Two roughly late twelfth century works represent a transition in the reception of The Tale of Genji. The first, Genji shaku by Sesonji Koreyuki (d. 1175), begins the long line of scholarly commentaries that are still being written today. The second, Mumyōzōshi (ca. 1200, attributed to Shunzei’s Daughter), can perhaps be said to round off the preceding era, when Genji was simply a monogatari (tale) among others, enjoyed above all by women. In contrast with Koreyuki’s textual glosses, Mumyōzōshi gives passionate reader responses to characters and incidents in several monogatari, including Genji. The discovery of something like it from much earlier in the preceding two hundred years would be very welcome.

Fortunately, some evidence of earlier reader reception survives after all, not in critical works, but in post-Genji tales themselves. Showing as they do demonstrable Genji influence, they presumably suggest at times, in one way or another, what the author made of Genji, or how she understood this or that part of it. This essay will discuss examples from Sagoromo monogatari (ca. 1070–80, by Rokujō no Saiin Senji, who served the Kamo Priestess Princess Baishi) and Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari (ca. 1060, attributed to the author of Sarashina nikki). Chief among them are the meaning of the chapter title “Yume no ukihashi”; the question of what happens to Ukifune between “Ukifune” and “Tenarai”; and the significance of Genji’s affair with Fujitsubo. Discussion of these topics, especially the second, will hark back at times to material presented in earlier essays, although this time with a different purpose.

Two introductory examples

A passage from Hamamatsu illustrates simply how a post-Genji monogatari can shed light on the way a particular Genji passage might have been understood by its original audience. It concerns the trials inflicted on Genji’s mother by her jealous rivals (“Kiritsubo”). Their nature remains vague, despite talk of the possibility of a “nasty surprise

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1 Hikaru Genji ichibu uta (1453) by the nun Yūrin (fl. ca. 1450) and the work of Kaoku Gyokuei (1526 – after 1602) constitute the only significant writing on Genji by women between Mumyōzōshi and modern times. Gaye Rowley is due thanks for this information.
2 On the author of Sagoromo monogatari and her context, see D’Etcheverry, “Rethinking Late Heian,” 42–69; and Love After The Tale of Genji, 39–57.
awaiting her along the crossbridges and bridgeways, one that horribly fouled the skirts of [her] gentlewomen.”³ Her distress is easy to imagine, but one may still wonder whether her rivals did anything more pointed to cause her death.

The stories about curses included in *Konjaku monogatari shū* suggest an answer with which the *Hamamatsu* author apparently concurred. At the beginning of the surviving portion of her work (the first chapter of which is missing), she transposed the plight of Genji’s mother to the Chinese court, complete with an unmistakable counterpart of the hostile minister of the right. In *Hamamatsu* this minister “places all sorts of curses” on Kara no Kisaki, the counterpart of Genji’s mother, and many of the Chinese emperor’s women do the same.⁴ *Midō Kanpaku ki*, the diary of Fujiwara no Michinaga, likewise mentions attempts to lay curses, once probably on himself, and once probably on a lady of the court.⁵ In the end Kara no Kisaki, like Genji’s mother, leaves the palace for good, although she does not die—her home, unlike that of Genji’s mother, being a very long way from the Chinese emperor’s palace and so much safer. Her experience and the testimony of Michinaga provide nearly contemporary confirmation of a reasonable conjecture about what remains unstated in the *Genji* narrative. It also highlights the contrasting approach taken by Murasaki Shikibu, who, by means of silence and understatement, turned a little world as jealous and vindictive as any other, as her original audience well knew, into a model of elegance for the ages.

A second, more diffuse issue concerns the nature of the hero in *Sagoromo* and *Hamamatsu*. The authors, who had Genji and Kaoru to choose from as two models, seem to have been more at home with Kaoru. (“Pity Poor Kaoru” has already discussed this question.) Presumably their audiences were, too. The chapters of *The Tale of Genji* that cover Genji’s life are impressive, but it is the Uji chapters that announce the fiction of later Heian times and beyond. Although Genji makes a memorable hero, he seems to have had no clear successor.

It is not that the *Sagoromo* and *Hamamatsu* authors made their heroes perfect. Sagoromo no Taishō and Hamamatsu no Chūnagon, especially the former, are not above betraying husbands and fathers, or ruining

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³ *TTG*, 4; *GM* 1:20.
⁴ Ikeda Toshio, *Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari*, 44.
⁵ Hérail, *Notes journalières de Fujiwara no Michinaga, ministre à la cour de Heian* 2:581 (Chōwa 1.4.10 [1012]) and 3:121 (Chōwa 4.7.2 [1015]).
women’s lives. Like Kaoru, however, they both enjoy brilliant worldly success in the background, while displaying in the foreground a dreamily melancholy, otherworldly side. Sagoromo’s fantasies of entering religion so resemble Kaoru’s that he has been described as “a second Kaoru,” while in Hamamatsu, Buddhism as a sort of fantasy world is replaced by China, and by repeated oracles and dream communications. The closing section of Hamamatsu even features an extended variation on the rivalry between Kaoru and Niou over Ukifune. Just as the reader of the Uji chapters is constantly invited to sympathize with Kaoru’s sorrows, whatever they may be, so in Sagoromo and Hamamatsu the hero’s sorrowful feelings alone matter, regardless of what he may have done to arouse them. The beautiful hero enjoys full indulgence. The narrator’s treatment of him little resembles the shifting, sometimes critical, and always personally engaged attitude toward Genji evident in his story.

Yume no Ukihashi: the bridge of dreams

The final chapter of The Tale of Genji is entitled “Yume no Ukihashi.” A good deal has been written about this intriguing expression over the centuries, and in any case it is no wonder that some should have taken the title of the closing chapter to be particularly significant. The range of interpretation has been wide. The reading suggested by Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari therefore stands at the beginning of a long thread in Genji reception.

Yume no Ukihashi in Hamamatsu

At a certain point in Hamamatsu, the author has her hero “remember her [a love now inaccessible to him] sadly, feeling just like yume no ukihashi.” This occurrence of the expression seems not to be widely recognized as an allusion to the Genji chapter title, but three parallel Hamamatsu passages clearly suggest that it is one.

This mention of yume no ukihashi is one of four Hamamatsu passages that sum up a scene or mood with a brief allusion on the pattern, “[It was] just like X.” In two, “X” is a now-lost monogatari. The first goes, “It was just like a picture from the monogatari entitled Karakuni”; the

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6 Gotō, “Mō hitori no Kaoru,” 68–89.
7 Ikeda, Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari, 250.
8 The present Genji chapter titles existed by the late twelfth century, but no evidence indicates when they originated or, in particular, whether the author applied them to the chapters herself. The discussion below assumes only that the tale’s final chapter had acquired its current title by the time Hamamatsu was written.
second simply caps a description with the words, “as in Ōi no monogatari”; and the third says, “no doubt just like Ono no shigure no yado.”

“Ono no shigure no yado” may or may not be the title of a lost monogatari, but the expression clearly refers to a specific story. The fourth is the passage in question here.

It has long been recognized that the Genji author must have invented the expression yume no ukihashi for the purpose of naming her last chapter, which made it famous. It does not appear in earlier literature. For this reason alone the Hamamatsu mention of yume no ukihashi probably refers to the Genji chapter, and the pattern of allusion just described confirms the idea. In Hamamatsu the expression clearly alludes to a monogatari or monogatari-like story familiar to every reader in the author’s time, and that story can only have been the Genji chapter. The Hamamatsu author’s allusion shows that, to her, the chapter title described the painfully precarious bond between Kaoru and Ukifune, as experienced especially by Kaoru.

However, contemporary scholarship refrains from taking the Hamamatsu passage this way, at least in any formal context. The relevant headnotes in the Nihon koten bungaku taikei (NKBT) and Shin Nihon koten bungaku zenshū (SNKBZ) editions of Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari treat yume no ukihashi as a common noun meaning a perilous passage traversed in dreams (NKBT) or simply a precarious link, for example between lovers (SNKBZ). Neither mentions the Genji chapter title.

This position is consistent with recent, conservatively presented Genji scholarship. No recent edition of Genji monogatari (SNKS 1985, SNKBT 1997, SNKBZ 1998) suggests such a reading of the chapter title, nor does the Genji manual Jōyō Genji monogatari yōran (1995). All four note that the expression yume no ukihashi is absent from the chapter itself, but that yume occurs several times; and all mention, hesitantly, a possible connection between the chapter title and a poem originally cited by Fujiwara no Teika in his Okuiri (early thirteenth century) in connection with a passage in “Usugumo.” Two (Yōran, SNKBZ) tentatively suggest an allusion to Ukifune’s nightmarish life of rootless wandering (sasurai). That is all.

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9 Ikeda, Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari, 32, 324, 354.
10 Endō and Matsuo, Takamura monogatari, Heichū monogatari, Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari, 300, n. 4; Ikeda, Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari, 250, n. 3. However, the Kuge Haruyasu edition of the text (125, n. 13) recognizes the allusion to the Genji chapter title and notes its reference to Kaoru and Ukifune.
11 Nakano, Jōyō Genji monogatari yōran.
The poem first mentioned in Okuiri (one regularly acknowledged by later commentaries) goes, Yo no naka wa/ yume no watari no/ ukihashi ka/ uchiwataritsutsu/ mono o koso omoe: “Is this world of ours a floating bridge crossed in dreams, that crossing it should call up such sorrows?” The “Usugumo” passage reads:

The [Akashi] lady at Ōi led a life at once quiet and distinguished. Her house was unusual, but as for herself, Genji admired whenever he saw her the looks and the mature dignity of demeanor that placed her very little below the greatest in the land. If only it were possible to pass her off as simply another provincial governor’s daughter, people would be glad enough to remember that this was not the first time such a thing had happened. Her father’s fame as an egregious crank was a problem, but he had quite enough about him to him to make him acceptable. Genji did not at all want to rush home again, since this visit had no doubt been too short for him as well. “Is it a floating bridge crossed in dreams?” he sighed.

Genji’s “Is it a floating bridge crossed in dreams?” (yume no watari no ukihashi ka, the words glossed by Teika) refers to the complexities that keep him from visiting Ōi more often. The note in the translation therefore explains that yume (Genji’s and the poem’s) alludes to erotic liaisons and the poem’s yo no naka, too, to matters of love. Nothing about this explanation is controversial, but its theme has vanished from the four discussions of the chapter title “Yume no Ukihashi” just cited, despite their acknowledgment of the poem. Instead, two of them mention Ukifune’s sufferings, while the other two suggest nothing at all.

**Yume no ukihashi** in the Genji commentaries

Thus material from either end of the Genji millennium suggests an early association between yume no ukihashi and Kaoru’s longing for Ukifune, and a late reluctance to accept that association. Generally speaking, the pre-modern commentaries encourage this reluctance.

Most of the content of these four recent treatments of the chapter title can be found in the commentaries. Shimeishō (late thirteenth century), Kakaishō (ca. 1365), and others note as an anomaly the absence of the expression yume no ukihashi from the chapter text itself, observe that yume occurs five times in the chapter, and suggest

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12 TTG, 352, n. 11. The published translation, corrected here, has “tossing” instead of “floating.”
13 TTG, 352; GM 2:440.
a tentative connection between the chapter title and the poem Teika cited. *Ichiyōshō* (1494) and four sixteenth-century commentaries link the title to Ukifune’s painfully rootless life. However, all these works emphasize other matters. As the *Kakaishō* author observed, the title’s meaning “has always been uncertain [korai fushin nari].”\(^\text{14}\)

The dominant trend is clear already in *Shimeishō*. A questioner who wants to know the meaning of *ukihashi* remarks that “most people” (*yo no hito*) take it as referring to Ukifune’s refusal even to open Kaoru’s letter. As evidence, the questioner mentions the words *fumi minu* (“did not read the letter”), which the chapter text only implies. This *fumi minu* plays on an implied negative verb *fumi-minu* (“did not tread [the bridge of dreams]”).\(^\text{15}\) Thus, according to the *Shimeishō* questioner, “most people” take *ukihashi* as alluding to the broken communication between Kaoru and Ukifune. This reading is compatible with the *Hamamatsu* author’s.

However, the *Shimeishō* author disagreed. “This monogatari,” he wrote, “reveals impermanence and demonstrates that all living beings come to naught. Therefore this chapter, unlike the others, is founded upon *yūgen* and is intended also to establish a link with enlightenment [*bodai no en*].” He therefore saw in this chapter a grander, graver theme than the failure of the bond between two lovers. Not that he excluded eros, since he also cited the *ame no ukihashi* (“floating bridge of heaven”) story from *Nihon shoki* and wrote, “The distinction between male and female, the separation of man from woman, began with [*ame no*] *ukihashi*. How, then, could the heart of one with a taste for gallantry and a fondness for love not cross this *ukihashi*?” However, he placed greater emphasis on *yume*, which he took in a mainly religious or philosophical sense. Having quoted the *Nehan-gyō* and other sutras on the theme “Life, death, and impermanence are all a dream,” he concluded: “Present reality is a dream, good and evil are a dream...Therefore, the final chapter was probably named ‘Yume no ukihashi’ because this title brought together both the *ukihashi* of this sullied world [*edo*] and the dream of the dharma-nature [*hosshō no yume*].”\(^\text{16}\)

Seen from this perspective, *ukihashi* no longer represents the bipolar tension of perilous desire between lovers but becomes instead one

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\(^{14}\) Tamagami, *Shimeishō, Kakaishō*, 600.

\(^{15}\) Tamagami, *Shimeishō, Kakaishō*, 178. This tortuous explanation of *ukihashi* is spelled out explicitly in *Genji monogatari teiyō* (1432).

term of a greater tension on the same pattern: that between “this sullied world” (of samsara) and hosshō no yume—the dream of, or the dream that is, pure, timeless truth. Some Genji scholars still hold that the chapter title refers to a bridge between earth and heaven, this world and the next, and so on.

Kakaishō (followed by others) develops this more expansive sort of reading, one tending to favor yume at the expense of ukihashi, by suggesting that “Yume no Ukihashi” is at the same time an alternative title for the whole tale. This approach of course does not eliminate the erotic dimension of the “dream,” especially considering the tale’s general reputation as an erotic work. However, this erotic dimension receives less and less explicit acknowledgment. Genji kokagami, a digest from about the same period as Kakaishō and perhaps, like Kakaishō, a product of the circle surrounding Nijō Yoshimoto (1320–88), illustrates this trend. It explains that the title refers to Genji’s rise to dream-like glory and to the “single painful moment” (tada hitofushi no on-nageki, probably Murasaki’s death) of his life that at last, before he dies, awakens him to the truth. It also suggests that the final chapter is entitled “Yume no Ukihashi” because it is meant to convey impermanence. This sort of reading suggests Chuang-tzu’s dream of the butterfly, or the story of the pillow of Kantan, and indeed, several commentaries mention them.

In Kachō yosei (ca. 1470), Ichijō Kanera (1402–81) referred the reader to the long Kakaishō entry on the closing chapter title, but he suggested on his own that it adds pathos (aware) to the situation evoked at the end of “Tenarai” and refers particularly to Kaoru’s longing for Ukifune. This reading agrees with the Hamamatsu author’s. However, Fujiwara Masaari, the editor of Ichiyōshō (ca. 1494), soon disagreed. “The source of this tale has nothing to do with talk of love,” he wrote. “It reveals the swift passing of all things and teaches that the mighty must fall.” Regarding the term ukihashi itself, he wrote that it has no special meaning apart from the broad notion of the passage from birth to death. Rōkashō (1510), edited by Sanjōnishi Sanetaka (1455–1537), affirms similarly that the meaning of the chapter title is carried by yume, and that ukihashi has no meaning of

17 Tamagami, Shimseishō, Kakaishō, 601.
18 Takeda Kō, Genji kokagami, Takai-ke bon, 411.
19 Ii, Kachō yosei, 347.
20 Izume, Ichiyōshō, 498.
its own; so does the *Mōshinshō* (1575) of Kujō Tanemichi (1507–94).  

The more ambitious later commentaries, such as *Sairyūshō* (1510–13), *Mingō nisso* (1598), and *Kogetsushō* (1673) tend to reproduce the entries from earlier ones without adding anything new, thus juxtaposing divergent ideas without visibly favoring any. However *Tama no ogushi* (1796), the influential *Genji* commentary by Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), is different. Norinaga took a new approach to the subject of “Yume no ukihashi,” as he did to others. “As the old commentaries say,” he wrote, “the title of this chapter applies to the entire tale. However, it would be wrong to call it a title for the whole. The content of the tale is convincingly real, but all of it is invented...Everything in it is as though seen in a dream.” Norinaga condemned the earlier commentators for citing Buddhist and Chinese writings to argue that the chapter title means life is a dream. “That is wrong,” he declared. “It only means that everything written in this tale is a dream.” His focus on the author is of interest, but more relevant here is the absence of any reference to love or erotic tension, whether particular (Kaoru and Ukifune) or generalized (the “floating bridge of heaven”). The *yume* of the chapter title has obliterated the *ukihashi*. Norinaga’s interpretation has the same cool respectability as the four contemporary discussions of the title cited above.

**Closing reflections on *yume no ukihashi***

Still, two of those discussions mention the miseries of Ukifune, the most pressing of which have to do with love. They confirm a tendency in the commentaries, noted by Masuda Katsumi in 1991, to read the chapter title from her standpoint. Masuda argued that the chapter is really told more from that of Kaoru. Indeed, Mori Asao had already stated in 1988 that the *Genji* chapter title refers to the precarious bond between Kaoru and Ukifune, and especially to the severing of that bond as the chapter ends. Komachiya Teruhiko, writing in 1992, agreed: the issue is the breaking of the bond—the *ukihashi*—between Ukifune and Kaoru. “Ukifune [now a nun] goes off into a world beyond Kaoru’s comprehension, leaving Kaoru behind, alone, in the profane world.” Thus Komachiya recognized the *ukihashi* between Kaoru

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and Ukifune after all but, echoing Shimeishō, assimilated it to the unbridgeable gulf between the sacred and the profane.

In Hamamatsu Chūnagon monogatari, however, the hero remains in touch by letter with the lady for whom he longs, and although circumstances keep them apart, nothing suggests that she would not meet him if she could. Whether or not they are, in practice, parted forever, the bond between them is not broken. A gap therefore still separates the Hamamatsu author’s reading of the Genji chapter title from that adopted by Mori Asao or Komachiya Kazuhiko, who hold the break to be final.

The analysis of Ukifune’s story in “The Possibility of Ukifune” suggests that the Hamamatsu author was right. The events, situations, and relationships described in “Tenarai” and “Yume no ukihashi” make it difficult to believe either that Kaoru will never see Ukifune again, somewhere past the end of the book, or that Ukifune is in any position to reject him indefinitely.

Motoori Norinaga wrote in Tama no ogushi, “The closing chapter [of Genji] functions as a conclusion, but really it is as though the dreamer had awakened before the dream was anywhere near complete.” Written speculation about events beyond the end of the tale began with Yamaji no tsuyu, an apocryphal Genji chapter now attributed to Kenreimon’in Ukyō no Daibu (1157?–1233?). In Yamaji no tsuyu Kaoru does see Ukifune again, and at the end of it the situation remains unresolved. Yamaji no tsuyu therefore comments on “Yume no ukihashi” as meaningfully as the work of a medieval or modern scholar. It also seconds the Hamamatsu passage. No one will ever know what the title “Yume no ukihashi” “really” means, but the Hamamatsu allusion to it belongs to the history of Genji reception. Considering that the author lived far closer to Murasaki Shikibu’s time than we do, and inhabited the same world, perhaps it even deserves an extra unit or two of weight.

Ukifune and Asukai

At the end of the “Ukifune” chapter of Genji, Ukifune decides to drown herself. In the first chapter of Sagoromo monogatari, Asukai no Himégimi does the same. Both then disappear. The Sagoromo author so obviously adopted so many Genji motifs that the Genji influence in this case is beyond question. What happened to Asukai therefore

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25 Ōno, Motoori Norinaga zenshū 4:521.
begins a curious thread in the history of *Genji* reception. Ukifune will be discussed first.

Ukifune’s disappearance

Nearly everyone familiar with *Genji* in any form (including received folklore) assumes that, between “Ukifune” and “Kagerō,” Ukifune throws herself into the Uji River to drown, but is then swept away by the current, washed ashore downstream, and saved by Yokawa no Sōzu. Relatively a few people, most whom are academic specialists, doubt that Ukifune genuinely attempts *jusui*: suicide by drowning. “The Possibility of Ukifune” has covered this topic already, but a brief recapitulation will be useful.

In reality, Ukifune never even approaches the water. Yokawa no Sōzu finds her not on the riverbank, but beneath a great tree in a silent wood behind a residence known as the Uji Villa. The text of “Tenarai” provides enough evidence to show how she got there. It allows only one answer: after stepping out onto the veranda of her house, with the intention of going down to the river, Ukifune was possessed by a spirit that transported her supernaturally to the place where she was found.

Being unable to choose between two lovers, Kaoru and Niou, Ukifune decides to drown herself in the river that flows past her house. The ending of “Ukifune” convinces the reader that she is about to act, and at the start of the next chapter, “Kagerō,” she is indeed gone; the entire household is hunting for her. Only some way into “Tenarai,” the chapter after that, does the author provide a consecutive account of the event in the form of Ukifune’s silent reminiscences. Although quoted already in “The Possibility of Ukifune,” the passage deserves renewed attention here.

They were all asleep, and I opened the double doors and went out. There was a strong wind blowing, and I could hear the river’s roar. Out there all alone I was frightened, too frightened to think clearly about what had happened or what was to come next, and when I stepped down onto the veranda I became confused about where I was going; I only knew that going back in would not help and that all I wanted was to disappear bravely from life. Come and eat me, demons or whatever things are out there, do not leave me to be found foolishly cowering here! I was saying that, sitting rooted to the spot, when a very beautiful man approached me and said, “Come with me to where I live!” and it seemed to me that he took me in his arms. I assumed he was the gentleman they addressed as “Your Highness,” but after
that my mind must have wandered, until he put me down in a place
I did not know. Then he vanished. When it was over I realized that I
had not done what I had meant to do, and I cried and cried.\textsuperscript{26}

Motoori Norinaga praised this way of conveying what happened to
Ukifune as “a most entertaining manner of writing” (\textit{ito omoshiroki}
\textit{kakizama}).\textsuperscript{27} In practice, however, so many readers miss, ignore, or
dismiss the passage, at least in modern times, that one can perhaps
fairly say that it no longer works.

\textbf{Asukai’s disappearance}

The Asukai no Himegimi of \textit{Sagoromo monogatari} is a Yūgao-like waif
(many writers, starting with Hagiwara Hiromichi in 1854, have noted
the parallel) of decent birth but without future prospects. Sagoromo,
the hero, discovers her and makes love to her, but he never allows
her to find out who he is. In time she becomes pregnant. Meanwhile
Michinari, one of his retainers, learns about her as well. Never
suspecting her relationship with his lord, he decides when he is posted
to Kyushu to abduct her and take her there with him on the ship.
Asukai’s nurse, who scorns the frivolous ways of noble youths like
Asukai’s still-anonymous lover, supports this plan so effectively that
the outraged and astonished Asukai is soon bundled aboard.\textsuperscript{28}
Rejecting Michinari’s blandishments, she resolves to throw herself into
the sea.\textsuperscript{29}

Surviving manuscripts of \textit{Sagoromo monogatari} differ significantly
among themselves, and so do the published texts. This essay will refer
to four: those edited by Mitani Eiichi and Sekine Keiko (NKBT), Suzuki
Kazuho (SNKS), Komachiya Teruhiko and Gotō Shōko (SNKBT), and
Yoshida Kōichi (Koten bunko). With respect to the closing passage of
the first chapter (the one that matters here), the SNKS and Koten
bunko texts are equivalent. The SNKBT text adds a sentence, and to
this sentence the NKBT text adds a paragraph.

Asukai’s moment comes as the ship approaches Mushiake no Seto, a
narrow passage between Nagashima island and the Bizen coast of the
Inland Sea. The passengers are asleep. Tormented by memories of
Sagoromo, Asukai wants to write a farewell poem on a fan he once
gave her, but tears blind her, her hand trembles, and she has difficulty

\textsuperscript{26} TTG, 1083–4; GM 6:296–7.
\textsuperscript{27} Ōno, \textit{Motoori Norinaga zenshū} 4:516.
\textsuperscript{28} Charo D’Etcheverry discussed this subject in “Out of the Mouths of Nurses,” 58–87.
\textsuperscript{29} Komachiya and Gotō, \textit{Sagoromo monogatari} 1:143.
doing so. Before she can finish, she hears someone nearby (*hito no kehai no sureba*). She therefore

(SNKS 1:122–3; Koten bunko 1:137) gazed at the sea before hastening to throw herself in. She was terrified, they say.

(SNKBZ 1:152–3) gazed down into the sea before hastening to throw herself in. Even this much terrified her, however, and she lay face down, trembling, they say.

(NKBT, 114–15) gazed down into the sea before hastening to throw herself in. Even this much terrified her, however, and while she trembled, someone held her back. “I knew it!” she thought, aghast and feeling as though she were dying; and she said not a word while the person picked her up and carried her aboard another ship. “What is going on?” she wondered in blank horror, with her clothing pulled over her head. Meanwhile, she gathered that day was about to break. She was thinking in bitter disappointment, “I seem not to have managed to do it,” when the person approached her and said, “Do not be afraid. I had been looking for you for years, wondering where you went and how you were, when I heard that you were on your way to Kyushu and took the same route in the hope of meeting you...What is it that decided you on so desperate a deed?” She could not forget having heard that thin, weeping voice when she was little: it was her elder brother’s.

Asukai’s brother then tells her he lost an eye as a boy and became a monk. She feels reassured. They go together to the capital, and he takes her to the house of an aunt, now a nun. When the nun asks Asukai to tell her story, Asukai speaks of having wanted to die anyway, and of having then been taken aboard an *ukifune* (“drifting boat”), which made her detest life even more. “I feel safer now that I have met you,” she says. “If you would be so kind, please make me a nun.” The nun agrees to do so after Asukai’s baby is born. Asukai’s brother agrees, urging her to remain until then where she is, quiet and unnoticed. He then leaves, saying that he has various pilgrimages to make.

Each of these versions corresponds roughly to a step in the account quoted from “Tenarai.” The SNKS and Koten bunko texts leave Asukai at the stage of Ukifune’s fright when Ukifune actually goes outside and hears the noise of the river; the SNKBZ text leaves her, like Ukifune, overcome by fear; and the NKBT text then has her carried away like Ukifune by a mysterious man. The NKBT text even incorporates the word *ukifune* and has Asukai ask to be made a nun, as Ukifune eventually did.
Asukai’s disappearance devastates the hero, who early in the second chapter receives an oral report from the abductor’s (Michinari’s) younger brother. The content is the same in all four texts: “Some very strange news has reached me. Michinari’s wife threw herself into the sea. Everything the lady’s nurse told me, weeping, suggests that the lady in question is the very one who has disappeared.” (SNKS 1:129; Koten bunko 1:141; SNKBZ 1:158–9; NKBT, 120) His report leaves Sagoromo in the same position as Kaoru, once Kaoru learns in “Kagerō” of the disappearance and presumed drowning of Ukifune.

However, the different first chapter endings each leave the reader in a different place. The SNKS/KB ending corresponds roughly to the close of “Ukifune”: the reader knows that Asukai plans to drown herself and cannot yet assume that either the presence of someone nearby (hito no kehai) or fear itself guarantees failure. The SNKBZ reader knows that fear has mastered her (as Ukifune recalls it doing in “Tenarai”) and so can reasonably take her failure for granted. However, only the NKBT text actually tells what happens next. Presumably the NKBT narrative is meant to explain a surprise present in all four versions: Sagoromo’s discovery, late in the second chapter, that Asukai is alive and in her brother’s care.30 (She dies before he can see her again.) However, what “really happens” to Asukai, as to Ukifune, remains in the end unfathomable, unless one simply accepts in Ukifune’s case that a spirit carried her off bodily, and in Asukai’s that her brother appeared from nowhere, at sea in the middle of the night, to do the same. Regarding Ukifune, readers and scholars in recent times, reluctant to accept supernatural intervention, have tended to replace what the text says with something more intelligible. Confusingly enough, the silent assumption, or the reluctance to deny, that Ukifune somehow threw herself in after all has been encouraged since at least the fifteenth century by ambiguous use of the term jusui and related expressions. Modern insistence on finding source materials for the jusui motif in Heian times may also have played its part.

**Ukifune’s jusui in the commentaries**

The earliest of the major commentaries, Shimeishō and Kakaishō, say nothing to suggest that the content of Ukifune’s experience is anything other than self-evident. Later works (Genji kokagami, Kachō yosei, Mōshinshō, Bansui ichiro, Mingō nisso, Kogetsushō) note that she was

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carried off either by someone she thought was *miya* ("the prince"), or, more explicitly, by a spirit she believed to be Prince Niou. These two readings amount to the same thing. They refer to Ukifune’s memories—memories that Motoori Norinaga apparently accepted, since he praised the way the author let the reader know what had happened to her. Meanwhile, *Genji kokagami* and *Hikaru Genji ichibu uta* (seconded by the *Noh* play *Kodama Ukifune*) say that Ukifune was carried off by a *kodama* ("tree spirit"), and in 1854 Hagiwara Hiromichi agreed. Finally, several medieval commentaries or digests identify the place where Ukifune was found as the site of the Byōdō-in, thus tacitly accepting the inevitable conclusion that the spirit carried her bodily across the river.

The first hint of what looks like ambiguity on the subject occurs in the mid-Muromachi *Genji ōkagami*, which begins its account of "Kagerō" as follows: “Everyone is distraught that Ukifune should have thrown herself [into the river], but they are wrong. She meant to do so, but once she opened the door and went outside...” The text then summarizes Ukifune’s later memories. Nonetheless, the “Tenarai” section says that at the Uji Villa the nuns “gathered her up and put her in the carriage. The time when Ukifune threw herself in [mi o nagetarishi toki] was the end of the third month.” Taken out of context, this passage suggests that the writer believed Ukifune literally threw herself into the river. However, he clearly did not. Perhaps he meant the expression *mi o nagu* (equivalent to *jusui su*, “drown oneself”) to acknowledge intention over failed execution. More probably, however, he simply found no more economical way to refer to an otherwise untidily enigmatic event—an event the real content of which no one in his time seemed to doubt.

*Kachō yosei* and *Sairyūshō*, followed respectively by *Mōshinshō* and *Rōkashō*, do much the same thing. In *Kachō yosei*, the first gloss on “Kagerō” reminds the reader of Ukifune’s obvious plan to take her

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32 Caddeau, “Tree Spirits (kodama) and Apparitions (henge),” 2; Hagiwara Hiromichi, “Sōron,” 342. As shown in “The Possibility of Ukifune,” this idea, equally based on the text, does not contradict what Ukifune remembers.
33 Other commentaries question this identification, but there is no reason to believe they do so because the author rejected the notion of the spirit carrying off Ukifune.
own life and goes on, “It would have been pointless to write about her actually throwing herself in, since no one [among the household at Uji] knows she did it.” Further on, however, the writer accepts Ukifune’s memories and explicitly acknowledges her recognition that she had failed.

Similarly, Sairyūshō glosses the first words of “Kagerō” (kashiko ni wa) as meaning “the place [Uji] where Ukifune threw herself in [mi o nage-tamaishi ato],” even though later on it acknowledges the same evidence that she did not. In connection with a mention of heavy rain, it likewise states that the rain fell “on the day after Ukifune’s jusui.” Interestingly, the linked-verse poet Satomura Jōha (1527–1602) used the same sort of language on the subject at about the same time. In his Sagoromo shitahimo (1590), a short commentary on Sagoromo monogatari, Jōha wrote that the moment when Asukai seems about to throw herself into the water “recalls Ukifune’s jusui in Genji.” Thus Jōha included under the rubric of jusui two incidents in which no jusui takes place. Modern scholars have often done the same.

In the Edo period, Motoori Norinaga and Hagiwara Hiromichi seem to have recognized, either tacitly or explicitly, that Ukifune was abducted. In his Kogetsushō (1673), Kitamura Kigin quoted the Kachō yosei and Sairyūshō glosses on the first words of “Kagerō,” but he also glossed Ukifune’s vision of the “beautiful man,” in “Tenarai,” by quoting Mōshinshō: “The spirit [that had possessed Ukifune] appeared to her, and she saw it as Niou.” Regarding Ukifune’s memories of what happened, he wrote nothing at all. Presumably he accepted them. However, if the Confucian thinker Kumazawa Banzan (1619–91) had been able to carry Genji gaiden, his ambitious commentary on the tale, beyond “Fuji no Uraba,” he would probably have rejected both the “beautiful man” and the “kodama.” Banzan’s approach was resolutely historical and rational. He attributed Yūgao’s death not to the phantom woman that Genji saw, but to fear, and he denied that Rokujō’s spirit actually left her body to torment Aoi. This quasi-psychological view of spirit possession foreshadows an influential line of interpretation put forward in recent decades: one that strives to rationalize and psychologize Ukifune’s experience.

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36 “Unfortunately a downpour was threatening” (TTG, 1079; GM 6:284).
37 Nihon Tosho Sentā, Sagoromo monogatari kochūshaku taisei, 463.
38 In his Genji monogatari taii, dated 1830 (p. 201), Amano Naokata, too, noted that Ukifune was taken away by “someone she believed to be the prince [miya]” and left by him under a tree at the Uji Villa.
Ukifune’s *jusui* in modern times

Since scholarly books and articles still refer routinely to *Ukifune no jusui*, one might assume that their authors and readers nonetheless know what really happened, as people apparently did in medieval times; and perhaps in most cases nowadays they really do. However, it is not clear that they always have. Much evidence suggests that Ukifune’s literal *jusui* has long been taken for granted not only by the reading public at large, but by academics. How did this happen?

Meiji scholars and readers, caught up in the spirit of enlightenment and progress, and eager to set *The Tale of Genji* beside the greatest novels of the nineteenth-century West, might easily have rejected the tale’s supernatural elements in favor of rationally modern readings. Patrick Caddeau has suggested that they did so, citing as evidence the headnotes in the first modern, popular edition of *Genji*: the five-volume *Nihon bungaku zensho* text published by Hakubunkan in 1890. The notes at the start of “Kagerō” sound tersely confident that Ukifune genuinely threw herself in. However, they are based ultimately (via *Kogetsushō*) on the corresponding *Kachō yosei* and *Sairyūshō* glosses, so that their intended meaning is not really obvious. The “Kagerō” and “Tenarai” headnotes in a 1927 edition of *Genji* say nothing bearing on the question of what happened to Ukifune.

The source of the confusion therefore remains unclear. Simple convenience may help to explain why articles, chapter titles, and so on still refer to *Ukifune no jusui* as though it really happened. However, given the near universality of the misreading, it is striking that some should still have written within the past few years that, “Having thrown herself into the river [*jusui shita*], bearing her burden of sin, Ukifune is saved by Yokawa no Sōzu”; that, “Having given herself to two men, [Ukifune] plumbs the depths of suffering and as a result throws herself into the Uji River [*Ujigawa ni mi o nagete shimau*]”; and that, caught between two lovers, Kaoru and Niou, Ukifune “soon threw herself into the Uji River [*Ujigawa ni mi o tō-ji*],

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40 Caddeau, “Tree Spirits (kodama) and Apparitions (henge),” 11–15.
42 For example, “Ukifune no jusui o megutte,” in Ōasa, *Genji monogatari zokuhen no kenkyū*.
was saved, and became a nun." Perhaps these writers indeed take intention for achievement, but if they do, their view of the matter little resembles Ukifune’s; for when Ukifune understood her failure, she wept. They also perpetuate an error.

On this subject, current *Genji* summaries, dictionaries, and manuals are not always helpful. Five representative examples are *Genji monogatari no makimaki* (1987), *Genji monogatari jiten* (1993), *Genji monogatari o yomu tame no kenkyū jiten* (1995), *Genji monogatari yōran* (1995), and *Genji monogatari jiten* (2002). Only the 1993 *Genji monogatari jiten*, edited by Akiyama Ken, clearly recognizes that Ukifune became possessed at all. The article states that she seems to have fainted on the way to the river, that she was possessed by the spirit of a monk, and that “she wandered between dream and reality” until she collapsed behind the Uji Villa. Unlike such texts as *Genji ōkagami*, it says nothing about what Ukifune herself remembers happening. A particularly modern touch is the explanation that Ukifune walked to the Uji Villa. Reason demands something similar, but reason in this case is not good enough. At the time, Ukifune’s house was surrounded every night by guards, posted by Kaoru to keep Niou away and severely enjoined by him to be vigilant. They would have noticed her. Moreover, she was found without a mark on her. Her passage to the Uji Villa, like Asukai’s passage from a Kyushu-bound ship to her brother’s care at Kokawa-dera, simply defies reason. Nothing can be done about this.

The first of the other works just mentioned (*Genji monogatari no makimaki*) treats parallels between Yūgao and Ukifune, and then discusses Ukifune’s state of mind after she recovers. The second (*Genji monogatari o yomu tame no kenkyū jiten*) discusses mononoke in *Genji* without stating that a mononoke possessed Ukifune. The third (*Jōyō Genji monogatari yōran*) has Ukifune found “on the bank of the Uji River” (*Ujigawaberi de*), when she was not. The fourth

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45 Hasegawa Masaharu, *Tosa Nikki, Kagerō Nikki, Murasaki Shikibu Nikki, Sarashina Nikki*, 299, n. 20. Patrick Caddeau is due thanks for this reference. Haruo Shirane, too, wrote of Ukifune “being saved from the turbulent waters of the Uji River” (*The Bridge of Dreams*, 161); and twenty years later, despite the Asukai material quoted above, Charo D’Etcheverry wrote that, “rather than betray the hero, [Asukai] leaps overboard” (*Love After The Tale of Genji*, 64). The pull of the *jusui* image is almost irresistible.


47 “Genji monogatari no makimaki,” 138–41.


(Genji monogatari jiten), the most recent, summarizes Ukifune’s experience without mentioning either spirit possession or her memory of what happened, and a separate article presents “the prototypes of the suicide-by-drowning motif” (jusuitan no genkei) without acknowledging that Ukifune did not commit jusui.50

There are more noteworthy aspects to Ukifune’s story than can be accommodated in a dictionary or manual entry, but considering the prevalence of the error, such works might at least ensure that those who consult them do not make it. Instead, discussions of Ukifune often ignore the subject completely, if possible; or, if they must address it, they may argue in effect that it is irrelevant. Thus Mitani Kuniaki granted the mononoke exorcised by Yokawa no Sōzu no other significance than to reveal the unconscious preoccupations of the Sōzu himself and then of Ukifune when, after the exorcism, she remembers seeing the “beautiful man.”51 In a similar mood, Fujimoto Katsuyoshi denied that the man Ukifune remembers seeing has anything to do with the spirit that speaks to Yokawa no Sōzu (claiming once to have been a monk), because Ukifune does not remember ever having been possessed by a monk.52 This sort of argument reduces Ukifune’s memories to the fantasies of a young woman suffering a nervous breakdown and the exorcism to a psychotic episode on the part of Yokawa no Sōzu. Meanwhile, Ōasa Yūji presented Ukifune as a steadfast heroine, firm and rational in her resolve to drown herself, whose last-minute fears and hesitations are all quite normal in terms of the “psychology of suicide”; and he presented the spirit as a mere literary device to achieve the author’s aim, which is to save Ukifune by making sure she does not drown.53 If the conundrum of Ukifune’s possession amounts to no more than that, then the author could have arranged more simply to have her throw herself into the river and be washed ashore downstream.

Concluding reflections on the case of Asukai
Asukai no Himegimi’s experience at Mushiake no Seto is interesting as the earliest surviving post-Genji step toward the anomalous situation just described, unless by any chance Asakura monogatari came first. Like Hamamatsu, this now-lost tale has been attributed to the author of Sarashina nikki. Scholars have reconstructed some notion of it

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50 Hayashida et al., Genji monogatari jiten, 67–8 (“Ukifune”), 214 (“Jusuitan”).
51 Mitani Kuniaki, “Genji monogatari daisanbu no hōhō,” 100–2.
52 Fujimoto, Genji monogatari no “mononoke,” 95–9.
53 Ōasa, Genji monogatari zokuhen no kenkyū, 495–527, 563–4, 570.
thanks to the many poems from it included in *Shūi hyakuban utaawase* and *Fūyō wakashū*. The heroine’s mother is dead, and her father has become a monk and disappeared. Alone in the world, she accepts Sanmi no Chūjō (later, Asakura no Kanpaku) as a lover, but meanwhile she is also courted by Shikibukyō no Miya. Eventually she sets out for Michinoku to find her father, but on the way, at Awazu no Hama, she throws herself into Lake Biwa. *Fūyō wakashū* 1047 is a poem written by Asakura no Kanpaku on a pilgrimage to Ishiyama “upon hearing that a woman he had loved had thrown herself [into the lake] at Awazu no Hama.” However, the heroine seems actually to have been saved (perhaps by her father). Asakura no Kanpaku takes her in, and she serves the court under the name Kōtaigō no Miya no Dainagon.\(^54\) Things worked out much better for her (if Asakura really ended on that note) than for Ukifune or Asukai, but otherwise the similarity is obvious.

The *Genji* author presumably knew the *jusui* motif well, since it was established in literature and art. The *kotobagaki* to *Yoshinobu shū* 389 (Ōnakatomi Yoshinobu, 921–991) describes a painting of a woman looking down from a high bank while a man watches her from below; the poem suggests she is about to drown herself because her lover has stopped coming. Likewise, the *kotobagaki* to *Dōmyō Ajari shū* 17 (Dōmyō, 974–1020) evokes a painting in which a woman looks down from a high bank before throwing herself in; the poem has her regretting only the reputation that will survive her. Finally, *Yoshinobu shū* 389 concerns a scene similar to the one that begins “Kagerō.” The *kotobagaki* describes a picture illustrating *Sumiyoshi monogatari*. Jijū (a gentlewoman) stands at the outlet to a pond named Narabi no Ike. She is looking for her mistress, Himegimi, who has thrown herself into the pond. The poem says, “If only she had told me where she went in, I would go in search of her, even if that meant parting the water-weeds myself to do so.”\(^55\)

However, these poems capture only moments in stories that remain otherwise unknown. As prototypes for the *jusui* motif, reference works and scholarly studies repeatedly cite two stories from *Yamato monogatari*. In no. 147, a young woman’s two suitors are so equal in all ways that she cannot decide between them. When a test to set

\(^{54}\) Morishita, “*Jusuitan no keifu,*” 113.

\(^{55}\) All three poems are cited in Morishita, “*Jusuitan no keifu,*” 114. The extant *Sumiyoshi monogatari* is a Kamakura-period work, but the original one dated from the tenth century. Narabi no Ike, near the southern end of the Narabi ga Oka hills in present Ukyō-ku, Kyoto, seems to have disappeared in the seventeenth century.
one above the other fails, she drowns herself in despair, and both young men drown while trying to save her.\textsuperscript{56} In no. 150, an \textit{uneme} (young woman attendant) at the Nara court rejects every suitor and reserves herself for the emperor, who finally summons her. However, he never does so again, and she drowns herself in Sarusawa no Ike.

The similarity between these stories, especially no. 147, and those on the Ukifune "\textit{jusui}" pattern is self-evident, but it goes only so far. The two \textit{Yamato monogatari} heroines really throw themselves into the water and genuinely drown, whereas Ukifune, Asukai, and apparently the \textit{Asakura} heroine do not. In no. 147 the two suitors drown as well, whereas in \textit{Genji}, Kaoru and Niou live on in good health. Nor does Asukai’s predicament convincingly parallel the dilemma affecting Ukifune and the heroine of \textit{Yamato monogatari} 147. No doubt two men claim her attention, but she is not caught emotionally between them; she is a kidnap victim. Obvious though all this is, the academic emphasis on prototypes and sources tends to obscure it, and perhaps even to encourage withholding explicit recognition that, in Ukifune-pattern stories, no \textit{jusui} occurs at all.

While acknowledging a motif from the past, Ukifune’s failure to drown herself thus establishes what amounts to a new \textit{monogatari} device: the unrealized \textit{jusui} that serves to move the heroine to a new life situation. The \textit{Sagoromo} author’s version of it follows that of the \textit{Genji} author faithfully in the sense that she, too, left her reader unable to picture sensibly how her heroine passed, physically, from her old life to her new one. However, the \textit{Sagoromo} author removed from this passage the element of the supernatural. (So, apparently, did the author of \textit{Asakura}.) This change in turn highlights a difference between her tale and \textit{Genji}. Divine visions, visitations, and oracles certainly figure in \textit{Sagoromo}, but not possessions or \textit{mononoke}. The reasons can hardly be the same ones that for most modern scholars cast such a shadow over Ukifune’s possession, but the coincidence is intriguing. Considering that medieval readers seem to have accepted Ukifune’s possession without question, the \textit{Sagoromo} author’s avoidance of it comments interestingly on an enigmatic \textit{Genji} issue.

Asukai’s experience dramatically changes her circumstances (as the \textit{Asakura} heroine’s apparently does hers), but nothing suggests that it changes Asukai herself. The reader never even sees her again. Psychologically, it is flat. Is Ukifune’s? Most writing on her seems to

\textsuperscript{56} This is the story of the Maiden Unai, told earlier in the \textit{Man’yōshū} by Takahashi Mushimaro and others, and dramatized in the \textit{Noh} play \textit{Motomezuka}.
assume that the way she gets from her house to the Uji Villa is immaterial; all that matters is what happens after she gets there. She might just as well have been swept downstream, and nothing is lost if, for the sake of convenience, that notion is allowed to stand. This assumption is debatable. Perhaps the Sagoromo author disagreed with it and, to keep things simple, adjusted her use of the motif accordingly.

**Sagoromo’s enthronement**

Early in *Sagoromo monogatari* the hero (a second-generation Minamoto) secretly violates a princess (Onna Ninomiya), as Genji violates Fujitsubo. To save this princess’s reputation the empress, her mother, presents the resulting son to the emperor as her own, thus placing herself voluntarily in the same position as Fujitsubo. Then, near the end of the tale, the emperor wishes to abdicate in this young prince’s favor. An oracle from Amaterasu Ōmikami at Ise immediately identifies the prince’s real father (Sagoromo himself) and requires the emperor to cede him the throne instead, on the grounds of proper precedence. The oracle also describes Sagoromo as so gifted and beautiful that his being a commoner has long offended the gods.\(^{57}\) Thus Sagoromo becomes emperor thanks to beauty and other gifts that resemble Genji’s, and thanks above all to his having a secret son by an imperial woman. That the woman is not the empress suggests that the Sagoromo author may have found Genji’s intercourse with Fujitsubo too strong to adopt undiluted.\(^{58}\) However, in *Sagoromo monogatari* the emperor assumes after the oracle, and after recognizing Sagoromo’s features in the boy, that the boy’s mother is indeed his now-deceased empress. Thus he gathers that his empress had intercourse with the hero just as Fujitsubo did with Genji.

The *Mumyōzōshi* author objected violently to Sagoromo’s accession. Actually, she disliked all the supernatural manifestations in the tale, but this one was just too much. “More than absolutely anything else,” she wrote, “the hero’s becoming emperor is utterly revolting and appalling.” She then went on to venture the opinion that Genji should not have become honorary retired emperor, either. “However,” she wrote, “he at least was genuinely an emperor’s son.”\(^{59}\)

Thus the author of *Mumyōzōshi* noted and discussed the parallel between Sagoromo’s enthronement and Genji’s appointment as

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\(^{57}\) Komachiya and Gotō, *Sagoromo monogatari* 2:343.

\(^{58}\) Fujitsubo was not yet empress when Reizei was conceived, but she became empress soon after her son’s birth.

\(^{59}\) Higuchi and Kuboki, *Matsura no Miya monogatari, Mumyōzōshi*, 223.
honorary retired emperor. This parallel has probably struck many readers over the centuries, although the works collected in *Sagoromo monogatari kōchūshaku taisei* say nothing about it. Motoori Norinaga acknowledged it, and Mitani Eiichi wrote about it in 1968, speculating that the *Sagoromo* author’s initial idea for the plot involved an adulterous affair between the hero and Sen’yōden no Nyōgo (an imperial consort and a minor figure in the existing tale), patterned on *Genji’s* affair with Fujitsubo. Mitani went on to suggest that when Sagoromo’s affair with Asukai made this idea unworkable, the author fell back on Onna Ninomiya instead. “In order to have Sagoromo, her hero, succeed to the throne,” he wrote, “the author had to devise an adulterous affair between him and an imperial daughter or consort.”

Others, too, have acknowledged this *Genji–Sagoromo monogatari* parallel. However the corollary reading, to the effect that the *Genji* author devised Genji’s affair with Fujitsubo as a natural step toward having him appointed honorary retired emperor, is missing from *Genji* scholarship.

The parallel shows that the *Sagoromo* author saw in Genji’s transgression the engine that drove his rise, and that she therefore adopted a similar device for her own work. Sagoromo may personally resemble Kaoru, but the trajectory of his life shadows the first part of Genji’s—faintly, as the dim outer arc of a rainbow repeats the bright, inner one. In “Fuji no Uraba” Genji becomes honorary retired emperor, while near the end of *Sagoromo* the hero becomes the reigning emperor. In each case it is the hero’s violation of an imperial woman, and the consequent birth of a son, that make possible his rise to imperial grandeur.

Why should the author of *Sagoromo monogatari* have wished, or even dared, to repeat a pattern of which the *Mumyōzōshi* author disapproved in about 1200, and which later became a scandalous problem for many *Genji* admirers? Kumazawa Banzan (1619–91) had excruciating difficulty with it, and in 1703 Andō Tameakira wrote of people who,

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61 Mitani Eiichi, *Sagoromo monogatari no kenkyū* (denpon keitōron hen), 135.
62 Mitani Eiichi, *Sagoromo monogatari no kenkyū* (denpon keitōron hen), 137.
64 McMullen, *Idealism, Protest, and The Tale of Genji*, 321. Being unable to take Genji’s affair with Fujitsubo at face value without condemning the entire work, Banzan interpreted it as the author’s signal to the reader not to take the tale’s amorous tone seriously. To make sure the reader understood her higher intent, the author invented an incident so gross
because of it, could not even pick up the book. Inoue Mayumi highlighted the issue in her article on *Sagoromo monogatari*. After explaining the link between the hero’s affair with Onna Ninomiya and his eventual enthronement, she suggested that Sagoromo knows he violated a taboo, deceived the emperor, committed *lèse-majesté*, and so on, and therefore feels that as emperor himself he is an imposter; and it is to these sentiments that she attributed at least a part of his gloom at the end of the book. Sagoromo’s self-criticism, as she understood it, is the same criticism long directed at Genji himself. It makes the *Sagoromo* author’s adoption of the motif difficult to explain.

It is at least possible, however, to suggest that Genji’s affair with Fujitsubo did not offend Murasaki Shikibu’s patrons as it did the *Mumyōzōshi* author, let alone a Kumazawa Banzan or the ultra-nationalist readers of the 1930s and early 1940s. If it had, Murasaki Shikibu would have devised something else. Sure enough, Amaterasu’s oracle in *Sagoromo* contains no such criticism, either. The deity has not a word of reproach for the hero’s uninvited lovemaking with Onna Ninomiya, even though this lovemaking ruins both Onna Ninomiya’s life and her mother’s. On the contrary, Amaterasu makes it clear that, thanks to the hero’s behavior, she (Amaterasu) can at last act on her only concern, which is to do him justice. Amaterasu’s championing of Sagoromo resembles the Sumiyoshi deity’s championing of Genji. Genji’s transgression with Fujitsubo is precisely what enabled Sumiyoshi at last to give him his due.

Written only fifty or sixty years after *Genji monogatari* itself, *Sagoromo monogatari* therefore appears to support a reading of Genji’s transgression that has long been almost inconceivable. As already argued in “The Disaster of the Third Princess,” Genji’s lovemaking with Fujitsubo was no crime in eyes of the gods, but instead an opportunity toward merited glory. It is remarkable that the *Sagoromo* author should have grasped this and exploited it in her own tale of supernatural success, especially since, just a century and a half later, the motif seems no longer to have meant anything to the author of *Mumyōzōshi*, let alone to the many readers who followed her. In adopting this pattern from *Genji monogatari*, the *Sagoromo* author left an exceptionally powerful comment on the whole tale.

that no one could fail to do so; and just to make sure, she then turned this incident into what Banzan called (in McMullen’s translation) “the climax of the novel.”

Conclusion

The Sagoromo and Hamamatsu authors did not identify themselves as commentators on Genji monogatari, nor have they been recognized as such. However, their work contains passages and motifs that illuminate Genji reception in a time before formal Genji commentary began—a time when Genji was still a monogatari among others and not yet a recognized cultural monument. This essay affords a glimpse of what might be gained from reading post-Genji fiction not as simple imitation of Genji monogatari, or even sometimes as reaction against it, but as interpretation and commentary in the context of undoubtedly changing reader assumptions and tastes. The material it presents suggests in particular that Genji’s affair with Fujitsubo was not perhaps taken from the start as the self-evident crime seen in it by readers of later times. It also highlights the greater complexity and richness of Genji, when compared with later fiction, as well as some of the profound originality that makes this great masterpiece so endlessly fascinating.