

Introduction

Rather than introduce *The Tale of Genji* in a general way, these seven essays offer a few fundamental perspectives on a work that has stood for a thousand years as a rich and varied masterpiece. They remain generally silent about the pleasures the tale offers (elegance, sensibility, wit, poignancy, and so on) and about many of the issues that it raises. No interested reader should find them unapproachable, but they admittedly assume a degree of familiarity with the work. Essential to each will be the widely recognized tripartite division of the tale into Part One (Chapters 1–33), Part Two (34–41), and Part Three (42–54).¹

This Introduction will review each essay briefly and then summarize the principal reading developed in the earlier ones, concerning Genji and his brother Suzaku. Next it will discuss the provisional character of any approach to the tale, the inevitable emergence of incommensurable views, and the position of Hikaru Genji in the work as a whole. Finally, it will turn to an issue raised in several of the essays: the difference in character between Part Three of the tale and the rest.

An overview of the essays

The first essay (“Genji and Murasaki: Between Love and Pride”) follows Genji’s long relationship with Murasaki, the woman most important to him during the greater part of his life, while the second (“Genji and Suzaku [1]: The Disaster of the Third Princess”) emphasizes his even longer relationship with his elder brother, Suzaku. Both relationships intersect when Genji marries Suzaku’s favorite daughter, the Third Princess, at the beginning of Part Two. These two essays therefore view this turning point and its aftermath from different angles. “The Disaster of the Third Princess” also discusses the supernatural influences that encourage Genji’s triumph over the faction centered on his brother.

Taken together, these two essays propose an underlying dramatic structure for what easily appears to be a fragmented, episodic work centered on love relations. However, they do not question the importance of these relations, which naturally and properly remain the principal focus of reader interest. Rather, they propose a background unity that leaves the tale’s main appeal intact and, at the same time, extends the range of the author’s achievement. The third essay (“Genji

¹ On this division, see Shirane, *The Bridge of Dreams*, xx.

and Suzaku [2]: The Possibility of Ukifune”) discusses the nature and experience of the tale’s last heroine, her psychological condition, her likely future fate, and the significance of the exorcism scene in the penultimate chapter. It speculatively identifies the possessing power as the angry spirit of the late Suzaku, thus suggesting a possible thematic link between the first two parts of the tale and the third.

The fourth essay (“Genji and the Luck of the Sea”) approaches the relationship between Genji and Suzaku in Part One from the perspective of myth. Genji’s exile and triumphal return hark back to the *Nihon shoki* story best known in English as “The Luck of the Sea and the Luck of the Mountains” and referred to below in this collection as the myth of Hikohohodemi. The essay develops this parallel and links the myth to the history of the Sumiyoshi deity, who plays so vital a role in this phase of Genji’s life.

The fifth essay (“Pity Poor Kaoru”) discusses the main hero of Part Three. While many readers accord Kaoru psychological depth, “Pity Poor Kaoru” argues instead that the narrator’s chief interest in him lies in manipulating his experience so as to elicit the greatest possible sympathy for him. It also contrasts the portrayal of Kaoru with that of Genji and discusses in this connection the distinctiveness of Part Three.

The sixth and seventh essays (“Two Post-*Genji* Tales on *The Tale of Genji*” and “Veils of the Feminine over Visions of the Male”) treat more restricted topics. The former analyzes passages from the mid-eleventh-century *Sagoromo monogatari* and *Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari* in order to shed light on how their authors read *The Tale of Genji*. It particularly discusses ancient and modern views of Ukifune’s failure to drown herself. The latter essay analyzes and attempts tentatively to explain a motif that has stirred the curiosity of many readers: that of a man or men wishing that a beautiful man were a woman.

Genji’s rise and the collapse of his world

The essays that consider Genji’s life and career differ with the view expressed by Norma Field in her book on the tale: “Now for Genji to qualify as a fictional hero, he must be free of the taint of political desire, and there is no more powerful antidote for this than erotic desire.”² The discussion in them rests on the contention that “political desire” is fundamental to Genji as a fictional hero; that erotic desire

² Field, *The Splendor of Longing*, 27.

is not for any man an antidote to political desire but belongs instead to an entirely different realm of life, even though the two may certainly become entangled; and that both are essential to Genji as a character and as a hero.

Field conceded:

It should be admitted that political ambition, even though unbecoming to heroes, can provide a fictional interest different from that of erotic anguish. And Genji is ambitious, as we shall see, but his political manipulations are usually masked, at times transparently, by erotic tension.³

Attentive readers certainly recognize that the tale's love relationships play themselves out against a backdrop of political maneuvering and ambition. "Genji and Murasaki" and "The Disaster of the Third Princess," supplemented by aspects of some of the succeeding essays, offer a reading of this background narrative. They suggest that tension between Genji and the faction represented by Suzaku (Part One), and then increasingly between Genji and Suzaku personally (Part Two), gives the work a veiled thematic continuity that Part Three may conceivably prolong, and that the Hikohohodemi myth may have first suggested. The most visible aspect of this continuity has to do with Genji's rise, followed by the collapse of his private world.

In agreement with the consensus on the importance of love in *The Tale of Genji*, Sumie Terada described the work's "central theme" as that of "frustrated love" (*les amours contrariées*) and observed that this theme appears at the very start, with the story of Genji's mother ("Kiritsubo").⁴ The major love-related elements in the introductory "Kiritsubo" chapter (the Kiritsubo Emperor's loss of Genji's mother, Genji's early longings for Fujitsubo) indeed foreshadow future developments. Genji's yearning for Fujitsubo, prolonged by his relationship with Murasaki, remains alive for him until the end of his life. However, "Kiritsubo" also evokes the political pressure that forces Genji's father, against his wishes, to appoint Suzaku rather than Genji heir apparent. Later chapters follow through on this political struggle, which reappears, even after Genji's death, in the opening pages of "Hashihime" (the first chapter of Part Three).

It is also in "Kiritsubo" that Genji marries Aoi, the daughter of the minister of the left. Suzaku, by now the heir apparent, expresses

³ Field, *The Splendor of Longing*, 29.

⁴ Terada, "Présentation," 7. Terada's remarks introduce a volume of French essays on the tale.

interest in her. However, her father gives her to Genji instead, and the emperor, the brothers' father, upholds his choice. Just as Suzaku's appointment as heir apparent marks for the faction focused on him a victory over the threat represented by Genji, this marriage constitutes Suzaku's first loss of a woman to Genji—a loss that Suzaku's mother, a major force on his side, resents bitterly. (Genji is of course too young at this point to have any initiative in the matter.) It will not be the last. In the realm of personal feeling, Suzaku's later loves (Oborozukiyo, Akikonomu), and his loss of them to Genji or Genji's interests, are a likely source of unspoken tension between him and his brother.

These essays therefore distinguish between two aspects of the relationship between Genji and Suzaku.⁵ The first is political: the struggle between the factions of the right (Suzaku's side) and left (Genji's). A major aspect of this struggle, and one certainly familiar to the author and her intended audience, has to do with the imperial succession. The second, more personal aspect of the relationship between the brothers influences developments in the background of the tale just as Genji's loves provide the great foreground theme. The relationship need not involve personal antagonism. Nothing in the narrative suggests that Genji dislikes Suzaku, and there is no need to imagine him doing so. There is no need, either, to imagine Suzaku consciously resenting Genji's successes, still less plotting against him. However, the brothers are dissimilar not only in age, but in ability and recognized standing. The younger, extravagantly gifted Genji is a commoner despite his father's personal wishes, while the elder Suzaku, whose lack of talent his own father clearly recognized, is heir apparent, emperor, and retired emperor. Birth and circumstance have placed the two in a relationship that invites difficulty between them and guarantees open tension between their allies. Under these circumstances Genji's efforts, first to redress the balance tipped against him at the start, and later (after he accepts the Third Princess) to retain the relationship he still treasures with Murasaki, are certain to involve decisions and actions that neither honor Suzaku nor satisfy Suzaku's fondest wishes.

The proposed background story therefore goes as follows. Having been forced by external circumstance to favor his lackluster first son

⁵ The *Genji* author has long been celebrated for her psychological insight. To dismiss from the relationship between Genji and Suzaku any psychological content beyond sweetly fraternal affection is therefore to hold that in their case the author set psychology aside and portrayed Suzaku, especially, less as a man than as a cipher genuinely free of any feelings not publicly attributable to an emperor.

(Suzaku) publicly, the Kiritsubo Emperor does all he can to favor his brilliant second son (Genji) privately. Meanwhile Genji, feeling cheated of the honor to which his gifts and his father's favor properly destine him, maneuvers (with supernatural assistance) to overcome those who forced him into this position. After many vicissitudes he succeeds well enough to dominate the court, including Suzaku, completely. Part One and the parallel with the Hikohohodemi myth end at this point.

As many scholars have noted, and as any reader (especially of the original) may observe, Part Two represents a new departure for the author, who seems to have relaunched her tale at this point in a different mood and in a style not seen before. Part Two appears from the perspective of these essays to extend the story told by the Hikohohodemi myth in order to follow the brothers' fortunes after the victory of the younger, and with the same emphasis on the younger as before. Suzaku's efforts to find the Third Princess a husband immediately tempt his victorious brother, and Genji, whose success has clouded his judgment, accepts a prize that he neither needs nor examines. The marriage almost destroys his relationship with Murasaki and leads ultimately to her death. Meanwhile, Genji's continuing attachment to Murasaki gives Kashiwagi an opening to violate the Third Princess. Kaoru is born, and Suzaku and Genji confront each other first from a distance over the despairing Third Princess, then at last in person when, over Genji's protests, Suzaku makes the Third Princess a nun. By this time Suzaku has reason to resent profoundly the ruin that Genji has brought on the daughter he cherishes above all else in the world. The narrative does not explicitly attribute any such sentiments to him, but it does not need to. No man in Suzaku's position could fail to have them. The example of Rokujō, described as unaware while awake of any hostility toward Aoi, even though her spirit attacks Aoi savagely while she sleeps, shows how accurately the *Genji* author recognized the possibility of a gap between conscious and unconscious feelings.

"The Possibility of Ukifune" argues on these grounds that Suzaku may be seen as becoming, after death, the angry spirit that eventually possesses Ukifune. Extravagant at first glance, the idea has been retained in this book for two reasons. First, the secondary literature on Ukifune's possession conveys such conflicting ideas about the spirit, and indeed often betrays (at least in Japanese) such reluctance to deal with the subject at all, that there is room for further speculation. Second, the work of collecting evidence to test the plausibility of the idea nourished this reading of the relationship between Genji and Suzaku, and of the intense drama played out in Part Two. This reading

of Ukifune's possession therefore turned out to be stimulating and fruitful. Whether it is "true" or not, no one will ever know.

Reader orientations and incommensurable views

Most interpretations of the tale are impossible to prove to the satisfaction of all readers because, as Richard Okada noted of the "Wakamurasaki" chapter alone, the narrative requires the reader to make, unaided, so many connections between this and that in the abundance of material that it offers.⁶ The narrator seldom signals a connection, still less spells out its intended content (if there is one), and she therefore leaves making sense of it all largely up to the reader. Striving to grasp the tale as a whole is therefore like attempting to fix in one painting a landscape that changes with every hour, season, and play of light, and also with every shift in the viewer's mood and interests. The narrative offers more possible connections and inferences than anyone could gather into a single, coherent reading. Moreover, little external evidence confirms or denies what might have been the intentions (should these be felt to count) of author, patrons, and original audience. As a result, no reading of the work, in whole or in part, can reveal a hitherto unseen *fact* about it. It can only develop a perspective and seek to persuade the reader that this perspective, however limited, is at least legitimate and even, perhaps, congenial.

For this reason differing convictions, interests, and experience may yield strong, conscientiously supported, but also mutually incompatible views. The tale has been condemned as immoral and praised as a record of "the beautiful ways of antiquity,"⁷ damned for depicting *lèse-majesté* and read as documenting the contradictions in the ruling class. Such perspectives may convince those suitably committed, but the narrative does not demonstrably confirm any of them. It does not confirm either the current conviction of some readers, academics among them, that Genji's marriage to Murasaki ("Aoi") is farcical and insulting to her, and that his first intercourse with her is an unforgivable crime. This, too, is a matter of perspective.

Some readings, although persuasive in their own terms, are therefore incommensurable because founded on perspectives too different to allow usefully reasoned comparison or refutation. An example is the

⁶ Okada (*Figures of Resistance*, 265) wrote, "The situation [in 'Wakamurasaki'] not only calls into question notions of 'unity' and 'narrative development' but places on the reader-listener the burden of making the links between those moments and pretexts." By "pretexts" he meant such works as *Ise monogatari*.

⁷ Kumazawa, *Genji gaiden*, 442.

gulf between the view of possessing spirits adopted here and that developed at length in English by Doris Bergen.⁸ Several of the essays acknowledge Bergen's view and debate it to a degree, but the gulf just mentioned explains why they do not address it more fully. Like Mitani Kuniaki, writing somewhat earlier in Japanese,⁹ Bergen gathered from a poem in Murasaki Shikibu's personal collection (*Murasaki Shikibu shū* 44) that Murasaki Shikibu took a sophisticatedly psychological view of possessing spirits and therefore wrote this view consistently into her fiction. Although the (fictional) narrator of a fictional work cannot be assumed to be identical with the author,¹⁰ Bergen founded on faith in this identity, hence in authorial intention, her thesis that a possessed woman in the tale is actually wielding, of her own unconscious volition, a "weapon" to recapture Genji's wandering attention and in this way proclaiming her power, even as her "weapon" sickens or kills her.¹¹ It is not necessary to engage Bergen's thesis in detail if one accepts neither its foundation, nor her concomitant treatment of fictional material as authentic anthropological data. Her identification of the spirit in "Tenarai" with Ukifune's father is likewise as impossible to prove objectively as the identification of the same spirit, here, with Suzaku. These readings simply represent different perspectives on the work.

Genji's position in the tale

One important matter of perspective involves the position of Genji himself in the tale. Most readers over the centuries have probably seen him as an attractive and impressive hero, and some modern authorities have described him as "ideal." By taking his quality and centrality as self-evident, however, such a view may also seem to slight the experience and importance of the women whose absorbingly difficult

⁸ Bergen, *A Woman's Weapon*, especially 23–27.

⁹ Mitani's work is cited and discussed in "The Possibility of Ukifune."

¹⁰ There is no reason, even without the poem, to assume that Murasaki Shikibu took the lore regarding possessing spirits wholly at face value. Many cultivated people in her time, especially those familiar with Chinese writings, probably had personal doubts on the subject. At the collective, public level, however, spirits and spirit possession seem to have been accepted as genuine. Murasaki Shikibu is unlikely to have exploited, through a fictional narrator and throughout a complex work of fiction, so dramatically effective a device in accordance with a personal view so at variance with collectively accepted belief and practice.

¹¹ Bergen insisted (*A Woman's Weapon*, 93–4) that the spirit of Rokujō does not kill Aoi. However, her evidence for this reading proves nothing to anyone not already disposed for other reasons to accept it.

relationships with him give the work its most accessible appeal. Objections to his behavior with them date back at least to the late twelfth century,¹² and in recent decades some have even come to condemn or belittle him. Many have rejected his centrality in the work in favor of that of the women characters. This view is prominent in academic writing in English. Norma Field gave it influential expression when she wrote:

The eponymous hero, far from being the controlling center of the work, is as much constituted by his heroines as they are by him. Yet, for reasons to be seen, he is curiously absent by comparison to his ladies.¹³

Genji and the tale's female characters of course stand in a reciprocal relationship to each other, as do living men and women. From the perspective of these essays, however, Genji functions as the "controlling center," or perhaps reference point, of the narrative. It is he who initiates every love relationship in which he engages, and to whose interests the narrative always returns. Moreover, his decision to accept the Third Princess makes him not a passive victim of erotic nostalgia, but the active agent in the unfolding of his fate. Seen this way he is not "curiously absent by comparison to his ladies." This does not make him better or more deserving than they, nor does it require the reader to admire him. The point is elsewhere. He is a charismatic figure whose actions change his own life as well as the lives of others. He is the hero of the tale.

Reflections on Part Three

A recurring issue in these essays is the literary difference between Parts One and Two, taken together, and Part Three. It is great enough to seem perhaps to cast doubt on Murasaki Shikibu's sole authorship of the tale. However, these essays do not suggest multiple authorship. Murasaki Shikibu is the only identifiable author. Her diary associates her intimately with the work, and centuries of fame both for the tale itself and for the art motif of her writing its first chapters have put that association beyond challenge. What the essays implicitly question is instead the necessity of reading Part Three *through* faith in her sole authorship.

This authorship is indeed a matter of faith. The mentions of the tale in Murasaki Shikibu's diary probably do not refer to all 54 chapters.

¹² Higuchi and Kuboki, *Matsura no Miya monogatari*, *Mumyōzōshi*, 198.

¹³ Field, *The Splendor of Longing*, 17.

She may not have written every word of all of them. Some modern authorities have therefore questioned the authorship of one or more of the “three ‘Niou Miya’ chapters” (42–44), although others have then sought to refute their doubts.¹⁴ In pre-modern times two commentators reported, without endorsing it, a rumor that the Uji chapters were by Murasaki Shikibu’s daughter, Daini no Sanmi; and Yosano Akiko (1878–1942) more recently attributed Parts Two and Three to her.¹⁵ No Japanese specialist actually questions the authorship of the Uji chapters, but many share a “perception of disharmony” (*iwakan*) between them and the rest.¹⁶

In his discussion of the way the tale may have been composed, and of the diversity of its constituent elements, Haruo Shirane described it as “a highly diversified and far-ranging body of texts.” He concluded:

The reader of the Ukifune sequence, for example, can appreciate these five chapters both independently and as an integral part of the previous narrative. The reader approaches the new sequence with a memory of Murasaki Shikibu’s earlier accomplishments and recognizes its individuality in light of her previous literary achievements.¹⁷

In this spirit many scholars have pointed out parallels of theme, motif, and so on between the Uji chapters and the rest, thus affirming an underlying continuity of intention and style that integrates these chapters with what precedes them. In the spirit of these essays, however, the balance tips the other way. Shirane’s “recognizes its individuality in light of her previous accomplishments” becomes, so to speak, “wonders in light of what precedes the Uji chapters how the same person could conceivably have written them at any time in her life.” This doubt is reasonable, even if it is not inevitable, once the weight of Murasaki Shikibu’s immense prestige is set aside. It is meaningful because bypassing her name widens the range of possible readings of the Uji chapters and affects some existing ones.

In the decades immediately after World War II, the Uji chapters came to be seen as the culmination of the entire tale. “Pity Poor Kaoru” briefly summarizes Konishi Jin’ichi’s view to this effect. That of Takeda

¹⁴ Takeda Munetoshi rejected “Takekawa” in 1949, Ikeda Kikan rejected all three chapters in 1951, Ishikawa Tōru rejected “Kōbai” in 1961, and Ishida Jōji rejected all three in 1971 (Kubo, “Zokuhen sakushaibun,” 208). Many others have contributed to the same debate, which continues.

¹⁵ Rowley, *Yosano Akiko and The Tale of Genji*, 147–8.

¹⁶ Kubo, “Zokuhen sakushaibun,” 207–8.

¹⁷ Shirane, *The Bridge of Dreams*, xxi.

Munetoshi, originally a student of Western literary theory, was perhaps even more influential. Takeda wrote in 1954:

Part One was written from an idealistic perspective, although one cannot call the ideals in question very high. Part Two conveyed actual suffering from an objective perspective and so at last approached reality. Part Three, one may say, conveyed the times through individual experience, reflected human universality transcending time, and thus achieved symbolic truth in the most profound sense. With Part Three, *The Tale of Genji* comes at last to deserve being called a masterpiece.¹⁸

However, times have changed. Current appraisals of the Uji chapters avoid value judgments, and some scholars come close to inviting doubts about sole authorship. In a 1982 essay echoed by later writers, Mitani Kuniaki found in them a new approach to characterization that, in keeping with their “hollowed-out” world, undermines the “myth of unity” of character.¹⁹ (“Pity Poor Kaoru” discusses this topic.) Takahashi Tōru wrote similarly of “multidimensional fragmentation of the subject” in the Uji chapters and of the inability of the Uji characters even to communicate among themselves;²⁰ and Kanda Tatsumi saw an “epistemological disjunction” (*ninshikiteki setsudan*) between the Uji chapters and the rest.²¹ Opinions like these suggest the need to define what it means to say that the Uji chapters, brilliant as they are in themselves, are integral to the rest.

Mitani responded to this need by providing a definition that he rested on the opening words of “Niou Miya”: “His light was gone, and none among his many descendants could compare to what he had been.”²²

¹⁸ Quoted without page attribution by Akiyama Ken, “Kanketsuteki na seishin hatten ron,” 138. The passage is from Takeda’s *Genji monogatari no kenkyū*, Iwanami, 1954.

¹⁹ Mitani Kuniaki, “Genji monogatari daisanbu no hōhō,” 94.

²⁰ Takahashi, “Aishū no tsumi: Ukifune no genzoku to bukyō,” 153–4.

²¹ Kanda Tatsumi, *Monogatari bungaku, sono kaitai: Genji monogatari ‘Uji jūjō’ ikō*, Yūseidō, 1992: cited by Kobayashi, “Uji jūjō no genzai ni kaete,” 352.

²² *Hikari kakure-tamainishi nochi, sono mi-kage ni tachisugi-tamaubeki hito, sokora no on-suezue ni arigatakarikeri* (TTG, 785; GM 5:17). For what it is worth, Chateaubriand (1768–1848) wrote almost exactly the same thing, in his own style, when looking back on the swiftly eclipsed empire of Napoleon (*Mémoires d’outre-tombe* 2:3–4, author’s translation): “To fall back from Bonaparte and the Empire into what followed is to fall from reality into the void, from a mountaintop into the abyss...Of whom, of what is one to speak after such a man?...I blush to think that I must now drone on about a horde of infinitesimal beings, myself among them—dubious, nocturnal creatures that we were in a world the great sun of which was gone.”

Genji's world, vividly present a moment ago, has gone dark. The Uji chapters have indeed been called a tale of "darkness."²³ As one literary critic wrote in 1949, "With [them], the atmosphere of *The Tale of Genji* turns dark and cold, as though one had stepped down into a cellar."²⁴ The opening words of Part Three are therefore fundamental to Mitani's view of these chapters as a "hollowed-out tale of absence,"²⁵ that is to say, the story of a world now without a center. The effect of this "darkness" is to give Genji's life a new, retrospective radiance. Kobayashi Masaaki similarly called these chapters an "anti-monogatari" that succeeds Genji's story in a Hegelian dialectic of light and darkness.²⁶ In short, Mitani attributed the value of Part Three above all to the way it renews the reader's pleasure, by contrast, in Parts One and Two.²⁷ Whether the same author or another planned this effect, however, remains imponderable.

The many parallels noted between Part Three and the rest likewise leave the issue moot. A simple example is the proposition that Kaoru's discovery of the Uji sisters ("Hashihime") "echoes" Genji's discovery of Murasaki ("Wakamurasaki").²⁸ Perhaps it does. However, it also echoes the first episode of *Ise monogatari*, which is understood to underlie the "Wakamurasaki" scene as well, and is in fact the closer of the two to *Ise monogatari* since it involves *two* sisters, both of marriageable age. Moreover, the real issue has to do with the flavor of the two scenes. The one in "Wakamurasaki" is casual, fresh, almost naïve, the one in "Hashihime" elaborate and theatrical in comparison. The reader may prefer either, but, granted the presence in both of the *kaimami* ("peeping through a crack") motif, they are at any rate extremely different. The value of the echo, or even its meaningful existence, is therefore unclear.

Other such parallels likewise stand or fall according to the reader's perspective. Ishida Jōji wrote that "no understanding of Part Three is possible without an understanding of Part Two"²⁹ and cited as evidence the roles played by two "sisters" (*shimai*) in Part Two (Murasaki and the Third Princess—actually cousins whose lives are unrelated until the latter's marriage) and three sisters in Part Three

²³ Ōasa, "Monogatari no kōzō," 298.

²⁴ Odagiri, "Uji jūjō: chūsei bungaku e," 393.

²⁵ Mitani Kuniaki, "Genji monogatari daisanbu no hōhō," 76.

²⁶ Kobayashi, "Uji jūjō no genzai ni kaete," 349.

²⁷ Mitani Kuniaki, "Genji monogatari daisanbu no hōhō," 86.

²⁸ Shirane, *The Bridge of Dreams*, 140.

²⁹ Ishida, "Seihen kara zokuhen e," 22.

(Ōigimi, Nakanokimi, Ukifune); the adultery between Kashiwagi and the Third Princess in Part Two, and Niou and Ukifune in Part Three; and Yūgiri's failed attempt to make love to Princess Ochiba in Part Two, and Kaoru's failures with Ōigimi in Part Three. However, these pairs illustrate Kanda's "epistemological disjunction" equally well. Viewed from the standpoint of contextual circumstance and literary character, they are utterly dissimilar and shed no light on each other.

"Pity Poor Kaoru" suggests several times that a particular scene parodies one from much earlier in the tale. Parody, which is a recurring theme in the reception of the Uji chapters, has also been extended to cover them as a whole. Mitani's reading suggests parody with a particular effect in mind, and the eminent thinker Yamaguchi Masao put the matter as plainly as possible when he wrote, "The theme of *The Tale of Genji* is summed up and brought to completion by the parody of the Uji chapters."³⁰ Both seem to have had in mind *self*-parody, which the Uji chapters may indeed be; and yet they convey so pervasively different a view of people and life that the "*self*-" is not wholly convincing. A motif that seems familiar at first glance need not have in these chapters anything like its earlier value.³¹ This, too, is a meaningful perspective from which to read them.

It is easy to explain why Murasaki Shikibu might not have written every word. In the main, she undoubtedly followed through chapter by chapter, as Shirane suggested, on an evolving and expanding conception of her work. However, she may also have responded to outside stimulus (suggestions, requests, even orders) as her work grew in reputation. The populous, fastidious court society around her must have made widespread participation in any attractive pastime almost inevitable. (The "Eawase" and "Hotaru" chapters of *Genji* provide examples.) Her stories might have inspired others (individuals or rival coteries) to join in or even to compete. For diplomatic reasons she might have been unable to reject every suggestion or contribution and so ended up editing others' work into the whole as well as her own, roughly as Watsuji Tetsurō suggested long ago.³² Or perhaps inter-salon rivalry even brought under the shelter of her name extended material over which she had relatively little control.

³⁰ Yamaguchi, *Tennōsei no bunka jinruigaku*, 161.

³¹ An example is Mitani Kuniaki's reading of the exorcism scene in "Tenarai," discussed in "The Possibility of Ukifune."

³² Watsuji, "Genji monogatari ni tsuite."

Being pure fiction, such speculation as this is no more compelling than Maruya Saiichi's fancy, in his novel *Kagayaku Hi no Miya* (2003), that Murasaki Shikibu simply wrote up in *The Tale of Genji* the escapades that Fujiwara no Michinaga related to her while the two lay together in bed. Nevertheless, it remains true that nothing about her immortal achievement can be taken for granted.