

The Aesthetics of Linked-Verse Poetry in Yasunari Kawabata's 'The Lake'

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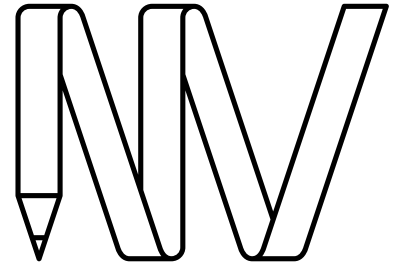
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ABSTRACT

The distinctive narrative style exhibited in Japanese author Yasunari Kawabata's literary works has frequently been associated with the traditional Japanese art of linked-verse poetry (*renga*). However, the precise compositional nature of these similarities has yet to be thoroughly explored. In this article, I examine two fundamental principles of linked-verse poetry, 'linking' (*tsukeai*) and 'flow' (*yukiyō*), and use these as analytical tools to explore the thematic and narrative structure for which Kawabata's literary technique is renowned. Considering the first chapter of his 1954 novel *The Lake* (*Mizuumi*) as a case study, I identify notable correspondences between linked verse and Kawabata's prose writing in the form of a qualitative mode of progression characterised by a rich use of sensory and emotive association, and a wave-like sense of rhythm between moments of heightened and reduced expressive and affective intensity. This article uses detailed textual analysis to demonstrate a structural basis for comparing Kawabata's prose with linked verse, which in turn implies that Kawabata's narrative style is shaped by conscious aesthetic decisions to draw on linked-verse principles.

KEYWORDS

aesthetics; culture; linked verse; literature; poetry; *renga*; tradition; Yasunari Kawabata



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Born in Osaka in 1899, Japanese author Yasunari Kawabata (川端 康成) produced more than 35 novels, over a hundred short stories of varying lengths, and numerous works of literary criticism before his death in 1972. Kawabata is renowned for his literary style, which combines elements of traditional Japanese aesthetics with an avant-garde sensibility rooted in symbolism and the conveyance of sensation. In 1968, he became the first recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature to write exclusively in a non-European language, and therefore holds an important position not only in the Japanese literary canon, but also in the broader canon of world literature.

Comparison between Kawabata's distinctive literary style and the mediaeval Japanese tradition of linked-verse poetry, or *renga* (連歌), are a frequent theme in discussions of his works (Hibbett 1966; Araki 1969; Liman 1971; Seidensticker 1979). This assessment is partly due to the fact that Kawabata produced the majority of his works in serial form, with each scene building on the last similar to the way in which a linked-verse sequence is composed verse by verse. However, the similarities between the two run much deeper. Themes and plot threads seldom develop towards a tidy close, but rather serve as motifs that continue to repeat and flow without resolution, like lingering echoes suggestive of deeper feelings in the vein of linked-verse poetry (Handō 2002). Scholarship to date has highlighted the influence of linked verse on Kawabata's literary style, with a focus on how the form's conventions can be seen in the motifs and narrative development of his novels. However, the precise compositional nature of these similarities has yet to be thoroughly explored. In contrast to the narrative focus of past studies, this paper explores the nature of the similarities between Kawabata's prose and linked verse from a compositional and stylistic standpoint by identifying tropes of linked-verse poetry in one of Kawabata's representative works, his 1954 novel *The Lake* (みずうみ).¹

KAWABATA'S LITERARY STYLE

Kawabata's debt to traditional literature is widely acknowledged, and symbols of traditional culture, from the tea ceremony, to geisha, to classical art and architecture, feature prominently in his works. At the same time, he is also widely viewed as a Modernist author, and the intersection between tradition and modernity is a key trend in research into his writings (Brown 1988; Starrs 1998; Nihei 2011). In his early career, Kawabata was one of the founding members of the *Shinkankaku-ha* (新感覚派) or 'New Sensationism' movement that pioneered the introduction of Western Modernist modes such as stream of consciousness, automatic writing, Dadaism, cubism, expressionism and futurism into the Japanese literary sphere (Iwamoto 1988). He employed such techniques himself in various early works, such as his 1930 novel *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (浅草紅団) (Lippit 2002), his 1932 novella *Lyric Poem* (抒情歌) (Nihei 2011) and his 1934 novella *Crystal Fantasies* (水晶幻想) (Breu 2015). As if to reinforce this association with the

¹ This article is based on the 1991 Shinchō Bunko edition of the novel entitled *Mizuumi* (みずうみ). All English translations of the text are cited from the 1974 Kodansha International edition translated by Reiko Tsukimura.

Modernist movement, while his narrative technique has often been likened to linked verse, comparisons have also been made to Modernist strategies such as Joycean stream-of-consciousness (Iwata 1983), Freudian psychoanalysis (Mebed 2010), and free association (Breu 2015; Miyazaki 2019).

Nonetheless, in Kawabata's case, the seemingly opposing trends of tradition and modernity should not be regarded as mutually exclusive. Brownstein (1994) observes that there is "a basic affinity between classical Japanese aesthetics and twentieth century Modernism" (483), principally in the use of juxtaposition and symbolism. Starrs (1998) charts a course of influences from traditional Japanese aesthetics on the Western Modernist movement, resulting in various inherent parallels between the two, and argues that Kawabata's "traditionalism was a natural outgrowth of his Modernism" (126). In effect, Kawabata draws on tradition in a Modernist context, using influences such as linked verse to establish a self-conscious break with the then-prevailing literary modes of the Meiji and Taishō eras, such as Naturalism and Realism, which he regarded as failing to address the fundamental question of literary expression: the notion of sensation (Dodd 2012).

Previous examinations of Kawabata's debt to linked verse have taken a variety of approaches. Saeki (1958) and Kurokawa (2013) show how his writing style is steeped in the stylistic language of traditional poetry, drawing on shared themes, vocabulary and motifs. Ueda (1986) demonstrates that, like linked verse, Kawabata's novels are often composed of seemingly disparate episodes that rely on 'suggestiveness' (余情; *yojō*) and 'mysterious depth' (幽玄; *yūgen*) (Odin 1985, 68–74) to evoke a narrative theme and to give some clues to their resolution, but leave it to the reader to infer a meaningful ending. Riddington (1995) explores Kawabata's use of the ancient concept of *kotodama* (言霊), the belief in Japan's animist Shinto religion that ritual word usages possess mystical powers capable of influencing the mind and soul, demonstrating how he borrows from the linked-verse tradition of lexical terms with prescribed hidden allusions "to harvest the tension between sensation and meaning" (111). Starrs (1998) considers Kawabata's works as emblematic of 'anti-narrative', employing a structure highly akin to linked verse so as to allow his characters to transcend time and regain aspects of their lives that are out of reach.

The most widely noted similarity between linked verse and Kawabata's novels can be found in the way that linear plot development in Kawabata's works is subordinate to themes that are "developed and enriched by the use of image, parallel, and symbol" (Obuchowski 1977, 207). The result is a narrative progression that appears "formless, as life is formless" (Ueda 1976, 208). This implies a significant distinction from conventional conceptualisations of the novel, which place comparatively greater emphasis on the importance of causal structural unity. What is referred to here is more akin to a quality developed from the tradition of Zen Buddhism known as *zenki* (禅機), "the spontaneous naturalness of ordinary activity free of forms, flowing from the 'formless self'" (Ames 1965, 28). While seeming to embody randomness, *zenki* is in fact a heavily cultivated representation of an idealised sense of formlessness, in the manner that a Japanese garden attempts to capture

the essence of nature, and in so doing transcend it. In other words, this ‘formlessness’, which—drawing on the quality of *zenki*—may be described in terms of ‘spontaneous naturalness’, can itself be regarded as a purposefully constructed and conventionalised form. In this sense, adopting Burke’s (1968) theoretical terminology, Kawabata’s works can be said to feature a higher degree of ‘qualitative’ progression, by which the presence of one quality prepares the reader for the introduction of another, and a lesser degree of ‘syllogistic’ progression, by which a chain of events develops step-by-step according to the rules of cause and effect, than is often encountered in prose novels.

The Lake is an illustrative example of this kind of narrative progression. Originally serialised in the magazine *Shinchō* (新潮) between January and December of 1954, the novel tells the story of a beauty-obsessed aesthete, Gimpei Momoi. It focuses on Gimpei’s flight from Tokyo, spurred by the belief that he has stolen a handbag from a woman named Miyako Mizuki whom he had been following through the streets. The novel also dwells on Gimpei’s relationship with one of his former students, Hisako Tamaki. The text is indicative of the structural and stylistic elements that characterise Kawabata’s longer works and that bear striking similarities to linked verse. Not only does the novel read episodically, with its various scenes weaving in and out of one another, but it also progresses in such a manner that the presentation of prior events functions not to provide an impetus or explanation for subsequent ones, but rather to build an emotive picture of its cast of characters. In this way, the development of the plot is largely driven by the use of association, each scene transitioning to and from the previous one, and in so doing, bringing something new to the attention of both the reader and the protagonist. In order to demonstrate the manner by which this technique functions, I will first discuss several key principles of linked-verse poetry.

PRINCIPLES OF LINKED-VERSE POETRY

Linked verse is a genre of Japanese poetry that reached its height in popularity and practice between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries. As a poetic genre, it is governed by a strict set of rules that eschew any sense of syllogistic progression beyond any single pair of immediately adjoining verses. As a result, any given linked-verse sequence will typically shift from one visual and/or emotional sentiment to another with little overall sense of causal progression, leading scholars of the medium to refer to it in terms such as a “symphony of images” (Konishi 1975, 45). The formal rules (式目; *shikimoku*) governing the structure of linked verse are extremely complex, comprising one of the most detailed sets of conventional forms in world literature (Carter 1991). However, for the purposes of this paper, a brief summary of the central principles of ‘linking’ (付け合い; *tsukeai*) and ‘flow’ (行様; *yukiyō*) will suffice.

In linked-verse poetry, each verse in a sequence is linked both to the one immediately preceding it (前句; *maeku*) and to the one immediately succeeding it (付け句; *tsukeku*), but to no other, like the succession of links in

a chain (Miner 1990, ix). The relationship between adjoining verses is complementary: each of the pair leaves something unsaid, entrusting its completion to its partner, which in turn also leaves something unsaid (Ramirez-Christensen 2008b, 103). The essential quality of linked verse can be found in the link, which exists as a gap between verses, serving as a poetic application of the aesthetic principle of ‘negative space’ (間; *ma*) and creating an interpretive vacuum for the audience or reader to engage with. In the composition of a collaborative linked-verse sequence, in which multiple authors take turns to compose individual verses, it falls to the next participant to enter into and to complete the preceding verse: their verse then acts to construct a reading or an interpretation of the preceding verse (Ramirez-Christensen 2008a, 40). For the reader or listener, the two independent yet interrelated verses create an invitation to interpretation, and the contrast between them creates a sense of ‘mysterious depth’ (幽玄) that would not exist if they were read separately (Odin 1985, 68–74).

The early authority on linked-verse poetry, Nijō Yoshimoto (二条 良基) [1320–1388], identifies thirteen techniques of linking (Ueda 1967, 37–54). Each of these techniques are to varying extents syllogistic and qualitative, either building upon the previous verse to further develop a sensation, image or suggestion, or changing course in an unanticipated direction through the use of wit, juxtaposition or allusion. Links that lean more towards the techniques of the former are described as ‘close’ (親句; *shinku*), while those that rely more on the latter are described as ‘distant’ (疎句; *soku*) (Ramirez-Christensen 2008b, 96). While these two concepts function as a spectrum rather than as a strict dichotomy, contemporary scholars typically describe links in terms of four ranges of closeness: ‘close’, ‘close–distant’, ‘distant–close’ and ‘distant’ (Miner 1979, 72). While one verse may relate to its predecessor syllogistically, in order to avoid a ‘clashing’ sense of rhythm (嫌い; *kirai*), it must not be similarly relatable to the verse preceding its predecessor (前々句; *maemaeku*) (Ramirez-Christensen 2008a, 186). For this reason, while short-term syllogistic continuity is permissible within a pair of verses, the overall sense of flow in a sequence from beginning to end must be qualitative.

This sense of flow is maintained through a variety of forms. Chiefly, these are: an alternating arrangement of ‘pattern’ (紋; *mon*) and ‘background’ (地; *ji*) verses; rules for seriation and intermission (去り嫌い; *sarikirai*), which regulate the frequency of the appearance and reappearance of similar elements; and a modulation pattern of ‘prelude-allegro-presto’ (序破急; *johakyū*) (Konishi 1975, 50). In the first form, the relationship between pattern and background verses mirrors the relationship between patterns and backgrounds in visual media. Pattern verses present striking and vivid images or sensations that command the attention, while background verses contain comparatively plain, unremarkable images or sensations so as to provide the pattern verses with space to produce the desired effect (Miner 1979, 73). As with the case of close and distant links, this alternation between pattern and background verses is best conceived as a spectrum, although contemporary scholars often divide it into four ranges of impressiveness: ‘background’, ‘background–pattern’, ‘pattern–background’ and ‘pattern’ (Miner 1979, 72).

The second form, comprised of the seriation and intermission of related images and phenomena, is governed by a more complex set of rules. The general principles behind seriation and intermission are that verses featuring similar or related thematic or lexical components must be separated from each other so as not to dilute their effect, and that themes must continue for a certain number of verses, often capped by a maximum, and sometimes a minimum number (Konishi 1975, 43). These restrictions are based on thematic and lexical categories derived from the classical tradition of *waka* (和歌) poetry anthologies (Ramirez-Christensen 2008a, 12), and apply not only to the categories themselves, but also to words commonly associated with them, to other homophonous terms, and to terms that may be associated with homophonous terms. Thematic categories include topics such as Spring, Autumn, Love, Travel, Laments and Miscellaneous. Lexical categories include iconic elements that are considered to cluster naturally together, such as Sky Phenomena, Falling Things, Flora, Mountains, Waters and Dwellings (Konishi 1975; Carter 1991). These rules in effect produce a sense of continuous motion, in which the sequence may dwell only momentarily on one theme before moving to another. This wave-like sense of progression is similarly maintained in the distribution of close and distant links, and in that of background and pattern verses.

The third form is the modulation pattern of prelude-allegros-presto. This pattern is not unique to linked-verse poetry but features in a wide variety of Japanese arts, perhaps most famously in the Noh tradition of theatre. In general terms, the prelude should have a slow beginning with a graceful, restrained tone; the allegros should develop the narrative with a brisk sense of forward movement and strive for heightened interest, generally with an increased focus on human affairs; while the presto should develop yet faster with a sense of striking imagery before returning to a smooth progression and a simple conclusion (Konishi 1975, 50). The effect of this pattern is to create a gradual build-up of tension followed by release, imparting the sequence with a performative energy representative of the Zen Buddhism aesthetic conceptualisation of life as symbolic animation (Ramirez-Christensen 2008a, 61).

In order to demonstrate the shaping of flow in linked verse in terms of the above principles, I will first consider an exemplary sequence, the *One-Hundred Verses by Three Poets at Minase* (水無瀬三吟百韻) composed by the poets Sōgi (宗祇) [1421–1502], Shōhaku (肖柏) [1443–1527] and Sōchō (宗長) [1448–1532].² The forms mentioned above can be observed in the first fifteen verses of the sequence:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 1. 雪ながら山本かすむ夕べかな | while snows yet remain
hazy round the mountain base
grows the evening |
| 2. 行く水とほく梅にほふさと | distantly the water glides
by the plum-scented village |

² English rendition cited from Kenneth Yasuda's 1956 translation.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 3. 川風に一むら柳春見えて | in the willow-grove
before the river-breezes
spring is visible |
| 4. 舟さす音もしるきあけがた | there the poling of the boat
sounds distinctly in the dawn |
| 5. 月や猶霧わたる夜に残るらん | does the moon still hang
lingering as in the night
when mists were lacing? |
| 6. 霜おく野はら秋は暮れけり | over the frost-set meadows
autumn is about to close |
| 7. なく蟲の心ともなく草かれて | withered now, the grass
shares no more the joyous heart
of insects singing |
| 8. かきねをとへばあらはなるみち | at the trimmed hedge I called
the road runs bare and open |
| 9. 山ふかき里やあらしに送るらん | in those deep mountains
is the village still untouched
by the stormy wind? |
| 10. なれぬすまひぞさびしさもうき | in an unfamiliar dwelling
loneliness grows sadder still |
| 11. 今更にひとり有る身をおもふなよ | more than ever now
do not even dream a dream
that you are alone |
| 12. うつろはんとはかねてしらずや | should we not know
beforehand whatever blooms
always fades? |
| 13. 置きわぶる露こそ花に哀れなれ | the dew that rises
forlornly on the flowers
is deeply touching |
| 14. まだ残る日のうち霞むかけ | in the twilight's balmy haze
still the sun is lingering |
| 15. 暮れぬとや鳴きつゝ鳥の歸るらん | do the calling birds
cry the coming on of night
as they homeward fly?
(Yasuda 1956, 39-43) |

In a hundred-verse sequence (百韻; *hyakuin*) such as this, the prelude encompasses the first eight verses, the allegros verses nine through to ninety-two, and the presto the final eight verses (Miner 1979, 64).³ As such, in the above sequence, the thematic progression begins in Spring (1–3), moves through a single Miscellaneous verse (4) into Autumn (5–7), before moving again into a pair of Miscellaneous verses (8–9) that punctuate the prelude and lead into the allegros, emerging in Laments (10–12), and returning to Spring (13–15) (Ramirez-Christensen 2008a, 16). Verses 1–3 describe the vibrancy of spring, while verses 5–7 the somberness of autumn, which is then capped by the bare path of verse 8. Through the shift from spring to autumn, the prelude comes to an end, and the allegros marks its beginning with an emphasis on human affairs. While the previous verses focus on scenery, the temporal and thematic movement lending a sense of travel, verses 8, 11 and 12 are of a more personal nature, ostensibly reflecting a dialogue in a village deep in the mountains where the speaker of verse 8 has arrived. In verse 13, a symbol compresses the sentiment of verse 12 into a concrete image and the sequence returns thematically to spring, but carries with it the overtone of evanescence generated in the previous verses. In regard to thematic structure, there can be seen in this excerpt an elliptical pattern of zooming in and zooming out, or more generally, of an alternation between greater and lesser degrees of emotional intensity, reflecting the rules around thematic seriation and intermission discussed earlier.

We can observe a similar alternation between the distribution of background and pattern verses, the arrangement of which Miner (1979, 184–89) identifies as pattern (1–2), pattern–background (3), background–pattern (4–5), background (6), pattern (7), pattern–background (8), background (9–12), pattern (13–14) and background (15). The impressive imagery of verses 1 and 2 gradually shifts into the quietness of verse 6, before rising suddenly with the crying of the insects in verse 7, and beginning to subside again by verse 8. Verses 9 through to 12 are comparatively plain, moving away from description in verses 10 through to 12, while verses 13 and 14 again present striking springtime imagery, then with verse 15 the tone again subsides as the birds return to their roosts. Just as there is a basic elliptical pattern in the sequence’s thematic structure, so too is there a constant interweaving of expressive pattern verses set off against less striking background verses.

As is the case with the sequence’s shifts in thematic matter and degrees of intensity, the arrangement of close and distant links is again generally one of asymmetrical alternation. Nonetheless, in this section of the sequence there is a greater proportion of more closely related links, with a particularly notable frequency of close–distant links. Miner (1979, 184–89) views the shifts in the manner of linking as follows: close (1–2 and 2–3), distant–close (3–4), close–distant (4–5, 5–6, 6–7, 7–8, 8–9, 9–10, 10–11), close (11–12), close–distant (12–13, 13–14, 14–15). The preponderance of close and close–distant links in this section of the sequence has the effect of rendering the overall poem with a gentle sense of fluidity. As this excerpt comprises the prelude and the beginning of the allegros, it proceeds with restrained prosody and unchallenging caesurae, enticing the reader or listener to drift along with

³ Hundred-verse sequences were the standard length of classical linked-verse compositions. The formal rules of the genre relate primarily to this format.

the succession of imagery, which gradually becomes more involved as the sequence develops. While more distant links occur later in the sequence as the allegros develops further, the oscillating pattern discussed above can nonetheless be observed in the distance between links in this early section: while the links here lean towards closeness rather than distance, the pattern holds in the elliptical cycle between their levels of closeness. The first link is among the closest, followed by one that is comparatively more distant, followed by a chain that is then comparatively closer, then closer still, then more distant. As the sequence continues, with the allegros coming into shape and the flow building up speed, there is an increasing frequency of techniques such as synaesthesia and wordplay, and thus the pattern shifts towards a greater focus on distant links.

LINKING AND FLOW IN *THE LAKE*

In linked verse, links manifest structurally in the space between verses, and the overall flow of a poem in this style is determined by the nature of each individual verse as it continues from one to the next. A novel, however, is not comprised of such strict and discrete units. As such, it is not the conventional forms of linked verse that are of interest in this analysis, but rather the essential character, functions and effects of those forms. Thus, whereas a linked-verse sequence will feature numerous runs of three to five verses, each pertaining to a particular thematic category, in a novel, we might expect to find a comparable pattern in the relatively discrete scenes and subplots that occur throughout the narrative. Whereas the flow of a linked-verse sequence will entail shifts from one thematic category to another and back again in a wave-like progression, in a novel, we might look for similar usage in the presentation of events and imagery irrespective of their syllogistic continuity.

Indeed, this is the very kind of progression that we find in *The Lake*. The novel is divided into four unnumbered chapters, each involving a significant temporal shift. The first chapter is framed around the character of Gimpei Momoi; the second is framed around Miyako Mizuki; while the third and fourth return to Gimpei. While there is a degree of syllogistic progression between these chapters, primarily in the framing narratives of the third and fourth, this is secondary to their qualitative elements. There are few indications as to the syllogistic arrangement of the chapters, and it is chiefly through taking note of various seasonal phenomena that the reader becomes aware of the likelihood that they are presented in a non-linear fashion: the third chapter takes place in midspring, the fourth follows immediately afterwards in midsummer, the first takes place at the end of summer, and the second takes place at roughly the same time as the first. This echoes the treatment of thematic tropes in linked verse, where related imagery and topics alternate non-sequentially. On top of this, each of these chapters contains numerous subplots that weave in and out of not only their respective framing narratives, but also through the chapters themselves. The interwoven subplots can be seen to reflect the linked-verse characteristic of seriation and intermission, as the narrative constantly moves away from one, explores another, and later returns.

Due to the nonlinear nature of the text, we must consider its plot at the narratological levels of ‘story’ and ‘discourse’, ‘story’ referring to a sequence of events independent of their presentation, and ‘discourse’ referring to the presentation of events independent of their sequence (following Culler 1981).⁴ In addition to this, it is useful to consider distinct scenes demarcated by changes in characters, location, setting or theme. In the first chapter alone, we find no fewer than eleven scenes constituting four distinct yet interrelated stories woven together into a single integrated discourse. The novel opens with Gimpei’s arrival at the town of Karuizawa, whereupon he wanders towards a Turkish bathhouse. In a start of involuntary memory brought on by his own imaginings, he recalls the incident that prompted him to flee to this mountain town. A woman, Miyako, whom he had been following through the streets of Tokyo, becomes alarmed, hurls her handbag at him and takes flight. Gimpei too, uncertain as to whether or not she has reported the incident to the police, makes his escape. Back in the bathhouse, Gimpei goes on to recall the first woman whom he had ever followed: a former student of his, Hisako Tamaki. While reminiscing on his relationship with Hisako, he recalls an episode from his childhood, a time when he had lived by the lake of his mother’s home village with his older cousin Yayoi. Finally, the narrative returns to the bathhouse, and this first chapter comes to a close. If we divide the chapter into discrete scenes pertaining to each of these stories, the overall discourse can be illustrated as follows:

1. Gimpei arrives at Karuizawa (Kawabata 1974, 5–6).
2. Gimpei arrives at the Turkish bathhouse (6–16).
3. Gimpei recalls the handbag incident (16–18).
4. The narration returns briefly to the bathhouse (18).
5. Gimpei destroys the handbag and its contents (18–22).
6. Gimpei recalls Hisako (22–24).
7. After following Hisako, Gimpei flees to an amusement district (24–26).
8. Gimpei recalls his childhood with Yayoi (26–28).
9. The narration returns briefly to the amusement district (28).
10. Gimpei’s relationship with Hisako develops (28–33).
11. The bathhouse service ends, and Gimpei dwells on his relationships with Hisako and Yayoi (34–42).

The first story encompasses scenes 1, 2, 4 and 11; the second encompasses scenes 3 and 5; the third encompasses scenes 6, 7, 9 and 10; and the fourth encompasses scene 8. These scenes weave in and out of their respective framing narratives, the first story framing the second and the third, and the third framing the fourth. Just as the progression of a linked-verse sequence is characterised by a wave-like “going forth and coming back, but never to the same place” (Ramirez-Christensen 2008a, 16), the progression of *The Lake* too leans towards ellipticity, exhibiting a general structure in which wider narrative threads frame smaller digressionary sub-narratives.

While I have described this chapter as four interrelated stories, one may be tempted to view it as a single overarching story given that each scene revolves around the same protagonist and constitutes part of the greater sequence of events that have led to Gimpei’s present situation. However, the connections

⁴ Other terms used to indicate this dichotomy, originating in the Russian Formalism tradition of distinguishing between ‘*fabula*’ and ‘*syuzhet*’, include ‘*histoire*’ and ‘*récit*’ (Genette 1972) and ‘story’ and ‘plot’ (Bordwell 1985).

between these scenes in terms of both story and discourse are so tenuous, so filled with negative space, that the sense of continuity between them is driven by mental association (both that of Gimpei, and in turn, that of the reader) rather than by temporal causation. For this reason, the overall sense of forward movement during this chapter is achieved less through the use of syllogistic progression, as we might expect in a single story, and more by the repetition of theme and image through qualitative progression.

Nonetheless, there remains a sense of syllogistic progression within individual stories themselves. The framing narrative, for instance, begins with Gimpei's arrival at the Turkish bathhouse, follows him through the bathing service, and ends with his departure. His recollection of the handbag incident likewise adheres to a generally syllogistic pattern, though it is given to a degree of reminiscent ellipticity. The story begins with Gimpei being hit in the face with her handbag, follows his thoughts as he recalls the lead-up to the encounter, and ends with him destroying the bag and its contents. Gimpei's remembrance of Hisako follows a similar structure, beginning with Gimpei shadowing her to her home one day, continuing with him fleeing to a nearby amusement quarter, and ending with the two of them having a discussion outside her house. Finally, the brief story involving Gimpei's cousin Yayoi again follows a like pattern. It begins with Gimpei tricking her into walking on the frozen lake in the hope that the ice would break and cause her to sink into the water, then shifts into an exploration of Gimpei's past and the reason for his living with his cousin's family, and ends with Yayoi fading out of Gimpei's life and marrying a naval officer. The internal logic of each of these four stories proceeds syllogistically; however, in their relationships with one another they proceed qualitatively as part of the overall discourse. For this reason, we might liken them to the individual thematic runs in a linked-verse sequence, where the phenomena employed in each run must feature according to its temporal chronology. In linked verse, this is exemplified in the way that a seasonal word ascribed to an earlier part of a season is prohibited from occurring after another seasonal word ascribed to a later part of the same season (Higginson 2005). This convention is mirrored in the interplay between each of the four stories that comprise and punctuate the overall discourse of the first chapter, proceeding sequentially according to their natural development.

A sense of movement akin to the modulation pattern of prelude-allegro-presto can be seen in the development of the above discourse. Just as the prelude in a linked-verse sequence should have a slow beginning with a graceful, restrained tone, so too do scenes 1 and 2 progress slowly over the course of around a dozen pages without yet revealing the dark side of Gimpei's nature. In the same way that the allegros in a linked-verse sequence should develop the narrative with a brisk sense of forward movement, scene 3 onwards increases the pace of the narrative, with individual scenes lasting roughly two to four pages each and beginning to delve into Gimpei's disturbing actions and thoughts. In the same way as the presto should develop yet faster still, with a crescendo of striking imagery before returning to a smooth progression and a simple conclusion, the intensity of qualitative progression in this chapter of *The Lake* climaxes with scenes 8 and 9, nested within the

story of scenes 6, 7 and 10, which is itself nested within the overall framing story of scenes 1, 2, 4 and 11. The pacing following this climax returns to a smooth, slower sense of movement over the course of several pages in scene 11 before concluding the chapter. The effects of this modulation pattern can likewise be seen in the distance of the links connecting the various scenes, with those occurring in the prelude being comparatively closer and those occurring later being more distant, as I shall demonstrate shortly.

While sharing the modulation pattern of prelude-allegros-presto with linked-verse poetry, both overall and in terms of its constituent parts, *The Lake* suggests also a related pattern, that of ‘introduction-development-transition-reintegration’ (起承転結; *kishōtenketsu*).⁵ In contemporary Japanese compositional theory, the two patterns operate in tandem with one another, the former describing tempo and intensity, the latter describing content. Whereas the prelude-allegros-presto mode of progression is independent of the specific meaning of the verses or narrative, governing rather the overall sense of rhythm, the introduction-development-transition-reintegration paradigm describes how the various constituent actions and events are related to each other and to the overall discourse. In linked verse, the structural pattern of introduction-development-transition-reintegration is fundamentally associative in nature, being predicated around the notion of a qualitative transition away from a topic before ultimately returning back to it, with forward momentum being intuitive, sensory or emotive in manner. In brief, the introduction establishes the basics of the story, which are elaborated in the development, until a new, unexpected element is introduced in the transition, which is in turn reconciled with the first two parts in the reintegration to produce a coherent whole (Hinds 1980, 132). Reading through the lens of this paradigm sheds light on further similarities between *The Lake* and linked verse, this time in the area of narrative development.

Just as a linked-verse sequence features an abundance of links, so too can a novel be marked by a proliferation of developments and transitions that encompass the majority of the exposition (Hinds 1987, 150). As such, a narrative demonstrating the principle of introduction-development-transition-reintegration might take one or more seemingly incongruous digressions before eventually bringing something new back to its point of origin. This is the case in *The Lake*, as can be seen in the arrangement of the various subsections of the first chapter identified above. The introduction encompasses Gimpei’s arrival to Karuizawa (scene 1); the development encompasses the early stages of the bathing service at the Turkish bathhouse, including his discussion with the attendant (scene 2). The transition, or rather, transitions, encompass the digressions that explore his relationships with Miyako, Hisako and Yayoi (scene 3–10). The reintegration encompasses the end of the bathing service, with the reader now having achieved a deeper understanding of Gimpei’s warped nature (scene 11). This pattern can be observed over the chapter as a whole, and can likewise be seen in the manner in which the various stories and digressions are linked to one another. Scene 4 reintegrates scene 3 with scenes 1–2; scene 9 reintegrates scene 8 with

⁵ The ‘introduction-development-transition-reintegration’ pattern originates in the seven-syllable quatrain form (七言絶句; *shichigon-zekku*) of classical Japanese poetry written in Chinese (漢詩; *kanshi*).

scenes 6–7; and a sense of parallelism is established between the encounter with Miyako (scenes 3 and 5) and Gimpei’s prior relationship with Hisako (scenes 6–7 and 10).

Let us consider more closely the first link or transition, occurring between scenes 2 and 3 and connecting the framing narrative at the bathhouse to Gimpei’s recollection of the handbag incident:

The girl didn’t seem particularly interested in knowing about Gimpei’s hometown, and was not listening with any special attention. How was the bathroom lit? There seemed to be no shadows on her body. While massaging his chest, she pushed her breasts forward, and he closed his eyes, not knowing where to put his hands. If he stretched his arms along his body he might touch her. He thought he would be slapped on the face if so much as a fingertip brushed against her. And he could actually feel the shock of being slapped. In sudden terror he tried to open his eyes, but his eyelids refused to move. They had been hit very hard. He thought he might cry, but no tears came, and his eyes ached as though they had been pricked with a hot needle.

It was not the girl’s palm but a blue leather handbag that had hit Gimpei’s face. He hadn’t known at the time that it was a handbag, but after feeling the blow he found a handbag lying at his feet.⁶

(Kawabata 1974, 16)

Here, the link between what I have identified as the first and second stories begins in the latter half of the first paragraph, taking full form in the negative space between the development and transition phases in the paragraph break. While in the first paragraph Gimpei physically experiences the sensation of being slapped on the face, seemingly in response to an imagined attempt to touch the bathhouse attendant, this sensation is then re-evaluated by the following paragraph, which creates a new interpretation of what precedes it wherein it is Miyako’s handbag that has hit him. The transition here operates in the same manner as the link in linked verse, prompting the reader to reconsider the description that precedes it and providing an additional reading. As the link here occurs after a gradual development that prompts the transition, following on smoothly from that which comes before, it can be described in linked-verse terminology as being ‘close’ in nature. Moreover, the first paragraph features a gradual build-up in expressiveness, culminating in a tactile and emotional response, and so is akin to a pattern verse in a linked-verse sequence, while in the second paragraph this degree of expressiveness subsides, providing space and contextualisation akin to a background verse. As in a linked-verse sequence, this alternation contributes to a wave-like sense of progression and sensory intensity throughout the chapter.

The next link, between the second and third stories shortly afterwards, is of a like manner:

6 「湯女は銀平の古里など知りたいわけではなかろうし、心にとめて聞いている風はなかった。この浴室の照明はどうなっているのか、湯女のからだに陰がないようだった。湯女は銀平の胸をさすりながら自分の胸を傾けて来ていた。銀平は目をつぶった。手のやり場に迷った。腹の脇にのぼしたら湯女の脇腹にさわりはしないか。ほんの指先でも触れようものなら、びしゃりと顔をなぐられそうに思えた。そして銀平は真実なぐられたショックを感じた。はっとおびえて目をあこうとしたが、まぶたは開かなかった。したたかまぶたを打たれていた。涙が出そうなものが出ないで、目の玉を熱い針で刺されたようにいたんだ。銀平の顔をなぐったのは、湯女の手の手ひらではなく、青い革のハンド・バッグだった。なぐられた時にハンド・バッグとわかっていただけではないが、なぐられた後で足もとにハンド・バッグの落ちているのを見たわけだった。」(Kawabata 1991, 15–16)

Miyako must certainly have been frightened while she was being followed by Gimpei, but she might also have experienced a tingling pleasure, without recognising its presence. Can an entirely one-sided pleasure really exist in the human world? Had it not, perhaps, been like a drug addict's sensing out a fellow sufferer, that he should have made a special point of following Miyako when there were so many other pretty women walking around town?

Hisako Tamaki, the first woman he had ever followed, had clearly been a case of this sort.⁷

(Kawabata 1974, 21–22)

Here, we can observe once again a gradual development that prompts the transition into the third story. The transition again takes place in the negative space between paragraphs, indicating a shift in scene and time-orientation. The first paragraph features a build-up of rhetorical questions on whether Miyako had perhaps found some perverse enjoyment in being followed by Gimpei, and the second paragraph features a change in focus to Hisako while at the same time tying into the previous rhetorical questions. The link here is of a close variety as with the previous case, for there is a smooth lead-in with the rhetorical questions that are then answered in the affirmative for Hisako. Once more, the degree of emotional expressiveness builds up in the first paragraph in the manner of pattern description, while the second paragraph is more akin to background description, responding to the prior scene and providing context for the next. In this manner, the link between these paragraphs simultaneously functions as both the transition from the second story, and as the introduction anticipating the development of the third story.

In contrast, the link between scenes 10 and 11, reintegrating the story surrounding Gimpei's student Hisako back into the present moment at the bathhouse, is more distant:

But she did not remain long the shy, lovely Hisako she had first been. Instead her relationship with Gimpei developed to the point where Onda reported him and he was eventually dismissed from the school.

While the bath attendant massaged his belly at the Turkish bath in Karuizawa, Gimpei, after all these years, could still imagine Hisako's father lounging in a deep armchair in his grand western-style home and peeling skin off his infected feet.⁸

(Kawabata 1974, 33–34)

While the previous links occur between the development and transition stages, this one occurs between the transition and reintegration stages of the first and third stories. The narration of Gimpei's pursuit of Hisako has run its course and ends with its exposure, following which there is an immediate shift in the negative space leading into the following paragraph, which returns to the first story at the bathhouse. Other than the fact that the story

7 「銀平が後をつけているあいだ、宮子はおびえていたにちがいないが、自身ではそうと気がつかなくても、うずくようなよろこびもあったのかもしれない。能動者があって受動者のない快樂は人間にあるだろうか。美しい女は町に多く歩いているのに、銀平が特に宮子を選んだ後をつけたのは、麻薬の中毒者が同病者を見つけたようなものだろうか。」(Kawabata 1991, 20)

8 「しかし可愛い久子ではとどまらないで、銀平とのあいだを恩田信子に告発されて、銀平が学校を追われるところまでいった。それから年月をへだてた今、銀平は軽井沢のトルコ風呂で湯女に腹をマッサージされながらも、あの宏壮な洋館の豪華な安楽椅子で、久子の父が水虫の皮をむしっている姿を思い浮かべた。」(Kawabata 1991, 31)

appears to have reached its chronological end, there is no prior suggestion that we are about to undergo a shift, and so the link here is more distant than the previous cases. As the narrative of the chapter is by this stage well underway, entering into an equivalent of the allegros stage, the frequency of more distant links can be expected to increase, as occurs in a linked-verse sequence. Moreover, as the link here occurs between the transition and reintegration stages, such close links as we have observed in the previous examples are arguably unnecessary. As the link in this example connects back to an already established story, the reader can reorient themselves in the discourse more easily than if the narrative had jumped abruptly to an entirely new story.

This manner of distant link is perhaps best demonstrated by looking at an instance of a comparatively shorter transition taking place during Gimpei's time at the bathhouse:

There was a splashing sound as the girl, apparently needing something to do while her customer was in the steam bath, baled water out of the perfumed bath and washed the floor.

To Gimpei, it sounded like waves beating against a rock. On the rock two seagulls with arched wings were pecking at each other's beaks. The sea of his native village appeared before his eyes.

"How many minutes now?"

"About seven."

(Kawabata 1974, 10–11)

I have not indicated the scene in question here in my earlier breakdown of the various stories that comprise this chapter of the text, primarily as it lacks any sense of interior syllogistic progression, taking the form of a purely visual and emotive image. Nonetheless, we can see two distinct links. While the transition from the bathhouse to Gimpei's hometown is sudden and unexpected, it is not entirely unprecipitated, being prompted by the simile of the sound of waves beating against a rock, and may be classified as functioning similarly to a distant–close verse in a linked-verse sequence. The link from the memory of Gimpei's hometown back to the bathhouse, however, is not foreshadowed, and can therefore be described as distant. The function of this brief transition followed by its reintegration is threefold: it denotes the passage of time, it introduces elements from the fourth story regarding Gimpei's childhood (and by extension, his time with Yayoi), and it brings about despondence in Gimpei. As this is a striking image that commands the reader's attention, it functions akin to a pattern verse contrasting against the preceding and following descriptions. It is a particularly brief transition, with the reintegration returning to the bathhouse in the very next paragraph. As this example demonstrates, throughout *The Lake*, transitions are not only the means by which the more extensive narrative digressions that comprise

9 「湯女は客が蒸し風呂にはいつているあいだ手持無沙汰らしく、香水風呂の湯を汲み出して、流し場などを洗う水音が聞こえた。銀平には岩を打つ波のように思えた。岩の上で二羽のかもめがつばさを怒らせ、くちばで突つき合っていた。古里の海が頭に浮かんだ。

『もう何分?』

『七分ほどです。』(Kawabata 1991, 10–11)

the various stories are woven into the discourse, but also the means by which various shorter images and sensory perceptions throughout each of these stories are woven into their own framing narrative.

The structural pattern of introduction-development-transition-reintegration is evident in each of the above examples. With each of the various extended transitions, the narrative continues into a new stage of development in a similar manner to the thematic runs in a linked-verse sequence. The numerous shorter transitions punctuate prolonged threads of a single story, similar to the way in which single miscellaneous verses occasionally punctuate longer runs in a linked-verse sequence. In this sense, such transitions serve a qualitative function: they prepare us for later scenes and narrative threads, as well as changes in the protagonist's mental and emotional state. Though not necessarily in a syllogistic manner that would affect the events that are depicted in the narrative, the reintegration reconciles the various parts of the narrative into a coherent whole. Thus, the reader learns that Gimpei has fled to Karuizawa after the handbag incident, that Gimpei has a history of becoming obsessed by and subsequently following beautiful women, and that, behind his cautious behaviour and his softly spoken manner, he has throughout his life harboured dark thoughts about beauty and ugliness disguised even to himself.

Just as a linked-verse sequence is characterised by a wave-like progression between themes, degrees of closeness and distance, and background and pattern verses, so too do narrative links in *The Lake* impart a similar elliptical progression by following the introduction-development-transition-reintegration paradigm. The overall effect of this is to produce a narrative that is less plot-focused, less driven by one event leading into the next, and more of a thematic journey that illustrates Gimpei as an individual, highlighting episodes from his life that demonstrate his way of thinking and how he situates himself in the world. The depth and manner of qualitative association in the narrative composition of *The Lake* implies a developed and conscious aesthetic decision by Kawabata to incorporate linked-verse principles in the work, and lends further support to the position that he draws on traditional arts to nurture his focus on the notion of sensation.

CONCLUSION

In the previous pages, I have analysed some similar structural aspects of the techniques of linking and flow in both linked-verse poetry and Kawabata's novel *The Lake*. In both of these mediums, the overall flow is punctuated by numerous instances of negative space that separate and draw together seemingly disparate verses, trains of thought and scenes, and that require both reader and narrative persona to make mental associations between the various elements presented. In this sense, both mediums develop along a primarily qualitative rather than syllogistic pattern of progression, with forward poetic and narrative momentum being driven not by causation of related actions or events, but rather by the sudden presentation of sense, emotion, image and memory. Moreover, in the form of qualitative association observed in both

linked verse and *The Lake*, we can identify elliptical patterns of progression that are characterised by frequent shifts in distance, focus, and visual and emotional intensity, a “going forth and coming back, but never to the same place” (Ramirez-Christensen 2008a, 16), that provides an overall sense of flow and cohesiveness. Adopting and adapting the theoretical framework of linked verse in this way allows us to examine the stylistic and structural composition of Kawabata’s works with greater clarity, and provides groundwork for deeper stylistic analysis of his works.

While much more could be said about the parallels between linked verse and Kawabata’s narrative mode than can be fully explored in this paper, I hope to have demonstrated that there is a deep stylistic and structural basis for comparing the two. Indeed, Kawabata’s narrative mode, as exemplified by *The Lake*, implies a conscious aesthetic decision to draw on the grounding principles of linked verse in the creation of his prose works, adapting and developing the techniques of linking and of flow to shape his distinctive narrative style. Future studies on this topic may consider parallels between additional principles of linked-verse poetry, and may examine in greater depth how the techniques of linking and of flow are employed in a wider selection of Kawabata’s works.

GLOSSARY

hyakuin (百韻)

‘hundred-verse sequence’; the standard length of classical linked-verse compositions

ji (地)

‘background’; used to describe verses that contain comparatively plain, unremarkable images or sensations in linked-verse poetry

johakyū (序破急)

a modulation pattern of ‘prelude-allegros-presto’, which creates a gradual build-up of tension followed by release; features in a wide variety of Japanese arts, perhaps most famously in the Noh tradition of theatre

kanshi (漢詩)

Chinese-language poetry, as used in Japanese literature

kirai (嫌々)

a clashing sense of rhythm in linked-verse poetry

kishōtenketsu (起承転結)

a modulation pattern of ‘introduction-development-transition-reintegration’ which originated in classical Chinese-language poetry and can be found in classical Japanese poetry and other Japanese aesthetic forms

kotodama (言霊)

the belief in Japan’s animist Shinto religion that ritual word usages possess mystical powers capable of influencing the mind and soul

ma (間)
negative space

maeku (前句)
'the preceding verse'; a term used to discuss linked-verse poetry

maemaeku (前々句)
'the verse before the preceding verse'; a term used to discuss linked-verse poetry

mon (紋)
'pattern'; used to describe verses that present striking and vivid images or sensations in linked-verse poetry

renga (連歌)
the mediaeval Japanese tradition of linked-verse poetry

sarikirai (去り嫌い)
seriation and intermission in Japanese linked-verse poetry; the appearance and reappearance of similar elements in linked verse

shichigon-zekku (七言絶句)
Chinese-language seven-syllable quatrains, as used in classical Japanese poetry

shikimoku (式目)
the formal rules or conventions governing the structure of an art form such as linked verse

Shinkankaku-ha (新感覚派)
the 'New Sensationism' movement, whose founding members included Kawabata; exponents of this movement pioneered the introduction of Western Modernist modes such as stream of consciousness, automatic writing, Dadaism, cubism, expressionism and futurism into the Japanese literary sphere

shinku (親句)
a verse with 'close' links to another verse in linked-verse poetry

soku (疎句)
a verse with 'distant' links to another verse in linked-verse poetry

tsukeai (付け合い)
'linking'; a term used to discuss linked-verse poetry

tsukeku (付け句)
'the following verse'; a term used to discuss linked-verse poetry

waka (和歌)
a form of classical Japanese poetry

yojō (余情)
suggestiveness

yūgen (幽玄)
a sense of mysterious depth

yukiyō (行様)

'flow'; one of the central aesthetic principles of linked-verse poetry

zenki (禅機)

a quality developed from the tradition of Zen Buddhism; can be understood as "the spontaneous naturalness of ordinary activity free of forms, flowing from the 'formless self'" (Ames 1965, 28)

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