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Dreaming Gender:
Kyōgoku School Japanese Women Poets
(Re)Writing the Feminine Subject

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Literary historians generally tell tales of a gradual decline in Japanese women's writing after its great efflorescence in the mid- and late-Heian period (794-1185). Following the early important women poets Ono no Komachi (fl. mid-ninth c.) and Lady Ise (b. 875-d. after 938), these tales tell us that Japanese women writers also compiled poetry collections that included prose and wrote what might loosely be termed literary diaries (*nikki bungaku*) and tales (*monogatari*) that defined new genres and otherwise fundamentally shaped Japanese court literature. The great masterpiece of this women-centered tradition is *The Tale of Genji*, by Murasaki Shikibu (b. 978-d. 1016?), a sophisticated psychological novel of over one thousand pages in translation that some critics see as the first full-length novel in world literature.

The enormous importance of this writing by women in Japan for later generations of writers and for world literary history may be recognized without assuming that the writing of these women that has come to be known as *joryū bungaku*, or "women's literature," held little importance for writing by men in the Japanese language. The dominance of women in tenth-century court writing in Japanese is generally contrasted with men's court writing in the *lingua franca* Chinese. Yet women proved so accomplished and interesting in their literary production that men began a backlash by attempting to reclaim Japanese language writing for male courtiers, a premodern backlash comparable to that of our own day as discussed below. One famous example of male writers trying to compose literature in Japanese can be seen in the early memoir, the *Tosa Diary* (ca. 935), in a feminine voice by the influential male courtier Ki no Tsurayuki. After this backlash both men and women came to write in the voice of either masculine or feminine poetic subjects, depending on their interests. As we shall see shortly, in love poetry they wrote in the voice of whichever subject was at the center of the conventional phase of the love affair.

Rather than discussing this early high point of Japanese women's writing, I examine here two important women writers from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. My goal is to take a step towards reevaluating

women's writing from a later and often overlooked period of the premodern and to question the dismissal of Japanese women's writing after the Heian period. One of the most important and innovative schools of Japanese court poetry from this period is the Kyōgoku school, generally presumed by literary historians to be named after the male aristocrat Kyōgoku Tamekane (also Kyōgoku Tamekanu, b. 1254-d. 1332) even though the school was dominated by women poets. Here I will examine the writings of two major women poets from this school: the relatively unknown Kyōgoku Tameko (also Junii Tameko, b. 1250/1252 to d. after 1315), Tamekane's older sister, and the better known Retired Empress Eifuku (or Eifuku Mon'in, also Yōfuku Mon'in, or Saionji Kyoko, b. 1271-d. 1342).¹ This essay explores constructions of gender subjectivities in love poetry, which engages with such theoretical issues as the nature of the subject and women's agency in shaping reality. My study of this love poetry will lay the groundwork for an examination of Kyōgoku Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku's reinscriptions of feminine subjectivity; while androcentric conventions in court love poetry demanded that feminine subjects resign themselves, in love affairs, to a course of events that gave agency to male subjects, we will see that the feminine subjects constructed by these two women poets refuse such resignation.

Kyōgoku school women writers certainly composed conventional works demonstrating their mastery of courtly assumptions about the course of love affairs, as they were expected to do by their contemporaries. Yet Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku also wrote poems that rejected the conventional sorrowful longing of a woman whose male lover loses interest as the affair's end approaches. Thus some of their feminine personae take up an angry bitterness at the men who violate their vows of love, and others reject the normative "reality" of love constituted through court conventions to affirm alternative realities. Moreover, while premodern court love poetry was dominated by an established course of events that gave agency almost exclusively to male poetic personae—like many, if not all attempts to totalize gender constructions—this homogenizing convention was not always effective. My argument centers on the failure of conventional literary love affairs to determine women's subjectivity, focusing on the courtly love poetry of Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku, as well as on the poetic style known as the "passionate" style with which some modern critics associate them.

Women's Power in the Japanese Imperial Household

The Japanese imperial court is often described as a monolithic patriarchal institution, but it can also be seen as a site for the struggle between holders of widely differing conceptions of gender and social resources

for legitimization, authority, and prestige. At the court, women played important roles at the level of private interaction both as individuals and as members of the aristocratic class, but they also traditionally retained various types of public power and authority in the imperial household. Some of these positions were formally designated, such as court positions ranging from Empress, or first wife or consort to the Emperor, to Imperial Lady (*Nyōin*) for the Emperor's mother or sister.² Women holding these offices were in positions of great wealth and prestige, administering an entire household with substantial resources in the palace, and they were privy to regular contact with such important influential male players in the arena of public power as the emperor and male aristocrats of the highest ranking. In addition to these formally designated roles, more informally defined roles were also taken in court life by women, such as those of women attendants and of the mothers and wet nurses of male heirs to the throne and other members of the imperial family. These formal and informal positions gave them a significant base of financial and symbolic power that was useful in the production of cultural norms and values defining their own gender subjectivities. This social autonomy in elite circles is not surprising given the relative gender balance of a largely bilateral Japanese society in inheritance, kinship, legal, social, and cultural affairs during the ninth to the twelfth centuries.³

The women's quarters in the imperial household provided an influential site where a woman-centered domain of experience and influence could flourish. Not only did these quarters have the significant economic resources to support a good number of highly educated and influential women living together with surplus time and energy, they also gave these women an opportunity to support—through patronage and other means—other women who were not directly involved in the imperial household. An important example from an earlier period of such support is the well-known court of Empress Akiko, who had in her service the author of *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki Shikibu, the well-known poet and diarist Izumi Shikibu (ca. 970s-after 1027), and two other important poets, Akazome Emon (d.n.) and Ise no Tayō (ca. 987-1063). In this case and others, the members of a wealthy social circle defined their own values to a substantial degree independent of or in contest with that of male-defined sectors of Japanese society.

Institutional historians generally describe the imperial household as declining gradually in prestige, authority, and wealth with the breakdown of the *shoen* estate system, a process that accelerated with the institution of the split governmental system of the Kamakura period (1185-1333). Modern literary historians often describe this same historical period as marking the end of the period in Japanese literature dominated particularly in prose by "women's literature," with the rise of such new male-centered

genres as warrior tale literature, *zuihitsu* or informal essay writing, and other genres closely associated with male writers and a masculine-identified aesthetics.⁴

Yet there were many noteworthy women writers active during the centuries that followed the end of the Heian period. Despite the decline in the economic and political fortunes of the imperial household in the twelfth century, a women-centered situation comparable to that of Akiko's court at the height of the Heian period can be found in the imperial court of Emperor Fushimi (b. 1265-d. 1317; r. 1287-98) and Retired Empress Eifuku. In this court important women poets including Tameko, Chikako (also Minamoto no Shinshi, fl. 1287-d. 1317), Retired Empress Eifuku's Handmaiden (Eifuku Mon'in no Naishi, b. 1264-d. 1347), and Princess Shinshi (ca. 1302-10, 1376),⁵ together with such prose writers as the diarist Lady Nakatsukasa (fl. ca. 1250-92), gathered in significant numbers. The large number of women writers of poetry and prose at Retired Empress Eifuku's court suggests that she was a successful patron of and central figure in a sizeable, thriving literary community. This may be surprising to those social historians who assume that cultural affairs would be fundamentally shaped by the weakening of women's power through the erosion of bilateral economic, legal, and social practices due to the increasing influence of warrior practices of male primogeniture and other androcentric legal and social customs during the Kamakura period.⁶ However such cultural evidence as women's predominance in the Kyōgoku school and in song and tale literature and performance⁷ suggests that these socioeconomic and legal changes did not prevent women from continuing to contest male-centered traditions as part of an efflorescence of women's literature during and after this period. We may now turn to an exploration of how these contestations shaped practices of women's subjectivity in poetry.

Women's Importance in the Kyōgoku School

Great prestige in court poetry was accorded to those poets whose work found its way into the rarely compiled imperial anthologies, several of which quickly became canonical. As a result, a gendered court politics mingled with the rivalries of competing literary schools in the intrigues behind the imperial appointment of anthology editors. Careful attention was subsequently given to the number and location of poems by leading court poets—one reason why there is little uncertainty about the authorship of most major poetry. Consequently, the literary fortunes of the Kyōgoku school were closely tied to contemporary political rivalries at the imperial court. Women's struggles over poetic matters, like men's, were entangled in the successes and emburance of different imperial households. Through their participation in these political, aesthetic, and social

struggles, they would ultimately redefine women's subjectivity during this period, a topic to which I return later in the essay.

In modern historical narratives centering on the social and economic male elites of the imperial court, the late Kamakura period is staged as a period of rivalry between male-centered Jimyō-in and Daikaku-ji factions of the imperial household. This rivalry would erupt into the armed conflict of the Kemmu restoration in the 1330s and subsequent wars. Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku aligned themselves with the Jimyō-in imperial line through their association with Emperor Fushimi.⁸ Tameko and her younger brother Tamekane were taken into Emperor Fushimi's household as poetry tutors around 1280 when Fushimi was still Crown Prince, and together, these three soon joined forces with another important woman poet, Chikako, to establish the Kyōgoku school style of poetry during the mid-1280s to mid-1290s.⁹

During this early, formative period Emperor Fushimi acceded to the throne in 1287 and was married to the woman who would be known to history¹⁰ as Retired Empress Eifuku only a few months after his enthronement in mid 1288. Retired Empress Eifuku, the first daughter of the influential minister Saionji Sanekane (b. 1249-d. 1322), quickly adopted a son already born to Fushimi by another consort, Fujiwara Tsumeko (d.u.), and that son was designated Crown Prince in the same year. This designation of the future Emperor Go-Fushimi (b. 1288-d. 1336; r. 1298-1301) assured the Jimyō-in line of another emperor and also guaranteed Retired Empress Eifuku's continued preeminence in the social and literary affairs of the women's quarters of the imperial household. This latter point would prove crucial to Retired Empress Eifuku's career, for it allowed her to later take on a major role in her natal Saionji household after her husband's death, and provided her with an additional material base for continued literary influence.¹¹

By the last few years of the thirteenth century, then, Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku had established themselves, along with Tamekane, as major poets in an established school of court poetry affiliated with the Jimyō-in line of the imperial household. Their importance emerged through several events, including the birth of another son to Fushimi (by a consort other than Retired Empress Eifuku), the future Emperor Hanazono (b. 1297-d. 1348; r. 1308-18). Tameko was given the formative role of wet nurse to this son, and she subsequently had a strong influence (as did Eifuku later) on the boy and future emperor who would compile the latter of the two Kyōgoku school-edited imperial poetry anthologies, the *Fugashū* (Collection of Elegance). Taken together these events, sometimes referred to as marriage politics, were simultaneously part of the web of relations between the emperor and the influential Saionji aristocratic household and between the emperor and the talented brother and sister poets of

the Tamekane family that helped assure the continued importance of the Kyōgoku school style.¹²

In addition to this function in the imperial household, Tameko fulfilled a leadership role in the early, formative period of the Kyōgoku school. Taking the position of judge in several early poetry contests, she also encouraged other woman poets, including Retired Empress Eifuku, during these formative events. The preponderance of women participants in the work of the first generation Kyōgoku school poets has been shown statistically by the scholar Miyoko Iwasa: female participants outnumbered males in nine of the eleven known poetry contests during the important formative period 1285-1310, a period of perhaps unequalled influence for women in Japanese poetry circles at the elite level.¹³

While it is not surprising that women had an important role in the more informal area of poetry contests, the number of poems included by women poets in the male-dominated public arena of imperial poetry anthologies also shows the strength of women poets in this school. In the first Kyōgoku school-edited imperial anthology, the *Gyokuyōshū* (Collection of Jeweled Leaves), compiled in 1311-13 at Fushimi's request by Tamekane, Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku are two of the four most anthologized living poets based on the sheer numbers of their poems included: 60 and 49 respectively, compared to 93 for Fushimi and 62 for Saionji Sanekane, Retired Empress Eifuku's father and an important political official. This is significant given the male-defined context of the imperial anthologies, none of which in the history of Japanese court poetry had a woman formally involved in their compilation.¹⁴

Another way in which Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku successfully strengthened their roles in contemporary culture was through their activities after the departure through death (such as Empress Eifuku's husband) or exile (such as Tameko's brother Tamekane) of important men in their lives, when these women took the initiative to step into social positions of considerable social, artistic, and material influence. Tameko, for example, seems to have increased substantially her influence through the ongoing political difficulties of her brother Tamekane, who is often credited in twentieth-century accounts by literary historians as the most important poet of the school.¹⁵ Due to his controversial political opinions and personality, Tamekane was exiled from the capital for extended periods of time, leaving Tameko, Fushimi, and Chikako to lead the school in the early years of 1298 to 1303, and then leaving the capital again for another extended exile beginning in 1317. Retired Empress Eifuku became the sole senior member of the poetry school after Fushimi and Chikako passed away in that same year of 1317, which appears to be around the time of the unknown date of Tameko's death.

It was during the twenty-five year period from 1317 to her death in

1342 that Retired Empress Eifuku had perhaps her most significant impact on the Kyōgoku school. She took on the task of ensuring the continued success of the Kyōgoku school as well as the survival of the Jimyō-in imperial line and the fortunes of her natal Saionji house. During these years, she met this challenge first by training her young adopted son, Emperor Go-Fushimi, who was only twenty-nine when Retired Empress Eifuku's husband passed away, together with Fushimi's other son, Go-Hanazono, who retired at only twenty-one from the throne one year later in 1318. Retired Empress Eifuku furthered the ongoing success of the literary movement by working with other women poets who were active at the core of the second generation Kyōgoku poets, including a woman known as Retired Empress Eifuku's Handmaiden and Princess Shinshi. She also confronted the Nijō school poets regarding their editing and even exclusion of Kyōgoku poetry from imperial anthologies, an encounter that enabled her to sharpen the distinctiveness of the Kyōgoku school style.¹⁶ Retired Empress Eifuku implemented and trained the younger poets in this style by serving as a judge at a number of poetry contests both at the Jimyō-in palace until 1331—she left the palace when her grandson was appointed as Emperor Kōgon (b. 1313-d. 1364; r. 1331-33), and then at the Saionji household, which she headed from 1331 to her death.¹⁷ Collectively Retired Empress Eifuku's work laid the foundation for Emperor Hanazono's contributions to the Kyōgoku school, such as the second Kyōgoku-influenced imperial anthology, the *Gyokuyōshū*, compiled shortly after her death in the years 1344 to 1346. Retired Empress Eifuku was honored by Emperor Hanazono with the second largest number of poems in that anthology.

From even this brief summary we can see that the women's quarters of Fushimi's imperial household were one site of the practice of a poetry distinctive in the degree to which women formed it, as well as the base for the influence of Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku on a younger generation of poets both female and male. While the public institutions of the imperial and aristocratic households may have been dominated by men through male primogeniture, the poetry writing of the Kyōgoku school was a different matter. Not only did these women hold their own with male poets of the Kyōgoku school, we know that they were leaders of the school at certain definable and extended periods of time. Such an accomplishment was unusual in the history of Japanese court poetry, for although women had been important writers of court poetry since the time of its origins, men had always been the keepers of the tradition of the imperial anthology. To find women presiding as judges over poetry contests, being anthologized in such large numbers, and acting as leaders of an important poetry school for such extended periods of time is perhaps unique in Japanese literary history.

This sociopolitical basis provided Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku with the resources and autonomy to develop innovative practices for the feminine poetic subject, advances often found in their love poetry. For the purpose of examining the gender roles in their poetry, I will focus on the subject of love, a subject where we can see the struggle over gender roles more clearly and also where we find the more philosophical, and even theoretical, poetry of the court tradition.

To the informed reader, Japanese court love poetry closely followed a traditional definition of the course of a love affair through a highly determined sequence of events.¹⁸ In the early stages of the conventional love affair, the male lover is enamored with a woman whom he pursues ardently only to be met with her refusals of interest. As the affair progresses his persistence ultimately wins her over, and they consummate the relationship to begin a brief period of pleasurable and passionate love centered on his visits to her residence. Convention commanded that, all too quickly, his attentions wander to other objects of affection, and the woman is left to await a rare letter and even less frequent visit in solitude and increasing melancholy. As he stops coming altogether, the woman's role is one of deepening sorrow and loneliness, occasional bitterness, and profound despair.

The conventions for love affairs in literature were crucial to the court poetry tradition, for they allowed readers to determine the setting and even the gender and feelings of the poetic speaker for the comparatively brief, five-line *waka* poems that were its dominant genre.¹⁹ These conventions were followed by male and female authors writing as both masculine and feminine poetic speakers throughout Japanese poetic history, thereby establishing a long tradition of writing in the voice of one's own biological sex and in the voice of the opposite sex. The conventional course of love was followed not only in individual poems, but also in the compilation of poetry collections, including the influential "Love" books section of the imperial poetry anthologies. Consequently, the conventional poetry of the earlier books in the "Love" books sections of poetic anthologies depicted the man's ardent pursuit of the woman, and the later books typically represented the woman in lonely solitude pining for a man who no longer returns her affections.

As aristocratic participants in imperial court culture, Retired Empress Eifuku and Tameko both wrote poetry in this conventional vein, and these poems are closely comparable to other examples from earlier periods. For one such conventional love poem we find a poem by Retired Empress Eifuku that exemplifies the middle to late stages of the affair:

Akenuru ka	Dawn has come?
mata koyoi mo to	"Again this evening . . ."
omou yori	I realize, when
namida ni ukabu	In my tears drift
tomoshihi no kage	the candles' flames. ²⁰

The conventional pain of this woman is best seen in her absorption in waiting, absorption evident from her surprise that the dawn has arrived. Once this feminine subject emerges from her reverie of loss and longing, she is surprised to find tears coming, and she realizes she has spent another evening without the man to whom she devotes herself. This passive acceptance of the agency of the masculine love partner—an acceptance that leads to loss and hurt—is the conventional feminine role in court poetry about the later stages of love affairs, one from which Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku diverged in other love poems.

A few women poets resisted giving too much authority to traditional renderings of the later stages of love affairs, and these poets are often identified with the style of women's poetry known as "passionate style." One example of such resistance is found in this poem by Retired Empress Eifuku:

Okata no	In wide world
yo wa yasuge nashi	there is no rest;
hito wa ushi	people are cruel.
waga mi izuku ni	Wherever can I remain
shibashi okamashi	even momentarily? ²¹

The speaker here has generalized the pain she feels from her lover's slights late in their affair to the entire world, naming explicitly the crisis of belonging that characterizes the conventional course of love in a way that makes recognition and potential resistance possible. Here the canonically authoritative course of court love poetry as defined for women by tradition is reproduced by the poet to leave her speaker no room of her own where she might define for herself her own experience and find some peace of mind.

The poem just quoted demonstrates Retired Empress Eifuku's mastery of the conventions of later stages of relations between lovers from earlier imperial anthologies, where the poetic personae at times ruminate on the general character of human nature. This poetic mode of philosophical contemplation bears fruit in comparison with other canonical abstract reflective poems, such as this anonymous poem from the enormously influential imperial collection *Kokinshū* (Collection of Ancient and Modern [Japanese Poetry]), which seems to venture even into epistemological and ethical theory:

Itsuwari to omou mono kara imasara ni ta ga makoto o ka ware wa tanomamu	Although I believe you speak to me in falsehoods, is there another on whose truth I might rely now that things have come to this? ²²
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The self-destructive potential for the woman in this affair is clear from the *Kokinshū*:

Hisakata no amatsusora ni mo sumanaku ni hito wa yoso ni zo omoubera na	Though I do not dwell in a celestial realm far removed from earth, you seem to consider me an alien in your world. (KKS #751)
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Like the example we saw in Retired Empress Eifuku's poem above, where the feminine poetic speaker does not feel that she has any place of her own, in this *Kokinshū* poem the feminine speaker comes to fear that she must be from another world.

In these conventional love poems the implications of love poetry for feminine subjectivity and for the construction of gender relations as defined for Japanese court society begins to emerge. As with many, if not all, attempts to constrain women through stylized repetition of gendered identities in a monolithic cultural system, however, this conventional configuration of feminine subjectivity failed to contain the agency and subversion by the few women writers who were willing to transform sexist practices through poetic innovation.²³ To explore these failures in the case of Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku, I introduce a style of love poetry through which some critics have understood their work and unfortunately attempted to domesticate it back into the limits of androcentric assumptions in our own day.

Contesting Gender and Agency in the "Passionate Style" of Love Poetry

Retired Empress Eifuku and Tameko's love poetry has been read by some modern literary critics primarily in the context of the "passionate style" of women's Japanese court love poetry.²⁴ In one influential reading by Robert H. Brower and Earl Miner, the rubric includes poems marked by direct expression of feelings about lovers, even deeply passionate eroticism, while others are enlivened by a playfully arch or a cuttingly ironic tone. Still others plumb considerable depths of thoughtful and even philosophical reflection on the character of love and reality. By exploring Retired Empress Eifuku and Tameko's poetry of this type, we may come to see how this modern rubric produces and reinforces certain modern androcentric conceptions of gender difference even as it draws on medieval constructions of gender difference found in premodern texts.

Retired Empress Eifuku is closely associated with this style, as are the early *Kokinshū* poets Ono no Komachi (fl. mid ninth c.) and Lady Ise (fl. ca. 935), some crediting the former with founding the style, and the mid-Heian authors Izumi Shikibu and Lady Sagami (fl. ca. 1050). The late-Heian poet Princess Shikishi (also Shokushi) (d. 1201), known for her poems from the enormously influential imperial collection *Shinkokinshū* (New Collection of Ancient and Modern [Japanese Poetry]), is credited with having revived the style. Several of these women authors became canonical in their influence, including Ono no Komachi, who was chosen as the only woman of the Six Poetic Geniuses of the canonical *Kokinshū* preface, and Princess Shikishi, whose poems in the canonical *Shinkokinshū* outnumber those even of her younger contemporary, the enormously influential male Fujiwara no Teika (b. 1162-d. 1241).

The more directly expressive poems usually grouped under this style leap out at the reader of court poetry with their directness and physicality, as in Ono no Komachi's:

Hito ni awan	Not meeting you:
Tsuki no naki ni wa	No moon above.
Omoi okite	Longing, awakening,
Mune hashiribi ni	Breast racing,
Kokoro yakeori	Heart in flames. ²⁵

Even given the comparatively liberated sexual and love customs of the early Heian court,²⁶ this poem takes the reader's breath away with its intensity and directness. Komachi's skill may be seen in the way this directness remains forceful even while overlaid with multiple word plays and layered meanings: her heart both feels love and is an organ that physically burns; the racing breast contrasted with the lover who did not race to meet her. Another well-known poem from this tradition by a poet known as Shunzei's Daughter (also Koshibe no Zenni; b. 1171?-d. 1252?) burns with a more hidden, yet no less intense passion:

Shitamoe ni	In smoldering fires
Omoikienan	my longing dies out
Kemuri dani	yet the smoke forms
Ato naki kumo no	clouds without traces,
Hate zo kanashiki	ending in sorrow. (SKKS #1081)

Shunzei's Daughter leaves her readers with a burning that fades, so that when her heated yearning passes it is replaced with the sorrow that convention demanded. The intensity of this subject's yearning is unusual in court literature, and came to be so well-known that the poet herself went by the nickname "Smoldering Lesser Captain" among later generations. It earned the author a place for critics among the "passionate style" poets, even as the author confirms an agency that only absorbs loss and does not fight for her desire. In this sense Komachi and Shunzei's Daughter's

innovations in poetry about women's experience did not subvert the power inequalities being inscribed into gender identities.

Other poems in this same style are resigned to the loss of a lover's attentions that the court tradition made central to the course of love affairs. One of the more eloquent would be Komachi's famously complex poem,

Wabinureba	Lonely,
Mi o ukigusa no	My body floating grass
Ne o taete	Its roots cut through:
Sasou mizu araba	If there were inviting waters,
Inan to zo omou	I would follow, I think. (KKS #938)

The complexities of this poem are less in the language than in the context, for this work was written in response to a playful invitation by a friend to accompany him to a government post in the provinces. The seemingly deep feelings of the response play against the reader's (and the friend's) expectations, and somewhere in the back and forth between the playfulness and the longing, we get a distant sense of what Komachi herself might have meant.

The poems lumped together under this rubric of the passionate style also include profoundly philosophical and reflective pieces as well. This modern critical category combines poems that seem unrelated in the modern Eurocentric academic category systems, where strong feelings are not conventionally associated with abstract thinking, as discussed further below. Many of the more philosophical poems reach their generality and abstraction through Buddhist conceptions of dream, reality, and the suffering induced by love, such as Lady Sagami's:

Utatane ni	Dozing, then
Hodo naku sameshi	Briefly seeing clearly,
Yume o dani	In such a dream even:
Kono yo ni mata mo	In this world once more
Mite zo yaminan	Seeing [you] it would end.

(qtd. in Brower and Miner, p. 228)

Here the poetic subject can rely only on the most unreliable of realities in a Buddhist world, the fleeting dream of the troubled sleep of a despairing lover, to find a way to end her longing for the man who has abandoned her. The ironic play of the term "sameshi"—meaning at once "to awaken," "to lose interest," and "to see the truth rather than delusion"—gives layers of multiple echoes to the idea that the solution to an enduring problem in the world might come from dreams, the metaphor in Buddhist perspectives for our deluded sense of reality. The reader cannot tell whether the poetic subject actually awoke or perhaps simply thought she could glimpse in her dream the solution to the suffering of her love affair gone awry.

Yet it is precisely this lack of clarity for reader and poetic subject that

convinces the Heian court reader of Lady Sagami's passions, for surely only a woman so lost in the despair of an abandoned lover cannot tell the difference between dreams and awakening. This widely believed Buddhist insight holds that aspects of the world we generally assume are stable and enduring, such as a happy relationship with a lover or a spouse, are indeed like dreams in that they are only impermanent and changeable (*mujō*), all too often leading to loss, suffering, and despair. In poetic interpretation the sorrowful feelings of loss and suffering, particularly when emerging from love affairs, came to be identified without particular Buddhist implications as *mono no aware*, or the pathos of things, and with a more general view of life as simply *aware*, or moving.

The Buddhist view of the confusion of dreams and awakened reality is found more directly in a poem by Ono no Komachi:

Utatane ni	While dozing,
Koishiki hito o	My lover I saw
Miteshi yori	And ever since
Yume cho mono wa	On dreams now
Tanomismeteki	I rely completely. (KKS #553)

So behind the apparent confused vision of such female poetic subjects is a deeper, gendered rendering of Buddhist truths: what we see in our dreams may indeed be just as real, or more real, than what we assume is real when we awaken. Komachi plays with the tradition of women longing for men late in the course of love affairs to suggest that her longing has overtaken her normal sense of what is real so that what she wants may be true even if the male lover is not cooperating, thereby repeating the gender identity but subverting the male's claim to control its terms.

The ironic distancing of these critiques of the overdetermined downward spiral of love takes a much sharper tone in other works lumped together by critics as examples of the passionate style. These include female poetic subjects' famously cutting attacks on men who do not keep their word and fail to return the attention of longing women they are destined to desert in the course of the court love affair. What would be regarded as an astonishingly confrontational poem for the court tradition is found in the works of Princess Shikishi: "I'm much in love, but look at me, I'll survive all this"—that isn't what I said, and you know it.²⁷

A more subtle and generalized questioning of the good intentions of men is found in another work by Ono no Komachi:

Ima wa tote	"The time has come."
Wagami shigure ni	I, in autumn showers,
Furimucha	aging, fallen.
Koto no ha sae ni	Even the leaves of your letters,
Uraromikeru	Fading, scattered. (KKS #782)

These poems at times resort to strongly felt and directly expressed bitterness and resentment, as in this memento of an affair by Ono no Komachi:

Those gifts you left
have become my enemies:
without them
there might have been
a moment's forgetting.²⁸

In poems such as these, the passion of these women poets grouped together by critics through this style includes not only passionate love but also anger, bitterness, hatred, and enduring resentment. In many of poems that have come in the twentieth century to be labeled “passionate,” the feminine poetic subjects “talk back” to their masculine partners. Such poems allow feminist subjects to critique the androcentric course of court love affairs in a tone ranging from the more subtle and philosophical to the sharp and direct even as they subject themselves to the gender identity produced through its repetitious sequence of events.

The association of this comparatively strong emotive style with women may well be an example of gender stereotyping in modern critical scholarship. The style has become associated by modern scholars with women poets not only because of their poetic tone but also because of the few fragments of what we know about their lives through literary headnotes and prefaces. For example, Izumi Shikibu was rumored to have been a *femme fatale* since one of her several lovers and husbands died during their affair.²⁹ Grouping these poems under the rubric of “passionate” poetry reduces them to a singular site of resistance, consolidating the feminine into a homogenous grouping categorized by emotions. It also erases the complex intellectual arguments of many of these poems as well as the sharp, ironic caricatures and open disagreements with court gender conventions. In combining women who think too much with women who allow themselves to feel too strongly, this critical category consolidates women who wouldn't allow themselves to be domesticated fully into court literary and social convention and its underlying epistemology.

In this way modern critical consolidations of women's poetry reproduce and also diverge from influential premodern interpretations, such as that found in the Japanese language preface to the canonical text, the *Kokinshū*. This preface, by Ki no Tsurayuki (ca. 872-945), lists six earlier poets who later came to be known as the Six Sages of Poetry, one of whom is a woman, Ono no Komachi. Tsurayuki's comments identified Ono no Komachi's poetic style with that of an earlier woman poet (who shares Komachi's gender but little stylistically), then famously characterized Komachi's poetry as “moving (*aware*) but lacking in strength. It reminds us of a beautiful woman suffering from an illness. Her weakness is probably

due to her sex.”³⁰ By disparaging not only Ono no Komachi individually, but the poetry of an entire gender in this way, Tsurayuki participates in a campaign to underplay the association of Japanese poetry with women poets and to showcase the virtuosity of male poets.³¹ Women poets dominated tenth-century court writing in the Japanese language, and they dominated early court poetry meetings where poetry was judged.³² Tsurayuki and other male courtiers of his day were actively attempting to appropriate Japanese writing in addition to their already established dominance of Chinese prose and poetry by marking a limited number of poetic and prose styles and voices as feminine, as Edith Sarra has noted, while leaving a broad range of styles and voices open to the masculine.³³

Brower and Miner's caricature of Eifuku and Komachi's poetry as representative of the “passionate style” carries out a similar maneuver to Tsurayuki's in its gendering the distinctive style of strong feeling as feminine, while refusing to mark or limit the masculine in a comparable way. Yet Brower and Miner's limitation of the feminine diverges from Tsurayuki's in at least three respects. First, Brower and Miner do not need to appropriate poetry (or prose) for the masculine; that project is unfortunately long established in many modern literary traditions. Secondly, Brower and Miner emphasize the strength of feeling in their characterizations of the feminine style, not feeling as weakness or even illness, as Tsurayuki did. Eurocentric, neo-Romantic assumptions that good poetry expresses feelings gives Brower and Miner's emphasis on passionate emotion a different valence than Tsurayuki's. These modern critics appear more concerned with finding a way to limit and manage the strong reactions of women writers to such poetic topics as love, when love is defined as a woman pining away for a man whose relations might best be characterized in terms of neglect and disloyalty, unfaithfulness and hypocrisy. Brower and Miner's categorization of strong women's reactions, often critical or even hostile, within gendered literary and social conventions also serves to identify women with strong feelings in a modern setting where social norms are associated not with strong feeling but with European Enlightenment values of rationality and claims to neutrality and objectivity. Finally, Brower and Miner's marking of a feminine style retains the claim to universality for the male poet, who may range broadly through different styles and voices without concern for limitations on their writing, a claim with a global reach in a time of Eurocentric modernity not found in Tsurayuki's characterization of Japanese literature.

Debates over poetic styles are generally anchored in issues of biological sex, as was the case both for Tsurayuki and for Brower and Miner, yet gendered poetic voice is another matter. Tsurayuki famously composed

a document purportedly written as a diary by a woman,³⁴ and poets in all periods wrote in genders other than their own. Kyōgoku Tameko's brother Tamekane composed such a love poem from the last stages of the love affair:

Kozu mo kozu	He'll not come, he'll not come!
Tanomaji mataji	I'll give him up. I'll wait no more.
Wasuremu to	I shall forget him!—
Omoinagara mo	Or so I think, and yet
Tsuki ni nagamete	I gaze upon the moon with longing. ³⁵

Tamekane here takes up the poetic voice of a woman despairing that the man who has abandoned her will ever come, then resolving to “forget” him, and in the end failing to carry out her own resolve and falling back into unrequited longing. Like Tamekane's other poems of this sort,³⁶ this poem takes as its central conceit the futility of the feminine subject who tries to resist the lure of the unavailable male lover in the last phase of the conventional course of court poetry on love. Tamekane here certainly presents the feminine subject as capable of considering options other than being caught up in the vulnerable positioning of the conventional course of love. However, despite the resistance she voices, Tamekane subjects his feminine subject to a collapse into helplessness, reinscribing the androcentric conventions of courtly love that returns the feminine to the position of weakness close to that defined by Tsurayuki nearly five centuries earlier. While various poetic voices were available to authors, it would be up to Tamekane's sister Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku to construct different subject possibilities for their poetic subjects that successfully refuse such androcentric poetic limitations and conventions.

Most importantly for the present argument, careful reading of poems by women identified by Tsurayuki and Brower and Miner may actually demonstrate that the poems erode the totalizing claims of the conventional literary love affair. They do so in their angry criticisms and resentments of the unfaithful male lovers required by androcentric convention, in ironic distancing and scathing sarcasm, through a questioning of masculinity, and through appropriations of Buddhist ontology in questioning even the epistemological grounds for knowing reality. The reductionist inclusion of these profoundly thoughtful ruminations by women poets on the nature of love, impermanence, truth, and reality under the rubric of the neo-Romantic, emotion-based “passionate style” obscures their philosophical and theoretical significance, a topic to which I now turn.

Agency in Doubting Gender Traditions: Retired Empress Eifuku

Writers are both constrained by the inherited gender traditions of a particular societal context and also free to perform those traditions differently

in their literary practices. This agency is one source of transformations of gender roles in cultural systems over time. As Judith Butler has argued,

If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relations between such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style.³⁷

Through renegotiating contested aspects of gender relations, Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku developed differences in the stylized repetition of love that opened the door to a different politics of subjectivity for women of the imperial court.

In contrast to the two more traditional love poems discussed above, Retired Empress Eifuku in some of her other love poetry rewrites gendered conventions and leaves traces of a resistance to court poetic tradition. I begin with one of her poems from the Love Books of one of the two Kyōgoku imperial anthologies, the *Gyokuyōshū*:

Oto senu ga	No word [from you],
ureshiki ori mo	a happy occasion
arikeru yo	this might have been,
tanomi sadamete	after giving [you my] trust
nochi no yūgure	this evening. (GYS #1383)

This poem has been interpreted differently by modern commentators, some finding it an expression of happy, trusting love and others reading it as an ironic image of doomed aspirations.

The ambiguity of the present poem comes from the obscure quality of the thought processes it describes. In the poem a presumably male lover's failure to send word of whether he will visit for a tryst one evening is somehow taken by the feminine poetic persona as a happy affirmation of her trust in his vows from past evenings of undying love. The conventions of love poetry might suggest to the feminine speaker and her readers that the male lover's failure to send word was an early sign of the beginning of the end—of his gradual yet seemingly inevitable loss of interest in the woman. However, some readers might also read this speaker's deep faith in the lover's vows being affirmed by his failure to send word as a happy, if distinctively naive or blissfully hopeful, declaration of faith.³⁸

I would suggest that any confusion for modern readers of this poem is symptomatic of the author's subtle and complex negotiations of the contested arena of court gender relations. In working with and against the grain of rapidly changing late-Kamakura-era gender roles, Retired Empress Eifuku, on the one hand, makes gestures that affirm the authenticity of traditionally defined roles and, on the other hand, undermines them by subtly distancing and questioning those same roles. In this poem she treads

the thin line between affirming faith in the male lover and raising doubts about the masculine role in her readers' minds, though in this case not in the mind of her feminine poetic speaker. The interpretive question here is not whether women doubted the intentions of male lovers: all women in the traditionally defined love affair inevitably came to question the man's intentions as his affections faded despite repeated promises to the contrary. Rather, this poem raises the issue of whether it is possible for a feminine subject ever to trust a male lover.

The question for modern interpreters of Japanese culture is: how should we read the feminine subject position that Retired Empress Eifuku presents in her poems? In the above poem we can attribute the poet's "peculiar" movement from absence to affirmation as something outside the bounds of "logic" as it is defined by patriarchal tradition, and hence "unrealistic," or we can view it as an opening through which to enter a world defined by another tradition, a woman-centered perspective on love, perception, experience, reality, and meaning that rejects the logic of androcentric conventions. By seeing the feminine subject that Retired Empress Eifuku presents to us as naive or confused, we take the comfortable, distanced position of the all-knowing reader who can see the "reality" as it was defined by the court poetic tradition, which we might interpret by rendering the feminine speaker as unable to grasp fully (that the affair will soon begin its decline into [his] freedom and [her] despair). If we take this position, we affirm the traditional gender roles of the court love tradition as "reality," and we fail to question whether this tradition might not be (re)defined in some other way. If we move too quickly to authenticate in our own interpretive act the "reality" Retired Empress Eifuku inherited from her past, we also eliminate all too glibly the possibility that she did not give that "reality" the authority we do: that she may indeed have questioned it herself, through her poetry.

Yet if Retired Empress Eifuku does not wish to give male-defined society the authority it demands, then where would we find her vision of society? We find another example of an opening for a distinctive rendering of feminine gender roles in one of Retired Empress Eifuku's early masterpieces, a love poem from 1303 anthologized in the *Gyokuyōshū* some ten years later. She writes:

Kaku bakari	When, even now,
uki ga ue dani	after such heartlessness,
aware nari	I long for him,
aware nari seba	if he longed for me,
ikaga aramashi	how would it be? (G.Y. = 1696)

Her poetic subject here follows the predictable woman's role in love by pining for her lover even after his failure to even have shown her clearly that

he is no longer interested. Yet it seems to have occurred to the speaker of this poem that her longing is somehow an inappropriate response to the unfeeling man since if she feels so strongly that she wishes to be with him when he shows no affections, how could she feel even more longing for him if he actually showed some love for her?³⁹

The question with which Retired Empress Eifuku closes the poem is one of her major contributions to *waka* court love poetry; it in turn questions the nature of love and of human experience more generally. A subtle awareness of the deep irony of a woman absorbed in unrequited longing and wondering how she might begin to feel if her lover shared her feelings is the starting point. Behind this awareness is a questioning of why the speaker must feel so painfully the absence of her lover, when she knows full well that, according to tradition, he will not show affection for her. This deepening sense of self-awareness in the poetic subject is characteristic of other Kyōgoku school poets as well,⁴⁰ but the poetic subjects in these poems by Retired Empress Eifuku show a deep interest in self-awareness that erodes the stability and veracity of the gendered inequities of courtly conventions.

Implicit is the questioning of the entire conventional course of the love affair, including most importantly for our present purposes the sorrowful sense of the passage of time through a lover's unwanted fading of affections. This is a sense that pervades the Buddhist teachings of the impermanence that leads to suffering. In the just-quoted poem Retired Empress Eifuku emphasizes the term *aware*, here translated as "longing," in a repetitive phrasing typical of Kyōgoku school innovations, which often used these repetitions for emphasis and to underline the subtle transformations of human subjective experience.⁴¹

In this poem, however, the term *aware* seems to carry associations with love itself, an identification that may have gendered implications for poetic subjects. Specifically, we can see that late in love affairs, as they were conventionally defined in the Japanese court tradition, *aware* would mean for the feminine subject an intense feeling of longing and suffering for her lover as his affections faded and he withdrew more and more from their relationship. Conversely, for the male partner *aware* would be associated with an earlier phase of the love affair and mean something quite different, such as disappointment at being rejected by a woman he desires. In conventional love poetry the male subject would find *aware* only in refusal and attachment to someone unknown, and he would never encounter it along the lines of the general Buddhist understanding as a loss or absence of something to which a person has become attached. The transience of what one once had belongs only to the feminine subject when her object of desire becomes less available and more distant.

Here the court tradition of love poetry seems to have defined the

Buddhist theme of transience in a fundamentally gendered way. If we take this as one of the most important defining characteristics of love itself, then we might say that in this poem Retired Empress Eifuku has expressed her sense that love is *aware* or sorrow for the women in this tradition, and that conventional love is inevitably the loneliness and suffering of unrequited longing for the lover that is absent.⁴² This Buddhist-inspired understanding of standard court love relations then becomes one more reason for the author to diverge from or reject poetic convention through the subtle distancing of the reader from the naive or doubting poetic subject.

A more subtle example of the same gentle questioning of the traditional course of love poetry is found in a poem by Retired Empress Eifuku from the fourth book of “Love” poems:

Kyō wa moshi	If today
hito mo ya ware o	he might even have longed
omoiizuru	for me,
ware mo tsune yori	I would, more than usual,
hito no koishiki	have loved him. (FGS #1223)

As in the early poem quoted above, Retired Empress Eifuku's speaker here seems to be drifting in the opposite direction of what is expected: while yearning endlessly for a man who does not even think of her, she would love him even more if he were just to long for her. The irony of this is clear to Retired Empress Eifuku's readers, for the predictable course of love condemns her to growing despair deepening into bitterness before she finally gives up on her attachment to her lover. While the readers (and the author) know this, the female subject of the poem does not, and therein lies the distance that makes the poem so darkly poignant. Once again, however, the emotional significance of the poem is highly determined by the gender of the speaker, and the pathos or *aware* of this literature is a consequence of that gendered context.

Agency Through New Gender Logics: *Kyōgoku Tameko*

Retired Empress Eifuku rewrites gender roles through a subtle irony and distancing of the reader from the poetic feminine subject and her conventional course of love. Tameko defines her position in love poetry in a way that gives her more direct forms of agency both in a relationship and in writing. She speaks to us about her position in the following poem:

Waga kokoro	My heart,
urami ni mukite	if you turn to resentment,
uramihate yo	then resent [him] completely,
aware ni nareba	for if you prove successful,
shimobigataki o	I can hardly bear it. (CC1=1297)

Here Tameko presents her readers with a defined fork in the road of love, one side leading to angry bitterness and the other to the sorrowful longing of *aware*. The preference of her speaker is also clear: the road of longing and despair is too painful, hence she must refuse that convention and instead turn to resenting the male lover—whom her readers would assume has left her for another female (or male) partner. The typical (and innovative) *Kyōgoku* school technique of repetition also underlines for the reader the intensity of the speaker's resentment. Tameko's evocation of resentment has precedent in the courtly love poetry tradition, as we have already seen in the deep bitterness of the Ono no Komachi poem discussed above. This strand of resentment at neglectful male lovers is one important way that authors provided imaginative space for women readers to take a position critical of traditions that fostered feminine passivity and painful melancholy. Tameko's development of this form of critical agency may be contrasted with the sense of agency in much Heian period “passionate style” court love poetry. Komachi's poem comparing a woman to floating grass, for example, which is quoted above, may follow the impetus of “inviting waters”(KKS #938). Yet Tameko's poetic persona in the poem above compares the two types of responses and then chooses to define the woman's role as one of strength in disappointment, thereby making an important statement about how she sees women in life and the feminine subject in love poetry. This dramatic innovation contrasts sharply with poetry focused on the later stages of love affairs by both female and male poets and is an important benchmark in Tameko's original contribution to the court poetic tradition.

The gender issues implicit in this poem come through more explicitly in composition by Tameko with a similar subject found, significantly, not in the “Love Books” but in the “Miscellaneous Books” of the *Fugashū* (#1882):

Kokoro da ni	Even my heart
waga omou ni mo	will not follow
kanawanu ni	my desires:
hito o uramin	there is no sense
kotowari zo naki	in resenting him.

While the question in this poem is once again framed around the issue of whether to resent (*uramu*) the lover or not, this time Tameko raises the question not as one of her own fortitude but as one of control and making “sense.” The reader perceives a struggle between two ways of making “sense”: one which tells the feminine speaker to avoid resentment, which she labels in a departure from traditional poetic diction as “sense” or “reason” (*kotowari*), and which she struggles to affirm; and a second impulse of the feminine speaker's own “heart,” which leads her to resent her lover. This juxtaposition of the “sense” that she wishes would lead her away

from resenting the masculine lover and the heart that pushes her into an unwanted resentment suggests internalized resistance to follow the usual tendencies. This “sense” might be described as a masculine-defined logic, which both the speaker and the poet Tameko have inherited from contemporary court androcentric social practices of love, and which she struggles against internally. It is by reading through the cracks in this masculine “sense”—identifying competing internal logic in the poetic subject—that we can find traces of a “sense” of the feminine that women writers were constructing in court love poems. This alternative logic would be very powerful in establishing and stabilizing feminine agency both for poetic subjects in writing and for lived behavior in society.

Yet the most important maneuver in this poem is Tameko’s explicit statement of the opposition, raising questions in her reader’s mind about what it is that makes “sense” or, more accurately, how it is that we render the world sensible. In other words, whose reality is given the authority to define the limits and practices of the subject? The reader knows the circumstances that surround the speaker’s impulse to resentment in the overdetermined world of courtly love: the man has left the speaker after overcoming her initial resistance to him, and now she can do nothing but hope (while knowing all is in vain) for the smallest sign of his affections. The powerlessness and hopelessness of this feminine position are evident and were apparently moving for premodern readers as evidenced by the endless reiterations of the solitary, futile longing of women in the third, fourth, and fifth of the “Love Books” in each of the imperial anthologies.

This ceaseless repetition of such a plaintive, victimized feminine position had long before become a figure of deep empathy in court culture for a woman absorbed in longing, sorrow, and hopelessness, yet in this poem Tameko seems to provoke her premodern and modern readers into asking, “Why so? What sense in that? Why not a figure of woman’s bitterness, anger, and power?” This is a threatening topic not just for love poetry but for a court society bound to male-centered logic and tradition because it asks us to question generally who it is that makes “sense.” Always behind such struggles between what has in the past made sense and what defines one’s own reality lie questions of who defines reality. These struggles also call attention to the power that certain social groups have to impose their “reality” on others.

One might speculate that the threat of this questioning could have led the compiler of the *Fugashū* to place this poem in the “Miscellaneous” section rather than in the books of “Love” poems, where we might otherwise expect to find it. This placement may indeed be related to issues of poetic content. The famous Ono no Komachi poem in which flames leap from her breast, conveying feelings we may associate with the height of love, were placed in the “Miscellaneous” books of the canonical *Kokinshū*,

perhaps due to its directness, intensity, and unorthodoxy. As I mentioned previously, for the late Kamakura period, particularly compared to the placement of poems by Retired Empress Eifuku and other Kyōgoku school poets, it is significant that Tameko’s poems are concentrated not in the “Love” and “Seasonal” Books of the imperial anthologies, which were considered centerpieces of the court tradition’s canon. They instead are found to a greater extent in the “Miscellaneous Books.”

When Tameko’s younger brother Tamekane had worked at Emperor Fushimi’s request with other poets (including Tameko) to compile the first Kyōgoku school imperial anthology, the *Gyokuyōshū*, he changed the traditional format of the imperial anthology by increasing the number of “Miscellaneous” books.⁴³ This move against the tradition presumably allowed more room for innovative writing that did not easily fit into the canonically defined topics of love and nature as part of their struggle with the orthodox Nijō schools of poetry. And it is in these books that we find much of Tameko’s best poetry both in the *Gyokuyōshū* and in the second and last of the Kyōgoku school-edited imperial anthologies, the *Fugashū*.

Yet Tameko did not have to leave the canonically defined tradition of poetry placement to challenge the largely male-defined traditions of love in her day. We find another, more explicit example of her insistent questioning in the second “Love” book of the *Fugashū*:

Sawari areba	“Since something has come up,
ato kanarazu no	next time definitely . . .”
nagusame yo	is your consolation:
iku tabi kikite	How many times hearing this?
iku yo matsuran	How many nights waiting? (FGS #1059)

Here Tameko’s speaker openly challenges the conceit of the tradition, questioning her lover’s claim to faithfulness, and by implication, the dictates of courtly love that a male lover’s devotion quickly waned and his attentions must wander to other objects of desire. Kyōgoku poets introduced to court poetry more colloquial phrasing by expanding poetic diction and by using language that reflected actual speech more closely than court poetry conventions had allowed. In this poem such innovations allow for a vivid immediacy in both Tameko’s caricature of the lover’s feeble excuse (“Since something has come up / next time definitely . . .”) and the feminine poetic speaker’s pointed questioning that may be compared to the Shikishi poem “That isn’t what I said,” quoted above. The Kyōgoku school-style repetition of “How many?” (*iku*) in the last two lines of the poem and the parallel structure of the questions underline the insistence with which Tameko inscribes this feminine questioning of the masculine. The overall effect is to render the male persona rather conventional and unconvincing, if not bumbling and deceitful, while the female speaker sounds assertive and

persistent in making her point.

“Since something has come up” might be compared with a poem by an early Heian woman poet often associated with the passionate style, Lady Ise:

Izukata ni	Not knowing
Ari to shiraba ka	where you rest,
Hanasusuki	would miscanthus
Hakanaki sora wo	blooms beckon
Manekitateramu	to an empty sky? ⁴⁴

Lady Ise uses a conventional form of questioning here, doubting her suitor's sincerity and future fidelity through elegant floral metaphor. By contrast, Tameko's colloquial quality combined with the repeated parallelism would have had a strong impact on her contemporary readers. Compared to court poetry hewing closer to tradition, the directness and persistence of Tameko's lines would have cut through convention to a degree difficult for modern readers to fathom, so accustomed as we are to colloquialisms in free verse. The court tradition had long found repetition to be one of the “sicknesses” of bad poetry, and here Tameko carries out the typical Kyōgoku school violation of these illnesses for which she, Retired Empress Eifuku, and Tamekane came to be known, bringing considerable criticism from Nijō school defenders of the orthodox tradition. Even modern readers accustomed to colloquial language in poetry like Brower and Miner critique such repetition as an experiment, which they find may lead to “trivial” poetry, an attitude unusual in their otherwise positive evaluation of the Kyōgoku school.⁴⁵

Dreaming Gender

Yet in Tameko's “Since something has come up” poem it is precisely the repeated, insistent questioning that presents us with a methodology for our own approach to the study of women in Japanese court culture. In their various modes of presenting alternatives to the masculine-centered limits and politics of feminine subjectivity constituted through love poetry, Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku give us ways to proliferate the failures of attempts to totalize gendered experience. Their innovations may allow us to strengthen our skills in reading through the cracks in the masculine “sense” of these texts to render intelligible other elements that diverge from androcentric practices and logics of their age and of our own modern age.

We have just seen that the contestation of gender roles calls into question not just the nature of women's experiences or of men's experiences, but raises the issue of how “reality” itself is defined, how we make

“sense,” or, most importantly, who it is that makes “sense,” men or women, masculine or feminine, normative or orthodox? Gender issues are often caricatured in the modern era as applying only to the personal experience of women and hence as insignificant, since the masculine vision is often both identified with the universal and assumed to define the most “significant” public institutions of Japanese society. Such valorization of the universal or the public over the personal has been persuasively questioned in much feminist theory.⁴⁶ Yet when reading the texts and reconstructing the practices of women in our own day we still have to read constantly through the “reason” and episteme of the androcentric worlds of past and present, always searching for the room past and present that authors were and are occasionally able to open for their own agency. It is precisely these moments of struggle and of efforts to build alternative realities that we may find in these women's texts.

I would like to conclude with an example of such a vision, found in another poem by Tameko, from which I took the title of this paper. This poem once again comes, perhaps significantly, from the Miscellaneous books of the *Fugashū*:

Hito no yo wa	This human world is
hisashi to iu mo	interminable, they say,
hitotoki no	yet briefly,
yume no uchi nite	in a dream,
sa mo hodo mo naki	it was not so long at all. (FGS #1975)

Tameko once again defines for us the struggle between two visions of reality competing for a feminine poetic subject: the Buddhist-defined world of nearly infinite impermanence and suffering and a less stable world that is not defined by almost endless suffering. Yet this time Tameko's speaker turns to the dream as a resource, for dreams often question socially defined conceptions of reality. Significantly, in this poem Tameko's speaker finds in her dreaming a happiness that the Buddhist vision of life as painful suffering cannot give her in love or other activities at the center of her life.

Here Tameko draws on earlier court love poetry that affirms the reality of that which her contemporaries all normatively “knew” to be unreal—dreams. We have already seen such a poem in Ono no Komachi's love poem from the *Kokinshū* (#553). In that poem, Komachi's poetic subject is defined by court tradition as a woman so distraught by the neglect of her unfaithful male lover that she verges on insanity, falling into a confusion of reality and dream: “on dreams now / I rely completely.” These poems contradict the treatment of dreams as unreliable visions of desire that are not upheld by the realities of human relations. Tameko's and Komachi's poems might be contrasted with poems on love and dreaming more faithful to court tradition, such as this one by Shunzei's Daughter:

Yume ka to yo	Dreaming
mishi omokage mo	I saw your face and
chigirishi mo	your vows too
wasurezunagara	I will not forget yet
utsutsunaraneba	they are not real. ⁴⁷

Shunzei's Daughter likens dreams to a male lover's vows of unending love when the male lover is expected to lose interest and break those vows—here rendering dreams unreliable as well. Tameko's and Komachi's turn towards dreams for an alternative reality transforms a turning point in courtly love for the feminine subject and points to a shift in power relations. The feminine subject rejects normative reality and relies on dreams only at the risk of losing her sanity (defined in Buddhist terms as the ability to distinguish between dream and reality). Yet this ontological rejection came to be praised by critics as capturing the deep emotions and even obsession of a passionate woman persona and, perhaps also, the feminized poetess herself as representative of the "passionate style" of poetry.

Some historians of Japanese culture may recognize these dreams as important metaphors from within the Buddhist canonical tradition of the unreality of ordinary, desire-based existence, which is ultimately subsumed in a patriarchal movement towards the liberation of the self from attachment. Yet Tameko's poem does not seem to be suggesting that the rapidly passing life of her speaker's dream is somehow a merely transitional stage on the road to higher insight. Other historians might be tempted to read this dream as a trace of the ancient women-centered shamanic or *miko* tradition, a tradition surviving in the women's quarters of the imperial court and elsewhere.⁴⁸ Yet the *miko* tradition in Japan is largely a tradition of women's spirit possession, and the dream journeys more commonly associated with male shamans do not lead to the pleasure that would speed one's life along to its end.⁴⁹

I would suggest that we read Tameko's dream as one place where she defined her own reality, where her own vision of the world could stand its own ground independent of the dominant, male-defined court tradition and allow her to build life on her own terms. Yet in the Buddhist epistemology and psychology on which Tameko draws, dreams are much more than mere subjective delusions. Given a feminist rendering of Buddhist ontology, dreams are what tell us that the androcentric world of normal "reality" is just as much an illusion as that which seems real to us in dreams. As Audre Lorde has written,

Our feelings and the honest exploration of them become sanctuaries and spawning grounds . . . a safe-house for that difference so necessary to change and the conceptualization of any meaningful action. . . . Poetry is not only dream and vision; it is the skeleton architecture of our lives. It lays the foundation for a future of change, a bridge across our fears of what has never been before.⁵⁰

The dreams that run through Japanese court love poetry are one strand in the efforts of court women to define the reality of both internal identity and social relations over and against the imperial court's world view and inegalitarian social circumstances to which they were often subjected. Dreams in their Buddhist world gave Tameko, Retired Empress Eifuku, and other women poets a space in which to perform autonomy from the courtly love traditions. The question for critics in the twenty-first century that I hope to have begun to address is, "What was the architecture of life that the Kyōgoku women poets dreamed of in their poetry?"

NOTES

¹ Customary premodern naming practices for Japanese court women lead to variant names in archival records. Both these women are known by two names: their court titles, Junii Tameko (or Tameko of Junior Second Rank) and Ex-Empress Eifuku, and their personal names, Kyōgoku Tameko and Saionji Kyoko. Formal references generally use their highest court rank, as I do below. Women were also known by the name of powerful male relatives or by Buddhist names, thus a woman known as Daughter of Shunzei was also known by her name after ordination into the Zen sect of Buddhism as Koshibe no Zenni. While in archival records and documents this may become confusing, for consistency, I have used names by which the person was best known.

² See William H. and Helen Craig McCullough, trans., Volume 2 of *A Tale of Flowering Fortunes: Annals of Japanese Aristocratic Life in the Heian Period* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980), pp. 818-20.

³ English language discussion of the changing inheritance and property ownership practices of women Japanese aristocrats can be found in many studies; for example, Wakito Haruko, "Marriage and Property in Premodern Japan from the Perspective of Women's History," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 10, No. 1 (1984), 77-99.

⁴ In English-language histories of Japanese literature, there is no mention of "women's literature" as a discrete phenomenon after the Heian period, suggesting either that women do not write during the period or that the critical category "women's literature" really refers for unexplained reasons only to women of the Heian period. See for example Kato Shōichi, *A History of Japanese Literature: The First One Thousand Years* (New York: Kodansha International, 1979), or Konishi Jin'ichi, *A History of Japanese Literature, Volume 3: The High Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

⁵ My list includes only the most prominent women poets at Eifuku's court. A sense of the large number of women writers important to this cultural center during Eifuku's lifetime can be gathered from Ihara Aki's article, "Eifuku Mon'in to Gyōka no Fuga no Onna Kajin" (Retired Empress Eifuku and the Women Poets of the *Gyōka* and *Fugashū* Imperial Poetry Collections), in *Nihon Joryū Bungakushi* (The History of Japanese Women's Literature), ed. Hisamatsu Sen'ichi (Tokyo: Dobun Shoin, 1969), pp. 447-70.

⁶ For an authoritative synthesis in English of Japanese language scholarship with

recent feminist theory, see Hitomi Tomomura, "Women and Inheritance in Japan: Early Warrior Society," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 33 (1991), 493-623 and her "Re-envisioning Women in the Pre-Kamakura Age," in *The Origins of Japan's Medieval World: Courtesans, Clerics, Warriors, and Peasants in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Jeffrey Mass (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 133-69 and various essays in *Women and Class in Japanese History*, ed. Hitomi Tomomura, Anne Walthall, and Wakita Haruko (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan), 1999.

⁷ For English-language discussions of women's importance in late- and post-Heian popular literature and performance, see Barbara Ruch, "The Other Side of Culture," in *Cambridge History of Japan, Volume 3: Medieval Japan*, ed. Keeto Yamamura (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988), pp. 517-30; Yung-hee Kim, *Songs to Make the Dust Dance: The Ryōjin hishō of Twelfth-Century Japan* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), pp. 5-17; Ruch, "Woman to Woman: Kumano bikami Proselytizers in Medieval and Early Modern Japan," in *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2002), pp. 537-80; and R. Keller Kimbrough, *Preachers, Poets, Women, and the Way: Izumi Shikibu and the Buddhist Literature of Medieval Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2008).

⁸ For a Western-language introduction to this process and the politics behind it, see Robert N. Huey, *Kyōgoku Tamekane: Poetry and Politics in Late Kamakura Japan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), although Huey overlooks the various leading roles of women in the school.

⁹ It might be noted at this point that the inordinately large role of the two women poets, Tameko and Chikako, represents an important event in the history of Japanese literature that has been neglected in many accounts of this subject. For example, Huey notes a small number of selected occasions that demonstrate Tameko's influence in the school, such as her presence at the 1297 poetry contest (held when Tamekane was unavailable due to exile) that established the Kyōgoku school as distinct (p. 35). However, he makes no general statements about the extent of her or Chikako's influential roles in the early years of the school and leaves implicit the presumption that Tamekane was the primary founding poetic force in the school.

¹⁰ Individuals from court society are known by different names at different periods in their lifetimes, so for clarity I have chosen one name for each individual and use it consistently through the paper.

¹¹ Retired Empress Eifuku's ascendance to head of household status after her father's death was remarkable in an era of increasing male primogeniture.

¹² Further information about Tameko and Retired Empress Eifuku's biographies can be found in my entries in *Japanese Women Writers: A Bio-Critical Source Book*, ed. Chieko Mulhern (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 27-40, and 160-73.

¹³ Miyoko Iwasa, *Kyōgokuha kajin no kenkyū* (Studies of the Poets of the Kyōgoku School) (Tokyo: Tsukuma shoin, 1974), pp. 440-41. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹⁴ Several sources show that Tameko participated in the selection of poems for

the *Uta-arashi*, but she was not credited in any formal fashion for this work. See, for example, a passage from Emperor Hanazono's diary cited in Huey, *Tamekane*, p. 49, p. 133.

Huey, *Tamekane: Kamakura History*, p. 385-88. A corrective to this approach may be found in the work of Miyoko Iwasa, whose work has been foundational for my own analysis.

¹⁵ Iwasa, *Eifuku Mon'in: sono shō to uta* (Retired Empress Eifuku: Her Life and Poetry) (Tokyo: Tsukuma shoin, 1977), pp. 37-39.

¹⁶ Iwasa, *Eifuku Mon'in*, pp. 33-37, discusses the circumstances that placed Ex-Empress Eifuku in the position of heading such an illustrious household during the turbulent times of the Kemmu Restoration and the first years of the Muromachi period.

¹⁷ See Janet A. Walker, "Conventions of Love Poetry in Japan and the West," *Journal of the Association of the Teachers of Japanese*, 14, No. 1 (1979), 31-65.

¹⁸ Many scholars have assumed that the love affairs depicted in this poetry are exclusively heterosexual. However, there is considerable cross-gender composition of poetry in the voice of another gender—for example, a man writing in the voice of a woman pining for a man to come visit late in the affair. This practice opens up the possibility of writing same-sex love poetry—to take just one likely tradition of same-sex relations—in the poetry written by monks for boy lovers, such as *Kokinshū* #555.

¹⁹ Tōza Utaawase, qtd. in Iwasa, *Eifuku Mon'in*, p. 218. Throughout my discussions of the poems I am indebted to the scholarship and annotated modern Japanese translations by Iwasa in her *Eifuku Mon'in* and her *Kyōgokuha kajin*. In addition, my work has been facilitated by the ground-breaking efforts of Robert Brower, Earl Miner, Helen McCullough, Edith Sarra, and Stephen Carter, although I take responsibility for any errors in the translations.

²⁰ Eifuku, "In the wide world," #1253 in *Fugashū*, ed. Iwasa et al. (Tokyo: Sanmii Shoten, 1975). Henceforth all poems unless otherwise noted will be cited parenthetically in the text with an abbreviated name of the imperial anthology and the poem number in the anthology; for example, this poem would be cited as FGS #1253. Numbering of poems in the imperial anthologies is taken from Iwasa, *Eifuku Mon'in*, and from *Fugashū*, unless otherwise noted as having a source in a published English translation. The poem numbers are consistent across editions.

²¹ Anonymous, "Although I believe," #713, ed. and trans. Helen McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū: The First Imperial Anthology of Japanese Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 158. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically as KKS and the poem number.

²² The question of whether male poetry writers also rejected these conventions in defining new forms of agency and resistance for women (and men) remains for future study.

²³ A general description in English of this style may be found in Robert Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), pp. 221-22, 226-28. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

²⁴ KKS #1030; this translation and those below are my own unless otherwise indicated.

²⁶ See Janet Grodzwin, *Selling Sams and Sams: The Sex Trade in Heian and Kamakura Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007).

²⁷ Princess Shikishi, "I'm much in love," trans. Hiroaki Sato, in *From the Country of Eight Islands*, ed. Sato and Burton Watson (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1981), p. 187.

²⁸ Ono no Komachi, "Those gifts you left," trans. Jane Hirshfield, in *The Iki Dark Moon: Love Poems by Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu, Women of the Ancient Court of Japan* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1986), p. 32.

²⁹ S. Yumiko Hulvey, "Izumi Shikibu," in *Japanese Women Writers: A Bio-Critical Sourcebook*, p. 154.

³⁰ Trans. McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū*, p. 7.

³¹ Edith Sarra, *Fictions of Femininity: Literary Inventions of Gender in Japanese Court Women's Memoirs* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 15; s.a., ii, 7, p. 270.

³² McCullough, *Brocade by Night: "Kokin Wakashū" and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), p. 242.

³³ Sarra, pp. 13-18.

³⁴ See Sarra, pp. 13-18, and Lynne Miyake, "The Tosa Diary: In the Interstices of Gender and Criticism," in *The Woman's Hand: Gender and Theory in Japanese Women's Writing*, ed. Paul Gordon Schalow and Walker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 41-73, for recent commentary.

³⁵ Trans. Huey, *Tamekane*, p. 48.

³⁶ See, for example, the poem beginning "Fuku mo seba" discussed at length in Huey, *Tamekane*, pp. 138-43; while Huey briefly notes the feminine voice of the poem and a number of technical innovations of this poem, he does not discuss its implications for gender relations.

³⁷ Judith Butler, "Performance Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal*, 40 (1988), 520. See also her *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

³⁸ In *Eifuku*, pp. 100-101, Iwasa sees this work as a very happy, peaceful poem giving the speaker's trust over to her lover completely, commenting that this happiness appears unusual when compared to the Japanese love poetry of earlier centuries. On the other hand, Brower and Miner in their *Japanese Court Poetry* (p. 386) interpret the image of evening in the poem as an ironic symbol of hope doomed to despair. They find the poem to be a prime example of Kyōgoku poetry, which utilizes imagery for highly symbolic, metaphorical, and other purposes.

³⁹ This ironic questioning itself is not unique to Eifuku's love poetry; see, for example, KKS # 760, # 772, and # 812.

⁴⁰ Huey, *Tamekane*, pp. 141-43.

⁴¹ Brower and Miner, pp. 372-73.

⁴² While Eifuku's association of love with *aware* may be somewhat distinctive to her poetry or perhaps to the Kamakura period, earlier poets also associated love with unhappiness and even misery (*uki*); see, for example, KKS #750.

⁴³ Huey, *Tamekane*, p. 122.

⁴⁴ H. Richard Okada, "Ise," *Japanese Women Writers*, p. 149.

⁴⁵ Brower and Miner, pp. 372-73.

³⁸ Among many such critiques, on the recent consequences of universalization, see Chandra Mahanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 196-220; and on the pitfalls of false universalization of the author's gendered categories, see Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, "Social Criticism Without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism," *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 19-38. Key considerations of the politics installed by the boundary between public and private are perhaps as old as feminism itself, but for recent discussions see Joan Scott and Debra Keates, eds., *Going Public: Feminism and the Shifting Boundaries of the Private Sphere* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

³⁹ Shunzei's Daughter's poem is collected in the canonical imperial anthology, *Shūkaishū*; textual source is from Okada, "Fujiwara Shunzei's Daughter," in *Japanese Women Writers*, p. 76; translation is my own.

⁴⁰ See Doris Bargen, *A Woman's Weapon: Spirit Possession in the Tale of Genji* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997).

⁴¹ Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975).

⁴² Audre Lorde, "Poetry is Not a Luxury," in *Sister Outsider* (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), pp. 37-38.