THE HERITAGE OF SYMBOLISM:  
THE “AESTHETIC” STYLE OF KITAHARA HAKUSHÛ 
AND MURAYAMA KAITA

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KAICHÔON (THE SOUND OF THE TIDE), THE PAN NO KAI (PAN SOCIETY), 
AND JASHÛMON (HERETICAL FAITH)

The Japanese encounter with late nineteenth-century French poetry 
through introductory surveys and translations by Ueda Bin (1874–1916) 
had a profound impact on Japanese poetics. Perhaps the most influential 
of his work was the collection Kaichôon (The Sound of the Tide, 1905).¹ 
Although it contained translations of poems as diverse as Sappho and 
Shakespeare, over half of Kaichoôn consisted of translations of French 
and Belgian poets, especially writers directly associated with symbolism 
or retroactively claimed by its adherents as progenitors of the school.²

¹ Ueda Bin, Kaichôon, ed. Kenmochi Takchiko, Kobori Keichirô, Mori Ryû and 
Yasuda Yasuo, Meiji Taisô yaku shishû, Nihon kindai bungaku taisei 52 (Tokyo: 
² Kaichoôn includes a number of works important in the development of 
European symbolism, such as “Paraboles,” “Chanson d’automne,” and “Mon 
rêve familial” by Paul Verlaine (1844–1896) and “Soupir” by Stéphane Mallarmé 
(1842–1898), but it also includes the work of other authors associated with the 
symbolist school, such as the Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren (1855–1916), the 
French poets Henri de Régnier (1864–1936) and Albert Samain (1858–1900), and 
the Greek-born poet Jean Moréas (1856–1910). Although literary historians often 
speak of symbolism as a movement with clear founders and adherents, in reality, 
it is a broad concept that has been retroactively constructed and reconstructed 
throughout literary history. Kenneth Cornell’s survey of French literary 
magazines and manifestos of the late nineteenth century suggests that even as the 
term gained currency in the mid-1880s, there was little writing that was 
recognizably identifiable as “symbolist,” partly because the authors using the 
term at this early date wrote more criticism than poetry; as a result, they produced 
few practical examples to illustrate what the “symbolist” style actually was. 
Kenneth Cornell, The Symbolist Movement (New Haven: Yale University Press, 
1951) 42. A manifesto published in Figaro in September 1886 by Jean Moréas 
gave the nascent symbolist movement both its name and a lineage of “symbolist” 
poets that included Verlaine, Mallarmé, Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), and 
Théodore Faullain de Banville (1823–1891). Moréas claimed that symbolist 
writing should consist of an “archetypal and complex style” made up of “good 
language” that has been “restored and modernized” and fashioned into phrases of 
“unpolluted words.” He claimed symbolist art would possess ambiguous and 
suggestive expressions that could, in the language of Neo-Platonism, point to the

Yosano Tekkan (1873–1935) noted that this anthology gave "the same nourishment to Meiji and Taishō poetry that Po Chü-i’s Works had afforded Heian literature," and it inspired young poets as diverse as Kanbara Ariake (1876–1952) and Miki Rofū (1889–1964).³

One group that fell under the spell of Kaichōōn was the Pan no Kai (Pan Society), an organization founded to promote interactions between visual artists and poets and to imitate the café discussions of art and literature common to France in the late nineteenth century. The society, which poet and playwright Kinoshta Mokutarō (1885–1945) had named after the mischievous Greek god of shepherds and flocks, first met in a restaurant on the Sumida River on December 12, 1908. In attendance were the founders of the art and poetry journal Hōsun (Square Inch of Feeling): Yamamoto Kanae (1882–1946), an oil painter who would later play an important role in the Nihon Bijutsuin (Japan Art Institute) and the Nihon Nōmin Bijutsu Kenkyūjo (Research Center for Japanese Rural Folk Arts), Ishii Hakutei (1882–1958), known for his oil paintings, and Morita Tsunetomo (1881–1933), a painter and printmaker who worked in an Impressionist style. Also there were a number of poets, including the budding poet Kitahara Hakushū (1885–1942), who had contributed to Hōsun. Many members of the society had read Bin's translations and the efforts of Ariake, one of the first Japanese poets to draw upon its innovations. Mokutarō recalls, "At that time, we enthusiastically read art history and the debates about impressionism. Ueda Bin was also active at that time. Influenced by his translations and other works, we dreamed of the lives of Parisian artists and poets, and we decided to try imitating them."⁴ Like many nineteenth-century Parisian literary groups that combined discussion of art and literature with merrymaking, the meetings of the Pan no Kai usually involved frivolity, music, the presence of geisha, and copious amounts of alcohol.⁵ Ueda Bin, Nagai Kafū, Takamura Kōtarō (1883–1956), Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886–1965), and many other important artistic and literary figures participated in it before it disbanded four years later from a lack of clear, unifying principles.

A crowning achievement of these meetings was the publication in 1909 of Hakushū’s anthology Jashīmon (Heretical Faith), which was designed by Hakutei and contained illustrations by Hakutei, Kanae, and other members of the Pan no Kai. One of the best-known parts of the anthology was the introduction, which served as a manifesto that helped direct the poetic mainstream of late Meiji and Taishō Japan toward a highly aestheticized language separate from that of everyday life. Below is a full translation of the introduction.

The life force of a poem is found in intimacy, not in simple explanations of phenomena. The poet addresses the faint, indistinct sores of the spirit that arise amidst the limitless trembling of emotion that cannot be fully expressed through writing or speech. He is enamored with the pleasure of barely audible music, and he takes pride in the grief in his own impressions. Isn’t this the fundamental purpose of the symbol? We face the mysterious, we rejoice in visions, and yearn for the red of putefying decadence. Alas! Even in our dreams, we, the disciples of a modern heretical faith, cannot forget the laments of marble sobbing in the pale, white light of the moon. Nor can we forget the eyes of a sphinx tortured by a thick, Egyptian mist, sullied with crimson. Nor can we forget romantic music smiling in the sunset, nor the doleful screams of that state of

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³ Quoted in Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West*, vol. 2 (NY: Henry Holt, 1984) 228. Of course, Bin was not the only translator of late nineteenth-century French verse. After spending much of 1907 and 1908 in France, Nagai Kafū (1879–1959) produced the 1913 anthology Songo shū (Corals), which consisted largely of translations of French poetry, especially poets associated with symbolism. For instance, Kafū translated ten by Henri de Régnier (1864–1930), seven poems by Baudelaire, seven poems by Verlaine, one by Rimbaud, and one by Saumain. In the 1920s, Horiguchi Daigaku (1892–1981) began producing translations of nineteenth-century French poetry. Many of these translations are still read today.


⁵ One such French literary group was the Hydropathes founded about 1878 by Emile Gaudreau who described it as the negation of a literary school. Its members included figures from various walks of life, such as the novelist Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893) and the actress Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923). The Hydropathes inspired other writers to produce similar societies, such as the Zutistes, Chat Noir, and Soirées de La Plume. See Kenneth Cornell, *The Symbolist Movement*. 15.
mind surrounding the crucifixion of an infant. The ceaseless spasms of putrefying yellow wax, the olfactory sensation of a violin's A-string being stroked, the sharp nerves of whiskey smothering in a frosted glass, a sigh deeply scented of poison grass the color of a human brain, the melancholy of a nightingale exhaustedly singing while under anesthesia of the senses—all of these things too... At the same time, how hard it is to cast away the touch of scarlet velvet escaping into the faint sound of a distant horn!

According to Hakushū, instead of producing flat descriptions, the poet should listen to the quiet “sebs of the spirit.” For Hakushū, the symbol served as a tool leading the sensitive poet, who acts as a “seer” as in the theory of Rimbaud or Baudelaire, into a rich, mysterious world of subtle sensory perception. The job of the visionary poet was then to reproduce the world they discovered by using particularly stimulating signifiers that would encourage the reader along the path of imagination.

One stated purpose of the symbol was to aid the poet in fulfilling his yearning for “the red of putrefying decadence;” a longing that Hakushū apparently assumes to be present whenever a poet plunges the depths of the senses. The work in Jashūmon suggests that Hakushū welcomed decadent visions that depart from established standards of beauty and that could serve as doorways into new, intense realms of perception. Throughout the collection, one finds examples of images that do not belong to the classical canon of poetry: images of sobbing violins, blood-red wine, and twilight parks, as well as obscure Christian terms that might stir the reader’s imagination. His use of images, especially crepuscular ones, along with frequent evocations of ennui, sorrow, loneliness, and despair, are strongly reminiscent of the decadent school of fin-de-siècle French writing.

In the descriptions of the visions that fill the second half of the introduction, one finds a synesthetic combination of sensory perceptions; for instance, Hakushū combines tactile and visual cues in the mention of yellow-gray trembling, tactile and visual cues in the image of smiling music, olfactory and aural sensations in the mention of the scent of a violin’s sound. The use of synesthesia is often considered a hallmark of symbolism and is visible to varying degrees in the work of Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, and other nineteenth-century French poets. By artfully juxtaposing signifiers that appeal to different senses and thus seem to short circuit obvious pragmatic meaning, Hakushū is not trying to throw up opaque walls of confused signifiers that impede understanding completely. Like Moréas and other European proponents of symbolism, he seeks a new kind of highly subjective communication in which poets and readers use language to access meaning in an almost mystical way, circumventing logic and firm signifier-to-signified relations to help each reader arrive at a delicate emotional state. Of course, this state might differ significantly from reader to reader. For Hakushū and his contemporaries, the idea that a poem should express exactly the same thing to all readers was not paramount. In fact, Earl Jackson has argued in his study of Japanese symbolism that Hakushū and his contemporaries were exploring a new type of language that would “accommodate the essential enigmatic plasticity of consciousness and its representations” and, at the same time, celebrating the idea that a singular meaning could not necessarily be retrieved from a text. Instead of attempting to produce an absolute meaning in each poem, they purposefully cultivated suggestive syntactic or imagistic vagueness, which they hoped would stir the imagination of readers.

Certain poems, such as “Jashūmon hikyoku” (“The Secret Song of the Heretical Faith”), first published in the September 1908 issue of Chūō kōron (Central Review), made extensive use of synesthetic descriptions, which with their artful illogicality give the illusion of being pregnant with personal meaning. As a result, literary historians often point to this poem as a representative example of Japanese symbolism poetry. Yet at the same time that Hakushū experimented with the style manifested in this work, he also produced other poems with fewer of the finely tuned breaks of logic and less of the obscure imagery of his hard-edged, overtly “symbolist” works. These poems, which also appear in Jashūmon, make

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7 Donald Keene interprets his version of symbolism as an “indulgence of the senses, hedonistic and sometimes not fully controlled.” Donald Keene, Dawn to the West, vol. 2, 243.


greater use of juxtaposition, a poetic device long familiar to poets of traditional Japanese verse, and display a highly aestheticized yet comparatively straightforward style reminiscent of the lyricism of Verlaine. Within these poems, one often finds intense descriptions of sensory perception, elaborate evocations of color, the use of landscape and atmospheric conditions as indexes of emotional state, the consistent use of musical and rhythmic language, and the repeated expression of melancholic and love-haunted langur. 10 “Sora ni makka na” (“In the Sky, Deep Red”), a short four-line poem first published in Hōsun in 1909, is typical of this type of poem. Though it is only one of many short verses Hakushū wrote during his association with the Pan no Kai, it was particularly well known, and in fact, members of the society often sang it to the tune of Rappa no setsu (Strains of the Trumpet), a song popular during the Russo-Japanese War.

In the sky, the hue of a crimson cloud  
In a crystal glass, the hue of crimson liquor  
Why should this life be so very sad?  
In the sky, the hue of a crimson cloud

空に真赤な雲のいろ。  
琥珀に真赤な酒の色。  
なんでこの身が悲しくら。  
空に真赤な雲のいろ。  

The lyrics juxtapose the image of scarlet clouds, probably dyed by the sunset, with a deep red glass of alcohol – probably wine, a drink that might evoke thoughts of far-away Europe. Within this poem, Hakushū does not use the synesthetic blending seen elsewhere in Jashūmon, but a series of highly visual images laden with color, which are put together so that the syntactic relationship between images remains loose. Because the first, second, and fourth lines consist of subjects without predicates, the connection between the clouds, spirits, and the narrator’s melancholy is never explicitly stated. Perhaps the sight of alcohol recalls the image of clouds or perhaps the narrator is seated directly beneath them with wine in hand. The exact relationship between the images is unclear, but their concurrence evokes a twilight moment of melancholia or Weisenschmerz that even the narrator seems at a loss to explain.

Other friends from the Pan no Kai followed Hakushū in this lyrical, pseudo-symbolist style and produced a loose association of poets sometimes identified as the tanbīha or “Aesthetic School.” Known for its pursuit of sensual beauty, this style represents an important stage in the naturalization of European symbolism by Japanese writers, and it set the stage for later poets such as Murayama Kaita (1896–1919).

KAITA AND HAKUSHŪ

Like a number of talented authors and artists in early twentieth-century Japan, Kaita died from tuberculosis at an early age; however, he left behind a prodigious number of paintings and poems, as well as a handful of mystery-adventure stories and plays. 12 His earliest extant poetry dates from about 1912 or 1913, when as a student in the Kyoto Prefectural First Higher School, he started writing a large number of poems for small, homemade magazines (kairan gasshū) that he and his friends circulated among classmates and teachers interested in literature. Meanwhile, Kaita began showing signs of talent in the visual arts. His older cousin Yamamoto Kanae, who had been one of the co-founders of Hōsun and a charter member of the Pan no Kai, encouraged Kaita, gave him paint and brushes, and wrote supportive letters from Paris where he was then studying. As Kaita prepared for graduation, Kanae arranged for his young charge to study art at the newly restructured Nihon Bijutsuin in Tokyo and to stay at the home of his friend, the prominent artist Kosugi Misei (later known as Kosugi Hōan, 1881–1964), who had also participated in the Pan no Kai. While in Tokyo, Kaita produced some of the most striking portraits of Taishō-period art, including Futari no shōnen (Two Boys, 1914), Kanma to shojo (Girl with Cannas, 1915), and numerous self-portraits. 13 Kaita’s promising career, however, was cut

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10 The regular meter and lyrical qualities of Hakushū’s verse were factors that seem to have inspired many composers to set his poetry to music. Among the most popular composers are those of Yamada Kōsaku (Yamada Kōsak, 1886–1965), Kusukawa Shin (1893–1948), Narii Tamezō (1893–1945), Nakayama Shinbei (1887–1952), and Tada Takehiko (1930–).

11 Kitahara Hakushū, Hakushū zenshū, vol. 1, 29. Subsequent translations of the poems of Hakushū and Murayama Kaita are mine.

12 After his death, Kaita’s friends collected his works and published them posthumously as Murayama Kaita, Kaita no ukiyo, ed. Yamazaki Shūsaku (Tokyo: Ars, 1920) and Murayama Kaita, Kaita no ukiyo sono go omoi Kaita no banashi, ed. Yamamoto Jirō (Tokyo: Ars, 1921). The contents of these two collections plus several newly discovered works are available in Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, rev. 2nd ed., ed. Yamamoto Tarō (Tokyo: Yayoi Shobō, 1997).

13 Mie Kenritsu Bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ren: Settan 100-nen (Tsu: Mie Kenritsu Bijutsukan, 1997), and Kuboshima Seichirō, ed., Murayama Kaita.
short by tuberculosis brought on in large part by his penniless lifestyle and his tendency to purchase alcohol and art supplies over sufficient clothing, housing, or nourishing meals.  

A common theme of the poetry Kaita wrote during his days as a schoolboy in Kyoto was his unrequited passion for Inō Kiyoshi (1897–1989), an attractive younger student who had recently moved from Fukui to attend the same school as Kaita. (See Figure 1.) The contemporary poet Takahashi Mutsuo (1937– ) states a common opinion when he writes that of Kaita’s poems, “the ones that stand independently and sparkle as poetic creations are concentrated in the years 1913 and 1914 when his feelings of love for Inō were at their peak.” These poems, which combine strong romantic sentiments with the types of motifs seen in the pseudo-symbolist aestheticism of Hakushū and his Pan no Kai compatriots, are among Kaita’s most frequently anthologized works. One such poem is an untitled work from 1913 that addresses a person identified only with the intimate second-person pronoun kimi.

Ah, he who knows you
Knows spring one month in advance
Your eyes are the vernal sky
Your cheeks, flowering cherries, red as blood
Jewels cover your hands and your feet,
Casting the sunlight into dazzling forms

And he who knows you
Knows summer two months in advance
With just a look, one’s heart is set aflame,
Burning red as the setting sun over a land of flame
Basking in the maddening heat,
One is driven to madness, wildly searching into eternity

Ah, he who knows you
Knows autumn three months in advance
Such a charming, sweet, and sad countenance
Your lips are hills and fields of cinnabar
Share with me just as they are
The dazzling autumn days in your exalted eyes

Yet he who knows you
Knows winter four months in advance
In your absence, all eyes fall to the ground,
All things lose light and color
Struck no longer by taste, scent, or sound
All merely waits in earnest for you, for spring to return

ああ君を知る人は三月さきに
春を知る
君が眼は春の空
また御顔は桜花血の如赤く
宝石は手を足を蔽ひて
日光を華麗なる形に象めり

また君を知る人は二月さきに
夏を知る
君見れば胸は焼かれて
火の国の人日の如赤くたり
唯狂はしき暑気にむせ
とこしへに血眼の物狂ひなり

ああ君を知る人は三月さきに
秋を知る
床しくも甘くさびし御面かな
そが呂是に明き野山のけぼり
また御ひとみに秋の日のきららがなるを
そのままにつけへ給へり

14 In an essay from 1927, the artist Yanase Masamichi (1907–1945) says that when he moved to Tokyo, he found Kaita living a life of squalor even though he seemed indifferent to his poverty. He writes, “Though I was down and out, I was surprised to find someone so much more destitute than I. Murayama Kaita came to visit. All that he had to cover his gigantic body was a tattered chincikare hannya coat and a pair of briefs. ‘I’ve been sleeping under the eaves ‘cause these days no one will put me up,’ he said. Showing no signs of this getting him down, he spits out his theories of art and then left. That day, he came and went barefoot.” Quoted in Sunouchi Tōru, Sesamuro no marinokashī: Kusasame bijutsukan (Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1983) 330–31. In the years after Kaita died, Yanase Masamichi participated as a charter member in the Dadaist art group Mayoi and became a leading figure in the proletarian art movement.
The use of landscape and climactic conditions to set mood is a central motif in romantic and symbolist poetry. With these movements, artists departed from rational notions of objective existence to portray the external world through a highly individualistic lens. As a result, landscapes in poetry were not merely mere descriptions of an absolute outdoor world but rather carefully crafted environments that served as projections of the individual author's singular vision. In this poem, however, this notion is taken to an extreme. Feeling shapes the ways in which the narrator sees kimi, whose countenance provides the point of departure for the imaginary landscapes and climactic conditions through which the intensity of the narrator's feelings is revealed. Kimi carries the narrator through the metaphorical seasons with astonishing rapidity, bringing warmth when the outside world is cold; however, when kimi disappears, the winter of discontent sets in.

This poem displays a motif that recurs throughout Kaita's work, namely the prominent use of the color red. The novelist Arishima Takeo (1878–1923) was perhaps the first to comment in a laudatory review published in the August 1920 issue of Chosaku hyōron (Writing Review), how often Kaita employed colors in his writing. As Arishima notes, purple, gold, blue, and green appear often in his work, but red appears with particular frequency, especially in contexts associated with passion or indulgent descriptions of decadent feelings. Kaita's love for the color red is visible throughout his short career. One of his best known statements is a single line of text jotted in a notebook in 1918: “The world is red, not blue nor yellow.” Just months before his death, he also wrote two often anthologized poems, “Garanusu” (“Garance”) and “Ippon no garansu” (“A Tube of Garance”) that express the intense, impassioned pleasure that garance, a dark red paint derived from madder, could provide. Kaita's love for the dramatic use of red is readily visible in one of his most memorable works, Ibari suru razō (Nude Monk Urinating, 1915), which is dominated by the color. (See Figure 2.)

Considering that Kaita was an artist as well as a poet, it is not surprising that he should treat his poems like his canvases, splashing great swatches of color across them; however, Higushi Shunrō, a curator at the Mie Prefectural Art Museum, has suggested that Kaita's particular preference for the color red, might have been inspired by Hakushū's Jashūmon, in which the color appears with overwhelming frequency. As mentioned above, Hakushū writes in the introduction that one function of the symbol is to help fulfill the yearning of the poet for the "red of purifying decadence," a statement that establishes a relationship between the color and the particularly intense emotion that recurs throughout the anthology. Even though it is likely that Kaita read Jashūmon, one cannot prove it with certainty. In his diaries, the only mention of Hakushū is in a telegraphic entry from July 12, 1917 that notes he found Hakushū's 1915 anthology of tanka Kirara shū (Mica) to be "interesting." This comment comes about four or five years after Kaita began writing poetry so it cannot help prove whether or not he had read Jashūmon at the beginning of his career; nonetheless, one can surmise from other facts that he probably did. Kaita was a voracious reader who often consumed large numbers of books within a single day, and diaries and comments from friends show that poetry was among his favorite reading material. More importantly, his cousin Yamamoto Kanae, who played an enormous role in Kaita's life, was close to Hakushū that he contributed an illustration to the first edition of Jashūmon. In fact, the close friendship that had existed between Kanae and Hakushū since the days of Hōsun and the Pan no Kai took on a new dimension when Kanae married Hakushū's younger sister, Kitahara le (1893–1959) in 1917 and became the poet's brother-in-law. Given this

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16 Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, 128.
18 Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, 361.
19 In his diary, Kaita mentions that he stopped by Kanae's home on the day of the wedding, but he does not mention whether or not he met Hakushū. Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, 362. The connection between the Kitahara family and Kanae was probably a factor leading to the posthumous publication of Kaita's manuscripts. One of Hakushū's younger brothers, Kitahara Tetsu (1892–1957), was the head of Ars, the publishing house that released the first editions of his work, and another brother, Kitahara Yōshio (1896–1985), was a staff member there. Even though he did not edit Kaita's manuscripts, Yamamoto Kanae wrote
closeness, it is likely that Kaita at least perused Hakushū's famous work.\textsuperscript{22}

A number of motifs that resemble those in Hakushū's work are visible in Kaita's poem "Nigiyaka na yūgure" ("A Lively Evening"), a work from 1913 that describes an evening trip through eastern Kyoto made to gaze at the home of Inō Kiyoshi, to whom the poem was dedicated.

A Lively Evening (To K.I.)

"A lively evening, isn't it?  
Really full of life, don't you think?"
On this pale blue, deep evening,
What is so lively? What?

The beautiful sky over the eastern mountains
The stars like a purple globe of rain
In the drunken vernal sky over the hills
Shine purple and light red like specks of hardened blood

"So lively, don't you think?"
A group of ladies arrive.
A wanton crowd, like a line of jewels,
Their lovely white make-up shines in the dusk

Lights, lights, lights along the Kamo riverbanks
Shine in gold, the arc lamps cherry pink
"Really lively, isn't it?"
A lovely night, don't you think?"

Drops of spirits fall steadily
From my thistle-shaped nerves
Alongside my footsteps as I spring lightly along
The elegant lavender hem of Kaguraoka

"Lively, isn't it?"
Pleased at my response
The group of lovely ladies, so numerous, replies,
"Yes, indeed..."

"A lively evening, isn't it?"
Really full of life, don't you think?
How lovely of late
Is the beautiful child whom I love..."

As I descend Konoezaka Slope, I see the lavender
Plain of heaven reflected on the surface of the lake
The faint echoes of a silver flute
Trickle from the window of my beloved's home

"A lively evening, isn't it?"
Really full of life, don't you think?"
I, with my unrequited love, weep as I whisper,
"Yes, but how terribly lonely I am!"

にぎやかな夕ぐれ（K.Iに）

「にぎやかな夕ぐれやおへんか
しばらくにぎやかな夕ぐれや」
何かにぎやか、何かにぎやか
薄夜深い夕ぐれ

美しい空が東山に
星の珠が消えたいに東山に
見が血の海へいて消びたたりの春の空に
寒い薄黙な不

\textsuperscript{22} Kaita researcher Sasuki Teru has also suggested that there may be a link between the images in Hakushū's poetry and those in Kaita's painting. He suggests that Kaita may have taken the inspiration for the painting \textit{iharizuri raizō} from Hakushū's poem "Akaai sōdō" ("Red Monk") in \textit{Shashönen} or "Ibari sura ondajin" ("Urinating Dutchman") in \textit{Onwači (Memories)}. Sasuki Teru, "Tadareta ni no jikan tarashime yo: Murayama Kaita Ibari sura raizō nōyū," \textit{E} 379 (Sep 1995): 17. See Kihara Hakushū, \textit{Hakushū zenshū}, vol. 1, 17–18 and vol. 2, 212–13.
This poem, perhaps the first in modern Japan to incorporate extended passages of the distinct dialect of the Gion district pleasure quarters, describes the narrator’s encounter with several geisha as he wanders toward the eastern hills of Kyoto where his beloved resides. In 1913, when Kaita wrote this poem, he was living along Teramachi Avenue, several streets to the west of the Kamo River, and Inō lived by Kaguraoka, the hilly area around Mt. Yoshida on the fringes of the eastern hills mentioned in the poem. For him to make the journey to Inō’s house, he would pass through the northern fringes of the Gion district, where he might conceivably meet women like those in the poem. History tells us that Kaita made the trip to Inō’s house often. The reminiscences of Yamamoto Jirō, a close friend from college preparatory school, state, “Every night, Kaita would climb Kaguraoka near the house of the young boy. That was so he could watch the lights in the boy’s house from a distance.”

In a diary entry from November 12, 1913, Kaita describes one of these outings to Inō’s home: “From the fields where the rice stalks were cut and piled up, I heard the distant, red sound of a flute. In front of your house, a friend called out to me, ‘Murayama,’ and my heart trembled. That exulted laugh of yours flooded from your home, together with the light burning inside.” The friend who called his name may have been Hayashi Tatsuō (1894–1984), a younger schoolmate who later in life became a prominent intellectual historian. In a series of biographical interviews, Hayashi recalls Kaita’s passion for the “incredibly beautiful young boy” Inō. Hayashi says that because he lived on a cliff directly above Inō’s home, Kaita would frequently come by and chat as an excuse to stare at Inō’s window below.

Even though the experience described in “Nigiyaka na yūgure” was almost certainly inspired by one of Kaita’s nocturnal pilgrimages, the poem contains highly romanticized language. The images of reflected stars, silver flutes, and sobs of unrequited love demonstrate the degree to which Kaita borrowed language of contemporary poetry to fashion his own experience into verse. A number of motifs in the poem, such as the arc lights, the encounter with the women, and the image of a fading sunset are similar to motifs in Hakushū’s work, and suggest a continuity of poetic language between the two poets. The motif of the melancholy sound of silver flute (ginetteki), for instance, is particularly common in Hakushū’s poetry. The first poem in “Danshō” (“Fragments”), a collection of short verses published in the 1911 anthology Omoide (Memories), revolves around the motif.

23 Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, 42–43.
25 Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, 342.
26 Hayashi Tatsuō, Shūō no dorontatarigū, Heibonsha rairurarii 2 (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1993) 144–45, 148–49.
So sad again today, all alone in the evening
The lonesome, faint sound of a small silver flute
Also sobs faintly, all alone
Blowing through my heart in the dim light.

今日もかたはしと悲しみ、ひとりゆふべを、
銀の笛の音ほそく、ひとり幽かに、
すすり泣き、呟き潰れたるわがこころ、
薄き光に。27

Hakushū’s use of the flute as a motif recalls the writing of Verlaine and Baudelaire, whose poetry often describes the sounds of violins, flutes, and other instruments in order to suggest particular emotional states. Hakushū’s anthology of tanka Kiri no hana (Paulownia Flowers), published in January 1913, also contains sixty-three verses subtitled “Ginteki aibō chō” (“Melancholy Strains of a Silver Flute”). The section takes its name from the second poem.

Like a silver flute.
This plaintive
Monotone fades
Into the distance—
Is it no more than a dream?

銀笛のごとく哀しく単調に過ぎもゆきにし夢なりしかな28

The faint notes of a flute, which appears here in a simile, carry the same sort of dreamy, even otherworldly sadness that they do in Kaita’s “Nigiwaka na yūgure.”

In the collection of the Mie Prefectural Art Museum is an early love letter, known in art history circles as the “Pink Love Letter” (Pinku rabu reta), which Kaita wrote to an unnamed person identified only as “kimi.” This letter demonstrates that even Kaita’s personal writing sometimes employs pseudo-symbolist, visual motifs like those in Hakushū’s early poetry. Written in gray letters on brilliant pink paper, the letter is decorated with disconnected, wavy lines and a watercolor painting of a small figure sitting by a fountain. (See Figure 3.) Though the heavy watercolors obscure seven characters toward the middle of the letter, the majority of the text is legible.

Oh you!
Truly I cannot tell you
I am but one person yearning for you
My love is a beautiful electrical water fountain
In red つづく口 in silver
Spewing, rising, then raining down
Over the garden of my heart. There in the shade
I suppress my faint cries of unreciprocated love
The red moon rises faintly
Oh kimi! At least try to feel pity
For this longing of mine
(Do not be alarmed at reading this letter
Others can forgive my bad habit
Of writing this sort of thing…) Oh you, so generous!
Hide this in the depths of your smile!

Farewell for now. From the Red Demon

君よ
まことに君に告げまみらせん
われは君を悲しみ夢ふ一人なり
わが恋は美しい水電噴水にして
くれなひに口口口口口口口
絕えもなくわが心の隅に
上がり漂り落してわれはそのかすひに
片想ひのなげきをほのかにし余る
なる。赤き月もかかに上るなり
君よせめてこの君の思ひをあわれ
みたまへ。（さくとこの次にひづひづし
給はるかなる君書いてみる事
わが思しきせと人も許せる事
なければ。）たたか大なる君よ
たた君の微笑の底に秘おかれよ。

さらばまた あか鬼より29

As elsewhere in Kaita’s work, landscape—here a park with a central fountain that erupts with dazzling glory—serves as a metaphor for the author’s emotions. Halfway through the letter, he begins to imagine himself, like the small figure drawn on the letter itself, within this garden of emotion lamenting his unrequited love. The red moon, which appears in the watercolor on the edge of the letter, adds a dark, eerily lovely touch to this metaphorical garden of passion, cloaked in the night of unreciprocated desire.

The letter shows that Kaita took pleasure in playing the part of the lonely lover whose feelings remain unrequited. Beneath the text of the letter, Kaita has written in pale roman letters, “Chotto kirei deshō” (“Rather lovely, don’t you think?”) as if particularly pleased with his work. He also has signed the letter “The Red Demon,” coining a sobriquet for himself that describes himself as an oni, a creature that in Japanese legend often pursues its own desires with single-minded, amoralistic devotion. This sobriquet represents a play on his given name—kai, the first character of his given name (槐), meaning the lucky tree *Sophora japonica*—contains on its right side the character oni (鬼) meaning “demon”—and suggests that Kaita willingly took on a decadent, desiring identity similar to that of the narrative persona in his early poetry.

The motif of a red moon in the pink love letter resembles an image from the fifty-first poem of Hakushū’s “Danshō.”

Red crescent moon,
Red crescent moon—
Today again lying in bed
Your child blows his silver flute.
How peaceful is his play!

色赤き三日月,
色赤き三日月,
今日もまた臥所に
君が児は銀笛のおもちゃを吹く,
やすらぎきそのすさびよ。

The moon hangs over a bed containing a child, who plays peacefully with a silver flute. As in Kaita’s poem, the red moon adds a decadent, otherworldly touch to the calm scene. Fountains, like the one in the “Pink Love Letter,” also appear as a frequent motif in Hakushū’s early work. The poem “Fukiage no inshō” (“Impressions of a Fountain”), written in July 1908 and included in *Jashinmon*, centers around this motif. The first stanza gives a taste of the languorous, melancholy work.

The fountain’s slow dripping—
The depths of a misty park, the light of the setting sun
The yellow murmur of the basin,
All, now
The color of a sweet sigh.

噴水のゆるぎしぼりた,
霧しぼれ筍の果、夕日の中光。
水盤の黄なるさざやき、
たべて、いま
もののあまき味嘗の色。

As the title of the poem suggests, the work gives a series of impressionistic glimpses of a fountain in a park at sunset. This verse, which incorporates a great deal of synesthetic description, describes the sound of the water lapping at the basin’s edge as “yellow,” and the whole scene appears the “color of a sweet sigh.” Another poem, “Kōen no usugure” (“Dusk in the Park”), the first poem in the 1913 anthology *Tokyo keibutsu shū oyobi sono ta* (Scenes of Tokyo and Other Poems), also describes a similar scene. The poem begins.

In the pale bluish, silver air,
Water drips discreetly from a fountain,
The dim light of dusk lingers for a moment.
As a woman passes seductively by,
the color of a fluffy feather boa.

ほのぼのらしき銀色の空に,
そこなく噴水の水はしぼれたり、
薄明ややしばらくさかえぬほど、
ふらふらする羽毛模様のいろなやましく女ゆきかふ。


In subsequent stanzas, the poem evokes the sights, smells, and sounds of a park at dusk — arc lights glowing in the mist, a train squealing in the silence, and the flickering lights casting "hysterical eyes" at the narrator. Throughout the poem, one sees the kinds of motifs also present in Kaita's work — arc lamps, moonlight, shade, silver flutes, the prominent use of colors, and so on; however, the central conceit of the garden, the melancholic mood, and the artful looseness between individual elements of the scene most strongly resemble the pink love letter.

The image of gardens, and ruined gardens in particular, appears often in Kaita's work. In 1913, Kaita produced a small handwritten, hand-stitched anthology of poetry which he called Aoiro hainen (The Ruined Garden in Green) and dedicated to his "Prince," Inō Kiyoshi. At the time, many anthologies of poetry, including Bashōmon, contained short introductory verses designed to set the tone for the work that followed. Kaita most likely wrote the following verse, which has become one of his most famous, in such a capacity.

I long in earnest for extravagance —
For the extravagance of
Sipping spirits in a garden
Where one is overcome by a feeling
Like the aroma of green plums

わいわいに豪華を思ふ
青梅のに於てなに如く
感せるる国のの日頃に
消滅なるる豪華を。

The poem above does not describe Inō directly, but the image of hard, unripe, green plums with an inviting fragrance suggests a youthful rawness not unlike that of an adolescent youth who has not yet quite reached the peak of maturity. With its yearning for sensual, indulgent pleasures beyond the narrator's reach, the poem sets a tone of longing appropriate for poems about unrequited love.

The image of the ruined or abandoned garden (hainen), which surfaces in Aoiro hainen, also appears in a large number of other works. Just in the poems from 1913, one finds the image of the ruined garden in the poems "Chi ni shimeite" ("Stained in Blood"), "Kicyoku sagū" ("The Nature that Fades Away"), "Hainen ni mitaru sakura kai" ("A Cherry Tree Seen in a Ruined Garden"), and "Mi zo shimeru hainen no hana" ("The Body Sinks into Spring in the Ruined Garden"), some of which were probably originally part of Aoiro hainen. Although numerous classical Japanese texts, such as Isse monogatari (The Tale of Isse) mention ruined gardens, the poet Miki Rofū had reintroduced it into the poetical lexicon with his 1909 anthology Hainen (The Ruined Garden). Rofū once commented that he selected the image of the ruined garden to express his "feelings and poetic thoughts of a certain period of my youth" and that he had based the images in his poems on an unkempt garden near his home in Zoshigaya, Tokyo. For Rofū as for Kaita, the garden served as a symbol representing the emotional landscape of the narrative persona. For instance, one of the best-known poems from Rofū's Hainen is "Sariyuku gogatsu no shi" ("A Poem for Departing May"), which describes the flora in a ruined garden as the narrator reflects with melancholy upon the rapid passing of time. Rofū, however, was not the only figure associated with the Aesthetic School to use this image. The image of the ruined garden also appears in poem number forty-seven of Hakushū's "Fragments."

Down the light rain comes, down it comes
Over the green of the abandoned garden
Singing faintly as it falls
Oh poppy flowers, poppy flowers.
Softly shall you burn...

崩れたりる国ののよりに
ふりそそぎ、ふりそそぎ、にばやかに小雨はうたふ。

32 Kitahara Hakushū, Hakushū zenshū, vol. 3, 8; translation from Margaret Benton Fukasawa, Kitahara Hakushū, 56.
33 Murayama Kaita, Murayama Kaita zenshū, 17. Incidentally, composer Nishimura Akira (1953-) has produce a setting of this poem and a handful of others for female choir. Nishimura Akira, Aoiro hainen: Mushūsō joshi geshō no tame no, Murayama Kaita no shi ni yoru, Op. 3 (Tokyo: Ongaku no tomo, 2000).
34 The editors of Kaita no utaeri did not indicate which poems originally appeared there, and since the original manuscript of Aoiro hainen has disappeared, one cannot know with certainty whether or not these poems were part of it or not.
The abandoned garden, full of verdant overgrowth, is charged with romantic overtones. This poem, number forty-seven in the sequence, forms the first of a sub-sequence about the narrator’s feelings for the wife of another man, and the abandoned garden serves as a site where secret, unfulfilled passions are played out. This poetic resonance seems particularly appropriate for poems like Kaita’s, which describe unrequited love.

CONCLUSION

As this paper has mentioned, synesthesia, which is often named as a characteristic of both French and Japanese symbolism, appears in some but not all of Hakushū’s early work. Even in his early anthology *Itashimono*, many poems are in a somewhat flatter, less opaque style dominated by an absence of visual images connected by purposefully loose syntax. As a result of this looseness, the texts become what Roland Barthes has called “writerly texts,” loosely organized strings of signifiers that invite the reader to create meaning through the organizing act of interpretation. This “aesthetic” style contains a high concentration of visual cues along with other recurring motifs, such as instruments, gardens, and landscapes that serve as cues to emotional states. All of these motifs had figured prominently in the late nineteenth-century French poetry Hakushū and his companions in the Pan no Kai admired. Known for its pursuit of sensual beauty, the “aesthetic” style of Hakushū and his circle represents an important stage in the naturalization of European symbolism by Japanese writers, and it set the stage for later writers such as Kaita, who perhaps because of his own interest in the visual arts, employed a large number of visual cues in many of his early poems. Even though Kaita’s writing never indicates that he lifted these motifs directly from Hakushū, there is no question that Kaita was writing in an era when the “aesthetic” style Hakushū represented was at its height.

Figure 1: Murayama Kaita, Inō zō (Portrait of Inō. About 1913) Watercolor on paper, Shinano Bijutsukan, Murayama Kaita ten, 23.

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Figure 2: *Ibari suru rasō* (Nude Monk Urinating, 1915)
Oil on canvas, Shinano Drawing Museum

Figure 3: Murayama Kaita, Detail from the "Pink Love Letter."
Watercolor on paper, Mie Prefectural Art Museum
WORKS CITED


