

Symbolic Imagery in the Poetry of Izumi Shikibu, — Parallels with French Symbolism —

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The lyrical poet Yosano Akiko (1878-1942), who is one of the representative Tanka poets in modern Japan, in her critical work "Akiko's Koten Kanshō" ("Akiko's View of Classics"), comments on the symbolic character of the Japanese court poetry¹ (*waka*). She explains that symbolism is a technique in which one word has a central meaning and another implicit meaning.

Falling down on the bed
Indifferent to the disheveled black hair
I remember him, who touched me softly.²

In this poem "disheveled black hair" suggests not only the disheveled black hair itself but also a mind disordered by sorrow. So the phrase "disheveled black hair" is symbolic.

I must offer a definition of symbol. I think that it has three essential elements. The first is the theory of "Einfühlung," Lipps' aesthetic idea, the second, Dr. Onishi Yoshinori's idea of "Herausföhlung"³ influenced by Lipps, and the third is the theory of "correspondence"⁴ originally held by such French symbolists as Charles Baudelaire. It is similar to the English "sympathy."

No one will object to the first and the third as essential elements of symbolism. Dr. Onishi's "Herausföhlung" holds that the ego, the observing consciousness, goes out and unites with the object (other). The subject and object become one. He remarks that there are different processes

involved in *Herausföhlung* and *Einföhlung*. In "*Herausföhlung*," the ego and its feelings are cast into the object, which is usually nature. The subject loses its subjectivity and becomes united with nature.

In the *Manyō-shū*, a collection of the seventh century, there is a special kind of sympathy or "*Herausföhlung*." For example, Dr. Onishi refers to a poem said to have been composed by the Empress Iwa hime (Iwa hime no Kōgō).

The morning mist,
Through the autumn ears of rice,
When will my love go away?⁵

In this poem the poet identifies her feeling with the morning mist in the fertile ears of rice fields ready for harvest. After the sun rises, the morning mist fades away, somewhere unnoticed. Where and when will her feeling of love which has been rooted in her mind disappear, just like the morning mist with which it is identified?

This is an example of Dr. Onishi's aesthetic idea of "*Herausföhlung*." For the poet, the morning mist is not a living object but contemplated and observed nature. Nevertheless "the morning mist through the autumn ears of rice" is the natural object which symbolizes her feelings. The morning mist which was caught by her eyes first is of course a natural phenomenon, but it reflects her feeling as if the two were one. The morning mist has metamorphosed into something which is rather an attribute of the phenomenon. Her jealousy is in sympathy with the morning mist after the metamorphosis. It is not until after she personifies the morning mist that she casts her own feeling into it.

"*Herausföhlung*" is a different conception from "*Einföhlung*." Then there is the theory of "Correspondence." This is the title of a poem by Baudelaire in which he speaks of the sympathy between human beings and nature, and of nature with nature.

Now let us look at Western ways of observing nature and the notion of "correspondence."

Cuccu Song⁶

Sumer is icumen in;
Lhude sing cuccu!

Groweth sed, and bloweth med,
 And springeth the wude nu
 Sing cuccu!

Awe bleteth after lomb,
 Lhouth after calve cu;
 Bulluc sterteth, blucke verteth,
 Murie sing cuccu!

Cuccu, cuccu, well singes thu, cuccu:
 Ne swike thu naver nu;
 Sing cuccu, nu, sing cuccu!
 Sing cuccu, sing cuccu, nu!

The cuccu is a personification of contemplated nature and the poet (unknown) never makes explicit his feeling toward the bird. He only tells us that the cuccu sings of the coming of spring. In this view, the singing cuccu is only the cuccu of nature.

Next let us look at "L'albatros" in *Les Fleurs de Mal* by Baudelaire.

Souvent, pour s'amuser, les hommes d'équipage
 Prennent des albatros, vastes oiseaux des mers,
 Qui suivent, indolents compagnons de voyage,
 Le navire glissant sur les gouffres amers.

A peine les ont-ils déposés sur les planches,
 Que ces rois de l'azur, maladroits et honteux,
 Laissent piteusement leurs grandes ailes blanches
 Comme des avirons traîner à côté d'eux.

Ce voyageur ailé, comme il est gauche et veule!
 Lui, naguère si beau, qu'il est comique et laid!
 L'un agace son bec avec un brûle-gueule,
 L'autre mime, en boitant, L'infirme qui volait!

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées
 Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
 Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
 Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

Here "vaste oiseaux des mers" in the first stanza, "ces rois de l'azur" in the

second stanza. "Lui, naguère si beau" in the third and "ses ailes de géant" in the fourth are characteristics of the albatros and reflections of the eyes and mind of the poet. The life of "Le Poète" in the fourth stanza is that of the albatros itself.

The albatros is the companion of men, especially of sailors. Jean Pommier points out that Baudelaire gets the theme from Samuel Coleridge's poem "The Ancient Mariner," which has the "suffered albatros" as a central figure.⁷ The poet sympathizes with the bird. Seeing it as more than a bird, in the end he almost personifies it.

We can see differences of natural observation in the two poems. The former is the poet's impression of nature including the cuckoo while in the latter nature (the bird) is not the subject. The impression enters the poet's mind after he reflects on his inner image and the bird re-reflects this image.

The latter image of the bird is personified and an object of sympathy. So the two poems illustrate Lipps' *Einfühlung* (sympathy), the theory of "correspondence" and Dr. Onishi's idea of "Herausföhlung."

Let us turn to Izumi Shikibu's poetry. I will study the meaning and role of the *Hototogisu*⁸ in each poem, and show its symbolic relation with the outside object, nature. I see five patterns.

- A) When the *Hototogisu* is a real or natural object.
- B) When the *Hototogisu* is a natural object but the situation is somewhat symbolic.
- C) When the *Hototogisu* is a natural object but because its song corresponds to the feeling of the poet, it becomes symbolic.
- D) When the *Hototogisu* is simply a metaphor for a person.
- E) When the *Hototogisu* is a metaphor but as a result of personification and sympathy, it becomes a symbolic image.

Izumi Shikibu has thirty-three *Hototogisu* poems. Let us see how they follow these five patterns.

- 1) Many times I heard the *hototogisu*.
Now as I go on my way
It is heard faintly
in the sky.⁹

The *hototogisu* in this poem is a real bird, a natural object.

- 2) *Hototogisu*, you who tell us of the mountain

In the land of the dead,
We await your early coming.¹⁰

In this poem the *Hototogisu* is seen as the bird which goes to the next world and returns to this world. The poet earnestly hopes that the *Hototogisu* will tell her of her lost one's situation in the next world. The *Hototogisu* is a real bird in the poem; furthermore it also brings news of the lost one and is the messenger bird between this and the next world. In this process the *Hototogisu* comes to have a symbolic meaning beyond that of the actual bird.

- 3) Listening intently to the *hototogisu*
I wonder if you have longing for me or not!¹¹

In this poem the song of the *hototogisu* is a messenger between lovers. It is traditional and conventional for a bird to be a messenger of love, but in this poem we can perceive the feeling of the poet, who is waiting for the song of the *Hototogisu*, and also for a living voice. Love and longing are implied. These three elements are mutually corresponding.

- 4) Next, a mixture of the two preceding cases:
"On a rainy evening in June"
If I were a *hototogisu* of Ashibiki
I should cry now.¹²

The first line is a short message from a sender with a poem. Here the poet feels somewhat sad and so she wants the *hototogisu* to cry ("cry" here is a pun – *naku* = sing/cry) in her place. If she were a *hototogisu*, she would cry (sing) but she controls her feelings. We perceive restraint of her real sentiments intellectually; but for the poet it is emotional. It is symbolic emotion.

- 5) There is no example for pattern D, in which
hototogisu is simply a metaphor for a person.
- 6) There are many orange blossoms
Planted in my house;
It is painful to wait for
The visit of *hototogisu*.¹³

This *hototogisu* is a metaphor for the man who visits the orange tree (the woman). The tree and the bird are traditionally coupled in Japanese court poetry, as are the plum (*ume*) and warbler (*uguisu*). In this poem, the *hototogisu* is not a simple metaphor. It carries the lover's suffering and the agony of waiting. As I read this poem, I see the *hototogisu* in flight. It gradually changes to the figure of the man, a courtier of ancient times, who visits a court-lady in fantastic organe robes. There is a feeling of sympathy toward the object.

- 7) The last case is that in which the *hototogisu* is a metaphor for a man with whom the poet corresponds, and the poet is this *hototogisu*. It has a symbolic character.

Beside the wild orange
Here I'll wait for the *hototogisu*
I wonder if he hates the smell of orange.¹⁴

The orange is a metaphor for a woman and the *hototogisu* is a man. As the idea expressed is not that he hates the orange but the smell of its blossoms, the implications are abundant.

"Oh, the smell of the *kiku* (chrysanthemum)
old Buddhas in Nara,"¹⁵

In this Haiku by Bashô the words "smell of *kiku*" have a sensuous effect, and contrast with the holy images.

In Baudelaire's "correspondence" there is a sympathy between spirit and sense through the agency of smell. This is common among French symbolists.

In sum, it can be said that all of Izumi Shikibu's poems above have symbolic images except the first. In the Manyô-shû there are many *hototogisu* songs but most of them are about the real bird which is rarely seen to suggest human feeling. In the poetry of Izumi Shikibu the *hototogisu* is not only the observed object, but also a metaphor for human beings and a symbol of human feeling and emotion. She uses other birds and insects as well as metaphors or symbolic images to express her special feelings.

Most natural objects become metaphors for her own sentiments and her emotions are poured into natural objects. In this way the natural object becomes more than a real substance. It becomes symbolic.

For Izumi Shikibu the *hototogisu* is an aesthetic object suggesting traditional nature as a kind of unification with herself. I think that not only natural objects but also every real entity outside herself can be the object of such identification. This means that she sympathizes with and makes correspondence with everything around her to show her mental and metaphysical situation. This is also apparent in her elegies.

I have been interested in Izumi Shikibu's symbolic imagery and its similarity to French symbolism. The theory of Lipps and French symbolism are similar aesthetically. I have also tried to use Dr. Onishi's theory of "Herausföhlung" for measuring symbolic character and image.

In Izumi Shikibu's poetry I can see "Einföhlung" as well as "Herausföhlung." Symbolic imagery is essential to her poetry.¹⁶

Notes

1. IZUMI SHIKIBU (?976-?). Mid-Heian *waka* poet, diarist. Apart from the fact that she was the greatest poet of her time and served at the remarkable court of *Jötö Mon'in with *Akazome Emon and *Murasaki Shikibu (who could not abide her), what is "known" of her derives chiefly by inference drawn from, or supposition occasioned by, her writing. Miner, Odagiri & Morrell, *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature*; Princeton University Press, 1986, pp. 170-171.
2. Kurokami no 黒髪の
Midare mo shirazu 乱れも知らず
Uchifuseba 打臥せば
Mazu kakiyarishi 先づ掻きやりし
Hito zo koishiki 人ぞ戀しき
Yosano Akiko Senshü 4, Shunjüsha, 1967, p. 80.
3. Onishi Yoshinori
"The Feeling for Nature in The Manyöshü"
("Manyöshü no Shizen Kanjö"), Iwanami Shoten, 1942, pp. 72-75, 183-86, 201-02, 203-17.
4. (from "Les Fleurs du Mal") Oeuvres Complètes. 2, Gallimard (Pleiade) 1975. pp. 9-12.

CORRESPONDANCES

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laisserent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répendent.

Il est des parfums frais comme des chairs d'enfants,

Doux comme les hautbois, verts comme les prairies,
 – Et d'autres, corrompus, riches et triomphants,

Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,
 Comme l'ambre, le musc, le benjoin et l'encens,
 Qui chantent les transports de l'esprit et des sens.

5. Aki no Ta no 秋の田の
 Ho no e ni kirau 穂の上に霧らふ
 Asagasumi 朝霞
 Izu e no katani 何處邊の方に
 Waga ko'i yamamu わが戀ひ止まむ
 Nihon Koten Taikai Manyôshû 1 vol. 1. Iwanami shoten, 1957, p. 62-63.
6. (from "An Anthology of English Poetry" by R. H. Blyth Nan-undo, 1952), p. 1.
 "This cheerful and musical poem is one of the first extant English lyrics, composed about 1250. Anglo-saxon poetry was alliterative, epical, rugged, occasionally personal and emotional. The influence of French verse is seen here in its rhyme, metre, and light touch. The author is unknown."
7. I should like to express my gratitude to Professor Abe Yoshio, for his great works of translation and studies of *Aku no Hana*, Baudelaire Zenshû, Chikuma Shobô, 1984, pp. 468-74.
8. *Hototogisu* is cuckoo in English, but it is different as a poetic sense in Japanese court poetry.
9. All of the following poems are from Collection of Izumi Shikibu, ed. by Shimizu Fumio, Iwanami Shoten, 1966, p. 49.
- Ikutabi ka いくたびか
 Miniwa kikitsuru 身には聞きつる
 Hototogisu 郭公
 Michi no sora nimo みちの空にも
 Honoka naru kana ほのかなるかな
10. Ibid., p. 142.
 Kano yama no かの山の
 Koto ya kataruto ことやかたると
 Hototogisu ほととぎす
 Isogi mataruru いそぎまたるる
 Toshi no natsu kana 年の夏かな
11. Ibid., p. 112.
 Kokoro shite 心して
 Kikubekari keru きくべかりけり
 Hototogisu 郭公
 Sono hitoko-e ni その一こゑに
 Kayo'i keru yato かよひけりやと
12. Ibid., p. 150.
 Ashibiki no 足曳の
 Yama Hototogisu 山郭公
 Ware naraba われならば
 Ima nakinubeki 今なきぬべき
 Kokochi koso sure こちこそすれ
13. Ibid., p. 15.
 Hana koso are 花こそあれ

- Hanatachibana o はな橋を
 Yado ni u'ete 宿にうゑて
 Yama Hototogisu 山郭公
 Matsuzo Kurushiki まつぞくるしき
14. Ibid., p. 112.
 Koko ni shite ここにして
 Machi kokoro mimu まち心みん
 Hototogisu ほととぎす
 Hanatachibana no 花たちばなの
 Ka o nikushitoya 香をにくしとや
15. Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei Bashō kushū, Iwanami shoten 1962, p. 175.
 Kiku no ka ya 菊の香や
 Nara niwa furuki 奈良には古き
 Hotoke tachi 佛達
16. The following comments are the part of my paper, titled "Chinese Allusions in the Poetry of Izumi Shikibu. It is for Princeton Conference in March, 1976.

I would like to add here Izumi Shikibu's use of the Chinese phrase "A brocade in the night" ("Yami no nishiki"). The phrase has fairly wide currency in Heian literature, there it appears in *Tale of Genji* and others. In Chinese the phrase occurs in Chinese History Record in a biography of 朱買臣 (Chu Mai Chen in Former Han, where we read; 富貴不歸故郷 如衣繡夜行).

To become rich and famous and then not go back to your old home is like putting on an embroidered brocade coat and going out walking in the night.

Izumi Shikibu uses the phrase in the following poem. The headnote is

Yama no fumoto ni ie ari,	A house at the foot of a mountain
momiji chirite hito nashi	The autumn leaves have fallen
	There is no one about

followed by the poem:

Chiri chirazu	Fallen or unfallen
miruhito mo naki	The red leaves of the mountain village
yamazato no	seen by no one,
momiji wa yami no	are a brocade
nishiki nari keru	in the night

This poem is, of course, an allusive variation (honkadori) upon an earlier poem by Ki no Tsurayuki that appears in the *Kokinshū*.

Miruhito mo	Seen by no one
nakute chirinuru	The falling red leaves in the deep mountain
okuyama no	are the brocade of the night
momiji wa yoru no	
nishiki narikeru	

The phrase in question, drawn from the *Shiki Shih Chi*, also appears in the *Mōgyū*, *Meng ch'iu* (蒙求), the collection of quotations, and by Izumi Shikibu's time it had become almost a conventional phrase in poetry. However, upon closer examination, Izumi Shikibu's use of the phrase differs from other uses in an important way. Whereas Ki no Tsurayuki and other writers use it as a simile, with "as if" or "like," Izumi Shikibu uses it metaphorically. Without the headnote,

Izumi Shikibu's poem might appear similar to Ki no Tsurayuki's (and indeed many commentators have taken it to be similar). The headnote points out that no one is around because the leaves are already fallen. Yet in the first line she stresses, by using "chiri chirazu", that the fact of the leaves having fallen or not fallen is less important than the fact that no one is present to share the scene with her. There is, then, a contradiction between the actual situation – the red leaves have fallen – and the opening lines of the poem. This slight but important disparity reflects her emotional situation. Wanting to get away from the capital, she has visited the lonely house in the hills, far away from her friends. In this lonely place, with no one with her who can appreciate the beauty of the scene, she expresses her own feelings of desperation and loneliness. The red leaves are a metaphor for herself. For Tsurayuki, on the contrary, the red leaves are simply an element in a natural scene. Izumi Shikibu brings out the hopelessness of the situation in her opening lines, "chiri chirazu." This note of resignation is also struck again in the last word of the poem, *keri*, an auxiliary verb that is subtly different in its connotations from the *keri* in Tsurayuki's poem.

In conclusion I would like to stress Izumi Shikibu's achievements in poetic diction and phraseology. As we have seen in examining her use of the Chinese phrase "brocade in the night," she was able to incorporate a contentional phrase into her work while at the same time giving it a subtle shade of meaning all her own.

Perhaps the message in this borrowing of Chinese phrases is best expressed in Aristotle's *Poetics*:

It is a great thing indeed to make a proper use of these poetical forms, also of compounds and strange words. But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor. It is the one thing that cannot be learnt from others, and is also a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilars.

We are left with this idea: although Izumi Shikibu did not formulate any poetic theory, her practice, at least in the area of borrowing phrases, is in accordance with the views of Aristotle as well as of the French symbolist poets.