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Towazugatari

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Japanese literary works of the Kamakura period (1185-1392) are often regarded as a degeneration of aristocratic literature or the rise of a new common people's literature. Contemporaries viewed this popularization of literature as a lowering of literary quality. Even the term *shominteki bungaki* (literature of the common people) has a negative connotation. *Towazugatari*, written by Lady Nijō in about 1307, is a work which transcends this degeneration and manifests the transitional characteristics of Kamakura literature in a positive manner. *Towazugatari* is perhaps one of the most significant works of medieval Japan next to the *Tale of Genji*, which was so popular during the Heian period.

The late Heian court, which preceded the Kamakura court, was characterized by its pessimism, despite a flowering of aristocratic culture. This was partly due to the decline in the power of the central government. As the old order began to crumble, a new warrior class took its place. This shift to a feudal type structure was evident during the Kamakura period. The ultimate manifestation of Heian pessimism can be found in the recurrent idea of *mujō* (impermanence) in Heian court literature where death was regarded not as a gruesome event, but as an artistic one. In *waka* poetry, Heian court aristocrats found the possibility of eliciting a beauty from death that transformed it into something positive rather than negative.¹

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Even after the establishment of the Kamakura government in 1192, Japan was destined to continue experiencing turbulence and warfare. In the provinces, sporadic revolts occurred. On the Inland Sea, there was rampant piracy. Daylight robbers frequented the streets of the capital. Even Buddhist priests in monasteries came down from the mountains for raids. Furthermore, there occurred epidemics, famines, storms, and earthquakes over which people had no control. Such depressing events certainly affected people in the imperial court of Kamakura, who were deprived of the political and economic power to which they had become accustomed.

All these calamities caused a sense of anxiety in the aristocrats, making them realize that they indeed lived in the midst of the 'latter days of the Law' (*Mappō*). It was, therefore, only natural that the interest in Buddhism as a means of salvation from a corrupt world and obtaining rebirth in the Pure Land prevailed more and more in this period. Those who did not turn to Buddhism could do nothing but sink into a state of decadent pleasure, enjoying the present unencumbered with any thoughts of the future.

At the same time, aristocrats in the Kamakura period showed an excessive nostalgia which sprang from the undeniable realization that old institutions were steadily crumbling. The last thing that the aristocrats could do was to cling to their sense of cultural supremacy. This tendency is best seen in their attitudes towards *waka* poetry. As Katō has pointed out, *waka* poetry was by this time institutionalized, and was the pivot around which aristocratic culture revolved. Besides poetry, the legacy of the Heian court culture, such as canons of aesthetic judgement and standards of personal behaviour, were all treasured by court nobles even to the extent of sentimental obsession. Needless to say, the *Tale of Genji* was considered a celebrated manifestation of the court nobles' cultural supremacy; and Kamakura aristocrats extensively consulted and referred to the content of the *Tale of Genji* in their everyday lives.²

In this world of the declining court, Lady Nijō (1258-?), wrote *Towazugatari* because she could no longer keep her story to herself. *Towazugatari* literally means 'unrequested story', which implies the self-confessional character of the story. It consists of five volumes and covers thirty-six years from 1271 to 1306. In the first three volumes, Lady Nijō is one of the court women and faces heartbreak and pain from love affairs and the loss of those who are dear to her. In volumes four and five, Lady Nijō becomes a Buddhist nun and travels extensively to holy places, following the example of the twelfth century poet-priest, Saigyō. The narrative ends in the year 1306.

Lady Nijō was born in 1258 into a family well known for its excellence in poetry.³ Her father, Masatada, served the Emperor Go-Saga and later

the Emperor GoFukakusa. Nijō's mother, Sukedai, was also of a noble family and had served the Emperor GoFukakusa. Sukedai died when Nijō was only two years old. From that time on she was brought up in the imperial court. At the age of four she was adopted by GoFukakusa and formally became his concubine at the age of fourteen. About the same time, Nijō indicated in her diary that she had a lover whom she nicknamed Yuki no Akebono (literally, Snow Dawn).⁴ In fact, he is believed to have actually been Saionji Sanekane, who played an extremely important role at court as the mouthpiece (*kanto moshitsugi*) of the regent. Masatada, Nijō's father, died when Nijō was fifteen. His death was a great loss for Nijō in terms of her personal as well as her social life, since there would no longer be a chance for Nijō to obtain a higher position in the court.⁵

When she was eighteen, Nijō became deeply involved with the prelate of Ninnaji Temple, to whom she gave the nickname Ariake no Tsuki (Dawn Moon). Only three years later he died during an epidemic. At the age of twenty-six, Nijō left the court partly because of GoFukakusa's suspicion about the relationship between Nijō and GoFukakusa's half-brother and political antagonist, the emperor Kayeyama, and partly because of the incessant persecution by GoFukakusa's wife, Empress Higashi-Nijoin. Following the example of Saigyō (1112-1190), Nijō set out as a Buddhist nun on travels which lasted for more than fifteen years. She ventured as far as the Sumida River in the East, Zenkoji Temple in the North, Ise Kumano in the South, and Shikoku Itsukushima in the West, making her one of the most extensively traveled persons of the time. During these travels, Nijō encountered GoFukakusa, who had also joined a holy order, and she confessed that she had loved him for many years. GoFukakusa died in 1304 and the last record of Lady Nijō is her attendance at services in 1306 that marked the third anniversary of his death.

In 1940, Lady Nijō's autobiographical account, *Towazugatari*, was accidentally discovered by Yamagishi Tokuhei in the Imperial Household Library. It immediately caught the attention of the literary experts, but its publication was delayed for more than twenty years. The first annotated edition was published in 1966. Since then many scholars have tackled the difficult text and published a considerable number of books and articles.⁶ Some scholars have attempted to date the work. Tsugita Kasumi believes that there are great discrepancies in style between the first three volumes and the latter two and therefore that the two parts were written in two different periods.⁷ Fukuda Hideichi disagrees with this claim and states that the work was written as a consistent structural whole in one particular period.⁸

Because of its unique content, critics, including some experts, have paid most of their attention to surface matters. They have reduced Lady

Nijō to a "flat character," a mere prostitute, and have completely ignored the richness of her character and her writing. Their comments and opinions of *Towazugatari* have tended to be impressionistic and emotional. S. Nakamura, for example, refers to the work as "a record of a lustful woman in the declining court society."⁹ Enchi Fumiko, a female writer, compares the work with the *Tale of Genji* and also concludes that Lady Nijō's life is the manifestation of the decline of aristocratic tradition. Enchi, without commenting on much of the second half of the work, nor giving any literary value to *Towazugatari*, frowns on Lady Nijō's life at court and her 'passive attitude' towards life. Lady Nijō's vivid descriptions of her love affairs, as well as the detailed descriptions of her experiences, such as giving birth, are unknown in the works of other court ladies. This might have given the impression that the work is extraordinary and unconventional in a rather negative sense.¹⁰

One of the most studied topics is the identification of the characters Lady Nijō calls 'Yuki no Akebono' and 'Ariake no tsuki'. These two figures are believed to be Saionji Sanekane, a grandson of an influential statesman, and Prince Shōjō, a high ranking Buddhist priest who was the half brother of the ex-emperor, GoFukakusa. Miyauchi Sanjirō, however, claims that Ariake was Hōjo, a prelate of the Ninnaji, who was very close to GoFukakusa.¹¹ Miyauchi also states that Nijō was the real mother of Yūgi-in, who is often mentioned in volumes four and five. His arguments, which gave special attention to the use of honorifics, are convincing; but he did not develop them enough before his death. If what Miyauchi believed is correct, interpretations of the work, especially the second half, will be considerably changed.

The second half of the book is a neglected area of study. Some experts believe that Nijō actually did not travel as extensively as she wrote in the work. Fukuda, Hideichi and others believe that Nijō did not go to Zenkōji or Ashizuri-misaki peninsula for pilgrimages. However, few question why Nijō included these places in her work.¹² This issue relates to the discussion of whether *Towazugatari* is a natural diary or an art diary. Fukuda discusses the issue and emphasizes that the *Towazugatari* is an art diary. Others regard it as a natural diary.¹³

Fukuda presents the issue of the influence of the *Tale of Genji* on *Towazugatari*. Karen Brazell also draws our attention to this point and gives a few examples of how skillfully Nijō employed the technique of allusion used in the *Tale of Genji* as well as syntactic ambiguities. Fukuda and Brazell, however, do not present a detailed study of this issue.¹⁴

Most of the fiction of the Kamakura period are so-called *giko monogatari* (pseudo-classical tales), where the modifying work 'gi' (pseudo) immediately signifies the negative aspect of this genre. Although only ten *monogatari* survived in whole or part, the *Fūyō wakashū* (Wind

and Leaves Collection) (1271) tells us that there were nearly one hundred *monogatari* circulated in the Kamakura period.¹⁵ Quantitatively, therefore, *monogatari* in that period were not in short supply. Qualitatively, they are often not highly regarded due to the fact that they are frequently mere imitations of earlier works of the Heian *monogatari*, especially the *Tale of Genji* which was the most important *monogatari* in the literary history of Japan. They could neither surpass the Heian *monogatari* nor depart from the framework of the earlier *monogatari* literature.

One also finds such imitation in those works known as *nikki* (diaries). It is interesting to note that Bashō considers the *Izayoi nikki* (The Diary of the Waning Moon) by Abutsu ni (1233?-1283?) the last creative work worth mentioning. Bashō, in his *Oi no kobumi* (Manuscript in My Knapsack) (1688) writes that the *Izayoi nikki* is the last truly creative *nikki*, and the rest are mere imitations of earlier *nikki*. Bashō's comment was limited to the works of travel diaries. However, even if we include diaries of court society, such as *Ben no Naishi nikki* (The Diary of Lady Ben, date and authorship unknown) and the *Nakatsukasa no naishi nikki* (The Diary of Lady Nakatsukasa) (1292?), the general evaluation of *nikki* in the Kamakura period is more or less the same as Bashō's comment. Nagazumi, for example, considers *nikki* one of the main streams of medieval literature in Japan. Nagazumi, however, admits that except for the *Izayoi nikki*, most of the diaries written in the Kamakura period make dull reading and display neither creativity nor uniqueness.¹⁶

Among all these prose works of the Kamakura period, which are imitative and sterile, the *Towazugatari* exhibits its excellence. The significance of this work lies in the fact that although *Towazugatari* basically conforms to the tradition of Heian court literature, it presents the positive heritage of earlier literary works, and strikingly new aspects, which are only found in *Towazugatari*. Most significantly, however, the author's narrative skill, careful structure and technique make *Towazugatari* extremely interesting to read.

Towazugatari is usually categorized under the genre of *nikki* (diaries). *Nikki*, however, should be divided into two types. One is what Miner calls 'natural diaries'. These are day-to-day jottings of events as they more-or-less actually occurred. One of the best examples of this type is the travel diary, *Nittō-guhō-junrei-kōki* (Travel Diary of Pilgrim to China), written by a Buddhist priest, Ennin (Jikaku Daishi) (793-864). With extremely observant eyes, Ennin described in detail the social customs and events he encountered. Ennin, however, did not include any personal feelings in his travel diary.¹⁷

The other type is the 'art diary', which is "at once related to fact and freed by art." It is extremely important to discriminate 'art diaries' from

'natural diaries'. Unlike 'natural diaries', literary aspects must be taken into consideration, with *tsukuri monogatari* (a narrative tale), or other fictional literary works. This is essential because art diaries share common features with *tsukuri monogatari* much more than with the 'natural diary'. The basic element which distinguishes a Japanese art diary is that the natural diary records facts while the art diary presents an artistic reconstruction of fact participating in or paralleling fiction. Another essential aspect of an art diary is that it contains poems which "heighten the sense of fiction, the air of art, the presumption of literature." Furthermore, art diaries do not employ the daily entry as a formal device.¹⁸

Towazugatari satisfies each of these three requirements: literary elements, frequent use of poems, and lack of daily entries. Therefore, *Towazugatari* qualifies itself as an art diary. Nijō's conscious arrangement of structure, skillful application of literary techniques to produce tension and depth, and well-versed narratives, suggest the literary excellence of *Towazugatari* as an art diary. Additional evidence that *Towazugatari* is an art diary, rather than a natural diary, can be observed from the following sentences which indicate her motive for writing this work:

. . . mi no arisama o hitori omoi itaru mo akazu
oobehaberu. . . kayō no itazuragoto o tsuzuke oki haberi
koso.¹⁹

"I feel unsatiated with pondering about my experience in this life all on my own . . . therefore I kept writing this useless account."²⁰ This is almost identical to the well-known passages on the art of *monogatari* and the art diary, both of which are of a fictional character. In *Tosa nikki* (Tosa Diary) (935), the first art diary extant, the author, Ki no Tsurayuki, writes on the ninth day of the second month:

. . . I do not set down these words, nor did I compose the poem, out of mere love of writing. Surely both in China and Japan art is that which is created when we are unable to suppress our feelings.²¹

This indicates that art is created as a result of a spontaneous outpouring of strong feelings on a specific subject.

This passage from the *Tale of Genji* supports Tsurayuki's comment on the art of the novel:

. . . these diaries and romances which . . . whether for good or ill - not only what he has passed through himself, but even

events which he has only witnessed or been told of - has moved him to an emotion so passionate that he can no longer keep it shut up in his heart Again and again something in his own life or in that around him will seem to the writer so important that he cannot bear to let it pass into oblivion.²²

Nijō, in like fashion, wrote down *Towazugatari* because she could no longer keep the story to herself. When doing so, however, Nijō exercised her literary skills to elevate the work as an 'art diary' from the commonplace to the excellent.

Among literary works of the Kamakura period, there are numerous works extant in which we can detect influences of Heian court literature. All works which belong to the genre of *giko monogatari* show painstaking attempts to follow the grand achievement of the *Tale of Genji*. *Nikki* also present the authors' conscious efforts to continue in the tradition of art diaries such as the *Izumi shikibu nikki* (Diary of Izumi shikibu) (1004), and the *Kagerō nikki* (Gossamer Diary) (974?). Almost all of them, however, failed to demonstrate that their works have anything more to offer than mere formalism. They appear to be mere imitations of the earlier works.

Like other works of Kamakura court literature, while *Towazugatari* goes beyond mere imitation, it still basically belongs to the tradition of Heian court literature. On a superficial level, *Towazugatari* shows nothing particularly new. Nijō exploits the 'art diary' form, an obvious legacy of diary literature whose origin goes back to the *Tosa nikki* of the tenth century. *Towazugatari* also confines its subject matter to love affairs within the aristocratic society in the first three volumes, and the journey in the last two, which are both conventional subjects of Heian court art diaries. Moreover, *Towazugatari* demonstrates two dominant features of Heian art diaries: "a normative role for poetry" and "an awareness of time."²³ The first is supported by the large number of poems; Nijō uses 169 poems "after prose has said all it can, or all that it is decent for it to attempt."²⁴ The second feature becomes clear with innumerable passages such as: "This year, having turned eighteen, I felt that my year had passed as quickly as a racing horse glimpsed through a crack, as irrevocable as water rushing over rapids."²⁵ A sentence such as ". . . so distraught that I was 'unaware of the passing of spring',"²⁶ paradoxically reveals Nijō's extreme awareness of the passing of time.

But *Towazugatari* offers more than a superficial resemblance to earlier literary works. Nijō was the first author to successfully combine the two distinct subject matters of conventional art diaries without losing unity and coherence. This combination of love affairs within court society and a journey with a sincere religious motivation results in a uniquely comingled

air of refined romanticism and a sense of dignity. Unlike Abutsuni, who shows only the poetic formalism associated with the old court aristocracy, Nijō uses poetry as a creative vehicle. One of the techniques frequently employed by Nijō is the use of Buddhist allusions in poems. This technique is similar to that known as *honkadōri* (allusive variation). It should be distinguished, however, from conventional *honkadōri*. These allusions are cast by words, situations, or concepts within the poem; but rather than referring to other famous poems, Nijō's poems allude to texts and sutras, or concepts, principles, and knowledge which are specifically Buddhist in nature.

For instance, Nijō composes the following poem to mark the forty-ninth day after Ariake's death:

Tsuki o matsu Akatsuki made no Harukasa ni Ima iru hi no Kage zo kanashiki ²⁷	The long awaited moon Shall rise on that distant dawn, Now memories of the sun Just set bring grief. ²⁸
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The above is a seemingly conventional elegy, or love poem. However, 'matsu akatsuki' does not only refer to Nijō's waiting for the dawn, or for the time to meet Ariake again. It also refers to the Buddhist belief of Miroku (the Bodhisattva Maitreya). Miroku was believed to be the future Buddha who would descend from Tusita heaven to save the human race, specifically at dawn, 5670 million years after Buddha's death.²⁹ The word 'harukasa' (far away both in time and distance) also has multiple meanings. Nijō is sad because she must wait 'for a long time' to meet Ariake who is 'far away' from Nijō. She is impatient because the night is dark, and she longs for the moon. However, Nijō also refers to 'the long-waiting' time when she, Ariake and possibly all humans will be saved by Miroku.

Honkadōri is appreciated only when a poet and his contemporaries share a knowledge of earlier literary tradition. In a similar manner, allusions to Buddhist themes are fully understood and welcomed only through a considerable amount of common knowledge. Based on the traditional technique of *honkadōri*, Nijō applies the same idea to the Buddhist themes. By extensive use of Buddhism allusions in the poems, Nijō succeeds in giving them a rich texture, complexity of imagination, and air of reverence.

In *Towazugatari*, Nijō shows special interest in the concept of salvation in *jōdo* (the Pure Land). There are extensive references in the text to Buddhist concepts and practices pertaining to rebirth in *jōdo*. Nijō especially exhibits a strong concern with the manner in which her close

relatives and friends die. For example, when Emperor GoSaga had taken a turn for the worse, the court people summoned the head priest of the Ojō Temple to instruct him and offer prayers. She says, "But a love of worldly things stayed his heart and blocked the road to repentance. He died . . . without any sign that his heart had been changed by these teachings."³⁰

Nijō expresses deep concern and worry over Ariake's life in the transcendental world. When Ariake, the prelate and Nijō's lover, anticipates death, he shows "futile attachment to this world" which distressed her. Nijō pleads with Ariake to pray that they could be born together in paradise. Ariake did not. After Ariake's death Nijō found herself lamenting "our sin -- a sin so deep that Ariake would not pray to be reborn in paradise."³¹

This attitude immediately reminds us of the teaching indicated in *Ōjōyōshū*, written by Genshin (942-1017) in 985, who emphasized the importance of one's manner at the moment of death. However, aristocrats in the Heian period who had been greatly influenced by the teaching of *jōdo* through Genshin's *Ōjōyōshū* did not indicate a particular interest in this concept. Then, what was the cause of Nijō's pursuit?

One possible answer to this is that Nijō had a different view of death from the one held by aristocrats in the Heian period. This difference changed Nijō's image of the Pure Land as well as her general understanding of the teaching of *jōdo*. Besides her different conception of death, we find a strong implication that her belief in *goryō* (spirits of the dead) influenced Nijō a great deal. *Rinjū* (the moment of death) is the crucial moment in the belief in *goryō*, as in the case of the teaching in *Ōjōyōshū*. Nijō's yearning to be reborn in *jōdo* and her keen interest in the ultimate moment which assures this rebirth, reveals a concern with the transcendental principle in the teaching of *jōdo*, which was reinforced by the conventional aristocrats' belief in *goryō*.

Nijō's view on death was one of the most fundamental influences on her interpretation of life; it further enhanced Nijō's desire to seek salvation in the Pure Land. Along with this personal view of 'death', the belief in *goryō*, which grew stronger as the Heian moved into the Kamakura period, reinforced Nijō's extraordinary interest in the manner in which her close relatives and friends died.

A fundamental difference between Nijō's attitude towards death and the one commonly held by the Heian aristocrats is that, while Nijō perceived death as a merciless end to life in *shigan* (this world) and as the separation between *shigan* from *higan* (the other world), court nobles of the mid-Heian period, who lived in the midst of great prosperity, regarded death as something aesthetic. It is a well known observation that the Heian aristocrats saw their "*momento mori* in live, poignant images like the

scattering of blossoms or the yellowing of autumn leaves, which served to remind them that all beautiful things must soon pass away."³²

A similar attitude can be seen in the poem composed by Ariwara no Narihira (825-880) when he was weak with illness:

Tsui ni yuku	Though formerly I heard
Michi to wa kanete	About the road that all must travel
Kikishikado	At the inevitable end,
Kinō kyō to wa	I never thought, or felt, today
Omowazarishi o ³³	Would bring that far tomorrow. ³⁴

Here, Narihira certainly shows a feeble grief over approaching death. We, however, sense that the concept of death has been something alien to him; something that Narihira never contemplated. There is no intense awareness of the tragedy of the phenomenal world, nor fear of death.

The prevailing impression of sadness in works of the mid-Heian period mainly comes from references to the fleeting world described in natural images such as fading blossoms and falling leaves. In the midst of prosperity, aristocrats found no urgent need to refuse this world or embrace the next. Unlike the mid-Heian aristocracy, Nijō confronted the idea of 'death'. Instead of making sentimental poems about the scattering of flowers, Nijō pursued the significance of 'death' in 'this' fleeting world. One glance at Nijō's personal history makes us realize that she was destined to experience the deaths of people to whom she was very close. Nijō lost her mother when she was only two years old. Nijō's father, who lavished on her the "love due three thousand" left Nijō when she was fifteen. Nijō writes, "Nothing I could ever do would erase the grief of this parting. My grief extended even to parting from his mortal remains, but that painful moment was unavoidable."³⁵

Nijō's first son by the Emperor GoFukakusa also died. She laments, in the original text, ". . . zengo sōi no wakare, aibetsu-riku no kanashimi, tada mi hitotsu ni todomaru,"³⁶ which reads, ". . . death in reverse order, separation from the beloved ones: why does such sadness pour on me alone?"³⁷ Not only her close family members, but also one of Nijō's lovers, Ariake, suddenly passed away, leaving Nijō and their two children behind. Nijō was then only twenty years old.

Lady Nijō learned the most fundamental Buddhist concept, *mujō*, through the painful experiences of losing many close to her. Unlike the sentimental and intellectual conception of *mujō* which mid-Heian aristocrats held, Nijō's realization of *mujō* was extremely realistic, even physical. While Lady Nijō lamented these deaths a great deal, she went further than mere sobbing. She questioned death as a special incident

which separates *shigan* where she had to stay, from *higan* which is the transcendental world where she, as a survivor, could not go with deceased people.

As for the second feature of the diary, 'awareness of time', Nijō extends the traditional conception of time to the level of 'transcendental time', which the Heian aristocrats did not perceive. However, Nijō seriously thought about both 'time' in this world and transcendental time, which follows death. Her awareness of time is certainly a heritage from the early diary works. However, *Towazugatari* clearly shows that the author seriously pondered this new aspect: the significance of transcendental time, though she does not reach the conclusion on her thought.

Nijō laments the State of Impermanency which led her to the State of Suffering. She often ponders her grief and pain: "I know that sorrow is inherent in all things but is grief always like this . . . so much anguish?"³⁸ While she believes Buddhist teachings intellectually, her poems show a difficulty in accepting them emotionally:

Yoshi saraba
kore mo nabete no
narai zo to
Omoi nasubeki
Yo no tsurasa ka wa³⁹

Am I to believe
This pain is but the suffering
inherent in all life?⁴⁰

Indeed, Nijō constantly confronts the State of Suffering. Physically, Nijō suffers from an unknown disease which makes her worried. Once, her nose suddenly begins to bleed and everything goes black before her eyes. She expresses her anxiety, "I was helped away, and for the next ten days, seriously ill, afraid to ponder why." Here she wonders what karma has brought her to suffer. However, most of the suffering that Nijō has to experience is emotional rather than physical. Nijō says, "Suffering is the nature of human existence, but I felt as though the myriad sufferings said to exist in a single day had all fallen to my lot."⁴¹

The primal emotional suffering that Nijō experiences is caused by the result of the first state of humans, *mujō*, a loss of loved ones. Nijō is fully aware of death as a special moment which separates 'time in this world' and 'time in the next world.' Her grief is so deep and painful that she even hints of doubt of the existence of the 'next world'. Nijō composes poems such as:

Waga sode no namida no umi yo
Mitsuse-gawa ni
Nagarete kayoe
Kage o da ni min⁴²

Endless flow of tears, stream
into the rivers of that world
And mirror for me there
The crossing of his shade.⁴³

Ukishizumi Mitsuse-gawa ni mo ose araba Mi o sutete mo ya tazaneyukamashi ⁴⁴	Now I'm afloat, now sinking if the streams of the afterworld Hand shoals where we might meet I would hurl my body in to see you. ⁴⁵
--	--

Koishinobu sode no namida ya Oi-gawa ōse arinaba mi o ya sutemashi ⁴⁶	A hidden love and tears Enough to form a river Were there a shoal of meeting I would drown this self of mine. ⁴⁷
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In these poems, we find that Nijō is “on the verge of breaking down completely.” With all her heart, she wished that she could go to the next world where deceased people go. The first and third poems even suggest that Nijō doubts the possibility of going to the ‘shoals of meeting’ in the next world, which means she questions the very existence of the next world. Nijō expresses her agony by saying, “vexed at the ways of this world, I wanted to sink to the river bottom like a bit of debris.”⁴⁸

Nijō’s uniqueness with respect to traditional court literature is also seen in her sophisticated description of human psychology. *Kagerō nikki* is the pioneering work in the exploration of all the subtle psychological nuances and emotions associated with the relationships between men and women. After the *Kagerō nikki*, most of the art diarists tended to focus on psychological descriptions of the relations between men and women. In contrast, *Towazugatari* includes a sensitive description of the psychology of men. Nijō’s skillful presentation of the emotional struggles between GoFukakusa and Ariake portrays the delicate movement of emotions between close friends of the same sex. *Towazugatari* also addresses the psychological tension between court ladies and gentlemen. One example can be found in the account of the concert modeled after one in the *Tale of Genji*. Here, Nijō’s extensive description discloses the intensive interplay between men and women of the court. Thus, Nijō’s sensitivity captures the movement of human emotions and psyches beyond those between men and women in love.⁴⁹

The *Tale of Genji* is one of the most important *monogatari* in the literary history of Japan. A well organized structure, one of the *monogatari* elements from the *Tale of Genji*, influenced and benefited *Towazugatari*. Japanese narratives are often compared to *emakimono* (Japanese horizontal scroll), where each segment should be beautiful in and of itself. Like *emakimono*, Japanese traditional prose tends to be a collection of episodes which can stand as completely independent stories.⁵⁰ This

tradition contains a danger in that without structural integrity, there can be no artistic unity of the whole. *Nikki* is one form that is apt to fall into this trap largely because it can end up as a mere sequence of daily activities. This is particularly true of a long *nikki*.

Towazugatari excels at attaining artistic unity. Conforming to the traditional literary ideal, many episodes are interesting and attractive as independent stories. At the same time, however, because the concatenation of episodes is carefully designed, they each in turn play essential roles in advancing the plot. The juxtaposition of each is so planned as to elicit tension, anticipation, and depth, making the work extremely interesting to read as a whole. Furthermore, these episodes are closely bound by the coherent development of two main themes which unify the work: Nijō's love for GoFukakusa and her search for inner truth. Another device that Nijō employs to achieve cohesiveness is the use of the first person narrative. This serves to prevent the work from disintegrating into a mere series of less-related episodes.

The most ingenious achievement of Nijō, however, is that she transformed a basically non-fictional 'natural diary' into an excellent piece of art. Indeed, Nijō can be considered the first writer to successfully exercise one of the principles of art by Chikamatsu: "art is something which lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal."⁵¹

In order to accomplish this task, Nijō resorts to some inventive literary techniques first developed by Murasaki. One of the most effective of these is 'allusion'.⁵² Nijō's allusion is mainly to the *Tale of Genji*. Such allusions to 'Genji' were used by Nijō's contemporaries, so this in itself was nothing new. For example, in the beginning of the work, one of the most apparent allusive parallels is presented in the relationship between Nijō and GoFukakusa. On the day when Nijō becomes his concubine, GoFukakusa tells her that he raised her from childhood eagerly awaiting this day. The reader is immediately reminded of the parallel relationship in *Tale of Genji*: Genji and Murasaki. This allusion echos back when GoFukakusa confesses that he loved Nijō's mother. The imagery association is thus strengthened.

This association of GoFukakusa and Nijō with Genji and Murasaki leads the reader to associate Ariake with Kashiwagi. This anticipation will be confirmed by the description of Ariake's last days. Ariake's last poem:

Mi wa kakute
Omoi kienan
Keburi dani
Sonata no sora ni
Nabikidaniseba⁵³

Body thus consumed by passion
May the smoke it leaves
Drift through the sky
in your direction.⁵⁴

will be associated with Kashiwagi's last poem:

Yukue naki
Sora no keburu to
narinu to mo
Omou atari o
tachi wa hanareji⁵⁵

Though nought of me remains
save smoke drawn out
across the windless sky,
yet shall I drift thee
unerringly amid the
trackless fields of space.⁵⁶

Furthermore, this allusion is reinforced by the passage describing the mode of Ariake's last letter to Nijō:

“The box contained a letter, but the brush marks looked more like bird tracks than writing. . . .”⁵⁷

The reader will automatically associate this passage with the description of the letter which Kashiwagi wrote to Nyosan:

“His reply looked much as though birds with wet feet had walked over the paper.”⁵⁸

The painful triangular relationship of Nijō, Ariake and GoFukakusa will be easily associated with the one among Nyosan, Kashiwagi and Genji.⁵⁹

Unlike most of the other writers of her age whose use of allusive parallels is rather sporadic and fragmentary, however, Nijō deliberately uses the technique extensively throughout the work in a well organized manner. This solid build-up gives the reader a strong sense of anticipation, suggestion, and sometimes, tension in the course of development of the narrative. The effect is that the resonance evoked by these allusions shortens the distance between reality and fiction. Because the *Tale of Genji* is so well known a *monogatari* that most readers would not miss Nijō's allusions, her consistent, well-organized use of such complex parallelisms has a certain impact; it reinforces the effectiveness of this comingling of the real and unreal.

Nijō employs 'dreams' as a means to strengthen this effect even more. Although inclusion of 'dreams' is another literary convention extensively employed by Murasaki and other earlier writers and poets, it was mainly used for creating sustained imagery. It also enhances the illusionary quality of reality in temporal matters as in Buddhist concept. Besides using 'dreams' in the conventional manner to convey a romantic atmosphere and sense of *mujō*, such as "life is more fleeting than a dream within a dream", Nijō uses 'dreams' to produce a strong anticipation and hint at future events.⁶⁰ For example, one night Nijō has a dream:

I dreamed Akebono gave me a silver hair-oil jar, which he proffered on a cypress wood fan bearing a pine tree design. I had accepted this and concealed it in the bosom of my kimono when I was awakened by the dawn bells.⁶¹

Nijō continues to say that Akebono also had the identical dream. Nijō's skillful use of symbolism in this dream leads readers to anticipate that she may have conceived Akebono's child, which is later confirmed. Nijō constantly uses dreams as prophecies which are always fulfilled in later parts of the work. Nijō, by doing this, transforms dreams as embodiments of the 'unreal' into the unmistakably 'real'. By drawing unreal qualities into undeniable reality, Nijō balances the two extremes and blurs the boundary between the real and unreal.

Nijō absorbed and digested the legacies of earlier literary works. Nurtured by the heritage of literary tradition, she successfully integrates these various literary devices and develops them so as to create a truly unique literary work. Although Nijō builds upon a literary foundation established by her predecessors, she nevertheless presents some distinctive characteristics which cannot be found in earlier court literature.

One of the most striking aspects can be seen in Nijō's broad-perspective approach. Katō Shūichi, in his discussion of the social background to Japanese literature, writes that one peculiarity of Japanese literary history is "the way writers have always been wrapped up with the group to which they belong and their closed-shop attitude towards the other group." This tendency is particularly true in Heian court literature. In the *Makura no sōshi* (The Pillow Book), Sei betrays her contempt of commoners. Michitsuna's mother, in her *Kagerō nikki*, does not even indicate the existence of people other than aristocrats. Even in the celebrated masterpiece of *The Tale of Genji*, there is very little which tells of the lives of people other than aristocrats. This tendency for writers to become integrated into distinct groups continued basically unchanged into the Kamakura period. Lady Nijō, on the other hand, includes characters from a variety of social and professional backgrounds: nuns, prostitutes, dancers, a fan maker, and warriors -- not to mention the people of the court to which she belonged.⁶²

Nijō also exhibits her broad-perspective approach in geographical terms. One glance at a list of place names and the illustrative map of her travels confirms this point. Nijō's travel account spans from as far as Itsukushima in the West, Sumida River in the East, Zenkō-ji in the North, and Futami-no-ura in the South. As I have mentioned in the chapter entitled 'Existing Studies', Fukuda and other scholars claim that Nijō actually did not travel to all the places mentioned in the *Towazugatari*. This point, however, is not relevant from a literary viewpoint. The

important fact is that Nijō selects these places for inclusion in her work. They presumably have some significance for her; enough, at least, to lead her to incorporate them into the work. Indeed, Murasaki, in a famous passage on the concept of *monogatari*, states that the author's experience includes "not only what he has passed through himself, but even events which he has only witnessed or been told of."⁶³

Nijō interweaves such broad perspectives in characters and places to advance her story. This variety serves to further attract the reader's attention and stir one's curiosity throughout the work. This is indeed a unique technical approach for the literature of the time; it breaks out of the 'in-group' mentality of Japanese literature.

Furthermore, Nijō's broad perspective leads her to capture scenes, which earlier writers of court society completely ignored. For example, all of the earlier writers of Heian court society, as well as her contemporaries, circumscribe one of the most dramatic experiences for any woman: child-bearing. Previously, there was no realistic description. At best, earlier authors express practices and events related to child delivery, such as magical prayers for an easy delivery and ceremonies for felicitations. Michitsuna's mother in her diary spends but one short line to indicate Michitsuna's birth. Murasaki, too, in this respect follows the example of Michitsuna's mother. In the beginning of *Murasaki shikibu nikki* (Diary of Lady Murasaki) (1011?), Murasaki beautifully describes the event of the birth of Shoshi (987-1074). In the description, however, Murasaki concentrates on the public side of the affair, and anxiety over the condition of Shoshi. In her diary, Murasaki totally ignores her own experience with child-birth.⁶⁴

On the other hand, Nijō offers realistic portrayals. The following passage is one of four child-birth accounts described in *Towazugatari*. Here, Akebono helps at Nijō's child-birth:

After the lamps were lit I suddenly felt that my time was very near. Yet there was no twanging of bows on this occasion; unaided, I suffered under my gowns until, when the late-night bell tolled, I could stand it no longer and tried to get up. 'I'm not sure, but isn't the woman supposed to be held around the waist?' I clung to him as he pulled me up, and the baby was safely delivered.⁶⁵

Katō writes that the tendency of writers to become integrated into groups has the effect of "limiting material in Japanese literature."⁶⁶ In this respect, too, Nijō breaks out of this 'in-group' mentality by recounting experiences such as child-bearing -- experiences which no one else dared to illustrate.

Nijō shows her sympathetic nature to people regardless of their social or professional background, such as the disfavored fan maker, wretched dancer, forsaken warrior, and the nun who was formerly a prostitute. Nijō also describes her misconduct which causes problems and adversely affects her relatives.⁶⁷

Unlike earlier writers of the court society who tended to idealize people or to exclude unattractive and unfavorable aspects of human beings, Nijō includes every feature of human experiences, both good and bad, that she was moved to express. This elevates *Towazugatari* to the level of a large-scale search for the inner truth of human beings. This is exactly what Murasaki expresses as her own theory of the art of the novel.

Thus, *Towazugatari* is an art diary based on Nijō's life. This work clearly develops from the tradition of Heian court literature. Nijō learned sophisticated techniques to describe human psychology from the *Kagerō nikki* and solid structure from the *Tale of Genji*. But above all, Nijō's literary significance lies in the fact that she skillfully synthesizes these various literary devices and develops her own unique literary work. With her consistent use of allusion and dream imagery, Nijō becomes the first writer who creates an 'art diary' which truly walks the fine line between fiction and non-fiction.

NOTES

¹ See George Sansom, *A History of Japan to 1334* (Stanford, 1958) 178. Also, see Ivan Morris, *A World of Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (Dallas, Pa., 1975); William R. LaFleur, "Japan", *Death and Eastern Thought* edit. Frederick H. Holck, (Nashville and New York, 1974), 233; Barbara Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of National Literature." *Japan in Muromachi Age*, eds. John W. Hall and Takashi Toyoda (Berkeley, 1977) 282. Also see, Edward Putzar, *Japanese Literature: A Historical Outline* (Tucson, Arizona, 1973) 70.

² Shūichi Katō, *A History of Japanese Literature*, trans. David Chibbett, (Tokyo, 1979) 240.

³ Genealogical as well as historical studies reveal that the *Towazugatari* is basically in accordance with historical facts. See Kosuke Tamai, *Towazugatari Kenkyū taisei* (Tokyo, 1969) 607-616, Iwao Nakada, *Towazugatari senshaku* (Tokyo, 1966) 21-24. For a discussion of the relationship between the *Towazugatari* and the *Masu kagami* (The Clear Mirror) (1333?), see I. Nakada, 54-56.

⁴ Miyauchi disagrees with this interpretation. See Sanjirō Miyauchi, "Towazugatari no sakusha to 'Ariake no tsuki': Towazugatari isetsu," *Kokugo to kokubungaku* 3 (1976) 38-54.

⁵ George Sansom, 479-484; William McCullough, "Japanese Marriage Institutions in the Heian Period," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967) 103-167.

⁶ *Chūsei Bungaku Kenkyū Nyūmon*, "Nihon Bungaku Zenshi" 3, Chūsei, 265-268 (ed. Teiji Ichiko); Tokyo Daigaku Chūsei Bungaku Kenkyūdai, 269; Shin'ichirō Nakamura, "Towazugatari ni yoru ren'ai ron", *Bungaku* 1.35 (1967)

48; Hajime M. Mizuhara, "Towazugatari o yomu: Tsuioku to yūgimon'in" 30; Kasumi Tsugita, "Ai to Genjitsu" 90-96.

⁷ Kasumi Tsugita, "Towazugatari honbunkō", *Kokugo to kokubungaku*, 1 (1962) 37-51.

⁸ Fukuda Hideichi "Towazugatari no seiritsu sonota ni kansuru shiron" *Kokugo to kokubungaku*, 7 (1972) 28-29. In his article, Fukuda mentions that Yasushi Matsumoto and Tokujirō Tomikura shared his view on this point.

⁹ See Shin'ichirō Nakamura in *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to Kanshō*, 7 (1968) 186-189; Yasushi Matsumoto and Shōichi Nagano, "Towazugatari"; Teiji Ichiko, *Chūsei bungaku kenkyū myūmon* (Tokyo, 1965) 269.

¹⁰ Fumiko Enchi, "Towazugatari ni yosete", *Asahi Shinbun*, 23 March 1967, evening edition, 9 col. 1. Hiroko Takenishi, a female critic-writer, is caught by the same realistic description of the births. She evaluates such descriptions as positive, not only because the material is unconventional, but also because of how it is treated. Takenishi says the detailed description of such matters a giving birth shows Lady Nijō's consciousness of the existence of human beings in relation to other people. Hiroko Takenishi, "Towazugatari to Ōchō Nikki", *Bungaku*, Jan. 1967, vol. 35, 49-57.

¹¹ See S. Miyauchi, "Towazugatari no sakusha to 'Ariake no tsuki'".

¹² See Hideichi Fukuda, "'Towazugatari' no Kyokō ni tsuite." in *Chūsei Bungaku no Kenkyū*, ed. Minoru Akiyama (Tokyo, 1972), 122-127. Matsumoto claims that the course of travels in the *Towazugatari* is similar to that of Ippen (1239-1289), rather than that of Saigyō's. Matsumoto also discusses possible reasons why Lady Nijō had included trips to Ashirzunijori-misaki and Zenkōji. See Yasushi Matsumoto, "GoFukakusain Nijō *Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, 24.10 Aug. 79, 148. Miyauchi, on the other hand finds a significant similarity between the course Nijō took and those in *Kaidōki* (1223?) and *Tōkankikō* (1242?), neither of whose authorship is known, the *Izayoi nikki* (1280) by Abutsuni (?-1283). Miyauchi proposes to take a serious look at the above mentioned travel diaries to understand the motivation for Nijō to fabricate part of the course of her trip. See *Kokugo to Kokubungaku*, March 1976, especially 78-80.

¹³ Earl Miner, *Japanese Poetic Diaries* (Berkeley, 1976) 10. Hideichi Fukuda, "Towazugatari no Kyokō ni tsuite" in *Chūsei Bungaku no kenkyū* ed. Minoru Akiyama (Tokyo, 1972), 115-140.

¹⁴ See Fukuda "Genji monogatari to kōdai bungaku" *Chūsei bungaku e no eikyō; Kokubungaku: Kaishaku to kanshō* 5 (1968) 110-114. Karen Brazell, "Towazugatari: Autobiography of a Kamakura Court Lady" *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 31 (1971), 228-229. Also in the introduction of *The Confessions of Lady Nijō*, (Stanford, 1973) especially, xxiii - xxiv.

¹⁵ Putzar, 93.

¹⁶ Bashō, *Oi no Kobumi*, in *Nihon Koten bungaku taikai*, 46, 53. Yasuaki Nagazumi, *Chūsei bungaku no tenbō* (Tokyo, 1966).

¹⁷ Earl Miner, *Japanese Poetic Diaries* (Berkeley, 1976), 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 10, 8, 9.

¹⁹ Iwao Nakada, ed. *Towazugatari zenshaku* (Tokyo, 1966), 418.

²⁰ If it is established that Nijō herself named the title as "Towazugatari", it gives us more significance on this point. Brazell translated the *Towazugatari* as "The Confession of Lady Nijō" which might be a little misleading because of the strong connotation of 'admitting sins' in a Christian sense. However, in her introduction to her translation of the work, Brazell provides an explanation on the meaning of the title. She says: ". . . means literally 'unrequested tale.' In the

Kamakura period the phrase also had the connotation of pouring forth something you can no longer keep to yourself." (xxvii) This clearly tells us the self-confessional character of the work.

²¹ Miner, "The Tosa Diary" in *Japanese Poetic Diaries*, 87.

²² Arthur Waley, trans. *The Tale of Genji* (New York, 1960), 501-502.

²³ Miner, 30, 19.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁵ Brazell, *The Confessions of Lady Nijō*, 67.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁷ Nakada, *Towazugatari zenshaku*, 412.

²⁸ Brazell, 153.

²⁹ Ichirō Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*, ed. Joseph M. Kitagawa, et al. (Chicago, 1968), 242.

³⁰ Brazell, 17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 182, 148, 152.

³² Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (Dallas, Pa, 1979), 123.

³³ Nobutsuna Sasaki, ed., *Kokin waka shū* (Tokyo, 1958), 172. (Vol. 16, poem 861).

³⁴ Robert Brower and E. Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford, Ca, 1961), 203.

³⁵ Brazell, 25, 27.

³⁶ I. Nakada, 146.

³⁷ Translation by author.

³⁸ Brazell, 104.

³⁹ I. Nakada, 282.

⁴⁰ Brazell, 105.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 91, 52.

⁴² Nakada, 79.

⁴³ Brazell, 28.

⁴⁴ Nakada, 405.

⁴⁵ Brazell, 150.

⁴⁶ Nakada, 424.

⁴⁷ Brazell, 157.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 151, 157.

⁴⁹ Brazell, 122, 127, 130, 96-101.

⁵⁰ See Donald Keene, *Japanese Literature: An Introduction for Western Readers* (New York, 1955).

⁵¹ Ryūsaku Tsunode, "On Realism in Art," in *Source of Japanese Tradition* (New York, 1958), 439.

⁵² I. Morris, 275-298.

⁵³ Nakada, 402.

⁵⁴ Brazell, 149;

⁵⁵ Tokuhei Yamagishi, ed., *Genji Monogatari* (4) (Tokyo, 1962), 17.

⁵⁶ Waley, *The Tale of Genji*, 679.

⁵⁷ Brazell, 151.

⁵⁸ Waley, 681.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 679-692.

⁶⁰ I. Morris, 275-298, Brazell, 149.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶² Shūichi Katō, *A History of Japanese Literature*, trans. David Chibbett (Tokyo, 1979), 14, 16.

⁶³ Herbert Plutschow and Hideichi Fukuda, *Nihon kikō bungaku binran* (Tokyo, 1975), 69-75; A. Waley, 501.

⁶⁴ Nobutsuna Sasaki, *Kagerō nikki* (Tokyo, 1958), 49. Jingorō Usuda, *Murasaki shikibu nikki* (Tokyo, 1957).

⁶⁵ Brazell, 49-50.

⁶⁶ S. Kato, 16.

⁶⁷ Brazell, 68-74.