世紀～12世紀)の純文学におけるライトモチーフとしての宮廷愛の役割について考察を与える。前半部では、語彙・記号論的観点から見た愛の定義について考え、後半部では、古代の叙情詩と叙事詩における愛の印象イメージを提示する。

Key words: courtly love, Heian period, *irogonomi*, *aware*, topos of *kyūkon*, topos of *shinobu koi*, topos of *tsumaaraso*, *kayō*, *sōmonka*, *Manyōshū*, *Kokinshū*, *ochō monogatari*