



A Thousand Strands of Black Hair
Seiko Tanabe, translated by Meredith McKinney

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Biography
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Description

The turbulent lives and passionate relationship of two radical Japanese poets are explored in this intimate and personal biography.

This book examines and re-imagines the turbulent and intertwined lives of Akiko Yosano (1878–1942) and Tekkan Yosano (1873–1935), two poets who sparked a revolution in the world of Japanese 'tanka' (short-verse classical poetry).

Born in provincial Sakai, in the Osaka prefecture, the young Akiko defied expectation to become a female poet, a calling through which she met Tekkan Yosano, the figurehead poet of the iconic literary journal *Myōjo* and who would eventually become her husband. The author explores the effect of their passionate and at times tormented relationship on their hugely influential work, as well as describing each of their childhoods, as she uses documentary sources along with her storytelling abilities in order to evoke the intimate details of their lives, together and apart. The story of these two poets is interwoven with those of the other poets and family who surrounded them, while these personal stories are also situated within their wider historical context.

Sensitively and beautifully translated by Meredith McKinney, this is an intimate and personal exploration of the compelling lives of these two Japanese poets, in what the author calls 'a love letter' to their memories.

Readership: Readers of literary biographies or love stories, and readers with an interest in Japanese poetry.

About the Author

Beginning as a literary magazine editor, and contributor to the magazines *Bungei shuto* and *Osaka bungaku*, **Seiko Tanabe** (1928–) was in 1964 awarded the Akutagawa Prize for her novel *Senchimentaru jani* (*Sentimental Journey*). Later in 1993 she was awarded the Yoshikawa Eiji Literary Prize for *Hinekure Issa* (*Perverse Issa*), followed by both the Izumi Kyoka Prize and the Yomiuri Literary Prize in 1998 for her novel *Dotombori no ame ni wakarete irai nari* (*Since Parting in the Rain at Dotombori*).

Meredith McKinney received a PhD in Japanese literature in 2002 from the Australian National University, where she is currently a visiting fellow. She lived in Kyoto for twenty years, teaching English literature and language at various universities and working as a freelance translator. Her main publications include translations of the Japanese classic *The Pillow Book*, as well as Soseki Natsume's *Kusamakura* and *Kokoru*, for the Penguin Classics series. Her translation of Yoshikichi Furui's *Ravine and Other Stories* won her the US–Japan Friendship Commission Translation Prize in 2000.

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