

Dōgen and the Japanese Religio-Aesthetic Tradition

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I. THE RELATION OF RELIGION AND AESTHETICS

A. Kawabata's Comments on the Waka, "Original Face"

At the beginning of his 1968 Nobel Prize acceptance speech, *Japan the Beautiful and Myself*, Kawabata Yasunari somewhat surprisingly cites a waka by Dōgen in the context of commenting on the profound influence of Zen aesthetics on his own writing. In Edward Seidensticker's translation of the speech, the verse reads:¹

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¹ In Kawabata Yasunari, *Japan the Beautiful and Myself* (*Utsukushii Nihon to Watakushi*), tr. E. G. Seidensticker (Tokyo, New York, San Francisco: Kōdansha, 1969) p. 76 (original Japanese on p. 6).

Dōgen's waka collection consists of over fifty poems originally included in the biography, *Kenzeiki*. A critical edition of six versions of *Kenzeiki* appears in Kawamura Kōdō, ed. *Eihei kaizan Dōgen zenji gyōjō—Kenzeiki* (Tokyo: Daishūkan shoten, 1975); the collection is on pp. 82–96. The 1589 Zuichō manuscript is the one considered most reliable by Kawamura, and it is used as the standard text for the translations in this article. Another critical edition of the waka collection is in Ōkubo Dōshū, ed., *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, Vol. II, (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1970), pp. 411–416. The translations and interpretations used in this article are also based on the following commentaries on the collection: Ōba Nanboku, *Dōgen zenji Sanshōdōbei no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Nakayama shobō, 1970); Ōba, *Dōgen zenji waka-shū shinshaku* (Tokyo: Nakayama shobō, 1972); Ōyama Kōryū, *Kusa no ha: Dōgen zenji waka-shū* (Sōtō shū shūmusho, 1971); Sawaki Kōdō, vol. 13, in *Sawaki Kōdō zenshū* (Tokyo: Daihōrin-kaku, 1963); Hata Egyoku, et. al., "Satori wo utau: Dōgen zenji no uta," *Zen no kaze*,

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Haru wa hana	In the spring, cherry blossoms,
Natsu hototogisu	In the summer the cuckoo.
Aki wa tsuki	In autumn the moon, and in
Fuyu yuki kiede	winter the snow, clear, cold.
Suzushi kari keru.	

Dōgen's poem is notable, according to Kawabata, because "by a spontaneous though deliberate stringing together of conventional images and words, it transmits the very essence of Japan."² Kawabata refers to "conventional images and words" in a special sense expressing a simple connecting of seasonal imagery evoking the ephemeral yet cyclical quality of the beauty of nature, which springs directly from the deepest sources of the Japanese poetic tradition.

Although the general discussion of Zen and literature is not unique, Kawabata's citation of Dōgen was considered striking and unusual by specialists in Dōgen studies for several reasons.³ First, Dōgen is not generally known or analyzed as a poet, and he probably did not consider the composition of poetry an important endeavor. His collections of Japanese waka (often referred to by the title given it in the Edo period, "Sanshōdōei") and of Chinese poetry (or *kanshi*, included as the last two parts of the 10-volume *Eihei Kōroku*), constitute a relatively minor portion of his complete works. His creative efforts were devoted primarily to the philosophical and religious issues concerning Buddhist theory and practice expressed in the 92-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*. The *Shōbōgenzō* is the subject of voluminous medieval and modern commentaries and translations. The poetry collections, however, have received little attention even from the Sōtō sect.

Also, the poetic tradition has never regarded Dōgen as a significant figure. The verse handled by Kawabata, entitled "Original Face"

no. 1 (1981), pp. 27-37. Ōba's second volume also surveys the traditional Sōtō commentaries, including Menzan's "Monge," Kakugan's "Sanshōdōei ryakuge," and Kasama's "Sanshōdōei-shū kōjutsu," which originally appear in *Sōtō shū zensho* (Tokyo: 1979), *Shūgen*, vol. 2.

All the available commentaries are sectarian in origin and doctrinal in orientation. Although numerous literary critics (see fn. 20) have analyzed the *Shōbōgenzō*, there has not been a commentary on the waka collection from a literary perspective.

² Kawabata, p. 13 (my translation).

³ Ōba, *Dōgen zenji Sanshōdōei no kenkyū*, p. 231f.

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(*honrai no memmoku* 本来の面目; Seidensticker: "Innate spirit"), is one of the few well-known pieces in "Sanshōdōei." This is largely because it became the source for a variation by the famous Edo period Sōtō Zen poet, Ryōkan, which Kawabata also cites in his lecture.⁴ None of Dōgen's waka is included in the major Court anthologies of the Kamakura era.⁵ The only commentaries on his waka collection in either medieval or modern times are written by sectarian scholars who analyze its doctrinal, rather than literary, foundations and implications. Dōgen's Japanese poetry is not of the rank of such late Heian/early Kamakura Buddhist poets as Saigyō (also mentioned by Kawabata) and the Tendai abbot Jien, who are the most prolific contributors selected for the leading imperial anthology of the era, the *Shinkokinshū*.

Many commentators have noted that Japanese culture is marked by a profound and direct convergence of religion and aesthetics, so that "artistic form and aesthetic sensibility become synonymous with religious form and religious (or spiritual) sensibility."⁶ More specifically with regard to Buddhism, Tagore characterizes aesthetics as the "uni-

⁴ Ryōkan's waka:

Naki ato no	In remembrance
Katami tomo kana	After I am gone —
Haru wa hana	In spring, the cherry blossoms,
Natsu hototogisu	In summer, the cuckoo's song,
Aki wa momijiba.	In autumn, the crimson leaves.

Nakamura Hajime discusses the differences in Dōgen's and Ryōkan's verses in *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1964), pp. 356–357. Concentrating on the *Shōbōgenzō*, Nakamura Sōichi examines Dōgen's impact on Ryōkan's poetry in *Ryōkan no ge to Shōbōgenzō* (Tokyo: Seishin shobō, 1984).

⁵ There is a textual controversy surrounding this issue. Ōkubo includes in his critical edition two poems that were taken from Court anthologies, though their authenticity is disputed by Kawamura and Ōba.

⁶ Richard Pilgrim, "The artistic way and the religio-aesthetic tradition in Japan," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 27, no. 3 (July 1977), pp. 285–305. See also Joseph Spae, *Japanese Religiosity* (Tokyo: Oriens Institute for Religious Research, 1971). In contrast to this view, however, Philip Yampolsky maintains, "It might not be too much of an exaggeration to say that when Zen flourishes as a teaching it has little to do with the arts and that when the teaching is in decline its association with the arts increases." In *The Zen Master Hakuin* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 9.

que Dharma of Japan.”⁷ Yet, Dōgen is often considered an exception to the religio-aesthetic mainstream because of his strong criticism of literature. He warns his followers against involvement in literary pursuits by advising a singleminded dedication to sustained zazen practice to achieve the Buddhist Dharma. Dōgen apparently draws a clear and consistent line between religion and art in admonishing his disciples against the pursuit of “style and rhetoric” which may distract or impeded their spiritual development. “Impermanence moves swiftly,” he says in a frequently cited passage in *Shōbōgenzō zuimonki*. “The meaning of life and death is the great problem. In this short life, if you want to practice and study, you must follow the Buddha Way and study the Buddha Dharma. The composition of literature (*bumpitsu*), [Chinese] poetry (*shi*) and [Japanese] verse (*ka*) is worthless, and it must be renounced. . . .”⁸ He adds in another passage, “Zen monks are fond of literature these days, finding it an aid to writing verses and tracts. This is a mistake. . . . Yet no matter how elegant their prose or how exquisite their poetry might be, they are merely toying with words and cannot gain the truth.”⁹

The distinction indicated by Dōgen between “art for art’s sake” and

⁷ Cited in Charles A. Moore, *The Japanese Mind: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1967), p. 296.

⁸ Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*, ed. Mizuno Yaoko (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1963), p. 67. For a discussion of the significance of this passage in the context of Dōgen’s works, see Karaki Junzō, *Butsudō shūgyō no yōjin: Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1966), p. 141f. Other criticisms of literary pursuits by Dōgen appear in *Zuimonki*, p. 203, and in *Kichijōzan Eiheiji shūryō shingi*, in *Dōgen zenji zenshū*, vol. II.

Dōgen is not alone in being suspicious of literature. Musō Soseki, famous for his poetic and prose writings, argues that “those minds that are intoxicated by secular literature and engaged in establishing themselves as men of letters . . . are simply laymen with shaven heads.” Quoted in D. T. Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove, 1960), p. 150. On the other hand, the noted literary critic Konishi Jin’ichi argues that despite Dōgen’s stated intentions, a literary interpretation of the *Shōbōgenzō* is appropriate and justifiable based on the reader’s response; see *A History of Japanese Literature*, ed. by Earl Miner, vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 7.

⁹ Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*, p. 113. The translation of this passage is taken from Masunaga Reihō, tr., *A Primer of Sōtō Zen: A Translation of Dōgen’s Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1971), p. 33.

the search for truth, or between an idle indulgence in literature and an exclusive determination to fulfill the religious quest, has also been carried out in his personal life. His biography, according to traditional sources (which modern research has shown to be somewhat marred by hagiographical excess),¹⁰ is notable for a renunciation and departure from the aesthete world of the Kyoto Court on three main occasions. First, Dōgen's decision to become a monk at the age of thirteen was an abandonment of the Court career awaiting him. Overwhelmed by grief due to the loss of both parents at the time of the tragic death of his mother when he was eight, he continued to feel a keen sense of the sorrow of impermanence and a profound longing for release from suffering, which led him to join the monkhood. Also, at twenty-four, Dōgen left the dominant Tendai and newly formed Zen monasteries in the Kyoto-Mt. Hiei area to seek the authentic Dharma in Sung China because of what he considered the corruption and secularization of the Japanese Buddhist institutions. Finally, at forty-four, sixteen years after returning to Japan from China where he attained enlightenment under the guidance of Ju-ching, Dōgen again renounced the secularized and politicized atmosphere of Kyoto Buddhism. He established a strictly disciplined monastic order (which later became the Sōtō sect), in the natural splendor of Eihei-ji temple (celebrated in many of his poems),¹¹ situated in the relatively remote and isolated mountains of Echizen province.

¹⁰ Many modern biographical accounts of Dōgen have been based on the *Teiho Kenzeiki*, the eighteenth century annotated version of *Kenzeiki* by Menzan Zuihō. The recent discovery of old manuscripts of *Kenzeiki*, included in Kawamura's work cited above, has challenged the authenticity and accuracy of the Menzan text on a wide range of issues, from Dōgen's aristocratic heritage, through his journeys to Mt. Hiei and Sung China, to the establishment of Eihei-ji and final return to Kyoto. For a reassessment of the biographical sources and issues, see Nakaseko Shōdō, *Dōgen zenji den kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kokusho kankōkai, 1979).

This textual controversy also affects an understanding of the title, number, sequence, and phrasing of the waka collection; see Ōba, *Dōgen zenji Sanshōdōei no kenkyū*; and Kishizawa Ian, *Zuishikaian zuihitsu* (Tokyo: Daibōinsatsu K. K., 1960). According to Ōba, for example, "Sanshōdōei" ("Poems on the Way from Sanshō Peak") is not the authentic title, and it should be replaced by "Dōgen zenji waka-shū" ("Dōgen's Waka Collection").

¹¹ For example, the following verse inspired by a Chinese Zen poem cited in the "Keisei-sanshoku" fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō*, identifies the Echizen landscape with

The opposition between religion and art that Dōgen's *Zuimonki* admonitions and biography highlight involves the relation between the relative and absolute, lyricism and didacticism, attachment and realization, and objectivity and subjectivity in the pursuit of the Buddhist Dharma. Dōgen's approach is based on his enlightenment experience of "casting off body-mind" (*shinjin datsuraku*), or liberation from all volitional attachments and mental constructions concerning objectifiable forms. His writing exemplifies the "compassionate words" (*aigo*) expressing the truth of Dharma (*hōgo*) whose sole aim is to convey one's own realization in order to assist others on their path to the attainment of genuine subjectivity. Dōgen criticizes literature for its interest in the external world of relative forms, which are objectified through an inauthentic subjective or emotional reaction to change and instability. Poetry, as an example of "dramatic phrases and flowery words" (*kyōgen kigo*),¹² attempts to eloquently capture feelings of longing, sorrow, loss, expectation, or uncertainty that reflect a partial awareness of evanescence.¹³ Dōgen suggests, however, that poetry may fail to express an authentic, or detached, subjective realization of the absolute truth of impermanent and nonsubstantive existence. Thus,

the attributes of the Buddha (in Kawamura, p. 86):

Mine no iro	Colors of the mountains,
Tani no hibiki mo	Streams in the valleys;
Mina nagara	One in all, all in one
Waga Shakamuni no	The voice and body of
Koe to sugata to.	Our Sakyamuni Buddha.

Another waka expresses Dōgen's mixed feelings toward Kyoto (in Kawamura, p. 93):

Miyako ni wa	All last night and
Momiji shinuran	This morning still,
Okuyama no	Snow falling in the deepest mountains;
Koyoi mo kesa mo	Oh, to see the autumn leaves
Arare furi keru.	Scattering in my home.

¹² For the distinction between *aigo* and *kyōgen kigo* in terms of Dōgen and the literary tradition, see Honda Giken, *Nihonjin no mujōkan* (Tokyo: Nihon hōsō shuppan kyōkai, 1978), p. 167.

¹³ For a discussion of the role of emotions expressed in poetry in terms of seasonal imagery and human affairs, see Robert H. Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 430f.

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literature deals with an emotional attachment to form and words, while Buddhist enlightenment concentrates on impartiality toward the self-nihilating foundations of reality beyond the oppositions of life and death, love and hate, and speech and silence.

Yet, Kawabata interprets "Original Face" as an essentially aesthetic utterance which is not Buddhist in contrast to poetic. He sees it divulging the typical religio-aesthetic understanding of man in relation to time, nature, the four seasons, and reality. The verse is perhaps comparable to Kenkō's statement in *Tsurezuregusa*, "The changing of the seasons is deeply moving in its every manifestation."¹⁴ Considered in light of his philosophical writings, Dōgen's poem indicates that the question of absolute and relative is not clear-cut or one-sided. The philosophy of the *Shōbōgenzō* is based largely on eliminating any subtle sense of duality or discrimination. Dōgen clarified such traditional Mahayana doctrines as the Kegon "interpenetration of form and form" (*jiji muge*), the Tendai "three thousand worlds in a single instant of thought" (*ichinen sanzen*) or "the true form of all dharmas" (*shohō jissō*), and Kūkai's "attaining the Buddha in this very body" (*sokushin jōbutsu*). His innovative notions, including "impermanence-Buddha-nature" (*mujō-busshō*), "being-time" (*u-ji*) and "spontaneous realization" (*genjō-kōan*), stress the thoroughgoing inseparability of absolute and relative, and emptiness and form.¹⁵ From Dōgen's standpoint, each and every form, including the flowers, cuckoo, moon, and snow, neither conceals nor delimits, but is in itself coterminous with the ultimate state of reality if viewed from the contemplative gaze of casting off body-mind.

In addition, Dōgen frequently mentions in *Zuimonki* and other writings that his deeply personal experience of transiency through the early loss of his parents was a crucial emotional factor in his resolve (*hosshin*) for enlightenment or the awakening of the Dharma-seeking mind. Although enlightenment lies beyond emotionalism, the inspiration to seek attainment is founded on a special, self-surpassing emo-

¹⁴ Kenkō Yoshida, *Tsurezuregusa*, tr. *Essays in Idleness* by Donald Keene (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1981), p. 28.

¹⁵ Dōgen says of *mujō-busshō*, for example, "the very impermanence of grasses and trees, thickets and forests is the Buddha-nature." In *Shōbōgenzō*, published as *Dōgen*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1970 and 1972), I, pp. 54-5.

tion—the drive and desire to overcome ignorance and attachment because of an awareness of impermanence. Furthermore, Dōgen stresses that language and symbols should be used positively and constructively as revelatory of the absolute. He contrasts his approach with the problematic Zen view stressed in some approaches to the use of the kōan, particularly Ta-hui's *kanna-zen*, i.e., that speech is an obstacle or barrier to realization that must be abandoned. As he says in a waka on the topic of “No reliance on words and letters” (*furyū mon-ji* 不立文字): “Not limited/ By language/ [the Dharma] is ceaselessly expressed;/ So, too, the way of letters/ Can display but not exhaust it.”¹⁶

B. The Elements of Aesthetics

Thus, a connection between Dōgen and aesthetics can be established in his approach to Zen theory and practice, which seeks to overcome the distinction between absolute and relative by concretizing the former in the latter. That is, Dōgen uncompromisingly situates the “absolute” in the “relative” world of an emotional response to ephemeral phenomena evoked through language. The function of emotions, forms and language in disclosing the absolute of impermanence-Buddha-nature is conveyed in the following waka by the symbolism of the term *tsuyu* 露 (lit. “dewdrops,” also suggesting “tears”):¹⁷

Asahi matsu	Dewdrops on a blade of grass,
Kusuba no tsuyu no	Having so little time
Hodonaki ni	Before the sun rises;
Isogina tachi so	Let not the autumn wind
Nobe no akikaze.	Blow so quickly on the field.

The dew, a central image in both the Buddhist and poetic traditions, epitomizes the fleeting quality of all things as manifestations of the

¹⁶ In Kawamura, p. 88. The original: *Ii suteshi/ Sono koto no ha no/ Hoka nareba/ Fude ni mo ato o/ Todome zari keru*. A literal rendering would be: “Because [the Dharma] is outside of language, words are renounced, and the way of letters also leaves no trace on it.” However, the translation given here is based largely on the poem's affinity to the following “Bendōwa” passage, which seems to echo Chuang Tzu: “Let [the Dharma] go and it fills your hands—it is unbound by singularity or multiplicity. Speak and it has already filled your mouth—it is not restricted by lesser or greater.” In *Shōbōgenzō* I, p. 11.

¹⁷ In Kawamura, p., 95.

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universal structure of life-death or arising-desistance. Dōgen's aim in expressing this metaphysical understanding of impermanence is to sustain the implicit moral message. Dōgen chides the wind for causing the evaporation of the dew in order to counsel disciples to neither resist nor waste time that flows at an ever-quickenning pace. People, who are subject to the same laws that govern the dew, must seize the opportunity to take advantage of the seemingly brief but experientially complete here-and-now moments that recur in the inevitable movement from life to death. But moral practice and metaphysical insight are based on an aesthetic sensitivity to the precariousness and vulnerability of natural phenomena. Dōgen's poem recalls Chōmei's introduction to the *Hōjōki*: "Which will be the first to go, the master or his dwelling? One might just as well ask this of the dew on the morning glory. The dew may fall and the flower remain—remain, only to be withered by the morning sun. The flower may fade before the dew evaporates, but though it does not evaporate, it waits not the evening."¹⁸ An emotional identification with the plight of ephemeral things, and consequent anguish and outrage, awakens the need for release from suffering. Enlightenment is attained as empathetic grief is transformed into a realization of the nonsubstantive basis of existence.

The poem thus expresses an aesthetic awareness that holistically encompasses an understanding of time and nature in a transcendental experience of nonsubstantial reality. The verse indicates that the religious vision incorporates a constellation of factors symbolized by the "dew," including impermanence, nature, emotions, symbolism, and illusion. Dewdrops, a conventional epithet for autumn, represent the transient, *impermanent* foundation of *nature* reflected in the changing of the seasons. As Kenkō writes, "If man were never to fade away like the dews of Adashino, never to vanish like the smoke over Toribeyama, but lingered on forever in the world, how things would lose their power to move us! The most precious thing in life is its uncertainty."¹⁹ In evoking "tears," *tsuyu* suggests the inseparability of *emotions* and insight, or the fundamental connection between sadness and awakening. The multiple implications of *tsuyu* also highlight the impor-

¹⁸ Kamo no Chōmei, *Hōjōki*, in Donald Keene, ed. *Anthology of Japanese Literature*, vol. I (Rutland, Vt. and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1955), p. 198.

¹⁹ Kenkō, p. 77.

tance of poetic *symbolism* and wordplay in portraying transcendent levels of awareness. Finally, dew represents the *illusory* status of the “floating world.” Like dreams, mirages, bubbles, etc., dew is a symbol of the relativity of illusion and truth based on the nonsubstantive or radically impermanent ground of existence. Kenkō again illustrates this theme by writing, “The world is a place of such uncertainty and change that what we imagine we see before our eyes really does not exist. . . . External things are all illusions.”²⁰

The crucial role of language in the paradoxical interplay of absolute and relative is expressed in Dōgen’s waka entitled, “A special transmission outside the scriptures” (*kyōge betsuden* 教外別伝). Here, Dōgen cites a traditional Zen motto associated with the position on language attributed to Chinese masters Te-shan and Ta-hui that he elsewhere refutes. According to Dōgen’s critique, the Ta-hui approach sees enlightenment as outside the world of conceptual discourse, and it uses absurd utterances in kōan cases to create an impasse with language and thought that requires a breakthrough to a nonconceptual and non-discursive understanding. Ta-hui’s standpoint fosters subtle dichotomies between language and Dharma, thought and attainment, and thus the absolute and relative. Dōgen’s verse uses a variety of wordplay to reinterpret the motto so that it suggests not a duality, but a profound and paradoxical inseparability or creative tension between these realms:²¹

Kyōge betsuden	Special transmission outside the teaching
Araiso no	The Dharma, like an oyster
Nami no eyosenu	Washed atop a high cliff:
Takayowa ni	Even waves crashing against
Kaki mo tsukubeki	The reefy coast, like words,
Nori naraba koso.	May reach but cannot wash it away.

On first reading, the poem seems to support the conventional Zen view Dōgen is known to criticize. The “Dharma” (*nori*) resides on a lofty “peak” (*takayowa*) above and aloof from the controversy and disputation of the world of discourse, symbolized by the “crashing

²⁰ Ibid., p. 200.

²¹ In Kawamura, p. 87.

waves" (*nami*) of the "reefy [Echizen] coast" (*araiso*). The Dharma is located "outside the scriptures" and is not accessible to the words of the sutras and recorded sayings. However, the full meaning of the waka revolves around the use of pivot-words and a relational word whose connotations are so complex and interwoven that they cannot be easily translated. The pivot-words involve the phrase *kaki mo tsukubeki*, which has at least three implications. First, *kaki* can mean "oyster," which implies that the Dharma is not a remote entity opposed to the waves but finds its place beyond the water precisely because of their perpetual motion. This image plays off the traditional Mahayana analogy of ocean and waves representing universality (absolute) and particularity (relative). Thus, the oyster has been cast out of the universal background by the movement of a particular wave, but must return to its source for sustenance.

In addition, *kaki* means "writing," suggesting the total phenomenon of language and communication (*kotoba*), modified by the verb *tsukubeki*, which itself is a pivot-word meaning both "must reach" and "must exhaust." The twofold significance of the phrase, "language must reach/must exhaust," heightens the importance of the role of words and accentuates the creative tension between language and Dharma. The Dharma must be expressed. It cannot escape the necessity of discourse, yet the affirmation of the role of language contains the admonition not to use up or exhaust the Dharma through unedifying discussion. The effect of this phrase is enhanced by the relational word, *nori*, which means "seaweed" in addition to Dharma. Seaweed makes an association with waves and, like *kaki* as oyster, highlights the intimate connection between the conceptual discourse of scripture and the realization of Dharma.

In contrast to the Zen view which seems to regard verbal communication as unnecessary or inherently misleading, Dōgen does not reject or seek to abandon language. Rather, he discloses the genuine and multiple implications harbored by discourse though not generally understood or acknowledged. In a sense, this has been the aim of the long history of Chinese Zen poetry which "draws the [unenlightened] reader into the standpoint of casting off body-mind that surpasses conventional knowledge and understanding."²² But, Dōgen seems more

²² Nakamura Sōichi, p. 30.

emphatic in viewing language as an inexhaustible reservoir of meaningful ambiguities at once embedded in yet concealed by the words of everyday discourse. He rereads the Zen motto, *kyōge betsuden*, to be a sign that verbal expression is a creative resource which reflects and enhances the multifaceted perspectives of realization. In so doing, Dōgen draws inspiration not only from Chinese Zen but from the techniques of the Japanese poetic tradition. These include wordplay, neologism, lyricism, and recasting traditional expressions, all used in his poetic and philosophical writings. The poetic conceit plumbs the depths of discourse from the standpoint of a spiritualized aesthetic intentionality. In a similar vein commenting on the creative process of poetry composition in "Maigetsushō," Fujiwara Teika maintains that "the poetic masterpiece must have . . . a profundity and sublimity of mind and creativity of expression allowing an eminently graceful poetic configuration to emerge with an aesthetic plenitude that overflows [or is beyond] words (*kotoba no hoka made amareru*)."²³ The poetic ideal of aesthetic plenitude or overtones (*yojō* 余情) "compressing many meanings into a single word"²⁴ is comparable to Dogen's view that language serves as an invaluable tool in navigating the paradoxical path linking oyster and wave, cliff and ocean, seaweed and Dharma, as well as the absolute and relative aspects of the religio-aesthetic quest.

Dōgen's poetry also shows the importance of an immediate and holistic experience of natural forms for religious attainment. The verse entitled, "True seeing received at birth," for example, identifies the inner recesses of mountain pathways with Buddhist enlightenment through a pun connecting the isolated retreat or mountain village (*sato*) and sudden awakening (*satori*). The headnote is taken from a passage of the *Lotus Sutra* (chapter 19) concerning the primordial Buddha-nature or original face. Here, one's absolute nature is achieved through a journey into the mountains, which has a resonance with the theme of mountain solitude and the valorization of nature in the "grass-hut literature" (*sōan no bungaku*) of Saigyō and Chōmei:²⁵

²³ Fujiwara Teika, "Maigetsushō," *Nihon kagaku taikai*, vol. III, ed. Sasaki N. (Tokyo: 1935), p. 359.

²⁴ Cited in Brower and Miner, p. 269. See also Hilda Kato, "The Mummyōshō of Kamo no Chōmei," *Monumenta Nipponica*, vol. 23, no. 3-4 (1965), pp. 321-430.

²⁵ In Kawamura, p. 88.

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Fubo shoshō no manako	True seeing received at birth
Tazune iru	Seeking the Way
Miyama no oku no	Amid the deepest mountain paths,
Sato nareba	The retreat I find
Moto sumi nareshi	None other than my
Miyako nari keri.	Original abode: satori!

The fulfillment of the travel motif is expressed in that the place found at the end of the journey is none other than the initial home, thus suggesting a unity of original and acquired enlightenment. The pivot-word *miyako* literally means "capital," or, specifically, Kyoto, and implies the comfort and satisfaction of one's true home. The authentic abode is located far from the actual Kyoto, yet is no different than the essential nature of the capital. When the syllables are pronounced separately as *mi ya ko*, however, the phrase signifies "body and child." This word-play elaborates on the title by implying that genuine insight received as a potentiality at birth is not realized until the body develops, a progression which does not lead beyond or out of but is precisely a return to the initial home. *Mi* (body) also associates with *miyama* or "deep mountains," indicating that the mountains have become the new body which is fundamentally the same as the original home despite the length of the journey. Finally *sato* as "abode" or village evokes a spontaneous awakening to the knowledge always already present, though not previously attained, of the inseparability of the potentiality and actuality of enlightenment, or the oneness of practice and realization.

The significance of emotions in Dōgen's thought is highlighted by the following waka on the role of grief and sorrow in response to natural change as a source of religious inspiration:²⁶

Kokoro naki	Even plants and trees,
Kusaki mo kyō wa	Which have no heart,
Shibomu nari	Wither with the passing days;
Me ni mitaru hito	Beholding this,
Ure-e zameya.	Can anyone help but feel chagrin?

As all beings are interrelated by virtue of the transiency which invariably undercuts their apparent stability, man necessarily responds to

²⁶ Ibid., p. 95.

the demise of plants and trees “which have no heart” (*kokoro naki*). The latter phrase is used in Court poetry to denote a priest with a subdued heart, or one who has conquered any attachment to feelings through meditation. In this case, the phrase carries at least a double message. The plants can be considered to lack an awareness of their plight due to either a subhuman absence of consciousness or a symbolic suprahuman transcendence of sorrowful emotions based on an innate acceptance of the natural situation. At the same time, the priest implicitly referred to by the phrase cannot avoid feeling chagrin (*ure-e*) despite his apparent state of liberation. Or, rather, the aesthetic perception—or the awakening of an aesthetically-attuned heart—dislodges the clinging even a priest may have to the view that perishability is something objective and apart from one’s own existence by highlighting its subjective pervasiveness. Therefore, the refined emotion of sorrow is more conducive than strict detachment to exploring the existential depths of enlightenment.

Dōgen’s approach to evoking symbolically the ephemeral quality of man and nature has been compared by Honda Giken to the following Teika poem, an allusive variation of an earlier waka by Tomonori:²⁷

Ika ni shite	What reason is there
Shizugokoro naku	That these cherry petals fluttering
Chiru hana no	With unsettled heart
Nodokeki haru no	Should symbolize the essential color
Iro to miyu ran.	Of the soft tranquility of spring?

Honda acknowledges the differences between Teika, the Court poet and critic, and Dōgen, the seeker of the Way. By stressing Teika’s commitment to composing waka based on a contemplative realization infused “with-mind” (*ushin* 有心 or *kokoro ari*) as the basis of *yūgen* 幽玄 (profound mystery) he argues that both authors penetrate to the fundamental or primordial (*rakei* 裸形, lit. naked or uncovered) level of nature. The understanding of nature and impermanence as *rakei* is prior to conceptualization and devoid of fabrication—it is an aware-

²⁷ Honda, p. 164f. The translation of Teika (*Shūi Gusō*, xi, 355) is taken from Brower and Miner, p. 15, which also translated Tomonori’s verse. Honda cites both Teika’s and Tomonori’s waka in his general comparison of the former with Dōgen, but he does not specifically mention any of Dōgen’s poems.

ness of stark, meaningless reality just as it is (*arinomama*).²⁸ On the one hand, the two waka are nearly opposite in that Dōgen sees plants as devoid of feeling, while Teika projects onto the cherry blossoms the all-too-human sense of a restless heart. Yet, each poem points to the intimate connection and empathetic sensitivity of man in communion with the phenomena of nature, as well as the interrelated feelings of instability and tranquility or grief and transcendence. An aesthetic response to forms through contemplation is essential to the attainment of authentic subjectivity or a creative and self-illuminating awareness that is immersed in nature yet beyond the vacillations of personal emotions.

II. CONTEMPLATIVE VIEW OF NATURE AND IMPERMANENCE

A. Karaki's Analysis

Several scholars in addition to Honda have suggested that the attainment of a contemplative view-of-nature (*shizen-kanshō* 自然觀照) and view-of-impermanence (*mujō-kanshō* 無常觀照) on a primordial and unencumbered level of holistic subjectivity is the central intellectual and cultural theme linking Dōgen's nondualistic philosophy and Japanese aesthetics. The connections between Dōgen and the literary tradition that have been explored by leading philosophers, cultural historians, literary critics, and Dōgen specialists²⁹ particularly apply to

²⁸ The notion of time understood on the *rakei* level is also discussed by Karaki in *Mujō* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1967). For the notion of *arinomama*, see Nakamura Sōichi's modern Japanese translation of "Genjōkōan" in *Zenyaku Shōbōgenzō* (Tokyo: Seishin shobō, 1977), vol. I.

²⁹ The major philosophical commentaries dealing with Dōgen in the Japanese context remain the early works by Watsuji Tetsurō, "Shamon Dōgen," *Watsuji Tetsurō zenshū*, (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1977), vol. 4; Tanabe Hajime, *Shōbōgenzō no te-tsugaku shikan*, *Tanabe Hajime zenshū* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1967), vol. 5. The leading discussions of Dōgen and Japanese cultural history include: Karaki, *Mujō*; Nakamura Hajime, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*; Nishida Masayoshi, *Mujōkan no keifu* (Tokyo: Ōfusha, 1970), and Nishida, *Nihon bungaku no shizenkan* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1972). Some of the main studies by literary critics are: Nishio Minoru, *Dōgen to Zeami* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1965); Yasuraoka Kōsaku, *Chūseitoki bungaku to tankyū* (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1970); Murata Nobura, *Bukkyō bigaku* (Tokyo: Sankibō, 1981); and Imanari Motoaki, et. al., *Shūkyō to bungaku* (Tokyo: Akiyama shoten, 1977). Konishi Jin'ichi also refers to Dōgen in *Michi—*

the *yūgen* poetry of Teika, Shunzei, Saigyō, and Chōmei. The *yūgen* poets and critics articulate a pure description of nature as a contemplative field fully coterminous with the realization of mind that is quite similar to Dōgen's doctrines of whole-being-Buddha-nature (*shitsu-busshō*) and this very mind itself is Buddha (*sokushin-zebutsu*). *Yūgen* expression "involves the bracketing of a poet's individual impressions and drawing near to the very essence of the subject," based on Tendai *shikan* (cessation-contemplation) meditation.³⁰ In addition, Dōgen's celebration of the Echizen landscape as a source of preaching the Dharma (i.e., *sansuikyō*, "mountains and rivers sutras") is comparable to the reclusive "grass-hut" or "mountain retreat" (*yamazato*) literature that sees mountain solitude as a redemptive and purifying act.³¹

How far do the parallels go? The most systematic and comprehensive analysis of Dōgen in light of the literary tradition is presented by Karaki Junzō in the monograph, *Mujō*, and other works. Karaki stresses Dōgen's surpassing of aesthetics, and his approach stands in contrast to many commentators who emphasize underlying affinities be-

Chūsei no rinen (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1975). Studies by Dōgen specialists exploring the role of literature and aesthetics include: Terada Tōru, *Dōgen no gengo uchū* (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1974), and Nakamura Sōichi, *Ryōkan no ge to Shōbōgenzō*.

³⁰ Konishi, "Michi and Medieval Writings," *Principles of Classical Japanese Literature*, ed. Earl Miner (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 204; for the significance of *shikan* meditation, see Konishi, "Shunzei no *yūgen-fū* to *shikan*," *Bungaku*, vol. 20, no. 2 (February 1950), pp. 108-16.

³¹ The theme of the *yamazato* as religious symbol is discussed in Ienaga Saburō, *Nihon shisō ni okeru shūkyōteki shizenkan no hatten* (Tokyo: Sokansha, 1944). Ienaga's arguments are critically assessed by: Robert Bellah, "Ienaga Saburō and the Search for Meaning in Modern Japan," *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*, pp. 369-424; and William H. LaFleur, "Saigyō and the Buddhist Value of Nature," *History of Religions*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1973), pp. 93-127 and no. 3, pp. 227-248. See also Mezaki Tokue, "Aesthete Recluses During the Transition from Ancient to Medieval Japan," *Principles of Classical Japanese Literature*. Although Ienaga does not refer to Dōgen in the context of the *yamazato* ideal, an affinity between Dōgen and *yamazato* is indicated in that the largest section of Dōgen's *waka* collection is entitled, "Sōan no gūei" ("Impromptu hermitage poems"). Yet, there are significant differences between Dōgen and the medieval aesthete-recluses; for example, the latter often see the loneliness (*sabi*) of mountain solitude as a religio-aesthetic end in itself, whereas Dōgen views renunciation only as a means to the realization of Dharma.

tween Dōgen and literature. On the one hand, Karaki is skeptical of the literary value of Dōgen's poetry, in opposition to Nakamura Hajime, for example, who argues that "Dōgen was a great poet. . . . his [waka] vibrate with warm sympathy for the beauties of nature."³² More significantly, Karaki maintains that Dōgen's "metaphysics of impermanence" (*mujō no keijijōgaku* 無常の形而上学) goes beyond the influences absorbed from literary expressions of transiency and nature. He argues that Dōgen's realization of *mujō-kanshō*, or clear observation and contemplation of impermanence-as-non-self as the thoroughly nonsubstantive ground for all manifestations of ephemeral phenomena and sensations, supersedes the sentimentality and attachment conveyed in Court literature. Nishida Masayoshi, however, sees Dōgen's "literary critique of literature" (*bungei futei no bungei*)³³ as representing a healthy convergence of traditions that constitutes a vital warning against the decline of both religion and literature when the fields unreflectively intermingle with one another. Karaki's view also stands in contrast to several critics who stress Dōgen's strong influence on Japanese literary giants. These include Nishio Minoru's account of the conceptual link between Dōgen's notion of *genjōkōan* and Zeami's interpretation of *yūgen*, and Nakamura Sōichi's assessment of Dōgen's impact on Ryōkan's poetic commentaries on the *Shōbōgenzō*.

Karaki presents Dōgen's view-of-impermanence in the context of a sustained analysis of a line of progression in the understanding of the meaning of transiency expressed throughout the history of Japanese religious and literary works. He traces several stages in the development of viewing-impermanence (*mujō-kan*) based on how the human sees itself in relation to the fleeting aspect of objects. The term *aware* (or *mono no aware*), stressed in *Genji monogatari* and interpreted more fully by Motoori Norinaga centuries later, is often considered the

³² Nakamura Hajime, p. 554. Ōkubo also praises Dōgen as a poet in *Dogen zenjiden no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1966), p. 358. Yet, Karaki and Ōyama are skeptical of Dōgen's poetry, especially in comparison with his eloquence in the *Shōbōgenzō*. Also, Funatsu Yōko questions the originality and/or authenticity of some of Dōgen's waka which are similar to earlier poems in the literary tradition; see "'Sanshōdōei' no meishō, naritachi, seikaku," *Ōtsuma kokubun*, vol. 5 (1974), pp. 24-44.

³³ Nishida, *Mujōkan no keifu*, p. 333.

most typically Japanese attitude. *Aware* means feeling a sense of sympathetic poignancy or pathos as people and events pass by and fade ever so quickly. But Karaki historically frames the expression of *aware* by analyzing prior and subsequent approaches to impermanence. He argues that the initial literary response was represented by the term *hakanashi*, fragility or frailty based on the gap created between external things moving too swiftly and man's inner feeling that he cannot match their tempo and is frustrated by their loss. *Haka*, originally a time unit for planting and cutting rice, came to refer to a measurement of temporal limits. When the negative suffix *nashi* was applied to *haka*, the term suggested "past the limits" in the sense of time that has flown by or passed from view. Thus, *hakanashi* in early literature implied a pace of time with which the individual subject could hardly keep up, creating feelings of doubt, uncertainty and instability about the self. *Aware* then developed as a more heartfelt and refined attunement to the universality of change and loss from the standpoint of the vulnerable emotions of man whose destiny is bound with all phenomena. Also referred to as *mujō-kan* 無常感, this feeling is an exclamatory sigh (*eitan*) of sorrow in sensing-impermanence as an inexorable motion perpetually undercutting subject and object. *Aware* thus marks the transition from *hakanashi*, which naively objectifies time, to an internalized view-of-impermanence.

In Karaki's analysis, *hakanashi* roughly corresponds to the *Manyō-shū* era *chōka* poetry including Hitomaro's verse on discovering a dead body and Okura's "Lament on the Instability of Things." *Aware* is expressed in *Kokinshū* verse and *Genji monogatari*. The stage of a more genuine and interior approach based on contemplating-impermanence (*mujō o kanzuru*) encompasses Pure Land thinkers Hōnen and Shinran, reclusive priests Chōmei and Kenkō, as well as *Shinkokinshū* and *renga* poets such as Shinkei and Sōgi. In this period, the feelings of fragility and poignancy are still expressed in literature and religion, though these emotions are sublimated of a more transpersonal view of impermanence. Dissatisfied with the stagnancy and decline of Court society, many medieval writers and thinkers turned to Buddhist meditation as a means of transcending the shifting currents of vicissitude. Karaki maintains that among the contemplatives Kenkō comes closest to Dōgen in viewing transiency as the basis of a "self-realizational viewing-impermanence" (*jikakuteki mujō-kan* 自覺的無常觀).

Kenkō admonishes, for example, "In our dreamlike existence, what is there for us to accomplish? All ambitions are vain delusions. . . . Only when you abandon everything without hesitation and turn to the Way will your mind and body, unhindered and unagitated, enjoy lasting peace."³⁴ Yasuraoka Kōsaku similarly sees a strong parallel between Dōgen and Kenkō in their common emphasis on sustained practice to attain true selfhood in relation to incessant evanescence.³⁵

According to Karaki, the notion of fragility continues to influence Dōgen, and it is this attitude deeply rooted in the Japanese literary tradition that inspires his eloquence (*yūben*) in poetic and prose writings. Yet, Dōgen's metaphysical approach also clearly renounces any lingering attachment to *hakanashi* by declaring in the *Shōbōgenzō*, "You must always devote your mind to impermanence and never forget the fragility of the world and the uncertainty of human life. Do not take it that I think of the world merely as fragility. You must discipline your mind, value the Dharma, and overcome the uncertainty of life. For the sake of the Dharma, you must cast aside the uncertainty of existence."³⁶ Karaki stresses that in Dōgen's view, "Impermanence refers neither to the psychological aspect of 'fragility' (*hakanashi*) nor the sentiment of 'sensing-impermanence' (*mujō-kan*). Impermanence is, rather, the reality which encompasses self and other; it is the fundamental reality not only a subjective[ly experienced] reality, but the one and only category."³⁷ Dōgen realizes an authentic or holistic subjectivity which overcomes the emotionalism that results in conventional attempts to adorn basic or primordial time with a linear, sequential notion that there is a set beginning (*logos*) and end (*telos*). He does not construct images of creationist, evolutionary, teleological, or progressive time that still plague Kenkō, for example. "[Dōgen] repeatedly refutes such attempts to idealize and ascribe false meaning to time," Karaki argues, "and he directly and nonobstructively faces

³⁴ Kenkō, p. 200.

³⁵ Yasuraoka, *Chūseiteki bungaku no tankyū*, pp. 112-19.

³⁶ Cited in Karaki, *Mujō*, p. 296, originally in the "Dōshin" fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō* (included in Ōkubo's edition of *Zenshū*, but not the Iwanami edition).

³⁷ Karaki, *Mujō*, pp. 283-84. Karaki's analysis tends to follow the philosophical distinction made by the Kyoto school thinkers between epistemological subjectivity (*shukan* 主観), which presupposes a duality of subject and object, and holistic subjectivity (*shutai* 主体) of the formless Self.

basic time as it is. He encounters spontaneously and effortlessly time that is without beginning or end. He confronts without blinking the stark reality of the moment-to-moment destruction-generation of time. This is a barrier which must be crossed. Without penetrating this barrier, there is no realization of Zen."³⁸

Although Karaki highlights many important aspects of Dōgen's relation to Japanese aesthetics, he seems to overlook several points that would enhance this critical comparison. First, Karaki's conclusions sacrifice the neutrality maintained by Nishida Masayoshi, Yasuraoka and others, who distinguish Dōgen's meditative (*zazenteki*) or liberation-oriented (*gedatsuteki*) approach to impermanence from Kenkō's literary appreciation of the irregular and incomplete which shows that "the most precious thing in life is its uncertainty." Also, in focusing his comparison on Kenkō, Karaki does not stress the role of subjective attainment through contemplating-impermanence reached in *yūgen* poetry. Teika asserts, for example, that the mode of composition with-mind (*ushin*) is one of and yet the basis for all other styles of poetry; therefore, the transpersonal experience of *ushin* is the foundation of *yūgen*.³⁹ *Yūgen* poets like Teika are not as clear philosophically as Dōgen about the structure of the holistic moment. But their descriptive realism removes almost all traces of personal sentiment in reacting to transient phenomena, and the desolation they often express is a self-surpassing state of mind based on total immersion with the unity of nature and time.⁴⁰

In addition, Karaki tends to criticize Dōgen's lyricism and eloquence as a holdover from the Court tradition without fully assessing the productive and integral role lyricism plays in Dōgen's religious thought. Dōgen's life and writings clearly show that impermanence must be viewed from a variety of perspectives based on the fundamental paradoxicality of absolute and relative, and didacticism and lyricism. Transiency can be interpreted either "negatively" as a source of suffering, grief, despair and desolation, or "positively" as a celebration of the

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 304-05.

³⁹ Teika, p. 349.

⁴⁰ See the philosophical discussion of *yūgen* poetry in Toyo and Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Theory of Beauty in the Classical Aesthetics of Japan* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981).

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promise of renewal and symbol of awakening. Although transiency ultimately discloses nonsubstantiality, the variety of subjective attitudes may serve as "illusion surpassing illusion"⁴¹ in the quest for a transcendental standpoint.

B. "The Final Journey"

The productive role that emotions, or the authentic subjective response to ephemeral natural forms, plays in the religious quest is expressed in two waka dealing with Dōgen's final journey to Kyoto. These poems, which offer a rare glimpse of Dōgen's attitudes near the end of his life, are perhaps the most moving verses in his Japanese collection. The diction and syntax of the first poem plays off the traditional poetic theme of travel and the imagery of evanescence to convey Dōgen's dual sense of exhilaration and anxiety, and expectation and frailty during the trip:⁴²

Go-jōraku no sono hi go-shōka kore ari shō ni iwaku	The [final] journey to Kyoto
Kusa no ha ni Kadodeseru mi no Kinome yama Kumo ni oka aru Kokochi koso sure.	Like a blade of grass, My frail body Treading the path to Kyoto, Seeming to wander Amid the cloudy mist on Kinobe pass.

Kusa no ha ("a blade of grass") is a multidimensional image. First, it connotes travel, a theme used generally in Court poetry to suggest someone's feeling of either dismay or relief in leaving Kyoto but here ironically expresses uneasiness about an imminent return. On a symbolic level, the image indicates the fragility and vulnerability that

⁴¹ In the "Muchū-setsumu" fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō* (I, p. 311), Dōgen writes: "Even though illusion is compounded within illusion (*meichū-yūmei*), you must understand that the path to attaining the Way is realized through illusion surpassing illusion (*madōi no ue no madōi*)." The latter phrase suggests the ability to see beyond deception through the deception itself, so that illusion is self-surpassing, as in the related notion of disentangling vines by means of vines (*kattō*).

⁴² In Kawamura, pp. 81-2.

undercut the existence of each and every being. It also recalls several passages in the *Shōbōgenzō* in which Dōgen asserts the identity of the “radiance of a hundred blades of grass” with the true nature of reality, or maintains that “a single blade of grass and a single tree are both the body-mind of all Buddhas.”⁴³ *Kusa no ha* therefore expresses a convergence of departure and return, feeling and detachment, as well as particularity and frailty, with the universal nonsubstantiality of phenomena.

Another important image in the poem involves the word *oka*, which literally means “hill” and makes an association with *Kinobe yama* (“Kinobe pass” located midway between Eihei-ji and Kyoto). The syllable *ka* (questioning) also conveys Dōgen’s deep uncertainty about, yet fleeting moment of liberation from his current medical condition as his spirit seems to float and feels lost in the clouds. Dōgen at once transcends his physical problems and realizes he can never be free from the travails of impermanence. The alliteration of *k*’s at the beginning of each line adds a solemn or reverent undertone, while the term *kokochi* (a synonym for *kokoro* or *shin*) softens the sentiment, or transmutes it into an expression of subjective realization. The mind appears released although the “body” (*mi*) is bound by suffering. Ōba Nanboku further suggests that the image of clouds recalls the Zen doctrine of enlightenment as “floating like the clouds, flowing like the waters” (*unsui* 雲水).⁴⁴ Thus, the poem represents a transformation of personal sentiment or aesthetic perception into an holistic experience of liberation.

The second verse on the final journey is based on an ambiguous reference to the viewing of the harvest moon, a traditional occasion for contemplation and the composition of poetry:⁴⁵

Gyo nyūmetsu no toshi	On the eighth month/fifteenth
hachigatsu jūgoya	day [harvest] moon in the year
go-eika ni iwaku	of Dōgen’s death
Mata minto	Just when my longing to see

⁴³ For example, see “Muchū-setsumu,” *Shōbōgenzō* I, p. 310, and “Hotsumu-jōshin,” *Shōbōgenzō* II, p. 209.

⁴⁴ Ōba, *Dōgen zenji waka-shū shin-shaku*, p. 331.

⁴⁵ In Kawamura, pp. 85–6.

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Omoishi toki no	The moon over Kyoto
Aki dani mo	One last time grows deepest,
Koyoi no tsuki ni	The moon I behold this autumn night
Nerare yawa suru.	Leaves me sleepless for its beauty.

The word “moon” (*tsuki*) appears only one time in the original, so that the phrase *mata minto* (lit. “seeing again”) makes it unclear to which moon Dōgen’s longing refers: is it the Kyoto moon he has missed for the ten years he has been in Echizen, or the harvest moon of the following year which he realizes he may not live to see? In either case, the moon is a haunting image that is used in his other waka to represent either an irresistible attraction to beauty or holistic illumination.⁴⁶ Dōgen’s anxiety and longing converge and collapse at the sudden understanding that the moon he hopes to see at some time in the future is none other than the one he currently beholds. The irony cannot be missed that Dōgen uses lyricism to admonish himself spiritually. He has almost neglected the message so fundamental to his Zen teaching, that the present moment should be experienced exactly for what it is without recourse to the self-created distractions of expectation and regret. The poem thus concludes with a sense of thankfulness and wonderment based on a personal experience that clarifies the philosophical meaning of time.

Seen in light of the way lyricism enhances didacticism in the waka on “the final journey,” the aesthetic configuration of “Original Face” which complements its religious significance is based primarily on the multiple nuances of the adjective *suzushi* 涼 appearing in the final line. *Suzushi* can be taken to mean, as Seidensticker’s translation indicates, either the physical characteristic of the brightness and coldness of the snow or a bodily sensation reacting to this external stimulus. Yet that rendering, which suggests that *suzushi* merely amplifies *kiede* (lit. “frozen”) in modifying snow, represents but one level of meaning.

⁴⁶ For example (in Kawamura, p. 92):

Ōzora ni	Contemplating the clear moon
Kokoro no tsuki o	Reflecting a mind empty as the open sky,
Nagamuru mo	Drawn by its beauty,
Yami ni mayoite	I lose myself
Iro ni medekeri.	In the shadows it casts.

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Suzushi appears in Court poetry to imply the serene and cool outlook—encompassing both objective appearance and subjective response—generated by phenomena that are not literally cold. The term is used by Tamekane, for instance, to describe the purity and coolness of the voice of the cuckoo (*hototogisu*),⁴⁷ a synthesia that illustrates the underlying and complex interrelatedness of personal reaction and external stimulus, body and mind, and sensation and awareness. *Suzushi* refers neither just to the snow nor the observer, neither to the physical nor the mental. Rather, it suggests a lyricism that is rooted in yet unlimited by the forms previously portrayed in the poem.

Ōba's interpretation argues that Dōgen uses the term in a religio-aesthetic way to comment on human involvement in seasonal interpenetration, or the immediate and renewable response to the perpetual rotation of four distinct yet overlapping phenomena. Thus, *suzushi* reflects upon the lyricism of the entire poem to express the primordial unity encompassing infinite diversity and the possibility for momentary change. It modifies each of the seasonal images: the vivid colors and graceful scattering of spring flowers, the sharp cry of the cuckoo at dawn or dusk, the clarity and tranquility of autumn moonlight, and the virgin purity of freshly fallen snow.⁴⁸

Suzushi is not another modifier in a descriptive poem otherwise noted for being nearly devoid of adjectives. On the the other hand, it does not imply a conventional feeling of a subject that reacts to an objectified stimulus. Rather, *suzushi* refers to nature in and of itself—or nature “as it is” (*arinomama*) authenticated by contemplation—in such a way that subjectivity neither interferes with nor is excluded from the holistic and impersonal manifestation of each and every phenomenon. That is, the subject is symbolically removed from the setting as an independent entity to return to or participate holistically in the cyclical unity of nature. Thus, *suzushi* expresses the central and consistent transcendental attitude toward the entire array of images, in which a peak moment of nature is perfectly reflected by the quality of human experience. An alternative translation, also supported by the ending word *keri*, which represents affirmation, reads:

⁴⁷ Brower and Miner, p. 359.

⁴⁸ Ōba, p. 110.

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Honrai no memmoku

Original Face

Haru wa hana

In spring, the cherry blossoms,

Natsu hototogisu

In summer, the cuckoo's song,

Aki wa tsuki

In autumn, the moon, shining,

Fuyu yuki kiede

In winter, the frozen snow:

Suzushi kari keru.

How pure and clear are the seasons!