

# “Monogatari” and “Old Monogatari” in *Genji Monogatari*

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What is curious about *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 is that Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 designates as “old” even those monogatari that were loved by the people in her age as the most fashionable and exciting ones. Her gesture to differentiate her own monogatari from old monogatari (*mukashi monogatari* 昔物語), however, does not effect what it purports, because the narrative of *Genji* continues and imitates the traditional pattern of old monogatari immediately after making a depreciatory comment on old monogatari. What I am going to observe is the deeper implication of this seeming paradox. I will investigate how *Genji monogatari* retroactively defines what old monogatari is by its paradoxical gesture of differentiating itself from and identifying itself with old monogatari. Monogatari gets defined when old monogatari is defined. In other words, monogatari as a genre does not present itself as monogatari, but as something different from old monogatari. I will argue that monogatari inheres something nostalgic in itself. We cannot reach the presence of monogatari except through old monogatari, because monogatari is constituted through its past. Monogatari is a genre nostalgically perceived.

## 1: Nostalgia for Mukashi Monogatari in *Genji monogatari*

*Genji monogatari* constantly refers to old monogatari. As Kaoru 薫<sup>1</sup> visits Uji 宇治 in the heavy rain and among the thick underbrush, not knowing that the

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<sup>1</sup> From his childhood, Kaoru has been bothered by the suspicion that Genji 源氏 might not be his real father. With his religious predilection, he is drawn toward the religious serenity of the Eighth Prince (Hachinomiya 八の宮), who, although born to a high-ranked nobility as a younger brother of Genji, has been embittered and tormented by a series of ill fortunes, and is determined to live a saint's life. Hachinomiya survives his wife. He is bringing up his two daughters—Ōigimi 大君 and Nakanokimi 中君—single-handedly in Uji, which is in the south of Kyō 京.

“Monogatari” and “Old Monogatari” in *Genji Monogatari*

Eighth Prince is away in the mountains for Buddhist observations, he hears a Japanese lute-like instrument, called *biwa* (琵琶), being played so beautifully to the extent as to sound awesome. At first he thinks it is the Prince who is playing; however, as he hides himself in a secluded place fenced off by wattled bamboo, led by a guard, he has a glimpse of the two daughters of the Eighth Prince. The moon bursts out from the clouds suddenly; the sisters look most lovely:

さらによそに思ひやりしには似ず、いとあはれになつかしうをかし。昔物語などに語り伝えて、若き女房などの読むをも聞くに、必ずかやうのことを言ひたる、さしもあらざりけむ、と憎く推しはからるるを、げにあはれなるものくまの隈ありぬべき世なりけりと、心移りぬべし。(Chapter 45 “Hashihime” 橋姫: NKBZ 5: 132)<sup>2</sup>

It was a charming scene, utterly unlike what Kaoru had imagined from afar. He had often enough heard the young women of his household reading old monogatari. They were always coming upon such scenes, and he had thought them the most unadulterated nonsense. And here, hidden away from the world, was a scene as affecting as any in *monogatari*. (“The Lady at the Bridge” : S 2: 785; italics are mine)

A man hears a beautiful lady, who was born high-ranked but has fallen in the world, playing an instrument “behind sad-looking gates of tangled weeds” (*sabishiku abaretaran mugura no kado ni* さびしくあばれたらむむぐらの門かどに) (Chapter 2 “Hahakigi” 帚木/“The Broom Tree”; NKBZ 1: 136; S 1: 23)—this is one of the favorite motifs employed in older monogatari, as in *Utsuho monogatari* 宇津保物語 and *Sumiyoshi monogatari* 住吉物語. In *Utsuho monogatari*,<sup>3</sup> Kanemasa 兼雅, who

<sup>2</sup> Citations from *Genji monogatari* are taken from *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (NKBZ) 日本古典文学全集. For most of my citations, I use Edward Seidensticker’s English translation. I sometimes add modifications to his translation. While he translates monogatari as romance, I retain monogatari without translating them. I abbreviate his translation as S. The parenthesis after a citation includes chapter titles in NKBZ and S, and volume numbers and page numbers in NKBZ and S.

is General of the Right and the son of the Prime Minister, comes across a desolate landscape:

野ヲ藪のごと、恐しげなる物から、心有りし人の、急ぐことなくて、心にいれて作りし所なれば、木立よりはじめて、水の流れたるさま、草木のすがたなど、ヲかしく見所あり。蓬 葎のなかより、秋の花はつかに咲き出でて、池ひろきに、月面白くうつれり。おそろしきことおぼえず、おもしろき所を分け入りて見給フ。

秋風河原風まじりて、はやく、草むらに蟲の聲みだれてきこゆ。月隈なうあはれなり。人の聲きこえず、かゝる所にも住むらむ人を思ひやりて、獨言に、

蟲だにもあまた聲せぬ淺茅生に ひとり住むらん人をこそ思へ

とて、深き草を分け入り給ひて、屋のもとに立ちより給へれど、人も見えず。たゞ薄のみ、いとおもしろくて招く。隈なう見ゆれば、なほ近くより給ふ。東面の格子、一間あげて、琴をみそかに弾く人有り。立ち寄り給へば、入りぬ。<sup>4</sup>

In the large garden here and there were found plants and streams with refined and graceful features, but at first sight it seemed quite desolate like a moor or thicket. The autumn flowers were blooming, and the bright moon was mirrored in a lake. He walked in, forgetful of fearfulness. There blew the autumn breeze mingled with the cool wind of the Kamo River, and insects sang sorrowfully among the weeds.

“Little Lord” [Kanemasa] advanced further through the weeds and stood still for a while, but not a soul was to be seen, and only Japanese pampas grasses were beckoning as before. As the moon shone brightly in the sky, he had an unobstructed view. He proceeded further,

<sup>3</sup> This monogatari has many problems—authorship, the date of composition, the order of twenty chapters (books), and the authority of manuscripts. Some attribute the authorship to Minamoto Shitagō 源順 (911-983), poet and scholar, who was renowned as one of the thirty-six greatest poets (*sanjūrokkasen* 三六歌仙). Since *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子 and *Genji monogatari* frequently allude to *Utsuho monogatari*, we can safely assume that it was written earlier than those two works.

<sup>4</sup> *Utsuho monogatari*, vol. 1, pp. 59–60.

and found that a shutter of the east room of the main hall had been raised. He was able to see inside. There was the girl playing the koto. When he tried to go near to her, she entered the back room to hide herself.<sup>5</sup>

The woman who immediately charmed the celebrated son of the Prime Minister by her mysterious and solitary manner of living is the daughter of Toshikage 俊陰,<sup>6</sup> the protagonist of the first book of *Utsuho monogatari*, who returned from China after a series of unbelievable adventures of twenty-three years, to transmit the supernatural skill of koto 琴 to his descendants. When the daughter of Toshikage was fifteen years old, her mother died, and immediately after, her father, Toshikage, died without leaving much means for her sustenance except for two of the heavenly zithers (*kin* 琴) he brought back from China and hid in the north-west (the direction of *inui* 戌亥) corner of the house. As days go by, servants and waiting-ladies have left her behind and the house has been neglected while she has been looking over flowers in the spring and red and yellow leaves in the autumn. It was one of those days that Kanemasa happened to take a glance of her beauty among the weeds on his way toward the Kamo Shrine (*kamo jinja* 賀茂神社) and to hear her playing the zither beautifully on his way back from the Shrine. Unable to suppress his curiosity, he intrudes into the house and spends a night with her. She bears a male baby, who becomes the third generation of the koto master.

Women of noble birth suffering from a series of bad fortunes or from the evil-minded eventually arrive at happy-endings—this makes one convention of monogatari. Kanemasa and the daughter of Toshikage get reunited after she and her son, Nakatada 仲忠, spend years in the hollow of a tree after being reduced to extreme poverty. Nakatada, miraculously endowed with a sense of filial duty even as young as three years old, becomes the most favored figure of the court as he gets older. The daughter of Toshikage lives happily ever after.

Princess Sumiyoshi 住吉 of *Sumiyoshi monogatari* 住吉物語<sup>7</sup> is bullied and

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<sup>5</sup> Utsuki, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Women were rarely given their own names in those times but they were called daughters of their fathers or wives of their husbands.

harassed by her evil stepmother after her real mother died when she was seven years old. The stepmother’s secret plan to marry her off to an ugly old man, called Kazue no Suke 主計の助, finally causes the Princess to take a refuge in Sumiyoshi, which is in the vicinity of Kyo. In the meantime the hero, Shosho 少将, realizes that he was tricked into marrying the younger daughter of the stepmother believing her the Princess Sumiyoshi. Several months passed without his knowing where the Princess has gone. One night he dreams about a woman who looks like her. She reads a poem for him, and gives him a hint for the whereabouts of the Princess Sumiyoshi. Immediately he sets out for Sumiyoshi, wearing special travel shoes made of straw. After climbing up and down mountains, he arrives at Sumiyoshi:

日も暮れければ、松のもとにて、「人ならば問ふべき物を」など、うちながめて、たゝすみわづらひ給ける。さらぬだにも、旅の空は悲しきに、夕波千鳥、  
 哀に鳴き渡り、岸の松風、物さびしき空にたぐひて琴の音ほのかに聞こえり。  
 此声、律に調べて、盤渉調に澄み渡り、これを聞給けん心、いへばをろか也。  
 「あな、ゆゝし。人のしわざには、よも」など思ひながら、其音に誘はれて、  
 何となく立ち寄りて聞給へば、釣殿の西面に、若き声、一人、二人が程、  
 聞こえてけり。琴かき鳴らす人あり。

As the sun was set, he found himself under a pine tree, not knowing what to do, looking around, and reciting a piece of poetry “Shall we ask? Shall we ask?” Plovers flying over the evening tides and singing sorrowfully make the sky look all the sadder for a traveler. Together with the wind blowing from the bank and ruffling the pine trees, the sound of “koto” came over among the forlorn landscape. The sound was so clear and refined in its pitch and tempo—how could anyone fail to be impressed by

<sup>7</sup> One of monogatari written before *Genji*. The authorship and the date of composition are unknown. The various manuscripts exist; the earlier one comes from the thirteenth-century. The story is based on a popular-motif—a lovely heroine who has lost her natural mother persecuted by the evil-minded step-mother, endangered and suffering in various ways, but finally marrying a most promising and nicest man in the world and living happily ever after.

it? “Oh, it is almost awesome! It is beyond human power to play like that!” he thought. He was drawn toward it unawares. He stopped to listen to it. He heard one or two young persons talking on the pavilion. Then, he had a glimpse of the woman who was plucking the “koto.”<sup>8</sup>

The princess is rescued from the shabby house in the lonely neighborhood, goes back to Kyō with Shōshō, to settle down in his palace. She gives birth to babies for him and gets reconciled with the father. Her happiness is perfect after her despondent girlhood. Her stepmother is duly punished by being kicked out of the house and dying in dejection.

It is no wonder that Kaoru as a hero of monogatari is surprised to find himself in a scene which he has frequently heard waiting-ladies reciting aloud from monogatari. Such enthusiasm for *Utsuho monogatari* and *Sumiyoshi monogatari* as shown in other monogatari points toward the immense popularity of those monogatari at that time. *Saki no dainagon Kintōshū* 前大納言公任集<sup>9</sup> registers the fact that the ladies at the court of Enyū Tennō 円融天皇 (r. 970-83) had a heated discussion over the superiority of the two heroes of *Utsuho monogatari*, Suzushi 涼 and Nakatada 仲忠. *Daisai'in maegyoshū* 大齋院前御集<sup>10</sup> takes many motifs and images from *Sumiyoshi monogatari*, which testifies to the ladies and courtiers' fascination with it. Further, *Ihon Nōsen shū* 異本能宣集 by Nōsen 能宣 (a poet and monk who lived sometime in the ninth- to the tenth- centuries) composed seven poems out of the story of *Sumiyoshi monogatari* for the pleasure of Princess Senshi.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Sumiyoshi monogatari*, p. 335. The translation is my own.

<sup>9</sup> Collection of poems by Fujiwara Kintō 藤原公任 (966-1012). Kintō was one of the favorite courtiers during the reign of Ichijō Tennō 一条天皇 (r. 995-1012), loved by Fujiwara Michinaga 藤原道長, who held the greatest power in those times, and also by Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon. He is one of the compilers of *Wakan rōei shū* 和漢朗詠集 (ca. 1013), and a participant in many poetic matches in the imperial presence.

<sup>10</sup> Collection of poems by various courtiers and ladies who gathered in the salon of Princess Senshi 選子, who is a daughter of Murakami Tennō 村上天皇 (r. 951-969). The collection covers from ca. 984 to ca. 986. *Daisai'in* 大齋院 as her title designates that she took orders and that she did not get married. The date of composition is unknown.

<sup>11</sup> Ishikawa 石川, p. 80.

Three motifs constitute these romantic encounters between Kaoru and Ōigimi, Kanemasa and the daughter of Toshikage, and Princess Sumiyoshi and Shōshō. First of all, a handsome and high-ranking man encounters a woman born high-ranked but fallen in the world. Second, a man peeps at a woman through a screen, a hanging, a wall, or a fence, or from a distance. Last, it takes place under the moon.

The frequent appearance of the first motif in monogatari is justified with two reminders. The first one is that monogatari were written for women to divert their boredom. We may remember that Genji said to Tamakazura 玉鬘 “What would we do if there were not these old monogatari to relieve our boredom?” (Chapter 25 “Hotaru” 螢/“Fireflies”; NKBZ 3: 203; S 2: 437). The second reminder is connected with the first one: for women, especially for lower-ranking women, monogatari presented a dream-world. The daughter of Sugawara Takasue 菅原孝標 wished to become like Yūgao 夕顔 or Ukifune 浮舟, whom higher-ranking men—Genji and Kaoru respectively—fell in love with and took great care of (*Sarashina nikki* 更科日記, ca. 1059). Ōigimi—the eldest sister in Uji—was pursued by Kaoru in spite of differences of social ranks and wealth, and Princess Sumiyoshi got married with Shōshō surmounting the evil tricks of the stepmother, and Kanemasa loved the daughter of Toshikage, who had nothing to offer for him except her talent for *koto*—these stories certainly enchanted the imagination of the women of those times. If they were not daughters of tennō, women would like to hope for better marriages by reading those stories. A story about a poor but beautiful woman captivating a rich and handsome man would be understandably more attractive than a story about an ugly and high-ranking woman marrying a man of the same rank and so fulfilling usual social expectation.

The second motif involved is an activity called “peeping through a gap” (*kaimami* 垣間見). To have a glimpse of women, especially their faces and their hair, had a far greater implication and resulted in a far greater consequence in those times. Since women of the nobility were not allowed to make appearance in the presence of men in those days, men rarely had an opportunity to see them, except in their own family. Men managed, though, to peek at women through walls and

fences, and screens and hangings. This activity or this scene of peeping through a gap constituted an integral part of the conventional beginning stage of a relationship in monogatari. To show her face meant for a woman almost to lose her chastity. To see the face of a woman was enough for a man sometimes to be enchanted forever, as Kashiwagi 柏木 was by the Third Princess 女三の宮.

Kashiwagi's story shows the erotic potential of seeing a woman of high rank. Genji marries the Third Princess upon the request of the abdicated tennō Suzaku 朱雀, who loves her most among his children and is worried about her after he took tonsure and withdrew from the world. Genji at forty and the Third Princess at thirteen—from the beginning the marriage was not quite promising. The immaturity of the Third Princess is emphasized, especially in sharp contrast with the maturity of Murasaki 紫, Genji's beloved wife.<sup>12</sup> One day in the third month, various young men come over to the mansion of Genji to play kickball (*kemari* 蹴鞠). Kashiwagi suddenly has a glimpse of the Third Princess standing in the room in casual attire when a Chinese cat runs out of the room with a chord tangled around its neck and gets caught in a curtain. With a curtain pulled back, it is more than a “peeping through”: Kashiwagi sees the whole figure of the Third Princess standing<sup>13</sup> (Chapter 34 “Wakana jō” 若菜上/“New Herbs: Part I”; NKBZ 4: 132; S 2: 582-83). From that day on, Kashiwagi is unable to get rid of her image from his mind. He invades her room one day when Genji is away. The Third Princess becomes pregnant. The sense of guilt sickens Kashiwagi. Before his baby is born, he dies.

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<sup>12</sup> Murasaki has remained Genji's beloved wife throughout his life. He takes her forcibly from the protection of the nun, her aunt, at the temple of Mt. Kita 北山, pretending that he is interested in bringing her up as his daughter. Genji was eighteen and Murasaki was ten at that time. When she became fifteen years old, he finds himself unable to suppress his desire for her. They got married. Although she is fortunate enough to receive Genji's utmost love, Murasaki has to suffer from the lack of protection of her family, and also from Genji's many amorous affairs typical of men of his rank. She lacks the kind of support enjoyed by Aoi 葵, whose father was the Minister of the Right. But the worst blow is Genji's marriage to the Third Princess, daughter of the abdicated tennō Suzaku.

<sup>13</sup> To stand was considered to be quite ill-mannered for women of nobility in those days.



What is the deeper implication of seeing and being seen? The preoccupation with catching a sight of woman is so compelling everywhere in the earlier ages. Women have to accept grave outcome of having been seen—feeling guilty of an adultery all through her life as the Third Princess did, or being torn between Kaoru’s love and her father’s words for discreet action as Ōigimi in Uji was. Hayashida Takakazu 林田孝和 deciphers the enigma of seeing and being seen by going back to the legends of the ages of gods. Among various legends he cites, one from *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) goes like this: Toyotamabime 豊玉毘賣, a daughter of the Sea God, tells her husband, Hoorinomikoto 火遠理命, not to see her while she gives birth to her baby. Hoorinomikoto is unable to suppress his curiosity, though, in spite of her strict prohibition, and peeps through a window to find her floundering in her original shape as a crocodile. Toyotamabime, being ashamed of her ugly figure, runs back to her home region leaving the baby and the husband behind.<sup>14</sup> Even without seeking authority in legends of the gods, we can find various similar stories in children’s tales. Tsuru Nyōbō 鶴女房 tells how a crane changes itself into a beautiful woman and gets married with a man who saved her from a trap. Enclosing herself in her room, the crane wife weaves pretty cloths one after another. While he enjoys wealth brought from her weaving, he begins to be curious about how she is weaving. He peeps through a screen door, breaking his wife’s strict prohibition not to see her while she is weaving, to find her as a crane plucking her own plumage and producing cloths thereby. The crane wife flies off leaving her husband behind. As Hayashida quotes from Takahashi Masahide 高橋正秀, to peep through is to disclose the mystery, the godliness of women. Once deprived of their mystery, these special women have to give themselves to the men who saw them or return to that other world whence they came.

The last motif involved in Kaoru’s peeping at Uji sisters is the moon. It is understandable that a man needs moonlight to get himself to a woman’s place at night to try to have a glimpse of her in the pre-electric ages. However, it is not only for a practical reason, as Hayashida observes, that the moon appears when a man

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<sup>14</sup> Hayashida, pp. 242-43.

makes an amorous approach to a woman. The moon is almost a necessity for an amorous scene: without a moon a man does not feel like having an affair with a woman; with the moon he gets erotically-inclined. Hayashida marks twenty-one instances where a man and a woman sleep together with the moon shining in the sky and only two or three exceptions where the consummation of love does not come with the moon.<sup>15</sup> Those instances include a story like this: Genji sets off to visit one of his mistresses, Hanachirusato 花散里, when the moon begins to make its appearance in the sky after many days of pouring rain break to only a few drops. On his way he notices a shabby house covered with weeds. That was Suetsumuhana’s 末摘花. Genji’s man, Koremitsu 惟光, looks for someone who might reside there, just in vain. The moment he begins to retrace his way, the moon starts to shine brightly, and then he sees someone moving inside the house. Genji finds a mistress he has forgotten for many years. After exchanging poems and consoling her for her hard life, Genji promises that he would provide her with necessities. When Genji heads off, the moon shines forth its last glamour before setting in the eastern sky (Chapter 15 “Yomogi’u” 蓬生/“The Wormwood Path”; NKZ 2: 334-2; S 1: 298-301).

Meteorological studies have proved that in Kyōto at the yearly average between 1945 and 1952 at 10:00 p. m. it was fine for 183 days and it was cloudy or rainy or stormy for 186 days. People did not see the moon almost half of the year. The weather in the twentieth-century and that in the eleventh-century may be a little bit different. We can safely surmise, however, that chances are less that lovers almost always had the moon to light in the days of Genji.<sup>16</sup> What Hayashida offers as an explanation for this unusual frequency of the appearance of the moon comes from anthropology. The moon is the euphemism of the period of women. Women in periods are forbidden to sleep with men, since blood is sinful according to the ideas of Shintō. Impiety is paradoxically connected with piety; or, the supposed purity of blood makes people avoid it. Then, it might have been associated with impurity. Whether pure or impure, women during periods are secluded. People’s

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<sup>15</sup> Hayashida, p. 23.

<sup>16</sup> Hayashida, p. 25.

imagination makes a story that godly beings visit women during periods, who are called “flower wives” (*hanazuma* 花妻) or as “one-night wives” (*ichiya-zuma* 一夜妻).<sup>17</sup> As ages go on, the image of the moon is kept alive, only with a vague awareness of its original association with a symbolic marriage of a woman and a godly guest.<sup>18</sup>

Murasaki Shikibu might have intended these anthropological dimensions of the romantic encounter of Kaoru and Uji sisters. She certainly knew that the Cinderella type of love story about a handsome man of noble birth and a beautiful but suffering woman was frequently employed in earlier monogatari. This awareness may have made Murasaki Shikibu shy away from simply duplicating it without making a self-referential comment on her own creation. She has Kaoru suspend his belief at the moment he finds himself in a stereotypically romantic scene: “He had often enough heard the young women of his household reading from old monogatari. They were always coming upon such scenes, and he had thought them the most unadulterated nonsense” (Chapter 45 “Hashihime”/“The Lady at the Bridge”; NKBZ 5: 132; S 2: 785). The narrator, at the next moment, intrudes into Kaoru’s mind and analyzes his psychology: “he must be thinking that the world has such a corner in which we can encounter these impressive sights” (the translation is mine). The author criticizes her own narrative technique, and the hero cannot believe that he is in this stereotypically romantic scene. The hero, however, immediately plunges himself into the romantic scene and begins an amorous approach toward Ōigimi, the eldest sister of Uji. Psychological distance from the image of his own self in a romantic scene quickly yields itself to the identification of himself with the typical romantic hero in old monogatari. The apparent distance from older monogatari that the author imposes on her own monogatari proves to be ambivalent when the story itself follows the trajectory of *Utsuho monogatari* and *Sumiyoshi monogatari*. *Genji monogatari* shows an enigmatic attitude toward old monogatari. What does the author try to imply when she has her character say “this is just like

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<sup>17</sup> Hayashida, pp. 27-39.

<sup>18</sup> Hayashida, p. 40.

old monogatari”? Does she try to be aloof from conventional monogatari? Or does she try to claim a revolutionary character for her monogatari? We need more examples of this self-referential comment to see clearly what *mukashi monogatari* means for *Genji monogatari*.

Kaoru’s romantic encounter with the ladies in Uji is an enactment of an argument made far earlier in the second chapter by Uma no Kami (Hidari no Uma no Kami 左馬頭) concerning the ideal woman:

さて世にありと人に知られず、さびしくあばれたらむ<sup>むぐら かど</sup>律の門に、思ひの外<sup>ほか</sup>にらうたげならん人の閉じられたらんこそ<sup>かぎ</sup>限りなくめづらしくはおほえめ、いかで、はたかかりけむと、思ふより<sup>たが</sup>違へることなん、あやしく心とまるわぎなる。父の<sup>とし</sup>年老いものむつかしげにふとりすぎ、<sup>せうと</sup>兄の顔にくげに、思ひやりことなることなき<sup>ねや うち</sup>閨の内に、いといたく思ひあがり、はかなくし出でたることわざもゆゑなからず見えたらむ、片かど<sup>かた</sup>にてても、いかが思ひの外<sup>ほか</sup>にをかしからざらむ。すぐれて<sup>きざ</sup>暇なき<sup>かた</sup>方の<sup>かた</sup>選<sup>かた</sup>びにこそ及ばざらめ、さる方にて捨てがたきものをば  
(Chapter 2 “Hahakigi” ; NKBZ 1: 136-7)

There are surprisingly pretty ladies wasting behind tangles of weeds, and hardly anyone even knows of their existence. The first surprise is hard to forget. There she is, a girl with a fat, sloppy old father and boorish brothers and a house that seems common at best. Off in the women’s rooms is a proud lady who has acquired bits and snatches of this and that. You get wind of them, however small the accomplishments may be, and they take hold of your imagination. She is not the equal of the one who has everything, of course, but she has her charm. She is not easy to pass by. (“The Broom Tree”; S 1: 23)

After establishing his own definition of middle-ranked women,<sup>19</sup> Uma no Kami

<sup>19</sup> The middle-ranked women include, according to Uma no Kami, not only those who were born to the middle-ranked, but also those who have climbed up from the lower to a higher rank and also those who have fallen from the higher to a lower.

gives the highest credit to those middle-ranked ones whose fathers are provincial governors (*zuryō* 受領)—the position which the father of Murasaki Shikibu occupied. He imagines that among those families of *zuryō* he may find dazzlingly attractive women, since *zuryō* can acquire more money than their social status denotes, and so their daughters are more often than not brought up carefully. With a stretch of imagination, in the paragraph above, Uma no Kami creates an imaginary landscape where an unexpectedly pretty woman is hidden away “behind tangles of weeds” and living with the ugly father and brother. Uma no Kami, then, tells about two of his own experiences—one with an extremely jealous woman who bit his finger in her instant fury over his negligence and the other about a frivolous woman who had more than one lover at the same time. Tō no Chūjō 頭の中將 is on the spot next. He recounts his affair with a shy woman. She is from the middle-ranked and ignored by the world, and thus stages an imaginary situation to discover the prettiest woman “behind tangles of weeds” told by Uma no Kami. The woman, who appears as Yūgao 夕顔 in Chapter 4 “Yūgao”/ “Evening Faces,” has been lonely as an orphan and comes to depend on Tō no Chūjō. She is too reticent, though, to show resentment for the lack of attention on the part of Tō no Chūjō. She does not complain, either, about the ill-will of his wife’s family, which objects, naturally, to their relationship and uses their political influence as the family of the Great Minister of the Right. When Yūgao sends him a poem insinuating his inconsiderateness, he finally visits her to find her weeping as if competing with insects as she looks out at the neglected garden wet with dew. Tō no Chūjō thinks “this is just like an old monogatari” (Chapter 2 “Hahakigi”/“The Broom Tree”; NKBZ 1: 157-58; S 1: 32-33). A beautiful woman suffering patiently and silently from a series of ill fortunes and depressed by the animosity of someone more powerful—these elements obviously point toward old monogatari in the mind of Tō no Chūjō.

Genji picks up the love affair left by Tō no Chūjō. It is quite a coincidence that he finds a woman from the middle-rank living as the neighbor of his former wet-nurse. His curiosity about a beautiful middle-ranked woman found in a least expected place like “behind tangles of weeds” has been nurtured, apparently, while he pretends to be asleep during “the rainy night’s discussion on woman” 雨夜

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の品定め。He has Koremitsu, his man, inquire about the identity of the residents. While her real identity is unknown, she is known as Yūgao from evening faces as a metaphor. One day Genji takes her to a deserted house, seeking to be alone with her. Yūgao dies there, possessed by an evil spirit. The evil spirit appears in Genji’s dream in the form of a beautiful woman. It says:

おのが、いとめでたしと見たてまつるをば、尋ね思ほさ<sup>おも</sup>で、かくことなること  
なき人を率<sup>も</sup>ておはして、時めかしたまうこそ、いとめざましくつられ  
(Chapter 4 “Yūgao” ; NKBZ 1: 238).

You do not even think of visiting me, when you are so much on my mind. Instead you go running off with someone who has nothing to recommend her, and raise a great stir over her. It is cruel, intolerable (“Evening Faces”; S 1: 71).

Genji wakes up and finds Yūgao suffering from a sudden sickness. The evil spirit appears again at the bedside of Yūgao. Genji is horrified and thinks it so unrealistic that it could happen only in old monogatari (Chapter 4 “Yūgao”/“Evening Faces”; NKBZ 1: 241; S 1: 72). When Genji next looks at her, Yūgao is already dead.

As the story goes on several chapters, Tamakazura, Yūgao’s daughter, is brought forth to the narrative present. As a child, she had made a metaphorical appearance as a wild carnation in a poem which Yūgao wrote for Tō no Chūjō. After a long absence from the story, Tamakazura enters the narrative as the object of Genji’s eroticism. Genji suggests as a way of seducing her that they make a monogatari-like story: “Suppose the two of us set down our monogatari and give the world a really interesting one たぐひなき物語にして、世に伝へさせん” (Chapter 25 “Hotaru”/“Fireflies”; NKBZ 3: 205; S 1: 438; italics are mine).

Here is a curious phenomenon. We noticed in the above that Tō no Chūjō’s story about Yūgao is an enactment of Uma no Kami’s discussion on the ideal women. Uma no Kami began to embrace those ideals when he as a child heard women in his house reading monogatari: “When I was a child I would hear the

women reading romantic stories 童にはべりし時、女房などの物語読みしを聞きて、いとあはれに、悲しく、心深きことかなと、涙をさへなん落しはべりき” (Chapter 2 “Hahakigi”/“The Broom Tree”; NKBZ 1: 142; S 1: 25). Uma no Kami’s discussion on women occasions Tō no Chūjō’s examples of “reticent women” (He says: “She must be listed among your reticent ones, I suppose? これこそ<sup>わらは</sup>のたまへるはかなき例なめれ” [Chapter 2 “Hahakigi”/“The Broom Tree”; NKBZ 1: 159-60; S 1: 34]). Tō no Chūjō’s actual love affair is rescued and continued by Genji. Genji’s love affair with Yūgao is told by the narrator as if it actually happened. We may say that Yūgao was a woman in Tō no Chūjō’s monogatari but becomes an actual woman with Genji. Yūgao’s daughter, Tamakazura, found out in the country, appears in the narrative as if she were evoked out of another monogatari in order to become an actual figure in a newer monogatari.<sup>20</sup> Thus, monogatari are not simply told in *Genji monogatari*, but they penetrate into its narrative to constitute an integral part. Monogatari embedded within monogatari do not remain as monogatari; they claim their existence as actuality. At the same time the story which actually happens as the narrator claims and the readers are required to believe suspends its pretension of actuality by comparing itself to old monogatari. It declares its own artificiality in this way.

Here we have to ask our question again: what is *mukashi monogatari*? Kaoru’s, Tō no Chūjō’s, and Genji’s remark—“this is just like an old monogatari” does not lead the narrative toward a new direction. The readers might expect that the phrase marks the beginning of a new and radical plot similar to the repeated motifs of old monogatari at an early point but totally different from them in later development. As Kanemasa of *Utsuho monogatari* and Shōshō of *Sumiyoshi monogatari* come across pretty ladies in desolate houses who are high-ranking but suffering from bad luck, Kaoru discovers beautiful daughters of a fallen prince in the least expected place (Kaoru came to Uji to seek for religious solace). Whether or not because of the lunar influence, he is captivated by them, and begins to approach the elder sister, Ōigimi. He follows the trajectory of love which was established by

<sup>20</sup> For the discussion on the multiple layers of narrative which monogatari make and are made of, I am indebted to Takahashi 高橋 1978.

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earlier heroes, Kanemasa of *Utsuho monogatari* and Shōshō of *Sumiyoshi monogatari*.

Certain scenes—peeping at women under the moon, a despondent woman waiting for a man patiently, an evil spirit possessing a woman—are exactly the ones from old monogatari. In *Genji monogatari*, the author’s and the characters’ own self-awareness of their being like old monogatari is the sole difference. We find a discrepancy between the self-conscious statements of the characters’ and the narrator’s and the actual stories they are immersed in. On the one hand those self-alienating comments effect a distance between *Genji monogatari* and old monogatari. On the other hand they are annulled by the fact that those scenes from old monogatari are part and parcel of *Genji monogatari*. The references to old monogatari blur the distinctions between the old and the new monogatari. Those gestures of the characters’ and the narrator’s toward differentiation of *Genji monogatari* from old monogatari have double-edged effect of differentiation of *Genji monogatari* from old monogatari and also its identification with them. If the author is claiming that her monogatari is revolutionary and subversive by dissociating it from other monogatari, her attempt is not quite successful. If it is only our deconstructive tendency to find a gap between those self-critical comments and the effects they have on the readers, *Genji monogatari* may be successfully declaring its being different from other monogatari. Or the author may not be intending to announce that her monogatari employs new themes and new ways of developing plots and is therefore superior to older monogatari.

### 2: Old Monogatari Is Not Really Old.

Two of the old monogatari to which *Genji monogatari* often refers to are *Sumiyoshi monogatari* and *Utsuho monogatari*. They were written earlier than *Genji monogatari*. While many manuscripts of old monogatari are lost, what is still with us includes: *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 (the early tenth-century), *Taketori monogatari* 竹取物語 (ca. 900), *Yamato monogatari* 大和物語 (ca. 951), *Sumiyoshi monogatari*, *Ochikubo monogatari* 落窪物語 (the late tenth-century), and *Utsuho mono-*



*gatari*. Questions of manuscripts of those monogatari are always with us. However, we can at least have access to their stories whichever manuscript is in our hands. They have been handed down through centuries. This fact denotes their immense popularity among people. We guess that people did not feel weary of transcribing them word by word. Apart from those monogatari, we find references to other lost monogatari here and there. We are simply surprised at the enormous number of monogatari written but lost. What is extant now is only a bit from a huge number of monogatari.

It might strike us as curious that *Taketori monogatari*<sup>21</sup> is not referred to when a character or a narrator utters “this is just like an old monogatari,” in spite of the fact that it is entered in the picture contest against *Utsuho monogatari* in Chapter 17 “Eawase”/“A Picture Contest.” The contest starts off with illustrations for *Taketori monogatari* from the Kokiden 弘徽殿 side, and then those for *Utsuho monogatari* from the Akikonomu 秋好 side. The Kokiden side extols *Taketori monogatari*:

なよ竹の世々に古りにける事をかしきふしもなけれど、かぐや姫のこの世の濁りにも穢れず、はるかに思ひのほれる契りたかく、神世のことなめれば、浅はかなる女、目及ばぬならむかし (Chapter 17 “Eawase” 絵合; NKBZ 2: 370)

The story has been with us for a very long time, as familiar as the bamboo growing before us, joint upon joint. There is not much in it that is likely to take us by surprise. Yet the moon princess did avoid sullyng herself with the affairs of this world, and her proud fate took her back to the far heavens; and so perhaps we must accept something august and godly in it, far beyond the reach of silly, superficial women. (“A Picture Contest”; S

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<sup>21</sup> An old bamboo cutter discovers a girl baby in a tree of bamboo one day. She grows up quickly to be a most beautiful lady in the country, as the bamboo cutter gets rich miraculously. Many nobles and even tennō fall in love with her, and try to marry her. It turns out, however, that she is a heavenly creature. She goes back to the moon, her native place, to the much disappointment of her foster parents and her wooers.

1: 311)

In response to this, the Akikonomu side claims:

俊蔭は、激しき浪風におほほれ、知らぬ国に放たれしかど、なほさして行きける方<sup>かた</sup>の心ざしもかなひて、つひに他<sup>ひと</sup>の朝廷<sup>みかど</sup>にもわが国のもありがたき才<sup>ざえ</sup>のほどを弘め、名を残しける古き心をいふに、絵のさまも唐土<sup>もろこし</sup>と日本<sup>ひのもと</sup>とを取り並べて、おもしろきことどもなほ並びなし (Chapter 17 “Eawase”; NKBZ 2: 371)

Toshikage was battered by tempest and waves and swept off to foreign parts, but he finally came home, whence his musical activities sent his fame back across the waters and down through the centuries. This painting successfully blends the Chinese and the Japanese and the new and the old, and I say that it is without rival. ( “A Picture Contest”; S 1: 312)

The side of Akikonomu depreciates *Taketori monogatari* saying that the radiance of the moon princess is limited only within the house, while in *Utsuho monogatari* the light “suffuses these many-fenced halls and pavilions,” while Toshikage explores the wider region of both China and Japan. In the picture contest the real force is on the paintings, not on the stories, as a matter of fact. The illustrations for *Utsuho monogatari* which feature “a blue mounting and a spindle of yellow jade” painted by Tsunenori 常則 and captioned by Michikaze 道風<sup>22</sup> assures the victory of the Akikonomu side. The narrator says: “The effect was dazzlingly modern.” We have to be careful when we apply the evaluations made for illustrations to stories. The contest all in all, however, contrasts the antiquity of *Taketori monogatari* and the modernity of *Utsuho monogatari*. The former is called “the ancestor as a first to

<sup>22</sup> Tsunenori is presumably a famous painter who lived during the reign of Murakami Tennō (r. 951-969). Michikaze is Ono no Michikaze 小野道風, one of the three greatest calligraphers (*sanseki* 三蹟) of the age. While the painter and the calligrapher for the Kokiden side are from earlier ages, those for the Akikonomu side are from the almost contemporary. This would greatly contribute to the modern impressions of the illustrations for *Utsuho monogatari*.

appear of all monogatari” (*monogatari no ideki hajime no oya* 物語の出で来はじめの親); the pictures of the latter are admired as “dazzlingly modern” (*imamekashiu okashige* 今めかしうをかしげ). We can see how modernity marked *Utsuho monogatari* in those ages.

The fact that we find a copy of *Taketori monogatari* in an old bookcase of Suetsumuhana 末摘花 is also suggestive of its “old-ness.” The narrator informs us that Suetsumuhana opens her old bookcase (*mizushi* 御厨子) from time to time to beguile her lonely hours with illustrated copies of *Karamori* 唐守, *Hakoya no Toji* 藐姑射の刀自, and *Taketori monogatari* (Chapter 15 “Yomogiu”/“The Wormwood Patch”; NKBZ 2: 321; S 1: 292). The two textual families of *Genji monogatari*—*Abyōshibon* 青表紙本 and *Beppon* 別本—make Suetsumuhana produce these monogatari in this order; the other one—*Kawachibon* 河内本—has *Taketori monogatari* first and then *Karamori* and *Hakoya no Toji* after that. *Karamori* had, according to some references to it in some places, immigrated from China and lived in a tall castle built in an island in the midst of the sea. He has a lovely princess, whose renowned beauty attracts men from all over the country just as Princess Kaguya of *Taketori monogatari* does. The story is focused on the process how men struggle to climb up the castle to have a glimpse of the princess. There was a man fortunate enough to find a way into the castle. He was extremely disappointed to find her ugly, stumped, and with some other fatal disadvantage.<sup>23</sup>

Both *hakoya* and *toji* in *Hakoya no toji* are evocative of their Chinese origins. *Hakoya* denotes a place in Chinese folktales where fairies live; *toji* means an old lady of nobility in a Chinese expression. Further information to identify them comes from a poem in *Fūyō wakashū* 風葉和歌集 (ordered in 1271), vol. 14: “However I complain about it, my wounded mind would not be healed/my love for her simply increases. いへどいへどいふに心は慰まず恋しくのみもなりまさるかな” There is a preface in prose affixed to it: “Composed by the Emperor ‘Futodama’ of ‘Hakoya no toji’ on the occasion Princess Terimichi was taken back. 照満姫取り返され給ひてよませ給ひける/はこやのとじの太玉のみかどの御歌”<sup>24</sup> Princess Terimichi’s

<sup>23</sup> Ishikawa, pp. 49-50.

mother is “the Queen of the West” (*Seiōbo* 西王母), who lives in Mt. Konrin 崑崙 in the west and who has rivalry with “the King of the East” (*Tōōfu* 東王父), who lives in *Fusō* 扶桑 in the east, according to the Chinese folktales. The King of the East took Princess Terimichi away from her mother on a fast ship. The magic of the Queen of the West immediately brought her back, though. In this way, we have the King of the East dejected in a poem in *Fūyō wakashū*.

Suetsumuhana is, in fact, described all through *Genji monogatari* as old-fashioned and tasteless in her choice of clothes, way of speaking, and everything. She is a daughter of the late Prince Hitachi 常陸. She enjoyed her father’s dotting on her while he was alive, but now she lives a lonely life with narrow means. The daughter of Genji’s nurse casually mentioned her to Genji, who immediately took interest in her. Genji was motivated to find a pretty woman born to the highest rank but suffering from decline. He succeeds, as he almost always does in amorous affairs, in spending a night together with her. In the morning after their first night he sees Suetsumuhana for the first time clearly in the reflection of the snow, to find her extremely ugly with her long and red nose hanging down on her pale face. While Genji was away in Suma 須磨 and Akashi 明石 as a way of self-banishment, he was completely forgetting about her. After some years, when he happened to pass by her house, he remembered her. During his neglect, Suetsumuhana had nothing to do except to look at those monogatari.

All three monogatari from Suetsumuhana’s bookcase are disposed to supernatural characters and events with a touch of foreignness (=Chinese). It is not only because her bookcase is old or her way of living is old-fashioned, but also the supernaturalism of stories, that encourages us to say that *Taketori monogatari* was regarded as old, even when it is not compared with *Utsuho monogatari*.

Supernaturalism is one of the two trends of monogatari which *Sambōe* 三宝絵 (written by Minamoto Tamenori 源為憲 in 984) depicts in a depreciatory way. Supernaturalism makes inanimate things speak and feelingless things think, while the other kind of monogatari is committed to amorous stories.<sup>25</sup> We may have to

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<sup>24</sup> *Fūyō wakashū*, p. 152. The translation is mine.

distinguish two kinds of supernaturalism: in monogatari such as *Taketori monogatari* heavenly beings act as heroes and heroines; in the other kind of supernaturalism animals or plants appear as personifications. We notice the fact that the kind of supernaturalism that *Taketori monogatari* has is not reported in *Sambōe*. It will suggest that *Taketori monogatari* was already out of the fashion in the age of *Sambōe*, given almost a century’s lapse between *Taketori monogatari* and *Sambōe*. Afterward love stories and stories with personified animals became two main streams of the age.<sup>26</sup> It seems, however, that people in the subsequent periods did not care for transcribing manuscripts of supernatural monogatari with personifications, since we do not have them now. We can see that monogatari oriented toward love themes remained to be acclaimed as modern in the age of *Genji monogatari*.

This is the reason *Sumiyoshi monogatari* and *Utsuho monogatari* are on the list for “Monogatari wa” 物語は in *Makura no sōshi* by Sei Shōnagon 清少納言:

物語は <sup>すみよし</sup>住吉。 <sup>うつほ</sup>宇津保、 <sup>との</sup>殿うつり。 <sup>くにゆずり</sup>国譲はにくし。 <sup>むもれき</sup>埋木。 <sup>むめつぼ</sup>月まつ女。 <sup>むめつぼ</sup>梅壺の  
大将。 <sup>だうしん</sup>道心す、 <sup>まつ</sup>むる。 <sup>まつ</sup>松が枝。 <sup>え</sup>こまの物語は、 <sup>ふるかはまり</sup>古蝙蝠さがし出でて <sup>も</sup>持て <sup>い</sup>行き  
しがをかしきなり。 . . . <sup>かたの</sup>交野の少将。<sup>27</sup>

Monogatari includes *Sumiyoshi*, *Utsuho*, *Tono utsuri*. *Kuni yuzuri* is disappointing. *Umorigi*. *Tsuki matsu onna*. *Umetsubo no Taishō*. *Dōshin susumuru*. *Matsugae*. What is interesting in *Komano no monogatari* is the scene where the hero took away an old umbrella . . . *Katano no Shōshō*.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> *Sambōe*, p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ishikawa, p. 49.

<sup>27</sup> *Makura no sōshi*, pp. 245-46. Textual variations are enormous for *Makura no sōshi*. This citation is translated from the textual family called *Maedabon* 前田本. There are three other textual families: *Nōinbon* 能因本, *Sankanbon* 三卷本, and *Sakaibon* 堺本. This section on monogatari varies according to the texts. Our present concern with *Sumiyoshi monogatari* and *Utsuho monogatari* is not affected by the textual deviations, however.

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Since *Kuni yuzuri* makes a chapter of the modern manuscript of *Utsuho monogatari*, we can safely say that it is as a chapter of *Utsuho* here, too.<sup>29</sup> The position of *Tono utsuri* after *Utsuho* and before *Kuni yuzuri* makes *Tono utsuri* a part of *Utsuho monogatari*, although it does not make a chapter title in the authorial text lines. *Fūyō wakashū* enters two poems from *Umoregi*, from which we can picture its hero wailing over an unrequited love. *Tsuki matsu onna* features a woman waiting for a man who is metaphorically expressed as the moon on a mountain’s rim. The central motif of *Umetsubo no shōshō* will be a courtly love affair, considering the fact that *Umetsubo* is a name for a residential area for a consort in the imperial house. *Dōshin susumuru* has eight poems in *Fūyō wakashū*. They enable us to surmise that it tells love affairs of nobles. Its title suggests, also, that it is touched by the sense of mutability and full of Buddhist tendencies. We have no idea about what is *Matsugae*, unfortunately.

Genji in the “Hotaru” Chapter characterizes *Komano no monogatari* as monogatari with a worldly predilection (*yonaretaru monogatari* 世馴れたる物語), and disqualifies it as the one for the Akashi Princess so that she would not think those happenings in it as commonplace in the world (Chapter 25 “Hotaru”/ “Fireflies”; NKBZ 3: 207; S 1: 438). Section 273 of *Makura no sōshi*, “Narinobu no chūjō” 成信の中將, describes *Komano no monogatari*:

こまの物語がたりは、なにばかりをかき事もなく、こと葉も古めき、見どころ  
おほからぬも、月にむかしを思おもひいでて、虫むしばみたる蝙蝠かほもりとり出いでて、「もとみし  
こまに」といひてたづねたるがあはれなるなり。

*Komano no monogatari* is not very interesting. The words are old-fashioned, with nothing special to see. However it is moving that the hero, being nostalgic of the past, produces an old broken umbrella and waits for

<sup>28</sup> The translation is mine. There is an English translation by Morris. It does not, though, include the section on “Monogatari wa.”

<sup>29</sup> For the discussion in this paragraph, I am indebted to Ishikawa, pp. 50-59.

<sup>30</sup> *Makura no sōshi*, p. 316. The translation is mine.

a woman at her gate, saying “my horse will follow its familiar route.”<sup>30</sup>

It is not very difficult to guess what *Katano no Shōshō* is. The narrator of *Genji monogatari* at the beginning of the “Hahakigi” Chapter makes fun of Genji: “the Minor Captain of Katano would laugh at Genji’s lack of skill in love affairs” (Chapter 2 “Hahakigi”/“The Broom Tree”; NKBZ 1: 129; S 1: 20). Further, *Ochikubo monogatari* compares the Minor Captain of Ben 弁の少将 to the Minor Captain of Katano. Since the Minor Captain of Ben is a rich handsome man from a high-ranking family, and a target of female attraction all over Kyō, the Minor Captain of Katano should be another amorous man.

Manuscripts for the majority of those monogatari are lost. Therefore we cannot be quite sure if a chronological scheme was imposed on this catalogue. Even if there was a temporal order in this catalogue, textual variations of *Makura no sōshi* prevent assurance of its order. We can only wonder why *Taketori monogatari*, *Ise monogatari*, and *Yamato monogatari* are not included in her catalogue of monogatari. The reason that *Ise monogatari* and *Yamato monogatari* are not mentioned here is simple: they are *uta monogatari* 歌物語, as distinctive from *tsukuri monogatari* 作り物語. In *uta monogatari*, poems are more or less more important than the part of the prose narrative, which is, in most of the cases, invented as to make a plot fit for poems. In *tsukuri monogatari*, the prose narrative speaks more for the story, while poems are presented as a man and a woman (there are sometimes some other cases) exchange them as a way of communication in those times.<sup>31</sup> Ishikawa Tōru 石川徹 comments concerning the exclusion of *Taketori monogatari* from the catalogue of Sei Shōnagon:

Sei Shōnagon did not mention *Taketori monogatari*, probably because her principle for choosing these monogatari is whether they catch up with the trendy fashion of the age. Stories oriented toward the supernatural deriv-

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<sup>31</sup> For more details on various kinds of monogatari, see *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature* under the term “monogatari.”

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ing their sources in folktales, like *Taketori monogatari*, did not suit the taste of the people in the age of Sei Shōnagon.<sup>32</sup>

It is true that those monogatari by Sei Shōnagon do not treat the supernatural, but the realistic, and that their main theme is almost always love. If Sei Shōnagon’s catalogue of monogatari is not ordered chronologically, we can imagine that it shows her evaluative catalogue of modern monogatari which people around her at court loved to read.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that *Utsuho monogatari* was written later than *Taketori monogatari* makes the former more modern than the latter. Things are not so simple, though. It was modern because of its taste and the morals and themes it presents, as we have seen above. This is well pronounced in the conversation between Genji and Murasaki concerning how to give an ideal education for Princess Akashi as a future consort of the crown prince. Answering to Genji’s suggestion that Princess Akashi should not read “wanton” monogatari, Murasaki remarks:

心浅げなる人まねどもは、見るにもかたはらいたくこそ。うつほの<sup>みじわら</sup>藤原君のむすめこそ、いと重りかにはかばかしき人にて、<sup>あやま</sup>過ちなかめれど、すくよかに言ひ出でたる、しわざも女<sup>をむな</sup>しきところなかめるぞ、一やうなめる (Chapter 25 “Hotaru”; NKBZ 3: 207)

“I would not of course offer the wanton ones as a model,”.....“but I would have doubts too about the other sort. Lady Atemiya in *Utsuho monogatari*, for instance. She is always very brisk and efficient and in control of things, and she never makes mistakes; but there is something unwomanly about her cool manner and clipped speech.” (“Fireflies”; S 1: 439)

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<sup>32</sup> Ishikawa, p. 59. The translation is mine.

<sup>33</sup> Nagai 永井, p. 172.



Murasaki devaluates Atemiya 貴宮 of *Utsuho monogatari* as unwomanly and cold, in spite of the fact that Atemiya attracts every man at court for her beauty and virtue. Murasaki’s comments imply that *Utsuho monogatari* is felt close enough by Murasaki (and also by the author, Murasaki Shikibu) as the monogatari from which she can learn moral and behavioral patterns.

*Utsuho monogatari* was considered new and modern in the age of Murasaki Shikibu. Its effect was “dazzlingly modern” with its love stories, not supernatural happenings or characters. Then we are left with a question: why does Kaoru utter “this is just like an old monogatari” apparently referring to *Utsuho monogatari*, when he gets a glimpse of beautiful Uji sisters playing koto under the moon? Takahashi Tōru 高橋亨 argues:

Murasaki Shikibu labeled new monogatari which were in fashion in those times such as *Utsuho monogatari* as “old,” because she was ambitiously trying to seek for a new possibility of monogatari as a genre in her own monogatari, and to make it different from others.<sup>34</sup>

In spite of her awareness that *Utsuho monogatari* was modern, Murasaki Shikibu gestures toward devaluation of her rival monogatari. She is concerned with new possibilities for monogatari that had not been realized so far. This is what Takahashi says. Yamamoto Toshitatsu 山本利達 agrees:

*Genji monogatari* was formed with the author’s renovative mind toward a new kind of monogatari, after she had much experience of reading monogatari and accumulated frustrations over them. She certainly thought how old-fashioned they were and how necessary new elements were to revolutionize monogatari as a genre.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Takahashi 1978, p. 255. The translation is mine.

<sup>35</sup> Yamamoto, p. 56. The translation is mine.

“Monogatari” and “Old Monogatari” in *Genji Monogatari*

In the ideas of Takahashi and Yamamoto, Murasaki Shikibu called all other monogatari than her own “old monogatari,” in her ambition to make a revolutionary monogatari. The ambitious mind of Murasaki Shikibu naturally despised old monogatari in preference to her new monogatari. She designates other monogatari, written earlier or later whether old-fashioned or in fashion, as “old.”

If so, why does Murasaki Shikibu have to repeat the same scenes from old monogatari in her own monogatari? If she is claiming that her monogatari is revolutionary and subversive by dissociating it from other monogatari, her attempt is not quite successful. Kaoru’s “old monogatari”—beautiful ladies plucking koto under the moon—makes the beginning of his life-long commitment to Ōigimi, which sets off the stories of love affairs in the last ten chapters of *Genji monogatari*. Tō no Chūjō’s “old monogatari”—an unhappy woman looking at the garden pensively—encourages him to love Yūgao more dearly. Genji’s “old monogatari”—an evil spirit at his bedside—is what happened to him on the night Yūgao died. Those scenes do not appear in a critical context at all. Instead they are all significant in the development of respective plots.

“Old” of “old monogatari” connotes “familiar” if we try to define it precisely, since “old” of old monogatari does not help present the subject matter as something far back in the past and therefore timeworn and quaint. Something “old,” instead, continues into the present to make an integral part of the present story. Abe Akio 阿倍秋生 gives us an interesting perspective concerning “old” of “old monogatari”:

In *Genji monogatari*, “mukashi monogatari” is used more frequently than “monogatari” when it means a literary genre. I wonder how different connotations these two phrases have. “Mukashi monogatari” designates “monogatari written a long time ago” not so much as “monogatari which relates the old ages.” The over-all meaning of “mukashi monogatari,” anyway, seems to be “monogatari which were written earlier and live on

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<sup>36</sup> Abe, pp. 25-26. The translation is mine.

until now.<sup>36</sup>

Abe concludes in this way that “mukashi” connotes a sense of continuation from the old ages up to the present, although its primary meaning is simply “written a long time ago.” Kaoru’s, Tō no Chūjō’s, and Genji’s utterances “this is just like an old monogatari” are to be interpreted, in Abe’s theory, as expressions of their surprise to find something familiar, rather than suggestive of nostalgia for something old.

The author had many reasons to choose familiar motifs. One of the most important motivations comes from the consideration of the taste of her audience, which consisted of Shōshi 彰子—a consort of Ichijō Tennō, Fujiwara Michinaga—Shōshi’s father and the central political figure in those times, and many waiting-ladies at the court. In those periods when literacy was not prevalent and paper on which to copy out the manuscripts was a luxury, the small and homogeneous group of readers of monogatari oriented the author’s choice of subject matter, vocabulary, and the way of writing. While always threatened by the accusation of its emptiness (*soragoto* 空言), monogatari was appreciated mainly for two reasons: they gave women (also men) diversion and pastime, and they instructed them about the ways of the world. We find Murasaki seeking in monogatari entertainment in order to divert her sadness caused by Genji’s frequent visit to his newly-wed main consort, the Third Princess. She tries to console herself by finding in fiction a woman suffering from the same predicament as hers (Chapter 35 “Wakana ge” 若菜下/“New Herbs: Part Two”; NKBZ 4: 203; S 2: 609). The nurses for the children of Higekuro 髭黒 and his primary consort agree to their mistress’s decision to take her children away with her when she decided to live separately from him upon finding Higekuro infatuated with Tamakazura. The old wives’ tale persuades the nurses:

昔物語などを見るにも、世の常の心ざし深き親だに、時に移ろひ人に従へば、おろかにのみこそなりけれ。まして、型のやうにて、見る前にだになごりなき心は、懸<sup>か</sup>り所ありてももてないたまはじ (Chapter 31 “Makibashira” 真木柱; NKBZ 3: 364)

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“It is the sort of things that happen in *mukashi monogatari*. A perfectly good father loses his head over a new wife and lets her dominate him and forgets all about his children. He has been a father in name only. He forgot about them long ago. I doubt that he can be expected to do much for them.” (“The Cypress Pillar”; S 1: 500; italics are mine)

Examples from monogatari such as *Sumiyoshi monogatari* or *Ochikubo monogatari* tell readers that a father is likely to transfer his affection to the daughters of his new wife, and neglect the daughters of his old wife, as time goes on. It would relieve people to find that actual events in the real life correspond with those in monogatari and to think that it happens everywhere. Or people might feel sadder not to find anything similar to their own cases as Murasaki did.

Fiction and reality were never separate from each other in people’s minds. People living in the world were eager to know from fictions what is going on in the real world. Therefore, fiction accommodates reality in order to make itself look more realistic and more persuasive. The readers might have been put off by an amazingly new and radical episode they had never heard anywhere in their real lives. The readers expected to learn how to respond to certain situations in their everyday lives, how to act toward their prospective lovers, or how to endure certain predicaments. They liked the familiar.

The audience shared certain ideas and reactions. If a young lady and her circle of attendance were the audience for a prospective monogatari, and the writer was an attendant within their group, she would be very familiar with the kinds of monogatari the group had read or heard up to that time and with the narrator of the group’s response. Her story would be premised on this information. A skillful writer might even borrow characters or situations from words already familiar to the group, thereby economizing on detailed explanations.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Konishi 小西, p. 271.

Kaoru’s, Tō no Chūjō’s, and Genji’s utterances “this is just like an old monogatari” were certainly brought forth by their sense of relief to find themselves in a familiar scene they have heard or seen or read in various places.

We sometimes have, therefore, the narrator making an excuse for her omission of detailed description as if she feels sorry to frustrate the readers’ expectation for the fixed pattern of old monogatari. Akikonomu, Genji’s adopted daughter, decides to prepare a celebration for Genji’s fortieth birthday on the behalf of Suzaku Tennō, her husband. Since Genji is at the heyday of his career, the banquet for him is supposed to be extravagant:

宮のおはします町の寢殿に御しつらひなどして、さきざきにことに変らず、  
 上達部の禄など、大饗になずらへて、親王たちにはことに女の装束、非参議の  
 四位、廷臣たちなどただの殿上人には、白き細長一襲、腰差などまで次々に賜  
 ふ。装束限りなくきよらを尽くして、名高き帯、御佩刀など、故前坊の御方ざ  
 まにて伝はりまゐりたるも、またあはれなん。古き世の一の物と名あるかぎり  
 は、みな集ひまゐる御賀になんあめる。昔物語にも、物得させたるをかしきこ  
 とには数へつづけためれど、いとうるさくて、こちたき御仲らひのことどもは  
 えぞ数へあへはべらぬや。(Chapter 34 “Wakana jō”; NKBJ 4: 90-91)

The gifts for the important guests were as at a state banquet. For royal princes there were sets of ladies robes, very imaginatively chosen, and, after their several ranks, the other guests received white robes, also for ladies, and bolts of cloth. Among the fine old objects (it was like a display of the very finest) were some famous belts and swords which she had inherited from her father and which were so laden with memory that several of the guests were in tears. We have all read monogatari which list every gift and offering at such affairs, but I am afraid that they rather bore me; nor am I able to provide a complete guest list. (“New Herbs: Part One”; S 2: 568; italics are mine)

The narrator says that she does not want to enumerate all the gifts for the fortieth

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birthday of Genji, since she knows that many old monogatari with a penchant for listing all the gifts are boring. She does, however, describe them in detail in spite of her proclamation that she would not.

On the occasion of the wedding of Niou 匂 and the Sixth Princess 六の君, the narrator announces that she cannot recount all the gifts the guests were given, although she knows well, again, that old monogatari are inclined to narrate, above anything else, the celebrations and its pleasures:

ひむがし  
東の対に出でたまひて、御供の人々もてはやしたまふ。おほえある殿上人どもいと多かり。四位六人は、女の装束さうぞくに細長ほそながそへて、五位十人は、三重襲みへがさねの唐衣からぎぬ、裳の腰もみなけぢめあるべし。六位四人は、綾あやの細長ほそなが、袴はかまなど、かつは限りある事を飽かず思しければ、物の色、しざまなどをぞきよらを尽くしたまへりける。召次めしつぎ、舎人とねりなどの中には、乱りがはしきまで、いかめしくなんありける。げに、かく、にぎははしく華やかなることは見るかひあれば、物語などにも、まづ言ひたてたるにやあらむ。されど、くはしくは、えぞ数へたてざりけるとや。(Chapter 49 “Yadorigi” 宿木; NKKBZ 5: 404-5)

Niou's retinue, which included numbers of ranking and honored courtiers, was meanwhile being entertained in the east wing. For six men of the Fourth Rank there were ladies' robes and cloaks, and for ten men of the Fifth Rank double-lined Chinese robes and trains in several colors for the several stations. Four men of the Sixth Rank received trousers and brocade cloaks. Chafing at the limits imposed upon even the most illustrious statesmen, Yugiri had exhausted his ingenuity in seeing that the dyeing and cutting were of the finest, and some might have thought the gifts for the handymen and grooms rather excessive. Because the pleasures the eye takes in are the best, *monogatari* seem to give these lively events first priority. But they are not supposed to be given in all the details here. (“The Ivy”; S 2: 904; italics are mine)

Thus, we have the narrator announcing that she will avoid listing up what

people wore or what gifts they got. Her announcement, however, is accompanied by the very catalogue of these details. In spite of the proclamation to shorten or omit the detailed description of trivialities, the narrative reveals its tendency toward it. The description how various guests were offered robes or belts or other things in accordance with their ranks are not omitted at all. It is there in the narrative to give it a sense of reality and concreteness. What does this imply?

The narrator is not trying to differentiate her monogatari from old monogatari. She is not trying to make a radical break with the tradition of monogatari. She follows the tradition, instead. We have to remark that the narrator does not say “old monogatari” in the last two quotations above. It is simply “monogatari” which the narrator mentions and whose narrative technique she pretends to try to avoid while actually following. The reason is that “old” does not add any substantially different meaning to “monogatari.” “Old monogatari” and “monogatari” are almost the same. “Old” simply calls attention to the conventionality of those motifs the narrator is employing. To be conventional was rather good, moreover, as we have observed. To call monogatari “old monogatari” was simply one way of referring to “monogatari.” In order to define “monogatari,” the narrator mentioned “old monogatari.” The reason is that monogatari is a genre which almost always brings with it a sense of oldness. Monogatari does not present itself as a modern genre which is during the process of rising. Monogatari is a genre retrospectively perceived. In other words, we cannot reach the presence of monogatari except through old monogatari, since monogatari is, if we borrow Derrida’s terminology, “inscribed in a chain or in a system within which it refers to the other, to other concepts, by means of the systematic play of difference.”<sup>38</sup> *Genji monogatari* needs to refer to old monogatari in order to define what monogatari is. As a result, the signifier “monogatari” is deferred from its presence, to bear the trace of what came before. What came before, in its turn, exists only retrospectively as a trace of the present. The present of monogatari is constituted through its past. Derrida says:

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<sup>38</sup> Derrida, p. 404.

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It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called “present” element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not; what is absolutely is not, not even a part or a future or a mediated presence.<sup>39</sup>

*Genji monogatari* weaves a complex relationship with earlier monogatari. It is constituted on the basis of traces of older monogatari, tracing the absent-presence of older monogatari. Old monogatari, instead of simply providing a background which is alluded to, participate in the signifying process that are taking place in *Genji monogatari* in the form of references and allusions to them. Old monogatari, then, acquire a new definition of what they are, which is inevitably different from their real selves existing somewhere in an ideal discursive space. Those spaces of references and allusions are, nevertheless, the only space where they can acquire an articulation of themselves, since monogatari comes with old monogatari. A new monogatari can be produced only as a transformation of older monogatari: monogatari get themselves defined at this moment as something anterior to themselves. *Genji monogatari* was produced as a transformation of old monogatari, by which it defines itself as something existing in and bearing the trace of old monogatari. Monogatari is, thus, a genre which is defined nostalgically and retroactively.

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<sup>39</sup> Derrida, pp. 405-406.



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