

<論文>

Poetic Justice in Aki Shimazaki's 3rd Pentalogy – *L'ombre du chardon* –

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Introduction

In 2018, with the publication of *Maïmaï*, Governor General award-winning Quebec-Japanese author Aki Shimazaki completed her third pentalogy of French language novels entitled, *L'ombre du chardon*.⁽¹⁾ Having previously published *Le poids des secrets* (1999-2004) and *Au cœur du Yamato* (2006-2013), Shimazaki's novels, known for being “minimalist, simple and direct” (Amyot, 46), have given rise to considerable academic scrutiny over the years

including the publication of an edited volume entitled *Le Poids des identités: mémoire et traumatisme chez Aki Shimazaki* (2010).⁽²⁾ Inspired by several authors, notably Hungarian author Agota Kristof, as well as Japanese writer Osamu Dazai, associated with the *Watakushi shōsetsu* or “I” novel, her works have been read in terms of their memorial nature, Japan's past and present, the pressure of social conventions, personal and collective identity, sexuality, the role of mothers and fathers, secrets, taboos, and betrayal.

Indeed, in Lucie Lequin's various articles which primarily examine Shimazaki's first pentalogy focusing on Korean-Japanese War time relations, she highlights the importance of consensual lies and the “public-private knot” (2003, 42) at the centre of the novels whose universality (2005) resides in the battle against conformity. Having described her own works as dealing with “individual human tragedy” (Amyot, 47), Shimazaki plays on Japanese contexts in a personal way, using different narrators in each novel, and explores “unspoken” individual and family secrets. While “polyphonic” (37), her stories according to Sonia Musella recall the delicate work of a “sculptor exposing his subject from a block of marble” (42). Full of word games and subtle symbolism, Shimazaki's works leave nothing to chance, as Joëlle Cauville shows by exposing in the first pentalogy maternal archetypes and their relation to Mother Nature, embodied in each of the novels' titles bearing the name of flowers. Sober in style, Shimazaki's use of the French language gives

her critical freedom according to Peter Schulman for whom her works are haunted by “a quest for the missing father” (22) within a maternal context. Insisting on the mirroring “layers” of her works, Schulman sees Shimazaki’s works in terms of a “mise en abyme” (15), as does Gabrielle Parker (306) in her 2013 comparative study of Ying Chen and Shimazaki’s “critical detachment vis-à-vis the presented subject” (311). Examining Shimazaki in terms of the Japanese *monogatari* tradition, Parker describes the social critique in both authors’ works in terms of Roland Barthes’ “poétique” (323). Having primarily focused on ethical, historical, and identity issues in Shimazaki’s first pentalogy, literary critics have not yet extensively studied her second series of novels, which delve into the trials and tribulations of Japanese corporate business men, or her latest stories, entitled: *Azami* (2014), *Hôzuki* (2015), *Suisen* (2016), *Fuki-No-Tô* (2017), and *Maïmai*. Subject at present to only newspaper and magazine reviews, these two pentalogies constitute a literary treasure chest waiting to be explored in terms of previously investigated topics, and new aspects, such as the one I propose to study here in Shimazaki’s third literary cycle: poetic justice.

Defined in terms of an “outcome in which vice is punished and virtue rewarded in a manner peculiarly or ironically appropriate” (Merriam Webster), poetic justice – an expression coined by Thomas Rymer⁽³⁾ – manifests itself in Shimazaki’s third pentalogy via the ironic reestablishment of a certain harmony or *wa* at the end of each story making up this series which explores, in the context of redemption, topics such as physical needs, deception, narcissism, sexual orientation, and star-crossed lovers. In other words, readers are witness in each of the novels composing *L’ombre du chardon* to a “fitting” (Baldick, 197) or ethically just resolution of the psychological and real conflict at the center of the novels’ plots, which play on missed opportunities, happenstance, and twists of fate. At the conclusion of each novel, which can be read separately, readers have the impression that there is a certain “balance of nature,” a “compensatory equilibrium” (Dimock, 166) or “karma” at work that ultimately rights wrongs in a commensurate fashion. In other words, “earthly rewards and punishments” are distributed “in proportion to the virtue or vice of the various characters” (Abrams & Harpham, 299-300).

Operating outside the legal context, poetic justice functions on ethical and moral premises and searches for something “better than the truth” (Kertzer 11) or the finality sought out by the judicial system. Similar in this way to the Buddhist concept of *inga ôhō* (105),⁽⁴⁾ according to Daniel Crump Buchanan, poetic justice in Shi-

mazaki's works is retributive to a certain degree, but is ultimately restorative in nature and functions in ways that recall the reparative Japanese art of *kintsugi*. While this term refers to the repairing of broken pottery with gold, it is also a metaphor for "the ability to discover deep values and qualities in flaw, without hiding them, but on the contrary highlighting them" (Lorenzetti, 41).⁽⁵⁾ This is precisely what one finds in Shimazaki's latest pentalogy, a healing via the exposition and subsequent acceptance of underlying problems. In the novels, damaged and flawed characters who "crack" as well as "broken" relationships are eventually mended or repaired to a large extent. The characters' lots in life are made better in the denouement of the novels through a form of reconciliation with the past and mistakes made during this time. This mending and making amends by characters echoes the fragmented but interwoven form of the separate stories composing each pentalogy, which ultimately "fit together" to form a restored whole. Associated with the aesthetics of *wabi sabi* or the acceptance of transience and imperfection, *kintsugi* characterizes the reparative mechanism or poetic justice at play in Shimazaki's novels. Each novel stresses an appreciation of the "unconventional" and "cosmic order" (Koren, 57)⁽⁶⁾ in a resolutely poetic way, emphasizing natural processes and the importance of confronting life's aleatory nature in order to move forward and prosper.

Characterized by "simplicity, simplicity," (Tremblay, D1) and described in terms of a "haiku" (Amyot, 46) in prose, Shimazaki's works have however not yet been analyzed in terms of the aforementioned corollary concepts and ideas. As such, we propose to examine the novels composing her latest pentalogy in terms of poetic justice, a notion implicitly already present in Japanese culture and one that manifests itself "literally" in her stories via letters, notebooks, poems, popular tales, and references to literature. Part and parcel of the redressing of initial wrongs and the making of things as they should be, these literary symbols render the restorative justice at work in the novels "poetic." They contribute to the deconstruction of objective or perceived rules and laws in Shimazaki's work and insist upon subjective ways of being that are in harmony with one's own nature and "natural" truths that we can paradoxically all understand due to the imperfections and differences we share.

1. *Azami* and the sexless couple: physical needs and wants

Published in 2014, *Azami*, whose English equivalent is “wild thistle,” tells the story of a “thorny” ⁽⁷⁾ situation, one of betrayal and reconciliation involving Mitsuo Kawano, a 36-year-old editor-in-chief of *N* magazine (10) from Nagoya and his wife, Atsuko. Involved in a “sexless” (18) marriage, Mitsuo ends up cheating on his spouse with Mitsuko Tsuji, his childhood first-love (52). The result of a chance encounter with Gorô Kida, a former elementary school classmate and president of the liquor importer, *Sakaya* Kida (11), the relationship develops after Mitsuo visits Bar X, where Mitsuko works as a hostess on Friday evenings.

In the novel, each character’s existence is determined and associated with a form of injustice and the reparation of a certain self-betrayal. Mitsuo, for example, has physical urges and, as a city-dweller, is not in his element in the countryside that his wife enjoys and frequents on weekends after inheriting her father’s farm. Having contributed to the couple’s lack of intimacy due to work commitments (19), he is reticent to fully explain his desires and sentiments to his wife and confront the situation (20); Mitsuko is in reality a well-read intellectual and single-mom who lives with her own mother and longs to own a used bookstore (119) and sell works of philosophy. She only works as a hostess in Bar X on Friday evenings to earn money to send her deaf and mute four-year-old (76) son, Tarô, to a special school. As for Gorô, he embodies injustice, despite having been nicknamed “the gentle one” (27) as a youth. Having lost his mother as a child (118), he compensates for feelings of abandonment by means of philandering exploits and abuses the prestige associated with his position as *shachô* (President) of the company he simply inherited from his father.

In the case of each character, the story dwells on their respective natural lot and the ironic nature of their respective realities via multiple references to aspirations noted in a grade school year book. Having aspired to be a “cameraman,” (36, 72) Mitsuo has surpassed his disengaged dream, but is disappointed with his marital reality and dreams about Mitsuko when thinking back to his youth. In his mind, she is someone like him ⁽⁸⁾ and represents a missed opportunity or destiny and the fulfilment of desire. While neither Mitsuko’s aspirations nor his photo (35) is present in the year book, Mitsuo recalls on two occasions that she wanted to become a “veterinarian” or “zoologist” (24, 36) and reflects on the gap between her current job that “has nothing to do with her dreams.” ⁽⁹⁾ This is also the case for

Gorô, who dreamt of becoming a *kyôju* (36, 44) or a tenured university professor. Far from this noble, socially conscious, intellectual aspiration, he pursued the personal profiteering path of least resistance in order to obtain monetary success and authority.

The source of considerable reflection by Mitsuo in the story that plays on nostalgia and the notion of chance, this grade school yearbook together with his literary profession highlight the poetic dimension of justice and injustice in the novel, the title of which is an ironic symbol. Referring to the prickly situation at the heart of the story, *Azami* is Mitsuko's nickname in Bar X, and the one that Mitsuo secretly used for her in grade school (83). The name of a "lullaby" (8) that Mitsuo's grandmother sang and that he repeats while thinking of Mitsuko, *azami* is also and paradoxically similar to the burdock plant (*la bardane*) that his wife, Atsuko has decided to grow in her garden (41). A coveted object in the lullaby associated with "dreams," *azami* is described as the "flower that sings the night to sleep."⁽¹⁰⁾ Like a poem of sorts, this lullaby alludes to the soothing of darkness or the importance of sexual relations to sleeping well and ultimately righting what is wrong or "qui nuit" (which harms). The rocking movement evoked in the lullaby emphasizes the importance of balance, of give and take, and alludes to the idea that Mitsuko's affair with Mitsuo, like Derrida's *pharmakon*, is at once a poison and a remedy.⁽¹¹⁾ Both a wild flower and sort of weed, *azami* which Mitsuo's daughter associates with "independence," "rejection" and "vengeance" (100), summarizes the artfully crafted ethical dilemma in the novel, which plays on the subjective nature of justice or what is right and wrong.⁽¹²⁾

Representative of the word games or *hanakotoba*, the Japanese language of flowers that Shimazaki uses in her previous works, the term *azami* is symbolic of the not only deconstructive, but also reconstructive aesthetic at play in the novel. Indeed, Mitsuo's affair is not purely destructive or a gratuitous rebellious gesture against his wife, but rather a self-healing, cathartic one and an act that while initially fragmenting his rapport with Atsuko will ultimately bring them together in terms of understanding each other. In this way, *azami* recalls the Japanese art of *ikebana*, "the art of arranging cut flowers" (15), associated with *kintsugi* by Lorenzetti, who describes the practice in restorative terms. Arranged in a triangular scheme, "[h]armony and balance" are created among the three elements, which represent the sky, the earth, and mankind. Considered "an appropriate art for meditation and the research of the inner Self," (15), *ikebana* described in this

way recalls the rupture and the transformation in the novel of what is dead or cut into an object of beauty. Placing mankind in the middle like the *ikebana* artist, Shimazaki searches in this novel and the others to establish harmony between characters' aspirations and the reality of life, bound by social conventions, notably divorce.

In *Azami*, where Mitsuo reflects on the shame associated with divorce, justice is ironically restored when he becomes involved with Mitsuko, a situation that comes about when he fortuitously prevents Mitsuko's money-filled handbag from being robbed upon exiting a bar after a late-night outing with his colleagues (62). Acting like a knight in shining armor in this serendipitous scene, as he had done years before when he defended Mitsuko against Gorô's unkind words toward her (89), he is subsequently rewarded by becoming her lover. While the affair contravenes the rules of marriage and social practices, it is rooted in circumstances, both ongoing and unexpected, and appears "just" in this way. Mitsuo is not trying to take revenge on his wife, but simply filling an emptiness in his life and making up for a previously missed romance that *should* have occurred in the past. This is also the case for Mitsuko, who truly liked Mitsuo as a 12-year-old, an idea that is conveyed when she first meets him as an adult and says: "Editor-in-chief, that suits you. Better than a cameraman." ⁽¹³⁾ Having remembered the yearbook inscription, Mitsuko had inscribed Mitsuo in her memory and seemingly her heart, as well. The "poetically just" nature of the relationship is established when Mitsuko gives Mitsuo a "fountain pen" (*stylo-plume*, 82) for saving her from losing her money-filled bag and when he later gives her his grade school diary (83). The exchanges, which take place in Mitsuko's "office," covered wall-to-wall in "books" (93) where they make love, are symbolic of a restorative justice and their mutual appreciation or love.

While bringing up the question of "love and criminality" (94) following a love-making session, Mitsuko also raises the question of justice in the legal sense of the term when she tells Mitsuo her mother was imprisoned (89) in the past for committing a minor "crime of passion," or accidentally wounding her lover's mistress⁽¹⁴⁾. Ironic, this background story, which plays on both the just and unjust nature of Mitsuo and Mitsuko's relationship, highlights the imperfect nature of both characters' childhoods in Nagoya and the idea that right and wrong are relative terms, subject to law, but also and more importantly human understanding or subjective reasoning. While legally criminal, Mitsuo and Mitsuko's adulterous

relationship is rooted in true “love” (93). There is history and chemistry between them; they are honest with each other regarding their respective lives and mutually respectful, which makes their relationship genuine and thus justifiable.

This being said, both characters realize that the relationship is temporary and the result of serendipitous circumstances, which a well-known Japanese proverb about “azami” reveals: *Azami no hana mo hito-sakari* or “thistle blossoms last but a moment” (Buchanan 4). Having come together in a way thanks to Gorô, an unjust man, the couple is also undone by this vengeful person who seemingly informs Atsuko of her husband’s affair (115). An injustice of sorts, this breaking of Mitsuo and Mitsuko’s secret is dealt with by Shimazaki via poetic justice. This is clear when Mitsuo, after recognizing his wife’s “letter” (109) regarding an unfaithful husband in the proofs of the advice column of his own magazine, breaks off his relationship with Mitsuko, confesses to Atsuko, and subsequently moves with his wife to the countryside where he founds his own cultural magazine. Influenced by public shaming regarding divorce, his own moral compass, and the advice columnist’s response (110), Mitsuo’s concessive gesture at the end of the novel swings the pendulum of justice back and officially rights his and Gorô’s “wrong.”

Like the lullaby that Mitsuo recalls on the last day in his office (163), he sees that his holding on to *Azami* or Mitsuko has done harm and that he must make up for betraying his wife and the mother of his children who he “still loves.”⁽¹⁵⁾ His decision to found his own journal while his wife pursues her goal of selling organic vegetables poetically reestablishes “harmony” or *wa* within the couple and mends what was essentially “broken” in his marriage. In effect, his gesture can be characterized as “golden” in the sense that he helps his wife cultivate her “garden” or world (as Voltaire in *Candide* would say) while allowing him to pursue his dream of founding his own review. In other words, there is a meeting or joining of their individual differences and aspirations at the novel’s conclusion, which is both “just” and “poetic.”

The novel’s ending which occurs in the symbolically-charged Fall and ultimately foreshadows the eventual dissolution of the couple in *Fuki-no-tô* plays on the idea of “karma” in a poetic way. This is clear when Mitsuo discovers a copy of the *N* magazine with a wilted *azami* flower in its pages in Mitsuko’s abandoned apartment which he visits after clearing out his own office. Symbolic of the end of his relationship with Mitsuko who suddenly moved out without telling him, the flower has been preserved in the review, the name of which can refer from a phonetic point of view

to “fate or karma” in Japanese. Supposing that Mitsuko no doubt read Atsuko’s letter in the September edition of the magazine, Mitsuo understands via this discovery that he must turn over a new leaf, as it were, like his former lover. Ending on the opening of what can be considered a book of sorts, the conclusion of *Azami* refers to the beginning of a new chapter in the lives of both characters, whose respective desires end up being satisfied in a fitting way.

2. *Hôzuki, Suisen, and Fuki-No-Tô: Selfishness, narcissism, homosexuality and redemption*

Present throughout *Azami*, poetic justice is also manifest in the other novels of Shimazaki’s pentalogy, which we can see by briefly examining the second, third, and fourth works. Narrated by Mitsuko, *Hôzuki* (2015) – a lampion flower and ground cherry associated with the deity protecting women – relates her story as a secondhand bookstore owner, specializing in philosophical works, and how she became a mother to Tarô, her now seven-year old deaf and mute son. Having had an abortion in the past following an accidental pregnancy with Shôji, a postdoctoral philosophy student (21), Mitsuko discovers Tarô, as an abandoned baby in a locker at the train station in Maïbara and decides to keep him as her own. This incredible story is revealed at the end of the novel when she is confronted by Madame (Kako) Sato,⁽¹⁶⁾ a client at the bookstore and Tarô’s birthmother, who after becoming pregnant following a one-night stand with a former Spanish teacher (122-126) panics upon giving birth and leaves the baby in the locker. While Mitsuko never admits to taking the baby, Kako Sato who tries to befriend Mitsuko realizes that Tarô is indeed her son and that her “crime” (128) has been righted thanks to Mitsuko’s “illegal” (79) action. The result of social taboos, this strictly unlawful situation deconstructs the moralizing statement whereby two wrongs do not make a right and shows the natural justice at work in Shimazaki’s second novel.

By saving and caring for Tarô, Mitsuko redeems herself in terms of her past, giving life after taking it, and thus making amends to a certain extent for what her previous lover called a “grave” (21) act. This is clear when she says to herself: “We came across each other in this way, you who were abandoned, and me who had an abortion.”⁽¹⁷⁾ This can also be said of Kako Sato who restores life to what was essentially dead by accepting that Tarô is now Mitsuko’s unofficially adopted

son. She moves on with her life as a diplomat's wife, her initial goal before becoming accidentally pregnant, and assumes her role as the mother to her legitimate daughter, Hanako, whose name ironically means "flower child" (67). The poetic nature of justice at work in the novel manifests itself when both women reflect on their acts during their last discussion in Mitsuko's used bookstore, a *wabi-sabi*-like space where imperfection and the exchange of "used goods" are considered precious. Relating the conversation to a comic book called *Le gros chat et le petit serpent* (The Fat Cat and the Little Snake), Mitsuko plays on the tentative nature of the meeting and the idea that she could be swallowed, as in the story, by Kako Sato who gradually puts together the broken pieces of her life. Indeed, in the novel, Târo whose name is associated with *Urashima Tarô* (87) and *Momotarô* (126) or "Peach Boy," is a sort of golden boy, a "kintaro" or superhuman hero of sorts.⁽¹⁸⁾ Associated with Japanese folktale heroes, he is a treasure, a glorious find to both women and the "light" in their darkness. He is like the full moon that is associated with *seijin*⁽¹⁹⁾ or the 15th of January, the day he was abandoned by Kako Sato and discovered by Mitsuko.

Set against the background of philosophical and practical questions concerning Christianity and Buddhism that Tarô asks Mitsuko (94), whose mother is deeply Catholic, the story insists on self-redemption, about being saved by saving and or giving to others. Selfishness becomes selflessness in *Hôzuki*, which champions imperfection via Tarô's handicap, his hybrid identity as a "métis," the ambiguity of the name of Mitsuko's boutique – kitô, written in "hiragana" (16) and meaning, *hôzuki*, prayer, and then "lie" (96-97). Indeed, white lies (like the light of a *hôzuki*, associated with *ikebana*, 96) permeate the story that embodies a non-religious confession of sorts, this act of contrition and pardoning of past mistakes.⁽²⁰⁾ The novel insists on the idea that the hazards of life are to be interpreted in a philosophically mixed fashion, that is to say, in a relativistic and non-absolute way, a notion communicated via Mitsuko's interests and her cat's name, Socrates. The conclusion of the novel communicates that redemptive unspoken (like Tarô) gestures outweigh judgements based in law, religion, or doctrine and that within words (*mots* in French), we can understand and empathize with suffering (*maux*), a human trait that everyone experiences despite their differences.

This is clear when considering the "sage-femme" (79) or midwife, who helped Mitsuko register Tarô's birth in the *koseki* (80) or the Japanese family registration, and who seems to be the same person having helped Kako Sato give birth. Dwelling in an area formerly associated with prostitutes, who ate *hôzuki* to abort

pregnancies, (81), this nurturing, Mary Magdalene-like figure embodies a *sage femme* or “wise woman,” first identifying Târô’s handicap, and then recognizing that while Mitsuko’s act is undeniably criminal, she will ultimately offer the boy a better life than he would have as a disabled, métis orphan in a fairly intolerant society (82). Having understood the constructive nature of Mitsuko’s desire to bear this burden, she tells her to come back in “three days” (83) and effectively allows Mitsuko and the baby to be reborn or resurrected. Like the maternal archetype that Joëlle Cauville examines, the midwife in *Hôzuki* subverts legal authority and embodies a form of poetic justice, which according to Ralph Grunewald “is not bound by procedural rules and as a concept works within an individual text, within a specific time but not as a system” (55). Indeed, the poetic nature of her gesture, which recognizes that motherhood is not just a biological function, becomes apparent in the lullaby that she invents as she rocks Tarô in her arms. Referring to *hozuki* as a “love in a cage” and a “light,”⁽²¹⁾ she indirectly describes the baby boy within the locker and insists on the bright and living side of what is a rather dark and “horrible” situation.

Based, like *Azami*, in restorative justice, *Hôzuki* relativizes right and wrong and ultimately highlights the redemptive powers of love and goodness in the face of adversity and past mistakes. Insisting on the need to redeem oneself, these stories tie into *Suisen* (2016), which is characterized by retributive or punitive justice and the subversion of the “law of the father” or superficial and teleological ways of being. Referring to a daffodil and Narcissus, Shimazaki’s third novel signals the “yellow” or cowardly and hypocritical disposition of the narrator and protagonist, Gorô, whose arrogant and egotistical behavior, as both a father, husband, and lover ends up being punished. Dumped by both his mistresses, a movie star Yuri K (eureka) and a former employee’s widowed wife, “O,” Gorô end up being dispossessed of his title as the president of *Sakaya Kida* by his step-mother and finally abandoned by his loyal wife and children. His injustices are thus duly and commensurately punished.

The novel plays on the idea already present in *Azami* that Gorô, at 51 years of age, is a narcissistic “play-boy” (134) and opportunist, who abuses his inherited power and wealth. In the opening scene, he describes himself looking into a mirror, admiring a yellow striped tie given to him by Yuri K, and then, recalls being called a “wounded child,”⁽²²⁾ by a Sayoko M, a jilted former girlfriend (125), who also gave him a tie with *suisen* on it during their time together.⁽²³⁾ Due to the loss of his

mother to cancer when he was 3 years old (13), Gorô sees people as dispensable, like “pieces of clothing,”⁽²⁴⁾ a means to an end, and objects that he uses and discards when better opportunities, associated with prestige and money, present themselves. Characterized by an inferiority complex and jealousy, Gorô repressed artist talents in his youth as a “pianist” (138) to pursue power and wants his children to follow in his footsteps. For example, he wants his son, Jun, who wishes to study psychology, to become the next president of *Sakaya* Kida. As for his daughter Yôko, a third-year University student in music, he tries to choose her boyfriend. In terms of his wife, he believes that she should be grateful to have such a husband (17), and thus, tolerate his infidelity. Having undeservingly obtained his power and prestige, Gorô gets what he deserves or his comeuppance when everything is taken away from him.

With an intertextual reference to Narcissus as its background, as well as Yuri K's film, *Ne me quitte jamais, maman ! (Don't ever leave me, mom!)*, a “story about a child having lost his mother” which evokes Gorô's own childhood, the novel plays on the repression of natural interests and the ultimately destructive nature of self-imposed, power-hungry behaviors. The concept of “poetic” justice appears in the novel via references to the film, music, the arts and important letters. Gorô's mistress, “O” abandons him via a “letter” (107-109), as does his wife (113), who also leaves him with “divorce papers” (115) to sign. In this way, Gorô, just as artfully as he has seduced and tricked everyone else like an actor, is himself suddenly duped.

This being said, the conclusion of the novel is not vengeful or dark, as Gorô ultimately confronts what he has repressed, his lack of “self-love,”⁽²⁵⁾ his failings, and seemingly changes for the better. Deciding to go for a drive to Kanazawa (marsh of gold) after being abandoned by his family, Gôro embarks on a memorial journey, “back to the mother” in the Freudian sense of the term, which fulfils him. We see this when he goes to see *Don't ever leave me, mom!*, a movie he initially refused to watch and whose soundtrack recalls yet another lullaby involving a field of *suisen*.⁽²⁶⁾ In this scene, the “silver screen” represents a sort of poetic or ironic “mirror” for Gorô, who comes face to face with what is at the origin of his troubles and the cost of repressing psychological wounds. This is clear when he associates the film with the loss he experienced due to his mother's death: “I see the boy's face as if it were my own, and that of the woman, as if she were my real mother.”⁽²⁷⁾

Gorô's redemption is also further accomplished by saving an injured black cat he discovers following his return home near the garbage storage room of his house.

The cat, which Gorô eventually adopts and calls “Suisen” (153), is at once a symbol of bad luck in the West and good luck in Japan and symbolizes how he assumes the dark part of his personality and his “bêtises,” a French word referring to animal-like idiocies. By caring about the cat, Gorô shows selflessness for the first time in the novel. Reflecting also in the final part on his previous mistreatment of Sayoko who gave him a tie with *suisen* on it, an object he associates with another striped yellow tie given to him by Yuri K, Gorô shows regret and becomes conscious that his selfish ambitions are at the heart of his undoing. Coming back home and to the origins of his problems, he visits a supermarket (157) where Sayoko worked in the past as a student and discovers that she has become a well-renowned psychologist. According to an employee, she is a specialist of “adult behavioural problems” and the author of “books” (158), notably one called: *L’enfant blessé et l’adulte raté* (*The Wounded Child and Failed Adult*, 159). Deeply ironic, and metadiscursive, this title, which highlights the importance of literature, obviously refers to Gorô’s situation and signals the poetic nature of his change of heart.

Seated in his car in the last line of the novel with the idea in mind that he will retrieve Sayoko’s tie with the *suisen* on it from his step-mother, Gorô is literally on the road to redemption and ready to move forward in terms of reconciling himself with his past. The ties, both Sayoko’s and Yuri K’s, are a golden symbol in the novel that like *kintsugi* literally “tie” or bind together all the separate elements of the story while fully exposing Gorô’s narcissistic flaw. They expose Gorô’s hubris, while constituting a mending element, one that helps fix to a certain extent what is broken in his life by reconnecting him with his past and true self.

Having as a message the Greek aphorism, “know thy self,” expounded upon by Socrates, for whom the “unexamined life is not worth living,” *Suisen* leads perfectly into *Fuki-No-Tô*, published in 2017. Referring to the giant butterbur plant, whose flowers are both female and male⁽²⁸⁾ (12) and whose “toxic” (13) stems remain underground, the title alludes to the nature of the story in which we see the return of the repressed. Harking back to *Azami*, the novel tells Atsuko’s story in which she literally “unearths” her buried or repressed homosexuality, after fortuitously hiring a former lesbian high school sweetheart to help her grow her organic vegetable company. At her parents’ farm “Tomo” (meaning companion in Japanese) that she inherited, Atsuko is confronted by her true “nature,” in the form of Fukiko Yada who has also had a family and been a mother. Having always dreamed of having a “farm” (36), Fukiko, whose name recalls the giant butterbur plant, discovers what

she has been seeking out for years in Atsuko, who paradoxically finds herself in a situation similar to her husband's in the past. Confronted with a former lover, who looks ironically like Mitsuko, Atsuko's decision to pursue the relationship is just, despite lesbian relations being strictly taboo in Japanese society.⁽²⁹⁾ Far from being vengeful, the relationship is rooted in natural dispositions and rights the inherent wrong that is the repression of Atsuko's true sexuality. The relationship between the women allows both people to cultivate their garden as in *Azami* and get in touch with their true or "biological" nature, a synonym for "organic" in French.

The poetic nature of the unexpected turn of events at the heart of the novel is symbolized by the fact that the two used to exchange a *cahier* or "notebook" (33), embroidered with the image of a *fuki-no-tô* on it (79), in which they would each record "thoughts about life, philosophy, comments on a film or book. And especially feelings for one another."⁽³⁰⁾ Similar to the grade school diary that Mitsuo kept in *Azami*, the book symbolizes the bond between the two women who fully reconnect during a trip to Sado Island together, an excursion that Atsuko was initially to take with her husband. Filling in for Mitsuo who is receiving a prize for his article writing on the exact weekend of the planned trip, Fukiko shares the notebook with Atsuko, who subsequently exposes several letters (79-89) to the reader. Beginning like a memorial journey, the trip reunites the two women in a *kintsugi*-like fashion, which we see when considering the significance of the destination. Associated initially due to its remoteness with banishment,⁽³¹⁾ a notion which recalls the taboo regarding women being lesbian in Japanese society, the island is also known for its "gold mine." Indeed, the island, whose name recalls the term used for the Japanese tea ceremony "*sado, chado* and *chanoyu*" (Koren, 31) at origin of *wabi sabi*, represents a golden opportunity for the two women to literally treasure each other. Isolated and alone, they make love together (111-112) and ultimately take advantage of a previously impossible and missed opportunity to be a couple.

At the novel's conclusion, the poetic justice already at play becomes fully visible when Atsuko gives Mitsuo a "letter" (139) explaining her decision to leave him for Fukiko and the need to be true to herself: "The problem is me not having been sure about myself."⁽³²⁾ While upset, Mitsuo, who thanked his wife in his acceptance speech, understands Atsuko, as she made efforts to make sense of his affair and need to find personal satisfaction. He implicitly seems to comprehend that you ultimately "reap what you sow" (*inga ôhō*) as he confronts Atsuko when she returns to the house from their vegetable field. This idea, which corresponds to the novel's ag-

ricultural context, is indirectly communicated by the last image in the novel – a full moon (143) – as the two members of the couple return home in order to feed their children. Referring to a good autumn harvest, the full moon here designates at once the hole or emptiness in Mitsuo's life and the idea that his wife, Atsuko, is whole now, a fulfilled person returning to her true nature. As the golden middle ground between the sun and darkness, the full moon represents at once communion and transformation. It is a *kintsugi*-like symbol reflecting the light or hope at the “center” of this novel, while referring to the cyclical or back and forth nature of life where, ultimately, “what goes around comes around.”

3. *Maïmai*: gains and losses, endings and beginnings

Narrated by Tarô, who has become an adult in *Maïmai*, Shimazaki's last novel of *L'ombre du chardon* explores the idea that life is cyclical and that losses can be gains, beginnings, endings and vice versa. Revisiting a secondary and somewhat enigmatic but key character who was four years old in *Azami*, Shimazaki ties up what constituted loose ends in this novel and *Hôzuki* while further exploring the question of sexuality and importance of the unspoken. Bearing a title which refers to the onomatopoeic, child-like term for “snail” or *katatsumuri* in Japanese, the novel alludes to the relationship between living creatures and nature through a complex story in which Tarô, who has become a painter, discovers that Mitsuko is not his biological mother and that the woman he loves or Madame (Kako) Sato's daughter, is in fact his half-sister.

Breaking with the plant motif, the title – *Maïmai* – plays on the question of doubles in the story and Tarô “seeing” what he had previously been “sheltered” from, following the sudden and unexpected death of Mitsuko in the first pages of the story.⁽³³⁾ Unpredictable from the reader's point of view, the disappearance of Mitsuko, who had invented stories about the circumstances of Tarô's birth and supposed Spanish father, allows nature to take its course and the return of people who were previously excluded from his life. While unsettling for Tarô, the events that unfold in the novel are framed in a poetic context, one established when he recalls the poem his mother recited to him in a garden when he was seven, as they observed a snail on a leaf.

Maïmaï, maïmaï,	Maïmaï, maïmaï
Où vas-tu si lourdement?	Where are you going so heavily?
Que portes-tu dans ta maison si grande?	What do you carry in your large house?
Un chagrin ou un fardeau, ou bien les deux?	Sorrow or a burden, or is it both?
Ah, tu ne peux qu'avancer, comme la vie!	Ah, all you can do is go forward, like life!
Bon courage, maïmaï! Adieu ! (11-12)	Best of luck, maïmaï! Until we meet again!

While the exact sense of the poem is unclear, Mitsuko seemingly anticipates her unexpected passing here and speaks indirectly to Tarô about the burdens of life and the need to take them in stride. Philosophical in nature, the poem indirectly relativizes what Tarô learns about his mother after moving in with his grandmother and into his mother's apartment above the bookshop, which he subsequently turns into an art gallery.

Having encountered Hanako outside the gallery (31) after she discovered Mitsuko's death in a notice published in the *Azami* review, Tarô renews the bond between them described in *Hôzuki* and falls in love with her at the same time he discovers many secrets about his mother. His grandmother, who eventually confesses having spent time in "prison" (74), bears no shame with respect to her daughter's independent, free-thinking, and spirited behavior⁽³⁴⁾ and tells Tarô about his mother's past, as he goes through her personal belongings. She brings up Mitsuko's job as a "hostess" (39) when Tarô finds sexy, brightly coloured dresses (38) belonging to her and explains that she had several lovers, including Mitsuo Kawano (51). As in other stories, the reader is witness to the return of the repressed, especially when Tarô discovers his mother's "passport" (37) and that she had not been to Spain, where she was supposed to have met his father (Felipe Santos – a painter, supposedly killed in a car accident before going to Japan) and become pregnant around the time of his birth. Missing entry and exiting stamps (100, 126), the blank in this "book" of passage raises questions and ultimately reflects the relativizing effect of other books in *Maïmaï*, in which the colourful nature of the past is exposed and ultimately embraced.

This is clear when Tarô discovers the book *Urashima Târo* (58) that Hanako, who becomes his fiancé, gave him as a seven-year-old boy. A famous Japanese 8th century tale describing the loss of childhood innocence and the cost of maturity,⁽³⁵⁾ the book is associated with the "theory of relativity" (60) by Mitsuko and ultimately reflects what happens throughout the novel, and especially at the end of *Maïmaï*.

Like the story's young fisherman or "pêcheur" (59) in French, a homonym for "sinner," who ages immediately after exploring a secret casket "Tamate-bako" (60) given to him by "the princess of the sea," Tarô discovers via Hanako's reappearance in his life that she is his half-sister and that Kako Sato is his biological mother.

While the exact meaning of the tale is not perfectly clear, the secret casket which has given rise to the Japanese stock phrase *akete kuyashiki tamatebako* or "opened to his regret (mortification)," recalls Pandora's box in Greek Mythology, associated with chaos, but also hope. In *Maimai*, this is what the reader sees: Taro's life story is deconstructed and turned upside down and yet ends, however, on a positive note related to the unforeseeable, but marvelous "spectacle" (172) that is nature. Having first discovered his mother's passport and then that she had her ovaries (136) removed following an abortion after querying⁽³⁶⁾ Mr. Taki, one of his mother's former clients and the doctor who issued her death certificate, Tarô is finally confronted in the novel's conclusion by what appears to be madness.

Indeed, this is what we see at the end of *Maimai* when Tarô is invited to speak privately with "Kako" (169) in her room at the psychiatric hospital in Kyoto where she is recovering from mental illness.⁽³⁷⁾ Having initially been brought on after discovering that her daughter wanted to marry her biological son, Madame Sato's unraveled state paradoxically allows her to clear the air in a dignified way, confess her criminal act (164), and explain the mysteries that Tarô indirectly discovered about Mitsuko following her passing. While deeply disturbing, Kako Sato's seemingly crazy confession puts a stop to a legal injustice, Hanako and Taro's planned marriage, and establishes the truth, which is seemingly reassuring for Tarô: "She is mentally ill, but I believe everything she told me."⁽³⁸⁾

The poetic nature of this discovery, that Tarô associates with a "fairy tale" (139) his mother invented,⁽³⁹⁾ and others in the novel, is conveyed by references to the communication abilities of Madame Sato and Hanako, who both speak sign language. In Hanako's case, Tarô says "I have never seen anyone use [sign language] in such an elegant way as you"⁽⁴⁰⁾ and insists on her natural ability throughout the novel. In Kako Sato's case, he describes her hand movements upon meeting her as "gracious" (161) and learns that she secretly learned sign language in "hope" of meeting him again "one day" (162). Insisting in both cases on the finesse and subtlety of their language skills, Tarô, whose silence is the background to the novel, highlights here and elsewhere the importance of communication to seeing and understanding others. Part and parcel of Freud's talking cure, expression

– be it through words, signs, or drawings – conveys not only explicit messages, but also implicit or unspoken ones that, while potentially unsettling at first, contribute ultimately to our personal and collective well-being.

In the novel's conclusion, the unspoken is extremely important, communicating a certain "hope" and optimism. Having told Hanako and Madame Sato's parents what could be called white lies when asked about his private conversation with his birthmother, Tarô mentions the "snail" brooch (151) Hanako has worn since meeting her, mentions his mother's painting that looks like his own (169), but protects these individuals from the entire truth that will eventually come to light in the future. This idea is clear as he exits the hospital with them, following a dinner, and notices that "[t]he rain has stopped and the light of the sun peeking out between the white clouds." ⁽⁴¹⁾ A metaphor for the three parties involved in this scene, two of which (Hanako and Madame Sato's parents) remain oblivious to the truth, this moment of pathetic fallacy is followed by another involving the appearance of a "rainbow" (172) that alludes to the complexity of the secret yet to be revealed by Tarô regarding his identity and relationship to Hanako.

Described in terms of its five separate colours (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) that seem to correspond to the flowers of the novels' titles, the rainbow recalls "hydrangea plants" for Hanako and represents a prism of light, exposing what is invisible. A symbol of luck in western culture associated with a pot of gold, the rainbow embodies hope here, but also the complexity of what lies ahead for the characters. Indeed, the rainbow echoes the ominous beginning of the story, as Tarô also notices this natural phenomenon on the day Mitsuko dies: "These lively colours remind me of hydrangea flowers [...] Captivated by this spectacle of nature, I momentarily forget the seriousness of the situation." ⁽⁴²⁾ Broken down into its separate parts at the beginning and end of story, the rainbow's colours, called *iro* in Japanese, conjure up the notion of "sexy," one bending over the other, and thus the reality that haunts the end of *Maimai*, whose name evokes the idea of coupling.

Having slept with Hanako after she asks him to marry her, Tarô not only takes his sister's virginity (he "deflowers" her), but also alludes to the potentially problematic situation their love may provoke: "I can no longer hold back. She clutches me. I ejaculate." ⁽⁴³⁾ While Hanako is said to have been in the "'sure'" (94) part of her feminine cycle and the two lovers did not know they were related at the time, the fact remains that doubt arises with respect to Hanako's future state at the novel's very end and that the pair have committed in part an incestuous act.

A recurring subject in Japanese manga, incest raises the question of genealogical lines in Japan and elsewhere where cousins frequently married in the past and the complexity or colourful nature of human relations, concealed within the white of sperm that Tarô's evokes in his ominous description.

Polysemous and ironic in nature, the rainbow is a *kintsugi*-like bridge of sorts between heaven and earth, the past and the present, which brings the reader full circle in the novel. It is a poetic symbol reminiscent of the colours of a painter's palette and one that alludes, as such, to the need to not lose "perspective" on this particular situation. Recalling furthermore the colour of Tarô's mother's dresses, the rainbow symbolizes the spectrum of life and that what first appears "stormy" or scandalous and dark, like incest, adultery, abortion, homosexuality, needs to be understood in "light" of the context. As Irène Oore explains when talking about incest in *Le Poids des secrets*, such scandalous behaviour in North America "can represent a rapport that is fusional, natural, and innocent" ⁽⁴⁴⁾ for other readers. In the description of the rainbow, it is important to take into account the comparison to the hydrangea plant, as it seems to restore Hanako's innocence (flower) and nuance the interpretation of the scene. Associated varyingly with "apologies," "gratitude," "immortality" and a "fickle heart," ⁽⁴⁵⁾ the hydrangea, a flower indigenous to Japan, designates the unfortunate and fortunate nature of the situation in which the two characters are separated as lovers, but reunited as half brother and sister.

Indeed, the flower, which is mentioned in terms of the rainbow by Tarô at the beginning of the novel and then by Hanako at the end alludes to their bond while implicitly signaling that a change of heart has occurred. They are "kin," according to the English expression used to designate blood relations and will remain close, but in a "different" way in the future. Finding themselves like orphans, tied only to their grandparents, ⁽⁴⁶⁾ Tarô and Hanako recall at the end of the novel the parts of a broken heart, but that will ultimately heal with the passage of time. While this goes unsaid in the "silence" (172) evoked as they contemplate this spectacle of nature that follows a storm, it is clear that life will go on and that what has been gained outweighs the loss. *Wabi sabi* in nature and filled with "reverberating images that seem 'larger' than the small verbal frame that holds them" (Koren, 54), this scene plays on the question of resolve, the cyclical nature of life, and speaks to the poetic aesthetic pervading Shimazaki's novels in which she literally attempts to write/ right wrongs or injustices.

Conclusion

Having written against “injustices” (Amyot, 48) in Japan before moving to Canada,⁽⁴⁷⁾ Shimazaki’s fiction is preoccupied with this “universal theme” (49) and appears to be an extension to her prior social engagement. Political in many ways like her previous works, *L’ombre du chardon*, as we have seen, deals with various collective social taboos, but focuses on individual issues and their resolution in ways that are fitting or poetic in “nature.” In the novels, works of literature and arts participate in the renewal process of the characters who ultimately confront questions related to nature. Indeed, in Shimazaki’s novels, we are witness to a dialogue with natural processes and the idea that life’s unpredictable and disquieting tendencies are to be embraced and not rejected, as it is the case with *kintsugi*, and that a compromise between rationality and impulse is the key to personal and ultimately collective fulfilment.

In *Azami*, for example, Shimazaki insists on natural sexual needs, but also on love and respect for the other. In *Hôzuki* where the notion of forcing nature and motherhood is questioned, the author insists that bonds are based in caring and not necessarily blood and the need for forgiveness. Playing on the nurture/nature debate, this novel highlights the interaction between the two as does *Suisen*, in which a lack of self-love, the respect of one’s natural disposition, and artificiality causes heartbreak and betrayal. Cultivating nature is the main theme in *Fuki-No-Tô* and then is an important idea in *Maïmaï* where the author cautions against giving in entirely to it and the need to keep things in perspective. While the novels all criticize the taboo surrounding “divorce” and stress the importance of obeying one’s nature, the pentalogy emphasizes striking a balance. Like the snail in *Maïmaï*, who is ultimately associated with Madame Sato (172), perched on a leaf, it is important to understand how to bear one’s burdens and know that while nature can protect us, it can also make us fall or lose our balance.

Favouring a balanced philosophical stance with respect to nature and life in general, Shimazaki points repeatedly to the importance of love, human expression, and sensitivity in *L’ombre du chardon* and the need to confront what is repressed. In the novels, this occurs via lullabies, which speak to the give-and-take nature of life and the need to embrace its highs and lows. Associated with rocking and back-and-forth movements, these cradle songs represent the poetic and carefully weighted nature of justice at play in Shimazaki’s world where characters suffer, become lost,

but eventually find their way and personal redemption. These soothing words, while haunting the characters, ultimately guide them along a winding introspective path towards a deeper understanding of themselves and others, allowing them to right wrongs.

In the end, Shimazaki nurtures her troubled characters in the sense that they find a “juste milieu,” a happy medium in their lives, and their place in the world. They grow with the changing environments they find themselves in and are renewed, like the seasons, which we often use to describe life. In this way, the relatively happy endings characterizing the novels composing *L'ombre du chardon* do not stem from a naïve belief that things always turn out, but rather life's regenerative capacity, its ability to rewrite itself, and create a new story. Poetic in this way, nature's cyclical patterns are at the base of the balance or *wa* established at the end of each novel and have seemingly inspired all Shimazaki's literary endeavours. Working in cycles, Shimazaki is constantly bringing characters back, renewing aspects, and alluding to others in an attempt to do justice to the poetic nature and complexity of life.

Note

- (1) All English translations from the original French are mine. I have not given the French equivalents largely resembling the English, but have provided the pages to specific references and moments within the novels.
- (2) Consisting of ten articles, this volume covers a vast range of topics dealing with questions of identity, resilience, eroticism, intertextuality, traumatism as well as the role of historical context in Shimazaki's works, which are ultimately part of Quebec's migrant literature.
- (3) The *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines poetic justice as “the morally reassuring allocation of happy and unhappy fates to the virtuous and the vicious characters respectively, usually at the end of a narrative or dramatic work. The term was first coined by the critic Thomas Rymer in his *The Tragedies of the Last Age consider'd* (1678) with reference to Elizabethan poetic drama: such justice is ‘poetic’, then, in the sense that it occurs more often in the fictional plots of plays than in real life. As Miss Prism explains in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Ernest*, ‘The good end happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.’ In a slightly different but commonly used sense, the term may also refer to strikingly appropriate reward or punishment, usually ‘fitting retribution’ by which a villain is ruined by some process of his own making” (197).

- (4) This expression is explained in terms of cause and effect in Japaneseness and is associated to the saying “as man sows, so shall he reap” (104).
- (5) Kertzer sees poetic justice as “true to what is irregular in human experience and unaccountable in the convolutions of thought” (15), an idea that corresponds to *kintsugi*'s valorization of damaged goods.
- (6) Koren's book evokes *kintsugi* (67) and poetry (54-55) in his purposefully non-absolute definition.
- (7) In the novel, Atsuko describes the flower as “épineuse” (42).
- (8) Mitsuo reflects on the similarities between their names (66) and signals that they are both from Nagoya (67), while Mitsuko explains that they both have a remarried father (117-118).
- (9) “Son métier d'aujourd'hui n'a rien à voir avec ceux de son rêve” (36).
- (10) “A qui rêves-tu ? Viens, viens vers moi. Je m'appelle Azami. Je suis la fleur qui berce la nuit” (32).
- (11) See “Plato's Pharmacy” in Derrida's *Dissemination*.
- (12) Citing Derrida's “Force of Law” in which he says “Deconstruction is justice” (14-15), Kertzer declares: “Formulated in this way, Deconstruction is poetic justice” (17).
- (13) “Rédacteur, cela te va bien. Mieux que cameraman” (52).
- (14) This episode in the Mitsuko's mother's life is covered in more detail in *Hôzuki* (88-89).
- (15) “Et ce drame chaotique m'a enfin amené à reprendre une vie normale avec ma femme que j'aime toujours” (123).
- (16) Mitsuko relates the meaning of Kako Sato's name: excellent or beautiful child and village/country (12).
- (17) “‘Nous nous sommes ainsi croisés, toi qui as été abandonné, et moi qui me suis fait avorter’” (118).
- (18) Kintarô is an extremely popular folk hero in Japan. His image adorns everything from statues to storybooks, anime, manga, to action figures.
- (19) *Seijin* is a Coming-of-Age Day in Japan, celebrating adulthood. In the past, it was associated with the first full moon of the Chinese lunar calendar year (*koshogatsu*).
- (20) Mitsuko's mother speaks to Tarô about her faith. He speaks to his mother about “confession” (33-35).
- (21) “Hôzuki, hôzuki, l'amour en cage / Orange comme le lis tigré, / Éclatante comme le soleil. / Quelle joie ! Tu es ma lumière !” (83).
- (22) “Ses paroles me reviennent : ‘Gorô, tu es un enfant blessé’” (12).
- (23) The letter “m” that is Sayoko's last name evokes “e-mu” which can mean “blessing” and “dream” in Japanese.
- (24) In a conversation with Gorô, Sayoko says: “J'ai l'impression que tu changes d'amante comme de chemise” and that “Les êtres humains ne sont pas des vêtements” (135).
- (25) Gorô's wife relates what their son said to her: “Papa ne changera pas de conduit. Je crois qu'il est toujours blessé par son enfance malheureuse, qu'il n'a

- pas pu développer son amour de soi” (114).
- (26) “Dans le champ de suisen, tu dances en me berçant / Dans tes bras tendres, je regarde ton sourire doux. / Ton visage est comme un soleil. / Ne me quitte jamais, maman !” (25).
- (27) “J’observe le visage du garçon comme si c’était le mien, et celui de la femme comme si c’était ma vraie mère” (146).
- (28) “Je commence la cueillette en lui expliquant que les *fuki* portent des fleurs soit males, soit femelles, comme celle des épinards” (12).
- (29) Fukiko tells the story of her cousin, a lesbian who committed suicide (59) due to pressure from her lover to “come out.” Atsuko says that while people are more open to homosexuality, it is still a delicate topic: “Néanmoins, ce sujet est encore délicat dans la vie privée” (60).
- (30) “Dans le cahier, chacune notait ses pensées sur la vie et la philosophie, des commentaires sur un film ou un livre. Et surtout ses sentiments envers l’autre” (33).
- (31) Exile to Sado in the 8th century when Japan assumed control of the island was a very serious punishment, second only to death. The earliest known dissident condemned to the island was a poet, Hozumi no Asomi Oyu in 722, for supposedly having criticized the emperor.
- (32) “Le problème, c’est moi qui n’ai pas été sûre de moi-même” (141).
- (33) The idea that Tarô eyes are opened in the story is confirmed when Hanako sings a song while preparing breakfast with him: “*Escargot, Escargot, où sont tes yeux ?*” (where are your eyes) (109).
- (34) Tarô’s grandmother says that Mitsuko was “Trop belle, trop sensuelle, trop intelligente pour appartenir à un seul homme !” (85).
- (35) See McKeon’s book on this topic.
- (36) This event that Doctor Taki or Taki-sensei explains to Tarô via a written message that recalls a letter is mentioned in passing in *Hôzuki*. See 45.
- (37) Having returned from Belgium with her husband, who is unfaithful, Kako Sato faints in the kitchen of their house (120) while preparing tea after meeting Tarô who Hanako presents as her “fiancé” (117). She is subsequently hospitalized in Kyoto where her parents live.
- (38) “Elle est mentalement malade, mais je crois tout ce qu’elle m’a raconté” (171).
- (39) After meeting Dr. Taki, Tarô imagines how he and his mother legally became mother and son and imagines the circumstances in terms of a story beginning as follows: “À Kanazawa, une jeune fille vivait seule. Un jour, elle rencontra un bel Européen” (139).
- (40) “Je n’ai jamais vu quelqu’un l’utiliser avec autant d’élégance que toi” (49).
- (41) “La pluie a cessé et la lumière du soleil pointe entre des nuages blancs” (170).
- (42) “Ses couleurs vives me rappellent les fleurs d’hortensia [...]. Captivé par ce spectacle de la nature, j’oublie un moment le sérieux de la situation” (9).
- (43) “Je ne peux plus me retenir. Elle m’agrippe. J’éjacule” (96).
- (44) “Une fois de plus, un lecteur nord-américain pourrait être scandalisé, mais ce comportement peut signifier un rapport fusionnel, naturel et innocent à d’autres

- lecteurs” (57).
- (45) Called *Ajisai* in Japan, the hydrangea is known as “nanahenge” (the flower of seven formations) as it changes colour according to the acidity of the soil. The flower is featured in Japanese poetry and is varyingly associated with apologies, immortality, and gratitude.
- (46) Hanako explains at the end of the novel that her mother, due to her mental illness, can now divorce (168-169) her father, who is a play-boy diplomate and whose first wife committed “suicide” (107) in a mental institution, due in part to his infidelities. This is mentioned in passing in *Hôzuki* (60).
- (47) See Shimazaki’s interview with Linda Amyot (48-49) where she explains that that she used to send letters to newspapers denouncing injustices and constantly battled unjust treatments by people in power.

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