



Temporal persistence of emotion in waka and classical Chinese poetics: A comparative study of poem on “A Promise Carried Through Time” and “Toki Koyuru Chigai”

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Abstract

This research paper examines how emotion persists across time through a comparative analysis of two original poems modeled on Classical Chinese regulated verse and Japanese waka. Emotional continuity is considered as a structural effect of the epistemologies of poetic form. Temporality theory provides insights into how each form represents time and intercultural hermeneutics explores how meaning is produced by the meeting of two distinct aesthetic systems. The waka-based poem sustains emotion through atmospheric suggestion and cyclical temporality. The Chinese style poem sustains emotion through metaphysical causality and linear continuity. Affect theory further explains how each form circulates feeling according to its internal logic. The findings contribute to global lyric studies by showing how poetic structures generate emotional meaning across temporal frames.

Keywords: Comparative poetics, lyric temporality, affect theory, intercultural hermeneutics, poetic form, global lyric studies

Introduction

A comparative analysis is presented between two original poems: Poem on “A Promise Carried Through Time” and Toki Koyuru Chigai. These works are composed in the styles of Classical Chinese regulated verse and Japanese waka. Both poems are used to examine how emotion is sustained across time. Emotional persistence is treated as a structural effect rather than a universal constant.

In waka-inspired composition, emotional resonance is often produced through seasonal imagery and atmospheric suggestion. In Chinese style composition, emotional continuity is frequently framed through metaphysical reasoning and causal logic. These contrasting tendencies reflect distinct cultural conceptions of time, memory, and fate.

The study thus positions emotional movement in the context of cross-cultural poetics, in which the concept of form is conceived as a bearer of affective logic. The present study positions its findings in the context of global lyric studies, in which there is a growing interest in the ways in which different poetic cultures shape emotion, time, and the self through their formal means.

Method and Framework

A comparative method is employed. The two poems are placed in parallel. Each poem follows the conventions of its respective tradition.

Toki Koyuru Chigai adopts a waka-based structure. It uses an introduction, a prelude, a main verse and an envoy. Seasonal cues and tonal shifts are used to guide emotional development. Poem on “A Promise Carried Through Time” follows a Classical Chinese style structure. Parallelism and conceptual clarity are emphasized.

1. Form as Epistemology

A view of poetic form as a mode of knowledge is adopted. This position is supported by work in historical poetics and comparative aesthetics, where form is treated not only as a container of meaning but as a way of producing it. Structure

is understood as an epistemological system. It shapes how emotion is perceived, organized, and transmitted. Waka and Classical Chinese style poetry therefore operate as distinct frameworks of understanding. Each form encodes a different theory of time and a different logic of emotional continuity. The comparison of the two poems demonstrates how these frameworks generate specific affective outcomes.

2. Justification of Method

The use of original compositions as primary material is justified within current practices in comparative poetics. Creative reconstruction has been recognized as a valid analytical tool in studies of lyric transformation [Cai 1996], aesthetic systems [Saussy 1993]^[2, 8], and historical poetics [Owen 2006]^[7]. These works demonstrate that poetic form can be examined through both critical analysis and compositional practice.

The method aligns with translation studies. Venuti suggests that both translation and creative rewriting make visible the underlying structures that give meaning its shape. [Venuti 2008]^[13]. By composing poems within two distinct traditions, the present study exposes how emotional continuity is produced by formal design rather than by content alone.

Cross-cultural poetics further supports this approach. Shirane’s work on Japanese literary aesthetics [Shirane 2012]^[11] and Wang’s analysis of lyric depth [Wang 2010]^[14] emphasize that emotional effect is inseparable from structure. The two poems used here are constructed to reflect these structures. Their comparison therefore provides a controlled way to observe how emotion moves within each system.

The method is transparent and replicable. The poems are not treated as historical artifacts. They are used as analytical instruments designed to highlight specific features of waka and Classical Chinese style poetry. This allows the study to isolate structural differences that might be obscured in traditional textual comparison.

A brief engagement with temporality theory further strengthens the analytical framework. Work in phenomenology and historical time studies has shown that temporal experience is not neutral. It is shaped by cultural forms and narrative structures. Ricoeur's account of narrative time and Koselleck's analysis of temporal layers both suggest that time is produced through representation rather than simply reflected by it. In this view, poetic form becomes a mechanism through which temporal experience is organized. The waka-based poem constructs time as cyclical and seasonal. The Chinese style poem constructs time as cumulative and causal. These temporal models shape how emotion is carried forward. Emotional persistence is therefore linked to the temporal logic embedded in each form.

Intercultural hermeneutics also informs this study. This approach argues that meaning emerges through the encounter between cultural systems rather than inside a single system. Such as when two poetic forms are placed in dialogue, their assumptions about emotion, time and memory become visible. The comparison of the two poems therefore functions as a hermeneutic act. Each poem brings the other into clearer focus by exposing the assumptions it normally leaves unspoken. This approach resists essentialist readings because it treats both traditions as flexible interpretive systems rather than fixed cultural identities. The analysis is based on relational way of understanding, where meaning emerges through the interaction between the two forms.

Waka-Based Composition: Atmosphere and Trace

In the waka-based poem Toki Koyuru Chigai, emotion is conveyed indirectly. Atmosphere is used as the primary vehicle of feeling. A scent, a shadow, or a trace of frost can evoke memory. Emotional presence is allowed to remain understated. This aligns with the aesthetics of suggestion and ephemerality central to classical Japanese poetics [Keene 1999] ^[4].

The poem uses frost and moonlight to recall a past bond. The vow is implied rather than declared. Time is treated as cyclical. Seasonal return enables emotional return. The poem invites reflection rather than argument. A poetics of trace is produced through this method.

Chinese-Style Composition: Causality and Continuity

A contrasting approach is taken in Poem on "A Promise Carried Through Time". Emotion is framed within a system of karmic continuity. A vow made in a previous life is believed to reappear in the present. The bond is more causal than atmospheric.

Terms such as kousu (karmic cycles) and shukugan (vow from a previous life) signal metaphysical depth. Recognition occurs through fate rather than sensory detail. Emotion is placed within a larger cosmological order.

This reflects the structural clarity and philosophical grounding associated with Classical Chinese poetics. Wang's theory of lyric depth supports this orientation by linking emotional intensity to metaphysical coherence [Wang 2010] ^[14].

Comparative Gloss and Table

A glossary is provided to support cross linguistic clarity. **Table 1** lists key expressions from both poems. Romaji and English glosses are included.

The table highlights semantic and phonetic correspondences that inform the comparative analysis. It also functions as a methodological tool by making explicit the conceptual vocabulary that shapes emotional movement in each tradition.

Table 1: Glossary of key Japanese and Classical Chinese poetic terms with romaji and English glosses, illustrating semantic and phonetic correspondences relevant to the theme of temporal emotional persistence.

Japanese/Classical Form	Romaji	English Gloss
時越ゆる誓ひ	Toki koyuru chigai	A vow that crosses time
時 (とき)	toki	time
越ゆる (こゆる)	koyuru	to cross; to pass beyond
誓ひ (ちかい)	chigai / chikai	vow; pledge
霜階	shimo-kai	frost-covered steps
月冷	tsuki-rei	cold moonlight
古殿	kodono	ancient hall
舊魂 (旧魂)	kyūkon	old soul; lingering spirit
劫数	kōsū	karmic cycles
宿願	shukugan	vow from a previous life
香痕	kōkon	trace of fragrance
灯影	tōei	lamp-shadow
相随ふ (相随う)	aisou / aisoufu	to follow alongside

Discussion: Emotion as Structural Effect

Emotion is shaped by poetic structure. In Toki Koyuru Chigai, emotional continuity is carried by atmosphere. In Poem on "A Promise Carried Through Time", emotional continuity is carried by causality.

These mechanisms reflect distinct cultural epistemologies. Japanese poetics often privileges perceptual immediacy and sensory nuance. But Chinese poetics on the other hand privileges metaphysical coherence and moral causation.

1. Affect Theory

Affect theory argues that emotion is shaped by circulation, pattern, and relational movement rather than by individual expression. This view supports the claim that emotional persistence is produced by poetic structure. In the waka-based poem, emotion circulates through atmospheric cues. It moves through trace, suggestion, and seasonal return. In the Chinese style poem, emotion circulates through causal reasoning. It moves through metaphysical continuity and karmic linkage. These patterns reflect different affective economies. Each poem organizes feeling according to the logic of its form. This supports the broader argument that emotion is not only represented in poetry. It is structured by poetry.

The approach used in this study is therefore strengthened by affect-oriented perspectives. By working within both systems, their capacities and limitations are observed. The aim is not to establish universality. The aim is to clarify differences.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that emotional persistence is not a universal psychological constant. It is a structural effect produced by the epistemologies of poetic form. The waka-based poem sustains emotion through atmospheric recurrence and cyclical temporality. The

Chinese style poem sustains emotion through metaphysical causality and linear continuity. These mechanisms reflect distinct cultural theories of time and affect. The comparison therefore contributes to broader debates in comparative poetics by showing how emotional meaning is generated by form. Further research across traditions is encouraged. Poetic composition can continue to serve as a precise instrument for examining how cultures imagine the movement of feeling across time.

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