

Sōgi's *Problem Passages*: Exegetical Method and the Idea of the Text

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Introduction

Problem Passages in the Tale of Genji (*Genji monogatari fushin shōshutsu* 源氏物語不審抄出, 1494?–1500, **fig. 1**) represents the latest extant work¹ of commentary on the *Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari* 源氏物語) left to posterity by the commoner-origin *renga* master Sōgi 宗祇 (1421–1502), universally recognized as one of the most important figures in that tale's thousand-year exegetical history.² Despite

¹ Of nine extant MSS, all but one end with the following colophon by the nobleman Tominokōji Toshimichi 富小路俊通 (d. 1513) (punctuation added):

此一冊宗祇法師抄出之所也。命可一覽由、其後下向關東、於相模国卒去。尤可歎而已。
かたみともその世にいはぬ心までふかくかなしき筆のあとかな
富小路俊通 在判

This volume of passages was selected and excerpted by Monk Sōgi. Having allowed that I should peruse it, he then left on a journey for the Kantō, and in Sagami Province expired. One can only deeply mourn.

katami to mo sono yo ni iwanu kokoro made / fukaku kanashiki fude no ato ka na
For a keepsake, then, to trace in sadness a pen unfathomable
as those thoughts left forever unsaid to the world beyond.

Tominokōji Toshimichi [signature here]

Notably, the base-text here quoted (see note 5) additionally provides its colophon with an exceptional—and exhaustive—set of glosses (fol. [80r], **fig. 1b**), all of which I have omitted above.

² As a cultural figure writ large, Sōgi 宗祇 himself is the subject of a truly extensive literature, beginning with a steady stream of biographies going back almost a century, the most recent of which in Japanese is by Hiroki Kazuhito 廣木一人 (see Hiroki, *Muromachi no kenryoku*) and the most accessible of which is probably still that by Okuda Isao 奥田勲 (see Okuda, *Sōgi*). A very useful survey in English of Sōgi's cultural position (above all in *renga* context) is given by Steven D. Carter in his recent study and translation of one of Sōgi's most important *renga* treatises, *A Solace in Old Age* (*Oi no susami* 老のすさみ, see Carter, "Readings from the Bamboo Grove"). Passing over what might be cited in connection with Sōgi's work in *renga*, *waka*, or even studies

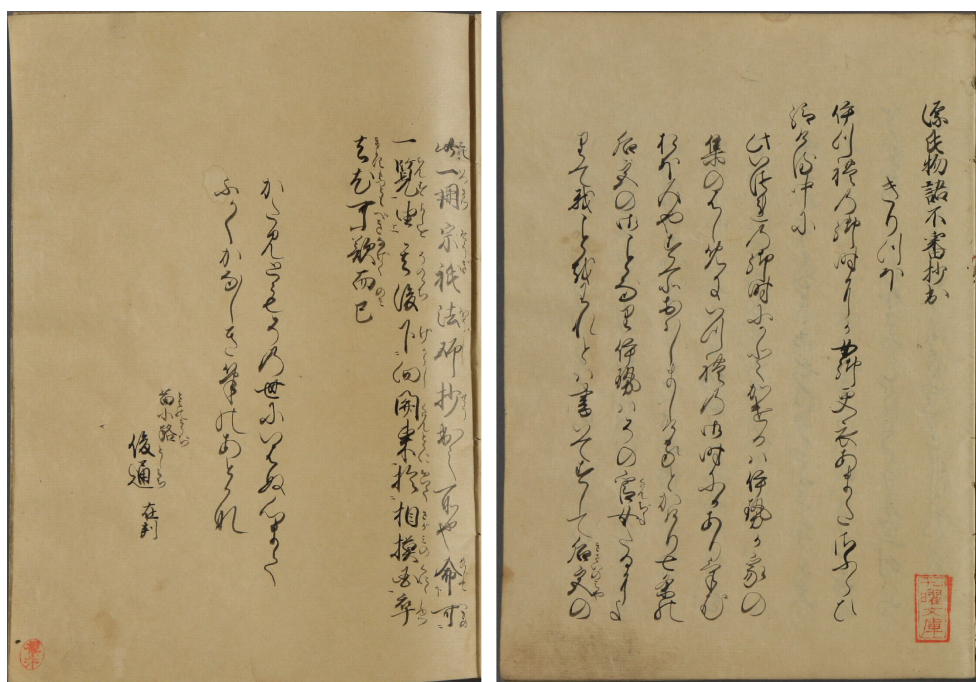


Figure 1a (right) and 1b (left). Kuyō Bunko 九曜文庫 MS^{kō} (“kō-hon” 甲本) of Sōgi’s 宗祇 commentary *Problem Passages in the Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari fushin shōshutsu* 源氏物語不審抄出). Used in this article as base-text. Waseda University Library.

Figure 1a: Inner title, Entry #001 (from “The Paulownia Pavilion”), fol. [2r]. See p. 141.

Figure 1b: Colophon, fol. [80r]. See p. 131n1.

the great strides made in recent decades by scholars of that history, however, even among Sōgi’s own body of philological work, his *Problem Passages* (as abbreviated hereafter) stands out as a text distinctly understudied.³

There are several reasons why this might be surprising. On the most superficial level, *Problem Passages* is not only the longest of Sōgi’s three *Genji* commentaries,⁴

of *The Tales of Ise* (*Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語), with respect to his *Genji* studies, the starting point must be with Ii Haruki’s 伊井春樹 groundbreaking volume on the history of *Genji* commentary (see Ii, *Chūshakushi*, pp. 243-338), though Ii’s helpful and more recent précis of his thinking on Sōgi should also be mentioned (see Ii, “Sōgi no kotengaku”). Much about Sōgi’s activity as a teacher and scholar of the *Genji* in high literati circles can be gleaned from Miyakawa Yōko’s 宮川葉子 study of his great aristocratic disciple, Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (see Miyakawa, *Sanjōnishi Sanetaka*). A recent summary of Sōgi’s career can also be found in Knott, “Medieval Commentaries,” pp. 118–123.

³ It is the only of Sōgi’s *Genji* works not to appear, for example, in Musashino Shoin’s multivolume commentary collection *Genji monogatari kochūshaku sōkan* 源氏物語古註釈叢刊.

⁴ At roughly 30,000 characters, longer than his substantial (and far more well-known) commentary on the *Genji*’s second chapter, *Habakigi betchū* 帯木別注, by about 25%.

but the most wide-ranging, covering 42 of the tale's 54 canonical chapters.⁵ More uniquely still, as faithfully indicated in the work's customary title (not necessarily Sōgi's own), by and large its 124 entries (**table 1**) address passages of particular interpretive difficulty: its selective principle is the textual crux, or in commentary argot, the text's *fushin* 不審. As such it embodies a judgment of what constituted—for either Sōgi himself or his students—textual questions both difficult and worthy of consideration, recording additionally the efforts made towards answering these by one of the *Genji*'s most celebrated interpreters to date.

It is true that the text *per se* does not appear to have circulated widely. And if *Problem Passages* has seemed to invite far less attention than it looks to reward in both scope and content, the vagaries of transmission go some distance towards explaining the fact. Against the twenty-seven extant and often divergent textual witnesses to Sōgi's more famous commentary on the *Genji*'s "Broom Tree" chapter,⁶ his *Problem Passages* has been found to survive in no more than nine copies, all but one of which are reported to belong to the same narrow textual line.⁷ Indeed throughout the Edo period, to which by far the lion's share of extant manuscripts belong, Sōgi's influence as a whole—while hardly forgotten—tended to be felt indirectly, experienced rather through the work of disciples and the succes-

⁵ No full-work *Genji* commentary by Sōgi is known to have existed. However many the students who may have heard from him extensive lectures on every chapter, by his own hand only three works of very partial commentary are known. Preceding the *Problem Passages* are:

- (1) *Shugyoku's Reordering* (*Shugyoku henjishō* 種玉編次抄, 1475–1481): a consideration of the complex ordering (*henji* 編次) of the overlapping timelines of the Uji 宇治 chapters (broadly conceived here to include the full last 13). Shugyokuan 種玉庵 was the name of Sōgi's residence in the Capital.
- (2) *The Broom Tree Commentary* (*Habakigi betchū* 帚木別注, 1485): an unusual commentary dedicated exclusively to the second chapter of the *Tale of Genji*, containing extensive remarks by Sōgi reflecting his conceptions of the tale, its significance, and its proper interpretation.

For a brief review of all three commentaries' textual contents and history, see Knott, "Medieval Commentaries," pp. 123–135.

⁶ As confirmed by the author to date as part of a study in preparation.

⁷ This article is deeply indebted to Korenaga Yoshimi 伊永好見 for her survey—the fullest to date—of the work's nine extant MSS (see Korenaga, "Sōgi-chū", pp. 2–3). I follow her organization (and nomenclature) here. Her division of the nine MSS by their distinctive colophons (*okugaki* 奥書) into two groups is as follows:

Group A: Toshimichi 俊通 Colophon MSS (8)—see colophon in note 1 above

(1) **Waseda U. Library, Kuyō Bunko 九曜文庫 MS^{ko} ("kō-hon" 甲本)** [Bunko 30/A0114]

This is the base-text from which all examples are transcribed. See table 1 for summary of contents.

(2) Shimabara Library, Hizen Shimabara Matsudaira 肥前島原松平 Bunko MS [104–6]

(3) Tokyo Central Library, Kaga 加賀 Bunko MS [913–M–16]

(4) Tōkai 東海 University Library, Tōen 桃園 Bunko MS [桃 9 109]

(5) Waseda U. Library, Kuyō Bunko MS^{otsu} ("otsu-hon" 乙本) [Bunko 30/A0113]

(6) Nishio City, Iwase 岩瀬 Bunko Library MS [Bunko 512.1]

(7) Tohoku U. Library, Kanō 狩野 Bunko MS [4–11423–1]

(8) Tenri Central Library MS [913.36–1 281]

sors of disciples. And while Sōgi's unique position at a watershed moment in the *Tale of Genji's* history—the post-Ōnin boom in classical scholarship—makes a more detailed account of his contributions a pressing desideratum, it is certainly unsurprising if in modern research priorities the textual environment of more recent premodernity has played the more determinative role.

Just as certain, however, is *Problem Passages's* long-neglected promise as an object of study. Above all it has this value as Sōgi's most fulsome—and final—statement on one of the prime occupations of his literary life, yet the commentary also has particular value by virtue of its own chosen research subject. For an important condition of fulfilling said pressing desideratum is the elucidation of exactly that to which *Problem Passages* most directly speaks: Sōgi's exegetical method. Over the course of its hundred-strong entries, whose knotty *fushin* the master himself felt challenged his interpretive powers, the commentary offers us an unparalleled glimpse of the method by which those powers were exercised. Precisely because, moreover, Sōgi's influence on later *Genji* scholarship—and thereby ultimately on *Genji* readership—is often so sublimated, an understanding of his developed method is all the more critical. It is this understanding that the author, by examining a judicious selection of these entries, hopes here to advance.⁸

Group B: Myōyū 明融 Colophon MS (1)

(9) Notre Dame Seishin 清心 Women's U., Kurokawa 黒川 Bunko MS [H-196]

This is the only manuscript to contain instead the following colophon by Myōyū (d. 1582):

此抄出宗祇法師註也。

桑門明融

This book of excerpted passages is a commentary by Monk Sōgi.

Monk Myōyū

Seemingly an autograph copy by Myōyū himself, while its colophon gives no date, Korenaga has demonstrated that the Kurokawa Bunko MS reflects an earlier stage of the commentary's composition than the text underlying the MSS of Group A.

⁸ As the base-text for this article I have adopted the **Kuyō Bunko MS^{k6}**, influenced by Korenaga's evaluation of it as relatively complete and undamaged in its text among manuscripts of Group A (Korenaga, "Sōgi-chū," p. 2), but also by its accessibility. Of the total nine MSS extant (see previous note for numbering), the following four can be consulted either online or in published transcriptions:

- (1) Downloadable from Waseda's *Kotenseki sōgō dētabēsu* 古典籍総合データベース at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko30/bunko30_a0114/index.html.
- (5) Downloadable from Waseda's *Kotenseki sōgō dētabēsu* at: https://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko30/bunko30_a0113/index.html.
- (6) Transcription by Yoshizawa Yoshinori 吉澤義則 available: see Iwase Bunko Library MS, pp. 347–382.
- (9) Viewable on NIJL's *Database of Pre-Modern Japanese Works* (*Shin Nihon kotenseki sōgō dētabēsu* 新日本古典籍総合データベース) at: <https://doi.org/10.20730/100214107>. There are also a transcription by Korenaga (Kurokawa Bunko MS, pp. 28–44 (pt. 1) and pp. 38–52 (pt. 2), and a facsimile edition from Shirai Tatsuko 白井たつ子 (Shirai, *Genji fushin shōshutsu*).

1. Modern Research on *Problem Passages* and Sōgi's Place in Commentary History

While current understanding of the textual history of Sōgi's *Problem Passages* is increasingly clear,⁹ understandings of its textual substance remain, by contrast, much more imprecise. It is probably easiest to illustrate this by consideration of an example entry from the commentary itself.

Tamakazura 玉鬘, the daughter of Hikaru Genji's 光源氏 friend Tō no Chūjō 頭中将 and the ill-starred late Yūgao 夕顔, has quietly spent her childhood far away in Kyushu, raised in the family of Yūgao's old nurse. Now at twenty, however, and in headlong flight from a demanding local suitor, she finds herself suddenly brought back by said nurse to the Capital of her birth. Joining Tamakazura and her nurse are the latter's eldest son—the Bungo Deputy (Bungo no Suke 豊後介)—and youngest daughter. The group's situation upon arriving, however, is fairly desperate, and they turn to a higher plane for succor. After a pilgrimage to nearby Yawata 八幡 Shrine is completed, the Deputy decides (“Next . . .”) that they should visit the famous Kannon 観音 of Hasedera 長谷寺 Temple in Hatsuse 初瀬, quite a bit further removed to the East in Nara—and on foot. Here he tries to reassure his companions (as it will turn out, correctly), that the journey will be worth it (**fig. 2**):

*“Next there are the buddhas, among whom Hatsuse is famous even in Cathay for vouchsafing the mightiest boons in all Japan. Hatsuse will certainly be quick to confer blessings on our lady, since for all these years she has lived in our own land, however far away.” He had her set out again.*¹⁰

⁹ See, above all, Korenaga, “Sōgi-chū.” Also the *kaidai* 解題 in Shirai, *Genji fushin shōbutsu*, pp. 1–8, and tangentially in Izume Yasuyuki's 井井康之 edition of *Ichiyōshō*, pp. 522–536.

¹⁰ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 414; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 3, p. 104.

Throughout this article, for quotations from the *Genji* text—above all in the lemmata that head each of Sōgi's commentary entries—I have relied on the easily-consultable translation of Royall Tyler, whose faithfulness to the original language makes it by far the most suitable among existing (English) translations for close work. (Translations of the comments are my own). At times, Sōgi's quotations of the text—albeit reflecting the same Aobyōshi-bon 青表紙本 recension—do differ on minor points from the various modern editions used by Tyler (cf. his note on “Manuscripts and Texts,” p. xviii), though of course these latter also differ on minor points from one another. In passing it is worth noting that this closeness is a hidden witness to Sōgi's continuing influence today: while medieval commentators before him had largely used the alternative Kawachi-bon 河内本 recension, Sōgi—and after him his students and ourselves—adopted the Aobyōshi-bon line (i.e., the text of Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家, though modern research has complicated this identification, see e.g., Sasaki, *Shoshigakuron*, pp. 284–315).

As at the beginning of this note, though I have not given quotes from the *Genji* text here in the original, I have footnoted references to the corresponding SNKZ text.

In those cases where Tyler's distance from the text on an important point seemed too great, I have modified his phrasing and noted the change in the footnotes. One such case occurs here: for “since for all these years she has lived” Tyler has “since she has always lived,” eliding the sense of year upon year in obscurity that Sōgi found so poignant.

此こと葉のうち、「まして我国のうちにこそ」とは、日本の心也。「とをき国のさかひととも」、おなし日のもとにおはしませは、「わか君おはしましてめくみ給てん」¹¹といへり。「としへ給つれば」といふうちに、かなしひをつくすやうの心あるへきか。又、そのあいたにくはんをんをたのみたてまつる心もあるへし。されは、「我君をはましてめくみ給はん」といふにや。『河海』に、はつせは房前卿のちからにてこんりうあれはといへり。それならでも、ことはり侍るへきにや。¹²

In this passage, “in our own land” is a reference to Japan.¹³ “[H]owever far away” it may have been, because [Tamakazura] has always lived in the same Japan, [the Bungo Deputy] says that [Hatsuse] “will certainly be quick to confer blessings on our lady.” Perhaps in the phrase “since for all these years” lies a sense of the extremes of [Tamakazura’s] sadness. There is likely also some sense of her beseeching Kannon for aid throughout the same period. Perhaps this is the reason he says “will certainly be quick to confer blessings on our lady.” In the *River and Sea* [commentary], [Yotsutsuji Yoshinari] says that the reason is because [the temple at] Hatsuse was founded through the efforts of Lord [Fujiwara no] Fusasaki. Yet even without this, [the passage] seems to make sense on its own.

—*Problem Passages #033* (from “The Tendril Wreath”)

Sōgi’s entries follow the usual commentary format: each entry begins with its lemma (a quotation from the *Genji* text of the passage to be discussed, here given in *italics*), then continues at a vertical indent (usually 1–2 characters) with the text of the comment corresponding to that lemma. This division is not perfectly imporous: bits of quoted *Genji*-text (here marked in **gothic type**) may also

¹¹ Here わか君おはしまして is likely an error (which I have not reproduced in my translation) for わか君をはまして, the reading reflected in the (here suppressed) lemma and also below in Sōgi’s in-comment second quote of the same phrase. The error is not unique to the Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, however, appearing also in the Kanō Bunko MS (fol. [21v]), though there it has been afterwards amended. Cf. **fig. 2a**, line 2 from right, and **fig. 2b**, line 7 from right.

¹² Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fols. [30v–31r].

As explained above in note 8, I have adopted what Korenaga Yoshimi has named the Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō} as a base-text throughout. My transcription differs from the manuscript page in the following points: (1) I have ignored line and page breaks; (2) I have normalized all now non-standard *kana*-character variants (*jibo* 字母), but otherwise preserved the original orthography; (3) I have normalized most Sinitic characters (e.g., 部 not 𛄀) while retaining customary exceptions (e.g., *uta* 哥 is left as such, not transposed to 歌); (4) for ease of reading I have (indeed quite liberally) added punctuation marks (though not vocalization marks—any found here are original to the text); and (5) where the body of a comment re-quotes the *Genji* text to make a point (quite frequent in Sōgi), this text is set off by means of gothic type.

¹³ It will be noted that the rearrangement of phrases and clauses necessary for a fluid translation has here made it difficult to find exact equivalents for Sōgi’s snippet-quotes in Tyler’s English (e.g., “in our own land” does not entirely render まして我国のうちにこそ, and “certainly” is not equivalent to まして). In such cases, I have done my best to balance the demands of translation with my sense of the drift of each commentator’s remarks.

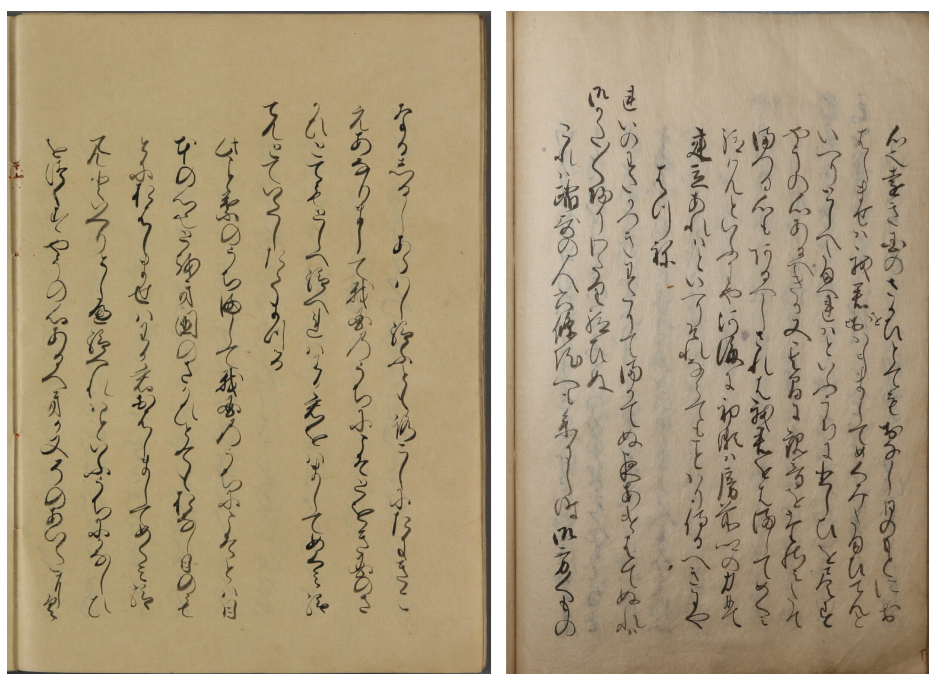


Figure 2a (right) and 2b (left). Comparison of two different MSS of *Problem Passages* at entry #033 (from “The Tendril Wreath”). See p. 136.

Figure 2a: Kanō Bunko 狩野文庫 MS, fol. [21v]. Tohoku University Library. Photo by author.

Figure 2b: Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fol. [30v]. Waseda University Library.

come up for mention within the body of the comment itself. The degree to which such a format was already standardized can be glimpsed in **figs. 3 and 4**. With some exceptions—occasional non-lemmatic excursions, diagrams, etc.—by and large a *Genji* commentary text is simply a long chain of such lemma-comment dyads from start to finish. The format is not, of course, unique to commentaries on the *Genji*. Nonetheless the degree of standardization even within the subfield is some index of the already developed stage of *Genji* studies which formed the context from, and against which, Sōgi's own contributions emerged.¹⁴

Two works of commentary in particular—for their contemporary influence, for their enduring centrality to the tradition in after-ages, for Sōgi's deep engagement with them¹⁵—dominate this context, representing the backdrop against

¹⁴ It must be remembered, however, that the Edo provenance of most surviving manuscripts can often produce an illusion of more standardization than actually obtained at earlier periods.

¹⁵ Sōgi himself produced an abridgement of the two for student use that survives in multiple manuscripts today.

which scholars have evaluated what makes Sōgi's own approach unique. The first, from the previous century, is (1) the *River and Sea* commentary (*Kakaishō* 河海抄, 1367) of Yotsutsuji Yoshinari 四辻善成 (1326–1402), the great-grandson of an emperor though himself a “common” nobleman (of a newly-minted yet at length ill-fated line).¹⁶ The second, completed during Sōgi's own lifetime, is (2) the *Lingering Florescence* commentary (*Kachō yosei* 花鳥余情, 1472–1478) of Ichijō Kaneyoshi 一条兼良 (1402–1481), a nobleman of far loftier status, who ascended the heights of court office even as he held sway as one of the great cultural figures of his generation.¹⁷ The social gap between men such as these and the commoner Sōgi—whose origin is obscure enough at least that no attempts to clarify it have yet succeeded—hardly needs emphasis, but this can be misleading. In part this is because the gap proved to be no barrier: not only was Sōgi able to associate, even collaborate with Kaneyoshi a generation above, but a generation below he himself became teacher to the nobleman Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (1455–1537). More importantly, however, the distinction simply lacks explanatory power: while not uninfluenced by their stations in life, the respective commentary approaches of Yoshinari and Kaneyoshi are neither reducible to personal station, nor predictable from it, and it is against their approaches—not against their biographies—that Sōgi's own work is judged.

The crux of the above *fushin* seems to be why, precisely, the Bungo Deputy is so very confident that “Hatsuse will certainly be quick to confer blessings on our lady [Tamakazura].” According to Sōgi, the *River and Sea* commentary “says that the reason is because [the temple at] Hatsuse was founded through the efforts of Lord [Fujiwara no] Fusasaki.” This is in fact incomplete. More precisely Yoshinari's explanation is that the foundation of said temple was in part to ensure the prosperity of the Fujiwara clan, and that “The present Tamakazura is a member of the Fujiwara clan—this is why [the Deputy] says ‘will certainly [be quick to confer blessings].’”¹⁸ Nothing further is added, though preceding this Yoshinari offers a great deal about the phrase “Hatsuse is famous even in Cathay for vouchsafing the mightiest boons in all Japan.” Beyond historical information about Hasedera itself, he even mentions (in brief) two stories that might fulfill this condition of “even in Cathay.”

In *Lingering Florescence*, there are two lemmata for this passage. The comment to the first considers the reason for which Kannon, “though really a bodhisattva, is here called a buddha.”¹⁹ The comment to the second lemma begins by more or less rehearsing Yoshinari's theory about the Fujiwara connection, but then offers

¹⁶ For detail on Yotsutsuji Yoshinari's 四辻善成 life, see Ogawa, *Nijo Yoshimoto*, pp. 556–581.

¹⁷ For Ichijō Kaneyoshi 一条兼良, a full biography exists in English (Carter, *Regent Redux*); especially for his role as a scholar in contemporary context, see Tamura, *Ichijō Kaneyoshi*.

¹⁸ 今ノ玉鬘君、藤氏なれば、「まして」といふなり。 *Kakaishō*, pp. 387b–388a.

¹⁹ 「仏」といふは、神に対して「神ほとけ」といひならはしたれば、まことは菩薩なれともほとけといへるにや。 *Kachō yosei*, p. 151b.

another: “If they only pray fervently, [Hatsuse] works miracles even for the people in China. This means there is no doubt that favor ‘will certainly’ be shown to our lady, who was born in Japan and makes a pilgrimage to Hatsuse even now.”²⁰ Substantially this agrees with the thrust of Sōgi’s “[H]owever far away’ it may have been, because [Tamakazura] has always lived in the same Japan, [the Bungo Deputy] says that [Hatsuse] ‘will certainly be quick to confer blessings on our lady.’”

The differences in Sōgi’s analysis are easy to inventory: (1) he pauses to weigh the implications latent in the Bungo Deputy’s phrasing (“since for all these years she has lived in our own land, however far away”)—“perhaps,” Sōgi muses, in this passing remark “lies a sense of the extremes of [Tamakazura’s] sadness”; (2) he posits a backstory of particular devotion to Kannon on Tamakazura’s part to justify the Deputy’s certainty of divine intervention—“There is likely also some sense of her beseeching Kannon for aid throughout the same period”; finally (3) while not challenging the historical angle brought to bear by Yoshinari (and echoed in part by Kaneyoshi a century later), he questions, if not precisely its relevance, at least its necessity here in clearing up the *fushin*—“even without this, [the passage] seems to make sense on its own.”

In the light of such differences, the way modern scholars have characterized the *Problem Passages* is easy to understand. In an early, brief summary of the text, in 1938 Yamagishi Tokuhei 山岸徳平 described its approach to the 120-odd lemmata as “above all dealing with the meaning of the language.”²¹ In 1961, in the course of a longer account discussing it together with Sōgi’s other commentary works, Shigematsu Nobuhiro 重松信弘 echoes the assessment, judging that “In the passages it deals with, the analysis is above all about phrases, the meaning of the language, and context, with past precedents, court lore, and questions of models featuring only seldom, making it, like his *Broom Tree Commentary*, a very detailed, explanatory work of commentary.”²² More recently in 1980, in again similar terms, Ii Haruki 伊井春樹 described *Problem Passages* as essentially sharing the approach of Sōgi’s *Broom Tree Commentary*,²³ for which he provides the summary: “Kaneyoshi’s systematic method of interpreting the tale was taken to an even deeper level by Sōgi, who tried to make clear even the subtle movements of its characters’ psychology and the structure of its literary expression,”²⁴ noting

²⁰ もろこしの人たに、祈請渴仰すれば、そのしるしをあらはし給ふ。「まして」わか君は、わか日の本にむまれ給て、しかもはつせへまうて給へは、利生にあつかり給はん事、うたかひなきといふ心なり。Ibid., p. 152a.

²¹ 文義を主として取扱つて居る。Yamagishi, “Kenkyū,” p. 249. The collection containing it dates to 1970, but as made clear in the collection’s afterword, the substance of the piece itself dates to an earlier incarnation published in 1938 (see p. 430).

²² 取扱つた所は故実・有職・準拠等は少なく、語句・文意・文脈の解説が主となつてをり、帯木別註同様の精しい解説的註解である。Shigematsu, *Kenkyūshi*, p. 213.

²³ Ii, *Chushakushi*, p. 289.

²⁴ 兼良の体系化した物語の読みの方法は、宗祇によってさらに深められ、人物の微細な心理の推移や、文章表現の構造などでも明らかにしていこうとした。Ibid., p. 285.

also Sōgi's attention to passages of authorial intervention (*sakusha kainyū no kotoba* 作者介入の詞). The marked accord of the three assessments across three generations is indeed striking.

At first sight, at least as a descriptive characterization of the above entry, there is little in this mutual agreement to disagree with. Even where Sōgi's interpretation overlaps with Kaneyoshi's, the way he walks the reader (or more likely, listener at lecture) through the passage step-by-quoted-step truly is remarkably "explanatory." Sōgi does in fact show keen interest in character psychology, and only weak interest in Yoshinari's historical gloss—though he did take the trouble to reference it. And rather than the background to the temple's construction, he prefers the context of Tamakazura's personal religious devotion. All told, while a bit abstract in their formulations, the impressions of scholars to date seem to be reasonable enough.

Yet here we should pause: is there such a context of childhood devotion to Kannon to be found? Certainly Tamakazura's nurse is frequently shown praying in this chapter, and before flight from Kyushu came to seem the only option, her first line of defense against unwanted suitors had been, in fact, to declare that she intended to make the girl a nun. Moreover, directly after the *fushin* passage, making her way on foot to Hatsuse, Tamakazura herself is shown praying in-text: "... she did as she was told and walked on in a daze, calling out to the buddha, What sins burden me, that I should wander this way through the world? If you have pity on me, take me to where my mother is, even if she is no longer on earth, and if she still lives, show me her face!"²⁵ That as a young girl under such a devout nurse Tamakazura would have prayed to Kannon habitually is not an absurd idea to entertain. It is, however, not a find from Murasaki Shikibu's own text, but one of Sōgi's imagination.

Nor does it quite do justice to Yoshinari and Kaneyoshi to dismiss their references to the temple's Fujiwara connection as something not directly concerned with text and context. Later in the same chapter, Ukon 右近 (once in Yūgao's service), after rediscovering Tamakazura, engages a priest at Hasedera to pray for the young woman—under the name of "Fujiwara no Ruri-gimi" 藤原の瑠璃君.²⁶ *River and Sea* is not particularly "explanatory" in its style, to be sure, but it is probably mistaken to confuse methods and goals. While the relevance of the Fujiwara connection might be debated, the notion at least has clear grounding in the *Genji* text, Sōgi's musings about Tamakazura's childhood, not. The "meaning of the language"—*bun'i* 文意 or *bunji* 文義, in the formulations of Yamagishi or Shigematsu—can plausibly be seen as the concern of many different methods, the under-explained mere citation of relevant historical background certainly among them.

²⁵ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 414; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 3, p. 104.

²⁶ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 418 (without the genitive *no*); *Genji monogatari*, vol. 3, p. 112. Kaneyoshi in fact makes this connection explicit, see *Kachō yosei*, p. 152a.

It is also possible to overlook our own assumptions. Ii Haruki has characterized the method of *Problem Passages* as one which, transmitted from Sōgi to his disciple Sanetaka, thereafter eventually “led to the development of a more modern type of commentary.”²⁷ This has the ring of truth, yet if it is not a concern with the text’s meaning *per se* that unites us with Sōgi against earlier commentators, what does? We should entertain the question: does the passage above truly “even without this” (i.e. historical context), “make sense on its own”? It is argued here that the answer depends, not upon the presence (or absence) of one’s concern to explain the text’s meaning—which all commentators presumably share—but rather upon one’s working theory of textual meaning. Where does meaning lie? Understanding Sōgi’s method in *Problem Passages* requires us to observe with this question in mind.

To thus reformulate the problem: scholars have described Sōgi’s method empirically, defining it by those elements of the *Genji* text that it can be observed to highlight. In other words, Sōgi’s method has been defined by the targets of its application. But just as, e.g., the dry forensic report is every bit as proper a comment on the “lemma” of a crime scene as the moving eye-witness account, (most) targets of explanation are open to any number of very different commentary methods. Yet if we do eschew empirical definitions, by what motivating principle can Sōgi’s method then be explained? Can we identify in Sōgi’s commentary any consistent theory of meaning? This is the question we will seek to probe below, while reexamining in particular those elements of Murasaki Shikibu’s work towards which Sōgi has been deemed uniquely attentive: (1) authorial intervention in the text; (2) character psychology; and finally, (3) “the meaning of the language.”

2. Authorial Intervention

The presence in the *Tale of Genji* of a voice more active than the omniscient third-person of the folk tale is not everywhere subtle. From the initial line of the opening chapter (also the first entry in *Problem Passages*), at times it emerges as a brute fact of the work with which all readers and commentators must reckon. Previous scholarship is not wrong to see Sōgi as sensitive to these manifestations. To begin at the beginning:

*In a certain reign (whose can it have been?) someone of no very great rank, among all His Majesty’s Consorts and Intimates . . .*²⁸

此「いつれの御時にか」とかけるは、伊勢か家の集のはしめに「いつれの御時にかありけむ、おほみやす所おはしましける」とかけり。七条の後宮の御ことなり。伊勢は、その官くほんぢよ女たるによりて、我ことをわれとは書いてすして、
きさいのみや后宮の御ことをまつかけり。わか身のことをも、むかしのやうにかきなせり。

²⁷ 近代的な注釈の確立へと繋がったのである。Ii, *Chishakushi*, p. 296.

²⁸ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 3; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 1, p. 17.

その心をむらさき式部思ひけるなるへし。そうして此物語をは、我かきたり
とみえぬやうに作なしたる物なり。寔につくり物語の本意なるへし。²⁹

Regarding this expression “In a certain reign (whose can it have been?)”: at the beginning of [Lady] Ise’s personal [poetry] collection, she wrote “In a certain reign (whose can it have been?), there was a certain Imperial Haven.”³⁰ This refers to the Shichijō Imperial Consort. Ise, being a woman in her service, did not use “I” to begin her personal account, but wrote first about the Imperial Consort. Even when writing about herself, she wrote as if about someone long ago. No doubt this is the idea Murasaki Shikibu had in mind. Generally speaking, this tale has been written so as not to reveal that she herself wrote it. Truly this is the essence of what a tale is.

—*Problem Passages* #001 (from “The Paulownia Pavilion”)

There is much that might be said about this rich analysis,³¹ and indeed, Ii’s mention of “authorial intervention” reflects one of the most developed lines of inquiry into Sōgi’s philology to date, centering around the technical term *sōshiji* 草子地 (*lit.* “story texture”), which Sōgi seems to have been the first in *Genji* scholarship to employ (in his *Broom Tree Commentary*).³² The term is often taken to refer to a “narrative interjection” distinct from the baseline of impersonal narrative description, but this is an understanding of the term that postdates Sōgi, or at least seems not to be the sense intended in his one recorded use of it.³³ In any case the term does not appear here or anywhere else in *Problem Passages*. To the contrary, as we see here, Sōgi does not identify an independent narrative voice in the text at all: the voice is that of Murasaki Shikibu, merely masked, whose “tale has been written so as not to reveal that she herself wrote it.” This reading of Sōgi’s intent is quickly supported two entries further into the commentary, within his comment on the famous beginning of the subsequent *Broom Tree* chapter, where the tale almost seems to reset itself, jumping over *Genji*’s

²⁹ Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fols. [2r–2v]. This is one of the few passages in the manuscript presenting examples of phonetic glossing. In most entries that follow, the copyist opted rather for a somewhat sparing use of *kanji*, often writing in flowing *kana* even unambiguously Sinitic vocabulary like *tennō* 天皇, *emon* 衛門, *saigu* 齋宮, and once (#017) even *Genji* 源氏, thereby heightening—perhaps intentionally?—the graphic resemblance between Sōgi’s own commentary and lemmatic quotations from the *Genji* itself. See **figs. 2 and 5** for comparison with other *Problem Passages* MSS.

³⁰ “Haven” is Tyler’s translation of *miyasu(n)dokoro* 御息所, an honorary appellation reserved for the recognized mothers of children born to the imperial family.

³¹ Discussed at length in Knott, “Medieval Commentaries,” pp. 144–152.

³² The (single) occasion of this usage can be found at *Amayo danshō*, p. 619a.

³³ This is the conclusion of Izume Yasuyuki’s thorough survey of the term’s use-history in *Genji* studies (see Izume, *Chushakushi*, pp. 399–408; 467–487). It must be noted, however, that this is not Ii Haruki’s understanding: in his more recent “Sōgi no kotengaku,” he even raises (in passing) the putative use-distinction between *sōshiji* and “Murasaki Shikibu’s words” as one of Sōgi’s most significant contributions to *Genji* studies (pp. 50–51).

half-orphaned childhood to rejoin him as a very young man with certain very “deplorable” habits³⁴:

*Shining Genji: the name was imposing, but not so its bearer's many deplorable lapses, and considering how quiet he kept his wanton ways, lest in reaching the ears of posterity they earn him unwelcome fame, whoever broadcast his secrets to all the world was a terrible gossip.*³⁵

〔前略〕「いとゝかゝるすきこと」ゝは、かうしよくのこと也。「すゑの世にきゝつたへて、かろひたる名をやなかさん」とは、源氏のかゝるかたのなを忍ひ給ふことなから、されとなを其名きこゆることをいはんとて、「かくろへことを語つたへけん人の物いひさかなさよ」と紫式部かいへること葉也。〔後略〕³⁶

... “His wanton ways” refers to [Genji's] amorous behavior. And while “lest in reaching the ears of posterity they earn him unwelcome fame” refers to how Genji would nonetheless keep such affairs of his quiet, “whoever broadcast his secrets to all the world was a terrible gossip” represents Murasaki Shikibu's own words, with the sense that in spite [of all those efforts] such a fame has indeed endured to the present. . . .

—*Problem Passages* #003 (from “The Broom Tree”)

Here Sōgi does not even mention the mask: this disapproval of a “terrible gossip,” though putatively put into the mouth of (following Lady Ise) some nominal “someone long ago,” is unambiguously characterized as “Murasaki Shikibu's own words.” Such a focus also suggests a possible purpose to this section of entry #003. At least in part, the *fushin* to be unknotted seems to involve not only identification of the author's presence here (obvious enough), but also the import—the function? the motivation?—of her words, which bear “the sense that in spite [of all those efforts] such a fame has indeed endured to the present.”

Indeed, it is not impossible to see entry #001 in this same light: the opening's debt to (the after all quite well-known) Lady Ise's collection was noted already in the *River and Sea* commentary over a century earlier,³⁷ and upon reflection, identification alone of the link does not seem to be in that entry either the *fushin*'s sole concern. Again, at least in part, the purpose of such an authorial pose is also deemed to be of significance. One entertains the doubt: is authorial intervention as a phenomenon itself the subject of Sōgi's interest—more concretely, the kernel of the *fushin*—or is it the technique's purpose that occupies him? Let us

³⁴ The end of this entry directs the reader to Sōgi's earlier *Broom Tree Commentary*, an internal index of *Problem Passages*' later composition (Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fol. [5r]): 此まきは、始終ともに、其心をえかたし。しかる間、一冊、別註之ものあり。Incidentally, the language of this reference, *bechi ni kore o chusuru mono ari*, weights somewhat in favor of calling that work (as I do here) *Habakigigi betchū* 帯木別注, as opposed to its alternative name of *Amayo danshō* 雨夜談抄.

³⁵ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 21; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 1, p. 53.

³⁶ Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fols. [4r–4v].

³⁷ Yoshinari is clear on the allusion: “. . . Or in Ise's [poetry] collection, where it has ‘In a certain reign (whose can it have been?), there was one known as an Imperial Haven.’ Cases like these seem to be the precedents.” 〔前略〕伊勢集始云、「いつれの御時にかありけむ大宮すところときこえける」と云々。是等の例歟。 *Kakaishō*, p. 189a.

examine a further entry considering this technique from the “Twilight Beauty” chapter, here not a beginning but an ending. At length, the vices mentioned at the beginning of the *Broom Tree* chapter with a deceptively lighthearted disapproval have shown themselves to be quite serious, after an amorous excursion with Yūgao, the eponymous twilight beauty herself, ends with only one of them alive and Tamakazura a child orphan bound for Kyushu: “No doubt he understood by now how painful a secret love can be.” Directly after this summation, the intervening voice continues more openly, closing the chapter (fig. 3):

*I had passed over Genji's trials and tribulations in silence, out of respect for his determined efforts to conceal them, and I have written of them now only because certain lords and ladies criticized my story for resembling fiction, wishing to know why even those who knew Genji best should have thought him perfect, just because he was an Emperor's son. No doubt I must now beg everyone's indulgence for my effrontery in painting so wicked a portrait of him.*³⁸

「かやうのくた / しきこと」ゝは、源氏の君のかうしよくの道のいろ / のことなり。あまりにはいかでともらせは、また「物ほめかちなり」と世人のいへは、かきとむるよしをいへり。世中の人の心のわりなきをいへり。これも大かたこゝろえかたければ、しるしをけるはかりなり。³⁹

Here “trials and tribulations” refers to various episodes connected with Genji's amorous pursuits. It is an explanation of why she recorded [such things]: were she to leave them out as going too far, then people would say she “ha[d] thought him perfect.” She is speaking of the senselessness of people's hearts in general. Here, too, I make note of this only because the sense [of the passage] is as a whole difficult to understand.

—*Problem Passages* #007 (from “The Twilight Beauty”)

Absence of an evidenced interest is only weak evidence of its absence, especially in a commentary of only 124 entries, but the note that this entry exists “only because the sense [of the passage] is as a whole difficult to understand” is striking. At the least it weakens the argument for narratological issues *per se* being the target of Sōgi's attention to such moments of reader-directed speech. We notice the same pattern as in entries #001 and #003: identification is here, too, accompanied by explanation of the discourse's purpose. It is interesting to contrast articulation of “the senselessness of people's hearts” with Kaneyoshi's near-contemporary and quite different sense of the passage:

此一段は、物語の作者の詞也。御門の御子なりとも、よき事はよき事、あしき事はあしき事にてあるへきを、一かうにかきもらせは、わたくしあるやうなれば、ありのまゝにしるしをきたるとなり。〔後略〕⁴⁰

³⁸ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 80; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 1, pp. 195–196.

³⁹ Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fols. [7v–8r].

⁴⁰ *Kachō yosei*, p. 45b. Kaneyoshi continues here with an interesting consideration of a significant end-chapter variant characteristic of the Kawachi-bon recension of the *Genji* text (cf. Katō, *Kōi shūsei*, p. 45). Though the variant is not unknown in texts of the Aobyōshi-bon recension (cf. Ikeda, *Kōi-ben*, 0146:5–6n), it is not quoted in Sōgi's lemma here (which, as seen above, is lengthy

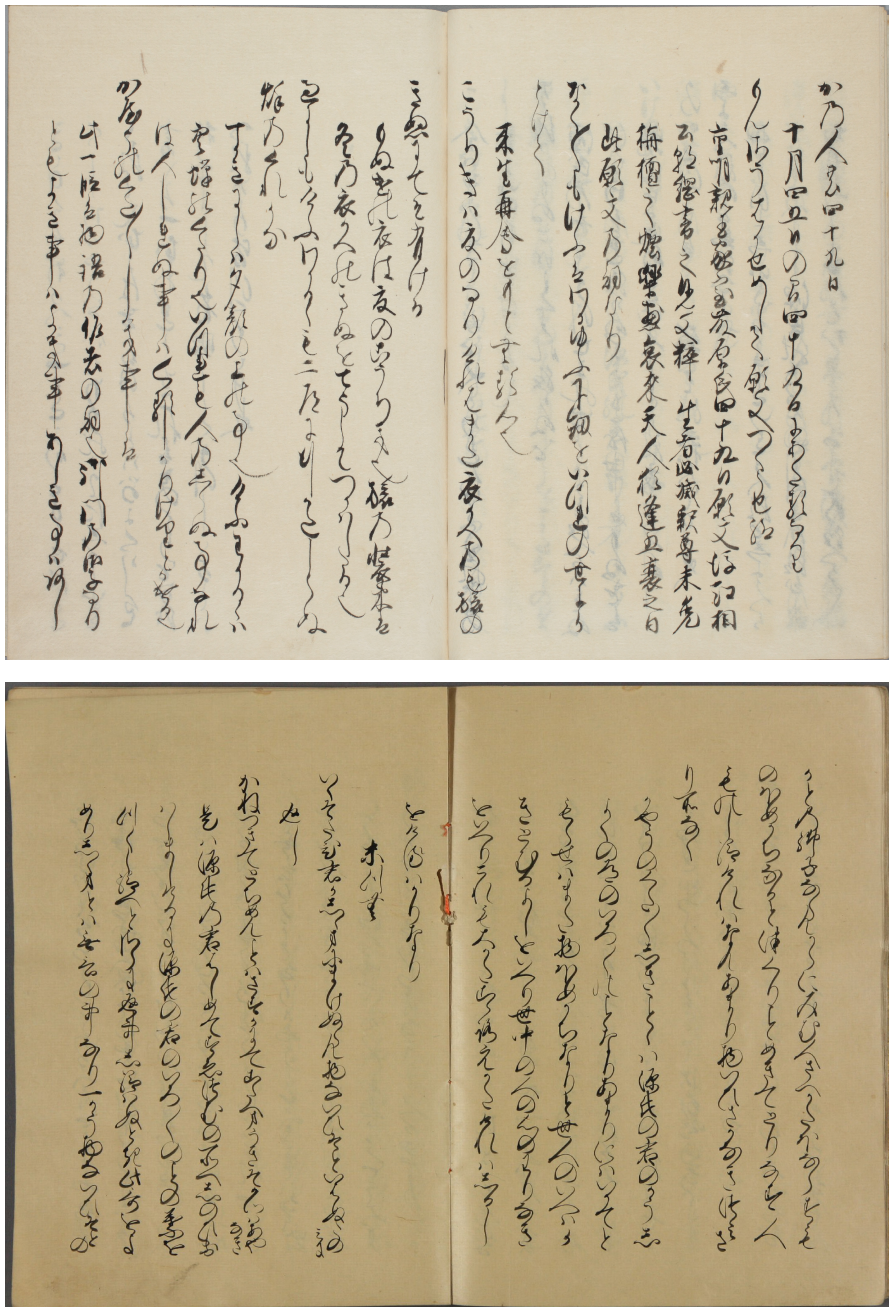


Figure 3a (above) and 3b (below). Comparison of *Problem Passages* #007 (from “The Twilight Beauty”) with the corresponding entry in Ichijō Kaneyoshi’s 一条兼良 commentary *Lingering Florescence* (*Kachō yosei* 花鳥余情). See p. 144.

Figure 3a: *Lingering Florescence*, vol. 3, fols. [18v–19r]. National Institute of Japanese Literature. From line 9, left.

<https://doi.org/10.20730/200016469> (image 93).

Figure 3b: *Problem Passages* (Kuyō Bunko MS^{ko}), fols. [7v–8r]. Waseda University Library. From line 1, right.

This whole passage is the author of the tale speaking. It says that she recorded things just as they were, because even in the case of an emperor's son, right is right and wrong is wrong, and to consistently leave things out of her account would give the impression of partiality. . . .

—*Lingering Florescence*, vol. 3 (from “The Twilight Beauty”)

Noting in passing the reminder that such authorial effusions are a basic feature of the text and hardly the concern or discovery of Sōgi alone, on this passage Kaneyoshi's comment has quite a different take. It is tempting to dismiss this as moralizing—which undoubtedly it is—but it should not go unremarked that in Kaneyoshi's analysis this is presented as the author's internal reasoning. Nor is his reading of an “interlinear” message here as something intended by the author without its arguments. Was not “No doubt he understood by now how painful a secret love can be” plausibly such a case of message? Nonetheless it is a reading very much between the lines: “because . . . right is right and wrong is wrong” does not surface in the text. In contrast the sequence “I had passed over . . . out of respect . . . I have written . . . now only because certain lords and ladies criticized . . . No doubt now I must beg everyone's indulgence for . . . such a wicked portrait” can very reasonably be described as the plaint of one feeling (even if without justification) plagued by the inconstant “senselessness” of public opinion: the theme is clearly present in the text. The readings are even compatible, but the exegetical methods they represent are regardless distinct.

Problem Passages contains one final consideration of such a technique, at the beginning of the “Bamboo River” chapter, long after Yūgao's death and Tamakazura's successful return to the Capital—indeed, the “successor Chancellor” here mentioned is her husband. Hikaru Genji too has passed, Genji's tale becoming now that of his descendants:

*[This is gossip volunteered by certain sharp-tongued old women, once of the successor Chancellor's household, who lingered on after him. It is nothing like the stories about Lady Murasaki, but] they held that some things told of Genji's descendants were wrong, and hinted that this might be because women older and more muddled than they had been spreading lies. One wonders which side to believe.*⁴¹

「あやしかりける」といふは、いまの「わるこたち」かあやしかりけるなるへし。「いつれかまことならん」とかける、むらさき式部か心なり。此まきのはしめ、こゝまでさらにふしんをはるけかたき也。これまでは、紫式部かわか身はよからぬことにしるせる詞ともなり。⁴²

and spans in full the characteristic Aobyōshi-bon ending). With no direct comparison possible, I have here omitted it, though as Sōgi was undoubtedly aware of the variant, and indeed makes explicit reference to (more minor) variants elsewhere in *Problem Passages* (e.g., #060/fol. [44v], #113/fol. [72r]), his silence here is intriguing.

⁴¹ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 805; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 5, p. 59. For this entry Sōgi's lemma begins only after the bracket: making an exception, I have here quoted the preceding sentences for clarity.

⁴² Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fols. [58r–58v].

In “hinted at” here, the ones doing the hinting are the just-mentioned “certain sharp-tongued old women.” The one writing “One wonders which side to believe” is Murasaki Shikibu. When the beginning of this chapter reaches this point, the confusion only gets harder to clear up. Up to this, the passage has consisted of Murasaki Shikibu making herself out to be someone bad.

—*Problem Passages* #086 (from “Bamboo River”)

此巻のはしめより今の詞にいたるまで、いたく何の故ともきこえさるにや。さためて意趣ある歟。若、此物語の時代、人の准拠など、其人とはみゆれとも、一篇ならざる事おほし。仍、其難をのかれんために、如此書之歟。⁴³

From the beginning of this chapter up to this passage, it seems to make no sense at all. Yet there is likely some intent behind it. Maybe it was that, for the era of this tale, when it came to characters, etc., being based after various models, accurate as they might be, there were still many points on which that was not the case. Perhaps it was to avoid such criticisms that [Murasaki Shikibu] wrote like this.

—*River and Sea*, vol. 16 (from “Bamboo River”)

〔前略〕さりなから、たしかに人のしらぬ事なれば、人のひかおほえにやなとおほめきてかきなせり。この一たんのことは、心詞あひかねて、凡慮およひかたし。『〈・河〉海』の説、あやまれりといひつへし。⁴⁴

... All [those family secrets] notwithstanding, since certainly people would have no way of actually knowing [the truth], [Murasaki Shikibu] wrote here in such a way as to hint that it might all be groundless suspicion. This paragraph as a whole, in its meaning as much as in its language, is beyond the reach of the average mind. The theory of the *River and Sea* [commentary] is to be rejected as wrong.

—*Lingering Florescence*, vol. 24 (from “Bamboo River”)

Truly a passage worthy of the word *fushin*, it seems to have roused all three of our commentators to fall back on methods broadly considered typical of each. Famous for his reading heuristic of seeing historical models (*junkyo* 准拠) sublimated beneath the era, events, and characters of the *Genji* surface, Yoshinari wonders in the *River and Sea* if this narrative voice represents, straightforwardly, a mid-compositional authorial response to (anticipation of?) criticisms of model inaccuracy. The abbreviated beginning of the *Lingering Florescence* comment omits a lengthy consideration by Kaneyoshi of precisely which “things told of *Genji*’s

⁴³ *Kakaishō*, p. 539a.

⁴⁴ *Kachō yosei*, p. 279a-b, whose transcription has: 凡慮およひかたし。河海の説あやまれり。The above notation 〈・河〉 represents a compromise between punctuation-assisted readability (see note 12) and text-faithful transcription. At issue is a case of textual repair. Ii Haruki’s transcription reveals that at this point in his base-text, we find a brief interlinear suppletion (河), whose point of insertion into the main column-line of text is indicated there by a small circle (°)—an extremely common method of manuscript correction. While adopting this emendation into my punctuated text above, I have retained the circle to indicate the suppletion’s existence, and added brackets 〈〉 to mark its precise extent.

descendants were wrong,” which he takes quite literally to refer to incorrect public perceptions about descent—e.g., the belief that Kaoru is Genji’s son (though actually Kashiwagi’s), that Reizei is the Kiritsubo Emperor’s son (though actually Genji’s), etc. All in all, he sees the author as “wr[iting] in such a way as to hint” (*obomekite kakinaseri* おほめきてかきなせり). There is something similar in this to his “interlinear” reading of entry #007 above, though here the intended message is of a higher order, “beyond the reach of the average mind (*bonryo oyobigatashi* 凡慮およひかたし).” If he explicitly rejects Yoshinari’s theory, he does not reject the latter’s principle: “Yet there is likely some intent behind it” (*sadamete ishu aru ka* さためて意趣ある歟).

Most importantly, while neither earlier commentator mentions Murasaki Shikibu by name, it is nonetheless clear that they understand this intervention in the story as her own voice. Sōgi cannot be distinguished from them on this point. Indeed, Sōgi’s comment here is somewhat difficult to parse, and harbors an important variant.⁴⁵ It seems to mean that up until “One wonders which side to believe,” Shikibu wrote in the persona of “someone bad” (as in entry #001 in the persona of “someone long ago”), but that in this final line “The one writing . . . is Murasaki Shikibu” (*kakeru, Murasaki Shikibu ga kokoro nari* かける、紫式部か心也). This much can be concluded: Sōgi does not depart from the text in his explanations, a point on which one clearly can distinguish him from his interlocutors.

This, and not a particular interest in narrator voice, is the clear thread running through the four examples examined here. Accepting Sōgi’s judgment that all constitute *fushin*, while four out of 124 entries does mark a high visibility for the technique of direct narrative voice in his commentary, the concentration just as plausibly represents simply the particular difficulty of such passages for his students (cf. Kaneyoshi’s “beyond the reach of the average mind”), rather than a characteristic of Sōgi’s method itself. The most consistent and unique characteristic in his method seems to lie rather in its closeness to the text.

3. Character Psychology

How does this closeness to the text in Sōgi’s method—as Sōgi’s method?—connect with the concern for character psychology and context which earlier scholarship has discovered in his work? Unlike the case of authorial interven-

⁴⁵ The Kurokawa Bunko MS has here: これまでは、紫式部か我身はかゝぬ事にしなせる詞共也 (Korenaga’s transcription, part 2, p. 42, has 詞の也, which I have corrected against the facsimile edition; see Shirai, *Genji fushin shōshutsu*, fol. 50r). Instead of “making herself out to be someone bad,” this would yield “making it seem as if she is not the one writing [the tale].” Such a reading would echo entry #001 above, though is perhaps suspect for just that reason. The Iwase Bunko Library MS transcription by Yoshizawa (p. 373a) has ふかゝらぬことに, which is hard to make sense of (“making herself out to be someone shallow?”), but further investigation will have to await confirmation of the Iwase Bunko Library MS itself, and beyond that a collation of all extant manuscripts.

tion, such a concern does seem more characteristic of Sōgi in comparison to other commentators. An illustrative example is the *fushin* about the color of Hikaru Genji's mourning robes when the great love of his life, Lady Murasaki, dies (fig. 4):

*He wore a rather darker shade than when he had spoken of "light gray."*⁴⁶

これは、あふひの上、その巻にうせ給ひし時、源氏の君の御ふくの時の哥に、「かきりあれはうすゝみ衣あさけれと涙そ袖をふちとなしける」。「かきりあれは」とは、はつとのこと也。いま、紫上のうせ給ふときに、「うすゝみ」なるへけれと、心さしのせつなるにより「こまやかに」そめ給へり。さるにより、「うすゝみとの給ひしかと」ゝはかけり。⁴⁷

This [is] in the “Heart-to-Heart” chapter, after Lady Aoi dies, in the poem Lord Genji composes when donning robes of mourning: “I may do no more, and the mourning I now wear is a shallow gray, / but my tears upon my sleeves have gathered in deep pools.”⁴⁸ “I may do no more” is a reference to the law (i.e. prescribing the mourning garb appropriate for, e.g., a father, a wife, etc.). Here on the occasion of Lady Murasaki's death, while it should be, again, “a shallow gray,” [Genji,] given the depth of his feelings for her, has dyed [his mourning garb] “a rather darker shade.” This is why [the author] wrote, “than when he had spoken of ‘light gray.’”

—Problem Passages #073 (from “The Law”)

〔前略〕葵巻に葵上うせてのち、六条院、「われさきたゝましかはふかくそゝめ給はまし」とありし此事也。哥に、「かきりあれはうすゝみ衣あさけれと」ゝあり。⁴⁹

... [This] is that occasion in the “Heart-to-Heart” chapter, after Lady Aoi's death, where Rokujō-in (i.e. Genji) [thinks] “her gray would have been still darker if she had outlived him” (i.e. Aoi's, as a wife in mourning for a husband).⁵⁰ In the poem there: “I may do no more, and the mourning I now wear is a shallow gray[, / but my tears upon my sleeves have gathered in deep pools.]”

—*River and Sea*, vol. 15 (from “The Law”)

In the broadest sense, there is complete agreement about the interpretation: “when he had spoken of . . .” refers to Genji's poem on the occasion of the death of his first wife, Lady Aoi 葵. On closer inspection, however, while the *River and Sea* commentary seems interested to give the prose context for the poem referenced from the “Heart-to-Heart” chapter—possibly merely as an in-

⁴⁶ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 762; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 4, p. 516. As can be gleaned from its re-quote in the following comment text, Sōgi's lemma has not “than when he had spoken of” (の給ひしよりは, as in the SNKZ text) but “though he had spoken of” (の給ひしかと, see fig. 4b, from the right, line 5). I have kept to Tyler's translation here despite the discrepancy it produces.

⁴⁷ Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fols. [50v–51r].

⁴⁸ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 178; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 2, p. 49.

⁴⁹ *Kakaishō*, p. 522a.

⁵⁰ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 178; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 2, p. 49.

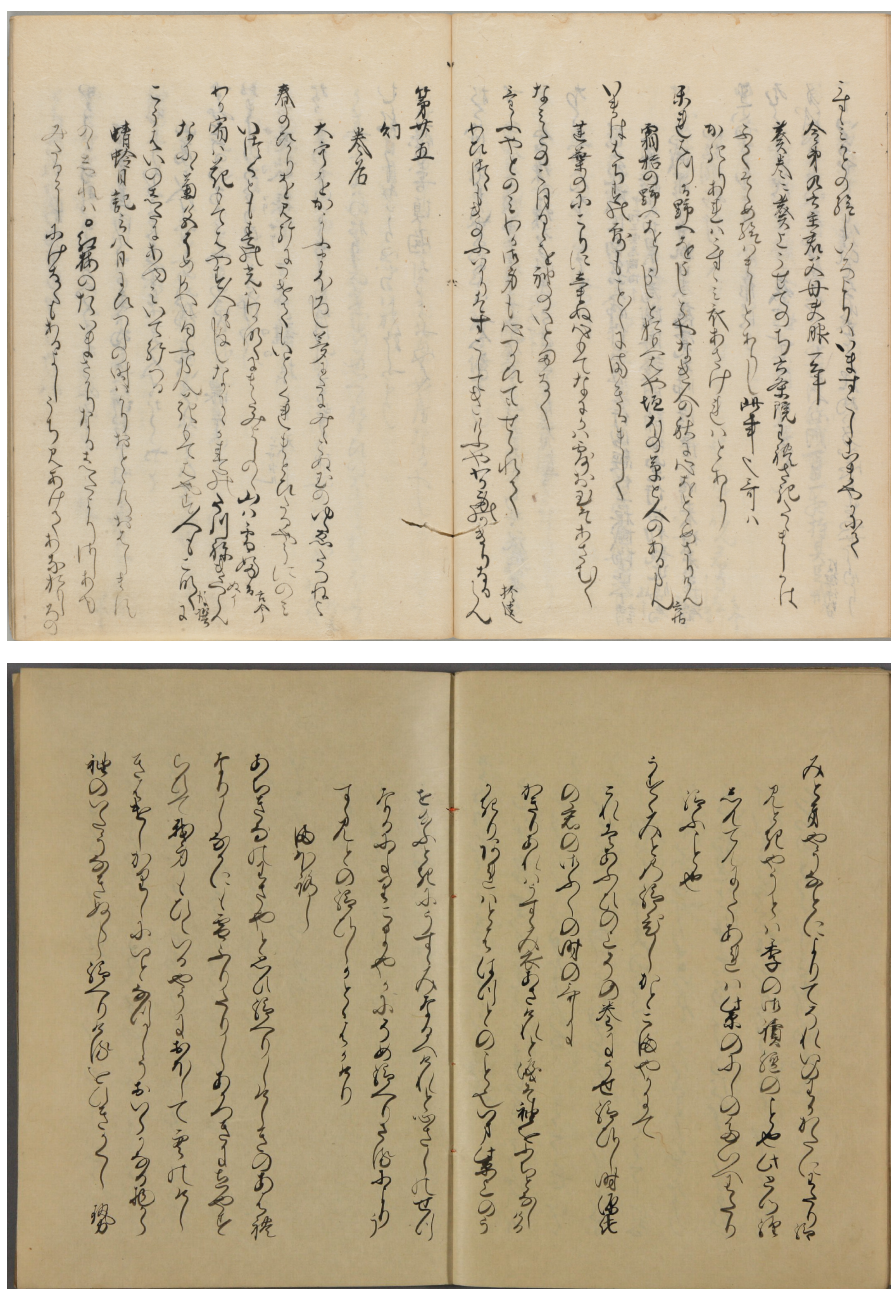


Figure 4a (above) and **4b** (below). Comparison of *Problem Passages* #073 (from “The Law”) with the corresponding entry in Yotsutsuji Yoshinari’s 四辻善成 commentary *River and Sea* (*Kakaishō* 河海抄). See p. 149.

Figure 4a: *River and Sea*, vol. 15, fols. [19v–20r]. National Institute of Japanese Literature. From line 1, right.

<https://doi.org/10.20730/200003419> (image 585).

Figure 4b: *Problem Passages* (Kuyō Bunko MS^{ko}), fols. [50v–51r]. Waseda University Library. From line 5, right.

dex to its location, possibly as an aid to interpretation (an explanation of the reason for Genji's musing "I can do no more")—Sōgi's method takes an altogether different turn. The difference is highlighted further by what I have omitted: Yoshinari begins here with a *kanbun* 漢文 citation of mourning codes entirely missing from Sōgi's considerations. The *Lingering Florescence* commentary's statement here consists entirely of such a quotation (albeit one different from Yoshinari's).⁵¹ Nor should this be dismissed as a merely ancillary concern. However laconically, a bare citation of mourning customs remains an implicit comment on Genji's refusal to here follow them. It represents neither disinterest in his actions, nor disinterest in character. Nonetheless, it stands as a method dependent on the leverage of extra-textual sources.

Sōgi in fact notes these sources ("this is a reference to the law"). Yet just as in his explanations of the authorial voice, here he shifts to the implication of linking these two scenes of mourning: "given the depth of his feelings." Genji "has dyed [his mourning garb] 'a rather darker shade.'" Where his earlier poem's "I may do no more" had protested a deeper feeling lamentably restrained by the law, here his actions stand as witness. In fact, to convey such a difference "is why [the author] wrote" thus. There is every reason to believe that earlier interpreters were sensible to the meaning of Genji's defiant "darker shade" of mourning, and the argument might well be made that citation of the substance of the law to which Sōgi only gestures is the better, more helpful explanation. Yet his method remains here entirely within the text. Such contrasts with his predecessors are precisely why his discussion of character emotions has seemed so characteristic of his work—where others cite, Sōgi seems to give attention to the personages on stage.

There is a difficulty in this for us: unlike with clearly extra-textual documents like these mourning codes, when an interpretive question turns entirely on elements internal to the text, the motivation for a given reading is not always easy to distinguish: does it lie in the exegete's concept of a given character, or in the turn of a given phrase? Yet there are examples where the distinction can be made. One *fushin* in particular, on its face seemingly concerned entirely with the "subtle movements" of psychology, may serve as demonstration. It involves nothing but the shadow-play of a moment's vacillation. In the wake of a frightful typhoon, Yūgiri 夕霧 accompanies his father Genji on a round of visits to check in on the latter's various ladies in the aftermath, all the while himself delayed in writing an inquiring letter to his own beloved Kumoinokari 雲井の雁, whose father's opposition makes a visit impossible. With the day well past he finds himself at the chambers of his little half-sister the Akashi Princess. Chatting with her women, impatience prompts him to ask suddenly for writing paper and an inkstone:

⁵¹ *Kachō yosei*, p. 267a.

*One went to a cabinet and took out a roll of paper that she gave him in the inkstone box lid. "Oh, no," he said, "I would not presume." Still, he felt a little better when he considered where the lady in the northwest stood, and he proceeded with his letter.*⁵²

これは、野わきのあした、明石のひめ君のかたに夕きりの君おはしたるつゐてに、ふみかき給てむとてこひ給へるに、とりいてたるを、「いな、これはかたはらいたし」とは、ひけの心也。されと、明石のうへの是をきゝて、いたしたるかみにかき給はすは、ふみやり給かたの人、させる人にてもなきやとおほさん、とおほす心也。「北のおとゝ」は、あかしのうへのおはするかたなり。又いはく、「かたはらいたし」とは、すこしれいきの心也。されとも、あかしのうへのほとをおほすに、「なのめ」におもひなしてあそはしけるにや。⁵³

This is the morning after the typhoon when Yūgiri, while paying a visit to the chambers of the Akashi Princess (i.e. Genji's daughter by Lady Akashi), takes the occasion to ask [for paper and ink], to write, he says, a letter then and there. The sense of his "Oh no" "I would not presume" when these are brought out to him is [a gesture of] self-effacement. Should, however, [the mother] Lady Akashi hear of this, and he himself forgo using the paper brought out to him to write, then she will think, he thinks, that the letter's addressee must not be anyone particularly important. That is the sense here. "[T]he lady in the northwest" refers to where Lady Akashi lives. Others say that his "I would not presume" is a bit of politeness, but that he decided he "felt a little better" when he considered Lady Akashi's position.

—*Problem Passages* #040 (from "The Typhoon")

The paper comes directly from his half-sister's own cabinet (*mizushi* 御厨子): should he refrain? "[H]e considered where the lady in the northwest stood, and he proceeded with his letter." The *River and Sea* commentary does not even have an entry on the passage. Kaneyoshi offers only: "He says this comparing Kumoinokari with the standing of Lady Akashi."⁵⁴ This aligns with Sōgi's final, tentative, but probably also correct interpretation.

The root of the first, much more involved interpretation seems to lie in what underlies Tyler's "considered where the lady in the northwest stood": *keita no otodo no oboe o omou ni* 北の大臣のおほえを思ふに. The *fushin* seems to stem from the question of how to construe *no oboe*, whether as a subjective genitive (the Lady Akashi's thoughts of ...) or objective genitive (people's thoughts of Lady Akashi). Translations like Tyler's "standing" remove the syntactic ambiguity, but in the original it remains, and this longer interpretation flows from adopting the former construal. It is a valiant attempt to consider what "[Yūgiri] thinking about what [Lady Akashi] is thinking about ..." might mean, and why considering this might make Yūgiri "feel better" (*nanome naru kokochi* なのめなる心地, *lit.* "feel slack", i.e. be at ease) about writing. Sōgi's solution involves Yūgiri thinking that his reticence to use the stationery offered will give the Lady Akashi the

⁵² Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 494; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 3, p. 283.

⁵³ Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fol. [34v–35r].

⁵⁴ 雲井の雁をあかしのうへのおほえになすらへての給ふなり。 *Kachō yosei*, p. 196a.

wrong idea about his correspondent: “she will think, he thinks, that the letter’s addressee must not be anyone particularly important.” If nothing else, precisely Lady Akashi’s lack of exalted status makes such a supercilious view seem unlikely on her part, but while the explanation may misfire, the direction of the miss is only thereby all the more revealing: Sōgi’s “she will think, he thinks, that” (*obosan to obosu*) tracks extremely closely the original (*oboe o omou ni*). The driving motivation for his elaborate reading of Yūgiri’s hesitation is above all to make the text itself make sense. That his imagination turned to character psychology in a pinch is no doubt a reflection of his interest in, and comfort with, that aspect of the tale (perhaps a natural predilection for an interpreter inclined to stay within the text), but Sōgi’s exegetical point of departure lay elsewhere.

One final such example, another case of mourning: here Kaoru 薫 effectively locks himself away to brood over the death of his great unrequited love, Princess Ōigimi 大君. The crux of the *fushin* lies in a close combination of two poetic allusions in a single phrase, one Chinese, one Japanese (fig. 5):

... at last a twelfth-month moon, the one they always call so dreary, shone forth in cloudless splendor, and he rolled up the blinds to look out. A temple bell yonder rang out faintly, as when one lay with pillow raised and heard it announce the close of another day.⁵⁵

〔前略〕「遺愛寺鐘敲枕聴」といふ詩のことはと、「いりあひのかねのごゑごとにけふもくれぬ」といふ哥とをもつてかけり。「むかひの寺のかねのごゑ」に月さし出たる時分、「けふもくれぬ」とくはんし給ふ心なるへし。宇治のひめきみのうせ給ふて後、つれ／＼とこもり給ふ、そのあはれを思ひつゝけ給ふおりなり。まへのことはに「ひねもすになかめくらして」とあり。⁵⁶

... Here what [the author] wrote uses both words from the Chinese poem “Propping up my pillow, I listen to the bell of Yiaisi Temple . . .”⁵⁷ and also the *waka* poem “At each and every cry of the bell tolling dusk . . .”⁵⁸ The sense is that, with the moon shining down as “[the] temple bell yonder r[ings] out,” [Kaoru] ruminates over “the close of another day.” This is when, after the Uji Princess’ (i.e. Ōigimi’s) death, he is hiding himself away in melancholy, brooding ceaselessly on the tragedy. In the passage just before this it says, “all day while he gazed and dreamed.”⁵⁹

—Problem Passages #102 (from “Trefoil Knots”)

⁵⁵ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 910; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 5, pp. 332-333. Tyler has simply “the close of day” for the underlying 今日も暮れぬ, to which I have restored the elided も (i.e., “another day”).

⁵⁶ Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fol. [67r].

⁵⁷ The first half of a couplet taken from a poem by Bai Juyi 白居易, anthologized in the *Wakan roeishū* 和漢朗詠集 (554): 遺愛寺鐘敲枕聴 香鑪峰雪卷簾看 (*Wakan roeishū*, p. 292). The translation is Helen McCullough’s: “Propping up my pillow, I listen to the bell of Yiaisi Temple; / Rolling up the blind, I gaze at the snow on Incense Burner Peak” (McCullough, *Classical Japanese Reader*, p. 424n27).

⁵⁸ A partial quote of *Shūi wakashū* 1329, found also (like the *kanshi* just referenced) in the *Wakan roeishū* (585): 山寺の入相の鐘のごゑごとに今日もくれぬときくぞかなしき (*Wakan roeishū*, p. 307). “At each and every cry of the bell tolling dusk for the mountain temple, / “The close of another day . . .”—the very sound brings sadness” (translation by author).

⁵⁹ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 910; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 5, p. 332.

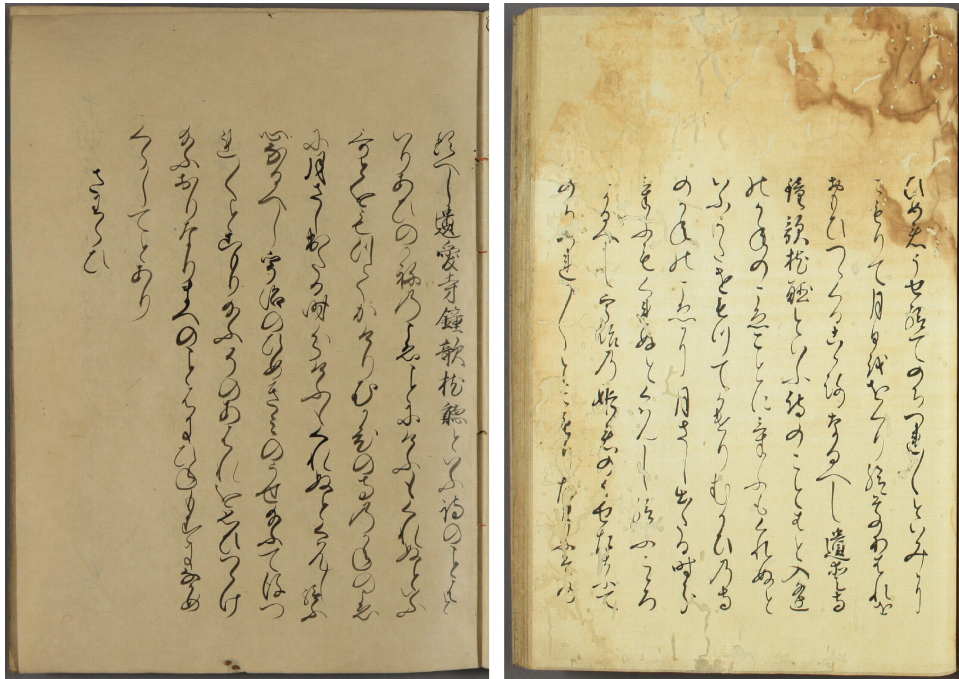


Figure 5a (right) and 5b (left). Comparison of two different MSS of *Problem Passages* at entry #102 (from “Trefoil Knots”). See p. 153.

Figure 5a: Kuyō Bunko MS^{otsu} (“otsu-hon” 乙本), fol. [72r]. Waseda University Library.

Figure 5b: Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fol. [67r]. Waseda University Library.

At first glance, the focus of this entry seems to be Kaoru’s mournful emotions themselves, but this is not the case. The *fushin* centers around a question of time, in whose resolution Kaoru’s feelings have been marshalled as supportive evidence. Said question involves a contradiction between one of the poetic allusions identified and the time-setting of the story. This is a nighttime scene, as is clear enough from Tyler’s translation, but clearer still in the original, which has not “a twelfth-month moon,” but “a twelfth-month moonlit night” (*shimasu no tsukuyo* 師走の月夜). In contrast, the poem to which “the close of another day” is said to allude is clearly a twilight verse, ringing out “the bell tolling dusk” (*iriai no kane* 入相の鐘). Indeed, even the “close” of the day is etymologically here its hour of *kure*, or “darkening.” In an age of endless electric light the sense is perhaps difficult to recover, but here in merely moonlit full darkness, Kaoru seems to think of a poem to the effect of “and so the sun sets on another day.”

The difficulty is not insuperable, and Sōgi uses Kaoru’s emotional state to clamber over it. The bell makes Kaoru “reflect” or “ruminate” (*kanzu* 観ず) over the day spent. This spending of it involved him “brooding ceaselessly on the tragedy,” as “all day . . . he gazed and dreamed.” “Day” here is not day by the shifting sundial, but a counting measure of mourning time. This subjective sense

of a “day” appears in the commentaries of Sōgi's disciples in an even more developed form. The younger *renga* master Shōhaku's 肖柏 (1443–1527) *Triflings with Flowers* commentary (*Rōkashō* 弄花抄, 1510) has “He thinks of the sense of the old poem in the bell of nighttime.”⁶⁰ Sanjōnishi Sanetaka in his commentary work *Rivulet* (*Sairyūshō* 細流抄, 1510–1520?) takes it even further: “To say this after it is nighttime is interesting. It has the sense of him thinking both ‘today too is [now] darkness’ and ‘today too has [now] passed.’”⁶¹ The vector of development is more-over clear: outward from questions first of text to questions of then character.

Character psychology is clearly a *forté* of Sōgi's interpretive practice—many more entries in *Problem Passages* replicate the pattern above of Sōgi discussing character subjectivity where previous commentaries are silent. Yet as we have observed, while these discussions may feature in the course of his arguments: they do not motivate. This was the case even in our first entry here (#073). Sōgi is not struggling to determine what Genji's mourning attire says about his feelings—that is not the *fushin* in question. Those feelings serve, rather, to explain the significance of an oblique color reference involving an earlier chapter. It is more than a heuristic of *closeness* to the text. The text *leads*.

4. “Meaning of Language”

Yet what can it mean for the text to “lead” in the case of questions specifically on the significance of the text's own language? Paradoxically this may be the easiest distinction to make. Let us consider a passage of (*waka*-discourse mediated) natural description of the Uji 宇治 Bridge. Kaoru and Ukifune 浮舟 view it together from the veranda, each alone in their darkening thoughts: Kaoru frustrated in the progress of his replacement-affair for the still-mourned Ōigimi, Ukifune at a loss in cross-pressured despair between Kaoru and Niou 匂.

*The hills were veiled in mist, and magpies stood on a sandspit, giving the scene a perfect touch . . .*⁶²

「かささき」とは、からすのこと也。いま、こゝにかけるは、つねのさきの事なりとみゆ。かきたかふる事にや。また、「さき」といふへけれと、何となく「かさゝき」といへはこと葉のおもしろきこゆれは、なすらへて物かたりのさくしやかきけるにやとみゆ。いかん。⁶³

⁶⁰ 古哥の心を、夜の鐘に思給也。 *Rōkashō*, p. 271a.

⁶¹ 夜になりていへる、おもしろし。けふもくれ、又けふもくれぬ、とおもふ心あるへし。 *Sairyūshō*, p. 381a. Alternatively, taking both instances of *kure* verbally, the double meaning here proposed by Sanetaka might involve instead a perfective distinction: “today too is [now] passing” (*lit.* “darkening”) vs. “today too has [now] passed.”

⁶² Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 1023; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 6, p. 145. Tyler has “crested herons” here, perhaps because—there is no explanatory note—he takes the underlying かさゝき (usually understood as 鶺鴒, or “magpie”) to mean instead *kasa-sagi* 笠鷺. I have amended to reflect Sōgi's understanding, but it is worth noting in passing that some manuscripts (outside the Kawachi-bon and Aobyōshi-bon recensions) do in fact have the reading *sagi* 鷺 (heron) here (see Ikeda, *Kōi-ben*, 1887:12n).

⁶³ Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fol. [74r].

The word *kasasagi* means *karasu* (i.e. “crow,” a relative of the magpie). What is described here on this occasion seems to be the common heron. Perhaps this is a mistake by the writer. Alternatively, though it really should have *sagi* (heron) here, it seems that the tale’s author might have—for the somehow appealing effect, perhaps, of the word itself?—[merely] written (i.e. of herons) in the guise of *kasasagi*. Uncertain.

—*Problem Passages* #116 (from “A Drifting Boat”)

The *fushin* in question is one of birds—magpies (or crows) on a sandspit where herons should be. Prior commentators essentially reject this. The *River and Sea* commentary mentions a text that solves the problem by simply having the reading *sagi* instead: “There are texts that have ‘and herons stood on a sandspit.’ If one were to truly go by the sense of this sentence, this would probably be the most appropriate [reading] If there happens to be a text that reads *sagi*, perhaps that is the one to use.”⁶⁴ *Lingering Florescence*, while not reaching for alternative texts entirely, argues instead that while *kasasagi* clearly does mean “crow,” “[n]onetheless, in this tale, *sagi* are called *kasasagi*” For this he offers no evidence, but does then offer the example of a *waka* where *kasasagi* are, he opines, described as white (i.e. like herons).⁶⁵ In either case, one perceives a rebellion against something so discordant with artistic conventions (and observed nature?) that the text cannot be taken at face value. Either the text is itself to be deprecated, or it must not mean what it seems to mean.

At face value, however, is exactly how Sōgi tries to take this passage. He does admit the possibility of mistake—by Murasaki Shikibu herself, no less—but also forwards a reading to salvage the reading *kasasagi*. Alluding to what might be called the poetic heft of the word (in *waka*), he suggests that a metaphoric use might be involved: it is not that herons are actually called *kasasagi*, as per Kaneyoshi, merely that they are here “written in the guise of” (*nazuraete . . . kakitaru*) magpies. The “appealing effect” here referenced is uncertain, but the motivation for Sōgi’s reading is not: to make sense of the text as-is, come what may. This goes beyond “faithfulness” to a text, which frequently, even in terms very similar to Yoshinari’s and Kaneyoshi’s solutions here, might sacrifice a word, a phrase, a line to reasoned arguments from a principle of text-wide coherence, or coherence even with other contemporary texts. Sōgi’s approach here is far more stubbornly text-committed.

It is not an approach without benefits to recommend it. Emendation of the “more difficult reading” (*lectio difficilior*) runs the risk of arbitrariness, and no doubt many of Sōgi’s explanations of the “meaning of language” that have so impressed scholars going back a century stem precisely from the focused attention

⁶⁴「すさきにたてるさき」とかける本もあり。誠に此句の心によらは、尤可然歟。〔中略〕たま／＼「さき」とある本あれば、可用之歟。 *Kakaishō*, pp. 583b-584a.

⁶⁵「かさゝき」といふは、先は鶺鴒のからすなり。しかれども、この物語には、鶺鴒をかさゝきといへり。〔後略〕。 *Kachō yosei*, p. 326b.

such “text-firstism” promotes. In some cases, a reading proposed by Sōgi—based on nothing but a talented will to make the text make sense—has been so compelling that it can be found in a commentary of the present day without the slightest sustaining evidence.⁶⁶ Here Ukifune, having survived the suicide to which scenes like that of the previous entry had driven her, finds the peace of her new anonymous life at the mountain retreat of Ono 小野 disturbed, again, by unwanted pursuit. Fleeing the attentions of a certain “Captain,” she takes desperate shelter in the old nuns’ room, only to find unreasoning terror there as well:

*The terrified young woman wondered whether tonight was the night when they would eat her; not that she much valued her life, but, as timid as ever, she felt as forlorn as the one who was too afraid to cross the log bridge and had to turn back.*⁶⁷

是は、手ならひの君、小野にて、大あまのふしたる所に、ね給へる時、としよりのをそろしけなるか、あまたゐて、此君をみやりたるなどを、おそろしくおほす時、このことを思ひ出給へり。「一橋^{はし}あやうかりて帰る」とは、むかし身をなけんとするもの、川をわたるにひとつはしのありけるを、わたるかあやうければ、立かへりしことあり、となり。それを我身によそへおほす心なり。此ふることしるせる物なとはみえず。此物語に侍るうへは、うたかひなき事にこそ。此手ならひの君は、うち川に身をなけし人のおほえすなからへておはする人也。一たび身をなけし人の、いま「此ものにやくはれむ」とおそろしくおほす時、一はしの事おほしいてたる也。⁶⁸

As for this, this is something Lady Writing-Practice (i.e. Ukifune) remembers when, in Ono, as she lays herself down where the old nun is sleeping, she finds herself in the midst of so many terrifying old women, whose glances alone fill the young woman with fear. What “the one who was too afraid to cross the log bridge and had to turn back” [refers to] is [the story] where once upon a time, there was someone on his way to throw himself in the river, but when he came to a certain log bridge crossing the river, he decided instead to turn back, because the crossing seemed too dangerous. The sense here is her thinking of the parallel [in the story] to herself. Nothing can be found that records this old story. Yet given that it appears here in this tale, there seems no reason to have doubts about it. This Lady Writing-Practice is one who did throw herself in the Uji river, but to her surprise ended up surviving and living on. When she thinks of how she, someone who has already thrown herself in a river once, now felt “terrified . . . they would eat her,” she remembers the story about the log bridge.

—Problem Passages #123 (from “Writing Practice”)

“Nothing can be found that records this old story,” Sōgi admits. Yet because it is “in this tale,” he feels there is no room for doubt. Strictly speaking, all that the

⁶⁶ The interpretation below can be found in SNKZ 25, p. 329n29, where the lack of any evidence is granted, though there the source quoted is that of Sōgi’s disciple Shōhaku, from the commentary *Trifling with Flowers* (see *Rokashō*, p. 324a). Shōhaku duly identifies it as *shisetsu* 師説 (“my master’s theory”).

⁶⁷ Tyler, *Tale of Genji*, p. 1096; *Genji monogatari*, vol. 6, p. 329.

⁶⁸ Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō}, fols. [78r–79r].

tale contains is the phrase “forlorn as the one who was too afraid to cross the log bridge and had to turn back”—no mention of the wish of that one to commit suicide, much less in a river, without which crucial point Ukifune has no reason to “remember” it as a parallel to her current situation. It also seems difficult to see this as a tradition, as a story Sōgi brought to the tale from some other source: his reasoning against doubt is, again, explicitly “that it appears here in this tale.” There is moreover no discernible precedent in previous *Genji* scholarship—both Yoshinari and Kaneyoshi mention it only as a problem for further research, offering no theories of their own. The only source seems to be Sōgi’s will to interpretation.

And indeed the reading is an arresting one. A former suicide here ironically afraid of death recalls another proverbial figure. To imagine in this unidentified proverbial an equivalent combination of suicidal intent with physical timidity, whose own proposed method of suicide moreover coincided with Ukifune’s own—for her to recall such a figure here, now, would introduce to this scene an element of critical self-awareness that wholly alters its import. Yet even if we call it genius, we may not call it careful philology. We cannot even call it an interpretation of the “meaning of the language,” which requires the evidence of a substantial textual support. It is simply Sōgi’s method: the mining from within the text of meaning it is assumed to contain—a close-reading textual maximalism.

Conclusion

The textual record of commentary dedicated to elucidating the *Tale of Genji* is characterized above all by its surprising continuity over many centuries of otherwise insistently dramatic social, political, and cultural upheaval. This continuity is all the more remarkable for its antiquity, the earliest extant example of the tradition, Sesonji Koreyuki’s 世尊寺伊行 (d.1175?) work *Genji Explanations* (*Genji shaku* 源氏釈) dating back to at least the mid-twelfth century, when the youngest grandchildren of Murasaki’s own generation were still on the edge of living memory. Nor does the tradition display the pronounced foreshortening so familiar from cultural histories of the West, where—reasonably or not—intellectual genealogies often skip through the millennium from “ancient” to “modern,” from Greco-Roman antiquity to the Renaissance, in a few brisk steps. Quite the opposite: across the woodblock-printed pages of the grand, synthesizing *Moonlit Lake* (*Kogetsushō* 湖月抄, 1673) commentary of Kitamura Kigin 北村季吟 (1624–1705), which remained standard well into the Meiji period (1868–1912), exegetes of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries remain central voices in a voluble debate, one audible still in the footnotes of annotated editions today.

Among the most influential voices in that dialogue is Sōgi, though he is not often cited—indeed has not left behind enough material to be much cited—in the *Moonlit Lake* by name. Throughout this article he has been frequently compared with the voices of Yotsutsuji Yoshinari and Ichijō Kaneyoshi, for several reasons

explained above. Yet here one further reason might be raised: because *Genji* studies in Sōgi's aftermath were so dominated in commentary record by his students (and by their students and students' students in ever-lengthening chains), these two predecessor commentaries remain the better comparanda until the emergence—well into the Edo period—of newer schools. That *Genji* studies was able to continue on so serenely while accommodating such a change, and why it proved willing to do so—or perhaps, why its core constituents, interested educated *Genji* students, *willed* it to do so—is a mystery that remains unsolved. That Sōgi, and other *renga* masters from whom even less commentary material survives, are yet so incompletely understood, is a major reason for this unsolvability.

This article has tried, through examination of roughly 8% of the *Problem Passages* corpus (see **table 1**)—as it survives in one of nine extant manuscripts—to better understand the exegetical method by which Sōgi was led to such different results from previous commentators. As a provisional conclusion, he appears to have had a very different concept of the *Genji* as a work, combining a maximalist commitment to the letter of its text with a maximalist idea of that text's meaningfulness. Because no interpretive stance exists in a vacuum, this cannot be taken too categorically—Sōgi was restrained above all by the *intertextual* nature of the *Genji* text itself, and secondarily by its hoary exegetical history, of which he was no dismissive rebel. Nonetheless this conclusion seems to this author to have some explanatory power. On the one hand it identifies a common thread uniting what have been, empirically speaking, taken for discrete hallmarks of the Sōgi approach, and not only by those scholars herein cited: attention to the work's narrativity, concern for psychology, dedication to fine-grained explanation. All such elements come plausibly more fully into coherence in the light of a maximal fixation on details of the *Genji* text itself. On the other hand, and in broader view, it does not seem impossible that such a novel approach, with its axiomatic insistence on the text's inexhaustibility, might indeed prove to be so attractive—and so productive—a critical practice for so many for so long. At the very least, even Sōgi's own few, partial commentaries remain themselves a resource far from exhausted, and for yet greater clarity on the *Genji* studies transformation whose aftermath remains with us still, the prospects of future research seem hopeful.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Note: This article represents in part the results of research supported through a Grant-in-Aid (21K12939) for Early-Career Scientists from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), for the project *Sengoku-ki kotengakushi no kisoteki kenkyū: rengashi no Genjigaku o chushin ni* 戦国期古典学史の基礎的研究：連歌師の源氏学を中心に (“Basic Research on the History of Classical Studies in the Warring-States Period: The *Genji* Studies of *Renga* Masters in Particular”).

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- Note: Per custom, references to this standard variorum edition of the Genji base-text cite, not only page numbers (as they increase across volumes, which are accordingly omitted), but also (vertical) line numbers, e.g., 112:3, 1786:13, etc.*
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Table 1Contents of *Problem Passages in the Tale of Genji* (Kuyō Bunko MS^{kō})

“*Taisei* Number” refers to the corresponding location (page:column) of each entry’s lemma within Ikeda’s variorum edition, *Genji monogatari taisei: kōi-ben* 源氏物語大成：校異篇.

<i>Tale of Genji</i> Chapter (N° of Entries)	Entry	Folio	<i>Taisei</i> Number
1. The Paulownia Pavilion 桐壺 (2)	#001	02r	0005:01
" "	#002	02v	0023:11
2. The Broom Tree 帚木 (1)	#003	03v	0035:01
3. The Cicada Shell 空蟬			
4. The Twilight Beauty 夕顔 (4)	#004	05r	0120:14
" "	#005	06r	0132:08
" "	#006	06v	0140:05
" "	#007	07r	0146:02
5. Young Murasaki 若紫			
6. The Safflower 末摘花 (2)	#008	08r	0213:09
" "	#009	09r	0226:13
7. Beneath the Autumn Leaves 紅葉賀 (1)	#010	10v	0251:08
8. Under the Cherry Blossoms 花宴			
9. Heart-to-Heart 葵 (5)	#011	11r	0292:05
" "	#012	12v	0309:08
" "	#013	13v	0309:06
" "	#014	14r	0311:09
" "	#015	15r	0311:14
10. The Green Branch 賢木 (3)	#016	16v	0336:04
" "	#017	17r	0340:03
" "	#018	18r	0369:01
11. Falling Flowers 花散里 (1)	#019	18v	0388:07
12. Suma 須磨 (3)	#020	20r	0426:11
" "	#021	20v	0428:14
" "	#022	21r	0433:11
13. Akashi 明石 (3)	#023	21v	0447:11
" "	#024	23r	0460:03
" "	#025	24r	0477:07
14. The Pilgrimage to Sumiyoshi 湊標			
15. A Waste of Weeds 蓬生			
16. At the Pass 関屋			
17. The Picture Contest 絵合 (1)	#026	24v	0564:10
18. Wind in the Pines 松風 (2)	#027	25v	0585:12
" "	#028	26v	0594:03
19. Wisps of Cloud 薄雲 (1)	#029	27v	0629:13

20. The Bluebell 朝顔 (1)	#030	<i>28v</i>	0649:05
21. The Maidens 乙女			
22. The Tendril Wreath 玉鬘 (3)	#031	<i>29r</i>	0726:10
" "	#032	<i>29v</i>	0726:14
" "	#033	<i>30r</i>	0731:03
23. The Warbler's First Song 初音 (2)	#034	<i>31r</i>	0775:11
" "	#035	<i>31v</i>	0776:06
24. Butterflies 胡蝶 (3)	#036	<i>32r</i>	0781:01
" "	#037	<i>32v</i>	0782:12
" "	#038	<i>33r</i>	0785:04
25. The Fireflies 螢			
26. The Pink 常夏			
27. The Cressets 篝火 (1)	#039	<i>33v</i>	0857:12
28. The Typhoon 野分 (2)	#040	<i>34r</i>	0877:06
" "	#041	<i>35r</i>	0877:13
29. The Imperial Progress 行幸			
30. Thoroughwort Flowers 藤袴 (4)	#042	<i>36r</i>	0920:10
" "	#043	<i>36v</i>	0920:13
" "	#044	<i>37r</i>	0923:11
" "	#045	<i>37v</i>	0923:13
31. The Handsome Pillar 真木柱 (2)	#046	<i>38r</i>	0935:08
" "	#047	<i>39r</i>	0938:14
32. The Plum Tree Branch 梅枝 (3)	#048	<i>39v</i>	0977:06
" "	#049	<i>40r</i>	0981:09
" "	#050	<i>40v</i>	0983:05
33. New Wisteria Leaves 藤裏葉 (3)	#051	<i>41r</i>	1002:09
" "	#052	<i>41v</i>	1003:05
" "	#053	<i>41v</i>	1004:06
34. Spring Shoots I 若菜上 (4)	#054	<i>42v</i>	1038:10
" "	#055	<i>42v</i>	1109:02
" "	#056	<i>43r</i>	1109:04
" "	#057	<i>43v</i>	1109:07
35. Spring Shoots II 若菜下 (9)	#058	<i>44r</i>	1139:10
" "	#059	<i>44r</i>	1140:03
" "	#060	<i>44v</i>	1150:08
" "	#061	<i>45r</i>	1156:01
" "	#062	<i>45v</i>	1160:06
" "	#063	<i>45v</i>	1160:07
" "	#064	<i>45v</i>	1163:08
" "	#065	<i>46r</i>	1180:09
" "	#066	<i>46v</i>	1189:01

36. The Oak Tree 柏木 (2) " "	#067	47r	1264:03
	#068	48r	1252:07
37. The Flute 横笛			
38. The Bell Cricket 鈴虫			
39. Evening Mist 夕霧 (2) " "	#069	48v	1359:08
	#070	49r	1359:10
40. The Law 御法 (3) " " " "	#071	49v	1386:10
	#072	50v	1387:09
	#073	50v	1396:13
41. The Seer 幻 (6) " " " " " " " " " "	#074	51r	1404:14
	#075	52r	1408:04
	#076	52v	1414:06
	#077	53v	1415:09
	#078	54v	1416:05
	#079	55r	1414:12
42. The Perfumed Prince 匂兵部卿 (2) " "	#080	55v	1432:05
	#081	56r	1437:14
43. Red Plum Blossoms 紅梅 (2) " "	#082	56r	1447:01
	#083	56v	1458:08
44. Bamboo River 竹河 (10) " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "	#084	57r	1463:01
	#085	57v	1463:02
	#086	58r	1463:03
	#087	58v	1466:04
	#088	58v	1490:12
	#089	59v	1497:06
	#090	59v	1497:07
	#091	60r	1499:09
	#092	60v	1500:10
	#093	60v	1501:06
45. The Maiden of the Bridge 橋姫 (2) " "	#094	61r	1516:05
	#095	61v	1519:14
46. Beneath the Oak 椎本 (3) " " " "	#096	62r	1573:12
	#097	63r	1574:01
	#098	63v	1574:04
47. Trefoil Knots 総角 (4) " " " " " "	#099	64v	1611:10
	#100	65r	1612:03
	#101	65v	1625:13
	#102	66r	1664:07
48. Bracken Shoots 早蕨 (2) " "	#103	67v	1682:09
	#104	67v	1685:08

49. The Ivy 宿木 (7) " " " " " " " " " " " "	#105	<i>68r</i>	1701:01
	#106	<i>69r</i>	1702:03
	#107	<i>69r</i>	1704:04
	#108	<i>69v</i>	1708:02
	#109	<i>69v</i>	1718:07
	#110	<i>70r</i>	1726:09
	#111	<i>70v</i>	1778:12
50. The Eastern Cottage 東屋 (2) " "	#112	<i>71r</i>	1825:06
	#113	<i>71v</i>	1839:13
51. A Drifting Boat 浮舟 (3) " " " "	#114	<i>72v</i>	1864:04
	#115	<i>73v</i>	1869:11
	#116	<i>74r</i>	1887:11
52. The Mayfly 蜻蛉 (6) " " " " " " " " " "	#117	<i>74v</i>	1946:10
	#118	<i>75r</i>	1977:14
	#119	<i>75r</i>	1978:02
	#120	<i>75v</i>	1978:03
	#121	<i>76r</i>	1978:06
	#122	<i>76v</i>	1981:04
53. Writing Practice 手習 (1)	#123	<i>78r</i>	2023:13
54. The Floating Bridge of Dreams 夢浮橋 (1)	#124	<i>79r</i>	2057:02