with society in various ways" (3). The content of this textbook clearly shows that the authors have succeeded in achieving that goal.

How Dark Is My Flower: Yosano Akiko and the Invention of Romantic Love

By **Leith Morton**. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2023. x, 403 pp. $44.95.

Reviewed by
Marianne Tarcov

This book argues that Yosano Akiko's (1878–1942) poetry and that of her circle, the *Myōjō* (Morning star) coterie, contributed to the rise of the modern concept of romantic love in Japan during the early twentieth century. In the introduction, Leith Morton delineates a theoretical foundation for his argument based on Peter Verdonk, Jonathan Culler, and other studies of poetry and poetics, suggesting a complex, multifaceted dynamic between poetry on the one hand and society on the other. Morton makes the case that poetry is not a mere symptom or evidence of historical trends in Japan; rather, it is an active participant. As such, Akiko (Morton follows Japanese conventions and refers to the poet by her given name) does not merely reflect the twentieth-century rise of romantic love in her writing; she actively contributes to it.

In the first chapter, Morton then traces the contested discussions of romantic love in a general-interest periodical called *The Sun* between the years 1895–1905. Ranging from philosophical meditations to fiction and poetry, the material in *The Sun* represents a diverse series of views on romantic love, and there is little in the way of consensus. This lack of consensus points to the uneven, dynamic process by which Western–inspired notions of romantic love were translated and interpreted in Japan.

Chapter two traces the development of romantic love in a women's magazine, *Jogaku zasshi* (Woman's magazine), and it also broadens the discussion to include significant works of Meiji–period fiction by such authors as Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935), Higuchi Ichiyō (1872–1896), and Mori Ōgai (1862–1922). Morton shows how romantic love was

perceived as foundational to the Meiji state because of its connection to marriage and the family unit, on the one hand. On the other hand, romantic love was also perceived as potentially subversive because of its connection to the erotic and the individual self, often in oppositional relation to social norms and conventions. Morton shows how Christian notions of sacredness and spirituality, as well as modern biological science, also shaped the debates in the pages of the *Woman's Magazine* and beyond.

Chapter three turns to the work of Yosano Akiko and describes the complex interplay between literary romanticism and modernism at play therein. Morton examines the *Myōjō* poets including Akiko herself, as well as her husband Yosano Tekkan and their friend Yamakawa Tomiko, describing what is "generally called *Myōjō* romanticism" in their poetry (88). In Morton's analysis, *Myōjō* romanticism was foundational to what we think of today as modern Japanese literature, and it performed this function largely through its treatment of romantic love. In other words, for Morton, to be modern in Japanese literature is to write about love in a certain way, with potentially explosive ramifications for the portrayal of women, gender, and sexuality.

Chapter four pursues further the connection between Akiko's work and what it means to be modern with particular reference to her debut collection *Tangled Hair* from 1901. Using the ideas of Harold Bloom, Morton argues that Akiko creatively misreads her influences, both from the West and from the waka tradition, to birth a new strain of romanticist modernism in Japan with this influential book of verse. Morton's account of the different scholarly interpretations of the famous opening poem in *Tangled Hair* is particularly noteworthy. He shows how a single short poem can have a rich interpretive history, with significant implications for his subsequent discussion of the canonicity of Akiko's work in chapter ten.

Chapter five enriches the discussion of *Tangled Hair* by introducing the triangular poetic exchange among Akiko, her husband, and Yamakawa Tomiko. Morton makes the point that this three-way exchange is in fact partially obscured by the canonical narrative found in *Tangled Hair* (itself exhaustively edited by both Akiko and her husband). The full picture only becomes evident upon reading the three poets' works as published in magazines and journals, before they were compiled into books. Drawing on Earl Miner and other thinkers, Morton argues for the "relationality" of these poems, recasting images of the lone genius poet in the light of interpersonal connections and intertextuality.

Chapter six zeros in on a particular exchange among the three poets

that took place between July and November 1900, primarily in the pages of *Myōjō* and another journal called *Kansai Literature*. Morton shows how both Akiko and Tomiko felt passionate love for Tekkan, who returned the love of both women. Morton uses the biographical interpretation of the three poets' work to highlight the literary, highly troped romantic narrative they create together, a quintessentially modern tale of love, friendship, and rivalry. In the following chapter, Morton shows how this melodrama culminates on a night in November, with Akiko and Tomiko spending the night in one room of an inn in the Kyoto area and Tekkan in the room next door. Morton relates how Tomiko tells her two compatriots that she will enter an arranged marriage, thereby ending their passionate exchange.

In chapter seven, Morton offers a close reading of the White Lily chapter of *Tangled Hair*, titled after the flower the three poets associate with Tomiko, her symbol in their rich imagistic tapestry. Once again, Morton uncovers what is obscured by the book publication of *Tangled Hair* and looks at the poems in their original contexts in magazines and journals, especially *Myōjō*. In pieces that were not included in *Tangled Hair*, Morton finds an even deeper layer of complexity in the romantic melodrama narrated in chapter six, uncovering the passionate mutual affection between Akiko and Tomiko. In her poems, Akiko uses the white lily's tragic plight to comment on the subversive nature of modern romantic love, caught as it is in the constraints of social convention.

Chapter eight returns to the question of literary modernism and what it means to be modern, shifting the discussion to Akiko's use of the topography of Kansai (an area in western Japan) in her work. Akiko was native to the region, and so Morton argues that it is a site of remembrance and nostalgia for her. Morton shows how Akiko avails herself of classic imagery of Kyoto, often using the notion of modern romantic love, to reinvent the traditional canon and introduce something new, innovative, and modern to the world of Japanese poetry.

Chapter nine shifts to later in Akiko's career, examining her poetry on childbirth, particularly in her collection *Seigaiha* (Blue ocean waves) from 1912. Morton argues that Akiko's vivid evocations of the pain and suffering of giving birth contribute to the rise of literary naturalism and show a shift away from the style of *Myōjō* romanticism. He shows how her frank portrayals of this taboo subject constitute a challenge to the status quo and help redefine the female subject in imperial Japan. He links the childbirth poems to a constellation of works Akiko produced about her husband's trip to Europe, on which, after a period of separation, she joined

him. Morton shows howAkiko's European encounter hails the expression of a modern Japanese feminine subject in poetry on a world stage.

Chapter ten investigates the scholarly reception of *Tangled Hair* and its invention as part of the Japanese literary canon. Morton traces the book's reception from initial reactions that focused on the scandal of its frank depictions of sexuality, to subsequent responses that highlighted its difficulty and obscurity. He shows how Akiko's own re-editing of *Tangled Hair* simplified these difficult poems for a generation of readers in the 1930s. Eventually, he shows how scholars revert to the original edition and produce a voluminous body of research dedicated to decoding it. Morton also shows how contemporary poet Tawara Machi reinvents the classic work with a colloquial translation in 1998. Morton raises questions like: what does it mean to be canonized? What makes a particular work canonical, and what is gained and lost by the text in that process?

The closing reflections turn to a 1918 collection called *Myōjō shō* (*Myōjō* collection), a self-compiled anthology of Akiko's poems from her *Myōjō* era. Morton shows how the poet retrospectively positions *Myōjō* romanticism as the forerunner of literary modernity. He cites a quote from Wada Hirofumi (which appeared previously in the book) linking the *Myōjō* style to romantic love and to modernity itself: "By liberating romantic love and carnal desire, fin de siècle and early twentieth-century [Japanese] romanticism created the interior face of modernity" (299). Morton weaves in his prior discussion of the canonicity of *Tangled Hair* by bringing in Baba Akiko and other scholars to comment on the enduring impact of Akiko's work.

Morton makes numerous exciting contributions to the study of Japanese literature. Most importantly, he links the extensive body of scholarship by such thinkers as Saeki Junko and Mark Jones about the invention of the modern concept of romantic love in Japan to sensitive, insightful close readings of Yosano Akiko's poetry. In so doing, he makes a powerful argument for the social and political import of Akiko's poetry, particularly *Tangled Hair*. Many readers of Japanese literature are already familiar with *Tangled Hair* as a bold, taboo-busting portrayal of woman's sexuality, but this study puts the famous volume in a new light: Morton describes *Tangled Hair* as one of the fundamental building blocks of Meiji Japanese modernity, intrinsic to notions of self, interiority, and of course, romantic love.

Another most welcome contribution is Morton's focus on magazines and journals. One insight contained in *How Dark Is My Flower* is that the

study of literature can only go so far when it restricts itself to the canonical version of texts found in books, and that the study of journals and magazines is key. The poetic narrative of love, rivalry, and mutual respect among Akiko, Tomiko, and Tekkan that Morton excavates is enthralling to read, and it is really only accessible thanks to Morton's attentive magazine scholarship. It would be interesting for future scholars to put this book in dialogue with the burgeoning field of magazine studies, discussed in *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research* (edited by David Abrahamson and Marcia R. Prior-Miller; Routledge, 2015). How does the study of journals and magazines enrich Japanese literary studies?

Though accessible and clear in style, *How Dark Is My Flower* does presuppose a certain familiarity with Akiko's work and life and with Japanese literature more generally, making it perhaps a little advanced for most undergraduate classrooms. It will be of great interest to scholars and graduate students in Japanese literary studies, particularly those who work on modern poetry, still an understudied area.

***The Comic Storytelling of Western Japan: Satire and Social Mobility in Kamigata Rakugo*.**

By **Matthew W. Shores**. Cambridge, U. K.: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 261 pp.

Reviewed by
Esra-Gökçe Şahin

Matthew W. Shores's *The Comic Storytelling of Western Japan: Satire and Social Mobility in Kamigata Rakugo* provides an in-depth view of one of Japan's most prominent stage crafts by providing a historical trajectory of the development of the genre. *Rakugo* is one of Japan's major verbal arts, which had developed in two separate geographical centers—Tokyo and Osaka. Mostly for political reasons, Edo *rakugo*, which originates in Tokyo, has gained more popularity over the years and had been researched more often. In that regard, Shores's research deserves particular attention for tracing the development of the Kamigata tradition that has become identified with the urban traditions of Osaka.